

Learning together: A study of six B.A. completion cohort programs in early care and education: Year 4 ^[1]

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Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

Format: Report

Publication Date: 10 Feb 2012

AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

EXCERPTS:

During the last decade, researchers and policy makers have been debating the optimal level of formal education for ECE practitioners (Bogard, Traylor, & Takanishi, 2008; Calderon, 2005; Early et al., 2008; Fuller, Livas, & Bridges, 2006). Some stakeholders continue to support having few or no barriers to working with young children, while a growing number of advocates and educators assert that a B.A. degree and a credential in early education should be the standard for preschool teachers (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). The Learning Together Year 4 study focused on the experiences and views of practitioners, who are seldom included in these discussions. These findings provide a new perspective: a snapshot of B.A. completion cohorts by program participants two to three years after graduation.

Key Findings:

- **Finding 1:** Looking back on their experiences in B.A. cohort programs, graduates continued to identify the programs' structural supports, such as financial aid and flexible class schedules, as important to their educational success.
- **Finding 2:** Since graduation, cohort members continued to serve as professional, personal, and educational resources for each other.
- **Finding 3:** More than two-thirds of graduates reported taking general education classes while participating in their B.A. cohort. Approximately two-thirds of these graduates reported that general education classes had enhanced their educational experience and/or had had a positive impact on their work with children and families.
- **Finding 4:** The majority of graduates reported that skills and knowledge related to two issues – ECE public policy and working with other adults – would be helpful to their current jobs and to their future careers. More than one-half reported that their B.A. completion cohort program had addressed these issues to some degree during the course of their studies.
- **Finding 5:** Approximately one to two years after graduation, nearly one-quarter of graduates reported changes in their job positions, with three-fourths attributing this change to having attained a B.A. degree. Three-fifths of graduates reported pay increases, with 80 percent attributing these exclusively, or in part, to their B.A. degree.
- **Finding 6:** Almost all graduates were of the opinion that their B.A. degrees would have a positive impact on their future. Most reported a positive impact on their professional lives, more than one-half on their personal lives, and about one-third on their future educational pathways.
- **Finding 7:** Graduates working in center-based programs agreed that prevalent characteristics of the ECE workplace, such as insufficient staffing, staff turnover, lack of sick or personal days, and lack of paid planning or preparation time, all have an impact on a teacher's ability to engage in effective classroom practice. Only about three-fifths of these graduates reported that their workplace offered paid planning time, and a much smaller percentage reported opportunities for paid sharing time with other colleagues.

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Region: United States ^[3]

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