Nebraska Early Care & Education Landscape: Exploring Workforce Well-Being

Susan Sarver, Ph.D.
Amy M. Roberts, Ph.D.
Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D.

buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu
Workforce Survey Goal

Understanding Nebraska’s early childhood workforce (birth through Grade 3) across settings, geography, and preparation.
Programs and Teachers Surveyed Across Settings Throughout Nebraska

- Licensed Home – Based Child Care Providers
- Licensed Center – Based Professionals (Including Directors)
- Principals and Teachers in Public Schools (PreK – 3)
Holistic Survey to Allow Parallels to Other Studies of Early Care and Education

- Demographics
- Financial resources
- Qualifications
- Depressive symptoms (*CES-D 10*; Radloff, 1977)
- Stress (*Job Stress Inventory*, Curbow et al., 2000)
- Beliefs about children (*Modernity Scale*; Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985)
- Characteristics of children served
# Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home-Based Providers</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-Based Directors</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-Based Teachers</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K Administrators</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K Teachers</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Administrators</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Teachers</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Rural to Urban Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Location</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>PreK</th>
<th>K − 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban/Metropolitan</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Town/Micropolitan</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town/Rural</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics

- White, female, and middle-age
- Home-based respondents were the oldest group ($\bar{x} = 48$) while center-based were the youngest ($\bar{x} = 36$)
- Nearly all Pre-K and K-3 teachers had college degrees, whereas 46% of center-based and 23% of home-based had bachelors or graduate degrees.
A Focus on Teacher Well-Being
Depressive Symptoms

• Hopelessness
• Irritability
• Loneliness
• Loss of energy
• Change in sleep and eating habits
• Lack of interest

Estimates of depression among early childhood educators range from 6% to 27%.
Teacher Depression Relates To:

- Less sensitive and more withdrawn interactions with children (Hamre & Pianta, 2004)

- Lower levels of classroom quality (Jennings 2014; La Paro et al., 2009; Sandilos et al., 2015)

- Poorer quality relationships (Whitaker, Dearth-Wesley & Gooze, 2015)

- Less positive outcomes for children (Jeon et al., 2013; McLean & Connor, 2015; Roberts et al., 2016)
Children in classrooms with more depressed teachers made fewer advances in social-emotional development.

Roberts, LoCasale-Crouch, Hamre, & DeCoste (2016)
What characteristics relate to teachers’ depression across early childhood settings?

- Beliefs about children?
- Economic status?
- Work stress?

Controlling for demographic characteristics and setting type

Roberts, Gallagher, Daro, Iruka, & Sarver (under review)
Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey Report (forthcoming)
The Prevalence of Depression in the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce

• Most teachers (86%) experienced some depressive symptoms across all settings.

• Roughly 9% of teachers experienced symptoms consist with clinical depression.
Teachers’ Depression by Setting and Urbanicity

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey
Results show teachers with ... 

- More adult-centered beliefs
- No health insurance
- Lower wages
- Multiple jobs
- More workplace demands
- Fewer workplace resources

... had more depressive symptoms
Beliefs About Children Particularly Important in Home-Based Settings
Health Insurance Status Mattered Across Settings

- Centers had the most uninsured teachers.

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey
Pay Mattered Across Settings

- Median hourly pay was lowest among home- and center-based professionals.

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey
Implications

• PD focused on child-centered practices, particularly for home-based providers.

• Increase pay and benefits, which are lowest among home- and center-based providers.

• Lower teacher stress by decreasing inordinate demands and providing more resources & support.
Systematic and Sustainable Supports are Needed to Transform the Workforce
Susan Sarver, Ph.D.
ssarver@nebraska.edu

Amy Roberts, Ph.D.
aroBERTS@nebraska.edu

buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu