

Detroit-Area Early Childhood Workforce Study

November 2018

Introduction

Research shows that process quality in early childhood education (ECE) programs—specifically teacher–child interactions—is the strongest predictor of children’s gains in learning and development.¹ Due to a number of factors associated with the city’s early childhood infrastructure and the budgets of the current Head Start grants, it has been difficult for Detroit Head Start programs to recruit and retain effective teachers to engage in the types of interactions that are most important for children’s development and learning. Three of the four Detroit grantees are facing competition because of low process quality as measured by the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*.

The Head Start Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for the City of Detroit includes a “Staffing and Supporting a Strong Early Learning Workforce” section that provides applicants the opportunity to propose stronger workforce development initiatives—including higher compensation, more impactful professional development, and improved workplace environments—that will support them in recruiting and retaining highly qualified Head Start teachers. The goal of this white paper is to provide an evidence-based rationale for Detroit Head Start applicants to propose stronger workforce initiatives in their applications.

The paper is organized into the following sections:

- ***Data and methodological approach.*** In this section, the data, methodology, and process for producing the paper is briefly described.
- ***The state and community context affecting the ECE workforce pipeline in Detroit.*** Using census and survey data, population-level financial and educational characteristics of the early childhood education workforce are described for Michigan, Wayne County, and Detroit.
- ***ECE workforce pipeline: Perspectives of local institutes of higher education.*** In this section, interview data is used to describe the perspectives of local institutions of higher education (IHEs) on the ECE workforce pipeline in the Detroit area. Self-reported quality of training, challenges for recruiting students, and supports available for working adults are examined.
- ***The staff recruitment and retention challenge in Detroit-area Head Start programs.*** Drawing on teacher and program director survey data, staffing challenges are described.
- ***Workplace and professional supports in Detroit-area Head Start programs.*** In this section, survey data is used to describe the workplace environments, professional

¹ See, for example, Curby, T. W., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Konold, T. R., Pianta, R. C., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Bryant, D., Clifford, R., Early, D., & Barbarin, O. (2009). The relations of observed pre-K classroom quality profiles to children's achievement and social competence. *Early Education and Development*, 20(2), 346-372; Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25, 166-176. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.10.004

development supports, and compensation of Detroit-area Head Start and Early Head Start teachers.

- ***What will it take? How agencies can improve Head Start workforce stability and quality.*** In this section, the main findings are summarized, and recommendations are offered to Detroit Head Start agencies regarding how to use the findings in their federal Head Start grant applications.

Data and methodological approach

This is a mixed-methods descriptive study conducted from June–October 2018. In June/July 2018, Head Start agencies in Detroit were consulted to obtain feedback on the proposed research questions and methodology. Feedback was obtained from stakeholders on data collection instruments. Preliminary findings were presented to Detroit Head Start grantees in October 2018.

Data Sources. The findings draw on several sources of data, including interviews or surveys of a convenience sample of individuals at Detroit-area IHEs, Head Start program directors, and lead and assistant teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms (**Table 1**).

Response Rates. Of six colleges and universities identified by Head Start grantees as matriculating teaching staff, the research staff team was able to contact and interview individuals at three. Each interviewee was either a program director or ECE department chair. For the ECE staff surveys, seven of 19 program directors responded to the director survey (37 percent), and 20 percent of teachers responded to the teacher survey. Secondary analysis of publicly available census and Head Start Program Information Report data were also used to describe the context.

See Appendix A for a more detailed description of data and methods.

Table 1. Data collection methods, sample sizes, and response rates

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	POPULATION	ANALYTIC SAMPLE	RESPONSE RATE
Interviews with representatives of local colleges and universities	6	3	50%
Head Start program director survey	19	7	37%
Teaching staff survey	727	143	20%
Head Start lead & assistant teachers	432	107	25%
Early Head Start lead & assistant teachers	295	36	12%

Understanding the Data

There are a few things to keep in mind when considering the finding presented below. First, the findings are based on a sample of Head Start respondents that comprise a portion of the entire Head

Start population of directors and teachers in Detroit. As such, the findings represent information from respondents that may have been particularly motivated to take the survey or had more time to do so. Consequently, the findings may not be representative of the entire population of Head Start directors and teachers in Detroit. A number of attempts were made to obtain as large a sample as possible and the overall findings appear to have face validity (i.e., seem reasonable in light of the Detroit Head Start context) and concurrent validity (i.e., consistent findings across Census and survey data).

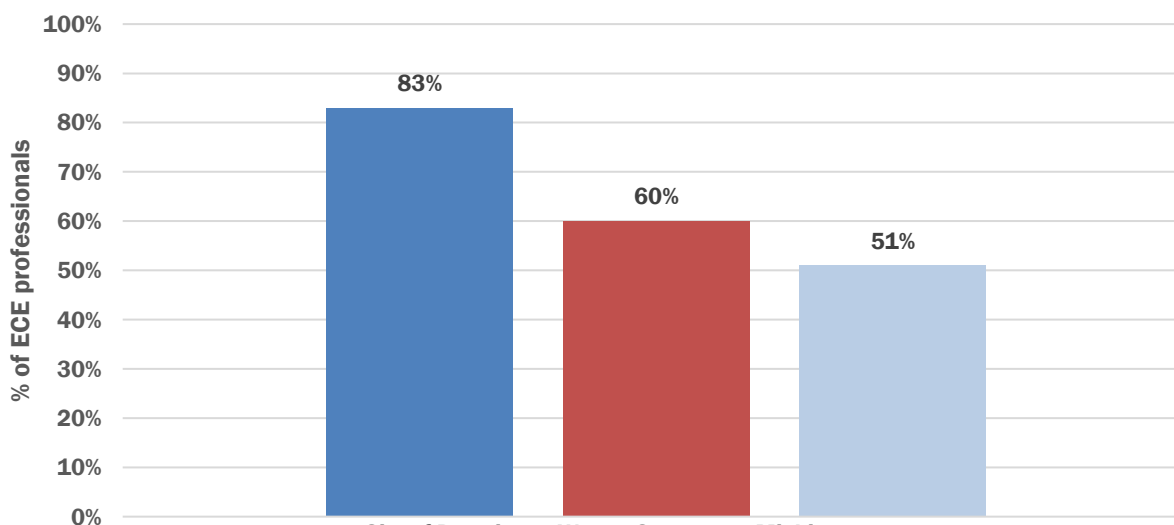
In addition, the findings from the IHE interviews are based on a self-assessment from those who run postsecondary ECE programs and not on an independent evaluation of each IHE. Accordingly, the findings related to the quality of the postsecondary program represent the feelings and perceptions of the IHE respondent and may not reflect the objective state of classes, training, and fieldwork of IHEs in the Detroit area. At the same time, the information provided by these respondents is vitally important to understanding the relationship and dynamics between the IHEs and Head Start programs and the implications for Head Start teacher quality.

Findings

The state and community context of the ECE workforce pipeline in Detroit

Census and survey data are used to describe population-level financial and educational characteristics of the ECE workforce in Michigan, Wayne County, and Detroit. Early childhood education professionals in the City of Detroit are under remarkable financial stress: Over 80 percent of ECE professionals in Detroit do not earn a living wage (Figure 1), which is defined as 264 percent of the federal poverty wage (or \$10.87 per hour for a full-time working adult with no dependents).² This percentage is significantly higher than that of Wayne County (60%) and the state as a whole (51%). While Head Start teachers are only a portion of the early childhood workforce in Detroit, this finding is consistent with results reported below that 88 percent of Detroit Head Start teaching staff that participated in our survey reported at least some difficulty paying bills.

Figure 1. Percentages of early childhood education professionals with incomes below the living wage in the City of Detroit, Wayne County, and Michigan, 3-year rolling average, 2014–16

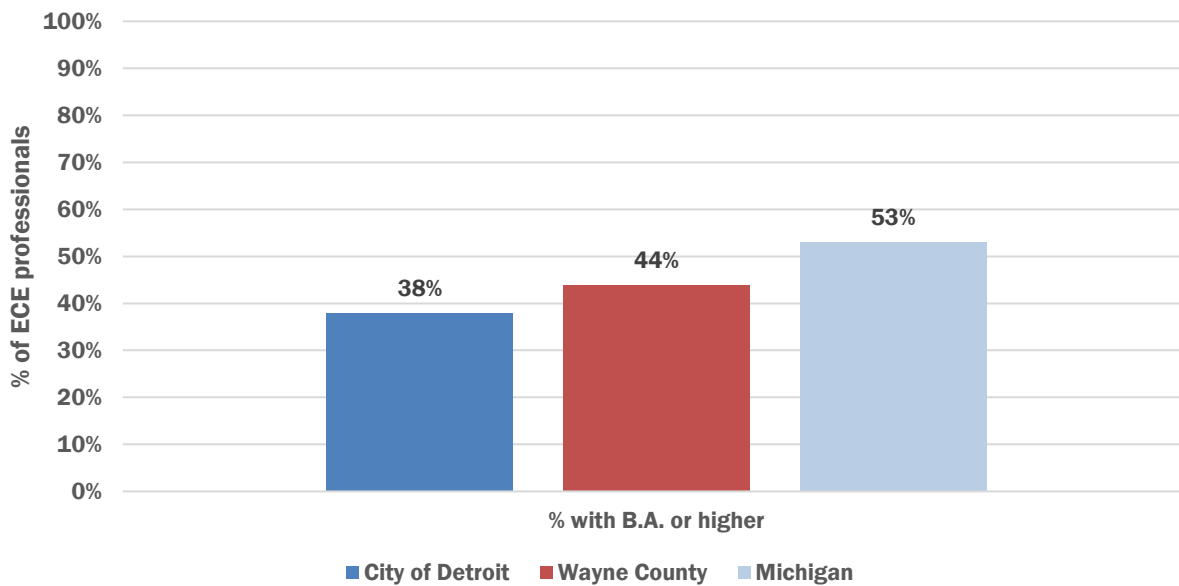


²Glasmeier, A. K. 2018. Living Wage Calculator. Retrieved from <http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/26>.

The percentage of ECE professionals with a bachelor’s degree in Detroit is significantly lower than in Wayne County and the state overall even though the number of ECE professionals with a bachelor’s degree is on the rise in the region.

Census data show substantial disparities in educational attainment between ECE professionals in the City of Detroit compared to the rest of the state. As shown in Figure 2, compared to an average of over half (53%) of ECE professionals in Michigan and 44 percent in Wayne County, only 38 percent of ECE professionals in Detroit had a bachelor’s degree or higher from 2014–16.

Figure 2. Percentages of early childhood education professionals with bachelor’s degrees in the City of Detroit, Wayne County, and Michigan, 3-year rolling average, 2014-16



Source: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 8.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V8.0>

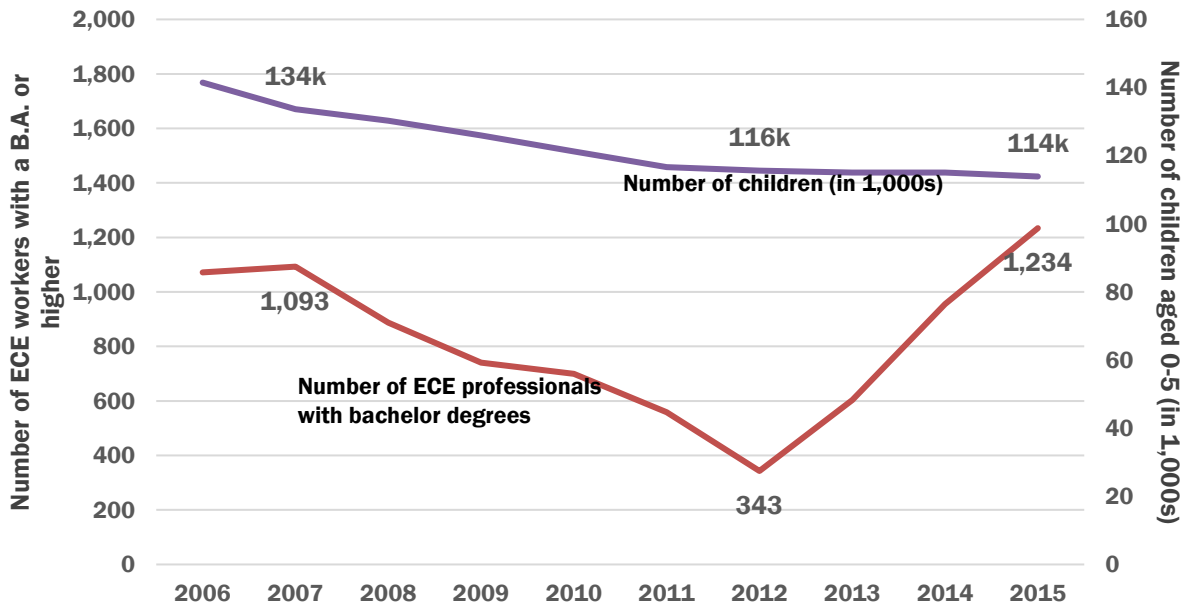
At the same time, the number of ECE professionals with at least a bachelor’s degree has increased in the area in recent years. **Figure 3** shows a 350 percent increase in ECE professionals with a bachelor’s degree in Wayne County from 2012 to 2015, from less than 350 to over 1,200. This increase corresponds to the expansion in state funding (from \$108 million in 2012 to \$243 million in 2017) for the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), which requires that lead teachers funded by GSRP have a teaching certificate with an early childhood endorsement, Child Development Associate credential (CDA), or bachelors’ degree in child development with a specialization in preschool teaching.^{3,4} The GSRP credentialing requirement and higher salaries is likely a contributing factor to the recruitment and retention issues faced by Head Start programs. As discussed below, the average salary of bachelor’s-level Head Start teachers in Detroit is significantly below that of the GSRP program. **From the data, it appears that ECE professionals with a bachelor’s degree can be attracted to work in the area. The Head Start recruitment and retention issues may not**

³ https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSO_IT_approved_422341_7.pdf
⁴ https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSO_OK_Approved_422339_7.pdf

necessarily be one of supply, but offering salary and benefit packages that can attract and retain professionals with higher credentials.

As **Figure 3** illustrates, the number of qualified ECE professionals has increased while the number of children in need of care in Wayne County has decreased.

Figure 3. Number of children aged 0–5 and early childhood education professionals in Wayne County from 2006-2015 (3-year rolling averages)



Source: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 8.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V8.0>

The data shown in **Figure 3** do not describe *where* early childhood education professionals in Wayne County are working. Lower wages and fewer benefits in Detroit programs relative to other ECE employment opportunities suggest that Detroit may not be benefiting from the increased supply in bachelor’s-level ECE professionals. The survey of Detroit-area Head Start program directors suggests as much. Six of seven Head Start program directors surveyed for this study reported it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to find candidates with the preferred level of education. As one program director put it, “The biggest barrier to hiring qualified teachers is the lack of a competitive wage compared to [the] cost of education.”

Summary Points

Although the number of bachelor’s-level ECE professionals is increasing within Wayne County, qualifications and wages for ECE professionals in Detroit remain low. Detroit Head Start programs may have a particularly difficult time offering wages and benefits that are competitive with GSRP to attract the limited pool of qualified staff.

Access to and quality of ECE higher education programs in Detroit

Here, data are reported from interviews with respondents from local IHEs serving the Detroit area. The research team interviewed individuals at three local IHEs, all of whom described strong, high-quality postsecondary programs with healthy retention rates that prepare students for diverse ECE

careers. Yet these programs struggle to recruit students, though there are efforts to meet the needs of many working adults.

Nearby higher education programs offer high-quality training, including strong fieldwork components.

The IHEs in the interview sample all require that full-time faculty have ECE backgrounds, and interviewees reported having enough faculty to cover required coursework. Interviewees all perceived their programs to be strong (i.e., they are NAEYC-accredited with strong fieldwork components). All respondents reported that their program seeks to make students aware of the differences between different kinds of early childhood settings (e.g., Head Start, private pay, GSRP). Respondents reported that, across institutions, this is both formally written into the curriculum and informally addressed.

Programs ensure that students see different kinds of settings through their field experiences. For example, one respondent said, “They definitely have a mixture of different experiences. Those who are working in the field love to stay right where they're working, but we force them to go outside of their comfort zone, so to speak.” Another respondent said:

[Students] actually have to go out and see six different types of programs in person. So, we want them to go to a family child care home. We want them to go to a corporate program. We want them to go to a program that is an employer-sponsored program. We want them to see these different programs and... even things like philosophy, like a Montessori or a Reggio.

The high teacher turnover in Head Start make these field placements difficult to set up, and teachers hired by Head Start programs may be unprepared to work in Head Start as a result.

All three respondents reported that field experiences are a core component of their higher education programs. To connect students to field experiences, respondents reported using a list of ECE programs used in the past, new connections with alumni, and their onsite early childhood center (if applicable). However, the high teacher turnover in the city's Head Start programs make Head Start field placements difficult to develop and maintain. One interviewee noted:

It's hard to get high-quality placements [for fieldwork]...[T]here's such a high turnover in our field. Where we need experienced teachers, you can't place a student teacher or a practicum student with somebody who's only been there for a year or two. So, we need consistent high-quality teachers that we can put the students [with] for some additional practicum experiences as well as their student teaching.

A lack of field placements in Head Start programs may result in a lack of preparation for work as a Head Start teacher. In our surveys, 40 percent of teachers said their position is more difficult than they expected; half of these cited paperwork as the most difficult element of their role. One teacher said, “I just thought that, after the first year, all the kinks would be worked out. It has been almost four years... Seems like we are not provided materials often required to get the job done.” Additionally, the challenges of placing students in Head Start fieldwork assignments may limit the professional connections that students make with these programs and the likelihood that they will seek employment there.

Training programs in postsecondary institutions set high expectations for workplace environments and career support.

According to interviewees, postsecondary training programs set high expectations for students in terms of what they should look for when searching for a position. One interviewee said:

We tell [our students] that you want to find a nice match. You want to be in a place that is going to be very supportive. You want colleagues who have comparable academic preparation to you so you'll be able to bounce ideas off them. We talk about what kind of professional development support is provided at various programs. Do they help with sending you to conferences? Do they help with membership to professional organizations? Do they bring in speakers? Do they build a sense of community at the place of employment? All of that is important.

As discussed in more detail below, many current Head Start teaching staff report inadequate workplace supports, low morale, and insufficient professional development supports. The incongruities with the expectations set by postsecondary programs and the reality of many Head Start programs may lead prospective teachers to seek employment elsewhere.

Postsecondary institutions struggle to recruit students to ECE degree-granting programs.

Interview respondents from local colleges and universities reported that recruiting students to their ECE programs is challenging, and increased recognition of the field's importance might support more interest in attending these programs. One respondent said, "We're having trouble finding those students. So, if somebody could magically find students who will become teachers, we'll all be really happy." Another said, "I wish there was a better way for us to recruit. We have a real potential, a real need in Detroit which is not that far from us." Although recruitment is a challenge, postsecondary programs report multiple supports to accommodate the needs of "non-traditional students" (e.g., students working full-time, single parents, or those facing limited financial resources), such as financial aid advisors, alternative class schedules, distance learning, and off-campus classes. Many who pursue a degree in early childhood—particularly those currently working in the field—fall into the category of non-traditional students and these supports are consistent with best practice recommendations for ECE institutes of higher education.⁵

Summary Points

Detroit-area institutes of higher education offer programs that meet experts' recommendations for high-quality ECE teacher preparation programs⁶ including faculty experience and capacity, curriculum content, robust fieldwork placements, and supports for adult-learners and non-traditional students. However, the higher education programs report difficulties recruiting students into their programs—

⁵ Early, Diane, and Pamela J. Winton. (2001). Preparing the workforce: Early childhood teacher preparation at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 16 (3):285–306; Zaslow, M., Tout, K., Halle, T., Vick Whittaker, J. & Lavelle, B. (2010). *Toward the identification of features of effective professional development for early childhood educators*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

⁶ Whitebook, M., Austin, L. J. E., Ryan, S., Kipnis, F., Almaraz, M., & Sakai, L. (2012). *By default or by design? Variations in higher education programs for early care and teachers and their implications for research methodology, policy, and practice*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

resulting in a limited pool of qualified teachers—and connecting students to Head Start programs through fieldwork placements.

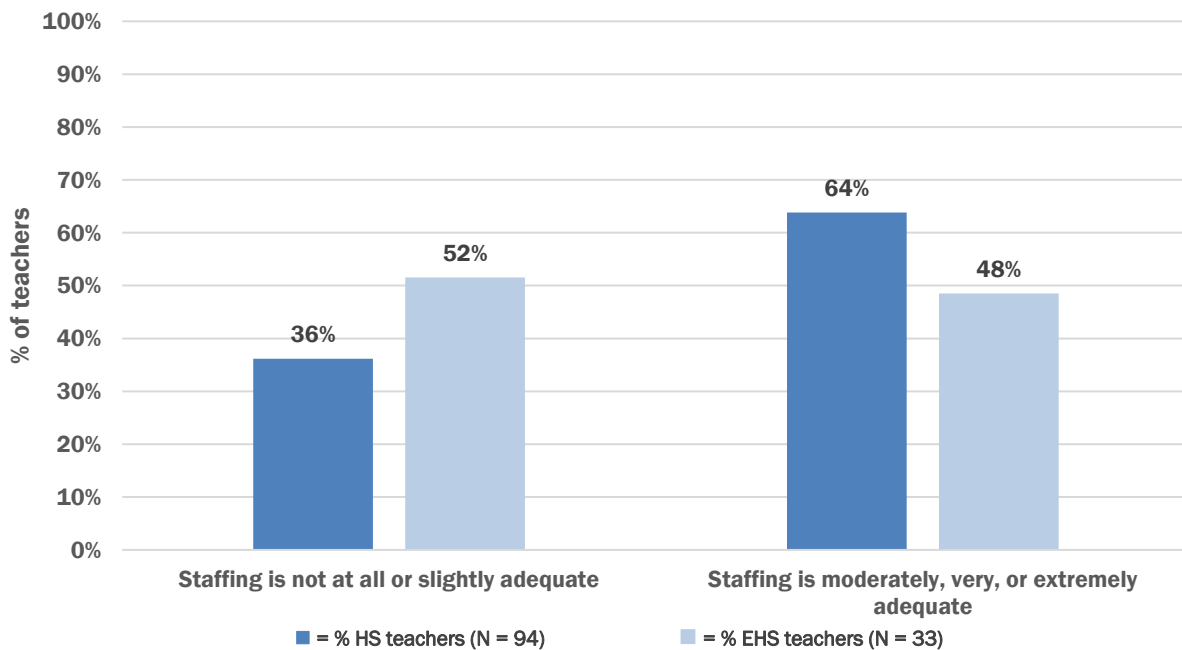
The staff recruitment and retention challenge in Detroit-area Head Start programs

The Detroit community is struggling to attract and retain a well-qualified ECE workforce. This is a significant concern because knowledgeable and skilled early educators are the single most important factor in high-quality ECE.

Current staffing is perceived to be insufficient to meet children’s needs.

Over one-third of surveyed Head Start teachers and over half of Early Head Start teachers reported that program staffing is “not at all adequate” or “only slightly adequate” to meet children’s needs and allow for the completion of other teaching-related tasks (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Percent of teachers reporting adequacy of staffing for meeting children’s needs, N=127 teachers



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

Filling lead teacher positions typically takes six months and average tenure is only seven months.

Head Start program directors reported that it takes six months to fill a lead teacher position and that, on average, lead teachers stay with the program for only seven months. Directors reported that it takes an average of nine months to fill assistant teacher positions and that individuals typically only stay in this role for an average of five months. On average, directors reported needing to fill 23 teacher positions (lead and assistant) during the last year (although wide ranges were reported from 1–40 lead teacher positions and 0–20 assistant positions). This significant turnover leads to

programs struggling to fill the gaps with non-ideal staffing solutions. Over half of the surveyed program directors reported that 20 to 40 percent of their staff is temporary at any given time.

This “revolving door” of teaching staff poses many problems at the child, teacher, and program level. As noted above, teaching staff feel that current staffing is insufficient to meet children’s needs and program directors reported that two of the most significant consequences of turnover in their programs are: (1) reduced individualized attention for children; and (2) a rise in children’s behavior problems. This is consistent with research that suggests that the lack of continuity in caregivers can be detrimental for children’s development, particularly for infants and toddlers for whom consistency in caregivers is especially important.⁷ Constant turnover can also pose challenges in building cohesion within teaching teams and promoting a positive workplace environment for ECE staff. Finally, the constant churn of staff hurts programs financially. Any time, money, or other resources that go into training teaching staff is lost as soon as an individual leaves the program. This low return on human capital investment, as well as the large percentage of temporary staff at any given time, may help explain why Detroit Head Start programs fared so poorly on measures of classroom quality (i.e., low scores on the *CLASS*), which necessitated their participation in the re-competition process.

Summary Points

There is significant turnover in Detroit Head Start programs with many teachers leaving every year, long gaps between permanent hires, and teachers staying for very limited periods of time. This results in a high number of temporary staff for many programs. The constant churn in staffing is detrimental for program functioning, returns on human capital investment, workplace climate, classroom quality, and child outcomes.

Inadequate supports for Head Start teachers are the driving force behind workforce challenges

Factors that can contribute to challenges attracting and retaining qualified teachers include workplace climate (e.g., workplace resources and staff morale), professional development supports, and teacher compensation (i.e., wages and benefits). This section describes Detroit-area Head Start director and lead teacher perspectives on the supports offered to teachers. These findings suggest that significant changes to the workplace environment must be made to attract well-qualified staff to the Head Start space.

Workplace Climate

Early Head Start teachers report lower levels of workplace supports than Head Start teachers.

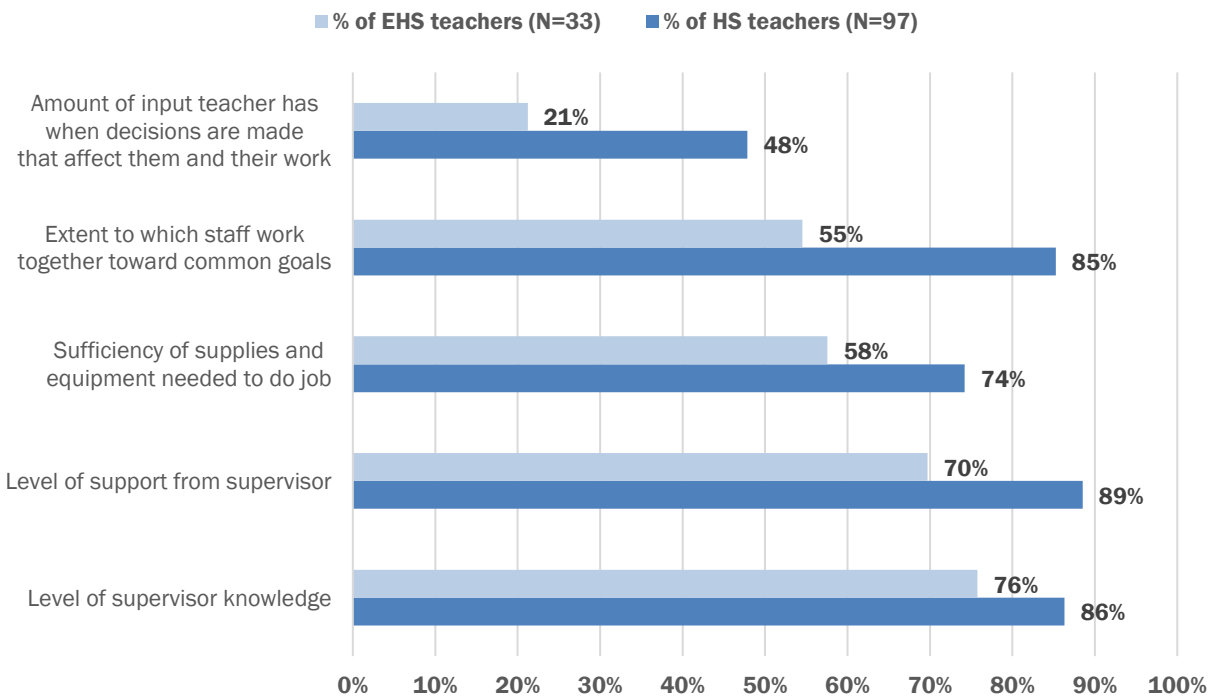
In the survey, we asked teachers about several aspects of their work environment, including indicators of workplace autonomy and collaboration, sufficiency of supplies and equipment, and supervisor support and knowledge. These aspects of workplace climate affect teachers’ abilities to

⁷ Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, CD: The National Academies Press.

engage in effective teaching, teacher well-being (e.g., burnout and depression), and ECE programs' capacity to attract and retain qualified teachers.⁸

As **Figure 5** indicates, teaching staff reported generally high levels of workplace supports, but Early Head Start teachers tended to be less likely than Head Start teachers to report high levels of support. For example, while 85 percent of Head Start teachers reported that staff work together toward common goals at least a moderate amount, only 55 percent of Early Head Start teachers had similar attitudes. While 89 percent of Head Start teachers felt they had at least moderate levels of support from their supervisor, only 70 percent of Early Head Start teachers felt similarly. The lowest area of perceived support for both groups was the amount of input teachers felt they had into program decisions that affect them (48 percent of Head Start and 21 percent of Early Head Start teachers reported at least moderate support in this area).

Figure 5. Percent of teachers that reported at least moderate support across indicators of productive workplace environments, N=130 teachers



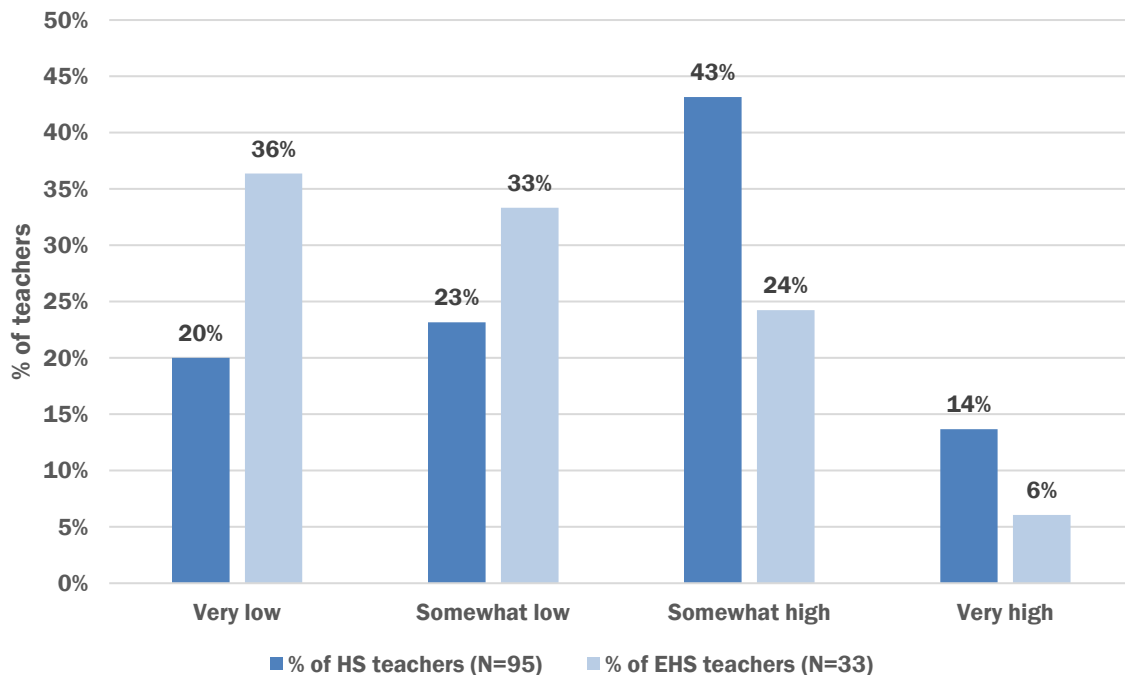
Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

⁸ Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy Work, Still Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley; Bloom, P. J., Hentchel, A., & Bella, J. (2010). *A great place to work: Creating a healthy organizational climate*. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons; Schaack, D.D., & Le, V. (2017). *Retaining early childhood teachers in Colorado: Factors that predict teacher turnover, retention, and well-being*. Denver, CO: University of Colorado Denver.

Many teachers report low staff morale, especially among Early Head Start teachers.

When teachers were asked to report on the level of morale among staff, almost half (43%) of Head Start teachers and 69% of Early Head Start teachers reported that morale was either “very” or “somewhat” low, as shown in **Figure 6**.

Figure 6. Staff morale among Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, N=128 teachers



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

Summary Points

Overall, Early Head Start teachers report lower levels of workplace supports and staff morale. Teacher stress and well-being has been linked to the quality of their interactions with children, which in turn is linked to child behavior and outcomes.⁹ If workplace stress undermines the capacity of Early Head Start teachers to engage in strong, positive relationships with a program’s youngest children, it is possible that children’s behavior in their subsequent Head Start classrooms may be affected, which can also impact classroom quality.¹⁰

⁹ Early, D.M., Maxwell, Kelly L., Ponder, Bentley D., & Pan, Yi. (2017) Improving teacher-child interactions: A randomized controlled trial of Making the Most of Classroom Interactions and My Teaching Partner professional development models. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 38, 57-70.

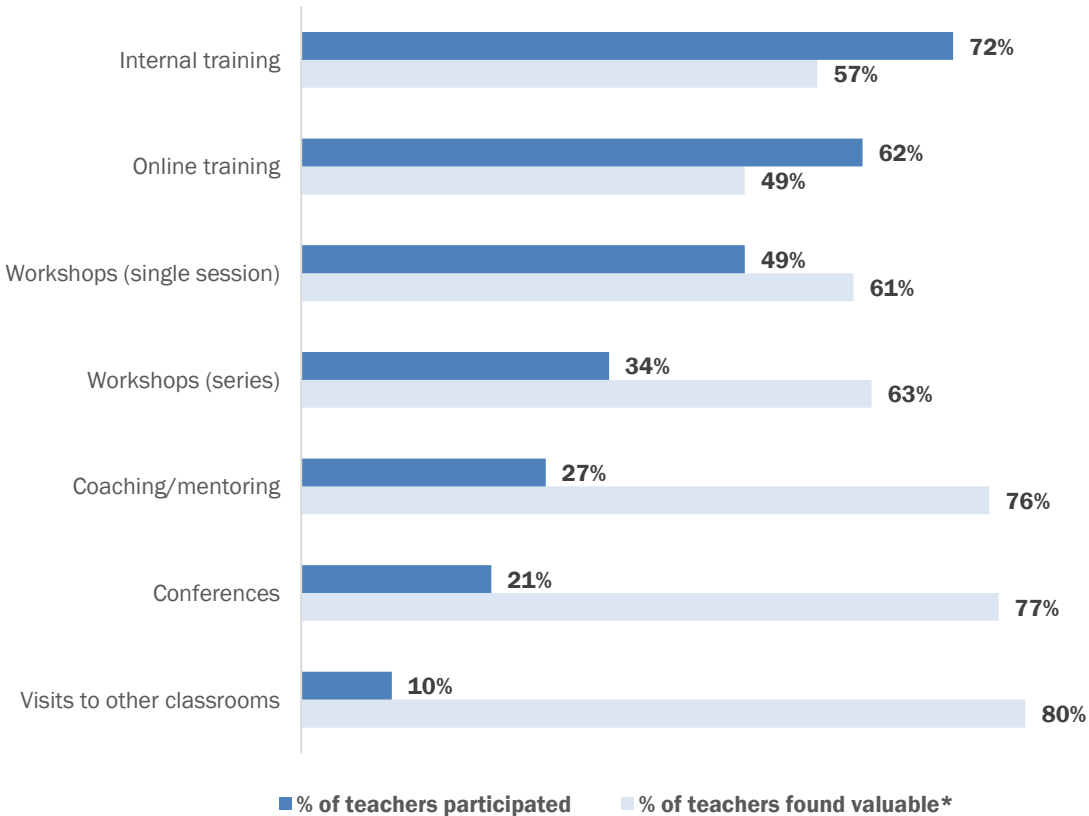
¹⁰ Friedman-Krauss, Allison H., Raver, C. Cybele, Morris, Pamela A., & Jones, Stephanie M. (2014) The Role of Classroom-Level Child Behavior Problems in Predicting Preschool Teacher Stress and Classroom Emotional Climate, *Early Education and Development*, 25:4, 530-552.

Professional Development Supports

Professional development offerings do not always align with what teachers find valuable.

Teachers reported that several types of staff professional development opportunities are available and valuable (Figure 7). However, there is some incongruence between the professional development opportunities in which most teachers participate (e.g., internal and online trainings)

Figure 7. Types of professional development activities offered and teacher perceptions of value, N=143 lead and assistant teachers



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

Note: *Percent among teachers that participated

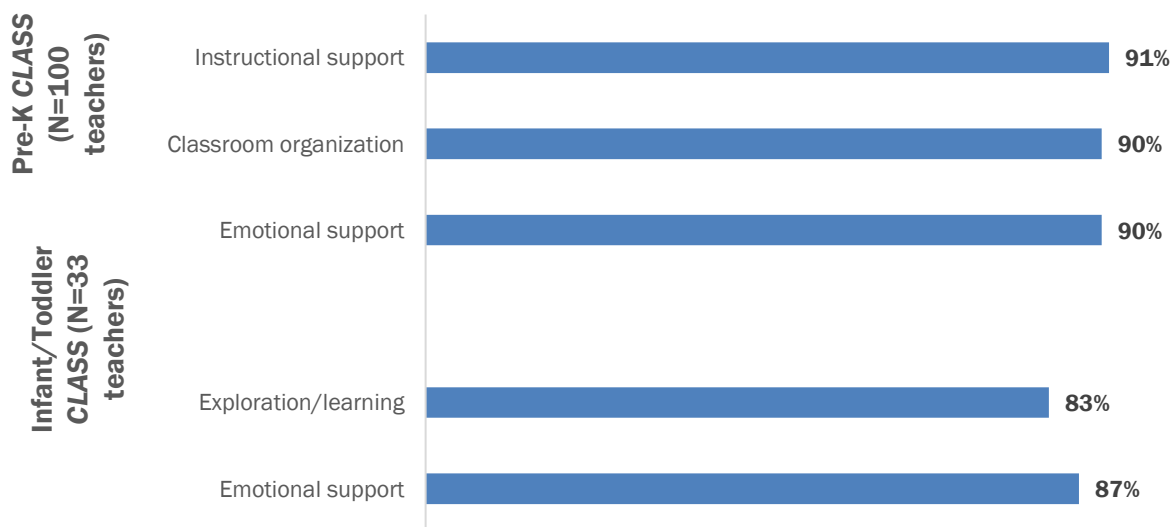
and what most teachers find valuable (e.g., visits to other classrooms, conferences, and coaching/mentoring). Specifically:

- While over 75 percent of teachers found coaching and mentoring, conferences, and visits to other classrooms valuable, fewer than 30 percent of teachers reported participating in these professional development activities.
- Perceptions of value for the top two professional development activities most participated in—internal and online training—were mixed. About half of teachers reported finding the activities valuable.

There may be a need for more emphasis on professional development for teachers working with infants and toddlers.

In the survey, Head Start teachers were asked to report the quality of professional development for activities that address specific components of the *CLASS Pre-K*, including emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Early Head Start teachers were asked about the quality of professional development for emotional support and exploration/learning (areas of classroom quality captured by the infant and toddler versions of the *CLASS*).¹¹ As shown in **Figure 8**, lead Head Start teachers reported that the training they received was valuable. However, slightly fewer Early Head Start teachers reported the professional development in areas related to infants and toddlers as high-quality, especially in the areas of supporting children’s exploration and learning.

Figure 8. Percentage of teachers reporting that professional development received related to *CLASS* components was high quality, N=133 teachers



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

Teachers report a greater need for emphasis on professional development for supporting children with different needs.

In the survey, teachers were asked to report how prepared they feel to meet the needs of their students. Teachers reported a greater need for emphasis on support for children with different needs. For example, 28 percent of teachers feel “not at all prepared” to work with dual language learners, 27 percent feel “somewhat unprepared” or “not at all prepared” to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma, and 20 percent of respondents feel “somewhat unprepared” or “not at all prepared” to address children’s special health care needs.

The largest barriers to professional development are cost, substitute coverage, and staff turnover.

¹¹ Head Start programs are not held accountable for *CLASS* scores in EHS classrooms as part of the Designation Renewal System.

Teachers and directors were asked to identify the largest barriers to accessing professional development. Twenty-two percent of teachers and 29 percent of directors said that the cost of professional development was a significant barrier. Teachers (19%) and directors (57%) also identified the challenges of finding substitute coverage as a barrier. Fourteen percent of teachers identified the time of trainings as a problem, likely because many trainings are offered on evenings and weekends given the difficulty of obtaining substitutes. Twenty-nine percent of directors also reported that staff turnover is too high to make the investment in professional development worthwhile. It should also be noted that 48 percent of teachers and 29 percent of directors did not report any barriers to accessing professional development. However, as discussed above, even when training is accessible it may not be meeting the needs of the teaching workforce.

Though teachers are interested in pursuing higher education, they need significant supports to do so.

Of 139 teachers who responded, 63 percent ($n = 87$) reported that they already have a degree and 23 percent ($n = 32$) reported that they are currently enrolled in a degree program. Fourteen percent ($n = 20$) reported that they do not have a degree and are not currently enrolled in higher education. Of this last group, 95 percent said that they are interested in pursuing a degree in ECE. However, this group cited several supports that they would need to pursue and complete a degree including tuition support (reported by 88 percent of teachers interested in pursuing a degree), classes at convenient times (53%) and locations (47%), easy transfer of credits (53%), and online courses (41%). Given that local institutions of higher education that were interviewed reported offering many of these supports (e.g., classes at convenient times and locations, online courses), it is likely that the largest barrier to pursuing higher education is the cost.

Summary Points

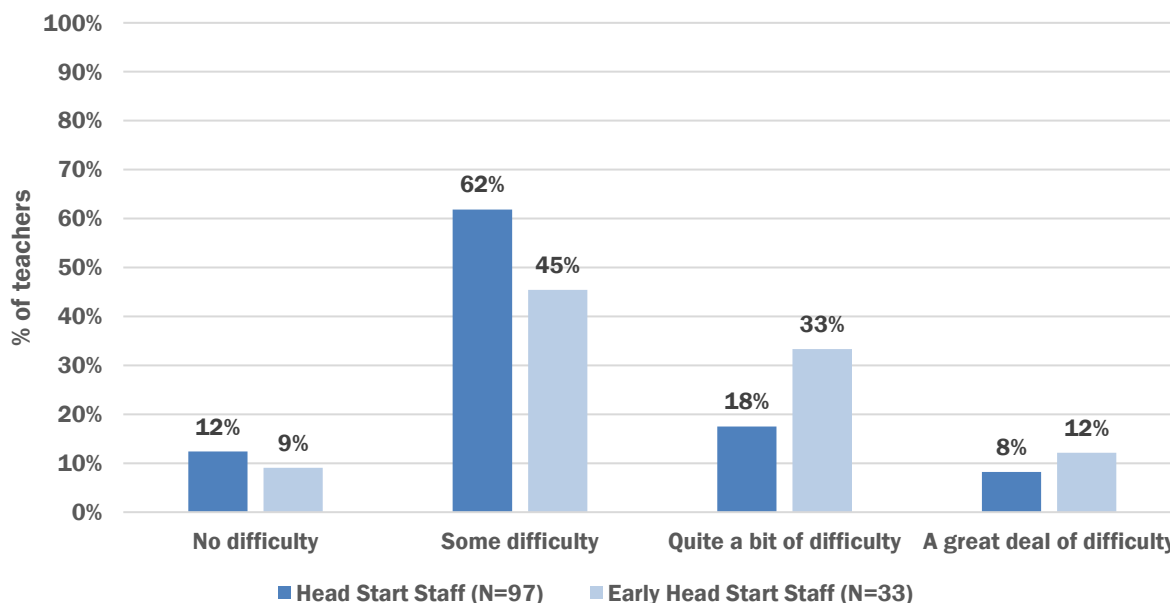
Available professional development offerings do not always align with what teachers find most valuable (e.g., coaching and mentoring) and teachers need additional support in some areas such as working with children who are dual language learners, have experienced trauma, and have special health care needs. The largest barriers to accessing professional development are cost, substitute coverage, and staff turnover. Similarly, although many teachers are interested in pursuing higher education, they need financial and logistical support to do so.

Teacher Compensation

Teachers are experiencing financial stress, especially Early Head Start teachers.

The surveys provide evidence of significant financial stress among Head Start and Early Head Start teachers in Detroit. We asked teachers: “During the last 12 months, how much difficulty did you have paying your bills?” Responses, which can be seen in **Figure 9**, suggest that nearly all teachers reported at least some difficulty paying bills in the past year. Early Head Start teachers report more difficulty than Head Start teachers, with 45 percent of Early Head Start teachers reporting having either “quite a bit” or “a great deal” of difficulty, compared to 26 percent of Head Start teachers.

Figure 9. Percent of Head Start and Early Head Start teachers with difficulty paying bills in last 12 months, N=130 teachers



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

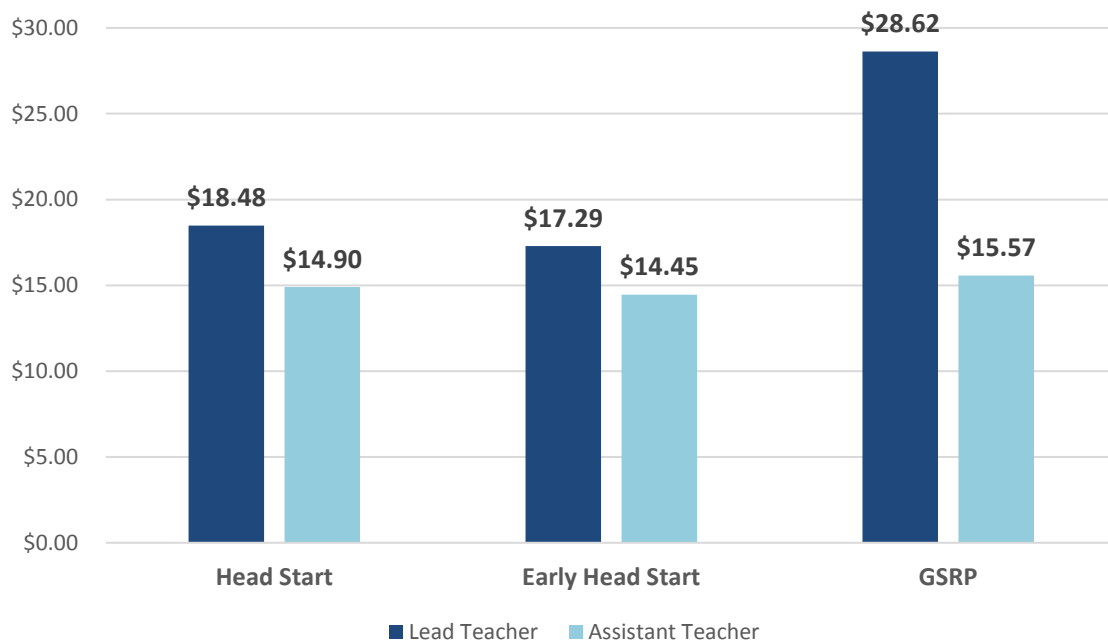
Teacher wages greatly vary depending on program, position, education, and ages of children served.

As presented in **Figure 10**, the survey found that average hourly wages of teachers varies, with lead teachers making more than assistant teachers and Head Start teachers making more than their counterparts in Early Head Start. **Figure 10** also shows the average hourly wages of GSRP teachers, which are higher than any of the Head Start/Early Head Start positions.¹² These data are relatively consistent with a 2015 study of early childhood educator compensation in Detroit that reported that on average, Head Start lead teachers make \$18 to \$20 per hour (depending on education levels) and Head Start assistants typically make an average of \$13 per hour. The 2015 study found that Early Head Start teachers make an average of \$15 to \$19 based on education levels and that GSRP teachers made an average of \$30 (assistant salaries were not reported for Early Head Start or GSRP in that study).¹³

¹² GSRP wages data calculated from: High Scope Center for Early Education Evaluation. (2017). *2016-2017 Great Start Readiness Program, Program Quality Assessment Statewide Data Report*.

¹³ Rahmberg Stover and Associates (2015). *Head Start/Early Head Start Compensation and Benefits Survey*, Detroit: Author. Retrieved from: <http://www.detroitheadstart.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/DHS-Educator-Compensation.pdf>; Data includes responses from Development Centers, Southwest Counseling Solutions, Starfish Family Services, and United Children and Family Head Start.

Figure 10. Hourly wages of Head Start, Early Head Start, and GSRP teachers by position¹⁴



Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

In addition to variation across positions, the data indicated a range of salaries across programs that responded to our survey. For example, within bachelor's-level Head Start lead teachers, hourly wages varied from \$18.00 to \$22.52 across programs (N = 5). To further complicate matters, some Head Start programs operate on a full-year schedule while others operate on a part-year basis. This makes equivalent comparisons across programs difficult, especially as it affects teachers' overall earning potential. For example, some Head Start programs operate on a 10-month schedule (laying off their teachers in the summer and rehiring them in the fall) and GSRP lead teachers work an average of 9 months per year. This truncated schedule may give teachers the opportunity to earn supplemental income through other part-year work or experience the benefit of extra vacation time. Conversely, if a teacher is not able to find or take on part-year work, this arrangement may limit their annual earning potential.

Furthermore, wages for a given position may vary based on a teacher's education level even within a program, and the steps and structure of pay scales differ widely from program to program and by

¹⁴ Directors were asked to report hourly wages for Head Start and Early Head Start lead and assistant teachers. Respondents were given the option to report different levels of pay depending on teacher education level. Given the small sample size (and not all directors reported within each education category), hourly wages reported in Figure 10 represent the average across all programs and education levels. Head Start lead teacher data were provided by five directors; three directors reported varying wages based on teacher education level. Head Start assistant teacher data were provided by four directors, three of whom reported varying wages based on education. Early Head Start lead teacher data was provided by four directors, two of whom reported varying wages based on education. Early Head Start assistant teacher data was reported by two directors (one only at the CDA level and one only at the associate level). GSRP wages data calculated from: High Scope Center for Early Education Evaluation. (2017). 2016-2017 Great Start Readiness Program, Program Quality Assessment Statewide Data Report. GSRP hourly wages were calculated by dividing the average annual salary (\$40,788 for lead teachers; \$20,609 for assistants) by the average number of hours worked per year (1,425 for lead teachers; 1,325 for assistants).

position. For example, in one program a Head Start lead teacher could make \$5.00 per hour more with a bachelor's degree than with an associate's degree. In two other programs, the difference between associate- and bachelor's-level Head Start lead teacher wages was only \$1.00–\$1.50. In one program, there is a \$4.25 per hour difference for assistant Head Start teachers to go from an in-process CDA to a completed CDA, but no additional raise for obtaining an associate or bachelor's degree. Within our data, assistant Head Start teachers can make the same or more by having an associate degree than by having a bachelor's degree depending on the program they work in. Similarly, an Early Head Start lead teacher can make more in one program with a CDA than in another program with an associate degree. These discrepancies between program pay scales may actually cause a disincentive for some groups of teachers to pursue higher education.

This complex landscape of compensation and its variations across programs, position, education, and ages of children served indicates the lack of a consistent pay scale within and across programs and likely contributes to the challenges of attracting and retaining well-qualified staff. Without consistent wages across programs, teachers may be constantly cycling between programs as opportunities arise trying to better their financial situation. The degree of turnover may be exacerbated as teachers further their education given differences in pay scales across programs.

There are significant discrepancies between the benefits teachers report as important to them, benefits that are currently offered, and those that program directors cite as essential for retention.

Table 2 presents the percentage of programs currently offering various benefits followed by the proportion of teachers who reported that the potential benefit was “very important.” To the right, the percentage of directors (out of six) that reported benefits as “essential for retaining staff” is displayed. The last column notes inconsistencies in teacher and director perceptions.

Table 2. Teacher and program director perspectives on benefits

	% of Programs Currently Offering Benefit (N = 6)	% of Teachers Endorsing "Very Important" (N=136)	% of Directors Endorsing "Essential for Retention" (N=6)	Incongruent Perceptions of Teachers and Directors
Benefits				
Paid sick days	100%	99%	33%	×
Paid PD days	83%	97%	50%	×
Health insurance	100%	93%	83%	
Retirement plan	83%	93%	83%	
Paid planning time	67%	92%	33%	×
Dental insurance	100%	85%	83%	
Life insurance	83%	85%	33%	×
Vision insurance	100%	83%	83%	
Flexible schedule options	50%	74%	17%	×
Free/reduced-rate child care	0%	39%	17%	
Teacher Development				
Release time to participate in PD	50%	90%	67%	×
Help with cost of PD	33%	87%	50%	×
Student loan repayment	0%	84%	33%	×
Tuition reimbursement	50%	81%	83%	
Induction program for new teachers	67%	83%	100%	
Learning communities	33%	78%	83%	
Reflective supervision	83%	67%	100%	

Source: RFA-PEG Head Start Teacher Survey, 2018

Notably, over 80 percent of teachers reported that 8 of 10 benefits were very important. The two exceptions included flexible schedule options and free/reduced-rate child care. There were many benefits that teachers rated as very important that are not currently offered by many programs including paid planning time, flexible scheduling options, release time and help paying for professional development, student loan repayment, tuition reimbursement, new teacher induction, and learning communities.

Survey data also indicated that teacher and director perspectives on employee benefits differ. The top two most-endorsed benefits included paid sick days and paid professional development days, but only two or three directors reported that these two benefits were essential for teacher retention. Also incongruent were perspectives on paid planning time and life insurance, flexible scheduling options, release time and help with cost of professional development, and student loan repayment.

With regard to health care, a benefit cited as important by many of the teachers, it should be noted that half of the programs surveyed only offer part-year health care coverage as these programs operate on a part-year basis and employ teachers only part of the year. This may present a significant burden for ECE staff in these programs. One director reported that they offer health care plans with a \$0 deductible. Four directors reported that they offer plans with deductibles within the range of \$1 to \$499 (two directors did not respond to this question).

Implications for Detroit Head Start Applications

The findings presented above provide clear evidence for the need for stronger workforce supports that increase staff retention, provide more impactful and valuable professional development, and improve staff morale. The Detroit Head Start FOA provides an opportunity to propose these workforce supports. The application asks specifically how applicants will “attract and retain qualified staff, including through salary and benefits” and also asks about the “strategies and mechanisms” the applicant will use to support staff, including career development opportunities. Detroit Head Start applicants should take the opportunities afforded to them through the application and the evidence of need presented in this paper to propose workforce initiatives that will better support children’s learning and development through stronger staff–child relationships as measured through instruments such as the *CLASS*.

The data presented provides a strong rationale for the following initiatives to be included in the Head Start application:

A common, clearly defined pay scale with higher staff salaries that begin to approach GSRP salaries

ECE professionals leave Detroit Head Start programs because of poor compensation. As such, it will be important for applicants to propose staff salaries that are closer to the \$29 per hour offered by the GSRP program. While it will be difficult for Head Start applicants to propose an hourly wage that high, closing the gap will help increase retention and support ECE professionals in earning a living wage. It would also be beneficial for Detroit Head Start grantees to coordinate a common pay scale across programs to minimize turnover among programs.

Year-round benefits packages for all programs

The majority of teachers reported that benefits such as retirement plans and health, dental, vision, and life insurance are very important. However, for some teachers these benefits are currently only available on a part-year basis. To support all Detroit Head Start teachers and minimize turnover between programs, benefits should be year-round for all programs. Additionally, programs may want to consider supporting teachers in other ways that they cite are important, such as offering paid professional development days and paid planning time, if these benefits are not already offered.

More impactful professional development opportunities

High-quality professional development helps teachers reach their full potential and contributes to their sense of being supported as professionals. Research suggests that professional development is most effective when it is ongoing, intensive, and individualized, such as coaching and mentoring models.¹⁵ Teachers that participated in our survey validated that these types of experiences are most valuable to them; however, a small proportion of teachers had access to these types of experiences. This type of professional development, as well as the necessary supports such as covering costs and substitute coverage, should be written into the staffing section of the FOA. Specifically, professional development efforts should address the lowest scoring areas of the *CLASS* (i.e., classroom organization), as well as other areas identified by teachers such as working with children who are dual language learners, have experienced trauma, or have special health care needs.

The Detroit-area IHEs have potential to be valuable partners for Detroit Head Start programs. Programs may explore developing more formal partnerships with these institutions that would facilitate field placements in Head Start programs and create mutually beneficial agreements of recruiting new teachers from IHE programs and sending current staff to IHE programs to further their education. Ideally, tuition support could be provided to teachers interested in pursuing higher education, perhaps tied to retention agreements.

These initiatives will have implications for agency's Head Start budgets and should be accounted for appropriately in the budget section of the application. The information provided above related to retention, GSRP compensation and benefits, and staff morale provide evidence for the "budget justification" rationale for an increased staffing budget. It is imperative that Head Start programs implement new, adequately funded workforce initiatives to ensure that they are not facing competition again in five years due to similar issues.

¹⁵ Weber, R. & Trauten, M. (2008). *A review of the literature in the child care and early education profession: Effective investments*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon Child Care Research Partnership.

Appendix: Data and Methods

Interviews with Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs)

Protocol development. RFA developed open-ended interview protocols (using insight gained from Detroit meetings) in collaboration with PEG to understand IHE’s retention, recruitment, enrollment and access, curriculum and training, and Head Start partnerships.

Interview sample. PEG identified six Institutes of Higher Education that are key to the supply of Head Start teachers in Detroit. RFA interviewed representatives from three of these IHEs: two Program Directors of Early Childhood Education and one Department Chair of Early Childhood Education. The remaining three IHEs could not be contacted after more than five attempts each over the two-week data collection period.

Data analysis. Interviews were recorded (with consent), transcribed, and coded using the Dedoose web application. The data were then systematically analyzed to understand IHE’s retention, recruitment, enrollment and access, and programming.

Program Director and Teacher Surveys

RFA developed and administered two cross-sectional surveys in fall 2018 to collect data from program-level stakeholders (i.e., Head Start directors and Head Start/Early Head Start lead and assistant teachers) on experiences and perceptions of teacher professional development opportunities and recruitment and retention of a qualified teaching staff.

Director survey

Instrument development. RFA developed a 28-item questionnaire with open- and closed-response items for directors of Head Start programs to generate cross-sectional data on director experiences with teacher turnover and recruitment, and their experiences and perceptions on best supporting teaching staff. RFA developed initial survey items and then member-checked to ensure validity.

Sampling frame and survey administration. In August 2018, RFA used Qualtrics to program and administer a web-based survey to a census of Head Start program directors in each of the 19 programs managed by the four re-competing grantees. The survey was live for four weeks, and one reminder email was sent to non-respondents during that time. The survey was administered online via a single mode. RFA received staff email lists from Policy Equity Group which were used to deliver emails with an open-access link to each address.

Response rates. To calculate response rates, RFA staff compiled an inclusive list of programs from the Program Information Report yielding an approximate population size of 19. RFA received completed surveys from 7 respondents, yielding an approximate overall response rate of 36% (Table A1). At least one program director from each grantee completed the survey.

Table A1. Teacher and school staff survey response rates

	Population N	Sample N	% Complete
Directors	19	7	36%

Teacher survey

Instrument development. RFA developed a 32-item questionnaire with open- and closed-response items for Head Start/Early Head Start lead and assistant teachers to generate cross-sectional data on teacher experiences with professional development opportunities and teacher perceptions of the supports they receive and their workplace environment. RFA developed initial survey items and then member-checked them with Policy Equity Group to ensure validity.

Sampling frame and survey administration. In August 2018, RFA used Qualtrics to program and administer a web-based survey to a census of Head Start/Early Head Start lead and assistant teachers in each of the 19 programs managed by the four recompeting grantees. The survey was live for four weeks, and one reminder email was sent to non-respondents during that time.

The survey was administered online via two modes:

1. For one grantee, RFA received staff email lists from Policy Equity Group. We uploaded this contact list into Qualtrics, which sent emails with an open-access web link to each address.
2. For three grantees, Policy Equity Group sent an open-access web link to grantee leadership, who then disseminated the link to their program staff.

Response rates. To calculate response rates, RFA staff compiled an inclusive list of teachers drawn from the Program Information Report, yielding an approximate population size of 727. RFA received completed surveys from 143 respondents, yielding an approximate overall response rate of 20% (Table A2).

Table A2. Teacher survey response rate

	Population N	Sample N	% Complete
Teachers	727	143	20%

Characteristics of the teacher survey respondents. As shown in Table A3, most survey respondents were Head Start lead teachers (45%) or Head Start assistant teachers (30%).

Table A3. Characteristics of teacher and school staff survey respondents

Characteristics	Population	% of Population	Sample	% of Sample
Total	727	100%	143	100%
Role in Program	727	100%	143	100%
Head Start lead teacher	214	29%	64	45%
Early Head Start lead teacher	280	39%	32	22%
Head Start assistant teacher	218	30%	43	30%
Early Head Start assistant teacher	15	2%	4	3%