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## Survey of Early Childhood Center Directors in Illinois

### Number of Responses

- 203 completed surveys
- Sent out to 1,790 centers with a target of 328 surveys for a representative sample

### Type of Center

- 24% (47) Private nonprofit-independent
- 20% (40) For-profit proprietary or partnership
- 20% (39) Public nonprofit-sponsored by federal, state, or local government
- 14% (28) Public school
- 13% (25) Private nonprofit—affiliated with a social service agency or hospital
- 13% (23) Other (e.g., for-profit chain or corporation, college or university affiliated)

### Location of Center (if affiliated with a public school)

- 81% (29) Located in a public school
- 14% (5) In another school building (not an elementary school)
- 8% (3) In a district owned stand-alone building
- 166 skipped question

### Sources of funding

- 71% (109) IDHS or Chicago CYS child care subsidies (CCAP) program
- 57% (88) Preschool for All, state-funded pre-kindergarten, or other ISBE early childhood block grants
- 33% (51) Head Start or Early Head Start
- 3% (4) Parent tuition or district funds

### Geographic Location of Center

- 32% (64) Small town/Rural (pop. less than 25,000)
- 25% (50) Collar county (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will)
- 17% (34) Large town (pop. over 25,000)
- 28% (56) Chicago

### Age Levels of Children Served

- 97% (191) Preschoolers
- 56% (109) Toddlers
- 51% (99) School-agers
- 42% (83) Infants

### NAEYC Accreditation

- 76% (146) No
- 25% (47) Yes

### Licensure Status

- 83% (160) Licensed
- 18% (34) Licensed-exempt

**Number of Children Licensed to Serve**

- Average 116 children
- Median 80 children
- Range 8-935

**Race/Ethnicity of Children Served (response average—totals do not equal 100%)**

- 64% Caucasian
- 30% African-American
- 26% Hispanic
- 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 5% Multi-Racial
- 1% Native-American
- 9% Other

**Number of Teachers Employed (includes teachers, assistant teachers and teacher aides)**

- Average 13 teachers
- Median 8 teachers
- Range: 1-100

**Policies and Practices**

The purpose of the following questions is to identify policies and practices in your center aimed at coordinating and aligning your program to your local K-12 schools.

1. My center has a written policy or statement that recognizes the care and education children receive in our center affects how well our children are ready for Kindergarten.  
**74% (140) Yes**      26% (50) No
2. My center uses specific criteria for measuring a child’s readiness for Kindergarten.  
**81% (156) Yes**      19% (36) No
3. The curriculum in our preschool classes is aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards for Kindergarten.  
**76% (145) Yes**      24% (46) No

	To No Extent (1)	To Some Extent (2)	Moderate Extent (3)	Great Extent (4)	Average
Our center uses the same criteria as our K-12 school system for measuring a child's readiness for Kindergarten.	15.5% (30)	<b>30.9% (60)</b>	27.8% (54)	25.8% (50)	2.64
I provide my teachers with information about professional development opportunities that address the alignment of early childhood with K-12 education.	7.6% (15)	30.5% (60)	20.3% (40)	<b>41.6% (82)</b>	<b>2.96</b>
I work with the local school district to connect my teacher with their elementary school teachers for joint professional development.	<b>42.6% (83)</b>	27.7% (54)	12.3% (24)	17.4% (34)	<b>2.05</b>
I work with the local school district and my own staff to promote child and family transitions (for example, inviting local Kindergarten teachers to our open houses, or joint staff planning).	<b>32.8% (64)</b>	28.7% (56)	14.4% (28)	24.1% (47)	2.30

### Curriculum and Teaching Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore the current practices of your center in coordinating and aligning the curriculum and teaching practices in your center with K-12 schools.

	To No Extent (1)	Some Extent (2)	Moderate Extent (3)	Great Extent (4)	Average
I include elementary teachers and/or school administrators in planning with early childhood teachers in my center	<b>63.5% (125)</b>	21.3% (42)	7.6% (15)	7.6% (15)	<b>1.59</b>
I meet with district administrators (for example, principals or superintendents)	<b>62.6% (124)</b>	20.7% (41)	8.1% (16)	8.6% (17)	1.63

to talk about aligning our center curriculum with Kindergarten curriculum in the district(s).					
I invite elementary teachers and/or administrators to observe our classrooms to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations of our early childhood program.	51.3% (100)	25.6% (50)	13.3% (26)	9.7% (19)	1.82
I encourage my teachers to observe Kindergarten classrooms in the local school district to learn about the Kindergarten curriculum and learning expectations.	33.7% (66)	34.2% (67)	19.4% (38)	12.8% (25)	2.11

### Student Assessments

The purpose of the following questions is to explore your center's current practices in using screening and assessments to document and follow each child's development.

	To No Extent (1)	To Some Extent (2)	Moderate Extent (3)	Great Extent (4)	Average
We provide developmental screening of every child upon three months of program entry.	18.2% (33)	14.6% (29)	13.1% (26)	54.0% (107)	3.03
We expect teachers to use individual child's assessment data to inform curriculum, individualized teaching, and program development.	4.6% (9)	15.2% (30)	18.8% (37)	61.4% (121)	3.37
We expect teachers to document each child's developmental strengths and needs through a portfolio that is shared with the parent/guardian.	9.0% (18)	9.5% (19)	15.6% (31)	65.8% (131)	3.38
We expect teachers to prepare documentation of each child's	23.9% (47)	16.8% (33)	16.2% (32)	43.1% (85)	2.79

strengths and weaknesses that can be shared with elementary school teacher(s) to facilitate an aligned transition.					
We follow the progress and development of each child after they leave our center and matriculate through the K-12 schools.	48.7% (94)	30.1% (58)	6.7% (13)	14.5% (28)	1.87

After assessing your students, do you have access to resources to support families if you identify a particular learning or development issue?

91% (166) Yes      9% (17) No

### **Barriers to Aligning and Coordinating Learning Experiences**

The purpose of the following questions is to identify those issues that serve as a barrier to your center's work with K-12 schools to align and coordinate teaching and learning experiences for children as they move from birth to K-12 schools.

	To No Extent (1)	To Some Extent (2)	Moderate Extent (3)	Great Extent (4)	Average
Differing philosophies between your early childhood program and the K-12 schools (for example, curriculum, pedagogy, purpose)	38.6% (71)	38.6% (71)	19.0% (35)	3.8% (7)	1.88
K-12 community is so vast that I do not know where or how to start building partnerships	41.3% (76)	41.8% (77)	8.2% (15)	8.7% (16)	1.84
Not enough time to build partnerships	26.2% (45)	36.0% (62)	23.3% (40)	14.5% (25)	2.26
K-12 school districts do not provide follow-up data on progress of our center graduates when they enter and matriculate through the K-12 system	31.5% (58)	18.5% (34)	12.5% (23)	37.5% (69)	2.56
Lack of awareness of the Illinois Learning Standards for Kindergarten and elementary grades	60.2% (109)	30.4% (55)	6.1% (11)	3.3% (6)	1.52
Incompatibility of schedules between my center and elementary schools	42.8% (77)	39.4% (71)	13.9% (25)	3.9% (7)	1.79

<b>Language and/or cultural barriers between my center and the school district(s)</b>	<b>86.7% (156)</b>	11.1% (20)	1.7% (3)	0.6% (1)	<b>1.16</b>
<b>Our local K-12 school district(s) have not been interested in receiving our child assessments or data</b>	<b>39.0% (69)</b>	24.9% (44)	10.7% (19)	25.4% (45)	2.23

Please list any other barriers not listed above:

- Early childhood is not highly regarded by K-12 administrators,
- Uncertainty by K-12 staff of early education benefits,
- K-12 personnel are instructed not to use data from providers who are not schools,
- Confidentiality issues,
- Different licensure structures (DCFS versus ISBE),
- Staffing for personnel to leave premises to go to public schools,
- Apprehension of requiring teachers to do more than they already do.

What policies (state and/or local) would reduce the barriers that inhibit your center’s ability to work with the local K-12 school system(s)?

- Require PreSchool for All and state funded at-risk programs to be included in district training and staff development,
- Policies to assure more consistency in expectations and pedagogy between early learning and K-12,
- Require kindergarten screenings rather than just early childhood screenings,
- Require written policies that require communication between local schools and community child care centers,
- Implement statewide inducements for districts to collaborate with centers,
- Require mandatory planning meetings before the school year begins, include local childcare providers in teacher training days.

### **Director Preparation and Professional Development**

The questions on this page ask for information about the context and content of the education and professional development in which you have participated.

1. How many year have you been an early childhood center director? **Average 11 years**
2. What is the highest degree you have earned?
  - 22% (40) Associates degree
  - \_\_\_ Bachelors degree
    - 24% (45) in Early Childhood Education
    - 21% (39) in an Education-related field (for example, elementary education, curriculum & instruction)
    - 9% (16) in a Non-education related field
  - \_\_\_ Masters degree

18% (34) in Early Childhood Education  
17% (31) in an Education-related field (for example, a principal endorsement)  
4% (7) in a Non-education related field  
1% (1) Doctorate (please specify): Special Education

3. Have you earned the Illinois Directors Credential (IDC)? 13% (25)Yes **87% (165) No**

a. If so, at what level? 19% (6) Level I 22% (7) Level 2 22% (7) Level 3

**38% (12) I'm currently pursuing the IDC**

**Note: 170 skipped this question**

4. Have you earned the Type 04 certificate for teaching in early childhood? 23% (44) Yes  
**77% (149) NO**

5. Have you earned the Type 75 (Illinois General Administrative endorsement)? 6% (12)Yes  
**94% (177) No**

6. What could colleges do to prepare early childhood administrators like you so that you could better understand and partner with K-12 schools to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and transitions?

- Offer on-going classes post-graduate that include early childhood administrators in joint training sessions,
- Place more emphasis on partnering and relationship building,
- Include observation in a child care center or early learning classroom as a requirement for the internship,
- Require early childhood experience as well as elementary and secondary experience,
- Utilize Creative Curriculum's on-line course on teaching strategies' resource for the primary grades,
- Recognize the philosophy switch from early childhood to elementary education,
- Create a requirement for Type 75 educators to link their school district with five centers and two family childcare providers,
- Teach students about the whole span of a child's learning and development from infancy through high school and how it connects together.

7. Within the past five years, have you received professional development on these issues (check all that apply): NOTE: a significant number of people (88) skipped this question

**86% (79) Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12**

47% (43) Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors

35% (32) Using data to track students as they enter and matriculate through the K-12 schools

47% (44)\_\_\_ Other (please specify):

31 Qualitative Responses:

- 15 related to Curriculum (e.g., Creative Curriculum; High Scope Curriculum; administration; pedagogy related to reading, writing, and math)

- 16 said no professional development was provided on any of these issues

NOTE: 110 did not place a check mark next to any of the issues listed above

8. What professional development would you like to see offered to support your needs to work with K-12 schools?

97 Qualitative Responses:

- 25 responses are related to the concept of “push-up/push-down” in which philosophies, policies, and practices from the early care and education sector and K-12 sector can learn from each other (e.g., learning theories, expectations, and developmentally appropriate practices, curriculum alignment, relationship between the IL Early Learning and IL Learning Standards, and transitions).
- 12 responses are related to providing professional development courses on strategies for building partnerships and collaborating across sectors.
- 8 responses are related to special education issues (e.g., identifying special needs students, IEP issues, more involvement of early childhood teachers in placing special needs students)
- 7 responses call for more cross-sector team-based opportunities to collaborate in which representatives from the early care and education community and K-12 community come together for seminars, workshops, etc. These could be county-wide, district-wide, or town-wide professional development activities.

### **Cross-Sector Collaboration**

1. Is your center involved with any programs, services, or formal or informal partnership whose goals is to improve children’s transitions from Pre-K to elementary school? For example, these partnerships might focus on aligning curriculum and the learning experiences for children before and after they enter the K-12 schools, improve the curriculum and teaching practices across the education sectors to be more developmentally appropriate, and/or even have the broader goal of improving student learning outcomes.

26% (45) Yes                      **74% (127) No**

Note: 30 skipped this question

If you answered yes, please describe the partnership including information about:

- The partnership’s goals
- The partners involved
- Partnership activities (what you do)
- The partnership’s accomplishments

There were 57 responses to this question. NOTE: not all of these responses equal to 57 cross-sector collaborations. Some talked about collaborations among teachers and/or parents in their own centers, some talked about how this is needed, some talk about the how this is not needed (e.g., not until early



childhood teacher salaries are raised). The types of collaborations the directors wrote about fell into the following categories.

- Formal community/county-wide coalitions (formal collaborations with community stakeholders from the education and business communities, social service agencies, etc.): Typically, these collaborations work to increase the resources for early care and education providers and improve transitions for children from pre-school to kindergarten.
- Working with the school district: Directors talked about serving on school district school improvement teams, working on decision-making committees to align the curriculum, sharing test results, and informing the early care and education community on the district's kindergarten readiness expectations and forms.
- Working with individual schools and/or teachers (these tend to be the least formal): This was the most popular type of collaboration. Directors talked about working formally or informally with school and/or groups or individual teachers. The goals of these partnerships were to: place students, particularly special needs students; align standards and curriculum, and to learn about best practices and teaching strategies. The most common goal for these collaborations is to improve the transitions of children from preschool to kindergarten as early care and education providers learn about kindergarten expectations for students. There was one collaboration that included the local school district and an advocacy organization to improve language and reading literacy.