Results from
The Virginia Landscape: Spring 2011

Background

The purpose of this survey conducted in spring 2011 was to gather information across multiple sectors to produce a descriptive landscape of early childhood professional development (PD) in Virginia. A total of 256 early childhood PD providers responded to the survey (see method section for additional details). These PD providers answered questions about the characteristics of the learners (the *who*), the content of the PD (the *what*), and the methods used to promote the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in practice (the *how*).

WHO were the learners who participated in professional development activities?

- The vast majority of learners in PD were reported to be practitioners (91%); administrators were also reported to participate (60%); other learners were reported to participate in PD by about one-third or fewer of the PD providers.[These included family members (34%); specialists (25%); PD providers (23%) and other (7%)].[a]
- Of the practitioners, almost half had a 2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree (42%); and almost half had an early childhood and/or early intervention license or credential (44%). Fewer practitioners served infants and toddlers than served pre-K children; the majority served children and families who were diverse with respect to a variety of factors (e.g., income, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ability level). The majority of practitioners worked in center-based programs (e.g., child care, Head Start, preschool), as opposed to home-based or early intervention programs.

Information Specifically about Learners Identified as Practitioners

Practitioners' Level of Education

Graduate degree	10%
4-year degree	24%
2-year degree	8%
Some college	27%
High School	24%
Don't know	7%

Practitioners' Work Settings[a]

Child care centers and homes	76%
Head Start or Early Head Start	67%
Private preschools	54%
Public Pre-K programs	42%
Public Pre-K for children with disabilities	30%
K and/or primary grades	26%
Early intervention	22%
Home visiting/family support	20%
Other	4%

Age Groups Practitioners Served[a]

Infants/toddlers	77%
Pre-K	88%
K-3rd grade or higher	37%

Groups of Children and Families Practitioners Served[a]

Low income	89%
Diverse race, ethnicity, culture	88%
Identified disabilities/delays	69%
English Language Learners	66%
At risk for learning difficulties or challenging behaviors	62%
Don't know	2%

WHAT was the content of the professional development?

- Approximately three-fourths or more of PD content focused on general classroom practices, development and learning, and working with families, whereas approximately one-half or less of the PD activities focused on practices to address diverse learning needs (e.g., strategies for working with children with identified disabilities, and children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups).
- The majority of PD providers drew on their state's early learning guidelines/standards, professional competencies, and quality rating and improvement system, as well as on the NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice to guide their PD activities. Fewer than one-third of providers relied on the Head Start Child Outcomes framework or the DEC Recommended Practices.

Content Areas Covered in PD[a]

Children's development and learning	86%
Strategies for improving general classroom practices, learning environments, and program quality to support development and learning for all children	75%
Strategies for collaborating, communicating with, and/or supporting families	71%
Children's health, safety, and nutrition	59%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children with identified disabilities	54%
Strategies for collaborating and communicating with other professionals	53%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children at risk for learning disabilities or with challenging behaviors	50%
Assessment approaches	45%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups	42%
Other	12%

Professional and Program Standards/Competencies on Which PD Was Based[a]

Your state's early learning guidelines/standards	64%
NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs	58%
Your state's professional competencies or core body of knowledge for early childhood	56%
Your state's Quality Rating System (QRS) or Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)	46%
Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and Head Start Program Performance Standards	30%
DEC Recommended Practices	20%
Office of Special Education Programs outcomes for children with disabilities	19%
NAEYC personnel standards	18%
DEC personnel standards	7%
Other	19%

HOW were professional development activities delivered?

- Almost all PD activities were organized as courses, workshops, or institutes. Close to half incorporated models of collaboration (e.g., TA, mentoring, consultation, coaching). Other approaches—such as distance learning, communities of practice, and co-teaching—were used by fewer than one-fourth of the PD providers.
- PD activities involved a variety of teaching strategies, with print materials, large and small group activities and/or discussions, and lectures mentioned by approximately three-fourths or more of respondents.
- About one-half of the PD delivered consisted of one-time events on a particular topic with or without some follow-up activities; whereas one-fourth or less of the PD activities on a particular topic provided ongoing instruction or long-term PD support.
- Most PD activities offered certificates of participation (38%) or state approved/required training credits (33%); very few offered college or university credits (8%).

Primary Approaches Used in PD[a]

Courses, workshops, or institutes	94%
Technical assistance	50%
Mentoring	49%
Consultation	47%
Coaching	44%
Distance learning approaches	24%
Communities of practice/ practitioner study groups	23%
Co-teaching	14%
Other	3%

Level of Intensity of PD on a Particular Topic

1-time PD event with or without some follow-up activities	53%
Multiple PD sessions, but less than a full semester course	25%
Full semester course and/or long-term PD support	17%
Other	5%

Teaching Strategies Used in PD[a]

Print materials	93%
Large and small group discussions	91%
Large and small group activities	90%
Lectures	75%
Video demonstrations	65%
Role play	55%
Case method of instruction	52%
Web resources, or online literature searches	50%
Guidance and feedback on instructional or intervention practices	45%
Individual or group assignments	44%
Networking opportunities	42%
Field assignments, homework, back-home or action plans	36%
Structured opportunities to interact with and learn from families of young children	20%
Other	4%

Key contexts and supports for professional development

Just over one-half of the survey respondents said (a) the PD they provided was coordinated across multiple agencies, institutions, or disciplines; (b) they were aware of specific local, state, or federal policies and initiatives that influenced how they approached PD; (c) there were incentives available to encourage participation in the PD they provided; and (d) they were aware of organizational or agency resources that could be used to support the PD they provided. A majority of respondents publicized (68%) and evaluated (86%) the PD they provided.

Method

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion conducted the 32-item Web-based *Landscape* survey using Qualtrics software. A state team identified potential PD providers in Virginia and these providers were invited via email to complete the *Landscape* online survey (766 emails were successfully sent). Of the 372 individuals who followed the link in the invitation email to the Web site with details about the survey, 256 responded to the survey[b] (69% of those who visited the Web site; 33% of the total number invited). See below for characteristics of survey respondents.

Characteristics of survey respondents

Sex

Female	95%

Age

Mean	50
SD	11
Range	20–70

Ethnicity

Not Hispanic or Latino	98%
Hispanic or Latino	2%

Race

White	79%
Black/African American	13%
Other[c]	7%

Highest Level of Education

Graduate degree	63%
Bachelor's degree	28%
Associate's degree	4%
Some college	5%

Discipline

Early Childhood Education/ Early Intervention	36%
Education/ Special Education	20%
Psychology	8%
Social Work	8%
Health	8%
Allied Health	1%
Other	19%

Years in Early Childhood

Mean	21
SD	10
Range	0–47

Years Providing Early Childhood PD

Mean	13
SD	8
Range	1–41

Frequency of PD Provision Annually

3–5 times or more per month	35%
1–2 times per month	27%
Less than once per month	38%

Primary Employer

Local or regional agency	28%
University, college, or community college	18%
Self-employed independent contractor	13%
State agency	12%
Federal agency	6%
Other	22%

Provided PD as Part of a State or Regional PD Network or System

No	56%
Yes	44%

Primary Network/System

VSQI	17%
Infant-Toddler Specialist Network	15%
VA CCR&R	14%
Child care trainer for VA DSS	12%
T-TACs	11%
Head Start (TA Network and providers)	6%
Infant & Toddler Connection of VA and Integrated Training Collaborative	5%
Home Visiting Consortium	2%
Cooperative Extension Agencies	1%
Other	18%

Held a State Credential as a PD Provider

No	83%
Yes	17%

[a] For some questions, respondents could check all that apply so percentages will not add up to 100.

[b] Some respondents did not complete all items.

[c] Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Filipino, Other Asian, Multiracial, and Some other race.