Planning for
The Professional
Development
of Early Educators

A Guide to
Assessment and Planning

Original publication developed October 2001 by the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development in cooperation with the North Carolina Division of Child Development and the North Carolina Partnership for Children

Updated 2010
NC Institute for Child Development Professionals

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About the Institute

The North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals (Institute; previously named the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development) was established in 1993 by the North Carolina Division of Child Development (DCD).

The Institute is a non-profit organization that has been connecting partners and sectors and developing strategies since 1993. It is dedicated to defining and advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive early childhood professional development system that provides supportive, accessible, and individually appropriate education which is linked to compensation in order to ensure high quality care and education services for children and families.

The Institute works to leverage resources to build a comprehensive early childhood professional development system and implements the NC Early Educator Certification system. Several Task Groups meet regularly and forums are provided throughout the year to share information and gather input which informs the work of the Institute.

The Institute is supported by public and private partners through funding and in-kind resources. The Institute provides both free and fee-based services including those listed below.

* Educates others about early childhood professional development system elements and strategies.
* Certifies Early Educators who work directly with, on the behalf of or intend to work with children ages birth to twelve.
* Provides consultation services on professional development strategies, systems development and grant development.
* Produces tools, publications, research and reports and collects and disseminates data about the NC Early Educator workforce.
* Creates and supplies high quality training opportunities on professional development planning for individuals, organizations and systems.
* Creates access to resources and the latest research on workforce issues through its partner network and learning community and via its website.
* Supports the provision of professional development services through trainings, networking opportunities and resources.
* Offers networking opportunities for Early Educators through in-person and virtual events.

For more information about the Institute, visit www.ncicdp.org.

Introduction and Acknowledgments

This guide was written for individuals and organizations who are involved in designing, coordinating and promoting professional development opportunities for the early care and education workforce in their community. The approach to professional development outlined in this guide is based on the research and experience of many states and communities that are working to improve the professional development levels of the early care and education workforce or Early Educators.

Multiple professional development efforts (see Resources) are underway in North Carolina to improve the quality of the early care and education services. Much of the work in the area of professional development began in the early 1990s. Supported by federal and state resources, the NC Division of Child Development (DCD) has supported professional development efforts such as the provision of college scholarships, salary supplements commensurate with increased education, professional development and technical assistance services via non profit agencies, namely child care resource and referral agencies and Smart Start partnerships and more.

One of the most important components of providing high-quality early care and education services is planning for the education and training of the early care and education workforce. The Institute, established in 1993 by DCD, provides an advisory structure and develops tools that serve to weave together professional development initiatives across sectors into a system of professional development for Early Educators.

This tool is designed to serve as a guide to help state partners and communities assess and plan for the provision of professional development. The guide was developed with the help of early care and education professionals from throughout North Carolina to provide:

- an overview of professional development: what it is, how a professional development system can help achieve the goal of high-quality early care and education, the relationship between professional development and licensing requirements and the connection between education, compensation, and the quality of care;

- information about how to build a professional development plan for a local community or region: what to include, and how to guide the planning process;
- examples of plan components; and
- a list of resources available for use in building a plan.

The guide may be used:
- to guide a local professional development committee in building a plan for its workforce with partners and collaborators who do not work directly in early care and education industry to provide an overview of the importance of education; and training in creating high quality care and education services for children;
- to help committees evaluate existing efforts and make improvements as needed.

Acknowledgments

Many individuals and organizations have given generously of their time and wisdom to make this publication a reality. The original version of the guide was created in 2001. It was authored by members of the Institute who provided much of the material. Additional sections were provided by writer/editor Elizabeth A. Nilsen. Many others who contributed to the original document were the Best Practices Committee and the Public Awareness Task Group of the Institute, and reviewers Peggy Ball, Marsha Munn and members of the Executive Committee of the Institute. The guide was updated in 2010 by the Director of the Institute, Debra Torrence, and reviewed by Institute Outreach & Support Task Group members Randall Hardgrove and Tracey West.

An Overview of Professional Development

Over the last two decades there has been increasing interest in learning about the experiences of children in early care and education settings: what settings are good and how early care and education influences later school performance and behavioral patterns. In particular, we have learned a great deal in recent years about the benefits and cost of high-quality early care and education services, and how to improve programs to meet the needs of all children. This has increased the need to shift from scattershot training to intentional forms of professional development to build and retain a highly qualified workforce. Today, like other occupations, education is the currency with which the early childhood professional development system is being constructed.

Defining Professional Development

Professional development for Early Educators (those working directly with, working on the behalf of or intending to work with children ages birth to twelve) refers to a combination of education, training and continuing education. Well-designed professional development includes a broad range of activities and audiences:

- it benefits providers in all settings;
- it responds to the needs of Early Educators[1] at all levels, from entry-level assistants to multi-site administrators;
- it spans a continuum of information and format, from short-term workshop-style training
  to college-level education to continuing education.[2]
- It is focused on services that are provided to children ages birth to twelve in early care and education and school age settings.

Defining a Professional Development System for Early Educators

An ECPD system is a comprehensive approach to providing professional development opportunities. When an effective ECPD system has been built:

- o Vision exists to serve all those working with children in all settings serving children birth to twelve.
- o Core knowledge is delineated, a set of information and skills that all providers need to know is developed, and education and training is offered to make sure that this entire body of knowledge is transmitted.

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[1] Defined as those working directly with, working on the behalf of or intending to work with children ages birth to twelve.

[2] Planning for Professional Development in Child Care. NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, www.ncchildcare.org

- o Requirements and incentives for providers to pursue professional development opportunities are clear.
- o A continuum of education and training for all providers, from entry-level to experienced, exists.
- o A system is in place to make sure that the education and training are of high quality.
- o A process is developed to assess what education and training providers in a community need;
- o Information about education and training opportunities is widely available.
- o Information about what opportunities providers have already pursued is available for monitoring and planning purposes.
- o Education and training opportunities are offered at times, in places and in languages and formats providers can successfully access.
- o Increased knowledge and competence are assessed and rewarded by increasing compensation.
- o Education and training are well-funded so that providers are able to attend, regardless of personal financial situations. [3]

In addition, a well-drawn system builds on base education and articulates prior learning (education and training) into the professional development pathway for the individual; supporting forward progress toward personal education goals without redundancy and continuing education is provided by highly qualified staff.

We also know from three studies of high-quality early education programs (from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) that early childhood care and education has long lasting outcomes for children, that produce economic benefits – when teachers are educated and compensated.

The Need for Professional Development Systems

In response to this clear connection between Early Educator preparation and the quality of care, there are many organizations in North Carolina working to make opportunities available for professional development for the workforce. Local agencies (child care resource and referral and Smart Start) are the main supplier of workshops and continuing education opportunities which support program start-up, quality improvement and maintenance as well as trainings to improve the quality of the workforce. Cooperative Extension agents, professional associations (NCaeyc, NCECA, Head Start Association, NC Licensed Child Care Association, etc.) and private trainers and

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[3] Adapted list from Genser, A. (1999). *Kicking off the Dialogue: Elements of a Career Development System for School-Age Care*, Boston, MA: Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education.

consultants offer workshops across the state on a range of topics as well. Community colleges and universities also offer continuing education unit opportunities as well as courses for college credit. These opportunities for professional preparation are shown in Figure 1.

The availability of opportunities, however, does not necessarily mean that Early Educators are being well-trained and educated to serve children and families. There may be many reasons for this:

- Opportunities for professional development may not be scheduled at times or in locations that meet providers' needs, particularly in rural areas where distance makes training inaccessible;
- Topics offered may not be the ones needed by the workforce, or perhaps the same topics are offered every year, with no variety;
- Variation in the intensity of professional development offerings may be limited -- offerings are almost all workshops, with no opportunity for providers to earn college credit or participate in extended continuing education opportunities;
- Cost may be prohibitive;
- Opportunities may be limited for particular professional positions – opportunities may be available mainly for entry leave teachers and little is offered for directors;
- Availability of professional development may not be available to meet individual needs.

Figure 1: Early Educator Preparation in North Carolina (as of June 2010)

| Early Childhood and School Age Sectors and Systems														
	Early Educator Certification Levels													Licensure
Workshops* (i.e. program start up, staff orientation, health and safety topics, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Birth to Kindergarten License / Preschool Add On License
	Certification Endorsements													
	NC Credentials (Early Childhood, School age, Family Child Care & Administrator) Child Dev. Associate Credential (CDA) Diploma Certificate							AAS degree BA/BS degree NC Birth to Kindergarten Degree Master's Degree Doctorate Degree						
← ———— **Continuing Education*** ———— →														

Career Ladders and Career Lattices

In beginning to think about a unified approach to professional development, it is useful to view professional development from multiple perspectives. From the lens of an Early Educator, an individual may enter the field as a teacher assistant, and then become a teacher, then perhaps a lead teacher, mentor and/or program director. This progression is often called a "career ladder."

At each step, an Early Educator needs to acquire additional skills and knowledge through education and training. In the example, these requirements are based not on facility licensing requirements, but based on requirements according to place of employment.

Another way the Early Educator may view her/his career, however, is to think about ways to develop as a professional without going up the ladder, but rather by moving into another setting. A teacher may decide to become a family child care provider, for example, or to work with parents in a child care resource and referral agency. Each of these other settings has its own series of career progressions, which could be viewed as a ladder.

One way of portraying both of these dimensions of career development is the career lattice, shown in Figure 3. In this model, an Early Educator may move up, across, or up and across a professional career lattice. Addressing the needs of Early Educators so that career advancement in multiple directions is possible is a critical element in the design and implementation of a professional development system.

Figure 2: Sample Career Lattice

Teacher   Administrator   Mentor/Evaluator   Trainer/Faculty   Agency Director
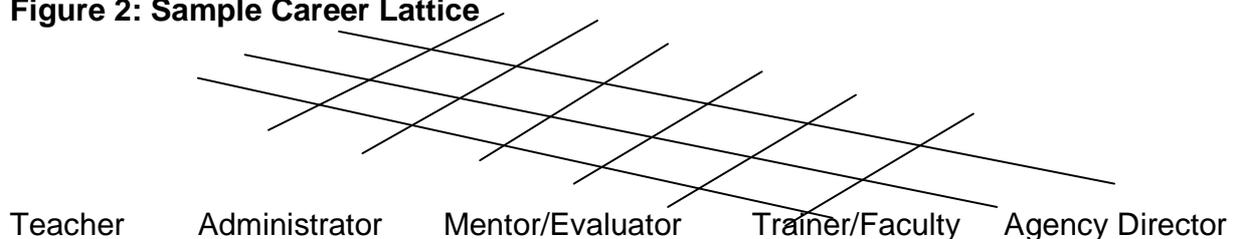
The Importance of Linkages

In developing a system, it is also important to view early care and education from the perspective of a child and family. Children do not exist only in the early care and education program —they may also be served by many other agencies and individuals. Inclusion, early intervention, public health, social services and places of faith are just a few of the services and agencies that may work with very young children. The number of adult a child may encounter in the first dozen years of life increases exponentially program, teacher and family circumstances change. For instance if a child moves up to another classroom, if the child leaves the program or the teacher is replaced with another teacher, if the family moves and the child attends a new program. The list of possible and very real changes in the lives of many children under the age of twelve is numerous as if the number of professionals involved in a child's young life.

These "linkages" imply the need for a holistic view of each community's children. To best serve all children, all of the participants in this partnership—all those providing services to children, including families—must be aware of each others' presence, services, resources and know how to work together. In the context of developing a professional development plan, an Early Educator's training and education must be offered with this holistic perspective. Representatives from fields other than early care and education need to be part of building the system, and some educational or training opportunities may even be offered in conjunction with others in the "partnership."

The Relationship between Professional Development and Regulation

Most early care and education facilities (centers, family child care homes, Head Start and pre-kindergarten classrooms which provide care for more than four hours per day) are subject to oversight by the NC Division of Child Development. Child care facility regulations include specific requirements with regard to staff education and training. The rated license system promotes and formalizes the concept that professional development is an integral part of quality early care and education. That concept is

supported by the incremental staff education that is required for facilities to move to the next step and earn more "stars".

The purpose of child care regulation is to minimize the risk of harm to children through state license requirements, local zoning ordinances, fire, building, and sanitation codes; to assess curriculum use and/or to meet a particular funder requirements, for example Head Start or More at Four. Regulations protect the health and welfare of children in out-of-home care but are not designed to measure the impact of the program policies on the child. Regulations (particularly at the basic, "one to three star" levels (see www.ncchildcare.net) provide minimum standards. They serve as the floor from which program quality, which is measured through performance standards, accreditation, certification or teacher credentialing, can develop.

With regard to professional development, the licensing function does provide some incentive for regulated programs to hire and retain staff with education and training levels above the required minimums, particularly for centers trying to achieve more "stars" under the rated license system. But the licensing function does not provide the infrastructure to make that achievement possible for individual Early Educators and programs. It is up to other state and local institutions and groups to make sure that education and continuing education opportunities are appropriate, available, affordable and accessible, through the development and implementation of a professional development system.

Developing a Professional Development Plan

A professional development plan is simply an approach to building an approach to providing education and continuing education opportunities and supports which ensures that all Early Educators in a community are best served so that all children and families benefit from a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. The steps to building a plan are shown below.

Planning Steps

Step 1: Convening a Planning Group

The first step in developing a professional development plan is also the most critical: assembling an inclusive planning group so that the resulting plan truly reflects the needs of Early Educators. In keeping with the holistic vision of children, the planning process itself must be collaborative to best serve the needs of the early care and education workforce, and eventually, the children and families.

Who should be included in this group? You will want to think broadly about the organizations and individuals who are concerned with the well-being of children in the geographic area being addressed by the plan. Certainly you will involve those groups that have a direct interest in and/or a commitment to providing services which support the early care and education workforce. In particular, any planning group needs to include those working directly with children—teachers, directors and family child care providers, etc. All of these participants are "stakeholders" who will inform the planning process and guide the professional development plan taking shape. Keep in mind that it is equally important to involve a diverse representation of stakeholders. When possible, include individuals and organizations with a less direct connection to early care and education. This makes the process richer and stronger and will allow for a larger group to build the model, develop commitments early on, and share the information with others.

Stakeholders might include:
- Agents working in Cooperative Extension agencies
- Consultants regulating child care facilities
- Directors and owners of early care and school age programs
- Early Educators working in programs that serve children with special needs
- Early Educators working with children in a variety of settings
- Experts in early intervention
- Instructors or administrators at educational institutions (universities and community colleges)
- Members of interested civic groups (e.g., United Way, Jaycees)
- Members of local Interagency Coordinating Councils
- Parents of young children

- Professional development specialists working in child care resource and referral agencies and Smart Start partnerships
- Representatives from related professional associations, particularly those associations which provide continuing education opportunities
- Representatives of business and industry
- Representatives of public schools (school board members or principals)
- Staff from larger early care and education systems in your community (e.g., the YMCA, YWCA, or military early care and education)

Step 2: Fostering Collaboration

The word "collaboration" literally means "working together." Collaboration is an active process through which people, groups, and organizations work together to achieve desired results. Starting or sustaining a collaborative journey is exciting and sometimes stressful. Each member of the collaborative effort brings his/her background, values, biases, and experience to the table.

As anyone who has served on a committee knows, not all groups are collaborations. Even groups which claim to be collaborative often are not. How can a group maintain a truly collaborative spirit? When beginning a collaborative project, it is critical that all existing and potential members share a common vision and purpose. This commonality brings members together to focus on achieving a mission. The catalyst that initiates collaboration may be an unexpected change, a problem, a community need, a shared vision, or a desired outcome—and different stakeholders may join the collaboration for different reasons. Regardless what the catalyst may be, the group needs to quickly move from problem-driven to vision-driven if it is to accomplish its joint purpose.

Step 3: Developing Values and Principles

At the beginning of the planning process, it will probably not be clear what activities will be undertaken. In fact, it is better if this is not crystal-clear at the beginning, since the group

> **Sample Principle**
>
> *Planning for professional development is based on an understanding that progressive levels of skill and education should be rewarded with higher levels of compensation.*

has not yet worked together to define the issues facing the community. Still, it is important that the group have some shared ideas when beginning work. Working to establish values and principles for the group is, therefore, a good first step to fostering

collaboration. Values and principles are the beliefs the group holds. They serve as guides for creating working relationships and describe how the group intends to operate on a day-by-day basis. Creating a document outlining your guiding principles as early as possible will prove helpful in the ongoing work that will surround the plan.

Step 4: Ensuring Ongoing Participation

Maintaining a collaboration requires effort throughout the planning process, not just at the beginning of the project. As your group works, keep in mind these questions:

- Who is not currently working with the process that needs to participate in designing the plan and deciding the strategies and priorities?
- How can we get them involved?
- Whose support will be important to the long-term success of this process and plan?
- How can we begin to get that support now?
- What are the structures or forms of organization that we can create to improve
- participation (i.e., are meetings scheduled at a time of day which all members can attend? Do providers need substitute coverage in order to participate?)
- What guidance, training, and support might be needed to strengthen individual participation?

Step 5: Assessing Community Needs

When your group has been assembled and has a preliminary commitment to its work together through the definition of values and principles, the next task is to conduct a community assessment. The assessment will identify both needs and resources in the community, and provide objective data from which to make implementation decisions. In the assessment process, the group collectively and individually gathers and shares information

> **Sample Need Statement**
>
> *Students graduating from the local community college's two year early childhood program can't transfer into the local four year university as third year students.*

about education and financial resources available, and brainstorms about service gaps and needs. The needs should be identified as specifically as possible.

What kinds of information should you be gathering? The specifics will vary by community, but there are several topics you will certainly want to include which are described in depth in this guide:

- Access
- Community education and awareness
- Compensation
- Education, continuing education & training
- Financing
- Professional standards
- Quality assurance
- Systems planning and coordination

An overview of each of these areas is included below, and additional resources for further investigation are included at the end of the guide.

Step 6: Assessing Existing Professional Development Opportunities

One of your first tasks will be to assess the existing education and continuing education and training opportunities available. A good starting point is often to simply inventory all of the education and continuing education opportunities available in a community. Example opportunities include:

- Agency-based (child care resource and referral, Smart Start)
- College courses, certificates, and degree programs (two- and four-year)
- Conferences sponsored by professional organizations
- Consultant-provided training
- Cooperative Extension training
- Department of Social Services training
- Events sponsored by community groups (literacy council, health and mental health groups, etc.)
- Inclusion and/or early intervention training
- NC Division of Child Development approved training
- On-site training

When completing the inventory, note the content area of available trainings and what areas may be missing in your community. Are there trainings for particular groups of professionals (for example, for Head Start) but not for others (family child care providers)? Is there a continuum of education and continuing education for all those working with children, from entry-level to very experienced?

Step 7: Coordinating Systems

Consider the multiple local services and systems that affect the lives of Early Educators and young children. In a well-coordinated approach to professional development, all the community's resources would work in unison to support the goal of improving quality early care and education though professional development. But in many communities, the resources may not be well-resourced or as well-coordinated as they might be. Examples of coordination problems might include:

- Several agencies offer training on the same topics for the same audience.
- Workshops are offered on topics which could be included in a college-level course, but the local college has not been approached to pursue the possibility of offering such a course.
- Continuing education opportunities are offered only in short workshop formats.
- Courses are offered, but they are scheduled at a time or in a place when Early Educators cannot attend.
- Teachers cannot attend education and continuing education opportunities because they do not have substitute coverage for their classroom.

In this part of your assessment, you are focusing not so much on the content of professional development opportunities (that should have been completed in the "education and continuing education" component of the assessment), but on the factors that make professional development more or less accessible, affordable, and available, or which influence the quality of its delivery. For example, you should gather information on transportation services, scheduling, articulation (the way in which education transfers from one institution to another, for example, community college credit transferring to a four-year institution), how trainers or continuing education are monitored to make sure the delivery and content are of high quality, availability of scholarships, professional development release time, and business and industry support.

Representatives from agencies or individual trainers, workforce studies and evaluations of funded activities may be able to provide data and information needed to assess current offerings. In addition, seek out input from:

- Experts who have knowledge of state and federally funded early care and education programs in your community.

- Local service providers of early care and education services such as Head Start, Departments of Social Services, child care resource and referral services, the local interagency coordinating council (LICC), etc. Make sure to also include the views of individual Early Educators from centers and family child care homes.
- Organizations that address economic development, such as the Chamber of Commerce, local economic development board, etc.

A possible outcome for this part of your assessment would be an inventory that includes:

- a list of available community resources. If available, estimate the market value of each resource (for example, the value of free space for evening classes). You may be able to use this information later in developing public awareness tools (e.g. the value can be counted as an effort to improve the quality of care through teacher education initiatives)
- the gaps or barriers to fully utilizing professional development opportunities, such as transportation issues, a lack of qualified substitutes, low wages, long work weeks, and conflicting family obligations.

Financing the System

A professional development system requires adequate, stable, well-coordinated funding in order to fully benefit the early childhood workforce of a community. Part of your assessment should include an accounting of funding already available for professional development, potential sources of new funding, and an assessment of how funding is being used in your community.

> **Sample Funding Resource**
>
> *Education for the early care and education workforce in North Carolina is supported for thousands of Early Educators annually by the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project. T.E.A.C.H. awards scholarships to individuals working in regulated early care and education programs who are pursuing a credential or degree in early childhood from a two- or four-year institution. However, participation in T.E.A.C.H. varies by community. As part of your assessment, you should investigate how widely the program is known and used by your workforce. If it's not being widely used, try to identify the reasons.*

The financing of continuing education opportunities is more diffuse. This is true both in North Carolina and nationwide. Smart Start, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and other initiatives are leading the way in North Carolina, but there are other potential funding sources as well. Assess the possibilities in the business, philanthropic, public, health,

mental health, education (Title I and early intervention services) and religious sectors for opportunities to expand the resources available for teacher education.

Addressing Compensation

Published data show that workforce compensation varies based on role and the setting in which an Early Educator works.

- The average salary for child care providers in 2007 was $19,030. In 2008, the average salary increased only by $60 to $19,090, with hourly pay reported at $9.18; up one cent from 2007 (NACRRA).
- The average salary for a Head Start teacher was $23,177 in 2008 (CLASP).
- The minimum compensation for a More at Four teacher with up to one year of experience working in a non-public school program was $26,260 – $26,680 and may include salary, salary plus health OR retirement benefits or salary plus health AND retirement benefits (based on 05-06 NCDPI Teacher Salary Schedule).
- A licensed public school teacher in North Carolina, with up to one year of experience working is scheduled to earn $30,430 over a 10-month period (NCDPI).

> **Types of Compensation**
>
> http://www.ncicdp.org/documents/Types%20of%20Compensation%207_10.pdf

Taking on Turnover

Workforce turnover rates for those working directly with young children vary based on program auspice (i.e. center, home, Head Start, etc.) and the types of supports provided. For example, those working in a regulated program and receiving a salary supplement through Child Care WAGE$® had turnover rate of only 15% in North Carolina in 2008-2009; an overall significant improvement compared to the 31% full time teacher turnover rate in our state prior to the implementation of WAGE$. In 2008, Head Start programs also reported staff turnover at a rate of 15%.

Community Education and Awareness

Educating the public about the importance of educated workforce is imperative to an effective professional development plan. Families want to know that their children are receiving the safest, most appropriate early care and education possible. Giving families (and other stakeholders) the information necessary to select an early care and education or school age program that supports and maintains a high quality teaching staff is necessary to create a healthy early care and education marketplace.

The strong relationship between a teacher's education and the quality of care and education a child receives is supported by research. Also clear is the connection between adequate compensation and teacher retention, also a key component of quality. In your assessment you will want to

Figure 3: Strategies for Increasing Public Awareness

Word of mouth — Spreading information to parents who frequent parent meetings, PTA gatherings and church sponsored events. Word of mouth is still the best and cheapest marketing strategy;

Public service announcement (PSAs) — , which many radio and television stations run for free;

You Tube/CDs/Videos — Developing brief videos for use in places where parents may spend time waiting in a lobby (medical offices and public agencies);

Business roundtables — Linking business leaders' concerns for competitiveness and productivity, workforce development, work/life issues, and school readiness and education issues with the need to improve early care and education;

Editorial board visits — Providing an opportunity for a team of community leaders to meet with the editorial boards of local newspapers to provide information and an opportunity for dialogue on improving the quality of care through professional development;

Press kit — Providing reporters, local boards of directors, elected officials, and others with a breadth of early care and education professional development issues and the views of experts;

web site — Supplying information and contact numbers of available resources such as the local child care resource and referral organization, Cooperative Extension office, and/or Smart Start partnership;

Written materials — Creating or soliciting newspaper articles and editorials, developing utility bill stuffers, making grocery bag advertisements and paper placemats used at restaurants;

Symposia — Increasing the visibility, number and impact of state and local community/business partnerships addressing professional development by hosting one or more sessions on the need for a well-educated early care and education workforce;

Professional Recognition — Hosting events that honor early childhood professionals and programs that have attained an increased level of licensure or accreditation.

investigate how well these connections are understood by various segments of your community: local officials,

business representatives, families, etc. You will also want to investigate the many options for increasing public awareness; a few are listed above. Note that at this point you do not want to choose a particular strategy; instead, you are investigating what resources might be available to help in this area.

Quality Assurance

Improving program quality so that children and families are better served is the underlying goal of any professional development plan. For this reason, the planning process should include close attention to quality assurance. Quality assurance means different things to different people, even to individuals within the early care and education field. In answering the question, "What indicates high quality?" any or all of the following might be included as measurement tools, standards or guidelines:

- accreditation by a nationally known entity (e.g. National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Family Child Care)
- child care facility ratings (stars earned on a rated license through DCD);
- credentialing (North Carolina credentials and CDAs);
- educational attainment (college courses, certificates and degrees)
- environmental rating scales (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale [ECERS], Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale [ITERS], Family Day Care Environmental Rating Scale [FDCRS], School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale [SACERS]);
- individual certification;
- individual licensure;
- performance standards (used in Head Start, More at Four, Smart Start);
- program accreditation by national professional organizations;

All of these varieties of quality measurement imply workforce education and continuing education, whether as a direct requirement or indirectly as an avenue of achieving particular skills. Whether quality is expressed as attaining a certain Early Educator Certification level or individual license, a "5-star facility license," achieving high marks on an environmental rating scale, or achieving Head Start performance standards, education and continuing education of staff are key components of program excellence.

In the assessment phase of the planning process, the planning group should investigate existing program quality and identify areas which need attention. Information about program quality is more readily available through the rated licenses; your local Division of Child Development regulatory consultant should be able to provide you with valuable information in this area. Members of the planning group representing various stakeholders may also be able to provide information (for example, a Head Start representative may know what percentage of Head Start classrooms are nationally-accredited).

Presenting the Assessment

When you have finished collecting information for the community assessment, compile your findings into a brief, readable document. Now it is time to share your findings with all planning team members, particularly those who have not been active in the assessment process but whose ongoing participation is important. As a group, you will want to reach consensus on the following:

- What are our strengths in making professional development available? What do we already do well? What resources have we identified that we have not yet used?
- What are the areas in which there are service gaps or needs? Which segments of our workforce are not being well-served?
- Which needs are the most pressing? Which can be addressed at a later date?

Identifying Benefits and Barriers

As the group identifies needs and resources in the assessment process, it will become clearer how a unified professional development approach would benefit the community. It will be useful for the group to spend sometime identifying these benefits, as shown in Figure 4 (your planning group may identify others as well). Note that the benefits are focused on the long-term "outcomes" of improving professional development opportunities, rather than on specific activities that will be undertaken. At the same time that the benefits to a system become clear to the group, so will the barriers. Identifying the barriers, as is shown below.

Figure 4: Benefits of a Professional Development System

> **Benefits for the Child**
> - Increases potential to form positive long term attachments to a caregiver
> - Increased exposure to developmentally appropriate experiences
> - Increased potential to enter school prepared to succeed
>
> **Benefits for the Teacher**
> - Increases self-esteem
> - Provides opportunity for economic advancement
> - Increased knowledge and skills
> - Increased satisfaction with profession
>
> **Benefits for the early care and education program**
> - Improves overall quality of early care and education
> - Decreases teacher turnover rate
> - Creates marketing potential
> - Increased community awareness helps spur family involvement
>
> **Benefits for the community**
> - Strengthens the profession
> - Strengthens the community's economic base and quality of life

Identifying and addressing barriers is an important task for the group to undertake. With the barriers "on paper," groups often feel more able to undertake positive action, rather than spending time focused on what is holding progress back. Additionally, being specific about barriers can provide criteria for later work planning activities: some activities can be targeted directly at specific barriers.

Barriers to a Professional Development System

Barriers from service providers
- Turf issues
- Poor history of collaboration
- Lack of leadership
- Overlapping or incompatible missions
- Lack of funding
- Lack of time

Barriers from the early care and education system
- Incompatible systems
- Difficulty merging funding streams
- Poor history of collaboration
- Lack of resources (time, money, staff) to coordinate efforts

Barriers from the community
- Lack of perceived need
- Perceived lack of resources
- Habit
- Lack of focused leadership

Gathering Information about Alternative Strategies

In this step of the work, you will want to gather current information about other professional development efforts underway outside your community. How do other communities address their professional development needs? You will also be gathering data that will be useful in helping garner support in your community.

Examples Alternative Strategies

Some communities have augmented the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships offered in their communities with Smart Start funds, to increase the number of participants seeking a college degree and being compensated for their efforts.

A number of Smart Start programs have created professional development initiatives which incorporate increased compensation for workers via increased subsidies to early care and education facilities.

Sources for this research could include this workbook (the "Best Practices" section and the resources in particular), the NC Partnership for Children, Cooperative Extension, and professional associations. The members of your committee will also generate leads to be investigated.

Some activities to be undertaken in this step include:
- Gathering information on model programs/projects which address issues that you identified in your assessment;
- Consulting with groups that have already implemented professional development plans;

- Consulting experts in the field about solutions.

As you collect data, provide a forum for the community planning group to share information on other efforts. In addition to one or more meetings where findings are shared, you may also want to establish a resource collection, or make some other arrangement for exchanging information.

Creating a Plan

With information about the needs, benefits, barriers, and alternatives, it is now time for the community planning group to create its own plan. The plan will include goals, objectives, strategies, an action guide for implementation, and an evaluation plan.

As a prelude to considering specific activities, the planning group should develop a vision statement and a mission statement.

Vision is an image of what is desired— the ideal situation. It should be

Example Vision Statement
Each member of the early care and education work force in our county is valued and paid an equitable wage for their work of educating and caring for children.

described in the present tense, as if it were happening now. When creating a vision statement think broadly and deeply; do not limit your vision by the present realities.

A mission statement is more action-oriented than a vision statement. A *mission statement has four parts - who will do what to whom for what purpose, etc.*

Also, at this time the group may need to return to its "Values and Principles" and refine those statements before beginning the next phase of work.

Example Mission Statements
Our mission is to implement a comprehensive plan that enhances the skills, knowledge and career opportunities of the early care and education workforce.
-Or-
Our county will help early care and education providers pursue higher education as an important component of building high-quality early care and education.

Developing Goals

Goals are the broad statements of where you are headed. They each address one aspect of the needs identified in your community assessment. What should occur as a result of this plan? This might include gains made in the education level of the workforce, combining training opportunities at the local level and implementing opportunities to improve the compensation of teachers. For example, if the assessment identified teacher turnover as a major issue, a goal might be:

> *To improve the quality of care for all children in our county by decreasing teacher turnover.*

As in your community assessment, your goals should include efforts in the areas of education and training, compensation, systems coordination, financing, consumer awareness, and quality assurance.

Education and Continuing Education

Your assessment may have identified basic needs in the supply of education and continuing education, which you should now address by developing goals which respond to those needs.

Two needs which many communities identify are the need for qualified substitutes so that staff can attend education or training, and the need for articulation between two- and four-year higher education institutions. Sample goals for these issues might be phrased as follows:

No member of the early care and education workforce will be unable to access education or training because of a lack of a qualified substitute for his or her program.

All students completing the two-year early childhood program at the local community college will be able to enroll at a four-year institution as a third-year student.

Compensation Goals

To effectively address professional development, a system must address the issue of compensation, and the comparability and equity of early care and education positions and other jobs requiring similar skill and knowledge. There are many who believe that early care and education professionals with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities should receive comparable compensation regardless of their job setting. This means that a teacher working in a community early care and education center, a family early care and education provider, and an elementary school teacher who each hold comparable professional qualifications should also receive comparable compensation for their work. In addition, there are those who believe that compensation for early care and education professionals should be equivalent to that of other professionals with comparable preparation requirements, experience, and job responsibilities. This means taking into account other professionals and their workforce systems in the community. Your planning group should take the time to discuss these attitudes about compensation and formulate your own goals in this area (for Smart Start planning groups, goals in this area are required as part of your strategic plan). One sample compensation goal could be:

The early care and education workforce in our community will receive a salary and benefits commensurate with other professionals serving children in the community, based on experience, education and job responsibilities.

Systems Coordination Goals

Systems coordination may pose a particular challenge at this stage of your work, but the benefits of addressing this issue are worth the effort. While time consuming, coordinating how multiple resources can be used in the professional development plan will provide you with creative ways to address all of the other areas, including financing and consumer and public engagement.

The planning group itself plays an integral part in coordinating existing systems that directly impact teacher education. The planning group includes providers of professional development opportunities, and while these are the local experts in delivering their

particular service, they may also be the controllers of the dollars that currently support the existing system. There may be resistance to making changes.

It is important to listen to concerns about the effectiveness of current systems during each gathering. It is often difficult, if not impossible; to address the long term vision of a community when pressing needs occupy the minds of the planning group.

Think about the best way for the planning group to discuss paramount issues in a nonthreatening, formal manner that will result in realistic steps that will lead to the elimination of a barrier or problem. It may be useful to consider allowing an unbiased party that has no conflict of interest (that is, will not directly gain from changes) to facilitate discussions about systems change. Issues of "turf" and ownership will undoubtedly surface as open conversations begin about potential service improvements. A neutral party can effectively facilitate productive conversation, suggest ideas without seeming territorial, and provide a sense of neutrality during tense discussions.

Consider also the developmental level of the community in addressing problems as a group and accepting changes to the current professional development delivery system. Existing leadership, past experiences, funding stream barriers, differing missions, competition between service entities for the same target population are very real and can hinder or stop efforts to coordinate services.

A goal responding to a systems coordination need could be: *When space is available, educational and training opportunities sponsored by any organization in our community will be open to all members of the early care and education workforce.*

Consumer and Public Engagement Goals

The entire community is affected by the quality of care a child receives. Parents, elected officials, early care and education owners, directors and teachers, businesses, and the general public each have a stake in preparing our young children to enter school

prepared to succeed. Your challenge is to educate each of the groups with a message that is clear, consistent, and action-oriented. Put on your creative hat and think about how you can capitalize on this opportunity to try out "tried and true" as well as innovative approaches to educating the public about the important link between the professional development of an early care and education teacher and the quality of care. Check Figure 5 again for additional ideas.

An example goal in this area might be: *All new parents in our community will receive information about the importance of high-quality early care and education, and the role of education and compensation in high-quality early care and education programs.*

Quality Assurance Goals

Goals related to teacher education/staff qualifications, teacher turnover, staff wages, staff benefits, and rewarding staff for higher education as avenues to improving program quality require careful planning. Other hallmarks of quality, including parent involvement, accreditation, or meeting Head Start performance standards could also be a part of the planning process. Again, Smart Start planning groups must also address this issue as part of the development of a broader strategic plan, and can draw on that work in formulating goals for professional development.

A quality assurance goal could be stated as follows: *All early care and education programs in our community will have at least a "four star" license.*

Financing Goals

Most local communities will identify a need for additional financial resources to make an effective professional development system a reality. Your assessment may have revealed that already-available resources are not being fully utilized. Alternatively, the need may be to identify new sources of funding. Perhaps the corporate community can be encouraged to participate at the local level after a plan has been created. Some businesses are eager to help families with work/family issues including early care and education.

A sample goal in this area might be: *All early care and education programs in our community will have adequate resources to provide professional development opportunities for their staff.*

Developing Objectives

Objectives emerge from goals. They are specific, time limited and measurable statements that indicate progress toward the goals. The goal of reducing teacher turnover might include an objective such as: *By the year 2003, the teacher turnover rate in our county will be less than 30 percent.*

An important part of developing objectives is to identify the outcomes to be used in evaluating the success of your efforts, and how you might measure the outcomes. As in the community assessment phase of developing the plan, a formal workforce assessment might be an appropriate tool for determining progress. In this process, you are looking ahead to the evaluation of the plan, and will need to make objectives measurable and specific so that you will know if you have succeeded. For example, will this plan be inclusive of just those who work in early care and education centers, or will it include all who provide care for children? See page 31 for more information on the evaluation process.

Developing Strategies

Strategies are paths that get you from where you are now to your preferred destination. Strategies are means by which you will achieve your objectives and goals. In this step, the information you gathered about other communities' efforts is particularly important, as they may give you ideas about new strategies to reach specific objectives. One strategy to accompany the teacher turnover objective might be: *Early care and education programs will receive technical assistance on how to access financial resources that will allow them to adequately pay their staff.*

Figure 5 shows a chart that your planning group can use to think about strategies. The matrix is a particularly effective tool for use in a group setting, as it can be filled in without a great deal of text, and it allows the group to see the plan at a glance. The strategies are listed on the left, and some indication of when they might be implemented is made by checking the appropriate column. The strategies listed are some already being used by communities in North Carolina. Of course, not all these strategies may be appropriate for all communities, and your group may come up with others that need to be added.

Figure 5: Five-Year Early Childhood Professional Development Regional Action Plan

Mission or Vision Statement: _____

Key Area	Goal	Strategy (Policy, Program or Practice which can be measured - list in priority order by levels)	Partners (note Lead(s) and partner(s) responsible for supporting goal and strategies	Timeline	Estimated Cost Level (choose one per strategy)
Access		State: Local:	Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost
Continuing Education		State: Local:	Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost:
Professional Standards		State: Local:	Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost
Compensation		State: Local:	Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost
Planning & Coordination		State: Local:	Lead(s): Supporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost
Other		State: Local:	Lead(s): upporting Partner(s):	Target Date: Benchmarks:	No cost Low cost High cost

Implementing the Professional Development Plan

Developing an Action Guide

Turning your goals, objectives, and strategies into an action guide is the critical final step in the planning process. The action guide is really a more detailed version of the matrix just completed, organized around goals. Each goal becomes an activity (you may choose to give the goal a project or activity name), and is then supplemented with:

- Descriptor: the need for the activity and a brief description of the activity
- Strategies: a list of the strategies that will be used
- Outcomes: changes expected as the strategies are implemented. The outcomes will be closely tied to the objectives.
- A timeline
- A budget

The "Best Practices" in the next section of this workbook are shown as activities that could be included in an Action Guide. Refer to them as examples as you develop your own action plan.

Including Evaluation in Your Plan

Part of your plan's development should include specific activities through which you will evaluate whether or not your plan successfully addresses your community's needs— that is, whether or not you have met the outcomes you have outlined. Building a sustainable, effective professional development system will require objective information about whether your activities result in the outcomes your planning group had hoped.

An initial question to be addressed in the planning stage is whether your community has "baseline" data for each of the goals and objectives identified in the plan. That is, is there quantitative information about the current state of the workforce? In many cases, the assessment will have provided this data, particularly if you commissioned a

"workforce assessment." If you do not have baseline data on your workforce, you will need to build in additional "assessment" activities to the plan, prior to the strategies being implemented, so that the evaluation phase can measure whether or not the strategies effectively addressed the issues targeted.

Some key questions to be addressed in planning for evaluation are:
- Who will be responsible for the evaluation process — design and implementation?
- Will outside monitors be needed to conduct some or all of the evaluation (some funding sources may require this method)?
- What local or other resources are available for the evaluation?
- How often will the information be gathered?
- Who will do the analysis of the information and who will be responsible for interpreting the results?
- What is the time line by which tasks need to be accomplished?

Once these questions have been answered, the instruments used to gather the information should be developed. If you used a workforce study in your assessment phase, you may use similar or the same instruments used by the group doing that workforce study.

After the evaluation components are developed, they should be shared with all stakeholders. In addition, for Smart Start planning processes, the purpose of the evaluation will need to be shared with and adopted by the local partnership board. It is also important that there is agreement in how to use the information gleaned from the evaluation.

Questions to consider include:
- In what format will information be collected and reported?
- How will the results be reported and/or used?
- Who will be given the results?
- Who will use the results?
- What part of the information will be reported or used?

Are We Done Yet?

Developing a professional development system plan is a time-consuming but important task in ensuring a skilled workforce and quality care for children. Once you have assembled all the components of your plan, examine it using the check list beginning on the next page, to determine if all the necessary elements for an effective professional development plan are in place. Keep in mind, of course, that barriers to professional development cannot all be addressed overnight, and that implementing a professional development system is an incremental process.

Checklist to Determine If All the Necessary Elements for an Effective Professional Development Plan Are in Place

Community Assessment
   Have you completed an early care and education workforce assessment?
   Have you collected other data and analyzed how those data and the workforce assessment summary impact the quality of early care and education in your community?
   Have you arranged to have your plan evaluated on a regular basis so you will be able to move forward with your professional development plan?
   Have you studied state and national research regarding professional development available through early care and education professional organizations and educational institutions of higher learning?
   Have you assessed the participation rate of early care and education providers in the community in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood ® Project and identified the barriers to greater participation?

Collaboration
   Have you organized a group of stakeholders in your community to meet on a regular basis to collaborate on the development and implementation of your plan?
   Does this group include all stakeholders, not just those in the education and training fields, to ensure that you have adequate cross-system linkages represented? You should have at least one player representing each of these groups:
   Business and industry human resources personnel
   Child Care Resource & Referral
   Communities of faith
   Community college policy makers
   Cooperative Extension
   Early care and education professional organizations
   Head Start
   Instructors from an institution of higher learning
   Legislators

Parents and children
Providers of early care and education
School board policy makers
Special needs community
Has your agency provided an opportunity for all of the stakeholders to access state and national research regarding professional development via early care and education professional organizations and educational institutions of higher learning?

Education and Continuing Education
is available and accessible to all providers in your community?
is cumulative? Does it ensure the provider takes a number of courses that builds on their knowledge base rather than taking the same course time after time after time?
leads to a recognized credential or college certificate, diploma, degree?
provides best practices knowledge and skills to providers, based on current research about early care and education quality?
provides certification to the practitioners?
Are there articulation agreements in place within the educational institutions and between educational institutions in the community?
Do the educational offerings provide up-to-date information on current research findings as well as knowledge and skill development in the current best practices in early care and education?
Do the educational offerings provide up-to-date information on current research findings related to inclusion (providing early care and education to children with and without disabilities in the same classroom)?
Does your community have a plan for an early care and education career lattice in place which:

Compensation
Has the community stakeholder group addressed the comparability and equity issue relative to persons who teach children?
Is compensation linked to formal education in all professional development activities included in your community plan?

Financing
Are there examples of collaborations between public agencies, the business and early care and education communities and educational institutions to provide coordinated, expanded, blended and/or leveraged funding to support the community early care and education professional development plan?
Are there professional development scholarships available in the community other than T.E.A.C.H.?
Is the financial support for scholarships available through the T.E.A.CH. Early Childhood® Project effectively used in the community?

Consumer and Public Engagement
Are faith communities actively involved as a stakeholder in the plan development?

Can you demonstrate corporate and community support for your early care and education professional development plan?

Can you demonstrate public/private and public/public partnerships relative to your plan?

Have you provided examples of the most current research regarding professional development to the public via the media or other public awareness strategies?

Quality Assurance

Have you established goals for quality improvement and provided resources for programs to upgrade their centers or family early care and education homes?

Have you used the stakeholder group and the media as venues to address North Carolina's early care and education regulations and how programs can voluntarily implement higher standards with encouragement and local resources?

Examples of "Best Practices" Activities/Strategies

The following pages include some examples of "best practices" in professional development in North Carolina: activities, strategies and outcomes that could be adopted as part of a community's professional development plan. The activities are listed under "goal areas" rather than specific goal statements, since each community's goals should be unique to the needs identified in a community assessment. Note that an individual strategy could be included under more than one goal. Also, in order to be implemented in an Action Guide, additional information about timeline and budget would need to be added to the activities.

These activities are only examples, but all are based on activities actually being undertaken by one or more North Carolina communities. See the contact information or contact the North Carolina Partnership for Children to learn more.

Goal Area: Education and Training

Title of Activity: Higher Education Articulation*

Descriptor: This activity will increase access to education opportunities for the workforce. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro accepts the AAS degree from all North Carolina community colleges for 60 hours of credit. Although the number of hours remaining for completion of a BS degree in Birth-Kindergarten Education may vary depending on the community college from which a student transferred, in general

most students transferring with an AAS degree in Early Childhood/Child Development can complete their four-year degrees with an additional 65-75 hours of coursework.

Strategy:
- Articulation agreement between UNC-Greensboro and community colleges

Outcomes:
- Increase in students completing four-year degrees
- Increase in students matriculating at four-year institutions
- Greater career satisfaction for early care and education and school age professionals

* If UNC-Greensboro is not a viable option in your community (due to travel distance), contact your nearby four-year program to determine the status of their articulation agreements with community colleges, and/or their willingness to develop an agreement similar to that used by UNC-G.

Goal Area: Education and Training

Title of Activity: Education for Early Care and Education Teachers*

Descriptor: This activity will provide for the education and continuing education of individuals working directly with children and their families. This includes family early care providers, teachers and directors working in regulated settings. Individuals will increase their awareness of the importance of professional development and resources to support their goals. Participants will develop a professional development plan, and will receive individual consultation on selecting coursework, accessing scholarships through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project, and balancing school, work and family life. As part of the T.E.A.C.H. Project, staff will receive increased compensation as a result of completing additional education.

Strategies:
- Staff education
- Scholarships through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project
- Compensation for staff, including wages and other benefits

Outcomes:
- Increase in the number of teachers with a knowledge and understanding of the early childhood professional development system
- Increase in the number of family early care and education providers enrolled in early childhood education certificate and degree programs
- Increase in the number of teachers and directors enrolled in early childhood certificate and degree programs
- Increase in the number of staff from the community receiving T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.
- Increase in the average wage received by staff participating

- Increase in the quality of early care and school age services

* This activity is based on the success of thousands of early care and education teachers, directors, and family early care and education providers who have participated in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project. For more information on T.E.A.C.H., call (919) 967-3272.

Goal Area: Education and Training

Title of Activity: Comprehensive Continuing Education Services

Descriptor: This activity provides comprehensive continuing education opportunities for family child care providers, teachers and directors working in regulated settings. Individuals will receive information about the requirements for staff education by funding source and/or employment setting and career options during an on-site consultation to evaluate their needs and interests and develop a list of resources available to them. A timeline to meet those needs and interests will also be provided. Continuing Education Unit (CEU) opportunities will focus on developing high quality settings. Continuing education opportunities will be made available at convenient times and in accessible centralized locations. The content of CEU will include:
- Rating scales: The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R); Infant/ Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS); Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS); School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS)
- Inclusion of children with special needs
- Cultural diversity
- Health - CPR, First Aid
- Safety - Playground
- Basic School Age Care (BSAC)
- Standards and guidelines for early care and education and school age programs

Individuals participating in the CEU sessions will have access to funds that provide for substitute support. Each program will provide substitutes for their staff and the funding for such will be apportioned to the total number of individuals in all site settings.

Strategies:
- Staff education and training opportunities
- Technical assistance and consultation to program directors
- Training of a qualified substitute pool

Outcomes:
- Increase in the number of family child care providers enrolled in training
- Increase in the number of early care and education center teachers and directors enrolled in training
- Increase in the quality of care for children

Goal Area: Compensation

Title of Activity: Child Care WAGE$ Supplement*

Descriptor: This activity provides incentives and financial compensation for completion (beyond high school) of higher levels of education of individuals working directly with children and their families. This includes family early care and education providers, teachers and directors working in regulated settings (both early childhood and school-age care). Wages of the teachers and directors will be increased by supplements scaled to the level of licensure and accreditation. For example, an additional percentage amount (10 percent) will increase the wage supplement to those individuals working in a "three star" licensed facility. After a two year length of time has elapsed, if an individual provider demonstrates a commitment to staying in the field by remaining continuously enrolled in courses leading to higher educational levels, an additional percentage amount (5%) will increase the wage supplement to those individuals. The participating childcare homes and centers may offer these additional financial compensations as workplace benefit options.

Strategies:
- Staff education, including technical assistance, consultation, training substitutes
- Additional compensation for staff including wages and other benefits
- Quality improvement to the early education system or maintenance of previous quality improvements

Outcomes:
- Development and implementation of a standardized and tiered pay scale which is linked to completion of higher levels of education
- Increase in annual net wages available to full time staff: teachers, directors, and family early care and education providers
- Increase in the availability of workplace benefits
- Increase in family friendly early care and education work environments
- Decrease in the rate of staff turnover
- Increase in the quality of care for children

* This activity is based on one of the most successful and most replicated compensation efforts in North Carolina, and called Child Care WAGE$ (www.childcareservices.org). It is a special initiative designed to provide low paid preschool teachers and directors in early care and education centers and homes with salary supplements that are tied to their individuals levels of education, and is now available statewide.

Goal Area: Compensation and Benefits

Title of Activity: Health Insurance Subsidies*

Descriptor: This activity will increase access to affordable health insurance benefits for the workforce. In many North Carolina counties, almost one-half of the early care and

education teachers do not have health insurance from any source. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Health Insurance Program is an initiative to help fund the cost of health insurance for teachers and some administrative staff working in early care and education programs. Eligible early care and education programs may receive up to 1/3 of the cost of individual health insurance coverage. Participating programs must agree to cover at least 1/3 of the cost of the health insurance and employees may be charged the remaining 1/3. Participating programs may elect to cover both the employer and employee costs of insurance. Early care and education providers may choose their own health insurance carrier, although Blue Cross/Blue Shield has agreed to make some health insurance available to programs that have not found an insurance carrier that meets their needs. Programs must be currently participating in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (participation requirements vary depending on the size of the program and the educational qualifications of the staff).

Strategies:
- Subsidies for an additional portion of the health insurance coverage, so that programs and individuals do not have to pay a full one-third of the cost, making insurance more affordable
- Distribution of information about the availability of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships, the importance of an educated workforce and the new availability of help with the cost of health insurance
- Sponsorship of a health insurance vendor fair in the community
- Training and technical assistance to early care and education programs on how to develop good personnel policies and compensation plans

Outcomes:
- Increased education of the early care and education workforce
- Reduction of uninsured early care and education teachers
- Increased number of insured children of early care and education teachers
- Reduction in staff turnover

* This activity is based on the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Health Insurance Program, made available statewide through the Division of Child Development and administered by Child Care Services Association. Contact CCSA at (919) 967-3272 for more information.

Goal Area: Professionalism

Title of Activity: Early Educator Certification

Descriptor: This activity will support early care and education and school age professionals obtaining a portable, individualized certification. Early Educator Certification (EEC) is a strategy being used in North Carolina to professionalize the field. The system is available to all professionals intending to or currently working with or on the behalf of children ages birth to twelve. EEC acknowledges an individual's

verified level of educational achievement. Information about the importance of education will be included in three local publications, distributed to business and parent networks in the county/region. Certified individuals will be recognized in the agency newsletter, in local newspapers, and during the annual week of the young child.

Strategies:
- Recruit staff at all licensed child care facilities in county/region
- Provide recognition to certified professionals

Outcomes:
- Increased availability of data about the education levels of certified individuals
- Increased capacity to support local and state resource allocation decisions
- Increased public awareness about the importance of workforce education
- Increased professionalism in the field

Goal Area: Quality Assurance Capacity-Building

Title of Activity: Early Care and Education Capacity Building

Descriptor: This activity provides technical assistance and funding to family early care and education homes and early care and education centers for developmentally appropriate materials and equipment to implement quality improvement plans. This includes indoor and outdoor environmental improvements. In addition, technical assistance and funding will be made available to support the planning necessary to create early childhood education and training resources within the community. Assistance and funding will be targeted to programs who have made substantial commitments to upgrading the education and training levels of their provider staff.

Strategies:
- Quality improvement or capacity building expenses directly related to early care and education, including improving facilities, equipment, supplies or curriculum
- Capacity building funding to expand the number of college-level courses offered at the local community college

Outcomes:
- Increase in the number of accredited programs
- Increase in the number of courses in early care and education being offered
- Increase in enrollment in courses in early care and education
- Increase in the quality of care for children

Resources

Useful Web Sites for Professional Development

http://www.aft.org Center for the Child Care Workforce

http://www.naeyc.org National Association for the Education of Young Children

http://www.nafcc.org National Association of Family Child Care

http://nccic.org National Child Care Information Center

http://www.nhsa.org National Head Start Association

http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us North Carolina Community College System

http://www.ncchildcare.net North Carolina Division of Child Development

http://www.osr.nc.gov North Carolina Office of Early Learning

http://www.ncicpd.org/ North Carolina Professional Development Systems

http://www.smartstart-nc.org/   Smart Start in North Carolina

http://www.childcareservices.org/   T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® & Child Care WAGE$®

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Systems Coordination Sources

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References on Consumer and Public Engagement

Publications, how to articles, and on-line information abound and can be found in public, community college, and university libraries. Specifically check out publications and information sheets developed by the North Carolina Partnership for Children and the National Child Care Information Center which provide excellent tips and models for creating an effective public awareness campaign.

"Smart Start Communications Guide", North Carolina Partnership for Children, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Suite 300, Raleigh, NC 27604. (919) 821-7999

National Child Care Information Center, 301 Maple Avenue West, Suite 602, Vienna, VA 22180

"Child Care Bulletin," US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families

National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, 733 15th Street N.W., Suite 1037, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 737-7700 or 1-800-UR-WORTHY

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A great deal of research that is translated into practice occurs in teacher training programs at the community college and university level, through the Child Development Associate program and through the Cooperative Extension who offer child care training in counties across the nation. Much of the child care information for Cooperative Extension is placed on the National Network for Child Care database on the Internet.