

# Busting the Myths

## for Early Care and Education Workforce



- Myth #1:** Women do not need college classes to know how to love and take care of children.
- Myth #2:** Child care is just babysitting.
- Myth #3:** You don't need an education to work with young children.
- Myth #4:** Child care providers are uneducated and not capable of college course work.
- Myth #5:** An experienced teacher is better than a teacher with a degree.
- Myth #6:** Child care providers do not want to go back to college.
- Myth #7:** Child care providers can't afford to go to college.
- Myth #8:** Head Start teachers don't need help paying for college.
- Myth #9:** Only education courses matter—general education classes are a waste of time for child care providers.
- Myth #10:** Child care providers will leave our facility as soon as they complete their degrees.
- Myth #11:** The child care workforce is losing ground and will never be able to recover.
- Myth #12:** Parent fees can support the salaries and benefits needed by the child care workforce.



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### Overview

**A**s more and more preschool children spend most of their day in early childhood settings, it is critical to have a well-educated, fairly compensated, and consistent workforce. North Carolina has worked diligently to improve its standards, funding, and resources to support this goal. Education standards for teachers, directors, and family child care providers are part of the program regulatory system. Financial support for programs that meet higher standards has been earmarked through the child care subsidy system, which is funded with state and federal dollars. Through Smart Start, the Child Care Development Fund, and T.E.A.C.H., early childhood resources are available to help (1) child care programs improve the quality of their environments for children and (2) individuals improve their education, compensation, and retention.

Yet even as work is being done, the need for an educated workforce is questioned. Often assumptions about education and child care are based on erroneous or incomplete information. With this document, the North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals (NCICDP) seeks (1) to identify some of the myths about educating this workforce and (2) to provide research (facts) that refutes or corrects these false assumptions.



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## Myth #1

**“Women do not need college classes to know how to love and take care of children.”**

**The Truth:** Because of historical precedence, there is an incorrect perception that women can transfer child-rearing skills to the provision of group care for children. There is a body of research that indicates parent education can improve outcomes for children.\*

**The Truth:** Adults of either gender that work with young children in group settings need education to be able to understand the complexities of child development, implement effective group management practices, and offer a high-quality learning environment for children.\*

- The quality of child care is related to both the formal education levels and the specialized early childhood training of the teachers (Vandell and Wolf 2000, p. 14)
- Teacher behavior is one of the major influences on child development (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000; Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips 1990).
- Data indicates that higher levels of teacher education are associated with higher scores on Environmental Rating Scales (Cassidy, Hestenes, Mims, and Hestenes 2003).
- Teachers with more formal education (i.e., degrees, credentials) earn higher wages/compensation, and they are more likely to remain in their child care program. This results in better child outcomes (Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, and Kagan 1999, p. 14).
- The best predictor of a child’s success in school is the mother’s level of education (Haveman and Wolfe 1995; Christian, Morrison, and Bryant 1998; Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, and Seedfeldt 2000).
- High-quality programs depend on teacher effectiveness (Hamre and Pianta 2005; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan, and Carrol 2004).
- The key to sustaining teacher effectiveness and promoting continuous growth is high-quality in-service professional development (Borko 2004; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

\*Source: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v8n1/chen.html>

## Myth #2

**“Child care is just babysitting.”**

**The Truth:** A young child who begins his or her child care experience in infancy will spend more time in child care than in school from grades K-12. Many young children will spend more of their waking hours in child care than at home. The time spent in child care is the time they need to develop their intellectual, social, emotional, and motor skills to be ready for school success. Quality child care involves both the education and care of young children; it is more than babysitting.

- Nearly five million individuals are responsible for the care and education of the nearly two-thirds of America’s children under age 5 who spend time in non-parental care (Bellum and Whitebook 2006).
- The child care workforce is responsible for protecting, nurturing, and fostering children’s optimal growth and development (Kagan, Tarrant, Carson, and Kauerz, forthcoming).
- Early childhood is the crucial period when positive interactions with adults can have the most impact on children’s lifelong outcomes (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000).
- Child care is an important preventive service that serves family resource, support, and education needs. Comprehensive programs that view child care as a preventive service give considerable attention to providing services for parents and families. At a more protective level, child care can function as a safety net for a child when parental behaviors place children at risk of abuse or neglect (Hershfield 1995).



## Myth #3 “You don’t need an education to work with young children.”

**The Truth:** Research shows that a child care provider’s level of education is closely linked with the quality of care provided. Because a majority of brain development occurs during the early years, it is essential that children receive the highest quality early care and education at this time.

- An examination of teachers’ formal education levels, early childhood training, and overall classroom quality in the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes study (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, and Howes 2002) suggested that “caregivers with a B.A. or B.S. in early childhood education or a related field were rated substantially higher on the global measure of classroom quality” (Ackerman 2005).
- From Neurons to Neighborhoods, a study of early childhood development by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, finds that “both formal education levels and recent, specialized training in child development have been found quite consistently to be associated with high-quality interactions and children’s development in center-based, family day care and even in in-home sitter arrangements” (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000).
- Quality in early childhood education (ECE) is related to program structure and the type of experiences children have within the program, but one of the most crucial variables is teacher education and training (Dwyer, Chait, and McKee 2000).
- Several studies of state-supported preschool programs have found that quality is higher in programs where more teachers have at least a four-year college degree (Barnett et al. 1999; Marshall et al. 2002; Roach, Adams, Riley, and Edie 2002; Whitebook 2003).
- Staff education and training have been demonstrated to be among the most critical elements in preventing harm to children and in improving children’s experiences and development in child care (Adams 1995).
- Researchers found that children were more securely attached to their caregivers, more engaged in activities, and spent less time wandering about aimlessly when family child care providers obtain training (Galinsky, Howes, and Kontos 1995).

## Myth #4 “Child care providers are uneducated and not capable of college course work.”

**The Truth:** Teachers working in child care settings are capable college students and are enrolling in higher education classes.

- Fewer than 1 percent of early childhood teachers reported no training in early childhood. Thirty-one percent have taken some college-level courses in early childhood education, 19 percent have earned a CDA, 12 percent have an associate’s degree, 31 percent have earned a bachelor’s degree, and 13 percent have an advanced degree in early childhood education. Overall, 50 percent had at least a bachelor’s degree (Saluja, Early, and Clifford 2002).
- In 2000-2001, more Head Start teachers had obtained a graduate degree compared to 1997-1998. In 2000, more teachers studied early childhood education or child development for their highest degree, and more teachers belonged to a national professional association for early childhood educators (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2003).
- Nearly half of Early Head Start teachers, or 46 percent, had an associate’s degree or higher in 2004, according to new research from the Center for Law and Social Policy (Hamm and Ewen 2005).
- The national grade point average (GPA) for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship participants in the associate’s degree program for 2006-2007 is 3.4 (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- Between 2001 and 2003, the number of child care teachers with a two- or four-year degree rose from 22 percent to 28 percent (North Carolina Department of Commerce 2003).
- Both community college students transferring to four-year degree programs in early childhood and students seeking four-year degrees perform at progressive rates, earning GPAs leading to graduation (Cassidy, Hestenes, Teague, and Springs 2000).

## Myth #5

**“An experienced teacher is better than a teacher with a degree.”**

**The Truth:** There is no credible research showing that teacher experience alone predicts classroom quality or positive outcomes for children.

- More experience was found to be related to less cognitive and social stimulation and more apathy (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips 1990).
- Experience is not related to child outcomes (Kantos and Fiene 1987).
- The level of teacher education affects children’s language literacy skills (Peisner-Feinberg and Maris 2005).
- Teachers who have earned a bachelor’s degree
  - respond more sensitively to children’s needs
  - are more actively engaged with the children that they teach
  - give children more positive feedback and encouragement (Espinosa, 2002; Barnett, 2003).
- Children in classrooms taught by teachers who have earned a B.A. or B.S.
  - play more creatively and imaginatively
  - score higher on language tests (National Institute for Early Education Research 2003).
- Children in classrooms taught by teachers with the skills linked to higher levels of education
  - have higher levels of self-confidence
  - spend more time in goal-directed activities
  - present less problem behavior in the classrooms and are more sociable with their peers (National Institute for Early Education Research 2003).



## Myth #6

**“Child care providers do not want to go back to college.”**

**The Truth:** Many child care providers welcome the opportunity to increase their knowledge; become more effective in their classrooms; and earn college credits, credentials, and degrees. The primary deterrent to child care providers going back to school is barriers to access, including the cost of education; the time to take courses and balance work and family; and the time, places, and format in which classes are offered.

- More than 20,500 child care teachers and family child care providers in 22 states completed almost 114,000 credit hours in FY '06-'07. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships helped make this education accessible and affordable (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- Data from the 2003 study of the child care workforce in North Carolina found that 82 percent of center-based teachers had a degree, were in school, or wanted to go to school (Child Care Services Association 2003).
- Data from the 2003 study of the child care workforce in North Carolina found that 75 percent of family child care providers had a degree, were in school, or wanted to go to school (Child Care Services Association 2003).
- The 2001 study of the child care workforce in North Carolina asked teachers who said they were not interested in going back to school why they were not interested. Only 7 percent of those who said they didn't want to go to school said it was because they didn't need courses. The reasons they did not want to go back to school overwhelmingly had to do with issues of access (Child Care Services Association 2001).

## Myth #7

**“Child care providers can’t afford to go to college.”**

**The Truth:** A variety of financial aid resources are available to support child care teachers attending college ([www.ncicdp.org](http://www.ncicdp.org)).

- The study *Working in Child Care in North Carolina 2003* revealed that child care providers have a strong interest in pursuing higher levels of education. Many directors, teachers, and family child care providers had completed college courses. Of those who had not completed courses, 32 percent of the directors, 49 percent of the teachers and assistant teachers, and 45 percent of the family child care providers stated they were interested in taking college courses to improve their education in the early childhood field (Child Care Services Association 2003).
- The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program is a comprehensive statewide initiative that provides sequenced professional development opportunities to early childhood professionals (Child Care Services Association 2006).
- Scholarships pay for up to 80 percent of the costs for tuition and books. They also provide travel stipends, release time, and compensation upon completion of a set number of credit hours as determined by scholarship contract. Child Care centers and family home providers provide support by contributing 10 percent to 50 percent of the cost of tuition and books for staff they are sponsoring on a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship. In many scholarship models, child care centers and family home providers provide paid release time and compensation upon completion of predetermined credit hours to scholarship participants (Child Care Services Association 2006).
- Financial aid through government assistance in the form of scholarships, grants, loans, etc., is available. Therefore, teachers have several opportunities to help them to afford the cost of higher education in the early childhood field (North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals, n.d.).



## Myth #8

**“Head Start teachers don’t need help paying for college.”**

**The Truth:** Research indicates a significant level of funding is needed to raise the qualifications of Head Start teachers.

- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) indicated that it will cost at least \$2.7 billion over six years to cover the cost of educating the necessary number of teachers in the proposed bill and raising their compensation to the levels of kindergarten teachers (National Head Start Association 2005).
- CLASP estimates that it will cost as much as 3.4 billion over six years to pay for the cost of the U.S. Senate requirements for increased education and raising compensation. These estimates include the cost of tuition and books (National Head Start Association 2005).
- Even with the positive research results, a constant criticism of Head Start has been the minimal teacher qualifications and educational levels of Head Start employees. Given the large number of Head Start professionals who need to meet requirements, there is a strong need for appropriate departments in higher education institutions to develop strategies to assist in their education (Plunkett, Longmore, and Clark 2002).
- Head Start professionals seeking bachelor’s degrees often experience scheduling conflicts, financial obstacles, and complex or slow bureaucratic processes (North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals 2003).
- Upgrading the education requirements for Head Start teachers is expensive. The tuition grants and higher salaries needed to implement the plan would cost about \$2.25 billion (USA Today 2003).

## Myth #9 “Only education courses matter—general education classes are a waste of time for child care providers.”

**The Truth:** Many high school graduates do not have basic skills and knowledge.

- North Carolina’s place in the rankings indicates that only 48 percent of adults meet the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) assessment for adequate workforce literacy levels (Siedow 1998).
- Lifelong learning is an economic necessity. Adult learners need new skills and knowledge. They turn to postsecondary education to enhance their careers or enter new careers. (See Lumina Foundation, <http://www.luminafoundation.org> or [http://www.luminafoundation.org/adult\\_learners/index.html](http://www.luminafoundation.org/adult_learners/index.html))
- The National Governor’s Association has identified a basic level of proficiency as a minimum standard for success in today’s labor market. The International Adult Literacy Survey assessment indicates that only half of the U.S. adult population meets these criteria (Sum, Kirsch Taggart 2002, p. 11, Table 5).

**The Truth:** Adult literacy is the key to ensuring child literacy.

- Vocabulary is a critical building block for later literacy. Research has established a strong link between the number and complexity of words spoken by adults—both parents and teachers—and the number and complexity of words spoken by children (Whitebook 2003).
- Children’s reading scores increased between 1 and 4 grade levels when their parents were enrolled in Motherhead classes (Motherhead, Inc. 2003).
- English-speaking and Hmong-speaking parents improve their reading skills. Participants’ children increase overall reading skills, including comprehension and question-asking ability (Motherhead, Inc. 2003).
- Parents improve their literacy behaviors relating to their children. Classes help parents gain greater self-esteem and control of their lives (Motherhead, Inc. 2003).

**The Truth:** A basic liberal arts education ensures that teachers have fundamental literacy and numeracy skills; understand key concepts about science, social studies, and humanities; and know how to acquire and use information.

- A liberal arts education prepares one for the world of work by providing an invaluable set of employability skills, including the ability to think for oneself, communicate effectively, and enjoy a capacity for lifelong learning (Sigurdson 2005).

**The Truth:** Higher education without coursework in early childhood education can make a difference in the classroom and for child outcomes.

- The National Child Care Staffing Study found that more years of formal education in early childhood produced more sensitive and appropriate teaching that resulted in children with higher language scores, less aimless wandering, and higher levels of peer play (Whitebook et al. 1990; 1993; 1998).

**The Truth:** For those early childhood teachers and professionals planning to eventually obtain higher education (bachelor’s and advanced degrees), taking general education classes greatly assists in transferring to four-year institutions and is often more cost effective when taken at the community college level (Cassidy, Hestenes, Teague, and Springs 2000).



## Myth #10 “Child care providers will leave (our facility) as soon as they get their degree.”

**The Truth:** When child care providers are earning more money and receiving better benefits, they will remain in their classrooms.

- Data from the Child Care WAGE\$® Project annual evaluation indicates that teachers with degrees do not leave their child care classrooms at a faster rate than those without degrees. In FY '06-'07, 16.7 percent of WAGE\$ participants with two- or four-year degrees left their classrooms, while 18.8 percent of WAGE\$ participants without degrees left (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- Data from the Child Care WAGE\$® Annual Project Report found that individuals working in counties paying higher salary supplements had significantly lower turnover rates (17 percent) than those working in counties with lower supplement rates (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship FY '06-'07 annual evaluation found that teachers completing contracts working toward an associate's degree had turnover rates of between 3 and 10 percent during their commitment year. Teachers working on a bachelor's degree had turnover rates between 3 and 6 percent during their commitment year. The more scholarship contracts completed, and thus the more support their center had been giving them, the lower the turnover rate (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- Data from the first cohort participating in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Health Insurance Program found that turnover dropped dramatically by the end of the first year of participation. The annual turnover rate of centers the year prior to participating in the program was 35 percent; it dropped to 24 percent after one year of participation (Child Care Services Association 2001).

## Myth #11 “The child care workforce is losing ground and will never be able to turn it around.”

**The Truth:** North Carolina has demonstrated to the nation that when a state strategically and significantly invests in the early childhood workforce that it can expect to see real gains in education and retention.

- The national turnover rate for child care teachers in 1989 was about 42 percent (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips 1990). In North Carolina in 1993, the annual turnover rate for child care teachers was 38 percent (Russell, Clifford, and Warlick 1993). By 2003, the rate in North Carolina had dropped to 24 percent annually (Child Care Services Association 2003).
- In 1998, 31 percent of teachers in the statewide workforce study reported that they would leave the field in three years. In 2001, only 25 percent reported that they would be leaving the field (Child Care Services Association 2001).
- Educational gains throughout the entire workforce take time. However, between 2001 and 2003, real earnings gains in the percentage of teachers with degrees were found between the two workforce studies. In 2001, only 10 percent of teachers had a two-year degree and only 12 percent had a four-year degree. By 2003, 14 percent of teachers had a two-year degree and 14 percent had a four-year degree (Child Care Services Association 2003).
- Nineteen percent of WAGE\$ participants in FY '06-'07 had received enough education to increase an education level on the WAGE\$ scale, and 31 percent had submitted documentation of completion of coursework (Child Care Services Association 2007).
- T.E.A.C.H. participants on associate's or bachelor's degree scholarships average between 13 and 14 credit hours per annual contract (Child Care Services Association 2007).



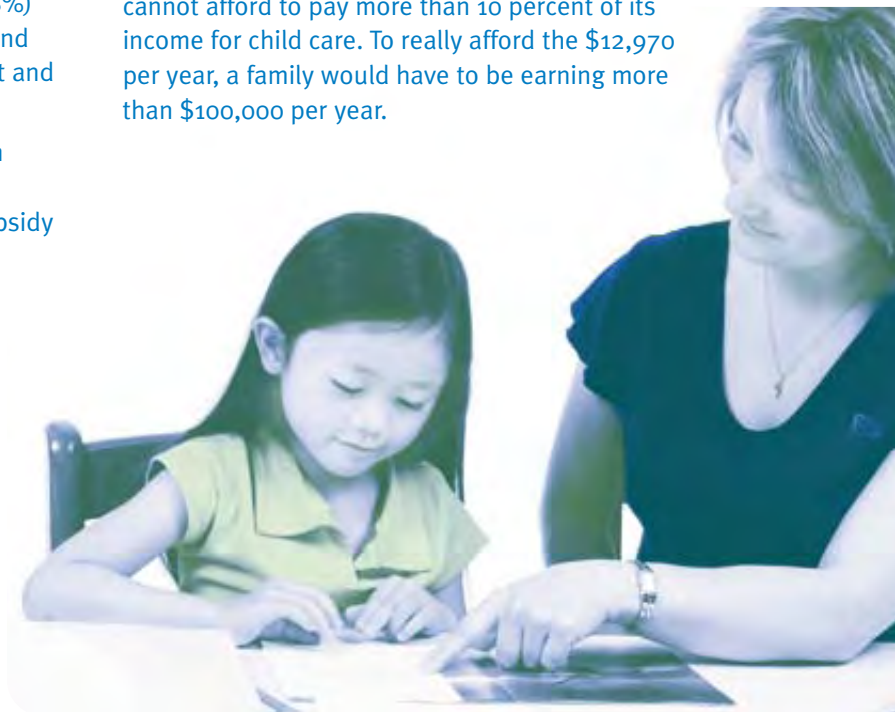
## Myth #12 “Parent fees can support the salaries and benefits needed by the child care workforce.”

**The Truth:** The cost to support salaries and benefits for child care teachers is often more than what a typical family can afford to pay. Competitive salaries and benefits are critical to retain qualified teachers who will promote a high-quality child care environment.

**The Truth:** National research shows that children in poverty are considered to be the most vulnerable to school failure and social problems. This population therefore has the greatest need for high-quality care, but quality care is often out of reach for low-income families because it is more expensive to provide.

- The North Carolina Early Childhood Needs and Resources Assessment found that “eight percent (8%) of North Carolina’s citizens are under the age of 6 and about 25 percent live in a family in poverty” (Bryant and Maxwell 2004).
- The same report found that 41.8 percent of children aged 0-5 enrolled in regulated child care have low-income families who depend on state child care subsidy funding to help cover the costs of child care, and thousands more are on a waiting list (Bryant and Maxwell 2004).
- Many low-income working families do not qualify for child care assistance, and child care subsidies alone are insufficient to cover the costs of child care (Kantras, Zuiker, and Bauer 2004).

- The Needs & Resources Assessment found that families just above the poverty threshold that are not eligible for child care subsidies spend 24 percent of their monthly income on child care (Bryant and Maxwell 2004).
- The largest variable in determining the cost of care is teacher salaries and benefits (Committee of Economic Development 2006).
- The cost for full-day, year-round, high-quality child care is estimated at \$12,970 (National Institute for Early Education Research 2007). This truly illustrates how expensive quality child care is and how it may be out of reach for many families, especially those with multiple children in care. Economists estimate that a family cannot afford to pay more than 10 percent of its income for child care. To really afford the \$12,970 per year, a family would have to be earning more than \$100,000 per year.



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# RESOURCES & TOOLS

## Financial Aid Sources

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Careers in Early Childhood—[http://www.childcareservices.org/\\_downloads/CareersinEarlyChildhoodGuide\\_NC.pdf](http://www.childcareservices.org/_downloads/CareersinEarlyChildhoodGuide_NC.pdf)

College Foundation of North Carolina—[www.cfnc.org](http://www.cfnc.org)

Federal Pell Grant—[www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PellGrants.jsp](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PellGrants.jsp) and [www.ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html)

Federal Student Aid—[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Financial Aid Home Page—[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

Financial Aid, scholarships—[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

Loans, scholarships—[www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)

National Student Loan—[www.nsls.ed.gov](http://www.nsls.ed.gov)

Scholarship search—[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project—[www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html](http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html)

U.S. Department of Post Secondary Education—<http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/index.html>

Local community college foundations—ask in your community college Financial Aid office.

## State Early Childhood Agencies and Organizations

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NC Institute for Child Development Professionals—[www.ncicdp.org](http://www.ncicdp.org)

NC AfterSchool Coalition—[www.ncafterschool.org](http://www.ncafterschool.org)

NC Association for the Education of Young Children—[www.ncaeyc.org](http://www.ncaeyc.org) (and local affiliates)

NC Child Care Resource and Referral Council—<http://staging.childcareresourcesinc.org/community/council.aspx>

NC Division of Child Development—[www.ncchildcare.net](http://www.ncchildcare.net)

NCECA—[www.ncearlychildhoodassoc.com](http://www.ncearlychildhoodassoc.com)

NC Head Start Association—[www.ncheadstart.org](http://www.ncheadstart.org)

NC Head Start Collaboration Office—[www.osr.nc.gov/HeadStart/index.asp](http://www.osr.nc.gov/HeadStart/index.asp)

NC Office of Early Learning—[www.osr.nc.gov/](http://www.osr.nc.gov/)

NC Partnership for Children—[www.smartstart-nc.org](http://www.smartstart-nc.org)

NC Preschool Exceptional Children—[www.osr.nc.gov/PreschoolEC/indexNEWo8.asp](http://www.osr.nc.gov/PreschoolEC/indexNEWo8.asp)

## Distance Learning Tools

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Am I Ready For Distance Learning?—[www.distancelearn.org/readyDL.cfm](http://www.distancelearn.org/readyDL.cfm)

Are Online Courses for Me?—[learn.ucf.edu/1intro.html](http://learn.ucf.edu/1intro.html)

