

2010 Child Care Survey Report

Introduction

Since Success by 6 last surveyed the Travis County child care community in 2006, even more research has highlighted the need for quality early care and education. Safe, enriching, and affordable child care must be available in order to prepare children for a successful transition into elementary school. This is especially true for the poorest and most vulnerable children in our community, who are more likely to enter Kindergarten unprepared and struggle to catch up with their peers.

As our community continues to explore ways to improve the quality and availability of early care and education, up-to-date data about the current licensed facilities is needed. The 2010 Success by 6 survey gathered data on each center's enrollment, quality-rating, funding sources and budgetary priorities. Data was also collected on staff education, wages, benefits, working conditions, and retention.

The 2010 survey results illustrate both progress made and challenges remaining. Compared to 2006, more programs are quality-rated and more teachers have college degrees. However, access to quality care provided by highly educated professionals remains highly variable and dependent upon a family's zip code. The information summarized in this report should help guide the planning efforts of Success by 6 and the Travis County early care and education community.

Survey Method

Terminology

- **SB6** refers to United Way Capital Area's Success By 6 initiative.
- **Child care center** is inclusive of all licensed centers that are both full-time and part-time.
- **Accredited** refers to NAEYC accredited (National Associations for the Education of Young Children)
- **Certified** are programs that are certified either by Texas Rising Star or any other professional group, such as NAC
- **Quality-rated** refers to programs that are either accredited or certified.
- **Formal education** refers to college-credit courses.
- **Lead teacher** refers to the classroom staff person with primary responsibility for a group of children, with job duties which may include lesson planning and assessment.

Participating Child Care Centers

The survey was sent via email to 330 of the 348 centers in Travis County. The other 18 centers were contacted 3 times each but either did not respond to the phone call or could not provide an email address. 78 centers returned the survey, representing 82 sites. This is a response rate of 25% of centers included in the sample, 24% of all

Travis County centers. There was even response from different geographic areas of the city and from quality-rated versus non-quality-rated programs.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument pulled from a compilation of old SB6 surveys, the *Child Care Center Salary and Working Conditions Survey* developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, and an Austin/Travis County Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Report: *Compensation and Staffing* developed by Melissa Aerne in December 2000.

After completing a draft of the survey format, it was presented as a working topic at the February 16, 2010 SB6 Stakeholders' Meeting. It was launched February 17th through Zoomerang, an online survey tool. As an incentive, the first 5 centers to finish the survey were given \$40 worth of educational toys and the next 20 respondents were given \$20 worth. The survey was closed a month later after two reminder emails.

Data Analysis

To certify the teacher education and retention results, the number of teachers reported in each category was compared to the number of teachers a center claimed to employ at the beginning of the survey. If teacher totals did not match within a reasonable margin (20%), those results were not used in the calculation.

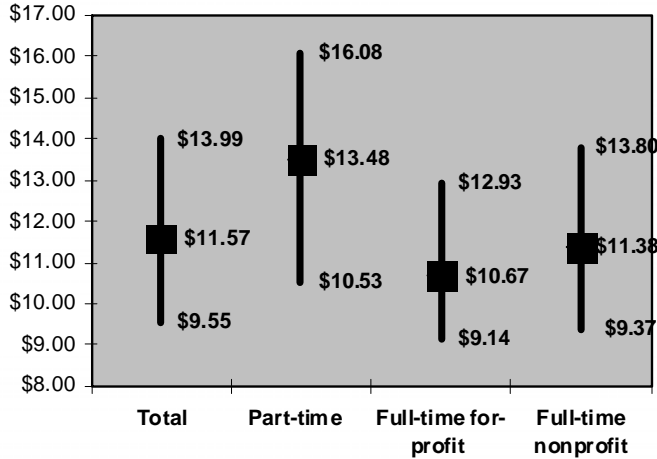
Data was analyzed as a whole to come up with overall results. In addition, data was analyzed comparing: part-time only centers to full-time only/full-time and part-time centers; nonprofit centers to for-profit centers; centers by geographic area; and full-time nonprofit centers versus full-time for-profit centers. When the small group comparisons did not differ significantly from the overall analysis, they were excluded from the report.

Executive Summary

Wages

The average wage reported for center teachers was \$11.57 per hour, with 68% earning between \$8.71 and \$14.43 per hour. Teachers at full-time centers made \$2.46 less per hour than teachers at part-time centers, who earned the highest salary per hour, \$13.48. Nearly all of the part time centers surveyed were located in West and Central Travis County. When looking at full-time centers, there were a few significant differences in wages geographically, with Central and West Travis County centers paying more per hour on average. East, West, and South Travis County all averaged similar wages, around \$10.50 an hour, although there were differences in education levels.

Average Hourly Wage Range



As in the past, teachers at part-time centers earned more per hour than teachers at other centers. This is especially interesting considering that part-time centers have a much lower rate of teacher turnover (10%) and teachers at part-time centers are often more educated (i.e., 70% of teachers at part-time centers have at least a 4-year degree, compared to 35% of teachers overall).

In comparison, the average wage reported in 2000 was \$8.97 per hour.

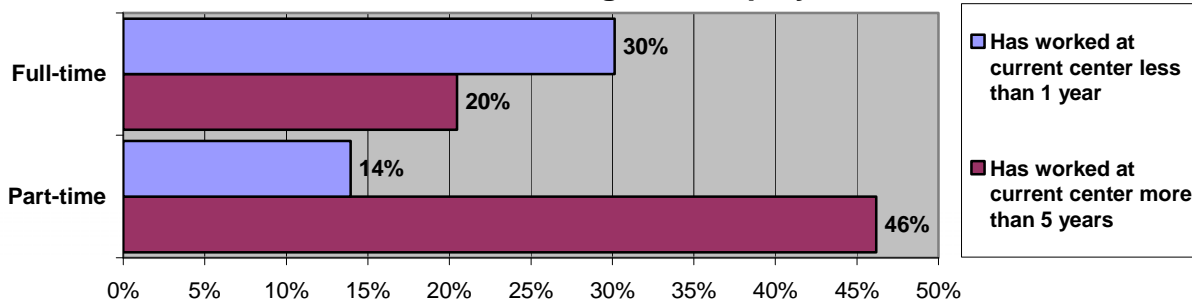
Teacher Retention

The average turnover rate for centers last year was 21%, with part-time centers reporting the lowest turnover, at 10%, and full-time centers the highest, at 25%. Some of the reasons given for turnover were low pay, few benefits, and high job-related stress. One reason cited was the lack of career mobility:

“For us I think the number one reason is career ladder. We have not lost a lead teacher in 10 years, but our assistant teacher positions turn over because they may increase their education over time and want to take on a position with more responsibility and leadership opportunities.”

22 centers reported that no staff had left within the past 12 months. However, one center reported a 300% staff turnover this year, with no teachers working at the center for longer than one year. This trend is apparent in the chart below, which represents how long current teachers have been employed at the surveyed centers. Both part-time and full-time center reported a little less than half of their employees having worked at the center for 1-5 years (40% and 49%, respectively). But nearly a third of employees at full-time centers have been employed for less than 1 year, and only a fifth for more than 5.

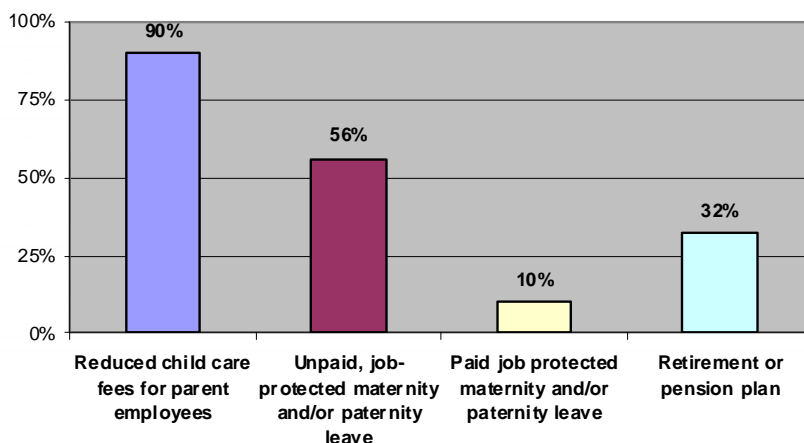
Current Teacher Length of Employment



Part-time centers reported nearly half of their current staff having worked at the center for 5 or more years, even though their teachers receive few or no benefits and the

comparable wages. Furthermore, on average, teachers at part-time centers have the highest education levels. This indicates that other factors may influence teacher turnover, including “burn-out” and working conditions.

Benefits provided to teachers

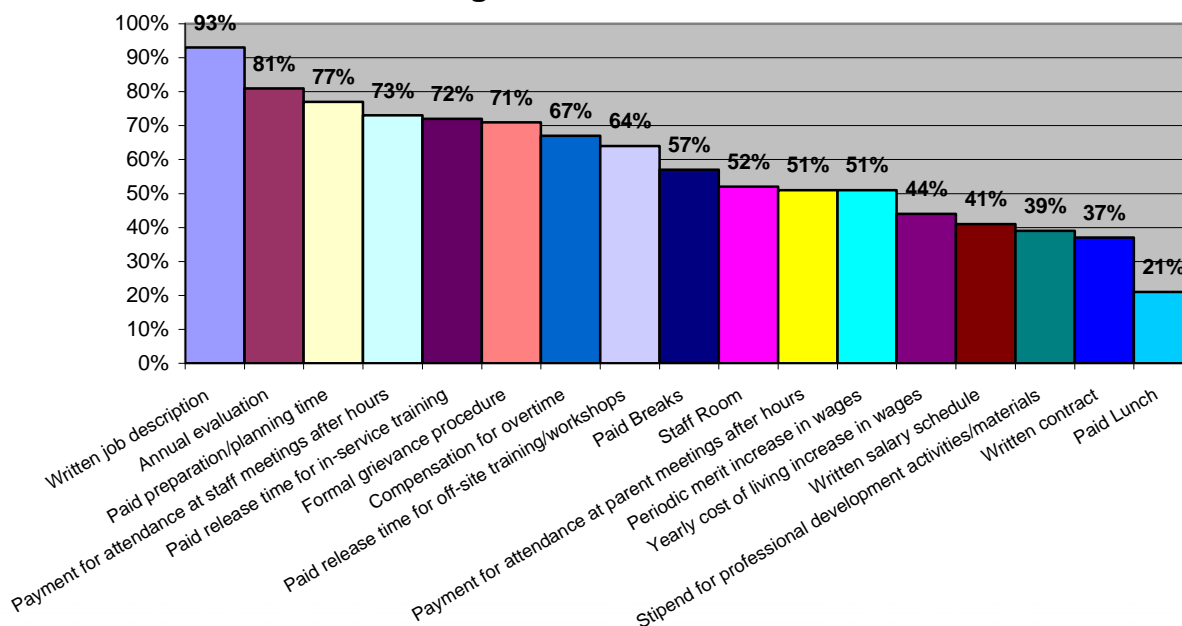


Benefits

The benefit package for a child care worker frequently included reduced child care fees and unpaid job-protected maternity leave. In addition, about half of the centers surveyed provided some sort of health coverage. A third of centers offer a retirement or pension plan, perhaps an indication of the growing

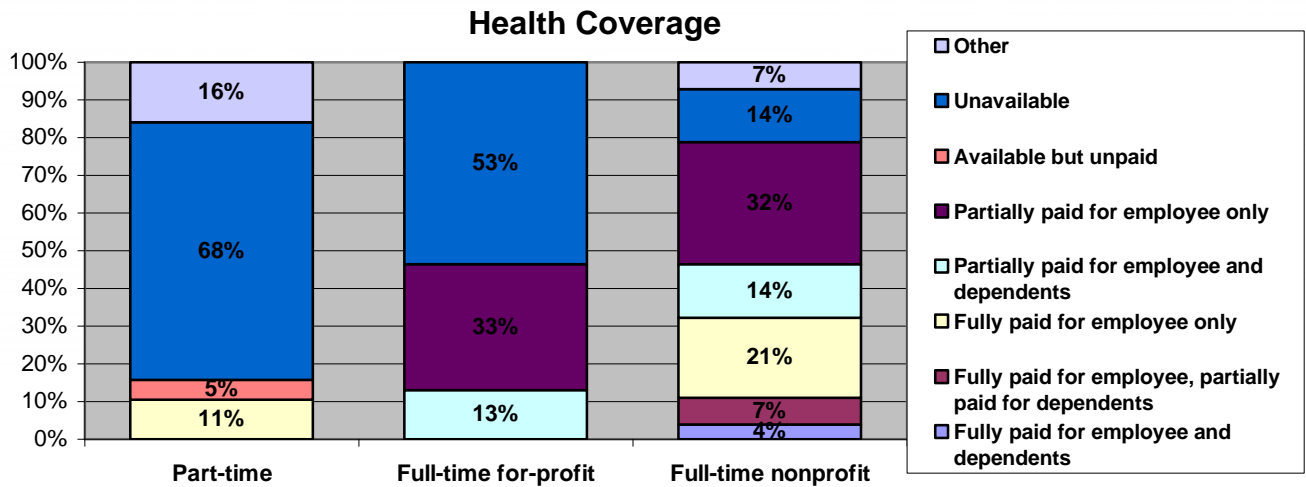
professionalism of the field.

Working Conditions and Policies



Common working conditions and policies include paid breaks, staff rooms, written job descriptions, formal grievance procedures, and annual evaluations. In addition, most

employees are offered compensation for overtime, payment for attendance at staff meetings after hours, payment for attendance at parent meetings after hours, paid release time for off-site training and workshops, and paid release time for on-site in-service training.

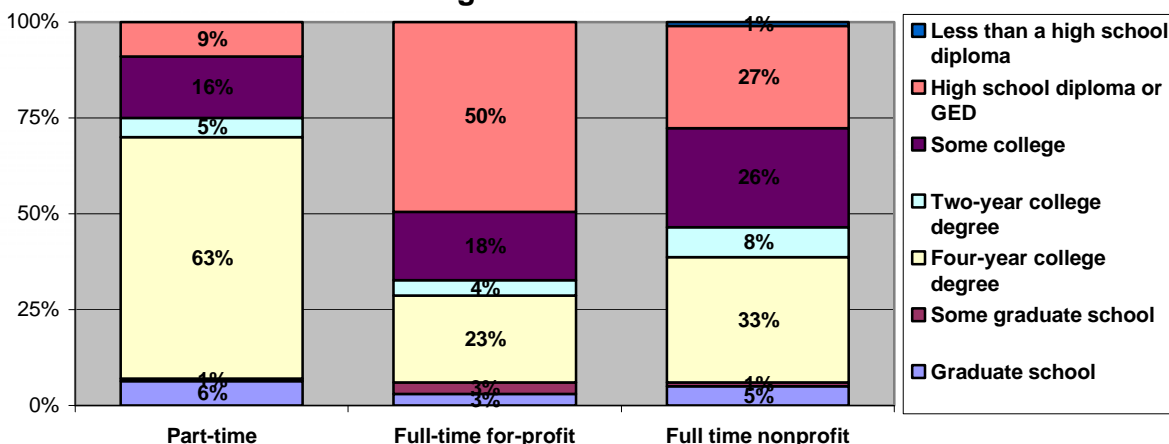


Most of the part-time centers surveyed offered no health coverage. More than half of the full-time for-profit centers offered no health coverage, with a third offering partially paid coverage for the employee only. None of the full-time for-profit centers offered fully paid coverage for employees and dependents. Nearly all of the full-time nonprofit centers offered at least partially paid coverage.

Education Levels

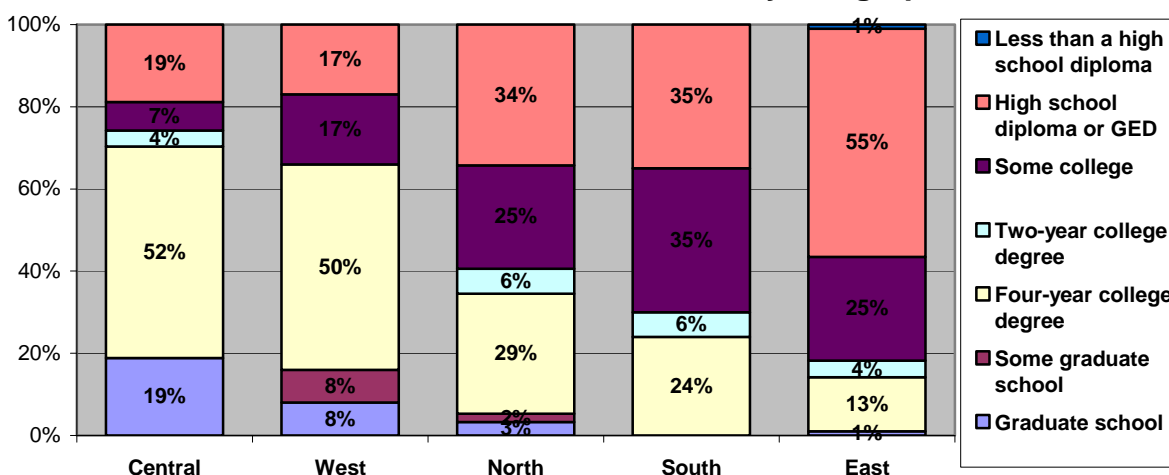
In the 2010 survey, lead teachers at part-time centers were generally the most-educated, with 75% having at least a two-year degree. Full-time for-profit centers had the highest percentage of lead teachers with no education beyond a high school diploma or GED (50%). At full-time nonprofit centers, less than a third of lead teachers had education beyond a high school diploma or GED, a quarter had some college, and nearly half had a college degree.

Lead Teacher Highest Education Level Achieved



Compared with the 2006 SB6 child care survey, which found that 19% of full-time child care teachers had a bachelor's degree, the 2010 survey found that 27% of full-time teachers (lead and assistant combined) have at least a bachelor's degree, and an additional 14% have a two-year degree.

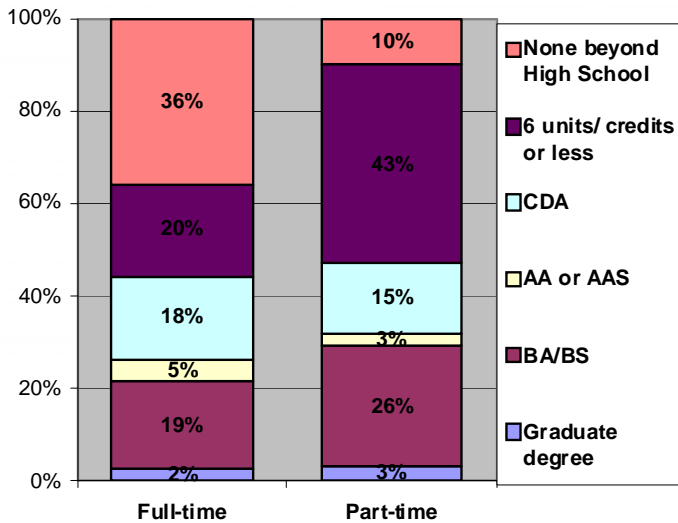
Full-time Lead Teacher Education Levels by Geographic Area



However, there is a noteworthy regional difference in full-time lead teacher education. Generally, teachers in Central and West Austin have achieved a higher level of education than those in East Austin. Less than a fifth of lead teachers in East Austin

have a college degree, and more than half have no college education. Conversely, over half of the lead teachers in Central and West Austin have at least a four-year degree.

Formal Child Development or Early Childhood Education of Lead Teacher

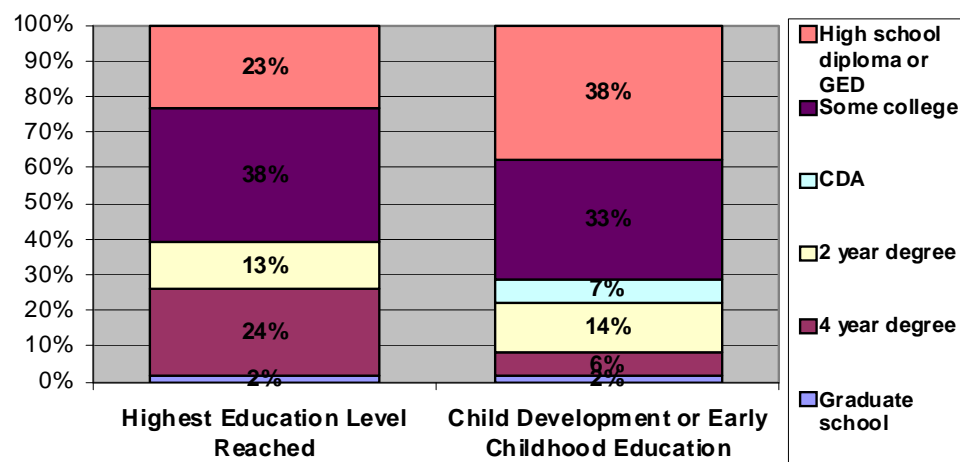


While part-time center lead teachers generally achieved a higher level of education, part-time and full-time centers had similar numbers of lead teachers who had received a formal degree or certificate in early childhood education or child development. The primary difference was the number of teachers who had received formal (i.e., college) credits and those who had had no training beyond high school. All teachers in licensed childcare centers in Travis County are required to complete 15 hours of professional development training

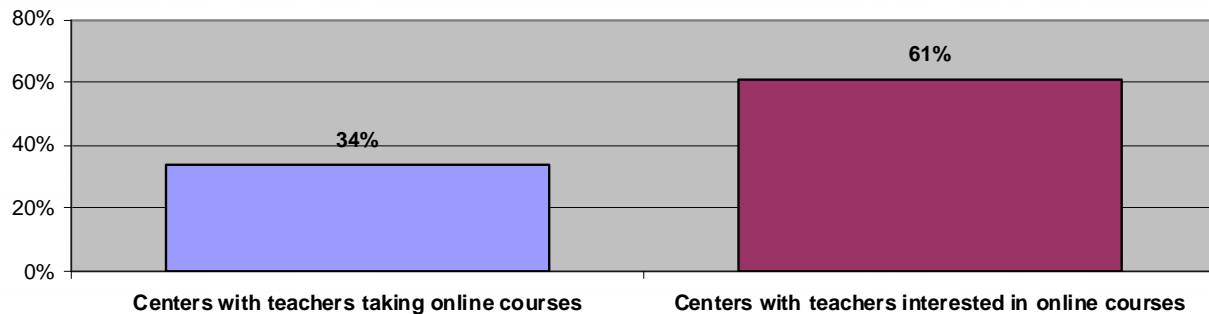
each year.

Educational Level of Assistant Teacher

More than 60% of assistant teachers were reported to have no college degree, with more than a third having no formal child development or early childhood education.



Interest in Online Formal Education

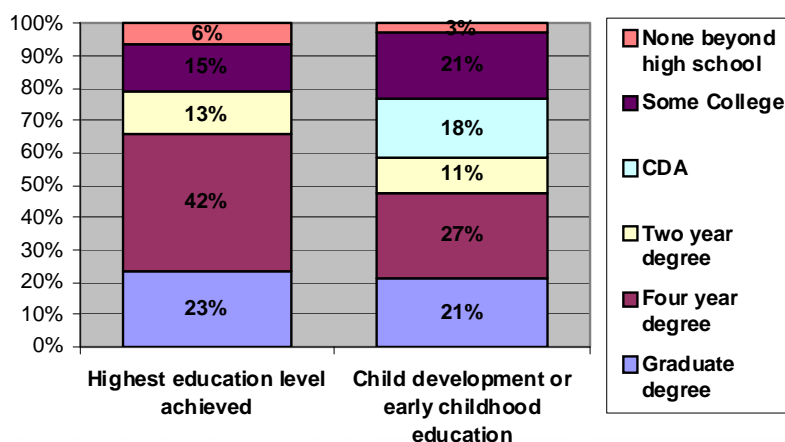


In addition, over half of the centers surveyed expressed that their teachers were interested in formal education online. This suggests that while fewer than half of the lead teachers in Travis County have a degree, there is interest in alternatives to traditional education that could work in a child care setting. While a number of directors expressed interest in online courses because of the ease of scheduling, many also noted that their teachers do not all have access to computers or the necessary computer skills. One center director explained:

We do find it hard to have so many teachers in school for reasons either because of getting coverage during the day or having to pay extra hours outside of the work day. As well as the amount of work that requires the use of a computer even if it is not an online course. Not all of our teachers own computers and we only have a few to share here.

While there is a lot of interest in furthering teacher education, the reality of working full-time while taking classes or working towards a degree is more complex.

Director Education



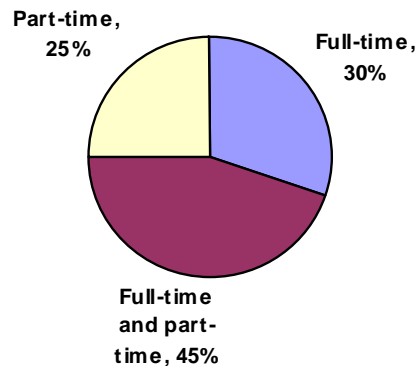
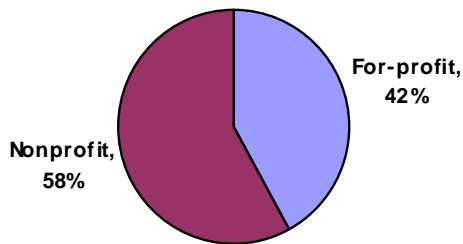
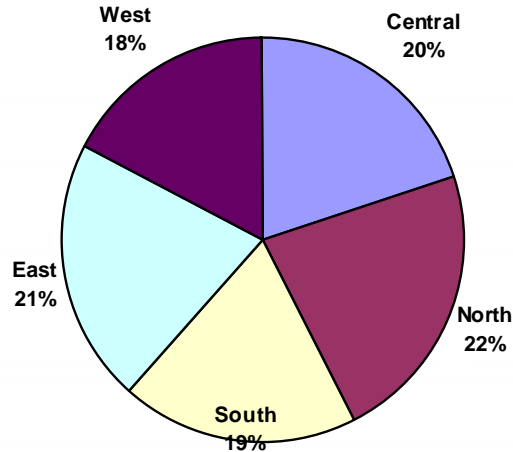
Directors

Nearly 80% of child care center directors had a degree as well as a formal early childhood education. The average hourly wage for a director was \$21.62. 84% of the survey respondents were center directors.

About Survey Participants

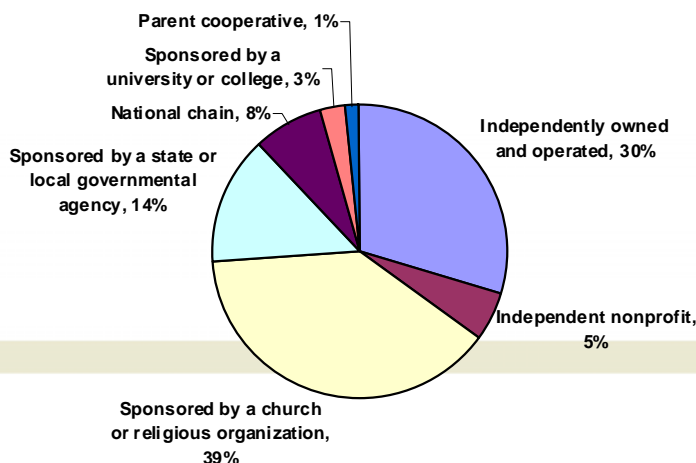
Electronic surveys were sent to 330 of the 348 licensed child care centers in Travis County. 77 individuals responded, representing a total of 81 centers. This is a return rate of 25%, representing 23% of all Travis County centers. Survey responses were received evenly from the different areas of Travis County, and matched up within 3% of the actual regional distribution of childcare centers.

Survey Response Geographical Distribution



A little more than half of the responding centers were for-profit, and a third of centers were full-time, a quarter part-time, and a little less than half were both full-time and part-time.

Center Types



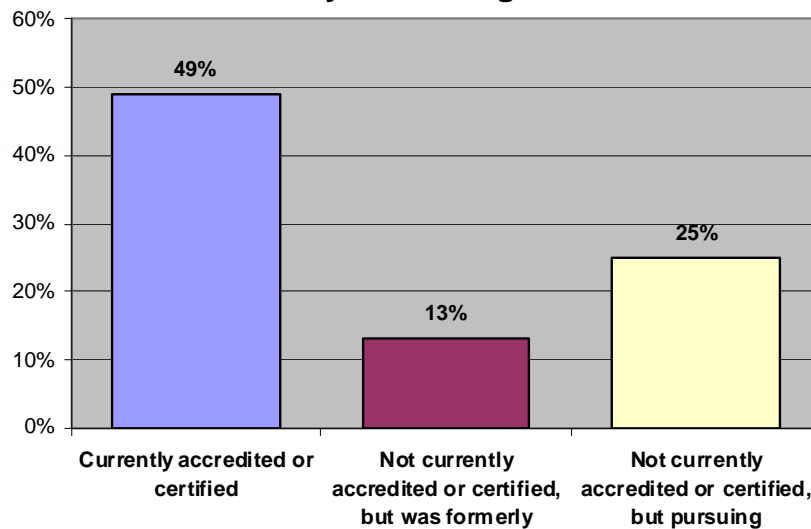
Types of Center

Most full-time for-profit centers are independently operated, while part-time and nonprofit centers are generally sponsored by a church or religious organization. Some sponsored programs cited free or reduced location fees from their sponsor.

Quality-Rated Programs

Of all the child care centers in Travis County, around 35% are accredited by NAEYC or certified by Texas Rising Star. Of the centers who responded to this survey, 42% were certified by these programs. Both of these programs have guidelines above and beyond Texas Licensing regulations, including more teacher training and lower classroom ratios. Given that our survey responses were a similar mix of both certified/accredited and non-certified/accredited programs, we can conclude that our results are a reliable snap-shot of center-based childcare in Travis County.

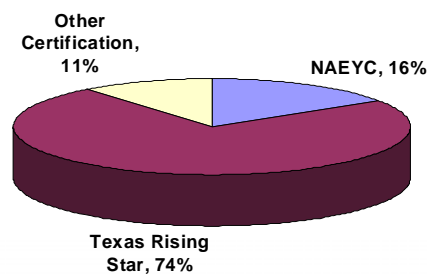
Quality-rated Programs



Nearly half of all centers who responded were accredited or certified by a professional organization, including, but not limited to, Texas Rising Star certified and NAEYC accredited. An additional 13% of centers were once certified or accredited, but are no longer, and a quarter are currently pursuing certification or accreditation.

Of the centers which are certified or accredited, three-quarters are Texas Rising Star certified, which contract to serve WorkForce subsidized children and meet requirements beyond licensing guidelines. 16% of quality-rated centers are NAEYC accredited, which is a national accreditation system for child care programs.

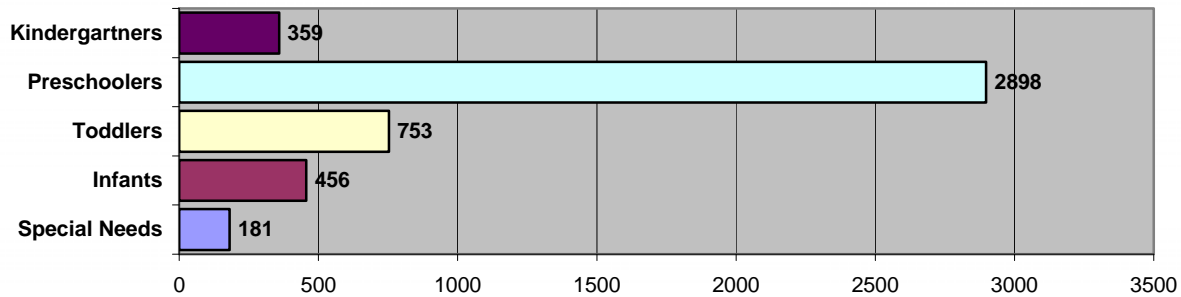
Types of Accreditation or Certification



Children in the Programs

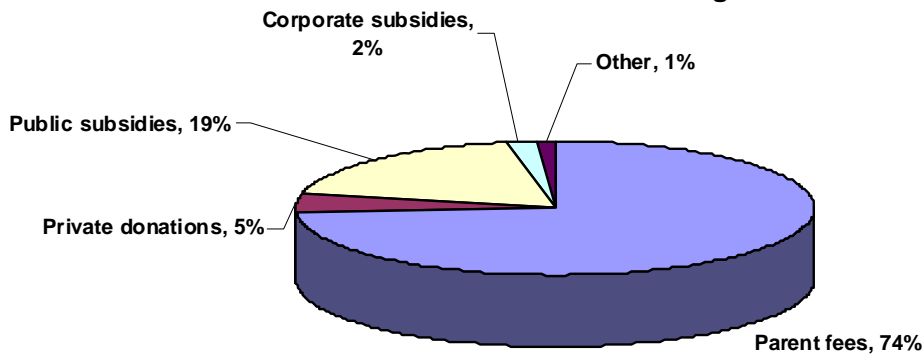
A total of 1,181 child care workers were represented in this survey, with 627 working full-time and 554 part-time. The programs represented 4,466 children from infants to kindergarteners. 65% of the children enrolled are preschoolers, or 2 to 4 year-olds.

Total Child Enrollment



Funding and Budgets

Center Source of Funding



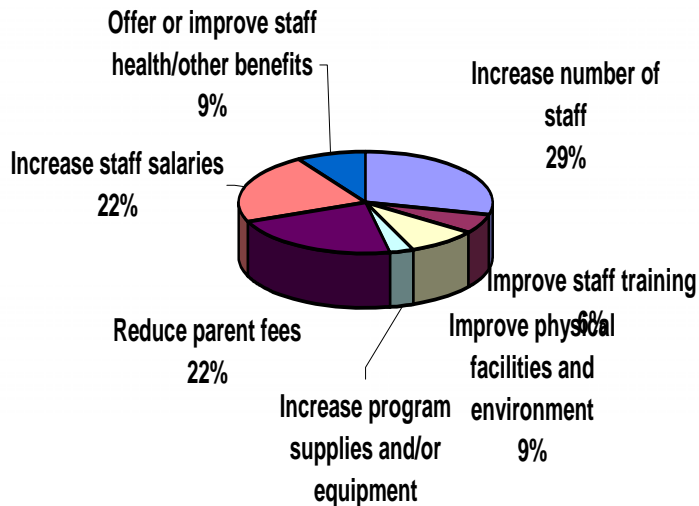
Funding Sources

Over a third of all centers reported parent fees as their sole source of funding, with over half citing parent fees as 95% or more of their funding. Conversely, a quarter of all centers reported less than half of their funding from parent fees, with nearly all of the rest made up through public subsidies.

Funding Priorities

Centers were asked to rate from 1-7 their priorities if more funding were available, with first being their top priority and 7 their last.

Top priority if more funding were available

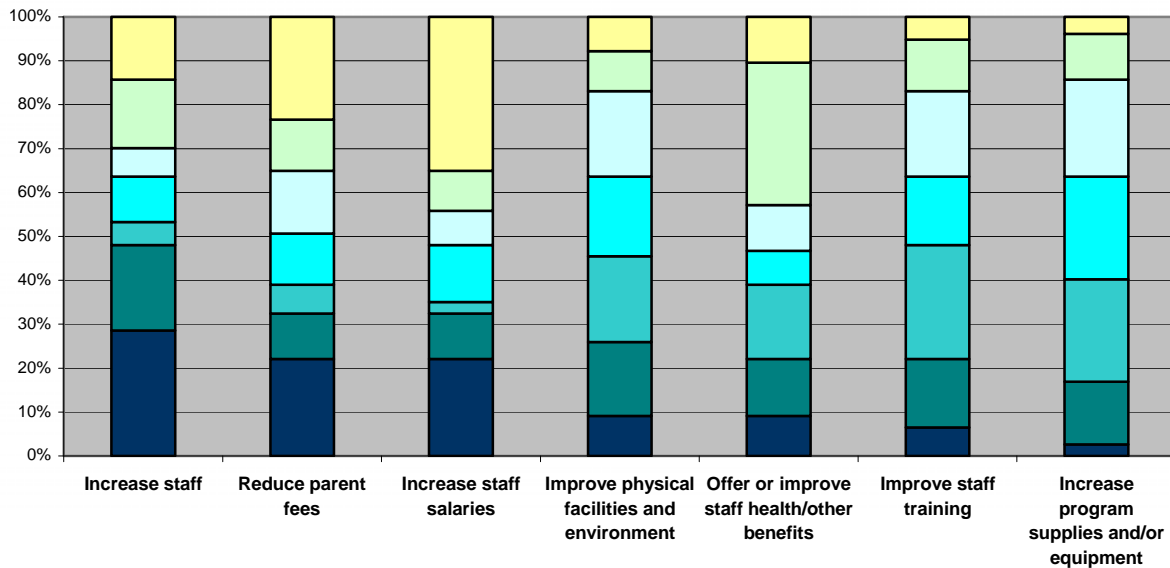


As seen above, most centers reported that if more funds were made available, they would reduce parent fees, increase the number of staff, or increase staff salaries. But as one center director pointed out:

In order to increase wages and benefits for staff we have to increase tuition - at some point we are going to max out what the families can afford to pay - what will happen to the staff at that point? There needs to be outside funding sources

While more than half of centers reporting parent fees as their main source of funding, 21% of centers placed 'reduce parent fees' and either 'increase number of staff' or 'increase staff salaries' as 2 of their top 3 priorities.

Funding Priorities



While first priorities tell a lot about which issues are important to child care in Travis County, by including the entire 1-7 rating for each priority there is a slightly different picture. The graph shows how each priority was rated by the centers, with the dark blue representing 1, their top priority, and fading to yellow, the last priority. So while 22% of centers would increase staff salaries if more funds were available, 35% placed salaries last on their list. In fact, the three priorities which were most often rated as first are also the ones which are also most often rated 7th, or the least important. The graph also shows that while fewer than 10% of centers reported improving staff training as their top priority; nearly 50% rated it in their top three.

Discussion of Results Accuracy of Results

Out of the centers that were emailed the survey, 25% responded, representing 24% of all centers (including those not receiving the survey due to technological or logistical reasons). To make the results about center teachers as reliable as possible, results to the question of 'how many teachers work at your center' were compared with each question about education and retention. If in any given question the number of teachers recorded did not fall within 20% of the total teachers working at the center, then those results were thrown out for that question. This was to ensure that the results were a reliable representation of each center and the results as a whole.