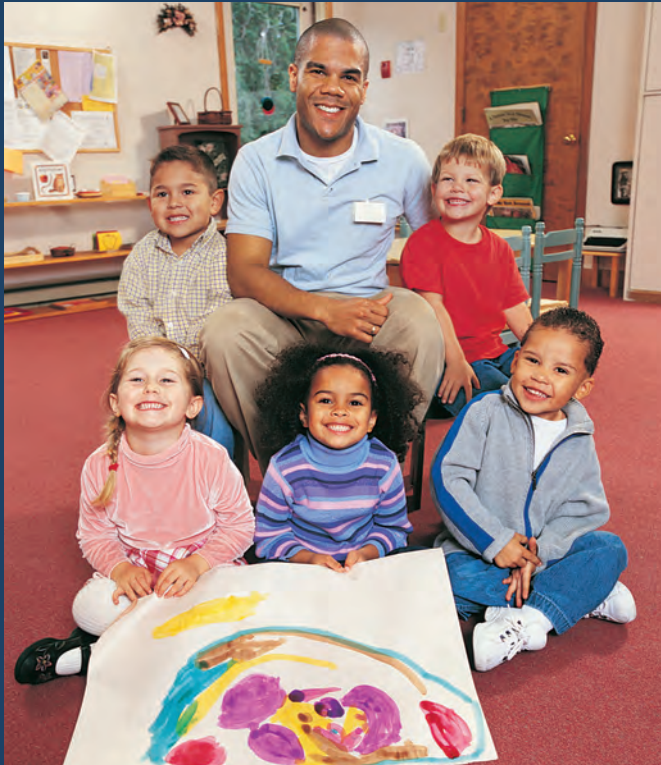


Enhancing Culturally Diverse Children's Access to High-Quality Programs

6



Exactostock/SuperStock

Pre-Test

1. The issues surrounding program monitoring for cultural competence are the sole responsibility of the director of the program or center. T/F
2. Early childhood teachers can do very little to affect public policies that impact young children and families living in poverty. T/F
3. There is a positive correlation between increased professional development and increased instructional quality. T/F
4. All federal and state early childhood education programs are basically the same in terms of their funding streams and the populations they serve. T/F
5. Quality rating improvement systems are used to evaluate teachers. T/F

Answers can be found at the end of this chapter.

Learning Objectives

By the time you reach the end of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the importance of access to high-quality programs for ethnic minority and culturally diverse children and families and describe the different types of programs that culturally diverse children attend.
2. Discuss the need for professional development strategies for building and maintaining cultural competency.
3. Explain how quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) program practices and policies can foster cultural competence among staff and within programs.

Introduction

Rosa sits quietly during the staff training being offered by her program. She is debating whether or not she should “speak up” about the changing demographics of the children now enrolling in the program. Increasingly, the children are coming from migrant-worker families. Just within this last school year, there have been three children who enrolled in her classroom and two others who enrolled in her colleague’s classroom.

These new children and families need social and education resources that are different from the resources needed by the primarily European-American, Midwestern families who have always been in the program. Yet, neither the program director nor the other teachers are talking about this. They are continuing to teach the students in the same way, using the same instruction techniques and materials, and they have the same expectations of the children’s families. During this meeting, one teacher states that Enrique’s mother is late sending back the health forms indicating whether he has had his yearly check-up: “His mother just doesn’t make the effort to make sure he is on track to be successful in school.”

Rosa debates what she should say, and how she should say it; she is the only ethnic minority teacher working at the center, and she doesn’t want to risk alienating herself from the other teachers. Rosa wonders how she can bring up this issue in a manner that ensures her director and the other teachers will take action to address the rising diversity.

This chapter focuses on the program practices and policies used to improve the quality of and access to early childhood programs for poor and ethnically and culturally diverse children. The chapter highlights newly developed accountability systems that have implications for how programs can become culturally competent. It focuses on how teachers can build the professional development skills that will strengthen their cultural competence and how programs can provide opportunities for training support to teachers to better instruct ethnically and culturally diverse children.

6.1 Types of Early Education Programs

Researchers from the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) have found that children attend a variety of early education programs, which are described in Table 6.1; the table provides information about the mission, funding, and eligibility criteria for each program. Presently, states receive federal Title I dollars from the U.S. Department of Education, which are intended to improve the academic outcomes for children at risk for school failure. As part of this larger mission, a portion of the funds can be used to finance preschoolers’ enrollment in ECE programs, including state pre-K, child care, and Head Start (Ewen & Matthews, 2007).

Table 6.1: Overview of Major Early Education Programs

Mission	
Head Start	Head Start seeks to lessen the detrimental effects of poverty on children's learning, health, and social development. The program also offers family support, such as employment counseling for parents and medical referrals for children. Initially, Head Start only served children age 3 to 5, but in 1995 a sub-program was created, Early Head Start, that was designed to serve infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Presently, Head Start is provided in every state.
Pre-K	Since the 1990s, there has been a rise in the number of states offering pre-K programs. The purpose of pre-K programs is to provide children with an education experience a year (or two) before kindergarten that will bring them up to par with national educational averages. In 2010, state-funded pre-K is provided in 39 states (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squire, 2011).
Subsidized Child Care	Throughout the decades, federal and state governments have played only an intermittent role in providing child care to working mothers. During World War II, the federal government invested in child care in order to support the women working in war-time industries; after the war, investment declined because women were encouraged to leave their jobs and return to the home. Child care is different from the other forms of early education because the cost for it is mainly paid by parent fees. However, some low-income children attend child care through the help of government subsidized child care vouchers. The philosophy behind our current system of subsidized child care is linked to the 1996 Personal Work and Responsibility Act, which reformed the nation's welfare system. Public funding for child care was developed expressly to provide children with supervision while their parents work.
Special Education Preschool	Preschool special education programs are designed to serve children with identifiable disabilities or developmental delays. Special education services for children have been around since the 1970s under the law that was then called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA; Danaher, 2004). However, there were concerns that under that law the disability criteria were not applicable or appropriate for use with preschool age children. In 1992, this federal law was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B (619), and it required states to serve children age 3 to 5 with disabilities and to incorporate a special disability category for this age group (Dunst, Hamby, Clow, & Fromewick, 2004).
Funding	
Head Start	The program is funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, which provides direct grants to local entities and bypasses state government. However, the program still works with state governments by funding state-level Head Start Collaboration Directors to facilitate collaboration with state and local governments.
Pre-K	Currently, no federal policy exists to financially support state pre-K programs. However, President Obama proposed a plan for Preschool Expansion. (See the "Real World Dilemma" feature box). In addition to Title I funds, states use a variety of other sources to fund pre-K, such as lottery proceeds (Georgia) or money from county tobacco taxes (California), and many states combine multiple funding streams, including federal child care dollars, Title I, and local property taxes to fund programs at the district level.

(continued)

Table 6.1: Overview of Major Early Education Programs (*continued*)

Funding	
Subsidized Child Care	Across the age groups of 0–5, the majority of middle- and upper-income children are enrolled in private child care that individual parents pay for out of pocket. Funding for subsidized child care comes from three main federal block-grants: the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). CCDBG receives the greatest funding. Subsidized child care funds are delivered through vouchers/certificates to parents. Parents can use these vouchers, along with a co-payment fee based on their income, to purchase a slot in a child care center of their choice.
Special Education Preschool	Federal dollars for special education come from the U.S. Department of Education in the Office of Special Education Programs, and these funds are awarded to states based on the number of children in the state who received special education services during the previous school year. Because federal funding of the program has declined during the last several decades, states have had to assume a larger portion of the costs.
Eligibility	
Head Start	Eligibility for the program is determined by the family's poverty status and other risk factors, and children can remain eligible for the program for multiple years even when their family circumstances change. The other risk factors that deem a family eligible for Head Start are determined by community needs assessments and may include homelessness, incarcerated parents, being an English language learner, having a developmental disability, being a ward of the state, or having parents with substance abuse problems.
Pre-K	The majority of state pre-K programs are targeted toward low-income 4-year-olds. Families must meet income requirements to be eligible. For Pre-K programs funded by Title I, children must meet the additional requirement of attending a school or living in a district that is eligible to receive such funds. Some states (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Oklahoma, and West Virginia) have enacted policies to offer pre-K services to all children regardless of their income.
Head Start	Eligibility for the program is determined by the family's poverty status and other risk factors, and children can remain eligible for the program for multiple years even when their family circumstances change. The other risk factors that deem a family eligible for Head Start are determined by community needs assessments and may include homelessness, incarcerated parents, being an English language learner, having a developmental disability, being a ward of the state, or having parents with substance abuse problems.
Special Education Preschool	Approximately 6% of children ages 3 to 5 have a developmental delay or disability (Danaher, 2007). Disability categories are well defined by the federal government, but states have flexibility in defining developmental delays, which can relate to physical, cognitive, communicative, social/emotional, or adaptive development. Because each state sets its own definition, there is variety across the states in the types of delays children can have and the number of children served (Danaher, 2007). There is also wide variation in the percentage of the population served in preschool special education, ranging, at ages 3 and 4, from a high of 14% in Wyoming to a low of 3% in Alabama, with an average across all 50 states of 5% (Danaher, 2007).

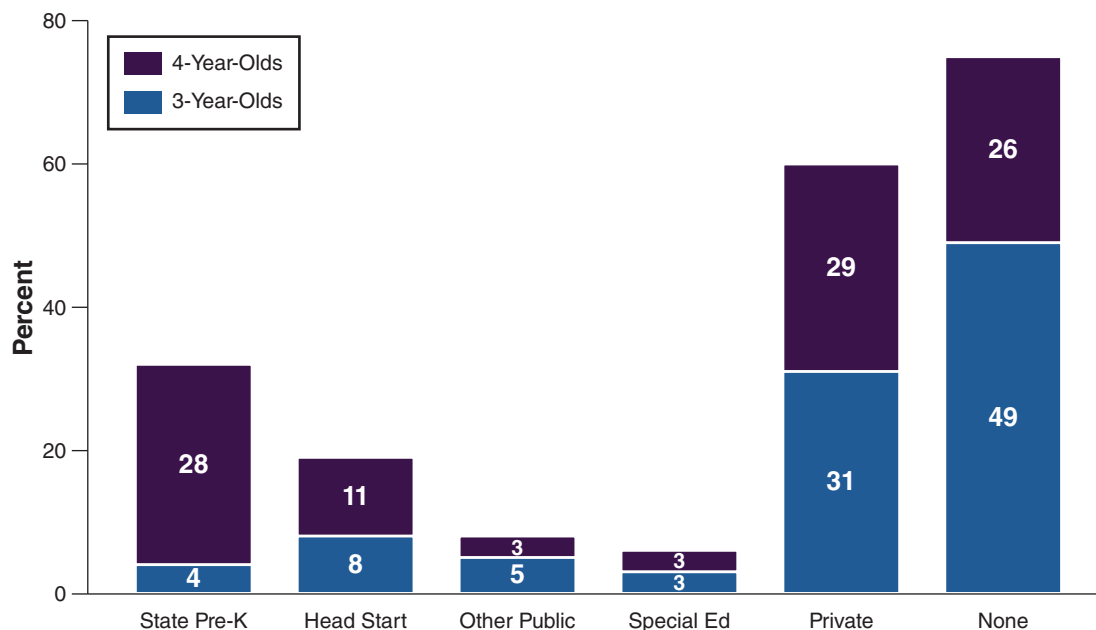
Source: Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2011). *The State of Preschool 2011: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Figure 6.1 shows the percentages of 3- and 4-year-olds that are enrolled in an early education program and the types of programs in which they are enrolled. It is important to note that most 3-year-olds (49%) are not enrolled in any kind of early education program. The 3-year-olds who are enrolled in early education programs are most likely to attend private child care programs or Head Start.

The story is a little different for 4-year-olds because the majority of 4-year-olds are enrolled in some type of early education, and most of them are in either private child care or state pre-K, along with a smaller percentage enrolled in Head Start. Overall, these data show that the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in a variety of early education programs. But are the children who attend these different types of early education programs the same? The answer to that question is no.

6.1: Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Old Children Enrolled in Early Education by Program Type

The availability of state pre-K programs for 4-year-olds might account for the dramatic difference in the percentage of children not attending any type of early childhood program. What other factors might explain the large increase in enrollments?



Source: Based on data from the National Institute for Early Education Research (2011).

The descriptions of various programs in Table 6.1 make clear that although all listed programs have the intention of building the educational capacity of young children, each is different in terms of its funding streams and eligibility requirements. As a result, the programs tend to serve a wide variety of students, with some programs, such as special education preschool, being targeted and specialized in terms of the population it serves.

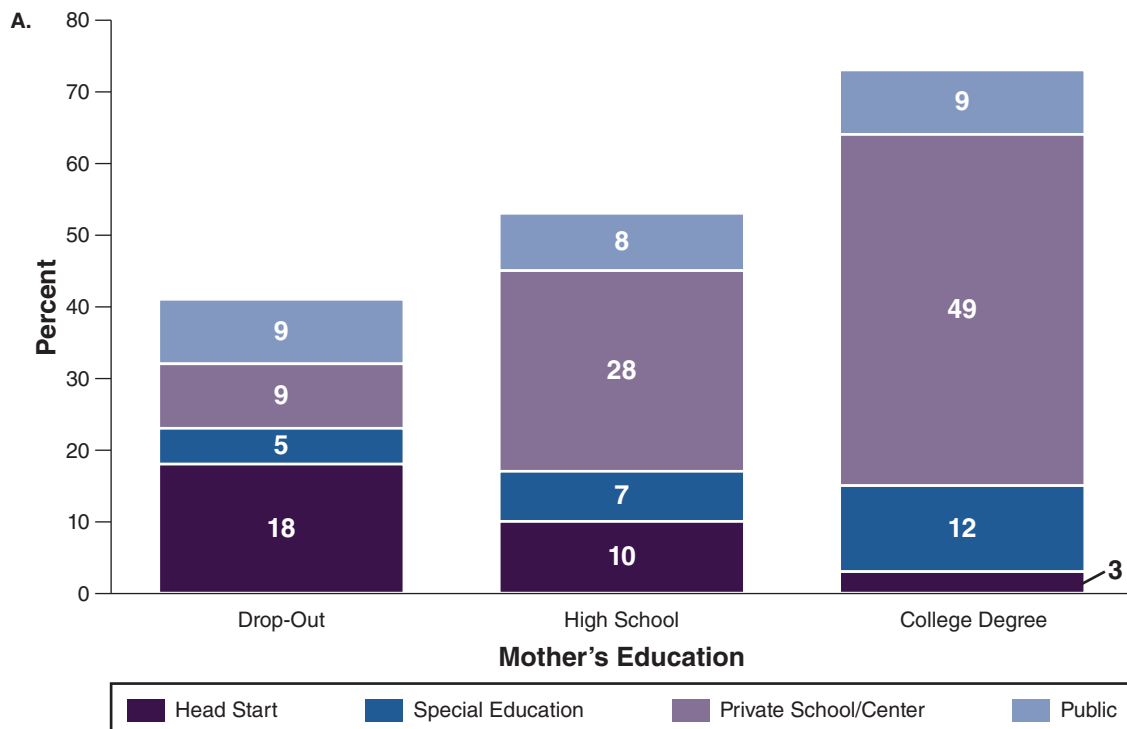
Cultural and Ethnic Minority Children's Access to Types of Early Education Programs

Because each of the early childhood education programs is different, there are differences in who they serve, which can be explained as children and families being “selected” to enroll in certain programs based on the program’s mission and eligibility criteria. Throughout the development of these programs, there has been consistent evidence that differential selection has been an issue. Even decades ago, Hoefforth (1994), who analyzed data from a sample of Head-Start-eligible families who had participated in a national survey during the 1990s, found that children with certain demographic characteristics were more likely to be enrolled in Head Start; more specifically, she found that children from two-parent families with no earners, children whose mothers were in a job training program, and children who were Black were more likely to be enrolled.

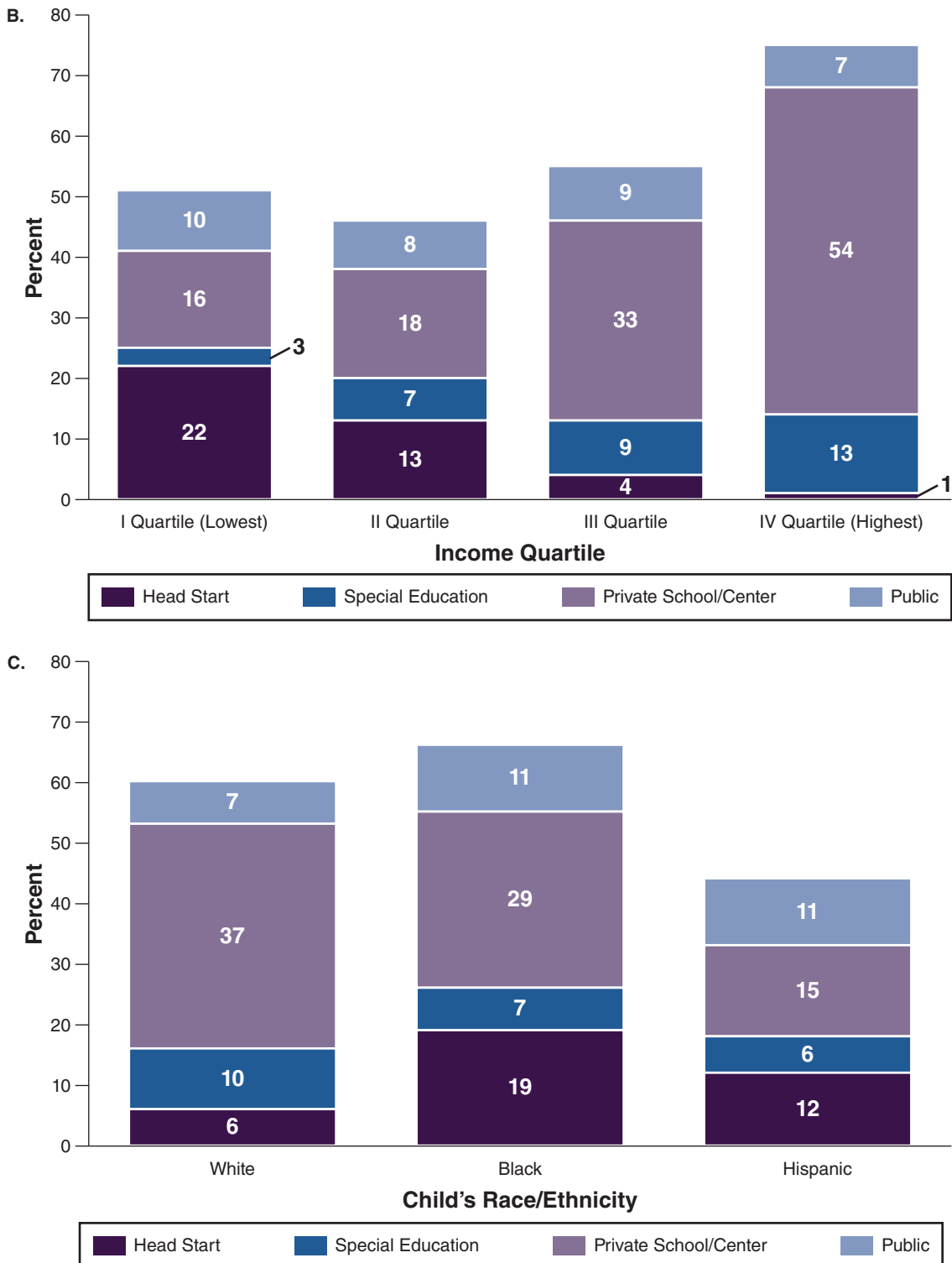
More recently, national census data also confirms that there are programmatic differences in that children who are poor and/or ethnic minorities not only have limited access to early education programs, but they are also mostly enrolled in certain types of programs. In fact, lower percentages of children whose mothers are high school dropouts are enrolled in any type of early education program (Figure 6.2 A). In addition, fewer children from families in lower income quartiles are enrolled in early education compared to children from the higher income quartiles (Figure 6.2 B). Lastly, there is a difference in enrollment by race and ethnicity: Fewer Latino children are enrolled in early education as compared to Black and European-American children (Figure 6.2 C).

6.2: Percentages of Children Enrolled in ECE Programs Based on Mother's Education, Family Income, and Race/Ethnicity

Children most likely to be enrolled in an ECE program have mothers who have completed at least high school (A), come from higher income families (B), and are not Hispanic (C).



6.2: Percentages of Children Enrolled in ECE Programs Based on Mother's Education, Family Income, and Race/Ethnicity (*continued*)



Source: Based on data from NHES ECPP 2005 Survey.

What is also interesting to notice about Figures 6.2 A, B, and C is the differences in the types of early education program in which children are enrolled. For example, Head Start enrolls children that exhibit greater socioeconomic needs (as indicated by lower maternal education, lower incomes, and being a minority, respectively) than children enrolled in private child care, public pre-K, or special education preschool. Figure 6.2 A shows that Head Start serves the largest percentage of mothers who dropped out of high school; Figure 6.2 B shows that Head Start serves more families with incomes in the lowest quartile; and Figure 6.2 C shows that the program serves more Black children.

On the other hand, public pre-K programs serve nearly equal percentages of preschoolers across mother's education levels and income quartiles (Figures 6.2 A and B, respectively). Interestingly, according to Figures 6.2 A and B, there is a tendency for special education programs to serve higher percentages of families in which mothers have college degrees and who are within the highest income quartile. Lastly, preschoolers enrolled in private child care centers (non-subsidized) have the highest percentages of children whose mothers have either a high school or college education and families with incomes in the third or fourth quartile (Figure 6.2 A and B, respectively).

The demographic differences between programs are even more apparent across a wider range of issues when children are in kindergarten. Sample data from a research study conducted by Curenton, Dong, and Shen (2013) illustrates the demographic differences across the program type (Table 6.2). The data is based on a statistical comparison across children who had attended Head Start, pre-K, and child care, and it reveals that overall the kindergartners who had been enrolled in Head Start the year before kindergarten showed more child and family risk factors than the children who had been enrolled in pre-K, child care, or no early childhood program (described as "None"). Specifically, kindergartners who had been enrolled in Head Start were more likely to have a disability and live in households with more siblings and younger mothers with lower education levels, and they were less likely to be working for pay.

In addition, Head Start children were more likely to be ethnic minorities (i.e., Black, Latinos, or Asians/Other), and on average they started attending early education programs at a later age than their peers who had been enrolled in the other programs; lastly, the Head Start children's families were more likely to be using public assistance programs like free or reduced lunch programs, food stamps, and welfare. These results confirm that Head Start serves the neediest population of children, among all of the early education programs. When examining the effects of this program and the outcomes for these children, the combined level of risk factors and hardships these children face must be considered.

Table 6.2: Comparison of Risk Factors of Children Who had Attended Various ECE Programs

Child and Family Characteristics at Kindergarten	Early Education Program Child Attended Before Kindergarten	Percentage or Average with Risk Factor
Percent of children with a disability	Head Start	18%
	Pre-K	14%
	Child care	13%
	None	11%

(continued)

Table 6.2: Comparison of Risk Factors of Children Who had Attended Various ECE Programs (continued)

Child and Family Characteristics at Kindergarten	Early Education Program Child Attended Before Kindergarten	Percentage or Average with Risk Factor
Percent of Black children	Head Start	34%
	Pre-K	17%
	Child care	9%
	None	13%
Percent of Hispanic children	Head Start	23%
	Pre-K	16%
	Child care	11%
	None	27%
Percent of Asian/other children	Head Start	13%
	Pre-K	4%
	Child care	7%
	None	12%
Percent of children's mothers who worked for pay	Head Start	61%
	Pre-K	73%
	Child care	73%
	None	60%
Average years of mother's education	Head Start	13
	Pre-K	16
	Child care	16
	None	14
Percent of families who received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Head Start	14%
	Pre-K	3%
	Child care	2%
	None	7%
Percent of families who received food stamps	Head Start	39%
	Pre-K	9%
	Child care	5%
	None	17%

(continued)

Table 6.2: Comparison of Risk Factors of Children Who had Attended Various ECE Programs (continued)

Child and Family Characteristics at Kindergarten	Early Education Program Child Attended Before Kindergarten	Percentage or Average with Risk Factor
Percent of children receiving free/reduced lunch	Head Start	66%
	Pre-K	23%
	Child care	13%
	None	37%

Source: Analysis derived from unweighted sample data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Cohort from Curren, S. M., Dong, N., & Shen, X. (2013, March). Do peer academic achievement effects mediate long-term education outcomes? Invited lecture presented at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.

Need for Expanded Access to Early Education

Even though the federal government spends billions of dollars on early education, not all the children who need access to such programs to increase their school readiness skills have the opportunity to enroll. Because existing major early education programs do not have the capacity to serve all eligible children, child advocates have been calling to expand children's access to high-quality programs by making larger federal investments in early education.

President Obama's 2011 federal budget proposal included approximately \$22 billion for early education. Table 6.3 describes the amount proposed for each program, along with the amounts that were actually appropriated in 2008 and 2010. What is most interesting about the information in Table 6.3 is the range of programs that are a part of the early education network, such as the Department of Defense Child Care program, the Home Visiting program, the Child Care Food Program, which almost all Head Start and subsidized child care programs participate in, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit that any family with a child is eligible to receive.

Table 6.3: Spending on Children Under Age 5 by Major Federal Early Childhood Programs

Program	2008	2010	2011 Federal Budget
Head Start (excluding Early Head Start)	\$6.2 billion	\$6.7 billion*	\$7.2 billion*
Early Head Start	688 million	1 billion*	1.7 billion*
Child care subsidies	5.2 billion	5.7 billion*	6.5 billion*
Child Care Food Program (CCFP)	1.3 billion	1.4 billion	1.5 billion

(continued)

Table 6.3: Spending on Children Under Age 5 by Major Federal Early Childhood Programs (continued)

Program	2008	2010	2011 Federal Budget
Tax credits (CDCTC and DCAP)	2.2 billion	2.2 billion	Expected increase since Obama proposal raises CTCDC eligibility limits
DoD Child Care	300 million	750 million	800 million
Title I preschool	400 million	500 million*	550 million*
Preschool special education (IDEA Part B, Sect. 619)	374 million	574 million*	374 million
Early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities (IDEA Part C)	436 million	632 million*	649 million*
Home Visiting	0	100 million	250 million
Total**	\$17.1 billion	\$19.5 billion	\$21.7 billion***
*Totals include additional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for FY 2010 and FY 2011. **Note that part of the reason for the significant increase from 2008 is ARRA funding, which accounts for \$1.4 billion of the 2010 funding and \$1.6 billion of the 2011 funding. ***This total includes tax credits continuing at 2010 levels. President Obama has announced his intention to increase the credit amount, “nearly doubling” its value (see Karolak, 2010, p. 40).			

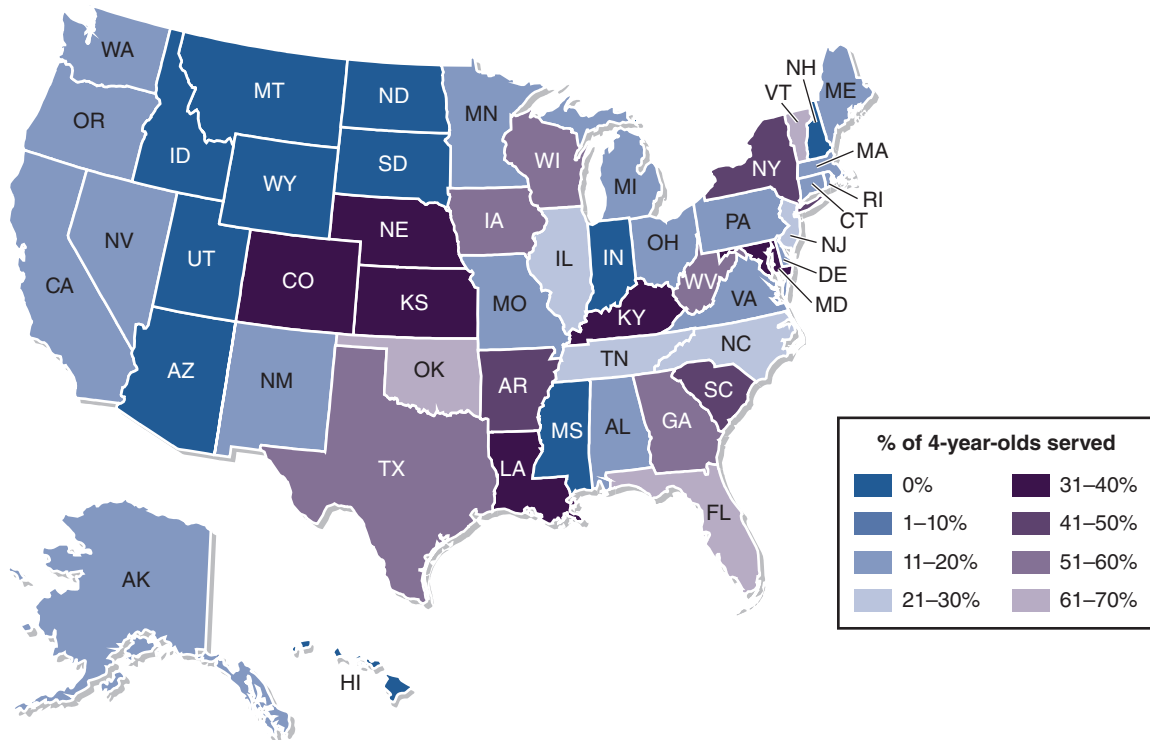
Source: Haskins, R., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Investing in young children: New directions for federal preschool and early childhood education policy. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

What Table 6.3 does not show, however, is the amount of state investments made to fund early education, most notably state pre-K programs. According to NIEER’s *The State of Preschool 2012*, in the 2011–2012 school year, combined total state spending on pre-K was approximately \$5.1 billion (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012), which is a decline from previous years; after a decade of growth, state pre-K funding has stalled and the average state spending per child has dropped to below \$4,000.

As shown in Figure 6.3, there is a wide discrepancy among states in the number of children served by state pre-K. Because we know that children from low- or moderate-income ethnic minority families in which the mother has a lower level of education have less access to early education, there is a strong need to expand access, and funding, so that all these children can be enrolled in high-quality education programs.

6.3: Percentage of 4-Year-Olds Served in State Pre-K Programs

The number of 4-year-olds enrolled in state pre-K programs varies widely from state to state, with some states serving as many as 71% of their 4-year-olds, while others don't provide ECE programs to any 4-year-olds.



Source: Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2011). *The state of preschool 2011*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Spotlight on Research: Expanding Access via Targeted Versus Universal Programs

The impetus for offering any type of preschool expansion often comes from framing the problem in terms of the **achievement gap**, which can be operationally defined as the difference between the average achievement of middle-income children and that of lower-income children. Poppe and Clothier (2005) write that the achievement gap creates a scenario in which a child that has had early childhood opportunities comes to kindergarten more socially, academically, and emotionally prepared than a child who did not have early childhood opportunities. The push to expand access to preschool by providing early childhood education opportunities to children who are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level is one attempt to narrow the achievement gap.

Although most researchers, policy makers, and practitioners would agree that access to early education programs should be expanded, there is considerable debate regarding how society should go about expanding this access. Presently, two models of expansion are being debated: targeted expansion and universal expansion. A **targeted preschool program** is one that allows for only specific groups of young

(continued)

Spotlight on Research: Expanding Access via Targeted Versus Universal Programs (*continued*)

children to attend based on certain eligibility criteria, such as being low income, having a disability or developmental delay, being an English language learner, or facing other social hardships or family hardships, like living in a single-parent family or having incarcerated parent(s). Our nation's most common preschool programs are targeted programs, including Head Start, targeted state pre-K programs, and special education preschool programs.

In contrast, in **universal programs** there are no eligibility criteria set; universal programs would operate akin to the way that our current K–12 elementary school system operates, meaning they are seen as entitlement programs provided to all citizens. Currently, only five states offer universal pre-K (Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, West Virginia, and Vermont). Bassok (2010) explains that in order for preschool to narrow the achievement gap, programs must be specifically targeted toward low-income children, or low-income children must benefit from universal programs more than middle-income children benefit. Table 6.4 compares the two types of programs in more detail.

Table 6.4: What's the Difference Between Targeted vs. Universal Programs?

	Targeted Programs	Universal Programs
Eligibility	Intended to serve children who are at risk ¹ for academic difficulty, such as children who are from low- to moderate-income families, children who have special needs, children who are DLLs, or children who are homeless.	Intended to serve all children regardless of socioeconomic needs or academic risks.
Examples of programs	• Head Start • Subsidized child care • Special education • Nearly all state pre-K programs	• Private child care paid for by parent fees • Georgia Pre-K Program, Florida Voluntary Pre-K Program, West Virginia Universal Pre-K, Oklahoma Pre-K, Alabama's Voluntary Pre-K Program, various local pre-K initiatives within states
Student population	• Serve more minority children • Serve a higher proportion of poor children	• Serve more White children • Serve a lower proportion of poor children
Indicators of quality	• Shorter classes • Teachers with fewer years of education • Lower teacher-child ratios • Higher quality teacher-child interactions and instructional quality • Better classroom learning environments (such as furnishings, room arrangement, gross motor equipment, hands-on play-based learning materials)	• Longer classes • Teachers with more years of education • Higher teacher-child ratios • Lower quality teacher-child interactions and instructional quality • Poorer classroom learning environments (such as furnishings, room arrangement, gross motor equipment, hands-on play-based learning materials)

(*continued*)

Table 6.4: What's the Difference Between Targeted vs. Universal Programs? (continued)

	Targeted Programs	Universal Programs
Child outcomes	• Lower gains in children's expressive language • Equal in terms of gains in receptive vocabulary, literacy, and numeracy	• Greater gains in children's expressive language • Equal in terms of gains in receptive vocabulary, literacy, and numeracy
¹ Each state and/or program defines what the risk factors are; therefore, the list can be exhaustive.		

Source: Student population and quality data based on research by Dotterer, A. M., Burchinal, M., Bryant, D., Early, D., & Pianta, R. (2013). *Universal and targeted pre-kindergarten programmes: a comparison of classroom characteristics and child outcomes*. Early Child Development and Care. Advance online publication. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2012.698388>

The arguments in the targeted versus universal preschool debate can be summarized according to three models of preschool policy proposed by researchers in the early education field:

1. The *limited targeted rationale*, which restricts targeted preschool to academically at-risk children who meet certain income eligibility criteria;
2. The *broader targeted rationale*, which still targets at-risk children but expands eligibility beyond income to include other risk factors like developmental delays, disabilities, family hardships, and so on; and
3. The *universal rationale*, which is modeled on our current K–12 system and argues for the provision of publicly funded preschool education to all children. Hurwitz (2010) explains that researchers tend to fall in line within one of these three models when asked to take a stance on the targeted versus universal debate, and their stance on the models is described below.

Spotlight on Research: Researchers' Views on the Preschool Debate

Limited Targeted Rationale

This model is associated with economists like James Heckman and Robert Lynch. In describing Heckman's position, Kirp (2009) writes:

Heckman makes the economist's case for offering good, state-supported prekindergarten to disadvantaged youngsters. But for him, universal pre-K is another story. "Children from advantaged environments receive substantial early investment" from their parents, he argues, and so "there is little basis for providing universal programs at zero cost, although some advocate such a policy." (p. 87)

Heckman's argument centers on the notion that children from advantaged homes are already receiving many educational benefits. For example, as shown in Figure 6.2 B, higher-income families already participate in early childhood education programs at a higher rate. Instead, Heckman argues that preschool programs should be targeted to benefit those who are not already receiving the education they need. Robert Lynch (2004/2005) explains that while the program would initially cost around \$19 billion per year, in less than 20 years the program would pay for itself. Furthermore, after 30 years, the program would double its benefit.

(continued)

Spotlight on Research: Researchers' Views on the Preschool Debate (continued)

Longitudinal research from three model early education programs (e.g., Perry Preschool Project, the Abecedarian Project, and the Chicago Parent-Child Centers) has shown that children who were enrolled in these programs were less likely to repeat a grade, less likely to need special education services during elementary school, less likely to be involved in delinquent activities, less likely to be victims of child abuse, less likely to smoke cigarettes, and less likely to need welfare or be unemployed (Barnett, 2008; Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001; Campbell & Ramey, 1994, 1995; Currie, 2001; Currie & Thomas, 1995). This body of research documents that when low-income, academically at-risk preschoolers have access to high-quality early education programs, there are positive benefits not only for those individual children but also for society at large.

Broader Targeted Rationale

Janet Currie argues for what can be described as a broader targeted preschool program that incorporates more individuals based on a wider variety of eligibility criteria. Currie's (2001) assessment concludes:

It would also be a good idea to extend eligibility to some groups of children who are not poor but are vulnerable to educational failure for other reasons: children at risk of abuse or neglect; children of high school dropouts; and children with limited English-language proficiency. (p. 235)

By extending preschool to this broader, yet still targeted population, the country would ensure that all groups at risk for educational failure are given support, and the research evidence still supports that these children benefit from preschool as well (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001, 2002).

Universal Rationale

Steven Barnett advocates for a universal model of preschool education, stating, "Programs for the poor are poor programs" (quoted in Kirp, 2009, p. 88). Therefore, his rationale is that in order to ensure that low-income children are provided a high-quality preschool education, society has to ensure that the programs are designed to serve middle-income children because the programs for these children are of higher standards. However, empirical results described in Table 6.4 from Dotterer et al. (2013) demonstrate that Barnett's adage is not necessarily true when targeted versus universal programs are actually compared.

Others, namely Ackerman, Barnett, Hawkinson, Brown, & McGonigle (2009), also lay out an argument for universalizing preschool. Rather than basing their argument on empirical evidence comparing the quality of the two types of programs, they frame their argument in the context of how a universal preschool program will garner more **public will**, or public support from most citizens, than a targeted program. These researchers argue that the general public is (a) less likely to support a targeted program and that (b) middle-income families, especially those in the second quartile (Figure 6.2 B), have similar access to preschool and face many of the same education challenges as students living in poverty. Furthermore, Michael Lester (2007) makes the argument that other children beyond those selected for the targeted programs are not attending early education programs:

[W]hen a family's budget is tight, preschool becomes unaffordable. Less than half of low-income toddlers attend preschool, but half of middle-class four-year-olds and three-quarters from high income families (earning \$75,000 or more) attend preschool. (p. 27)

(continued)

Spotlight on Research: Researchers' Views on the Preschool Debate (continued)

Lester argues that partial vouchers should be allowed for families that fall slightly above the poor income bracket but still do not make enough to afford a preschool education. Empirical research by Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Dawson (2005) explain that specific groups of children known to possess certain academic risk factors benefited the most from Oklahoma's universal preschool program; for instance, Latino children, Black children who were enrolled in full-day programs, and children who were receiving free/reduced price lunch showed sharper gains in their academic achievement compared to their peers who were not academically at risk.

Despite the appeal that a universal expansion might have with the public, there are some unintended consequences to consider. One example is the **Matthew Effect** (see Rigney, 2010), a phenomenon of initial advantage leading to further advantage—with the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” widening over time.

Ceci and Papierno (2005) explain that the Matthew Effect can occur when social programs designed for the poor are universalized. For example, if all preschools were universalized then the achievement gap could be widened, unless, as Bassok (2010) explains, children who are at risk for academic failure benefit *more* than their classmates who are not at risk. Another question is whether society would reap as high of a return on the investment if the program were expanded to the entire population instead of focusing it on a targeted group of at-risk children who are known to cost society the most in terms of remedial education, receipt of social services, and other social problems in adolescence and adulthood. Some economic researchers, like Heckman (2005), argue that the return on a universal program would not be as great as the return on a targeted program.

The Real World Dilemma feature, “What’s Your Opinion on Obama’s Plan for Universal Preschool?” provides an opportunity for you to consider how the arguments in this debate apply to government policy.

Source: Hurwitz, A. (2010). Targeted vs. Universal: Why Science and Not Politics Should Guide Preschool Policy. Unpublished Manuscript.

Real World Dilemma: What’s Your Opinion on Obama’s Plan for Universal Preschool?

In his February 2013 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama described a plan for the Expansion of Early Education for All. The plan includes the following points:

- *Providing high-quality preschool for every child:* Obama’s plan proposes new federal-state cost-sharing partnerships that would expand each state’s ability to provide high-quality early education to all low- and moderate-income 4-year-olds whose families are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The federal poverty level (100%) for a family of 4 is around \$23,000 a year. So, if you’re a family of 4 making \$46,000 a year, you’re at 200% of poverty. (Conversely, if you’re a family of 4 making \$11,500, you’re at 50% of the poverty level.) Given that the average annual cost of center-based child care for a 4-year-old ranges from approximately \$3,900 in Mississippi to nearly \$11,700 in Massachusetts (Child Care Aware of America, 2012), families living in poverty in Massachusetts would have to spend nearly half of their yearly income on child care, leaving hardly any money left for other daily necessities like food, housing, and clothing.

(continued)

Real World Dilemma: What's Your Opinion on Obama's Plan for Universal Preschool? *(continued)*

- The U.S. Department of Education will allocate these expansion dollars to states based on their number of 4-year-olds and funds will then be distributed to local school districts and other partner providers to implement the preschool program. States will be given the incentive to expand these preschool services to reach additional middle-class children and/or to provide full-day kindergarten services. Funds are intended to ensure that children have access to high-quality programs; therefore, state preschool programs would be required to meet the following quality benchmarks:
 - Employ qualified teachers who are well-trained and paid on par with K-12 teachers
 - Meet the state-level standards for early learning
 - Present a plan to implement a comprehensive data and assessment system that effectively evaluates and reviews programs
 - Have small class sizes and low teacher-child ratios
 - Follow a rigorous curriculum
 - Offer comprehensive health and related services
- *Expansion of Early Head Start:* This plan will also make new federal investments in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships through competitive grants to local communities that meet the highest quality of providing services to children age 0–3. Funds will be awarded based on a competitive basis to those programs that would provide new, full-day, comprehensive services that meet the needs of working families.
- *Expansion of home-visiting programs for at-risk children and families:* The third aspect of the plan is to expand access to voluntary home-visiting programs for families whose children are vulnerable for health risks, such as illness, developmental disabilities, or developmental delays.

Obama's plan calls for the federal government to expand funding for access to high-quality preschool for children who are 200% or below of the federal poverty level. The former Commissioner of the Institute for Education Sciences under George W. Bush, Grover Whitehurst, provides [more detail](#) about the rationale for focusing on the low- to moderate-income bracket.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you think about the plan for universal preschool? Do you think this will help ensure that all children, including at-risk children, will be ready for school?
2. Are there other things you would suggest the federal and state governments should do to ensure that children, especially children with the greatest need, experience high-quality early education (e.g., providing more special education services or paying preschool teachers a higher pay)?

Early Education's Alignment With High-Quality Elementary Education: The Pre-K to Third Grade Continuum

Not only is there a need for ensuring that low- to moderate-income children have access to high-quality early childhood education, these children also need access to high-quality elementary education. Elementary schools serving large numbers of children living in poverty have student bodies that perform less well on indicators of student achievement, such as academic scores on reading and math tests. The average reading scores for fourth-graders enrolled in schools where

over 75% of the student body receives free/reduced lunch (called *high-poverty schools*) are significantly lower than the scores of students enrolled in *low-poverty schools*, or schools where 25% or fewer students receive free/reduced lunch. More specifically, in 2009, only 14% of fourth-graders from high-poverty schools were deemed proficient in reading compared to 50% of fourth-graders in low-poverty schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

This national data highlights the fact that elementary schools that have high levels of children in poverty have more difficulty helping their students achieve academic proficiency. In addition, research shows that this inequality in education continues on throughout high school; students enrolled in high-poverty schools are nearly two times more likely to be taught by teachers that do not have training in the core subject matter that they are teaching (Almy & Theokas, 2010).

Research demonstrates that it is not only the early education program but also the follow-up attendance in a high-quality elementary school that leads to higher educational attainment and child well-being (Curenton, Dong, & Shen, 2013; Reynolds & Temple, 2008). Without attending high-quality elementary schools, all the gains that children may have made during preschool (or even full day kindergarten) are at risk for “fading out” (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2005; Rathbun, West, & Hausken, 2004). Therefore, the need for a continuation of high-quality education into the elementary school grades is crucial.

There are several explanations for why such “fade out” effects might occur (Kauerz, 2006; Brooks-Gunn, 2003). One reason that fade out might occur later in elementary school is that early childhood education, which is typically delivered as a 4- to 6-hour educational intervention within a center, cannot be a “magic medicine” that inoculates low-income children from all the environmental risks and hardships that are present in their daily lives. A second reason has to do with the process of teaching in the elementary school environment; teachers must teach toward the skills of the “average” student. If there are children in the classroom who are not prepared for the curriculum because they have not had access to early education experiences, then teachers must lower their instruction in order to ensure that the unprepared children can follow the curriculum.

A third reason for fade out most directly has to do with the quality of the elementary school into which children matriculate. Placements into public elementary schools are based on residential location, and because affluent residences are typically congregated into one section of town and low-income residences are congregated into another section of town, children from those low-income neighborhoods tend to attend schools that have fewer resources (Clements, Reynolds, & Hickey, 2004; Lee & Burkman, 2002). The benefits of early education programs can be undermined by the fact that these children attend lower-quality schools (Curenton, Dong, & Shen, 2013; Currie & Thomas, 2000; Lee & Loeb, 1995). Therefore, it is critical for preschool teachers and K-3 teachers to collaborate on curriculum, assessments, and transition to maximize the learning foundation set in the early years.

The [Foundation for Child Development](#) has been instrumental in leading the charge nationally and across states in terms of pre-K–3 (also referred to as P–3) alignment. The foundation has funded state efforts in pre-K to 3 strategic program alignment in Maryland, California, and Washington, which have led to these states being prime examples of the long-term benefits and success stories that result when education leaders and policy makers collaborate to link the curriculum and professional development efforts in early education with those efforts in early elementary school (Pre-K Coalition, 2011). We will look next in some detail at professional development in early childhood education.

6.2 Professional Development for Early Childhood Teachers

There is variety of teacher educational backgrounds and credentials in the ECE field. Compare, for example, the descriptions of two teachers. Diana went to college and majored in child development. After working in a state pre-K program for three years, she has decided to go back to college to obtain her master's degree in special education because she wants to become certified to teach children with social-emotional and cognitive delays in a special education pre-K class. Rachel, on the other hand, has been working in a child care center for the past 15 years. She has her high school diploma and a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, but now she is enrolling in an online university to get her bachelor's degree because she is striving to meet the teacher qualification mandates for the Head Start program. Both of these teachers are working in the field, even though the two have different degrees and certifications.

Components of Professional Development

Professional development (PD) can be characterized as having three components: (1) education, (2) training, and (3) certification. Teachers engage in these components in order to be legally permitted to teach and to improve their instruction. Table 6.5 describes these three components in detail, and every teacher has a different professional development profile based on these components.

Table 6.5: Components of Professional Development

Education	Training	Certification
Level of education (MA, BA, AA, high school)	Amount of training	Child Development Associate (CDA)
Content of education	Content of training	Certification in Special Education
	Type/format of training (workshops, in-service, conference, online)	Certifications in Early Childhood

Education Component

In ECE, teachers' education levels range from master's (MA) or bachelor's (BA) degrees to high school degrees. For instance, all special education teachers are required to have at least a BA degree and certification to teach special education. Some states even require special education teachers to have MA degrees (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

As a group, special education teachers comprise the most highly educated and specially trained sector of the ECE workforce. However, education requirements are more varied in other ECE programs, such as child care and Head Start. For instance, in Head Start, only 45% of the lead teachers have a BA degree or higher (Schmidt & Ewen, 2012). Across the 39 states offering pre-K, there are 51 unique programs, and only 29 of these programs (56%) require that the lead teacher hold at least a BA degree.

There is even more diversity among teachers (both lead and assistant) who have AA degrees. In child care classrooms, the majority of professionals have associate of arts (AA) degrees or less (Early et al., 2006). The same is true for Head Start teachers, in that 76% of all teachers had at least an AA degree or higher. (This percentage includes the 45% of Head Start teachers with BA degrees or higher.) In the NIEER benchmark, there is no requirement for assistant teachers to have an AA degree (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2011).

Due to this wide discrepancy in teachers' education levels, researchers, policy makers, and advocates have been pushing for increasing teacher education qualifications, particularly in the Head Start program. The most recent 2007 Head Start Reauthorization mandated that at least half of all teachers must have a BA degree by 2013 and that all teachers have at least an AA degree by 2011 (Ewen, 2008); based on the most recent summary of 2010 program information, Head Start is on its way to meeting this mandate: 45% of all teachers have at least a BA degree and 76% of all teachers have an AA degree (Schmidt & Ewen, 2012).

The newly developing QRIS systems also push child care programs to raise teacher education levels to BA degrees, and in pre-K programs, the degree for teachers is often specific to the employment setting. For instance, most of the state pre-K teachers working in public school settings are required to have a BA degree, but the teacher education requirements are lower in private settings. The education level of teachers is one of the most controversial structural indicators of quality because we cannot tell the difference in the quality of teachers' instruction simply based on their degrees and credentials (Early et al., 2007; Pianta et al., 2005). So, for example, we can't tell the difference between Teacher Diana's and Teacher Rachel's instructional quality simply based on their degrees. In fact, both teachers' years of experience and a graduate education level (master's degree or more) have been found to have a very small effect on students' academic achievement (Nye, Konstantopoulous, & Hedges, 2004).

Training Component

The aspect of professional development that does begin to shed light on instructional quality is training, which is a significant predictor of quality, even after controlling for a variety of education levels (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002). Training is especially important for educators who do not have any college degree. Ongoing training is a required—and needed—component of a teacher's professional development. Most teachers are required by their program to take trainings every year, and these trainings span topics from managing classroom transitions to strategies for teaching literacy. According to the 2011 NIEER Yearbook (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2011), 45 out of the 51 different state pre-K programs required in 2011 that teachers have specialized training in early childhood education.



iStockphoto/Thinkstock

Training is a significant component of professional development and key determinant of instructional quality. The most effective teachers attend several trainings per year in the form of seminars, workshops, in-service days, or online courses.

Teachers are key to children's educational success. The teacher a child has is even more important than the school (center) the child attends (Nye et al., 2004), so it really does matter how well a teacher is trained. Professional development is especially important for teachers working with children who are living in poverty. Studies show that classrooms within the United States vary dramatically in the quality of their instructional environments, especially classrooms where the majority of children are living in poverty (Nye et al., 2004, Pianta et al., 2005). This means that in schools (or centers) located in poor neighborhoods, teachers may need additional training to be successful with the student populations within those schools. The Spotlight on Research feature, "A Training Program for Teachers Working In High-Poverty Schools," describes some research that might improve the instruction of teachers who work in high-poverty centers (Pianta et al., 2008).

Spotlight on Research: A Training Program for Teachers Working In High-Poverty Schools

Researchers have called for more focus and precision when it comes to measuring the impact of training (Curenton, 2006; Downer et al, 2011). They suggest a need for a system of professional development (PD) in which the specific skills (i.e., outcomes) for children are aligned with the PD strategies and instructional training teachers receive. This type of PD might need to be more intensive than the in-service trainings, conference workshops, or online courses that are typically offered.

In order to fill this need, Robert C. Pianta developed *My Teaching Partner* (MTP; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008), a web-based training and virtual consultation program for pre-K teachers teaching in school districts across Virginia. Most of the teachers in the MTP intervention were White (72%), and the remaining 28% were either Black or multi-racial. All the teachers taught in state-funded targeted pre-K programs for at-risk children, and nearly all were certified to teach 4-year-olds. All the teachers had either a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree.

MTP provided extensive opportunities for teachers to observe (via exemplar videos) teachers engaging in high-quality classroom interactions and receive individualized feedback and instructional support through an educational consultant. The effectiveness of the MTP approach was evaluated via an experimentally designed intervention: Sixty-one teachers participated in the consultancy group, in which they received access to the web-based training and were assigned an education consultant, and 52 teachers only received access to the website.

Results indicated that the intervention was successful. Teachers who were in the consultancy group showed marked improvement in their instructional quality as compared to the website-only group. These results were particularly profound for those teachers who were teaching in classrooms where all the children were in poverty (Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008). Thus, trainings like MTP may be most effective with teachers who work in low-income classrooms, and several such trainings that particularly focus on ethnic and language minority children should be developed.

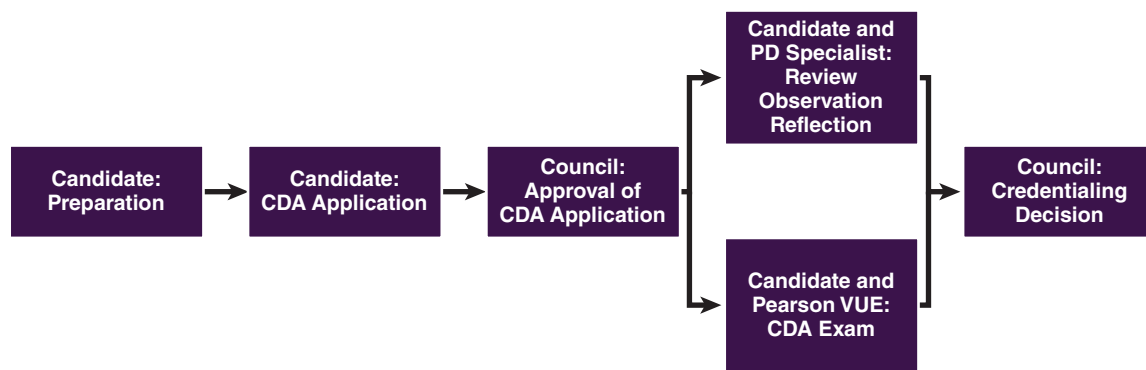
Certification Component

As highlighted in Table 6.5, there are various types of certification that early educators can receive. Two of the most common certifications that teachers have, along with their BA or MA degrees, are certifications in special education or early childhood. Because these trainings are obtained along with a BA or MA degree, only a small portion of the early education workforce possesses these certifications. By far the most common type of certification among early childhood teachers is the Child Development Associate's (CDA) credential. It is the only national credential designed for the early education workforce.

Regardless of education level, teachers can obtain a CDA through intense specialized training. The Council for Professional Recognition, which awards the CDA, introduced a **new credentialing process** for preschool, infant/toddler, and family child care teachers as of June 2013: CDA 2.0. Obtaining a CDA is a time-intensive process (Figure 6.4) that requires several steps, including a formal application; in-depth study that requires a detailed portfolio; and on-site observations or a comprehensive exam that spans various knowledge fields within early childhood education, such as child development and developmentally appropriate teaching practices.

Figure 6.4: CDA 2.0 Credentialing Process

The CDA credential, while time-consuming to earn, is the only national credential for ECE professionals. The process begins with candidate preparation and application, and the candidate must take an exam or participate in observation before the council will consider granting the CDA to the candidate.



Source: Adapted from the Council for Professional Recognition www.cdacouncil.org

Research has proven that the CDA is a worthwhile credential and that it actually does enhance teachers' quality of instruction. For example, teachers working in child care programs with CDAs engaged in higher quality teacher-child interactions than those in their educational cohort without such a credential (Early et al., 2007). In addition, the 2007 Head Start Reauthorization required that assistant teachers have at least a CDA credential and be currently working toward earning a degree as a requirement for employment. In state pre-K, according to the NIEER Benchmark, assistant teachers should be required to have a minimum of a CDA certification; however, only 16 of the 51 state programs (32%) meet this benchmark.

The Need for Professional Development Focused on Cultural Competence

The time is ripe for recruiting and retaining early childhood professionals with a special expertise in working with cultural and ethnic minorities because, as this book has emphasized, the population of the U.S. is rapidly becoming more diverse, and ethnic and language minority children are most at risk for school failure. The majority of the various pre-kindergarten programs across the country are targeted programs aimed at low-income children (Barnett et al., 2011); these children tend to face a myriad of family hardships.

Although the percentages of school-age African Americans and Asian Americans have remained relatively stable over the last decade (14% and 4%, respectively), the Latino population has risen to 23% (Mather, Pollard, & Jacobson, 2011). Latinos are major contributors to another hallmark demographic change within the country—increasing linguistic diversity. This new linguistic diversity presents the opportunity to retrain educators as well as other school practitioners on how to prepare young children in our increasingly diverse society to be academically successful (see Curenton, 2011; Castro, Peisner-Feinberg, Buysse, & Gillanders, 2010).

Strategies to Recruit and Retain Diverse Staff

It is not enough to merely ensure there are enough ECE professionals to serve the field, however; we also need to ensure these professionals are skilled in working with ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. Specifically, teachers report being uncertain about the strategies needed to support the language development of children with limited English skills (Diamond & Powell, 2011). We not only have to recruit professionals who are bilingual, but we also have to provide training and resources for monolingual speakers, particularly those who have intermediate skills in another language, to become bilingual.

Research has found that the quality of teacher-child interactions was lower in classrooms where the majority of children were from low-income backgrounds (Pianta et al, 2005). Such research highlights the need for better teacher training regarding how to interact in a nurturing and sensitive manner with children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The way to ensure this is to begin instilling the skills of cultural competence in students early in the education process. Sanders and Downer (2013) suggest placing pre-service teachers in student-teaching programs that are culturally diverse or different from their own experiences in order to provide them with the hands-on experience of teaching diverse student bodies.

Increasing the wages of early childhood educators is another strategy for recruiting high quality teachers into the field. In 2010, the average Head Start teacher earned approximately \$27,000 (Schmidt & Ewen, 2012). Data based on survey responses from child care directors in the state of North Carolina indicate that the median highest hourly wage that directors paid their child care teachers was \$11.25 (Child Care Services Association, 2012). North Carolina's NC Pre-K program, however, has helped increase salaries for child care teachers. The median highest hourly wage for teachers in NC Pre-K programs was \$21 per hour. The early educators who worked in NC Pre-K programs also were more likely to receive benefits, such as paid sick leave, retirement, parental leave, and health insurance, compared with those working in non-NC programs.

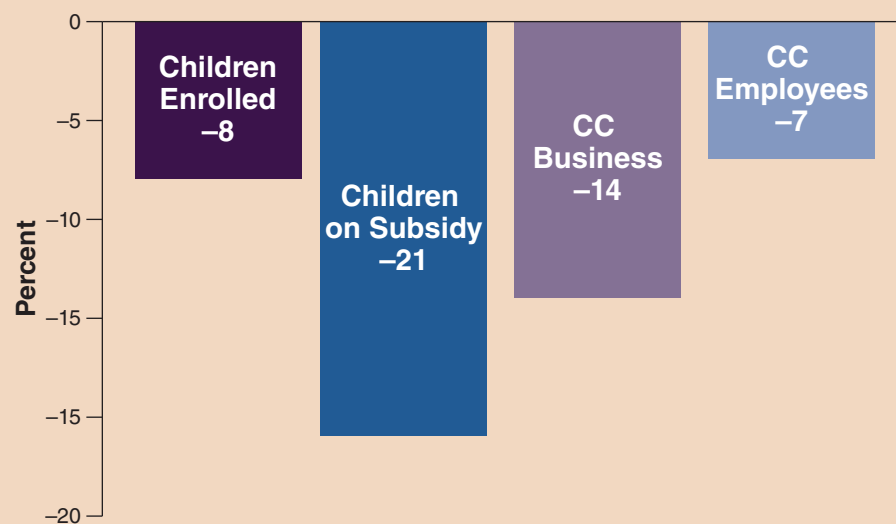
The Real World Dilemma feature, "Impact of the Economic Downturn on Early Education," takes a closer look at how the economy has affected wages for early educators.

Real World Dilemma: Impact of the Economic Downturn on Early Education

Since the downturn of the economy in 2008, child care workers have been hit especially hard. As Figure 6.5 shows, 14% of child care programs in North Carolina closed between 2007 and 2012, and 7% of child care staff lost their jobs. Directors of early childhood programs reported that during these tough economic times, parents were unable to keep up with their fees, so they had to stop buying needed equipment for the centers. Other ways that child care centers cut their expenses were by closing or combining classrooms, cutting back on staff hours, reducing benefits, or freezing salaries.

Figure 6.5: Effects of Economic Downturn on the Child Care Industry

Between 2007 and 2012, ECE programs were adversely affected by the economic downturn.



Source: 2011 Working in Child Care in North Carolina. © Child Care Services Association, 2012.

As Figure 6.5 shows, the loss of these businesses and jobs affected the lives of children and families: Between 2007 and 2012, enrollment in child care programs dropped by 8% and children from low-income, working families receiving subsidies dropped by 21%.

The downturn has decreased children's access to programs; Barnett and his colleagues (2011) explain that overall state spending for pre-K has declined since 2009. The downturn has also diminished education quality, as measured by state pre-K per-pupil spending, which has been dropping as well. Moreover, the subsidized child care program has been flat funded for the past several years, resulting in longer waitlists for child care services and less money for quality enhancements for infants and toddlers. The teacher layoffs and classroom closings mean that children are experiencing more instability in their care and education because they have had to change programs or are being taught by different teachers.

6.3 Early Care and Education Policy Initiatives and Accountability Systems for Diverse Children

Consider again the variety of missions and funding streams among the early childhood programs that we saw in Table 6.1. Those differences contribute to the disparities among the standards and regulations that guide Head Start, state pre-K, child care, and preschool special education programs.

Head Start Standards

All Head Start programs are governed by the federally legislated *Head Start Performance Standards*, which are the most comprehensive regulations in the ECE field because they cover a wide range of topics, from program management and operation to learning goals for children. The standards include provisions not just for preschoolers but also for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. In addition to the Performance Standards, the Office of Head Start publishes “Program Instructions” that function as supplements to the standards.

In terms of class size, the Performance Standards mandate that class size for 4-year-olds be no larger than 20, and that the staff-child ratio be 1:10. Research demonstrates that programs that fully implement the performance standards have better outcomes for children and families (Love et al., 2005). When programs don’t follow these standards, they are in danger of having to re-compete for their grant, which may result in a loss of the grant.

State Pre-K Standards

State programs vary widely with respect to standards and regulations because each state sets its own. As a result, each state is different with respect to program monitoring and operation and learning goals. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has created a checklist



Thinkstock Images/Comstock/Thinkstock

The National Institute for Early Education Research has developed a list of benchmarks aimed at encouraging better teacher-child ratios and recruiting teachers with advanced degrees.

of *Quality Benchmarks* that can be used as a tool to rate programs on their features, such as use of a comprehensive set of early learning standards and teacher education requirements.

These benchmarks are only a rating system; programs are under no obligation to adhere to them. In fact, in some instances the benchmarks may be contrary to a state’s regulations for its program. For example, Curenton and Schilder (2009) found that the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) preschool program required lead teachers to have only an AA degree. When compared to child care centers that were not partnering with

ELI programs, those ELI preschool programs were successful in having more teachers with AA degrees. Nevertheless, even though the state was successful in meeting its own state-specified goals for teacher quality, it still fell short of the NIEER benchmark that suggests all lead teachers have BA degrees. The criteria for these benchmarks are based on empirical evidence of program features that have been associated with quality.

In terms of maximum class size, 37 of the 48 programs met the benchmark of 20 or fewer children, and 39 met the benchmark of teacher-child ratio of 1:10.

Subsidized Child Care Development Standards

The federal government provides only minimal requirements for health and safety for child care programs (National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, 2013). So, as for their pre-K programs, states are at liberty to set their own standards and regulations regarding child care. As a result, child care standards and licensing regulations vary. In comparison to the other ECE programs, many state child care standards are lower than state pre-K or Head Start standards, and some state standards address only safety issues related to the physical environment and procedures for handling food, waste, or hazardous materials.

There are no standards or regulations specifically related to teacher qualifications or learning standards. Currently, no state requires that teachers have either a BA or AA degree. Each state sets its own standards regarding ratios and class size: teacher-child ratios for 4-year-olds average nearly 13:1 and the maximum class size averages 24 children per classroom, even though class size is unregulated in 17 states.

Preschool Special Education Standards

Special education preschool programs are regulated by the *Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities* (34 CFR Parts 300 and 301). These regulations cover program elements such as ensuring parental consent, procedures for educating and assessing children, program monitoring, and service delivery. For instance, an important feature of the law deals with development of Individualized Education Plans for children. There is nothing in the regulations detailing maximum class size or teacher-child ratios, but federal law does require that children be served in the “least restrictive environment,” which allows for the possibility for children’s inclusion in regular classrooms.

In terms of education and certification, special education teachers are the most educated teachers in the early education system; most of them have master of arts degrees and specialized certification to teach children with disabilities. Nevertheless, as with other sectors of early education, there are still gaps in the professional development trainings offered, and more and better training is needed. Bruder, Mogro-Wilson, Stayton, & Dietrich (2009) conducted a national investigation of state training systems for early intervention (Part C) and preschool (619), and they found that nearly half the states have professional development in-service training systems that recommend the components of practice for teaching students with special needs, but close to the other half of states do not.

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) as a Policy Tool to Enhance Quality

Because there are such drastic differences in standards across the various programs, early childhood educators, both nationally and within states, have been working to come up with a unified way of viewing and improving the quality across programs. In order to accomplish this, the field has been developing state-specific rating systems that would enable the monitoring of quality across all the early education programs, and these systems, known as **quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS)** are discussed in detail below.

Descriptions and Goals of QRIS

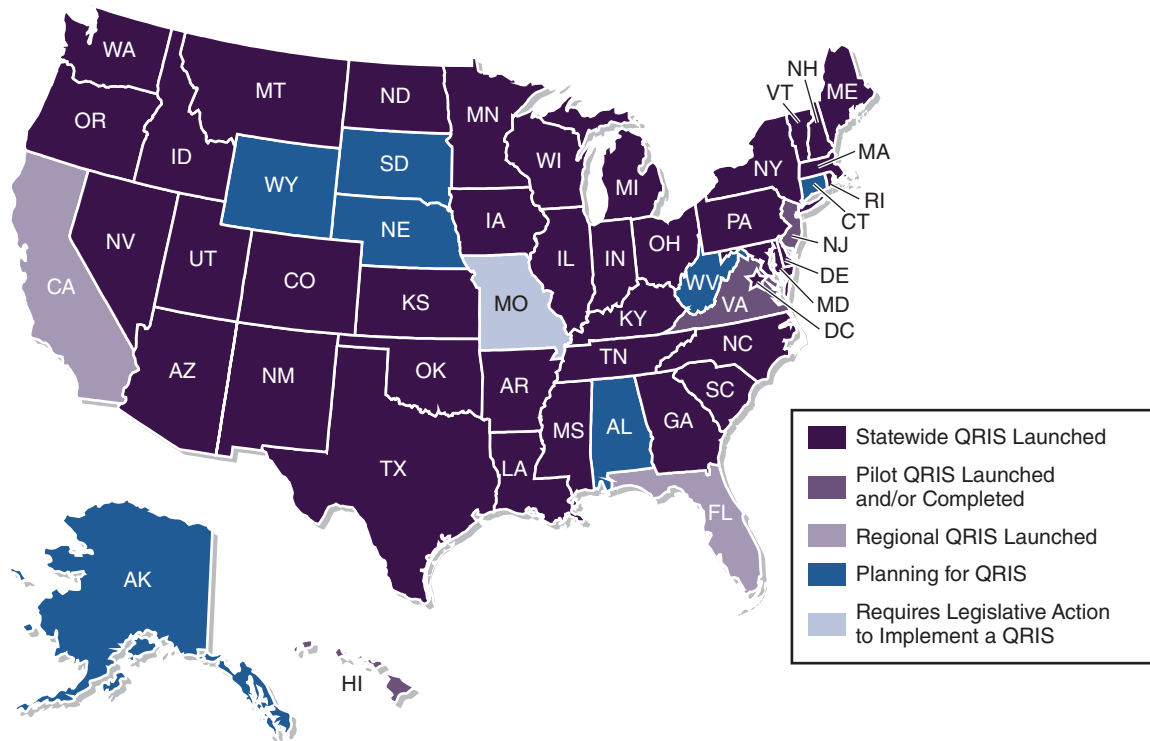
Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) are initiatives with the purpose of systematically evaluating and improving the quality of early childhood education programs and classrooms through a uniform approach based on state or local standards—with the ultimate goal of ensuring that children are ready for school. Programs included in these systems are community and private center-based child care programs; family child care homes; federal and state programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children (e.g., Early/Head Start, pre-K); and, at times, even programs that serve school-age children who need before- and after-school care.

In some states, these systems are part of the licensing structure. This means that in order to operate, an early education program must receive a license from the state, and the program is assigned a tier, depending on its adherence to specific high-quality elements and standards. In other states and communities, participation in these systems is voluntary. To encourage programs to participate in these quality initiatives, financial incentives, such as scholarships to increase staff education and tiered subsidy reimbursements (higher pay for serving children receiving financial assistance for child care) are included in QRIS.

In many instances, programs are given points or placed at a specific level on a scale based on the criteria they meet within the QRIS (for example, from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest level of quality). A program's points or level can then be used to help tailor professional development supports and activities to achieve an even higher level of quality. Similar to other systems, such as education and health care services, the measuring, monitoring, and improvement of QRIS standards are individualized at the state and local levels. At this time, there are no national standards for QRIS, such as licensing or quality of the classroom or program environment. In 2013, 36 states had launched QRISs, and many other states were piloting or planning to develop a QRIS. Figure 6.6 shows where various states are in terms of the process of launching, piloting, or planning a QRIS system.

Figure 6.6: Map of QRIS Implementation in the United States

As of May 2013, QRIS has been implemented in some form in every state except Missouri.



Source: Courtesy the BUILD Initiative and the QRIS National Learning Network.

The Need to Consider Cultural Competence Within the QRIS Framework

What is cultural competence within the framework of program operation? How could a QRIS system be designed to capture such cultural competence? Within a QRIS system, cultural competence would be defined as a congruent set of staff behaviors and attitudes, as well as program policies, structures, and practices that systematically come together to effectively address the unique needs of diverse children and families within a culturally responsive, anti-biased framework.

In order to ensure that a QRIS is culturally competent, Matthews (2008) suggests that it is important to include representatives from immigrant communities, ethnic and language minority groups, and various community partners when designing the QRIS framework. She explains that it is also important to base the framework on research that includes second language acquisition and research on cultural identities, multicultural education, special needs, and cultural bias.

Presently, few states focus on the cultural competence within their QRIS framework. Such a shortcoming does a disservice to DLLs, minorities, and low-income children because these children are more likely to attend programs that are of low quality (Mulligan & Flanigan, 2006). For example, when studying North Carolina's QRIS system, researchers found that overall the child care centers

within the most disadvantaged neighborhoods were more likely to be of the lowest quality (i.e., the programs with the lowest QRIS ratings), but that Head Start centers, the state's *More At Four* preschool centers, and subsidized child care centers were of higher quality (Lower, Hatfield, Cassidy, & Faldowski, 2013). Therefore, neighborhood context is an important factor in allowing (or blocking) access to quality, and we know that cultural and ethnic minorities are more likely to be concentrated in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The good news is that publically funded early education programs, such as Head Start and subsidized child care—even within those disadvantaged neighborhoods—were of higher quality than what was otherwise available in these communities.

The majority of QRIS criteria do not include indicators focused on culture and ethnicity, and program directors and staff are not likely to have training or specific programming focused on supporting the needs of low-income, minority, DLL, and immigrant children and families. Quality child care programs can incorporate culture and language into their programs in at least the following ways:

- support home language learning, when the child's home language is other than English;
- incorporate elements of the child's home culture into the day-to-day experiences of the children in child care;
- adopt approaches to learning consistent with the children's home culture and that culture's approaches to learning; and
- support children's learning about their own culture and about other cultures in ways that both affirm their cultures and show tolerance and appreciation for children and adults of other cultures.

Unfortunately, if states fail to require programs, via the QRIS standards and criteria, to incorporate culturally appropriate practices into their rating systems, they are allowing states to inadvertently engage in institutional racism (Bruner, Ray, Wright, & Copeman, 2013). When Bruner and colleagues from the BUILD Initiative (2013) reviewed QRIS systems for cultural competence, the only state QRIS systems that mentioned race, culture, or language were New Mexico, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. However, no states awarded points for having bilingual staff, staff formal education requirements related to multicultural or bilingual education or the study of the social development of diverse children, or professional development or training related to the use of anti-bias curriculum or instructional approach. Some states are working on how best to incorporate culturally meaningful standards in their system (e.g., Florida, North Carolina).

The following are the types of areas that could be incorporated into QRIS to begin to recognize cultural competence.

- *Home language and dual language development:* Program indicators that place value on teachers and caregivers who are fluent in a language other than English and use dual or multiple languages in their programs.
- *Multicultural resources:* Indicators that place value on programs exposing children to multiple cultures, through posters, signs, activities, books, music, and food.
- *Family participation:* Indicators that reward higher points for programs that draw upon families in developing (and delivering) culturally appropriate programming.
- *Multicultural training:* Indicators that reward higher points for programs that have teachers who have received training in multiculturalism and, in particular, ensuring

that programs counter any biases or stereotyping that children may be exposed to or begin developing as patterns of behavior.

- *Evaluation of cultural competence:* Indicators that reward higher points for programs that evaluate how well their classroom teachers and program staff acknowledge and accept diversity as a positive aspect of human development and family life and how well a program adopts the principles of culturally responsive, anti-bias framework.

In Table 6.6, these suggestions for cultural competence standards are expanded and categorized.

Table 6.6: Elements of Program Quality Related to Language and Culture

Element	Example
Multiculturalism	• Materials and resources expose children to different cultures in a positive light. • Curricula and activities provide children with opportunities to learn about different cultures with an eye toward tolerance and empathy.
Gender	• Materials and resources expose children to images that suggest the wide range of possibilities for boys and girls; e.g., nontraditional images of work. Teachers communicate positive and supportive messages that challenge gender stereotypes.
Language development	• The home language of children and their parents is valued and treated as an asset in the child's language development. • Children are exposed to other languages. • Dual language learning opportunities are provided on-site. • Teachers communicate in positive and supportive ways with children in the children's home language.
Family involvement	• Parents, relatives, and extended family are welcomed and their traditions accepted. • Staff understand and respond to family roles in different cultures and seek to minimize dissonance between home and program settings. • Family involvement is encouraged, including sharing of culture and language with staff and other families. • All program materials are available to families in their first language and in varied formats (e.g., newsletters, audio tapes, DVDs, text messages, voicemail). • Programs provide ample opportunities for families from different communities and circumstances to know one another and work together for the benefit of their children.
Anti-bias	• Staff is trained, supportive, and skilled in responding to children's emerging culture/race/gender identity and navigation within a multicultural society. • Staff are trained, supportive, and skilled in responding to and countering racial, gender, and cultural biases or prejudicial actions that occur. • Programs cultivate all types of diversity within their staff. • Program anti-bias policies and procedures are written and available to all families in their home languages.

Source: Bruner, C., Ray, A., Wright, M. S., & Copeman, A. (n.d.) *Developing Culturally-Appropriate Quality Rating and Improvement Systems*. Boston: BUILD Strong Foundation for Our Youngest Children.

Early Childhood Educators as Advocates for Cultural Competence in the QRIS

In addition to a focus on cultural competence at the system level, cultural competence can be immediately addressed at the classroom and program level. Teachers who create more nurturing, sensitive, and responsive classroom environments tend to be the same teachers who portray a higher level of acceptance for diversity (Sanders & Downer, 2013).

Educators who taught in classrooms where there were higher percentages of children from poverty were more likely to accept diversity (Sanders & Downer, 2013). Bilingual Latino teachers who were teaching in classrooms that served high proportions of children living in poverty were better than other teachers at creating emotionally supportive classrooms that acknowledged and accepted diversity. However, in general, all teachers, regardless of their ethnic background and ethnic match with their students, do a better job at creating a classroom that acknowledges and accepts diversity when the ethnic composition of their classroom is more diverse.

Remember the opening vignette about Rosa, who feels nervous about speaking up regarding the needs of the newly enrolled migrant children in her center? Rosa is hesitant to speak up because she does not know how to address the problem in a way that will help her fellow teachers and the program director understand how to translate the observation of the changing demographics of students into positive action for the children and families. One thing Rosa can do is discuss whether the program overall is addressing the needs of diverse children and families, and she can do this by referring to some of the items presented in Table 6.6, such as the value of supporting children's home language or intentional integration of culture in class lessons.

While reading the Cultural Reflection feature, "Thinking about Your State's QRIS System," think about how your state's QRIS system can become more culturally competent.

Cultural Reflection: Thinking About Your State's QRIS System

Answer the following questions about your state's QRIS system:

1. Is participation in the QRIS system mandatory or voluntary for your program?
2. What three things do you think are most important to improve quality in early education programs and classrooms? Why?
3. How can QRIS systems ensure that they are addressing cultural competence?

In order to advocate for cultural competence in the QRIS system, as well as in terms of professional development and even children's access to early education, it takes a strong sense of leadership that is grounded in **integrity**. Goffin and Washington define *integrity* as the willingness to speak and act on behalf of what you know is right, and they call for a "leadership manifesto" (p. 4) in which early childhood professionals work to address what can be described as a **program performance gap**.

The performance gap is the difference between the positive child outcomes that can be obtained from high-quality programs versus the mediocre (or non-existent) outcomes obtained from low-quality programs. They caution that this disparity in quality may come back to haunt the field, if early childhood educators, program directors, and policy makers do not begin to "speak up" and demand quality services for *all* children and families. The Goffin and Washington (2007) document is a must-read for those emerging leaders who are committed to their own professional growth as well as the development of the early education field. Leaders are often those who are *not* in positions of authority but who are fighting against the established norms and who speak out for the well-being of children and families.

(continued)

Cultural Reflection: Thinking About Your State's QRIS System (*continued*)

After reading this chapter, you should have many ideas for how Rosa can take action. For example, Rosa can frame her suggestions for how the program can address the needs of the newly enrolled migrant children by pointing to features of her state's QRIS system that focus on cultural diversity. Or she can suggest that the teaching staff engage in professional development activities that will build their skills in working with this new student population. The experience that Rosa has during her staff meeting is testing her leadership skills. Although she may feel uncomfortable speaking up, Rosa knows that it is something she must do in order to ensure that all children have access to what they need from their early learning experience.

When confronted with a situation such as the one Rosa is in, ask yourself the following questions:

1. How can I ensure that I can “speak up” for those culturally diverse children and families that do not have a strong voice within my center? More importantly, how can I ensure that I can “speak up” in a way that is respectful and not insulting to my colleagues who may have different opinions?
2. How can I ensure that my supervisor sees my understanding and commitment to culturally diverse families as an asset to the program? How can I use my strengths in cultural competence to show my supervisor how I can make the program stronger?

Chapter Summary

- 6.1: There are several kinds of early education programs serving children from birth to age 5, including Head Start, pre-K, subsidized child care, and special education preschool. Culturally diverse children, such as those from ethnic or racial groups, DLLs, and children in poverty, have differential access to early education programs. For instance, Head Start tends to serve children who have the most socioeconomic risk factors, such as low maternal education and poverty status. Access to early education needs to be expanded.
- 6.2: There is a strong need for professional development strategies in terms of education, training, and certification to educate and train teachers to work with culturally diverse children. Culturally diverse children have special needs and face unique challenges, and many teachers report not knowing how to approach teaching these children.
- 6.3: Early care and education standards vary from state to state and program to program. Quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) are an attempt to standardize ECE. They are important policy and program tools that can foster cultural competence among staff and within programs. Teachers need to be aware of their state's QRIS system, and they need to ensure that it reflects cultural diversity, especially in terms of curriculum and professional development opportunities for teachers.

Post-Test

1. Children in which early childhood program show the most risk factors in terms of poverty, maternal education, and disabilities?
 - a. Head Start
 - b. Child care
 - c. Pre-K
 - d. There is no difference among the students in the programs.
2. Data on children in early education programs, including data on children from ethnic minority families, indicate that _____.
 - a. funding levels are adequate and nearly all children are being adequately served
 - b. funding for, and access to, early childhood education programs needs to be increased
 - c. middle-class and upper-class families have less willingness to put their children in child care than do lower-class families
 - d. state governments spend more per child than the federal government does
3. Which preschool program model adopts the view that no eligibility criteria for attendance should be set and that preschool should be an entitlement program like K–12 education?
 - a. Limited targeted
 - b. Broader targeted
 - c. Universal
 - d. Both broader targeted and universal
4. During President Obama’s first term in office (2009–2012), spending on early childhood education _____.
 - a. decreased at both the federal and state levels
 - b. increased at both the federal and state levels
 - c. increased at the federal level and decreased at the state level
 - d. decreased at the federal level and increased at the state level
5. Pre-K programs _____.
 - a. were heavily subsidized by the federal government in 2012
 - b. have been universal since the 1970s
 - c. are designed primarily to help young children with disabilities or developmental delays
 - d. primarily target low-income 4-year-olds
6. What is the attendance rate across early childhood education programs for children of different races/ethnicities from highest to lowest?
 - a. Blacks, then Whites, then Hispanics
 - b. Whites, then Hispanics, then Blacks
 - c. Hispanics, then Blacks, then Whites
 - d. Hispanics, then Whites, then Blacks

7. There is a need for professional development regarding cultural competence because
 - a. teachers report being uncertain about how to foster language and literacy in bilingual children
 - b. teachers report being unwilling to teach children from minority backgrounds
 - c. teachers are afraid to interact with parents who are culturally diverse
 - d. early childhood teachers often lack the motivation to help young children who need the most help
8. What is the most common type of certification that early education teachers have?
 - a. Special education
 - b. K-5 teaching certification
 - c. English language learner certification
 - d. Child Development Associate's credential
9. According to the *Head Start Performance Standards*, the class size for 4-year-olds should be no larger than _____, and the teacher–child ratio should be _____ or lower.
 - a. 40; 1:20
 - b. 20; 1:10
 - c. 12; 1:6
 - d. 8; 1:4
10. A culturally competent QRIS should _____.
 - a. support home language learning for dual language learners
 - b. incorporate elements of diverse cultures in the school learning environment
 - c. include the study and appreciation of diverse cultures
 - d. all of these

Answers: 1 (a); 2 (b); 3 (c); 4 (c); 5 (d); 6 (a); 7 (a); 8 (d); 9 (b); 10 (d)

Discussion Questions

1. What policies are needed to incorporate minority children's strengths and resiliency into their child care experiences?
2. How can individual teaching staff influence public policy making and advocacy efforts around early childhood education?
3. What are the particular needs that families in poverty have in relation to their early education experiences and services?
4. What recruitment and retention strategies do you feel will be most helpful in ensuring that the early childhood workforce is culturally diverse themselves and able to teach a culturally diverse student body?

Further Reading

Daniel, J., & Friedman, S. (2005). Preparing teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children. *Beyond the Journal: Young Children on the Web*, 1–7.

Goffin, S. G., & Washington, V. (2007). *Ready or not: Leadership choices in early care and education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kirp, D. (2009). *The sandbox investment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Answers and Rejoinders to Chapter Pre-Test

1. **False.** The issues surrounding monitoring for cultural competence are the responsibility of program administrators, like the center director, but also the responsibility of staff.
2. **False.** Early childhood teachers can do many things to affect the policies facing young children and families living in poverty.
3. **True.** Ongoing professional development training is one of the best ways for teachers to better help their students, whether with multicultural topics or other topics.
4. **False.** The state and federal early childhood programs in the U.S. are different in terms of their funding streams and the populations they serve.
5. **False.** Quality rating improvement systems address a wide range of child regulation issues, from health and safety to staff training.

Key Terms

achievement gap The difference between the average achievement of middle-income children and lower-income children.

child care voucher A coupon that is issued by a state to a parent in order to help the family pay for private child care services; families must be income eligible and working or attending school full-time in order to qualify for this coupon and the coupon can be used to pay for child care in a center or home-based program.

integrity The willingness to speak and act on behalf of what you know is right.

Matthew Effect The phenomenon of initial advantage leading to further advantage.

program performance gap The difference between the positive child outcomes that can be obtained from high-quality programs versus the mediocre (or non-existent) outcomes obtained from low-quality programs.

public will Public support from many or most citizens.

quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) Initiatives with the purpose of systematically evaluating and improving the quality of early childhood education programs and classrooms through a uniform approach based on state or local standards.

targeted preschool program Allows for only specific groups of young children to attend based on certain eligibility criteria, such as being low-income; having a disability or developmental delay; being an English language learner; or facing other social hardships or family hardships, like living in a single-parent family or having incarcerated parent(s).

universal programs Have no eligibility criteria set; universal programs are akin to the way that our current K-12 elementary school system operates, meaning they are seen as entitlement programs provided to all citizens.

