



Strategies Toward the Equitable Implementation of PreK in Family Child Care

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Highlights

State and local PreK systems support FCC educators in PreK delivery, from building intermediary infrastructure to contracting directly with educators.

- Recognizing that intentional investment and infrastructure are necessary for FCC educators to deliver positive outcomes for children and families, many state and local PreK systems work with intermediary organizations that offer tailored supports and resources for FCC educators.
- Fewer state and local PreK systems in our focus groups have a stand-alone model, in which individual FCC educators contract directly with the state/local PreK system or local education agency (e.g., school district).

PreK systems offer a variety of types of support to FCC educators in implementing PreK, including professional development, financial and administrative support, and comprehensive services.

- PreK systems use multiple modes of professional development and technical assistance to support implementation of PreK requirements.
- PreK systems offer financial and administrative supports, including grants, business training, contract support, and shared services.
- PreK systems support delivery of comprehensive services for families, such as special education and early intervention services for children, as well as social work and family support services for families.

For a glossary of PKFCC terms (e.g., infrastructure, intermediary, network), please visit our website. www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc

ISSUE SERIES OVERVIEW

The PreK in Family Child Care (PKFCC) Project issue series explores strategies, successes, and challenges in the implementation of publicly funded PreK delivery in family child care (FCC) settings in the U.S. Intentionally (re)designing PreK systems to be more inclusive, equitable, and just can pave the way for transformative change across early care and education (ECE) systems that can result in enhanced outcomes for young children and families.

Guiding principles¹ for mixed-delivery PreK systems that authentically include FCC programs:

1. Recognize that high-quality PreK occurs in FCC, whether it receives public funding or not
2. Value and learn from FCC strengths and assets
3. Intentionally design resources, standards, and compensation structures for the FCC context
4. Preserve continuity of care, infant and toddler care, and the broader birth-to-5 system
5. Make equity and justice top priorities for FCC educators, many of whom face inequities due to racism and sexism

This series is focused on identifying how publicly funded PreK programs are including FCC in their mixed-delivery models by focusing on the following areas:

- Qualifications and Compensation
- Curriculum, Assessment, Developmental Screening, and Monitoring
- Infrastructure and Support
- Recruitment, Eligibility, and Data Collection

A partnership of

Introduction

This brief report presents key findings about ***the models of infrastructure and types of support*** that state and local PreK programs use to facilitate successful implementation in FCC settings. Findings are based on data collected through focus groups in February and March 2023 with 15 state and local PreK administrators and directors of intermediary organizations who spoke about the implementation of six state and six city/local PreK systems.² These 12 states and localities included some that are implementing PreK in FCC, as well as some that had previously or were currently planning for implementation of FCC in their mixed-delivery PreK systems. This brief also includes additional insights and recommendations from our PreK in FCC Educator Advisors. A key foundation for this series is that state and local PreK administrators recognize the importance and benefit of including FCC in their PreK systems and communities to ensure equitable access, experiences, and outcomes for children and their families. Promising Approaches are highlighted at the end of the brief.

Key Findings

Models for Supporting PreK Implementation in FCC

Recognizing that intentional investment and infrastructure are necessary for FCC educators to deliver positive outcomes for children and families, many state and local PreK systems use an intermediary model where partner organizations offer tailored supports and resources for FCC educators (see Table 1). Some participants framed the goal of delivering PreK in FCC as providing a near-identical experience in FCC as in a PreK classroom rather than providing a different but still high-quality PreK experience. All of the PreK systems that used an intermediary model felt it was important to tailor supports specifically to the FCC context to set up educators for successful PreK delivery.

Some PreK systems with an intermediary model contract with a single ***centralized organization*** that is responsible for overseeing PreK decision-making, coordination, and implementation across all

participating FCC programs, in collaboration with the state/local government agency. This strategy was reported by local PreK systems as well as Maryland, where a statewide FCC organization administers the ASPIRE PreK program for all participating FCC educators. Some local PreK systems, such as Multnomah County, Oregon, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, divide support functions between two organizations, with one primary intermediary organization focused on administrative, logistical, and financial support and/or compliance, and another subcontractor focused primarily on professional development and technical assistance support.

“How do you create an environment to reduce the workload on family child care educators in PreK? ...When you look at new teachers coming out of a bachelor’s degree program in early childhood education, walking into a public school system, day one, their classrooms are already set up. They have this massive support network around them. They have mentors, coaches, specialists, etc., so that they can just focus on teaching. So our thinking is that we’ve got to build a support network and community of practice... around those [FCC] educators.”

—PreK Intermediary, Maryland

Other PreK systems with an intermediary model work with multiple ***local networks/hubs***. Regionally specific nonprofit organizations or agencies work with PreK systems to support subgroups of FCC educators in PreK implementation. In our focus groups, this approach appeared to be more common in states where PreK systems are much larger and interested FCC educators might be more geographically clustered. In California, local Family Child Care Home Education Networks are housed in local education agencies or other organizations and submit detailed plans for supporting FCC educators.


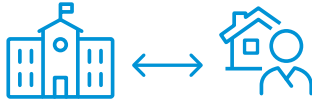
In Rock Island County, Illinois, FCC educators delivered PreK with the support of a local education agency that partnered with a local FCC network to offer services specific to FCC educators implementing PreK. Seattle’s hubs also offer an example of a multi-layered approach to “lower[ing] the barriers” to PreK delivery in FCC.

“The first year a provider joins our hub the city grants them \$8,000. And the reason behind that is because they know again, these are FCCs and if you’re going to really have a viable preschool classroom, there’s things like furniture, there’s things like materials. It even extends to let’s say appliances that are used in the child care. So if you need let’s say new carpet or the fridge, they will allow that...Each year following they do receive \$3,000 to replenish and to just create really a fantastic preschool classroom... Anytime teachers have to be in a training and or a meeting such as a reflective practice, they [the city]

will pay for that time outside of the classroom. We have also an outside organization that any early learning provider can use...They’ll pay for you to bring in a sub...We really try to lower the barriers.”
 —PreK Intermediary, Seattle

Fewer state and local PreK systems in our focus groups have a stand-alone model, in which individual FCC educators contract directly with the state/ local PreK system or local education agency (e.g., school district). In Maine and Vermont, funding flows to contracted FCC educators through the school

Table 1: Models for Supporting PreK in FCC

	 <p>Intermediary—tailored supports <i>A single centralized organization or a group of local networks/hubs provide tailored supports to groups of FCC educators.</i></p> <p>9 of 12 Programs</p>	 <p>Stand-alone—uniform supports offered across settings <i>State or local education agencies contract directly with individual FCC educators and provide similar supports as they would to schools or teachers.</i></p> <p>3 of 12 Programs</p>
California	✓ Local network/hub	
Connecticut*	✓ Local network/hub	
Illinois (Rock Island County)	✓ Local network/hub	
Maine*		✓
Maryland	✓ Centralized organization	
Vermont		✓
Boston, MA*		✓
Multnomah County, OR	✓ Centralized organization	
Northampton County, MA	✓ Local network/hub	
Philadelphia, PA	✓**Centralized organization	
San Antonio, TX*	✓ Centralized organization	
Seattle, WA	✓ Local network/hub	

* No current PreK implementation in FCC, reflects previous or planned implementation (e.g., in the 2023–24 school year).

** PHLPreK’s intermediary organizations support FCC educators as well as school and center-based settings.

district. FCC educators receive similar PreK support services to public school classrooms, in addition to possibly receiving generalized supports through other sources (e.g., the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) or an FCC association). Although we did not hear about standalone models as much in our focus groups, this direct school-system-to-provider approach is also utilized in many other state models not discussed here.³

“All FCC partnerships must have a formal written agreement in place with their local school district. Once that is in place, then anything that the two parties agree to will occur in the FCC setting for the identified public PreK students. Services could vary from location to location, including but not limited to ESOL [English to Speakers of Other Languages] services, guidance and social work services, professional development, etc.”

—PreK Administrator, Maine

Resources and Supports Offered by PreK Systems

PreK systems use multiple modes of professional development and technical assistance to support FCC educators in implementing PreK requirements.

These supports include but are not limited to coaching, program observations and site visits, peer-to-peer sharing, webinars and trainings, and reflective practice conversations. Some PreK systems, like in San Antonio, Texas, implement professional development approaches based on the interests and needs of FCC educators as well as using the strengths of more experienced FCC educators to role model for newer educators on the pipeline to offering PreK. Other PreK systems use a more uniform approach, less tailored to the specific strengths of FCC, to deliver coaching and mentoring to prepare FCC educators for PreK delivery. Several programs mention the importance of having bilingual staff and materials to support professional development, especially in English and Spanish, as well as providing interpreters and translators, when needed, for other languages spoken by FCC educators. Additional information about professional development approaches can be found in Briefs 1 and 2 in this series, available on the PKFCC website.

Box 1

The PHLPreK Model for Infrastructure and Support

The Philadelphia, PA, PHLPreK program partners with the Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) as an intermediary organization.

According to intermediary and support staff, PHMC is “responsible for all the contracting activities, seat solicitation responsibilities, monitoring, and enrollment activities.”

Additionally, the SPARK Quality Support Center works with PHLPreK educators across setting types to provide “professional development and learning opportunities,” including “coaching and technical assistance.”

FCC Educator Perspective: Tailored Support

A PHLPreK FCC educator shared that the program’s support was particularly helpful when monitors and specialists deeply understood the FCC context, but that “peer support is huge” when educators have specialists who don’t know FCC as well. She also noted the importance of tailoring training and professional development for FCC educators with different levels of experience in FCC and in PreK: “Don’t assume that all providers need the same support. ... If this is your first year, you may need more intense support and training” than someone who has been in PHLPreK for several years. “This is an issue across systems, not just in PreK.”

“We have specific trainings on curriculum built into our year long program that we offer. So that comes with monthly in-person face-to-face sessions, as well as that follow-up coaching and additional support based on individual needs...We pretty much learn from each other, learn what it is that they want to learn more of, what help they need. And then just kind of bringing in the community, bringing them guest speakers that are able to help them either with grants, either with curriculum, to help them be more qualified in the services that they’re providing for the children... We’ve also gone out and we’re trying to see if they can go visit other family homes in the area to see what they have and how they can implement it.”

— PreK Intermediary, San Antonio, TX

A few PreK systems with school district models use or are considering use of an itinerant teacher model to deliver PreK in FCC homes where the educator is not certified. An itinerant teacher model entails a certified teacher delivering PreK instruction directly to children in one or more FCC homes for an allotted number of hours each day or week. In Illinois, a certified teacher is assigned to multiple FCC homes where they would deliver PreK for part of the day. However, workforce staffing shortages among certified public school teachers, have inhibited their ability to keep offering PreK in FCC in Rock Island County, Illinois. In Vermont, FCC educators can also choose to use an itinerant teacher model. However, more educators prefer to deliver PreK instruction directly by contracting with a certified teacher to provide them with three hours each week of hands-on training and supervision during the Universal PreK year. Northampton, MA, also offers an itinerant teacher model, specifically, for special education services. Maine is considering an itinerant teacher model for future FCC applicants. (See figure 1.)

“We were hiring early childhood licensed teachers who would go into the homes. So it was a push-in model, itinerant. They would go between two different providers. ...You go to one home for one child care provider in the morning, and then you move to a second in the afternoon. We have found that those teachers who really have the skill set to develop relationships have had the most success. Because it’s really more of a partnership in sharing in that knowledge base. It’s definitely not a model of us to say ‘we’re coming in.’ It’s very, like, ‘We’re going to work together as a team.’”

—PreK Administrator, Rock Island County, IL

PreK systems also offer financial and administrative supports. Business supports (including coaching and training from specialists or consultants) and financial supports (including startup grants and funding/scholarships for degrees and/or professional development sessions) are commonly offered to FCC educators. Several intermediary organizations offer support with grant writing, request for proposal (RFP) responses, budgets, and contracting, so that FCC educators don’t need to handle this administrative work on their own. A few PreK programs also use shared services models, such as substitute pools in

Figure 1

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR FCC EDUCATORS

Professional development and technical assistance



12 of 12 Programs

Can include coaching, curriculum implementation support, workshops and webinars, site visits and observations, providing curriculum and materials, reflective supervision, leadership initiatives

Figure 2

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR FCC EDUCATORS

Financial and administrative support



11 of 12 Programs

Can include business training, financial supports (grants, scholarships), support with grants and contracts (including RFP and enrollment supports), and shared services (e.g., substitute pools, lending libraries)

Multnomah County, OR, and Seattle, WA, and lending libraries for materials and toys in California. Most PreK programs offer at least two of these types of supports. (See figure 2.)

“In our early years of implementation, we’re developing supports that we hope will lead to meaningful and robust participation of family child care in Preschool for All. Those supports include business development, infant/toddler stabilization dollars, inclusion funding, and coaching. Over half of our participating providers are family child care, so it’s essential that we partner closely with them and invest in their success.”

—PreK Administrator, Multnomah County, OR

Figure 3

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR FCC EDUCATORS

Comprehensive services



10 of 12 Programs

Can include family engagement, health and developmental screenings, early intervention and special needs therapies, support staff and specialists (e.g., for mental health consultation, social work case management, other specialists), and financial supports for families

PreK systems support FCC educators around delivery of comprehensive services for families, such as special education and early intervention services for children, as well as social work and family support services for families. The types of comprehensive services and approaches to delivery vary, in part, based on the PreK system’s model for supporting FCC. PreK systems where FCC educators work with school districts or regions, either through intermediaries or directly (e.g., Rock Island County, IL; Northampton County, MA, Maine, and Vermont), all emphasized the provision of equivalent screening, assessment, and special education services as those provided in public school settings (e.g., through itinerant staff). Additionally, in Maine, FCC educators can access other comprehensive services for families, such as access to social workers, guidance counselors, ESOL services, free and reduced lunch, and transportation.

In PreK systems with intermediary support organizations, comprehensive services to children and families are delivered to FCC educators and the families they serve through dedicated staff, including family engagement coordinators, early childhood mental health consultants, and behavior specialists. A few PreK systems, both with intermediary and stand-alone models, provide developmental and health screenings. (See figure 3.)

“We also... offer family financial assistance. So let’s say you get behind on your rent, we’ll pay a month’s rent. You need some help with your utility bill? We’ll pay that. You need a food voucher? We’ll take care of that. Kids need winter coats? We pay for that....We have really built in our contracts funds to bring in behavior specialists, as an example, to go into the FCC, whether it’s for two hours a day or more, and work with a child. Our school district has an agency called Child Find, and they will do deep evaluations on concerns that the teacher and/or the family are sharing with us.”

—PreK Intermediary, Seattle, WA

Across all supports provided, PreK systems relied on other systems to deliver services to FCC (e.g., QRIS, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, and public schools). These approaches allow PreK systems to build on existing strengths and resources of the broader birth-to-5 system—particularly when existing structures already have tailored support for the FCC community. For example, child care resource and referral agencies often have deep relationships with FCC, and integrating their supports into PreK delivery may support implementation.

Promising Approaches

Some approaches to supporting implementation of PreK in FCC settings that could inform future (re)design efforts include:

- Recognizing that FCC homes are unique contexts that offer their own opportunities for high-quality PreK that can be invested in and built upon,⁴ rather than expecting FCC educators to look exactly like classroom teachers
- Investing in intermediary models that are dedicated to supporting FCC educators in delivering PreK in ways that honor the FCC context, including through professional development, administrative and financial support, and comprehensive services tailored to FCC educators’ interests, strengths, experiences, and needs⁵
- Expanding peer support efforts within intermediary models to allow educators to learn from one another’s strengths

- Conducting needs assessments with FCC educators delivering or interested in delivering PreK to tailor supports to their needs and interests, including but not limited to tailoring levels of professional development, offering materials and support in educators' languages, offering comprehensive services to support families
- Developing mentorship models (similar to but more responsive than itinerant teacher models) where certified teachers who understand the FCC context observe, coach, model, and support multiple FCC educators in PreK delivery in their home settings
- Designing pipelines for home-based child care educators to move toward existing requirements for PreK delivery, including direct funding supports (e.g., for becoming licensed, higher education costs, and other quality enhancements), as well as allowing alternative qualifications (e.g., combinations of coursework, CDAs, and experience)
- Aligning and coordinating supports, particularly for professional development, across existing birth-to-5 systems, PreK systems, and school systems to leverage successful strategies and not duplicate resources or overburden educators

Methodology

PreK administrators from the 26 states, 12 cities, and 6 counties that allow FCC to deliver public PreK were contacted via email to participate in a one-time focus group about models of infrastructure and support for PreK in FCC. In total, four focus groups were held, each with a mixture of state and local PreK systems represented, as well as individuals from government agencies and intermediary organizations. Most of the quotes in this brief were drawn from these groups, but in some cases, relevant quotes were pulled from earlier focus groups in the series from the same participants. A total of 15 administrators and intermediaries spoke about implementation of PreK in 6 states and 6 localities; 13 of these responded to a demographic survey. Most participants were women (77%). More than half (69%) of the focus group participants identified as White, 15% as Black, 15% as Latine, 8% as Asian, and 8% as multiracial. Participants had been working in their PreK system for between 7 and 40 years (mean = 20).

Limitations. Our focus group conversations were limited to administrators from PreK systems that allow (but do not necessarily currently include) FCC and from states and localities that signed up to participate in the focus groups based on having an interest in PreK in FCC settings. Thus, we cannot generalize to PreK systems not represented in our focus groups, such as those that exclude FCC participation at all levels. While we note many ways that public PreK systems are creating pathways and opportunities to include FCC, they may not look the same, given the diversity of contexts across state and local communities. Finally, the information collected was from PreK administrators and intermediary organization staff and not FCC educators, who may have different perspectives about the supports and barriers related to infrastructure and support in state or local community PreK systems.

Endnotes

- 1 Melvin, S.A., Bromer, J., Iruka, I.U., Hallam, R., & Hustedt, J. (2022). *A transformative vision for the authentic inclusion of family child care in mixed-delivery PreK systems*. Erikson Institute.
- 2 Opinions, quotes, and anecdotes shared by participants do not represent the views of their larger state/city, agency, or organization.
- 3 Other examples of standalone PreK models where funds flow from states or local education agencies directly to FCC educators include Arkansas, Ohio, and New Mexico. NIEER's 2021 State of Preschool Yearbook also highlights which state PreK programs allow FCC to receive direct or subcontracted funding (see Appendix A page 299-302): <https://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks-yearbook2021>
- 4 Learn more in the PreK in Family Child Care Projects' Conceptual Framework for Including FCC in Mixed-Delivery PreK Systems on our website: <https://www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc/>
- 5 Additional detail about the comprehensive supports that networks and intermediaries can offer FCC educators and families is provided in: *Erikson Institute & Home Grown. (2022). Strengthening home-based child care networks: An evidence-based framework for high-quality.* https://homegrownchildcare.org/_resources/strengthening-hbcc-networks-an-evidence-based-framework-for-high-quality/

About the Partners

The PreK in Family Child Care project is a collaboration of Erikson Institute's Herr Research Center, the University of North Carolina Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute's Equity Research Action Coalition, and the University of Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood.

Home-Based Child Care Research at Erikson Institute's Herr Research Center

www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc

Erikson Institute educates, inspires, and promotes leadership to serve the needs of children and families. As part of that mission, the Herr Research Center develops original scholarship and research that shapes the early childhood field. Since 2008, the Home-Based Child Care (HBCC) Research focus area has conducted rigorous and actionable research to inform early care and education policy and program design and decision-making. Through national, multistate, and local projects and participatory approaches, Erikson's HBCC Research group partners with professionals and communities to highlight promising strategies for supporting equity for the home-based child care workforce and quality for children and families who use home-based child care.

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood at the University of Delaware

www.dieec.udel.edu

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) strives to improve the quality of early care and education throughout the state and beyond by providing exemplary professional development and program-level supports to all sectors of the early care and education community. DIEEC conducts policy-relevant research that helps advance equity, promote the early childhood workforce, and enhance the lives of young children and their families.

Equity Research Action Coalition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu

The Equity Research Action Coalition, a university-based collaborative, focuses on co-constructing with practitioners and policymakers actionable research and evaluation to support the optimal development of Black children and other children of color prenatally through childhood. The coalition works at the intersection of research, program, and practice through anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks. The coalition focuses on developing a science-based action framework to eradicate the impact of racism and all its consequences on the lives of Black children, families, and communities and other children and families from marginalized communities, and to ensure their optimal health, wealth, and well-being.

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