PreK in **Family Child Care** Project

Case Studies

Implementing PreK in Family Child Care: Case Studies of Three Public PreK System Approaches

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Introduction

Intentionally (re)designing PreK systems to be inclusive, equitable, and just can pave the way for transformative change across early care and education systems that results in enhanced outcomes for young children and families.

This brief is focused on examining *how* three distinct locales are integrating Family Child Care (FCC) into their mixed-delivery PreK systems. The multisite study examined how each of the three PreK systems carried out the delivery of PreK in FCC settings to include FCC educator recruitment and compensation, professional-development support and qualifications, the selection and implementation of curriculum and assessment in FCC settings, and program monitoring. This brief also includes perspectives of FCC educators participating in the focal PreK systems.

ABOUT THE PREK IN FCC PROJECT

The PreK in Family Child Care (PKFCC) Project explores strategies, successes, and challenges in the implementation of publicly funded PreK in FCC settings. The PKFCC Project is guided by the acknowledgment that many FCC educators deliver high-quality preschool education, whether or not they are publicly funded for it (Melvin et al., 2022), and that FCC educators bring unique benefits to PreK systems. Including FCC educators in mixed-delivery early care and education and PreK systems requires intentionality and differentiated support to preserve continuity of care from birth to school age and to promote equity and justice for the many women of color who have been marginalized in this workforce.

A partnership of

Erikson Institute
Home-Based Child Care Research

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

EQUITY RESEARCH ACTION COALITION
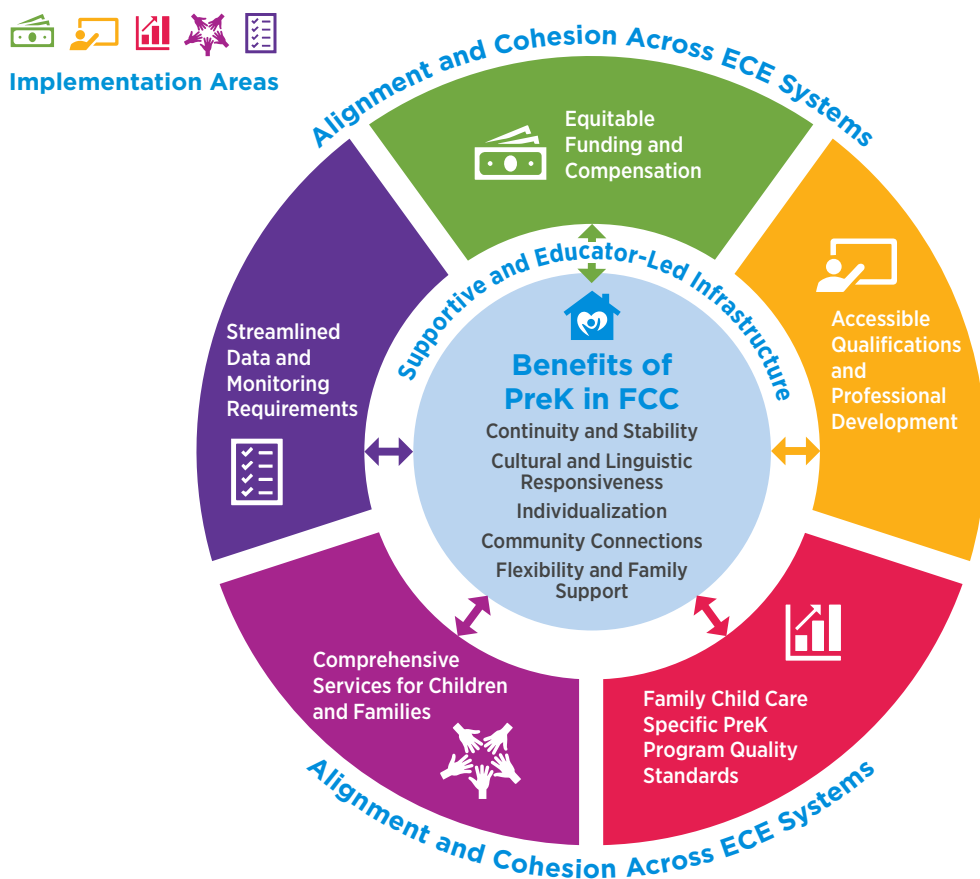UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

Background

Promising implementation considerations for inclusion of FCC educators in mixed-delivery PreK systems are described in a recent conceptual framework (see **Figure 1** and **Box 1**; Melvin et al., 2022). These considerations include five core implementation components: 1) equitable funding and compensation, 2) accessible qualifications, 3) FCC-specific program quality standards, 4) comprehensive services for children and families, and 5) streamlined data and monitoring systems. In addition the framework articulates the importance of supportive infrastructure that includes educator voice and decision-making and supports full FCC participation in PreK systems. The conceptual framework also shows the importance of alignment across birth-to-5 early care and education (ECE) systems and policies to reduce burdens on educators and families who participate in these systems.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Including FCC in Mixed-Delivery PreK Systems

Implementation Areas

Alignment and Cohesion Across ECE Systems

Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure

Equitable Funding and Compensation

Accessible Qualifications and Professional Development

Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements

Benefits of PreK in FCC
Continuity and Stability
Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
Individualization
Community Connections
Flexibility and Family Support

Comprehensive Services for Children and Families

Family Child Care Specific PreK Program Quality Standards

Alignment and Cohesion Across ECE Systems

> **Birth-to-five ECE systems context:** Historically not designed for FCC programs
> **Sociocultural context:** Legacy of structural racism, classism, and sexism

Adapted from Melvin et al., 2022

Core Implementation Areas for PreK in FCC Settings

Considerations for PreK implementation in FCC settings are drawn from decades of literature on early childhood systems building as well as limited descriptive studies of PreK systems that include FCC. The Conceptual Framework for Including FCC in Mixed-Delivery PreK Systems identifies 5 core areas of implementation.

1. **Equitable funding and compensation** point to the actual and true costs of delivering high-quality FCC, including wage parity and access to benefits that support educator well-being. Blended funding honors the continuous, mixed-age nature of FCC programs (i.e., children age in and out of PreK within the same setting).

2. **Accessible educator qualifications and professional development** honor FCC educator strengths and lived experiences and include clear and accessible pathways for attainment. Based on an understanding that differentiated inputs may be necessary to yield consistent outcomes, PreK systems may include phase-in time, flexible lattices that make space for FCC educator leadership opportunities, schedules that work for FCC educators, content that is appropriate for the FCC setting, staffing supports, and assistant requirements that acknowledge the home/family setting (i.e., that assistants may be family members).

3. **FCC-specific PreK program quality standards** optimize program quality to honor and integrate the value and realities of FCC (e.g., staffing, children and families served, home-based setting). FCC-specific standards are built on the unique assets of FCC and are designed to strengthen and highlight implementation of PreK (e.g., curriculum, qualifications).

4. **Streamlined data and monitoring requirements** are reasonable for FCC educators to accomplish and are reciprocal with other elements of the birth-to-five system (i.e., single data tracking platform, limited number of visitors).

5. **Comprehensive services for children and families** acknowledge FCC educator understanding and rootedness in their communities and builds on these strengths through delivering services (i.e., delivering or referring to health, vision, dental, or early intervention services aligned with Head Start Performance Standards), but also continuing to support children and families in informal and relationship-based ways.

Adapted from Melvin et al., 2022

Overview of Case Study Approach

Because PreK systems are designed and offered across different locales (e.g., states, cities, counties, and school districts), program sites were selected to capture this type of variation. Specifically, this study looked at a PreK program in a local school district (Pajaro Valley Unified School District in California), a county-based PreK system (Multnomah County in Oregon), and a statewide PreK system (Ohio). For each site, we conducted focus groups with PreK administrators, PreK coaches, and FCC educators. The conceptual framework and core implementation areas were used to analyze and compare implementation practices across the three case study sites. In addition to the components in the conceptual framework, an additional implementation component—recruitment of educators—was identified as an important consideration across case study sites.

A detailed description of study methods can be found in the Appendix. Participant demographics are presented in Tables A1 and A2. The following section describes the PreK system at each of the three sites.

Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) and California State Preschool Program (CSPP)

CSPP is a needs-based, income-eligible, state-funded preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds. Information in this report reflects the program's operations before the state's revision of CSPP in Spring 2024. Throughout California, Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs) serve as supportive infrastructure and work with local education agencies (LEAs) or community-based organizations to facilitate the delivery of CSPP in FCC programs. As of 2022, the FCCHEN affiliated with the PVUSD contracted with about 50 FCC educators. From these, 31 educators were eligible to deliver CSPP. **Figure 2** outlines the key components of the PVUSD's implementation of CSPP. In the PVUSD, FCC educators are required to meet state and school district requirements for delivering CSPP. Requirements and standards are the same across setting types (e.g., homes, centers, schools) without differentiation for FCC programs. None of the infrastructure supports for PreK implementation include formal FCC educator leadership or decision making about how CSPP is implemented in FCC settings.

FCC Educator Perspectives
PVUSD and CSPP (California)

"One of the little girls I have would get very frustrated because she couldn't speak. [The network] helped me to work with the family to support them on how to talk to the little girl and refer them to community support. [They] also provide a lot of support regarding the emotional aspect and activities for the curriculum."

"También este ellas nos apoyan con el material, si a veces no lo tenemos. Cuando nos dan las conferencias allí hablamos el tema, en que los niños a veces les salen a ellos bajos y como tenemos que progresar y a veces nos ofrecen el material. También cuando ellos nos hacen las visitas también hablamos de lo que el niño está bajo o si hay alguna necesidad, entonces ellas nos apoyan, si nos van a dar a una persona para… Si algún niño por ejemplo del lenguaje necesita referirse a hacer terapia entonces ellas son las que dan el seguimiento y nos apoyan para poder lograr ayudar a ese niño."

TRANSLATION
"They also help us out with material if we don't have it. Also, when they perform visits, we talk about where the child is low, or if there are special needs, they support us. They see if they're going to refer us to a person. For example, if a child needs to be referred to speech therapy, they follow up and support us, so we can help that child."

FCC educators complete extensive documentation to participate in the FCCHEN, including a health and safety check. The FCCHEN offers a range of supports to educators, such as early childhood mental health consultation and support for children with disabilities, professional development, and linkages to other community resources as well as helping educators meet the specific requirements of CSPP. FCC educators identify a range of benefits from participating in CSPP, with a particular emphasis on how CSPP supports delivered by the FCCHEN help them meet the individualized needs of children in their FCC programs.

Figure 2

Pajaro Valley Unified School District, California State Preschool Program

Equitable Funding and Compensation
- The FCCHEN administrator manages all CSPP funding and reimburses educators directly, based on submitted child attendance sheets.
- In 2023–2024, FCC educators were reimbursed at a flat monthly per-child rate of $211 set by CSPP (www.cde.ca.gov)

Accessible Educator Qualifications & Professional Development
- CSPP sets minimum requirements. It requires FCC educators to be licensed by the state and initially have at least a Child Development Permit or 12 units in early care and education or child development, or two years of experience in an early childhood education or child care and development program.
- PVUSD sets requirements above the CSPP minimum. PVUSD requires all CSPP FCC educators to have an associate's degree and complete 20 hours of professional development in early care and education per year.

FCC-Specific PreK Program Standards: Curriculum and Assessment
- The CSPP requires use of curricula that meet California's Preschool Learning Foundations.
- PVUSD has additional requirements: All FCC educators in the FCCHEN are required to use the center-based version of the Creative Curriculum® (Burts et al., 2016).
- CSPP requires that all FCC educators use the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment system for every child funded by CSPP in their care.

Comprehensive Services for Children and Families
- A mental health consultant works with all FCC educators and families and administers developmental screenings for children in FCC programs, conducts visits with educators to support them around children's social-emotional development and working with children with diagnosed disabilities.

Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements
- CSPP has a data system that monitors PreK implementation, but it cannot examine differences by setting type.

Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure: Intermediaries and Networks
- The FCCHEN, a part of the PVUSD Child Development Department, facilitates delivery of CSPP in FCC programs.

Recruitment
- New FCC educators are actively recruited for CSPP through the FCCHEN
- New FCC educators find out about the FCCHEN through word of mouth.
- FCC educators complete extensive documentation to participate in the program.

Multnomah County Preschool for All

The Preschool for All (PFA) ballot measure passed in Multnomah County, Oregon in November 2020. Multnomah County encompasses Portland and five additional cities and is the most populous of Oregon's 36 counties. Implemented by the Department of County Human Services' Preschool & Early Learning Division, this tuition-free program is designed to provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive preschool experiences for 3- and 4-year-olds. FCC sites were included from the start with the recognition that high-quality preschool happens in all types of settings, to support small businesses, and as a strategy to offer culturally relevant program choices for families of color (see **Box 2**). FCC programs are awarded three-year contracts for PFA slots, with the option to extend for an additional two years. FCC programs must apply for a minimum of four PFA slots. While PFA will eventually be universal, the program's implementation began by focusing on children with the most significant needs, with a gradual plan for full-scale operation by 2030. During the 2023–2024 preschool year, the PFA program contracted with 37 FCC locations, nearly half (44%) of all contracted programs. The program's gradual growth is intended to incrementally increase the number of children and families served each year. Key components of the PFA program are outlined in **Figure 3**.

Program standards are the same for FCC and center-based settings, however, adaptations have been put in place to facilitate the engagement of FCC educators in PFA. Modifications such as simplified forms and extended time to meet educational requirements are ways the PFA differentiates supports for the FCC sector. Qualifications and compensation requirements for FCC educators align with PFA established salary standards. Oregon's career registry Steps are a professional

Box 2

Inclusion of Family Child Care and Racial Equity Goals

"PFA works to meet the needs of home-based preschool providers who often look like the children and families they serve and speak the same languages. All providers are expected to create environments of safety and trust where children and families feel like they belong."

Source: Multnomah County Preschool for All Provider FAQs

FCC Educator Perspectives
Multnomah County Preschool for All

"I think that the benefits are that children have stability. They don't have to move around every month. They feel stable. They finish their year, and they can continue the following year. The families are stable, and the children are emotionally stable, as well, and they learn a lot."

"For my families, the benefit has been the continuity of care. … Families can start their little ones with me and then know that they have a spot."

"They give the funds [to hire teachers]. They indicate the teacher's salary, and we find the appropriate teacher to help us. It's perfect because we train them, and they give us the monthly funds."

development pathway that acts as degree equivalents. PFA recognizes the barriers to higher education for FCC educators and values progression on the registry Steps as highly as a degree which for some educators offers a more attainable pathway to meeting requirements. Local child care resource and referral agencies offer the PFA required professional development and training for FCC educators. Supportive infrastructure includes direct support through PFA as well as multiple partnerships with community organizations aligned with the PFA program. FCC educators receive regular visits and communication with their Preschool Specialist—a staff person in the Preschool and Early Learning division who provides ongoing and tailored support to a caseload of FCC programs. Educators also receive support from PFA around substitute care with up to 50 hours of substitute care available per school year. In addition, educators receive supports from an intermediary organization—the Microenterprises Services of Oregon—which offers educators business and financial supports including access to insurance and other benefits. Other supports include a new facilities fund that FCC educators will be able to access to make renovations or repairs to their FCC homes. Educators identify a range of benefits from PFA participation, including continuity and stability for the children and families in their programs as well as access to funds to hire additional staff as needed. Educator voice is valued and integrated through monthly check-ins with coaches and annual reports where educators can offer feedback to the program. FCC educators are also included on the PFA's Advisory Committee.

Figure 3

Multnomah County Preschool for All

Equitable Funding and Compensation
- New FCC educators receive up to $25,000 in startup funding.
- FCC educators are reimbursed at a per-slot cost. The annual full-day, full-year slot allocation for 2023–2024 was $22,050. Part-year slots are also available.

Accessible Educator Qualifications & Professional Development
- Educator requirements align with the State of Oregon's Registry Steps training and education credentials and can be achieved through multiple pathways with incremental steps that include earning a Child Development Associate credential (CDA), an Associate's degree, or obtaining college course credits, or participating in community-based training.
- Incumbent educators are provided with time and financial support to attain the necessary qualifications, and waivers are available for those who have a plan to meet these requirements within two years.

FCC-Specific PreK Program Standards: Curriculum and Assessment
- FCC educators must create or select a curriculum that aligns with Oregon Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines.
- FCC educators must select an assessment that aligns with Oregon Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines and conduct developmentally appropriate assessments twice annually.
- Curriculum and assessments must be culturally and linguistically responsive to the children and families in the program.

Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements
- One data portal serves as the platform for families applying for Preschool for All and allows educators to confirm enrollments, record attendance, and indicate when a child has withdrawn from their program.
- Simplified forms and surveys are used to collect data to reduce administrative burden on providers.
- PFA makes efforts to align with other early childhood reporting requirements. There is intentional collaboration between PFA and the Oregon Online Registry.

Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure: Intermediaries and Networks
- Intermediary organizations subcontract with small PFA providers and offer FCC business development support including coaching and access to benefits.

Recruitment
- Information sessions for prospective FCC educators are offered by partners.
- Multilingual support is available to FCC educators.
- The program has a specific focus on engagement of Indigenous educators and educators of color.
- PFA has an abbreviated application process that is available for FCC educators in multiple languages.

Ohio Early Childhood Education

Ohio's Early Childhood Education (ECE) grant program is currently overseen by the Department of Children and Youth (DCY). At the time we collected data, the administration of the ECE program was transitioning from the Department of Education to DCY. The information contained in this summary describes Ohio's state-funded ECE grant that supports state-funded PreK for FCC educators and does not include county- or city-funded PreK programs, which are also offered in Ohio. In a major statewide expansion, the fiscal year 2024 ECE grant was allocated to provide programming for more than 30,000 children at $4,250 per child/slot. As part of this expansion, 100 FCC educators were awarded ECE PreK slots. However, due to onboarding challenges, only about 36 FCC providers accepted and maintained their allocated slots. This increase is still substantial compared with the six FCC educators who participated in fiscal year 2023. Key components of Ohio's ECE grant program are presented in **Figure 4**.

Program standards for ECE grants are the same for FCC and center-based settings. No supportive infrastructure exists for participating programs; all supports come from state personnel. The ECE grant requires participating FCC programs to register in and navigate through three distinct state-level data systems. The data systems are used to track reimbursement for expenditures, child assessment, child eligibility, and child attendance. Because these data and monitoring systems are not streamlined, the Ohio DCY supports FCC grantees navigating the various data systems through office hours, webinars, in-person trainings, and by providing a comprehensive guidebook with step-by-step onboarding instructions.

FCC educators who participate in Ohio's ECE grant program appreciate the opportunity to be recognized as educators within the PreK system and identify the additional funding as an important facilitator for offering high-quality care and education. The ECE grant program has no formal educator advisory or leadership board.

FCC Educator Perspectives
Ohio Early Childhood Education

"I mean just being a positive part of the community for families and children and to be able to offer high-quality care in an area that children don't typically get high-quality care … I take pride in being able to offer that for children who otherwise may not be able to get it."

"I'm just happy that we are finally getting the recognition more on a state level that our programs are beneficial for the children and the families and the learning because for many years—I've been in this field since 1996—we were not getting the respect we deserved from the people who were licensing us."

"One thing they've done very well is step-by-step manuals, because if you really did follow how they put it in order, you definitely are able to accomplish your goal. I did see that was a lot of work that they put in to help us as we were being introduced to a new opportunity. I do say that kudos to whoever worked very hard to put that piece together to help us navigate through this process."

"The funding, it does help. You basically just, I guess, piggyback off of what you're getting through Step Up To Quality [a ratings program], that extra there because the parents can't afford to pay the private fee, so you have to get that money from somewhere in order to be able to continue your high quality."

Figure 4

Ohio Early Childhood Education

Equitable Funding and Compensation

- The state directly reimburses grantees delivering state-funded PreK for approved expenses incurred during the fiscal year, based on a per-child calculation. The per child rate is $4,250.
- The ECE grant does not specifically include employee benefits to any educator, regardless of setting, but allows including fringe and retirement as expenditures in the budget.

Accessible Educator Qualifications & Professional Development

- 50% of FCC educators working in ECE-funded classrooms/programs as teachers must be working toward an Ohio Department of Education-approved bachelor's degree.
- Step Up To Quality recently moved from a five star program to a three level system with bronze, silver, and gold levels. In the prior system, highly rated programs at Star Level 3 or above could be eligible for ECE slots. In the new system, programs with a silver or gold rating can receive ECE slots. Educators who are eligible for ECE may obtain a Career Pathway Level 3 (CPL3, Child Development Associate [CDA] equivalent) in place of an associate's or a bachelor's degree.
- Educators must also complete 20 hours of professional development every two years, which may come from a range of community sources (e.g., CCR&R) and is not PreK-specific.

FCC-Specific PreK Program Standards: Curriculum and Assessment

- The Early Learning Assessment is a child-level assessment tool for preschool-age children that is directly aligned to Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and is required to be used for assessment and progress monitoring twice annually for children ages 3 to 5 years.
- ECE grantees must also report the Ten Required Learning Progressions (24 skills, knowledge, and behaviors) for ECE-funded children twice a year.

Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements

- CSPP has a data system that monitors PreK implementation, but it cannot examine differences by setting type.

Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure: Intermediaries and Networks

- Programs awarded slots must register in multiple separate state data systems designed to track reimbursements for expenditures, child assessment, eligibility, and attendance.
- The Ohio DCY supports grantees in navigating the various data systems through office hours, webinars, in-person training, and by providing a comprehensive guidebook with step-by-step onboarding instructions.

Recruitment

- PreK outreach to FCC educators is part of an overall mailing to educators who opt to receive emails from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) in the form of a statewide email describing the PreK opportunity.
- Local child care resource & referral (CCR&R) and public/private agencies engage in recruitment of FCC programs and assist programs in the application process.

Cross-site themes, challenges, and promising approaches

Table 1 uses the categories from the PreK in FCC conceptual framework (Melvin et al., 2022) to summarize approaches used across the three case study sites. Findings suggest promising approaches, including offering flexible pathways for degree attainment, curriculum differentiation and choice, training around data systems, and the use of intermediaries to support FCC educators with applications, navigation, and participation in PreK systems. Gaps suggest potential areas for improvement or innovation. Only PVUSD supports FCC educators with delivering comprehensive services to families and children through an early childhood mental health consultant and referrals to early intervention for children in FCC settings. Only Multnomah's PFA initiative intentionally considers pay parity and policies that reimburse FCC educators based on enrollment not attendance. None of the three case study sites require FCC educators to hold a BA degree. One site requires an AA degree, another aligns to the state QRIS which sets a minimum of CDA, while another site offers a progressive requirement leading to an AA minimum in 2030.

Table 1: Promising Implementation Approaches to Including FCC in PreK

		PVUSD/CSPP (Local School District, California)	PFA (Multnomah County, Oregon)	ECE (Statewide, Ohio)
Equitable Funding and Compensation	Pay parity		✔	
	Payment based on enrollment not attendance		✔	
Accessible Educator Qualifications and Professional Development	Flexible pathways for education qualifications (time, CDA, on ramps)		✔	✔
	AA required	✔	✔ (pathway to 2030 requirement)	Equivalencies available as outlined in QRIS
	BA required			
FCC-Specific PreK Program Quality Standards	Targeted recruitment of & application process for FCC educators		✔	✔
	Curriculum/assessment choice		✔	✔
Comprehensive Services for Children and Families	Referrals or direct supports for families and children	✔		
Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements	Aligned data systems			
	Training and support around data system navigation		✔	✔
Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure	Intermediaries support FCC participation	✔	✔	

Equitable Funding and Compensation

Equitable funding and compensation for FCC educators are essential components to the delivery of PreK in FCC settings (Melvin et al., 2022). In these case studies, key issues of design and implementation are illuminated that point to important considerations for the equitable integration of FCC into PreK systems. Specifically, how funding is delivered to local FCC sites, how program policies promote or support educators in braiding PreK funds with other funding sources to deliver full day, year-round services, and how PreK systems address the significant disparities in FCC compensation are areas of strategic policy development.

Approaches to how PreK systems pay and reimburse FCC educators varied across the three case study sites. Strategies such as payment based on enrollment not attendance, alignment of FCC educator compensation with public school salaries, and consistent payment

FCC Educator Perspective
Equitable Funding and Compensation

"Pero pienso que deberían de ser un poquito más organizados porque de hecho el pago pues sí llega digamos como el 20 de cada mes. Si pudieran ser un poquito de mejora que el pago fuera digamos tal vez si no la primera semana del mes de perdido la segunda semana del mes, pero no la tercera. En ocasiones hasta la cuarta semana ya. También ya es demasiado para esperar nosotros."

TRANSLATION

"But I think that they should be a little bit more organized because, actually, we get the payment around the 20th of each month. If they could improve here and give the payment if not the first week of the month, at least the second week, but not on the third week. Sometimes they don't do it until the fourth week. That's too much waiting. We work a lot, and we have to wait for such a long time. We have expenses. If you don't get your payment on time, we need to have a plan B. I think that the program could be better in reimbursing, pay us a little bit sooner."

schedules all matter for FCC educators who do not have back office supports or reserve funds to draw on when attendance and payments fluctuate. Only one of our case study sites, PFA, pays providers through contracted slots irrespective of attendance, ensuring FCC educators' salaries align with the pay scale of public kindergarten teachers. The other two sites use a reimbursement model based on attendance for compensating educators. In the Ohio ECE grant, the state reimburses educators for approved PreK expenses, based on a per-child calculation. In PVUSD's implementation of CSPP, the FCCHEN reimburses educators based on the daily rate per child from any funding source and submitted attendance sheets. FCC educators are compensated at a lower rate than public school PreK teachers. Additionally, in PVUSD's implementation of CSPP, FCC educators are required to collect reimbursement checks in person, which some educators report is an additional burden that sends a message of distrust to educators.

Nationally, FCC educators struggle to attain benefits such as health care coverage and retirement (Brochard, 2023). The delivery of PreK in FCC creates the opportunity to develop an infrastructure that delivers these important benefits and should be considered when determining the cost of PreK delivery (Harmeyer, Weisenfeld, & Frede, 2023). None of the case study sites provide direct employee benefits such as retirement or health care, although the Ohio ECE grant allows FCC educators to include fringe and retirement as expenditures in their budget. In the PFA program, an intermediary focused on business support may help educators access benefits but educators still report challenges accessing benefits such as health insurance.

FCC educator experiences participating in PreK systems along with other early care and education funding streams highlight the need for more attention to strategies that braid funding sources across multiple systems. Specifically, PreK FCC educators may also be engaged with state subsidy systems and/or Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. Understanding the intersection between these systems and navigating multiple funding sources can be challenging for educators (Morgan et al., 2024). For example, most systems do not allow programs to

use multiple funding sources for the same child slot. When this administrative calculation is not coordinated by the PreK system or an intermediary organization, administrative challenges may result. For example, FCC educators in CSPP may receive funding from PVUSD for PreK and additional funding for infants and toddlers in care, but if they wish to receive funding from other sources such as Head Start, Migrant Head Start, or the child care subsidy program, they are required to work with different intermediary agencies to access these funds and ensure they are not duplicating already funded time slots. Furthermore, an issue not addressed in any of our three case study sites is how PreK systems use braided funding to cover full day and year-round costs beyond the part-day, nine-month school year.

Accessible Educator Qualifications and Professional Development

Supporting the delivery of high quality PreK in FCC settings requires accessible qualifications for FCC educators (Melvin, et al, 2022). Accessibility can include a variety of supports to promote FCC participation, including flexible career pathways, curriculum relevant to FCC, and flexible and online courses.

Two of the case study sites offer flexible pathways for FCC educators to obtain degree requirements for PreK delivery. PFA requires all FCC educators to work toward an associate's degree but offers significant financial resources as well as an extended timeline to attain the degree. Ohio's ECE grant allows alternative credentials to a bachelor's degree. PVUSD requires an associate's degree, which may be more attainable for FCC educators than a bachelor's degree yet may be difficult for educators to obtain without financial support, which PVUSD does not offer (Morgan et al., 2022).

FCC-Specific PreK Program Quality Standards

FCC-specific standards acknowledge the uniqueness of home-based child care settings (e.g., mixed age groups, dual roles of educator and administrator) through differentiated standards and supports. Despite receiving support to implement PreK requirements, such as curriculum and assessment,

FCC Educator Perspectives
Accessible Educator Qualifications and Professional Development

"It's [application and onboarding process] very time-consuming. Being a family child care, you're the only person, and it's a lot of applications. I had one friend, she just decided not to do it because it was way too much. It's a lot of work. A lot of the bigger centers in the schools and stuff, they have someone that's dedicated to do that, and when you're a family child care, it's you."

"Una de las maestras estamos en el proceso de que ella pueda obtener una beca en [un colegio comunitario local] para que ella pueda empezar a estudiar su carrera en early childhood education. Gracias a que ella está trabajando aquí en mi programa es posible que ella pueda recibir la beca."

TRANSLATION
"For one of the teachers, we're trying to get her a scholarship at [a local community college] so she can start her career in early childhood education. Thanks to her working in my program, she may be able to get the scholarship."

some educators across the case study sites feel that the PreK standards do not recognize the unique aspects of FCC settings and are sometimes difficult to meet. For example, some educators express frustration with lack of support around working with mixed-age groups of preschoolers and infants and toddlers. For example, some educators describe their PreK coaches as unfamiliar with FCC settings; they feel pressure from their coaches to meet PreK standards by making their FCC homes look like center-based programs. It's possible that coaches who are not familiar with FCC settings may not understand what implementation of PreK standards in an FCC setting could look like. As a result, they may communicate their interpretation of how to

implement requirements in ways that are not actually aligned with the PreK program's standards. Other FCC educators mention their need for business as well as quality supports in their role as administrators of their FCC programs. FCC educators at two of the case study sites describe challenges with the PreK application process. In addition to educational barriers and requirements, the paperwork and the onboarding process are time-consuming and may be difficult for some FCC educators to complete without administrative support.

Comprehensive services

Access to comprehensive services and resources for children and families beyond PreK education for children are an important component of high-quality PreK systems for families. Only one of the PreK sites in this study reported offering early childhood mental health consultation and referrals to comprehensive services for families. Educators at this site appreciated the support they received from a mental health consultant who could help them communicate with and connect families to needed resources.

FCC Educator Perspectives
FCC-Specific PreK Program Quality Standards

"I would like more support when it comes to our environment. We're all independent, and not all the houses are the same. Maybe one of us has a large yard or a large house, so it needs to be adjusted."

"Sometimes it's frustrating that they want to see all the areas in a home. The homes are small. They don't have as much space as a center to make that arrangement of areas. They want to see all those areas, but personally, inside, we can't have it. Maybe there's a little bit more space outside, and we can work with a little bit more. It's frustrating because we would like to comply with the requirements. Unfortunately, the home environment is small, or not all the areas fit."

"I think some of it is unrealistic, to be honest. In our classroom, we have nine. Seven of them are on Individual Family Service Plans. Two of them are Level 3. We've been asked to put a swing in our classroom. It's like, we don't have the space for a swing. How do we functionally hang that from our ceiling? We've been asked to put doors where licensing has said this is a fire hazard, you can't do that. I just feel there needs to be some type of communication with licensing and their vision."

"Y seguimos trabajando overtime. ¿Cuándo son las conferencias, alguien de ustedes cerró su cuidado infantil cuando fueron las primeras conferencias? ¿No sé el año o el mes pasado, ustedes cierran? Yo no cerré. Yo tuve que hacer mis conferencias entre o después de las horas de trabajo con las familias. ¿Dónde está ese tiempo? ¿Ese tiempo no se ve, no se valora? ¿Dónde está nuestro tiempo personal de cuidado para nosotras como maestras, como educadoras, como proveedoras de cuidado infantil? ¿Dónde está?"

TRANSLATION
"And we continue working overtime. When there were parent-teacher conferences, did any of you close your child care center? During the first conferences last month or whenever, do you close? I didn't close. I had to have my parent-teacher conferences in between or after work hours. Where is that time? That time is not considered? It doesn't count? Where is our personal time to take care of ourselves as teachers, educators, and child care providers? Where is that?"

Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements

Alignment of data and monitoring systems is essential for reducing duplication in data entry and administrative burden. PreK data systems can be varied and can include systems for child attendance, funding distribution, and/or program delivery (e.g., curriculum implementation and child assessment) (Morgan et al., 2024). Monitoring requirements may also create challenges for FCC educators especially when visitors to the FCC program are required across different systems (Lewis et al., 2023). In all three PreK systems, educators highlighted the complexity of data systems. Navigating multiple early care and education data systems can be a barrier for new educators engaging with PreK delivery and a time burden for educators engaged in PreK delivery. For example, in Ohio, the ECE grant's data system does not align with the state child care subsidy data system; educators are required to enter the same

FCC Educator Perspectives
Streamlined Data and Monitoring Requirements

"We were reminding each other what step comes first because it was new information that we have never been privy to, and sometimes the state's systems are a little antiquated. They're working to get things better, but you just have to go through so many different apps. Then you have to get approved from this one designation, which is the school, and I forget what it's called, the Department of Education."

"It needs to be streamlined and not as cumbersome. … I consider myself computer-literate, and some of that stuff—it's mind boggling, the steps that you have to go through. …They should work together. It's not cohesive."

information across different data portals (e.g., child birth certificate, family income level, etc.). Similarly, in Multnomah County, the PFA's data system is not aligned with the state-level Preschool Promise program's data system. Two of the sites offer training and technical assistance for FCC educators on how to navigate the PreK data system. PreK monitoring was often aligned to the data systems described here. In addition, some PreK systems relied on licensing and QRIS for other aspects of monitoring, such as quality observations.

Supportive and Educator-Led Infrastructure

Educator-led infrastructure (such as staff family child care networks or hubs) can serve as important brokers between FCC educators and PreK systems. This type of infrastructure can impact all aspects of service delivery and provide a mechanism for FCC educators to provide feedback and leadership on aspects of PreK implementation as well as support FCC educators as leaders and key participants in the design, delivery, and implementation of the program (Melvin et al., 2023).

Supportive infrastructure may be important for FCC educators' initial engagement in PreK systems (application process) through delivery of high-quality PreK (implementation). Supports may include translation and language support, support with administrative paperwork, and facilitation of peer-to-peer connections. Two of the case study sites use intermediaries specifically designed to support FCC educators. CSPP uses the FCCHENs that may be community based or part of school districts such as the PVUSD model. In the PFA model, differentiated support for FCC educators is provided by CCR&R agencies who offer required professional development and a business enterprise organization that offers business coaching and access to benefits, recognizing that program sustainability is tied to quality PreK delivery. Moreover, the PFA system has an intentional focus on cultural

"My last response was talking about the application process, but now, when it's implementation, like OK, your application was approved, it has been very challenging. You gotta go in, and you have to set up the apps, and you gotta do the CCRP, and you gotta do 50 million things. And that, yes, I have been struggling with that. … I'm still tryin' to make my way through it."

"The only thing that I found to be about the whole process, it was tedious, to say the least. If you did not go in the order and follow the steps on the guidance document that they sent out and stay truly on top of it, you will get lost. What me and another group of providers did, we worked together, like in a beehive. We all were readin' the materials. We all were checking in on each other."

"Supuestamente tenemos un coach, pero el coach de cierta manera tal vez también lo tenga limitado. Porque a veces cuando pedimos alguna asesoría en alguna área dice "oh este, es que yo no estoy autorizada para meterme en esta área. Mi haría es solamente ser coach." Literal lo que es la educación. Y entonces simplemente cuando muchas comenzamos en estas áreas necesitamos asesoría en el internet y pues no, al menos en lo personal no lo recibí. Como lo hicimos no sé, pero lo hicimos solas."

TRANSLATION

"Supposedly, we have a coach, but the coach is limited in a certain way. Sometimes, when we request orientation regarding a specific topic, she will say, 'I'm not authorized to get into that topic. I am just a coach.' They're limited to education. When many of us start working in these areas, we need training in internet use, but in my case, I never got it. I don't know how we managed, but we managed on our own."

and linguistic responsiveness across implementation areas, including support for FCC educators in their preferred languages, and community-based supports and resources for educators. Educators at two sites noted challenges navigating technology, websites, and administrative requirements, suggesting that additional supports in these areas are needed.

Discussion

Findings from the case studies described in this report suggest several promising approaches to inclusion of FCC educators in publicly funded PreK systems. The success of these efforts is evidenced by FCC educators across all three sites who recognize the value of incorporating PreK in their programs for children and their families. In all the PreK systems described here, educators mentioned benefits from PreK funding. FCC educators were glad to be included in the PreK system and felt their participation elevated them professionally and gave them recognition and credibility. Educators also noted increased access to resources such as curricula as well as materials and opportunities for children in care. Educators noted that by being included in publicly funded PreK, they were able to serve children who would otherwise not have access to PreK. Moreover, FCC educators across the three sites appreciated the PreK system's recognition of the unique strengths and needs of the FCC population.

Despite the promises of FCC inclusion in PreK systems described in this report, many challenges around *equitable* inclusion were highlighted by PreK administrators as well as FCC educators. First, a lack of alignment of PreK requirements, standards, and data and monitoring systems with other birth-to-5 systems, such as licensing, subsidy, quality rating and improvement systems, and Head Start, creates additional administrative burdens for FCC educators who, unlike centers or schools, do not have back-office administrative support. Second, while some PreK systems seek to tailor supports and requirements for the FCC context, the three PreK systems described here do not differentiate standards or requirements in significant ways that acknowledge and celebrate the strengths of the FCC sector. Third, funding and compensation policies that do differentiate may work

against equitable outcomes for FCC educators. For example, only one site has a pay-parity policy for FCC educators. In the other two sites, FCC educators are paid at lower rates than public preschool teachers but are expected to meet the same standards and requirements.

Given the disproportionate numbers of women of color in FCC and the low wages of child care workers compared with school-based PreK teachers (McLean et al., 2024), pay-parity strategies are particularly important to repair harm caused by systemic inequities within public systems.

In addition to these challenges, we find that educator voice is not often leveraged or used to design or inform system policies. Only one of the PreK systems in our study explicitly acknowledges the importance of educator voice in decision making within the PreK system. More work is needed to fully include and learn from the FCC sector in the development of mixed-delivery systems. Strategies such as FCC advisory groups, using FCC educators as consultants or ambassadors, and intentional feedback loops with educators can assist PreK programs in redesigning recruitment, enrollment, and implementation processes in ways that are responsive to the unique experiences of delivering PreK in FCC.

Recommendations

Based on our case studies in three locations, we identify several recommendations for building successful mixed-delivery PreK models that include FCC educators. These approaches stem from the need to differentiate multiple aspects of PreK systems to be more responsive to FCC settings.

Intentional Outreach to FCC Educators Through Trusted Systems

Trusted partnerships built over time can ease the challenges that come with change and taking on new endeavors. Organizations and programs that currently engage FCC educators through mentorship, advocacy, professional development, and community, such as FCC networks and CCR&R agencies, can offer a natural extension for recruitment of FCC educators into PreK systems.

Streamline Application Processes

Complex application processes are time-consuming and burdensome for FCC educators who do not have specialized staff dedicated to administrative tasks. Using easy-to-navigate processes and data collection procedures in place of cumbersome application systems and lengthy applications may reduce burdens. Modifying applications to remove information that does not pertain to FCC programs may also reduce the time required for application completion.

Differentiate and Streamline Data Systems to Address Home-Based Child Care Settings

The time required to navigate multiple complex data systems, which may be duplicative, can deter FCC educators from delivering PreK. Streamlining data systems to pull pertinent data from one system to another can help FCC educators better manage day-to-day PreK requirements like tracking child attendance, recording expenditures, and entering child assessment data. Reducing the effort required to complete data entry may attract more FCC educators to participate in delivering PreK.

Compensation Parity for FCC Educators (Including Income and Benefits)

Low wages in the early care and education sector are widespread and are even more precarious for FCC educators, many of whom are women of color (McLean et al., 2024). Incomes from running an FCC business may be insufficient for educators to support themselves and their families (Bromer et al., 2021). Paired with low compensation is unpredictability and timeliness of payments, as educators in this study report. In addition, lack of access to benefits such as paid time off and health insurance threaten the capacity of many FCC educators to stay in the work. Increasing PreK funding to include scaling up compensation to reach parity standards with K–3 educators is needed to retain and recruit FCC educators delivering PreK. Moreover, the timely and accessible delivery of those funds to FCC educators is an important aspect of PreK systems implementation.

Models of Braided Funding

FCC educators who deliver PreK services often engage with other early childhood programs and funding systems, such as child care subsidy and Early Head Start. Policy coordination across these systems to promote continuity for children and families is essential. Continuity includes stability across the day (e.g., PreK followed by after school care potentially paid by child care subsidy) and across the year (e.g., year round care that includes summer months for children enrolled in PreK). Policy approaches such as intentional braided funding at the state, county, or intermediary level have the potential to reduce administrative burden for FCC educators and increase the ease of navigating multiple fundings sources. Such approaches to streamlining funding across early care and education systems may promote FCC participation in PreK and their delivery of year-round, full day services which ultimately benefits working families with young children.

Aligned Professional Development and Coaching

Professional development and coaching are widely recognized as promising tools for supporting continuous quality improvement for early care and education professionals. However, many FCC educators work long hours, including evenings—often alone—and are unable to close their programs to attend professional-development sessions during daytime or even evening hours. Adjusting training hours, locations, days of the week, and settings (e.g., virtual) to meet the needs of FCC educators can reduce barriers to professional-development participation. Coaching sessions should be scheduled in coordination with educators' availability and should address topics relevant to FCC educators, such as business practices, financial management, and marketing. Moreover, FCC educators often face challenges with coaches who are unfamiliar with FCC settings. The appropriate preparation of PreK coaches and specialists to support FCC educators in the delivery of mixed-age services in home-based settings can improve the professional development supports for these educators.

Appendix

Methodology

Three PreK systems in three different types of jurisdictions (school district, county, state) were selected based on their implementation stage, geographic location, and populations served. PreK administrators helped recruit PreK coaches and FCC educators at each site.

Protocols were developed for interviews and focus groups with PreK administrators and staff and focus groups with PreK FCC educators. A demographic survey was also developed for all study participants. The study received Institutional Review Board approval, and informed consent was obtained from all research participants.

All data were collected virtually via Zoom. All interviews with administrators and staff were conducted in English. PVUSD and Multnomah County focus groups with educators were conducted in Spanish and English. Ohio focus groups with educators were conducted in English. Educators received a $75 stipend for their participation.

Zoom transcripts were cleaned and coded based on the key categories of implementation described in the PreK in FCC Project's conceptual framework (Melvin et al., 2022).

In total, 20 PreK administrators and staff participated in an interview or focus group (see Table A1). A total of 37 FCC educators participated in one of 14 focus groups across the three sites (see Table A2).

Table A1: State Administrators and Staff Characteristics

	Pajaro Valley Unified School District/CSPP		Multnomah County PFA		Ohio ECE		Full Sample	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Ethnicity/race								
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	1	20	1	14	1	13	3	15
Asian or Asian American	0	0	2	29	0	0	2	10
Black or African American	0	0	1	14	2	25	3	15
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous AND Asian American	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	5
Hispanic, Latine	1	20	1	14	0	0	2	10
White	2	40	1	14	5	63	8	40
Missing/prefer not to answer	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	5
Gender								
Female	4	80	6	86	8	100	18	90
Male	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	5
Prefer not to answer	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	5
Highest degree completed								
Bachelor's degree	2	40	4	57	1	13	7	35
Master's degree	3	60	3	43	4	50	10	50
Doctoral degree	0	0	0	0	3	38	3	15
Years of experience								
Up to 10 years	0	0	0	0	4	50	4	20
11 to 20 years	4	80	3	43	2	25	9	45
21 to 30 years	1	20	2	29	1	13	4	20
Over 30 years	0	0	1	14	1	13	2	10
Missing	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	5

Table A2: Family Child Care Educator Characteristics

	Pajaro Valley Unified School District/CSPP		Multnomah County PFA		Ohio ECE		Full Sample	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Ethnicity/race								
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous and Hispanic	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	3
Black or African American	0	0	1	17	17	85	18	49
Middle Eastern or North African	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	3
Hispanic, Latine	10	91	2	33	0	0	12	32
White	0	0	2	33	1	5	3	8
White AND another identity	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	3
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	3
Gender								
Female	11	100	5	83	20	100	36	97
Prefer not to answer	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	3
Highest degree completed								
High school diploma or GED completed	5	46	2	33	3	15	10	27
Technical or trade school	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	3
Some college credit, no degree	1	9	3	50	3	15	7	19
Associate's degree	2	18	0	0	6	30	8	22
Bachelor's degree	2	18	0	0	7	35	9	24
Master's degree	1	9	0	0	1	5	2	5
Years of experience								
Up to 10 years	3	27	2	33	6	30	11	30
11 to 20 years	5	46	2	33	6	30	13	35
21 to 30 years	3	27	0	0	7	35	10	27
Over 30 years	0	0	2	33	1	5	3	8

Note. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

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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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Erikson Institute — Home-Based Child Care Research

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EQUITY RESEARCH ACTION COALITION — UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute