



## FCC Educator Perspectives

# Delivering Publicly Funded PreK in Family Child Care: Perspectives From Educators Across the United States

## Research to Policy Brief

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During the 2022–2023 school year, approximately 2,400 family child care (FCC) educators delivered publicly funded state or local prekindergarten (PreK) to nearly 6,000 3- and 4-year-olds across the nation.<sup>1</sup> While an increasing number of states and municipalities are including FCC educators in their mixed-delivery systems or expanding the number of FCC programs receiving public dollars, there is very limited documentation about FCC educators' experiences delivering PreK in their home-based settings. This brief reports on data from a survey of 103 FCC educators across the United States who were delivering state or locally funded PreK between April and October 2023 or who had delivered publicly funded PreK within the last five years. The brief aims to amplify their work, highlight the benefits and challenges they experienced, and offer recommendations for mixed-delivery early care and education (ECE) systems that include FCC educators.

This brief summarizes major themes with data highlights from the PKFCC educator survey. Additional data are presented in the full technical report available on our [website](#).

## 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,<sup>2</sup> and that FCC educators bring unique benefits to PreK systems. Including FCC educators in mixed-delivery ECE 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*

## What Is Family Child Care?

Family child care is:

- Nonparental ECE delivered in a home-based setting
- Typically paid, often by a combination of parent payments, child care subsidies, and other public funding sources (such as PreK)
- Provided to small, usually mixed-age groups of children from 6 weeks to 12 years old
- Regulated by state and local licensing, registration, or certification policies
- A primary form of ECE for over 300,000 3- and 4-year-olds in 2019<sup>3</sup>
- A common form of ECE for families from economically, racially and ethnically, and geographically marginalized communities.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. PKFCC educators bring numerous strengths and benefits for children, families, and PreK systems.

A recent conceptual framework for equitable inclusion of FCC educators in PreK systems centers the strengths of FCC settings to emphasize the distinct benefits they may afford PreK children and their families.<sup>5</sup> (See **Figure 1**.)

- Continuity, stability, and mixed-age groups
  - 85% deliver PreK in mixed-age groupings, while a small number enroll only PreK-age children.
  - 82% report having cared for some PreK-funded children as infants/toddlers.
- Cultural and linguistic responsiveness, aligned with the children and families FCC educators serve
  - 99% have a racial/ethnic match with at least one child in their care.
  - 82% frequently speak to families about their family lives and cultural identities.
  - 61% are women of color, with large proportions of Black or African American educators and Hispanic or Latina educators.
  - 25% speak 2+ languages.
- Individualized care and education for children
  - 99% report spending time daily in one-on-one and child-selected activities. Group sizes are small in FCC, which facilitates these close interactions and activities.
  - 53% are willing to care for children previously expelled from or asked to leave another ECE program for behavioral reasons.
  - 52% care for at least one child with a disability or developmental delay.

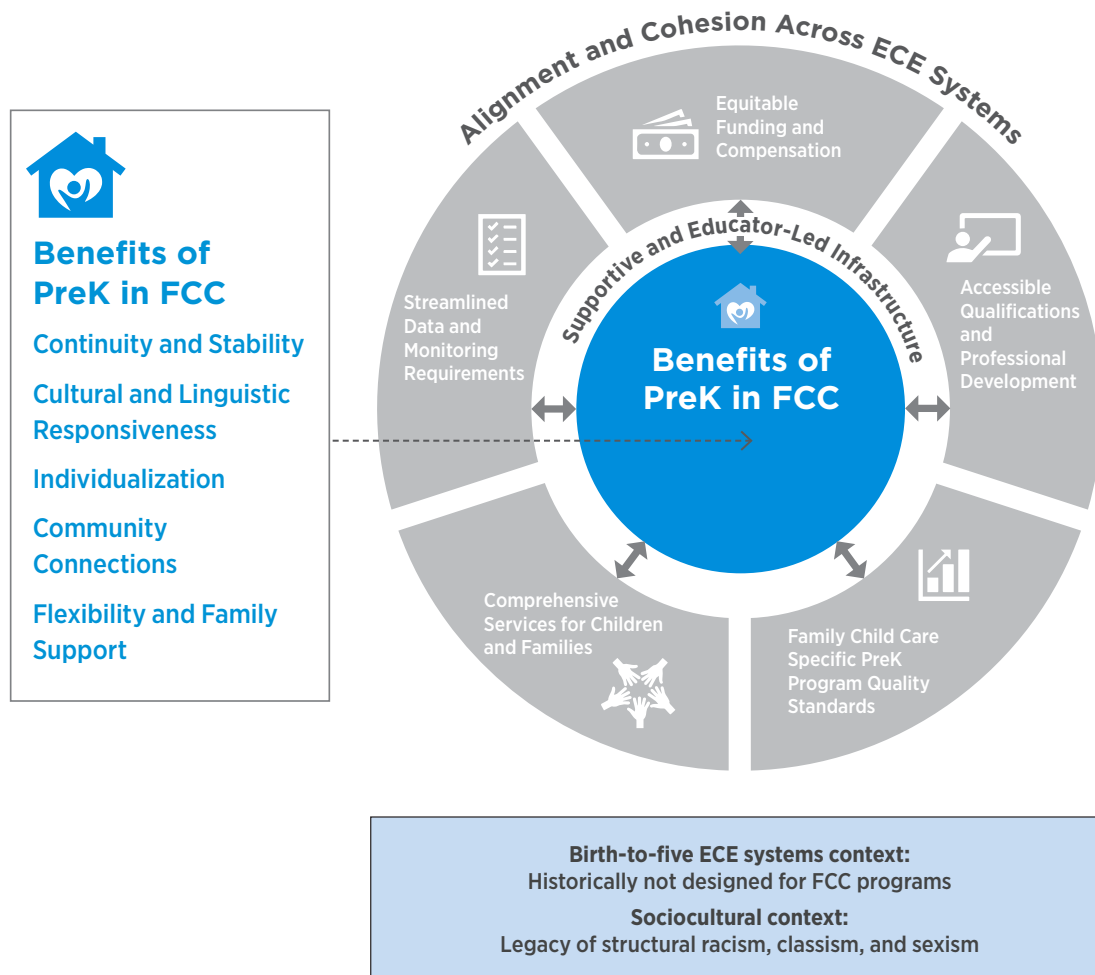
- Flexibility and family support
  - 93% are open year-round, supporting working families who need child care during summer.
  - 79% offer nonstandard-hour care, including extended hours, emergency or drop-in hours, and weekends.
  - More than half participate in federally funded programs that support families such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program and child care subsidy programs.

### 2. The current PreK in FCC workforce is highly qualified, experienced, and professionalized.

- Over 80% report that the easiest PreK requirements to meet are related to care and teaching practices because these build on what educators are already doing for children in their FCC programs.
- The average PKFCC educator has over 20 years of ECE experience, and the majority have previously worked in schools or centers.
- 73% have a bachelor's degree or higher and more than half have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or state teaching certification.
- 30% are accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).

Figure 1

## Conceptual Framework for Including FCC in Mixed-Delivery PreK Systems



Melvin et al., 2022

### 3. Implementing PreK in FCC has benefits for FCC

**educators.** Most educators participate in public PreK because it helps them better serve their communities, increases their professional status, helps them attract more families to their FCC program, and, for some educators, stabilizes their compensation.

- Educators find the PreK-related professional development and support they receive to be helpful, particularly coaching support and help from PreK coaches.
- Educators agree that their PreK systems respect their work and believe that FCC settings prepare children well for kindergarten and provide high-quality ECE.
- Educators report that partnering with PreK systems positively changed their attainment of professional credentials, curriculum use, and income generation (see **Figure 2**).

#### 4. Implementing PreK in FCC has barriers and challenges for some educators including increased paperwork burdens, qualification requirements that are hard to meet, additional expenses, and inadequate compensation.

- Finding and/or paying for qualified assistants is a major challenge for most educators who have an assistant, an issue that cuts across ECE system requirements.
- Half report challenges around recruiting enough PreK eligible children to participate. This may be attributed to PreK system bias in promoting FCC options or to PreK system eligibility requirements for children.
- Under half report that PreK system supports are individualized or adapted to meet their needs.
- Under half report that their voice is heard in their PreK system.
- A third report they do not get help completing applications for PreK slots.

Although some educators report PreK participation helps stabilize their income, others experience economic challenges related to implementing PreK (see **Figure 3**).

#### 5. A majority of educators report that families want to choose FCC for PreK because of the smaller setting, one-on-one time, comfort with known educators, and convenience.

- 92% feel that families appreciate that they offer publicly funded PreK services.
- 57% maintain a dedicated waiting list for PreK-age children.
- 43% report that families choose FCC for PreK because of a shared cultural and linguistic background with the educator.

Figure 2

#### How PreK benefits FCC educators

PKFCC educators (N=103)



##### *Partnering with PreK positively changed...*

##### My credentials and qualifications



##### The curriculum I use



##### The income my FCC program generates



Figure 3

#### FCC educators' compensation challenges implementing PreK

PKFCC educators (N=103)



##### Educators feel they are paid less than they deserve



##### Educators report they are never compensated for attending required trainings or meetings



##### Educators feel that their fringe benefits are not adequate



##### Educators report that their income is not stable from month to month

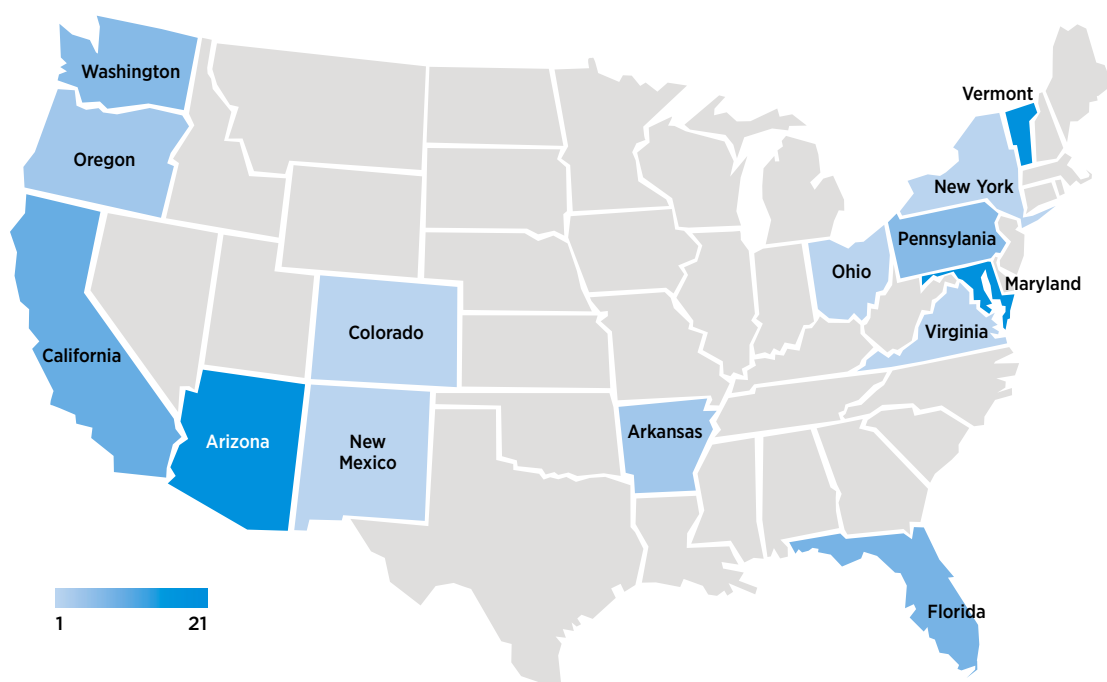


# Policy Recommendations for PreK Policy and Practice

- **Create new narratives and messages in mixed-delivery PreK systems about the benefits of PreK in FCC** for children and families (e.g., continuity of care; small group sizes; flexibility for families; racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity), PreK systems (e.g., experienced, highly trained, and high-quality educators), and educators, themselves (e.g., more stable funding, more support, feeling valued and respected by systems and families). Messages must include considerations about how to include FCC educators in PreK systems through adapted and tailored supports that acknowledge their strengths and differences from school- and center-based settings.
- **Build on-ramps and flexible pathways for FCC educators to attain required qualifications and other eligibility requirements within PreK systems.**<sup>6</sup> These can include experience-based qualifications and eligibility, cohorts for degree and certification attainment, honoring degrees received outside the United States and supports for communities that speak Spanish and other languages besides English.
- **Fund the full cost of delivering high-quality PreK in FCC and implement payment procedures and benefits that support financial stability.**<sup>7</sup> It is important that the financial benefits—increased and more stable and sustainable compensation—outweigh the additional costs of meeting PreK requirements such as hiring and retaining assistants. PreK systems should consider payment processes that are based on enrollment not attendance and that pay providers on a prospective basis rather than reimbursements. Ensuring that FCC educators understand the funding process should include transparency around blended funding and allowable uses of PreK funding. PreK systems should find ways to broadly to support FCC educators' access to benefits such as health insurance, paid time off, and retirement.
- **Simplify application processes, including recertification processes, to support continuity.**<sup>8</sup> When PreK eligibility for educators fluctuates from year to year, it may negate some of the benefits of PreK participation, such as more stable income.
- **Coordinate with broader birth-to-5 initiatives**<sup>9</sup> to increase access to PreK funding and participation for FCC educators. Systems coordination should include streamlining of paperwork, requirements, and monitoring across systems. PreK expansion to include FCC should not disrupt care for infants and toddlers in these settings.
- **Develop intermediary and other support structures, such as hubs, networks, coaches, and professional development cohorts dedicated to FCC.**<sup>10</sup> PreK systems should work to ensure FCC educators receive the support they want and need, including support for both the PreK application process and PreK implementation and delivery.
- **Include FCC educators in the design, adaptation, and planning for FCC inclusion in PreK initiatives** to ensure that educator voices inform development of requirements that make sense for FCC settings, are easily understood, and are attainable with available resources.
- **Where PreK in FCC is an option, help families understand its availability and possible benefits.** Public messaging campaigns not only help families meet their needs for PreK but also help enhance public opinion about home-based child care educators more broadly. Marketing and communication with families and communities about the value and benefits of FCC could also support FCC educators with recruitment and enrollment of PreK children.

## Methods and Sample

- Online survey of 103 FCC educators who offer state or locally funded PreK
- FCC educators were from 18 mixed-delivery PreK systems:
  - 12 states
  - 6 municipalities (city or county)
  - 3 regions of the country, based on census definitions:<sup>a</sup>
    - North (Northeast + Midwest): Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont (N=30)
    - South: Arkansas, Florida, Maryland, Virginia (N=32)
    - West: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington (N=41)
- 1-21 FCC educators from each PreK system
  - An estimated average 25% of FCC educators in each program<sup>b</sup> (range: <1% in New York to 78% in Maryland)



a US Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Geographic Terms and Definitions*. Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/about/glossary/geo-terms.html>

b Response rates were calculated using data from NIEER's state and local PreK surveys for the 2022-2023 school year (Weisenfeld & Harmeyer 2024a, 2024b).

## Endnotes

- 1 Not including states where data were not available or provided. Numbers are calculated from National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) state and local PreK surveys conducted with administrators about the 2022–2023 school year. See: Weisenfeld, G., & Harmeyer, E. (2024a). *Including family child care in state-funded pre-K systems: An update*. NIEER. <https://nieer.org/node/1068>  
  
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- 3 Estimates are based on listed HBCC providers in the 2019 National Survey of Early Childhood Education (NSECE)  
  
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- 6 Morgan, J.A., Iruka, I.U., Bromer, J., Melvin, S.A., Hallam, R., & Hustedt, J. (2022). *Strategies toward the equitable implementation of PreK in family child care: Qualifications & compensation*, Issue 1. The Family Child Care in PreK Project Brief Series. Erikson Institute, University of Delaware, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/PKFCC-Policy-Implementation-Issue1-final-2.pdf>
- 7 Morgan, J.A., Bromer, J., Melvin, S.A., Lewis, S., Hustedt, J., Hallam, R., & Iruka, I.U. (2024). *Strategies toward the equitable implementation of PreK in family child care: PreK funding procurement, child enrollment, and data tracking*, Issue 4. The Family Child Care in PreK Project Brief Series. Erikson Institute, University of Delaware, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/PKFCC-Brief4-Funding-Enrollment-DataTracking-FINAL.pdf>  
  
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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/hbcc](http://www.erikson.edu/hbcc)

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](http://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](http://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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**For more information, see the full technical report: Melvin, S.A., Reinoso, L., Bromer, J., Hallam, R., Hustedt, J., Morgan, J., & Iruka, I.U. (2025). *PreK in family child care (PKFCC) project educator survey: Full technical report*. Erikson Institute. <https://www.erikson.edu/research/prek-in-family-child-care-project-pkfcc/>**

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