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Assessment of the System of Professional Development for West Virginia Pre-K Teachers

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Thesis submitted to the
College of Human Resources and Education
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Child Development and Family Studies

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Morgantown, West Virginia
2009

ABSTRACT

Assessment of the System of Professional Development for West Virginia Pre-K
Teachers

Sally Byard

This study examined the system for professional development that exists in West Virginia
for education staff who teach in the West Virginia Pre-K program.   This information
should be used to increase the understanding of policy makers and early childhood
system planners within a framework of policy areas as described by the National
Association for the Education of Young Children in *Workforce Designs: A Policy
Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* to support quality
improvement. While several components of a comprehensive professional development
system are present, further coordination and alignment is necessary to meet the diverse
needs of individual early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf
of young children enrolled in West Virginia Pre-K.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Over the past decade, states have responded to overwhelming evidence that quality early care and education programs and services strongly influence the development of children prenatal to kindergarten entry. Two profound changes over the past several decades have had a significant impact on the field of early care and education (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). First, an explosion of research in the neurobiological, behavioral, and social sciences has led to major advances in understanding the conditions that influence whether children get off to a promising or a worrisome start in life.   Second, the capacity to use this knowledge constructively has been constrained by a number of dramatic transformations in the social and economic circumstances under which families of young children are living in the United States. These transformations include changes to the work force with the inclusion of more women working full time leading to a significant increase of children enrolled in an early care and education setting. According to West Virginia Kids Count Data Book (2008), 64,000 (50.8%) West Virginia children under six spend a large part of their day in the care of someone other than their parents.

Coordinated and public early childhood services have a relatively short history. Many services were initially provided primarily to children and families from distinct populations, such as those living in poverty. In 1965, Head Start was launched as a comprehensive child development program primarily serving children and their families who are at or below the poverty level as defined by the federal government. Since 1965 it has grown from an eight week summer program to a national program serving over 908,412 children annually across the United States and in territories outside the United States (Head Start 101: History, Values, and Regulations, n.d.).

Another large scale mandate aimed to improve the education of targeted groups of children and their families was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, enacted in 1975, by the United States Congress. This act addressed the need for appropriate educational services for children with disabilities. Subsequent reauthorizations resulted in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) which was enacted to ensure that every child who has been identified as having a disability receives a free appropriate public education. IDEA also required additional special education services and provided for procedural safeguards. Amendments to IDEA in 1986 and 1992 provided for services to preschool children and infants and toddlers with disabilities. Further improvements to the quality of services provided under the law have been mandated, with the latest amendment enacted in 2004 (The History and Reauthorization of IDEA, n.d.).

Child care grew out of a welfare movement to care for immigrant and working class children while their impoverished mothers worked (Scarr & Weinberg, 1986). In response to the growing need for quality child care, Congress established *The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990*. Today low income families are supported in obtaining and affording child care for their children through the Child Care Development Block Grant that is provided to states to: (a) allow each state maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within the state; (b) promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions on the child care that best suits their family's needs; (c) encourage states to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care; (d) assist states to provide child care to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance; and (e) assist states in implementing the

health, safety, licensing, and registration standards established in state regulations (*Child Care and Development Block Grant* Amendments *Act* of 1995, 1995).

The most recent surge in early childhood services was launched by the Bush administration in 2002 with the *Good Start, Grow Smart* (GSGS) initiative. The primary focus of the initiative was to respond to growing concerns over whether children were entering school unprepared resulting in poor performance and an increased risk for failure. The initiative was designed to help states strengthen early learning for young children, with a strong emphasis on school readiness in academics (Good Start, Grow Smart: The Bush Administration's Early Childhood Initiative, 2002). In response, most states, including West Virginia, have significantly increased funding for pre-kindergarten programs over the past decade for four-year-old children (NIEER *State of Preschool* Yearbook, 2008).

During the 2002 West Virginia legislative session, Senate Bill 247 was passed mandating universal access to preschool education for all four-year-old children and three- year-old children with an identified disability under IDEA. According to West Virginia Code 18-5-44 *Early Childhood Education Programs (2002), "*beginning no later than the school year 2012-2013 and continuing thereafter, county boards of education shall provide early childhood education programs for all children who have attained the age of four prior to the first day of September of the school year in which the pupil enters the early childhood education program". To meet this goal, West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) Policy 2525, West Virginia's Universal Access to a Quality Early Education System (2007 requires that 50% of all enrollment opportunities should be provided in collaboration with a community partner including Head Start and child care. Preschool enrollment has more than doubled since the 2002-2003 WV Pre-K baseline year. Enrollment has increased from 7,027 to an estimated 15,000 for the current year (2009-2010). It

is estimated that by 2012-2013, 18,000 four-year-old children will be enrolled in WV Pre-K (WVDE Annual Report, 2008).

Significant to the quality of preschool programming is workforce development (Zaslow & Martinez, 2005). The nature of WV Pre-K growth over the past seven years has put a strain on the capacity of a qualified work force. The impact of the 10 year increase in preschool enrollment on the capacity of the work force to meet the growing number of classrooms is significant. Based on an average class size of 18 children, and the mandated teacher-child ratio of 1:10 (West Virginia's Universal Access to a Quality Early Education, 2007) the number of preschool teachers and aides employed during the 2002-2003 school year was approximately 781. Using the same formula and the 2012-2013 projected preschool enrollment numbers (18,000) an additional 1219 teachers and aides will have been added to the workforce. WVDE reports that 74 teachers completed an approved early education program in 2008-2009 from a West Virginia institution of higher education (WVDE Personnel Data Report 2008).

In an effort to address this issue, the WVDE developed teacher qualification standards that were designed to phase in a higher level of pre-service qualification requirements. Initially the WVDE allowed for community programs to hire teachers who did not hold state certification but who met the requirements under WVBE Policy 2525 Section 7.4.1., (West Virginia's Universal Access to a Quality Early Education, 2007) which permits them to qualify for a Temporary or Permanent Authorization for Community `Programs with a minimum requirement of an associates degree in applied science.

WVBE Policy 2525 is currently under revision to increase the minimum pre-service qualifications of teachers employed by community programs requiring them to have a baccalaureate degree in the field. Head Start has also increased the level of teacher qualifications

over the past decade. The Head Start Act (2007) requires that by September 30, 2013, at least 50% of Head Start teachers in center based programs nationwide have a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education or a baccalaureate or advanced degree and coursework equivalent to a major relating to early childhood education, with experience teaching preschool children.

Currently, the WVDE does not have minimum pre-service qualifications for aides who support the professional staff in preschool classrooms, however, the Head Start Act (2007) requires that by September 30, 2013, Head Start teaching assistants must have at least a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or be enrolled in an associate or baccalaureate program that can be completed within 2 years. While pre-service educational requirements for teaching staff are critical to high quality programming for preschool children, on-going professional development opportunities are also essential to enhance the initial skills, knowledge, and abilities of teachers as well as the continued support for researched-based practices that are identified to result in higher outcomes for children (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990).

In summary, the increasing enrollment in WV Pre-k classrooms is paralleled by an increase in the number of staff required to meet mandates. The quality of these programs depends largely on the qualifications and demonstrated competencies of the education staff working directly with children. In-service professional development becomes vital to establishing the quality of programming that is necessary to yield desired child outcome results.

Purpose of Study

The disparity of pre-service certification and credentialing requirements that exists among teachers and aides who teach children enrolled in West Virginia Pre-K elevates the critical nature of high quality in-service professional development opportunities that meet the

needs of the diverse work force. Children's classroom experiences, particularly interactions with their teachers are more predictive of outcomes than teacher degree, major, or certification (Pianta, 2006). Teachers and aides vary dramatically in the quality of their classroom practice, and this variation is strongly linked to significant differences in children's learning. When children experience poor teaching for three or more years in a row, their long term academic prospects are compromised (Hamre et al.,2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000).

National standards exist to support states as they form a professional development system for early care and education. This study assessed the status and describes the system of on-going professional development for preschool teachers in West Virginia as compared to the policy criteria established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an organization that promotes the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age eight. NAEYC is a member organization of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation (NCATE). The West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) have a joint partnership with NCATE (NCATE/State Partnership Protocol, 2005), an organization that is officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an accrediting body for institutions that prepare teachers and other professional personnel for work in preschool, elementary, and secondary schools (About NCATE, 2009). With key responsibility for WV Pre-K assigned to the WVDE and local county school boards, it is imperative that an exploration of the current professional development system include a context that exists for this governing institution. Therefore, NCATE standards have been included within the context of the NAEYC policy criteria. It is also important to distinguish between standards for a high quality professional development system, and standards of professional development for personnel.

NCATE has six unit standards that identify the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions expected of educational professionals. The standards also identify the organizational structures, policies, and procedures that should be in place to support pre-service teachers in meeting these expectations.

This study aimed to lay the foundation for further investigation to inform policy and make recommendations for the development of a coordinated and integrated state professional development system for West Virginia Pre-K. The study sought the answer to the following key question:

Does West Virginia have an intentional and comprehensive, integrated early childhood professional development system of preparation and ongoing support that meets the needs of individual early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of young children enrolled in West Virginia Pre-K?

Chapter II: Review of Literature

In 2008, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (LeMoine, 2008). In Workforce Designs, NAEYC defined an integrated early childhood professional development system as a "comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of young children" This blueprint focused on the policies that connect professional development activities and that support and make possible effective implementation of a state system of professional development. Essential to high quality professional development is for the growth of all early childhood professionals, at all levels of expertise, to be ongoing. The significance of in-service professional development has been identified as having a major impact on quality early care and education (Barnett, 2003; Cryer, 1999). Children who are educated by qualified teachers have been found to be more sociable, exhibit a more developed use of language, and perform at a higher level on cognitive tasks (Bowman, Donavan, & Burns, 2001; Dwyer, Chait, & McKee, 2000; Howes, 1997). Training and professional development of early childhood educators is a key component to providing high quality classroom environments that will help children to succeed (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005; Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2005).

In Workforce Designs (LeMoine, 2008) NAEYC acknowledged that while many states have components of a professional preparation, development, and career system, many policies and initiatives are not yet linked and some are nonexistent. They further acknowledge that professional standards and requirements vary according to funding streams or program type. West Virginia Pre-K is financed through the use of four primary funding streams: (a) the WV

School Aid Funding Formula and (b) Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act administered by the West Virginia Department of Education, (c) Head Start and (d) child care. There are 21 Head Start agencies in the state that provide services to four- year-old children. Child care services are provided to four-year-old children through private tuition and the child care block grant subsidy program administered by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resource. Total spending in 2008 per pre-k child enrolled was $7,778. State spending per child was $4,793. Head Start accounts for most of the remaining $2984 (NIEER *State of Preschool Yearbook*, 2008). The NAEYC blueprint identifies six essential policy areas: (a) professional standards; (b) career pathways; (c) articulation; (d) advisory structure; (e) data; and (f) financing. These policy areas must be integrated and inclusive of all early care and education sectors. For WV Pre-K, these sectors primarily involve public education, Head Start, and child care.

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards

Professional standards define the *what,* or the content, of professional preparation and ongoing development. Aligned with the funding sources, West Virginia preschool staff have a variety of educational backgrounds. Teachers and aides have entered the work force with a wide range of foundational knowledge and competencies depending on their pre-service preparation and in-service experience. Policy and teacher preparation standard revisions are beginning to align pre-service qualification requirements for the various WV Pre-K funding sources, but disparities still remain (West Virginia's Universal Access to a Quality Early Education: Pending Board Approval, 2008). For example, Head Start and child care staff continue to practice under a temporary or permanent authorization certificate with a two year associate degree in child development or a baccalaureate degree in child development or early childhood education. Approximately 67% of all Head Start teachers have a B.A. or advanced degree in ECE or a

related field with qualifications (Byard, 2010). Pre-K staff employed by county boards of education may be working under a permit because they do not currently hold preschool certification. Many teachers have moved into preschool after years of service teaching at the elementary level. The knowledge and competencies of pre-k teachers and aides varies according to the age of the children they are teaching as well as the expectations of the institutions they have been employed under. Words that are used to describe quality teaching practices have very different meanings depending on the context in which they are used (Darling-Hammond, 1997). There is a strong link between significant differences on children's learning and the dramatic variation in the quality of the classroom practices of teachers (Hamre et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000). In addition to the challenges created by this diverse workforce is the expectation that all classrooms are inclusive of children with disabilities, requiring staff to have the knowledge and ability to teach learners who may need additional supports and exceptional strategies. Children who enter public school at the age of four, often experience adjustment challenges that require a range of approaches to meet their needs. Head Start directors and disabilities managers have identified that teaching staff need more training on effective practices for teaching children with disabilities (Byard, 2010). Head Start state partners identified that all teachers need more training on serving children with special needs in inclusive environments (Byard, 2010). Regard for children's health and safety takes on new meanings when four year olds are present. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) scores for health and safety are among the lowest reported on annual ECERS reports submitted to the WVDE (WVDE Annual Report, 2008).

All of these factors influence decisions policy makers and education leaders must make regarding the type and quality of in-service professional development opportunities. The

challenge of ensuring quality educational experiences to all WV Pre-K children regardless of their placement and the minimum qualifications of the teaching staff requires a comprehensive system of on-going in-service professional development that can be managed through a unifying framework that is designed to meet the individual and collective needs of all teachers and aides.

Professional standards for West Virginia Pre-K teaching staff are primarily defined through the West Virginia Board of Education, Head Start, and child care, the three partner groups that provide pre-k services through collaborative models. Appendix A-2 of Approval of Educational Personnel Preparation Programs (2005) outlines the West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards. This policy states that the professional teaching standards are the basis for teacher preparation, assessment of teacher practice, and professional development. Professional teaching standards provide a common language that describes what a teacher needs to know and be able perform on a consistent basis. These professional teaching standards provide the expectation that every West Virginia teacher will demonstrate expertise in five broad areas that are the basis for what teachers must know and be able to do. These five areas include: (a) curriculum and planning, (b) the learner and the learning environment, (c) teaching, (d) professional responsibilities for self-renewal and (e) professional responsibilities for school and community. According to NCATE Standard 1 (2008): *Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions,* candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals know and demonstrate the content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students[5] learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional[6] standards.

The amount of in-service training required is addressed in WVBE Policy 2525 (2007) which

mandates that all WV Pre-K staff to participate in 15 clock hours of in-service staff development,

with 6 of those hours specific to service children with special needs. Head Start and child care

programs that provide WV Pre-K services must also adhere to WVBE Policy 2525.

Head Start professional development standards are addressed in the Head Start Act (2007).

Section 648A requires the US Secretary of Health and Human Services to ensure that each Head

Start classroom is assigned one teacher who has demonstrated competency to perform functions

that include:

> (A) planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and
> physical development of children, including improving the readiness of children for
> school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness, their understanding
> and use of language, their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied
> vocabulary, their appreciation of books, their understanding of early math and early
> science, their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning; (B) establishing
> and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment;
> (C) supporting the social and emotional development of children; and (D) encouraging
> the involvement of the families of the children in a Head Start program and supporting
> the development of relationships between children and their families. Programs are
> instructed to provide no less than 15 clock hours of high quality, sustained, intensive and
> classroom-focused in-service professional development per year.

West Virginia Child Care Licensing Regulations (n.d.) require all qualified staff to

complete 15 hours of approved training within the first year of employment according to the

following: 8.7.a.1. A director shall have six (6) hours in management training within the required

fifteen (15) hours; and 8.7.a.2. Qualified staff members shall have six (6) hours of training

related to the age group of children for which they care, within the required fifteen (15) hours.

Child care staff are also required to register on the West Virginia State Training and

Registry System Career Pathway (WV STARS) to track training content and maintain their

credentialed status. Renewal on the STARS pathway is required every three years. To maintain

credentialed status, registrants must have completed 45 clock hours of training or a three hour credit bearing course that is linked to the core/knowledge competency areas.

WV STARS is a state professional development system that builds on other efforts in the state to create an inclusive early care and education system of career mobility that is grounded in a core body of child-related knowledge (West Virginia STARS 2009). The WV Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals was adopted in 2004 by the Partners Implementing an Early Care and Education System Advisory Council, (PIECES). It is the intent of PIECES that this set of core knowledge statements and core competencies provide a fundamental and consistent set of knowledge and skill areas that are common to all roles in the early care and education field, with a focus that includes, but is broader than teaching standards (PIECES n.d.). The core knowledge areas are: Child Growth and Development, Health, Safety and Nutrition, Positive Interactions and Relationships, Curriculum, Child Observations and Assessment, Family and Community, Program Management, and Professionalism (West Virginia STARS 2009).

Policy Area 2: Career Pathways

Necessary to effective use of professional standards is a process that guides education staff on a measurable pathway that promotes continuous acquisition of knowledge and skill development. The pathway should meet staff wherever they are and support them as they move. Pathways should not only promote movement between levels, but also continued growth within levels. NAEYC has identified some weaknesses associated with many career pathway systems. Career pathways are often unclear or not linked across sectors and functions. Many staff participate in professional development seminars and courses that frequently do not lead to a credential or degree. There is often no articulation between associate degree and baccalaureate

degree programs or with credit-bearing community-based training and education opportunities (LeMoine, 2008).

West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources (WVECTR) is an organization that provides professional development opportunities for the WV early care and education community through information, training and technical assistance, and resources. WVECTR administers the WV STARS Career Pathway (West Virginia STARS 2009) providing registrants with a system to track their career advancement, recognizing that individuals enter the early care and education workforce from very diverse educational qualifications and background experiences. While the WV STARS Career Pathway is required by child care licensing regulations for staff employed by a licensed child care program, public education and Head Start staff are encouraged to register . Career mobility is tracked in eight levels that identify specific educational and experience requirements and a core competency practice. The pathway progresses from Level I with requirements that the candidate be at least 16 years old and enrolled in high school or GED preparation classes to Levels VII and VIII with requirements that include a baccalaureate (VII) and advanced degree (VIII) in an early care and education field. Descriptive abilities for levels VII and VIII are very broad and not specific to actual teaching performance.

On October 13, 2009, WVECTR convened representatives from early childhood provider groups including public education, child care, and Head Start to initiate a strategic planning process that involved an examination of the West Virginia STARS system within the current early care and education context in the state. Participants were asked to answer the following question: What are one or two issues/comments/suggestions or questions you feel are important with respect to the West Virginia Professional Development System? Answers pertaining to the

pathway included concerns that the pathway does not address the needs of professionals at the highest level and credentials are not recognized in the system (Training Connections, 2009). With the advent of universal Pre-K over the past seven years, West Virginia has seen an increase in professionals who are already in the top category of the STARS Career Pathway, leading members of the strategic planning work group to question whether the pathway meets the needs of pre-k teachers.

NCATE identifies a pathway for professionals through higher education institutions with levels identified as *The Candidate:* an individual who is preparing to become a teacher, *The Novice:* an individual who is just entering the work force with a novice or provisional license, and *The Professional*: teachers who keep up with the advances in the field throughout their career, engaging in continuing professional development to broaden their knowledge and skills (Steps to Become a Professional Teacher(n.d.).

Policy Area 3: Articulation

Articulation refers to the transfer of credentials, courses, credits, and degrees between programs or institutions with little to no loss of credits. Institutions of higher education should have policies in place to support qualification requirements across sectors, including public education, Head Start, and child care (LeMoine, 2008). Without articulation, integrating standards and regulations between provider groups becomes much more difficult. Moving along a continuum of professional development is made much more possible with an array of articulation agreements. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (TITLE 133 Procedural Rule, 2005) stipulates that the articulation of undergraduate level credits and grades from any public institution in WV shall be generally transferable to any other institution.

Furthermore, at least 64 and up to 72 hours of credits and grades completed at public community and technical colleges or regional campuses shall be transferable to any baccalaureate institution in WV. The Core Coursework Transfer Agreement ensures that Community College graduates with an AA or AS degree can meet general education requirements at four-year institutions.

In 2002, the Professional Development Committee of the PIECES Council was charged with the responsibility to plan for and promote articulation policies and agreements. The committee was assigned to work with the West Virginia Higher Education Consortium to accomplish this charge. The Higher Education Consortium was to report to the Professional Development Committee quarterly on their progress toward making early care and education college credits more accessible by addressing articulation issues. Recommendations were made to hire a consultant to work with the committee on developing a seamless articulation model by May, 2005. A consultant was hired to support the development of a seamless model for educators in West Virginia, with multiple entry and exit points, launching the Careers in Education Project. The project was focused on developing a model of articulation that would smooth transition from community based high school and apprenticeship coursework to an Associate Degree, and on to a four-year degree resulting in teacher certification. A model was developed that has supported two articulation agreements (PIECES Professional Development n.d.).

West Virginia Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) is a training program under the US Department of Labor for people who are employed in early care and education programs. Articulation agreements exist between nine West Virginia colleges and universities and the ACDS for credit toward an Associate of Applied Science Occupational Development. This degree has been found to be problematic for students who wish to pursue a Bachelor of Arts

or Bachelor of Science degree with our without certification due to articulation challenges.

Currently there are two community and technical colleges and two universities that have

articulation agreements between this degree and the Birth to Five certification program (PIECES

Professional Development n.d.). The US Department of Health and Human Services has

accepted the ACDS Department of Labor certificate as an equivalent to the Child Development

Credential (CDA) the minimum credentialing requirement for assistant teachers who teach in

Head Start classrooms (CDA Equivalent, n.d.). Completion of ACDS can also be used by public

education aides as part the education requirements for paraprofessional certification (Office of

Professional Preparation, Programs, 2009).

      WV Board of Education Policy 2525 is currently under revision, scheduled to be

presented to the West Virginia Board of Education for final approval in December, 2009.

Rationale for the current revisions to the professional development requirements includes the

changes to Head Start teacher qualification standards requiring a baccalaureate degree (Access to

a Quality Early Education: Pending Board Approval, 2009). The attention to Head Start

standards in a board of education policy is a new phenomenon that speaks to the wiliness of

public education to articulate standards among institutions.

      West Virginia STARS promotes coordination and collaboration among professional

development providers and establishes criteria for the qualifications of trainers. The ACDS and

the CDA are identified as qualifying credentials for Levels IV and V (West Virginia STARS,

2009). The West Virginia Core Knowledge and Competencies are based on the CDA

Competency Goals and Functional Areas. This alignment promotes registration on the career

pathway of Head Start teaching assistants and public education aides.   WV STARS does not

address articulation among universities and colleges.

Policy Area 4: Advisory Structure

An advisory structure that is respected by all provider groups requires cross-sector representation and regard for the separate needs of all participants. Coordinating and integrating regulations and standards is made much more difficult if there is no advisory structure or the existing structure is poorly led. The professional development advisory structure in West Virginia has gone through a variety of changes since Senate Bill 247 was passed and WV Pre-K was launched. Prior to 2002, the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families provided the structure for early childhood professional development planning. In response to Senate Bill 247, the PIECES Advisory Council was created by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources and the state superintendent of schools to foster collaboration in the process of developing a vision for a comprehensive early care and education system (PIECES, n.d.). The council charged the Professional Development Committee in September, 2002 with the primary responsibility to examine the current status of professional development programs for the early childhood workforce and plan for articulation, career pathways and a comprehensive training system (PIECES Professional Development, n.d.).

Documentation of the work of the committee is sparse. The official PIECES Website (PIECES Professional Development n.d.) has 10 documents with meeting minutes from September, 2002 to April, 2005.   It does not appear that a meeting has been held since 2005. In September of 2007, an update was provided on the status of the Quality Initiatives and Curriculum Committee of PIECES with suggestions for a renewed charge. Responsibilities of this committee now include engaging representatives of higher education at a minimum of twice annually to jointly plan and link in-service teacher training to professional development to course credit (PIECES,n.d.). A decision was made to merge the PIECES Professional Development

Committee with this committee to avoid duplication (Plan for CCDF Services, 2009). The committee name was changed to Early Childhood Initiatives for Quality in 2008. During the November, 2009 PIECES Council meeting a request was made to assign professional development articulation and credentialing matters to the original Professional Development Committee. The PIECES Council acknowledged the request and action was taken to reconvene the Professional Development Committee.

Policy Area 5: Data

Coordination of the collection and use of workforce and professional development data is essential to inform state-wide decisions regarding the supports given to different WV Pre-K providers. A coordinated system in West Virginia that aggregates professional development activity, career progression, compensation of the workforce, and training and technical assistance needs could not be found. Two studies were conducted that provide some cross sector data on professional development in West Virginia Pre-K: (1) Universal Access to Pre-K in West Virginia, a Report for The West Virginia Department of Education prepared by Marshall University (Templeton et al., 2008) and (2) Comprehensive Improvements in Early Childhood Policies for West Virginia, prepared for Imagine West Virginia by CBER, Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research (2009) In the first report, the researchers were unable to retrieve credential and salary data for WV Pre-K teachers. A key recommendation of the report was to develop a central depository for reports, noting that data collected by the various agencies was valuable but it would have a greater impact had it been collected more systematically. The second report focused primarily on child care workforce issues in West Virginia.

Evidence was found that each of the three primary providers of WV Pre-k have a different system of documentation. West Virginia STARS is available to all early care and education practitioners working in a variety of settings and may be used to document all in-service professional development as well as career pathway information, however, only licensed child care centers are required to use this system. Unlicensed Head Start centers and public education providers may or may not register individuals or their trainings on STARS.

The West Virginia Department of Education collects data on the status of WV Pre-K implementation annually through an analysis of the 55 county implementation plans, contracts and budget plans, and the West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS, 2009). Reports include enrollment trends by provider, anticipated 2012 status, pre-k models, curriculum/assessment, and budget contributions by provider. Professional development activities and teacher qualifications are documented on the annual county plans. County boards of education track all training hours, training content, and staff qualifications independently. Documentation was not found of an analysis of the types and frequency of professional development activity.

The Head Start Act (2007) requires Head Start programs to develop individual staff development plans with all full time employees who provide direct services to children. The plans must be regularly evaluated for their impact on teacher and staff effectiveness. At this time, there is no mechanism in place to aggregate this information for a state-wide cross-sector report for WV Pre-K education staff. Information on the qualifications of education staff is documented annually through the Program Information Report (PIR) that is required by US Department of Health and Human Services.

Child care programs register on STARS to track all training hours, training content and career pathway status. No mechanism exists to aggregate this information with Head Start and public education.

Policy Area 6: Financing

Financing professional development systems is necessary on multiple levels to support both individuals and programs. Compounding the issue of obtaining high quality professional development is the associated costs for staff making an inadequate salary, often without benefits (Barnett, 2003; Edwards, 1999; Whitebook et al., 2001). Support should include higher levels of compensation for those who reach pre-service education requirements regardless of their employment circumstances and rewards for individuals who strive to continue to increase their abilities through in-service professional development activities.

Promoting school readiness through sound financial structures that coordinate and maximize existing funding as well as making wise state investments has been a focus of the National Governors Association (NGA) since 2002 when the chairman established a gubernatorial Task Force on School Readiness. The task force identified actions states could take to support families, schools, and communities in their efforts to ensure that all children enter school ready to reach their full potential. The Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness: Building the Foundations for Bright Futures (2008) was submitted to the association. The report communicated a clear message to governors that states have an opportunity to streamline eligibility requirements and program regulations; coordinate the flow of funds to the local level; and align data collection, reporting requirements, and accountability measures across programs, agencies, and levels of government. With improved understanding of where and how public and private dollars are being spent, states can better identify funding gaps and determine

strategies to reallocate, leverage, increase, and maximize funds to fill these gaps. Also highlighted in the report was a recommendation that states provide incentives and financial support to providers and early childhood educators to engage in professional development and training.

In October 2007, West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin issued an Executive Order charging the PIECES Council to study the three essential components of a strong early childhood development system: quality, governance, and financing. The PIECES Council presented their findings through a report to the governor in June, 2008 (Executive Order, 2008). While the expectations of this order were broader than professional development, a comprehensive system would encompass this critical element. The report calls for an economic commitment to create a more cohesive system of early care and education. The report noted that it is estimated that every dollar invested in early childhood development reaps a return of more than five dollars. These returns include higher rates of educational attainment and lower rates of social problems such as teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. Using a grant from the National Governors Association, the PIECES Council is currently in the process of creating an early learning council that aligns with requirements set forth in the Head Start Act (2007). It is anticipated that this council will engage state policy makers in a process of strengthening the state system of early care and education, including the coordination of funds toward a common vision and goals (Meeting Summaries, 2008).

On-going professional development for West Virginia Pre-K education staff is funded primarily through the three partner groups: public education, child care, and Head Start. Each funding stream has regulations to inform their decisions on how professional development funds are allocated. WV STARS is funded through a variety of sources including WV DHHR, WVDE,

and Head Start (WV STARS, 2009). West Virginia has been acknowledged nationally for it's efforts and success in designing and implementing a universal pre-k system that maximizes the use of funds across provider groups to bring 4 year old children together in classrooms that adhere to aligned standards for curriculum and early learning outcomes (NIEER *State of Preschool* Yearbook, 2008). To ensure that every child has access to high quality experiences, every teacher regardless of funding stream should have access to the same quality opportunities for professional development including compensation for achievement.

Professional Development Pedagogy

Universal quality not only depends on an effective system to coordinate professional development across provider sectors, it also depends on the type and integrity of the professional development that is provided. Collaboration is a term that appears frequently in literature on effective professional development. Teachers must collaborate with providers of professional development opportunities to increase the impact on their teaching practices based on what they have learned. Formal professional development and collaboration with other teachers are key mechanisms for providing teachers with ongoing training opportunities (Henke et al., Sprinthall et al., 1996). What teachers do in their classrooms must be continuously shared, documented, and discussed. Teachers must share in the responsibility for strengthening teaching and learning. This can only happen when professional development is frequent and collaborative, both within and across grades and levels of education. Leaders need to build and support communities of practice (Shore, 2009). In a recent policy statement (Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, n.d.2009), NAEYC stipulates that early childhood professionals are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety

of sources. Just as curriculum for young children is more than a list of skills to be mastered,

professional preparation for early childhood teachers is more than a list of competencies to be

assessed or a course list to complete.

Early childhood students in well-designed programs develop professional knowledge,

skills, and dispositions in a community of learners making sense of readings, observations, field

experiences, and group projects through their interactions with others. They make connections

between life experiences and new learning. They apply foundational concepts from general

education course work to early childhood practice. They learn to self-assess and to advocate for

themselves as students and as professionals. They strengthen their skills in written and verbal

communication, learn to identify and use professional resources, and make connections between

these "college skills" and lifelong professional practice (Standards for Early Childhood

Professional Preparation Programs 2009). West Virginia Pre-K teachers primarily participate in

training events that occur during the few days prior to the first day of school. The training they

receive is topical in nature and often conducted in 2-3 hour workshops. While most of West

Virginia Pre-K teachers participate in training that lacks cohesiveness, there are a few

opportunities that are provided through models that have a longer duration using a collaborative

approach. One such model is The Marshall University Early Education Outreach Program, which

offers a year-long sustained approach to professional development that incorporates support with

instruction and mentoring. Professional development institutes are conducted annually with

quarterly follow-up workshops and on-site and web-based individualized support. The program

is a grant funded project launched in 2006. 2010-2011 is the final year of the current grant

program. The project has been successful in developing a model for professional development

however, only approximately 15 counties have been able to participate (Marshall University Early Education Outreach Program, 2009).

Recognizing the need to provide quality professional development for all WV Pre-K teachers, the WVDE has assembled a task force to begin discussions and plans for a coordinated system that will utilize existing resources and link systems in an effort to create a state-wide teacher in-service program for continuous quality improvement. Plans include using classroom observation instruments such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Early Learning and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) to support teachers in becoming actively involved in their professional development plans with opportunities for self reflection and collaborative engagement with their colleagues, mentors and supervisors. Differentiated instruction may be provided to small groups in clusters and professional development communities through existing structures and resources.

In summary, West Virginia Pre-K is considered a universal pre-k program by both state and national leaders with universality to be achieved by all county systems by 2012. A pre-k system with universal access and quality requires universal standards for professional development, career pathways that are appropriate for all staff at all entry levels, articulation of course credit and credentialing requirements across institutions of higher education and program regulations, a sound and inclusive advisory structure that coordinates the efforts of each of the three primary funding sources, a system for collecting data to drive collective decisions and allocation of resources, and finally a solid state funding mechanism to ensure funds are allocated where they are most needed.

The nature of the West Virginia Pre-K model has presented the state with a dynamic challenge. How will we ensure that every pre-k child receives the level of quality educational

opportunities that research has identified as necessary to reduce their risk for school failure? I

conducted this research to inform policy makers of the strengths and weaknesses of our current

professional development system in order to support an intentional and well informed process for

quality improvement.   With this information, it is my intent that they will be able to make

changes that are necessary, build bridges as needed, and expand collaboration to ensure that

every preschool teacher and aide has the information they need and the appropriate array of

choices to support their continued professional development.

Chapter III: Methodology

I used a qualitative, descriptive approach to conduct this study. Research was accomplished by documenting a review of public information that is relevant to the professional development system in West Virginia for pre-k educators. It was the intent that this information would lay the foundation for future planning among the three primary provider groups. An initial review of literature was conducted to determine an organizational framework for this study. *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* was selected as the primary framework because of the overarching recognition of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the producing organization. NAEYC has been a leading early childhood advocacy and professional development organization since 1926 and is the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children with nearly 90,000 members, a national network of over 300 local, state, and regional Affiliates, and a growing global alliance of like-minded organizations. Additionally, the blueprint was designed to focus on the policies that connect professional development activities to make possible the effective implementation of a state system of professional development. State policy makers, early education advocates, program administrators and other national organizations and experts working to strengthen professional development and career systems for the early childhood workforce were involved in the development of the document.

References to The National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) appeared often during the search for the framework. NCATE is an organization that is officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an accrediting body for institutions that prepare teachers and other professional personnel for work in preschool, elementary, and secondary schools.The work of these two leading organizations is often interconnected. NAEYC

is a member organization of NCATE and Donna Gollnick, a senior vice president of NCATE is listed as an input participant for the development of *Workforce Designs.* In part, based on this relationship, NCATE was also selected as a vital source of information to support the organization of this study. In addition, The West Virginia Board of Education and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission have a joint partnership with NCATE.

With the framework in place, the task of describing the current system of professional development for West Virginia Pre-K educators was undertaken. To accomplish this, pre-existing information from a variety of sources was obtained through a search of public domain websites to identify relevant policy, plans, and records that documented the professional development process in West Virginia.

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

A thorough search of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services website produced documentation of activity related to the planning of the West Virginia State Training and Registry System as well as action taken by the Partners Implementing and Early Care and Education System Council in the form of minutes. In addition, information was retrieved from the Plan for CCDF Services in West Virginia for the Period 10/1/09 – 9/30/11 and Child Care Licensing Regulations.

West Virginia Department of Education

The West Virginia Department of Education website was searched to obtain information regarding plans, policies and training initiatives. The county implementation plans for 2009-

2010 were accessed for training information. The West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS) provided information on pre-k enrollment trends.

Head Start

The Head Start Act of 2007 was reviewed to identify teacher qualification requirements and the 2009 Head Start State Training and Technical Assistance Office Needs Assessment provided information regarding specific needs unique to the Head Start community. The Head Start Program Information Report provided data on teacher qualifications for 2008-2009.

The information was described in the framework of the blueprint to initiate an analysis of the current system to identify potential gaps or lack of integration and to provide a platform for further investigation leading to the development of a comprehensive system of professional development for West Virginia Pre-K teachers and aides.

A member check was conducted with the WVDE Coordinator for Early Childhood to increase the validity of the representation of WVBE policy content. The Coordinator concurred with the representation of the content as read to him through telephone communication (C. Burch, personal communication, November 30, 2009).

Analysis of Data

To identify the similarities and distinctions among the professional standards (Policy Area 1) of the three WV Pre-K partners groups, I organized the information into comparative analysis charts (Figures 1-6). I chose to identify public education as the anchor for this process because of the legislation that has assigned primary responsibility for the full implementation of the project to the state and local school boards of educations. The results for Priority Area 1

Professional Standards were determined by comparing and contrasting the professional standards of Head Start and child care against those of public education.

In order to determine the extent to which each of the primary partners track and document professional development activity and the achievement of increased qualifications, I organized the career pathway information into a unified chart. Recommendations for aligning and connecting the separate career tracking processes were made after determining the strengths and weakness of each system.

Information related to Policy Areas 3 (Articulation), 4 (Advisory Structure), 5 (Data) and 6 (Financing) was summarized into concise statements to facilitate the identification of recommendations for improvement to strengthen current practices and the development of additional strategies and policies.

A summary of the information regarding the type and quality of the current professional development pedagogy was provided to support the identification of recommendations for the development of effective strategies that are more likely to increase the knowledge and competencies of staff resulting in improved teaching practices that promote positive child outcomes.

Chapter IV: Results

The study presented information that may be used to increase the understanding of policy

makers and system planners within a framework of policy areas that should be considered when

developing or refining the system of professional development for pre-k educators. The

following results were identified to inform recommendations for system change and

development:

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards

Figure 1
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   Public Education Standard 1   Comparative Analysis Chart

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education *Standard 1: Curriculum and Planning*	*WV STARS* Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
Function 1A: Core Content *The teacher has a deep knowledge of the content and its inter-relatedness within and across the disciplines and can move beyond basic content competency to assure student mastery of skills necessary for success in life and work.*	**Core Competency Area:** **4. Curriculum** 4.2 Social Development 4.3 Emotional Development 4.4 Creative Expression of the Arts 4.5 Health Practices and Physical Development 4.6 Language and Literacy Development 4.7 Mathematical Thinking 4.8 Scientific Thinking	**Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act** (Section 648A) **(A)** planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and physical development of children, including improving the readiness of children for school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness, their understanding and use of language, their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary, their appreciation of books, their understanding of early math and early science, their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning; **(C)** supporting the social and emotional development of children; **Program Planning and Development:** Uses thorough analysis and thoughtful planning to achieve child outcome. Child Observation and Assessment: Observe and assess what children know and can do in order to provide curriculum that meets their developmental and learning needs.
Function 1B: Pedagogy *The teacher has a deep knowledge of the art and science of teaching in his/her specific content and can facilitate experiences that advance creativity, innovation and problem-solving.*		
Function 1C: Setting Goals and Objectives for Learning *The teacher uses a standards-based approach to instruction aligned with the state and local curriculum and sets instructional goals and objectives that describe what students will learn.*		
Function 1D: Designing Instruction *The teacher designs instruction that engages student in meaningful instructional activities using the WV Content Standards and Objectives and resulting in intentional student learning.*		
Function 1E: Student Assessments *The teacher uses a balanced approach to assure both assessment of learning and assessment for learning to provide both teacher and students information to guide future learning.*	**Core Competency Area:** **5. Child Observation and Assessment** 5.1 Principles of Observation and Assessment of Children 5.2 Documentation Methods	

Figure 2
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   Public Education Standard 2   Comparative Analysis Chart

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education *Standard 2: Learner and Learning Environment*	*WV STARS* Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
Function 2A: Understanding intellectual/cognitive, social, and emotional development *The teacher's understanding of the unique characteristics of the learner is evidenced in the design of learning activities which are developmentally appropriate and differentiated to engage all students in the learning process.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **1. Child Growth and Development** 1.1 Characteristics and Needs of Young Children 1.2 Multiple Influences on Development and Learning **4. Curriculum** 4.2 Social Development 4.3 Emotional Development 4.4 Creative Expression of the Arts 4.5 Health Practices and Physical Development 4.6 Language and Literacy Development 4.7 Mathematical Thinking 4.8 Scientific Thinking	**Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (**Section 648A) **(A)** planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and physical development of children, including improving the readiness of children for school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness, their understanding and use of language, their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary, their appreciation of books, their understanding of early math and early science, their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning; **(B)** establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment; **(C)** supporting the social and emotional development of children; and
Function 2B: Creating an environment of respect and rapport – *The teacher shows respect for students by having high expectations, providing management frameworks that clearly define roles and procedures, using respectful language, communicating interest in students as individuals and encouraging student collaboration.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **3. Positive Interactions and Relationships** 3.1 Relationships with Individual Children 3.2 Managing Environmental Design 3.3 Developmentally Appropriate Guidance 3.4 Relationships with Others	**Child Growth & Development**: Uses knowledge of the principles of child growth and development to understand how children acquire language, creative expression and develop physically, cognitively, and socially.
Function 2C: Establishing a culture for learning – *The teacher establishes a culture in the learning environment that is focused on learning and that reflects the importance of the work undertaken by both students and the teacher.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **1. Child Growth and Development** 1.3 Learning Environments that Support Development **4. Curriculum** 4.1 Learning Environment **3. Positive Interactions and Relationships** 3.2 Managing Environmental Design	**Learning Environment and Curriculum**: Establish an environment that provides learning experiences that meet each child's capabilities, and interests. **Interactions with Children**:
Function 2D: Implementing classroom procedures – *The teacher assures that rules and procedures are in place for a smoothly functioning learning environment evidenced by the efficient use of time and resources.* **Function 2E: Managing student behaviors –** *The teacher collaborates with students to establish norms of behavior for the learning environment that assures a focus on learning.*	**Core Competency Area:** **3. Positive Interactions and Relationships** 3.1 Relationships with Individual Children 3.2 Managing Environmental Design 3.3 Developmentally Appropriate Guidance 3.4 Relationships with Others	Establish supportive relationships with children and guide them as individuals and as a part of a group
Function 2F: Organizing the learning environment *The teacher assures that the physical or virtual learning environment is safe, and that there is maximum flexibility in the use of physical space in a physical learning environment.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **2. Health, Safety, and Nutrition** 2.1 Indoor and Outdoor Safety **4. Curriculum** 4.1 Learning Environment	**Health, Safety and Nutrition**: Establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's healthy development, safety and nourishment.

Figure 3
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   Public Education Standard 3   Comparative Analysis Chart

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education *Standard 3: Teaching*	*WV STARS* Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
Function 3A: Importance of Content *The teacher utilizes content knowledge to focus learning targets that create meaningful learning experiences for students.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **3. Positive Interactions and Relationships** 3.1 Relationships with Individual Children 3.4 Relationships with Others	**Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act** (Section 648A) **(A)** planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the intellectual and physical development of children, including improving the readiness of children for school by developing their literacy, phonemic, and print awareness, their understanding and use of language, their understanding and use of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary, their appreciation of books, their understanding of early math and early science, their problem-solving abilities, and their approaches to learning;
Function 3B: Communicating with Students *The teacher creates and maintains a positive, supportive classroom climate and communicates with students in a variety of ways.*	**4. Curriculum** 4.2 Social Development 4.3 Emotional Development 4.4 Creative Expression of the Arts 4.5 Health Practices and Physical Development 4.6 Language and Literacy Development 4.7 Mathematical Thinking 4.8 Scientific Thinking	
Function 3C: Questioning and Discussion Techniques *The teacher practices quality questioning techniques and engages students in discussion.*		

Function 3D: Student Engagement
The teacher delivers instruction to motivate and engage students in a deep understanding of the content.
	5. Child Observation and Assessment
	5.1 Principles of Observation and
	     Assessment of Children
	5.2 Documentation Methods
	5.3 Observation and Assessment Findings
	     and Uses
	5.4 Reporting Methods	

Function 3E: Use of Assessments in Instruction *The teacher uses both classroom summative and formative assessment as a balanced approach to instructional decision making.*		
Function 3F: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness *The teacher adjusts instruction based on the needs of the students and in response to "teachable moments."*		

Figure 4
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   *Public Education Standard 4*   *Comparative Analysis Chart*

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education *Standard 4: Professional Responsibilities for Self Renewal*	WV Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
Function 4A: Professional Learning *The teacher engages in professional learning to critically examine his/her professional practice and to engage in a continuous cycle of self-improvements focused on how to learn, teach and work in a global and digital society.* **Function 4B: Professional Collaborative Practice** *The teacher is actively engaged in learning with colleagues in a way that models collaboration and collegiality to improve his/her practice for the purpose of addressing questions/issues related to the school and student achievement.* **Function 4C: Reflection on Practice** *The teacher engages in continuous critical examination of his/her teaching practice and makes adjustments based on data.* **Function 4D: Professional Contribution** *The teacher contributes to the effectiveness, vitality and self-renewal of the teaching profession through investigation of new ideas that improve teaching practice and learning for students.*	**Core Competency Areas:** **7. Program Management** 7.1 Professional Interactions **8. Professionalism** 8.1 Ethical Standards and Professional Guidelines 8.2 Continuous, Collaborative Learning 8.3 Reflective Practice	**Professional Development and Leadership:** Serve children and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of early childhood care and education.

Figure 5
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   Public Education Standard 5   Comparative Relationship Chart

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education *Standard 5: Professional responsibility for School and Community*	WV Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
Function 5A: School Mission *The teacher works collaboratively with the principal and colleagues to develop and support the school mission.*	**6. Family and Community** 6.2 Respectful and Reciprocal Relationships with Families 6.3 Family Involvement 6.4 Community Collaboration and Relationships	**Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (**Section 648A) **(D)** encouraging the involvement of the families of the children in a Head Start program and supporting the development of relationships between children and their families.
Function 5B: School-wide Activities *The teacher participates in the development and implementation of school-wide initiatives in curriculum, instruction and assessment.*		
Function 5C: Learner-Centered Culture *The teacher participates in activities and model behaviors that build and sustain a learner-centered culture.*	**7. Program Management** 7.1 Professional Interactions 7.2 Leadership 7.3 Organizational Management 7.4 Standards 7.7 Program Philosophy and Evaluation	**Families & Communities**: Work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet children's needs and to encourage the community's involvement with early care and education.
Function 5D: Student Support Systems *The teacher works collaboratively with the principal and colleagues to develop and sustain student support systems that enable learning to occur.*		
Function 5E: Student Management Systems *The teacher works collaboratively with the school principal, colleagues and students to develop and sustain management systems that support and extend learning.*	**8. Professionalism** 8.1 Ethical Standards and Professional Guidelines 8.2 Continuous, Collaborative Learning 8.3 Reflective Practice 8.4 Advocacy 8.5 Collaborative Partnerships	
Function 5F: School, Family and Community Connections *The teacher works collaboratively with the principal, colleagues, parents, students and the community to develop and sustain school activities that make meaningful connections between the school and families and the community.*		**Professional Development and Leadership:** Serve children and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of early childhood care and education.
Function 5G: Strategic Planning/Continuous Improvement *The teacher participates in the development and implementation of the school's strategic planning and continuous improvement.*		
Function 5H: Teacher Leadership *The teacher demonstrates leadership by implementing classroom and school initiatives that improve education as well as by making positive changes in policy and practice that affect student learning.*		
Function 5I: Ethical Standards *The teacher models the ethical standards expected for the profession in the learning environment and in the community.*		

Figure 6
Policy Area 1: Professional Standards   *Comparative Analysis Chart*

Policy Area 1: Professional Standards		
Public Education	WV Core Knowledge/Competencies (Child Care and Licensed Head Start Centers)	Head Start
There are no public education functions that correspond to the WV Core Knowledge/Competences for: **2. Health, Safety, and Nutrition** 2.2 Health Promotion 2.3 Health Appraisal and Management 2.4 Child Abuse and Neglect 2.5 Nutritional Needs of Children	**2. Health, Safety, and Nutrition** 2.2 Health Promotion 2.3 Health Appraisal and Management 2.4 Child Abuse and Neglect 2.5 Nutritional Needs of Children	**Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (**Section 648A) **(B)** establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment **(D)** encouraging the involvement of the families of the children in a Head Start program and supporting the development of relationships between children and their families. **Health, Safety and Nutrition:** Establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's healthy development, safety and nourishment. **Families & Communities:** Work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet children's needs and to encourage the community's involvement with early care and education.

All three of the primary WV Pre-K providers have a separate set of standards that defines

what teachers and aides need to know and be able to do in order to frame professional

development. Tables1-6 above illustrate the similarities and distinctions among the three groups.

While the standards are expressed in different formats and use different language to describe the

abilities that should be demonstrated, similarities can be identified to support an alignment

leading to an integrated standards document.

Findings

All three provider groups require teaching staff to be able to:
- use child assessment information to establish goals and objectives based on individual developmental and learning needs;
- establish learning environments that are safe and engaging;
- design developmentally appropriate teaching practices
- engage the family and community
- demonstrate leadership and professional behaviors

Primary distinctions can be found in the areas of health and nutrition. Head Start and

child care address these two areas within their professional standards, public education does not.

Policy Area 2: Career Pathways

Figure 7
Policy Area 2: Career Pathways

Policy Area 2: Career Pathways
*Registration on the **West Virginia STARS Career Pathway** is recommended to all early care and education staff and required by West Virginia Child Care Licensing Regulations for staff employed by a licensed agency. Career mobility is tracked in eight levels that identify specific educational and experience requirements and core competency practice.*
Level I: Requirements: At least 16 years old and enrolled in High School or GED preparation classes. Abilities: Conform to Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals by following supervisory direction and instruction. *Level II:* Requirements: At least 18 years old with a high school diploma or equivalent and 0-1 years of experience. Abilities: Understand and practice Core Knowledge and Core Competencies with direction and instruction or through sponsorship/affiliation with a professional organization or qualified mentor. *Level III:* Requirements: WV Training Certificate in Early Care and Education (WVTCECE) which includes completion of 120 clock hours of registered training through WV STARS or 120 completed training hours required for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent or 3 completed semesters of the Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) program or completed 4 courses of the WVDE Child Development Specialist (CDS) Career and Technical Education program. Abilities: Practice programming that conforms to Core Knowledge and Core Competencies. *Level IV:* Requirements: Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent or 12 college credits in early care and education and 300 clock hours of relevant occupational experience or 4 completed semesters of the Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) program. Abilities: Practice and implement programming that conforms to Core Knowledge and Core Competencies. *Level V:* Requirements: Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) certificate or other comparable certificate program in early care and education or 28-63 college credit hours, with 9 college credit hours in early care and education or 28-63 college credit hours and 1 year of relevant occupational experience. Abilities: Plan and adapt programming that conforms to Core Knowledge and Core Competencies. *Level VI:* Requirements: Associate's degree in an early care and education field or associate's degree with 12 college credit hours in early care and education courses or associate's degree and 2 years of relevant occupational experience or 64 college credit hours with 12 college credit hours in early care and education courses or 64 college credit hours with 2 years of relevant occupational experience. Abilities: Make curricular decisions that conform to Core Knowledge and Core Competencies. *Level VII:* Requirements: Bachelor's degree in an early care and education field or bachelor's degree with 15 college credit hours in early care and education and either 90 practicum contact hours or 1 year of relevant occupational experience or bachelor's degree and 3 years of relevant occupational experience. Abilities: Develop, select, and evaluate the early childhood program; apply theory into practice. *Level VIII:* Requirements: Advanced (master's or doctorate) degree in an early care and education field or advanced degree with 18 college credit hours in early care and education and either 90 practicum hours or 1 year of relevant occupational experience or advanced degree and 5 years of relevant occupational experience. Abilities: Directly involved in the activities of state, regional and/or national groups; contribute to the formation, evaluation and implementation of policies within the early childhood field.
Head Start: Staff employed by Head Start programs may or may not register on the WV STARS Career Pathway. Head Start Performance Standards do not require a specific career tracking process. Career progression is defined by qualification requirements and continued education through credit bearing course work and Grantee agencies maintain a record of staff qualifications and training.
Public Education: Education staff employed by public education may or may not register on the WV STARS Career Pathway. Career progression for teachers is defined by certification requirements and continued education through credit bearing course work. County Boards of Education maintain a record of staff qualification and training.

WV STARS has been identified by state and national organizations as the WV state professional development system career pathway. This study provided evidence that WVDE, the governing agency for WV Pre-K does not recognize the career pathway in their professional development policies or procedures. Head Start programs adhere to the Child Care regulations for registration on the WV STARS Career Pathway if they operate a licensed center otherwise the practice is optional and may or may not occur. Child care programs are required to register on the STARS Career Pathway.

Both Head Start and public education have separate requirements for documenting and tracking career mobility. In some cases, registering on the WV STARS Career Pathway is a redundant activity that may be considered unnecessary because it does not address the needs of all education staff, particularly those who have already acquired a status of VII or VIII.

Policy Area 3: Articulation

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission has an articulation policy in place to govern credit transfer between institutions. The study documented several articulation examples including transitions between the Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist credential and an occupational degree program provided through community and technical colleges. Articulation between the occupational degree and a four year institution has been identified as a challenge. The WVDE has policy in place to support articulation of standards between Head Start and Boards of Education.

Policy Area 4: Advisory Structure

The professional development advisory structure in West Virginia is tied to the PIECES Advisory Council. The structure has undergone several changes over the past 7 years since the introduction of WV Pre-K, with the latest change occurring during the most recent PIECES

meeting in November, 2009. The lack of consistency and leadership has impaired the work of the advisory.

Policy Area 5: Data Collection

Collection of professional development information in West Virginia is fragmented with each of the primary partner groups collecting and organizing their data according to the requirements of their institutions.   There is currently no process in place that will aggregate this information or disaggregate it into different reports that would be useful for state or regional planning. The WVDE collects and reports professional development activity by analyzing the WV Pre-k County Implementation Plans. Through the West Virginia Education Information System WVEIS) they are able to document qualification information. Head Start tracks professional development activity through the Program Information Report (PIR) and individually through employee records. Child care and licensed Head Start programs track this information through STARS.

Policy Area 6: Financing

Financing of professional development is allocated by each partner provider group according to their priorities and requirements. Training Connections and Resources received funding through a variety of sources including the three provider partner groups. Efforts to coordinate priorities in order to maximize financial resources have been initiated through the Governor's Executive Order with a broad objective of funding a comprehensive professional development system.

Professional Development Pedagogy

The review of the training plans submitted to the WVDE annually with the County Pre-K Plan, indicated that the majority of training pre-k teachers in West Virginia receive lacks the

cohesiveness and quality that has been recommended by experts in the field. The Marshall

University Early Education Outreach Program is an exception to this practice, but has been

offered to only a small group of teachers and funding for the project will no longer be available

after 2011 through the current grant.

Chapter V: Discussion

West Virginia Pre-K grew out of the Good Start Grow Start initiative with the specific

purpose of providing early learning experiences to promote school readiness for all four-year-old

children and three year old children who have an identified disability under IDEA.   Too often,

children enter kindergarten already at risk for school failure. Research in child development has

indicated that the experiences children have during the first years of life are critical to their

prospects for reaching their full potential. West Virginia is among several states that have

increased funding over the past decade to support early learning experiences for preschool

children.   Critical to ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn is the quality of their

preschool experience. The nature of preschool funding sets up a dynamic that is unique to

children's school experiences. Preschool is financed through the use of multiple funding

streams. In West Virginia legislators recognized the importance of ensuring that funding

resources were maximized by requiring that WV Pre-K is implemented through collaborative

models with child care and Head Start, while assigning primary responsibility to local school

boards of education. The West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2525 (2007) establishes a

unifying framework that brings all partner groups under a common set of regulations, however,

Head Start and Childcare licensing and standards still apply. While this presents an opportunity

regarding the strengths each funding source offers children and families, it also provides a

challenge. The challenge lies in the process of aligning polices and standards to ensure the

continued use of all funds. How states define their organizational early childhood system

impacts the quality of programming at the local level, requiring coordination and integration of

these strengths and services. The focus of this study was to examine the professional

development component of the broader early childhood system to determine if West Virginia has

an intentional and comprehensive integrated early childhood system of preparation and ongoing

support that meets the needs of individual early childhood education professionals working on

behalf of young children enrolled in WV Pre-K. The study found that research has identified

high quality on-going professional development (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990) focused on

how teachers interact with children (Pianta, 2006) is an important determining element of quality

teaching.

National standards exist to assist states in identifying necessary policy elements for a

comprehensive professional early childhood system. The study examined the West Virginia

early childhood professional development system through the lens of a policy blueprint set forth

by NAEYC in Workforce Designs (LeMoine, 2008). The policy areas are: Professional

Standards, Career Pathways, Articulation, Advisory Structure, Data, and Financing.   A

description of the existing system found that WVBE Policy 2525 does not address standards for

professionals other than pre-service qualification requirements and references to other related

policy including those of Head Start and child care. WV STARS is designed to coordinate

training activities and track professional development career pathways, but with the advent of

WV Pre-K and the increase of professionals who enter the workforce with a minimum of a

baccalaureate or advanced degree and a system already in place that tracks their career

movement, registering on STARS becomes a task that probably does not serve their needs.

Professionals who are highly qualified for their positions should also have a pathway that meets

their needs with regard to continued knowledge acquisition and the development of

competencies that are responsive to the latest description of research-based best practice.   West

Virginia has an articulation policy set forth by The West Virginia Higher Education Policy

Commission (TITLE 133 Procedural Rule, 2005), however, barriers still remain. Records

reviewed of the PIECES Professional Development Committee activity illustrated that leadership

for an overarching advisory structure has been inconsistent resulting in a lack of continuity that

has slowed down progress toward the development of a system to connect the standards and

regulations of the various provider groups. Another barrier that was identified in this study is the

lack of a coordinated record keeping and reporting system. Without a coordinated system that

links data collected and reported from each provider group, aggregation and desegregation is

difficult, impairing the use of information to drive quality improvement. Finally, the study

showed that financing of a coordinated system depends on the independent prioritization of each

provider group. This may result in a duplication of effort or a lack of attention to a critical need.

While West Virginia has a fragmented system of professional development for WV

Pre-K teachers, there is some evidence of coordinated opportunities at the local level, including

the joint training plans that are submitted with the County Pre-K Plan. Coordinated activities that

ensure the trainings are of high quality designed to meet individual needs appears to be rare and

not based on the assessed needs of individuals, but rather on an arbitrary list of topics. This

study has described the current landscape of pre-k professional development, but the question

still remains: Where do we go from here?

Recommendations

This paper should be used by a broader group of stakeholders to frame discussions and

plans for an integrated system of professional development for WV Pre-K teachers and aides.

Initially the paper should be reviewed with a small core group of individuals invited by the

Department of Education to expand on the information described in this study. A White Paper

should be developed to move the information forward to the WVDE task force that has already

been assembled to begin discussions and plans for a coordinated system that will utilize existing

resources and link systems in an effort to create a state-wide teacher in-service program for

continuous quality improvement.   The following recommendations are offered to the WVDE

task force for consideration:

1. Professional Standards:

Conduct a more comprehensive search of literature to provide planners with additional

models for comparison to support the development of a unified set of competencies that align the

standards of each provider group. The strengths of each system should be considered as a cross

sector comprehensive set of standards are developed.   The standards should include

competencies for health and nutrition.   The standards should also include researched based best

practices for effective professional development strategies.

2. Career Pathways:

Consider a career pathway design for West Virginia Pre-K teachers with baccalaureate or

advanced degrees that promotes their collaborative involvement in professional development

activities while extending their knowledge on a continuous pathway of quality improvement.

Continue to promote WVSTARS for individuals who are on a pathway that leads to a

baccalaureate or advanced degree. This can be accomplished after a comprehensive set of

professional standards have been developed. Develop a cross-walk chart, articulation policies,

and a coordinated recordkeeping system to ensure an alignment to the WV STARS Career

Pathway.

3. Articulation:

Conduct further investigation of barriers to articulation to strengthen transitions between

vocational training, community colleges, and four year institutions. Design and provide credit

bearing professional development opportunities in partnership with colleges and universities for better alignment to qualification requirements.

4. Advisory Structure:

Conduct further investigation in partnership with the PIECES Advisory Council and the higher education community to determine if a new structure should be created or if the current system should be strengthened with policies and/or agreements to ensure better coordination and integration between providers. Provide leadership to the advisory for consistency. Link the advisory to the Higher Education Policy Commission.   Develop an organizational chart to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the provider groups and their responsive governing entities.

5. Data

Contract for information and technical services from an outside source or obtain an in-house commitment from one of the provider groups to establish a coordinated and integrated data collection system to allow for cross-sector reporting and planning processes.   Create communication pathways between systems with agreed upon policies and procedures. Ensure that governing entities are well informed and legal requirements have been met.

6. Financing

Further research and planning is needed to determine the best use of sparse resources and to develop policies that ensure funds are expended according to agreed upon priorities.

7. Professional Development Pedagogy

Develop a professional development conceptual framework with specific criteria and instructions to assist state and local providers in developing opportunities for high quality in-service training that leads to the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and dispositions

resulting in the continuous improvement of educational practices. Conduct a literature review of adult learning theory to inform this effort. Organize and facilitate professional learning experiences that respond directly to the assessed needs of staff and are connected to overall program quality and positive child outcomes. Incorporate an on-going support and accountability process to ensure sustained improvement.

Limitations of the Study

By no means is the information provided in this study a complete representation of the work that has been accomplished independently or collaboratively by the West Virginia early care and education pre-k community. Because of a fragmented system of data collection, it was difficult to retrieve information efficiently. The use of existing data presented a challenge, but also served to highlight the need to integrate information from all three provider groups into a centralized record keeping system without compromising the systems already in place as part of each provider agency's institutional requirements**.**

A thorough analysis of the types of training that has been provided, the participation rates, or the opinions of administrators and education staff regarding the effectiveness of the training was not conducted as part of this study.

While this study focused on WV Pre-K, a comprehensive early care and education system for professional development should be inclusive of the infant/toddler provider sector. In addition, the study did not distinguish between professional development in general and professional development specific to meeting the need of distinct populations such as English language learners, children with disabilities, the homeless population, children with fragile health care, or children who live in poverty.

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