Supporting Virginia’s Early Educators during COVID & Beyond

Daphna Bassok
Associate Professor
Education & Public Policy
University of Virginia

Joint Subcommittee on Early Childhood Care and Education
Dec 2020

STUDY OF EARLY EDUCATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS
COVID & THE ECE WORKFORCE

- Teachers are the key to high quality early learning opportunities.
- COVID has created major challenges for the early education workforce.
- It has highlighted longstanding differences in how we treat early educators in child care settings compared to schools.

This presentation has two goals:

- Describe how COVID impacted the jobs and financial stability of early educators in child care settings and schools?
- Share findings from our rigorous evaluation of Virginia’s Teacher Recognition Program.
WHO ARE VIRGINIA’S EARLY EDUCATORS?
May 2020 survey of over 1,600 early educators in Virginia including:
- Child care, Head Start, School-based Pre-K
- Lead teachers & assistant teachers (aides, floaters, paraprofessionals, etc.)
- 74% response rate
- Includes people no longer employed by May
## The Survey Sample: ~1600 Virginia early educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centers</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead teachers</td>
<td>Assistant teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school degree or less</td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>62 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree or higher degree</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income &lt; $25,000/year</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income &lt; $45,000/year</td>
<td>67 %</td>
<td>77 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income &gt; $100,000/year</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Survey Sample: About 2 in 5 child care teachers report household income under 25k

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centers</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead teachers</td>
<td>Assistant teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or higher degree</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $25,000/year</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $45,000/year</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>05%</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $100,000/year</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Survey Sample: Black & Hispanic women make up a much larger share of child care teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centers</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead teachers</td>
<td>Assistant teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW DID COVID IMPACT EARLY EDUCATORS’ WORK?
All public schools switched to remote instruction.

Operational Status of Child Care Sites, May 2020

- 53.0% Closed
- 37.3% Open only for critical workers
- 9.2% Open as usual
- 0.5% Other

Note: Data from 185 child care sites
EARLY EDUCATORS’ EMPLOYMENT & EARNINGS

- No longer employed or employed but not currently working
- Earnings decreased

% of respondents

Note: Based on 1018 responses of lead teachers.
COVID & EARLY EDUCATORS’ FINANCIAL INSTABILITY
FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

% of respondents who indicated felt this way occasionally or most of the time

- Lead teacher at center
- Assistant teacher at center
- Lead teacher at school
- Assistant teacher at school

Note: Based on approximately 1570 responses of teachers.
Food Insecurity

- We have worried that our food might run out before we have money to get more
- The food that we bought just did not last, and we did not have the money to get more
- We could not afford to eat balanced meals

% of respondents who indicated this was sometimes or often true

- Lead teacher at center
- Assistant teacher at center
- Lead teacher at school
- Assistant teacher at school

Note: Based on 1592 responses of teachers.
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

The diagram illustrates the percentage of respondents in various categories related to access to health care. The categories include:

- No healthcare benefits
- Through employer
- Through non-employer

The data is represented by different colors for different roles:

- Lead teacher at center
- Assistant teacher at center
- Lead teacher at school
- Assistant teacher at school

Note: Based on 1598 responses of teachers.
Financial insecurity among early educators, particularly child care teachers, is pronounced:
- 2 in 5 child care teachers struggled to access food
- Over a third could not afford to pay for their medical needs, and half did not receive health care benefits from their employer

These conditions compromise efforts to provide high quality early care and education

COVID is highlighting the long-standing differences in how we treat educators across age & sector and the urgent need for major investments in the child care workforce.
VIRGINIA’S TEACHER RECOGNITION PROGRAM
Virginia used nearly 3 million dollars in federal funds from its Preschool Development Grant to pilot an innovative early childhood incentive to support early educators, reduce turnover, and improve quality.

- $1,500 financial incentives
- Tied to retention at a specific PDG site
- Any early childhood educators (teachers, assistant teachers, aides, staff)
- Working directly with children 0-5, 30+ hrs per week
What is the impact of the financial incentives?

- One large, urban county was interested in participating in the PDG B-5, but insufficient resources to include all sites and teachers in the recognition program.
- Eligibility was determined by site-level lotteries.
- 75 sites and 584 teachers.
- Lottery winners: Up to three payments of $500.
- Comparison group: $0 received through Teacher Recognition Program.
FINDINGS

Main results
- Over one quarter of teachers in comparison group left their program within 8 months
- Incentive program increased retention probability by about 11 percentage points

Results by subgroups
- Impacts driven by child care centers

Regression-adjusted means; based on 75 sites and 568 teachers (full sample)
Most teachers reported using incentives for basic needs.

Did the recognition grant help with any of the following expenses? (% some or very much)

- Personal or family needs (housing, food, bills): 83%
- Paying off debts (student loans, credit cards): 61%
- Materials for your classroom: 54%
- Saving money: 49%
- Addressing emergency needs (e.g. costs related to COVID): 40%
- Rewards or treats (e.g. vacation, breaks, movies): 34%
- Your own professional development or education: 30%
“EARLY EDUCATORS ARE SO OFTEN LEFT OUT OF THE CONVERSATION WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING. THIS Grant HAS SHOWN THAT OUR WORK MATTERS. I AM HOPEFUL THAT ONE DAY, BEING RESPECTED AND RECOGNIZED FOR WHAT WE DO WILL BE A NORM IN OUR SOCIETY.”
Virginia’s Teacher Recognition Program is a unique approach to supporting early educators.

Our findings provide very strong experimental evidence that financial incentives meaningfully reduce turnover in child care settings.

- Among child care teachers, a $1,500 incentive cut 8-month turnover rates in half… from 30% to 15%

Improving stability in child care centers is essential for supporting young children’s development, and building high quality learning opportunities for children.
THANK YOU!

Daphna Bassok
dbassok@virginia.edu

To read the full report:
bit.ly/see_partnerships_tchr_covid

To learn more:
www.see-partnerships.com

The Divergent Experiences of Early Educators in Schools and Child Care Centers during COVID-19: Findings from Virginia

Daphna Bassok, Molly McHie, Deliby Mayarís Cubides-Mateus, Justin B. Doromal, & Sarah Kiscaden

EdPolicyWorks at the University of Virginia