2019

Teachers' Voices

Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality

CSCCE

Marin County

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Teachers' Voices:
Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality
— Marin County

Established in 1999, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children's optimal development. CSCCE provides research and expert analysis on topics that include: compensation and economic insecurity among early educators; early childhood teacher preparation; access to educational opportunities and work environments; and early childhood workforce data sources and systems. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

THERE IS BROAD CONSENSUS that high-quality environments for young children depend on teachers who are skilled at nurturing their development and learning, yet low pay and inadequate working conditions routinely hamper teachers in their efforts to apply their skills and knowledge.[i] This condition exists among teachers in early education as well as K-12 classrooms, fueling the ubiquitous challenge of recruiting and retaining a skilled teaching workforce across the age spectrum. K-12 teachers nationwide are now calling attention to how inadequate pay and poor working conditions are driving economic insecurity and turnover and how insufficient classroom resources continue to hobble their practice, leading to large-scale demonstrations for increased public investment in education. With teachers increasingly engaging in the public sphere and a growing number of elected officials prioritizing support for schools and teaching staff, the demand for change to the systems that prepare, support, and compensate educators continues to build.

The Unique Challenge of Early Childhood

The voices of early educators — those working with children from infancy through preschool — are rarely heard, and public awareness of the challenges facing this workforce remains low. Compared to their K-12 peers, early educators are less organized and vocal about their situation, but a persistent state of teacher crisis casts a pall over efforts to ensure high-quality early care and education (ECE) for all children prior to kindergarten.

Access to unions and professional organizations that advocate for benefits and supportive working conditions in the K-12 workplace are far rarer for early educators. Perhaps as a result, early educators often don't have even basic expectations of working conditions — such as program policies providing for payment for planning time, staff meetings, and professional development; a salary schedule; and provision of health, retirement, sick-, and vacation-leave benefits, nor are they typically the focus of strategies and policies to improve the quality of early care and education services.[ii] In California, early educators constitute one of the lowest-paid occupations, and members of this workforce are more likely to live in poverty than other workers, including other teachers in the state.[iii]

This study captures early educators' perspectives about their work environments in nearly all centers in Marin County, California, including those participating and not participating in a quality improvement initiative. It also examines how these environments impact teaching staff practice and well-being. In order to teach to the best of their ability, educators require

work environments that support their ongoing learning, emphasize time without child responsibilities for professional activities, and offer dependable benefits that ensure their well-being. Prioritizing workforce supports will lead to substantive progress towards a system that is equitable, efficient, and effective for children, their families, and educators alike.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Currently operational across 44 of the 50 states, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) have become a primary approach for quality improvement efforts intended to strengthen early care and education systems within states and local municipalities. Quality Counts California is a statewide system that is implemented locally, at the county and regional level, with core standards shared across the state. While each QRIS assesses program quality in a comparable way, there is a degree of local control and flexibility.

The elements incorporated into a system's QRIS communicate important messages to stakeholders (including policymakers, teachers, and administrators) about the values and priorities deemed most important for focusing resources and attention.[iv] While staff qualifications and training are among the most commonly assessed areas of quality and are included in nearly all QRIS, fewer systems to date include benchmarks related to positive and supportive teacher work environments.[v] The attention that a given QRIS pays to the workforce through staff education, professional development, compensation, benefits, and work environments may determine how practitioners invest their energies, how public resources and priorities are allocated, and the ultimate success of the QRIS effort itself.[vi]

Quality Improvement and Teacher Work Environments

Marin County's QRIS initiative implemented in 2015, Marin Quality Counts, is available to centers throughout the county. Programs participating in Marin Quality Counts are eligible to receive one of five quality-level ratings based on the California Quality Continuum Framework Rating Matrix. These ratings range from "participating in quality standards" to "exceeding high quality standards." Program ratings are calculated based on licensing compliance, child observations and assessments, child health and developmental screenings, ratios and group size, teacher and director qualifications, teacher–child interactions, and program environment. The latter of these areas, program environment, assesses the age and developmental appropriateness of three areas: materials, activities, and caregiver routines.[vii] Programs participating in Marin Quality

Counts receive a variety of resources and supports intended to improve program practices and ratings, including access to professional development, professional growth advising, assessments/observations and data to inform practice and growth, stipends to support acquisition of academic coursework, program mini-grants, and access to coaches to support professional and program improvement.

Another QRIS, the Marin County PreK-3/ECE Quality Improvement Initiative has been in place for nearly a decade. Through this initiative, the Marin Community Foundation supports quality improvement activities — professional development, coaching, data acquisition and use, early childhood mental health consultation, and academic growth advising — in select preschool programs that partner with local elementary schools.[viii]

Marin County's early education community recognizes the importance of addressing the low compensation and challenging work environments that impact educators' well-being. To inform current efforts to support programs as well as longer-term improvement strategies, Marin County administrators, advocates, and other ECE stakeholders are interested in exploring how program work environments can be strengthened, and to this end, they are using the SEQUAL tool developed by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE). (For a description of SEQUAL methodology, see **Appendix A**.)

SEQUAL provides insight into how centers support teaching staff and gathers information on the range of conditions experienced by early educators across the county. Collecting teachers' perspectives on the features of their work environments that best allow them to apply their skills and continue to develop their knowledge is a starting point for generating new avenues and solutions to enhance teacher practice and inform quality improvement.

SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning)

To facilitate the process of bringing teachers' voices into quality improvement strategies, CSCCE developed the Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning tool, or SEQUAL. As a multi-purpose validated tool, SEQUAL addresses five critical areas of teachers' learning environments: **Teaching Supports**, **Learning Community**, **Job Crafting**, **Adult Well-Being**, and **Program Leadership**. The SEQUAL study conducted in Marin County provides a window into the daily realities of early childhood teaching staff employed in licensed child care centers that participate in QRIS as well as those that do not.

SEQUAL DOMAINS				
TEACHING SUPPORTS	LEARNING COMMUNITY	JOB CRAFTING	ADULT WELL-BEING	PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

Key Findings

Transforming the way that the early education system values and supports teacher working conditions requires sustained strategies implemented on multiple levels. The perspectives of teaching staff represented in this study can be used to inform quality improvement efforts and guide workforce policy in Marin County. These findings underscore the need for further changes in the practices and provision of professional supports, as well as the need for sufficient staffing to ensure that standards — including basic legal requirements like paid breaks — are consistently enforced. It is worth noting that while almost one-half (45 percent) of teaching staff in the sample worked in the ECE field for 16 years or more, 44 percent were only employed at their center for two years or less, highlighting turnover in the field. Three areas in particular require improvement based on teaching staff assessments of their work environments: Adult Well-Being, Staffing and Teaching Supports, and Professional Learning and Guidance.

Adult Well-Being

Economic

Teaching staff struggled to meet monthly expenses and afford housing, health, transportation, and food costs as well as save for the future.

- **75%** worried about having enough to pay their families' monthly bills.
- **71%** worried about paying housing costs.
- **62%** worried about paying for routine health care costs.
- **49%** worried about losing pay if they or someone in their family became ill.
- **39%** worried about having enough food for their families.

"I have two jobs because I can't afford to just be a preschool teacher. I teach preschool in the morning and then work [another] job in the afternoon. It puts me over 50 hours a week, I wish I could just pursue my passion of being a teacher, but it's not possible. I am very happy in the classroom, but sometimes having the other job dragging me down and the exhaustion of it all gets to me."

— Assistant Teacher

Quality of Work Life

Teaching staff reported experiencing stressful workplace dynamics like intimidation, unequal distribution of workload, favoritism, or a lack of opportunities for input in their program.

- **51%** reported that they did not feel confident that their complaints (if voiced) would be considered fairly.
- **46%** reported that other staff may not always be held equally responsible for doing their share of work.
- **43%** reported that staff members received preferential treatment at the expense of others.
- **36%** reported that bullying among adults or staff or co-workers was tolerated in their program.

Health and Safety

Many teaching staff reported that their programs lacked basic health and safety practices.

- **41%** reported that their program did not provide sufficient comfortable places for adults to sit and be with children.
- **39%** reported that their program did not provide a safe place for their personal belongings.
- **27%** assessed the ability to take paid breaks during the workday as undependable.
- **23%** reported that their program does not provide a staff room or area away from children for breaks or private conversation.
- **17%** reported that they could not depend on using their paid sick leave when ill.

"My school does not have a staff lounge or place for adults only, which during breaks can make it very difficult to wind down or decompress."

— Assistant Teacher

Staffing and Teaching Supports

Sufficient Staffing

Teaching staff assessed staffing levels as insufficient to engage in practices necessary to promote children's learning and to improve their practice.

- **73%** felt the practice of hiring new staff quickly in the event of turnover was unreliable.
- More than one-half (**51%**) reported that there were not enough staff available to give children individual attention, and **29%** did not agree that there are trained substitutes/floaters available to help.
- **28%** agreed that frequent changes in staff make it difficult to try new ways to teach.

Time for Professional Responsibilities

Teaching staff used their own unpaid time or time while supervising children on the playground or during naps to complete their professional responsibilities.

- **48%** spent time doing paperwork during paid time while also being responsible for children.
- **42%** spent time during paid work hours planning curriculum activities in the past week.
- More than one-third (**35%**) reported that they did not have dedicated time, aside from nap or playground time, to discuss work issues with other teachers.

Professional Development and Guidance

Sufficient and Appropriate Training

Teaching staff characterized training to support their work with children and families as insufficient.

- Less than two-thirds (**64%**) agreed that they had been trained on how to use assessments and observations to talk with families about their children.
- **56%** agreed that they had received guidance on how to use the information from assessments and observations in their teaching.
- Less than one-half (**47%**) agreed that sufficient training about teaching children with challenging behaviors was available to them.
- Less than one-half (**44%**) agreed that training for supporting family needs was available to them.

Support for Working With Dual Language Learners and Their Families

At the time of the survey, **81%** of teaching staff reported working in classrooms with children who speak another language in addition to English.

- **63%** reported that the training available to them for teaching children who are dual language learners was insufficient.
- **47%** reported that outside resources were insufficient in assisting them if they have a problem communicating due to a language barrier.

Guidance

Teaching staff reported an absence of guidance from program leaders in supporting their professional practice.

- Only **39%** agreed that once a month, their supervisors meet with them to discuss their teaching practice.

- **35%** did not agree that they meet with their supervisor at least once a year to develop a personalized professional development plan.

Access, Payment, and Reward

Staff members reported difficulties in accessing or paying for professional development activities or receiving remuneration for advancing their skills or education.

- More than one-half (**51%**) could not reliably adjust their work schedule in order to participate in professional development activities.
- **42%** could not depend on compensation for routine professional activities, including work outside of regular work hours, parent conferences, and evening or weekend events.
- **24%** reported that their employer would not pay some or all of their professional development expenses.

Recommendations

Marin County has made significant investments in and taken critical steps toward improving the quality of early care and education services. Notwithstanding the investment of resources and supports, the working conditions of teaching staff as captured in this study suggest further efforts are needed to support teacher practice and well-being necessary for quality services.

Leaders in Marin County have an opportunity to shape expectations and codify standards for early educator work environments. The following recommendations are provided to inform efforts in the county to improve the quality of early childhood jobs and programs.

1. Develop workplace standards, such as guidance on appropriate levels of paid planning time, which are necessary for educators to engage in professional practice and to alleviate conditions that cause educator stress. Use existing models, such as the **International Labor Organization Policy Guidelines** and the **Model Work Standards**, to support this process.

2. Provide financial resources and other assistance specifically designed to enable programs and providers to comply with work environment standards in a reasonable period of time.

3. Embed work environment standards in the QRIS scoring systems to emphasize their importance and ensure that programs cannot achieve the highest ratings without addressing work environment standards.

4. Develop and implement training programs that support programs leaders, supervisors, and coaches to address work environment issues. Program leaders, supervisors, and coaches all require support and training on how to implement and sustain these types of changes.

5. Provide funding to institutions of higher education and training programs to develop and offer classes and workshops related to work environment standards, rights of the teaching staff on the job, and the critical importance of economic, emotional, and physical well-being among adults in the workplace.

6. Institute strategies that engage early educators in the process of informing quality improvement and regularly collect data to assess how they experience the work environment.

Capturing the experiences and perspectives of early educators working directly with children presents an opportunity to further refine and strengthen the policies, practices, and resources necessary to facilitate a high-quality system that supports children and their teachers alike. The findings from the Marin County SEQUAL study presented in the following pages, coupled with forthcoming resources such as the Model Work Standards and the SEQUAL companion document, are intended to inform decision making and guide quality improvement strategies county-wide.

About This Report

THE FOLLOWING REPORT PRESENTS the findings from the 2019 Marin County SEQUAL study and shares the perspectives of teaching staff in licensed child care centers throughout the county, including centers that participate in one or both of Marin County's quality improvement initiatives (Marin Quality Counts and the ECE Quality Improvement Project) as well as centers that do not participate in either initiative. Following a description of the study design, this report will explore major findings drawn from teaching staff responses. The report is divided into three sections:

1) Study Design shares a study overview, the goals guiding the study, a profile of the survey respondents, and a guide to the findings;

2) Findings outlines teaching staff responses to items in each of the five SEQUAL domains, including an analysis of how responses varied by site characteristics; and

3) Appendices presents additional information on the study design, which includes survey instruments and analysis, characteristics of program leaders, and additional tables and figures.

STUDY DESIGN

Study Overview

In 2019, researchers from CSCCE implemented a SEQUAL study in Marin County to examine how teaching staff employed at center-based programs across the county assessed their work environments. The study took into consideration all licensed child care centers in the county, including those participating in a quality improvement initiative (Marin Quality Counts and the ECE Quality Improvement Project) and those not participating in any such initiative. Teaching staff (teachers and assistant teachers) completed an online survey — the SEQUAL for Teaching Staff — to capture perceptions of their work environments and provide information about their demographic background, educational preparation, and work experience, including their current position, job tenure, and compensation. In addition, program leaders filled out an online survey to provide contextual information about their centers. They also answered questions about their own demographic and professional background and current job role.

Marin has 131 child care centers, all of which were initially considered for inclusion in the study. However, 47 centers were excluded because they either declined to participate at the onset of the study, did not provide full contact information for staff, or employed fewer than two staff members. The remaining 84 centers were invited to participate. The final sample included 67 centers, 29 program leaders, and 163 members of teaching staff. Of these 67 centers, 39 participated in a quality improvement initiative (Marin Quality Counts or both Marin Quality Counts and the ECE Quality Improvement Project), while 28 centers did not participate in any quality improvement initiative. By program type, 49 centers were Title 22 programs, 10 centers were California State Preschool Programs (CSPP), and seven centers were Head Start programs; 45 percent of Title 22, 90 percent of CSPP, and 100 percent of Head Start programs participated in a quality improvement initiative.

For a more detailed description of the study methodology, study instruments, sampling frame and selection, population and sample, response rates, and analysis plan, please see **Appendix A: Study Design** and **Appendix C: Tables and Figures**.

Goals Guiding the Study

The study surveyed teaching staff employed at center-based programs in Marin County, examining how they assessed their work environments overall and across specific domains, as captured by the SEQUAL survey instrument (see description, p. 4). In addition, the study examined how assessments varied by:

- The center's participation in a quality and improvement initiative;
- The auspices or type of program (Title 22, California State Preschool Program, and Head Start); and
- Teaching staff characteristics, including position, tenure, and age group of children in the classroom.

A Profile of the Survey Respondents

Teaching Staff

The detailed portrait of teaching staff in our sample (n=163) notes differences among staff members based on job role and other characteristics. Regarding differences among staff members, we will note statistically significant differences (p<.05) with the phrasing "more likely to" or "less likely to." When there is a trend in the data that is not statistically significant, we will use the phrase "tended to" or report a descriptor (e.g., nearly all, vast majority, one-half) along with the percentages.

Among teaching staff, 27 percent worked as assistant teachers and 73 percent as teachers.[ix]

The majority of teaching staff (76 percent) in the sample were employed full-time at their center: the average number of hours per week was 33, and the median number of months per year was 11.

Personal Characteristics

Gender and Age

Nearly all teaching staff in the sample were female (99 percent). Teaching staff were 43 years old on average. The vast majority of teaching staff (80 percent) were more than 30 years old. Teaching staff working in Head Start programs tended to be older (average age: 46 years), compared to teaching staff working in CSPP programs (average age: 42 years old).

Family Characteristics

A majority (60 percent) of teaching staff in the sample reported their relationship status as married or living with a partner. In addition, only 17 percent had a child under the age of five living in the household, while less than one-half (42 percent) had a child between the ages of 6 and 18. Teachers between the ages of 30 and 49 were more likely to report having a child under the age of 18 living in their household.

Race and Ethnicity

Of the teaching staff in the sample, 51 percent identified as white (non-Hispanic/Latino), 29 percent as Hispanic/Latino, 5 percent as Asian, 4 percent as black/African American, 2 percent as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native, 5 percent as multiracial, and 3 percent as other.[x]

Country of Origin

Thirty-two percent of all teaching staff were born outside of the United States. Their countries of origin include Brazil, Canada, El Salvador, France, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Thailand. Among teachers, 35 percent were born outside of the United States; among assistant teachers, this figure was 21 percent.

Languages Spoken

Teaching staff in the sample and the children they serve were linguistically diverse: one-half (50 percent) of teaching staff reported speaking another language in addition to English. Twenty-two percent of teaching staff reported being fluent in Spanish and 8 percent in Chinese, including Cantonese or Mandarin. Additional languages include French, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Thai, and Urdu.

Teaching staff working in CSPP programs reported higher rates of linguistic diversity. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of teaching staff reported speaking another language in addition to English, compared to those working in Title 22 (45 percent) or Head Start programs (58 percent).

The vast majority (81 percent) of teaching staff reported children in their classroom who speak another language other than English. Examining by program type, all teaching staff working in Head Start programs and the vast majority (92 percent) of teaching staff working in CSPP programs reported linguistic diversity in their classroom. Of the languages that children speak in addition to English, 73 percent of teaching staff reported Spanish and 16 percent Chinese, including Cantonese or Mandarin. A variety of other languages were also reported, including Farsi, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Dual Language Learners

In early care and education classrooms across the nation, children are culturally and linguistically diverse and becoming increasingly more so. California has the highest percentage of children who are dual language learners in the United States — 60 percent of children under the age of five[xi] — yet teaching staff often do not mirror the children in their care in terms of linguistic or cultural background.

In the present study, dual language learners (DLLs) were reported in the classrooms of 81 percent of teaching staff. Among teachers themselves, 50 percent reported speaking a language other than English. Regardless of how closely they may reflect the linguistic or

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cultural background of children in their care, ECE teachers must be prepared to employ and engage in pedagogical practices that optimize learning and development.

According to findings from CSCCE's *Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory* studies conducted across multiple states, many college degree programs lack courses focused on pedagogical and practical strategies for preparing future educators to work with DLLs. Furthermore, while coursework acknowledges the importance of the home environment for children learning English, less of a focus is placed on preparing educators to facilitate the learning process for children who are dual language learners.[xii] Similar to the scant preparation teaching staff receive during their degree program, there is also a lack of training at their center for teaching children with linguistic diversity. For example, in this study, almost two-thirds (63 percent) of teaching staff found that training for teaching DLLs was insufficient.

Professional Background

Education

Relative to the ECE workforce in the state, the sample had higher levels of degree attainment for both associate and bachelor's degrees.[xiii] Almost a quarter (24 percent) of teaching staff held an associate degree, and almost one-half (46 percent) of teaching staff held a bachelor's degree or higher. Of those with a degree, 48 percent majored in Early Childhood Education, 22 percent in Child Development or Psychology, and 9 percent in Elementary Education. The remaining 21 percent held degrees in a range of other subjects. Seventy-five percent of teaching staff working in centers not participating in QRIS and 65 percent of teaching staff working in centers participating in QRIS held an associate degree or higher, a difference that is not a result of job role. Stratification by race and educational attainment was evident, however. Teachers of color were less likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (24 percent), compared to teaching staff who were white (65 percent).

Student Loan Debt

Accruing student loan debt can compound teachers' economic insecurity, particularly in light of low wages. Among all teaching staff in the sample:
- **22 percent** reported accruing student loan debt; and
- **49 percent** of teaching staff who reported student loan debt had loans in excess of $25,000.

Tenure

Overall, teaching staff represented a range of experience, from teachers new to the profession to others with many years in the field and at their current place of employment.

While almost one-half (45 percent) of teaching staff in the sample worked in the ECE field for 16 years or more, 44 percent had only been employed at their center for two years or less, suggesting high turnover among centers.

Table 1. Teaching Staff Tenure

Tenure	2 years or less	3-5 years	6-15 years	16-20 years	More than 20 years
Number of years in the field	14%	15%	27%	16%	29%
Number of years at current place of employment	44%	17%	18%	10%	10%
Number of years in current position at current place of employment	59%	18%	13%	6%	3%

Compensation

Wages
The median hourly wage of teaching staff in the SEQUAL study was $20.00 per hour. Assistant teachers in the sample reported earning a median hourly wage of $18.00, and teachers reported a median hourly wage of $21.00. For 46 percent of teaching staff, more than one- half of their household income came from their work with children.

The living hourly wage in Marin County is $20.58 for one adult and $39.86 for one adult and one child.[xiv] In our sample, the mean hourly wage of teaching staff who had at least one child under the age of 18 living in the household was $19.25, and the median hourly wage for teaching staff with no children living in the household was $21.00.

According to the *2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index*, the California state hourly median wage in 2017 was $12.29 for child care workers and $16.19 for preschool teachers, while kindergarten and elementary-school teachers earned $38.33 and $45.17, respectively.[xv] The median hourly wage for teaching staff with a bachelor's degree in our sample was $22.30, reflecting an hourly wage gap of $16.03 with similarly qualified kindergarten teachers in the state. Though the wages reported in the *Index* are drawn from a larger swath of early educators, the wages among teaching staff in the SEQUAL sample are slightly higher, reflecting the cost of living in the Bay Area and Marin County, one of the highest in the nation.

Notably, more than one-half (54 percent) of teaching staff reported not having savings for retirement. Furthermore, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of the sample currently work another job in addition to their work at their center and site. The most common jobs reported related to caretaking or the service industry: babysitter, nanny, server, tutor, and caregiver.

Wages by Teacher Characteristics

While wages were low across the teaching staff in the sample — particularly in light of their high levels of education and Marin County's high cost of living — variations exist in several categories.

- **Age of Children in the Classroom:** The median hourly wage for teaching staff working with younger children (infants and toddlers) was $19.10; for teaching staff of mixed-age groups, $18.00; and for teachers of three- and four-year-olds, $21.50.
- **QRIS Participation:** Teaching staff working in centers not participating in QRIS earned higher median hourly wages ($22.50), compared to teaching staff working in centers participating in QRIS ($18.63).
- **Future Plans:** Teachers who planned to continue working at their center during the next three years reported earning the highest median hourly wages, $21.50, compared to teaching staff who planned to work at another child care center ($18.00) and those who planned to work in a job outside the early care and education field ($18.00).
- **Program Type:** The median hourly wage for teachers working in CSPP centers was $16.00; for teaching staff working in Head Start programs, $17.24; and for teachers working in Title 22 programs, $21.90. Both teachers and assistant teachers working in Title 22 programs were more likely to earn higher hourly wages.

Table 2. Wages by Educational Attainment and Program Type

	CSPP	Title 22	Head Start
Bachelor's degree or higher	$25.27	$26.29	$19.32
Associate degree	$18.67	$20.64	$16.52
No college degree	$15.25	$17.45	$15.88

Commute Time

On average, teaching staff reported total commute times of 40 minutes per day. Almost one-fifth (17 percent) spent more than 60 minutes going to and from work.

Public Income Supports

Twenty-two percent of teaching staff resided in families that utilized at least one form of federal public support, such as the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid (for themselves), Healthy Families or Medical/Medicaid for Children, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as "food stamps"). This rate is comparable to the national rate of participation for all workers.[xvi] However, among staff members in the

sample who held a bachelor's degree or higher, 35 percent resided in families that utilized at least one form of federal public support.

Benefits

Health Care
Twelve percent of teaching staff reported that they had no health coverage from any source. Among the 88 percent who had health coverage, less than one-half (49 percent) reported receiving insurance through their employer. Other sources of health insurance were coverage under the policy of a parent or spouse or coverage through Medicaid. Among teaching staff who received health insurance, 78 percent had vision and dental included in their plan.

Nonetheless, 32 percent of teaching staff reported that in the past few years, they or a family member had gone without medical care due to the cost of treatment, a reflection of inadequate health care coverage, high co-pays, and/or high deductibles.

Vacation and Leave
The vast majority of staff members reported that they receive paid holidays (93 percent) and leave (92 percent) during the year. Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of the sample reported that their employer permitted them a specific number of days off to be used for either vacation or sick leave. The average number was eight days for vacation and 13 days for paid leave.

Program Leaders
In addition to providing information on their center's characteristics, program leaders (n=29) shared information about their own personal and professional background. While the person most likely to fill out the survey held an administrative position (63 percent), such as center director, assistant director, or site supervisor, more than one-quarter (33 percent) held another leadership role at the center, mainly as a teacher-director. All program leaders in our sample identified as female. Program leaders ranged in age from 31 to 73 years old, with an average age of 50. Program leaders working as center directors were older, with an average age of 54, compared to teacher-directors, who had an average age of 48, and site supervisors, who had an average age of 47.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of program leaders who filled out the survey worked in centers participating in QRIS, and 72 percent worked in Title 22 programs. More than one-half (55 percent) of program leaders working in Title 22 programs also participated in QRIS. To learn more, please see **Appendix A: Study Design**.

A majority of program leaders (82 percent) identified as white, and 18 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino. While there was no stratification of race/ethnicity by position title for teaching staff, there was stratification between teaching staff and program leaders (see **Table 4**). People of color were less likely to be in the role of center director (see **Table 4**).

More than three-quarters of program leaders (79 percent) held a bachelor's degree or higher, and almost one-half (48 percent) majored in Early Childhood Education. Overall, program leaders had a wealth of experience in the field, with more than two-thirds (72 percent) working in early care and education for more than 15 years. The median wage for program leaders was $32.69.

Table 3. Educational Background, by Position

Highest Level of Education	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
Less than a high school diploma	3%	0%	0%
High school diploma or GED	14%	3%	0%
Some college credit but no degree	25%	24%	8%
Associate degree	19%	25%	15%
Bachelor's degree	28%	38%	54%
Graduate or professional degree	11%	11%	23%
Bachelor's degree or higher	39%	49%	77%

Table 4. Race and Ethnicity, by Position[XVii]

Race/Ethnicity	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
White (non-Hispanic/Latino)	54%	51%	69%
Hispanic/Latino	32%	26%	15%
Asian	3%	6%	0%
Black/African American	3%	5%	8%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%	2%	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	0%	0%
Multiracial	5%	5%	8%
Other	0%	5%	0%

Table 5. Hourly Wages, by Position

Wage (Median)	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
Hourly	$18	$21	$35.39
Range	$11.00–$27.50	$14.19–$40.00	$25.48–$42.69

For a more detailed description of Program Leaders, please see **Appendix B: Description of Program Leaders**.
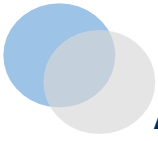
A Guide to SEQUAL Findings

Teaching staff assessments of their work environments are reported separately for each of the five SEQUAL domains: Teaching Supports; Learning Community; Job Crafting; Adult Well-Being; and Program Leadership. For each domain, we begin with a description of the domain and why it is important to teacher practice and development. Within domains, findings are presented for each dimension (note that domains vary with regard to the number of dimensions). Reporting on each domain is organized as follows:

Domain and Dimension Scores
- o Mean scores, representing an aggregate of teaching staff responses, are provided for each SEQUAL dimension and domain. Results for each domain represent an aggregate of staff perceptions across sites, and therefore, the prevalence of issues identified will vary by site. Means are calculated according to a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Unless noted, higher scores reflect that a positive work environment condition is in place or can be reliably depended upon.
- o A graphic follows the domain score, representing the strength or weakness of the domain in relation to the mean score.

What Teaching Staff Said
- o Percentage of teaching staff who agree or disagree with individual items describing various workplace policies, practices, and relationships in a given dimension (see "Interpreting Agreement and Disagreement With SEQUAL Items," p. 21).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice
- o Implications of teaching staff assessments.

Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics
- o Relationship between SEQUAL domain and dimension scores and program characteristics, including QRIS participation and program type.
- o Relationship between SEQUAL domain and dimension scores and teacher characteristics, including position, tenure, and age group of children in the classroom.

Interpreting Agreement and Disagreement With SEQUAL Items

The SEQUAL survey presents statements, and teaching staff are asked to indicate agreement or disagreement. In almost all cases, teaching staff agreement with an item signals that a positive work environment condition is in place or can be reliably depended upon, while disagreement indicates a lack of support for various work environment conditions necessary for teachers to apply their knowledge and skills and continue to hone their practice. We note the few instances in which agreement signals a less-supportive environment.

All SEQUAL items are rated on a six-point scale, with designations of "strongly agree," "agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Throughout the report, "agree" combines both strongly agree and agree responses. Likewise, "disagree" combines both strongly disagree and disagree responses.

For certain items, when the percentage of "somewhat disagree" and "somewhat agree" responses warrants, they will be reported out to provide greater nuance to those findings. For example, these instances include when the selection of the somewhat options (whether "somewhat agree" or "somewhat disagree") suggests that a policy or practice may not be consistently in place, may not be routinely enforced, or is otherwise unreliable and undependable.

FINDINGS

DOMAIN 1: TEACHING SUPPORTS

Domain Score:

4.30/6

The Teaching Supports domain includes a range of workplace tools that influence teaching practice. Varied in nature — ranging from specific materials and resources to levels of staffing and dedicated time for observation, planning, and sharing with colleagues — teaching supports constitute essential conditions for enabling teaching staff to apply their knowledge and skills. When such supports are missing or undependable, their absence undermines efforts to improve or sustain program quality and places additional burdens on the complex and demanding work of teaching, which includes meeting the varied needs of individual children in the classroom.

Dimension 1: Curriculum

Score: 4.24/6

The Curriculum dimension examines whether a program has articulated an approach to guide teacher practice and assesses whether teaching staff consider themselves adequately trained to apply the approach or curriculum to their planning and teaching.

What Teaching Staff Said

Almost all teaching staff reported that their program had a curriculum in place that tied directly to daily activities in the classroom.

- The vast majority (**87 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that their program had a curriculum in place to guide children's learning and teaching practices.
- **85 percent** agreed that they can explain how daily activities are a part of their program's curriculum.
- **74 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their program's curriculum was helpful in deciding how to teach.
- **72 percent** agreed that their program's curriculum was helpful in planning for individual children's needs

Though most staff members agreed their program's curriculum was helpful, a substantial portion reported that training and individualized supports were lacking.

- While **60 percent** of teaching staff agreed that they have received training on how to use the curriculum, almost one-quarter (**23 percent)** only somewhat agreed, indicating that this training may not have fully covered the topic or their guidance was insufficient.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Curriculum provides teaching teams with an organizing framework that identifies and guides the content and processes teaching staff follow to reach specific learning outcomes.

- In the absence of a curriculum or in the case of a curriculum that is not well understood or utilized, teaching staff pursue various instructional approaches that may work at cross purposes, making it more difficult to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

- A supportive work environment provides ongoing training and support to ensure that teaching staff can implement curriculum effectively.

Dimension 2: Child Observation and Assessment   Score: 3.89/6

The Child Observation and Assessment dimension examines the training, support, and resources teaching staff are provided to assist them in understanding and recording children's behavior and development.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff generally reported positive findings when asked about their use of observations and assessments to help guide children's learning.

- That their program had a process in place for assessing children's development and learning (**86 percent**);
- That assessments and observations help them decide what children need, both individually and as a group (**85 percent**); and
- That they regularly conduct assessments (**82 percent**).

> **"My program helps me use observations and assessments to guide curriculum by trying different ways of interacting with them and seeing what works and what doesn't. The challenges I face are when I need to talk to a parent."**
>
> – Assistant teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

Furthermore, many teaching staff indicated not having sufficient time to carefully conduct assessments and observations of children. Less than two-thirds of staff members (**64 percent**) agreed they had received training on how to use assessments and observations to talk with families about their children or how to use this information to inform their teaching.

- Nearly two-thirds (**64 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that they have been trained on how to use assessments and observations to talk with families about their children, but almost one-quarter (**23 percent)** signaled that their training was inconsistent or did not fully cover this area in sufficient detail to support their practice.
- While **56 percent** of teaching staff agreed that they receive ongoing guidance on how to use information from assessments and observations in their teaching, more than one-quarter (**26 percent**) only somewhat agreed, indicating that for many members of the teaching staff, guidance may not be ongoing or sufficient to support their practice.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Observations and assessments provide valuable information about children's development that can be used to tailor teaching strategies to support individual children's socioemotional, physical, and cognitive development.

- When teaching staff are not sufficiently trained nor provided adequate time to complete observations and assessments, inaccurate conclusions may be drawn about children's current abilities or progress towards developmental milestones, and/or developmental delays requiring specialized interventions may not be identified.

Dimension 3: Materials and Equipment

Score: 4.76/6

The Materials and Equipment dimension examines whether the equipment, toys, and consumable supplies available are appropriate, accessible, and kept in good condition.

What Teaching Staff Said

Most teaching staff reported that materials were appropriate for the needs of children. However, a small portion of staff members could not depend on access to appropriate equipment and materials for children and staff.

- **76 percent** of teaching staff agreed that materials and supplies were shared fairly across classrooms at their program.
- While almost two-thirds (**64 percent**) agreed that their program provides technology (e.g., Internet access, a computer or tablet) for them to use, **20 percent** disagreed, and the rest (**16 percent**) said they could not rely on access to technology.

The timely repair or replacement of broken equipment was an area of concern.

- More than one-third (**38 percent**) reported that equipment and materials were either not quickly repaired or replaced when broken or that they could not regularly rely on this practice.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Classroom materials are essential in creating an enriching and engaging environment that allows children to explore, play, and learn.

- When children do not have access to appropriate materials, it may impact their physical, socioemotional, and cognitive development.

- Teaching staff need access to materials and equipment (such as computers, printers, and copy machines) in order to prepare instructional materials, access online resources, engage in online professional development activities, and increasingly, communicate with families.

Dimension 4: Support Services for Children and Families Score: 4.55/6

The Support Services dimension examines the training, resources, and assistance available to enable teaching staff to respond to the individual needs of the children and families in their program.

What Teaching Staff Said

In the event of an issue with children or families, teaching staff reported that they could rely on support from supervisors or co-workers.

- **79 percent** of teaching staff agreed that if they have a problem with a child, they can rely on their supervisors or co-workers for help.
- Similarly, **77 percent** agreed that if they have a problem with a family, they can also rely on their supervisors or co-workers for help.
- **73 percent** agreed that if they have a problem communicating because of a language barrier, they can rely on their supervisors or co-workers for help.

However, teaching staff were less likely to agree that outside resources were available to assist them with issues related to children and families.

- **57 percent** of teaching staff agreed that if they had a problem with a child, outside resources are available.
- Similarly, **55 percent** agreed that if they had a problem with a family, outside resources are available.

Resources related to supporting family needs — including training in teaching children who exhibit challenging behaviors, training in supporting dual language learners, and training in supporting family needs— were reported as less reliable.

- Almost two-thirds (**63 percent**) found that the training available for teaching dual language learners was either not available or not sufficiently targeted to meet their needs.
- Similarly, **53 percent** also found that training available for teaching children with challenging behaviors was either not available or not sufficiently targeted to meet their needs.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need additional training, support, and often, access to outside resources (such as mental health or developmental consultations) to effectively meet the needs of children and their families.

- Support from co-workers and supervisors is an important element in ensuring effective interactions with children and families, but may not be sufficient in some instances.

- Addressing the needs of children and families who speak a language other than English is impaired when teaching staff cannot communicate with them directly or through a translator and/or when staff have not been trained in adapting to the unique needs of these children.

Dimension 5: Staffing and Professional Responsibilities Score: 4.05/6

The Staffing and Professional Responsibilities dimension examines the stability of teaching staff and the extent to which they are trained to meet their responsibilities. This dimension also examines how much time teaching staff have for planning, peer-to-peer discussion, attention to individual children, and completion of required paperwork.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff responses indicated that teaching staff are trained to work with young children but revealed shortages in staff coverage.

- Almost three-quarters (**74 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that teaching staff in their classroom are trained to work with young children.
- While nearly two-thirds (**62 percent**) agreed that there are enough teaching staff to help with children during staff breaks and during special projects (e.g., cooking and field trips), **21 percent** only somewhat agreed with this statement, highlighting that they cannot reliably depend on having enough staff to help.
- **64 percent** reported that they did not have or could not reliably depend on trained substitutes or floaters to be available when staff are absent.
- One-half (**51 percent**) also reported that they did not have or could not reliably depend on sufficient staffing levels to give each child in their classroom individual attention.

A lack of trained staff within programs may be exacerbated by teaching staff turnover.

- Almost three-quarters (**73 percent**) could not depend on new staff being hired quickly in the event of turnover.
- More than one-half (**52 percent**) of teaching staff also could not depend on the practice of hiring qualified new staff in the event of turnover.

Professional responsibilities essential to effective teaching are challenging to accomplish during the paid workday when coverage is insufficient, as teaching staff responses indicate.

- Slightly more than one-half (**55 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that they had dedicated time, without responsibility for children, to discuss work-related issues with other teachers.
- Less than one-half (**42 percent**) agreed that in the past week, they had paid time for planning without being responsible for children.
- Less than one-half (**41 percent)** also agreed that in the past week, they had paid time for doing paperwork for their job, without being responsible for children.

"The program I work in does not allot time for observations and assessments, nor does it allot time for curriculum planning when NOT being responsible for children. When there are 20-22 kids in the class and only two teachers, this does become a struggle when you don't have extra time to plan, spend individual attention, or talk with your co-teacher in regards to planning."

– Teacher at a Title 22, QRIS-participating center

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Each classroom needs an appropriate number of trained staff consistently in place in order to meet children's immediate needs and to allow teaching staff to fulfill their other responsibilities related to curriculum and assessments.

- When staffing in a classroom is insufficient or unreliable, it challenges the ability of educators to attend to individual children's needs and to provide a stable and nurturing learning environment for all the children in their care.

- Teaching staff need dedicated time, without child responsibilities, to plan curriculum, conduct observations and assessments, share with one another, and complete required paperwork.

Variations in Teaching Supports Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we looked at variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Teaching Supports domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences in assessments among teaching staff employed based on program type and whether or not the center at which they worked participated in QRIS. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, and ages of children in the classroom. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are listed below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Teaching Supports Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on overall Teaching Supports domain scores by participation in QRIS or program type.[xviii]

- On the Observation and Assessment dimension, examining the training, support, and resources provided to assist in understanding and recording children's behavior and development, statistically significant differences were found by program type.[xix] Teaching staff working in Title 22 centers had lower mean scores (M=3.67), compared to teaching staff working in Head Start centers (M=5.01). Findings for teaching staff working in CSPP centers was not statistically significant (M=4.36).

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Teaching Supports Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences were found by teaching staff characteristics on the overall Teaching Supports domain by teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, or ages of children in the classroom.

- On the Staffing dimension, which examines the stability of teaching staff and the extent to which they are trained to meet their responsibilities, statistically significant differences were found based on position title[xx] and teaching staff members' career plans over the next three years.[xxi] Assistant teachers had higher mean scores (M=4.63), compared to teachers (M=4.10). This finding may be a reflection of program characteristics because assistant teachers in this sample were more likely to work in larger programs.

- Statistically significant differences were also found among teaching staff based on their future plans. Members of the teaching staff who indicated in the next three years that they planned to still be working at their current center had higher mean scores (M=4.62), compared to teachers who planned to work at another child care center (M=3.42) and those who planned to leave the early care and education field (M=3.68). Statistically significant differences were not found with teaching staff who planned to retire (M=4.36), indicating that they did not assess their work environments differently than other teaching staff. Lower scores on the staffing domain for teaching staff who plan to either leave their center or leave the field entirely reflects the stress that inconsistent staffing and understaffing may have on teachers' practice and the extra burden entailed, which leads to frustration or burnout. Additionally, insufficient staffing levels may point to a larger issue regarding the work environment at the center.

- On the Professional Responsibilities dimension, which assesses the time spent on responsibilities in addition to teaching (e.g., planning, conducting observations, meeting with co-workers to share ideas, recordkeeping), statistically significant differences were found by position title.[xxii] Assistant teachers had higher mean scores (M=4.28), compared to teachers (M=3.72), which may reflect the difference in their responsibilities.

DOMAIN 2: LEARNING COMMUNITY

Domain Score:
4.20/6

The Learning Community domain addresses conditions that strengthen and refine teaching practice. Encompassing issues of policy, practice, and relationships, a professional learning community involves opportunities to participate in relevant training, occasion to practice emerging skills, and encouragement for testing new strategies and ideas. Effective learning and implementation of new approaches to teaching requires engagement among colleagues across all roles in the organization. When learning opportunities fail to address classroom challenges, allow for opportunities to practice and reflect, or engage all members of the team, adult learning and organizational improvement are stalled and less likely to be sustained.

Dimension 1: Professional Development Opportunities   Score: 4.00/6

The Professional Development Opportunities dimension examines types of professional learning experiences and supports available to teaching staff.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff were asked whether they had participated in any professional development activities over the last six months and, if so, to indicate the types of activities (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Professional Development Opportunities

Activity	Percentage
Dedicated time to reflect with other teachers	56%
Meeting with a mentor, coach, or consultant	52%
Professional conference	47%
Single-topic session related to my job	44%
In-depth training	44%
Discussion about professional articles/books	36%
College courses related to my job	35%
Observational visit to other classrooms/centers	21%
Did not participate in any professional development	14%

Access to professional learning opportunities for teaching staff is limited by various factors, including personal cost burden and a lack of flexibility in employer scheduling.

- Less than two-thirds (**65 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that they had a choice in the form of professional development in which they took part.
- Slightly more than one-half (**51 percent**) reported that they could not adjust or reliably adjust their work schedule to participate in professional development opportunities.
- More than one-third (**36 percent**) did not have sufficient opportunities to meet with other teaching staff during paid hours to discuss approaches to teaching.
- Almost one-quarter (**24 percent**) reported that in the past year, their employer did not pay for a portion of their professional development expenses

"Professional development is lacking mainly due to there not being enough help for teaching staff to go to training classes. It is almost impossible for me to change my shift to accommodate going to development meetings or trainings due to lack of substitute teachers or staff."

– Teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Adult learners find learning experiences to be most meaningful when they participate in the design or selection of these activities.

- Conducting professional development activities during paid work hours — or providing a stipend for engaging in these experiences outside of work hours — demonstrates an employer's commitment to ongoing learning and reduces the personal financial burden associated with these activities. In 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) recommended that payment for professional development and education not be the responsibility of teachers, given their low wages.[xxiii]

Dimension 2: Applying Learning

Score: 4.41/6

The Applying Learning dimension examines teaching staff assessments of opportunities and support for trying new approaches to teaching and examines how staff stability and relationships may interfere with trying new approaches.

What Teaching Staff Said

Most staff members agreed that they feel comfortable trying new approaches to teaching. However, fewer agreed that their co-workers support them in doing so. Interpersonal dynamics and staff turnover were other factors that make it difficult to explore new methods of teaching. Taken together, these conditions reveal that many barriers may be inhibiting teachers from exploring new teaching methods.

> **"High turnover rates and no support when team members call out sick make it challenging to incorporate new practices in the classroom."**
>
> **–** Teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

- Though the vast majority (**82 percent**) of staff members agreed that they felt comfortable trying new approaches to teaching, only slightly more than one-half (**53 percent**) agreed that *other* teachers in their classroom are also interested in trying new styles.
- More than one-quarter of teaching staff agreed that frequent staff changes make it difficult to try new ways to teach and that staff conflicts in their classroom make it difficult to apply new approaches to teaching (**28 percent** for both statements).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- In order for teaching staff to be able to translate learning experiences into teaching practice, they need to feel supported in experimenting with new ideas and concepts.

- When a work environment is unstable — either due to internal conflict, staff turnover, or both — it creates a barrier to quality improvement and undermines investments in training and professional development.

- In order to integrate learning experiences into real-world applications, teaching staff need opportunities for reflection, peer-to-peer learning, and observation of other classrooms.

Variations in Learning Community Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we looked at variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Learning Community domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences in assessments among teaching staff employed based on program type and whether or not the center at which they worked participated in QRIS. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, and ages of children in the classroom. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are listed below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Learning Community Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on the overall Learning Community domain or dimension scores by site characteristics.

Variations by Teacher Characteristics

Learning Community Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on the overall Learning Community domain by teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, and ages of children in the classroom.

- On the Applying Learning dimension, which examines assessments of opportunities and support for trying new approaches to teaching, along with how staff stability and relationships may have an impact on trying new approaches, statistically significant differences were found by tenure in the field.[xxiv] Teachers with fewer than two years in the field had higher mean scores (M=4.87), compared to teachers with three to five years in the field (M=4.00). There were no statistically significant differences among teaching staff with 6-15 years, 16-20 years, or more than 20 years in the field. This finding may reflect that newer teaching staff in the field are more eager and willing to try new approaches to learning as they refine their practice.

- Statistically significant differences were also found by ages of children in the classroom.[xxv] Teaching staff who worked with older children (ages three, four, and/or five-year-olds before kindergarten) had higher mean scores (M=4.53), compared to teaching staff who worked with younger children (infants and/or toddlers) (M=4.25).

DOMAIN 3: JOB CRAFTING

Domain Score:

4.39/6

The Job Crafting domain focuses on workplace practices and relationships that support individual teaching staff in expressing how their work is done and sharing decisions that impact their classrooms and the larger organization. When teaching staff consider themselves part of a well-functioning team and feel they have a meaningful say in how their classrooms operate, they are more able to engage in the reflection, creative problem-solving, and innovation necessary for continuous quality improvement. Both morale and performance improve in workplaces where employees feel well informed about program policies and changes and can identify that there is a clear process for giving input into organization-wide decisions that impact their day-to-day jobs. When teamwork and avenues for input are lacking or input is not seriously considered, morale and engagement decrease, while turnover increases.

Dimension 1: Decision Making

Score: 4.48/6

The Decision Making dimension examines the authority or input that teaching staff have on classroom composition and on establishing and adjusting schedules.

What Teaching Staff Said

Though most staff members reported that they had the power to make decisions about their classroom composition and materials, many indicated less autonomy in shifting planned activities and hosting visitors.

The majority of staff members agreed that they had:

- The ability to choose materials and arrange their classroom space (**79 percent**);
- Freedom of choice in making changes to planned activities when needed (**75 percent**); and
- Limited control in terms of when visitors, other than family members, may observe their classroom (**71 percent**).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Children's developmental needs are constantly changing, and teaching staff need to feel comfortable adjusting their environment and teaching strategies frequently, based on their observations and professional assessments. Teaching staff need to know that they have relative autonomy to make decisions about materials, room arrangement, and planned activities.

- Visitors may impact the activities and schedule within a classroom, and teaching staff need to identify optimal times for visitors to conduct observations.

Dimension 2: Teamwork

Score: 4.83/6

The Teamwork dimension examines teaching staff assessments of co-workers' respect for one another's opinions and whether they collaborate effectively in planning and implementing learning experiences for children.

What Teaching Staff Said

While the vast majority of staff members reported working well with their co-workers in the classroom, almost one-quarter nonetheless identified around issues of teamwork.

- More than three-quarters (**76 percent**) agreed that all teaching staff are responsible for their share of the work.
- **73 percent** agreed that the opinions of all teaching staff in their classroom are considered fairly.
- **72 percent** agreed that teaching staff in their classroom consider themselves to be part of a team, and **66 percent** reported that teaching staff in their own classroom work well with those in other classrooms.
- **62 percent** agreed that teaching staff work together to plan learning experiences for children. However, **20 percent** only somewhat agreed, indicating that they could not always depend on working together to plan activities.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Each early educator has their own unique philosophy and perspective on how to achieve learning outcomes for children. An effective, high-quality classroom begins with a teaching team that respects one another's approaches and teaching styles and works together to meet the needs of their children and families.

- Effective teamwork contributes to classroom and program stability by improving teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction. Cultivating this camaraderie requires dedicated paid time for professional sharing and peer-to-peer learning among teaching staff.

- Conflict within a program, at the classroom or administrative level, may occur when different ideas and approaches are not acknowledged and respected. In severe cases, animosity or conflict among staff may be noticed by children and adversely affect classroom behavior and learning opportunities.

Dimension 3: Input

Score: 3.87/6

The Input dimension examines teaching staff perceptions related to the ability to influence work policies that impact their practices.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff reported not being consistently informed of program policies and changes, along with limited opportunities for input into decisions that directly impact their classrooms and practice.

- Less than two-thirds of teaching staff agreed they are kept well informed about program *policies* (**60 percent**) and program *changes* (**59 percent**).
- **59 percent** of teaching staff agreed that they had input into decisions about the classroom in which they would be teaching. However, almost one-half reported that they could not provide input into the placement of children in their own classroom (**49 percent**) or at their center (**45 percent**).
- Less than one-half (**44 percent**) agreed that they know ahead of time when there are changes in their classroom assignment, while **31 percent** only somewhat agreed with this item, conveying that this information may not be consistently communicated.

> **"I think we should have more input in who teaches in the classroom, what children are placed in the classrooms, and how many times we have people come into our classroom to observe us."**
>
> – Teacher at a Head Start, QRIS-participating center

Teaching staff received limited opportunities to contribute to decisions that affected all staff members and their work.

- Almost one-half (**48 percent**) of teaching staff felt that their input into program policies was not taken seriously.
- **46 percent** of teaching staff did not agree that teaching staff have input into how funds or resources are used.
- One in five staff members did not agree that all teaching staff are invited to have input into program policies that affect everyone (**21 percent**) or that there is a clear process for teaching staff to have a say in decisions that impact their work (**21 percent**).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Having clear information on the areas of program and classroom decisions in which teaching staff can provide input is an important component to creating a supportive work environment.

- Opportunities to make decisions or to provide input on staff and child assignments, scheduling, room arrangement, and curriculum provides teaching staff with a needed level of control over their classrooms and the learning environments they create.

- Based on their direct knowledge and experience, teaching staff are a valuable resource in determining the appropriate classroom and teachers for children.

- Teaching staff provide a unique perspective on classroom and program needs and should be consulted on prioritizing how resources are used and what materials or supplies are needed.

- Failure to consider or respect teaching staff perspectives impacts staff morale and can lead to decreased job satisfaction and an increase in staff turnover.

Variations in Job Crafting Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we looked at variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Job Crafting domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences in assessments among teaching staff employed based on program type and whether or not the center at which they worked participated in QRIS. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, and ages of children in the classroom. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are listed below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Job Crafting Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on overall domain scores by site characteristics.

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Job Crafting Domain and Dimension Scores

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on overall Job Crafting domain scores by teaching staff position, years employed at the center, and ages of children in the classroom.

- On the dimension of Decision Making, which examines the authority and input that teachers have in the classroom or over their work, differences were found by position.[xxvi] Assistant teachers had lower scores (M=4.02/6), compared to teachers (M=4.62/6), indicating that they felt they had fewer opportunities to provide input into decisions impacting their work.

- In addition, on the dimension of Decision Making, statistically significant differences were found by ages of children in the classroom.[xxvii] Teaching staff working with older children (three, four, and/or five-year-olds before kindergarten) had higher mean scores (M=4.66), compared to teaching staff working with younger children (infants and/or toddlers) (M=4.09).

- On the Teamwork dimension, examining assessments of respect for one another's opinions and collaboration, statistically significant differences were found by age of children served.[xxviii] Teaching staff working with older children (three, four, and/or five-year-olds before kindergarten) had higher mean scores (M=5.01), compared to teaching staff working with younger children (infants and/or toddlers; M=4.48).

DOMAIN 4: ADULT WELL-BEING

Domain Score:

4.40/6

The Adult Well-Being domain encompasses the economic security and wellness of teaching staff, as well as their interactions with one another, all of which are influenced by policies, practices, and relationships. Low pay and inadequate benefits common to most early childhood jobs contribute to financial worry and insecurity among many staff members. Poor compensation is often exacerbated by expectations to complete job tasks during unpaid time or to work when ill, undependable breaks or schedules, and the absence of financial reward for professional advancement. Teaching young children is physically demanding work, which also includes continual exposure to illness, and requires that teaching staff be trained to protect their health and assured appropriate ergonomic equipment as well as adequate sick leave and vacations.

The tenor of relationships among colleagues at a site is another important contributor to teacher well-being, influencing the ability of staff to work effectively as a team. In a climate of respect and fairness, well-being can protect against or even alleviate stress, but such dynamics as favoritism and unresolved conflict can exacerbate it. In addition, children's well-being and learning are directly influenced by the emotional and physical well-being experienced by the adults primarily responsible for their education and care. When adults experience high levels of stress, there is a greater likelihood that they will be unable to engage children in developmentally supportive interactions that contribute to their learning.

Dimension 1: Economic Well-Being

Score: 4.14/6

The Economic Well-Being dimension examines the dependability of workplace pay and benefit policies (e.g., receiving paid time for work responsibilities and professional development) and the degree to which teaching staff worry about financial security (e.g., their ability to afford food for their families and housing and retirement costs).

What Teaching Staff Said

About Economic Worry

For items related to economic worry, stronger agreement, rather than disagreement, indicated higher levels of worry. For the items below, the somewhat agree responses are combined with the agree responses, as both indicate to that teaching staff experience worry to some degree.

Teaching staff reported concern about their ability to pay for basic living expenses.

- **71 percent** of staff members reported worrying about paying housing costs.
- More than one-third (**39 percent)** reported that they worry about having enough food for their family.

Worry about the ability to provide for themselves and their families was widespread.

- **75 percent** of teaching staff reported worrying about having enough to pay their family's monthly bills.
- **62 percent** worried about paying for their household's routine health care costs.
- Almost one-half reported worrying about losing pay if they or someone in their family became ill (**49 percent**) or worrying about taking time off from work to take care of family issues (**48 percent**).
- **35** of teaching staff reported worry about losing pay if they or someone in their family became ill or worry about taking time off from work to take care of family issues (**31 percent**).

Spotlight: Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the lack of reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. Given the low wages of teaching staff coupled with the high cost of living in Marin County, food insecurity impacted many teachers in the sample.

Almost one-quarter (23 percent) reported that within the last 12 months, the food that they or their family bought did not last and that they or their family did not have money to buy more. Almost one-quarter (24 percent) also reported that they could not afford to eat balanced meals.

Additionally, 11 percent of teaching staff reported that in the last 12 months, they or someone in their household had cut the size of their meals or skipped meals altogether because there wasn't enough money for food.

Most staff members did not see their jobs as a likely source for improving their financial situation in the long term. In fact, compensation and long-term financial well-being were reflected as common worries.

Teaching staff reported positive assessments of their work reliability and job security, potentially reflecting a strong demand for and a shortage of skilled staff in the field.

- Almost one-quarter of teaching staff reported that they worry about having their job benefits reduced (**24 percent**), having their hours reduced (**23 percent**), or getting laid off from work (**22 percent**).
- More than one-quarter (**28 percent**) reported worrying about being sent home without pay if child attendance is low or if their program has an unexpected closure.

Spotlight: Cost of Living in Marin County

Marin County has one of the highest costs of living in both the Bay Area and in the nation: it is listed among the 15 wealthiest counties in the United States. The median household income in Marin County is $113,908 a year, [xxix] compared to $75,277 for the median household income in California.[xxx] In our sample, 26 percent of teaching staff worried about having enough food for their families, 71 percent worried about paying housing costs, and 75 percent worried about paying their family's monthly bills. The median wage for the sample was $20.00 an hour, and more than one-half (54 percent) of teaching staff reported that their total household income was less than $50,000. The living hourly wage in Marin County is $20.58 for one adult and $39.86 for one adult and one child.[xxxi] In our sample, the mean hourly wage of teaching staff who had at least one child under the age of 18 living in the household was $19.25, and the median hourly wage for teaching staff with no children living in the household was $21.00. Nearly one-half (43 percent) of teaching staff in the sample earned less than the living wage for single adults, and very few (8 percent) earned the living wage for an adult with one child.

Despite the high concentration of wealth, income inequality in Marin County is particularly stark. Those with the highest incomes in the county earn 21.1 times more than the low-income families.[xxxii] One-quarter (23 percent) of households struggle to afford the basics, including housing, transportation, food, and child care.[xxxiii]

"I feel lucky that I don't have to rely solely on my own salary to make a living in Marin County, where I live. Without any health insurance or retirement plan of my own, I would be stressed out. Having said that, I really enjoy being with children and love what I do!"

– Teacher at a Title 22, QRIS-participating center

What Teaching Staff Said

About Dependability of Policies

Many staff members reported compensation for professional development and job-related activities outside of work hours as undependable.

- More than one-half of teaching staff agreed they could depend on receiving a pay raise if they completed a degree (**58 percent**) or if they were promoted (**57 percent**).
- While more than one-half (**58 percent**) agreed that they could depend on being paid for required professional development activities, almost one-quarter (**22 percent**) could not depend on being paid for required professional development activities.
- While only slightly more than one-half (**51 percent)** agreed that they could depend on being paid for work outside of regular work hours, more than one-quarter (**29 percent**) could not depend on being paid for work outside of regular work hours.
- **43 percent** reported that they could not depend on payment for required professional development activities.

"When I am ill, I feel that I cannot take the time to get better due to staff shortages. I also feel that I cannot take my vacation time also due to staff shortages."

– Teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

While teaching staff could depend on being paid if their center is closed for holidays or taking time off if they are ill, they could not always rely on being able to take time off for vacation or even take paid breaks.

- The vast majority (**83 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that they can depend on using paid sick leave if they are ill.
- **76 percent** agreed that they can depend on being paid if their center is closed for a holiday.
- Almost one-half (**45 percent**) reported that they did not have or could not depend on planning time during their paid work hours when they were not responsible for children.
- More than one-quarter (**27 percent**) assessed their ability to take paid breaks as undependable, although required by law in most instances.
- **20 percent** said they could not depend on taking paid vacation.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- The ability to have intentional interactions with children, requiring them to remain focused and present in the moment, is an important skill for teachers. Economic insecurity can cause significant stress and distract teachers from focusing on children's needs.

- A supportive teacher work environment recognizes the need for dedicated prep time and sets aside time and/or financial resources to support the professional responsibilities of teaching staff.

- The stress caused by low pay and inadequate benefits is often exacerbated by expectations to complete job tasks during unpaid time or to work when ill, as teaching staff cannot afford to take time off. Undependable breaks or schedules and the absence of financial reward for professional advancement can also serve as additional stressors and drive turnover.

- Regular breaks are necessary for all workers, and early educators are no exception. In a field in which teaching staff are required to be alert and responsive to children throughout the day, it is important for programs to have practices in place that ensure teaching staff can depend on regular breaks and can stay home when they are ill. Paid leave for vacation and holidays are also key policies that help to alleviate stress and prevent staff burnout.

Dimension 2: Wellness Supports

Score: 4.50/6

The Wellness Supports domain examines the conditions and training available in the work environment to ensure safety and security for teaching staff.

What Teaching Staff Said

Many staff members reported working in settings that promote workplace cleanliness, security, and physical comfort.

- **81 percent** of teaching staff members agreed that their program provides security measures to ensure their safety and well-being.
- However, **41 percent** reported that their program did not provide comfortable places for adults to sit and be with children or such places were not reliably provided.
- One-third (**32 percent**) reported that they could not depend on their program to arrange for classrooms to be cleaned by someone other than a member of the teaching staff.

Many staff members reported not having a private area away from children or a safe place to store their personal items.

- Less than two-thirds (**60 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that their program provides a safe place to put their personal belongings. Additionally, **22 percent** somewhat agreed, conveying that the space provided may not be secure or that they may not have reliable access to such a space.
- Almost one-quarter (**23 percent**) reported that their program does not provide a staff room or area away from children for breaks and private conversations.

Training to help prevent staff injury and illness and to support healthy behaviors was not universally available or comprehensive.

- Although more than one-half (**59 percent)** of teaching staff agreed that their program provides training about healthy ways to perform tasks — such as preparing food, lifting children, and moving heavy objects — **16 percent** disagreed.
- Only (**39 percent**) agreed that their program provides training for teaching staff on managing stress, healthy eating, and exercise.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need a supportive and safe environment with appropriate space and furnishings, break rooms, and secure places for their belongings. These are basic accommodations that contribute to teachers' feelings of security and well-being at work.

- Teaching in early education settings is an emotionally and physically demanding profession. Teaching staff need support in managing stress and living a healthy lifestyle.

- Teaching staff face multiple demands throughout the day, and when teachers are not provided support and opportunities to manage responsibilities, the system is susceptible to heightened staff turnover, which ultimately undermines program quality.

Dimension 3: Quality of Work Life   Score: 4.55/6

The Quality of Work Life domain examines how well teaching staff are supported and treated by other adults in their work environment.

What Teaching Staff Said

Interpersonal relationships greatly influence how teaching staff experience their jobs. While most staff members agreed that they are treated with respect and support by co-workers, a substantial portion of staff did not.

- **77 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their co-workers treat them with respect.
- **76 percent** agreed that their co-workers value their beliefs about teaching children.
- **71 percent** of staff members agreed that their co-workers support them when they have personal issues.

At the program level, teaching staff reported mixed assessments of fairness in the workplace.

- **51 percent** of teaching staff were confident that their complaints (if voiced) would be considered fairly. While only **17 percent** did not agree that complaints would be considered fairly, an additional **32 percent** expressed that fair treatment was inconsistent.
- **43 percent** reported that staff may not always be held equally responsible for doing their share of the work. While only **14 percent** did not agree that staff were always held equally responsible, **29 percent** felt accountability was unreliable, suggesting that a substantial portion of teaching staff may witness or experience issues of unfair expectations or an unequal distribution of workload.
- **43 percent** of teaching staff reported that some staff members received preferential treatment at the expense of others.
- More than one-third (**36 percent**) reported that bullying was tolerated or somewhat tolerated in their program, suggesting that some staff members may be experiencing or observing intimidating interactions between staff members in their program.

> **"Toxic environment has created extreme turnover, stress, etc. Preferential treatment creates resentment. Poor pay has people just going through the motions. Most at my workplace are seeing this just as a job because they are too burned out to care."**
>
> – Teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- In high-quality work environments, teaching staff feel that they are respected and treated fairly by their co-workers and leaders. When teaching staff work in a climate that allows bullying, includes favoritism, or has staff conflicts, this situation can create stress or exacerbate existing stress.

- When teaching staff perceive that their work is not valued or that others are being allowed to not meet their job responsibilities, it creates divisions among staff members and/or program leaders that adversely affect job performance and staff morale. These conditions can have a direct impact on interactions with children and the ability to create a nurturing environment, while simultaneously undercutting staff morale, contributing to turnover, and undermining program quality.

Of note, many teachers want to continue to do this work without the sacrifice it now demands because they find great satisfaction and meaning in their work.

"Al estar con los niños, me hace olvidar todo lo involucrado a mi persona, porque ellos hacen que uno se mantenga activo en la ensenanza desde que comienza el desayuno con lo que ellos platican y comparten en la mesa se hace muchas veces divertido y se vuelve como una segunda familia."

"Being with the children makes me forget everything going on in my personal life, because they keep me active in teaching from the beginning of the day (breakfast), when they chat and share at the table; it is often fun, and they become like a second family to me."

– Assistant Teacher at a Head Start, QRIS-participating center

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Variations in Adult Well-Being Findings

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we looked at variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Adult Well-Being domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences in assessments among teaching staff employed based on program type and whether or not the center at which they worked participated in QRIS. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, and ages of children in the classroom. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are listed below. In addition, we explored other teacher characteristics, such as being employed at another job or utilizing at least one form of public assistance, to observe differences within this domain.

Variations by Site Characteristics

<u>Adult Well-Being Domain and Dimension Scores</u>

No differences in teaching staff assessments were found on overall Adult Well-Being domain scores by participation in QRIS or program type.

- On the Economic Well-being dimension, which examines the dependability of workplace pay and benefit policies and the degree to which staff worry about financial security, statistically significant differences were found by participation in QRIS.[xxviii] Teaching staff working in non-participating centers reported higher mean scores (M=4.39), compared to teachers working in centers participating in QRIS (M=3.57). This finding may reflect the fact that teaching staff working in non-participating centers earned higher hourly wages.

Variations by Site Characteristics

<u>Adult Well-Being Domain and Dimension Scores</u>

No differences were found in teaching staff assessment on the overall Adult Well-Being domain by teaching staff position, years employed in the field and at the center, future plans, ages of children in the classroom, being employed at another job or utilizing at least one form of public assistance.

- On the Adult Well-being domain, there were statistically significant differences between teaching staff based on tenure at their current place of employment[xxix] and whether they worked at another job in addition to their teaching position.[xxx] Teaching staff with longer tenure at their center (between 16 and 20 years) had lower mean scores (M=3.75), compared to teaching staff with two years or less at their center (M=4.52), teaching staff who worked at their center for six to 15 years (M=4.50), and teaching staff who have worked 20 years or more at their center (M=4.47). Significant differences were not found with teaching staff with three to five years at their current center (M=4.31).

- In addition, teaching staff who worked at another job had lower mean scores (M=4.10), compared to teaching staff who did not work another job (M=4.48).

- On the dimension of Economic Well-being, statistically significant differences were found for tenure at current place of employment,[xxxiv] working at another job,[xxxv] and utilization of at least one form of public support.[xxxvi] Teaching staff who worked for 16-20 years at their center had lower mean scores (M=3.51), compared to those with

two years or less (M=4.34). This finding might reflect that teaching staff who have been at their centers longer may reflect the cumulative toll of working for a long period under less-than-optimal conditions and with insufficient remuneration. In addition, teaching staff who worked at another job had lower mean scores (M=3.69), compared to those who did not work an additional job (4.28). Finally, teaching staff who received at least one form of public support had lower mean scores (M=3.89), compared to teaching staff who did not (M=4.33).

DOMAIN 5: PROGRAM LEADERSHIP   4.46/6

The Program Leadership domain focuses on teaching staff's assessments of other staff members who fulfill leadership functions that provide support and guidance to teacher practice. In center-based early care and education programs, leaders fulfill multiple functions. Here, we focus on supervision of teaching staff and oversight for daily operations of the site, which may be functions fulfilled by more than one person in a given site. When leaders are knowledgeable about child development and pedagogy, engaged in learning themselves, considered to be accessible and fair, and committed to listening to and responding to staff concerns, they create a workplace climate that supports staff morale and encourages innovation. When leaders are assessed as inaccessible, insensitive, or unfamiliar with the daily experiences of teaching staff, confidence in their authority and in the organization is undermined.

Supervisor refers to the person who directly supervises teaching (e.g., a head or lead teacher, educational coordinator, site supervisor, director, or principal). This person may or may not teach in the classroom on a regular basis.

Leader refers to the person at a site who is responsible for overall daily operations in the workplace, which may be the same person as the supervisor (e.g., a director, principal, or site supervisor).

What Teaching Staff Said

About Supervisors | Score: 4.38/6

The vast majority of staff members agreed that their supervisors are knowledgeable about early childhood education and supportive of their teaching practice.

- Nearly all teaching staff (**83 percent**) agreed that their supervisors are knowledgeable about early childhood education and teaching young children, and **71 percent** agreed that their supervisors engage actively in professional learning.
- **74 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their supervisors encourage them to take initiative to solve problems.
- **71 percent** agreed that their supervisors understand the challenges faced in the classroom.
- **68 percent** agreed that their supervisors know their teaching well.

Teaching staff assessments of supervisors' professional guidance and on-the-job support were less favorable.

- Two out of five teaching staff members (**40 percent**) reported that their supervisor was concerned about their welfare, while **17 percent** reported that their supervisor was not concerned about their welfare, and **23 percent** felt like their supervisors' concern was inconsistent.
- Around one-third of teaching staff reported that their supervisors did not meet with them once a month to discuss their teaching (36 percent) or to offer useful suggestions that help them improve their practice (**30 percent**).
- **35 percent** of teaching staff reported that their supervisors did not meet with them at least once a year to develop a personalized professional development plan.
- **29 percent** reported that their supervisors did not review their job description at least once a year to ensure it describes what they actually do.

> **"I have been frustrated with the lack of leadership involvement and feedback. I feel like the only input I receive is surface criticism and/or praise that doesn't push me to think more deeply about my practice or allow me an opportunity to talk through decisions I've made or thoughts I have."**
>
> -Teacher at a Title 22, QRIS-participating center

About Leaders | Score: 4.54/6

Teaching staff mostly agreed that their site leaders know their site well and encourage staff to develop their skills, take initiative, and learn from each other.

- The majority of staff members (**79 percent**) agreed that their site leaders know their program well.
- **73 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their site leaders encourage staff to learn from each other.
- **71 percent** agreed that their site leaders were respectful of their roles and expertise.
- **66 percent** reported that their site leaders encourage all teaching staff to develop their skills, however, nearly one-third (**34 percent**) felt that this did not happen.

> **"My program leader has a great impact on my teaching practice. She is someone I look up to because of her knowledge of children and school/state policies."**
>
> – Assistant Teacher at a CSPP, QRIS-participating center

Teaching staff assessments of site leaders' role in professional guidance and program supports — including improving salaries and benefits and ensuring fairness — was less consistent.

- Less than two-thirds (**56 percent**) agreed that their site leader is familiar with how all staff teach.
- **51 percent** agreed that their site leader tries to improve salaries and benefits for teaching staff.
- **44 percent** reported that they could not rely on their site leader to consistently assist in fair and timely resolutions of conflicts among staff.
- Almost one-fourth (**23 percent**) did not agree that their leader informs staff about professional development resources.

Leaders by Role[xxxv]

In addition to understanding teacher perspectives on leadership, the role of the site leaders was also further analyzed. Center-based early childhood programs employ a variety of staff leadership structures. In some centers, the leader works in the classroom and may even be considered a member of the teaching staff, while in others the leader does not typically participate in classrooms. To further probe the meaning of teaching staff assessments of supervisors and leaders, we examined how SEQUAL scores varied by leadership structure and site leader role. We examined teaching staff assessments based on whether their supervisor or leader was another teacher or an administrator and whether or not they worked in the classroom.

- In the sample, **77 percent** of teaching staff reported that their supervisor or leader was an administrator, and **23 percent** reported that the person in this role was another member of the teaching staff. Leaders who were administrators were rated more highly by teaching staff than other leaders.
- **48 percent** of teaching staff reported that the site leader, regardless of their specific role/job title, worked in the classroom for some period of time. Leaders who spent time in the classroom were rated more positively than those who did not.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need strong educational leaders to whom they have easy access and from whom they can receive individualized feedback on job performance and

reflective supervision. It is important for leaders and supervisors to gather information on staff through observation, feedback from other staff, and direct input from the staff members themselves.

- When teaching staff perceive that their leader or supervisor is not familiar with their classroom or teaching practice, it can limit the influence that those fulfilling leadership roles have on staff performance and undermine staff confidence in the program and its leadership. Spending time in classrooms is a necessary job responsibility of leaders and/or supervisors. Only through regular contact and observation can supervisors and site leaders truly understand what staff need to support children's learning.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

Given the complexity of the current early care and education system, there are a variety of avenues by which California counties, including Marin County, could articulate standards, enforce them, and ensure sufficient funding for providers to implement them. Marin County has made significant investments in and taken critical steps toward improving the quality of ECE services. Notwithstanding the investment of resources and supports, teaching staff working conditions as captured in this study suggest that further efforts are needed to support teacher practice and well-being necessary for quality services.

Leaders in Marin County have an opportunity to shape expectations and codify standards for early educator work environments. Below is a brief summary of major themes identified in this SEQUAL study that frame key policy areas needing further attention. Following are recommendations provided to inform efforts in the county to improve the quality of early childhood jobs and programs.

Adult Well-Being

Teaching staff across programs experience conditions that challenge their well-being. Many struggle to afford housing, health care, sufficient food, and other basic monthly expenses. Teaching staff also reported conditions that threaten their health and safety, most notably not being able to take breaks during the workday (although required by law to do so), or not being able to take their paid sick leave. Finally, many teachers reported experiencing stressful workplace dynamics, such as intimidation, unequal distribution of workload, favoritism, or a lack of opportunities for input within their program.

Staffing and Teaching Supports

Many teachers assessed staffing levels as insufficient to provide children with individual attention or to observe them carefully. Furthermore, staff instability challenged many teachers' efforts to improve their practice. Most teaching staff reported not having dedicated time without child responsibilities to perform professional duties. They instead use their own unpaid time or time while supervising children on the playground or during naps for planning and professional sharing with other teachers. In contrast, more teaching

staff indicated they did have paid time without child responsibilities for completing their reporting and paperwork tasks.

Professional Learning and Guidance

Although many staff members participate in professional development, they reported insufficient training in several areas and a lack of professional guidance and support to engage in ongoing learning. Particular areas identified include training for teaching children with challenging behaviors and training for teaching children who are dual language learners. Teaching staff reported an absence of guidance from program leaders in supporting their professional practice and development. Lastly, staff members reported difficulties in accessing or paying for professional development activities or receiving remuneration for advancing their skills or education. Barriers raised included not being able to adjust their work schedule, not being compensated for work outside of regular work hours, or not being able to depend on their employer to pay for professional development expenses.

Recommendations

Marin County has made significant investments in and taken critical steps toward improving the quality of early care and education services. Notwithstanding the investment of resources and supports, the working conditions of teaching staff as captured in this study suggest further efforts are needed to support teacher practice and well-being necessary for quality services.

Leaders in Marin County have an opportunity to shape expectations and codify standards for early educator work environments. The following recommendations support funders and policymakers in advancing county efforts to enhance its quality improvement systems and address work environment conditions.

1.   Develop workplace standards, such as guidance on appropriate levels of paid planning time, which are necessary for educators to engage in professional practice and to alleviate conditions that cause educator stress. Use existing models, such as the **International Labor**

Organization Policy Guidelines and the **Model Work Standards**, to support this process. Developing these standards will benefit programs throughout Marin County by:

- Identifying conditions and supports teaching staff need to fulfill the professional responsibilities necessary for effective teaching;
- Acknowledging how systemic challenges impacting all programs affect daily teaching practice; and
- Elevating appropriate work environments as a critical component necessary to achieving desired child outcomes.

2.   Provide financial resources and other assistance specifically designed to enable programs and providers to comply with work environment standards in a reasonable period of time. To accomplish this goal, resources should be:

- Long-term and sustainable over time;
- Sufficient to cover the costs associated with meeting the established work environment standards; and
- Evaluated to determine their long-term impact.

3.   Embed work environment standards in the QRIS scoring systems to emphasize their importance and ensure that programs cannot achieve the highest ratings without addressing work environment standards. Acknowledging the inherent challenges in adjusting the Marin Quality Counts scoring system, Marin County could initiate this process by documenting work environment conditions during the rating process without incorporating them into rating scores. This approach would allow Marin County to collect valuable site-level data on work environments that can support ongoing efforts to integrate work environment standards into the Marin Quality Counts scoring system and the county's professional development system as a whole.

4.   Develop and implement training programs that support program leaders, supervisors, and coaches to address work environment issues. Program leaders, supervisors, and coaches all require support and training on how to implement and sustain these types of changes. The following steps may assist in this process:

- Utilize this SEQUAL study, other SEQUAL materials, and additional resources, such as the **International Labor Organization Policy Guidelines** and **Model Work Standards,** to develop an initial list of potential training areas; and
- Conduct a needs assessment with program leaders, supervisors, and coaches to further develop and prioritize training topics and content areas.

5.   Provide funding to institutions of higher education and training programs to develop and offer classes and workshops related to work environment standards, rights of teaching

staff on the job, and the critical importance of economic, emotional, and physical well-being among adults in the workplace. Strategies to begin this process include:

- Conducting a needs assessment with representatives from institutions of higher education and training organizations to identify existing college courses and training programs that could be expanded to include work environment standards;
- Determining which topics around work environment standards would require new college-level courses or training programs; and
- Establishing a funding process that would provide resources and incentives to institutions of higher education and training organizations to incorporate work environment standards into new or existing courses or training.

6.   Institute strategies that engage early educators in the process of informing quality improvement and regularly collect data to assess how they experience the work environment. Strategies to begin this process include:

- Adjusting planning and meeting times to make them more accessible to early educators;
- Creating opportunities for teaching staff to submit audio or video testimonials that capture their perceptions on work environment conditions. These testimonials can also be used bring teacher's voices and opinions into the planning process; and
- Incorporating opportunities for input on work environments into existing regional meetings conferences, etc.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Study Design

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, the survey instrument and data collection procedures were approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Berkeley.

In spring 2019, a notification letter was sent via email to all licensed child care centers in Marin County. The letter introduced the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) and announced the upcoming study, indicating to all recipients that their center could be selected to participate. Within a week of the notification letter, staff at CSCCE sent an email to program leaders and teaching staff via the Qualtrics survey platform. This email described the purpose of the survey and provided a personalized link to access the survey. The data collection period began in spring 2019 and extended into the summer.

Before launching the SEQUAL survey, the link brought the participant to the Informed Consent page, which detailed the purpose of the study, the procedures, any potential risks/discomforts, confidentiality of the data provided, contact information for our staff, a statement explaining that participation was completely voluntary, and finally, an online consent form where participants could agree to participate or decline. If the participant selected "agree," they were taken to the SEQUAL survey, and if they selected "disagree," they were redirected to the CSCCE homepage and removed from our SEQUAL mailing list.

The survey could be accessed from any electronic device connected to the Internet, and as the survey was sent through a personalized link, participants were able to take the survey in more than one sitting. A total of six reminder emails were sent to participants who had not completed the survey.

To thank participants for their time and participation, a gift card was sent to each participant who completed the survey.

Survey Instruments

Two survey instruments — the SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey and the SEQUAL Administrative Survey — were employed to capture information on work environments.

Surveys were offered in both English and Spanish for teaching staff. The surveys were administered online by Qualtrics and took approximately 40 minutes to complete.

SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey. The SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey includes two sections: 1) staff perceptions about workplace policies that affect their teaching practice; and 2) a profile of teacher education, experiences, and demographic information. For the section on staff perceptions of their work environment, teaching staff were asked to rate a series of statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The items focused on each of the following five domains:

1.   Teaching Supports – 34 items, including statements on the following dimensions: curriculum; observations and assessments; materials; support services for children and families; and staffing and professional responsibilities;
2.   Learning Community – 12 items, including statements on professional development opportunities and applying learning;
3.   Job Crafting – 21 items, including statements on the following dimensions: making decisions in the workplace; teamwork; and input;
4.   Adult Well-Being – 39 items, including statements on the following dimensions: economic well-being; quality of work life; and wellness supports; and
5.   Leadership – 28 items, including perceptions of their supervisor and the leader of their program.

In the teaching staff profile, participants were asked to provide information on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity), level of education, and work characteristics (e.g., wages, tenure, ages of children in their classroom).

U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form. The six-item version of the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module, a widely used self-report measure for assessing food security, was completed by teaching staff. The six-item survey is the short version of the 18-item survey and is designed to identify households that are food insecure or have very low food security.[xxxvi]

SEQUAL Program Leader Survey. Program leaders also filled out a version of the survey. A program leader was identified as the person at the site who would have access to information about workplace benefits and policies, as well as program and staff characteristics. The program leader survey asked program leaders to provide a variety of information, including a center and administrator profile.

Sampling Frame and Procedures

In line with our research questions and the number of centers in the county, we employed a census design that would allow comparison of work environment assessments from teaching staff employed at licensed child care centers participating or not participating in QRIS (Marin Quality Counts or both Marin Quality Counts and the ECE Quality Improvement

Project). Although the goal was to conduct a census of all centers in the county, centers were removed from the sample if they declined participation at the onset, did not provide full contact information for staff, or had fewer than two staff members.

Analysis Plan

Frequency Analyses. All SEQUAL items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). We used frequency analysis for SEQUAL items (e.g., the percentage of teaching staff who agreed or disagreed) as a measure of teaching staff assessment of workplace policies, practices, and relationships. These frequencies are reported as percentages or fractions for each of the items on the SEQUAL domains and dimensions. Crosstabs were also performed to look at the percentage of teaching staff responses to the SEQUAL by QRIS participation and position.

T-Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs). T-tests and ANOVAs were used to examine differences between groups (e.g., by QRIS participation, position). Depending on the number of groups, T-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences in teaching staff perceptions of their work environment as captured by their SEQUAL scores.

Correlations and Associations Between Scores. To examine the relationships between study variables and scores, bivariate correlations, chi-square, and regression models (linear and multiple regression) were conducted. Correlations were conducted for numerical variables and chi-square for categorical variables.

Throughout this report, we denote differences in SEQUAL scores and other variables by pointing out where scores between two or more groups are *significantly different* from one another. This indicates that there is a statistical difference between group scores or a statistical relationship between variables at a rate greater than chance levels. All significant findings are reported at a *p* value of <.05.

Population and Sample

At the time of the initial data collection, the population included 131 licensed child care centers throughout the county. For more information on the population and sample, see **Appendix C: Tables and Figures**.

Appendix B: Description of Program Leaders

Personal Characteristics

Race and Ethnicity[xxxvii]

Of the program leaders in the sample, 71 percent identified as white (non-Hispanic/Latino), 18 percent as Hispanic/ Latino, 4 percent as Asian, 4 percent as black/African American, 2 percent as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native, 5 percent as multiracial, and 3 percent as other.

Professional Background

Education and Credentials

Three-fourths of program leaders (79 percent) held a bachelor's degree or higher. Of those with a degree, 48 percent majored in Early Childhood Education, 12 percent in Child Development or Psychology, and 12 percent in Elementary Education.

Experience and Tenure

Overall, program leaders had a wealth of experience in the field, with nearly one-half (47 percent) working in early care and education for more than 15 years. There was variation in experience among program leaders in their current position at their center. While 47 percent of program leaders in the sample worked in their current role at their place of employment for more than 10 years, a sizable portion of program leaders were new to their role, with less than two years at their current position (53 percent).

Compensation

Wages

The median hourly wage for center directors was $35.39. The median hourly wage for program leaders wage $32.70.

Benefits

Health Care

Most program leaders in the sample (85 percent) had health insurance, with 41 percent receiving health care coverage from their employer. Of the program leaders who have health insurance from another source, most purchased their own health insurance policy through the Affordable Care Act/Health Care Marketplace, Medicaid/Medicare, or were covered under the policy of a parent or spouse.

Appendix C: Tables and Figures

Population and Sample

Table C.1. Center Population and Sample

QRIS	Invited (n)	Participated (n)
Participating in QRIS	49	39
Not participating in QRIS	35	28
Total	**84**	**67**
Program Type	**Invited**	**Participated**
CSPP	16	10
Title 22	56	49
Both CSPP and Title 22	2	1
Head Start	10	7
Total	**84**	**67**

Response Rates

Table C.2. Response Rate of Centers, Program Leaders, and Teaching Staff

	Invited Sample	Final Sample	Percentage Participating
Centers	84	67	80%
Program Leaders	52	29	56%
Teaching Staff	542	163	30%

*a few program leaders oversaw multiple sites**.**

Table C.3. Response Rate of Teaching Staff and Program Leaders, by Center

	Number of Centers	Percent
Centers with participation of BOTH program leader and teaching staff	29	34%
Centers with participation from teaching staff only	38	45%
Centers with participation from program leader only	7	8%
Centers with no participation from program leader or teaching staff	7	8%

Endnotes

1. Introduction

[i] Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., Connors, M., & Darrah, R. (2011). *Staff preparation, reward, and support: Are quality rating and improvement systems addressing all of the key ingredients necessary for change?* Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/CSCCEQRISPolicyBrief_2011.pdf.; Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/.

[ii] Whitebook et al., 2018.

[iii] The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment and Economic Policy Institute. (2019, July). Infographic: California depends on early educators. Retrieved from https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2019/07/CaliforniaChildCare2.png.

[iv] Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care (2015, April). *QRIS Resource Guide: Section 4 Standards and Criteria*. Retrieved from https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.govfiles/chapters/QRISRG_Chapter_4_Standards.pdf; Zellman, G.L., & Perlman, M. (2008). *Child-Care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in Five Pioneer States: Implementation Issues and Lessons Learned*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

[v] See BUILD Initiative & Teachstone (2016). What are the most common areas of quality assessed by QRIS? QRIS Compendium: Top Ten Questions about QRIS. Retrieved from http://qriscompendium.org/top-ten/question-4/; BUILD Initiative & Teachstone (2016). What are the features of professional development? QRIS Compendium: Top Ten Questions about QRIS. Retrieved from http://qriscompendium.org/top-ten/question-10/.

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[vii] Marin County Office of Education & Marin Child Care Council. (2015). *Marin Quality Counts ratings.* Retrieved from http://jade.marinschools.org/ECE/Documents/2015-2016%20TANYA%20MYERS/Marin%20Quality%20Counts/Marin%20Quality%20Counts%20Rating.pdf.

[viii] Marin County Office of Education. (2019). *P3/ECE Quality Improvement Project overview.* Retrieved from https://www.marinschools.org/Page/2757.

2. **Study Overview**

[ix] For reporting and analysis purposes, the category of teachers includes those who identified as teachers and head/lead teachers, based on the similarity of job duties and roles.

[x] Based on the census categories, two separate items asked whether the participant was of Hispanic/Latino descent and how the participant identified their race.

[xi] Ramos Harris, V. (2018). *Uplifting the assets of California's dual language learners in the early years: Preparing California's diverse children for the global economy*. Advancement Project California. Retrieved from https://www.advancementprojectca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AP-DLL-Policy-Brief-8.5-x-11-proof4-digital.pdf.

[xii] Copeman Petig et al., 2018.

[xiii] Austin, L.J.E., Edwards, B., & Whitebook, M. (2018). *California's ECE Workforce: What We Know Now and the Data Deficit That Remains*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/10/CA-ECE-Workforce.pdf.

[xiv] Glasmeier, A.K., & the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). (2019). *Living wage calculation for Marin County, California*. Living wage Calculator. Retrieved from https://livingwage.mit.edu/pages/about.

[xv] Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018, State Profiles: California*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/2018-Index-California.pdf.

[xvi] Between 2009 and 2013, 26 percent of the U.S. workforce as a whole were part of families enrolled in at least one of four public support programs: the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Source: Whitebook et al., 2018.

3. **Findings**

[xvii] Based on the census categories, two separate items asked whether the participant was of Hispanic/Latino descent and how the participant identified their race.

[xviii] There was variation by program type. There were more Title 22 centers included in the sample

[xix] $F_{(2,63)}=3.427$, $p=.039$.

[xx] $t_{(155)}=-2.49$, $p=.014$.

[xxi] $(F_{(4,130)}=5.12$, $p=.00$.

[xxii] $t_{(153)}=-2.415$, $p=.017$.

[xxiii] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) (2018). *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17226/24984.

[xxiiv] $F_{(4,146)}=2.69$, $p=.034$.

[xxv] $t_{(158)}=-2;08$, $p=.039$.

[xxvi] $t_{(146)}=2.05$, $p=.046$.

[xxvii] $t_{(148)}=-2.71$, $p=.008$.

[xxviii] $t_{(147)}=-3.00$, $p=.003$.

[xxix] $t_{(65)}=-2.632$, $p=.011$.

[xxx] $F_{(4,148)}=2.82$, $p=.027$.

[xxxi] $t_{(155)}=-3.326$, $p=.001$.

[xxxii] $F_{(4,147)}=2.71$, $p=.033$.

xxxiii t(155)=-3.326, p=.001.

xxxiv t(94)=2.234, p=.028.

xxxv No comparisons within the Program Leadership domain were examined by site or teacher characteristics.

4. Appendices

xxxvi United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (Updated September 2012). *U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form*. Retrieved from https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf

xxxvii Based on the census categories, two separate items asked whether the participant was of Hispanic/Latino descent and how the participant identified their race.