

# Closing the Leadership Gap

2017 STATUS REPORT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM  
LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MICHAEL B. ABEL, PH.D.  
TERI N. TALAN, ED.D., J.D.  
MELISSA K. NEWKIRK, M.ED.

## L.E.A.D. EARLY CHILDHOOD CLEARINGHOUSE STEERING COMMITTEE

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Childhood Leadership at National Louis University

**Michael Abel**, Director of Research and Evaluation,  
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership  
at National Louis University

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**L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Collaborative**

**McCormick Center Advisory Board**

**New America**

**National Workforce Registry Alliance**

**Goffin Strategy Group**

**LEE Policy and Advocacy Summer Fellows**

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# Closing the Leadership Gap



## THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

For more than 30 years, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University has been dedicated to building the leadership capacity of the early childhood workforce. However, addressing the need to increase the competency of early childhood program leaders in all sectors of the field has been compromised by limited information and irregular data collection across the states. The 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education<sup>1</sup> did not report on the demographics of program leaders. Knowledge about the roles, qualifications, and status of the leadership workforce is highly siloed and largely determined by the specific reporting requirements of respective agencies, resulting in intermittent studies of segmented groups of program leaders, such as elementary school principals or Head Start directors. Therefore, a comprehensive, cross-sector resource regarding early childhood leadership is needed to fill this void and to support early childhood system-building efforts.

## THE L.E.A.D. EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE

In 2016, the Leadership Education for Administrators and Directors (L.E.A.D.) Early Childhood Collaborative launched an initiative designed to identify and close the program leadership gap. This initiative will recommend key leadership competencies that address both content knowledge and skills needed by administrators to ensure developmentally appropriate outcomes for children, establish efficient program operations, and support working families' need for access to high-quality early learning and care. The overarching goal is to offer an actionable response to the 2015 National Academy of Medicine report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8*,<sup>2</sup> which calls for a unifying foundation for the early childhood leadership workforce across states and industry sectors. The McCormick Center developed the L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse to enhance this initiative.

## HOW THE L.E.A.D. EARLY CHILDHOOD CLEARINGHOUSE ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR DATA

The L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse has been created in response to the need for better data on the early childhood leadership workforce. This resource makes available accurate and accessible information for decision makers, policymakers, advocates, scholars, leaders, teachers, students, and other impacted individuals through an interactive website. Data about policy levers to improve the early childhood leadership workforce, state standards, and programs that educate, train, and support individuals who lead organizations serving children birth through age eight is accessible through the Clearinghouse. It is built on a technology platform and infrastructure that allows users to easily access national and state data from a single site. A comprehensive data management system is housed on a National Louis University server and protected by robust firewalls.

# Development of the L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse

## DATA ELEMENTS AND POLICY LEVERS: WHAT ARE WE TRACKING?

The L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse presents national and state statistics related to early childhood administrators (site-based directors, family child care providers, and school principals), and the qualifications related to their education, professional development, and experience. Five policy levers are identified to assess the degree to which the nation and states support high-quality program leadership standards.

### Policy Levers

1. Administrator Qualifications in Child Care Licensing
2. Administrator Credential
3. Principal Licensure
4. Administrator Qualifications in QRIS
5. Administrator Qualifications in State Pre-K Programs

Each policy lever is scored using a rubric with multiple indicators, yielding an average lever score and an overall policy levers score.

In addition to the policy levers, the Clearinghouse displays statistics on 42 elements for the U.S., 50 states, and the District of Columbia. The statistics for each of these profiles include:

**Administrators:** Early childhood site-based directors, school principals, and family child care providers

- The total number in each group
- Average annual salary for each group

**Higher Education Programs:** Early childhood leadership degree programs and elementary principal degree programs

- Number of institutions
- Number of degree programs
- Degree types: associate, baccalaureate and graduate
- Delivery method: in-person, on-line, and blended

**Early Childhood Leadership Academies:**

Extensive, focused professional development on pedagogical and/or administrative leadership of early childhood programs.

## How Can You Help Refine the Dataset?

A thorough process for examining the accuracy and validity of the information was followed to present the most accurate picture possible of the status of early childhood program leaders. Detailed references to the source of the data are embedded in its presentation. However, considering the segmented and disparate nature of information across states and sectors, it is inevitable that some gaps exist. Stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback that will make the dataset more complete, accurate, and valid. To provide feedback please visit [LEADClearinghouse.org](http://LEADClearinghouse.org).

## WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?

Multiple sources were accessed to contribute data to the Clearinghouse. The McCormick Center conducted a thorough national scan to identify potential sources of information. For some elements, reliable data were available in compendia or directories. However, for many of the elements, data were not available or were found in disparate reports or studies in siloed sectors or geographically-segmented portions of the early childhood leadership workforce.

The McCormick Center reached out to key organizations and established partnerships for collecting and sharing data. The Center also conducted a brief national survey of state regulatory agencies of child care programs to gather specific information about administrator evaluation and professional development. Data were accessed between August 2016 and April 2017. However, the time periods for when the data were collected varied by the source.

Throughout this report, the sources of specific statistics are cited. State reports (e.g., states' workforce studies and Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge performance reports) frequently referenced early childhood administrators, but the data were reported in inconsistent ways. Data from the state reports were reviewed to confirm findings from more comprehensive sources. The following key partnerships or resources provided major portions of data for the Clearinghouse:

**New America** partnered with the McCormick Center to collect and share data, avoiding duplicated efforts and supporting each organization's independent projects for mutual benefit. New America conducted a national survey of state departments of education to collect data on the elementary school principal workforce, qualifications, preparation, and professional development.

**National Workforce Registry Alliance** shared information from its workforce data set of state registries that meet Partnership Eligibility Review (PER) guidelines for data submission. Statistics on the characteristics of individual child care center

administrators and family child care providers were derived from a 2012 dataset of 58,398 professionals working in 12,050 programs/facilities. The Clearinghouse exclusively reports the data from nine registries that meet the PER guidelines.

**L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Collaborative** contributed a 50-state scan of requirements for early childhood director credentials.

**The Goffin Strategy Group** served as a key source for identifying leadership academies for early childhood program administrators.

**NAEYC** provided information on degree programs for preparing early childhood administrators through the Early Childhood Education Higher Education Degree Directory and a list with links to Administrator Credentials Recognized by NAEYC for program accreditation.

**National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System** yielded information on degree programs for preparing elementary school principals.

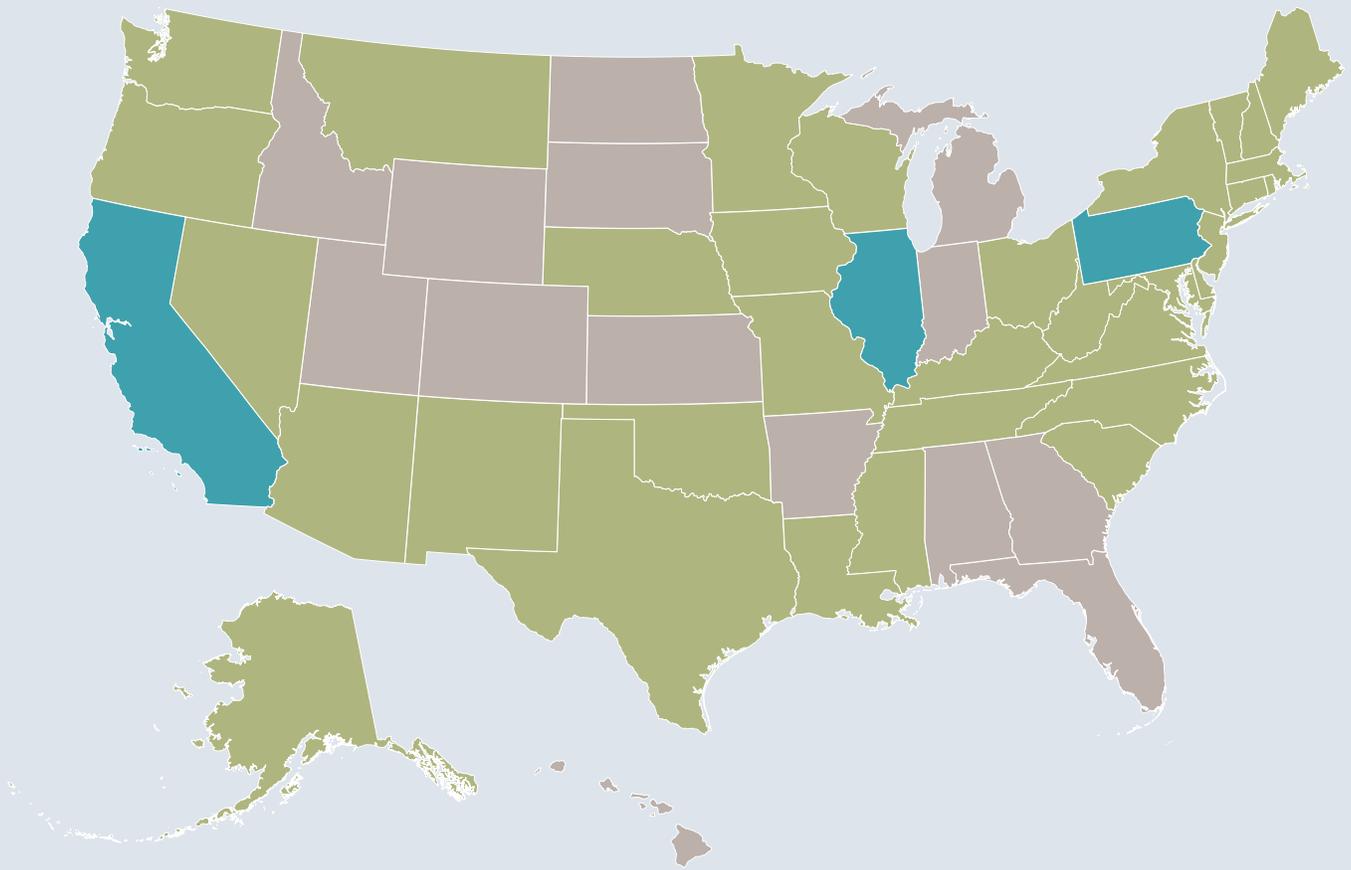
**U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics** provided reports on the numbers of early childhood program administrators and average salaries.

**QRIS Online Compendium** provided comprehensive information regarding state quality rating and improvement systems.

**National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance** hosted the National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations, which contributed to the verification of licensing regulations regarding administrators.

**Child Care Aware of America** served as a resource for the number of family child care providers.

# National Profile



## OVERALL AVERAGE LEVERS SCORE



Policy lever scores were determined by examining statewide policies against a multiple indicator rubric. An average score for each lever was computed and averaged to yield the Overall Policy Levers Score.

## POLICY LEVERS

- Administrator Qualifications in Child Care Licensing
- Administrator Credential
- Principal Licensure
- Administrator Qualifications in QRIS
- Administrator Qualifications in State Pre-K Programs

## INTERESTING NATIONAL FACTS

There are 27 times more degree programs to prepare principals than those to prepare center- or home-based administrators.

Only 9 out of 40 administrator credentials require a minimum of an associate degree.

There are 86 early childhood degree programs with a focus on management, administration, leadership, or advocacy.

California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania achieved the highest overall scores on the Policy Levers Rubric.

Only Delaware, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC require an associate degree of administrators in child care licensing.

## NATIONAL PROFILE

The early childhood education field has not defined national standards for the various roles practitioners play in the workforce. While the field is moving towards an acceptance of the BA in early childhood education as the standard for lead teachers, there is less agreement about the requisite competencies and education of program leaders. Instead, federal and state regulatory systems have created a wide array of standards for individuals leading programs for children, birth through age eight. Professional preparation standards for elementary school principals are consistently more robust than those for early childhood program directors or family child care providers. While the vast majority of states require elementary school principals to have a graduate degree in education, only one state, New Jersey, requires licensed center directors to have a bachelor's degree and this is only if the program serves 30 or more children. Advancements in standards for administrators of child care programs, primarily seen in voluntary state QRIS and state-funded pre-K, have not led to substantial improvements in the basic qualifications of most early childhood program administrators. It is notable that no state scored higher than a 6 on the overall policy levers rubric. However, the growing number of higher education degree programs in early childhood administration and specialized ECE leadership academies is an encouraging development.

## POLICY LEVERS

The five policy levers are derived from the recommendations of the recent National Academy of Medicine report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8*.<sup>2</sup> This report calls for a unifying foundation for all lead educators—inclusive of center directors, administrators, and family child care providers—having a minimum of a bachelor's degree with content knowledge and competency in child development/early childhood education. Additional competencies, depending on role, are also required. The five policy levers and the scoring rubric address the need for early childhood program leaders across sectors to have a BA degree, and competencies in both child development/early childhood education and program administration. The goal of reporting the state's overall policy levers score is to encourage thought leaders, policymakers, and advocates to tear down the silos and take a cross-sector, systems approach to improving the qualifications, competencies, and on-going professional development of early childhood program leaders.

## ADMINISTRATORS

There are over 250,000 early childhood administrators in the United States distributed as follows:

**Early Childhood Program Directors – 64,000<sup>3</sup>**

**Elementary School Principals – 75,760<sup>4</sup>**

**Family Child Care Providers – 142,816<sup>5</sup>**

Scanning for national-level data on early childhood administrators highlighted the differences in data collection and reporting systems between pre-K to 12 schools and those of early childhood programs serving children birth to age five. The National Center for Education Statistics report on more than 115,000 school principals by sector and school level.<sup>3</sup> However, the development of a centralized system for collecting data on center-based program directors and family child care providers is in an early stage with inconsistent progress across states. The dataset from the National Workforce Registry Alliance is only able to report data from nine states that meet PER standards. Therefore, demographic information found in the Clearinghouse is available on a sample of 9,226 early childhood administrators from the child care sector.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS

The national scan showed the following characteristics of center directors, principals, and family child care providers.

	Early Childhood Center Directors (n = 4,503) <sup>6</sup>	Elementary School Principals (n = 75,760) <sup>4</sup>	Family Child Care Providers (n = 4,723) <sup>6</sup>
<b>Average Age</b>	44 years	49 years	42 years
<b>Gender</b>	95% female 5% male	61% female 39% male	96% female 4% male
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	79% white 16% black 3% Hispanic	81% white 10% black 3% Hispanic	66% white 25% black 6% Hispanic
<b>Median Years in the Field</b>	12	20	8

Note: Sample of early childhood center directors and family child care providers is from nine state registries.

## HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Information is also available regarding the educational background of early childhood administrators. The table below shows the highest level of education attained by center directors, principals, and family child care providers.

	Early Childhood Center Directors (n = 3,811) <sup>6</sup>	Elementary School Principals (n = 75,760) <sup>4</sup>	Family Child Care Providers (n = 2,855) <sup>6</sup>
<b>Less than AA Degree</b>	33%	n/a	69%
<b>Associate Degree</b>	14%	n/a	15%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	38%	8%*	14%
<b>Master's Degree</b>	14%	60%	3%
<b>Higher than a Master's Degree</b>	1%	32%	0%

\*Bachelor's degree or less

## ADMINISTRATOR CREDENTIALS

A total of 40 credential programs for early childhood program administrators, in 31 states and the District of Columbia, were identified from the national scan.<sup>7</sup> Nineteen states did not offer a credential. Also, there are three national director credentials available. One half of the early childhood administrator credential programs are tiered, based on criteria such as general education; specialized college credit or professional development training in early childhood education; specialized college credit or professional development training in administration, management, or leadership; and varied lengths of experience. Nine programs (23%) require a minimum of an associate degree to be eligible for a credential. Twenty-five programs (63%) require college credit hours in early childhood education in at least one level of the credential. Twenty-three programs (58%) require college credit hours in administration, management, or leadership in at least one level of the credential.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

Of the 2,923 early childhood degree programs in the United States, 86 programs (2.9%) in 35 states, have a focus on early childhood management, administration, leadership, or advocacy. A majority of them (71%) are offered at public institutions, with 49% at 2-year colleges and 51% at 4-year institutions.<sup>8</sup> Most programs (79%) are delivered in-person, however 6% are offered exclusively on-line and 15% are hybrid programs.

Elementary principal preparation is offered in all 50 states and the District of Columbia through 2,376 programs by 797 institutions.<sup>9</sup> Of these, 246 programs (10%) are for Bachelor's degrees; 1,400 programs (59%) are for Master's degrees; and 730 programs (31%) lead to a doctoral degree. The capacity of higher education to prepare principals for the workforce is exponentially greater than that of preparing early childhood program administrators.

## LEADERSHIP ACADEMIES

In addition to formal education for early childhood administrators, there are 30 leadership development programs, in 15 states, with a specific focus on early childhood program leadership.<sup>10</sup> These leadership academies address various needs of program site directors including one or more of the domains of whole leadership<sup>11</sup>—pedagogical leadership, administrative leadership, and leadership essentials. The delivery approaches differ and may include coaching and mentoring, train-the-trainer options, online or hybrid learning, or face-to-face workshops.

## HOW CAN YOU USE THE CLEARINGHOUSE?

The L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse advances the understanding of competency standards for early childhood leaders across settings, sectors, and states. Here are a few ways that the Clearinghouse may be useful for decision makers, policymakers, advocates, scholars, leaders, teachers, and students:

- Policy levers can be used to promote the alignment of standards and the adoption of systems that support consistent and effective program leadership.
- Statistics on the early childhood leadership workforce are readily accessible for reports, proposals, papers, and research studies.
- Characteristics about early childhood administrators can be compared among states.
- Multiple resources can be readily accessed through interactive web links.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

A deep examination of the early childhood program leadership workforce and related state policies confirmed our expectations that broad differences exist across states and sectors. With increasing evidence of the importance of early brain development and the call for better educated and highly skilled early childhood teachers, there has been an astonishing lack of comparable call for well-qualified and highly skilled site-based leaders of early childhood programs.

There are two policy recommendations emerging from the Clearinghouse data. First, across sectors, there is a pressing need for a unifying foundation of administrative qualifications and competencies reflecting a whole leadership approach. A competent early childhood program leader needs knowledge and skills in child development, early childhood pedagogy, leadership essentials, and program administration. Second, the silos of program standards by sector for early childhood

administrators can best be eliminated by considering the five policy levers together.

State-funded pre-K and QRIS can impact administrator qualifications, including raising the educational level of program administrators to a minimum of a BA, by providing financial incentives to participate in these voluntary initiatives. Recognizing and rewarding principal licensure standards that include pre-K (birth to five) content areas and field experiences will lead to a more unified foundation for program leaders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The process of creating the L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse has emphasized the challenges related to accessing consistent and comparable data on early childhood administration. It is evident that segmentation in the field leads to gaps in our knowledge about the leadership workforce. For example, sufficient data was not available to develop a policy lever related to family child care, yet the number of family child care providers exceeds the combined number of early childhood program directors and elementary school principals. While the prevalence and sophistication of state registries is improving, only nine states have developed systems that are rigorous enough to meet the PER guidelines for data submission. The disparity of available data among elementary school principals, early childhood center directors, and family child care providers is striking. A greater commitment of states to develop workforce registries that adhere to rigorous standards in data collection is needed to advance initiatives designed to support the early childhood workforce.

## FOOTNOTES

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# State Profiles

## HOW DOES YOUR STATE COMPARE?

The L.E.A.D. Early Childhood Clearinghouse website presents profiles for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Each profile includes state-specific scores on the policy levers and statistics about administrators and leadership development in the state. Of the states with registries that meet PER guidelines, additional information about the characteristics of administrators and density maps of the concentration of early childhood administrators is available. Links to specific information about early childhood leadership in each state are accessible through the site's interactive features.



Visit [LEADClearinghouse.org](http://LEADClearinghouse.org) to learn more about the multiple indicator rubric for each policy lever.

POLICY LEVERS	RATING
1 Administrator Qualifications in Child Care Licensing	1
2 Administrator Credential	4
3 Principal Licensure	6
4 Administrator Qualifications in Q.R.I.S.	6
5 Administrator Qualifications in State PreK Programs	7

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## MCCORMICK CENTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP AT NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

6200 Capitol Drive  
Wheeling, Illinois 60090  
847.947.5063  
McCormickCenter@nl.edu

