EXAMINING HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM DIRECTORS SUPPORT TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A graduate thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Education,

Educational Psychology

By

Darlene Dawn Marie Ocasek

December 2013
The graduate thesis of Darlene Dawn Marie Ocasek is approved:

____________________________  _______________________
Sloane Lefkowitz Burt, M.A.    Date

____________________________  _______________________
Joannie Busillo-Aguayo, Ed.D    Date

____________________________  _______________________
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D., Chair    Date

California State University, Northridge
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Sloane Lefkowitz Burt, for the incredible amount of patience and energy you gave to help me process my thoughts. Your ability to ask questions to get right to the point of things has helped me in my career. Thank you for your kind words and helping me through the tailspin of doubt I had entering the last semester of graduate school! To Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, thank you for allowing me back in the program and taking me under your wing! Each day at work, I think of what you would do in a situation and amazingly, I am able to persevere and push through anything that comes my way. To Dr. Joannie-Busillo-Aguayo and Dr. Joan Maltese without your tremendous amount of knowledge regarding universal screening and the risk factors every person has, I would not be where I am today, pushing for my center to understand the Strengthening Families Approach. And finally, Dr. Jan Fish, I am fortunate to have had you as a professor and listen to your words of wisdom when speaking about the power of relationships. This basic concept is something I struggle to have others understand. I will not give up and will continue to help others understand the value a relationship brings to someone! With all the support each professor has shared with me, I see a glimpse into what my future holds.

To the friends that supported me through my own personal tragedies, thank you! Moreover, to the Smart People in my life you are not only friends but also members of my inner circle I call family!
DEDICATION

This thesis is a personal triumph that has been an ongoing battle to overcome. When I first learned I was accepted into the graduate program I was overjoyed and unprepared. Life took over and the culminating experience took a back seat. When I returned to the graduate program, I was a different individual ready to make a change within myself and to help others understand how to put into practice the knowledge that is locked in one’s mind. I dedicate this thesis to the people who have supported me through the challenge of finding myself and completing this work.

My most important dedication goes to my boyfriend Bill - you have supported me by listening to my rambling. You kept me on track when I planned my days for isolation and you helped me take breaks when I was frustrated and on the verge of giving up, again! Thank you for being the support I needed through this process.

Second, I would like to thank my incredible group of friends and neighbors! The amazing words of encouragement each of you gave me was the perfect amount of support needed to realize I am capable of completing this research. The barbeques, the weekly gatherings and the conversations that allowed me to vocalize what was in my head helped me through the realization that I was going to finish!

Third, I dedicate this thesis to the early childhood educators in the trenches of defining, modeling and encouraging others to understand the ongoing process of becoming a professional and the hope that the Early Childhood Education field one day is viewed as an important commodity. Please do not view the problems that occur each day as negatives, rather view them as lessons to help develop into a better educator. To the various early childhood directors, teachers and professors I have worked with, learned
from and in turn grown from, without living through the emotional roller coaster of experiences, from joyous to gloomy, and vice versa, I would not be the director I am today.

Finally, to Sloane Lefkowitz Burt I hope one day I can support the ECE program by having my center be a participating field study school. The combination of your professionalism and knowledge is a huge factor in my growth as an educator and director, but most importantly, your patience is remarkable! You are a true mentor with adult learners in the ECE program.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE........................................................................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................. iii
DEDICATION..................................................................................................................... iv
LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................. viii
ABSTRACT....................................................................................................................... ix

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- Role of Professional Development........................................................................... 1
- Statement of Need...................................................................................................... 3
- Purpose of Study .................................................................................................... 4
- Significance of Study ............................................................................................. 4
- Terminology............................................................................................................. 5
- A Preview to the Thesis .......................................................................................... 7

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

- Introduction .............................................................................................................. 8
- Definitions, Issues and Factors Related To Initial Training .................................... 8
  - The Factors and Timing of Obtaining an Associates Degree ................................. 10
- Professional Development: Methods and Effectiveness ........................................ 15
  - Multi-State Professional Development Study ....................................................... 15
  - Sense of Community When Participating in Professional Development .......... 18
- Challenges in Planning Professional Development Opportunities ......................... 21
  - Participants Educational Attainment and Years of Experience ......................... 22
  - Challenges Teachers and Directors Experience ............................................... 22
  - Location, Ideal Timing and Topics for Professional Development ..................... 22
  - Preferred Topics for Future Professional Development ...................................... 23
- Factors of Teacher Learning ...................................................................................... 25
- Review of Teaching Learning Literature ................................................................ 26
  - Individual Teachers ............................................................................................. 26
  - Influence of the Center ....................................................................................... 27
  - The Learning Activities ...................................................................................... 28
- Individual Professional Development Plans .......................................................... 30
  - The Four Components of IPDPs ......................................................................... 30
  - Developing IPDPs ............................................................................................... 32
- Bridge to the Next Chapter ....................................................................................... 32

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

- Introduction .............................................................................................................. 34
- Sample: Description of Program Directors and their Center ................................. 34
  - Bonnie .................................................................................................................. 37
  - Krystal .................................................................................................................. 39
  - Patricia ................................................................................................................ 40
  - Natalie .................................................................................................................. 42
  - Maggie .................................................................................................................. 44
- Recruitment .............................................................................................................. 45
- Instruments .............................................................................................................. 46
- Demographic Survey .............................................................................................. 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Subjects</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Logistics</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Professional Development</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges Related to Professional Development</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Motivation</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Topics and Successes</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development as a Complex System</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelations of the Directors</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Early Childhood Competencies and NAEYC Standards</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Growth Opportunity</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using State and National Resources</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Starting Out</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors’ Widening Scope of Professional Development</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Large Picture of Professional Development</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the Center Level</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Organization Membership</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Collaboration</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD for ECE Directors</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX: AFTERWORD</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Program Directors</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Director’s Definitions of Professional Development</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Directors’ Challenges and Overcoming Challenges</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Support For Professional Development from Each Director</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Directors’ Topics of Importance and Successes</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMINING HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM DIRECTORS SUPPORT TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

Darlene Dawn Marie Ocasek

Master of Arts in Education

Educational Psychology

The purpose of this study is to understand the role early childhood education (ECE) directors play in encouraging the ongoing professional development of their teaching staff including the factors that influence what or how they may provide such opportunities. Through interviews with ECE program directors (N=5), information was gathered on how each perceives professional development and its importance, as well as how they have supported their teaching staff’s continuing development. Interview questions were focused on four areas of inquiry including director’s: definition of professional development, challenges and successes, support given to their staff, and identification of the professional development topics they believe are targeted goals for their staff. One overarching theme was consistent throughout the results: the discovery of how important relationships are in an ECE center.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“Casting teacher learning as a complex system recognizes that this involves many processes, mechanisms, actions, and elements and that it is difficult to specify exact outcomes for every instance” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 379)

In 2012, the Department of Labor reported that there were 47,630 preschool teachers, apart from special education, working with children 3-6 years of age were employed in California (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012-2013). Given the vast amount of young children and their optimal development (California Department of Education, 2011), how are teachers prepared to care for society’s most valuable assets: young children? Early childhood education teachers’ skills are dependent upon multiple factors including their level of education, ability to comprehend and apply the knowledge in the early childhood classroom, motivation to further their professional development and the support provided to teachers in the work environment (Wagner & French, 2010).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) in California, 2% of preschool teachers had less than a high school diploma, 16% had a high school diploma or equivalent, 24% had no degree but some college experience. Additionally 14% of the teachers working with young children have an A.A. degree, 33% have a B.A. degree, 12% have a Master’s degree and 1% have a Doctoral or professional degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005-2009) and each State maintains specific licensing requirements that regulate the training and qualification standards for early childhood teachers.
The Role of Professional Development

In considering professional development, it is important to remember that in California, an ECE center can be licensed from the Department of Social Services Title 22 or California State Department of Education Title 5 regulating the minimum training and qualification standards for employment. As a result ECE professionals do not always complete their pre-service education (AA or BA degree) before working with young children. This is the case because ECE teachers can begin working with as little as 12 units (4 classes that can be taken at a community college), as is the situation with California’s Title 22 education requirements for early childhood teachers (The Department of Social Services, Title 22, 2005). In contrast, Title 5’s minimum required level of education for preschool teachers is a comprehensive permit issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (California Department of Education, 2012). Given the difference, there is widespread debate in the field of early childhood education pertaining to the need for teachers to obtain a bachelor’s degree as the recommended starting point for ECE employment (Bogard, Traylor, & Takanishi, 2008).

For teachers obtaining an early childhood education (ECE) degree, whether for the required 12 units in ECE (The Department of Social Services, Title 22, 2005), a B.A. or M.A., the responsibility for continuing professional development is often lost, because “many ECE settings do not have a continuing education requirement for teachers” (Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai & Kipnis, 2009, p. 3). However, when it does occur, professional development can include trainings, workshops, continuing education or on-site training (Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai & Kipnis, 2009). For the purpose of this thesis, the term professional development will be used to refer to the ongoing learning
and technical assistance that an early childhood education center provides to educators during employment. Opfer and Pedder (2011) relate professional development to the features of teacher learning that create changes in teacher practice and increase student learning. An important and many times overlooked level of this process includes the amount of support a teacher receives from his or her work place, such as reimbursement for attending workshops or college courses or planning time to research information (Austin, Whitebook, Connors, & Darrah, 2011). The adult learning environment can include opportunities to collaborate with other teachers for planning, and to make informed decisions about classroom goals and management which is beneficial in teacher preparation and is an integral component to professional development (Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai & Kipnis, 2009).

**Statement of Need**

While there is some discussion regarding the overt findings regarding teachers’ levels of formal education and child outcomes (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford & Howes, 2002) few would argue that ongoing professional development can only help improve children’s outcomes. However, the purpose of professional development is not solely to improve the learning outcomes of children; but more importantly to continuing learning, development and implementation of knowledge by the adults caring for children (NAEYC & NAECTE, 2011). According to one study, the preferred method of professional development opportunities is on-site during regularly scheduled days as opposed to before or after work or weekends (Vesay, 2008). In addition, those ECE professionals who participate in self-reflection, collaboration with peers and are supported by a director or mentor are more apt to participate in professional development outside of
the work environment for continuous learning and development (Landry, Anthony, Swank & Monseque-Bailey, 2009; Sugarman, 2011; NAEYC & NACCRAEA, 2011).

But who is responsible for the professional development? The program director of a center is a key player in encouraging and supporting continuing learning for staff. The steps that ECE program directors take to ensure that staff are furthering and applying their knowledge of children and families while supporting program implementation is likely to vary among directors. What are the goals and methods of directors who do want to provide support and encouraging development of their teaching staff?

**Purpose of Study**

Given the importance of ongoing professional development, the purpose of this study is to understand the role ECE directors play in encouraging the ongoing professional development of their teaching staff and the factors that influence what or how they may provide such opportunities. Through interviews with current program directors, the following aspects will be examined:

- How do ECE directors support their staff in their continuing development and the ability to apply knowledge into day-to-day experiences?
- What are the types of professional development opportunities that directors find to be successful for their teaching staff?
- How do directors overcome the challenges of motivating staff in professional development?

**Significance of Study**

The current study on the professional development practices of ECE program directors is significant for several reasons. First, the challenges and opportunities of
professional development from the role of the center director will be identified. Likewise, their goals will be revealed and will be interesting to reflect on the priorities they set for their staff. In addition, their experiences will highlight what works, what doesn’t and why. Others (beyond directors) such as college professors, trainers or organizations may find the data pertinent in terms of what content should be emphasized in what area identified by the directors. For example, what is missing in the pre-service learning of ECE teachers and what should professional organizations (such as local chapters of the National Association for the Education of Young Children) focus learning on?

**Terminology**

For the purpose of this study, the following are a list of terms and their definitions. The traditional terminology is early childhood education or ECE and those who work in this field are known as early childhood educators or professionals (ECE professionals/educators/teachers), the field is also known for using the term early care and education (California Department of Education, 2011; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011; Huss-Keeler, Peters, and Moss, 2013), however for this study the traditional terms will be used. The list is organized in alphabetical order:

*Continuing Education, In-service, or Training:* is a part of professional development that early childhood professionals engage in to enhance their existing skills, keep up to date on current knowledge and practice; this can take place on-site at a center or off-site, in a college setting or on-line (NAEYC, NAECTE, & ACCESECE, 2011).

*Early Childhood Education Program Director:* also known as Child Care Center Director (Department of Social Services, 2005) in addition, the individual typically
responsible for developing, encouraging and providing ongoing professional
development at an early childhood education center (California Department of Education,
Child Development Division & First 5, 2011; California Commission on Teacher
Credentialing, 2013. For the purpose of this study, ECE program director, center director
or director will be used hereafter.

*Early Childhood Educator* – also known as an ECE professional, ECE educator or
simply ECE teacher, are the adults responsible for the care and education of young
children from birth to age five (California Department of Education and First 5
California, 2011), including but not limited to center-based teachers, assistant teachers,
program directors, administrators, curriculum specialists, infant and toddler specialists,
early intervention specialists and early childhood special educators (California
Department of Education 2011; NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011).

*Early Childhood Professional Development (PD):* Consists of three areas,
Education, Training and Technical Assistance. PD is ongoing learning that is intended to
support activities designed to help ECE professionals work closely with children and
families (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011).

*Early Childhood Education Program:* any State-licensed or State-regulated
program or provider, regardless of setting or funding source, that provides early care and
education for children from birth to kindergarten entry, including, but not limited to,
programs operated by child care centers (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) in this
study the term program or center will be used.

*Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs):* Individual plans designed, in
conjunction with an individual and a member of the administrative leadership (ECE
director) of the individual’s workplace, to build an early childhood professional’s capacities and to ensure that individuals stay current regarding knowledge and best practice in the field (NAEYC & NACCRRRA, 2011).

*Pre-service or Education Program:* Learning experiences in an accredited school, college or university, specific to ECE, with planned courses including admission and graduation requirements (NAEYC, NAECTE, &ACCESSECE, 2011).

*Technical Assistance (TA) including mentoring, coaching, consultation and professional advising:* The delivery of a supportive relationship between aimed and tailored assistance by a professional to develop and strengthen processes, application of knowledge, or implementation by ECE professionals (NAEYC & NACCRRRA, 2011).

**A Preview to the Thesis**

With the aim of understanding how current early childhood directors develop, carry out, and encourage professional development in their schools, a review of research studies and research on the role of professional development will be presented in the Literature Review in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, Methodology, the manner in which the early childhood education program directors were recruited, the procedures, instruments, research design, and management of data will be presented. Chapter Four, Results, will examine the information gathered from the directors’ interviews and will present the data based on themes or patterns discovered. Discussions of the results, conclusions, including implications for the practice and policy for future research are presented in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the thesis is to better understand the role ECE directors play in encouraging the ongoing professional development of their teaching staff and the factors that influence what or how they may provide such opportunities. This chapter, the literature review, illustrates research and information related to this topic and will be organized in four sections. The first section presents definitions, issues and factors related to professional development in early childhood education. The second section will discuss and review research on the effectiveness of various methods of professional development. The challenges that arise for ECE directors when planning professional development opportunities are reviewed in the third section and in the final section the concept of Individual Professional Development Plans is described.

Definitions, Issues and Factors Related to Initial Training

Early Childhood Professional Development (PD) consists of three areas, *Education, Training* and *Technical Assistance*. PD is ongoing learning that is intended to support activities designed to help ECE professionals work closely with children and families (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resources &Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) collaborated and jointly developed a glossary of professional development, training and technical assistance terms to assist in maintaining consistent terminology and definitions regarding professional development in the field of early childhood education. As such, NAEYC and NACCRRA (2011) define professional
development as *education* (initial training in degree programs), *training* (in-service trainings or on-going education to enhance existing skills), and *technical assistance* including *mentoring, coaching, consultation, and professional development advising* (aimed and tailored assistance to develop and strengthen implementation of knowledge) that can overlap one another (pp. 7-9). Furthermore, NAEYC (2009) states that professional development (PD) is established

To improve the knowledge, skills/behaviors, and attitudes/values of the early childhood workforce. To meet NAEYC’s mission of ‘assuring the provision of high-quality early childhood programs for young children,’ it is necessary to have a highly competent workforce for the early childhood field. Professional development provides the path to achieving this goal.

(Para.1)

Conversely, NAEYC and NACCRRA (2011) recognize with the ECE field’s varying educational requirements, the reality is not all ECE professionals begin their educational pathway by obtaining a degree, and entering the workforce as a teacher at an ECE center, others enter college to complete the basic classes and may not have any intention of completing an AA or higher or factors in life take place stopping the pursuit of a degree (Huss-Keeler, Peters, & Moss 2013). ECE professionals may work at a center with some basic education, for example, in California, 42% of the ECE professionals only have some college courses but no degree such as, an A.A., B.A., or M.A. in early childhood education (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Given this statistic, there is significant opportunity for in-service or technical assistance that is center-based and/or supported or encouraged by an ECE director. Furthermore,
considering the varying ways one may come into a career as an ECE teacher and the differences in education and training it is also important to recognize factors that might motivate a teacher to further their education and how directors may support this endeavor.

The Factors and Timing of Obtaining an Associates Degree

Huss-Keeler, Peters, and Moss (2013) were interested in understanding the factors that motivate early care and education professionals (ECE teacher), to enroll in courses and identify the perceived benefits of pursuing a college degree (associate degree). Therefore, college students enrolled in child development courses at community colleges in a large metropolitan area were emailed a survey link requesting their participation in the study. Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) asked the questions pertaining to the factors motivating the participants to enroll in coursework or pursue a college degree and the perceived benefits of doing so were evaluated in this study. The online survey consisted of 44 questions divided into three subscales to gather information on participant’s educational (19 items), professional (18 items) and demographics (7 items); Participants responded by selecting the most appropriate response, filling in the blanks or providing a short answer to the open-ended question (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013).

Analysis of the data consisted of determining the motivating factors between teachers and directors to enroll in coursework or to pursue a degree differed based on the years of experience, the type of child care center employed, and any extrinsic motivators (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). The qualitative data obtained from open ended questions were analyzed to better understand what the perceived benefits the participants had for completing early childhood coursework and the impact it had on participants classroom
practices (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). Data were organized in Excel, allowing for emergent coding process; data were read and in vivo codes were assigned (to stay as close to the data as possible and using the words of the participants as code words). As for validity, Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) used peer-review coding individually and reviewed and discussed each team members coding in order to come to a group understanding; themes were generated, quantified and reported as percentages.

**Demographics of ECE college students.** One hundred and twenty early childhood education students responded, however 30 participants were disqualified (e.g. pursuing a bachelor’s degree, not currently working in child care or did not respond completely to survey items). Ninety qualified participants ($n=23$ directors, $n=67$ teachers) were involved in the study. Ninety-eight percent were female with the mean age of directors being 42.9 years ($\text{median}=44.5, \text{SD} = 9.61$), the ages ranged from 25-59 years, while the teachers’ ages ranged from 18 to 59 years old with the mean age of 36% ($\text{median}=36.5, \text{SD} = 10.28$). Overall, for teacher participant’s ethnicity for teachers, 39% were Hispanic/Latino and 32% were African American, 24% of teachers were White and 3.0% were Asian. In terms of the directors who participated, there was an equal representation of African American and Hispanic/Latino with 32% in each category, 23% were White, and equal representation of American Indian, Asian and Other with 5% in each category.

**Factors motivating ECE professionals to obtain an associates degree.** Interestingly, Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) found four factors associated with motivating early childhood education professionals, including directors to obtain an associates degree in early childhood: (a) personal goal, (b) professional development, (c) available
funding and (d) required by employer. The motivation for the directors (n=23) to obtain a college degree varied depending upon how many years of experience a director had (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). Directors with less than 5 years of experience were 100% motivated to obtain a college degree for a personal goal as opposed to those directors with 5-10 years experience were motivated by personal goals (50%), professional development (30%) and the available funding (20%). However, teachers with less than five years of experience stated that obtaining a college degree was 48% categorized as professional development, 33% categorized as a personal goal, 14% needed available funding and 5% stated having an associated degree was required by the employer. What’s more, directors with 10 to 20 years of experience considered completing a college degree to be a personal goal (80%) or part of professional development (20%), while those directors with the most experience (20 years or more) identified factors of professional development (33%), available Funding (33%), personal goals (17%) and required by employer (17%) as the motivating factor (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013).

ECE professionals educational attainment. When Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) looked at the highest degree earned they discovered teachers had more education, such as the Child Development Associates Credential, than directors. Approximately 20% of teachers had already obtained their Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) and 13% an associate-level degree, while only 9% of the directors had a CDA and 13% an associate degree. In contrast, a larger percentage of directors claimed to be enrolled in a program pursuing a CDA (35%) or an associate degree (39%). Fascinatingly, the majority of teachers (67%) and directors (78%) were not attending college for the first time, of those participants 49% of teachers and 48% of directors had previously
attempted to return to school to complete a certificate or associate (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). In other words, the directors had similar formal education to the teachers and likewise most had been in college before (indicating some sporadic attendance in formal education).

**Motivational factors and the type of childcare center.** Remarkably, the motivational factors aligned differently when the type of childcare center was examined in the analysis (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). Sixty-seven percent of for profit centers stated that returning to school as a personal goal while 33% considered available funding as a deciding factor. With equal justification, the top reasons for non-profit childcare center directors to finish their college degree was to complete a personal goal (42%) and for professional development (42%) and while 8% of directors looked for available funding as a factor. Those teachers and directors working in Head Start/Early Head Start were externally motivated by the requirement of the employer to obtain a college degree (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). In contrast, licensed family home teachers were motivated by professional development, (such as staying current on ECE research and practice) as the reason for obtaining a college degree, whereas directors were motivated by personal goals, for example becoming a better director or returning to school (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). Typically, directors must fulfill more qualifications to be a director, directors and ECE centers may develop a contract between identifying a timeline for a director to complete the degree.

**External motivation and perceived benefits.** The external motivating factors for teachers to return to school included the encouragement from directors (40%), family (25%) and self-motivation (25%). Directors, however, were encouraged through self-
motivation (39%) and family (33%) and overwhelmingly, directors, co-workers and family were supportive of their commitment of being in school, which added an additional element to the external motivation to finish school (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013). The idea of having a professional mentor and a supportive director was especially important for teachers when going back to school is required.

Teachers and directors have preconceived notions of what benefits will come after obtaining a college degree. Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) discovered four themes that include, 67% of teachers and 33% directors believe a better future will come from a degree including the potential of higher salaries, possible career advancement or moving into another related field such as elementary education. Forty-seven percent of teachers and 71% of directors believed a degree will provide more knowledge in their work environment including learning more about early childhood education and incorporating this information when working with children and families. Ironically, 25% of teachers and 26% of directors credited pursuing a degree with accomplishing a personal goal and with the notion of gaining a higher self-esteem or self-confidence. Finally 13% of teachers and 17% of directors believed that a college degree would help influence and help others in terms of friends, families and coworkers (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013), to illustrate this, two directors from non-profit centers shared, “It will give me the tools needed to be a productive leader at the center I am currently involved with” and “To model to the community that educators believe in education” (p.133).

Similarly, the benefits of knowledge in early childhood education and the self-confidence in obtaining a degree can also be categorized as internal motivators. The
effectiveness of professional development opportunities available for ECE teachers employed at a center will be examined in the next section.

**Professional Development: Methods and Effectiveness**

**Multi-State Professional Development Study**

Landry, Anthony, Swank and Monseque-Bailey (2009) compared the techniques and approaches ECE teachers used to promote early literacy and emergent reading skills with the various methods of support teachers received while participating in a professional development opportunity. The study took place in four states (Florida \( n = 65 \), Ohio \( n = 65 \), Maryland \( n = 59 \) and Texas \( n = 73 \)) and included three types of childcare sites, subsidized childcare, Head Start and public school prekindergarten (Landry et al., 2009). Among the four states early childhood educators \( (N=262) \) participated within 158 schools primarily serving children and families from low SES backgrounds.

**The four professional development groups.** Teachers were randomly placed in one of five professional development groups, including a control group labeled “business-as-usual.” Each of the four groups were given different procedures to use in addition to identical conditions, for example, curricula and related material, used the same techniques such as, online small-group trainings, and administered the same children’s assessments of academic progress also known as curriculum based measures (CBMs) (Landry et al., 2009). The differences among the four professional development groups consisted of the types of mentoring and feedback provided (Landry et al., 2009). Landry et al. (2009) hypothesized that participation in the professional development program known as Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and
Education (CIRCLE) as well as receiving mentoring and feedback regarding children’s learning, would improve teachers’ abilities to teach pre-literacy skills and emergent reading to at-risk children.

**Support given to the professional development groups.** The schools and teachers were randomized into one of five conditions, (a) the control group known as “business as usual” (b) mentored group using a personal digital assistant (PDA)-based progress monitoring, (c) non-mentored group using a PDA-based progress monitoring (d) mentored group with paper and pen version of monitoring progress and (e) non-mentored group with paper and pen monitoring progress. Facilitators visited each classroom at the beginning of the study to assess teaching practices and evaluate the classroom environment. Teachers involved in the mentoring group were mentored individually twice a month for two hours per session. The mentoring consisted of helping with arranging the classroom or environment, instructional lessons and instructional planning (Landry et al., 2009). Throughout the year facilitators videotaped teachers during book readings, center time, and small-group instruction. To measure teacher outcomes, seventy-five of the participating teachers were randomly selected for observation in the beginning of the school year, before the professional development opportunity (120 minutes) and again at the end of the year after completing the professional development program, CIRCLE, for another 120 minutes (Landry et al. 2009).

**Results of “business as usual” and the four groups.** In comparing the control group and the four professional development groups, Landry et al. (2009) discovered that all four experimental groups showed more positive teaching behaviors across academic domains than the teachers in the control group, \( t(69) = 2.45, p < .05, ES = 0.86 \). In
addition, Landry et al. (2009) found that the two professional development groups that used the PDA-based progress-monitoring tool were observed teaching more than the two groups using the paper- and -pen based monitoring tool \( t(69) = 2.27, p < .05, ES = 0.64 \). Furthermore, Landry et al. (2009) determined the professional development groups that received both mentoring and PDA displayed more teaching than the professional development groups receiving mentoring with no PDA \( t(69) = 1.79, p < .05, ES = 0.79 \). Finally, Landry et al. (2009) answered their question regarding the professional development program (CIRCLE) and teachers who were provided both a mentor and detailed feedback on children’s progress would demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom (Landry et al., 2009). The teachers who were provided a mentor and received feedback on children’s progress were associated with highest quality teaching compared to the teachers not provided a mentor or detailed feedback resulting with the poorest quality teaching among the four intervention groups (Landry et al., 2009).

The results from this study demonstrate that varying methods of professional development and the multiple modalities and mentoring seem to be more effective. This should be taken into consideration when directors are planning opportunities for their teaching staff. The online professional development program, eCIRCLE, was made possible by a facilitator however it would be interesting with an additional year of study, if the same outcome would be achievable without a facilitator present or possibly with a recent participant as the facilitator? Moreover, what factors in the work environment increase teachers’ motivation to participate in professional development? To answer the question regarding teachers’ motivation in participating in a professional development program a study examining the self-determination of teachers will be analyzed.
Sense of Community When Participating in Professional Development

To determine how interactions between ECE teachers, the work environment and a specific professional development topic interact to reinforce or oppose change, Wagner and French (2010) implemented a two-and-a-half year research project to identify factors in childcare settings that affect teachers’ intrinsic motivation to participate in professional development and to determine the validity of self-determination theory. Self-determination theory is the way individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness to foster the amount of choice and control a teacher has in making decisions in the classroom and the connection established between others in a trusting respectful manner (Wagner & French, 2010).

ECE participants. The participants included teachers \( n = 37 \) and teaching assistants \( n = 40 \) working in early childhood classrooms in childcare, preschool and universal prekindergarten program sites; 99% of the participants were female. The teachers’ highest level of education varied tremendously with a Master’s degree \( n = 9 \), 4-year degree \( n = 12 \), a Child Development Associate credentials \( n = 9 \), attended college \( n = 4 \) and \( n = 3 \) held a high school diploma. The teachers and teaching assistants participated (for one or two academic years depending upon the treatment group assigned) in Science Start, an inquiry-based curriculum program emphasizing hands-on exploration of everyday science experiences to build language, early literacy, age-appropriate skills and support a rich knowledge base (Wagner & French, 2010). The curriculum was designed for teachers to implement the cycle of scientific reasoning (a) reflect and ask, (b) plan and predict, (c) act and observe and (d) report and reflect, when introducing science concepts or plans with children (Wagner & French, 2010).
Satisfaction with work and motivation. Wagner and French (2010) hypothesized that a positive correlation would be found between intrinsic motivation (using the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, IMI) and four facets of work satisfaction (supervisor support, coworker relations, the nature of work itself and working conditions) measured by the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey (ECJSS). Using qualitative analysis Wagner and French (2010) addressed the ways in which teachers’ motivation and their perceptions of the work environment interact to create a sense of community to support a change in the classroom.

The teachers participated in monthly workshops including lectures, discussions, hands-on activities and 3-hour, on-site support visits including observation of teachers, modeling of techniques, discussions of issues with teachers and suggestions from program facilitators for continued improvement (Wagner & French, 2010). The teachers were then asked for their feedback regarding the program at the end of each academic year. Quantitative data were gathered and paired t tests showed that teachers and teacher assistants did not differ on any of the variables except for education level and pay. Wagner and French (2010) found a significant regression equation $F (6, 41) = 15.511, p<0.001$, with an $R^2$ of 0.694. Two facets of work satisfaction were significant predictors of intrinsic interest: supervisor relations ($p<0.05$), and nature of work itself ($p<0.01$), confirming the hypothesis that supervisor relations and nature of the work influence teachers’ motivation for professional growth (Wagner & French, 2010). Co-worker relations came close to significance as a predictor of intrinsic interest ($p=0.063$). The fourth facet of work satisfaction (working conditions, pay and opportunities for promotion), did not predict intrinsic interest (Wagner & French, 2010).
Teachers’ perceived changes. After analysis of the qualitative data, Wagner and French (2010) determined four subcategories with respect to teachers’ perception of what had changed after participating in the professional development training including, (a) change in the view of the child as a learner, (b) use of inquiry approach, (c) understanding science, and (d) teacher attitudes. Additionally, one of two changes emerged in teachers’ views: (a) the idea of how children learn or (b) teachers’ views of children’s capabilities. After using Science Start, teachers observed children using new vocabulary, being more interested in reading and writing and taking initiative. In addition, teachers had more confidence in the ability of children to learn. For example, Wagner and French (2010) highlighted teacher Shelly’s reflection: “we would have never have used terms such as ‘opaque’ and ‘translucent’ and ‘transparent’ and the children really, really picked up on the vocabulary that…it seemed that I noticed more complex words they were using” (p. 166).

Interview results. As a result of interviews, teachers’ significant influences for participating in the professional development, were categorized in three motivational positions, (a) engaging in professional development to fulfill job requirements, (b) engaging in professional growth to benefit their students, and (c) engaging in professional development as a means for challenging or improving oneself. The views of the teachers to participate in professional development were directly related to their motivation for teaching; either active, such as “something I always wanted to do” (p.162) or passive, “I fell into it” (p.162) (Wagner & French, 2010). The changes in teachers thinking are a direct result of the participation in the professional development program and show the ability of teachers to process “new” or “repeated” information regarding young children.
which suggests that teachers are capable of revitalizing their thinking regarding teaching practices in order for professional development and growth to be effective (Wagner & French, 2010). The most crucial component for professional development to be effective is for teachers and childcare programs to work together: by asking for help, using self reflection and mutual cooperation as well as being willing to grow and learn throughout the teaching process. A more difficult component is encouraging teachers and administrators to become excited in the process.

**Challenges in Planning Professional Development Opportunities**

A significant part of professional development is the in-service learning (continuing education to enhance existing skills and keep updated on current knowledge and practice) experiences centers provide to ECE professionals (NAEYC, NAECTE & ACESSECE, 2011). To explore the current professional development opportunities available to early childhood educators in community-based early childhood programs, in the New Jersey towns of Lawrence, Hillsborough and Princeton, five childcare centers were chosen to participate in a survey including short-answer questions, multiple choice, checklists and self-assessment (Vesay, 2008). Two questions guided the study: “What challenges are presented with planning and implementing professional development within nonprofit, community-based child care centers?” and “What types of professional development are needed to address student needs and program objectives?” (p. 289).

Twenty-four White female participants, including administrators (n =5), lead teachers (n =12), and teaching staff (qualified as assistants, aides, or paraprofessionals, n=7) agreed to participate in the survey.
Participants’ Educational Attainment and Years of Experience

Vesay (2008) found that at least 75% of the participants (teachers and administrators) had earned a bachelor’s degree while, 50% of the teaching assistants had earned a bachelor’s degree furthermore 92% of lead teachers had a higher percentage of bachelor degrees than the 80% of directors. The teaching experience (children birth to 6 years of age) for the lead teachers ranged from 1.5 to 26 years, with an average of 10.25 years. Interestingly, two of the administrators did not have teaching experience, another two indicated 2-5 years of teaching experience, and one reported 28 years of teaching experience (Vesay, 2008). Teacher assistants/aides had teaching experience ranging between 1-10 years with an average of 4 years. When looking at administrative experience of the directors, the range was 6-29 years, with an average of 15.6 years.

Challenges Teachers and Directors Experience

When Vesay (2008), asked teachers and directors to describe their experiences regarding effective in-service professional development practices, survey data, indicated various challenges such as work release, expense, interest level in particular professional development opportunity, convenience of session location, and lack of support from administration. The biggest challenge administrators revealed was finding good professional development opportunities for their staff, followed second by providing work release to staff, limited budget, and scheduling sessions (Vesay, 2008).

Location, Ideal Timing, and Topics for Professional Development Opportunities

Teachers and administrators were asked to rank their ideal location of training sites (on-site, off-site, or college-based), 68% of lead and assistant teachers (n=13) and 40% of the directors (n=2) preferred the onsite location. Less than 5% of the teachers
and directors preferred an off-site location for professional development. Forty percent of directors and 16% of teachers reported preferences for both on-site and off-site locations. Forty percent of the teachers preferred college-based site.

Seventy-four percent of the lead and assistant teachers ($n=14$) and 80% of the directors ($n=4$) preferred professional development to occur on regularly scheduled development days instead of before/after work or on the weekends. Secondarily, having substitutes provided to cover the classroom during the day was desired. Fascinatingly, the data reflecting teachers’ ($n=14$) preference to participate in short 1-hour meetings and teachers ($n=8$) all-day mini-sessions may have been reported in error (there were a total of 19 lead and assistant teachers, not 22 as the data suggests) there seems to be missing information regarding the directors’ preferences. The rationale for the professional development activities teachers and administrators participated in revealed 76% of the participants attended because the training was scheduled by the center. Accordingly, Vesay (2008) discovered three prevalent categories from the responses regarding the types of professional development engagement; (a) early childhood pedagogy or understanding how children learn (e.g. cognitive development, children with special needs, behavior), (b) early childhood teaching strategies such as, *Handwriting Without Tears, Creative Curriculum, and Teaching to Write* etc., and (c) general childcare/medical issues (e.g. First Aid, Child and Adult CPR, Allergy information).

**Preferred Topics for Future Professional Development**

Vesay (2008) provided participants with 14 early childhood topics and 10 early childhood special education topics, and asked them to indicate their varying interests in participating in future professional development on those topics. Remarkably, 80% of
directors’ chose the area of children’s cognitive development and 60% indicated student-centered learning as the topics of interest in further professional development. In contrast, the teachers (i.e., 8 or more teachers indicating interest) most requested topics were Learning of Typical Preschoolers, Teaching Strategies, Classroom/Behavior Management, Early Childhood Assessment and Articulation/Speech Disorder, with 47% noting each category (Vesay, 2008). The topics with the least interest from teachers (i.e., 4 or fewer indicated interest) included early childhood special education such as autism, mental retardation, visual hearing impairments and inclusive classrooms; directors indicated no response in seven categories (motivation, planning instruction, articulation/speech disorders, mental retardation/learning disabilities, emotional/behavior disorders, attention/hyperactivity disorders and visual/hearing impairments) implying these topics as being the least interested topics for directors.

In this study, the overarching preference of teachers was to participate in an hour-long “brownbag” on–site professional development workshops during lunch (Vesay, 2008 p. 294). In addition, there was a vast difference between teachers’ and administrators’ interests in future professional development topics (Vesay, 2008). How can center directors help individually promote and track teachers’ professional development learning? How do directors and teachers develop professional maturity?

An important question for program directors to ask before setting forth in preparing any professional development training is whether the current teachers employed truly understand the basic information regarding children’s development (Chen & McNamee, 2006). After interviewing teachers, Wagner and French (2010) discovered that teacher ideas of how children learn and develop changed after participating in the
professional development training, portraying the importance of teachers (aside of educational level) to review current research on how young children develop and learn. A meta-analysis on the influential features that provide teachers’ the abilities to comprehend knowledge and make observable changes in teachers’ actions will be presented.

Factors Related to Teacher Learning

While it has been established that continuing professional development or technical assistance are important for teachers to fully understand and apply their educational knowledge in the classroom setting, the sometimes-overlooked question, regarding how an individual learns is many times not often addressed. Using the complex systems thinking or complexity theory (i.e. teacher learning happens as a complex system rather than as an event), Opfer and Pedder, (2011) conducted a meta-analysis to better understand, “why teacher learning may or may not occur as a result of professional development activity” (2011) instead of the cause-and-effect; they wanted to examine how and why teachers learn. Opfer and Pedder (2011) intentionally used the term teacher learning rather than professional development for the reason: “we believe the use of the term professional development has reinforced the focus on individual programs, activities, or individual teachers in the research literature at the expense of context and the situatedness of teacher learning” (p. 396-397), therefore, the meta-analysis deconstructed the relationships between teacher learning and professional development and sought to understand what this relationship means.
Review of Teacher Learning Literature

The goal of the meta-analysis was to identify research that ascertained the interconnected and overlapped processes and practices to make teacher learning genuinely occur (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). With the goal in mind, the rules for choosing literature were stringent: (a) articles, chapters, and books were not included if the information was only being evaluated; (b) non-empirical literature was excluded if empirical references were not used; and (c) empirical and non-empirical articles were excluded if there was not an explanation of why or how the processes of learning occurred (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The total number of reviews analyzed was not identified but it is noteworthy to mention the established rules decreased the number of articles retained. The meta-analysis revealed three intersecting parts involved in teacher learning: the individual teacher, the school, and the activity (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Complexity theory will be further illustrated and presented within the discussion of the three systems.

Individual Teachers

Each individual teacher brings with her a complex system that includes prior experiences such as how she has grown up. These beliefs about learning are endless, for example, when a child begins to write. An individual’s prior knowledge consists of how much formal or informal education one has and how this knowledge an individual brings to the classroom interacts with other parts, such as peers, children and parents (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Learning orientation. Teachers develop personal beliefs about teaching and learning from past experiences (for example, as a child at home or at school) (Opfer &
Pedder, 2011). What and how an individual believes can widen or narrow values and theories that affect an individual’s decisions about learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The influences on teacher learning are tremendous, the ability for teachers to synthesize past, present and emerging information can be challenging. This “cognitive conflict” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 388) challenges teachers approach to thinking and may promote a change in thinking. Furthermore, the authors found that teachers’ ability to change their beliefs and practices are more likely to happen if the four areas are supported: (a) teachers have more field and classroom experiences (something that colleges and universities can implement and support), (b) teachers are given opportunities to reflect on their work, (c) opportunities for teachers to understand oneself in a safe and secure environment and (d) the ability to apply knowledge about teaching and learning.

However, from their review, Opfer and Pedder (2011) determined there is still insufficient evidence to connect a learning activity to the extent to which teachers change their teaching practices.

**Influence of the Center**

The school or center portion of the system is just as complex as the individual. The center involves the organization or group of people responsible for teaching and learning including teachers, administration and parents. The school also incorporates, the collective beliefs about learning and the norms of practices that exist in the school. A challenging piece of the system is the ability to realize and understand shared learning goals as a whole (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). These factors can enable or constrain teachers depending upon how a center is managed. Opfer and Pedder (2011) found consensus in the research in four areas in which organizational learning and individual learning can
occur on-site: (a) if there is a nurturing environment across all levels of a school (such as administration and teachers), (b) using self-evaluation to promote learning, (c) if opportunities for teachers to examine values, assumptions, and beliefs on practices through reflection are available, and (d) when the expertise of teachers and administration to create a system of knowledge management using resources and core capabilities is leveraged, for example, subject matter experts in the use of technology. Careful balance must take place for centers to manage the internal development and amount of time and energy this takes for crafting the decisively simple factors listed. Many times, centers overlook the wealth of knowledge that is internal and spend an enormous amount of energy searching for new ideas (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

The Learning Activities

The learning activities designed for teachers include the approaches in which tasks or the amount of practice time that teachers are given in order for the desired results or habits to take effect. More specifically, how do teachers begin to understand the information being presented and put into practice the information? The highlights answering this question will be presented.

Professional development. In order to have effective professional development, long-term and intensive trainings rather than brief and intermittent, allow teachers to comprehend and apply the information presented (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Too often childcare settings label one-day trainings as professional development, but there is a lack of follow up on the information presented with regard to making sure teachers comprehend what has been presented. Teachers need time to understand, discuss and practice new knowledge; Opfer and Pedder (2011), state that teachers learn best when
activities require them to engage with materials for practice, additionally, when the activity is active and requires teachers to reflect on how they should engage with children.

Teacher collaboration is important and reflects the support individuals need to understand a learning concept, when a learning community emerges, teachers are more likely to come together to discuss problems, successes and problem solve. The group support begins to change teacher’s beliefs and behaviors and “creates a collective responsibility rather than an individual one” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 385). On the other hand, too much collaboration can create conformity and stifle learning, by creating the need to gain support from someone to keep the collaboration group on task. An important piece affecting teacher learning and teacher practice is for teachers of the same school, department or year (age level) such as infant teachers, preschool teachers, etc. to participate together (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Ultimately, for collaboration to take effect and enhance learning, those involved must understand that each individual brings unique variables to a center that will create a different collaboration condition (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Moreover, Opfer and Pedder (2011) correlate professional development to the features of teacher learning that create changes in teacher practice. However, the challenge for early childhood educators to fully understand the multi-faceted implications of true professional development is more complex than attending a workshop for a couple of hours or returning to school. The next section will explore how ECE directors help their teachers understand the importance of self-reflection, understanding ones’ strengths and opportunities for improvement in order for ongoing professional development to
occur. A likely tool and aid that directors can use with their staff, known as an Individual Professional Development Plan will be explored in the last section.

**Individual Professional Development Plans**

A fairly new tool designed for individual ECE professionals and their director to use to plan and create professional development opportunities that build on the capacities of the individual ECE professional is the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDPs), (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011). The IPDPs deliver an outline connecting various professional development experiences related to each other and to professional standards, such as NAEYC, and common core knowledge, such as the California Early Learning Foundations. Individual Professional Development Plans require that individuals take accountability for their professional development by identifying areas of strength and areas of growth to ensure weaknesses in subject matter are addressed in an appropriate manner.

**The Four Components of IPDPs**

There are four components of an IPDP. The first consists of a self-assessment with the individual engaging in self-reflection or a self-assessment that can lead an ECE professional to define their skills, reinforcing the information they already know and developing future plans to reach. The second step is for an ECE professional to engage in reviewing, prioritizing and finalizing a list of potential areas for professional growth so that goals are clear and measurable. There are many questions that can guide the process of developing goals, questions revolving around necessary professional standards that need to be met, challenges that an individual needs to address, suggestions from a
director or topics that an individual is excited about (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011).

The third area of focus in IPDPs is encouraging ECE professionals to self-reflect when determining what strategies or resources will be needed to accomplish their goals. Again a series of questions can be used to assist in determining how best an individual learns, how will the goal be achieved if there was a specific learning activity that had a great impact and how the activity supported the individual’s learning (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011). The answers to the questions will support the types of strategies that are decided for example, observing other ECE professionals interact with children, choosing a topic to research further, or an ECE professional asking their director to observe and give feedback. In order for the strategies to be successful, the ECE professional will need various resources such as research-based information from multiple reliable sources, the Internet, journals or books. In addition, the ECE teacher will need to organize time for meetings with colleagues or to visit other centers and look for grants or scholarships depending on the goal being established (Sugarman, 2011).

The final step in planning with an IPDP is creating a timeline. This step is extremely important and creates accountability for creating a realistic target date (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011). Sugarman (2011) suggests when ECE professionals determine their target dates, one or more of the following ideas should be included in the plan: date for checking in with self, date for finishing a step, date for completing the task; these ideas will help ECE professionals stay accountable. IPDPs are not plans made in isolation but rather can act as a tool to establish a relationship of collaboration between an individual and a director, college professor or mentor.
Developing IPDPs

There are two ways to develop an Individual Professional Development Plan; the first is at the workplace level. This includes a review and approval from a director and is based on the individual reflecting and identifying needs and strengths in conjunction with the use of a performance appraisal which includes program evaluation and suggested improvements (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011). The second way to develop an IPDP is at the individual level with focus on mapping one’s own professional development and career pathway, such as in a college degree program or with guidance from a professional, such as an advisor, consultant, mentor or other technical assistance provider (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011; Sugarman, 2011).

Bridge to the Next Chapter

In sum, the amount of knowledge a teacher has is not reflected by her college degree yet it is possible for an ECE director to cushion and bridge the gap between education and professional development first and foremost by using the IPDPs and determining the level of early childhood development comprehension a teacher currently possesses. A pre-test can be given during the interview process or before creating any professional development training for currently employed teachers. Once the criterion for development has been determined, a post-test can be given after initial training has begun to check the progress of the training. ECE teachers along with their administrators can create an open relationship based on trust, support and confidence and move forward with creating Individual Professional Development Plans, only after engaging in self-reflection and addressing the basic issues regarding teachers’ true knowledge of early child development.
In the next chapter, the methodology for the current study will be described. The study consists of understanding how center directors plan and encourage professional development opportunities for their staff.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to understand the role ECE directors play in encouraging the ongoing professional development of their teaching staff and the factors that influence what or how they may provide such opportunities. Accordingly, the following questions are raised: How do program directors define Professional Development? What have directors found to be successful? What have they found to be problematic? What do they perceive as targeted professional goals for their staff? This exploratory study will examine the roles current directors play in the professional development of their teaching staff. This chapter describes the subjects, instruments, research design and procedures used to collect, review and analyze data for this study.

How do directors determine a systematic way to provide and encourage life-long learning and continuing professional development for their teaching staff and the challenges and accomplishments they experience in this process? Therefore, the open-ended question “what topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time?” was asked to distinguish if there is a common theme among directors when planning or focusing on professional development training for a center as a whole.

Sample: Description of Program Directors and their Center

One hundred and fifty people in the early childhood education field (current students and alumni of ECE program at California State University, Northridge) were emailed during the summer of 2013. However, only five ECE directors responded and were participants in the study. The discrepancy in the number of people emailed and the
The number of people that responded may have been attributed to many possible factors; those emailed were not ECE directors or the email addresses may not have been the primary email addresses of the individuals. In addition, the time of year that the recruitment began was in the summer, particularly close to the date of preschool graduations or when many early childhood education programs close for summer vacation.

The names used for each of the five program directors are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and respect for the sanctity of the interviewer-interviewee relationship. To follow, a description of each director is provided which includes information about their background, as well as their center. More specifically, a description of each director’s demographics, educational pathways and information on their current program is shared. Details such as, the directors’ ages, ethnicity and current title are revealed in addition to their education. Finally, the ages of children attending the center, how many teachers are employed and the teacher to child ratios are described.

Five directors participated in the study and were all female ranging in age from 28-60 years. Three directors were self-described as Caucasian or White; one was self-identified as Hispanic and one the last was self-described as Egyptian. The average number of years as a director was 9.4 years, with the range of 6-16 years total. The director characteristics were collected through the use of a demographic survey (Appendix A) and are summarized in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Program Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Bonnie</th>
<th>Krystal</th>
<th>Patricia</th>
<th>Natalie</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Age</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Identified Ethnic Background</strong></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completed Level of Education</strong></td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Finishing MA (human dev.)</td>
<td>MA ECE &amp; Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>MA ECE</td>
<td>MA ECE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Director Years</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Staff&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Type</strong></td>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Non-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Title</strong></td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Co-Director</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Preschool Director/Pedagogesta</td>
<td>Infant/Toddler Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECE teacher prior to becoming a Director</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECE Memberships</strong></td>
<td>CECMP</td>
<td>NAREA, NAEYC, Westside Collaborative and GLA CECMP</td>
<td>NAREA, NAEYC, RIE, CECMP</td>
<td>NAREA, NAEYC, LAUP</td>
<td>NAEYC and RIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages of children</strong></td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>3m-Kbound</td>
<td>2.9-5</td>
<td>6w-3yrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> These are pseudonyms selected to preserve the anonymity of the participants

<sup>2</sup> Staff is defined as ECE teachers
Bonnie

Bonnie is a 59 year-old white female with 16 years of experience as a director. Her highest level of education is a master’s degree in business administration. Bonnie is also a California Early Childhood Mentor Director. Chabot College and the Center for the Child Care workforce jointly developed The California Early Childhood Mentor Program available to teachers (mentor teacher) and administrators (i.e., directors).

“Director Mentors provides a unique one-on-one learning relationship with the novice director in the practical and theoretical aspects of Center administration and leadership” (California Early Childhood Mentor Program, 2013). Each Director Mentor is also given stipends for their work as a mentor in addition, offered support (such as classes and seminars) for their own continuing development (CECMP, 2013).

Bonnie’s pathway. Bonnie’s interest in the field of early childhood education began after she enrolled her daughter in a preschool. The experience of communicating with teachers and families is what intrigued Bonnie; “there is a way of speaking to each other that was not in the business world…to both parents and children” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). Bonnie had previously worked in the real estate business and did not feel the camaraderie with co-workers. Bonnie left real estate and began to teach, part-time (when a degree or 12 units were not required) at her daughter’s school and enrolled in community college school. As a parent at her daughter’s school, Bonnie felt nurtured and wanted to share and continue that feeling when she was working by, “being able to go to a place and feel like that was my new home” (personal communication, June 17, 2013) and have other parents feel the same way she had. After taking extension classes to fulfill her child development and administration units she
arrived at a crossroads and decided obtain Master’s in Business Administration. Bonnie describes her decision:

I’m probably one of the only directors you’ll ever meet who decided they wanted to do that. I felt I wasn’t being valued by my community—my friends. You know—when you say you run a preschool they think ‘oh you get to play all day!’ And that certainly isn’t what a director does. But especially because my goal was to keep moving up the ladder, that enabled me- it [MBA] gave me everything I needed for my position here; accounting, internal relationships, and human resources (personal communication, June 17, 2013).

Bonnie attributes her role of a director as equivalent to running a business with an emphasis on human relations, the relationships that are created in the course of working with co-workers, families, children and the environment. Bonnie explains this concept:

The difference is everybody else focuses on curriculum and while curriculum is very important, as a director, personally that is not where my head is at. So I wanted to create an environment and to see the big picture, you can’t just focus on curriculum, in my opinion. You have to see, how does that relate to my staff; which is human relations. How do they feel about working for me? What kind of benefits do they get? How do we treat our families? (personal communication, June 13, 2013).

**Bonnie’s center.** Bonnie’s ECE center is a non-profit, play-based and follows some of the Reggio Emilia tenants; “we follow six or seven of them… emergent curriculum, the role of the teacher as a negotiator between children’s motivation and provocations, parents and their role in the program, environment as a third teacher,
process vs. product and documentation” (personal communication, June 13, 2013). The Center is open as early as 7:30 a.m. for early care and her staff work from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. serving 160 children between the ages of two and five years old and their families. Bonnie oversees 25 ECE teachers. The ratios at her center consist of 1:5 for two year olds and 1:8 for three, four and five year olds.

Krystal

Krystal is a 45 year-old-Caucasian woman with seven years experience as a director; she is currently finishing her master’s degree in early childhood education. Like Bonnie, she is a director mentor through California Early Childhood Mentor Program (CECMP). In addition, she created the Early Childhood Educators of Greater Los Angeles (GLA), which provides ECE educators with an opportunity to collaborate, build community (visit ECE programs, work together) and support the learning and investigation of children and adults.

Krystal’s pathways. Krystal began her early childhood education career in high school when she pursued the field of child psychology. She worked as a camp counselor with preschool aged children through 5th grade. While attending San Francisco State University, Krystal worked as a reading tutor for English as a second language, lower income children. Eventually, Krystal became a mother and the following describes how having her own children continued to shape her career:

Having my own children narrowed my focus for several years on the preschool ages, how they learn, how contexts influence what they learn, how political contexts promote how/what they should learn and how to development the whole child through adulthood (personal communication, June 15, 2013).
As a student, Krystal attended an early childhood directors’ panel and met one of her current co-workers. At the time, Krystal was at a crossroads in her college career and was torn between pursuing her teaching career and becoming an ECE director. Krystal was fascinated by the information she was learning with regards to leadership in early childhood education programs; Krystal approached the speaker after the panel and was offered a summer internship at the center she currently works.

Krystal obtained her associates degree and certificate in ECE and chose to focus on Early Childhood Education when earning her bachelor’s degree. When deciding the focus for her master’s degree, Krystal shares “I chose Human Development over ECE because of my passion for working with adults and children in development. I plan to teach ECE at the college level when finished and continue mentoring and studying within all professional associations” (personal communication, June 15 2013).

Krystal’s center. Krystal’s ECE center is private, serving 75 children, ranging in age from three years to five years, and their families. The center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and provides multiple part-time possibilities. The center values the Reggio Emilia principles and applies theorists such as Vygotsky, Dewey, Montessori, Erikson and Malaguzzi to their daily on co-constructing knowledge with children, families and teaching staff. Krystal oversees 14 ECE teachers and maintains a 1:6 ratio while utilizing interns from Santa Monica College and CECMP.

Patricia

Patricia, an executive director, is a 37 year-old Hispanic woman with nine years of experience as a director and has her master’s degree from New York University in early childhood education and elementary school and is director mentor (CECMP).
Coincidently, Patricia is the third director to report being a director mentor (CECMP was not in the demographic or interview questions).

**Patricia’s pathway.** Patricia began her career in early childhood education while attending a human development course in college. The course she took lead her to want more and she engaged in conversations with a professor that helped guide her through her bachelor’s degree in child development. After working in the field for a short time, Patricia moved to Texas and then New York where she obtained her Master’s in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education. Patricia shares:

I worked in a public school; at this point, I thought maybe public school was where I needed to be. But my heart was still in the ECE career. It was great to see the other side, some regards felt really good. I realized theory and practice was so different. I moved to Los Angeles and was hired as an administrator, at an infant and toddler development center and realized, the way you treat your employees was extremely important (personal communication, June 17, 2013).

Once in Los Angeles, Patricia’s co-worker engaged her in conversations about the Reggio approach and introduced her to the idea of school tours. Patricia enrolled at Santa Monica College and took the Reggio classes, documentation classes and realized she understood some content areas but needed to focus on the information she did not fully understand.

**Patricia’s center.** The non-profit early childhood education center Patricia oversees two centers in different locations; the first serves 52 children between the ages of three months to 5 years of age or “kindergarten bound” (personal communication, June 17, 2013) and their families, the second center serves 81 children between the ages of 2.5
years and 6 years of age (transitional kindergarten) and their families. The centers are open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the philosophy integrates social constructivist practice based on the learning theories of Vygotsky, Piaget ad Dewey and the Reggio Emilia approach that supports each child’s right to develop a positive disposition toward learning. Patricia oversees 39 early childhood education teachers while maintaining an infant ratio of 1:3, toddler ration 1:6 and a preschool ratio of 1:9.

Natalie

Natalie, a director and pedagogista, is a 60-year-old Caucasian woman with nine years experience as a director and has her Master’s degree in early childhood education. The role of the pedagogista is to dialogue and collaborate with teachers to identify and facilitate professional development opportunities by which teachers are supported to reflect on their work and to understand that learning is a continual process by which an individual can change and grow (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002).

Natalie’s pathway. Natalie began her early childhood education career after receiving her Multiple Subject Credential and bachelor’s degree in Spanish when she was placed in a kindergarten classroom as a new teacher and loved the age. Natalie taught in the public school system for ten years as a kindergarten/first grade teacher. Natalie shared her perspective, “I saw the shift in valued in the public ECE classrooms, very disappointing to see the change to an inappropriate curriculum” (personal communication, June 24, 2013). After Natalie’s daughters were born, she returned to teaching but this time at the preschool level, in a private school setting, hoping to work in creative ways to support children’s natural curiosities in the classroom. Natalie remembers the way she felt working in the preschool classroom, “At this point in time, I
see once again hoe elementary curriculum has come into the preschool classroom” (personal communication, June 24, 2013), suggesting that natural and creative learning in the preschool setting was being lost.

After several years working with preschoolers, Natalie’s first administrative experience was when the founding director at the private school her children attended and she was working retired. Natalie was asked to fulfill the role of elementary director, working closely with the new leadership, preschool director, toddler director, and a new administrative head. Natalie recalled:

I ended up taking on many of the responsibilities of the preschool director due to her newness to the role and her choice to also teach as well as those of the administrative head, who did not have a background in education (personal communication, June 24, 2013).

Natalie admits she was not prepared for the politics or economics of her role and experienced as she describes “a big learning curve with regards to bringing change to a well-established school in a period of transition” (personal communication, June 24, 2013). When her daughters graduated, Natalie did too, she left the school, enrolling in the administration/supervision courses and then obtaining her Master’s degree in early childhood education at California State University, Northridge.

Natalie’s center. The non-profit early childhood education center Natalie oversees includes a toddler program called My Family and Me classes which serves children at least 21 months old and their families. The preschool program serves children, between the ages of 2.9 years to 5 years of age, and their families. The center is open from 8:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (for younger children) and 1:40 p.m. (for older
children); in addition, children can stay until 2:30 p.m. in an after-school program or focus groups. Every Friday, the center closes at 12:30 p.m. and the center is closed in the month of July. The center is inspired by the principles of Reggio Emilia and a unique feature of the school incorporates three atelieristas to support the classrooms. The role of an atelierista is to support the relationship between children and the visual arts in addition, documents a group of children’s work and allows adults to view the processes in which children (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). The ratios at Natalie’s center are 1:4 or 1:8 depending on the investigation and work of the classroom. There are four classrooms with 12 to 16 children, staffed by two co-teachers; the two younger classes share a support teacher and an atelierista, furthermore, the two older classrooms share a support teacher and an atelierista. The third atelierista works in the outside studio with all the children.

Maggie

Maggie, an infant/toddler director, is a 28 year-old Egyptian woman with six years of experience as a director and has her master’s degree in early childhood education.

Maggie’s pathway. Maggie reflected on how she entered the field of early childhood education by recalling her childhood. She was raised by a single dad and was the oldest of four children and naturally had to assume the “mother role” by the age of six; “it always felt very innate to me and I knew this was the field I wanted to be a part of” (personal communication, July 15, 2013). By the time Maggie obtained her bachelor’s degree in child and adolescent development she had worked with children in an afterschool program and as an educator with toddlers and preschool children.
Maggie then pursued and obtained her master’s degree in educational psychology emphasizing in early childhood education and felt after six years of experience teaching, she wanted to begin working in an administrative capacity. Maggie recalled how she became a director “I applied for an assistant director position and they felt I could do a director position, I accepted the challenge and have been a director for six years” (personal communication, July 15, 2013). Maggie has a passion for reading and applying information that will benefit herself or her program; her favorite topic is brain development.

**Maggie’s center.** Maggie is responsible for overseeing the infant and toddler teachers employed at the non-profit, infant and toddler center that serves 40 children, between birth and three years of age and their families. The children, after turning three years old move to the pre-kindergarten center in the summer. The center is opened from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The infant/toddler center uses various approaches to their philosophy incorporating the Reggio Emilia approach, RIE approach and some Montessori ideas. The ratio for infants (6 weeks to 18 months) is 1:3 with 10 children in the class and four fulltime educators; the ratio for toddlers (18 months to 36 months) is 1:5 with 30 children in the class. The center has an open environment with children moving inside or outside at their leisure; the choice is up to each child.

**Recruitment**

The criteria for recruitment of study subjects included currently employed early childhood program directors that oversee the professional development of early childhood educators (preschool teachers) in their center. Program directors were recruited by word of mouth in a snowball sampling method, resulting in the sample
subjects being acquaintances of the researcher’s colleagues. The thesis chair emailed (Appendix B) early childhood education teachers (preschool teachers) and program directors in the greater Los Angeles area and included background information regarding the study as well as contact information for those interested in participating. An ECE teacher contacted the researcher directly informing and sharing the information of her program director ‘s interest in participating in the study. The researcher followed up with an email (Appendix C) explaining the study and coordinating a meeting. In addition, two college professors shared additional contact information for six directors of which the researcher followed up with email. Of the subset of six directors, two responded and agreed to participate. In addition, one director in particular, shared four more names and emails of program directors. As a result, 11 early childhood program directors were directly contacted, however, only five directors responded and scheduled an interview.

**Instruments**

The data was collected using two types of measures. The first measure was a demographic survey (Appendix A) with 13 questions divided into three sections. The first section referred to participants’ past and present employment in early childhood education, the second section focused on their current program’s demographics and the third section gathered information about personal information (i.e. age, ethnicity, gender, and highest level of education attained), this information is presented in Table 3.1. The second measure was the director interview questions (Appendix D). The demographic survey and director interview questions were emailed and directors were asked to complete the survey and to review the questionnaire.
Demographic Survey

The demographic survey was created for directors to share their personal history or story and to create a context for how each participant became a director. The survey was designed to take less than 30 minutes to complete and included fill in the blank questions and short answers, beginning with asking a director to how long she has been working in the early childhood education field and in what capacity. This information was presented in two formats: first as a short answer and second as a fill in the blank section (questions 1 and 3). Followed by a question (4) about any other positions held in the field of ECE (board of directors, or president of any ECE networks) while employed. Additionally, directors identified their current title and how many years they had been employed (director, executive director, co-director) in that role. Moreover, the total number of years a participant has been in the role of a director was answered in question five.

Furthermore the second section of the survey (question 6) focused on identifying each participants’ current ECE program in terms of being non-profit, for profit, head start, private, corporate or employee operated. In addition, directors shared (question 7) how many ECE teachers are currently employed and the age groups of children enrolled in their respective programs. In the last section “About You” (questions 8-12) directors shared their ethnicity, age, gender and highest level of formal education completed, followed by a short answer question (13) capturing individual experiences of professional development in the last five years, including the titles of any conferences or workshops that directors attended.
Interview Questions

Before the interview process, the participants were asked permission to have the interview audio recorded using a voice recorder. The interview questions (Appendix D) were designed to encourage conversation and to capture key themes about promoting professional development, the first question “Tell me about how you became interested in the field of early childhood education” allowed for self-reflection and insight on the beginning of the career development of each director.

Four questions (1, 2, 4 and 5) capture directors’ personal development and ultimately sought to understand how directors define professional development. These included questions about directors sharing how they became interested in the field of early childhood education (ECE) and the work or professional development directors accomplished to become a director. These questions lead to asking directors how they define professional development for themselves and for their staff and what they see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff. Additionally, a question (3) was asked related to the early childhood program demographics (i.e., number of classroom, children’s ages and staffing ratios) to collect some contextual information.

Furthermore, two questions explored how current directors motivate and support their staff to participate in professional development (Questions 6 and 7); more specifically, they asked, “In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? In what ways do you support off-site opportunities for staff development?” The questions (8, 9, 10) address the challenges program directors face when motivating their staff to participate in professional development opportunities and how directors have overcome those challenges, including identifying successful PD
opportunities. Additionally, one question (11) focused on the professional development topics directors feel are most important for their staff to participate and understand. Finally, two questions directly related to advice current directors can give to new directors beginning in the role of directing an early childhood program were posted (questions 12 and 13).

**Research Design**

This study is an exploratory study using qualitative data (audio-recorded interviews) to determine the roles that directors play in professional development of their staff. In addition to comparing how directors define the term professional development for themselves and for their staff. The qualitative data was captured through the use of a demographic survey (Appendix A) and a questionnaire (Appendix D) that was filled out by the ECE director or answered via an audiotaped interview. The interview was downloaded to a password-encrypted file and deleted from the audio recorder after transcription was completed.

**Procedures**

In preparation for this exploratory study, human subjects protocol was prepared in the fall of 2012. This included preparation of the adult consent form (Appendix E) authorizing the directors to participate in human research by being interviewed, a protocol approval form (Appendix F) explaining the possible impacts the interview process may have on the participants. The Bill of Rights (Appendix G) explains the rights of each participant when participating in this exploratory study.
Human Subjects

The protocol for this study was submitted to the Standing Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at California State University, Northridge on March 5, 2013. After adding additional information, the researcher received committee approval on April 15, 2013.

Interview Logistics

Participants were initially contacted by email and word of mouth recruitment resulting in a snowball effect. The recruitment process began at the end of May, which was the end of many of the early childhood programs’ school year. The first interview was conducted on June 15, 2013.

On May 30, 2013, an email communication was sent to alumni and current students of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program of the Educational Psychology department at California State University, Northridge. On May 31, 2013, a director interested in participating in the study contacted the researcher; the director stated she received the forwarded email from an alumnus of the ECE program. In June, an additional alumnus referred the researcher to the alumnus’ ECE director. An ECE professor shared contact information on an additional four directors and these directors were contacted with only one director responding and sharing four additional director contacts. After the researcher received interested participants (program directors), a personalized email (Appendix C), including information regarding the study, was sent directly to the director. When the director agreed to participate, the researcher coordinated a time and place for the interview to take place. The researcher emailed the Bill of Rights (Appendix G) and Adult Consent Form (Appendix E) for review and to be
signed. In addition, the demographic survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix D) were emailed for each director to review prior to the interview.

All five directors responded online to the demographic survey (Appendix A), three directors answered the interview questions online with two directors scheduling face-to-face follow-up interviews. Two directors did not answer the questionnaire and requested face-to-face interviews in which the interview was audio recorded. After the interviews, the audio was transcribed directly into the director interview question form (Appendix D) to keep the data organized. The qualitative data will be presented in Chapter 4-Results.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The current study examines and compares the complexities of how current early childhood education (ECE) program directors help early childhood educators with their ongoing growth and development as professionals. This exploratory study describes how current directors encourage their teaching staff to engage in professional development activities and the opportunities directors provide at their ECE center. This chapter therefore, portrays the results of the directors’ interviews. The results are presented in themes, in four sections, directors’ definition of professional development, the challenges directors face when providing PD, how directors motivate and support PD, and the professional development topics directors feel are necessary for their teaching staff. Finally, the data are synthesized.

Results

In this section, the results of the directors’ interviews are presented. The results are organized into four themes; based on the director’s responses categories were created to reflect similarities and/or differences in the data. The themes include: (a) definitions of professional development, (b) challenges related to professional development, (c) support and motivation, and (d) professional development topics and successes. Each director’s response is categorized within each theme.

Definitions of Professional Development

In this section, a brief summary of how each director defines ECE professional development for themselves and their staff will be presented. The information was
gathered from the interview question (4) “how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff?” and are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Directors’ Definitions of Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>PD Definitions for Self</th>
<th>PD Definitions for Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Building authentic, genuine human relations around the sense of community-each school has its own identity</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence and relationship building with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krystal</td>
<td>Gaining new insight into yourself and your work individually and collectively</td>
<td>Doesn’t see a difference between titles. Gaining new insight into yourself and your work individually and collectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Continuous process of opportunities to self-reflect and participate in group reflections-the center doesn’t owe me PD</td>
<td>Any areas of interest that will help teachers make connections to society and can be connected to the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Opportunities that occur in every moment of a person’s daily life-become better listeners and learners</td>
<td>Learning is ongoing and complex and each day is an opportunity to gain new knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Staying current on licensing information, NAEYC accreditation and staying up to date with CPR and first aid.</td>
<td>Anything that challenges someone and supports a topic of interest-your childhood is a point of reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bonnie’s definition.** For Bonnie, defining professional development in relation to Bonnie herself revolved around the sense of community and building authentic and genuine human relations among teachers and staff, children and parents. Bonnie describes the community as such:

Each school has its own identity…I have people here who need to work fulltime… they need their paycheck…the community of parents is different, the
community of teachers is different. And I think it is very important that as a
director you know your community (personal communication, June 17, 2013).

As for a definition of professional development in connection to her staff, Bonnie
was quick to respond “relationship building between parents, getting them to trust,
believe in you and for the teachers, to be in tune enough to see when something isn’t
going right” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). Bonnie further describes what
she believes is a key factor in professional development “and I will say- as much as we
work on it that is the piece that seems to be missing the most. That emotional
intelligence is really hard to build in” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). What
Bonnie means is that her teachers believe they are doing “a great job” when informing
parents of their “good” day. But the notion of emotional intelligence, is more profound,
the sharing of an important story with a parent about their child is what Bonnie looks for
when teachers develop relationships with parents. Bonnie refers to these instances as
“little snippets of time” where customer service must be extremely high for parents to
connect emotionally with a teacher sharing a story.

**Krystal’s definition.** Krystal’s personal definition of professional development
revolved around her passion for PD “I define it as gaining new insight into yourself and
your work” (personal communication, June 15, 2013). Krystal is quick to share that she
is a “collective leader” meaning she involves her staff in all decisions and development of
ideas. Krystal shared her philosophy of involving her staff in making decisions for the
center; she believes that her teachers are then accountable for the decisions made together
and have more ownership of ideas and actions. Krystal describes that she involves her
staff in development meetings, which include once a week with the entire staff and once a
week for each team (three groups). Her teaching staff comes together to share children’s work and analyze children’s interest and learning goals as well as define measurable objectives. Krystal views PD in the same manner for her staff, regardless of title or role (e.g., director, teacher) and shares “we attend workshops, conferences and book groups together. All teaching staff are included and meet when the center closes at 5:30 p.m.; important topics to develop the staff, are an agreement on school values, philosophies and communication” (personal definition, June 15, 2013), an example of Krystal’s collective leadership.

**Patricia’s definition.** Patricia’s perspective on PD is summed up in her response the question about defining professional development for herself and her teaching staff, “I realized early in my career that the center I work for doesn’t owe me professional development, I had to seek those opportunities and learn through various modes” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). She continued to explain that PD is a continuous process that includes opportunities for self-reflection and group reflections. Patricia believes that PD for her staff is closely linked to any area of interest and can be connected to the classroom. Patricia explains that her center pays for conferences that teachers have a passion for, for example, the center recently paid for a teacher to attend a ceramics class and in the class, the teacher made a bowl, brought it to her classroom and was able to make connections to society and specifically about what children collect and put into bowls. Patricia is proud to invest in her teachers’ interests and reflects that this kind of support is a “nice morale and boost for teachers that you are investing in them as a person. I think it kind of spans that almost Humanitarian way of saying I believe in you!” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). Patricia stated the moments when her
staff, are “looking at me with stars in their eyes” when she is discussing details of an upcoming trip to the Reggio Institute in Sweden are priceless.

**Natalie's definition.** Natalie defines professional development, after reading and studying Reggio Emilia as opportunities that occur in every moment of a person’s life, with children, families and each other. Natalie believes “this understanding is helping us to be better listeners and learners” and an important focus of professional development is to “continue to get to know one another” (personal communication, June 24, 2013). Natalie reminds her staff that learning is ongoing and “the work is very complex and requires skills, meaning that we have to continue learning each day” (personal communication, June 24, 2013). Natalie and her staff’s ability to share their professional development experiences can also help others apply the learning to daily experiences.

**Maggie’s definition.** Maggie defines PD as anything that will allow someone to be challenged and anything that supports a topic of interest. Specifically, anything that builds on previous knowledge and continues to challenge knowledge. Particularly when Maggie gathers with her staff, conversations have been spent on looking at their individual childhood. Maggie shared “we have a lot of…let’s look at your own childhood because a lot of that comes out when you’re with children…and is your point of reference” (personal communication, July 15, 2013), she feels it is important to spend time discussing these things and Maggie has scheduled marriage and family therapists to support these discussions. Maggie looks at professional development for herself as staying current on licensing information, NAEYC accreditation, and staying up to date on CPR and First aid.
Challenges Related to Professional Development

In this section, interview questions (8 and 9) concerning the challenges ECE directors face when planning or scheduling professional development trainings will be summarized and presented. In addition, the various ways directors have overcome or problem solved those challenges are revealed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Directors’ Challenges and Overcoming Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Overcoming Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Money and encouraging teachers to attend meetings (PD opportunities)</td>
<td>Using the power of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krystal</td>
<td>Teachers being open to differences of opinions and sharing reflections</td>
<td>Engaging in one on one communications and touring other schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Investing in teachers and then they leave; being equitable across the board</td>
<td>Meeting teachers at their point of entry what knowledge each teacher brings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Time, money, and encouraging teachers to finish their formal education</td>
<td>Individual discussions with teachers about strengths and areas of growth; Asks for monetary donations from parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Time and Money</td>
<td>Fundraise and apply for grants; proposal to Board of Directors to close additional days for PD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Bonnie’ challenges. Bonnie is quick to share that her biggest challenge is she does not have any money in her budget to provide for any additional in-service trainings. She admits that her teaching staff has not been given a pay raise for the past four years and that many of her teachers have second jobs in an economy that is extremely difficult. The idea of professional development is difficult for her staff to become motivated or
passionate about when as Bonnie describes “where’s the incentive to utilize that if you’re going to use it for a better pay grade or just to enjoy your work. So I think that’s the biggest challenge, they can’t afford it and I can’t afford it” (personal communication, June 17, 2013).

Bonnie, however, says she can possibly afford $50 or $100 per staff member but then Bonnie takes into account “if the State of California wants people to have a B.A. or get their master’s…you’re wasting your money to if you get a master’s in early childhood” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). Bonnie suggested that people obtain a master’s in social work or business and looks at the investment in a simple mathematical equation. “If it costs me $20,000 for my schooling, I better get that back in the first couple of years or it’s going to have been a waste” (personal communication, June 17, 2013) she further recommended that teachers negotiate their salaries and only stay at ECE centers about four years. An additional challenge for Bonnie is ensuring that teachers attend meetings; Bonnie’s meetings are not mandatory (except for one “nuts and bolts” meeting before the school year begins) because many of her teachers have second jobs. Bonnie therefore must be creative when she plans a meeting she wants her teachers to attend.

**Overcoming challenges.** Bonnie uses the power of personal relationships to overcome the overt challenges she faces paying for professional development at her center. Bonnie describes the impact that relationships have on an individual;

Statistics say that people stay at a job even if they are underpaid if they’re seen well by their boss; they love the community that they’re working in. They love
their coworkers. And I really think that’s key. You have to have those good combinations of everything (personal communication, June 17, 2013). What Bonnie describes suggests that individual’s can work in an environment and create a compromise for a strong relationship instead of a higher paying salary.

**Krystal’s challenges.** The challenges Krystal face are helping her staff stay open to differences of opinions and sharing their reflections. Accordingly, she said “while most of us are comfortable with verbal expression some prefer writing, some prefer recording thoughts and some put together presentations to share insights” (personal communication, June 15, 2013).

**Overcoming challenges.** When Krystal experiences staff that may be challenging, she invites a one on one meeting to foster and encourage a safe environment for expression. Krystal candidly reveals, “I did not come from this kind of leadership model but have overcome the typical authoritarian work model to create a community which is responsible for each other” (personal communication, June 15, 2013). Krystal encouraged her staff to research and read the work of Jane Vella, Thomas Horton and Paulo Freire on the topics of collective leadership and communication models to build a collaborative community. Krystal has not encountered resistance when professional development trainings are of interest to her staff. Krystal finds that when teachers have the opportunity to visit other schools, this encourages inspiration to learn foreign topics, in addition, allows for her staff to rediscover subject matter.

**Patricia’s challenges.** The most frustrating of challenges, Patricia shares, are when she invests in teachers and they leave the center shortly thereafter. Patricia noted
“frankly, it is unfortunate, a lot of frustration, I feel like you are educating everyone else’s teachers!” (personal communication, June, 17, 2013).

The second challenge Patricia faces is when she cannot be equitable across the board, meaning, how does she chose a set number of people when 10 teachers want to attend. A third challenge Patricia works to overcome is when new staff members have visited or toured a school and return to the workplace and say, “but they do it like this.” She feels that the variables are not always understood by ECE teachers and make the process of PD a little more time consuming. One of the core practices Patricia follows at the center is the teachers in the classroom are not allowed to do something other classrooms are not engaged in doing, for example, if one classroom writes a monthly newsletter, all classrooms need to write a monthly newsletter. Patricia believes “if one classroom is not writing the newsletter, it shows parents, staff in one room are more committed than the other” (personal communication, June, 17, 2013). Additionally, Patricia helps her teaching staff understand this idea by having ongoing conversations.

**Overcoming challenges.** Patricia is passionate about “trying to meet someone at their point of entry-so where are you” (personal communication, June, 17, 2013), meaning, understanding the knowledge that each individual teacher brings to the center. Patricia explains that each teacher works with the directors to create three goals: one revolving around parents, one goal about children and one goal regarding colleagues. Each goal consists of deconstructing the steps “so it feels attainable and setting out the pathway for teachers” (personal communication, June, 17, 2013) alongside their director in order to develop a plan to meet the goal. Patricia and the additional directors meet with the teachers throughout the year to follow-up on the teachers’ goals. If only a
selected amount of teachers attend workshops or conferences, the teachers fill out a form explaining what their plan is to introduce and present the information to others. Patricia has ongoing conversations with her staff to ensure the decisions to attend a specific conference or workshop are made with as much input as possible, for example, if teacher attended a conference last year and felt it was not adequate for what they are looking for, the teachers and directors will converse and look for a different conference to attend.

**Natalie’s challenges.** The challenges Natalie faces relate to encouraging teachers to finish their formal education. Specifically, the fact that Natalie has a few teachers that have crossed over to the field of ECE for instance, elementary school teachers, makes motivating those teachers to take the necessary ECE classes more difficult. Natalie also shares that she has two of her best teachers could be actively working to complete their BA’s however, they have young children at home, which makes attending classes more challenging. Natalie believes in providing realistic opportunities for learning to continue and many times this type of learning occurs in workshops and conferences. However, she does not ignore the fact that teachers must obtain their degrees, in the words of Natalie, “we have been understanding and generous with pay raises, but will be making it clear this year that future pay raises will be tied to some effort to continue formal education” (personal communication, June 24, 2013). Natalie is hopeful that this correlation will motivate teachers to finish their degrees. Therefore, she meets individually with her teaching staff as part of relationship building and for self-evaluation. In the meetings, Natalie helps her teachers talk about their areas of strength and areas of growth.
Overcoming challenges. Even though Natalie meets once a week with her staff, she refers to time being an issue. Natalie realizes that she must be more intentional with her weekly meetings by blocking out specific dates in the year to discuss specific topics that have been chosen collectively by the teaching staff. Aside from time, money is a challenge. Natalie states that the parents in the school respect and value the fact that teachers engage in continuing learning opportunities and Natalie has asked for donations to support their professional development fund.

Maggie’s challenges. The challenges Maggie faces regarding professional development opportunities for her teachers revolve around time and money. Maggie explained: “It is very difficult to close the centers for staff development. All our educators work fulltime and most have young children so it is very difficult to ask them to come in on the weekends” (personal communication, July 15, 2013). In addition, Maggie shared that her center does not have extra money to spend on professional development.

Overcoming challenges. However, she acknowledged that a creative solution to help with the lack of funds for professional development is to fundraise or apply for grants. Maggie has proposed to the Board of Directors to close the centers additional days to engage in professional development.

Support and Motivation

Throughout the interviews, the themes of support and motivation emerged. Accordingly, a summary of the various ways directors support professional development for their staff will be presented in this section and in table 4.3. Support can be monetary (e.g., covering the cost of attending conferences or workshops), in the form of mentoring
(e.g. conversations with teachers or working side by side with a director), or planning
time at work to investigate or research information, plan to attend a meeting and so on.

Table 4.3

Support for Professional Development from Each Director

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Two weeks of PD-invite specialists and school tours; “nuts and bolts” meetings, CPR and always with food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krystal</td>
<td>Make time to travel together, close for PD, invite specialists to staff meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>$60,000 PD budget, close 6 days includes 2-day retreat; working side by side w/teachers in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Identifies strengths of teachers as “experts” to mentor and train others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>When together as a team focus on building relationships through games and food.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support from Bonnie. As Bonnie reflected on how she supports her staff in ongoing professional development, she admitted that previous years have consisted of two weeks of professional development in-service trainings (during summer) prior to the start of the school year. The first week of training covers what Bonnie described as “nuts and bolts”, such as, safety procedures, first aid, CPR, how to greet parents and create relationships. Bonnie holds weekly staff meetings, again covering “nuts and bolts” to discuss plans for the holidays and managing the little nuances that are important to staff. An example she gave of something that might be discussed as such a meeting was reminding the staff not to leave the bikes out on the yard on Friday nights. This action is bothersome to some teachers, therefore, they spend time problem solving and coming up with a solution rather than Bonnie telling them what to do. Bonnie provides for early
morning meetings (7:30 a.m.) or afternoon (3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) meetings that are not mandatory and allow teachers a time and place to come together to discuss information.

Bonnie disclosed because the center follows some of the Reggio tenants, she has a curriculum mentor that also acts as the atelierista, to work with the children and teachers to understand and support how and where the curriculum is going. Although Bonnie tries to pay for her staff to take a class or attend a workshop, she summed up her point of view regarding paying for teachers: “but basically, they have to want it internally. They have to have that intrinsic, I want to attend!” in order to dedicate their time to attending a conference or class.

Support from Krystal. The ability to listen to the needs of her teaching staff is what Krystal referred to “motivating staff comes from hearing their needs and designing professional development opportunities to address those needs” (personal communication, June 15, 2013). Krystal helps her teachers plan time to travel together, decide on days to close for PD and invite specialists to join at their staff meetings. Included in her yearly budget are closed days for OD, paying teachers for working on days off and fundraising for PD. Krystal finished submitting a grant and was in the process of writing a grant for the Westside Collaborative.

Support from Patricia. The center Patricia works for has a budget of $60,000 for professional development on a yearly basis. Within this budget, both schools (three month-kindergarten-bound children and preschool aged children) close for six days, including a two-day retreat of paid cross-site development days (teachers from both schools come together to team build and to discuss important topics). In addition, each teacher receives two hours of paid planning time per week to discuss lesson plans, write
newsletters, prepare activities etc. Furthermore, classroom teams, made up of two teachers, meet one a week for 1.5 hours to discuss children, investigations etc. Both centers come together (once a week) for a co-inquiry meeting, where the teachers team up with their counterparts (infant teachers, toddler teachers, preschool teachers). The general framework of the co-inquiry meetings revolves around reviewing videos of the children together and developing metaphors, brainstorming and discussing how to extend the work, and how the experiences being viewed may relate to a teacher’s own work. Finally, once a month, all staff from both schools meet, however, in Patricia’s words, “that’s boring! It’s just logistics in meaning, parent coffees, etc.” (personal communication, June 17, 2013), implying the conversations deciding the details (date and time) of these events is fairly quick.

In addition, Patricia supports her teachers by working side-by-side in the classroom, mentoring, video recording and reflecting in order to create the constant practice and reviewing of actions. She also steps into the classroom for twenty minutes, on an as needed basis for example, to allow a teacher the time to read an article or prepare for a meeting.

**Support from Natalie.** Natalie supports the individual strengths of her teachers by identifying each of their strengths and presenting those teachers as “experts” in areas of work such as technology, social-emotional development, environments, materials, special rights of children etc. These “experts” consult and work with other teachers to help each person develop a deeper competency in that specific area. Moreover, there is an expectation that teachers and directors present their “work” at meetings as a reflection and discussion session to consult with peers for opinions and advice. The work that is
being discussed is long-term projects in the classrooms, research children and teachers are engaged in and daily documentation revolving around the development of children. Natalie conveys that the long-term projects are documented and published online. Natalie meets with classroom teams or age group teams after school each week and as a whole faculty Friday afternoons for two hours.

Although one of the challenges Natalie has is money, she is able to pay for workshops, conferences and gives a stipend (paid time, however, not a full day’s pay) to teachers to attend a workshop or conference. Furthermore, if a teacher is enrolled in college courses, $200 is paid towards books annually.

**Support from Maggie.** Maggie’s center closes for a total of 25 days or five weeks each calendar year, which includes typical closed days, such as New Year’s Day, Thanksgiving, Presidents’ Day etc. Two of those weeks are during the winter, around the holidays. The center only closes two days for professional development opportunities (used for internal or external PD opportunities). Maggie reflects and shares that anytime the teachers are together, the major focus at every gathering is teambuilding and relationships. No matter what the professional development topic is, Maggie plans games and provides food. During staff meetings and curriculum discussions, Maggie asks “what do you feel like we need to work on?” and her teachers discuss and provide a list for PD topics.

Based on her experience, Maggie has found three different types of professional maturity in her teachers. The first type is, young teachers who are eager to participate and will use their credit cards to pay for their college education or workshops. The second type, are those who will ask the center to pay 50% of the fee for education or
workshops etc. The last type, are those teachers that have been employed the longest that are most resistant to paying for any professional development opportunity, in Maggie’s words, “The ones who feel like they have been here a long time, have done a lot of professional development are more resistant to paying out of their pocket for something.” Ultimately, Maggie reports: “that’s just the nature of the field, they just don’t have money,” however, the center tries to reimburse a portion of the fees or the center just pays for the opportunity and requires the teachers to attend.

Professional Development Topics and Successes

In this section, the professional development topics that directors identified and perceived (question 10) staff would benefit from are included along with the professional development successes (question 11) directors have experienced are described and summarized in table 4.4.
Table 4.4

Directors Topics of Importance and Successes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Topics of Importance</th>
<th>Successes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Special Needs, Relationship building</td>
<td>Inviting specialists to the center, visiting schools, and gathering as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>group during the summer to reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krystal</td>
<td>Relationships, Building teachers’ confidence in practicing</td>
<td>Relationship building by exploring materials, problem solve by helping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reflective listening to communicate clearly when educating</td>
<td>teachers understand how to research information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Basics and logistics, meaningful relationships, and building</td>
<td>PD reimbursement, engage in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collaboration with one another</td>
<td>state of “wonder” with materials, book club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Collaborative relationships, observations for creating</td>
<td>Ongoing meetings to support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curriculum, teachers’ understanding of children’s cognitive</td>
<td>relationships, and attending off-site events as a group, book club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ability, use of technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Teambuilding and relationships, defining who the centers</td>
<td>Communication exercise, providing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are, PD opportunities for infant/toddler teachers, NAEYC</td>
<td>the center with a facelift, reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accreditation, building leaders and special needs.</td>
<td>books as a group-book club.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bonnie:** Topics of importance and successes. Bonnie was passionate when she described “my new theory is I’m going to hire someone on a part-time basis who comes in, who is a child development specialist, who can help us” learn more about certain topics. For example, she feels that children with special needs are one of the most important topics they need to focus on. The second topic is that of relationship building. The ability of teachers to engage with colleagues, parents and children on an authentic level, this is the overarching principle Bonnie strives for, that emotional intelligence.
**Bonnie’s successes.** Bonnie’s successes when planning and providing for professional development opportunities consisted of Bonnie’s realization that bringing in someone her staff could bond with (i.e., a specialist discussing topics of interest and visiting that specialist’s school) was more beneficial than spending the money for the entire staff to attend a conference. Two years ago, Bonnie began this slightly different approach to PD and found it to be a success for those teachers that are able to attend (attendance is not mandatory) the PD opportunities with the specialist or visiting another school. In addition, Bonnie’s center is closed during the summer months, during which the opportunity to gather as a group is possible. Bonnie summarizes her thoughts on PD opportunities by remarking, “you are going to get people who really want to learn something new, and they’re hungry for it. And if they came and got something from it most likely they’ll want to do it again” (personal communication, June 24, 2013) and she advises always provide food. Bonnie engages her teaching staff in reflecting on what works well at their center and involves her teachers in problem solving what and how other things can be changed. Bonnie creates a list and asked her staff “Of these five things, I have a couple of ideas how we could change them, but its going to be up to you. You tell me” (personal communication, June 24, 2013).

**Krystal: Topics of importance and successes.** The two major topics for development at Krystal’s center revolve around what Krystal described as “lifting the veil of what we do at school for our parents”, meaning parent education. However, parent education requires a clear presentation of the center’s values and how those values come to life in the center. The professional development portion of this topic requires the teaching staff to self reflect and put into words or representations the techniques that are
used with the children. This type of PD focused on the teachers’ confidence levels and the ability to dialogue with parents in order to explain what is occurring in the classroom with the children. Additionally, the teaching staff benefit from practicing reflective listening with parents and exercise the use of common language that is consistent with the children; presenting a clear image or information to parents that is not confusing.

At the beginning of every September, the teachers take a tremendous amount of time building relationships with parents, colleagues and children. In addition, the teachers take time to introduce the classroom space or environment to parents and children. The areas that Krystal and her teachers continue to revisit and review are: reflective listening techniques, the image of the child, and identifying and helping to overcome the insecurities the teachers may have.

Krystal’s successes. Krystal revealed the story of a year of low morale: “our teachers had fallen out of synch with each other and had marginalized themselves into cliques due to a challenging set of children and new staff” (personal communication, June 15, 2013). Because of this, Krystal reflected and engaged her staff in building relationships among colleagues through the use of materials. Krystal reflects that teachers were working with one another in intimate settings and witnessed her staff begin to find commonalities with each other. At the end of the two-day project, the group came together to reflect and “share stories of hurt, mistrust, resentment and fear” (personal communication, June 15, 2013) that emerged in a respectful and supportive way that the relationships that were created were able to support. An additional success of professional development that Krystal disclosed was the fact that when teachers approach her with questions, she does not give answers. Rather, Krystal points the teachers in the
direction to “problem solve or the resource to help teachers gain the knowledge and understand how to research information” (personal communication, June 15, 2013) and ultimately Krystal believes relationships are the most valuable commodity in the field of early childhood education.

**Patricia: Topics of importance and successes.** Patricia realized that a majority of her PD topics are related to “basics and logistics” connecting with her teachers regarding how to order and store specific items with an intent, such as how to store red clay and grey clay. In addition and more importantly, she focused on how to create meaningful relationships with colleagues, families and children, such as, using the proper tone of voice and not allowing frustration to take over. The ability to look for help or ask for help is what Patricia stated as an “overarching” subject, which helps to create collaboration with one another. Patricia feels that an important piece to PD is to venture out of your comfort zone and visit other schools.

**Patricia’s Successes.** The opportunities Patricia perceived to be successes are simple. First, she has created a system for teachers to get reimbursed. Teachers requesting professional development opportunities to be reimbursed teachers must submit a form to the director explaining the benefits the PD opportunity will bring to the teacher, classroom and center in addition to what the teacher’s plan is to present the information at the center. Second, is the idea that “we must continue in the state of wonder, wonder about everything-not necessarily asking questions and looking for a child or teacher to answer” (personal communication, June 17, 2013). Patricia does not believe children are ready to answer questions however helping teachers put everything in a “state of wonder” is more playful. Patricia encourages her teachers to play with materials and helps her
teachers understand this concept of wonder when planning for curriculum topics such as literacy, identity, mathematics, science etc. A third success Patricia is proud to report is the book club she created with her teaching teams. Patricia purchases a new book each year (this year’s topic was reflective teaching practices) and the group gathers together (monthly) to reflect as a teaching team to develop a deeper understanding of how to apply the information that is read, in addition, engaging in the suggested activities that were published in the book.

Natalie: Topics of importance and successes. There are many topics of professional development that Natalie feels are important for her staff. To begin, conveying the idea of collaboration, which is “essential to our work and we have new teachers joining us this year” (personal communication, June 24, 2013) is of utmost importance. Followed closely with observation for the creation of curriculum, which is the core of the work Natalie and her staff engaged in daily, included how to shape environments and organize the day to provide for inclusion of special rights children. Additionally, the integration of “academic” skills into the emergent curriculum happening in the classrooms, which means, the ability to support teachers’ understanding of cognitive development. This also includes inviting specialists with knowledge in areas such as electricity, architecture, hydraulics and sound for teachers to better understand the concepts children are exploring by asking appropriate questions and choosing materials to support their learning. Likewise, with new teachers starting, Natalie believes the need to review strategies and teachers’ attitudes are necessary for parent involvement and engagement to be a success. Furthermore, understanding and forming children’s “learning groups,” in order to intentionally engineer small work groups in the classroom.
Finally, in order to pull everything together, the use of technology is an important subject for Natalie and her teachers to understand and navigate.

**Natalie’s successes.** Natalie believes that the ongoing meetings she has with her teaching staff support relationships, sharing of work and sharing of questions about work. The meetings and daily interactions with colleagues, parents and children are her biggest successes in the area of professional development. Natalie asserted, “they are built in to our lives and this gives continuity to the learning,” relationships are the focus to learning. In addition, Natalie shares that being able to attend off-site events as a whole group is a success, and “is helpful in sharing perspectives and in applying learning,” which increases the likelihood of ongoing conversations about the experiences. Furthermore new teachers to the center are reading *Powerful Children* and the entire staff is reading chapters from *Making Learning Visible*, this type of group support through a book club allows Natalie and her staff to have deep conversations about the information that is read and develop plans to put emerging ideas into practice.

**Maggie: Topics of importance and successes.** The professional development topics on Maggie’s list consist of five large ideas. To begin, teambuilding and defining what the centers are, including experiencing and learning more about the Reggio Emilia approach in order to transform their centers. Likewise, with specific regard to the infant and toddler school, attending the RIE conferences is of critical importance. In addition, preparing for the NAEYC reaccreditation process, due next year is necessary to focus on by researching the updated standards and necessary requirements for accreditation. Maggie looks to the future as she tries to build leaders, with this idea, the opportunity for development in understanding what leadership looks like in early childhood education.
The last topic Maggie feels is important for her teachers to engage in is the preparation and understanding of working and supporting children and families with special needs.

**Maggie’s successes.** Maggie reflects on three professional development successes. The first was a PD opportunity on the topic of the importance of communication. The day consisted of games, reflection and team building. Everyone involved participated in a communication exercise that revealed each teacher’s communication type, for example, there were lions, dolphins, monkeys, etc. Teachers were tasked to mingle among their teams and understand each communication style. Later, teachers were paired together and needed to problem solve and role-play how to speak to one another. Maggie excitedly recalls what a success the day was.

The second successful gathering pertained providing the center with a “facelift” that was a grand opportunity for teambuilding. The teachers and directors gathered to discuss plans, intent and purposeful execution. From the shade of green paint, to the types of brushes to paint with were discussed. Teachers took before and after pictures to document the experience and share with the parents and children. The experience took four days over the summer and provided for tremendous growth opportunities in the ability to fix and build objects, such as how to use a drill, staple gun, hammer etc. “being here anyway in this facility is breaking down and so you have to learn to use a drill and learn to unclog the toilets. It’s part of your resume.” The third PD success, is similar to what two previous directors reported, reading and discussing books with their teachers in a “book club.” This year, Maggie provided two books to her staff, *Are You Listening* and *Infant and Toddlers at Work: Using Reggio-Inspired Materials to Support Brain*
Development. Together Maggie and her staff met to dialogue the new ideas gained from reading the books and consider ways to incorporate these plans into their environment.

Synthesis

Although the sample size of the directors interviewed was small, the wealth of information the directors shared is vast. Four out of five of the directors held a master’s degree, with the fifth director in the midst of completing her masters. Interestingly, one of the directors was passionate about not having her MA in ECE rather having a master’s in business because she believes an MA in ECE does not give the same pay-off in salary that an MBA does; poignantly this is the same director that began her career with the minimum education required (12 units) then pursued and completed her BA in ECE.

In addition, four out five of the directors have had experience in the classroom, as an ECE teacher the one director with no teaching experience is the same director that is finishing her MA. After having children, three off the directors moved changed their job titles, moving into administration or moving from elementary school to early childhood classroom. All five directors spoke highly of the importance of building a relationship with their teaching staff and that overall the relationship between teachers, parents and children out ways anything else. More specifically, the emotional intelligence ECE teachers have or develop is key to the foundation for continuing professional development. Emotional intelligence or the ability to self-reflect and engage in open and honest conversations, listening to feedback about oneself may be the first step in professional development for oneself.

Discussion of key ideas and the limitations of the interview questions and further research possibilities will be discussed in the Chapter Five to follow.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The thesis explored how early childhood education program directors (N=5) overcome challenges to encourage, plan, and execute ongoing professional development opportunities for their teaching staff at their ECE programs. The purpose of this study was to understand the complexities that are involved when directors take on this task. Through interviews with five current program directors, the themes related to relationships, collaboration, current knowledge and ongoing learning were revealed and will be discussed. Furthermore, ideas for future research will be shared.

Professional Development as a Complex System

Professional Development can be challenging because teacher learning happens as a complex system rather than a single event (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Compound this complexity of learning with the time and resources (Vesay, 2008) directors face when planning professional development and the result may be daunting. Whereas some of the directors interviewed developed creative solutions such as, fundraising and writing grants to help fund PD opportunities, the challenge of managing personalities and building relationships is perhaps the most demanding challenge to overcome.

Revelations of the Directors

Highlights from the thesis include the educational attainment of the directors, four out of five of the directors held a master’s degree, with the fifth director in the midst of completing her masters. Interestingly, one of the directors was passionate about not having her MA in ECE rather having a master’s in business because she believed an MA
in ECE did not give the same pay-off in salary that an MBA does; poignantly this is the same director who began her career with the minimum education required (12 units) then pursued and completed her BA in ECE. In addition, four out of five of the directors have had experience in the classroom, as an ECE teacher the one director with no teaching experience, is the same director finishing her MA. After having children, three of the directors changed their job titles, moving into administration or moving from elementary school to early childhood classroom. Ultimately, all five directors spoke highly of the importance of building a relationship with their teaching staff and that overall the relationship between teachers, parents and children outweighs anything else. More specifically, the emotional intelligence ECE teachers have or were developing was key to the foundation for continuing professional development. Emotional intelligence or the ability to self-reflect and engage in open and honest conversations and listening to feedback about oneself may be the first step in professional development for an individual.

The roles of relationships couldn’t be more central to the entire field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). The need for sensitive and adaptive social/emotional intelligence is the foundation for all interactions with children, families and staff. In addition, the ability to self-reflect and engage in open and honest conversations and listening to feedback about oneself may be the first step in professional development for an individual.

**California Early Childhood Educator Competencies and NAEYC Standards**

Equipping adults with the fundamental information to become effective teachers in the field of early childhood is full of complexities, particularly comprehending
learning standards for children, assessing the diverse development of individual children and connecting curriculum to children’s developmental levels (Chen & McNamee, 2006). To address this issue, the California Department of Education, Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) and First 5 California created the California ECE Competencies, considered a resource for Professional Development, is a portion of a larger structure known as the CA Early Learning and Development System (Figure 5.1), that is designed for children, families and educators to ensure high quality programs exist in the state to strengthen children’s learning and development (Child Development Division, California Department of Education, 2011).

Figure 5.1 California’s Early Learning and Development System

The California ECE competencies are divided into 12 distinct areas and clearly recognize the role of professional development for those working with young children and families. Leadership in early childhood education (the tenth competency area)
clarifies the description of leadership as the ability to interweave one’s “knowledge, skills, character attributes, and personality traits” seamlessly to stimulate and prompt teachers and administrators (in every role within the ECE profession) “toward a common goal” is essential to operating an effective early childhood education center (CDE, 2011 p. 90).

A Growth Opportunity

The opportunities for directors and teachers to engage in continuing learning can be accomplished smoothly if resources are made available. The online resources from the California Department of Education are important assets for professional development at all levels. It can help those teachers just just starting out in the field of ECE as well as guide the professional development of directors themselves. In addition, online national standards from the NAEYC provide research-supported policies and practices for programs as well as for directors and teachers. The next section will discuss these resources.

Using State and National Resources

Interestingly, none of the directors (N=5) interviewed mentioned the CDE Competencies (2011) or any other aspect of the CDE Early Learning System for that matter. However, they did reveal that having relationships (a subsection of the CDE, competencies) with each of their staff was fundamental to planning professional development opportunities. One topic for further study and for action on the part of directors could be an increased awareness and training related to the Competencies. This has significance on both the directors’ levels of professional development for themselves (because the competencies are across four levels of competencies (specifically supporting,
guiding, maintaining, and advancing). Performance Areas such as “Individual early childhood career development” (p. 99) includes goals at the supporting level - individuals just beginning in the field to those who are advancing the career including “Identifies and contributes to resources that promote professional development within and outside the program” (p. 99).

However, at the national level, four out of the five directors are engaging in the NAEYC re-accreditation process and each center is at a different level of the self-study process. According to NAEYC, Early Childhood Professional Development (PD) consists of three areas, Education, Training and Technical Assistance that is ongoing learning intended to support activities designed to help ECE professionals work closely with children and families (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011). As such, NAEYC and NACCRA (2011) describe professional development as education (initial training in degree programs), training (in-service trainings or on-going education to enhance existing skills), and technical assistance including mentoring, coaching, consultation, and professional development advising (aimed and tailored assistance to develop and strengthen implementation of knowledge) that can overlap one another (pp. 7-9).

Furthermore, NAEYC (2009) states that professional development (PD) is established to improve the knowledge, skills/behaviors, and attitudes/values of the early childhood workforce. To meet NAEYC’s mission of ‘assuring the provision of high-quality early childhood programs for young children,’ it is necessary to have a highly competent workforce for the early childhood field. Professional development provides the path to achieving this goal. (para.1)
Just Starting Out

Conversely, NAEYC and NACCRRA (2011) recognize with the ECE field’s varying educational requirements, the reality is not all ECE professionals begin their educational pathway by obtaining a degree, and entering the workforce as a teacher at an ECE center, others enter college to complete the basic classes and may not have any intention of completing an AA or higher or factors in life take place stopping the pursuit of a degree (Huss-Keeler, Peters, & Moss 2013). Because the basic requirements is 12-units in early childhood, some who are just beginning their careers in the field may need encouragement and support from both their directors and their supervising teachers. In this way, directors would need to support the classroom lead teacher to help with specific classroom supervision. This adds another layer to the PD complexity, that of scaffolding lead teachers to become trainers in their own classrooms. In this way, a leadership chain is established wherein the director must model the behaviors (such as respect, active listening, promoting quality, understanding development) for the staff and then the lead teachers with their assistant teachers must do the same. And this, of course, includes not only furthering teachers’ formal education (earning degrees) but also attending conferences and workshops particularly those affiliated with national and state organizations, such as NAEYC, Zero to Three, etc.

Outside the confines of a formal college educational program (such as one in Child Growth and Development or Early Childhood Education) how can in-service learning be optimized? In other words, what can a program director do to build knowledge into daily practice? Might it be possible for an early childhood education program director to cushion and bridge the gap between education level and professional
development? Could this be accomplished, first and foremost, by determining the level of education, specifically in early childhood education, a teacher currently possesses when hired and then providing effective methods of professional development to support the teacher’s ongoing skill development? However, there must be a careful balance with the educational standards or educational “politics” that are at play in some of the ECE centers.

Directors’ Widening Scope of Professional Development

As the directors interviewed alluded to, little things matter in relationships. Whereas, the directors described various areas within the ECE Competencies in their interviews, they did not connect the concepts to the Competencies, possibly, because the directors may not have been aware of this publication or possibly do not know how to navigate through the information. If this thought is taken a step further how do ECE directors collaborate with other directors to be introduced to use new tools such as, the ECE Competencies within the Early Learning System? Perhaps the California Director Mentor program, NAEYC, and the California Child Department Training Consortium (http://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/about.htm) could collaborate to form a Directors’ Consortium with the purpose of introducing or discussing how directors and centers are using the leadership and professional development competencies integrating the state and national goals. Such a consortium might help the ECE center directors develop and maintain these competencies among teachers possibly using the Individual Professional Development Plans (Sugarman, 20ll). In the next section, implications on how a director can promote and encourage teachers’ professional
development within three distinct areas (At the center level, formal education, professional organizations and ongoing collaboration) will be presented.

The Large Picture of ECE Professional Development

Although the content for the ECE Competencies and the entire Early Learning System are highly accessible (free online), and various professional development opportunities from the California Department of Education are free, this only addresses part of the challenge for directors’ ability to share the information with teachers. A distinct challenge is the notion of how directors support teachers’ access to the information (i.e. is there a computer available for teachers at work, do teachers have computers at home). How problematic is it for directors to allow teachers to step out of the classroom, for instance, to read up and start planning curricula based on the Early Learning System? Can a director cover a teacher’s shift for the day, a couple hours and if not, then how are directors expected to encourage their teachers to participate in the free opportunities provided?

Another possible challenge of professional development includes PD that is situated in mainstream language and culture. For example, some teachers may attend PD who are not proficient in English-the language of instruction for most professional development seminars. Another concern is how some teachers learn best. Some may do best with personal mentors, in a relationship-based environment. How could directors best identify the knowledge a teacher possessed (i.e. the different languages a teacher can speak) and build on it? How might a director learn how a teacher learns best for instance, in a small on-site group with familiar colleagues as opposed to an off-site seminar with
unfamiliar people? In the next section, four distinct ways for directors to promote professional development are described.

Figure 5.2

*Components for Directors’ Support of Professional Development*

**At the Center Level**

On-site professional development can consist of center directors mentoring the lead teachers and helping them to promote promising practices as well as openly engaging all the teachers directly and independently. This can take place in the way Patricia engages her teachers by working side-by-side in the classroom, discussing and posing questions to her teachers. This type of director-teacher mentoring can help and encourage lead teachers to build the skills to mentor and model specific teaching skills to their own teaching staff in their classrooms. In addition, the way Natalie promotes her teachers’ individual strengths by identifying those teachers as “experts” in areas such as technology, environments or special rights of children, can build on teachers’ natural
interests. These teacher “experts” can help alleviate the many demands that directors, experience and can foster co-learning throughout the center by studying together. This type of collaboration can inspire teachers to possibly return to school or pursue a further degree.

**Formal Education**

Another way directors could support teachers to obtain formal education would be to encourage teachers to academic credit toward their next higher degree. This higher education could be potentially tied to salary or with some subsidy (i.e. money for a book allowance or small stipend to pay for a class). Likewise, having increased flexible scheduling to accommodate academic calendars, such as leaving early to attend a formal class at a university or attending conferences to gain ongoing education credits can demonstrate support for teachers’ continuing education. Furthermore, if teachers have the consent of their director to engage and implement their school assignments within the center, directors, teachers and institutions for higher learning (i.e. university professors) can collaborate further to ensure knowledge is being implemented in the work environment. In this way, everyone wins: the teacher-student, the colleges and universities, and ultimately the director who is the link between the teachers-program and community.

**Professional Organization Membership**

Additionally, directors can foster ongoing professional development by encouraging memberships in outside organizations such as NAEYC or taking PITC (The Program for Infant/Toddler Care; CDE & West Ed, 1995-2011) training etc. These organizations offer workshops, conferences or seminars that hold value for both directors
and teachers. Other, targeted professional development programs such as, the Cal Tech ECE STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) conference or the Southern California Kindergarten Conference (for TK teachers) can be meaningful and promote ongoing professional development. A possible outcome that could come to fruition from attending outside conferences would be to connect with an ECE presenter and invite the presenter to the center for an intimate small group conference.

**Ongoing Collaboration**

After participating in PD, the ability to collaborate with others is highly desirable and needed for colleagues to deconstruct information, think, and discuss the new information in a safe environment. This requires developing and enhancing mechanisms and routines that support respectful and continued communication. In this type of positive work climate, teachers and directors can be honest and ask for help in understanding a topic. This collaboration is critical in many ways, but may be most essential when teachers suspect a child may have a special need. The possibility of implementing a “community of learners” in ECE programs where teachers and directors come together to collaborate, clarify information and develop goals for themselves to improve classroom practices (Chen & McNamee, 2006) is a great step to building trusting relationships.

Within the “community of learners” environment, the possibility of leveraging subject matter experts within a center allows for internal growth and sharing of knowledge. How a director celebrates and supports her teachers’ development can create a positive, growth ecology for teachers. Moreover, the use of Individual Professional Development Plans or other similar planning tools allow teachers to self-reflect and plan
next steps for development. The continued use of these tools can help teachers become reflective practitioners and make the conversations with directors more valuable. No matter what the PD is – the goal would be to bring it back to the center, talk about it – let it grow, thrive, and have an ongoing effect. Ultimately, for professional development to be effective, early childhood educators (teachers and directors) must understand how to take part in the process.

Directors would be wise to recognize how PD will target each person differently based to a large extent to that person’s motivation and interest. For some teachers and possibly directors, learning challenges may make them feel embarrassed in formal learning environments. Therefore, when directors understand this, they can engage multiple pathways for PD. And here again, it is worth restating, this is a relationships-based field, and the trust, support, and confidence between teachers and their directors are critical.

**Future Research**

The key points for future research might be to look at the three pathways (*education, training, and technical assistance*, NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011) of professional development and see if there are differences in identifying what works for whom and when. In this way, entry-level teachers may need different skills (such as classroom management survival skills) compared to well-seasoned teachers looking to become more involved in using social media to communicate with families or who want to earn an advanced degree. Ultimately, the quality of the match is critical – not just getting random PD training, but offering a variety of choices and systematically, studying what works, for whom, when, why and how.
Another area for potential research revolves back to the California Early Learning System (ELS). What programs tend to use the State resources (such as the Foundations, Curriculum Frameworks, Desired Results Developmental Profile, etc.) as cornerstones for professional development? A study that compares similar programs - some who engage the ELS and others who do not might yield interesting results. This is particularly true if the Early Childhood Educator Competencies (CDE, 2011) are put in as a centerpiece for professional growth.

**PD For ECE Directors**

How directors balance the ability to support ECE teachers’ intra-personal relationships in addition to the demanding variables required to operate an early childhood education center is important to explore. The opportunity to understand the kinds of support ECE directors need may be possible by creating an organizational chart that includes the multiple roles directors have (e.g., pedagogista, curriculum specialist, facilities specialist). In other words, how do directors balance all their responsibilities? Another question related to the roles and relationships among and between programs with multiple directors within a program or organization. What skills and knowledge do upcoming directors need prior to becoming an ECE director? These questions and many more could be addressed through professional development for directors.

**Conclusion**

In sum, as the research becomes clearer about the need for quality early care and learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Vesay, 2008) and that the quality is based on the skills of the teacher (Landry et al., 2009; Wagner & French, 2010), more and more attention to PD should occur. However, without time and funding, this is unlikely despite the
overwhelming rational to do so. What is ultimately needed is a requirement, with funding attached to it such as stipends, to provide ongoing PD for the professionals who have the most to gain and the most to give to young children and families. Ultimately, when lawmakers and stakeholders come together to explore ways to support optimal development for children 0-5, they should consider the role of directors in nurturing teachers’ development. Mandating continuing education in Early Childhood Education (as is required in medicine and dentistry) and subsidizing it as a result of the very low wages in ECE (Austin, Whitebook, Connors, & Darrah, 2011) may be an important investment at the state and national level.
CHAPTER SIX
AFTERWORD

In the 18 years of working in early childhood education, the term professional development has been appropriately used and simultaneously misunderstood and thus miss-used. I can reflect on my own development and remember balking at the idea of participating in a PD opportunity when I already learned the information being presented in my undergraduate studies. I slowing began to realize that just because I passed the designated courses to receive my degrees (A.A. and B.A.) did not mean I was necessarily applying the information. I realize now that part of the struggle, was my mind was being clouded by my various directors portraying the false reality that having a BA in Child Development was all that was needed. In essence, all I had to do was come to work and follow directions. However, I was turning into a robot as I went through my teaching day and did not like that feeling.

At some point I realized that I didn’t have all the answers. Luckily, I had the confidence to take a chance and apply for graduate school. I distinctly remember attending a lead teacher meeting and asking my director, how do I help my staff develop? But I quickly realized I couldn’t change anyone except myself, however as a lead teacher, how can I encourage and help support someone’s thoughts and help them create systematic action plans. I remember a comment that was made to me after beginning the graduate program, “Darlene will be a professional student.” This comment might have been made in response to quickly enrolling in graduate school, possibly because I already had my BA in child development and most teachers at my center did not continue on to obtain their MA or because I was truly passionate about how adults learn and apply
knowledge (but may not have realized it yet). Ironically, I took a hiatus from graduate school.

When I became an assistant director in 2009, I realized, I needed to finish what I started in 2002 and reapplied to graduate school. This time, I was emotionally and professionally ready to make a difference and again I asked myself, how do I help develop others? At this point in my career, I began to realize the wide spectrum of professional development. Sometimes, I felt like I spent all my time trying to put out the “fires” among the staff, families, etc. Ultimately, we had hoped that if the center provided the ‘just right’ professional development opportunities, we would have a magic solution: fires would not start. However, I quickly realized that there is no magic solution to any particular problem, but that professional development never stops, ever.

Once I realized that professional development could be as simple as downloading an article, reading a journal or discussing a child’s behavior with other teachers, I redoubled my resolve to promote professional development at my program. My curiosity sparked this thesis – asking, “What do other directors do to promote PD?” In this way, my passion for the field, my resolve to finish my MA degree, and my day-to-day responsibilities to lead a large employer-based childcare program were melded.

Looking back on the comment that was made regarding being a “professional student” I didn’t know exactly what that comment meant, or how to take it, but, I now even as I complete my MA, I see myself as a continuous learner and an advocate for helping others. I realize now that professional development is not the sole responsibility of one person or entity. Rather, PD is comprised of multiple pathways for ECE professionals: they must continue to travel through, sometimes running, other times
stumbling and most importantly, when ready, bringing others along for the journey. I often encourage others to think of professional development for adults the same way we look at children in early childhood education, by giving support, building relationships and helping develop confidence, self-efficacy, and competence.

The passion I have for helping the teachers and administrators I work with understand the true meaning of professional development is what has given me the momentum to complete this thesis. The opportunity I had to interview, develop relationships with directors from other schools and review the qualitative data has spawned new creations. I have created a professional development approval form for teachers to submit to their directors prior to having a PD opportunity reimbursed by the program. I have introduced, created and implemented the individual professional development plans, for the administrators, the lead teachers and teachers to help encourage self-reflections and as a vehicle for conversation and feedback given during the review process. I have been thinking about creating a “book club” and possibly now that I am finished with my thesis, this will be an opportunity to implement this idea, to encourage the staff to read something and come together to discuss it. It need not be a book, it could just be an article from Young Children (the NAEYC Journal for practitioners), but each little opportunity builds the wider, broader, and more solid platform for optimal early care and learning. Again, this is what we do to support children and we would be well-served to support our teachers in the same way.
References


California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, (2013). *Child Development Permits.* Sacramento, CA. Retrieved on November 1, 2013 from
http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl797.pdf


http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp

http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/cd/staffingqatt.asp

http://www.pitc.org/pub/pitc_docs/about.html

California Early Childhood Mentor Program (2013). *Director Mentors (Quick Fact Sheet).* Hayward, CA. Retrieved November 1, 2013 from
http://www.ecementor.org/DMfactSheet.html

http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/priorities/workforce-data/policy-agenda/


doi: 10.3102/0034654311413609

doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.031809.130707
http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=V4CoDuB8glUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=perry+preschool+project&ots=AHcjTECZNC&sig=96q-WJi5Hb_TestQEzNfBnxIukg#v=onepage&q=perry%20preschool%20project&f=false


http://www.ed.gov/early-learning/elc-draft-summary/definitions


APPENDIX A

Demographic Survey

Comparing How Childcare Directors Plan Professional Development Trainings.

How long have you been working in the Early Childhood Education field and in what capacities?

Current position title ____________________________________________ how long?__________

Previous ECE positions:

1._________________________________________ how long?______________________________

2._________________________________________ how long?______________________________

3._________________________________________ how long?______________________________

Before becoming a director, what other positions have you held in the ECE field?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How many years have you been a director at a Childcare Center?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Please circle the type of Childcare Center you are currently a director for:

Non-profit  For profit  Head Start  Private  Corporate  Employee operated
How many staff members are currently employed at your Center and with what age groups do they work?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

About you:

Name: ______________________________________________________________________________

Ethnicity: __________________________________________________________________________

Age: ________________________________________________________________________________

Gender: ______________________________________________________________________________

Highest level of formal Education Completed:

____________________________________________________________________________________

Briefly, describe your own experiences over the past five years in professional development. For example, what organizations do you belong to? Have you attended any professional development conferences or workshops? If so, please include the organization sponsoring the conference as well as the title and subject matter of the workshop(s).

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

May 30, 2013

I am very excited about a thesis that my student, Darlene Ocasek, is conducting with child care directors. Her study consists of 14 questions regarding the trajectory of directors’ experiences in the field and it focuses in particular on promoting staff development. If you are a director or if you know of one (especially in large centers or with a Reggio philosophy) please ask them if we might contact them with more information regarding the study. The interview can be face-to-face or arranged via telephone (such as on a drive home) for maximum flexibility and convenience. Feel free to contact me directly by responding to this email.
APPENDIX C

Follow-up Personalized Email

Darlene Ocasek
Darlene.Ocasek.963@my.csun.edu

June 1, 2013

Re: Thesis Research on ECE Directors’ Promoting Professional Development

Good Morning __________,

My Name is Darlene Ocasek, and I am a graduate student in Early Childhood Education program at California State University, Northridge. I am conducting my Thesis study with child care directors; Comparing How Directors Plan Professional Development Trainings. I am interviewing (consisting of 13 questions in addition to a demographic survey) directors regarding the trajectory of directors’ experiences in the field and it focuses in particular on promoting staff development. If you are interested or if you know of a director(s) (especially in large centers or centers that are Reggio inspired) please ask them if I might contact them with more information regarding the study. The interview questions and survey can be sent through email with a follow-up face-to-face interview over coffee or telephone interview (such as on a drive home), for maximum flexibility and convenience, can be arranged. Please let me know if you are interested or willing to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time!

Warmly,

Darlene Ocasek
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Comparing How Childcare Directors Plan Professional Development Trainings.

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education?

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director?
   a. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:
   b. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc.

3. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program?

4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?)

5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?)

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? (Prompts: role models on site?)

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts: subsidized fees for conferences?)

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional development for your staff (Prompts: individual differences among staff?)
Resistance to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations, challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities?)

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? (Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?)

10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.)

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they have been successful?

12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX E

Consent to Act As A Human Research Participant

California State University, Northridge

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Comparing How Childcare Directors Plan Professional Development Trainings.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Researcher:
Darlene D. Ocasek
Educational Psychology & Counseling
(818) 397-0730
Darlene.Ocasek@my.csun.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch Ph.D. & Coordinator of the MA in Early Childhood Education
Educational Psychology & Counseling
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
(818) 677-2529
Carrie-Rothstein-Fisch@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY
The current study examines the nuances of leadership in early childhood education revolving around how Early Childhood Program directors enhance their staff through professional development. The current study explores the complexities of moving existing early childhood educators (in other words, preschool teachers) toward their own growth and development as professionals.

SUBJECTS
Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you are an early childhood center director.

Exclusion Requirements
You are not eligible to participate in this study if you are not an early childcare center director.

Time Commitment
This study will involve approximately 30 to 60 minutes of your time.

PROCEDURES
You will be asked if you will be willing to participate in this thesis project. If so, a time and place of convenience to you will be determined. At that time, the Human Subjects Bills of Rights and this Informed Consent form will be offered to you for your approval and I will be happy to
answer any questions you may have. Specifically, I will ask for your permission to be interviewed, highlighting permission to audiotape record the interview. The interview should take approximately 30-60 minutes. Following the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief survey about your background in early childhood. This demographic survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Alternatively, if you prefer to be contacted by phone, the forms can be sent to your Center or I can read them aloud to you and obtain your consent by telephone. Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed for the purpose of capturing the detailed information being shared.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include emotional discomfort associated with questions being asked related to your role as an early childhood educator director. You may skip any question you wish without jeopardy. You may also experience fatigue during the interview, however you may stop the interview at any time you become uncomfortable.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits
The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include reflection on Professional Development pertaining to your belief system and childcare center staff. It is possible that you may gain awareness of strategies to motivate staff that you may not have articulated before or ideas regarding the content of staff meetings or workshops.

Benefits to Others or Society
The benefits to others and society entail the ability to define what Professional Development currently looks like and introduce the ECE competencies as a resource to heighten field of early childhood education as a professional field.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation
You will not be paid for your participation in this research study. For participating in this research study you will be offered a token of appreciation with a $5 gift card to Starbucks Coffee and a thank you card.

Costs
There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

Reimbursement
You will not be reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses, such as parking or transportation fees.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data
All identifiable information that will be collected about you and any people you speak about will be removed and replaced with a code.

**Data Storage**
All research data and identifiable data will be stored on my password-encrypted home computer that only I have access to. In addition, the audio recordings will also be stored in my home with no names or other identifying information attached and once transcribed will be erased as soon as possible.

**Data Access**
The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

**Data Retention**
The researchers intend to keep the research data until analysis of the information is completed and then it will be destroyed.

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS**
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.
If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.
**Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Printed Name of Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Printed Name of Researcher
APPENDIX F

Human Subjects Protocol Approval

Student Researcher

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL APPROVAL FORM
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

1. Title of research: Comparing How Childcare Directors Plan Professional Development Trainings.

2. Principal Investigator: Darlene Ousek

3. Major or Department: Early Childhood Education

4. Co-Investigators: 1. Student: □ Faculty: □

5. Name of Faculty Advisor: Carrie Rothstein-Fisch Ph.D

6. Projected Dates of Data Collection:

   Begin Subject Recruitment/Data Collection: March 2013  End Data Collection: December 2013

7. Course prefix and number for thesis/grad. project: EPC 696  Course title: Directed Graduate Research in Early Childhood Education

8. Check one: □ Unfunded  □ Funded  Name of Funding Source: Date (to be) submitted:

9. History of Protocol: □ New  □ Continuing (Previous Approval Date ___)

10. Existing Data: Will this study involve the use of existing data or specimens (Data/specimens currently existing at the time you submitted this project)? □ No  □ Yes

   If Yes, attach documentation indicating the authorization to access the data if not publicly available and if accessing from an agency outside of CSUN.

11. Subjects to be recruited (Check all that apply)

   a. □ Adults (18+ years)

   b. □ Minors specify age: __________

   c. □ Cognitively or Emotionally Impaired Persons

   d. □ CSUN Students who are directors

   e. □ Others (describe): Early Childhood Directors

   f. □ Using existing data

12. Data will include (check all variables that apply): You must specify all of this information in the Project Information Form.

   a. □ names of people

   b. □ email address

   c. □ street address

   d. □ phone numbers

   e. □ age

   f. □ gender

   g. □ ethnicity

13. Will subjects be identified by a coding system (i.e., other than by name)? YES □  NO □

14. Is compensation offered? YES □  NO □

15. If yes, describe (e.g., gift cert., cash, research credit). A token of appreciation in the form of a $5 gift card to Starbucks and a thank you card will be given to each participant.

16. Number of Subjects: 12

CSUN Office of Research and Sponsored Projects
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Revised

10/06
17. Method of recruiting (elaborate in Section 2 of Project Information Form). A snowball convenience sample will be used as I network with professors, fellow students and other colleagues to find early childcare directors to be potential participants in the study.

18. Will there be any deception (that is, not telling subjects exactly what is being tested)? YES ☐ NO ☒ (Provide justification for deception and explain how subjects are debriefed in Section 2 of the Project Information Form)

19. Potential Risk Exposure: ☐ Physical ☒ Psychological ☐ Economic ☐ Legal ☐ Social ☐ Other, specify: Stress or Anxiety may occur during the survey or interview process
(Elaborate in Section 4 of the Project Information Form)

20. Data Collection Instruments (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ standardized tests
   b. ☒ questionnaire
   c. ☐ interview
   d. ☐ other (specify)

21. Recorded by (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ written notes
   b. ☒ audio tape
   c. ☒ video tape/film
   d. ☐ photography
   e. ☐ observation

22. Administered by (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ in person (group setting)
   b. ☒ in person (individual)
   c. ☐ telephone
   d. ☐ text message
   e. ☒ email/website
   f. ☐ mail
   g. ☐ other (specify)

23. Findings used for (Check all that apply)
   a. ☐ publication
   b. ☐ evaluation
   c. ☐ needs assessment
   d. ☒ thesis/dissertation
   e. ☐ other (specify)

24. Are drugs or radioactive materials used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☒
If yes, then list the drugs or radioactive materials used in Section 1 of the Project Information Form and provide a detailed description of each, with justification for its use.

25. Are any medical devices or other equipment to be used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☒
If yes, describe in detail the medical devices or equipment to be used in Section 2 of the Project Information Form.

26. Did you attach a copy of any questionnaire(s), survey instrument(s) and/or interview schedule(s) referred to in this protocol?
   YES ☒ NO ☐

27. Is a letter of permission for subject recruitment attached (if recruiting from an organization outside of CSUN)?
   YES ☐ NO ☒

28. SIGNATURES:
   **All Signatures must be obtained prior to submission. Student projects must have faculty advisor’s signature. Faculty signature on this Protocol Approval Form indicates that:
   • You and your student are familiar with the regulations for human subject research as defined by California State University, Northridge’s Standing Advisory Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (SACPHS) and you and your student intend to follow those regulations when conducting this study. You have reviewed and approve of this Protocol Approval Form and accompanying documentation. You approve of the manner in which human subjects will be involved in this study.

   Signature of Faculty Advisor  Date  3/14/13
   Signature of Student Investigator  Date  3/14/13

FOR SACPHS AND RESEARCH OFFICE USE ONLY

CSUN Office of Research and Sponsored Projects
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Revised

10/6
APPENDIX G

Bill of Rights

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS

BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As an experimental subject I have the following rights:
1) To be told what the study is trying to find out,
2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices is different from what would be used in standard practice,
3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes,
4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be,
5) To be told the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study,
6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study,
7) To be told what sort of medical treatment (if needed) is available if any complications arise,
8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started. This decision will not affect my right to receive the care I would receive if I were not in the study.
9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions I should ask the researcher or the research assistant, or contact Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone (818) 677-2901.

X

Signature of Subject

Date
APPENDIX H

Director Interview Responses

“Bonnie” (Face to face interview)

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education? Okay. That’s a good story only because I think I became interested in it only because I put my daughter in a preschool and loved it and thought it was a great experience. And it was a way of speaking to each other that was not in the business world. And really to both parents and children. There’s a simplicity in it and a directness. That’s why I got into the field actually. I needed a job. I was doing other things in business and decided that I wanted to jump in and teach.

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director? Mm-hmm. Well I’ve had many different jobs. I was in real estate. And I think it was at that time I didn’t want to direct sales anymore but really wanted to – I was also doing a lot of cold calling and working from my home. So I didn’t really have a comradery of employees to work with, you know, coworkers. So it was nice to be able to go to a place and feel like that was my new home. Which is why as a parent I felt nurtured and wanted to continue that. So that’s how I started but then – back in the day you could work without getting your degree or units. So I started teaching part-time and then started to go to school.

3. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:
   a. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc. So we have about 160 children. They ah– they’re Jewish. They’re all Jewish. We have about 25 staff
members. That doesn’t include our parent and me and other preschool programs. Our ratios are – we take children between the ages of two and five years old. Two year olds are a one-to-five ratio. Three, four, and five year olds are a two-to-sixteen or one-to-eight ratio.

b. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program? Mm-hmm. Well quite. Of course, number one, we’re Jewish. Number two we are play and socialization based. And number three is that we follow some of the Reggio Emilia tenants, the ones we feel we can do well. We have six or seven of them. I’ll try to remember them all. They are emergent curriculum, the image of the child as being totally able to access the curriculum, the role of the teacher as being the negotiator between the children’s motivation and the provocations that we put out, the importance of parents and their role in our program, environment as a third teacher, process versus product is very important to us. So if we’re going to come up with things like this or like that and not cookie-cutter kind of ideas. So those are basically the ideas that we try to follow. Oh and documentation. We try to do a good job with that.

4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?)

Okay. This is a good question. I did not get my degree back in the day in early childhood. It took my extension units to get my childhood development unit and also my director’s unit. And when it became time for me to decide where I wanted to go on in school, I did not feel that getting a master’s in early childhood was going to
provide me with the kind of money I needed. I’m a single parent. I needed to earn enough money to live on. So I had always wanted to be in business. I always, you know, felt that was a direction for me. So I ended up going and getting my MBA. I have a master’s in business administration. I’m probably one of the only directors you’ll ever meet who decided they wanted to do that. I felt I wasn’t being valued by my community, my friends. You know-When you say you run a preschool they think, “Oh you get to play all day.” And that certainly isn’t what a director does. But especially because my goal was to keep moving up the ladder. Uh- That enabled me – it gave me everything I needed for my position here; accounting, advertising, internal relationships, corporate – not corporate but human resources. So it really provided me with a tremendous amount of opportunities for me to actually utilize what I learned in class. Because I was already a director but it enabled me to further my ability to run an effective school. Most of the time they [directors] don’t have an MBA. Because they don’t see it as a business. They see it as a way of life. And while I agree with that philosophy, when I started teaching I taught at the school that my daughter went to. And then my younger daughter went there too. I’m not sure I ever thought about being a director. So I really thought I just wanted to work and continue that. And then during that process I got divorced and had to sort of make my way. And I think it was at that time that I felt that I could do as good of job as everybody else. But the difference is everybody else focuses on curriculum. And while curriculum is very important, as a director I’m – personally that’s not where my head is at. So I wanted to create an environment and to see the big picture. You can’t just focus on curriculum, in my opinion. You have to see how does that relate to my
staff, which is human relations. How do they feel about working for me? What kind of benefits do they get? How do we treat our families? you know-I am also responsible to the synagogue, right? They support us, we support them. And everyone there is technically my boss. Everyone who belongs to the synagogue is my boss. How do I maintain a budget and do what we want to do within the curriculum and yet satisfy all the other people? Relationship includes the curriculum, it is curriculum, all of that relationship, right? And you’re right. I mean I think that I got – when I started my daughter’s preschool, what I loved was community. That was what drew me to it. That’s what’s kept me in the field, obviously. I loved the community that I was in, a community of parents and children. And I have wanted to do that at every school I’ve taught at and at every school that I’ve been a director. This is my third school. And each school has its own identity, its own – Teachers out in Thousand Oaks are different than the teachers that are out here. A lot of the women there don’t have to work. Their husbands provide for them. They want to work until 3:00 and that’s the end of the story. I have people here who need to work full time, who want to work during the summer. Like they need their paycheck. So the community of parents is different. The community of teachers is different. And I think it’s very important that as a director you know your community. You know who they are so that you can best serve them. So I think that’s very important. How would you relate PD for your Staff? Mm-hmm. So of course for me a lot of that is curriculum. However, the Reggio Emilia curriculum lends itself to other things. And I still believe, even though curriculum is important, the number one thing is relationship building between the parents, getting them to trust and believe in you.
And want – and for them, the teachers, to be in tune enough to see when something isn’t going right. And I will say – as much as we work on it, that is the piece that seems to be missing the most. That emotional intelligence is really hard to build in. And what I mean by that is the teachers think they’re doing a great job. They’re telling the parent every day, “Your son is having a good day, or he’s having a bad day.” And I just don’t want to hear that. And what I tell parents and what I tell my staff, honestly a child could be here from three hours to eight hours. The only time the parents see that teacher is at the beginning and or at the end of the day. That is their small window of relationship. The parent almost doesn’t care what happens in the rest of the day. So when I say to a teacher tell the parent one thing you saw that child do today that you gained something from it. “He played in the sandbox and built a huge tower.” “We sat together with so and so.” Those little snippets of time are the only piece that a parent sees. And that’s when they say to themselves, “I’m paying good money.” Or, “I’m not getting my money’s worth.” Because today it’s all about if someone says “I’m paying good money, I could leave and go somewhere else. So it’s customer service based. It’s like running a restaurant. I have to say it’s like running a restaurant. If you walk into a famous restaurant and you wait 20 minutes for someone to even come give you a menu-you’re gonna be mad, it’s not gonna to go well. So you have to say hello to people when they walk in. You have to say, “Hi, how are you?” Talk to the kid for minute. Say, “Hello, what’s going on?” If they don’t do that they’re missing the boat. And I will say as hard as we try to hammer this home it doesn’t always work. They are focused on the curriculum or on managing the day. They don’t see the bigger picture.
5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?)

Yeah we do a lot – every year except this year I have spent two weeks of staff inservice. Okay most schools don’t do that. We spend at least one week full time in a meeting room talking about nuts and bolts, safety, first aid CPR, how do you greet a parent, what do you do? Let’s problem solve, documentation. And then throughout the year at every staff meeting – and I have a meeting every week, mostly nuts and bolts I call it only because – what are we going to do for this holiday? You guys don’t like the bikes out on Friday, right? So it’s managing the little – the things that are important to them. And I get it. But we’ve hammered that home. And I – while, you know, we’re lucky because I work in a nonprofit organization where I don’t have to follow state standards. So not every 20 minutes I’m not bringing out some other thing that kids have to learn. And so we are so lucky that we have the ability to do that. And I think because of that – I think they can be sometimes a little smarter in the way that they’re talking to parents. I had a teacher come in on Friday, give you a good example. And she was worried about today. We’re doing the we have before camp, that’s optional care. So optional care is going on and I’ve got only ten kids. First I only had five. By Friday I had ten. So I only have one teacher. She walks in. She’s panicked and she says to me, “I’m panicked because I don’t have anyone else to work with me and I have a parent standing right outside my office.” I don’t want my teachers to say that in front of anybody, especially a parent! Walk into my office, close the door, and say I’m panicked. That emotional intelligence – you know. We hire sweet, kind, devoted, hardworking, amazing men and women who do this job.
It’s really hard. I expect more than the normal school. I expect them to have that little bit. And it doesn’t always come easy. So here’s what I find. Number one, we don’t have — most of our — 75 percent, 80 percent of my income — or rather our expenses goes to salaries or benefits. So there’s very little money for staff development. And we expect teachers to want to do that on their own. A lot of them do. Some do, some don’t. I do bring in at least one specialist a year where we spend a half a day or a whole day in addition to the two weeks that we have working on a topic that I think is important. The Reggio component has added an additional piece. We have a curriculum mentor, that’s one of the positions. And she’s also our Atelierista. So her job is to work with the children and also work with the teachers with how and where the curriculum is going. But the piece that we still miss is that human relationship piece. Which I would say we still sometimes don’t understand. The parents want to see their kids are being educated. I totally get it! And in Reggio, with the Reggio influence it was a little more difficult because we’re a little more emergent curriculum. And if you don’t put the documentation out or if you’re not — my teachers will say they write documentation, they write a big long thing about what happened and nobody reads it. And I’ve come to realize that the reason no one reads it is because it doesn’t involve their kids. And I know — this is a fight that I have with the curriculum mentor, not fight but a philosophical difference. I read all my stuff from my kids that involved their names. I wanted to know what they were involved with, what they did. Even in camp or whatever. Karen did this, Jaycee did this. This is the piece we’ve been missing for the last eight years. So that’s the new piece we’re going to add this year is that every newsletter is going to talk about every kid at least
one time in the newsletter. Otherwise, yeah, they’ll say yeah, they’re working on
trees again, for the five time in a row, they don’t get it. They also worry about
whether the child is going to be ready for kindergarten. And the other piece, the other
hard part of my job is parent education. And we can talk about that later. But I do
pay for my staff to go take some classes or take a workshop. But basically they have
to want it internally. They have to have that intrinsic, “I want to attend!“

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-
site? (Prompts: role models on site?) So the curriculum mentor is on a couple of
Reggio lists. And so she hears about an art workshop at Evergreen, or something else
at Branches and shares with the staff. And so we’ll pay for our teachers to go there.
And while I think – again, art is one of the things we do pretty well here. We still
have ways to grow in a lot of other ways.

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts:
subsidized fees for conferences?)

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional
development for your staff (Prompts: individual differences among staff? Resistance
to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations,
challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities?) The major challenge is
I can’t afford to pay them for taking a class. Nor can I afford to pay when they come
back and take the class. We’ve been stuck the last four years, my staff has not gotten
a raise in four years. Which is hard. And I really get it. And they’re taking on
second jobs and – the economy is really difficult. And I think that for professional
development I think that’s the hardest part. Where’s the incentive to utilize that if
you’re going to use it for a better pay grade or just to enjoy your work. So I think that’s the biggest challenge. They can’t afford it and I can’t afford it. If I can afford about $50 OR $100 a staff member, that’s fine. But that’s about all I have. And that’s not enough to take a class. Or it’s only enough to take one class. And then where do you take them? If you – ah you know, if the State of California wants people to have a BA in child development or get their master’s – I have to be honest with you, again, I’ve said it to myself and I will say it to them. You’re wasting your money if you get a master’s in early childhood. Go get a master’s in social work. Go get a master’s in business. Go get something that – if it costs me $20,000.00 for my schooling, I better get that back in the first couple of years or it’s going to have been a waste. So I don’t always look at everything as a dollar and cents, but that was something I really looked at. And I used to have the philosophy that you don’t stay at a job longer than four years. Stay in a job only four years. Why? Because you come in and you’re this new person, you’re this great changer. You’re going to come in, you’re going to solve all the problems and everything is going to be great. Right? You sign a two-year or three-year contract when you get the money you want. And then the fourth year they’re not going to – they’re going to put you back to the two or three percent. Right? So I was lucky enough to leverage that at my first job at *****. I went to *****and I’d gotten my master’s at my first school. And I was able to leverage it at my second school. Again I was in the same position as I was negotiating my four-year contract and I was going to get a three percent raise. And I was losing my child support because my kids were too old and I’m like no, I can’t do it.
So I went out and I was able to look for a job. I probably would have done that here too as well. But the economy was terrible at the time. And so I wasn’t going to risk it. I felt that I owed them four years and so I stayed and now I’m happy. So we’ll see how long that goes. But there’s no reason for me to leave at the moment. I have a lot of good challenges here.

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? (Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?) Think about how many people stay at a job and they’re there forty years. And if you’re good you’re going to find a place that’s going to pay you more money. Is money everything? No, it isn’t. And I was thinking about that today that money is – people – statistics say that people stay at a job even if they’re underpaid if they’re seen well by their boss, they love the community that they’re working in. They love their coworkers. And I really think that’s the key. You have to have those good combinations of everything. But if you have to put yourself – at some point you have to look at it and say, “Am I really getting what I’m worth? And do I deserve more? Do I need more?” And look accordingly.

10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.) So the newest thing is – I had a conversation – I have a theory that 90 percent – that there are 10 percent of the people that take up 90 percent of your time. And the 10 percent that take up your time eventually leave unhappy. It’s almost always the case. No matter what you do there’s something that’s going to happen that’s going to turn it around, potentially. Special needs is probably the biggest area for us. And in the –
and I am – I’ve always been an advocate for working with children with special needs. However, when you have a community like mine here, that’s very over-the-top helicopter parents, if a child gets bitten – someone in Hollywood – I wasn’t there but I heard the story that a kid bit him a couple of times and the other parents wanted to sue the other parents of the kid who bit. So – this is crazy, right? So what I used to do -- and when LA unified used to offer companions for kind of outside the box kids. It was great. I could call them, we would get an IEP and we could have somebody on staff. I had like seven or eight companions here at one time. Now of course the only reason they’re going to give them to you is unless they have autism or on the spectrum. So now what we do is we tell the parents, ask them to go find a therapist. Sometimes they need a shadow, we can’t afford them. But what I think – what I find – what parents are saying to me is the teachers didn’t know how to manage the child effectively.

They complained all the time about the child, wasn’t doing well. So I have a new theory. My new theory is I’m going to hire someone on a part-time basis who comes in who is a child development specialist who can help us – instead of having a parent call a therapist I’m going to call them in from my management to help the teachers find strategies of ways to work with this child so they don’t have to have the parent go get a therapist. So special needs is kind of the – ‘because it will throw everything off. And every classroom has two or three kids who need special attention, ADHD, ADD, the autism spectrum, they might have some language delays or other things. And while again, I think my teachers are pretty smart – some of them are lacking – a lot of them- they’re spoiled in some sense. And I don’t mean this in a bad way but
their classroom management skills are not that great. And I know enough to –and on one piece we look for teachers who are sweet and kind and loving and that want to follow this philosophy, I don’t want to hire a teacher who does only have good management skills because they’re lacking in all the other relationship building, so they don’t have that skill. But my teachers need a little bit more of that.

Do you do any kind of screening of the children? No. I’ve thought about it a couple of times. What we try to do is catch it really early and offer our parents programs. Or within the first couple of months. I don’t think our parents are very – parents don’t want to hear this stuff. They just don’t want to hear it. So that’s a challenge. So no, we don’t do it. I think we should. But I wouldn’t exclude kids because of it. And you know I think what that does is that child – that’s a box to put them. So we’re still managing that. It would probably be easier and better for me as a director but I think we would also turn away a lot of families that are willing to get help. We just don’t know – at the get go we don’t know the kids very well. So now we don’t.

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they have been successful? Well Patricia McGrath is this amazing woman in Santa Monica. And we have actually – Two things – we used to go to conference, the BJE the Builders Of Jewish Education had their own conference. It was only $50.00 for staff so it would cost maybe $2500.00 for us to go and take three little workshops. And they weren’t always the best quality or exactly what I wanted them to go see. So I decided the last couple of years not to send them and instead to bring in someone who I felt my staff could bond to. So two years ago – for two years we had Patricia
here at our staff meetings at the beginning of the year talking about different issues. And then last year we went to her school and did another whole workshop. And I think those were beneficial to our growth. But we have a long way to go because I don’t require – I require everyone to be here for a staff meeting for nuts and bolts but I don’t require them – I should be able to have a meeting at least once a month on some topic and pay them to be there. But a lot of my staff have a second job, it doesn’t work out well. But I can do it voluntarily. I can bring somebody in and in lunch or dinner, whatever, pizza. And we can spend a couple of hours together. That I didn’t do last year and probably my weakness. So that’s going to be brought back this year as a permanent – here are the topics we want to cover, here are the people who are going to come in. And every month we can revisit. Staff have to be here at 8:15-3:15, we have early care at 7:30- and we can sometimes have meetings either in the early morning or the afternoon. Again some people can’t make it. I can bring in a majority of my staff in so from 3:30 to 5:30. We’ve tried that and it was rather successful. We are closed to families in the summer-so we have opportunities to gather with staff during the Summer Months too. I think the piece that works so well is you are going to get people who are motivated to learn. And I have found, honestly, that the people who show up are the people who really want to learn something new, they’re hungry for it. And if they came and got something from it most likely they’ll want to do it again. So my one thing, and I, you know, bring dinner.

12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff? Yeah. Well that’s a little bit of a challenge probably.
You know, as a new director I always say that your first should learn everything you can learn. Make the changes everybody wants to make but the changes cannot be from only you. They have to be bought by the people who work there. Let me give you a stupid example. When I ___ they had had a director there for like 15 years. I’m going to jump in and they’re not going to like me right away, probably. Or they’ll like me but they’re not going to trust me if I don’t know enough about their own organization. So I came in and I hosted a meeting before school started. And I said, “Look, what works great?” And they told me what works really well. And then I said, “What things would you like to change? Or what didn’t work well?” And I made a list of five things. And I said, “Of these five things I have a couple of ideas how we could change them but it’s going to be up to you. You tell me.” They liked the ideas. We changed those minor things. And then as it went on and I learned about what was going on I still tried to buy in a lot of my staff who were not open to some of the changes. The hardest thing is coming in and making those changes that you may not know the culture right away. So it’s important to find out why people are doing what they do. Then I guess also with the two other directors that work with you, they have more experience than you do. So you’re going to have to listen to them. And I would go to them for advice. Even if you don’t want to use their advice. I think a lot of times we think that we’re in this job by ourselves. And I have learned, because I worked so closely with parents, that – that’s pretty much my day, now. I mean I do my budget and I do my advertising but I manage and facilitate parents. That’s my biggest role. And they do a lot of things for us. I have a multitude of parents that want to help out. So that’s great. But I always ask them for advice.
Because I’m not young any more. They have different ideas. And I think getting buy-in and making them feel important is really key. In fact I will also do that in a classroom. If a classroom is having difficulty I have usually one or two parents that I feel I can call in that class. And I say confidentially, I want to get your take on something “Your kid -- or I heard this rumor about this, do you think this is true?” And they feel valued, the parent, and they can help me make those critical decisions. So I try not to make too many critical decisions on my own unless I have to.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add? No, just congratulations on being director. And I will just tell you, I am a mentor director. So the California State pays me to mentor other directors. It’s free for you. And you have up to 20 hours of service and it starts in August. So I’ll lay it out there in case you’re ever interested. This one is run out of Valley College. So all I do is I get you a form, you fill it out, they approve it in San Francisco and then we just document our hours. And then it pretty much – I’m more of a coach mentor. I’m gonna tell you what to do unless you want me to tell you what to do. But pretty much I help directors find their path. And so I do that. And then I also consult with – I’m also a consultant for other organizations that have preschool, if they haven’t figured out things or don’t know how they are not making money etc. So anyway if you ever hear of anybody that needs a mentor I am available.
Director Interview Responses

“Krystal”

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education? I have always been drawn to how we learn and how our environments shape that learning. My work history shows this interest focused on children as a touchstone but my fascination with human development has been a lifelong passion. Having my own children narrowed my focus for several years on the preschool ages, how they learn, how contexts influence what they learn, how political contexts promote how/what they should learn and how to develop the whole child through adulthood.

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director? As a student I met my co-worker. ********** was on a panel as a representative of ECE directors in the area. I attended this panel because I was at a crossroads in my college career. I was torn between becoming a teacher or a director. I resonated with what she was saying on the panel and approached her afterwards. We discussed leadership in the field and she invited me to intern for the summer and the school I currently work in. I finished my ECE certificate at SMC, got my AA and focused on Early Childhood Ed for my BA/MA. When approaching another crossroads during my Masters studies, I chose Human Development over ECE because of my passion for working with adults and children in development. I plan to teach ECE at the college level when finished and continue mentoring and studying within all professional associations.

3. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:
a. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc. We are licensed for 60/day but because of flexible schedules we serve about 75 families. We have 6 group of children who share two large classrooms, an atelier, two playgrounds and a middle courtyard. The children in our program start with us at age 3 (by September) and leave to kindergarten, staying a 3rd year if needed. Our staffing rations are 6:1 as we have interns through SMC and the CECMP program all year.

b. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program? Our school philosophy is based on co-construction of knowledge. We value the principles of the Reggio approach and are inspired by them. We apply theorists such as Vygotsky, Dewey, Montessori, and Erikson as well as Malaguzzi to our daily work and curriculum.

4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?) Professional development is a passion of mine. I define it as gaining new insight into yourself and your work. I work as a collective leader, involving my staff in all decisions and development of ideas. This way they are accountable for the decisions made together and have more ownership of ideas and actions. In our staff meetings (once a week whole staff, once a week for each team of three groups) we share the children’s work and analyze their interest and learning goals as well as define measurable objectives. We attend workshops, conferences and book groups together. All staff is included. Important topics to develop the staff are an agreement on school values, philosophies and communication.
5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?) Benefits of Professional Development are inspiration and deeper reflection gained through study and discourse. These two powerful tools are put to use in the classroom to enable a deeper experience for the children, ourselves and our parents.

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? (Prompts: role models on site?) Our staff is eager to learn and while difficult to get out we make time to travel together, close the school for professional development days and have specialists speak with us during staff meetings. Motivating staff comes from hearing their needs and designing professional development opportunities to address those needs.

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts: subsidized fees for conferences?) We budget for closed days, pay our teachers for working on days off and fundraise for professional development. We have recently concluded our grant from the Annenberg and are in process of writing another for the Westside collaborative to study together with financial support.

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional development for your staff (Prompts: individual differences among staff? Resistance to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations, challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities?) WE remain flexible with our staff and accommodate other responsibilities. I have not encountered resistance due to creating development along their interests. Inspiration from other schools encourages the staff to learn foreign topics. Teachers are researchers and
visiting other schools allows for rediscovery. Discourse serves to accept differences and find similarities.

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? Challenges continue to be staying open to differences of sharing reflections. While most of us are comfortable with verbal expression some prefer writing, some prefer recording thoughts and some put together presentations to share insights. It enriches the sharing experience and keeps us aware of the differences in each teachers, child, parent we communicate with. (Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?) When challenged with staff, I invite 1:1 meetings and work hard to make a safe environment for expression. I did not come from this kind of leadership model but have overcome the typical authoritarian work model to create a community which is responsible for each other by following Jane Vella, Lee Wah, Thomas Horton, Paulo Freire and more examples of collective leadership and communication models.

10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.) Right now we are focusing on lifting the veil of what we do at school for our parents. Parent education requires a clear presentation of our values and how they look in our school. We don’t want to be revered as magicians who can get children to behave miraculously when at home, they are tyrants. We want to share perspectives and techniques with parents that will serve to bring all of us on the same page. As for professional development, this requires more reflection on the staff’s part to put into words or representations what techniques we use. We are learning keynote for
presentations and practicing reflective listening as a whole staff so that our language is consistent with the children and we can present a clear image to the parents.

In addition, when September comes along we take time to introduce the space and environment to children, parents, teachers; including spending a tremendous time on building relationships with all involved. We continue to always discuss and review reflective listening, the image of the child and help teachers overcome their insecurities that they may have.

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they have been successful? Creating relationship is the fundamental key to studying and working together. On or off site motivation is high if engagement with the group is high. One year I had lower morale than usual. I determined that our teachers had fallen out of sync with each other and had marginalized themselves into cliques due to a challenging set of children and new staff. Following our theorists, I engaged the staff in making relationship through materials. It’s a simple concept, but effective.

When you physically work with someone in an intimate setting, you find commonalities and make bridges that give you new regard for each other. At the end of this two-day project we met as a whole group and the stories of hurt, mistrust, resentment and fear emerged in a respectful and supportive way that only a relationship can support. With facilitation we were able to come together again and work toward our higher values. Humans want affirmation, as a director, that is what your teachers want and need. When teachers ask me questions, I do not give answers, rather, I point the teachers in the direction to problem solve (suggestions) or the
resource to help teachers gain the knowledge and understand how to research information.

12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff? Focusing on the values promotes a bond that can be referred to over time. Make sure relationship is one of those values. Make sure you play with resources, for example, before we present clay to the children, the teachers have a chance to explore and reflect on the material. Teachers can do this with the children as well.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add? Don’t be afraid of emotions. Read books and gain a new understanding of human development that promotes the long view. Invest in deep and meaningful relationships with your staff. Be a reflective listener. If the goal is staff retention and high morale, one has to consider the long view.
Director Interview Responses

“Patricia”

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education? When I began college what was I going to embarked upon in my life, I was totally lost, taking basic courses, ended up stumbling onto human development dept. (oh we have that department on campus?!?) I went to the dept with- I will never forget his name-Dr. **** he was wonderful. Every class I took in the dept lead me to wanting more. it was always that wanting more that helped me progress in obtaining my degree with working with children.

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director? After my BA in child development I worked in field for a little bit, I moved to Texas and was a Bi-lingual (Spanish) head start teacher and realized the children were not getting it; children had never have seen the ocean, so why was I taking about something that they didn’t understand, i was searching for something else. I took a leap and moved to the east coast and went to NYU, received my MA in ECE and Elementary Education. I worked in a public school,-at this point I thought maybe public school was where I needed to be. But my heart was still in ECE career. Great to see the other side some regards felt really good. I realized theory and practice was so different. I moved to Los Angeles and was hired as an administrator at *** infant and toddler Development Center and realized the way you treat your employees was extremely important. Honestly it was serendipitous it landed in my lap. My co-worker began engaging me in conversations in Reggio approach and introducing me to other schools and tours; I had no idea that
touring other schools could happen. I took Santa Monica school tours, read books-then wanted to read more, then I realized Santa Monica college had classes and I enrolled in reggio classes, documentation classes started coming to have my own self assessments and realizing I got or understood some areas, but had to focus and make more advancements, by focusing on the information I didn’t understand. I was in tune enough with my own learning that I could see what I needed to focus on. once I started working for ***** we have an extensive PD I know I will never miss 0-3 conference; I will go to RIE conference every other year. Its all the research based information. When I go on school tours I will ask very kindly to see a newsletter and begin the relationship with the school I am touring.

3. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:

a. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc. *****opened in 1985-it was very different in beginning; staff, families would walk into the school and walk directly to their designated classrooms. we reorganized space and placed planters to develop natural walkway that forced parents, teachers and children to walkthrough middle courtyard. people began bumping into others and forming relationships. Our ratios: infant room (0-3 months) 1:3, toddler (2-3.5 years) 1:6, preschool (3.5-5) 1:8, TK (5-6 years) 1:8

b. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program? Reggio approach in supporting the child’s right to develop a positive disposition toward learning and our philosophy uses the model of integrated social constructivist practice based on learning theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey.
4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?)

I realized early in my career that the Center I work for doesn’t OWE me Professional Development, I had to seek those opportunities and learn through various modes. Professional development is a continuous process, including self and group reflections. I think PD is when somebody is closely linked to the area of their profession but doesn’t necessarily have to be just focused directly on your area of profession. For example-studying an area that is connected to something that isn’t just about your profession. We pay for conferences that are a passion for teachers.

Ceramic classes-society (what a bowl means in various societies), nesting (putting bowls in each other), teachers making connections about what children collect and put in their bowls. It was incredible and valuable that the teachers were making these connections. It felt good to say, yes we are going to pay for that ceramic class. At our centers the teachers have 2 hours of planning time/per week to discuss lesson plans, write newsletters, prepare activities etc. 1.5 hours per week the classrooms meet as a team (2 teachers 1 time a week we have something called Co-inquiry meeting that teachers from both centers come together to look at video-tape of children together and try to find the metaphors in the work or see what you may be interested in or brainstorm and discuss if this was my work, what would I do? how these experiences relate to your own work. We do it differently among the age groups and of course who is presented, but that is the general framework of what we do. 1 time a month All staff at the Center meets.—but that’s boring! Its just logistics in
meaning parent coffees, etc. We have our 6 days of professional development that is cross-sites,

5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?)

   continuous learner In the ECE field which is generally a low paying field- I feel like it feels like a nice morale and a boost for teachers that you are investing in them as a person. I think it kind of spans that almost Humanitarian way of saying “I believe in you!” I was just talking to two teachers that we are taking to Sweden to the region institute and they are looking at me with stars in their eyes because we (they are going with me) to Sweden. That response is valuable, you can’t put a price on that.

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? (Prompts: role models on site?) Trying to met someone at their point of entry- so where are you? Read and reflect on how teachers understand information- sometime our PD $ is spent on books, we participate in a book club. webinars-I have found are better for directors (non-profit, budgeting , NAEYC etc.) haven’t found anything good in terms of a webinar related to ece articles that are really specific and meaningful to a teacher; you have to draw the teacher in, cant say here’s an article everyone…NO ONE reads it, rather if you can say-you are gonna love this article, I read it and have highlighted some areas- I find they are more apt to read it-especially if i say, want me to cover you in the classroom for 20 minutes and you can read it? i find once they begin to engage a little bit, they usually are more interested. You have to remember teachers have a lot going on; I have to call that parent, talk to that
colleague who rolled their eyes at me, get lunch ready-I mean whatever it is- its hard to shift gears.

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts: subsidized fees for conferences?) PD at the ****** 60,000 we invest cross-sites for whatever endeavors teachers chose; can be a workshop, a training a conference college class-this is a follow-up. someone taking a specific class, it is their responsibility to provide information on the class example-ECERS and ITERS. Draw the information back to how this educational endeavor will be tied into the center environment. Supervision in the classroom experience teacher/director seating side-by-side; video recording and reflecting constant practice and looking ongoing education. We set goals how does a teacher work with children with challenging behaviors without becoming frustrated? The teachers must create three specific goals with their directors. One goal revolving around parents, one goal about children and one goal about their colleagues. This also includes director and teacher make the plan includes how each teacher will meet that goal. Example I will observe a specific teacher 4 times a month, go to this conference. We deconstruct the goal so it feels attainable and setting out the pathway for the teachers. Directors job is to follow up and there are two other times a year where the director and teachers meet formally to follow up on the progression of the goals. I will meet with this person four times a month, this includes ongoing education by tying the information back in at the center; meeting with your team to share information and ideas, Sept. teachers set goals, and review in Jan. hopefully teachers are looking at the goals all the time. Some teachers take goals from site directors, so it is the site director that helps create the goal. If an
assistant teacher is obtaining their degree—that would be their goal, not necessarily meeting with the director to set additional (parent/child/colleagues specific goal) it like we don’t want to bite off more than what we chew.

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional development for your staff (Prompts: individual differences among staff? Resistance to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations, challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities)

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? (Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?) we have all been to some conferences that are not what we expect-we reflect and have a deeper conversation about the specific conference when it is available the next time—maybe we don’t want to spend the money to attend this conference again. OPAL, the most frustrating or challenging is when investing in teachers and they leave. I have to hope they take what was offered (that seed that was planted) and they implement with other children etc wherever you go, frankly, its unfortunate, a lot of frustration, I feel like you are educating everyone else’s teachers. The second one is when you can’t be equitable across the board. Its kind of challenging in itself. How do I choose a certain number of staff to attend a conference when 10 really want to go? Do I only send Lead teachers? This is extremely challenging. Sometimes with my newer staff- after going on a school tour/visit, they’ll come back and say- BUT THEY do it like this-its very black and white!! We must think through the process, teachers don’t always understand the variables in place and the process of engaging the directors, teachers and all the staff
not only are we one school we are two schools. Big process-financial piece, looking at whole picture (supplies, PD, etc.). One of our core practices- we don’t let one classroom do something that another classroom is not engaging ex. writing a newsletter and other classroom is not, it shows parents, staff one room is more committed than the other. We help the teachers have that conversation and understand.

10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.) we are educators basics and logistics (store and order specific items with reason and logic-clay-red gray) tone of voice/frustration-how do you seek help with our co-teachers (relationships). How do you come back to that place when you need help with over-arching type of things. The Six days of PD which includes a two day retreat is an important time to be in collaboration, go out in the community and see other schools and teachers because it feels like isolation when speaking about our own school-lets get out and see other schools. The OPAL school in Portland was a great PD opportunity. I got so much and immediately was able come back and implement it was that translatable. ***** spent a tremendous amount of money to make this happen. If teachers want to go to professional development classes/workshops etc. they fill out a form and submit to their directors explaining the benefits etc. and what the plan is to bring the information back to the center. TOOL: teachers fill out form and inform directors etc.

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they
have been successful? We must continue in the state of wonder, wonder about everything—not necessarily asking questions and looking for a child or teacher to answer—I don’t even think children are ready for answers perse—however being in a state of wonder and helping teachers put everything in the state of wonder, it’s more playful, id like all teachers to understand this concept. With the idea of sense of wonder how do I wrap that concept around Literacy, identity, Mathematics, Science etc. If we write our goals and don’t do anything with it, it sinks. We need to put it at the forefront and make it happen—this year our goals are four pages long. I know that teachers are connecting children’s learning to development and wonder because I read our documentation and it is not just about making the learning visible, but you also have to engage the parents and their questions is part of the medium and conversations can be pulled out the significance of the work the children are doing, it brings meaning. The book we are reading now is a spiral bound book about reflective teaching practices and focused on intentions. Our success—was reading the book and engaging in the suggested exercise in the book. Thinking about images in classroom and reflecting on questions such as how do we continue to add, to our existing environments? We enjoy celebrating milestones and achievements with staff

12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff? Remember center directors are part of the process—take time to reflect often and meet your staff where they are!!! I Can’t expect others to understand something until I understand it, I read *The Hundred Languages of Kids* twice because I needed to absorb the information and have it make sense. Give others the freedom to explore at their own rate and allow them to become the teacher
they are. We all must work together. I bring and share information in a matter of fact way. For Professional Development to be successful, I do believe teachers need time, try to cover a teacher, so they can step out of the classroom to read, teachers are being pulled around-meeting with parents, needing to read, staff meetings-no wonder the teachers can’t think! Our pedagogista is really great and has high expectations. She is realistic and we must have compassion. We have four pages of CENTER goals: new goals and continuing goals. They are drafted under loose headings, we evaluate at the end of each year-how did we do last year, where are we this year, with the fiscal audit, safety risk management etc. Each year, the review process repeats, this year we will review any new NAEYC requirements, for example, teachers physically in the nap rooms; we didn’t make the rule up, but we have to inform and share with staff, bring everyone up to date. We must abide by it. Negotiating and collaborating is important and always an ongoing process. For example, do you always get the laptop and the time? And lastly, PD does not stop. hopefully a returning family will not step into the same Center as before.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add? Bring key (research based and concrete factual ) information to staff, continue to discuss and share the vision of the process and journey your center is striving for.
Director Interview Responses

“Natalie”

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education? With a BA in Spanish and a Multiple Subject Credential—I was placed in the kindergarten classroom as a new teacher—and loved the age! Teaching for about 10 years in kinder/first public school settings, I saw the shift in values in the public ECE classrooms. Very disappointing to see the change to an inappropriate curriculum. After my daughters were born, I returned to teaching at the preschool level—in the private school setting, hoping that I would be able to work in creative and appropriate ways with young children. This was generally true. However, at this point in time, I see once again how the elementary curriculum has come into the preschool classroom in many schools.

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director? My first administrative experience was at the private school where I was a teacher for several years—preschool, kinder and first grade. I was also a parent at the school. When the founding director retired, I was asked to take the role of elementary director, working with the preschool director (new to her role and to leadership), the toddler program director and a new administrative head. I ended up taking on many of the responsibilities of the preschool director due to her newness to the role and to her choice to also teach as well as those of the administrative head who did not have a background in education. Fortunately, I had some good role models in my previous public school experience whose examples I called upon with regard to the organizational aspects of the work—
and good training and education in terms of methods and curriculum. I was not prepared for the politics and economics of the role and experienced a big learning curve with regard to bringing change to a well-established school in a period of transition. When my daughters graduated from that school—so did I, returning to school for current ECE units at Pierce College—which included the admin/supervision classes. . . and then for an MA degree at CSUN. Carrie and Jan—and Madeleine Lieber—have been (are) wonderful role models in many ways—still. I say to myself, “What questions would _____ ask in this situation?”

3. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:

a. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc. We have four classrooms—ages 2.9 to 5+. Each classroom has 12 to 16 children, staffed by two co-teachers. The two classes of younger children share a support teacher and an atelierista. The two classes of older children also share a support teacher and an atelierista. A third atelierista works outside with all of the children. Ratios shift from 8 to 1 to 4 to 1, depending upon the activity and the classroom.

b. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program? We are inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. The three atelieristas are a unique feature of our school—as well as our lovely outdoor play environment in which children play for about 90 minutes or more per day.

4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?) From our reading and study of the RE approach, we are learning that professional
development opportunities occur in every moment of our daily lives together with the children and their families—and with one another. This understanding is helping us to be better listeners and learners. We meet as classroom teams or as age group teams after school each week and as a whole faculty most Friday afternoons for 2 hours. These meetings include discussion of particular children and parents, documentation of children and teachers’ current work, the environment and logistics. Studio teachers also offer explorations with various materials to help us gain confidence with the media and to help us understand how children might feel as they explore the materials. All teachers participate in these meetings in some way. We have started using video to document our work and we view video clips together—with permission and cooperation from colleagues. We hope that this practice will grow as teachers become more comfortable in sharing their areas for growth or moments for growth as well as their strengths. This happens over time as we continue to get to know one another. Community-building experiences such as dining out together, walks in our neighborhood, and visits to other schools as a whole faculty help to build the relationships needed to be effective collaborators. In addition to curriculum development, we include topics such as Big Body Play, Gender-based Play, Sensory Integration and Speech/Lang. Development, and technology related subjects, inviting experts to visit us for Friday meetings. These topics are chosen based upon the conversations and challenges or interests of our staff at a particular time. We recently invited a parent who is an architect/designer to visit both children and teachers to share his use of technology to enhance his design work. (I described the workshops and conferences we have recently attended in the Survey.)
5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?) Learning is ongoing. We wish to be “fresh” in our understandings and our enthusiasm for our work. The work is very complex and requires many skills, meaning that we have to continue our learning each day. By sharing many of our professional development experiences, we can also support one another’s application of the learning.

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? (Prompts: role models on site?) We have “experts” on our staff in different areas of the work—technology, social-emotional development, environments, materials, special rights children, etc. and we consult one another for opinions and advice. We also encourage (and expect) teachers and directors to “present” their work at meetings. This reflection process is valuable to all. Teachers and directors also create documentation to share with parents, children and colleagues each week—more reflection. Long-term projects are documented in books published online—a lot of data organization and reflection are involved in this process.

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts: subsidized fees for conferences?) The preschool pays for all workshops, conferences and gives teachers/directors time to attend (usually paid time—at least a stipend, if not a regular day’s pay). The preschool gives teachers enrolled in classes about $200 annually for books or fees.

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional development for your staff? (Prompts: individual differences among staff? Resistance
to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations, challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities) Because we have some teachers who came to the field from other fields—taking Child Development or Early Childhood Education classes to qualify for teaching positions, it is sometimes hard to motivate them to go back to school to focus on teaching. Two other teachers who could be working on a BA (and happen to be our best teachers) have young children. We have been understanding and generous with pay raises, but will be making it clear this year that future pay raises will be tied to some effort to continue formal education. However, the point is to move forward with the learning—and we try to offer realistic and pertinent opportunities that can be utilized by all teachers. (And, in fact, many of these workshops and school visits are as valuable as the formal classes.)

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? Time is always a challenge. Even with our meeting schedule each week, we never seem to have enough time to touch upon all that is interesting or needed. This year we are going to be very intentional with our Friday meetings with regard to blocking out specific dates for specific topics chosen collectively in the early part of the school year. $$ are also a challenge. We are at a point where most parents really value teachers’ learning and we sometimes ask for donations to support our professional development fund.(Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?) See above. I also meet individually with teachers as part of relationship building and self-evaluation and we talk about areas for growth in these meetings.
10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.)

Collaboration—essential to our work (and we have new teachers joining us this year)
Observation for the creation of curriculum—at the core of the work, observation for the inclusion of special rights children—how to shape environments and organize the day. Integration of “academic” skills into emergent curriculum—supporting teachers understanding of cognitive development. Parent involvement—with new teachers, need to review strategies and attitudes. Invitation of specialists in subject areas such as electricity, architecture, hydraulics, sound—to help us better understand concepts that children explore—and then ask appropriate questions or choose interesting materials for their play. Use of technology to enhance our documentation—especially for new teachers. Formation of “learning groups”—how to better engineer children’s small group work

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they have been successful? I think our ongoing meetings support relationships, sharing of work and sharing of questions about work. These meetings and the daily interactions with colleagues, parents and children are our biggest successes in the area of professional development. They are “built in” to our lives and this gives continuity to the learning. Being able to attend off-site events, etc. as a whole group is another success. Very helpful in sharing perspectives and in applying learning. No excuses for “not knowing” and increases the likelihood of ongoing conversations about the experience.
12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff? I would suggest that you promote the concept that “professional development” happens everywhere, all the time. We have much to learn from one another, from the children, and from parents. PD does not have to take place at a conference or workshop. The whole group attendance at off-site events is also very helpful. In our Admission Agreement, we include 3 unspecified school closures for the purpose of professional development. As the opportunities are announced after school starts—such as school visits, Learning Tours—we share the dates with parents. This allows us to close the school and participate as an entire staff. Of course, communication with families about the value of the experiences and their benefit to children is important in advance.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add? Are there some books or articles that you find especially valuable and interesting that you would like to share with your colleagues? For example, our new teachers are reading, Powerful Children, as part of their preparation for the school year. In addition, we are all reading recent Young Children articles and a few chapters from Making Learning Visible. We will meet during the first weeks of school before children join us to talk about our reading. Identifying “intentions” for the school year will help to guide the professional development topics. Including yourself as a learner in the learning group is important. Referring to “our learning” and “our staff” is a good strategy for team building. The “we” is valuable.
Director Interview Responses

“Maggie”

1. Tell me how you became interested in the field of early childhood education? I am the oldest of four children. I was raised by a single dad by the time I was 6 years old so naturally I had to assume a “mother role” at a very young age. It always felt very innate to me and I knew this was the field I wanted to be a part of.

2. What was your professional pathway (the work you accomplished, your own professional development) to become a director? I obtained my Bachelor’s Degree in Child and Adolescent Development. By then I had already worked in afterschool programs and as an educator for toddlers/preschool. Shortly after I obtained my Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. By then I had been an educator for 6 years and felt I wanted to begin working from an Administrative perspective. I applied for an Assistant Director position and they felt I could do a Director position. I accepted the challenge and have now been a Director for 6 years. As an educator I feel it’s very important to continue professional development so I attend anything I feel would benefit my program and myself. I also personally read A LOT of books. Favorite topic has always been brain development.

3. Please tell me a little bit about your program with regard to:

   a. Number of classrooms, children’s ages, staffing ratios, etc. 2 classrooms.

      Infants- 6 weeks to 18 months. 1:3 ratio 10 infants and 4 full time educators.

      Toddlers- 18 months to 3 years old. 1:5 ratio 30 toddlers and 6 educators.
b. Any specific philosophy or unique aspects of the program? We use an eclectic approach to our philosophy. We pull from various approaches and apply it to our program. In the infant toddler program you will see a lot of the RIE approach and Reggio Approach. We also incorporate some Montessori. So we have lead teachers that you can learn from them. They are kind of in charge of curriculum and documentation. So they are kind of the ones that are spearheading it. Last line is the director, we oversee it and if they need any support with materials, they will come to us. But for the most important, those are the ones who are – so every teacher has – we do primary caregiving. So every teacher has their primary caregiving group. It's kind of hard to explain. Our center is an open environment; so if you go downstairs and I'm going to walk you and we'll check it out, our toddler program is kind of an open classroom. It's 30 toddlers and for one to five ratio. So it kind of works with –So every teacher gets their own planning time, their own curriculum time and they're responsible for kind of changing out the documentation depending on what they're working on because we also have interest groups, and every teacher leads an interest group. So if you're, for example, we just had a group who was super interested in airplanes, naturally. That's like we are right near Santa Monica Airport. So they started off with just what is an airplane? So very, very simple, just kind of getting to understand the children's knowledge and what they already know. From that they took it to a whole – based on what the children know, it's kind of dialoguing about – and took it to a whole different – it turned out to be, you know, I'm more interested in flying and what flies. So they were launching things off of our building. You
know, does a pinecone fly? Why doesn't it fly? So a lot of those questions and
they also went to the Santa Monica Airport, went to the museum, got a private
tour. They went to the Observation Deck and they got to watch the taking off and
landing. So it was two teachers who were leading a group of eight children. They
were responsible for sending out the documentation to select the children for
whatever they did. So however they feel like they need to do it. Specific groups
were really interested in constructing an airplane and how would we build an
airplane. So they went and go materials and would this work? Why wouldn't it
work? And they ended up building an airplane and they launched it from a pier to
see if it would fly. You know, so stuff like that. We have a blog. We do lots of
things when we post for parents to see and do lots of e-mails. All the teachers are
responsible for sending their parents e-mails for what their children have been
working on. We do ASQ and then we have our own. So the ASQ we do once a
year, usually in the middle of the year when the children have been here for a
while. And we actually send the ASQ home for the parents to fill out. But we
also fill them out. Then we kind of compare and contrast to see if the parents are
seeing what we're seeing and vice versa. We'll have parent conference based on
the ASQ, just talking about the ASQ. But we also do parent conferences every
six months. So we have our own scale as well that we use that we've been using.
It's something we've developed. It's just the overall based on your child's age,
how are they doing physically, cognitively? social emotionally. What are things
to work on? What are some things we want to accomplish together? We have
family style conferences where we invite the child to come sit on it too. And so
we've really – I mean obviously bringing little toddlers are not saying much. But by the time they're three years old, they're very involved in their conferences and they're talking about what they want to accomplish and what they're learning and wanting.

4. I want to hone in on professional development. First, how do you define professional development for yourself? Your staff? (Prompts: Who is included? What topics are important for your staff? Do you include staff meetings? Workshops? Conferences?) We define professional development as any opportunity where we could gain experience and knowledge from. We do staff meetings once a week, curriculum meeting once a week and whole center meetings about once every other month. We also engage in lots of reading together. As a whole center we just read, “Are You Listening?” by Bruman and just started to read “Infant and Toddlers at Work: Using Reggio-Inspired Materials to Support Brain Development.” We provide our educators with reading materials and we dialogue about how to incorporate what we read to our environment. A few times a year we also close the centers to engage in professional development. Our senior team gets together before hand to discuss what we feel our staff would benefit most from. This year we had a lot of new members to the team so we felt it would be important to do a lot around team building and who we are together. We even took the staff to a ropes course to engage in physical team work! Super fun! We also attend workshops around us that we feel reflect what we are engaging in. For example we all went to the Growing Place workshop on Reflective Teaching. I think for myself really professional development being in early childhood is anything that's going to allow you to challenge yourself and anything you to feel
finds things that support that. Anything that forms on your knowledge and challenge yourself, whether personal, whether a specific goal that you're trying to reach. I think being in early childhood, we have to do a lot of reflective, you know, approaches to ourselves. So I think professional development more so in this field is a lot bigger than if you're an accountant and you're going to learn a new law, you know. We do a lot of – I mean for my staff even, we have a lot of like let's look at your own childhood because a lot of that comes out when you're with children. And so it's not okay for us not to look at stuff like that. I mean you have to definitely – sometimes it's uncomfortable and sometimes it's a lot of, you know, and we'll bring professionals who will come in. We've had marriage/family therapists come in and talk to our staff. You know, it's really important because a lot of that is your point of reference. A lot of that comes out in your teaching and working with children. So I think professional development is huge. I do truly believe that it's what keeps the future a quality teacher, quality educator. You can have your master's. You have your PhD. You can have whatever titles you hold, but if you're not continuing to learn what's out there and challenging yourself, you're never going to grow so. And it can be as mundane as first aid or CPR. But that's kind of huge. I think for myself being a director, it's a lot of obviously I have to licensing and we are accredited by NAEYC. So we're constantly attending those conferences and, you know, trying to keep up with it. But at the same time it's personal growth as well. I think the same thing for my staff. And a lot of times for the staff, too, it's a lot of we have to bring it back and pass on the knowledge to them in a more fun way. So it's not eight hours sitting about licensing orientation. So we have a brand new executive director which is
huge. It's been a huge transition. Our previous executive director was here for 35 years, and she is the founder of who **** currently is. If you know anything about ****, we've been around for 63 years. That's a long time. So Judith Brunk who was our previous executive director was a teacher at a preschool in the Palisades, the hills and dales of the Palisades. They decided they didn't want to do it anymore. She took and brought it to Santa Monica, turned it into a not-for-profit and now there are two sites – you know, like we've been at this building since 1984. She kind of carried a lot of the philosophy and kind of passing on the torch. Obviously we have a brand new executive director with new ideas and a new approach. So it's a lot of how do we – how do we keep the old and introduce it to the new and try to have a happy medium. So this year it's been a lot of – and naturally with an executive director, additionally we have two teachers on maternity leave. We've had teachers come and go. We have a lot of brand new staff. It's a lot of who are we together and a lot of team building and a lot of even just getting to know each other.

5. What do you see as the benefits of professional development for early childhood staff? (Prompt: What are the benefits to your self, children, parents and co-workers?)

I think we are never done learning. So anything we can engage in to challenge us, allow us to reflect and improve is very beneficial to anyone in any field. We have to keep learning! Well, for example, we were just closed for a week and a half. We closed the school, and that's hard for us to close. Parents get angry. We closed for a week and a half and part of it was team building and part of it was just kind of who are we together. So it was one day of let's revisit the pack. What do we like about the past? What do we want to keep? What is new? What's the theme? You know, a
lot of just having conversations, just sitting together. We have 25 staff total, just sitting together let everyone listen in a circle and just dialoguing about what do we want to keep. Trying to keep it authentic and honest and if you really don't like something speak up and let's figure it out together. It was a lot of – we always give them time in their classrooms to kind of get ready for the new – this is our new school year. There's always space for that. Then there's a lot of team building. And so one day we did – this is really fun – a rope course in Culver City. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. It's Fulcrum. It pushes you physically and so – but their whole emphasis is team building. So you're working with a core. We mix them up. So you're not allowed to go with your best friend. You have to go with someone that you don't know as well. You are rock climbing. You are jumping off of beams while your support is holding you. So it's a lot of trust. It's a lot of – if you get stuck on the wall, they have the ability to help pull you up, but you have to ask for it. So you have to say, "I need help. You know, I need support." So you have to, turn to your team and say I need support and they will help you. So I mean a lot of them were really pushed to the limits to your own comfort level. So if you felt like maybe you can only go two feet and you're done, that's fine. But it was your team's job to try to support you and cheer you on and get you to go to the top, you know. That's one of the ways. It was awesome. It was all day long. Naturally they're talking to each other. They're hanging out. They're getting to know each other. Then we did a lunch afterwards together. And being two sites but not different schools because we are the same program and our children do transition over to the preschool, it's a lot of how do we get them together and communicating and show the parents and show the
children, more importantly, that we're one school? That we are united and it's not just, okay, you're going off to the preschool. I don't know who is over there. I don't know what's going on over there. But it's the same. I know who Ashley is and I know who Andrea is and inviting them to come here and that.

6. In what ways do you motivate your staff to engage in professional development on-site? (Prompts: role models on site?) It’s mostly prompt by our senior administrative team and the experiences we provide. We also do encourage for our educators to let us know if they see a workshop they would like to attend. We do reimburse if their request is approved. I think naturally they get excited because we're open all year long, and we rarely get days to ourselves. I mean we're a year round school. We're only closed 25 days out of the year. Two weeks are their own vacation time around the holidays, but the rest are just little days here and there. So we only have two major staff developments a year. So anytime we're together, they naturally feel like, yay, all the kids are not here. We get to talk to adults. We get to hang out. We make it fun. We always provide food because that, you know. Always provide food. Always provide, you know. We always do lunch out together, sometimes even a happy hour together. Something fun. And they know that. They know how to make it fun. We always play games. We always have icebreakers. So they know they would – even if it's our last – the one before that, our insurance guy did and had to talk to us for like five hours about our insurance. Boring. But we provided food, lots of desserts. We did games in the beginning, games in the middle. They still expect even if it's going to be something tedious like that, that it's going to be fun, that we're still going to make it fun. And if ever we have someone who is not quite there yet,
it's kind of our job to mentor them and to show them the importance. We always explain why we're doing what we're doing. So we didn't just say we're going to work on team building. We explained why we needed to work on team building and what our goal is. We always talked about our goals in the beginning. And towards the end is what do you feel like we achieved. But we always get feedback from them. So before we have a huge staff development, we'll ask them and say in our little group staff meetings and their curriculum meetings, we'll say what do you guys feel like we need to work on? So they feel like they're a part of the process and they have a voice.

7. In what ways do you support offsite opportunities for staff development? (Prompts: subsidized fees for conferences?) We apply for grants and fundraise to help support financially. If they pay for it, it's really hard. It's really expensive. Most of our teachers have young children. They don't make that much money. So it's hard for them. Sometimes it's just like, okay, pay 50 percent and we'll pay 50 percent. Maybe that would work for them. I usually find the ones who are still in school and maybe haven't been in the field as long are more willing to, yeah, yeah, I'll just put it on my credit card and I'll pay as we go. But like the ones who feel like have been here a long time, have done a lot of professional development are more resistant to paying out of their pocket for something. For the most part though, we do try to – we do try to either reimburse them or we just pay for it and make them go. That's just the nature of the field they just don’t have money.

8. What are some of the challenges you face in creating meaningful professional development for your staff (Prompts: individual differences among staff? (Resistance to unpaid time for training, disinterest in topics such as, assessment, regulations,
challenging to do on weekends with family responsibilities?) I think our biggest challenge is always time and money. We are a full time, year around school. It’s very difficult to close the centers for staff development. All our educators work full time and most have young children so it is also very difficult to ask for them to come in on the weekends. Also, we are a smaller school that cater to mostly middle class families. So we do not have a lot of extra money to spend on staff development. Anything we do that goes above and beyond our budget has to be funded through grants and fundraisers. Schools always need more money! We rarely have educators that protest professional development. For the most part they are excited to engage.

9. What have been the challenges you have faced with regard to promoting staff development? (Prompt: If you have been met with challenges, how have you tried to overcome them?) Same answer as #8 and we have spoken our Board of Directors and really have pushed back to close the centers down more often for professional development. As far as financials go we continue to fundraise and write grants.

10. What topics for professional development do you feel are most important for your staff at this time? Why? (Prompt: ECE Competencies, use of Foundations, etc.) We have a new Executive Director and lot of new staff. And for that reason team building and defining who we are will be the topic for a few years. Well, we're definitely doing and going towards more – I don't think we're going to call ourselves Reggio inspired just because we're just not there yet, but we're definitely going towards experiencing the Reggio approach a little bit more. So I think a lot more on what that looks like, especially for infants and toddlers. It's really hard to find professional development for anything with infants and toddlers. We're constantly, and this is
always on our radar, we are always go to RIE conferences be we are huge on RIE and
the RIE approach. So anytime they have any kind of conference or anything
happening with training or anything that's happening is always on our radar to go to.
This year specifically we are getting reaccredited by NAEYC. It's due next year. So
we have to go and see what's new because last time we did it was five years ago. So
that's another big one that's on our plate. I think always, always, and we're always
trying to build leaders. We're always looking for leadership training and what does
that look like in early childhood. And something we've been talking about more and
more because we're seeing more and more anything with children with special needs
because it's everywhere and everyone has to know about it and definitely our new
staff who don't necessary have the experience. So that's always on our radar as well.
I think that's five.

11. What have been your biggest successes in creating professional development
opportunities onsite and encouraging offsite participation? Why do you think they
have been successful? It’s the most successful when we close the school down and all
the staff are getting paid. It’s successful because it’s on time they already have
planned in and they are getting paid. I think for our staff, in here we have 12
educators. You can really hone in on the individuals. I'll give you an example. We
have one staff who has a really hard time in new settings and kind of shuts down,
won't talk, won't – that's just who she is. We're okay with that. We don't force her to
talk. We always say it's whatever you're comfortable sharing. And then you have
your powerhouses who are like, yes, it's all about me. I want to talk the whole time,
you know, in front of everybody. Great. Those are great for them. But we
specifically do things for her as well, for the ones who are not okay in large group settings. So maybe we'll do smaller groups with people she's comfortable with. And maybe she doesn't want me in the room. Maybe she's more comfortable with her peers, not so much the director. So we'll try to do things and have opportunities for her to feel like she can share and for her to feel like she can try. So it's hard and it's a lot of – and we do this every year. We always talk about communication styles. And it's really helpful to have someone else come in and talk about it 'cause when it's the director, nobody wants to talk to you. Nobodies their like, yeah, yeah, sure, whatever you say. But when it's somebody else who comes in, all of a sudden, it's like I want to share everything to this random stranger who I know nothing about. So this time we actually had somebody come in from a – you know, that's her thing. That's what she does. She does team building. So she came in and did a whole piece on communication and the importance of communication and did fun things like fun little communication games and communication styles and taught us how to really look at what our communication styles are and it doesn't matter what yours is, it's who you're trying to speak to and who you're trying to connect with. So there was a lot of like, look around, find out who is – you know, who had little cute animal names or whatever. Of course are your directors are the lions. The powerhouses or the whatever. But you have other animals on your team and so how you communicate – because there was like a dolphin. How do you communicate to the dolphin? How do you communicate to the monkey? Because they're not going to listen to a lion. They have a hard time with that approach. It's our job to change that approach when we're talking to them. It's not their job to change their approach when they're talking to us.
So there was a lot of that. It was really helpful. It was really awesome. Yeah. We did because she allowed us to because it was like four hours of talking about the communication styles. So it was a lot of like what do you struggle with when you communicate to others or what don't you like about if someone had an issue or somebody – what don't you like? So we had a whole – and she gave us the space and the time to do that. So we had a teacher who was struggling, and she said, you know, I don't like when people come at me this way, you know, and gave specific examples because this is how I feel when you do that. So it was good for us to get. It was kind of like, oh, so you're not always just mad at us. It's your own thing, you know. It's your own personal issue. It was nice to hear because it', you know. So we just we try to focus on our individual educators. Another thing is that because it's such a process and we're always working on things, it's never seen as that like, oh, yes, I feel like it's been accomplished. Other than something more like, for example, our last professional development, we wanted to redo our entire center. We were just like here's some paintbrushes. We did a whole planning process. We're talking together about why are we going to paint this wall green? What's the purpose? We did a lot of that before we – okay. And then it was even our Home Depot trips, we had them go together. We made it somewhat fun. You guys go get the paint supplies. You guys, you know. That I feel like because you had evidence of your hard work. So like it was – I think we were closed for like four days and the center – and we took before and after pictures. It looks completely different. Completely different. We did everything. We painted. We fixed up things. We built tables. We did all kinds of stuff. So that was great. And then to have the parents and the children walk in and
of course we sent out e-mails and pictures of what it's going to look like and all of that, but for them to walk in and be like, wow, this is awesome. The kids all excited. I think – It was more like, you know, here's our goal. We accomplished it. Yeah, it definitely felt like one of those shows where you just come in and redo everything. I think with anything you have the ones who are super excited for whatever reason they love painting things. I don't know why. It just brings back some memories. And then some people are like, oh, my arms are tired. I don't want to do this anymore. It's too hot. It was during the summer. It's too hot. It's too this. But I think everybody, when you're done, and it's like you put all the furniture back and everything looks wonderful, it gives them a sense of this is what we did. Like, I painted this wall. And so I think they're okay. And I think being – I don't know if it's like that at your center, but being in early childhood and being here anyway in this facility is breaking down and so you have to learn to use a drill and learn to unclog the toilets. It's just part of your resume.

12. As a new director, what advice do you have for me regarding promoting professional development among my staff? Really listen to your staff and always get their input on what they feel they need. Make it fun and always take the opportunity to enjoy each other. We’re family and it should feel like a celebration not work. =)

13. Is there anything else you would like to add? There needs to be more and cheaper. We always advocate for infant toddlers – more for infant toddlers specific infant/toddlers or even infants and then just toddlers. I think everyone, even if you're just a preschool teacher, I think you should know about infant toddler development. You got to know where they started and where they're going to end up. Otherwise, I
mean we just we really try to make it a family feel for everything we do is – we call it professional development, but really it's an opportunity for us to get together and hang out and chat and see what we can do to improve. That's how they see it. So it's not so cold cut. It's not so, you know. We don't ever say, you know, it's professional development because you guys suck and you need to improve your skills. We all have room to grow! And we try to in everything we do we try to be super respectful. So I've worked at different schools. Sometimes professional development is really nasty and really, you know, you guys are not doing this and you need to do this. That's not how you encourage staff to grow.