

The Education Trust-West's Educator Listening Session - Feb. 11, 2021

<b>Major Findings in Early Learning Educator Sessions</b>	
<b>Early Learning</b> (4 Breakout rooms)	<p>Enrollment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Some parents have pulled their kids out because they don't want them coming in person.</li><li>● Other parents have pulled their kids out of distance learning to enroll them in charter schools or programs offering in-person learning.</li><li>● Disparity in access: students who are on-line have a shorter day than in-person instruction.</li></ul> <p>Emotional toll:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The most at-risk families are impacted the most; it is emotionally challenging for educators to deal with this on a daily basis and find ways to support families most impacted.</li><li>● Need to invest in mental health for teachers, families, parents, students</li></ul> <p>Workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● People are not talking enough about how this impacts women of color, who make up the majority of the early learning workforce.</li><li>● At least 50% of the workforce is faced with whether to keep working or quit to support their own children with distance learning. Men are not having to make that choice.</li><li>● Teachers don't get the kudos that they should be getting, especially in early childhood. They feel they're being advocated for because they are considered a babysitter without recognizing that Early Learning educators are teachers with expertise, too.</li><li>● In the field, compensation is a huge challenge, particularly for in-home childcare providers.</li></ul> <p>Supporting educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Educators can be a good support for each other. It would be helpful to have more space for educators to talk and share experiences. Teachers miss the informal social interactions they used to have to share tips and support one another.</li><li>● Parent expectations can be a challenge. They want the same experience as last year and teachers can't provide that.</li><li>● Subgroup of the Local Planning Council was a helpful space for teachers to connect and advocate</li><li>● Teachers need to know they are appreciated.</li><li>● Support from administrators/supervisors who acknowledge all the</li></ul>

work educators are doing is important.

#### Professional Learning:

- Need training to support families and children who've been going through significant trauma for a year.
- Don't know what we need yet because we're in a whole new era.
- Switching to offering PD virtually was needed for a long time and it's a benefit for family child care centers who have limited time.
- It would be helpful if it were easier to find trainings that are free or low cost. Could there be a centralized place to go to find different trainings?
- Training needs to be outside of school hours.

#### Supporting students and families:

- We don't always hear what the families are going through, if they've lost loved ones at home.
- Hard to promote social skills when we tell kids not to play with each other. Teachers are champions, have figured out creative ways to make the classroom exciting to help kids come in without feeling fearful.
- Teachers have less time to talk with parents because they can't come in anymore.
- It's hard for parents for whom English is not their first language.
- In SF families need support with housing, food security, healthcare, especially for families who are undocumented. These types of supports need to come from the state.
- We need to listen and ask open ended questions about what families are needing. We shouldn't assume we know. Let them tell us.
- Parents and teachers are concerned about students lacking opportunities to build social skills, especially for students with Autism.
- Students who were in the process of getting assessed for special services were put in limbo. They can't get assessed in person. Delays in the referral, assessment, and service delivery process.

#### Returning to in-person:

- PPE: even now, gloves are hard to find and expensive
- Challenging to figure out how to provide high quality programs while still abiding by public health regulations and coming up with a plan that would actually work for staff and with the realities in the classroom.
- It is a challenge for staff to manage supervision and cleaning/disinfecting protocols while maintaining high quality care for

children.

- Teachers are with their kids all day to keep groups from inter-mingling. As a result, sometimes teachers don't have bathroom breaks.
- Frustrating that there's lack of guidance and the uncertainty (for example around masks) -- adds more stress to the job. When they first went back in person, it was scary but feeling a little more comfortable with it now.
- Getting back to regular hours of operations has been a challenge. Making sure teachers have the time off that they need. Sometimes teachers are burned out and need a few hours off early, so need to figure out who to cover those classrooms. Trying not to call subs due to COVID.
- The guidance has shifted a lot so it feels like they are constantly making adjustments.
- Teachers need some time to return to campus to get set up before students return. Teachers will need more time to prep and teach kids proper social distancing.
- Funds should go straight to providers. They're underpaid and spend dollars from their own pockets. And when we don't provide them with basic safety. Cash bonuses for being in the classroom when they're taking care of our kids.
- Childcare providers are working with the Department of Public Health, but those policies are not specific to early education - all childcare centers that have opened are required to post their health plans - programs have some freedom to moderate their guidelines (ex: self quarantine is *strongly recommended* but not required)
- With more funding, could explore setting up outdoor classrooms.
- State should procure PPE and distribute it because it's hard to find and take time for local providers to manage.

Looking forward:

- Need to be mindful of the transition back and provide space to acknowledge all that's been lost.
- We need funding to address social emotional needs for students and adults now to prepare for a return in person.
- Need to address unidentified special needs - IEP, speech, health - that have been put on hold.
- How do we help families advocate for their children, especially for those whom it was already hard to get resources pre-COVID.
- Need trauma informed care and greater access to mental health resources.
- 4 year olds in 2022 will not be the same cognitively or emotionally as the 4 year olds in 2019. This will be a challenge for ECE teachers. Is the

K-12 system going to adapt to the gap, or will they treat kids the same? Half of the incoming kids haven't been in a high quality preschool program.

- Summer and extended learning should be a more available option because there is going to be a lot of kids that need it and a lot of parents that want it but don't think that school districts should extend the year. For many families, school was really hard this year. Should be an option for students that do want to keep opportunities for socialization -- even if it's just zoom.
- What we should be focusing on is social and emotional development. We can try and catch our kids up academically, but we have to help our kids heal from this.
- Children are not talking as much as they used to. Their language development is a little bit lower. They're not advancing as much as before. Even though we talk to them all the time, they are looking for our mouths and cannot see them because of masks.
- Concern about identifying students with autism and other special needs.
- Increase access to technology. There are digital deserts.
- Training to look for signs of domestic abuse and trauma
- Go back to play-based learning.
- Would use state funds for: PD, PPE, cleaning supplies, activities to send home to families

Issues would like more power and voice in solving:

- Funding so more families have access
- Compensation for teachers
- Bridging the divide with K12:
  - Requires leadership to set the tone at the top
  - Get clear about the expectations for students when they enter Kindergarten
- Developing policies rooted in equity