

**BEST PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED
EARLY CHILDHOOD LAB SITES**

by

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ABSTRACT

In a world so fast-paced, in a nation so eager to be the best, in a society where children *should* come first, there is a need for better quality in university-sponsored early childhood lab sites. This research project consists of four phases: Phase I: List Best Practices, Phase II: Describe best practices, Phase III: Compare Universities, and Phase IV: Recommendations. These four phases, along with a literature review, will help to shape an updated resource for both developing and already established university-sponsored early childhood lab sites. Concluding standards, best practices, and the importance of professional development will serve as the motivation for a better future for children all across the world.

Keywords: early childhood education, lab schools, best practices, university-sponsored, national standards, state standards, quality

*This project is dedicated to my loving father,
William Edward Benedict,
who worked hard to provide for my education.*

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“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” – Proverbs 22:6. God has blessed me with a beautiful life full of amazing people, including Jesus, who has carried me in my darkest hours, and others, who have celebrated with me my most cherished moments.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Need

Early childhood is a dynamic field; therefore, professionals within the field need to stay updated – especially when it comes to quality and standards. In a world so fast-paced, in a nation so eager to be the best, in a society where children *should* come first, there is a need for better quality in university-sponsored early childhood lab sites.

By following the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, Early Childhood Programs can be developed or improved to offer many benefits for not only children, but all who are involved in raising the future of our nation. NAEYC benefits for children include, but are not limited to, providing developmentally appropriate practices in which the caregivers or teachers interact with children in order to build knowledge and make connections on a deeper cognitive level compared to children trying to achieve developmental milestones on their own, higher standards in which the caregivers or teachers are held – only to provide children with a much safer and more academically focused environment, and an overall well-rounded experience.

Following the standards NAEYC provides benefits everyone involved, including caregivers or teachers, administration, parents, adult students, and especially children. The accreditation process, a measurement of quality within a child development center or an associate degree-awarding college or university, offers a sense of professional atmosphere as well as peace of mind, knowing that expectations are not only being met, but exceeded.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to compare university-sponsored early childhood programs to nationally recognized standards in order to establish a set of best practices for universities to use as a resource in creating new or improving already established programs.

Statement of Project Phases

The four phases of this project are:

Phase I: List Best Practices

Phase II: Describe Practices

Phase III: Compare Results

Phase IV: Recommendations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Childhood Education

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2005) has set standards for all early childhood programs within the United States. These standards are organized into ten different areas: Relationships, Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment of Child Progress, Health, Teachers, Families, Community Relationships, Physical Environment, and Leadership and Management (pp. 1-3).

According to recommendations by NAEYC (2003a), early childhood programs should “implement curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children (p. 2).”

NAEYC (2003a) also stated that early childhood programs should also “make ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment a central part of all early childhood programs. To assess young children’s strengths, progress, and needs, use assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistic responsive, tied to children’s daily activities, supported by professional development, inclusive of families,

and connected to specific, beneficial purposes: (1) making sound decisions about teaching and learning, (2) identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and (3) helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions (pp. 2-3).”

Finally, programs should, according to NAEYC (2003a), “regularly evaluate early childhood programs in light of program goals, using varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended as well as unintended results (p. 4).”

Rosalind Charlesworth (1998) discussed *developmentally appropriate practice* (DAP), in her document titled *Developmentally Appropriate Practice is for Everyone*, as being one of the most commonly used terms within the field of early childhood education. She stated, “Development refers to changes in individuals across the lifespan (p. 274).” Charlesworth explained, “In contrast, DAP (as defined in the guidelines) emphasizes the whole child (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), while taking into account gender, culture, disabilities, socioeconomic status, family factors and any other important elements in order to meet the individual child’s needs, developmental level and learning style (p. 274).” She clarified, “The guidelines are not intended as doctrine, but rather as a way to plan for providing supportive environments for young children (p. 274).”

Lab Schools – what are they?

According to the National Association of Laboratory Schools (1991), lab schools have been a part of the system since the 1880s. NALS claims that all institutions have cycles of development. In conclusion, NALS states, “We believe that schools built on a

university base have the heritage, the experience, and the leadership to be among the agencies that can raise the level of service to the teaching profession (p. 171).”

Tames (1992) suggested that lab schools are a feature of colleges nationwide. Most lab schools are open to the public and operate on a first-come, first-served basis. Tames also suggested that they may not be for everyone. “Parents who are considering a lab school should use the same criteria they would in assessing any preschool (p. 32).”

Bowers (2000) indicated that labs are a popular way to train students within child development. She continued to explain that recent changes, such as costs, popularity among university majors, and new technology, have issued a reexamination of such practices, raising the issue of effective training in the presence of real children. She explained that this would benefit students with more hands-on time, which is necessary for the development of competence. Bowers added the second issue of other types of childcare becoming competition. She added, “The data also highlight the unique contributions of infant/toddler laboratories, as opposed to programs for older children (p. 133).”

University Early Childhood Education Programs

NAEYC (2003b) established a set of outcomes for early childhood professionals:

- “1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. Building Family and Community Relationships
3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families
4. Teaching and Learning
5. Becoming a Professional (p. 7).”

The association revised this set of desired outcomes in the following two ways: First, Standard 4 had been separated into methods and content, increasing the number of standards from five to six. Second, the wording *all children* had been revised to state *each child* or *every child* to emphasize diversity. (NAEYC, 2009, p 2). NAEYC added, “Like all NAEYC position statements, the standards for early childhood professional preparation are living documents and as such will be regularly updated and revised (p. 2).”

NAEYC (1993) also issued a position statement regarding the conceptual framework for early childhood professional development. This sets a national set of criteria for any and all early childhood professionals, both academically and in practice, to follow within the United States. The association identifies the principles of effective professional development as the following:

- “1. Professional development is an ongoing process.
2. Professional development experiences are most effective when grounded in a sound theoretical and philosophical base and structured as a coherent and systematic program.
3. Professional development experiences are most successful when they respond to an individual’s background, experiences, and the current context of their role.
4. Effective professional development opportunities are structured to promote clear linkages between theory and practice.
5. Providers of effective professional development experiences have an appropriate knowledge and experience base.
6. Effective professional development experiences use an active, hands-on

approach and stress an interactive approach that encourages students to learn from one another.

7. Effective professional development experiences contribute to positive self-esteem by acknowledging the skills and resources brought to the training process as opposed to creating feelings of self-doubt or inadequacy by immediately calling into question an individual's current practices.

8. Effective professional development experiences provide opportunities for application and reflection and allow for individuals to be observed and receive feedback upon what has been learned.

9. Students and professionals should be involved in the planning and design of their professional development program (pp. 7-9).”

Although there are many reasons why lab schools are important, there are still issues that are not as positive. McMullen and Lash (2012) suggested that academic personnel may feel somewhat entitled to these centers. Faculty may be under the impression that they can come and go as they please, making any changes they feel is necessary without addressing the center staff. They added, “Furthermore, it is also essential to consider whether highly qualified early childhood educators working in such programs are treated with mutuality and respect by affiliated faculty, as the knowledgeable professionals they are (p. 13).”

The National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (2015) stated, “First and foremost the quality of a program rests on the level of education of its staff (p. 1).”

To further illustrate this statement, the Michigan Department of Education (2014) claimed, “All adults working with young children are teachers in the eyes, hearts, and

minds of children. Early childhood educators' competency in Teaching and Learning builds upon their knowledge of child development and their skills in fostering learning and engaging children in exploration. They demonstrate knowledge and understanding of child development, developmental domains, and early learning expectations and standards (p. 30).”

Benefits and Problems

Benefits and problems of early childhood education programs and lab schools have many commonalities across the nation. Babinsky (2008) stated, “That brings up a more global idea that is pervasive in teacher education at any level, although concepts can be discussed, role played and written about in our college classes, but until students experience them in a real setting, they don't fully comprehend them (p. 6).” Olga S. Jarret, Stacey French-Lee, and Phyllis Kimbro (2010) suggested, “Doing practical, relevant research at a campus children's center can help keep the faculty grounded and can enhance teaching examples (p. 6).”

Building on that thought, Hunt and Ratcliff (2009) stated that students need to be challenged when learning to establish relationships within the field. They continued to explain that centers frequently run into obstacles when it comes to providing student teachers with opportunities for creating such connections. They added, “Preservice teachers should also be provided opportunities to observe parent-teacher conferencing sessions, reflect on their observations, and discuss those observations with the cooperating teacher or with teacher educators and peers in the college classroom (p. 495)”

According to Cheruvu (2014), “In essence, the purpose of teacher research in the

realm of teacher education should be about not only improving one's practice but also contributing to a collective body of knowledge that can impact a broad range of teacher education practices and policies (p. 225)."

Grieshaber and Ryan (2005) suggested, "The aim of a postmodern teacher education is not simply to supplant the child development knowledge base with a range of postmodern theoretical ideas so that a new foundation for practice is created. Instead, a postmodern teacher education seeks to provide students with a set of analytic tools (something like a theoretical toolbox) that they can use to view practices from different perspectives, providing alternative ways of seeing, understanding, and acting on the same situation (p. 34)."

Highlighted in a study by Barnes (2013), "The final conclusion of this study is *student teachers recognize personal growth as well as professional growth throughout the early learning program as well as in their student teaching experience* (p. 138)."

Another conclusion, made by Aldrich (2014) stated, "As the results of this Lab School Survey show, lab schools and early childhood centers continue to evolve in order to meet the needs of families, provide high quality early childhood education and care to children, and offer meaningful opportunities for college students (p. 41)."

Finally, Goodfellow (2001) said, "Our practices require more introspective examination and, in the process, opportunities to explore our own values and beliefs as well as the insights and understandings framed within our workplaces (p. 1)."

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Methodology used in this research was broken up into four phases. During the first phase, a list of best practices was created for use in university-sponsored early childhood lab sites. During the second phase, these best practices were described. During the third phase, results of site visits to and responses to questionnaires from participating universities were compared. During the fourth and final phase, recommendations were made based upon the findings.

Phase I: List Best Practices

In order to complete Phase I of the project, national and state standards from Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, documents from the latest research on current issues within the field, and personal knowledge were used to determine the list of best practices. See best practices listed in Chapter 4.

Phase II: Describe Practices

In order to complete Phase II of the project, information from national and state standards, theoretical research that includes a wide variety of databases, research-based websites, journals, observations, questionnaires, and personal knowledge were used to thoroughly identify and explain in detail each of the best practices. Institutional Review

Board approval can be found in Appendix A. Consent forms for questionnaire participants can be found in Appendix B. The actual questionnaires can be found in Appendix C.

Phase III: Compare Results

In order to complete Phase III of the project, a summary of practices among six university-sponsored lab sites within the states of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio were compared to the list of best practices. These sites were visited and given questionnaires for the faculty, staff, college students, parents, and children. The questionnaires were sent out April of 2015 and returned April through July of 2015.

Phase IV: Recommendations

In order to complete Phase IV of the project, information from the previous three phases was analyzed and concluded to provide insight to the best practices in university-sponsored early childhood education and lab schools. The completed work will be sent to the participating universities, as well as made available to the public.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Findings discovered in this research were also broken up into four phases. During the Phase I, the list of best practices was created by combining research and personal knowledge. During Phase II, the list of best practices, along with their descriptions were placed into a table for easy reference. During Phase III, responses to the questionnaires were placed into a table for easy reference as well. During Phase IV, a summary of recommendations was provided for future use by personnel involved with any university-sponsored lab site.

Phase I: List Best Practices

The 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial & Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (2011) rubric for initial and advanced programs are as follows:

“Rubric Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Rubric Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships

Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families

NAEYC Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect

with Children and Families

NAEYC Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum

6. Becoming a Professional

Standard 7. Field Experiences (pp. 7-8).”

The NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria & Guidance for Assessment (2015) are as follows:

“Standard 1 – Relationships

Standard 2 – Curriculum

Standard 3 – Teaching

Standard 4 – Assessment of Child Progress

Standard 5 – Health

Standard 6 – Teachers

Standard 7 – Families

Standard 8 – Community Relationships

Standard 9 – Physical Environment

Standard 10 – Leadership and Management (pp. 2-97).”

By combining standards from both documents, research from the literature review, site visits, and questionnaires, and personal knowledge from previous employment at a lab site, a suggested list of best practices for any university-sponsored early childhood lab site within the United States would be:

1. Use developmentally effective approaches to teach and connect with children and families.
2. Build family and community relationships, including university academics.

3. Observe, document, and assess.
4. Use content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum.
5. Provide professional development.
6. Provide field experiences.
7. Ensure all practices meet health licensing requirements and physical environment codes.

Phase II: Describe Practices

1. Use developmentally effective approaches to teach and connect with children and families.

Description: Adults working with children should be trained in developmentally appropriate practice before attempting to establish relationships with children and their families.

2. Build family and community relationships, including university academics.

Description: Lab sites should strive to create meaningful networks among children's families and other members of the community, including university academics.

3. Observe, document, and assess.

Description: Adults working with children should be trained in observation, documentation, and assessment methods before attempting to collect data and/or use data for any purpose.

4. Use content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum.

Description: Adults working with children should be trained in content knowledge before establishing any curriculum to be used at the lab site.

5. Provide professional development.

Description: Adults working with children should be trained as a professional teacher, leader, or manager and continue to improve in professional development throughout their time at the lab site.

6. Provide field experiences.

Description: Lab sites should support field experiences necessary for the college's academic program to be successful in providing students with hands-on learning experiences.

7. Ensure all practices meet health licensing requirements and physical environment codes.

Description: Lab sites and personnel shall follow all federal, state, and local licensing requirements or codes.

These seven practices will ensure a quality program for any university-sponsored Early Childhood lab site. See Figure 1 on page 16.

Figure 1: Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites and Their Descriptions		
	Best Practice	Description
1	Use developmentally effective approaches to teach and connect with children and families.	Adults working with children should be trained in developmentally appropriate practice before attempting to establish relationships with children and their families.
2	Build family and community relationships, including university academics.	Lab sites should strive to create meaningful networks among children's families and other members of the community, including university academics.
3	Observe, document, and assess.	Adults working with children should be trained in observation, documentation, and assessment methods before attempting to collect data and/or use data for any purpose.
4	Use content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum.	Adults working with children should be trained in content knowledge before establishing any curriculum to be used at the lab site.
5	Provide professional development.	Adults working with children should be trained as a professional teacher, leader, or manager and continue to improve in professional development throughout their time at the lab site.
6	Provide field experiences.	Lab sites should support field experiences necessary for the college's academic program to be successful in providing students with hands-on learning experiences.
7	Ensure all practices meet health licensing requirements and physical environment codes.	Lab sites and personnel shall follow all federal, state, and local licensing requirements or codes.

Phase III: Compare Results

Questionnaires regarding several different aspects of the relationships between colleges and their lab schools were distributed. Participant types included faculty members from Early Childhood Education or Child Development academia within the colleges, students of those courses and/or working in the lab schools, staff members from the lab schools, parents of the children who attend the lab schools, and children who attend the lab schools themselves. Questions address the participants' knowledge, opinion, and future outlook of both the colleges as well as the lab schools and the relationships that exist among them.

Ten questionnaires per participant type per college or university were sent out. Altogether, fifty nine participants, six faculty members, fourteen staff members, thirty five students, two parents, and two children, gave feedback to the questionnaires. See Figure 2.

		College or University			
		A	B	C	D
Participant Type	Faculty	3	0	3	0
	Students	3	14	16	2
	Staff	3	6	3	2
	Parents	1	0	0	1
	Children	0	0	0	2

According to U.S. News and World Report Education (2015), the four colleges were described as the following:

College A was established during the late 1800s, has a population of approximately 13,000+ undergraduate students, has an average teacher to student ratio of

16:1, has a four year graduation rate of 26%, and has a 4% population of undergraduate students seeking a degree within the field of teaching.

College B was established during the late 1800s, has a population of approximately 20,000+ undergraduate students, has an average teacher to student ratio of 20:1, has a four year graduation rate of 20%, and has an 11% population of undergraduate students seeking a degree within the field of teaching.

College C was established during the mid-1800s, has a population of approximately 29,000+ undergraduate students, has an average teacher to student ratio of 13:1, has a four year graduation rate of 46%, and has a 5% population of undergraduate students seeking a degree within the field of teaching.

College D was established during the early 1900s, has a population of approximately 14,000+ undergraduate students, has an average teacher to student ratio of 19:1, has a four year graduation rate of 32%, and has a 4% population of undergraduate students seeking a degree within the field of teaching.

Conclusions of the results can be found at the end of each participant type's section.

Data Results

Faculty:

What is the relationship like between the lab site and this program?

College A:

1. "I teach courses part-time at [university] for the ECE Program and have students who complete assignments at the lab site."
2. "Not positive or friendly at current time. Lab site is not meeting our needs or our students' needs at present. In the past we have had a working relationship where our ECE students have used the lab site for activity classes, for observations and for internships. Currently the lab is used for observations of children, but only select and a few students can do activities or internships at the site. This change came about as a result of personality/power issues between lab director and ECE/SOE program and also a growth of students in the program. Currently, only the best students are chosen to do interns at the site (chosen by lab director) – however this practice is contrary to the needs of students – the lowest level students are the ones who need to be in a quality setting so they can benefit from the role models."
3. "Tenuous – occasionally we are allowed to place students for field experience and limited internship placements."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. "Close relationship. ECE students have several practica in lab school. Some students do full time semester student teaching there. Faculty in ECE area."
2. "There is a strong link between the lab and [ECE] program. We could not provide as many of the field experiences and monitoring as we do without the lab."
3. "Collaborative, active and supportive."

College D:

(no responses)

What do you like about the Early Childhood Education program?

College A:

1. "I love teaching others to become effective, nurturing and knowledgeable teachers. I think there is a great choice of hands on opportunities for the students. It is nice to have an on campus site to go to."
2. "The best part of our ECE [early childhood education] program involves all the hands-on field experiences for our students. They graduate not only knowing content, but having actually done observing, teaching, leading in the real world of ECE with real children."
3. "Hands on experience. Students are given a lot of opportunity to work with children."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. “Excellent, dual license program, PK-3, generalist *and* special education.”
2. “The large amount of mentoring and field experience. As well, we are a small program with a large university so have many benefits of both.”
3. “Hands on approach. Play based instruction. The attention students get. Collaboration between the department and the lab school.”

College D:

(no responses)

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

College A:

1. “I think that the communication between the lab site and the professors needs to improve. There seems to be a power struggle going on. The physical site of [lab site] needs to be updated or moved elsewhere.”
2. “In the ECE program – 2 more dedicated faculty to secure consistency and enable program growth. A lab site available for all our students that demonstrates quality. A win-win situation would be a guaranteed quality lab site placement for everyone of our students. Having students find own placements is hard for students (no transportation, no time in schedule) and *very difficult* – impossible to assure quality of placements.”
3. “I would like to see a better relationship between the lab site and our program. The lab site has been very difficult to work with over the past several years.”

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. “n/a”
2. “More students enrolled and better dedicated classroom space.”
3. “More students in our field.”

College D:

(no responses)

How would you compare this program to others?

College A:

1. [blank]
2. “Our ECE program has more field experience requirements than others. Lots of other ECE programs across the US are small – only 1 or 2 faculty. Some programs have lab sites that are part of the program (part of ECE) and other programs do not have this arrangement. Many programs still have little or no field experiences because of no lab sites.”
3. “The ECE program is as good as or better than other that I know of. The lab site however is not – cooperation is most of the problem.”

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. “Very good, broad preparation, infancy to 8 years. High standards.”
2. “There is a strong developmental focus and I see more field work than I have in other programs. As well, this is a dual certificate program.”
3. “Small – better presence and preparation for employment.”

College D:

(no responses)

How do you benefit from this program?

College A:

1. "I feel that I can add to the program because of my teaching experience and because I enjoy learning with and from my students."
2. [the words 'this program' are underlined] "? (unclear) It benefits me that students have field experience – because I ask them to discuss real life situations in class – which helps make their textbook learning relevant and more understandable."
3. "I do not benefit."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. "Opportunity to teach good ECE students and do ECE research."
2. "I enjoy the collaborative work with the other faculty and lab director and teachers. As well, I enjoy supervising field work."
3. "Collaboration – professional development opportunities. Support from the faculty."

College D:

(no responses)

How do your program and this lab site encourage further training or education for its employees?

College A:

1. [blank]
2. “The ECE tenure-track faculty are required to do professional development. Money for any training and travel has become harder to find. In the past, ECE faculty have done training workshops for employees at the lab site – but not currently. Currently we do not work together for training – we don’t even discuss trainings that have been done or that may be available.”
3. “In the past we have done trainings for the lab site. But I am not sure if this will continue as the center director does not seek us out.”

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

1. “ECE faculty observes, confers with director, makes suggestions, and does in-service training with staff on request.”
2. “Unfortunately [state] does not compensate for post baccalaureate degrees. So, there is no benefit to more education but we do encourage the students to be life long learners and continue to learn and grow.”
3. “We build training into the schedule/routine.”

College D:

(no responses)

In conclusion, faculty from both College A and C share similar values. They highlight the importance of hands-on learning and field experience. They value student learning throughout the entire process.

These two organizations, however, seem to have very different relationships with their lab schools. College A noted a disconnection among faculty and staff. College C highlighted its strong relationship.

Students:

What do you like about the Early Childhood Education program?

College A:

1. "After being in the field I noticed large gaps in our education. I also am very frustrated over the lack of quality staff and very limited advising help from our remaining full time teacher."
2. "I like the hands on opportunities provided. I like to be able to work with kids from the start."

College B:

1. "I like the open concept that children can choose the play they engage in and learn to the speed they choose to. Also the interest based curriculum the school provides."
2. "The fact that children are truly like sponges and whatever we instill in them they can reduplicate that knowledge to others. So, teaching appropriately is important."
3. [blank]

4. "The teachers mostly have all worked in some sort of child care or school. Most teachers are willing to help you outside of class."
5. "The children and watching them learn and grow."
6. "It focuses on the development of the children in their early stages of life."
7. "Classes prior to student teaching actually prepare you for the experience. There is also a lot of support from faculty."
8. "Passionate staff and teachers that fuel our passion for the program."
9. "I like the hands on experiences it provides and the variety of classes."
10. "I love how important they make my career. This program is a great hands on approach, unlike many other programs."
11. [blank]
12. "Teachers are very passionate about the program."
13. "That there are so many courses that deal directly with children of various ages."
14. "I like that it is extre[me]ly interactive. I enjoy that the program breaks learning down into steps and we get a chance to practice our skills learned."
15. "I like this program because we can know about children's all aspects of development where they are."

College C:

1. "You get a variety of experiences and get to dive into more child development topics."
2. "Opportunities to do field experience in a variety of places."

3. "Learning about child development and what helps/hinders it. Teaching/playing with young children."
4. "I like that there are many opportunities to engage in interactions with the kids for about 14 weeks of observation a semester!"
5. "An opportunity to learn how to educate children from the very beginning of their education life."
6. "Building relationships with the children I work with, learning about child development, helping with research."
7. "They try teaching the children and develop relationship[s] with the students and parents."
8. "I love the children I work with and all the experience I'm gaining from the staff to learn how to create a positive encouraging environment for children."
9. "I really like the age group of early childhood and learning about the development of young children."
10. "They value physical activities and active engagement of students."
11. "I love how you can do more with it other than just teaching."
12. "That students are able to work at the center to gain experience."
13. "[Name] is an amazing professor. Miss [Name] [name of classroom]."
14. "All of the practicum experiences we have been able to experience. Also the courses and professors."
15. "I like that all the teachers use the guidance approach in the classroom so there's consistency for the students."

16. "I love working with children. I love that it helps them learn about social, emotion[al], physical, etc. aspects of the world in addition to academics."

College D:

1. "I like the experiences gained as a student teacher, and the emphasis on literacy in instruction."
2. "Useful, helpful, beneficial programs. Excellent instructors, and plenty of opportunities for field placements in different schools."

What do you like about the lab site?

College A:

1. "I think that the teachers try very hard to provide students with an educational experience."
2. "I like the accessibility of the site. I also like the fact that infants through school age care is available."

College B:

1. "The materials, space, support of staff members to student teachers, families and children."
2. "The variety in toys and activities and how they are based off of the children's interests."
3. "The quality of materials and archite[ct]ural design. The amount of staff due to student teachers is also really nice."
4. "I love that there are 4 classrooms and that the children are free to go to any room. I love that the rooms are very nature based and have open ended materials."

5. "How children are the number one priority and how they train and teach the teachers how to be the best."
6. "It's a nice atmosphere, a lot of options for children, real inviting, focuses a lot on the children."
7. "The support and feedback we get from staff."
8. "The availability and amount of materials for staff, students, and children. Also the large number of adults, and team atmosphere."
9. "Everything! The openness and natural light and materials. The aesthetics. The team support. The ability for children to explore and move freely."
10. "I love how nice and so[ph]isticated it is. It is a high quality space for children and adults. The children have so much!"
11. "Open to new ideas/research."
12. "The space in the lab is very large and there are many resources there."
13. "Hands on experience with a high quality theoretical basis."
14. "Conve[ni]ent, clean, inviting, chang[e]able."
15. "I like the lab site because it is practice."

College C:

1. "The families are very involved which leads to support both in and out of the classroom."
2. "The teachers that I've worked with and their methods! As well as the room I was placed – and the students there."
3. "Teaching/playing with young children, Very nice staff. They use the guidance approach."

4. "I like that there are swipes in areas so that no stranger can just walk into the lab school. I don't like that two rooms are sep[ar]ate from other rooms."
5. "Amazing teaching groups allow us, the learners, to learn how to teach children in real world setting[s]."
6. "It is child-centered. All of the staff work to improve the development and learning experience of the child."
7. "It is a good environment for the children. The teachers are nice and it's always welcoming."
8. "There are many options children have in terms of toys, books, and activities."
9. "I like how welcoming and kind everyone is. Also, I always feel very safe and feel I've been gaining a lot of experience."
10. "Teachers are well educated/experienced in the guidance approach."
11. "I like how [lab site] is very structured and only so many students are accepted into the school."
12. "There are a lot of student workers and it is on campus."
13. "I enjoy [name] (she just got married) and changed her name."
14. "The friendly environment. All the staff and children are very welcoming."
15. "I like how you can observe teachers and students without being in the classroom. This way you get to see them at their most normal self."
16. "I like the diversity of the lab site and how open and effective the teachers are with this diversity."

College D:

1. "I like the environment and the clear expectations set on students."

2. “Real, beneficial experiences in working with young children, collaborating with parents and other teachers, friendly staff, opportunities to make and teach lessons.”

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

College A:

1. “I want our program to build positive relationships with other quality sites, when [lab site] is full I felt forced to attend [lab site] because a lack of relationships in the community.”
2. “I would like to see larger classrooms. I would love to see a larger space for outdoor activities as well.”

College B:

1. “More ability to switch things up a little. Schedules/routines.”
2. “Diversity in teachers so that when promoting diversity you actually are modeling in every aspect just not materials.”
3. [blank]
4. “It is hard coming every other day sometimes. Two days in a row would be better.”
5. “The staff in[-]tu[ni]ng more with the student teachers on teaching strategies.”
6. [blank]
7. “More room for students in observation booths and for us to know in advance when different tour groups are coming thru.”
8. [blank]
9. “Monitored enrollment for student teachers.”

10. "I wish there were infants and toddlers; would be great if the[y] could add on to include these ages."
11. "A better connection to all classes and the lab, making sure what they are learning is happening in the lab."
12. [blank]
13. "None."
14. "Smaller children capacity."
15. "More activities on math activity."

College C:

1. "Sometimes teachers have very certain philosophies they adhere to, and when two philosophies don't match up it can be bad."
2. "n/a"
3. "Ø"
4. "I would like to see a better way of signing in and out."
5. "It would be a lot better if I can see the whole day situation in the classroom because there are differences between morning and afternoon."
6. "Better playground, better pay."
7. "More grass space for outdoor play time. Maybe better room layouts for some."
8. "Maybe just more consistency between teaching approaches amongst teachers."
9. "None."
10. "Better training/preparation of philosophy of student workers being on the same page as teachers."
11. "I think that they need more time structured other than play time."

12. "n/a"

13. "Being able to go on field trips with them. [Class] and [class] need to be one class."

14. "Maybe dividing up the rooms strictly by age. Some rooms have too much of an age range."

15. [blank]

16. "n/a"

College D:

1. "none"

2. "I would like for the Early Childhood Education program to include more in depth classes on different disabilities and challenging behavior."

What do you know of the relationship between the Early Childhood program and the lab site?

College A:

1. "I am aware it's not good. No one tries to hide their feelings. However it's none of my business."

2. "I know that I am able to be a student and employee at [lab site] and that I have great opportunities at the lab site. Also, that with a growing program the site does not offer enough room for class assignments."

College B:

1. "Definitely a constructivist view just as [university] teaches. The lab demonstrates most of what I learned the program should be."

2. "The evaluations that are taken of the children and the teaching strategies of [state] that each child meets."
3. "The Early Education program teaches you what you need to know to become successful on the lab site."
4. "The classes usually have some assignment where students come to the lab to observe. Before I was teaching in the lab I already visited quite a few times."
5. "Very educated about children and developmentally appropriate."
6. "We focu[s] a lot of the independence of the children and giving them their own choices which helps their development."
7. "We get a lot of time experiencing the lab school in different aspects (observation booth experience and student assistant experience)."
8. "Very connected. Multiple courses are linked directly to the lab, and this experiences compiles all that work together."
9. "The ECE program has classes that allow students to observe in booths, take pictures, anecdotal records, and work as assistant and student teachers. Also complete assessments and observations."
10. "They are spot on here. They constantly strive to meet the goals and material we learn about. Many of our classes spend time in the lab and gain the experience."
11. "There are several classes that give students opportunities to observe and interact with children."
12. "It is very connected because it is right inside the Education building."
13. "Closely intermixed with a lot of communication."

14. "Everything reflects to or from the lab."
15. "Theory and practice."

College C:

1. "I know very minimal information of the relationship."
2. "I know that [ECE] students partner with the lab school for practicum placement."
3. "Ø"
4. "I know that they work together but not always informed about every detail about our classes."
5. "Only that professors and researchers in ECE program would observe and conduct researches at the lab."
6. "They work together constantly. Grad students do research there. Undergrad students get experience by doing practicums there."
7. "They try to impl[e]ment it in their classroom."
8. "Our program involves us doing a practicum each semester at the lab site."
9. "It's a close knit relationship and good communication."
10. "They value NAEYC and developmentally appropriate practices."
11. "They are very related because [lab site] is located on [university]'s campus."
12. "n/a"
13. "They work together for the practicum students."
14. "The relationship seems good. Our professors seem to know the staff well at the lab site."
15. [blank]

16. “The lab site is very up-to-date on the latest research and methods in the ECE program.”

College D:

1. “It is a large part of the program, as many ECE students complete hours there.”
2. “Class instructors assign projects, lessons, portfolios, and assessments that are to be done with students at the lab site to provide real practice and exposure.”

How would you compare this program to others?

College A:

1. “Our program needs a lot of improvements before I feel that we can compete with other programs.”
2. “I would say I am not exactly happy right now. There is little guidance and the classes are offered at horrible times (like once every other year). Also, some of the classes in my specific Lead Teacher choice are not beneficial and not seen as DAP for Early Childhood.”

College B:

1. “I am not familiar with others very well but I know that most don’t allow as much open/free time.”
2. “I would say this program offers a lot but more can be done on behalf of the teachers and making everyone feel inclusive.”
3. “This program is better th[a]n most, in my opinion. I feel this way because many different ‘curriculum’s’ are put into this one program.”
4. “Better than other ones I have heard of.”

5. "Very formal there is a lot of certain ways to do things and what you can and cannot say that is developmentally appropriate."
6. "I wouldn't be able to compare much but this one seems to be a little more organiz[ed] and full of communication."
7. "I believe this is one of the best programs out there!"
8. "Outstanding. I chose [university] for this experience and the program. I've loved my time at [university]."
9. "I think we have an excellent program and serve as a model to help others grow."
10. "We gain a lot of experience which is so important when finding a job."
11. "More in[nov]ative, open to change, team oriented."
12. "I have not seen a program that can offer a lab like the one here."
13. "I don't know about other lab schools work."
14. "Not familiar with others."
15. [blank]

College C:

1. "I like how this program is focused on child development and caring for the whole student rather than just classroom management."
2. "This program is similar to the Montessori school I worked at in high school and much better than the traditional daycare that I've worked at over the past few summers."
3. "This is my favorite preschool/daycare I have worked at. I love the staff and the structure of the school."

4. "n/a"
5. "It's nice you don't have to drive 20-30 mins away compared to my [class] class."
6. "Ø"
7. "It's different from normal or general schools since the teachers, resources and family SES and ethnicity are different."
8. "Haven't worked at others."
9. "It works well and prepares them for school later on."
10. "We get tons of different experiences and we get to work at a very highly-accredited preschool."
11. "I would say there is a specific mark on the upbringing of all the children in the lab school compared to other schools."
12. "This program is more aware of the li[c]ensure behind developmentally appropriate practices."
13. "I'm not sure what other programs have?"
14. "The lab site seems more strict on things such as schedules and conversation we can have with the children. The lab site follows the guidance approach more heavily."
15. "I haven't had the opportunity to be in other programs yet but I know this program provides a very safe and encouraging environment for everyone, especially the children."
16. "I would say it is much more research-based than other ECE programs."

College D:

1. "Above average."
2. "I am not aware of other university programs but I am very pleased with the Early Ed program at [university] and have learned many great things."

How do you benefit from this program?

College A:

1. "I was lucky to learn from two of the professors who keep their information up to date and care about their job and teaching. And I also got a job at [lab site] which has taught me a lot."
2. "I benefit from hands on experience."

College B:

1. "Being able to see a different type of educational practices than I would typically see elsewhere."
2. "The experience in whole and knowing how I want to teach and the curriculum I want to model."
3. "I'm getting a hands on education while participating in the education myself and other teachers prepare and provide for the children."
4. "I am gaining so much experience in how to talk and work with children. Working with such a large team helps me gain some teamworking skills."
5. "I learn a lot on a daily basis of how to be a better educator to children."
6. "I am going to benefit a lot by this program in aspects of Reggio and also with communication, environment as [a] teacher."
7. "We get real hands on experience in the field and not just the classroom."

8. "Coming from such a great program I benefit from the quality education and incredible leaders in the staff."
9. "In endless ways learning from more experienced teachers and modeling opportunities for student teachers; Growing as a professional."
10. "I learn so many different ways of teaching from all the leads. I get the chance to teach in a high quality preschool."
11. "Being [in] a learning environment."
12. "I benefit from using the resources in the lab and from direction of the teachers."
13. "Hands on experience with a wide range of philosophies all mixed together."
14. "Great learning/hands on experience that allows for trial and error."
15. "This program is very beneficial because we can get [a] chance to learn about teaching."

College C:

1. "There is more of a focus on child development rather than just teaching strategy."
2. "Experience and techniques differed by professors."
3. "It teaches me how to be a better teacher/therapist/parent."
4. "I benefit by having hands on experience and meeting teachers in the field that I will be in that guide my work."
5. "A chance to know how to educate children in [the] real world."
6. "Job! I work there 12 hours a week and also do a practicum there."
7. "I have learned a lot in being and caring for early aged children."

8. "I'm learning a lot about the guidance approach and how to implement it with students."
9. "I feel my advising teacher is really providing me with a good experience."
10. "I have gained so much real-world guidance related to my future career."
11. "This helps me get real life experience doing what I will be doing in the real world."
12. "Gaining experience."
13. "Experience with 2-4 year olds."
14. "I have learned a lot from the staff and gained an awesome experience."
15. "It has taught me to use the guidance approach in the classroom and I have seen how effective it is when you give students choices and guide them."
16. "It allows me to see a different approach to education and get experiences in the classroom."

College D:

1. "I gain necessary knowledge and skills to become a teacher."
2. "Learning developmental levels of young children, interacting with families, using my own lessons and activities in a classroom, first hand experience, advice from teachers."

How do you plan to further your training or education as a student or employee?

College A:

1. "I do plan on looking into my masters. However I do not think [university] will be my first choice based on my experiences with the current teachers I've encountered."

2. "I plan to continue to go to school after I graduate May 2016 with a Bachelor's and proceed to my Master's. I plan to continue to work at [lab site] until I can't any longer due to new opportunities or I am no longer needed."

College B:

1. "To attend conferences, informational speakers, classes as provided/appropriate."
2. "Become a child life specialist but also a child/teen center to educate children who may not have the opportunities that children here do."
3. "I plan to take part in continuous[s] education as well as staying active as a NAEYC member."
4. "After college I will continue to attend conference[s]. I am also considering getting Montessori certified."
5. "I plan to attend many conferences and seek out many different teaching strategies. In the future get my master's degree."
6. "Get involved in child like activities. Find jobs related to this field."
7. "By attending conferences and programs after graduation!"
8. "I really enjoy conferences and also visiting other places. This helps get new ideas or [a] better way for a working environment."
9. "Attending conferences and other professional development opportunities. Completing research."
10. "Continue working beside and observing the lead teachers. I also plan on taking note of the environment and try to du[p]licate in my future classrooms."

11. "Pro[f]essional development (conferences, presenting, workshops, etc.)."
12. "I plan to get a job as a preschool teacher and continue education to get a master's degree in this field."
13. "Continue my conference attendance and keep up with my own research as well as following others'."
14. "To go out and continue learning from children and other professionals."
15. [blank]

College C:

1. "I plan to finish out my 4-year degree in Early Childhood Education and exceptional needs."
2. "Studying abroad for experiential learning opportunities and in order to broaden my knowledge of Spanish in a teaching context."
3. "Ø"
4. "I plan on graduating with a 4 year degree, but I have [1]½ years left until I graduate. I'm not sure where I will student teach but I would love to be involved in the lab school more."
5. "I want to teach children in different countries and places in order to know culture[al] and language difference[s] and the influence [they] ha[ve] on children. I also want to know more about bilingual education."
6. "Hopefully grad school at [university]."
7. "I will complete more 4 year degree and then get a job as a teacher."
8. "I plan to finish my 4-year program with a variety of child care jobs and I hope to find a professional career in developmental therapy."

9. "I plan to finish out my four year program and spend some time in the Early Childhood classroom and maybe pursue some research."
10. "I want to finish my degree and take advantage of any educational or job opportunities available."
11. "I work there and am a practicum student so I plan on doing that until I graduate."
12. "Finish my degree in ECE and become a teacher."
13. "Student, to continue with my degree and graduate and then get a teaching position in [place]."
14. "Keep gaining experiences and opportunities with children at practicums, student teaching, internships, and summer jobs."
15. "Finish my 4 years of college, get my license, and go on to become a teacher."
16. "I plan on getting my teaching license and student teaching, substitute teaching, job shadowing, etc. along the way. I may go on to graduate school to get a degree in occupational therapy to work with children in that field."

College D:

1. "I will further my experience in methods/student teaching."
2. "I will take the experience from the program and lab site and complete my student teaching later this year. I will use all of this experience to look for a future job in an elementary school."

In conclusion, there were a number of similarities among students' responses. Most students valued the hands-on learning experience. They also mentioned furthering their education.

Students from College A had a few disagreeing statements. They noted that there may have been some gaps in their education which they noticed upon entering work within the field. They mentioned lack of guidance and unnecessary classes.

Staff:

What do you like about this school?

College A:

1. "Working with other early childhood professionals. Mentoring future early childhood professionals. Working for a center who has grown to have the same early childhood philosophy as myself."
2. "Outside area for children. Located on campus. Safe environment."
3. "[university] → I do like how much hands on opportunities is offered to students, they get ample time to use skills in the classroom. [lab site] → The classrooms at [lab site] are always well staffed and the majority of the workers are very good."

College B:

1. "I like the ability to be able to change. We are constantly changing here to make us better."
2. "All of the children."
3. "Working hands on with children at [blank]."
4. "It's beautiful. Many opportunities available to the children."
5. "The open floor plan for classrooms. The school is family friendly and diverse."

6. “The working with Reg[g]io inspired philosophy. The ability to use my creativity.”

College C:

1. “I like working in a university setting, connected to our major. I like working with a variety of centers.”
2. “It’s a facility that involves many international families. New classrooms with bright furnishings. People I work with each day. Large amount of resources.”
3. “This school is wonderful! The teachers and staff enjoy working here and have a passion for teaching young children. The parents are highly educated and value the staff and their opinions. The children are wonderful to work with.”

College D:

1. “It has a warm feeling about it. It is also deeply entrenched in the community as it has been in existence since the [era of time]. The people associated with it are caring and professional.”
2. “The set-up is absolutely brilliant. Room sections like ‘dramatic play’ and the giant ‘block area’ allow children many choices and ways to learn while playing and expressing themselves.”

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

College A:

1. “New facility with bigger classrooms. More support/trainings from the early childhood department in order to be consistent for the students and children.”

2. “Bigger indoor space/classrooms. Easier access to Early Childhood Education materials located in the [name of] library.”

3. [blank]

College B:

1. “The staff work better together – all as one. We work well for the most part but we could do better.”

2. “More parent involvement.”

3. “None at this time.”

4. “More collaboration with faculty.”

5. “More collaboration with the [university] Child Development faculty.”

6. “More recognition for the high quality, creative and inspiring program that we have.”

College C:

1. “More contact with professor[s] and research. More child-teacher ratio.”

2. “I would like to see the facility hire at least 2 or 3 adults that could work blocks of time. Our subs are students if floaters are already used. Having 6-8 people come in when a teacher is sick is difficult on children and staff.”

3. “A faster hiring process.”

College D:

1. “I would like to have the 2 classrooms closer together, but this is not possible with our current structure. Remember, we rent this space from [organization].”

2. “Professional development in the ways of properly dealing with children with more ‘emotional differences.’”

What is the relationship like between the Early Childhood Education program and this school?

College A:

1. “Not sure but the staff in both departments could work more closely together to benefit the students, the university and most importantly the children/families that attend the center.”
2. “Limited communication between [lab site] staff and Early Childhood faculty – *face to face* – we only see EDC-staff 2 times a *semester* – I would like to see them in our classrooms working with the students *1:1*.”
3. “I know there are a lot of issues but it is none of my business.”

College B:

1. “Wonderful however we two could be closer.”
2. “Some of their children attend.”
3. “A co-partnership towards best practice in all aspects of the school/children.”
4. “This is a lab school, so they go hand in hand.”
5. “We have a good working relationship with Early Childhood at [university] – students have hands-on experiences.”
6. “See below and above.”

College C:

1. “We are directly connected to our program. We have practicum students that we teach and supervise. We have some training from our own professors.”
2. “We have done (research) projects with engineering students. We try to promote other [university] activities on the campus that seem kid friendly.”
3. “We have a solid working relationship. We have practicum students come into the classrooms and we communicate with the professors of the classes. Some of the professors come into the classrooms to do observations or research.”

College D:

1. “As we are a lab school, we have a close relationship with Education faculty. We usually have students here from at least 4 education classes, and other students from psychology and nutrition.”
2. “It is a good relationship. During the semester, we constantly had new students coming in and observing/teaching the children.”

How would you compare this childcare to others?**College A:**

1. “This center has high standards and teachers are expected to perform best-practice.”
2. “Better quality. Trained staff with degrees. Better location.”
3. “From the other centers that I’ve seen [lab site] is wonderfully staffed with quality teachers. We also have great resources that is not always available to other centers.”

College B:

1. "Above the rest."
2. "Teacher to child ratio is higher and higher budget than most places. The kids can travel."
3. [the word 'childcare' is circled] "Preschool. Superior = staff, facilities and program."
4. "It's a preschool not childcare center."
5. "This is a preschool and not childcare."
6. "We are Reggio inspired. We implement updated, creative, open ended activities."

College C:

1. "I feel this is a model program not only for childcare but pre-school. We have well educated staff. I have my master's."
2. "We have many more resources available to use here at [university]. Highly educated parents who want top care for their children. Intensity with paper work and forms. Requirements strict to follow foundations and state on plans."
3. "This childcare is considered one of the best in our area. The staff is highly trained and work hard to do their best."

College D:

1. "We are positively viewed by NAEYC, [state initial]AEYC, and other professional organizations. Early Childhood professors view us positively."

2. “Unfortunately, this form of childcare has many different teachers cycling in and out during the semester – which may confuse the children who enjoy more of a routine, structured environment.”

How do you benefit from this program?

College A:

1. By being employed full-time with benefits from the university.”
2. “[University] employee benefits (health insurance). Tuition waivers. Flexible hours – working with staff as a team player.”
3. “I am a new teacher and since this is a center used to teaching I have been able to learn a lot and feel comfortable asking questions.”

College B:

1. “Professionally and educationally.”
2. “Working with children and college kids. Professional education opportunities.”
3. “Being able to work in a high quality program with outstanding co-workers. As well as working with a diverse group of children.”
4. “Meeting many families from different cultures.”
5. “Relationships with families. Professional development. Relationships with staff.”
6. “I am able to express my self and knowledge of child develop[ment].”

College C:

1. “Being in contact with latest research and continuing education.”

2. "Earning a salary and have benefits/retirement. Chances to learn from other teachers. Encouragement from parents."
3. "Working with highly trained passionate teachers helps me to be a better teacher."

College D:

1. "The university environment benefits from having such a wonderful program in its backyard."
2. "I have a greater awareness for the different points of view and mindsets children bring to preschool."

How do this lab site and the Early Childhood Education program encourage further training or education for the employees?

College A:

1. "The center director encourages the teachers to find trainings that are of interest and that would help us to perform best-practice in the classroom. Also, trainings in specific areas are planned during our shut-down week. The early childhood program is not usually involved in trainings for the center."
2. "Trainings on site. Classes available on campus. Support staff to allow leave for trainings."
3. [blank]

College B:

1. "Conferences and other professional development."
2. "Encourage professional development."
3. "By offering opportunities to attend conferences."

4. “We are constantly learning new things.”
5. “Professional development is highly encouraged.”
6. “We have a state of the art building and use updated insights on brain development.”

College C:

1. “Required training hours; onsite training opportunities; conferences etc.”
2. “→ We are requested from our director to present at the state [state initial]AEYC conference. We send in a proposal and resume and then must present if accepted. → 20 hours of continuing education are required.”
3. “The administration plans for trainings throughout the year. They also send us information for trainings in our area.”

College D:

1. “We stay as updated as possible. It helps that we supervise so many college students. This helps us to stay updated in curriculum and assessments. I prompt staff to stay current in trainings.”
2. “The student teachers are able to ‘jump right in’ and experience what teaching an actual preschool class would be like.”

In conclusion, the staff of the lab schools had much in common. The majority seemed to value working hands-on with the students during their field experiences. They also noticed the logical relationship between the two organizations.

There was, however, mention of wanting a closer relationship when it came to the responses from College B. College A also noted the lack of faculty presence within the classrooms.

Parents:

What do you like about your child's school?

College A:

1. "The teaching staff is consistent, caring and nurturing. The things the teachers plan are academically based. Teachers take into consideration what is happening at home to try to help the child. All staff are friendly. Hours are accommodating to our work schedules, location is convenient to both our home and work."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. "I like the play-based philosophy, diversity, and emphasis on learning through an integrated curriculum."

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

College A:

1. "An updated facility with more space for children in the classrooms. Teaching staff needs to be paid better for all that they do. Playground could use some new updates as well (preschool side)."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. [blank]

What do you know of the relationship between the Early Childhood Education program and your child's school?

College A:

1. "I know the teachers work extremely hard with the students, guiding them on best practices. I think some communication is lacking between the department as well as some updated of techniques and classes offered to the students."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. "I know that the adult students in the ECE program are placed in [lab site].
The relationship is strong."

How would you compare this childcare to others?

College A:

1. "I can't really compare it. My children have gone here since infancy and have not attended any other center."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. "This is a wonderful childcare program. My children learn to work with others, respect peers and adults, take responsibility, and have fun while learning. The same cannot be said for all childcare programs."

How do you benefit from this program?

College A:

1. "By knowing my children are in great care, I have peace of mind so I can focus on my work. I know they are also getting a great foundation for their higher education."

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. "I get to watch my child find success. I watch them progress happily through the early stages of child development."

In conclusion, the parents seemed to enjoy their child's school very much. They seemed to be comfortable with the teachers. They also seemed to be aware of the relationship with the academic unit.

College A noticed a lack of communication between the two groups. The need for an updated facility, as mentioned within the staff section, was noted as well. Overall, there was not much comparison within the parent group.

Children:

What do you like about your school?

College A:

(no responses)

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. "I like that I have my friends here. I like it when my friends know things I don't and we learn together."
2. "I like feeding Max and Ruby (classroom birds) and having show and tell."

What kinds of things do you do at school?

College A:

(no responses)

College B:

(no responses)

College C:

(no responses)

College D:

1. “I feed Max and Ruby, play and have circle time.”
2. “Play with my friends. I play in areas of the room like the ice cream shop today. Sometimes I like the block and art areas, too.”

In conclusion, children from College D seemed to value their classroom pets. They also valued their relationships with their peers. There was not much to compare within the children section of participants.

Comparison

When comparing results from the four schools involved in the questionnaire, anyone can see that education is highly valued by all who have reported. Some schools are struggling with lack of resources or communication while others are taking pride in the empire they have worked so hard over the years to build.

Whichever the case may be, it is quite obvious from the data that all four schools hold the same values. These values may not involve the same set of curricula, or the same teaching philosophies, but have the students’ best interest in mind – at both the college level as well as the Early Childhood setting. See Figures 3 and 4 on pages 59 and 60.

Figure 3: Similarities Among Results					
		Colleges			
		A	B	C	D
Participant Type	Faculty	Hands-On, Field Experiences, Student Learning		Hands-On, Field Experiences, Student Learning	
	Students	Hands-On, Field Experiences, Further Education			
	Staff	Hands-On, Field Experiences, Logical Relationship			
	Parents	Enjoy School, Comfortable with Teachers, Aware of Relationship with Academics			Enjoy School, Comfortable with Teachers, Aware of Relationship with Academics
	Children				

Figure 4: Differences Among Results					
		Colleges			
		A	B	C	D
Participant Type	Faculty	Disconnection with Lab School		Strong Relationship with Lab School	
	Students	Gaps in Education, Lack of Guidance, Unnecessary Classes			
	Staff	Lack of Faculty Presence within Classrooms, Updated Facility	Wants a Closer Relationship		
	Parents	Lack of Communication with Academics, Updated Facility			
	Children				Classroom Pets, Relationship with Peers

Phase IV: Recommend

Results of the study indicate a need for collaboration among university-sponsored early childhood lab schools with college programs in order to establish a relationship that benefits all involved. Early Childhood Educators need to take responsibility for the quality of education they are providing to their students. If there are issues among them, then they need to be addressed accordingly and appropriately within a reasonable amount of time. As professionals, student educators have a responsibility to put not only the children's best interests first, but those of their students as well.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Responses to the questionnaires indicated a need within several different areas. This next section includes discussion of the frequency among a few particular words that were repeated among participants' responses.

The form of the word 'resources' appears 6 times. The form of the word 'passion' appears 8 times. The form of the word 'communication' appears 8 times. The form of the word 'quality' is found 15 times. The form of the word 'observe' appears 16 times. The form of the word 'research' appears 17 times. The form of the words 'hands-on' appears 17 times. The form of the word 'professional' appears 17 times. The form word 'relationship' appears 22 times. The form of the word 'experience' appears 55 times.

Resources should be made readily available in order to support student learning. These resources include, but are not limited to: college instructor materials, materials for students to use to complete assignments, and materials for the students to use with the children.

There needs to be an obvious sense of passion within the department. Both faculty and administration need to share the same goals and visions that are established.

Communication is key in every academic setting, but needs to be focused on when attempting to implement a connection between teacher education programs and the lab sites where students are being placed. There needs to be several lines of communication between all parties involved.

In order to obtain a quality program, there must be several guidelines and/or standards to be followed. There are several organizations for Early Childhood Education that have established such measures of quality.

Humans learn by observation. Children learn by observation. As Early Childhood professionals, we must learn how to incorporate observation into teacher education. We must set an example and lead students to apply their observations to their own learning.

As mentioned previously, the field of Education is extremely dynamic. By using constant research, professionals are able to understand what and how is changing. Therefore, implementing research is crucial to the advancement of any program.

Students need to be able to apply what they observe within a learning environment. The classroom instructors should scaffold the students' learning by creating several opportunities for hands-on practice and learning.

Before the students enter the classroom, they need to have some sort of understanding about the professional world. They need to be aware of how to conduct themselves in everyday situations that may occur in a place of business. This knowledge should begin in the classroom with the instructor, before entering the Early Childhood setting.

Relationships are the driving force of any education. The student must trust the teacher, or the learning will not occur. Students need to be able to understand how and

why relationships work.

Finally, students must be given ample amount of experience. They need to create meaningful practice during their time of learning in order to gain the experience they will need when entering the business world on their own.

This means that there are similarities, differences, and patterns among the data. From the observations and interviews that occurred during the center visits, all personnel involved viewed the children as the first priority. Colleges that valued students' academic success prioritized the center as a lab site for field experiences.

Limitations

Initially, six colleges were contacted to be part of this study. A seventh college was added after no response from one of the initial six. Of the seven colleges, four participated in both a center visit and questionnaire, two participated in the center visit only, and one did not respond to initial requests. Any lack of participation may have been due to the timing of the visits and questionnaires as well as the size of the university. Questionnaires were distributed and returned between late winter and early summer. University personnel may not have had enough time to respond before the end of the academic year.

Of the six center visits, the time span range spent touring was between thirty and sixty minutes. Of the three hundred seventy nine possible responses within the questionnaires, sixteen were left blank, six responses stated, "n/a," and four responses stated, "Ø." Any lack of responses or responses that showed confusion may have been evidence of a need to clarify or reword some of the questions.

Phase IV: Recommendations

Further data collection and analysis is recommended in order to create a more detailed set of criteria for said lab schools to adhere by. Follow up visits should be scheduled as well as distributions of new questionnaires, including more demographic information such as NAEYC accreditation or affiliation with any other well-known organizations. A cross-comparison of criteria from state standards and licensing should be examined as well to determine individual lab schools' policies.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Academic Research, 220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308 · Big Rapids, MI 49307

Date: April 10, 2015
To: Dr. Liza Ingand Nicole Benedict
From: Dr. Stephanie Thomson, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application #140912 (*Best Practices in University Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites*)

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Best Practices in University Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites*" (#140912) and determined that it meets Federal Regulations *Expedited category 2G/2F*. This approval has an expiration date of one year from the date of this letter. **As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until April 10, 2016.** Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number (#140912), which you should refer to in future correspondence involving this same research procedure. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years.

As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,



Ferris State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Academic Research, Academic Affairs

Version 1.2015

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORMS

Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites

Niccole Benedict, Master's Student, and Dr. Liza Ing, Faculty Sponsor from the Education Department at Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI (FSU) are conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are somehow involved in a university-sponsored early childhood lab school. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study is being done in order to gain improvements in the quality of Early Childhood Education.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, we would ask you to answer questions such as, "What do you like about your child's school?" or "What kinds of improvements would you like to see?"

How long will the research study take me?

Time taken for participation in the questionnaire should take between 5-15 minutes.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no potential risks or discomforts. Anyone with a disability who chooses to participate in the research should notify the primary investigator, so the proper accommodations can be made.

Are there any potential benefits to me if I participate?

You may benefit from the study by helping to improve the quality of your university's early childhood lab site. The results of the research may provide improvements within the Early Childhood Education field.

Will information about my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of holding information on a password protected USB drive for an estimated 5 years and used as baseline data for a future dissertation. All research data will be destroyed after the estimated 5 years.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

• **The research team:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Niccole Benedict, Primary Investigator
(231)629-7947
benedin@ferris.edu

Dr. Liza Ing, Faculty Sponsor
(231)591-5362
ingl@ferris.edu

• **FSU Institutional Review Board:**

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please contact:

FSU Institutional Review Board
220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308
Big Rapids, MI 49307
(231) 591-2553

Upon your request, a copy of this information will be made available for you.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

• **The research team:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Niccole Benedict, Primary Investigator
(231)629-7947
benedin@ferris.edu

Dr. Liza Ing, Faculty Sponsor
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If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please contact:

FSU Institutional Review Board
220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308
Big Rapids, MI 49307
(231) 591-2553

You may make a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Please click on survey to provide consent to participate.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI
PARENT PERMISSION FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites

Niccole Benedict, Master's Student, and Dr. Liza Ing, Faculty Sponsor from the Education Department at Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI (FSU) are conducting a research study. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he/she attends a university-sponsored early childhood lab school. Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study is being done in order to gain improvements in the quality of Early Childhood Education.

What will happen if my child takes part in this research study?

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, we would ask him/her to answer questions such as, "What do you like about your school?" or "What kinds of things do you do at school?"

How long will the research study take me?

Time taken for participation in the questionnaire should take between 5-15 minutes.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that my child can expect from this study?

There are no potential risks or discomforts. Anyone with a disability who chooses to participate in the research should notify the primary investigator, so the proper accommodations can be made.

Are there any potential benefits to my child if he or she participates?

Your child may benefit from the study by gaining a sense of ownership in his/her classroom. The results of the research may provide improvements within the Early Childhood Education field.

Will information about my child's participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify your child will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of holding information on a password protected USB drive for a minimum of 2 years, 6 months to a maximum of 5 years, 6 months and used as baseline data for a future dissertation. All research data will then be destroyed via deletion. Paper consent forms and questionnaires that are returned to the investigator will be stored for the same amount of time and destroyed via paper shredder.

What are my and my child's rights if he or she takes part in this study?

- The age range of the children who might be participants is dependent upon the developmental level of your child. If your child is able to communicate the answers, then he/she is welcome to participate.
- If your child is able to read/write, he/she should attempt to answer on his or her own. If not, then you should read the question(s) to him/her.
- You can choose whether or not you want your child to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your child's participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you or your child, and no loss of benefits to which you or your child were otherwise entitled.
- Your child may refuse to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer and still remain in the study.

- **Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

The research team:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Niccole Benedict, Primary Investigator
(231)629-7947
benedin@ferris.edu

Dr. Liza Ing, Faculty Sponsor
(231)591-5362
ingl@ferris.edu

FSU Institutional Review Board:

If you have questions about your child's rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please contact:

FSU Institutional Review Board
220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308
Big Rapids, MI 49307
(231) 591-2553

Upon your request, a copy of this information will be made available for you. Although your signature is needed for consent, your child's signature is not, but is considered good ethical practice.

SIGNATURE OF CHILD AND PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Name of Child

Signature of Child

Date

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

- **Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

The research team:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

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(231) 591-2553

Upon your request, a copy of this information will be made available for you. Although your signature is needed for consent, your child's signature is not, but is considered good ethical practice.

SIGNATURE OF CHILD AND PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Name of Child

Signature of Child

Date

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRES

Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites Questionnaire

Faculty:

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return a copy to the child care center in which you are affiliated with, email, or mail directly to:

Nicole Benedict, Primary Investigator
benedin@ferris.edu
Ferris State University
College of Education & Human Services
1349 Cramer Hall Bishop 421
Big Rapids, MI 49307

What is the relationship like between the lab site and this program?

What do you like about the Early Childhood Education program?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

How would you compare this program to others?

How do you benefit from this program?

How do your program and this lab site encourage further training or education for its employees?

Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites Questionnaire

Students:

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return a copy to the child care center in which you are affiliated with, email, or mail directly to:

Niccole Benedict, Primary Investigator
benedin@ferris.edu
Ferris State University
College of Education & Human Services
1349 Cramer Hall Bishop 421
Big Rapids, MI 49307

What do you like about the Early Childhood Education program?

What do you like about the lab site?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

What do you know of the relationship between the Early Childhood Education program and the lab site?

How would you compare this program to others?

How do you benefit from this program?

How do you plan to further your training or education as a student or employee?

Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites Questionnaire

Staff:

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return a copy to the child care center in which you are affiliated with, email, or mail directly to:

Nicole Benedict, Primary Investigator
benedin@ferris.edu
Ferris State University
College of Education & Human Services
1349 Cramer Hall Bishop 421
Big Rapids, MI 49307

What do you like about this school?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

What is the relationship like between the Early Childhood Education program and this school?

How would you compare this childcare to others?

How do you benefit from this program?

How do this lab site and the Early Childhood Education program encourage further training or education for the employees?

Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites Questionnaire

Parents:

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return a copy to the child care center in which you are affiliated with, email, or mail directly to:

Niccole Benedict, Primary Investigator
benedin@ferris.edu
Ferris State University
College of Education & Human Services
1349 Cramer Hall Bishop 421
Big Rapids, MI 49307

What do you like about your child's school?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see?

What do you know of the relationship between the Early Childhood Education program and your child's school?

How would you compare this childcare to others?

How do you benefit from this program?

Best Practices in University-Sponsored Early Childhood Lab Sites Questionnaire

Children:

The age range of the children who might be participants is dependent upon the developmental level of your child. If your child is able to communicate the answers, then he/she is welcome to participate. If your child is able to read/write, he/she should attempt to answer on his or her own. If not, then you should read the question(s) to him/her. You can choose whether or not you want your child to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your child's participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you or your child, and no loss of benefits to which you or your child were otherwise entitled. Your child may refuse to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer and still remain in the study. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return a copy to the child care center in which you are affiliated with, email, or mail directly to:

Nicole Benedict, Primary Investigator
benedin@ferris.edu
Ferris State University
College of Education & Human Services
1349 Cramer Hall Bishop 421
Big Rapids, MI 49307

What do you like about your school?

What kinds of things do you do at school?