



Early Success Staff Survey Report:

Understanding Career Attraction, Recruitment, & Retention in the Early Childcare Field

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Purpose:

This report was created at the request of the Early Success Learning Cohort, which includes Byron Public Schools, Civic League Day Nursery, Families First of Minnesota's School Readiness, Good News Children's Center, Thrive Child Care and Family Resource Center, and YMCA of the North. This group was established through the United Way of Olmsted County with the common goal of *"Providing opportunities for all families to experience high-quality early education to prepare for kindergarten."* In pursuing that goal, the cohort elected to seek a better understanding of factors that influence recruitment and retention of staff in the early childhood education field. This report and the survey on which it is based are designed to analyze themes associated with staff turnover and retention, work/life balance and fulfillment, and factors attracting new employees to the field.

Method:

This report is based on analysis of a survey designed by United Way of Olmsted County's Early Success Learning Cohort. Survey questions were developed through group identification and refinement. Mechanisms to reduce survey bias, including respondent anonymity and response order randomization, were employed. The survey was distributed by email link to early childhood education center administrators in Olmsted County who further distributed the link to staff members. Additional information is supplemented and cited from academic and literary sources.

Key Findings

- Educators are intrinsically motivated to enter and stay in the field because of the type of work, relationships with others, and sense of purpose they feel.
- Educators who switch employers have many reasons for doing so; often it is because of pay or flexible scheduling.
- Survey respondents indicated that more paid time off (PTO) and flexible scheduling would increase their job satisfaction and work/life balance.

Executive Summary

Early childhood educators are in high demand in our community. Childcare centers are struggling to hire and keep high-quality staff. Most educators are drawn to the profession because they are passionate about the children and families they serve. These professionals indicated time and time again that they work in the field because they feel a sense of purpose and calling to be an educator. Although passion and experience have encouraged many to join this profession, that is not necessarily enough to keep these educators for the long term.

Early childhood educators face challenges such as low hourly pay, lack of flexibility with their schedule, and few benefits, despite the rigor of this profession. Many educators are concerned with their compensation packages and indicated that they previously have had to switch employers due to pay or scheduling. Survey respondents shared that more paid time off (PTO) and flexible scheduling is one way that employers can support their staff without paying them more.

As the need for a larger workforce continues to grow, so does the need for high-quality early childhood education. Our community needs to find ways to recruit and retain high-quality early childhood educators by compensating them appropriately and valuing the important work they do. This survey was created to inform supervisors within the childcare and early education sector, as well as other community stakeholders. It is just a small look at the joys and challenges that individuals in this profession experience.

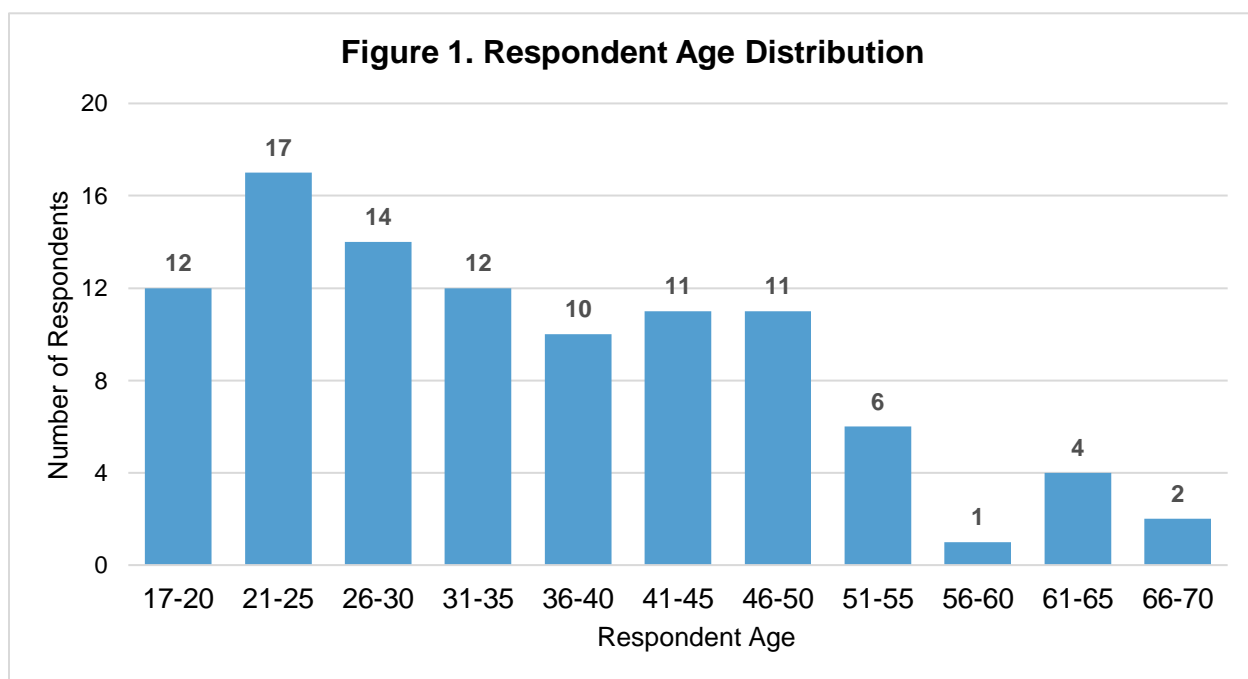
“This age group is my passion. I love working with children and having an impact on their lives and future is the most rewarding path I could ever pursue.”

-Survey respondent

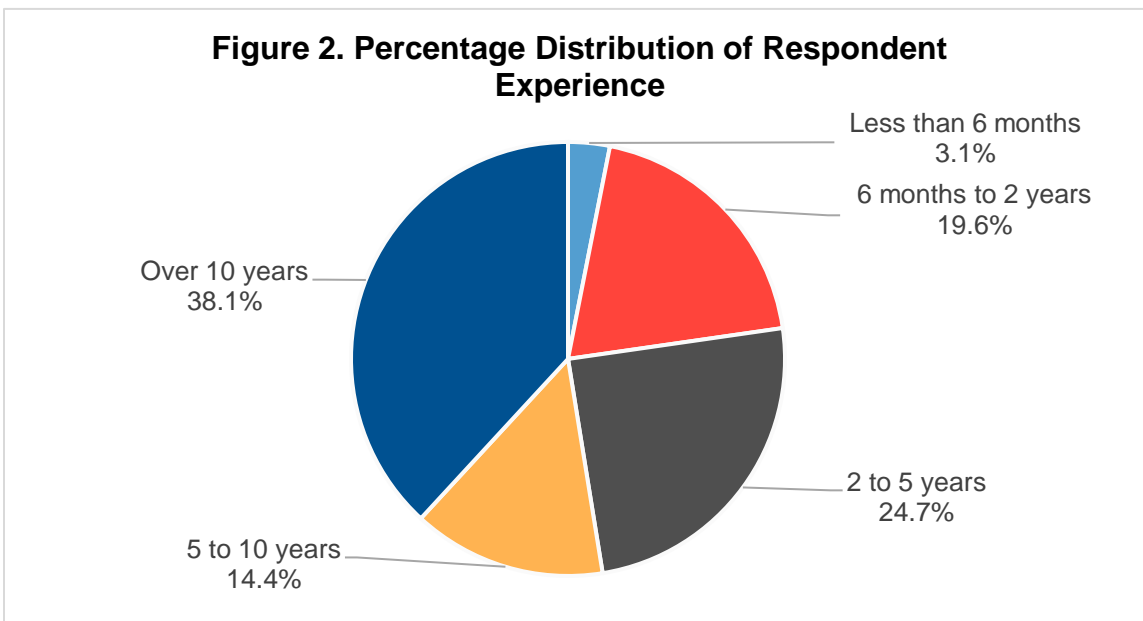
Respondent Demographics:

To better support early childhood educators, it is important to know who they are. These demographic questions were designed to better understand our survey respondents and what their experiences are. Of the local centers asked to participate in the survey, ten centers had educators respond.

- **10 Responding Centers:** Civic League Day Nursery, Byron Public Schools, YMCA of the North, Good News Children’s Center, Thrive Child Care and Family Resource Center, New Horizon Academy, Aldrich School, Listos Preschool & Childcare, Kids Come 1st, Kingdom Kids Preschool
- **Majority Female:** 94 of 98 respondents identify as female
- **Diverse Range of Age:** A high number of respondents in the 20-30 age range (Figure 1).



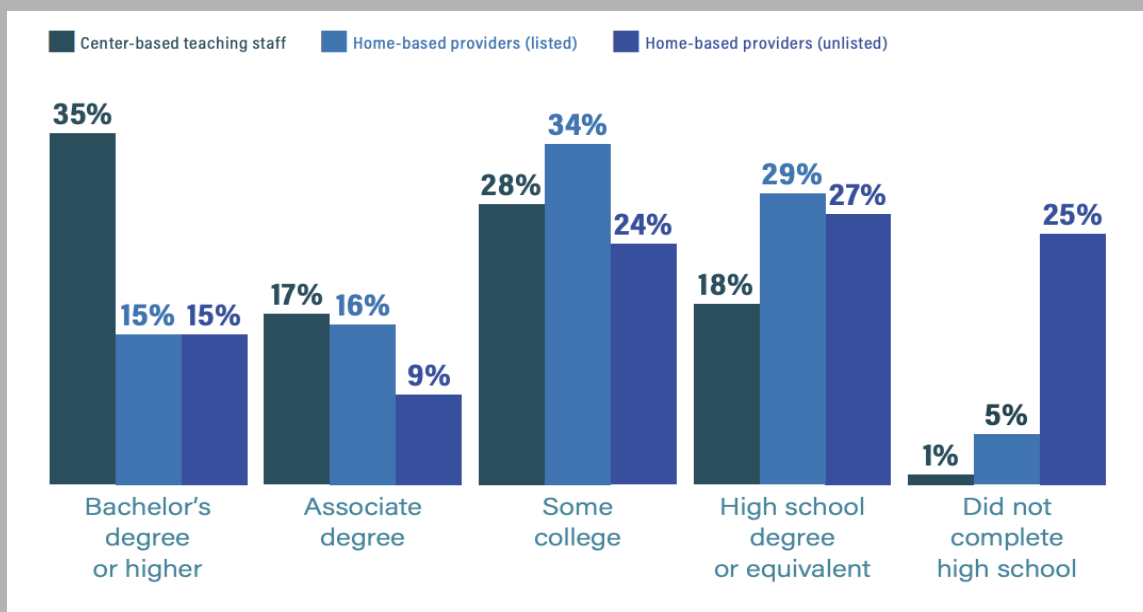
- **Diverse Range of Experience:** As seen in Figure 2.



National Level Look: Education Levels of Early Childcare Staff

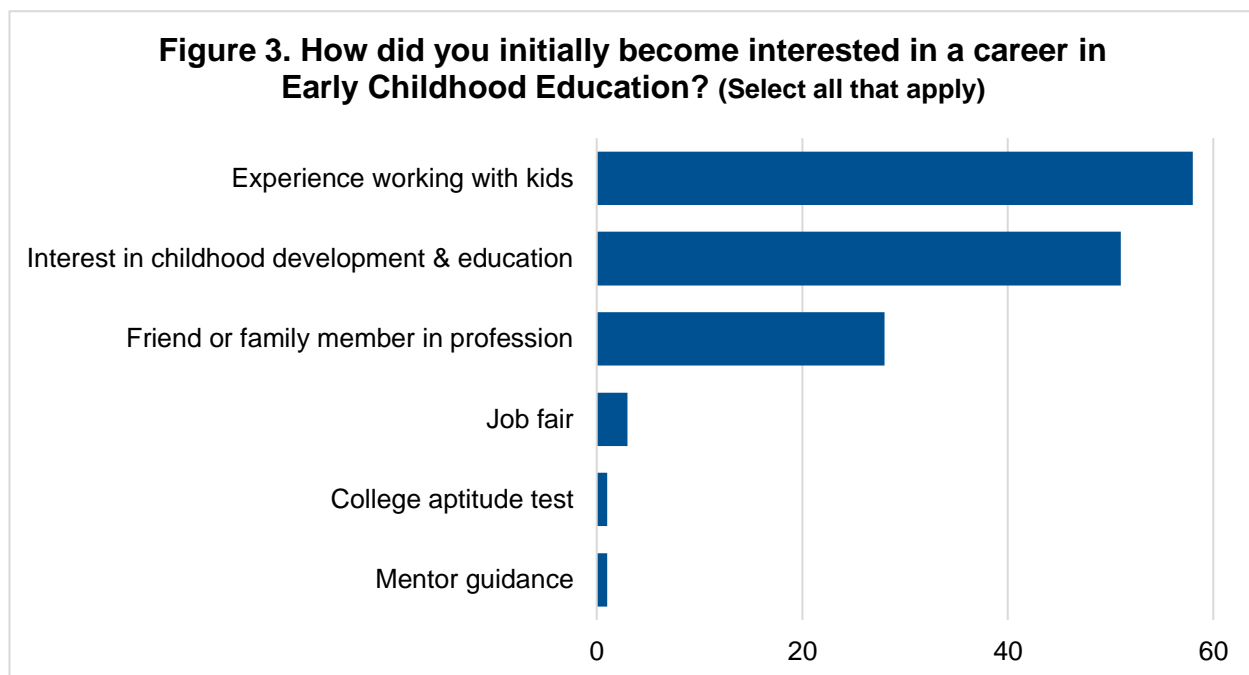
National Educational Background statistics: 80% of center-based teaching staff have some education beyond high school (Whitebook, McLean, & Austin 2016)

- **Minnesota:** Requires a Child Development Associate credential for center-based teachers (assistant teacher and above), no BA requirement for assistant, lead, or director in a licensed center (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards 2018)



Attraction

- **Three key attractors for survey respondents on initial interest in early childhood education:** experience working with kids, interest in childhood education and development, and a family member or friend in the profession (Figure 3).



“I love the children’s drive to learn as we learn from them also. Their smiles and full of life make my coming to work not a job; more of a love for what I get to do.”

-Survey respondent

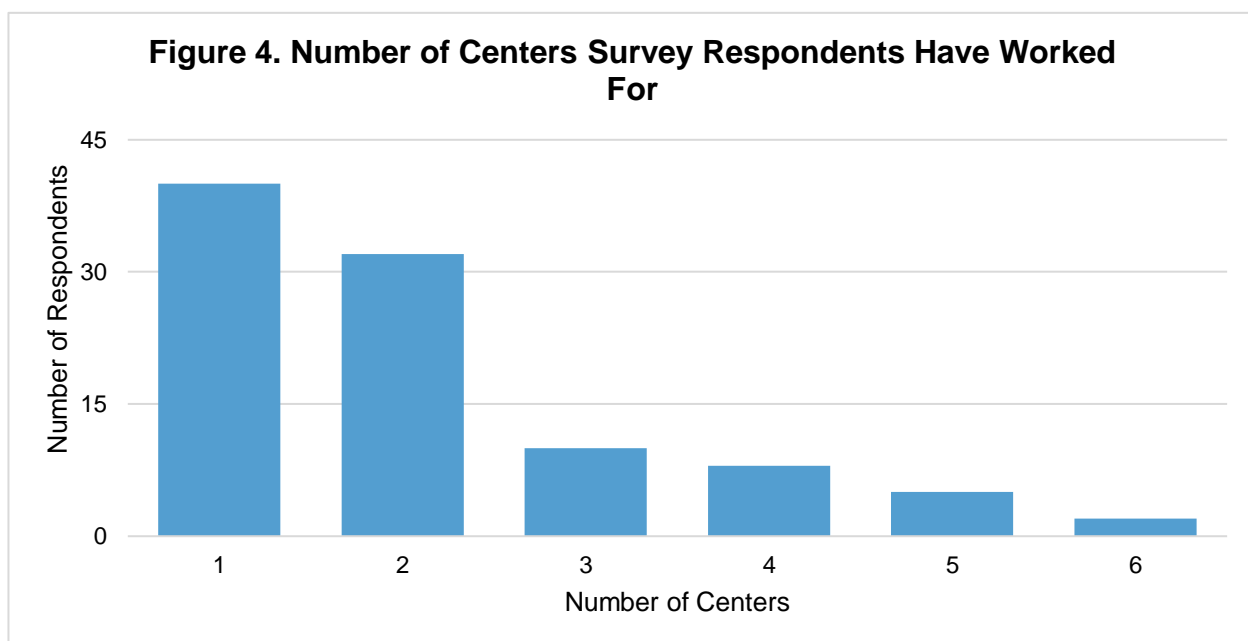
“My parents were educators and I grew up just loving the conversations around the dinner table. I knew I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children and the environments they learn in.”

-Survey respondent

Retention

- Figures regarding the number of centers respondents have worked for:**
 Respondents on average had worked for 2 centers at the time (Table 1) of response, with approximately 70% of respondents having worked at 3 centers or fewer over the course of their careers (Figure 4).

Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
2.08	2	1.28



National Level Look: Early Childcare Staff Turnover

- National figures regarding turnover and departures are noted as being high for the education field** (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes 2014)
 - Average turnover rate among early childhood educators:** 13% in 2012 (this includes all staff working directly with children)
 - Percentage of centers with any departures:** 50% in 2012

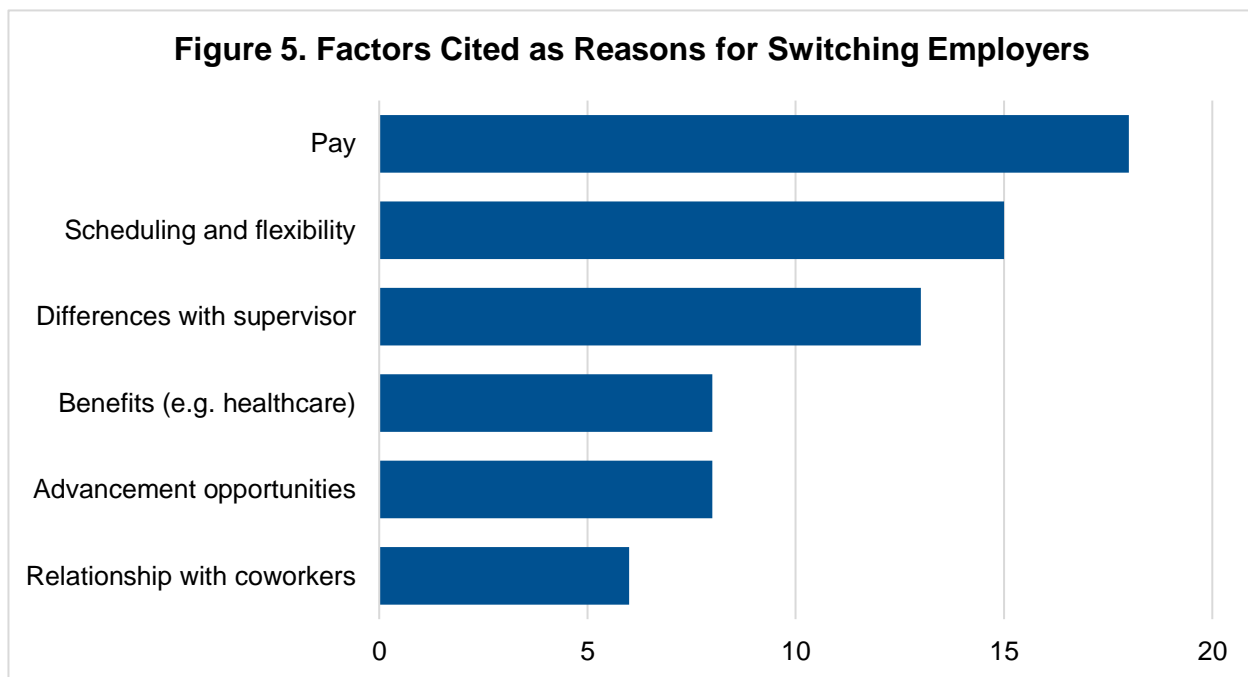
- **Retention by age and experience of survey respondents:**
 - The number of centers worked at generally increases with age; however, the number of centers for staff age 18-22 is notable for its relatively high average considering the short tenure of respondents in this category (Table 2).
 - This is in line with cross-industry data that indicates younger workers are more likely to switch jobs within their first years in the workplace (LinkedIn 2018).

<i>Age Category</i>	<i>Average number of centers worked at</i>
18-22	1.7
23-29	1.6
30-45	2.3
45-60	2.6
60+	2.2
Overall	2.1

- Comparing the number of centers worked at and the experience level of staff, demonstrates a similar trend, with another surprising number of centers worked at for those in the less than six months category (Table 3).

<i>Experience Category</i>	<i>Average number of centers worked at</i>
Less than 6 months	1.7
6 months to 2 years	1.2
2 to 5 years	1.8
5 to 10 years	1.9
Over 10 years	2.9
Overall	2.1

- **Three outlying reasons for switching employers:** pay, scheduling and flexibility, and differences with supervisors (Figure 5).



- **Low Wages:** Appear to present a significant issue both for switching between centers and workers leaving the field

State Level Look: Early Childcare Staff Wages

- **Minnesota:** Early childcare workers earn significantly less compared to both their elementary teacher counterparts and the average hourly worker (Whitebrook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards 2018).

Occupation	Median wage
Child care worker	\$11.27
Preschool teacher	\$14.93
Center director	\$24.36
Kindergarten teacher	\$32.39
Elementary teacher	\$35.00
All workers	\$19.84

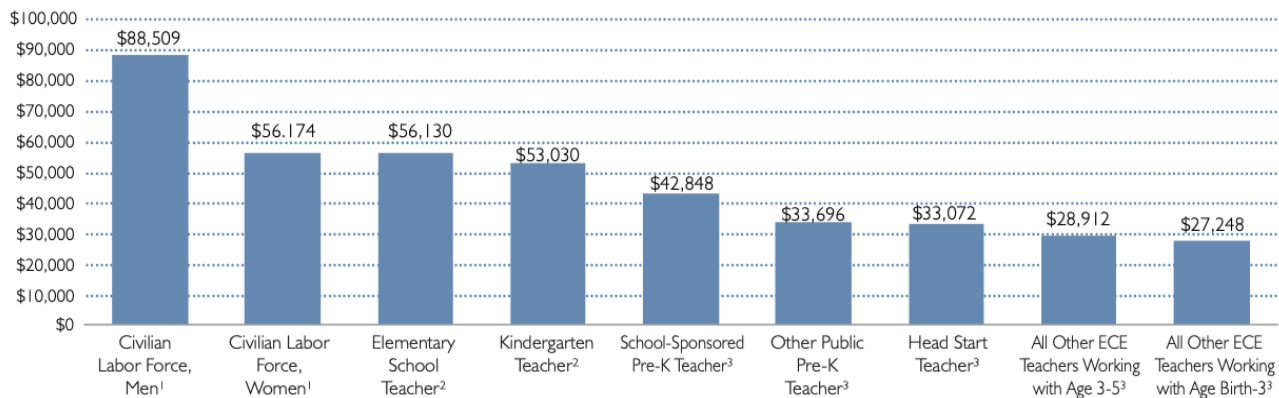
Earnings by Occupation

- In 2017 the median wage for child care workers was \$11.27, a **1% increase since 2015.**
- For preschool teachers the median wage was \$14.93, a **6% decrease since 2015.**
- For preschool or child care center directors, the median wage was \$24.36, a **5% decrease since 2015.**

National Level Look: Early Childcare Staff Wages

- Nationally:** This is echoed by a study that demonstrates bachelors degree-holders in early childhood education (approximately 35% of center based staff) are paid significantly less than the average civilian workforce salary of the same degree level.

FIGURE 3.5: Mean Annual Salary of Teachers with a Bachelor's or Higher Degree, by Occupation and for the Civilian Labor Force, 2012



- Below Average Net Promoter Score:** for recommending an early childhood education career among respondents, which can signal low growth potential
 - What is NPS:** NPS is a single question, *How likely are you to recommend a career in early childhood education to a family member or friend?* (1=Not likely, 10=Extremely likely), was asked to understand employee experience. This metric is a key signal to identify growth within an organization.

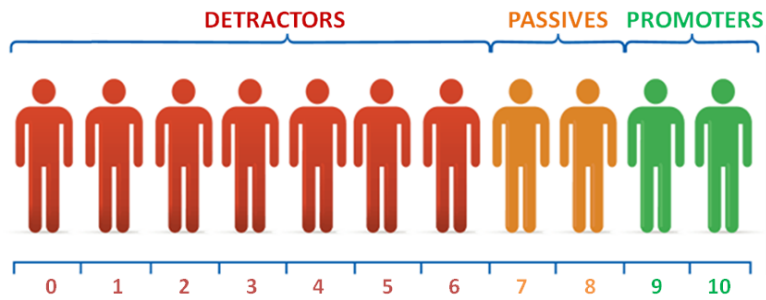
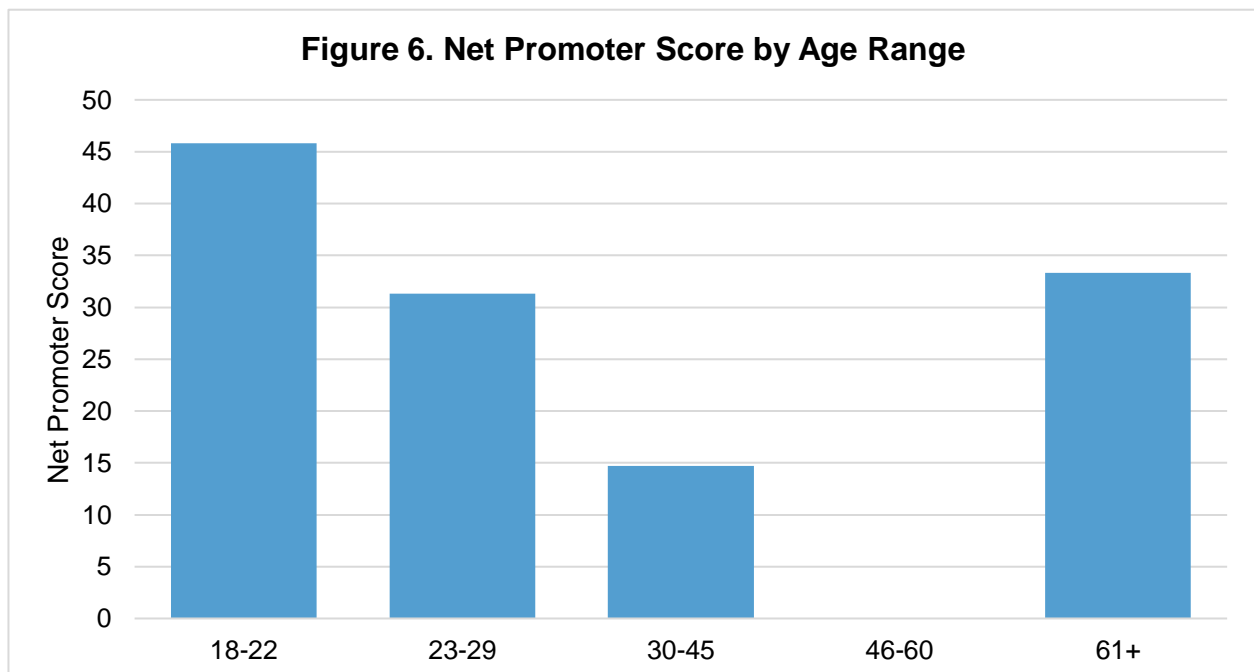


Image Source: Tribus <https://tribus.com/real-estate/professionalism/net-promoter-score/>

- **Why it matters:** NPS is a key metric to signify growth. A low NPS can signal a future decline in the availability of early childhood educators.
- **Early Learning Success Survey Report Score:** 21, below the education field average of 71. Scores range from -100 to 100.
- **Net Promoter Score Varies by Age Group:** The youngest age group has the highest score, whereas the 45-60 range has the lowest.
 - This data can be used to further analyze which factors among each age group most influence a low or high score (Figure 6).



The High: Ages 18-22

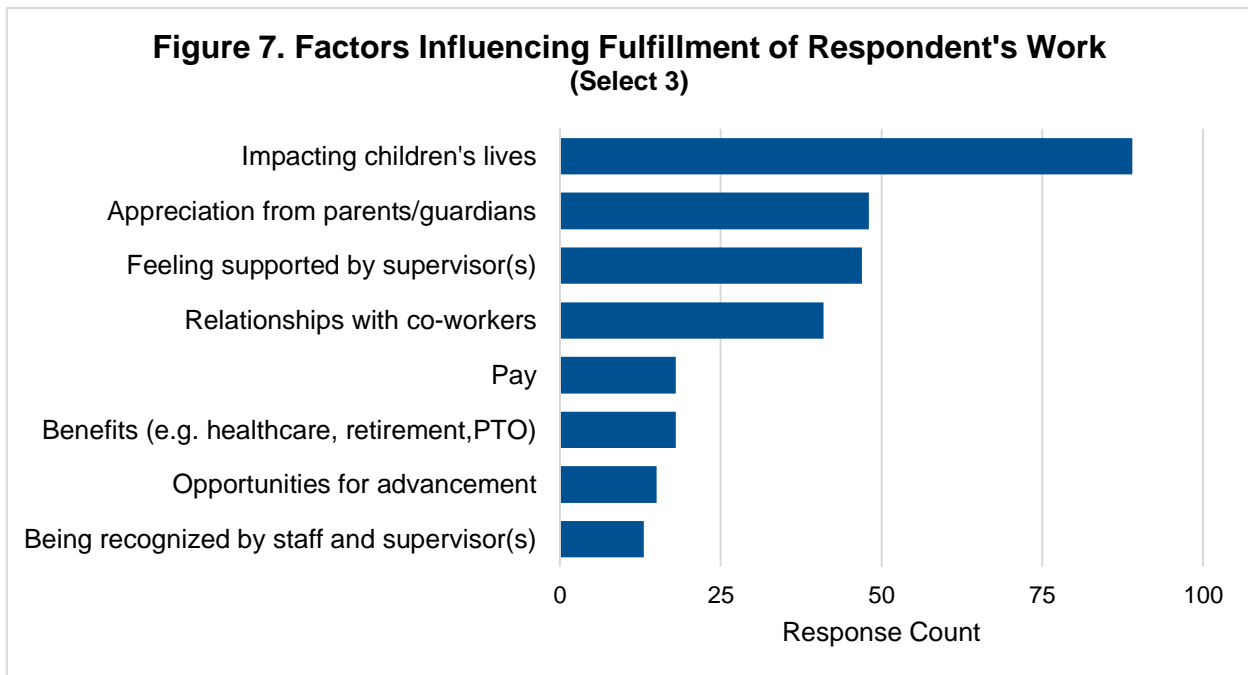
- Mean number of centers worked at: 1.7
- Factor most cited for affecting work life balance: Schedule Predictability
- Factors most cited for switching employers: Pay, Scheduling and Flexibility, Differences with Supervisor

The Low: Ages 45-60

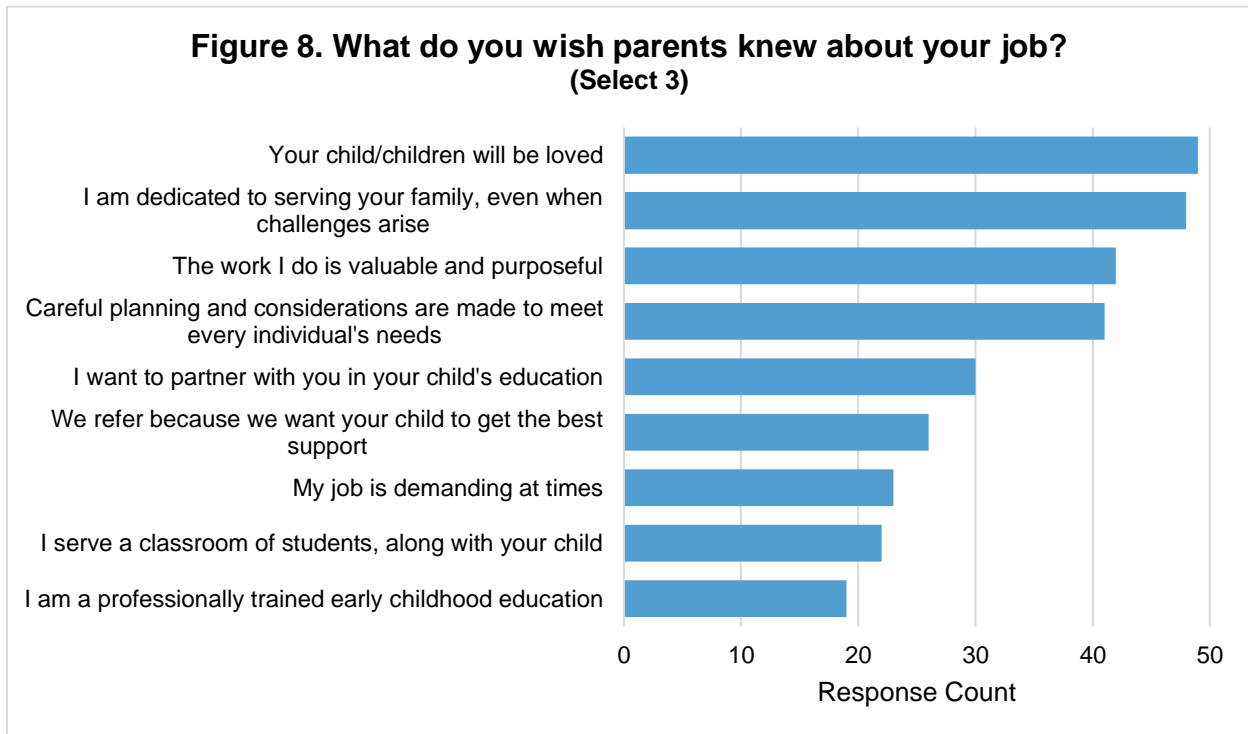
- Mean number of centers worked at: 2.6
- Factor most cited for affecting work life balance: Paid Time Off
- Factors most cited for switching employers: Pay, Family Considerations (children, moving, etc.)

Work life balance and fulfillment

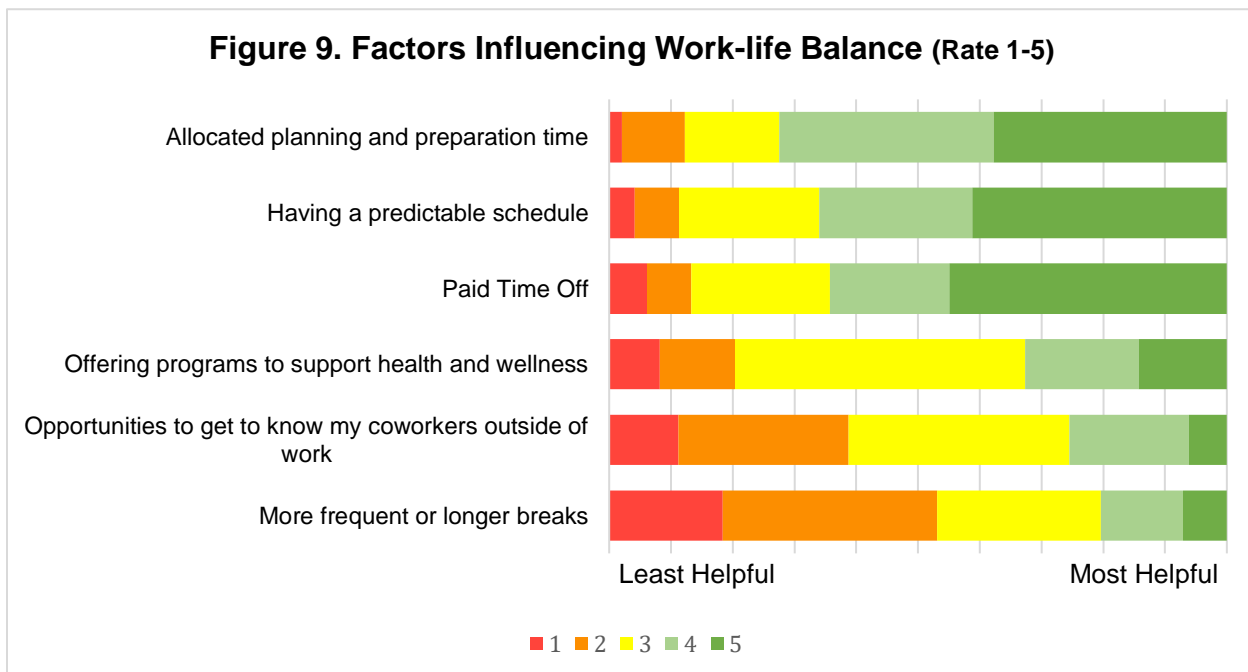
- Fulfillment is primarily relationship-based, not incentive-based (Figure 7).



- **Educators are passionate about the children, their families, and the work they do** (Figure 8).



- **Factors related to scheduling and flexibility are rated highest in their ability to impact work/life balance** (Figure 9).



Further Research

These survey responses have highlighted challenges that were expected and reminded our cohort of the sense of purpose their staff members feel. After data analysis and feedback from center directors, there are still opportunities to advance this research.

Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- The paradox between factors that provide fulfillment and reasons for turnover (i.e. pay benefits is emphasized reason for turnover yet low on rankings for fulfillment).
- Strategies that centers can put in place to improve the most cited items for improving work life balance.
- Considering why certain age demographics are less represented or hold lower satisfaction.
- Collecting more information from individuals who have left the ECE field for other career paths.
- Collecting more information from non-center-based providers for comparison.

High-quality early childhood education is critical for the success and growth of our community. Solving the staffing crisis will require more research, time, and creative problem solving from Olmsted County leaders. United Way's Early Success Learning Cohort will continue to learn more about this issue as we begin to develop solutions. We believe in building a community where children can reach their full potential.

Resources

Heitmann, B. (2018, October 11). The Job-Hopping Generation: Young Professionals Are On The Move. Retrieved October 14, 2020, from <https://blog.linkedin.com/2018/october/11/the-job-hopping-generation-young-professionals-are-on-the-move>

Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2014/ReportFINAL.pdf>.

Whitebook, M., McLean, C., and Austin, L.J.E. (2016). *Early Childhood Workforce Index - 2016*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2016/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2016.pdf>

Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>