

## Video: Child Care Workforce Crisis and Covering Efforts to Put Out the 'Five-Alarm Fire'

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### Speakers:

- **Isaac Windes**, education reporter, San Antonio Report
- **Elizabeth Pufall Jones**, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
- **Susan Sarver**, Buffett Early Childhood Institute

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### Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 00:13

Hello, everyone, thank you for joining, we are giving it a few minutes for people to trickle in before we get started. All right, I think we got a pretty good showing here. So, I'm going to go ahead and get started. Thank you all for joining today. My name is Isaac Windes. I'm the education reporter at the San Antonio Report as of a week ago, but before that, for the last year and a half, I was the early childhood education reporter at the Fort Worth Star Telegram as part of the Crossroads Lab, which is an editorial initiative to explore under-covered topics. And early childhood education is definitely an under-covered topic.

So, coming from the background in K - 12 reporting, I had paid little attention to early childhood education up until that point, but I quickly learned and, you know, it's reaffirmed with every story that I wrote that the early years of life are integral to many of the stories that we tell in later grades. Those where much of the achievement gap is born or learning differences are discovered or not. And where brain development is key to academic professional success take shape. It's also been chronically underfunded for many years. In the first weeks here, in my new job I've already found districts honing in on this, and investing in early learning centers, expanded pre-K and more, and studying the effects quality early learning experiences on later academic success.

This is also a really pivotal time for early childhood education. Decision makers from Congress to state houses across the country to school districts are investing more money, time, resources and energy, looking at how to rethink a broken system that has driven educators out, leaving parents with fewer options... popular ideas, including the expansion of universal pre K also threatened to upend the fragile economics of the current early childhood education workforce. With the education impacts aside, the early education workforce is sometimes known as the "workforce behind the workforce." Without it, a sizable portion of the country is greatly held back from their ability to work. Well, there isn't enough time

in the day to cover every aspect of every age and education. I hope you come away from today's panel with insights and story ideas that will help you connect early childhood education to your audience and incorporate it into the rest of your beat reporting. Before I introduce our panelists today, I'd like to go over just a few quick housekeeping items.

You could use the Q&A feature to ask questions throughout the panel today, as long as it's through the Q&A feature, and we will return to them after the moderated discussion. After the webinar, you will also receive an evaluation survey via email. Please complete it. Your feedback is important and helps EWA improve. I'm gonna go ahead and introduce our panelists, now.

I'm thrilled to be joined by Dr. Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Dr. Susan Sarver. Elizabeth Pufall Jones is the director of preparation and work environment programs at the Center for the Study of Childcare Employment at UC Berkeley. She leads the design and implementation of research and policy projects on the higher education and certification work environments and the well-being of early educators. In her professional career, Elizabeth has developed curriculum, taught in a preschool setting, provided consultation to early childhood programs, developed enriched mixed-methods research portfolio. Elizabeth earned her PhD in Applied Child Development at Tufts University, an MA in educational psychology from the University of Colorado, Denver, and a BA from Smith College.

Susan Sarver joined the Buffett Institute in 2014 as director of workforce planning and development. The workforce program takes on critical issues that affect the quality and quantity of early childhood professionals in Nebraska, such as professional preparation and qualifications, workforce compensation, funding and public commitment. As part of this work, the Institute convened the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission. She's on leave as the Associate Professor of Child Youth and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she provided leadership for undergraduate programs in early childhood education. Susan received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Washington and Lee University in Virginia and a master's degree and PhD in Child and Family Development from the University of Georgia.

Now, I'm going to turn it over to Elizabeth Pufall Jones for opening remarks.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 05:35**

Well, thank you all for inviting the Center for the Study of Childcare Employment, and me as their representative, to participate in this forum today to discuss preparation and training and their contribution to the expansion of the talent pipeline in early childhood care and education. At CSCCE, so the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, we support the development of a diverse, qualified and adequately compensated early education workforce. Our research and policy work, such as our higher education inventories of early care and education degree programs, contribute to our understanding of how systems are preparing and supporting this workforce.

As a part of this work, I speak regularly with directors and administrators, all of whom convey their struggles to find and retain qualified staff. So what is the answer? Where's the liferaft? Recently, like you all, we've been witnessing efforts across the United States to quell the workforce crisis through innovative efforts combining training and compensation. For example, apprenticeships. In Kentucky, the

Governor's Office of Early Childhood facilitates both youth apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs for teacher training, and recently added a director apprenticeship program using preschool development birth-through-five grant money. They've funded these programs, which include financial incentives to the centers, and mentor teachers who support the apprentices.

Second, we are also researching the role of sector intermediaries: organizations that connect and facilitate the different settings, like higher education and childcare centers necessary for a successful apprenticeship. In California, ECEPS, also called Early Care and Education Pathways to Success, is working as a sector intermediary for many apprenticeship programs, and is now branching out to other states. They work with programs and communities who want apprenticeships to solve the problem, but have no idea where to start. Finally, quote, "earn while you learn" models requiring funding to support the apprentice, and those teaching and mentoring them. Pay for Success programs, like the one in Colorado are a means by which public and private financing can come together to support the work of the ECE community.

These programs offer a means to build the workforce by offering those new to or wanting to grow within the field to quotes, "earn as they learn." Such models remove barriers for those interested in the profession. They remove the economic barriers often associated with obtaining certification or degree, as well as social barriers as many of these programs are focused on building employment within their own community. These programs have the potential to create a diverse, qualified and adequately compensated workforce. But allow me to offer a few notes for consideration before we laud these programs as quotes, "the answer." First, these programs need to be designed so that they not only ensure a participant receives a child development associate credential or apprenticeship completion program certificate, but that these credentials and certificates are stackable: They can contribute to further education and degree completion so as not to be redundant or a dead end in a person's career pathway.

Second, apprenticeships, dual-enrollment and Pay for Success programs are often only available to center-base educators. Family childcare programs make up almost a third of the childcare options across the United States. To ensure that the entire childcare field is well qualified and compensated, Earn and Learn programs need to be designed for family childcare providers. Indeed, ESEPS has a model for family childcare apprenticeships.

Finally, we also need to ensure that the financial perks do not end when the educators complete their certification. Apprentices might receive a living wage while they're learning but a living wage needs to be guaranteed upon completion. Further, those mentoring the apprenticeship, the apprentices, should also be paid a living wage. Because of funding streams, it is possible for apprentices to earn more than the lead teacher who is mentoring them. If Earn as You Learn programs assure a living wage, then they have the potential to raise the compensation for the field as a whole.

My colleagues, Abby Copeman Petig, and Caitlin McLean, stated in a 2020 commentary, quote, "The persistently low minimum qualifications that have been set for the majority of educators working with children birth through age five perpetuates the false notion that teaching an early education is less skilled than teaching older children." End quote. while these Earn as You Learn programs are a good

beginning, they are not a panacea. We need to keep working and developing a variety of pathways and on ramps in order to build a system that supports a diverse, qualified and well-compensated workforce. Thank you.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 11:48**

And Susan Sarver?

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 11:51**

Yes, good afternoon. And thank you for having me here today. I'm with Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, as Isaac said. The Institute has a vision to make Nebraska the best place in the nation to be a baby. And we are now entering our 10th year in existence. We are connected with the University of Nebraska as a whole system. And we work across all four campuses across the state. So we work in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and with the Medical Center here in Omaha. We have four areas that we work in: research, practice, policy, and outreach. And all of our work tries to hit all of those things.

We have two signature programs: One is closing the opportunity gap. So as Isaac said, thinking about that achievement gap, or as we talk about it now, the opportunity gap. How do we help those children and families who have been placed at risk because of various circumstances? We have some great programs going here in the Omaha area, that we're starting to spread statewide. And we're looking at it at those programs is an example of some things we can do across the nation. I'm going to talk a lot about our second signature program, which is elevating the early childhood workforce. And with that program, very similar to what Elizabeth was saying, is we want a qualified, diverse, well paid workforce. The early childhood workforce is the key to quality and early childhood.

And, so, this signature program for us really centers the workforce. What do they need, what do they want? So, my job and workforce planning and development is to work on the system to make sure that those teachers have what they need to be able to do their best in the classroom, in those family home settings that they're working with, with young children. At the Buffett Institute, we have experts in lots of different areas connected to these programs. So, please feel free to reach out to us if there's other things that come up during this webinar.

We have experts and workforce wellbeing, we have experts in practice and policy, we have an expert on funding in the early childhood system. And, so, our view here at the Institute is that you have to be working on all of those different aspects in the whole system in order to be able to make some difference to close that opportunity gap and to truly have that diverse, qualified workforce that we need for our young children.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 14:25**

Awesome, thank you guys so much. So, I want to start with a question about the kind of ongoing staff shortage which was a problem before the pandemic, was definitely a problem during the pandemic. But, experts have now called it a "five alarm fire" because of the proportion of the staffing crisis that has reached this industry. What would you say are some of the most pressing and urgent challenges that need to be addressed to solve this issue?

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 15:04**

I can go before Susan, if you don't mind. Okay. So with the workforce, I mean, as Susan was just saying, it's a systemic issue. And so when we think about what needs to be addressed, we really need to think about all things at once. So, all of those different areas like workforce and the training and the funding, all of those pieces need to go together. But because of the crisis that's been in the world, or in the US, for almost the entirety of the time that childcare has existed, one of the problems that we have is attracting new folks to the field.

A large number of folks left the field during the pandemic. And as Isaac just stated, that was depleting a pre-pandemic workforce that hadn't even been fully realized, okay. We also need to really address provider -- the proper compensation for providers and educators. And new educators need training, and they're not going to get involved in training, because there's no adequate compensation for them to be able to pay off those student loans that they need to take out in order to get the certificate or to get the associate degree. And why even engage in a field to begin with, if you know that they're earning below poverty wages or poverty-level wages. So really, we need to attract new people to the field, because a lot of the folks who have left the field are not going to be returning. So, we need new people coming to the field. And we really need to address compensation.

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 17:01**

Thank you, Elizabeth. I agree with a lot of that. And I want to add a couple of other things, too, that we've said a couple of times here "workforce behind the workforce." And I just want to really clarify what we're saying when we say that. We know that probably 70% of all adults in a family are in the workforce across the United States. In Nebraska, it's actually 76%. So, even higher in Nebraska. That means the children in those families have to be somewhere. They're either being cared for by someone outside the home, in a child care home or setting, or they're being cared by somebody else in the home. Those people are the early childhood professionals.

Parents can't go to work if they don't know their children are in a safe place. We also know -- there's some very recent research coming out -- that shows parents miss work, they're late for work, they've been demoted, they've been fired, because they have childcare issues. So, when we say "workforce behind the workforce," that's what we're talking about. These early childhood providers, professionals, are the workforce that allows everybody else to go to work. The other thing that I want to add on about why this is a fire, this "five alarm fire": 90% of brain development occurs in the first five years. So, what is happening with these children in these first five years, who are in a setting -- most of them -- other than with their parents makes a difference. As Isaac said, it contributes to that school readiness to everything else that's going on. So that's where the alarm is. We have to have people who know what they're doing, who are qualified to work with those young kids. And as Elizabeth said, we don't have enough now, and we're not recruiting enough into the field to be able to manage all of this.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 18:56**

Sure, and so much of this conversation kind of surrounds compensation and funding. And, you know, I've talked to a lot of providers that wanted to increase their funding, and simply couldn't. But last year, the federal government approved a \$2 billion increase -- 30% increase in the Child Care and

Development Block Grant in 2023. Are you hopeful that, you know, movements like this or that particular increase is going to, you know, help states address some of the losses in their workforce? And how will that money kind of translate in states that folks are covering?

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 19:38**

And I'll jump in on this one, if you don't mind, Elizabeth, and then I'll toss it back over to you. That's a really good question, Isaac. And that increase in the childcare development block funding is a really good, sustainable increase. And that's what we need in early childhood is we need this sustainable funds. A report from the National Academy of Medicines that can about a couple of years ago about funding in this field says that we need 0.75 of 1% of GDP to fully fund the early early care and education system. 75% of 1% is all we need, and we're not there. And, so, we can get there. And it's increases like this that will get us there. The key is how that money is spent. And is it spent on sustainable increases?

And is it invested in the workforce? So, one of the things that I try and bring to this is, when you invest in the workforce and the early childhood workforce, you are actually reaching multiple children and multiple families, because they're the key to quality. And they're the key to making the system work. So every teacher you invest in, in terms of their professional development, increasing their wages, decreasing their turnover, is going to reach multiple children and families because they have this multiple children and families. I want to add just one more thing real quick is a lot of folks have talked about the rescue funds and the ARPA funds that have gone into early childhood. And they've been like, "Oh, that's great. You don't need any more money." No, that's not true. Those are one-time funds. And those were absolutely necessary to the survival of the field. I mean, we had 87% of early childhood providers in our state use those funds, and they use those funds so they didn't close. So, those were essential. But they're not enough to fix the system yet.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 21:34**

Yes, and those funds are running out. They will expire in 2024. So, we need to think about those sustainable funds, like Susan was saying. And, as Susan was saying, taking that money: Where is that block grant money going? And what we like to say and stress is to stress it going directly to the educator, as Susan was saying, directly to the workforce.

Often these block grants can fund, perhaps, you know, the amount, the voucher amount, or it might fund changes that a center makes, things like that. But what we are stressing is really you need to invest in the compensation of the workforce. The workforce is and I, I will be saying this repeatedly throughout the time that we're here together, the workforce is earning poverty-level wages, which should be astounding to us, if we just look at those numbers. But when you hear the stories from educators who speak about their experiences, you know, I was just speaking with an early childhood workforce researcher yesterday, who's been collecting a lot of qualitative data with educators and directors, and she was telling me a story about one educator, who could not concentrate on her classroom, and what was occurring with all of the children in the classroom, because she was so worried about how she was going to pay her rent on Friday.

And if we're not funding the teachers, they're not able to concentrate in the classroom, and then they're not going to be able to support that critical development that Susan was just talking about and stressing. And so it really, yes, we need that sustainable funding, we need it to keep coming and be increased, and it needs to go directly to the workforce.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 23:51**

Sure, definitely. And something that kind of caught me off guard kind of coming from K-12 reporting to early childhood education reporting is kind of how it was viewed as a workforce issue in so many ways. It's overseen by workforce boards. And, you know, really, you know, kind of separate from the Texas Education Agency, you know, in terms of how its funded, how it's overseen, different things like that. So, I was wondering if we can talk a little bit about, kind of, for reporters that are used to kind of the K-12 part of it, how they should be able to, you know, kind of parse the workforce development aspect of ECE with the education and child development aspects that they kind of explore in their day to day, kind of K-12 reporting.

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 24:40**

I would say you can actually pull them apart. A lot of things in early childhood like that. It's this interdependent system. We talk about it as the workforce behind the workforce. We see, you know, this workforce development, and that's because a lot of our child care systems, including things like Headstart, were developed as the means to allow parents to go to work. And if they started out that way, historically. But what we know now is that it's really important for early development and learning. So, we're still trying to treat the system as a workforce issue. Parents need to be able to go to work, we have to allow them to go to work. But, really, what it's about is that children need a lot of support and development in these early years. And so we're trying to, we're trying to pay for it as if it's a system of just you know, babysitting the children, but it's not, it's about early care and education of the children.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 25:34**

Yeah, and I would just, you know, emphasize that, too often, we do silo these issues. But we do, really, have to think about them together. And if we continue to analyze them separately, then we will perpetuate the already very fractured system that is early childhood care and education. And actually, one of the things that we like to say, at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, is that the educator's work environment is the child's learning environment. So, if you are supporting the educator's work environment, if you are supporting the workforce, then you are supporting the child's learning as well.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 26:24**

For sure, and just really quickly on kind of the breakdown of those silos. I know a lot of the public school systems are kind of dipping down into kind of the early learning space, whether it be pre-K, pre-K-three, and even in some cases, infant and toddler care. I guess, you know, can you talk a little bit about what that means for the workforce?

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 26:50**

That's a really interesting question. I think there's some lots of implications if that. One of the things we have -- it's called the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan that we here, do here at the Institute in

Omaha. One of the things that they have really emphasized with that is talking to principals and superintendents about the fact that as soon as a child is born, they're in your school district. And they're your future student. And, so, that's part of that reaching down and thinking about these newborn infants are going to be coming into your kindergarten classroom, they're going to be coming into your high schools. So, what happens early on impacts later, in terms of what's happening. And, so, when you then take that to the workforce, what that means also is that that infant toddler teacher, should be just as respected and just as well paid as that kindergarten, third grade, 12th grade teacher. They're doing just as much hard work. They need just as much knowledge. It's just the different age tract.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 27:51**

Yeah, and I would just say, you know, at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, we've started doing some analyses and reports. And you can look on our website, we did a, we did a study of, we've been looking at the pre-K in California right now. And its impact on the workforce. And one of the things that we need to be mindful of is that there still are centers, there still are family child cares, those pre-K programs in schools don't reach all the children, and they don't reach all the types of care that families need in order to be in the workforce.

And because those pre-K centers are in the public school, they are getting better compensated than the teachers that are in those other spaces of family child care, or the other centers that are out there that are helping to fortify the workforce. You know, often these pre-K programs are only half a day, or even a quarter of a day. The one in my town is two hours. So we're not talking about the care that's going to be able to support a parent going to work. And what's happening in some spaces that we're noticing is that teachers are the qualified, high-quality teachers are being swept away from those centers, and are going into the public sphere where they can get properly compensated. So, yes, this is good, that we're thinking about the child from the time they're born all the way through graduation from high school, but we need to keep in mind that that does affect the workforce as well.

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 29:46**

And I want to follow up on what you were saying there, too, Elizabeth you know, a lot of these pre-K programs, you're right, are only part day, they're only a couple of days a week, which means the child is then somewhere else. And we have to think about where else they are at as, you know, it's this whole continuity of care for children that's really important.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 30:06**

Elizabeth, I know that you actually were a preschool teacher. So you know, kind of from that perspective, and then kind of looking at the wages and everything else. What do you wish reporters kind of understood about the work?

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 30:21**

Well, it is a wonderful job. But it's a very hard job. And it's also a job where I had to make choices. It would have been wonderful to stay as a preschool teacher, forever and ever and ever, but I wasn't being adequately compensated. And, so, that wasn't an option for me and my family. And that we need to pay attention to the working conditions for educators. You know, one of the things, we look at the

work environments of educators at CSCCE. Now, we're often looking at, you know, how much professional development are they provided?

Are they provided with paid planning time? And what -- it's very rare to find a preschool center that offers paid planning time for the educators because, directors, it's not that they don't know any better, like, "Oh, I should be giving planning time." But it's because they can't afford to give planning time. All of the time that they're paying teachers for goes to the actual care of the child without thinking about the planning time, without giving that planning time. And there's also not staffing for that planning time, either. So the last time I was in the classroom, I actually was in the classroom again, during the pandemic. I was spending my entire time caring for children. And I had no time to think about "Well, what did I notice the children doing today that I should build upon for the future?" So we need to think about the work environments that educators are working in, and how we can build those to better support the workforce as well?

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 32:18**

Sure, definitely. And, you know, I know we're, we've been talking a lot about the shortage in general. But in addition to the shortage, many of the centers that I visited had a lot of people that had just started, and a lot less people that had been there for years and years and years. So, we're gonna be talking a little bit about the turnover rate in kind of efforts to stop that, and kind of how that kind of interplays with the shortage in general.

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 32:46**

I think that turnover has a lot to do with the shortage. Well, they're intertwined, of course. And so when we talk about turnover, we're talking about, you know, how somebody comes into work, and then they leave. And in early childhood, the turnover rates are estimated anywhere between 25 and 40%. And, as Elizabeth was saying, that teacher is the key, you know, and it's the relationship of that teacher with the child, that makes the difference in the quality.

So turnover has an impact, because that child has to start a new relationship with a new teacher every time they come in. So think about it as an adult: What if every four months, you had to adjust to a new boss? You have to learn what they want, what they expect, how they communicate with you. Now put yourself in the shoes of a three year old whose entire world is wrapped up in this person or an infant. And they have to do that every couple of months. And that means that it's also hard for that center or that home, or that pre-K, they're having to train someone new every time in terms of the routines. And so that's another expense that's hard on them. So they're having to train these folks, they're having to find these folks, making it even harder to keep staffing going.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 34:06**

Yeah, and I would just reiterate what what Susan saying there so that the turnover, not only is affecting the relationship that the child has with the educator, which we know those relationships are essential to learning. But it's also affecting the center as a whole. Because the resources of that center then need to go towards supporting that new teacher in the classroom. Often a new teacher in the classroom is not allowed to be alone with children because of licensing, which is great, but because they're not able to be alone with them, then that means you have to pay two staff people for that classroom at the same

time. So if you're thinking that this is a 40% going on, that's almost half of the center. You're having to pay almost double because of all of the turn over that's occurring at that center. And I would also just stress that there are, you know, different training opportunities. And, so, really thinking about how are we supporting the workforce to get the training that's necessary to be in the classroom? You know? And are there ways to combine the training with the work in the centers in the family child cares at the same time, so that it, you know, some of that burden might be alleviated for those centers?

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 35:35**

For sure. And, so, the the purpose of this panel, really, and something that I've definitely grappled with, you know, over the last year and a half is kind of mixing the kind of patchwork of early childhood education, which is many different things at the same time, with kind of the kind of rigid world of K-12. And then a lot of folks are also kind of stretching up to colleges and higher-ed reporting, and, you know, smaller staffs, like you're juggling a million things. Could you talk a little bit about, I guess, how early childhood education issues, kind of impact the K-12 and the higher ed, whether it be school readiness, long term academic success, why should readers care? Why should reporters? And how can reporters kind of be bringing this into their their daily reporting?

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 36:36**

So, you know, as I've already said, you indicated Isaac as well, as Susan indicated, you know, the birth through five year time period is the most critical and a young person's life. And if you think about it, they go from being unable to coordinate their body movements, and lift their head to walking to being able to coordinate their body to kick a ball or throw a ball, and walk up and down stairs and alternating pattern. They go from no language to understanding and producing words, to recognize symbols as letters that represent sounds that can be combined together to make words. That's amazing. And these things that seem so easy and commonplace all develop within these first five years. And if we do not support the child's development, then we're leaving the children behind. And while we know that there's a great deal of plasticity, for children, we also know that to develop or learn these things later on, take so much more time and intervention, costing the child and the system a lot more than if we just invested in children from the beginning. And that means that you have to invest in in the workforce.

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 38:09**

Yeah, I think Elizabeth really hit it there. It's, you know, what they're learning. And those first five years are so important for later development and what's happening. And what I would say to reporters and others that are used to kind of the K-12 system, or higher ed is Isaac said, they're a little more structured, it's easier to say, "Okay, I need a third grade teacher, I'm gonna go find a third grade teacher."

And, you know, the structures around that are much more understood. Yes, early childhood is complex. It's what we call a mixed-delivery system. Children aren't home base settings and childcare centers and pre-K and Headstart and early intervention. Yes, it's complicated. But it's worth it in terms of digging in it. And when you go to ask questions, there is nobody who would rather talk about early childhood than an early childhood professional. Home-based providers will welcome you into their homes and explain what they're doing and why they're doing it. And they themselves can tell you why it's going to be important when that child goes to kindergarten. So, you know, there's somebody there who's going to

talk to you, and answer all of your questions, probably even more so than you'll find in the K-12 system, where teachers often get a little more anxious about, "Oh, nope, I can't talk to a reporter." You go to a home based professional, they will talk to you all day.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report 39:29**

Sure. And earlier, we were talking about the funding, whether it be the ARPA funding, or the Community Development Block grant. And that's something you know, reporters K-12, and otherwise, are always following the money. Can you talk a little bit about, I guess, possible accountability stories in there when it comes to how this money is being spent in kind of where reporters should be looking?

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute 39:52**

Oh, that's a really interesting story. I'm going to tell everybody to come back in about a month to the Buffett Institute website. Because we are getting ready to release a couple of reports, where we have tracked the funding flows in Nebraska. So we have actually, my colleague, Dr. Catherine Huddleston-Casas (associate director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Institute), has started at the federal level and looked at the funds coming down to the state, and then how they flow through the state and get to those ground levels, centers, home-based providers, school systems. It's not an accountability measure. But it's a way to start thinking about how the funds move through the system and where we can think about efficiencies.

And, you know, how complicated it is. We talk about rating in early childhood a lot. And what that means is a center may actually be getting funds from four or five different sources. And, so they're having to do the paperwork, and figure out what the regulations are for each of those four different sources, because they may actually have different requirements. And that takes away time from kids. But I think I went off on a pattern and didn't actually answer all of your question here. Sorry about that. I will, I'll let Elizabeth get directly to your question.

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 41:06**

Well, I mean, we we spend a lot of time at the at the center looking at the funding and how the funding is being spent. And actually I'm gonna, I'm gonna put in the in the chat for Angelina to send to you all. Oh, I can't chat with the host during the meeting. So anyway, I will put a link in the chat, hopefully. And we've been tracking how states have been using their ARPA funds. It's actually a system that we asked the states to report on how they're spending it. One of the things that we've been stressing with the the tracking of looking at how they're spending the ARPA funds in particular, is that it's a solutions focused tracker. And, so, we're looking at it to see how are they using it to support compensation and the and the workforce. And how they're also using it to think about, you know, what is the solution? How can I move forward from this?

And we've actually seen some different turns from the way that people have used the ARPA funds for compensation. In, for example, New Mexico, they just passed a constitutional amendment that uses a land grant fund, that will be helping to fund the workforce. They'll get an extra \$2. I know, it seems like just a little bit, but \$2 per hour increase for educators as well as for directors across all early childhood. So that includes family childcare, that includes center base care, both large and small. We'll all see that

funding increase. And that was, they were inspired by the way that they compensated the workforce, using those funds, and then translated it into this constitutional amendment that just got passed.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report** 43:22

Definitely. Now one last question really quickly, something that, again, was new to me when I came to this, the Early Childhood reporting from K-12, is kind of the different types of credentialing and the types of different types of credentials as required for different types of providers. So I was wondering if you could talk about, you know, what a CDA is, what educators, early educators are required to have higher learning and how important these different types of credentials are, to the quality of care that kids are getting?

**Susan Sarver, Buffett Early Childhood Institute** 43:56

Another really good question, and it's also tied to this mixed-delivery system that we have in early childhood. And it's going to depend state by state in terms of what kind of credentials are required, and if any credentials are required. So, in the state of Nebraska, you can be a lead teacher in a center with a high school diploma at 18 years of age. If you are working in a pre-K classroom that's connected to a school, then you are required to have a bachelor's degree with an associated teacher's teacher certification.

So, a four year old could have someone with a high school degree or someone with a teaching certificate, possibly in the same day, as Elizabeth said, because they're moving from place to place. So the requirements vary across the settings. Now, what should be required? That's the million dollar question. There's a lot of debate out there on that in terms the base you know, the the bottom line is you need skills and knowledge to be able to work with the children in your care. And we know what those skills and knowledge are. And the CDA, which is the Child Development Associate credential or teaching certification is just the way we try and measure those skills and competencies and say, "Yes, you have what you need to do to be a good teacher."

**Elizabeth Pufall Jones, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment** 55:51

Yeah, and I would just I would say there is, you know, to jump on what Susan said, there is a lot of debate about what is necessary for an educator right now. And, while, you know, there's a lot of variation that occurs, and we often see it in our higher-ed inventories that we do in terms of what's required coursework for different certificates, different credentials that a state might offer. And then we also say, well, who's teaching those courses?

You know, and so is it a quality program that the person receives those credentials from? Do they offer experience within a center? You know, do they have to do a practicum? Do they have to do the teaching experience, too. So, while there are some things that carry across in terms of the CDA, trying to make it more commonplace and systematic for everyone, there's still so much variation. And, so, is that enough for the workforce? You know, we're trying to figure that out.

**Isaac Windes, education reporter, San Antonio Report** 1:02:14

Sure, I'll turn it over to Angelina now for a Q&A.