

Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy

Early Care and Education (ECE) in Franklin County: The ECE Landscape Study

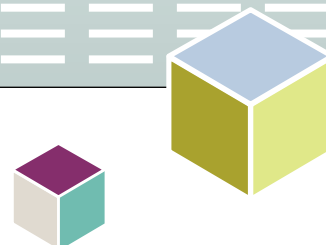
Final Report

Crane Center ECE Landscape Study Team

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Introduction

Program Context and Background

The Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy (CCEC) at The Ohio State University contracted with the City of Columbus and Future Ready Columbus to conduct a study of the Early Care and Education (ECE) landscape in Franklin County. The purpose of this 7-month study was to identify the ECE experiences of families with children 5 years of age and under in Franklin County, Ohio. While this “ECE Landscape Study” was designed to be representative of Franklin County families with young children in terms of the parent’s education, race, and ethnicity, the study was also designed to over-sample families in three specific communities – Linden, Hilltop, and Southside. In each of these communities, there is significant interest among county stakeholders to develop strategies to promote young children’s kindergarten readiness and ensure that children begin formal schooling with the skills needed to succeed. For example, only about one in five children entering kindergarten at Eakin Elementary School in Hilltop meet standards for kindergarten readiness based on the State’s readiness assessment (data provided by the City of Columbus, Department of Education), likely due to significant opportunity gaps in this community. Additionally, the city of Columbus has implemented community development plans in these neighborhoods in recent years. This study was therefore designed to describe the prevalence of ECE experiences of children in these communities, as well as in Franklin County more broadly.

Project Aims

The ECE Landscape Study was designed to address two aims:

Aim 1

To identify salient ECE experiences for children 5 years of age and under in Franklin County, including children’s participation in different ECE arrangements (including care in a daycare or early learning center, in someone else’s home, or in the child’s home), parent beliefs and practices relating to ECE, and home learning activities and experiences; and

Aim 2

To identify barriers and enablers of ECE participation as perceived by parents.

Methods

Sample

The ECE Landscape study was designed *a priori* to sample a total of 2,000 families with children 5 years of age and younger in Franklin County, Ohio. To ensure that the demographic characteristics of the sample were representative of families with young children in the county, the sampling frame was based on achieving participant quotas based on ZIP code and basic demographics. The final number of participants in the ECE Landscape study slightly exceeded the *a priori* target and included 2,194 families with children 5 years of age and younger.

The sample comprised two analytical sub-samples. The first group, the “Franklin County Sample” (n = 1,481), included participants from all ZIP code groups in Franklin County and a subset of participants from the oversampled communities of Linden, Hilltop, and Southside. The second group, the “Three Community Sample” (or 3C sub-sample; n = 968), included only participants from Linden, Hilltop, and Southside. Collectively, the total number of unique families participating in the study was 2,194.

Sampling Approach

The ECE Landscape study was designed to sample families with young children in such a manner as to generally represent the demographics of Franklin County and to represent the population estimates in each of the county’s 45 ZIP codes. A target number of respondents from each ZIP code in Franklin County was determined to achieve both: (1) a total of 1,000 respondents from across the entire county; and (2) a total of 1,000 respondents from seven ZIP codes of the three target communities of Linden, Hilltop, and the Southside (i.e., the 3C sub-sample). In addition, the target sample was also designed to include 100 Spanish-speaking and 100 Somali-speaking participants, regardless of participant ZIP code.

Demographic Sampling

The study team purchased demographic data for Franklin County households with children under 5 years of age from Marketing Systems Group (MSG). MSG provided data on race, ethnicity, education, and income from the 2019 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 1-year dataset. According to these data, there were a total of 522,379 households in Franklin County, with 69,694 of those households having children under 5 years of age.

The study team decided to use race and education to create quotas for the ECE Landscape Study sample as shown in Appendix A. No additional demographic information was included as this would have made the target quotas too difficult to obtain. Quotas were determined by multiplying the percentage of each demographic variable (e.g., race) times 1,805. The quotas were based on the sample number 1,805 (rather than 2,000) because the Somali-speaking (n=100) and Spanish-speaking (n=100) target samples were counted separately from the Franklin County (n=1,000) and 3C (n=1,000) samples during data collection.

ZIP code Sampling

A target sample size for each of 45 ZIP codes was calculated to reflect the size of the population (families with children aged 0-5 years) by ZIP based on population counts data retrieved from American Community Survey Tables 2014-2018 5-Year estimates (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>). Franklin County's 45 ZIP codes were aggregated into seven groups based on each ZIP code's Child Opportunity Index (see Appendix B). The purpose of grouping ZIP codes into seven smaller units was so that the study could target a pre-determined number of families with children under 5 years from each of these groups experiencing similar access to child-related resources.

The Child Opportunity Index (COI) 2.0 is an index of neighborhood features that help children develop in a healthy way (<https://www.diversitydatakids.org/child-opportunity-index>). The COI combines data from 29 neighborhood-level indicators into a single composite measure that is available for nearly all U.S. neighborhoods (about 72,000 census tracts) for 2010 and 2015. The 29 indicators cover three domains: education; health and environment; and social and economic. All indicators are measured at the census-tract level, which corresponds to the Census Bureau's definition of neighborhoods. The resulting Child Opportunity Score is a single metric that ranges from a score of 1 (lowest opportunity) to 100 (highest opportunity). All 72,000 neighborhoods in the U.S. are provided a Child Opportunity Score, as are metro areas, and this enables researchers to access an overall level of opportunity for children living within each census tract, as well as opportunity levels by race and ethnicity.

For this study, we used the metro-normed Child Opportunity Scores for census tracts within the Columbus, OH metropolitan area as the basis for classifying ZIP codes areas into a smaller number of groups. We calculated an overall Child Opportunity Score for each ZIP code in Franklin County according to the percentage of area that each census tract contributed to the overall ZIP code area.

For example, if ZIP code 43000 contains two census tracts: Tract A makes up 60% of the area and has a Child Opportunity Score of 70, and Tract B makes up the other 40% of the area and has a score of 80. The overall Child Opportunity Score for 43000 would then be calculated as $(70*60\%) + (80*40\%) = 74$.

After calculating scores for each of the 45 ZIP codes in Franklin County, these codes were then grouped into seven groups using the Jenks Natural Breaks Classification method, with Group 1 containing the lowest Child Opportunity scoring ZIP codes, and Group 7 containing the highest Child Opportunity scoring ZIP codes.

Group 1: 43211*, 43205, 43203, 43227, 43223*

Group 2: 43217, 43232, 43224*, 43206*, 43207*, 43201*

Group 3: 43213, 43204, 43219, 43109, 43222, 43229, 43210

Group 4: 43231, 43215, 43228*, 43209, 43137

Group 5: 43125, 43119, 43126, 43068, 43146, 43202, 43123

Group 6: 43110, 43214, 43212, 43081, 43235, 43230

Group 7: 43004, 43085, 43026, 43221, 43220, 43016, 43002, 43017, 43054

The seven ZIP codes marked with an asterisk* represent ZIP codes in the 3C sub-sample. Six of the seven 3C ZIP codes were within the two lowest Child Opportunity ranked groups (Groups 1 and 2). To oversample in the three target communities, ZIP codes in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside were grouped together as a separate “3C sub-group” during data collection.

Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively, provide visual depictions of the participant distributions by ZIP code for the Franklin County sample (n= 1,481) and 3C sub-sample (n=968).

Figure 1: Location of Landscape Study participants in the “Franklin County” sample

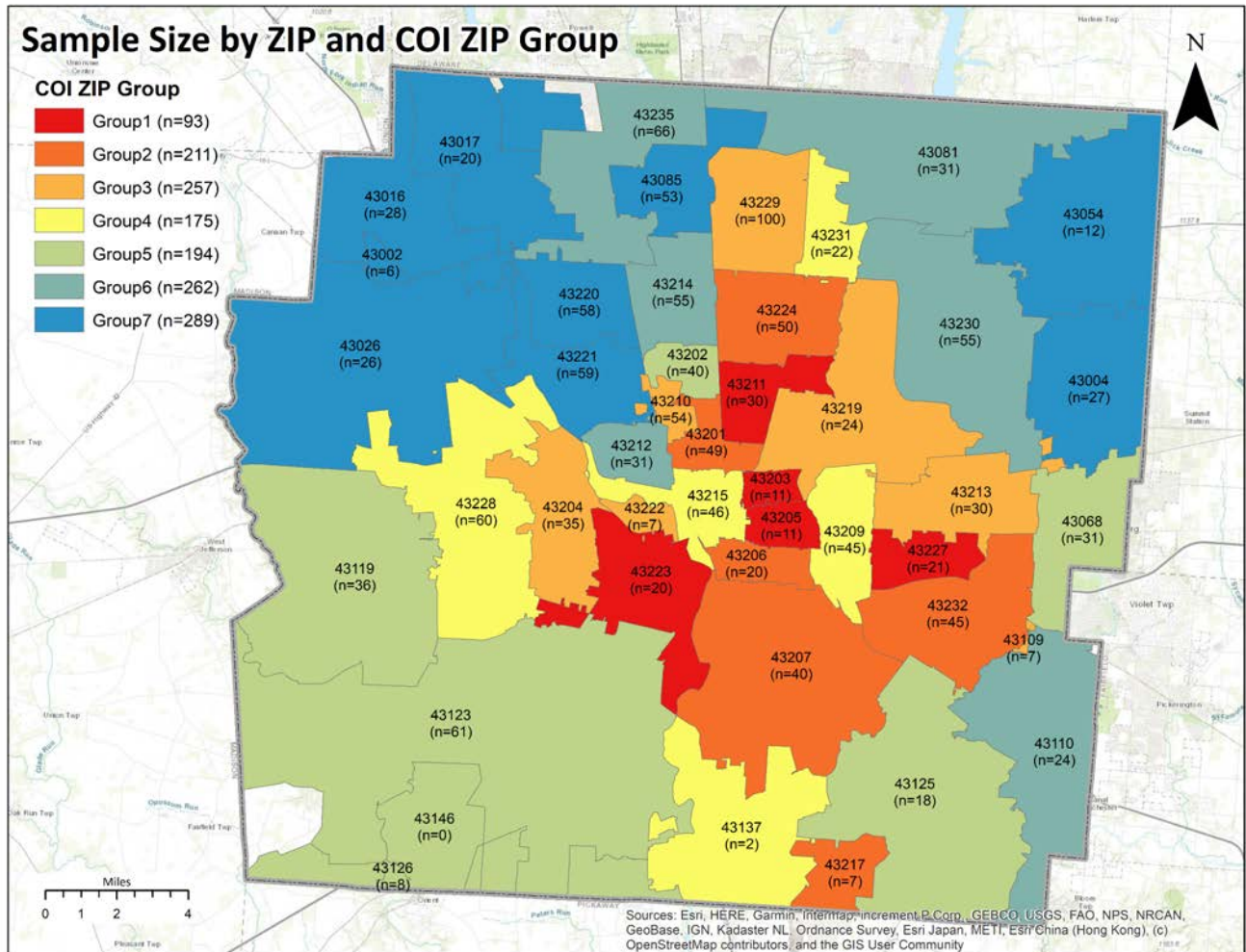
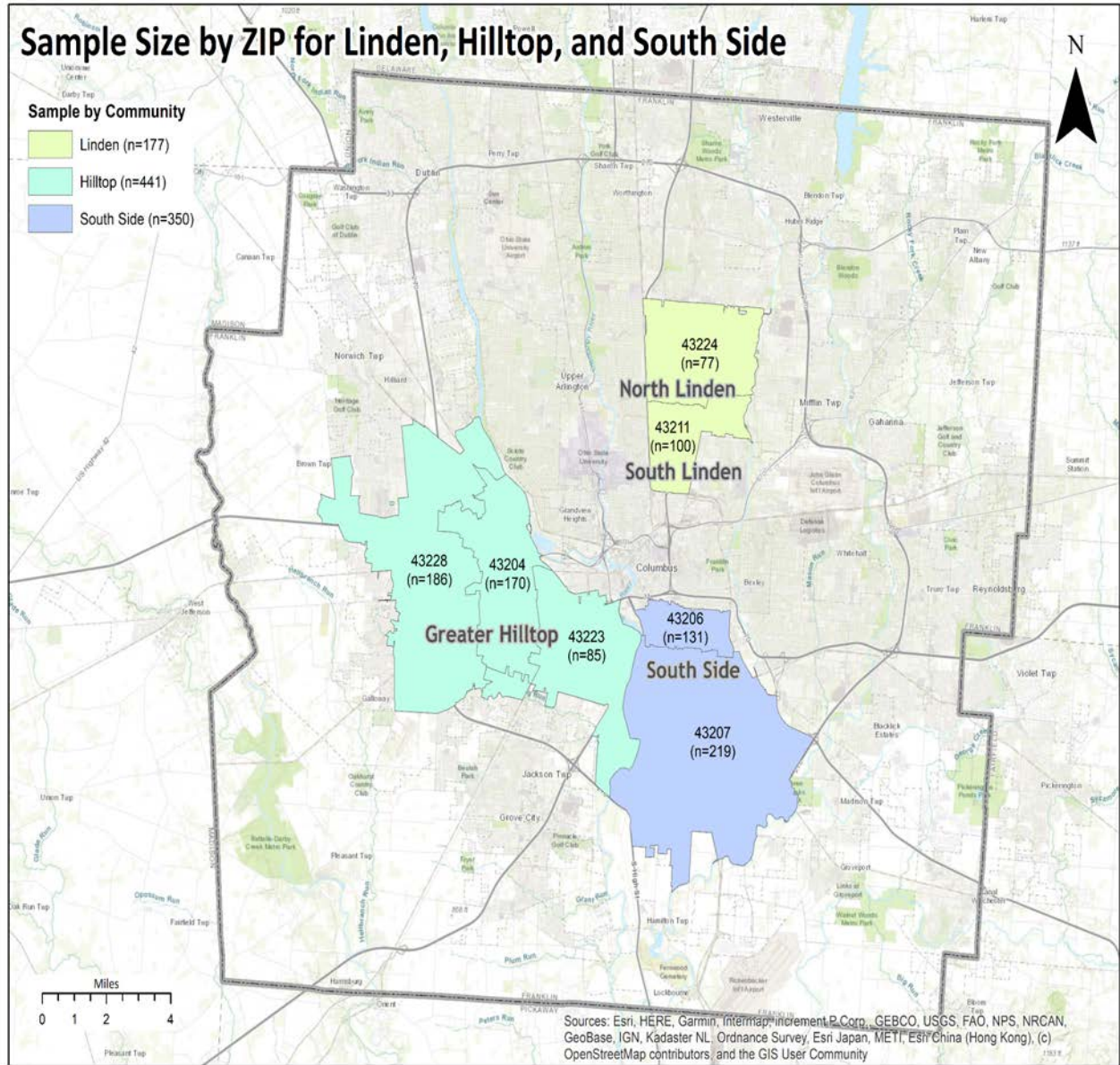


Figure 2: Location of Landscape Study participants in the “3 Community” sub-sample



Research Design

The study team identified a range of community partners to help recruit study participants to participate in an online survey and possible follow-up interview. Researchers recommend the identification of organizations that serve target populations to aid in recruiting a target sample (Lee, Fitts, Conigrave, et al., 2020). Between December 2020 and February 2021, research staff communicated with a total of 57 community partners, and 28 organizations agreed to facilitate recruitment within the populations they serve (see Appendix C). Of these, 21 community partners agreed to recruit via virtual methods (e.g., email and/or text). We provided these partners with a brief recruitment pitch and a survey link that automatically directed interested participants to the project survey. Seven community partners requested paper flyers to pass out to their constituents. Paper flyers included a recruitment pitch in English, Spanish, and Somali, as well as a QR code that participants could scan to access the project survey.

To target recruitment in the 3C neighborhoods, the study team distributed project flyers at seven local grocery stores and food sites across these communities. The study team additionally posted social media survey invites to four neighborhood Facebook groups and the NextDoor neighborhood app.

The survey was fielded over a roughly six-week period between January 4, 2021 and February 22, 2021. Prospective participants were provided a link that led directly to a short series of screening questions to ensure that participants met three eligibility criteria: (1) residing within a Franklin County ZIP code; (2) having a child at or under age 5 that lives with them for at least half of the week; and (3) willing to participate in the survey. We also asked about the prospective participant's ethnicity, race, and education level in the screening stage to facilitate real-time monitoring of the demographics of respondents in terms of target demographic quotas. Those who passed the screener were then directed to a consent form and, upon completion of informed consent, they were then directed to the full survey. Upon completion of the survey, participants were asked to provide their email address to receive a \$20 electronic gift card for their participation. Individuals were also asked to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview by phone call. Participants who later completed the follow-up interview received an additional \$20 electronic gift card for their participation in that activity.

On-going Participant Monitoring

To prevent fraud, multiple protections were put into place. First, participants had to click on Google's captcha button to confirm that they were not a bot. Second, participants screened out of the survey if their ZIP code associated with their geographic location based on their IP address was outside of the Franklin County, Ohio area. Third, a database was established to flag questionable survey responses. A participant was flagged as *questionable* if they had a captcha score under .3, had the same IP address as another participant, or had an identical consent name or email as another participant. Fourth, a confirmation survey was sent to questionable respondents in which they had to pass Google's captcha score and confirm the ZIP code in which they reside once again. If they passed the captcha score and their confirmation ZIP code matched their original survey ZIP code, then they were confirmed as a valid participant. If they failed the captcha, or provided a conflicting ZIP code, then the participant was not confirmed as a valid participant and their data were not included in the study. Collectively, these efforts resulted in the exclusion of 5,078 responses which were believed to be fraudulent. Due to these extensive efforts, the study team is confident that the participant data included herein is authentic and representative of families with children aged 0-5 years living in Franklin County, Ohio.

To monitor ZIP code and demographic quotas during survey fielding, the study team established race and education quota groups in the survey software. When a participant completed the survey, their ZIP code, race, and education level was counted in each respective quota group. As the sampling period progressed, certain quota groups were "closed" so that we would not continue to receive responses from ZIP code, race, or education groups where quotas had already been met. Consequently, as fielding progressed, some participants were screened out due to their ZIP code, race, or education level because the study had already met the target quota for those selected groups.

The study team also monitored completion of the survey continuously to identify any groups where we had too few survey participants. For example, mid-way through data collection, incoming data indicated that the number of participants identifying as Asian was low. To recruit more Asian families with young children living in Franklin County, the study team disseminated a Facebook ad to specifically target this participant demographic. The study team also reached out to organizations serving Asian families to help with recruitment.

Ongoing participant monitoring also served to highlight a difficulty in recruiting Spanish-speaking and Somali-speaking families. The study team consulted with a variety of local organizations and experts (e.g., Community Refugee and Immigration Services and SomaliCAN), who advised that reaching both Spanish-speaking and Somali-speaking participants must involve trusted community partners and that it would be better to collect data orally, rather than in written-form. To that end, the study team worked with two cultural liaisons to interview Spanish-speaking and Somali-speaking families to augment our number of completed surveys.

Data Collection Tools

Data for this study were collected using two separate tools (described below). First, participants were asked to complete an online survey, providing data relevant to both Aim 1 and 2. At the end of this survey, participants were also asked to indicate their willingness to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Then, a subset of interested participants were contacted for a follow-up interview to gain more insight into Aim 2 specifically.

Online Survey

A comprehensive “ECE Landscape Survey” was developed to achieve the primary study purposes. The survey included approximately 250 items to capture:

- basic demographics of parents and children (e.g., age, gender, race, language spoken)
- where a selected child aged 0-5 years old spends each day (i.e., inside the child’s home, in someone else’s private home, or in a daycare or early learning center), and what they typically do [to address Aim 1]
- parent’s mindset regarding child care, child development, parenting roles, and aspirations for their child [to address Aim 1]
- home-learning environments and activities [to address Aim 1]
- barriers and enablers to child care access [to address Aim 2]

Survey items were largely derived from researcher-developed questionnaires used in prior research that had already undergone assurances of validity and feasibility for completion. To the extent possible, we selected items that had been administered to samples similar to those in the present study. The survey was programmed in the Qualtrics survey software and incorporated skip logic where appropriate so that participants were only asked items relevant to them.

An initial draft of the survey was piloted internally by the study team to assess survey length as well as item clarity. The final survey was made available in English, Spanish, and Somali. The survey took 25-30 minutes to complete. A summary of the survey sections, as well as the number of items per section appears in Appendix D.

Follow-up Interviews

To further address Aim 2, which sought to understand barriers and enablers of participation in care arrangements that take place in daycares or early learning centers, a total of 42 participants were interviewed in a follow-up phone call after the completion of the initial survey online. Follow-up interviews took place over a five-week period from March 24, 2021 through April 30, 2021. Interview scripts can be found in Appendix E and full interview results can be found in Appendix F. Immediately after the interviews, the interviewer recorded notes on salient points of the interview, saved the transcripts, and recorded their notes. Interviews were subsequently coded for themes to be shared in the current report.

To recruit English-speaking interview participants, staff reached out to participants who indicated they were willing to be contacted after the initial survey. The study team aimed to interview 25-30 English-speaking families and prioritized asking for participation from groups that were underrepresented in the survey sample. This included participants that identified as Asian or “other” in race; or had an education of “less than high school degree;” or lived in the 3C target areas. Persons in these groups were contacted three times over email and text over a two-week period to schedule interviews. After prioritizing underrepresented groups, the landscape team contacted more participants who indicated interest in interview participation via both email and text.

Study staff aimed to interview 6-10 Spanish-speaking families. A Spanish-speaking staff member translated recruitment materials in Spanish and contacted the 29 Spanish-speaking survey participants a total of three times asking for their participation. The staff member also contacted personal contacts to recruit Spanish-speaking participants with a child under 5 years old and placed translated recruitment materials in a Hispanic grocery store. From these efforts, only one Spanish-speaking parent agreed to be interviewed. Considering the low response rate of Spanish-speaking parent interviewees, project staff conducted an additional three interviews with Spanish-speaking community workers to augment the sample.

Study staff also aimed to conduct 8-12 interviews with Somali-speaking families, due to their under-sample in the survey representation. However, the Somali-speaking liaison commissioned for this project failed to complete any interviews due to unexpected personal circumstances. Thus, we were unable to obtain any interview data from Somali-speaking participants.

In total, 38 interviews were conducted with English-speaking families, one interview was conducted with a Spanish-speaking family, and three interviews were conducted with community workers who work with Spanish-speaking families with young children. While we had success obtaining interviews with English-speaking families, the small number of Spanish-speaking and Somali-speaking families interviewed is a limitation of the study.

Findings

Overview

Findings are presented for the total Franklin County sample and two (3C and non-3C) sub-samples of participants in the ECE landscape study, of which the total sample has 2,194 unique respondents.

The samples of relevance include:

- (1) Franklin County (total) sample includes participants in all ZIP codes including a representative subset of participants from the 3C communities (“Franklin County Sample,” n=1,481);
- (2) The Non-3C sub-sample includes participants in all ZIP codes except those of the 3C sub-sample (“Non-3C sub-sample,” n=1,226); and
- (3) The 3C sub-sample includes participants from Linden, Hilltop, and Southside ZIP codes only (“3C sub-sample,” n=968).

For the present purposes, we consider findings for the Franklin County sample as well as the 3C and non-3C sub-samples in order to provide a statistical contrast of the experiences of children and families in the two areas of Franklin County.

Findings are presented as follows. First, we present background characteristics of families that participated in the ECE landscape study, such as age, marital status, race/ethnicity, language, education level, household income, and employment status, among others. These background characteristics also include issues specific to housing and household organization, as well as participants’ receipt of various types of public assistance. These data were captured so that we can fully understand the background of study participants.

Second, we address the primary aims of the ECE landscape study. Aim 1 was to identify salient ECE experiences for children 5 years of age and under in Franklin County, including children’s participation in different ECE arrangements (including care in a daycare or early learning center, in someone else’s home, or in the child’s home), parent beliefs and practices relating to ECE, and home learning activities and experiences. In the current study the term parent was used to describe the primary caregiver of a child or children under 5 years of age. Aim 2 was to identify barriers and enablers of ECE participation as perceived by parents. Barriers to ECE participation are presented as reasons that parents give for not enrolling their children in ECE, such as parental needs and preferences, program cost and affordability, and program quality.

When considering the extent to which there were significant differences between groups, we estimated a series of regression models. Throughout this report, we use superscripts embedded in tables to illustrate whether a given comparison was statistically significant. The different superscripts used within a table depend on the number of contrasts. For instance, in Table 1, the contrasts are between the 3C and non-3C sub-samples, and thus, there are only two superscripts used (a, b). On the other hand, in tables that include comparisons among three or more groups, there are more superscripts used to differentiate each comparison (e.g., non-Hispanic white vs. Black; non-Hispanic white vs. Hispanic; Hispanic vs. Black). When the same superscripts are used within a row, this implies *no* significant differences in the comparisons. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences across one or more of the groups.

ECE Landscape Study Participants and Background Characteristics

The ECE Landscape Study participants (Franklin County sample, n=1,481), representing primary parents with children 5 years of age or younger across the entire county, were primarily married (95%), female (67%), and college-educated (55%) as shown in Table 1. The race and ethnicity of participants were diverse, approximating the demographic characteristics of the county. Specifically, about one-half of the Franklin County sample was non-Hispanic white (51%), one-fifth was Hispanic (22%), one-fifth was Black (21%), and the remainder were Asian or multi-racial (6%).

As can be seen in Table 1, the 3C sub-sample differed in some ways from the non-3C sub-sample. The 3C sub-sample included significantly more Black and significantly fewer Hispanic participants than the non-3C sub-sample and participants were less likely to be college-educated in the 3C sub-sample. These differences likely reflect distinctions between the 3C communities and other communities in Franklin County.

In terms of children within the home, study participants had on average about one child under 5 years of age in the home, with the 3C sub-sample having significantly more young children in the home than those in the non-3C sub-sample. In terms of household income, the mean annual income reported was about \$65,000 (ranging from less than \$20,000 to more than \$100,000), with the 3C sub-sample reporting significantly less annual household income than the non-3C sub-sample. On average, participants worked about 24 hours per week, with those in the 3C sub-sample working fewer hours on average than those in the non-3C sub-sample. However, those in the 3C sub-sample had a greater number of jobs and more unpredictable schedules relative to those in the non-3C sub-sample.

Table 1. *ECE Landscape study participant characteristics and background.*

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- Sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- Sample (n=968)
Demographic characteristics			
Age (in years)	34.81	34.85 ^a	34.76 ^a
Female	67%	68% ^a	66% ^a
Biological parent	98%	98% ^a	96% ^b
Married	95%	95% ^a	94% ^a
Race/ethnicity			
White (non-Hispanic)	51%	51% ^a	50% ^a
Black	21%	18% ^a	29% ^b
Hispanic	22%	24% ^a	13% ^b
Asian or multiracial	6%	6% ^a	8% ^b
Home language is only English	89%	88% ^a	95% ^b
College-educated	55%	59% ^a	30% ^b
Children in the Home			
Number of children in home under 5 years of age	1.20	1.19 ^a	1.23 ^a
Number of children 6-11 years of age	.19	.18 ^a	.21 ^a
Number of children >12 years of age	.05	.04 ^a	.06 ^a
Household income	\$65,671	\$67,366 ^a	\$58,970 ^b
Participant Employment			
Hours employed	24.52	25.02 ^a	21.96 ^b
Work schedule changes week to week (among those employed)	28%	26% ^a	44% ^b
Work requires respondent to be “on call” (among those employed)	23%	23% ^a	21% ^a
Respondent number of jobs	1.06	1.05 ^a	1.12 ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a reference group) and 3C sub-samples. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group.

As part of the ECE Landscape Study survey, we included additional questions designed to examine general household characteristics of participants, as presented in Table 2. As can be seen, less than one-third of participants resided in single-family homes with the dominant housing type being an apartment or condominium. About 15% of families had moved in the prior 12 months. Overall, housing expenses were 37% of household income, and this was significantly higher for the 3C sub-sample compared to the non-3C sub-sample.

Measures of household resources (see Table 2) were also captured to characterize the ECE Landscape Study participants; this included material hardship, household chaos, and participant stress and anxiety. Material hardship was measured using six items designed to determine participants' experiences with specific types of hardship over the last 12 months (e.g., unable to pay the full amount of rent or mortgage; lost services because payments were not made; were not able to access water). We found this scale to have good reliability within our full sample, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76. We examined the proportion of difficulties that families experienced in the past 12 months, out of the six types of hardship. On average, families reported little material hardship, corresponding to experience with 10% of hardship items, but those in the 3C sub-sample were significantly more likely than those in the non-3C sub-sample to report such difficulties.

Household chaos was measured using the Household Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale – Short Form (CHAOS; Matheny et al., 1995). The CHAOS tool measures the cognitive and developmental effects of “environmental confusion,” which can be characterized as high levels of noise, crowding, and home traffic patterns. Participants were asked to respond to six items about what life is like inside their home (e.g., “You can't hear yourself think in our home”) and the overall household environment. CHAOS was measured on a five-point scale in which higher scores were associated with higher levels of household confusion (i.e., chaos). We found this scale to have marginal reliability within our full sample, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.52, which was not improvable by dropping scale items. Despite its low alpha, we have included these scale scores because of the well-documented relationship between household chaos and parent and child outcomes, as well as the long-standing successful history of using the CHAOS-SF across myriad research settings (see Marsh, Dobson, and Maddison, 2020). Overall, study participants reported average levels of household confusion, with a mean score of 2.64 on the five-point scale, with the 3C sub-sample reporting significantly higher levels of household confusion than those in the non-3C sub-sample.

Finally, participant stress and anxiety were measured using the Kessler-6 Distress Scale (K-6), a brief but widely used survey to measure mental distress (Kessler, et al., 2003). Respondents responded to six items to describe how often they have experienced symptoms of stress in the last 30 days (“nervous?” “hopeless?”). The K-6 was measured on a five-point scale and higher scores were associated with higher levels of stress and anxiety. We found this scale to have good reliability within our full sample, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.79. Generally, the study participants reported average levels of stress and anxiety, although those in the 3C sub-sample had significantly higher scores on the K-6 than those in the non-3C sub-sample, indicating that respondents in the three communities of Hilltop, Linden, and Southside experienced greater stress and anxiety than those in other communities.

Table 2. ECE Landscape study participant household characteristics.

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- Sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- Sample (n=968)
<i>Housing characteristics</i>			
Housing type			
Apartment/condominium	48%	47% ^a	55% ^b
Duplex/townhome	18%	18% ^a	18% ^a
Single family	32%	32% ^a	26% ^b
Mobile home/other	2%	2% ^a	1% ^b
Rent home	21%	21% ^a	24% ^a
Bedrooms in home	3.23	3.27 ^a	3.07 ^b
Number of moves in last 12 months	0.15	0.15 ^a	0.20 ^b
Housing expenses as a fraction of income	37%	36% ^a	42% ^b
<i>Household resources</i>			
Material hardship	0.10	0.10 ^a	0.13 ^b
Household chaos	2.64	2.62 ^a	2.77 ^b
Participant stress and anxiety	2.00	2.00 ^a	2.08 ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.

Participants also provided details on public assistance they utilized. Between 11-28% of participants utilized assistance from either WIC, food stamps, TANF, housing supplements and subsidies, supplemental security income, unemployment, and Medicaid (see Table 3). Of all participants, 49% reported receiving some type of assistance, with the dominant comprising food stamps (16%) and WIC (16%). Note that assistance utilization was significantly higher for all types of benefits for the 3C sub-sample compared to the non-3C sub-sample.

Table 3. ECE Landscape study participants' use of public assistance.

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- Sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- Sample (n=968)
Household Assistance			
Receipt of WIC	16%	15% ^a	21% ^b
Receipt of Food Stamps	23%	22% ^a	28% ^b
Receipt of TANF	12%	11% ^a	19% ^b
Receipt of housing supplements or subsidies	14%	12% ^a	22% ^b
Receipt of supplemental security income	11%	11% ^a	16% ^b
Receipt of unemployment benefits	12%	11% ^a	16% ^b
Receipt of Medicaid	12%	11% ^a	17% ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.

Aim 1 Findings: Salient ECE experiences for children 5 years of age and under in Franklin County

In this study, we categorized children’s ECE experiences into three categories:

1. Care in a daycare or early learning center
2. Care in someone else’s private home
3. Care in the child’s home

We provide descriptive data on children’s participation in these arrangements. Additionally, to classify parent beliefs and practices we present items on parent frameworks towards young children. These data describe parent’s beliefs on how children’s development occurs and who is responsible for teaching them. We present on home-learning activities through descriptive data on learning activities that take place in the home and how often these activities take place.

Children’s Participation in Out-of-Home Care

Approximately one-half of sampled children between the ages of 0 and 5 years in Franklin County (51-53%) spent time in a regular out-of-home care arrangement between Monday and Friday during the hours of 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (see Table 4). In this study, “out-of-home care” is defined as a child being cared for outside of the child’s home – whether at a daycare or early learning center or at someone else’s private home. There were few differences across the days of the week and the morning and afternoon usage rates. However, only 5-10% of families in Franklin County with young children use out-of-home care between the hours of 5-9 p.m. during the workweek and on weekends. Among children cared for in their own home during the workweek, approximately 90-93% were cared for by either their mother or father; during evenings and weekends, 97-98% of children receiving care in their own home were with their mothers or fathers.

Table 4. Children’s time spent in out-of-home care in Franklin County overall, and the non-3C and 3C sub-samples, by time of day.

Percent of children in out-of-home care...			
	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub-sample (n=1226)	3C Sub-sample (n=968)
Weekdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	51%	52% ^a	47% ^b
Weekdays 12-5 p.m.	53%	53% ^a	55% ^a
Weekdays 5-9 p.m.	7%	7% ^a	10% ^b
Weekends 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	9%	9% ^a	13% ^b
Weekends 12-5 p.m.	9%	9% ^a	15% ^b

Weekends 5-9 p.m.	5%	4% ^a	10% ^b
Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.			

Also presented in Table 4 are estimates of the percentage of children in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside (i.e., the 3C sub-sample) who were cared for outside of the home as compared with those in the non-3C sub-sample. We found no significant differences in percentages of children who were cared for outside of the home in these communities during the afternoons of the work week as compared with other areas of Franklin County. Of note, however, is that a significantly larger percentage of children in the: (a) non-3C sub-sample were cared for outside of the home in the mornings (52% as compared with 47% for the 3C sub-sample); and (b) 3C sub-sample were cared for outside of the home on weekends (between 10 and 15% compared to 9% for the non-3C sub-sample) and in the evenings (10% compared to 4% for the non-3C sub-sample). With that said, a comparable number of children in both the 3C and non-3C subsample who were cared for in their home were with their mothers or fathers (90-93% during the workweek and 97-98% during evenings and weekends).

Differences in Out-of-Home Care Utilization

We considered differences in out-of-home care utilization among families as a function of the parent's education and race/ethnicity. Among Franklin County families with children under 5, significant differences were observed as a function of family's educational levels. As shown in Table 5, 46-48% of families with less than a college education had children cared for outside the home during the workweek between 9 a.m.-5 p.m., which is significantly less than the 55-56% of families with at least a college education. Put differently, parents with higher levels of education used out-of-home care for their children at significantly higher rates than those with lower levels of education.

With respect to race/ethnicity, there were few racial/ethnic group differences with respect to out-of-home care utilization (see Table 5). For instance, 50% of non-Hispanic white families and 50% of Hispanic families utilized out-of-home care during the morning hours.

Table 5. *Group differences in children's time spent in out-of-home care in Franklin County*

Percent of children in out-of-home care...					
	Non-college-educated (n=670)	College-educated (n=808)	Non-Hispanic white families (n=750)	Black families (n=302)	Hispanic families (n=324)
Weekdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	46% ^a	55% ^b	50% ^a	52% ^a	50% ^a
Weekdays 12-5 p.m.	48% ^a	56% ^b	53% ^a	53% ^a	49% ^a
Weekdays 5-9 p.m.	6% ^a	8% ^a	8% ^a	5% ^b	7% ^{a,b}
Weekends 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	9% ^a	9% ^a	10% ^a	6% ^b	10% ^{a,b}
Weekends 12-5 p.m.	10% ^a	9% ^a	10% ^a	7% ^a	11% ^a
Weekends 5-9 p.m.	5% ^a	5% ^a	6% ^a	4% ^a	3% ^a

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row within a category (^a), this implies no significant differences within that category from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the categories. In this case, comparisons are made between: (1) non-college-educated (^a Reference group) and college-educated; and (2) non-Hispanic white (^a Reference group), Black, and Hispanic families.

Franklin County Children Out-of-Home Care Arrangements

Among children cared for outside of the home, we examined the nature of this programming with respect to whether it was in a daycare or early learning center, versus in some else's private home.

Note that these analyses were specific to the children who participated in out-of-home care, which corresponded to about 5-53% of the sample, depending on the time and day. That is, the children who were participating in out-of-home care were only a subset of all children in the ECE Landscape Study. To this end, focusing specifically on children in out-of-home care during the weekday between 9 a.m.-5 p.m., the subsequent study findings represent about 50% of the entire sample.

Study findings show that roughly 85% of those children participating in out-of-home care arrangement were enrolled in a daycare or early learning center between Monday and Friday and the hours of 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (see Table 6), with only 15% of children cared for in someone else's private home. No differences emerged as a function of the weekday (not shown), and only 20-25% of children in out-of-home care were in a daycare or early learning center program between the hours of 5-9 p.m. during the workweek and on weekends.

Table 6. Percentage of children participating in out-of-home care at a daycare or early learning center, by time of day.

Percent of children in out-of-home care...			
	Franklin County Sample (n=72-761)	Non-3C Sub-sample (n=107-566)	3C Sub-sample (n=52-634)
Weekdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	85%	86% ^a	78% ^b
Weekdays 12-5 p.m.	86%	86% ^a	79% ^b
Weekdays 5-9 p.m.	25%	25% ^a	24% ^a
Weekends 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	27%	23% ^a	37% ^b
Weekends 12-5 p.m.	24%	21% ^a	33% ^b
Weekends 5-9 p.m.	20%	20% ^a	16% ^a

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples. Sample sizes in this table represent a range because each sample size changes as a function of time and weekday vs weekend.

Even though the percentages of children in the non-3C and targeted 3C sub-samples participating in out-of-home care during the workweek were similar, fewer children in the 3C communities were cared for in a daycare or early learning center. As can be seen in Table 6, about 78-79% of children participated in a daycare or early learning center in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside, which was significantly lower than rates in the non-3C sub-sample (86%). In contrast, parents were far more likely to use a daycare or early learning center during weekends in the 3C sub-sample (33-37%) than in the non-3C sub-sample (21-23%).

Differences in the Utilization of Daycare and Early Learning Centers

We considered use of daycare or early learning center programming as a function of participant demographics, in particular education and race/ethnicity. Even though more-educated families were more likely to have their children cared for outside of the home than were less-educated families, there were no significant differences by education when looking at enrollment in a daycare or early learning center (84-85% of families who were not college-educated versus 86-87% of families who were college-educated). Thus, parents’ education made a difference in whether children were cared for in the home or outside the home, but not what type of care children received outside the home. Of note, however, was that more-educated families were more likely to use weekend care than were less-educated families.

Even though few racial/ethnic group differences were found among children cared for outside of the home in Franklin County, significant racial/ethnic differences were apparent in the *types* of out-of-home care children receive (see Table 7). Among children cared for outside of the home during the workweek, approximately 85-90% of non-Hispanic white and Black families enrolled their children in an early learning center compared to only 75-80% of Hispanic families. Put another way, although Hispanic families were equally likely to have their children be cared for outside of the home, they were significantly more likely than Black and non-Hispanic white families to rely on a care arrangement in someone else’s private home.

Table 7. Group differences in children’s time spent in an early learning center in Franklin County sample, by time of day.

<i>The percent of children cared for in ECE of those cared for outside the home...</i>					
	Non-college-educated (n=34-316)	College-educated (n=38-457)	Non-Hispanic white families (n=44-416)	Black families (n=13-163)	Hispanic families (n=9-144)
Weekdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	84% ^a	87% ^a	84% ^a	94% ^b	77% ^c
Weekdays 12-5 p.m.	85% ^a	86% ^a	86% ^a	91% ^a	80% ^{a,b}
Weekdays 5-9 p.m.	18% ^a	31% ^a	19%	##	##
Weekends 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	23% ^a	29% ^a	21%	##	##
Weekends 12-5 p.m.	19% ^a	29% ^a	26%	##	##
Weekends 5-9 p.m.	##	##	##	##	##

Note. ## corresponds to cells with less than 50 cases and, thus, are blinded. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row within a category (^a), this implies no significant differences within that category from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the categories. In this case, comparisons are made between: (1) non-college-educated (^a Reference group) and college-educated; and (2) non-Hispanic white (^a Reference group), Black, and Hispanic families. Sample sizes in this table represent a range because each sample size changes as a function of time and weekday vs weekend.

Daily Care Arrangements

There were notable differences when comparing families who exclusively care for their children in their own home versus those who sometimes used care in someone else's home or care in a daycare or early learning center. We describe the general patterns here, but more specific contrasts can be seen in Table 8.

In terms of respondent characteristics, the most notable patterns were as a function of education and race/ethnicity. More specifically, college-educated participants were more likely to use a daycare or early learning center than participants with less than a college education, who were more likely to rely on parental care or care in someone else's private home.

Across racial/ethnic groups, Black parents were found to be least reliant on care in someone else's private home, whereas Hispanic families were least reliant on daycare and early learning center arrangements.

With regards to household necessity, participants who reported working longer hours were most likely to use a daycare or early learning center, whereas those who were more likely to be "on call" and those who were in school relied more on care arrangements in someone else's private home. Additionally, respondents with more children at home, especially between 0-5 or 6-11 years of age, were more likely to use parental care.

Notable differences were also documented across household resources. For example, families with higher levels of income were more likely to use care arrangements in someone else's private home or in a daycare or early learning center (relative to parental care in the child's home), whereas families who used a larger share of their income on housing were more likely to rely on parental care. Although no differences emerged across housing types, families who were renting and those who had moved in the last 12 months were more likely to report using care in someone else's private home. Finally, while the use of household assistance varied with care type, the distinct types of assistance did not reliably predict the type of care arrangements in a uniform direction.

Table 8. Differences between participants who use care in their own home, care in someone else's private home, or daycare or early learning center arrangements in Franklin County overall.

	Care in child's home (n=560)	Care in someone else's home (n=125)	Daycare or early learning center (n=727)
Participant characteristics			
Age (in years)	34.78 ^a	35.67 ^b	34.72 ^a
Female	69% ^a	58% ^b	65% ^{a,b}
Biological parent	99% ^a	94% ^b	98% ^a
Married	93% ^a	91% ^a	96% ^b
Race/ethnicity			
White (non-Hispanic)	50% ^a	54% ^a	55% ^a
Black	23% ^a	12% ^b	22% ^a
Hispanic	22% ^a	26% ^a	16% ^b
Asian/multiracial	5% ^a	8% ^a	7% ^a
Home language is only English	90% ^a	90% ^a	91% ^a
College-educated	49% ^a	46% ^a	60% ^b
Participant employment			
Respondent hours employed	18.02 ^a	25.45 ^b	29.14 ^c
Respondent work schedule changes week to week (among those employed)	30% ^a	42% ^b	24% ^c
Work requires respondent to be "on call" (among those employed)	18% ^a	29% ^b	24% ^{a,b}
Respondent number of jobs	1.04 ^a	1.09 ^a	1.06 ^a
Respondent enrolled in school	8% ^a	16% ^b	8% ^a
Number of children in home under 5 years of age	1.30 ^a	1.23 ^{a,b}	1.12 ^b
Number of children 6-11 years of age	0.29 ^a	0.17 ^b	0.12 ^b
Number of children >12 years of age	0.07 ^a	0.06 ^a	0.03 ^b

Household resources			
Household income	\$59,657 ^a	\$67,359 ^b	\$69,845 ^b
Housing expenses as a fraction of income	42% ^a	32% ^b	35% ^b
Material hardship	0.09 ^a	0.22 ^b	0.09 ^a
Household chaos	2.66 ^a	2.81 ^b	2.59 ^c
Respondent stress and anxiety	1.94 ^a	2.27 ^b	1.98 ^a
Housing characteristics			
Housing type			
Apartment/condominium	49% ^a	56% ^a	48% ^a
Duplex/townhome	19% ^a	16% ^a	19% ^a
Single family	31% ^a	26% ^a	32% ^a
Mobile home/other	1% ^a	2% ^a	1% ^a
Rent home	18% ^a	28% ^b	24% ^b
Bedrooms in home	3.42 ^a	3.18 ^b	3.08 ^b
Moves in last 12 months	0.09 ^a	0.53 ^b	0.15 ^c
Household Assistance			
Receipt of WIC	18% ^a	18% ^a	15% ^a
Receipt of Food Stamps	26% ^a	30% ^a	21% ^b
Receipt of TANF	11% ^a	25% ^b	12% ^a
Receipt of housing supplements or subsidies	13% ^a	30% ^b	13% ^a
Receipt of supplemental security income	8% ^a	25% ^b	12% ^a
Receipt of unemployment benefits	18% ^a	16% ^a	7% ^b
Receipt of Medicaid	16% ^a	13% ^{a,b}	10% ^b
Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row, this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the care arrangement groups. In this case, comparisons are made between parental care (^a Reference group), care in someone else's home, and daycare or early learning center.			

Children's Activities

Having established where children are spending their time in Franklin County, we next considered what they were doing throughout the day. To do so, we examined children's engagement in 13 different activities (0 = no, 1= yes). Estimates reported below can be interpreted as whether or not children participated in a given activity during the given time block. Because there were no notable differences in children's activities during the different days of the work week and on weekends, we present parents' reports of their children's activities on Mondays between 9 a.m.-12 p.m., 12-5 p.m., and 5-9 p.m. as a representation of children's experiences during weekdays and parents' reports of their children's activities on Saturdays during the hours noted above as a representation of children's experiences on the weekend.

As can be seen in Table 9 during weekday mornings, approximately half of children in Franklin County played with adults or other children and roughly 35-50% of children engaged in different types of academic learning activities (e.g., looking at books; working on numbers, letters, words). With that said, roughly 40% of children played alone or watched television, and over a quarter played with a tablet or phone. Although similar patterns were documented between 12-5 p.m., differences emerged during the evenings. More specifically, in contrast to the weekday mornings and afternoons, children in the evenings were far more likely to take a nap and play with tablets or phones, and less likely to engage in academic learning activities. Also presented in Table 9 are children's experiences on the weekends. In the main, children's experiences on the weekends between 9 a.m.-9 p.m. were far more similar than different and resembled children's experiences from weekday evenings.

Table 9. Children's activities during the weekdays and weekends

	Weekdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (n=1481)	Weekdays 12-5 p.m. (n=1481)	Weekdays 5-9 p.m. (n=1481)	Weekends 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (n=1481)	Weekends 12-5 p.m. (n=1481)	Weekends 5-9 p.m. (n=1481)
Eat	69%	64%	65%	65%	67%	68%
Nap	32%	46%	58%	32%	41%	26%
Play with adults	49%	50%	30%	60%	56%	54%
Play with children	50%	54%	40%	44%	43%	30%
Play alone	42%	43%	53%	47%	43%	41%
Watch television	43%	42%	43%	50%	49%	52%
Listen to music or sing songs	48%	45%	39%	46%	48%	41%
Play with tablet or phone	28%	29%	44%	37%	42%	41%
Look at books with adults	37%	40%	32%	41%	41%	43%
Look at books alone	36%	37%	29%	38%	36%	34%
Work on letters, words, or numbers	46%	47%	23%	30%	32%	39%
Participate in other learning activities	40%	42%	19%	32%	32%	25%
Work on arts and crafts	28%	36%	19%	20%	22%	18%

We next examined differences in children’s activities as a function of their care arrangement, as shown in Table 10. For these contrasts we only present estimates for weekdays between 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and 12-5 p.m. due to the fact that few children received care out of the home in the evenings and weekends. In general, children cared for in their own home during the workweek were significantly more likely to play with an adult or alone, whereas children cared for in someone else’s home or in a daycare or early learning center were far more likely to play with other children. Children in daycare and early learning centers were the least likely group to watch television or to play with tablets or phones and the most likely group to engage in academic activities (e.g., work on letters and numbers) along with arts and crafts.

Table 10. Group differences in children’s activities during the weekdays and weekends.

	Care in child’s home (n = 656-695)	Care in someone else’s home (n = 85-88)	Care in a daycare or early learning center (n = 619-636)
Weekdays 9 a.m-12p.m.			
Eat	69% ^a	65% ^a	69% ^a
Nap	32% ^a	35% ^a	31% ^a
Play with adults	57% ^a	41% ^b	42% ^b
Play with children	33% ^a	47% ^b	69% ^c
Play alone	48% ^a	40% ^{a,b}	35% ^b
Watch television	54% ^a	52% ^a	30% ^b
Listen to music or sing songs	48% ^a	55% ^a	46% ^a
Play with tablet or phone	31% ^a	35% ^a	24% ^b
Look at books with adults	36% ^a	39% ^a	38% ^a
Look at books alone	28% ^a	36% ^{a,b}	44% ^b
Work on letters, words, or numbers	27% ^a	46% ^b	66% ^c
Participate in other learning activities	25% ^a	29% ^a	57% ^b

Work on arts and crafts	14% ^a	29% ^b	42% ^c
<i>Weekdays 12-5 p.m.</i>			
Eat	63% ^a	61% ^a	65% ^a
Nap	47% ^a	42% ^a	47% ^a
Play with adults	63% ^a	41% ^b	39% ^b
Play with children	36% ^a	56% ^b	72% ^c
Play alone	48% ^a	42% ^{a,b}	38% ^b
Watch television	50% ^a	60% ^b	31% ^c
Listen to music or sing songs	46% ^a	44% ^a	45% ^a
Play with tablet or phone	33% ^a	32% ^{a,b}	25% ^b
Look at books with adults	40% ^a	41% ^a	39% ^a
Look at books alone	33% ^a	34% ^{a,b}	41% ^b
Work on letters, words, or numbers	28% ^a	57% ^b	65% ^b
Participate in other learning activities	23% ^a	23% ^a	63% ^b
Work on arts and crafts	17% ^a	28% ^b	56% ^c

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the care arrangement groups. In this case, comparisons are made between care in child's home (^a Reference group), care in someone else's home, and daycare or early learning center

Aim 1 Findings: Parent Beliefs and Practices

Parent Frameworks Towards Young Children

In addition to examining families' use of various care arrangements for their young children, we also sought to understand parent "frameworks" regarding how children's development occurs. We use the term "framework" to refer to parent's perceptions on children's learning and development.

We examined parent beliefs and practices with respect to children's learning and development by asking participants to answer a series of questions about how children's development occurs. Examples included, for instance, "I feel children ages 0-5 years learn in their day-to-day lives at home, and additional experiences in early child care centers and programs are unnecessary to learn..." and "I feel child care centers and programs are responsible for teaching children ages 0-5 years old about..." Higher scores indicated a stronger agreement with a given statement (see Table 11).

In general, we found that Franklin County families valued experiences children have in both formal ECE environments and at home with family for teaching children academic and social skills, rather than relying on children to learn more naturally through their day-to-day experiences. When comparing the 3C and non-3C sub-samples, most notably we found that non-3C families were more likely to agree that children need formal environments like ECE to learn than the 3C families. Additionally, non-3C families (as compared to 3C families) were more likely to agree that families are responsible for teaching children, and that activities like playing, reading, talking with adults, and being taught by adults are important to children's development.

Table 11. *ECE Landscape study participants parent frameworks towards young children.*

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- sample (n=968)
<i>Children learn in in their day-to-day lives at home and ECE experiences are unnecessary to learn...</i>			
Academic skills	3.42	3.40 ^a	3.50 ^a
Social skills	3.39	3.36 ^a	3.46 ^a
<i>Children need to learn in a more formal environment like ECE to learn...</i>			
Academic skills	4.03	4.06 ^a	3.88 ^b
Social skills	4.12	4.17 ^a	3.98 ^b
<i>Families are responsible for teaching children about...</i>			

Academic skills	4.15	4.18 ^a	4.04 ^b
Social skills	4.24	4.27 ^a	4.07 ^b
<i>ECE programs are responsible for teaching children about...</i>			
Academic skills	4.19	4.20 ^a	4.13 ^a
Social skills	4.26	4.29 ^a	4.23 ^a
<i>Importance for children's development...</i>			
Playing with adults	4.24	4.25 ^a	4.17 ^b
Playing with other children	4.28	4.29 ^a	4.11 ^b
Reading with adults	4.24	4.27 ^a	4.09 ^b
Talking with adults	4.27	4.27 ^a	4.10 ^b
Being actively taught by adults	4.32	4.34 ^a	4.12 ^b
Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.			

We also examined differences in parent frameworks towards young children as a function of the parent's education and race/ethnicity, as shown in Table 12. While response patterns across educational and race/ethnicity categories were similar, there were some significant differences. Non-college-educated (as compared to college-educated) and Hispanic (as compared to non-Hispanic white or Black) families were each slightly more likely to agree that children learn academic and social skills from their day-to-day lives, although these two groups were even more likely to agree that formal environments like ECE are needed for children to learn academic and social skills. Hispanic and Black (as compared to non-Hispanic white) families were most likely to agree that families are responsible for teaching academic skills, and Hispanic families were most likely to agree that families are responsible for teaching social skills. Of the three race/ethnicity groups, Hispanic families were also most likely to suggest ECE environments are responsible for imparting both academic and social skills to children. College-educated (as compared to non-college-educated) families were more likely to agree that playing with other children, reading, and talking with adults were important for children's development.

Table 12. *Group differences for parent frameworks toward young children.*

	Non- college- educated (n=670)	College- educated (n=808)	Non- Hispanic white families (n=750)	Black families (n=302)	Hispanic families (n=324)
<i>Children learn in in their day-to-day lives at home and ECE experiences are unnecessary to learn...</i>					
Academic skills	3.68 ^a	3.19 ^b	3.24 ^a	3.47 ^b	3.90 ^c
Social skills	3.62 ^a	3.20 ^b	3.24 ^a	3.41 ^a	3.93 ^b
<i>Children need to learn in a more formal environment like ECE to learn...</i>					
Academic skills	4.09 ^a	3.97 ^b	3.81 ^a	4.20 ^b	4.39 ^c
Social skills	4.17 ^a	4.08 ^a	4.00 ^a	4.13 ^b	4.41 ^c
<i>Families are responsible for teaching children about...</i>					
Academic skills	4.12 ^a	4.17 ^a	4.07 ^a	4.24 ^b	4.34 ^b
Social skills	4.24 ^a	4.24 ^a	4.18 ^a	4.24 ^a	4.42 ^b
<i>ECE programs are responsible for teaching children about...</i>					
Academic skills	4.23 ^a	4.16 ^a	4.10 ^a	4.20 ^a	4.46 ^b
Social skills	4.24 ^a	4.27 ^a	4.25 ^a	4.14 ^a	4.46 ^b
<i>Importance for children's development...</i>					
Playing with adults	4.26 ^a	4.22 ^a	4.16 ^a	4.40 ^b	4.28 ^b
Playing with other children	4.18 ^a	4.36 ^b	4.29 ^a	4.13 ^b	4.41 ^c
Reading with adults	4.18 ^a	4.28 ^b	4.22 ^a	4.20 ^a	4.37 ^b
Talking with adults	4.22 ^a	4.31 ^b	4.24 ^a	4.26 ^{a,b}	4.36 ^b
Being actively taught by adults	4.30 ^a	4.33 ^a	4.24 ^a	4.33 ^a	4.51 ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row within a category (^a), this implies no significant differences within that category from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the categories. In this case, comparisons are made between: (1) non-college-educated (^a Reference group) and college-educated; and (2) non-Hispanic white (^a Reference group), Black, and Hispanic.

Home-learning Activities

We examined home learning activities by presenting participants with a list of 11 common home-learning activities (e.g., “tell stories to child,” “read to child”) and asking them to answer how often they do those activities with their child (not at all, once or twice a week, three to six times a week, every day). Participants were asked how much time an adult plays with their child both on a typical weekday and weekend. Estimates can be interpreted as days per week that the parent did each of these activities with child (scale = 0-7), with higher scores representing a greater volume of home-learning activities. We found this scale to have good reliability within our full sample, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.85.

Overall, the Franklin County sample reported moderate use of the 11 home-learning activities examined, with parents reporting that they engaged in a given activity about 3-4 times per week. For instance, parents reported telling stories to their children slightly more than four times per week, and reading to their children slightly less than four times per week.

We also examined these home-learning activities for the 3C and non-3C sub-samples. With respect to the overall frequency of home-learning activities, the two samples did not significantly differ. However, the type of home-learning activities in which respondents engaged their children varied in some interesting ways across the two sub-samples.

The 3C sub-sample engaged their children in several home-learning activities significantly more often than the non-3C sub-sample, to include telling stories to their children; helping their children to do arts and crafts; talking about nature or doing science projects; practicing reading, writing, and numbers; and playing pretend or imagination games. For other home-learning activities, the non-3C sub-sample reported engaging their children more frequently than those in the 3C sub-sample; this included reading to their children; playing games or puzzles; and playing a sport or exercising together.

Table 13. *ECE landscape study participants home learning activities.*

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- sample (n=968)
Home learning activities	3.65	3.62 ^a	3.68 ^a
Tell stories to child	4.38	4.36 ^a	4.54 ^b
Read to child	3.79	3.79 ^a	3.57 ^b
Sing songs with child	3.90	3.88 ^a	3.79 ^a
Help child to do arts and crafts	3.35	3.28 ^a	3.58 ^b
Involve child in household chores	3.34	3.26 ^a	3.44 ^a
Play games or do puzzles with child	3.62	3.63 ^a	3.31 ^b
Talk about nature or do science projects with child	3.15	3.10 ^a	3.39 ^b
Build something or play with construction toys with child	3.54	3.52 ^a	3.54 ^a
Play a sport or exercise together with child	3.71	3.74 ^a	3.54 ^b
Practice reading, writing, and numbers with child	3.56	3.49 ^a	3.86 ^b
Play pretend or imagination games with child	3.75	3.71 ^a	4.00 ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.

Aim 2 Findings: Barriers to Participation in Daycare or Early Learning Centers

Why parents choose not to enroll their children in daycare or early learning center programs

The most cited barrier for parents in Franklin County to enrolling their children in a daycare or early learning center was program quality (Table 14). Approximately three-quarters of parents reported that if an early learning center opened in their neighborhood and they were invited to enroll their child, they would choose *not* to place their child in the program if the program: (a) employed staff who were unfriendly (61%), (b) was not licensed or registered (66%), (c) employed teachers with little

experience (66%), or (d) had a poor-quality rating (70%). Approximately one-half of parents also reported barriers related to cost and program affordability (52%), hours and schedules (46-54%), and convenience (e.g., center not being within walking distance, 46%).

When comparing the reported barriers to enrollment in early learning center across the 3C and non-3C communities, we found similar patterns. With that said, significantly fewer parents in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside emphasized half-day programs and program quality as a barrier as compared with the families in the non-3C communities.

Table 14. Barriers to enrollment in a daycare or early learning center in Franklin County overall, and the non-3C and 3C sub-samples.

	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub- sample (n=1226)	3C Sub- sample (n=968)
Parental needs and preferences			
Want more control of child's learning	36%	35% ^a	36% ^a
Already caring for another child at home	46%	45% ^a	51% ^b
Child may pick up bad habits from others	49%	48% ^a	47% ^a
Child may be exposed to germs in the program	47%	47% ^a	50% ^a
Program cost and affordability			
Cost is too high	52%	52% ^a	50% ^a
Does not accept subsidies	36%	36% ^a	32% ^a
Convenience			
Center is not within walking distance of	46%	45% ^a	49% ^a
Hassle to apply	50%	49% ^a	50% ^a
Hours and schedules			
Program is half-day (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) only	54%	57% ^a	46% ^b
Program not available on evenings and/or weekends	46%	45% ^a	48% ^a
Program quality			
Not licensed or registered	66%	67% ^a	56% ^b
Poor quality rating	70%	71% ^a	65% ^b

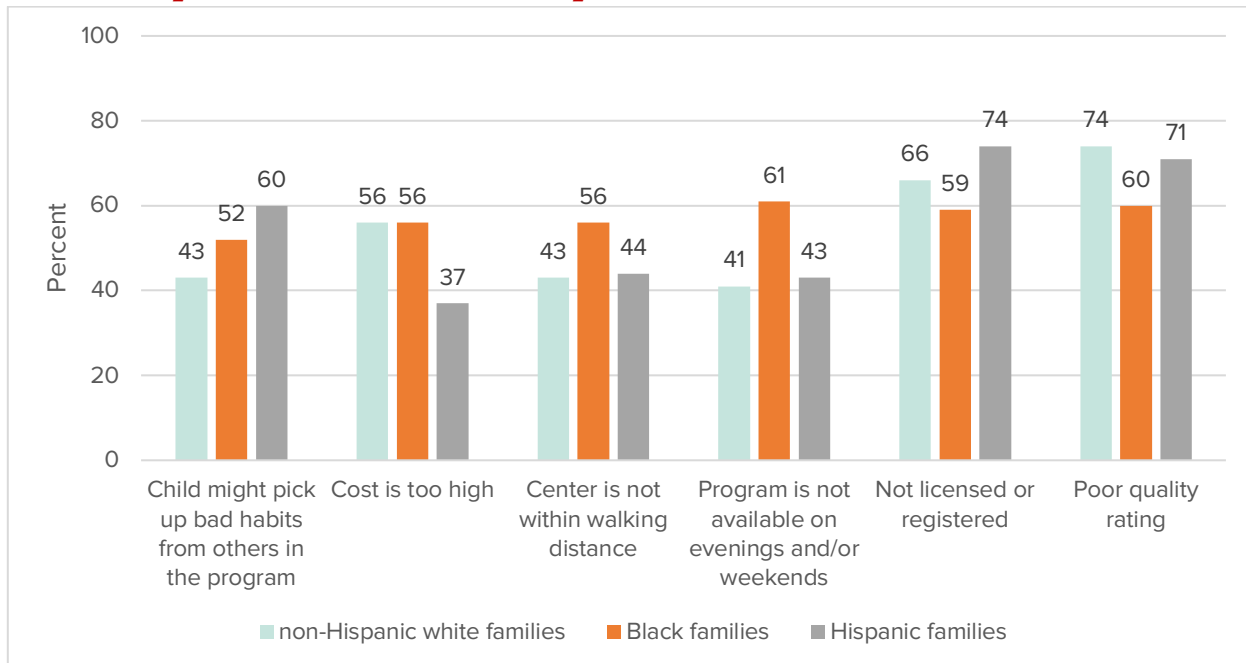
Teachers are very strict	42%	41% ^a	44% ^a
Teachers have little experience	66%	67% ^a	60% ^b
Staff unfriendly	61%	62% ^a	54% ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.

Differences in why parents choose not to enroll their children in daycare or early learning centers

As can be seen in Figure 3 and Table 15, there were notable racial/ethnic group differences in what white, Black, and Hispanic families in Franklin County reported as barriers to enrolling their children in an early learning center. Black families were significantly more likely to mention barriers related to the lack of evening care and distance from their home than non-Hispanic white and Hispanic families, whereas Hispanic families were more concerned about program quality and the potential for their children to pick up bad habits from other children in the program.

Figure 3. Differences in the barriers to enrollment in a daycare or early learning center for non-Hispanic white, Black, and Hispanic families.



Fewer differences emerged across the education gradient (see Table 15). However, parents with less than a college education were more likely to note barriers that stem from their own needs and preferences such as the need for walking distance care along with evening and weekend care, whereas more educated parents were more likely to report barriers related to programs that were only half-day.

Table 15. *Group differences in barriers to enrollment in a daycare or early learning center for Franklin County families.*

	Non-college educated (n=670)	College educated (n=808)	Non-Hispanic white families (n=750)	Black families (n=302)	Hispanic families (n=324)
Parental needs and preferences					
Want more control of child's learning	36% ^a	35% ^a	37% ^a	32% ^a	35% ^a
Already caring for another child at home	52% ^a	41% ^b	44% ^a	52% ^b	46% ^{a,b}
Child may pick up bad habits from others	55% ^a	44% ^b	43% ^a	52% ^{a,b}	59% ^b
Child may be exposed to germs in the program	50% ^a	44% ^b	45% ^a	47% ^a	52% ^a
Program cost and affordability					
Cost is too high	53% ^a	52% ^a	56% ^a	56% ^a	37% ^b
Does not accept subsidies	38% ^a	34% ^a	33% ^a	38% ^a	38% ^a
Convenience					
Center is not within walking distance	50% ^a	42% ^b	43% ^a	56% ^b	44% ^a
Hassle to apply	52% ^a	48% ^a	51% ^a	55% ^a	42% ^b

Hours and schedules					
Program is half-day (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) only	49% ^a	59% ^b	57% ^a	46% ^b	56% ^a
Program not available on evenings and/or weekends	53% ^a	40% ^b	41% ^a	61% ^b	44% ^a
Program quality					
Not licensed or registered	65% ^a	67% ^a	66% ^a	59% ^b	73% ^c
Poor quality rating	68% ^a	72% ^a	74% ^a	60% ^b	71% ^a
Teachers are very strict	43% ^a	40% ^a	40% ^a	43% ^a	41% ^a
Teachers have little experience	64% ^a	67% ^a	68% ^a	61% ^b	67% ^{a, b}
Staff unfriendly	61% ^a	61% ^a	64% ^a	52% ^b	63% ^a
Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row within a category (^a), this implies no significant differences within that category from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the categories. In this case, comparisons are made between: (1) non-college-educated (^a Reference group) and college-educated; and (2) non-Hispanic white (^a Reference group), Black, and Hispanic.					

We also found notable differences in parents' perceived barriers to enrollment based on their neighborhood within the 3C sub-sample (see Table 16). Southside parents were most likely to indicate that they wanted more control of their child's learning, although they were substantially less concerned that their child may pick up bad habits from others as compared to Linden or Hilltop parents. Linden parents were most concerned about whether the program accepted subsidies, followed by Hilltop parents, whereas Southside parents were the least concerned about subsidies. Linden parents were also the most concerned about the relative hassle of applying to programs. Southside parents were much more concerned about whether programs were in walking distance and/or had half-day programs as compared to Linden and/or Hilltop parents, although they were less concerned about evening and/or weekend programs. Additionally, Southside parents were the most concerned about poor quality ratings even though they were the least concerned about the program not being licensed or registered.

Table 16. *Neighborhood differences (Hilltop, Linden, Southside) in barriers to enrollment in a daycare or early learning center for Franklin County families.*

	Linden (n=177)	Hilltop (n=441)	Southside (n=350)
Parental needs and preferences			
Want more control of child's learning	36% ^a	27% ^b	47% ^c
Already caring for another child at home	50% ^a	53% ^a	47% ^a
Child may pick up bad habits from others	52% ^a	51% ^a	41% ^b
Child may be exposed to germs in the program	47% ^a	45% ^a	60% ^b
Program cost and affordability			
Cost is too high	48% ^a	51% ^a	49% ^a
Does not accept subsidies	39% ^a	33% ^{a,b}	27% ^b
Convenience			
Center is not within walking distance	42% ^a	45% ^a	57% ^b
Hassle to apply	58% ^a	50% ^{a,b}	47% ^b
Hours and schedules			
Program is half-day (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) only	46% ^a	37% ^a	58% ^b
Program not available on evenings and/or weekends	48% ^{a,b}	52% ^a	42% ^b

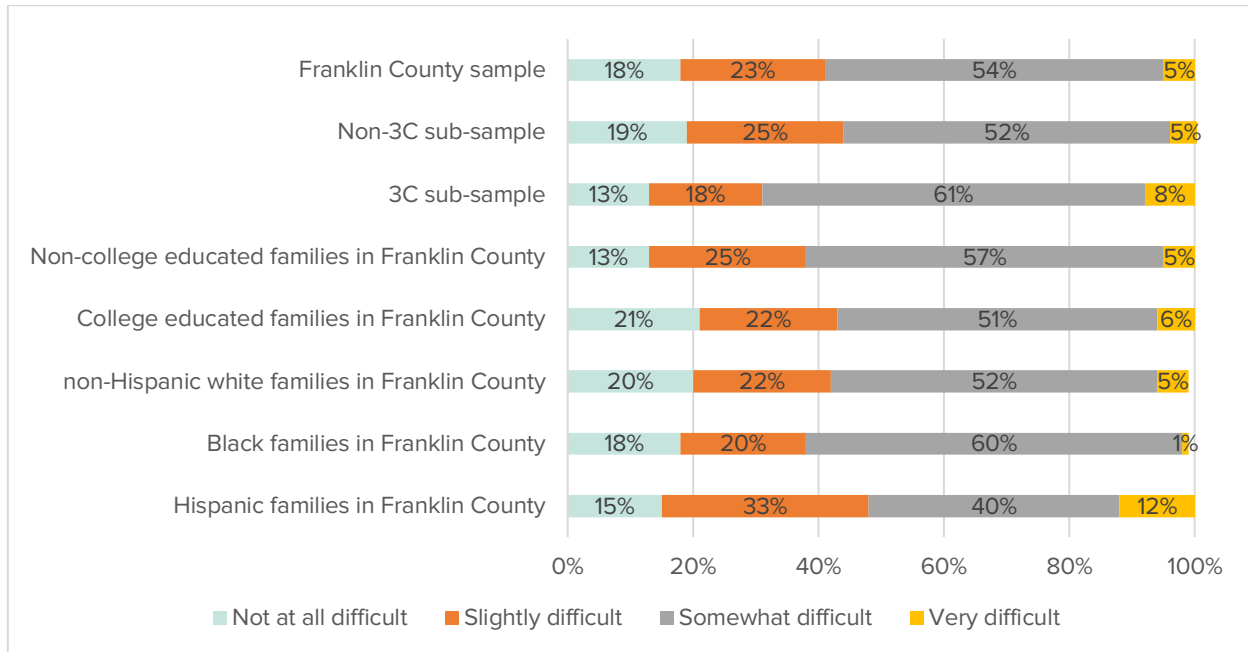
Program quality			
Not licensed or registered	58% ^{a,b}	59% ^a	52% ^b
Poor quality rating	57% ^a	61% ^a	75% ^b
Teachers are very strict	34% ^a	47% ^b	45% ^b
Teachers have little experience	65% ^a	55% ^b	63% ^a
Staff unfriendly	65% ^a	55% ^b	46% ^c

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscripts are used within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between these communities. In this case, comparisons are made between: Linden (^a Reference group), Hilltop, and Southside.

Difficulty in Finding Good Quality Care

Figure 4 displays the percentage of families who experienced various levels of difficulty in finding good quality care. According to this categorization, approximately six out of every ten families whose children were cared for outside the home in Franklin County reported having a somewhat or very difficult time finding good quality care for their child. With that said, parents reporting difficulty in finding good quality care were significantly higher in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside by approximately 10 percentage points relative to the non-3C communities. On the other hand, families with more than a college education reported the easiest time finding good quality care for their children.

Figure 4. Differences in the level of difficulty parents had finding good quality care for their children.



How do parents determine quality?

Interview data from 29 of 38 English-speaking participants was primarily used to address how parents determine child care quality. The word cloud presented in Figure 5 reveals the most repeated words in parents’ descriptions of high-quality care. Parents described viewing a high-quality center as one in which there was a low-turnover rate of teachers, teachers were qualified and had proper accreditations, teachers were welcoming and attentive to their child, and had low student-teacher ratios in the classroom. Many parents mentioned valuing good communication between parents and teachers as an indicator of high quality.

Figure 5. Word cloud of most repeated words to describe perceived high-quality early learning center.



How Parents Found their Current Child Care Arrangement

Across all three samples, recommendations from friends followed by location within the neighborhood seemed to hold the highest weight for parents to find their current child care arrangement (see Table 17). Participants in the 3C sub-sample were more likely to use recommendations from family than non-3C participants, whereas all participants were very unlikely to rely on recommendations from a local agency or previous use from another child.

Table 17. How parents found their current care arrangement.

Reasons for selecting daycare or early learning center	Franklin County Sample (n=1481)	Non-3C Sub-sample (n=1226)	3C Sub-sample (n=968)
Located in my neighborhood	66%	64% ^a	68% ^a
Recommendations from friends	69%	68% ^a	71% ^a
Recommendations from family	59%	56% ^a	65% ^b
Recommendations from a local agency	1%	<1% ^a	1% ^a
I used it before for another child	2%	3% ^a	3% ^a
Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used twice within a row (^a), this implies no significant differences from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the non-3C (^a Reference group) and 3C sub-samples.			

Finally, there were three notable group differences by race/ethnicity and education level across the Franklin County Sample regarding parent decision-making for selecting an ECE center (see Table 18). Non-college-educated (as compared to college-educated) and Black families (as compared to non-Hispanic white or Hispanic families) were the most likely to pick a center based on its location in the participant’s neighborhood. Similarly, non-college-educated families were more likely to rely on recommendations from family than college-educated families. Finally, college-educated (as compared to non-college-educated) and non-Hispanic white families (as compared to Black or Hispanic families) were the most likely to pick a center based on having used it for another child; however, the percentage of families that used this reason as a motivating decision-making factor was drastically smaller than that for either location or recommendations by friends and/or family.

Table 18. Group differences between how parents found current care arrangements, for Franklin County Sample.

Reasons for selecting daycare or early learning center	Non-college-educated (n=670)	College-educated (n=808)	non-Hispanic white families (n=750)	Black families (n=302)	Hispanic families (n=324)
Located in my neighborhood	72% ^a	61% ^b	60% ^a	81% ^b	64% ^a

Recommendations from friends	72% ^a	66% ^a	68% ^a	68% ^a	73% ^a
Recommendations from family	67% ^a	53% ^b	62% ^a	57% ^a	55% ^a
Recommendations from a local agency	<1% ^a	1% ^a	1% ^a	1% ^a	0% ^a
I used it before for another child	<1% ^a	4% ^b	4% ^a	1% ^b	0% ^b

Note. Different superscripts within a column indicate significant differences at $p < .05$. When the same superscript is used more than once within a row within a category (^a), this implies no significant differences within that category from the reference group. On the other hand, when different superscripts are used within a row, this implies that there are significant differences between the categories. In this case, comparisons are made between: (1) non-college-educated (^a Reference group) and college-educated; and (2) non-Hispanic white (^a Reference group), Black, and Hispanic.

Discussion

This report provides a summary of the study design, data collection, and analyses used in the ECE Landscape Study conducted in Franklin County, Ohio in the first two months of 2021. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the “landscape” of ECE in the county, including determining the extent to which families with young children utilize out-of-home care for their children, and to examine perceived barriers to accessing care.

The primary aims of the ECE Landscape Study were to: (1) Identify salient ECE experiences for children 5 years of age and under in Franklin County, including children’s participation in ECE arrangements outside the home (such as in someone else’s private home or in a daycare or early learning center), as well as parent beliefs and practices relating to ECE, and home-learning activities and experiences, and (2) identify barriers and enablers of ECE participation as perceived by parents.

1. About one-half of children five and under in Franklin County participated in out-of-home care arrangements during the week (9 a.m.-5 p.m.) with relatively low utilization rates on evenings and weekends (about 5-10%). Families in Hilltop, Linden, and the Southside (3C families) used out-of-home care at about the same rates as Franklin County families overall, but showed elevated rates of usage in the evenings and on weekends. These differences are likely explained by the fact that 3C families were more likely to have unpredictable work schedules and to work multiple jobs than non-3C families.
2. Utilization of out-of-home care for young children was slightly elevated for college-educated families (56% for week days) compared to non-college-educated families (48%). Non-Hispanic white and Black families had slightly higher utilization rates (53%) compared to Hispanic families (49%).
3. Among families who did use out-of-home care for their children, most (85%) were in daycare or early learning center programs rather than care in someone else’s private home. Slightly more reliance on care in someone else’s private home was seen among 3C families who used out-of-home care, with about 21-22% of families in Hilltop, Linden, and the Southside participating in care in someone else’s private home and 78-79% in daycare or early learning center programs.
4. Parents with young children identified a number of salient barriers inhibiting their utilization of daycare or early learning center programs, and there was generally coherence among the Franklin County and 3C families in their perceptions. Among the most salient barriers were structural features of programs, including poor quality (65-70% of parents), unlicensed programs (56-66%), inexperienced teachers (60-66%), unfriendly staff (54-61%), high costs (50-52%), hassles of applying (50%), and facilities only providing care for half days (46-54%).
5. A majority of parents with young children (~60%) indicated “some” or “significant” difficulty in finding good quality care for their children ages 5 and younger. This number was elevated for those in the 3C communities: parents in Linden, Hilltop, and the Southside reported significantly more difficulty in finding quality care for their children when compared to Franklin County parents as a whole.

Conclusion

Participation in ECE offers short- and long-term benefits to children, families, and communities (Reynolds, et al., 2019; Reynolds & Temple, 2006; Temple & Reynolds, 2007). Given such evidence, there is interest among Franklin County stakeholders in examining the contemporary “landscape” of ECE with respect to children’s participation in different ECE arrangements, parent beliefs and practices relating to ECE, and home learning activities and experiences. In addition, there is interest in identifying salient barriers to and enablers of ECE participation. To this end, the present study was designed to provide an initial evaluation of the landscape of ECE for Franklin County’s families with young children, with an eye towards identifying opportunities to be pursued to enhancing children’s participation in high-quality ECE. In assessing the landscape of ECE across the county, specific attention was paid to the communities of Linden, Hilltop, and Southside (3C sub-sample). In each of these communities, there is significant interest among county stakeholders to develop strategies to promote young children’s kindergarten readiness and ensure that children enter school with the skills needed to succeed. A compelling aspect of this study is that data were derived from parents of young children using a sampling approach that allows for generalizability to the county rather than relying on administrative data or convenience samples. A limitation is that Spanish- and Somali-speaking families are under-represented among participants; thus, findings should not be generalized to these families. With that said, findings from this report offer significant depth and breadth to our understanding of the ECE landscape in Franklin County, and in so doing, we draw the following conclusions.

First, approximately one of every two young children in the county is not participating in out-of-home care during conventional work hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays) and is cared for at home by their parent. Significantly fewer children in the 3C sub-sample participated in out-of-home care (47%) compared with those in the non-3C sub-sample (52%) and significantly more 3C children were cared for outside of the home on weekday evenings and weekends than non-3C children. Importantly, rates of out of home care are lower than national estimates, which suggest that 60% of children between 0-5 receive out-of-home care on a regular basis (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The relatively low ECE participation rate among Franklin County families as compared with the country more generally may reflect significant barriers to finding quality care for children, with nearly 60% of respondents indicating that quality care is somewhat or very difficult to find. From parents’ perspectives, the most significant barriers to ECE participation for their children are related to quality: 70% of parents report that a “poor quality rating” and 66% report that a lack of license are significant barriers to their use of ECE. Put simply, Franklin County families with young children privilege quality as the most important indicator of ECE programming and report that finding quality care is difficult.

The lower utilization rates of ECE programming for the 3C sub-sample may reflect a mental framework among parents with young children regarding the importance of “formal environments like ECE” for learning; 3C parents were significantly less likely to endorse the role of formal environments for children’s learning than non-3C parents. Moreover, a significantly higher percentage of respondents in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside reported that quality care is difficult to find (69% of respondents), which may reflect the relatively lower rates of ECE participation seen in the 3C sub-sample compared with the non-3C sub-sample. The increased utilization of ECE during non-conventional hours in the 3C communities may reflect the striking number of respondents whose work schedules are variable week to week (44% compared to 26% in non-3C communities). Accordingly, efforts to expand ECE programming in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside may need to be responsive to the unique needs of parents. Taken together, these findings provide an important baseline by which to measure future efforts to broaden participation in ECE programming among the county’s families with young children.

Second, 85% of children participating in out-of-home care attended a daycare or early learning center (rather than a home-based setting). Respondents who did not utilize out-of-home care were different from those who used out-of-home care in several ways: They worked fewer hours and had more young children in the home, and they had a lower annual household income and housing was a larger fraction of their income. These considerations indicate that parents who elect to care for their young children in the home are different in key ways from those who use external ECE arrangements.

Third, and in relation to the prior (second) point, children participating in out-of-home care appear to have distinctive daily experiences compared with those cared for in the home. We asked parents to report on their children’s engagement in 13 different activities during a typical week. Importantly, children cared for outside of the home (in early learning centers or in someone else’s home) had significantly different experiences than those cared for at home: They played significantly more often with other children and less often with adults; they spent less time playing alone; they spent more time looking at books on their own; and they spent more time working on letters, words, and numbers and working on arts and crafts. In addition, children attending a daycare or early learning center spent less time watching television during the day than those cared for at home. Of relevance to the consideration of daily experiences of children cared for at home are findings concerning the relatively modest home learning experiences occurring in children’s homes, as discussed as the fourth point.

Fourth, parents only modestly engage their children in common home-learning activities, such as telling stories and reading books. These types of home-learning experiences are associated with young children's development of cognitive and social-emotional skills (Ansari & Gershoff, 2016). Overall, the Franklin County sample reported moderate use of the 11 home-learning activities examined, with respondents typically reporting that they engaged in a given activity about three to four times per week. For instance, parents reported telling stories to their children slightly more than four times per week, and reading to their children less than four times per week. Children's home-learning experiences in the 3C communities are distinct in some ways from those in non-3C communities: Those in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside are less often read to, play games and puzzles, and play sports or do exercise, yet they more often are told stories, do arts and crafts, and talk about nature or do science projects. Nonetheless, although these differences signal potentially interesting cultural norms towards home-learning activities, the overall volume of activities was nearly identical for the 3C and non-3C sub-samples.

Fifth, as mentioned above, parents with young children in Franklin County report that it is difficult to find quality ECE programming: About six out of every 10 families whose children were cared for outside the home reported having a somewhat or very difficult time finding quality care for their child. Moreover, the percentage of parents reporting difficulty in finding good quality care was significantly higher in Linden, Hilltop, and Southside by approximately 10 percentage points relative to the non-3C communities. The most prevalent pathway to finding ECE for their children was personal recommendation followed by location within the neighborhood, with 3C participants more likely to use recommendations from family than non-3C participants. Important to note is that participants reported being very unlikely to rely on an agency for support in finding ECE for their children.

To conclude, the present report was conducted to examine the "landscape" of ECE within Franklin County. A unique aspect of this report is that it assesses the landscape from the perspective of parents and does so in a way that allows generalization of findings to parents across the county. Findings indicate that about one-half of children 5 years and under participate in out-of-home care; that poor program quality is the most significant barrier to enrolling their children in ECE programs; and that quality care is very difficult to find. Findings also indicate that children cared for in the home have distinctive daily experiences from children in out-of-home ECE arrangements, to include less opportunity to play with other children and to look at books. Finally, findings point to important distinctions between Linden, Hilltop, and Southside families with young children and those in other communities across Franklin County. These include less utilization of ECE programming overall in 3C communities coupled with lower levels of parental endorsement of the role of formal learning environments for their children and significantly higher levels of work-schedule fluctuations. When taken together, the present report can serve as an important baseline to assess future county-wide efforts to promote ECE programming and participation as a means to enhancing kindergarten readiness for all young children.

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Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy

The Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy, in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University, is a multidisciplinary research center dedicated to conducting high-quality research that improves children's learning and development at home, in school, and in the community. Our vision is to be a driving force in the intersection of research, policy, and practice, as they relate to children's well-being.

The Crane Center evaluation report series provides objective and evidence-based assessments for community stakeholders in the field of early childhood. If you are interested in utilizing the Crane Center's measurement and evaluation services, please contact Janelle Williamson (email: Williamson.620@osu.edu).

Appendix A: Target Demographic Quotas

Race		
Race	Group	Target Sample Size
White (non-Hispanic)	Group 1	1019
Black	Group 2	533
Asian	Group 3	145
Native American and Alaska Native	Group 4	5
Other	Group 4	103
Multiracial	Group 4	n/a – no target, included with 'other'
	Total	1805
Education Quotas		
Education Level	Group	Target Sample Size
Less than HS	Group 1	69
No formal education	Group 1	
Eighth grade or less	Group 1	
Some HS Some high school but no diploma	Group 1	93
HS Graduate High school degree or GED	Group 2	363
Some College (< 2 years) Some college but no degree	Group 3	348
Some College (> 2 years, Assoc.) AA/AS 2-year degree	Group 3	125
Bachelor's Bachelor's degree	Group 4	461
Some Graduate Some graduate school but no degree	Group 4	
Master's Master's Degree	Group 5	261
PhD or Professional Degree Doctoral degree of other professional degree (such as: MD, JD, PhD)	Group 5	85
	Total	1805

Appendix B: Target ZIP and Language Quotas

ZIP	COI2_byZIP	Group	Target sample size
43211*	5.3	Group 1	30
43205	6.1	Group 1	5
43203	6.5	Group 1	5
43227	11.9	Group 1	15
43223*	12.3	Group 1	20
		Group 1 Total	75
43217	16.0	Group 2	5
43232	17.2	Group 2	35
43224*	18.3	Group 2	50
43206*	20.0	Group 2	20
43207*	20.1	Group 2	40
43201	20.5	Group 2	15
		Group 2 Total	165
43213	23.0	Group 3	35
43204*	23.8	Group 3	35
43219	24.9	Group 3	35
43109	25.0	Group 3	5
43222	27.1	Group 3	5
43229*	29.7	Group 3	55
43210	30.7	Group 3	5
		Group 3 Total	175
43231	36.8	Group 4	25
43215	38.3	Group 4	5
43228*	41.0	Group 4	60
43209	42.6	Group 4	25
43137	44.2	Group 4	5
		Group 4 Total	120
43125	48.9	Group 5	5
43119	49.5	Group 5	25
43126	53.0	Group 5	5
43068	53.1	Group 5	15
43146	53.4	Group 5	5
43202	54.1	Group 5	15
43123	55.7	Group 5	45
		Group 5 Total	115
43110	63.5	Group 6	15

43214	65.6	Group 6	15
43212	67.3	Group 6	15
43081	69.0	Group 6	45
43235	71.0	Group 6	35
43230	72.1	Group 6	45
		Group 6 Total	170
43004	76.8	Group 7	25
43085	77.7	Group 7	25
43026	78.5	Group 7	45
43221	79.2	Group 7	25
43220	79.3	Group 7	25
43016	81.0	Group 7	25
43002	82.1	Group 7	5
43017	83.9	Group 7	25
43054	89.0	Group 7	25
		Group 7 Total	225
		Total (Franklin County)	1045
43224	n/a	Group 8	145
43211	n/a	Group 8	85
		Group 8 (Linden)	230
43204	n/a	Group 9	100
43223	n/a	Group 9	65
43228	n/a	Group 9	185
		Group 9 (Hilltop)	350
43206	n/a	Group 10	55
43207	n/a	Group 10	125
		Group 10 (Southside)	180
n/a	n/a	Group 11	
		Group 11 (Somali-speaking families)	100
n/a	n/a	Group 12	
		Group 12 (Spanish-speaking)	100
		Total (Franklin County +3C+Spanish+Somali)	2005

Appendix C: Community Partners

Organizations that shared the survey link via email and social media:

1. Action For Children
2. Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio
3. CelebrateOne
4. Columbus Properties of Ohio
5. Community Development for All People – Thrive to Five
6. CRIS
7. Directions for Youth and Families
8. Dwell Community Church
9. Family & Children First
10. Franklin County Jobs and Family Services
11. Hilltop YMCA
12. Japan-America Society of Central Ohio
13. Moms2B
14. Nationwide Children’s Hospital
15. Ohio AEYC
16. Ohio State’s Early Headstart Partnership
17. Our Lady of Guadalupe Center
18. Small Talk Study at CCEC
19. South Side Early Learning Center
20. Westside Free Store Ministries
21. Worthington Libraries

Organizations that shared paper flyers:

22. Columbus Metropolitan Library – Linden, Parsons, and Hilltop Branches
23. Community Grounds Coffee and Meeting House - Southside
24. La Michoacana Mexican Market
25. NCH’s Positive Parent Program
26. NCH’s Behavioral Health Services
27. NCH’s Comprehensive Pediatric Feeding Program
28. NCH Pediatric Primary Care – Linden

Additional Flyer drop-off sites:

29. Global Mall
30. Hiawatha Street Blessing Box
31. Family Dollar - Hilltop
32. Food not Bombs - Linden
33. Saraga International Grocery store
34. Come and Go Center – Linden
35. Bargain Hunt – Hilltop

Social Media Groups that shared study ad:

36. NextDoor App – Linden
37. North Linden Neighbors
38. Community Clothing Outreach
39. ECE Landscape Study Facebook Page

Appendix D: Survey Constructs

Sections in the ECE Landscape Survey (in order as they appeared to participants)	# Items
Household Roster	
Adults and children living in household (by age category)	7
Information about target child (age 0-5) (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity, race)	6
Child Time During Day and Child Care Arrangements	
Weekday waking and sleep routines, as well as night-time care arrangements	9
Weekday Routines: where care received, who cares, licensed/registered, require pay, how much, how do you pay, how satisfied are you with the arrangement, what does your child do there, what days are like this (9 questions per time period: 9am-noon, noon-5pm, 5pm-9pm)	28
Weekend waking and sleep routines, as well as night-time care arrangements	9
Weekend Routines: where care received, who cares, licensed/registered, require pay, how much, how do you pay, how satisfied are you with the arrangement, what does your child do there, what days are like this (9 questions per time period: 9am-noon, noon-5pm, 5pm-9pm)	28
Care Arrangement History	
Care from relatives outside the home (current and previous): when started (and stopped), how many hours a week, (for previous- licensed/registered, require pay, how much, how do you pay), how do you get there	5 or 10 (logic)
Care from non-relatives outside the home (current and previous): when started (and stopped), how many hours a week, (for previous- licensed/registered, require pay, how much, how do you pay), how do you get there	5 or 10 (logic)
Care in daycare or early learning centers (current and previous): when started (and stopped), how many hours a week, (for previous- licensed/registered, require pay, how much, how do you pay), how do you get there	5 or 10 (logic)
Child Care Decisions	
Basic Info: are you the primary decision-maker, have you/family members had to change employment for child care reasons, why did you choose to enroll (or not enroll) your child in child care outside your home?	3 to 5 (logic)
Decision-making criteria based on importance (list of items that may influence decisions, like: cost, distance, availability)	26
Deal-breakers for selecting a child care center (list of items that may negatively influence decisions, like: cost, distance, availability)	15
Home Learning Environment	
Frequency of parent-child activities related to learning (e.g., telling stories, singing songs)	13
Language(s) spoken in home	Up to 2 (logic)
Parent's Frameworks Towards Young Children	
Who is responsible for teaching children academic and social skills: families or centers	8
What activities are important for early child development (e.g., playing together, reading)	5
Home Stability and Resources	
Type of living situation	5
Level of chaos and disruption in home (<i>CHAOS-SF</i> ; Matheny <i>et al.</i> , 1995)	6
Access to resources (e.g., checking/savings account, utility services, local resources)	11
Participant Current Mental Health and Demographics	

Parent stress and anxiety (<i>Kessler-6</i> ; Kessler <i>et al.</i> , 2003)	6
Parent demographics (e.g., age, sex, marital/relationship status, ethnicity, race)	Up to 15
Information about significant other's employment status	Up to 2
Income and monthly expenditures	4
<i>Information for Follow-up</i>	
Contact information for gift card and opportunity for interview follow-up in future	Up to 4

Appendix E: Interview Scripts

Script 1: Parent Interview Script

Interviewee (Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Introduction: Hello! Thank you for joining our call today. My name is X, and I am excited to talk to you about your early childhood education experiences.

Consent: To facilitate our notetaking, I would like to record our conversation today. I will also be taking notes while we chat. Please provide your verbal consent to answer these interview questions while being recorded. For your information, only researchers on this project will have access to these recordings and interview notes. Neither you nor your child's name or personal information will be included on any publications about the study. Do you consent to this interview and recording?

If consent provided, click record on zoom and move to 1. **Confirming eligibility**

If consent not provided, state, "Thank you for your time, we will now end this call and no further items will be discussed."

1. Confirming eligibility

Interviewer: "First I am going to confirm your eligibility for the interview to make sure we're all set!"

NOTE: English interviewer: pull these answers from screener survey before the meeting to make sure their responses match what is included in their original survey response.

- a. Are you 18 years of age or older? Y/N (if no, end interview)
- b. What zip-code do you currently live in? (if outside of Franklin County, end interview)
- c. How many children do you have under age 5?

English survey: If more than one, let's focus on the child who you completed the survey on. How old is this child?

- d. What is your relationship to this child?

Interviewer: Great! Thanks for answering those questions. Now I'd like to ask you about your experiences with caring for a young child.

2. Child care experiences questions

Instructions for interviewers: please type respondent's answers as you listen to their responses. The goal of the interview is to understand the main points of the interviewee's responses. You do not need to write their response verbatim, rather you should be noting the main points of their response.

For example:

The interviewee says, “Well, Zoe wakes up around 6:30am. She eats breakfast and watches cartoons until 8. I’m usually trying to get ready for work around then. After that, her grandma picks her up so that I can go to work. Grandma spoils her – they go to the zoo, get ice cream, play at parks. Sometimes they go to grandma’s doctors’ appointments together. Zoe hates naps...but my mom tries to make her rest in the afternoons. I usually pick her up around 6. It’s a rush getting home, making dinner, winding down before she goes to bed. She’s usually in bed by 9. We try to read books before bed.”

Interviewer notes: Child wakes up @ 6:30. Eats/watches cartoons. Grandma cares for while mom at work – goes to zoo, snacks, and appointments. Mom feels rushed to get ready for bed. Reads books before bed.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Walk me through a typical weekday with your child– including the morning, afternoon, and evening - Where is your child typically cared for? Who cares for them? What activities are they doing? (Note: if participant has more than one child, they may describe how their child care arrangements are different for multiple children – that is okay).

- 2. IF INTERVIEWEE DESCRIBES CARING FOR CHILD ON THEIR OWN OR A FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND CARING FOR CHILD:**
 - a. You mentioned that X primarily cares for your child. Is that correct?
 - b. Does anyone else ever care for your child? If so, who? How often does this care occur?
 - c. How satisfied are you with this care arrangement? Is there anything that you would change?

- 3. IF INTERVIEWEE DOES NOT MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT CHILD BEING ENROLLED IN CENTER-BASED CARE:** Thanks for talking this through with me! Now I’d like to ask you more specifically your thoughts on child care outside the home, specifically at a daycare or early learning center.
 - a. (Confirm response) You did not describe your child being cared for at a daycare or early learning center, is that correct?
 - b. There are many reasons why a parent may choose not to enroll their child in an early learning center. I’m going to list some reasons and you tell me if you identify with them.
Some of these reasons could be:
 - Program Cost
 - Inconvenience of center location
 - Difficulty accessing transportation to get child to center
 - Special needs of the child

- Operating hours of the center, for example it's only a half-day program or unavailable on evenings/weekends
- Concerns about quality of teachers, curriculum, or licensing/quality ratings
- Beliefs about education
- Children don't need a center to learn academic or social skills

Do any identify with any of these reasons and can you explain some of your thoughts about them?

4. IF INTERVIEWEE MENTIONS CHILD SPENDING TIME AT CENTER-BASED CARE:

- a. You mentioned that your child is cared for at a daycare or early childhood center: what factors led you to choose this arrangement? There are many reasons why a parent might choose to enroll their child in an early learning center. I'm going to list some reasons parents might choose a center and you tell me if you identify with them. Some of these reasons could be:

- Program is affordable or accepts subsidies
- Center location is convenient
- Operating hours fit with parent or parents work schedules
- Recommendation from family or friends
- Center helps child learn academic and social skills
- High quality teachers, curriculum, licensing rating

Do any identify with any of these reasons, and can you explain some of your thoughts about them?

- b. Does anyone else ever care for your child? If so, who? How often does this care occur?

5. ASK ALL PARTICIPANTS: Thanks for sharing your thoughts with me! Now I'd like to ask about child care outside the home, specifically at a daycare or early learning center. Imagine that a daycare or early learning center were built in your neighborhood, and it was free for your child to attend. What factors would be important to you in considering your decision to enroll your child at this center? I'm going to list some factors that may be important to parents and tell me if you identify with them:

- Program Cost
- Convenience of center location
- Accessing transportation to get child to center
- Special needs of the child
- Operating hours of the center
- Quality of teachers, curriculum, or licensing/quality ratings
- Center may help child learn academic and social skills

- a. Do any identify with any of these reasons and can you explain some of your thoughts about them?
- b. Are there any other factors that we haven't discussed yet that may be important for you in making this decision?
- c. Continuing to think about early learning centers. I'd like to hear your thoughts on what would make a center "high-quality." What characteristics of a child care center do you think indicate high quality care?

6. WRAPPING UP WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS

- a. Thank you so much for your time and for answering these questions. Before we wrap up, is there any other thoughts you'd like to share about child care?

7. CONFIRM PARTICIPANT EMAIL:

- a. Can you confirm your email address so that we can send your gift card?

3. Demographic questions

Interviewer: before we end our interview, I'd like to confirm a couple of questions about you and your child's demographics

- a. How would you identify your race? Please tell me all that apply:
 - Black or African American (1)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (2)
 - White or Caucasian (3)
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4)
 - Asian (5)
 - Middle Eastern or North African (6)
 - I don't know (-887)
 - Prefer not to answer (-888)
- b. How would you identify your child's race? Please tell me all that apply:
 - Black or African American (1)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (2)
 - White or Caucasian (3)
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4)
 - Asian (5)
 - Middle Eastern or North African (6)
 - I don't know (-887)
 - Prefer not to answer (-888)
- c. Do you identify as Hispanic or Latinx in ethnicity? Y/N
- d. Does your child identify as Hispanic or Latinx in ethnicity? Y/N
- e. What is your highest level of education?

- o No formal education (1)
 - o Eighth grade or less (2)
 - o Some high school but no diploma (3)
 - o High school degree or GED (4)
 - o Some college but no degree (5)
 - o AA/AS 2-year degree (6)
 - o Bachelor's degree (7)
 - o Some graduate school but no degree (8)
 - o Master's degree (9)
 - o Doctoral degree of other professional degree (such as: MD, JD, PhD,) (10)
 - o I don't know (-887)
 - o Prefer not to answer (-888)
- f. What is your sex?
- o Male (1)
 - o Female (2)
 - o Intersex (3)
 - o I don't know (-887)
 - o Prefer not to answer (-888)
- g. What is the sex of your child?
- o Male (1)
 - o Female (2)
 - o Intersex (3)
 - o I don't know (-887)
 - o Prefer not to answer (-888)

CLOSING: Interviewer: Thanks again for your time. This a huge contribution to early childhood initiatives in our city. Enjoy the rest of your day!

Script 2: Community worker interview questions

1. What kind of work do you do with Spanish-speaking families with young kids?
2. In your experience – what care arrangements do you observe in Spanish-speaking families? For example: some families might enroll their child in a center, others may care for them at home, or have family members care for them.
3. Can you comment on what Spanish-speaking families might value in their care-arrangements?
4. Can you comment on any barriers that Spanish-speaking families might have in enrolling their children in center-based care?
5. Can you comment on any supports that may be helpful in Spanish-speaking families enrolling their children in center-based care?

Appendix F: ECE Landscape Study Interview Results

To further address Aim 2, 38 interviews were conducted with English-speaking families, one interview was conducted with a Spanish-speaking family, and three interviews were conducted with community workers that work with Spanish-speaking families with young children. The final demographics for the English-speaking interview sample were as follows:

English-Speaking Interview Participants(n=38)	
Participant characteristics	
Female	95%
Race/ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic white	71%
Black	13%
Asian	5%
Multiracial	10%
Hispanic	8%
Education	
Some college	21%
BA/BS	32%
MA or higher	47%

The final demographics for the Spanish-speaking interview sample (including one sample participant and three Spanish-speaking community workers) were as follows:

- Sole sample participant identified as female, resided in Hilltop (3C Sub-sample) with an education of a high school diploma and identified as Hispanic/Latinx in ethnicity
- No demographic information was collected from the community workers

English-Speaking Parent Interview Results

Why parents choose to enroll children in daycare or early learning center programs

Out of 38 English-speaking interviews, 22 parents enrolled their child in center-based care. Interviewers asked these parents to share their thoughts on why they choose to enroll their child in an early learning center. Many themes arose from the discussion including center location; referrals from other parents; operating hours of center; quality of center; affordability; and opportunities for social interactions.

Twelve of the 22 parents discussed the importance of center location in their selection of an early learning center. These parents enrolled their children in centers close to their home or work.

Ten of the 22 parents mentioned that referrals from other parents were important in deciding to enroll their child in an early learning center.

- “Recommendations from friends were most important to me [in deciding on a center to enroll their child].”

Ten of 22 parents described operating hours of the center as an important factor.

Eight of 22 parents described the quality of the center being important in their decision-making. Themes included the perceived quality of teachers, curriculum, and facilities.

- “Teachers are amazing – people oriented, they know how to be teacher and parent, and friend [to child]. Teacher helped transition to getting off pacifier. Teacher helps my child’s growth so much! So grateful for this center.”
- “I wanted a center closer to home, but I got picky as I toured more centers and wanted a center with large classrooms, newer toys, large outdoor play space, and a muscle room. I was willing to pay more for these amenities.”

An additional three parents mentioned state licensing ratings as being important in their decision to enroll their child at a selected center.

Five of 22 parents discussed affordability in describing their center choices, including parents that choose centers because they accepted subsidies.

Five of 22 parents said they decided to enroll their child in a program so that the child would learn social skills. Academic skills were not a concern that parents mentioned during the interviews.

- “I was a stay-at-home-mom, but I thought kids needed more social interaction with peers their age...”
- “Valued that the place would build social skills.”

Why parents choose not enroll children in daycare or early learning center programs

Out of 38 English interviews, 16 parents interviewed did not have their child enrolled in an early learning center. Interviewers asked these parents to share their thoughts on why they did not enroll their children in center-based care. Three themes arose from these discussions: parents' beliefs about education; cost of center-based care; and concerns about quality of center-based care.

Seven of the 16 parents identified with beliefs about education as preventing them from enrolling their children in an early learning center. These parents described wanting to be in charge of their child's education and upbringing. One parent stated, "We believe that parents do the best job of teaching kids in the first few years of life."

Other parents described beliefs that center-based care is too rigid and that a child should be able to play freely before going to school. One parent stated, "children need more freedom before they spend many years in school."

Nine of the 16 parents mentioned cost as a barrier to enrollment in center-based care.

- "Cost of daycare for my children is more than my salary, so I would have to work more to afford it."
- "It would be too expensive unless I qualified with help from the government."
- "Program cost is the main issue. I have no problem with daycares. I would've considered but the cost is too much."
- Ten of the 16 parents described concerns with the quality of early learning centers. Within these parents' comments, there seemed to be a degree of mistrust towards center-based care providers.
- "I'm concerned about the amount of staff turnover that I see at centers, the rigidity of activities, and lack of personal attention."
- "In previous jobs I had I saw negative things at daycares like overworked teachers and negative environments."
- "I want someone to interact with my child – not just sit there in a chair. I worry about a teacher or another child being abusive towards my child."
- "Wish I could put my young children in daycare but there's too much that goes on behind curtain and I don't trust them."

Satisfaction with care arrangement

Twelve of the 16 parents that do not enroll their children in an early learning center described themselves as feeling very satisfied with their current care arrangement.

- "Personally, I'm satisfied because I know who they are with."
- "Having bonus time [with child] has been magical."
- Two parents described desiring minor changes to their care-arrangements, like more babysitter availability for date nights with their partner.
- Two parents described feeling overwhelmed by their current care arrangement, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- "Very satisfied but wish I had more support from family. It can get overwhelming and depressing. But no one will love my kid the way I love my kid and take care of my kid. I'm

learning to cope with having 4 kids and everything. Sometimes I find time to myself, break down, and cry. At the same time, [my children] look up to me. They are my motivation.”

- “The current arrangement is difficult. I have 7 kids at home, who are all different ages and I feel like it’s hard to give each of them the attention and support that they need...I worked full-time before the pandemic and now I’m unemployed and at home all the time. I’m not used to being home with kids all day. Before the pandemic, the four older children were in school, and the younger kids went to an in-home provider while I worked full-time. We [mom and dad] used to have babysitters on the weekends and in the evening so they could attend events and go on dates. I’d like to get back to that.”

Parents’ perceptions on high-quality care

Interviewers asked parents to describe how they define a high-quality daycare or early learning center. This question was added to the interview script partway through the interview window, thus 29 of 38 parents interviewed answered this question. Parents described viewing a high-quality center as one where there was a low-turnover rate of teachers, teachers were qualified and had proper accreditations, teachers were welcoming and attentive to their child, and low student-teacher ratios in the classroom. Many parents mentioned valuing good communication between parents and teachers as an indicator of high quality.

- “[I view high-quality as] teacher training – they need to be qualified and passionate about what they’re doing. They need to love my child and know them well... Parents and teachers [should have] relationships with each other. It’s much easier and joyful to have lower ratios [in the classroom].”
- “How nice teachers are and the aura they give. I don’t want someone who doesn’t have patience with kids.”
- Quality curriculum, clean and safe facilities were high-quality indicators mentioned by parents as well.
- “Seeing the physical place and what kinds of materials they have and going through curriculum.”
- “Cleanliness, curriculum, dietary aspects – not just shoving juice and candy in their mouth.”
- Surprisingly, only two parents interviewed mentioned using the state quality rating system as a measure of high-quality care.

Considerations on a free early learning center with convenient location

Interviewers asked all parents to imagine that an early learning center was built in their neighborhood, and it would be free for their child to attend. Interviewees were asked to share what factors would be important for them in considering enrolling their child at this center. The word cloud below displays the most common themes that parents identified in considering enrollment of their child at a free early learning center in their neighborhood.



- 15 parents mentioned teachers as being a large consideration in choosing a free, neighborhood-located center.
- “The qualifications of the teachers and the school's approach to teaching would be most important to me.”
- “I can tell when people don't like their jobs and I want my children to be at a place with employees that love their jobs.”
- 12 parents mentioned matters of quality in their considerations. Of these 12 mentions of quality, 10 parents stated that quality curriculum would be part of their consideration of a center like this.
- “Free helps! Curriculum and quality of teachers would be a thing. If my child is there most of the day – need to make sure they're learning.”
- 8 parents mentioned the state rating systems as being important to them. Location, facilities, operating hours, developing social skills, transportation and flexibility were some of the other considerations mentioned by parents.
- Eleven parents expressed enthusiasm about the idea of a free center located in their neighborhood.
- “If it was free, that would be unbelievable!”
- One parent stated they would prefer to keep their children at home.
- Four parents viewed the idea of free child care with skepticism.
- “Program being free would probably affect quality.”
- “If a center is free then it's probably not very good.”

- “I would be suspicious of school because its free and wonder how much my taxes will go up for the use of the school. I wonder if higher taxes would be worth it for free care, or if it would really be cheaper than current care.”

Additional thoughts from parents

At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any other thoughts to share about child care that had not yet been discussed. The themes of cost of child care and the struggle of finding care arose from these discussions.

- “I wish there was something in place to help me and other single parents with child care, even if it was just help with the cost so that people don't have to choose between work and child care; price is a very limiting factor when it comes to child care.”
- “I wish child care was more affordable so that all families could get the kind of care they want. I feel very lucky and privileged for my child's care...”
- “I notice the need for more flexible and cost-effective child care, especially for working parents. I want to send child to care but struggle with idea of cost-benefit of staying home vs. working and sending to care. I would like to have more children but worry about the cost of care.”
- “Child care is a nightmare. I was super shocked by how challenging it was to find centers, decipher what ratings and other shorthand mean, and how few centers there actually are available. The whole process is stressful, overwhelming, and confusing. Also, child care is very expensive.”
- “Child care is very expensive and it's very hard to qualify for subsidies. Many families have to choose whether one parent works and spends all income on child care or stays home with the kids.”

Spanish-Speaking Parent Interview

The Spanish-speaking parent interviewed for the ECE landscape study does not have their child enrolled in an early learning center. When asked if they were satisfied with this arrangement, the parent stated, “I'm very satisfied with this arrangement because I believe child is still [too] young to attend school or be away from me. I prefer my child to be at home.”

When asked about reasons for not enrolling their child in an early learning center, the participant responded, “We are not taking her to school because the programs are half day, and she is still very young. And she has her siblings at home who she spends time with, because she will cry a lot around other people. She likes being around her siblings.”

When asked to imagine a center opening in their neighborhood that was free and to explain their considerations to enroll their child at the center, the participant responded with, “If she is in a school close to home and can learn English and can be around her siblings at school. If she could go to the same school or building as her siblings, so she could ride the same car or bus... The teachers [should be] qualified for teaching.”

Spanish-Speaking Community Worker Interviews

Three Spanish-speaking community workers were interviewed regarding their observations of the child care experience for Spanish-speaking families with young children living in Franklin County, OH. Two of the community workers work at a local early learning center and one community worker works for a local refugee agency. All community workers had ample experience with Spanish-speaking families with young children and had helped families find care for their children.

When asked about the typical care arrangements that they have observed in Spanish-speaking families, one community worker stated, “A lot of the parents are confident they are offering quality care in the house. They may have big families with siblings at home. There’s a view that the child within the family and being cared by parent is that is the most valuable experience the child can have. Hispanic heritage values being at home with child in the early years.”

Participants were asked what Spanish-speaking families might value in their care-arrangements. The theme of getting a child ready to enter formal schooling arose in this discussion.

Interviewees were asked to comment on barriers that Spanish-speaking families might have in enrolling their children in center-based care. The language barrier and tediousness of forms were themes that were discussed.

- “The way forms are set for enrollment are so repetitive. Even translated they can be too repetitive. Parents don’t necessarily know how to answer the questions.”
- “Access to enrollment is a problem – everything is online!” Community workers described families not having access to internet and struggling to get a hold of people in person to help them enroll.

Interviewees were asked to comment on any supports that may be helpful for Spanish-speaking families enrolling their children in an early learning center. The community workers stated that it may be useful to offer in-person support from a Spanish-speaking person that is familiar with enrollment pathways. It was also advised to make the enrollment process as simple as possible. There is a need for advocacy in addition to translation, “It’s hard for families to advocate for themselves when they feel lost [in enrollment process].”