

University of Massachusetts Boston

ScholarWorks at UMass Boston

Office of Community Partnerships Posters

Office of Community Partnerships

4-5-2012

The Development and Use of Online Modules for Professional Development in Early Childhood Education

Angi Stone-MacDonald

University of Massachusetts Boston, angela.stone@umb.edu

Anne Douglass

University of Massachusetts Boston, anne.douglass@umb.edu

MaryLu Love

University of Massachusetts Boston, marylu.love@umb.edu

Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/ocp_posters



Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and the [Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Stone-MacDonald, Angi; Douglass, Anne; Love, MaryLu; and Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston, "The Development and Use of Online Modules for Professional Development in Early Childhood Education" (2012). *Office of Community Partnerships Posters*. 17. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/ocp_posters/17

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Community Partnerships at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Office of Community Partnerships Posters by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact scholarworks@umb.edu, christine.moynihan@umb.edu, Lydia.BurrageGoodwin@umb.edu.

The Development and Use of Online Modules for Professional Development in Early Childhood Education



Angi Stone-MacDonald, Ph.D., Anne Douglass, Ph.D., and MaryLu Love, M.S. University of Massachusetts, Boston



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To examine the role of online training modules in professional development for early childhood educators
- To understand the technological capacity of the early childhood workforce for using online professional development
- To examine the challenges/barriers to the field in using online professional development and technology-mediated learning

BACKGROUND

This study builds upon previous work:

- access for professional development through technology (McMaken, Kauerz, DeCesare, & Hale, 2002)
- effective online instruction (Clark, 2004; Pianta, et. al, 2008)
- technology- and trainer-mediated instruction and professional development (Powell, Diamond, & Koehler, 2010)

Massachusetts has implemented an integrated professional development system to support early childhood educators. The Department of Early Education and Care is working "to align professional development, QRIS, and EEC Core Competencies, and to engage stakeholders across sectors. The goal of the new system is to support the pathways that lead educators to degree attainment and increased competency and to support providers in attaining and maintaining accreditation and upward movement on QRIS" (Douglass, Heimer, and Hagan, 2010).

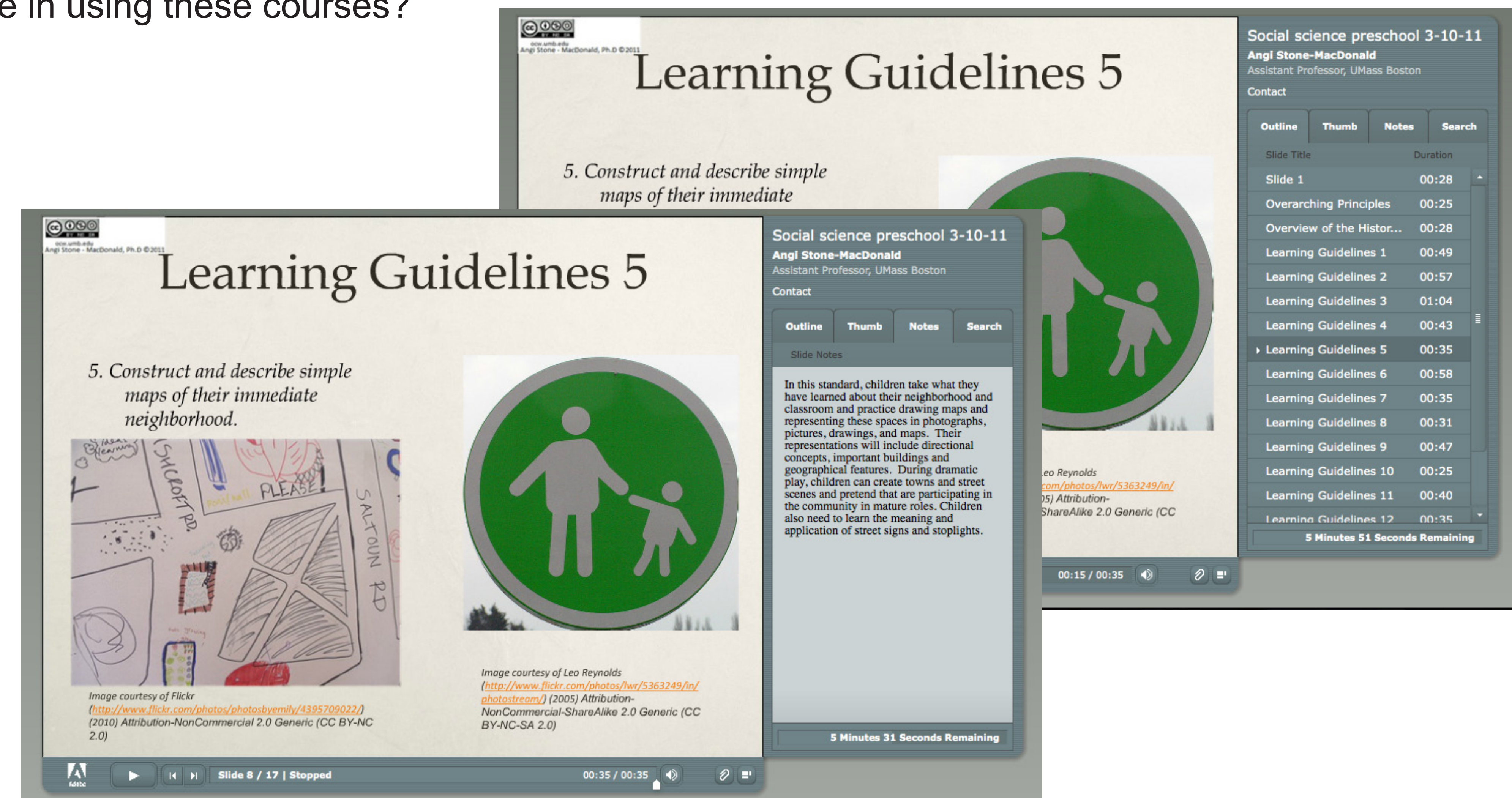
Coursework is available online worldwide through OpenCourseWare. These courses are designed to be used with a trainer, director/supervisor, for CEU or college credit, or in peer groups. These courses are composed of individual modules that can stand alone or be part of a complete course. The courses are also available in Spanish. The courses are:

- Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators
- Preschool Learning Guidelines

The trainers are early childhood professionals who work in the early childhood system as leaders. They work in family childcare, Head Start, public and private preschools and centers, public school systems, and after school programs.

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the technology skills and comfort levels of early childhood educators in Massachusetts?
- What are the strengths of the online training modules? What challenges/barriers do trainers/educators face in using these courses?



PARTICIPANTS

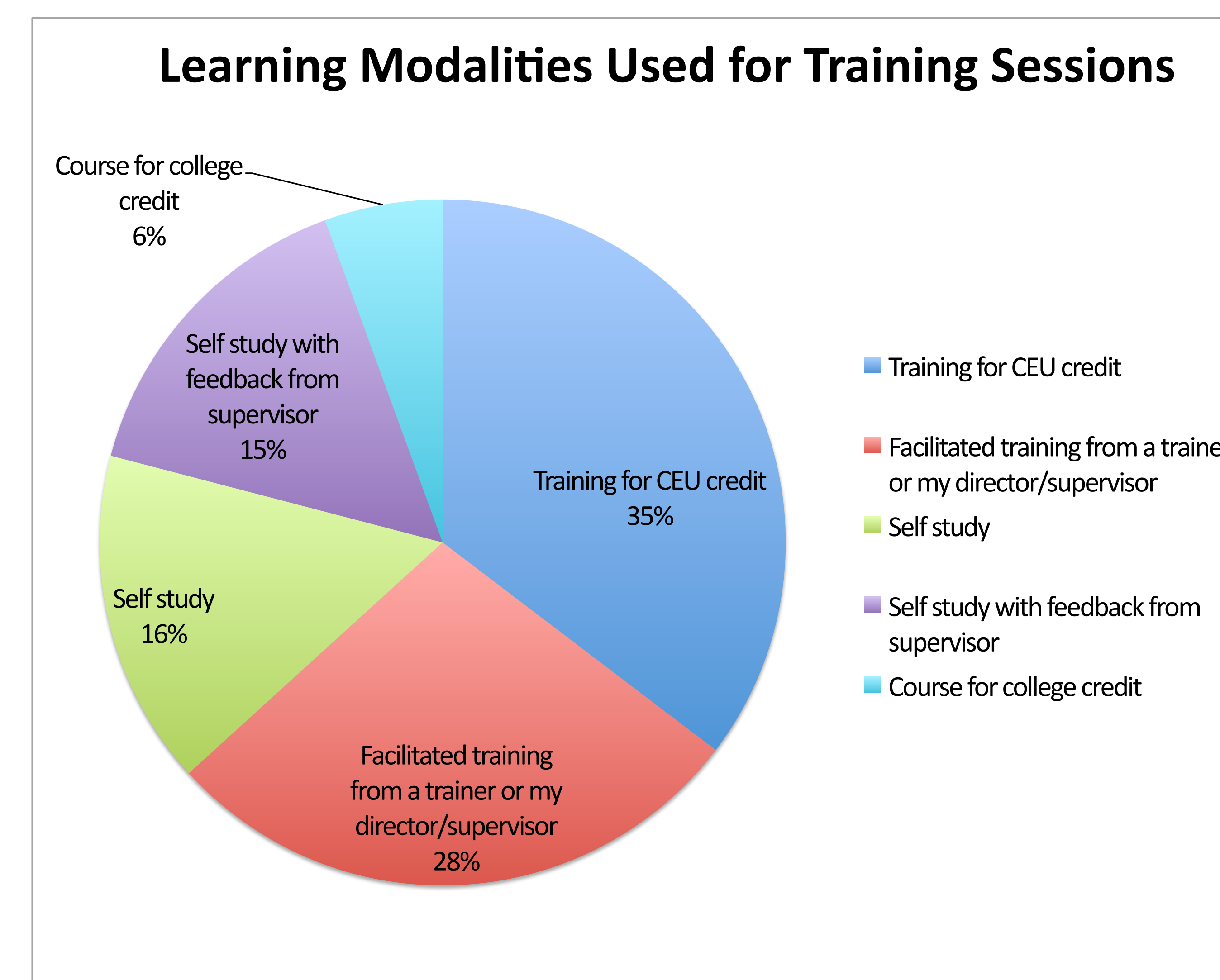
- Early Childhood educators from around the state of Massachusetts participated in the online modules and trainer-mediated modules
- 60 trainers were trained to deliver the modules, 50 have facilitated the completion of modules
- 231 educators completed surveys as of December 31, 2011
- 28 trainers completed trainer surveys

EDUCATOR SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Characteristic	Percentage %	Characteristic	Percentage %
Gender		Work Setting	
Male	4%	Center-based	56.7%
Female	96%	Family Childcare	39%
Race		Public School	8.6%
White/Caucasian	36.36%	After School Program	2.1%
Hispanic	25.91%	Consultant/Trainer	2.5%
Black	1%	Age of children	
Asian	13.18%	Preschool	90.13%
Other	2.27%	Toddlers	46.39%
Decline to Respond	6.36%	Infants	39.01%
Native American	0.91%	School age	17.49%
Education		Adults	4.48%
High School	98.91%	Years in early childhood ed.	
Diploma/GED	1.2%	1-2	6.7%
CDA	78.67%	3-5	14.4%
Associate's Degree	84.93%	6-10	2.8%
Bachelor's Degree	82.28%	11-15	2.4%
Master's Degree	52.94%	16-19	7.2%
Age		20+	23.6%
18-30	15.5%	Number of children in group with special needs	
31-40	29.9%	0	43.75%
41-50	32.1%	1-5	40.1%
51-60	17.1%	6-10	4.7%
61-75	5.3%	11+	11.4%

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

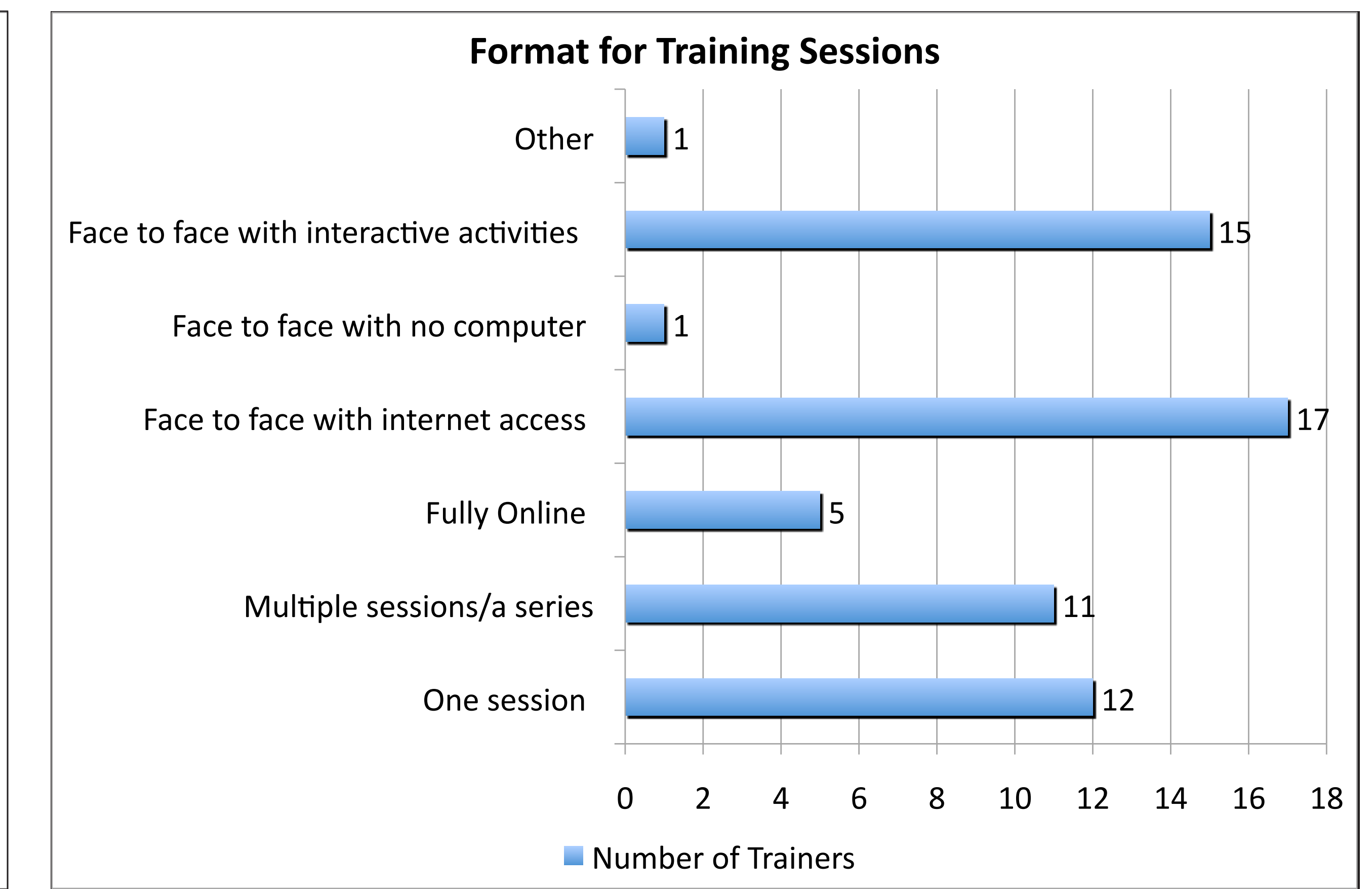
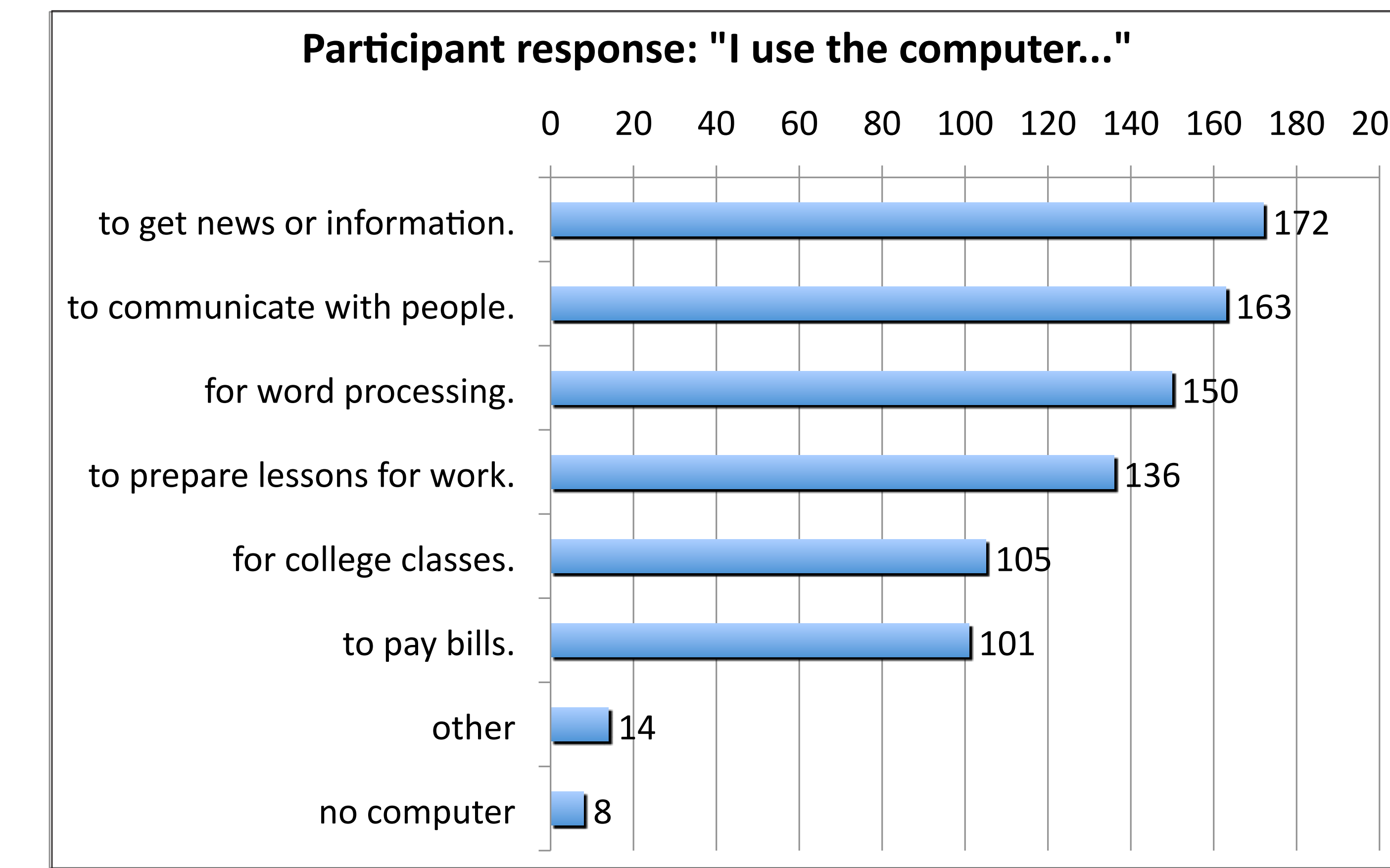
- Educator Survey: Participants were asked to complete the online or paper version of the survey given out by the trainer after completion of at least one module in the course
- Trainer Survey: Trainers completed online surveys after facilitating at least five hours of training
- Survey questions were modeled after national surveys on professional development and early childhood educator demographic surveys
- Focus groups were conducted at the training sessions to discuss how trainers could use the technology and how they would teach the course using technology-mediated practices



RESULTS

What are the technology skills and comfort levels of early childhood educators?

- 50% of participants felt comfortable using the online modules
- More than 60% said they preferred face-to-face settings for college courses and professional development
- 77% said they were comfortable or very comfortable with computers
- 95% of participants had access to a computer at work or home and 54% had one in both places



WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THE ONLINE TRAINING MODULES? WHAT CHALLENGES/BARRIERS DO TRAINERS/EDUCATORS FACE IN USING THESE COURSES?

QUOTES FROM TRAINERS:

"In the core competencies, much of the content was challenging for people to understand. I had to skip the voice over and try to explain the content in simpler terms."

"The participants ... were mostly Chinese speaking educators. I presented the training in English; I encouraged the educators to ask questions. I tried to translate the materials for them to the Chinese if the teachers had questions or they seemed confused about the content."

"The challenges faced ... are usually time and finance related. The beauty of the online module concept is that it makes the education of early childhood providers very accessible to administration and staff. The flexibility of the presentation is great for time constraints. I also really appreciate that there were no costs involved for the center."

"The modules were helpful in keeping the trainings focused. The resources were very helpful to give the participants more examples and explanations."

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS:

"The trainer was very organized and helpful. Being online was a great bonus as we live in an area of Western [Massachusetts] that makes it very hard to attend evening trainings (when offered)."

"Being in the field for so many years makes a lot of this information already well known. It's a good refresher but really what we do day in and day out. We are NAEYC so a lot of this info was very familiar."

OTHER BARRIERS:

- Lack of technology, including issues with wifi and equipment for showing the presentations.
- Expectations for training and use of these modules were unclear to some participants and some directors.
- People do not want a degree or to further their education without a substantial raise.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Participants used computers and the internet on a regular basis for many different purposes and were comfortable with this technology
- Participants still prefer face-to-face interaction and human support in processing and applying professional development training
- The online modules will support trainer and technology-mediated professional development, to support the further education and training of early childhood educators

LESSONS LEARNED

- Participant survey was too long and many people stopped in the middle, limiting our data collection
- Participants completed the training in multiple languages or with language support (Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese) but the survey was originally written only in English
- The modules are constantly changing; updating is needed for content, current web links, links to new standards, and other errors
- Timing is everything: When the data was collected, the state Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) was not yet fully implemented
- Every trainer/director stated they would be using the online modules in some format for QRIS advancement
- In future data collection, we will look at differences between pre-QRIS and post-QRIS training

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How feasible is online training for professional development in the future of EC/ECSE/IE?
- How can states most effectively use online training to provide high quality content in professional development for educators?
- What are the best ways to utilize online training within and across states, as well as across borders?

REFERENCES

Clark, D. (2004). A Long-Awaited Conversation: Dialogue to Bridge the High-Tech/High-Touch Gap in Early Childhood Workforce Preparation and Professional Development. Chicago: Childcare Bureau.

Douglass, A., Heimer, L., Winifred, H. (2011). The Massachusetts Early Education and Care Professional Development System Study Year 1 Report. Boston, MA: Research Report Submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/eeo/workforce-and-professional-development/resources-for-professional-development/20110827-umass-pds-rpt.pdf>

McMaken, J., Kauerz, K., DeCesare, D., & Hale, G. (2002). Technology and Early Childhood Professional Development: A Policy Discussion. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Pianta, R. C., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., Hamre, B. K., & Justice, L. (2008). Effects of web-mediated professional development resources on teacher-child interactions in prekindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, 431-451.

Powell, D. R., Diamond, K. E., & Koehler, M. J. (2010). Use of a Case-Based Hypermedia Resource in an Early Literacy Coaching Intervention With Pre-Kindergarten Teachers. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 29, 239-249.

