

# Preschool and Childcare Center Directors

## Snapshot

**Career Cluster(s):** Education & Training; Human Services

**Interests:** Education, teaching, early childhood development, leading activities, language development, arts and crafts

**Earnings (2018 Median):** \$47,940 yearly; \$23.05 hourly

**Employment & Outlook:** Faster Than Average Growth Expected

## OVERVIEW

### Sphere of Work

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Preschool and childcare center directors supervise and lead their staffs, design program plans, oversee daily activities, and prepare budgets.

### Work Environment

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Preschool and childcare center directors work primarily in child daycare services. They generally work full time. Preschool and childcare center directors assist staff with caring for and teaching children.



Preschool and childcare center directors supervise and lead staffs, design program plans, oversee daily activities, and prepare budgets. They are responsible for all aspects of their center’s program.

Some preschools and childcare centers are independently owned and operated. In these facilities, directors must follow the instructions and guidelines of the owner. Sometimes, the directors are the owners, so they decide how to operate them.

Other preschools and childcare centers are part of a national chain or franchise. The director of a chain or franchise must ensure that the facility meets the parent organization’s standards and regulations.

In addition, some preschools and childcare centers, such as Head Start programs, receive state and federal funding. Directors need to follow the requirements set by Department of Health and Human Services for program, staff, and facilities.

**Profile**

**Working Conditions:** Work Indoors  
**Physical Strength:** Light Work  
**Education Needs:** Bachelor’s Degree  
**Licensure/Certification:** Required  
**Opportunities for Experience:**  
Internship, Volunteer Work, Part Time Work  
**Holland Interest Score\*:** SAE

\* See Appendix A

**Occupation Interest**

The profession of preschool and childcare director draws individuals who are responsible, responsive, patient, observant, playful, and caring. preschool and childcare directors, who nurture children in the years between infancy and elementary school-age, should enjoy spending long hours with young children.

Preschool preschool and childcare director excel at long-term scheduling, planning, problem solving, and social interaction.

**A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities**

Although preschool and childcare center directors work in schools and childcare centers, they spend most of their day in an office. They also visit classrooms to check on students, speak to preschool teachers or childcare workers, and meet with parents.

Preschool and childcare center directors may find working in an early childhood educational environment rewarding, but they also have

significant responsibilities. Coordinating and interacting with staff, parents, and children may be fast paced and stimulating but also stressful.

Preschool and childcare center directors generally work full time. Some work more than 40 hours per week. They are on the job while the childcare center is open and may work early in the morning or late in the evening. In large facilities, the director and assistant directors may stagger their schedules to ensure that someone is always onsite.

### ***Duties and Responsibilities***

- **Supervise preschool teachers and childcare workers**
- **Hire and train new staff members**
- **Provide professional development opportunities for staff**
- **Establish policies and communicate them to staff and parents**
- **Develop educational programs and standards**
- **Maintain instructional excellence**
- **Assist staff in communicating with parents and children**
- **Meet with parents and staff to discuss students' progress**
- **Prepare budgets and allocate program funds**
- **Ensure that facilities are maintained and cleaned according to state regulations**

## ***WORK ENVIRONMENT***

### **Physical Environment**

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### ***Relevant Skills and Abilities***

#### **Communication Skills**

- Expressing thoughts and ideas
- Speaking effectively
- Writing concisely

#### **Interpersonal/Social Skills**

- Being patient
- Cooperating with others

#### **Organization & Management Skills**

- Coordinating tasks
- Managing people/groups
- Performing duties which change frequently

### **Human Environment**

Preschool and childcare directors are in constant contact with young children, students' families, fellow teachers, administrators, and preschool workers. Preschools and childcare centers may have students with physical and mental disabilities as well as students who are English language learners (ELL). Preschool teachers must be comfortable working with people from a wide range of backgrounds and able to incorporate lessons on diversity into their teaching. Given

the demands of the job and laws governing student to teacher ratios, preschool teachers should anticipate working in a teaching team.

## ***EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT***

### **High School/Secondary**

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High school students interested in becoming preschool teachers should develop good study habits and take courses in psychology, education, child development, physical education, and the arts. Internships or part-time work with children and teachers at camps, after school programs, preschools, or child-care centers are helpful to those interested in the field of early childhood education.

#### ***Suggested High School Subjects***

- Arts
- Audio-Visual
- Child Care
- Child Growth & Development
- Crafts
- English
- Health Science Technology
- Instrumental & Vocal Music
- Literature
- Mathematics
- Physical Education
- Pottery
- Psychology
- Science
- Sociology

# Famous First

Samuel Wilderspin opened his first infant school in London in 1819 and went on to establish hundreds more. He published many works on the subject, and his work became the model for infant schools throughout England and further afield. Play was an important part of Wilderspin's system of education. He is credited with inventing the playground. In 1823, Wilderspin published *On the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, based on the school. He began working for the Infant School Society the next year, informing others about his views. He also wrote "The Infant System, for developing the physical, intellectual, and moral powers off all children from one to seven years of age."

Source: <http://seffnerchildcare.com/learning-is-fun-at-kinder-school/>



## College/Postsecondary

College students interested in the field of early childhood education should consider majoring in education and earning initial teaching certification as part of their undergraduate education program. They should complete coursework in psychology, education, child development, physical education, and the arts. Prior to graduation, students intent on becoming preschool and childcare directors should gain experience, through internship or part-time work, teaching preschool-age children as well as exploring requirements for early childhood education master's degree programs and individual state teaching certification.

### *Related College Majors*

- Bilingual/Bicultural Education
- Child Care & Guidance Workers & Managers, General
- Elementary/Pre-Elem/Early Childhood/Kindergarten Teacher Education
- English Teacher Education
- Mathematics Teacher Education
- Science Teacher Education, General
- Speech Teacher Education

## Adult Job Seekers

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Adults seeking jobs as preschool and childcare directors should research the education and certification requirements in their home states, as well the requirements of the schools in states where they may seek employment. Adult job seekers in the early childhood education field can benefit from the employment workshops and job lists maintained by professional teaching associations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

## Professional Certification and Licensure

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A bachelor's degree and experience in early childhood education are typically required to become a preschool and childcare center director. However, educational requirements vary. Additionally, some employers require these directors to have a nationally recognized credential, such as the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, offered by the Council for Professional Recognition. Candidates need to pay a fee, take coursework, obtain experience in the field, and be observed while working with children. This credential needs to be renewed every 3 years.



### Additional Requirements

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States may require childcare centers, including those in private homes, to be licensed. To qualify for licensure, staff must pass a background check and meet a minimum training requirement. Some states have more requirements, such as requiring staff to have certifications in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

Individuals who find satisfaction, success, and job security as preschool and childcare directors will be knowledgeable about the profession's requirements, responsibilities, and opportunities. Successful preschool and childcare directors engage in ongoing professional development. Preschool and childcare directors must have high levels of integrity and ethics as they work with young children and have access to their families' personal information.

## Fast Fact

**Preschool matters. Studies show that kids without an early childhood education are 25 percent more likely to drop out of school, 40 percent more likely to become a teenage parent, and 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.**

Source: thinkprogress.org

## EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

The median annual wage for preschool and childcare center directors was \$47,940 in May 2018. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$30,900, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$83,730.

### Median annual wages May 2018

**Other management occupations:** \$90,120

**Preschool and childcare center directors:** \$47,940

**Total, all occupations:** \$38,640

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

In May 2018, the median annual wages for preschool and childcare center directors in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Elementary and secondary schools; state, local, and private	\$67,540
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	\$51,170
Child day care services	\$46,310



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## ***EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK***

Preschool and childcare center directors held about 66,700 jobs in 2018. The largest employers of preschool and childcare center directors were as follows:

Child day care services	63%
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	14%
Self-employed workers	8%
Elementary and secondary schools; state, local, and private	7%

Employment of preschool and childcare center directors is projected to grow 7 percent from 2018 to 2028, faster than the average for all occupations.

### **Percent change in employment, Projected 2018–28**

**LePreschool and childcare center directors:** 7%

**Other management occupations:** 6%

**Total, all occupations:** 5%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

The number of children under the age of 5 is expected to increase, although their share of the overall population should remain constant. As a result, a greater number of working parents will need the help of childcare centers. However, the rising cost of childcare and the increasing number of stay-at-home parents may slow the growth rate of the child day care services industry.

The demand for preschools, and consequently the directors who manage them, should remain strong due to the fact that early childhood education is widely recognized as important for a child's intellectual and emotional development.

***Related Occupations***

- Elementary School Teacher
- Preschool Worker

## *Conversation With . . .* **KERRY NOWOSIELSKI**

Director, Daniel Island Academy  
Charleston, South Carolina

Director, 21 years  
Early Childhood Education, 30 years

### **1. What was your individual career path in terms of education/training, entry-level job, or other significant opportunity?**

While I was in high school, I had an opportunity to take a course in child studies. In addition to the in-school course work, I had an internship at a local elementary school. That set me on my career path to work in the field of Early Childhood Education. My next step was to choose a college that had a top-notch education program, and I earned my BS at Wheelock College, which is primarily a teaching and social work school in Boston that recently merged with Boston University. While in school I had many opportunities to get experience in public schools, after school programs, and early childhood programs that worked with children as young as infants. During my senior year, I interned alongside a director of a preschool program, which really launched me into the path to become an administrator.

After graduating, I became a toddler teacher, then I was given the opportunity to take over as director as a program in Massachusetts. It was a non-profit center that the state took over, and I was still young, only 26. It was my first time managing people. That was when I realized that when you're a director or administrator you're walking the fine line of having to sometimes come down as "the boss"—and not everyone is necessarily a fan of you every day. And that's OK.

I moved on to a larger program that included the non-profit's center and a couple of satellite programs. It was the first time I took an organization through the process of accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, (NAEYC). During these years I also started having children, ended up staying home and our family moved to South Carolina. When my youngest was four, I felt it was time to get back out there. My husband saw the ad for this position, and I've been here 13 years. We are NAEYC accredited, with 250 children aged 12 months through pre-K in 17 classrooms. I supervise 45 staff members.

### **2. What are the most important skills and/or qualities for someone in your profession?**

Someone in this field must possess a lot of patience, flexibility, and willingness to modify the day at a moment's notice. For instance, if a stomach virus goes through

the school, I might spend half my day figuring out staff scheduling because in early childhood, there are staffing ratios you have to maintain. Or a classroom might be struggling with behavior and I need to step in. Also, you need to be willing to be a lifelong learner and continue to study the changes in the field to ensure that you are using curriculum and skills that are the most current based on research and growth in the field.

**3. What do you wish you had known going into this profession?**

In hindsight, I wish I had taken more courses in business practices. When you reach the position of administrator, you are also managing business practices, budgets and human resources policies.

**4. Are there many job opportunities in your profession? In what specific areas?**

Yes, there are lots of jobs in the field of early childhood education. The field is ever growing. One could be a teacher, a curriculum coordinator, a director.

**5. How do you see your profession changing in the next five years? How will technology impact that change, and what skills will be required?**

The field is constantly changing. Currently there is a huge focus on STEM education. We have also begun to look at behavior management and modification differently. I'm at conferences all the time to find out the latest research on brain development or child development.

Children are exposed to so much technology and it is important for us to maintain the "old school" play and imagination with the children while not completely ignoring the need for technology. The way we communicate with our families has changed because of advancements in technology. We currently use an app that allows us to send important information and photos to parents about their children's day.

**6. What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you enjoy least about your job?**

I most enjoy that I get to play with children on a daily basis. However, in the position of director, I sometimes have to make difficult decisions that will negatively affect a person's life. Even though letting someone go may be necessary and they aren't the right fit for the program, it is still very difficult. I also find the clear misconception between preschool vs. childcare to be disheartening. My philosophy is, if a young child needs to be in a program outside the family, whether it's three hours or all day, they deserve a high-quality program: play with a purpose where they are learning all kinds of things all day. That is what we do here.

**7. Can you suggest a valuable “try this” for students considering a career in your profession?**

If a person has opportunities to spend time in programs or shadow some people in the field, I think that is the most valuable.

## ***MORE INFORMATION***

**American Federation of Teachers**

555 New Jersey Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202.879.4400  
[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

**Association for Childhood Education International**

17904 Georgia Avenue, Suite 215  
Olney, MD 20832  
800.423.3563  
[www.acei.org](http://www.acei.org)

**Center for the Child Care Workforce**

555 New Jersey Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202.662.8005  
[www.ccw.org](http://www.ccw.org)

**Council for Professional Recognition**

2460 16th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009-3547  
800.424.4310  
[www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org)

**National Association for the Education of Young Children**

1313 L Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005  
800.424.2460  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

**National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center**

9300 Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22031-6050  
800.616.2242  
[nccic.acf.hhs.gov](http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov)

**National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center**

517 S. Greensboro Street  
Carrboro, NC 27510  
919.962.2001  
[www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org)