A Focus on Compensation

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®
ALABAMA
A Project of
Alabama Partnership for Children
www.smartstartalabama.org

The Focus

Teachers in early care and education (ECE) typically work for much lower wages than teachers in grades K-12, and formal pay scales are rare; the main exceptions are public school-based ECE and pre-kindergarten programs, and some unionized ECE centers. Compensation varies by funding source, often carrying little or no reward for education or ongoing professional development. According to the Center for the Child Care Workforce, less than half of our states have wage incentives in place for the early care and education workforce. As of April 2009, the number of states with compensation initiatives was dwindling due to a loss of funding. [1]

The Impact

- Although some teachers begin their careers with high rates of job satisfaction, this contentment begins to wane as they begin to view their pay as unfair. [2]
- Inadequate compensation (in the form of wages and benefits) often leads teachers to lose motivation and turn to other sources of income to support themselves. [3]
- High job stress can contribute to lowered motivation and likely makes the decision to leave a low-paying job that much easier. Professional development and administrative support are key to retention.[4]
- Low compensation in early care and education contributes to the cycle of poverty for many women. Due to the high demand for teachers, entry-level early care and education jobs are easily attainable by people with limited training. Such positions offer less compensation than positions that require more training. It is precisely these better-paying positions that are least likely to turn over.[5]
- Inadequate compensation has been identified over and over again as the strongest predictor of turnover among early care and education teachers. [6]

Early Childhood Workforce Hourly Wage Data [1]

- The mean hourly wage for early care and education teachers in 2007 was $9.32. The mean hourly wage for preschool teachers was $15.48 an hour; for kindergarten teachers, $30.51 an hour; and elementary teachers, $34.63 an hour.
- Based on the average number of hours they work, with the mean hourly wage of $9.32, early care and education workers earn approximately $18,623 per year.

Addressing the Issue

In 1990, Child Care Services Association created the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® Project to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover within the early care and education workforce. Available today in numerous states, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® model gives scholarships to early care and education teachers to complete course work in the field and to increase their compensation. All T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships link continuing education with increased compensation and require that recipients and their sponsoring employer share in the cost. In 1994, CCSA created the Child Care WAGE$® Project to help address the above workforce issues by providing education-based salary supplements to low paid teachers, directors and family child care providers working with young children. Supplements are tied to educational attainment and are designed to provide preschool children more stable relationships with better-educated teachers by rewarding teacher education and continuity of care.
These supplements make it possible for early care and education teachers to remain in their classrooms and in the field.

Linking education and compensation has been shown to address the need for a highly educated early care and education workforce and reduce teacher turnover. The national data from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE$® Projects demonstrate the outcomes that are possible if states invest in proven strategies. For more information about T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ outcomes visit www.childcareservices.org.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®
NATIONAL
Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance Center

A product of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance Center

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[1] Center for the Child Care Workforce, April & May 2009.
[2] Kontos & File, 1992
[3] Kontos & File, 1992
[4] Catapono, 2001; Young, 2000
[5] National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, 1996
[6] Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Whitebook & Bellm, 1999