

Turning Back the Tide of Teacher Turnover

“Stability is a significant determinant of teacher quality. Turnover in the early care and education field refers to the rate at which teachers leave their programs to take a new position within the early childhood education field or leave the field to retire or to enter a new field of work.” ~*The Early Care & Education Teaching Workforce: At the Fulcrum*

What are some of the factors that foster turnover?

- Inadequate compensation
- High job stress
- Sense of isolation
- Feeling devalued
- Lack of benefits

What are the costs of turnover?

> **Stresses children.** When a family provider leaves her business or a center teacher unexpectedly leaves or moves to another classroom, the loss of the relationship can be stressful to young children. This is especially true for infants and toddlers who are learning to build trust and first relationships. Feeling safe and secure with a primary teacher is essential in their development and learning process. When young children experience the stress related to losing this teacher, common behaviors may include regressing to earlier conduct, aggression, withdrawal, loss of appetite or depression.¹

> **Creates a sense of a loss for the children and program.**

The loss of a particular teacher with whom a child has established a trusting relationship can affect the child’s feelings of security in the child care setting, and also may affect the development of cognitive and social skills.² When a teacher leaves, the remaining teachers may feel the effects of losing a team member in their classroom or program.³

> **Changes teaching practices.** Low rates of teacher turnover are consistently associated with positive teaching practices.⁴

> **Influences compensation & child outcomes.** Teachers with more formal education (i.e. degrees, credentials) earn higher wages/compensation, and they are more likely to remain in their child care program. This results in better child outcomes.⁵

> **Strains employers.** Direct costs of turnover include recruitment, selection and training of new people. Indirect costs may include increased workloads for remaining staff, overtime and reduced productivity associated with low employee morale. In addition, teacher vacancies may result in loss of revenue, as parents may be reluctant to enroll their children in a classroom headed by a substitute teacher. Estimated costs vary from as low as a few hundred dollars to as high as four times the annual salary of the employee.⁶

How can we turn back the tide?

A recent survey of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® state projects revealed that the combination of scholarship, education, compensation and commitment yields staggering results. All T.E.A.C.H. states reported turnover of 11% or less. Turnover rates for Child Care WAGES participants in the three states ranged from 9 – 15%, far lower than typical rates for the early care and education workforce.

“When I started in child care, I thought it would only be for a little while, but now with my degree in hand and a salary supplement coming twice a year, I can really see that this is my career.”

~ Family child care provider,
Kansas



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¹ UCIC Extension: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/sangamonmenard/factsheets/family81.html>

² Howes, Hamilton, & Philipsen, 1998; Howes & Smith, 1995

³ Hamrick, 2000.

⁴ Kagan, Tarrant, Carson, Kauerz, 2006

⁵ Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, and Kagan 1999

⁶ Cost of Employee Turnover, <http://isquare.com/turnover.cfm>