

Is the Child Care WAGES[®] Project an evidence informed initiative? Yes. WAGES is a proven way to increase the education, retention and compensation of early educators, which means higher quality care for children. Brain research makes it clear that early experiences are critical for successful brain development, and making sure these quality early experiences are possible is far more effective than trying to address problems at a later age. It takes a qualified, educated, stable and effective teacher to provide the types of experiences that are needed to build trust and promote learning. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University reports that “substantial investments in training, recruiting, compensating, and retaining a high quality workforce must be a top priority for society.”¹ WAGES helps attract educated teachers to the field in the first place who might not otherwise choose it due to typically low salaries and benefits. The additional compensation helps retain those educated teachers and the program encourages (even mandates) additional education.

How do research findings support the need for the Child Care WAGES[®] Project? Research clearly shows the importance of teacher retention and education for the successful growth and development for young children and the role that compensation plays in quality care. The authors of *The Early Care and Education Teaching Workforce: At the Fulcrum* reported that most evidence suggests there are three primary factors associated with teacher quality² and WAGES is designed to address those three issues – professional development/education, compensation and stability.

Why are lower turnover rates so important for children? Stability is one of the key factors in quality early care and education. The bond that children create with their teachers sets the groundwork for learning, enabling better success in school and life. The consistent association of low teacher turnover rates with positive teaching practices³ highlights the need for strategies that increase retention.

Turnover tends to breed turnover. When a program has a revolving door of teachers, it makes it more difficult to provide quality care for children and to improve services, and it may also impact the remaining teachers. The decisions of others to leave may ultimately encourage them to do the same.⁴ As WAGES helps to slow the turnover rate in child care programs, the retention of even one teacher can make a positive difference for the staff, children and the program as a whole.

How does the Child Care WAGES[®] Project reduce turnover? Money! The Child Care WAGES[®] Project is an education based salary supplement project for teachers, directors and family child care providers. An annual financial award is issued in two installments, each after the participant completes at least six months in the same child care program. These supplements make early childhood a more affordable and attraction option for educated teachers.

¹ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. 2007. *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What we Know and What We Do*. Cambridge, MA.

² Kagan, S. L, Tarrant, K, Carson, A and Kauerz, K. 2006. *The Early Care and Education Teaching Workforce: At the Fulcrum (Summary Report)*: National Center for Children and Families for Cornerstones for Kids.

³ Kagan, S. L, Tarrant, K, Carson, A and Kauerz, K. 2006. *The Early Care and Education Teaching Workforce: At the Fulcrum (Summary Report)*: National Center for Children and Families for Cornerstones for Kids.

⁴ Whitebook, M. and Sakai, L. 2004. *By a Thread: How Child Care Centers Hold On to Teachers, How Teachers Build Lasting Careers*. Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Does increasing the compensation of teachers have an impact for children? Recent data on teacher wages collected for the Division of Child Development reveals that compensation for teachers does have a direct correlation to the quality of care children receive.⁵ For example, when examining preschool classrooms and controlling for education, the hourly wage was found to be a predictor for instructional support and the ECERS-E total score. The salary range predicted children's positive emotional experiences. WAGE\$ participants have so often voiced this as well by sharing that when they have less stress because of the WAGE\$ supplements, they are able to better focus their positive attention on children in their classrooms, which means children are happier and more open to learning.

Inadequate compensation has been shown repeatedly to be a strong predictor of turnover.⁶ The 2010 Bureau of Labor Statistics data on North Carolina wages found that kindergarten teachers (who do not work year round) earned twice the annual salary of a child care teacher. In FY11, 79% of WAGE\$ participants earned less than \$12.00 per hour. According to a 2003 workforce study in North Carolina, 79% percent of teachers statewide who do not see themselves in the child care field in three years indicate that better pay might entice them to stay.⁷ In their study, which included detailed interviews with early care and education professionals, Marcy Whitebook and Laura Sakai also found that better pay is most often identified as the way to reduce turnover, and better pay coupled with greater public respect would have an even stronger impact.⁸ Ninety-eight percent (98%) of WAGE\$ recipients indicated that the supplements either encourage them to stay in their current programs *or* to pursue further education. In addition, 97% indicated that, as a result of WAGE\$, they feel more appreciated and recognized for their work.

Does the education of the workforce really make a difference for children? Research continues to show the importance of education for those working with young children. The *National Child Care Staffing Study* indicated that formal education and specialized training were significantly associated with higher quality caretaking.⁹ In 2003, Marcy Whitebook reviewed eight major research studies on pre-kindergarten quality. The findings not only showed that the retention of educated teachers was critical to the success of young children, but specifically identified the importance of higher education.¹⁰

The most effective preschool teachers, according to Steven Barnett in his article *Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualification*, have at least a four year degree and specialized early childhood training. Although teacher qualifications alone cannot guarantee teaching effectiveness, the conclusion from research review supports the importance of having educated preschool teachers. Teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree tend to have

⁵ Kintner Duffy, V. L. 2011. *DCD Research Project: Teacher Wage Information Updated*. Greensboro, NC.

⁶ Phillips, D. A., Mekos, D., Scarr, S., McCartney, K., and Abbott-Shim, M. 2000. *Within and Beyond the Classroom Door: Assessing Quality in Child Care Centers*. Early Childhood Research Quarterly.

Bellm, D. and Whitebook, M. 1999. *Taking on Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Center Teachers and Directors*. Washington, D.C.

⁷ Child Care Services Association. 2003. *Working in Child Care in North Carolina: The North Carolina Child Care Workforce Study 2003*. Chapel Hill, NC.

⁸ Whitebook, M. and Sakai, L. 2004. *By a Thread: How Child Care Centers Hold On to Teachers, How Teachers Build Lasting Careers*. Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

⁹ Whitebook, M., C. Howes and D. Phillips. 1990. *Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America*. Final Report of the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, Calif.: Child Care Employee Project.

¹⁰ Whitebook, M. 2003. *Bachelor's Degrees Are Best: Higher Qualifications for Pre-Kindergarten Teachers Lead to Better Learning Environments for Children*. Washington, D.C.: The Trust for Early Education.

more positive interactions with children, have greater sensitivity to their needs and provide richer linguistic experiences.¹¹

In *High-Quality Preschool: Why We Need It and What it Looks Like*, Dr. Linda Espinosa summarized, “Research has consistently shown that 3- and 4-year-olds who attend a high-quality preschool are more successful in kindergarten and beyond—both academically and socially.” One of her primary recommendations is that teachers need four year degrees and specific child development training and education.¹² Recent research suggests that the effects of high quality child care continue into the teen years.¹³

How does WAGE\$ help increase education? Because WAGE\$ offers higher supplements as higher education levels are reached, there is the constant incentive to pursue additional coursework. In addition, all education levels below the Associate Degree focused on children ages birth to five (AAS ECE) are funded on a temporary basis, so participants must make educational progress in order to retain their eligibility.

Through WAGE\$ evaluations, teachers have repeatedly shared that the compensation provided through WAGE\$ not only motivates them to continue in their education, but often makes it financially possible. In FY11, 59% of WAGE\$ participants statewide had the AAS ECE or higher on the scale. When WAGE\$ became a statewide program in 1999, only 30% of the WAGE\$ participants met this standard.

Does the Child Care WAGE\$® Project have written guidelines? Yes. WAGE\$ has a written policy manual with text reaching approximately 150 pages. Staff members receive written updates as applicable and the full manual is revised annually to include all updates and changes. This extensive document is provided as part of the licensing agreement with three other states that have elected to replicate the WAGE\$ model. While they receive direct training, the copyrighted WAGE\$ manual is written to provide the necessary instruction and guidelines to successfully operate the program.

How does the Child Care WAGE\$® Project ensure that fidelity is maintained in its implementation? The Child Care WAGE\$® Project mandates consistency in its policy application, transcript review and program implementation. To help assure this level of quality, staff must adhere to all policies and procedures listed in the manual described above. WAGE\$ conducts multiple quality control measures to secure greater consistency and accuracy. An approval system is in place for much of the WAGE\$ work, including educational assessments and award amounts. This system involves a double check of accuracy by a supervisor who must then sign off that the work has been approved. WAGE\$ counselors, who process the work, have specific performance measures for which they are accountable and the regular assessments of accuracy determine the score for one of many high standards the team is expected to achieve.

¹¹ Barnett, W. S. Revised December 2004. *Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications*. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Brunswick, NJ.

¹² Espinosa, L. 2003. *High Quality Preschool: Why We Need It and What it Looks Like*. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Brunswick, NJ.

¹³ Vandell, D.L., Belsky, J. Burchinal, M., Steinberg, L., Vandergrift, N. and the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. 2010. *Do Effects of Early Child Care Extend to Age 15 Years? Results From the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*. Child Development.

Does the Child Care WAGES® Project have a strong logic model? Yes. The Child Care WAGES® Project does have a logic model that reflects the goals listed here. The logic model may be found online at the Child Care Services Association website:
www.childcareservices.org/ps/wage.html

Does the Child Care WAGES® Project have a history of demonstrating positive results? Yes. WAGES reports on a semiannual basis to local funding Smart Start partnerships. The mid-year report includes extensive data tables showing participant demographics, educational assessments and increases in education, payments made and turnover rates to date. Those data tables are updated for the annual report and are submitted along with a detailed narrative covering the project's outcomes and evaluation findings. Multiple stories from recipients are also shared.

WAGES has consistently met its statewide outcomes. For the last decade, for example, the statewide WAGES turnover rate has ranged from 12% to 18%, significantly lower than the 25% goal established by Smart Start's Performance Based Incentive Standards and well below the national average thought to be between 30 and 40%. WAGES recipients have continually shown significant educational progress, with 41% of those at temporary levels submitting verification of continued coursework in FY11. Each year, WAGES recipients have met the statewide target goal for either education submission or increased education levels or both. WAGES recipients have repeatedly reported satisfaction with the program (99% satisfaction rate in FY11) and have identified WAGES as a significant reason why they either stay in their child care programs or return to school. Due to the availability of higher tiers (award amounts) and growing education levels, WAGES has also seen a dramatic increase in the average six month supplement from \$392 ten years ago to \$815 in FY11.

Has the Child Care WAGES® Project been rated as “promising” or “emerging” by at least one source that rates evidence-based programs? While the Child Care WAGES® Project has not been officially rated as an evidence-based program, it has been recognized as a promising practice or potential compensation model by many different credible sources, including the following:

- Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)¹⁴
- Financing Child Care in the United States¹⁵
- Institute for Women's Policy Research¹⁶
- Linking Economic Development and Child Care Research Project¹⁷
- National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRA)¹⁸
- National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC)¹⁹
- National Organization for Women (Women's Enews)²⁰

¹⁴ CLASP. 2007. *Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care: A CLASP Child Care & Early Education Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/babiesinchildcare/states?id=0030>.

¹⁵ Mitchell, A, Stoney, L. and Dicter, H. 2001. *Financing Child Care in the United States*. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Kansas City, MO.

¹⁶ Gault, B., Goergen, E., Kiflu, F and Murphy, H. 2004. *Building a Stronger Child Care Workforce: A Review of Studies of the Effectiveness of Public Compensation*. Institute for Women's Policy Research: Research-in-Brief Series.

¹⁷ Ribeiro, R and Warner, M. 2004. *Measuring the Regional Economic Importance of Early Care and Education: The Cornell Methodology Guide*. Linking Economic Development and Child Care Research Project. Ithaca, NY.

¹⁸ NACCRA. 2011. Supporting the Child Care Workforce: Education and Compensation Initiatives. Retrieved from http://www.naccra.org/policy/background_issues/child-care-workforce/education-compensation-initiatives.php.

¹⁹ NCCIC. 2010. Workforce Incentive Initiatives: Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/resincentives.html>.

In addition to the WAGE\$ recognition listed above, the North Carolina Partnership for Children publicized the FY10 WAGE\$ results. Stephanie Fanjul was quoted in the article as stating, “Skilled and committed teachers are the backbone of a successful early education system. If we want the tens of thousands of children in early learning programs to arrive at school ready to succeed, we have to invest in teachers.”²¹ WAGE\$ is one way, with proven results, to invest directly in the workforce.

Finally, Child Care Services Association was asked to testify before Senate and House Congressional Committees about the workforce and strategies to address education, compensation and retention. The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project was part of this testimony. WAGE\$ was the model used in the development of the Focus Act – a bill to create a national salary supplement program for the early childhood workforce.

²⁰ Curphey, S. 2002. *Bill Would Provide Training for Child-Care Workforce*. Retrieved from <http://www.now.org/eNews/may2002/050202child.html>.

²¹ Zimmerman, T. 2010. *Program to Educate and Retain Child Care Teachers Benefits Children and the Economy*. Retrieved from <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/09/prweb4500304.htm>