

Child Care WAGE\$® Project

North Carolina 2009-2010

An Education-Based Salary Supplement Program for
Child Care Teachers, Directors and Family Child Care Providers



The Problem

According to workforce data collected in 2003 by Child Care Services Association, North Carolina is faced with an average teacher turnover rate of 24% per year. This rate is a notable drop from the 31% turnover rate established previously and reveals the impact of programs created to address retention. Despite the progress, this rate of departure means that children still struggle with inconsistent educators in the years when the establishment of trust and the promotion of learning in a stable environment are most important. The median wage for teachers is \$8.00 an hour, and teachers cite low pay as a primary reason for leaving. According to the study, 79% 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. Lack of resources and an effort to maintain affordability for parents often make it difficult for individual child care programs to offer sufficient wages to retain educated staff and to reward or encourage teacher education. Research continues to show that teacher education and turnover rates affect children's development, so fair compensation of child care professionals is essential.

The Purpose

Improve child care quality, through salary supplements, by reducing turnover and encouraging the continued education of teachers, directors and family child care providers.

The Program

- **Rewards Attained Education:** Supplement award amounts are based on the level of education an individual has attained.
- **Rewards Consistency:** Supplements are distributed in six month increments, after the recipient has spent a continuous six-month period in the same child care setting.
- **Maintains Marketplace Competition for Better Salaries:** Supplements vary based only on education attained, not on wages earned.
- **Integrates with Other Education and Compensation Initiatives:** The Child Care WAGE\$® Project builds on and collaborates with the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project. Whereas T.E.A.C.H. rewards child care professionals seeking more education and helps them attain it, WAGE\$ rewards those who have already attained education and helps keep them in their child care programs.
- **Provides a Direct, Graduated Supplement that is Logical and Sufficient:** Supplements recognize individual professional development efforts regardless of the work environment and address low wages without affecting center budgets, regular wages or parent fees. Amounts are sufficient to make a difference and the scale levels and awards represent logical progress in the educational system.
- **Does Not Increase Costs to Parents:** Because funding for the Child Care WAGE\$® Project comes from external sources and goes directly to individual child care providers, families can have the benefit of better educated, more consistent staff without having to pay more.

In the Words of Participating Teachers, Directors & Home Providers, the Child Care WAGE\$® Project is Benefiting Children...

- * *"I see many child care teachers seeking college degrees because of WAGE\$, and of course this benefits our children because they are getting better care. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, but have taken extra classes and plan to take more in the future. This can do nothing but improve child care at my center, in my county and the state of North Carolina." - Catawba, teacher*
- * *"Keep providing funds so we do not lose these highly skilled teachers to other professions. ... The WAGE\$ Project is important because it helps highly educated staff be able to afford to stay in the early childhood field. We now know for certain how crucial brain development and meaningful relationships are in the first years of life. It must be important to all of us as human beings to make sure that development and relationships occur with well-educated, highly skilled staff who understand the importance of molding and growing a brain. Our entire civilized society depends on our children being empathetic and well educated adults. This can't happen without empathetic and well educated teachers growing healthy brain connections in the beginning." - Chatham, director*
- * *"I think you have done a wonderful job with the program. It makes it easy for the children to not struggle with inconsistent educators in the years when establishment of trust and promotion of learning in a stable environment are important. ... Children are able to bond with me because of the commitment I have made to the field." - Chowan, teacher*
- * *"It is a reminder that furthering your education always pays off!! ... It helps you feel like the work you do is worthwhile and appreciated in the community. It also has taught me how important and empowering obtaining a higher education in any field of study really is. Therefore, I encourage the children in my care as well as their parents and my own children to embrace quality education." - Clay, teacher*
- * *"We are located in an economically depressed area and are unable to maintain tuition that pays our staff a competitive wage. Your program helps us hire and keep the amazing people who do great work with our kids." - Mitchell, director*
- * *"I know that it is very important in my life, because without the checks, it would have been very difficult for me to receive an AAS Degree in Early Childhood Education. I see how my education has helped me to communicate with my parents on their child's development. It adds to the professionalism of not being just a caregiver, but a good caregiver that is able to take a child to the next level. I'm able to encourage others that are in the early childhood community to continue to receive their education, if it is just one class at a time." - Moore, teacher*
- * *"Supplements have been very important financial relief for my family. Last fall it helped us to save our house from foreclosure." - Orange, teacher*
- * *"Programs like Child Care WAGE\$® serve to support the validity of Early Childhood Educators as professionals. This has encouraged the pursuit of higher education levels for my staff and increased the overall quality of our program." - Pender, director*
- * *"In today's economy, my supplement has made the difference between being able to keep my home, car, etc. Times are so hard; the supplement has been a lifesaver." - Randolph, director*
- * *"WAGE\$ is important because child care providers are very under-appreciated. ... WAGE\$ is a boost to your morale when you are tired and burnt out. It is an incentive, a breath of air, and a moment to feel victorious. You feel as if you've earned something." - Vance, teacher*

Selected Results: Fiscal Year 2009-2010

During fiscal year 2009-2010, Child Care Services Association administered the statewide Child Care WAGE\$® Project in 67 North Carolina counties. See below for statewide outcome data and for data from a small sample of participating counties.

Reduced Turnover

WAGE\$ turnover FY 2009-2010

North Carolina	12%
Brunswick	12%
Columbus	7%
Franklin-Granville-Vance	5%
Rowan	10%

Increased Education

The following percentages reflect active participants with education below the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or its equivalent who submitted coursework in 2009-2010; many moved up a level on the supplement scale and increased their awards as a result.

Active participants that submitted coursework

Active participants that reached a new level

North Carolina	31%	20%
Alamance	44%	28%
Catawba	32%	19%
Chowan-Perquimans	33%	24%
Transylvania	57%	36%

Evaluation Techniques

Several tools are used to determine the impact of the Child Care WAGE\$® Project.

- An annual written survey is sent to a sample of recipients and to a sample of directors with staff participating in the Child Care WAGE\$® Project. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the survey respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the program and its administration.
- Turnover rates for Child Care WAGE\$® participants are determined through employment confirmation calls at the end of each individual's six month commitment period and at the end of the fiscal year.
- Transcripts submitted by participants verify educational accomplishments attained during the year.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project was available in the following counties during fiscal year 2009-2010.

Alamance	Durham	Macon	Stanly
Alleghany	Edgecombe	Martin	Stokes
Avery	Forsyth	Mitchell	Surry
Beaufort	Franklin	Moore	Swain
Brunswick	Gaston	Nash	Transylvania
Catawba	Graham	New Hanover	Union
Chatham	Granville	Northampton	Vance
Cherokee	Guilford	Onslow	Warren
Chowan	Halifax	Orange	Watauga
Clay	Harnett	Pender	Wayne
Cleveland	Haywood	Perquimans	Wilson
Columbus	Hertford	Pitt	Yadkin
Craven	Hyde	Polk	Yancey
Cumberland	Iredell	Randolph	
Dare	Jackson	Rockingham	
Davidson	Johnston	Rowan	
Davie	Lee	Rutherford	
Duplin	Lincoln	Sampson	

Child Care WAGE\$® Project, 2009-2010



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