

Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project

Fiscal Year 2011 Statewide Results

■ Before first grade, a child may spend over 10,000 hours in child care. Research tells us that children enrolled in a high-quality early education program in the first five years of life are more likely to be in highly skilled jobs or in college at age 21. Ensuring quality early care and education for children today, ensures a viable workforce for the future and a strong American economy in the long run.

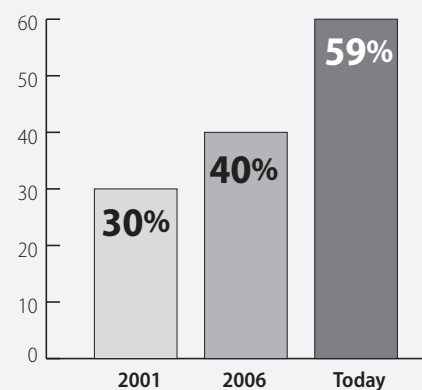


The quality of early care and education a child receives is directly linked to teacher education and compensation. But in North Carolina, few early educators have higher education degrees and many earn as little as \$8 per hour. The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project awards education-based salary supplements to child care professionals to address the key issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover within the early childhood workforce. The WAGE\$ supplements make the early childhood arena a more affordable and attractive professional option, thus reducing turnover rates. Higher financial awards are offered as more education is obtained, providing an important incentive to return to school. Many levels of education are funded on a temporary basis and ongoing awards are contingent upon completion of more coursework.

In FY11, the Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project provided salary supplements to 6,792 child care professionals for education earned and for their commitment to their child care programs. These teachers, directors and home providers worked in 2,555 different programs serving approximately 89,987 children.

- 59% of the WAGE\$ participants were awarded for having an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education (AAS ECE), its equivalent or higher on the supplement scale.
- 41% of active participants with education below an AAS ECE submitted education documentation to show progress in school.
- Only 12% of the WAGE\$ participants left their child care programs.
- 98% of recipients indicated that WAGE\$ either encourages them to stay in their current child care programs or to pursue further education.
- 79% of the WAGE\$ participants earned less than \$12 per hour from their employers.
- 52% of the WAGE\$ participants are people of color.
- WAGE\$ recipients earned an average six-month supplement of \$815, or approximately \$1,630 more per year, as a result of their participation.
- 98% of survey respondents stated that receiving a WAGE\$ supplement helps ease financial stress, with 77% saying they need the funds to pay bills and 73% explaining that they are more able to address the basic needs of their families (food/housing).

WAGE\$ participants with the AAS ECE, its equivalent or higher on the supplement scale



WAGE\$ recipients with higher education showed a particular commitment to staying in the field. Many directors share concern that teachers leave once they obtain higher education, but those receiving the WAGE\$ supplements did not leave as directors may have expected. Among WAGE\$ recipients, retention has been better among the more highly educated participants, which means better outcomes for young children.

Education Level of WAGE\$ Recipients	Turnover Rate
AAS ECE or higher on the WAGE\$ scale	11%
Below the AAS ECE	13%

The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project is currently licensed and operating in three additional states showing similar positive results. National outcomes can be found in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] and Child Care WAGE\$[®] Projects 2010-11 Annual Program Report.

"With my WAGE\$ checks, I was able to save up and get out of public housing and into my own apartment. ... The supplements help me provide for my family. When I'm not constantly worried about how to make ends meet, I enjoy my time with my kids more. I'm able to also do and buy things for my kids at work that I hadn't been before." —

Alamance, teacher

"The WAGE\$ Project is so important because it gives caregivers a better reason to go back to school and receive a degree in the field of early childhood, and it will give the centers a better education score when they go for the stars. Everyone wants to be a 5 star center because that's the best you can be and all parents want the best care for their child(ren) but that means education. So that's why this program is so important."

— Buncombe, teacher

"By doing this, I can better serve the children in my care without worries like having food or a place to live. My attention can be on them and not myself. For the early childhood community, it's like a thank you for doing a good job since sometimes caregivers are unrecognized for doing something positive." — Chatham, teacher

"Early childhood is the most important time in a child's life, yet many teachers who are caring for and teaching these young children have incomes at poverty level. The WAGE\$ bonus absolutely helps these teachers financially as well as boosts their morale and makes them feel appreciated for all their hard work." — Cleveland, director

"The program rewards me for staying with my current employer. This creates a bond and stability for the children and families that I serve. These children are the future, they need positive role models in their world." — Craven, teacher

"I think the Child Care WAGE\$® Project is very important to early childhood teachers. For most of us, this program is more important than other programs Smart Start sponsors. Without it, it would be difficult to maintain longevity with our employers. We would be jumping from center to center to find the highest pay. With the supplement, it rewards us for giving our time and loyalty to one center and directly affecting the quality of care offered to the children in NC." — Davidson, director

"Overall, it has led to a reduction in my stress level and it has enabled me to educate myself in the field of early childhood education. Both of these things help me to be a better and happier teacher, parent, and member of the community. I work very hard and love my job! The WAGE\$ program helps me to feel valued in a challenging and low-paying position." — Mitchell, teacher

"The main thing is the kids are benefiting greatly from the things I learn while getting my education. ... It has made me really want to continue my education. I think I can offer the kids ten times more than I could before. I benefit, the kids benefit and therefore the parents and the community benefit." — Randolph, home provider



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The Child Care WAGE\$® Project is a funding collaboration between local Smart Start Partnerships that choose to fund the supplements as well as the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education, which pays for the administration of the program.

