

Child Care WAGE\$® Project

Compensation Matters: Growing Support for the Early Care and Education Workforce

■ Brain research has left no doubt – to invest in children and give them the best opportunity for successful growth and development, we must invest in the adults who teach and care for them. We know that children need stable and engaging relationships with teachers who can provide appropriate and supportive learning experiences. In order for teachers to provide that stability and to pursue their own ongoing learning, what do they need? Fair and adequate compensation. This critical issue in the early care and education workforce is finally beginning to receive public attention. The tide is turning. For example, in 2015 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conducted opinion research with educators, potential educators and American voters across the nation. Voters very clearly recognized the importance of appropriate compensation for ensuring quality, with 84% stating it was extremely or very important. Unsurprisingly, low pay was reported by educators to be the greatest challenge for staying the field. Voters strongly supported investing in early care and education, even if that investment is used to enhance wages.

The support is growing, but the compensation puzzle is a complicated one. Parents cannot afford to pay more and thus teachers continue to face stagnant wages. While the nation explores different strategies to help bring this profession forward, North Carolina offers one such strategy currently through its Child Care WAGE\$® Project. WAGE\$ is an education-based salary supplement program for early educators funded by local Smart Start Partnerships and the Division of Child Development and Early Education. Each Partnership has the option to participate by providing funds toward the program's supplements. When that happens, eligible early educators in their communities have the opportunity to receive higher compensation. Not only will they see their income increase through these six-month awards, but the payments are tied to their education and stability in their child care programs. Children then can benefit from better-compensated, more stable teachers who have valuable education. Investing in adults *is* investing in children.

More than half of North Carolina's counties currently participate and, on behalf of recipients, WAGE\$ thanks the Partnerships who support the workforce through this program. Other Partnerships can join at any time and WAGE\$ invites questions from those interested. Other states can also license WAGE\$, and four states currently hold a license.

Compensation matters. For more information on the Child Care WAGE\$® Project, call Child Care Services Association at 919-967-3272.



CCSA
helping
families
educating
teachers
supporting
children

Child Care
WAGE\$
Project

Child Care WAGE\$® Project
Child Care Services Association

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