

Busting the Myths

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project, with funding from participating local Smart Start partnerships and the Division of Child Development and Early Education, provided tiered education-based salary supplements to 3,299 early childhood teachers, directors and family child care educators working in 53 counties across NC in FY17. The supplements are designed to close the gap between what the workforce is paid and what they deserve, and the awards help increase retention and education among participants.

Have you ever considered funding the Child Care WAGE\$® Project? Do you have questions or concerns about the program or how it is administered? Please let us know! We've compiled some information below that may help address some common misconceptions.

Misconception: Partnerships lose local control when they participate in WAGE\$. WAGE\$ isn't flexible enough to meet local needs.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project was created and is administered by Child Care Services Association in Chapel Hill, NC, and is available to any partnership across the state that wants to participate. It is a statewide model that ensures fidelity by mandating consistency in its policy application, transcript review and program implementation. This approach helps ensure the quality of the program to both funders and participants, and helps produce the desired results. However, the participating partnerships still have considerable control over how WAGE\$ operates in their counties or regions.

For example, partnerships:

- determine the amount of funding that goes towards supplements and thus can directly impact the scope of the program and the number impacted.
- choose the award level (out of five possible award structures) for participants. Percentage increases and decreases to awards may also be implemented if/as needed.
- choose many eligibility criteria and can tailor the program through these options.

In addition, participating partnerships have input into WAGE\$ policies. The program has an advisory committee that includes local and state partnership representation, and partnerships may request that a policy be considered by this committee.

Misconception: WAGE\$ is not evidence-informed.

WAGE\$ is a proven way to increase the education, retention and compensation of early educators, which means higher quality care for children. The North Carolina Partnership for Children has recognized WAGE\$ as a Promising Evidence-Informed activity. Please see the [WAGE\\$ Evidence-Informed fact sheet](#) for more information.

Misconception: WAGE\$ participants remain eligible permanently and are not required to continue their education.

WAGE\$ does have education levels that may be permanently funded if the participants continue to remain employed in their same child care programs and meet other eligibility requirements. Yet these are the levels that research shows make the most difference in the growth and development of young children. Once a participant has the AAS ECE, its equivalent or higher on the WAGE\$ scale, s/he is not required to continue coursework, but should s/he take additional classes, it could result in more money, so the encouragement is always in place. However, for all levels below the AAS ECE, participants *must* advance up the education scale to remain eligible for their awards. Each individual at a temporarily awarded level is given a deadline by which s/he must make educational progress in order to stay on the program. Education is required for these participants and, as a result of this and other eligibility requirements, there are almost always changes in the population receiving awards. It is important to remember, though, that if participants continue to be eligible for awards, it means that the program is working! Do you want your best-educated teachers to stay in the field? WAGE\$ is one avenue to provide that encouragement and support.

Misconception: WAGE\$ doesn't help our county meet the Smart Start Measures of Impact in the Community Early Childhood Profile.

County level indicators for education are based on the percentage of children enrolled in centers where the majority of the lead teachers have 7 lead teacher education points and/or where directors have 7 administrator points. WAGE\$ encourages (and in some cases mandates) the education of its participants. Over 80% have the AAS ECE, its equivalent or higher. Equally important is that WAGE\$ helps retain these educated teachers that can help counties meet this standard. Keeping the teachers who already have these levels is as critical to success with this expectation as motivating others to accomplish the same goals. WAGE\$ helps in both ways!

“I would have searched for a higher paying job since I am a single mom who is 100% supporting my child. I am staying at my job, growing my knowledge of child care and developing stronger relationships with the children in my care and my co-workers, etc. I feel satisfied with my income as a child care worker due to the WAGE\$ Project.” (teacher)

“Child Care WAGE\$® is very important because it helps all of us to look towards furthering and bettering ourselves through education. This in turn helps all of us to become professional child care workers. It has been a great part of our lives and it gives us a sense of hope and it makes us feel appreciated for our services in working with children.” (teacher)

Please see the [Child Care WAGE\\$ FY17 annual report](#) for additional results and participant feedback.

For more information about WAGE\$, please see the Child Care Services Association website at <http://www.childcareservices.org> or call 919-967-3272.