

# **Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®**

## **FY21 Final Report**

### **REPORT CONTENTS**

The Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® (AWARD\$) final report includes a detailed narrative, data tables to support many of the findings discussed and appendices that showcase participant feedback. Please see below for more information on the report's contents, which are listed in the order they are presented.

Program Description – Includes a brief overview of the program and its funding support.

Program Eligibility – Highlights primary requirements to participate in AWARD\$.

Program Impact – Provides information on the program's impact overall (Table A: Median Hourly Rates by Education Level)

Outputs – Includes the contracted outputs in table format with additional information on the activities that supported output achievement. (Table B: Outputs)

Outcomes – Includes the contracted outcomes in table format. (Table C: Outcomes)

Program Evaluations – Highlights results from the AWARD\$ surveys.

Program Challenges – Summarizes the primary challenges faced within the reporting year.

Funding – Describes the notification procedures for recipients regarding supplement funding.

Table 1 – Provides a demographic profile of active participants. Active participants are those who have been paid at some point in their participation and are still eligible based on their most recent employment confirmation.

Table 2 – Lists the participation results of active participants by the star rating of employing child care facilities.

Table 3 – Identifies the number of participants funded at each education level.

Table 4 – States the number of individuals paid, their programs and the number of children impacted for the state and for each county with program participants. Please note that these individuals may or may not still be eligible at the end of the year, so this number will likely be different than the number of active participants represented on other tables.

Table 5 – Describes turnover reporting methods, summarizes turnover data and provides the demographic overview of those who left their programs.

Appendix A – Presents sample survey feedback about the impact of AWARD\$.

Appendix B – Presents sample survey feedback about the impact of COVID-19.

Appendix C – Presents survey messages for AWARD\$ funder.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers and family child care providers working full-time with children birth through two years of age in North Carolina. The program is designed to better compensate and retain well-educated teachers working with our youngest children. AWARD\$ is funded by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

## **STATEWIDE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for at least one six-month payment during the fiscal year, applicants must:

- work at least 35 hours per week with infants, ones or twos.
- earn at or below \$19 per hour.
- work in a licensed child care program with at least three stars.
- have an Associate Degree plus or including at least 24 birth to five focused semester hours or higher.

## **PROGRAM OVERALL IMPACT**

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® impacts the community by improving the quality of early care and education for young children. Most evidence suggests there are three primary factors associated with teacher quality: education, stability and compensation. Through graduated salary supplements, the program helps decrease turnover and encourages the continued educational pursuits of the child care workforce. The funding helps address financial stress that participants may experience, giving teachers a better opportunity to focus on the children in their classrooms rather than on the economic challenges they face. The compensation is critical, particularly now as North Carolina wants to rebuild its economy, but can only do so if early educators can afford to return to and stay in the field. As of June 2021, 1,156 child care professionals in 697 child care programs were active AWARD\$ participants (those who have been paid and are still eligible based on their most recent employment confirmation).

### Turnover

Turnover numbers for Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® reflect active participants who left their child care programs during the fiscal year. Turnover was counted regardless of whether it may have been connected to COVID-19.

If a participant leaves her/his program and resumes eligibility at a new site, s/he will not be factored into the report until s/he has completed a full six-month period at her/his new site. Once s/he receives a supplement, s/he will again be recognized as an active participant. Only participants for whom AWARD\$ could have impacted the decision to stay or leave are factored into the turnover data. For example, participants who become ineligible for reasons other than leaving their child care programs (i.e. over the income cap due to raise, change of position within the program, elected Child Care WAGE\$® instead) are not considered turnover.

The turnover rate of AWARD\$ participants for FY21 was 12%, well below the turnover rate of 25% established as the contract goal. It is also below the 21% of infant-toddler teachers who indicated in a 2015 survey that they anticipated leaving the field within three years (Child Care Services Association, 2017).

The participant turnover rate compares favorably to the 21% turnover rate of full-time teachers and assistants in the state’s early childhood workforce overall, captured in 2019 pre-pandemic data (Child Care Services Association, 2020). Given the low, often poverty level, compensation for early educators, the rate of departure would likely have been much higher without the workforce supports available in North Carolina, including AWARD\$, the Child Care WAGES® Program and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

With directors reporting difficulty finding and keeping staff, particularly qualified staff, in the wake of the pandemic, it is clear that North Carolina’s \$11.50 per hour average rate of pay for infant-toddler teachers and \$10 per hour for assistants working with this age group are simply not enough. The AWARD\$ supplements address retention and make it more possible for educated professionals to afford to teach young children, particularly in this current landscape.

In addition to statistical data showing an impact on retention, AWARD\$ participants shared through evaluation feedback that supplements play a role in the decision and ability to stay in the field. See Appendix A for selected survey comments regarding the impact of these supplements.

*“It has been a true incentive to me and made me feel more valuable as an early childhood educator. It has most certainly added to my financial stability. It has also been a very real incentive for me to remain in the position and in the location that I’m at right now. I’m a believer in consistency of care and I am so thankful that there’s a tangible way that this priority is evident in the hearts and minds of others.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)*

Education

Infant-toddler teachers tend to have less education than their preschool counterparts. In 2019 data, 73% of those teachers who taught preschoolers had at least an associate degree compared to only 58% of those teachers who taught children birth through two. Progress is occurring, though, with a 6% increase for infant-toddler teachers with degrees compared to 2015. AWARD\$ is an incentive to get education and it helps retain those teachers who do. In order to participate, teachers must have at least an Associate Degree with 24 birth to five focused semester hours, so this population, although poorly compensated, represents a well-educated segment of the early childhood workforce.

Especially given these levels of education, the population is woefully underpaid. Table A below examines the median hourly rate of participants within each education level on the scale.

Table A: Median Hourly Rates by Education Level

<b>Education scale level*</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median hourly rate from employer</b>
8	725	\$13.00
9	46	\$14.30
10	91	\$13.26
11	259	\$15.00
12	35	\$14.44

Though participants already have higher levels of education, 90% of the survey respondents still indicated that Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® encourages or helps financially support

additional coursework.

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the AWARD\$ active participants are people of color and/or Latinx. Given the diverse population of children attending child care in North Carolina, this educational equity is very important.

Through survey feedback, participants took the opportunity to express the importance of education and how AWARD\$ supports, recognizes or rewards their efforts.

*“I feel AWARD\$ encourages further education in a most valuable profession. I feel further education is an asset for better understanding and meeting the needs of young children in our care.” (Davidson, teacher)*

### Compensation

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® increases the compensation of participants through salary supplements. Despite obtained education, compensation in the field continues to be low and is not competitive with many other professions. The challenge of hiring new teachers after the pandemic-related departures highlights the ongoing compensation plight of the field. Even in the best of times, early educators are severely underpaid for the work they do, which is illustrated by a comparison to the rate of \$30.09 that may be needed for one North Carolina employee with one child to meet basic, fundamental needs (Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2021).

With employers like Target paying entry level wages of \$15 per hour, early childhood is at a notable disadvantage. Forty-two percent (42%) of the active AWARD\$ participants earn less than \$13 per hour and 65% earn less than \$15 per hour. Though participants typically earn well below the income cap, increasing the cap from \$18 to \$19 did help several educators qualify and even these rates are far below what is needed. AWARD\$ currently has 35 participants who earn over \$18.

The poor compensation across the board highlights the need for salary supplements in order to attract and retain qualified staff. Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® survey results support this. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the respondents stated that AWARD\$ encourages them to stay with their current child care programs.

The average six-month supplement payment issued during FY21 was \$1,278. The scale ranges from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of evaluation respondents indicated that receiving an AWARD\$ supplement helps ease financial stress. When asked about the financial impact, recipients selected from a list of potential benefits. A sample of responses is below:

- 85% are better able to pay their bills
- 74% are more able to address the basic needs of their families (food/housing)
- 66% rely on the supplements to help address transportation costs
- 64% use the funds to provide additional resources for their classrooms or child care programs – in a separate question, a greater number of respondents (93%) stated that

providing resources for their programs is a benefit of AWARD\$

AWARD\$ recipients found the supplements to be particularly helpful during COVID-19 to meet their basic needs when they temporarily lost their employment, had a reduction in hours or they were required to quarantine. Many also used the funds to buy supplies needed to protect their families and/or classrooms from infection.

*“I was still blessed from the AWARD\$ program during the pandemic. Some of us were either furloughed or hours had been cut because of the pandemic, but AWARD\$ still sent out bonuses to help everyone in need who is on the program. That just showed me how much we are cared about.” (Forsyth, teacher)*

*“It has helped to purchase extra items to help keep my family protected from COVID-19. Extra money to buy masks, hand sanitizer, extra cleaning supplies, etc. for our home.” (Guilford, teacher)*

*“I have worked through the pandemic. Others who were laid off were making more sitting home than I was working. My bills and my paycheck stayed the same. The payment helped me provide for my family and pay my bills.” (Johnston, teacher)*

*“AWARD\$ has helped during the pandemic, by helping to make sure my family had food and the supplies to stay safe.” (Lenoir, teacher)*

*“I was able to use it to stay afloat during my two week unemployment period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)*

*“During the pandemic many companies have been forced to close or reduce employee working hours. This is putting a strain on families. However, I have been able to use the AWARD\$ supplement to sustain my business. At times offering care packages to help families get through the weekend. Care packages include snacks, oatmeal, and cereal.” (Orange, family child care provider)*

*“AWARD\$ has been a blessing to me and my day care. During this time of COVID-19, it has helped me with purchasing supplies that I need to ensure the safety of the children that I serve.” (Pasquotank, family child care provider)*

*“AWARD\$ was very helpful during this COVID-19 crisis in supplementing income lost during closures and lower attendance.” (Wake, family child care provider)*

Economic insecurity impacts teacher well-being, and can have consequences for the quality of interactions they have with the children in their care. Stress and adversity can affect the health of teachers and thus how effective they can be in promoting the supportive environments and engaging interactions children need. Especially now, easing financial stress is critical for the participants, their families and for the children they serve.

Throughout the survey, respondents discussed the importance of this additional compensation.

*“I love being a teacher but the wage is so low that I have trouble paying all my bills. AWARD\$ has helped me financially and it’s a reason why I keep my career that I love so much.” (Union, teacher)*

**OUTPUTS**

This section highlights the projected outputs of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® for FY21 and the program’s effectiveness in reaching these goals. Primary results are shown in Table B below, followed by additional detail as applicable.

**Table B: Outputs**

	<b>Projected Output</b>	<b>Results</b>
1	Approximately 980 eligible infant-toddler educators will receive AWARD\$ payments as of June 2021.	<b>Output exceeded.</b> As of June 2021, 1,355 infant-toddler educators had received AWARD\$ payments.
2	AWARD\$ will send 2,500 recruitment emails or mailings to the early childhood workforce.	<b>Output exceeded.</b> As of June 2021, AWARD\$ had sent <u>6,306</u> recruitment mailings and/or emails.
3	Staff will conduct 20 outreach opportunities to offer information about the program and recruit eligible educators.	<b>Output met.</b> Staff conducted 21 outreach sessions where information about the AWARD\$ opportunity was shared.

*Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® payments:* One thousand three hundred and fifty-five (1,355) infant-toddler educators were paid for completing at least one six-month period in FY21. These participants worked in 796 child care centers and family child care homes in 91 counties serving approximately 19,222 children. This number is an unduplicated count of supplement recipients for AWARD\$.

*Outreach and recruitment:* Twenty-one (21) virtual outreach sessions sharing AWARD\$ information were completed in FY21 and many other sessions were offered but did not have registrants during this year of COVID. When appropriate, staff discussed opportunities available through AWARD\$ and WAGE\$, and some sessions were completed in conjunction with the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program as well. The goal is to give audience members an opportunity to learn about multiple resources supported by DCDEE. Field-based outreach was suspended for the duration of FY21.

In addition to the outreach listed above, 6,306 recruitment emails or mailings were sent to 3,253 facilities. AWARD\$ also sent information to key partners including Smart Start partnerships, resource and referral agencies, community colleges, and infant-toddler specialists. Follow-up calls were made to many of the non-participating sites to verify receipt of the email/packet, answer questions and encourage participation. During each employment confirmation completed with a participating site, the counselor also inquired about any possible eligible staff not yet accessing a supplement.

## OUTCOME

Table C below details the primary outcomes for Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®.

**Table C: Outcome**

	<b>Projected Outcome</b>	<b>Results</b>
1	The turnover rate of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® participants for FY21 will be less than 25%.	<b>Outcome met.</b> The turnover rate for AWARD\$ participants was only 12%, well below the benchmark of 25%. This is particularly encouraging given the current reports of an overall teacher shortage.
2	Eighty-five percent (85%) of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® survey respondents will state that the supplement helps ease financial stress.	<b>Outcome exceeded.</b> Ninety-nine percent (99%) of survey respondents said that the AWARD\$ supplement helps to ease financial stress.

Outcome #1 is measured through employment confirmations completed as each participant concludes a six-month commitment period on the program. The information regarding turnover is entered into a database that produces the percentage. Outcome #2 is based on survey responses collected and calculated by the research department at Child Care Services Association (CCSA).

## PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

The information below reflects the impact of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® from the perspectives of participants and their employers. Salary supplement recipients and center directors who had recipients among their staff participated in an annual evaluation.

Survey samples were created based on the number of potential respondents. A 40% sample was drawn for participants. All site directors with staff on the program were surveyed. Directors in counties who potentially had staff members on AWARD\$ and/or WAGE\$ were sent a shared survey to assess the impact of salary supplements. These responses have been integrated into the director feedback.

All participants in the sample who had email addresses on file with AWARD\$ were invited to complete the survey online. Reminder emails were sent to encourage online response. Those who did not participate online or who did not have email addresses on file were also mailed surveys. One final attempt was made to secure non-respondent surveys via phone in counties with low response rates. All respondents were given the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for professional resources.

Overall, 65% of the targeted population completed the survey (941 of 1,448), which included the following:

- 77% of participating teachers/family child care providers (344 of 445)
- 60% of non-participating directors with staff receiving salary supplements (597 of 1,003)<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Non-participating directors in some cases may have responded about participants in AWARD\$ and/or WAGE\$.

Survey recipients were asked to examine a list of possible benefits resulting from AWARD\$ and indicate whether or not each benefit is true for the respondent. Responses to the individual options were as follows, listed in survey order:

- AWARD\$ helps me feel more satisfied with my job. – 98%
- AWARD\$ is an incentive for me to seek additional education and/or it helps make pursuing coursework more financially feasible. – 90% (participants must have at least an Associate Degree with 24 hours of birth to five focused coursework to be eligible)
- The AWARD\$ supplement helps ease financial stress. – 99%
- AWARD\$ encourages me to stay with my current program. – 98%
- My AWARD\$ supplement helps me to provide more resources for my program or classroom. – 93%
- Receiving the AWARD\$ supplement makes me feel more appreciated and recognized for my work. – 99%

Additional survey results are listed below:

**Ninety-nine percent (99%) of all respondents stated that they are satisfied with the program and its administration.** One of the directors who indicated that they were somewhat dissatisfied explained by saying, “Because directors or other teachers don’t get the same compensation.”

**For those respondents who had the opportunity to speak with the Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® staff, nearly 100% of those who have had interactions found the staff to be pleasant and helpful.** Many respondents took the opportunity to share additional comments about their interactions with AWARD\$ staff. Not only did the respondents report that they received helpful and pleasant customer service, but many also talked about how important the encouragement from AWARD\$ staff has been in terms of participation in the program and pursuit of education. A few examples of participant feedback are listed below:

*“Staff is always respectful, answers my questions and congratulates me on accomplishments.” (teacher)*

*“They are very professional and friendly. Five stars!” (teacher)*

*“The staff is nice and always answers questions in depth for clear understanding.” (teacher)*

*“Everyone I have talked to has been exceptionally helpful and friendly.” (family child care provider)*

*“They go beyond what is expected.” (director)*

*“The AWARD\$ staff was so awesome, they took the time and helped me and my staff. They went over and beyond.” (director)*

**Ninety-three percent (93%) of responding directors indicated that staff participation in AWARD\$ benefits the children in their centers in some way.** When asked to select from a list of options explaining how participation may be beneficial to the children in their programs, including an option stating that no benefits have been noticed, 93% of responding directors indicated that staff participation in AWARD\$ benefits the children in some way. The two most popular examples of impact were that improved morale has created more positive child-teacher interactions and that staff members are seeking more education, which leads to higher quality care for children.

**Ninety-nine percent (99%) of responding directors reported positive attitudes toward AWARD\$ in their child care programs.** One of the directors who stated that attitudes were somewhat negative said, “Infants and toddlers are not the only age group, and not the only underpaid positions.”

**Ninety-nine percent (99%) of responding participants indicated that, as a result of AWARD\$, they feel more appreciated and recognized for their work.** Recipients emphasize the importance of the recognition and appreciation associated with the receipt of the AWARD\$ supplements and the impact this has on self-esteem, professionalism and morale. Not only are these things significant in themselves, but they enhance the likelihood that participants will stay in the field and seek additional education.

*“It is always a plus to feel appreciated and recognized for my work. AWARD\$ makes me feel like I’m not just babysitting. The children in my care benefit through supplies to enhance learning and a teacher who strives to keep them learning and happy.” (New Hanover, teacher)*

## **PROGRAM CHALLENGES**

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® has operated successfully in a largely remote capacity and has issued payments on a regular schedule since the pandemic began. However, the impact on the field at large has been significant. While DCDEE reports that program closures are not as high as many expected, AWARD\$ recipients and their employers shared through survey responses that the challenges have been difficult to overcome and they are still suffering from the impact. See Appendix B for a sample of this feedback.

*“Due to COVID-19, some staff elected to stay home when the pandemic began and have yet to return. Due to fewer staff, we have fewer children enrolled. It is a struggle trying to hire new staff who have experience and education. Funding is down and we are open reduced hours due to a lower number of staff, which is hard on parents. The pandemic has also added stress and worry of someone coming into the building that has COVID-19.” (Ashe, director)*

*“I personally have worked during this whole pandemic and I’m thankful to have a job. But at the same time, I don’t think it’s understood and recognized how much we are risking our lives working in this field.” (Guilford, teacher)*

During FY21, AWARD\$ learned of 10 participants who lost eligibility due to a drop in hours. While this number is not extremely high, each of these individuals lost an important contribution to their compensation. Anecdotally, it seems that many teachers are experiencing a reduction in hours due to COVID-19, which may mean that others have not applied for a supplement because they did not expect to be eligible. DCDEE has now approved changing full-time status in FY22 to 30 hours or more, which should be a significant benefit to potential applicants.

AWARD\$ is an important resource for the early care and education field as it rebounds from this crisis, and to help participants get funds easily and quickly, AWARD\$ is in the process of collecting Automated Clearing House (ACH) paperwork. This will eliminate waiting for a check or losing checks in the mail. It will also eliminate returned checks due to moves. However, the process has been more challenging than anticipated. Staff are fielding questions on a daily basis and much of the documentation has been incomplete. Early educators are dealing with new requirements as well as health and safety concerns for themselves, their families and the children they serve. It is likely difficult to prioritize the submission of the needed documentation, but AWARD\$ will continue to pursue this goal. Having AWARD\$ recipients paid electronically is one more step to building our profession. Although difficult, we will continue this effort to directly deposit payments.

## **FUNDING**

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® implements several strategies to publicize that its funding comes from DCDEE. This is highlighted in every check letter and labels are affixed to the outside of each check envelope to identify the funder. Even as the program converts to electronic payments, notification will continue. The AWARD\$ fact sheets and application-based program agreements identify DCDEE as the funder and AWARD\$ representatives explain the funding for the program in outreach across the state. Finally, the program evaluations give respondents the opportunity to share messages with the funder of their supplements. See Appendix C for a sample of those messages for FY21. Please note that, in addition to the sample comments included, a large number of recipients shared their gratitude through “thank you” messages that are not listed.

*“Thank you for supporting infant-toddler teachers. We are often unrecognized for the work we do with young children. This supplement gives us incentive to stay with our current program and be better teachers.” (Craven, teacher)*



**Table 1**  
**Demographic Profile of the 1,156 Participants in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



	# of Participants	% of Participants
<b>Race*</b>		
White	373	32%
Black or African American	670	58%
American Indian or Alaska Native	21	2%
Asian	18	2%
Two or more races	11	1%
Not Given	44	4%
Other	19	2%
<b>Ethnicity*</b>		
Not Given	4	0%
Latinx	53	5%
Not Latinx	1099	95%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	0%
Female	1153	100%
<b>Age Range of Participants</b>		
20-24 years	30	3%
25-34 years	259	22%
35-44 years	295	26%
45-54 years	286	25%
55-59 years	121	10%
60-64 years	94	8%
65 and over	69	6%
Not Given	2	0%
<b>Position</b>		
Teacher	940	81%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	14	1%
Teacher (Assistant Director)	14	1%
Teacher (Director)	5	0%
Teacher (Director Owner)	12	1%
Assistant Teacher	26	2%
Director (Owner)	1	0%
Small Home Provider	141	12%
Teacher (in Small Home)	3	0%
<b>Education Level</b>		
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	725	63%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	40	3%
MA/MS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	6	1%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	65	6%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	26	2%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	254	22%

\*779 participants identify as Latinx or as a person of color, which is 68% of the active population that provided data.

**Table 1 (cont.)**  
**Demographic Profile of the 1,156 Participants in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**

	<b># of Participants</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>
MA/MS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	5	0%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	35	3%
<b>Wage Rate**</b>		
Below \$7.25 per hour	112	10%
\$7.25 - \$9.99 per hour	73	6%
\$10.00 - \$12.99 per hour	303	26%
\$13.00 - \$14.99 per hour	265	23%
\$15.00 - \$16.99 per hour	288	25%
\$17.00 - \$19.00 per hour	115	10%
<b>Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Report End Date</b>		
0 to .99 Years	30	3%
1.00 to 1.99 Years	134	12%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	144	12%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	132	11%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	88	8%
5.00 or More Years	628	54%

\*\*The first category under Wage Rate may reflect those earning below North Carolina's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue. Pay rates will also reflect bonus compensation if awarded by the employer.



**Table 2**  
**Child Care Center Profile for North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



	Programs	Participants
<b>Center</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>1,011</b>
3 STAR	57	69
4 STAR	126	205
5 STAR	357	720
PROB	1	1
PROV	1	1
SPPROV	1	1
Temporary	12	14
<b>Family Provider</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>145</b>
3 STAR	7	7
4 STAR	105	107
5 STAR	30	31
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b><u>697</u></b>	<b><u>1,156</u></b>

Participants in sites that become ineligible due to star rating changes may be eligible for time worked prior to this change if they complete successful six-month commitment periods.



**Table 3**  
**Educational Award Levels Profile of the 1,156 Participants**  
**in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



	<b># of Participants</b>	<b>% of Participants Out Of Active</b>
Eight	725	63%
Nine	46	4%
Ten	91	8%
Eleven	259	22%
Twelve	35	3%



**Table 4**  
**Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



1,355 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 796 different child care programs in 91 counties, serving approximately 19,222 children. 1207 participants worked in centers and 149 participants worked in family child care homes. (The total of these numbers may reflect a duplicated number of people paid if participants moved between center employment and family provider employment and were paid from both locations.)

\*Note that the sum of participants by county could be greater than the total participants paid. The total participants listed above is an unduplicated number. Participants can be paid by more than one county in any given year.

	Total Paid*	Total Programs	# Of Children 0 to 2
	<b>1,358</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>19,222</b>
Alamance	6	4	118
Alexander	4	3	76
Anson	9	7	44
Ashe	11	4	72
Avery	1	1	33
Beaufort	20	11	207
Bertie	9	6	54
Bladen	9	6	79
Brunswick	2	2	75
Buncombe	22	14	469
Burke	33	10	261
Cabarrus	18	14	490
Caldwell	9	4	106
Camden	2	2	4
Carteret	6	3	71
Caswell	2	1	16
Catawba	16	11	238
Chatham	19	13	212
Cherokee	4	3	56
Chowan	6	4	39
Clay	1	1	6
Cleveland	8	6	88
Columbus	7	6	116
Craven	8	4	86
Cumberland	64	23	572

**Table 4**  
**Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**

1,355 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 796 different child care programs in 91 counties, serving approximately 19,222 children. 1207 participants worked in centers and 149 participants worked in family child care homes.

\*Note that the sum of participants by county could be greater than the total participants paid. The total participants listed above is an unduplicated number. Participants can be paid by more than one county in any given year.

	Total Paid*	Total Programs	# Of Children 0 to 2
	<b>1,358</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>19,222</b>
Currituck	1	1	8
Dare	4	4	33
Davidson	22	14	409
Davie	7	5	122
Duplin	16	10	145
Durham	22	16	601
Edgecombe	1	1	3
Forsyth	19	12	507
Franklin	2	2	39
Gaston	5	4	54
Gates	3	3	21
Graham	1	1	6
Granville	5	5	129
Greene	3	3	34
Guilford	168	80	1,586
Halifax	6	3	35
Harnett	3	3	45
Haywood	9	6	104
Henderson	5	4	77
Hertford	5	3	21
Hoke	3	3	41
Hyde	1	1	4
Iredell	13	10	314
Jackson	4	2	31
Johnston	16	12	401

**Table 4**  
**Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**

1,355 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 796 different child care programs in 91 counties, serving approximately 19,222 children. 1207 participants worked in centers and 149 participants worked in family child care homes.

\*Note that the sum of participants by county could be greater than the total participants paid. The total participants listed above is an unduplicated number. Participants can be paid by more than one county in any given year.

	Total Paid*	Total Programs	# Of Children 0 to 2
	<b>1,358</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>19,222</b>
Lee	1	1	18
Lenoir	15	7	167
Lincoln	6	6	141
Macon	16	3	99
Madison	1	1	9
McDowell	16	6	82
Mecklenburg	92	64	2,074
Montgomery	8	2	58
Moore	34	14	295
Nash	2	2	17
New Hanover	27	15	591
Northampton	5	2	23
Onslow	8	8	153
Orange	38	19	410
Pamlico	3	2	26
Pasquotank	4	4	74
Pender	10	7	174
Perquimans	3	3	25
Person	4	4	24
Pitt	31	17	436
Polk	1	1	20
Randolph	4	4	137
Richmond	9	5	50
Robeson	37	21	515
Rockingham	6	5	117

**Table 4**  
**Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**

1,355 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 796 different child care programs in 91 counties, serving approximately 19,222 children. 1207 participants worked in centers and 149 participants worked in family child care homes.

\*Note that the sum of participants by county could be greater than the total participants paid. The total participants listed above is an unduplicated number. Participants can be paid by more than one county in any given year.

	Total Paid*	Total Programs	# Of Children 0 to 2
	<b>1,358</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>19,222</b>
Rowan	12	6	119
Rutherford	1	1	27
Sampson	15	7	76
Scotland	13	5	82
Stanly	7	3	144
Stokes	4	2	39
Union	20	11	224
Vance	6	6	65
Wake	197	129	3,622
Washington	5	4	33
Watauga	7	6	131
Wayne	20	11	253
Wilkes	4	2	41
Wilson	22	7	254
Yadkin	1	1	5
Yancey	3	1	14



**Table 5**  
**Annual Turnover Summary of the 1,318 Participants**  
**in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



The annual turnover percentage is based on an overall population of 1318 participants. This population includes those individuals that were active during the reporting period of July 2020 - June 2021 (1156) and those who left their centers during this time (162). Active participants meet all eligibility requirements and have worked at least six months in their child care programs. Active participants might also include individuals who have left a child care program, but have since worked six eligible months in a new site. (These “reactivated” participants are not factored into the report at all until they have completed this six month period.) The annual turnover percentage is obtained by dividing the total number of participants who left their center into the total number of participants.

People who became ineligible for other reasons (i.e. position change within center, became over-income due to raise, center closure, noncompliance with the program’s income documentation guidelines, failure to obtain necessary coursework) are not included in the table. They have been removed from the overall total and the turnover numbers since they were no longer eligible for Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$ and the supplement could not have been an incentive for them to stay.

Individuals who left their child care programs and those who became ineligible due to other reasons may or may not have been paid during the current fiscal year for completing one or more commitment periods. However, they have all been paid at some time during their participation on AWARD\$ and thus earned active status prior to becoming ineligible.

<b>Annual Turnover (June 2020 - June 2021)</b>	
Total Participants	= 1,318
Active Participants	= 1,156
Left Center	= 162
Turnover Percentage	= 12%



**Table 5**  
**Profile of Participants who Left their Programs in North Carolina**  
**Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®**  
**July 2020 - June 2021**



	# of Participants	% of Participants
<b>Race</b>		
White	75	46%
Black or African American	71	44%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1%
Not Given	12	7%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Latinx	10	6%
Not Latinx	152	94%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	2	1%
Female	160	99%
<b>Position</b>		
Teacher	155	96%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	2	1%
Teacher (Assistant Director)	1	1%
Assistant Teacher	2	1%
Small Home Provider	2	1%
<b>Education Level</b>		
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	96	59%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	7	4%
MA/MS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	1	1%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	9	6%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	5	3%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	39	24%
MA/MS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	1	1%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	4	2%
<b>Wage Rate*</b>		
Below \$7.25 per hour	1	1%
\$7.25 - \$9.99 per hour	15	9%
\$10.00 - \$12.99 per hour	54	33%
\$13.00 - \$14.99 per hour	49	30%
\$15.00 - \$16.99 per hour	34	21%
\$17.00 - \$19.00 per hour	9	6%
<b>Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Date Ineligible</b>		
0 to .99 Years	137	85%
1.00 to 1.99 Years	1	1%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	1	1%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	2	1%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	5	3%
5.00 or More Years	16	10%

\* The first category under Wage Rate reflects those earning below North Carolina's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue. Pay rates will also reflect bonus compensation if awarded by the employer.

**Table 5 (cont.)  
 Profile of Participants who Left their Programs in North Carolina  
 Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®  
 July 2020 - June 2021**

<b>Regulation Type</b>	<b># of Participants</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>
3 STAR	15	9%
4 STAR	28	17%
5 STAR	115	71%
Temporary	1	1%
PROB	1	1%
PROV	1	1%
SPPROV	1	1%

\* The first category under Wage Rate reflects those earning below North Carolina's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue. Pay rates will also reflect bonus compensation if awarded by the employer.



## Appendix A: AWARD\$ Impact Sample Feedback Collected from AWARD\$ Surveys FY21

“I noticed my staff is more motivated to complete their education.” (Alexander, director)

“As we all know early childhood teachers aren’t paid very well. The extra money is definitely an incentive to the infant-toddler teachers. My teachers get so excited when it is time for AWARD\$! I think that the teachers feel they are viewed as a professional by receiving the extra money.” (Ashe, director)

“AWARD\$ helps me to love my job more and to stay with the program.” (Burke, teacher)

“It is important as it has boosted staff morale and they feel more valued as educators. When the teachers are happy, the child-teacher interactions are more positive.” (Burke, director)

“It has encouraged my employees to want to create a learning experience for their families and to go back to school to enhance their knowledge.” (Buncombe, director)

“More than anything, it encourages staff to continue their education. More than half of our assistant teachers are working towards their Bachelor's Degree in Birth-Kindergarten, which improves their working knowledge and increases the quality of the program, in turn benefiting children and families.” (Caldwell, director)

“These programs have greatly benefited our staff and encourage them to grow professionally and to continue in the early childhood field.” (Caldwell, director)

“Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$<sup>®</sup> helps with staff being able to provide the children and families with teachers that are reliable and at work.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Teachers are motivated to continue with their education.” (Cumberland, director)

“Staff are continuing to go forth completing their degrees. These awards have helped tremendously because no one needs to worry about how they are going to purchase the next textbook or pay fees.” (Cumberland, director)

“The supplement is important because it makes the staff feel like what they are doing is very important to the children and the community.” (Cumberland, director)

“I feel AWARD\$ encourages further education in a most valuable profession. I feel further education is an asset for better understanding and meeting the needs of young children in our care.” (Davidson, teacher)

---

<sup>1</sup> Respondents referred to Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$<sup>®</sup> in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“Child care teachers are paid very low, so I think it is important to keep them in the field. The supplement has also encouraged my teachers to go back to school and finish what they have started.” (Davidson, director)

“The program gives me an incentive to continue my education and stay with my current school.” (Durham, teacher)

“It's important because teachers' wages have never been equivalent to the work that we do. I always look forward and count the months when it will be here. If my wage had been satisfactory, the AWARD\$ program would not have been so important. We love the children we work with and have their best interest in mind, but getting an incentive makes it worthwhile. So we thank you for this great humanitarian effort.” (Durham, teacher)

“Bills were about to be due and I was extremely stressed out about how I was going to pay them. My AWARD\$ supplement came in the mail and I was so relieved. Not only was I able to pay that month's bills on time, I was able to get a few groceries and pay ahead on a few of the following month's bills. It was the biggest relief to have received that supplement in the mail at such a critical time.” (Durham, teacher)

“It has encouraged staff to further their education. We have staff that are better educated and children who benefit from that.” (Durham, director)

“It has kept qualified teachers in our program, inspired staff to seek more education, and helped teachers feel valued by the community.” (Durham, director)

“It improves morale and encourages teachers to take classes to increase their education level. It is a great feeling when that check arrives.” (Durham, director)

“Families can't be the only ones supporting higher wages for early childhood education staff, and centers can't afford to pay all staff the wages they deserve. It takes outside subsidies to support them.” (Durham, director)

“It helps keep the staff happy and shows them that what they do makes a difference in teaching young children.” (Edgecombe, director)

“It's helped so many families receive a financial benefit that they may never receive from anywhere else. Some jobs have stopped or cut back on raises at this time so this is truly a blessing. Feeling grateful is an understatement!!! Thank you!!!” (Forsyth, teacher)

“It is important because it helps us to keep going in a field we believe in. Honestly early childhood education professionals are definitely not paid enough to survive. We do this for the children we care for, but take a bowl of poverty to do so. It helps to know someone appreciates us. This award helps to give some hope and to honestly make ends meet.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“AWARD\$ has helped with gas, lights, car payment and food.” (Gaston, teacher)

“It’s beneficial financially and helps motivate teachers to go back to school.” (Granville, director)

“I think it is important because birth to age two are the most critical years in a child’s life. We as educators are their second source of love, care, and nurture. It is meant to show appreciation for the hard work we as educators do. It helps boost the teachers to have more supplies in the classroom to make learning fun for children.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I believe it has helped me reconnect with my love of teaching.” (Guilford, teacher)

“AWARD\$ is important because it recognizes our profession and gives us an extra boost in income since early educators don’t get paid well in our field. It makes me feel better appreciated as a teacher and gives me the drive to continue to do what I was called to do.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It helps me feel that what I do for children and families really matters. With the stress of everyday life and expenses, having a little extra money coming is so important and I am truly grateful.” (Guilford, teacher)

“AWARD\$ brings awareness to the incredible value of teachers working with this age group and how important the earliest years are.” (Guilford, director)

“I think it is important, because a lot of time the teachers do not have the extra money to pay for classes. I notice that they perk up when that money comes.” (Guilford, director)

“It encourages staff to continue education and helps build a sense of professionalism and pride in their work.” (Henderson, director)

“It validates the importance and professionalism of a career in early childhood, offering support that will encourage staff to remain in this field.” (Henderson, director)

“I do not have health insurance so this helps with doctors and prescriptions. ... Feeling recognition for a job you love and have passion for is beyond words.” (Johnston, teacher)

“Single mom here. AWARD\$ helps me provide for my child.” (Johnston, teacher)

“The supplement is an incentive to continue to work with the children and at a center that I enjoy working.” (Johnston, teacher)

“It has really assisted me with paying for my schooling and I can provide more resources for the children in my classroom. I use it very wisely. I’m grateful that I have been blessed with these funds.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“Child care teachers are not paid enough money and the supplement helps them with their ambition and drive to want to continue to be in the same job.” (Lincoln, director)

“The job our staff does is a very thankless job, especially to not be recognized for the importance of the role it plays in the development of children. These supplements let staff know that others

do recognize and reward for jobs well done, as well as recognize the importance of GREAT child care.” (Macon, director)

“It is very helpful in a time when money is tight. It helps with being less stressed about bills.” (McDowell, teacher)

“It’s important because it helps to boost teacher morale. It makes me want to do my job even better.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It is so important because most of us don’t make enough to provide for our daily living and it also motivates people to keep going in the field and gives children a steady teacher.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It means a lot to our families to have consistent staff. I have had so many children in the infant room. A lot of parents recommend friends to our school and the prospective families appreciate the fact that the infant teacher that had their friend’s children is still there for their new baby. It makes them a lot more comfortable.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It allows for schools to maintain high quality teachers and for them to feel important and valued. I can serve the children better when my needs are met. It allows me to know early educators play a major role in society, but much work is needed to improve our pay and respect in this field. Our communities heavily rely on us.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It has been a true incentive to me and made me feel more valuable as an early childhood educator. It has most certainly added to my financial stability. It has also been a very real incentive for me to remain in the position and in the location that I’m at right now. I’m a believer in consistency of care and I am so thankful that there’s a tangible way that this priority is evident in the hearts and minds of others.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“We love what we do, but we get low pay and can hardly take care of our families. It has made me less stressed.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It helps educated teachers. It helps me feel appreciated for the career I chose. Better educators are offered to the children.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Staff feel more appreciated for the hard work put into establishing a career in this field.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“I think it is so well deserved for the teachers who have put in time to get their education. The supplement really makes them feel like it was worth it, and they can always use an extra boost that they are valued.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“It is rewarding to see more positive reactions from teachers. My turnover rate is very low, and I also like the fact that the teachers want to further their education.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“It is important as it helps financially in taking stress off because of student loans and everyday expenses that families face. So many have lower incomes at this time but an increase in bills. This shows appreciation and reminds us that we are essential workers.” (Montgomery, teacher)

“It allows teachers to overcome some financial stress because child care workers are underpaid at its finest.” (Moore, teacher)

“Both supplements are very beneficial to staff in the child care profession. It helps to place value in what we do while making us feel truly ‘essential’. The morale boost is definitely passed on through staff and child interactions.” (Nash, director)

“It is always a plus to feel appreciated and recognized for my work. AWARD\$ makes me feel like I’m not just babysitting. The children in my care benefit through supplies to enhance learning and a teacher who strives to keep them learning and happy.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“It has helped me with financial problems so I don’t have to focus on that. I can focus more on work.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“The program is important because it validates the importance of infant teachers. We are sometimes looked upon as babysitters when we really are teachers.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“Income in early childhood education is low and even more so in infant-toddler age groups. Not only is it hard to find staff that want to and are great at working in these classes, to find educated staff is even harder. This program encourages them to continue education and supplements their income.” (New Hanover, director)

“AWARD\$ encourages staff to not only pursue higher education, but it is also a great reward to them that helps them feel more valued.” (New Hanover, director)

“Teachers being supplemented with additional income can make them feel appreciated for what they do for young children on a daily basis. This incentive can assist in keeping teachers employed at our center, which provides stability for our children.” (New Hanover, director)

“Financially and emotionally, having the AWARD\$ incentive has helped me focus on giving the children the best I can give them as a teacher. It relieves having to worry about paying bills.” (Orange, teacher)

“I encourage more providers to improve education, because I see the benefit of having more courses in order to receive more AWARD\$.” (Orange, family child care provider)

“It gives me motivation to continue my education and obtain the knowledge to provide to best care for the children in my care.” (Pender, family child care provider)

“I think it is important because it shows that our hard work in the classrooms with our children is not unseen.” (Pitt, teacher)

“It is important because working in an early childhood program is challenging and important, but the staff is severely underpaid. To attract highly competent and qualified candidates, you have to be able to offer a competitive wage, especially when teachers are licensed and hold a Bachelor's Degree. I have been in the field for over 20 years, and it is becoming harder and harder to attract highly qualified candidates.” (Pitt, director)

“It's very beneficial to the teachers with personal expenses involving school, home life and encourages teachers to continue their education. Overall, it creates a better environment for the children as well because the teachers will be better educated to teach the children.” (Pitt, director)

“Everyone wants to take more classes because of the supplemental income.” (Pitt, director)

“The program is absolutely essential and has been extremely helpful to staff's continuing education.” (Pitt, director)

“The Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® program is important because teachers don't get paid nearly enough as they should, and the supplement adds a nice bonus to the pay. AWARD\$ helps me to want to continue to stay working in child care because of the bonus received every six months. It helps bring a positive outlook to teachers in the early childhood community, as well as to help bring new exciting things to the classroom for the children in my care.” (Randolph, teacher)

“It is an incentive to stay with a program for the long run in order to receive the supplement.” (Randolph, director)

“We are not able to pay teachers what they deserve, so this is a huge incentive to continue working in child care, in our center and also to continue working towards more education in the field.” (Randolph, director)

“Teachers are more eager to take more classes and encouraged to provide better services to the children.” (Richmond, director)

“It increases morale, teachers come in happier and the kids are happier.” (Richmond, director)

“It has helped to pay for me to go and work on my bachelor's degree. It has also helped me by buying more books for me to use with my children.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I feel that the AWARD\$ supplement is a great opportunity for teachers to help them along the way concerning their finances and resources that they need. It lets you know that there are people out there that appreciate all that you do in the workplace.” (Robeson, teacher)

“The AWARD\$ gave my staff something to look forward to. It encourages them to be more involved and want to stay in an early childhood setting.” (Robeson, director)

“AWARD\$ puts food on the table.” (Rockingham, teacher)

“It encourages me to stay in the field.” (Rowan, teacher)

“We feel it’s very important that in this field where it is easy to be forgotten, that the supplement allows teachers to feel as though they are being heard as educators. We should also be paid as educators.” (Rowan, director)

“Staff are far more valuable than what they are paid, and the supplement helps counter that.” (Swain, director)

“I love being a teacher but the wage is so low that I have trouble paying all my bills. AWARD\$ has helped me financially and it’s a reason why I keep my career that I love so much.” (Union, teacher)

“AWARD\$ helps meet my needs. I don’t have to worry about finding other employment.” (Union, teacher)

“It just makes you feel like you are not forgotten and that we are needed.” (Wake, teacher)

“It’s very helpful and as stressful as it gets in child care, it makes you want to keep pressing on because you know there is actually help out there. These centers don’t really pay us what we are worth.” (Wake, teacher)

“Working with younger children is sometimes stressful and challenging, but with getting AWARD\$, I feel appreciated for my work.” (Wake, teacher)

“I love my job and what I do but it’s a reality that the pay is very bad and having a child, it’s even worse. This program has helped me with him and it’s been a relief.” (Wake, teacher)

“It has helped me feel more valued in my profession and encouraged me to stay.” (Wake, teacher)

“It has made me feel more valued and that shows in how I interact with the children in my care, in my community and just made me feel better overall in my choice for a career.” (Wake, teacher)

“AWARD\$ has allowed me to get out of debt and to consider returning to school.” (Wake, teacher)

“AWARD\$ provides incentive for early child care providers to further their careers. Children benefit greatly from an awesome, satisfied, trained teacher.” (Wake, teacher)

“It has enabled me to continue my education while providing care to children. It has helped purchase resources needed to provide an enriched learning environment.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“I am a sole proprietor and never receive bonuses because I work for myself. This was one thing I missed about working Corporate America. For the first time in over 15 years, I received a

‘bonus’ for recognition of my work. I really appreciated it and I’m very thankful for it. I had a few classes left to complete my bachelor's degree and the program assisted me with this as well as items for my program.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“It has built up my morale for working with children and not feel like a babysitter. I can put my teaching skills to work and see where I am helping children.” (Washington, teacher)

“I wouldn’t be able to continue in this career if it weren’t for the financial assistance.” (Watauga, teacher)

“It is an incentive to keep working with toddlers. Something that I look forward to in order to help ease the financial situation.” (Wayne, teacher)

“The Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® program is important because it helps us to continue working in the field of early childhood.” (Wayne, teacher)

“It has really lightened some very heavy financial loads.” (Wayne, teacher)

“It gives teachers the incentive to want to work in early childhood and motivates them to provide quality care for the children that we serve.” (Wayne, director)

“It keeps staff morale up and families are feeling satisfied that the teachers caring for their children are qualified.” (Wayne, director)

“Receiving WAGE\$ or AWARD\$ is important because the salaries are low in this profession and the extra money really helps the teachers. It means so much to the staff, and it increases the morale at the center. The children benefit with keeping the same teacher.” (Wilson, director)



## Appendix B: COVID-19 Sample Feedback Collected from AWARD\$ Surveys FY21

“Staff are more stressed, and we have had a lot of turnover because of the fear teachers have had of getting COVID-19.” (Alamance, director)

“The pandemic is STRESSFUL. We are not operating well and are barely making ends meet.” (Alamance, director)

“Due to COVID-19, it’s been difficult. We have lost some kids and now that kids are able to come back, we now have no staff.” (Alamance, director)

“We had to close our center down several times for two weeks because of positive COVID-19 tests. We became more aware of symptoms experienced by infant and toddler children. Screening was and continues to be our best line of defense.” (Anson, director)

“Due to COVID-19, some staff elected to stay home when the pandemic began and have yet to return. Due to fewer staff, we have fewer children enrolled. It is a struggle trying to hire new staff who have experience and education. Funding is down and we are open reduced hours due to a lower number of staff, which is hard on parents. The pandemic has also added stress and worry of someone coming into the building that has COVID-19.” (Ashe, director)

“COVID-19 affects morale, and they are questioning whether they get paid enough to risk getting COVID-19. Child care workers have been on the frontlines since March 2020.” (Buncombe, director)

“During COVID-19, our program is much smaller and many of our teachers left the program to pursue other lines of work. The instability, at the time, led to many teachers jumping ship. We have many new staff this year, which has given us some fresh perspectives, but new hires require a great deal of onboarding. The uncertainty around enrollment and employment has been difficult. The fear of a possible outbreak has us all on edge all of the time. Overall, lots of uncertainty makes it hard to plan and project for the future.” (Buncombe, director)

“COVID-19 has made it hard to hire qualified staff members. They really highlighted the importance of what we do, but now we need to get paid accordingly.” (Buncombe, director)

“COVID-19 has made the teacher’s job more difficult with increased cleaning and worries about contracting the virus. Our enrollment is lower than expected and keeping rooms staffed with consistent teachers has been an issue. We are having to use substitutes much more than normal.” (Caldwell, director)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made it very difficult to keep the center staffed, and it has been almost impossible to bring in new staff because of the extreme delays in the fingerprinting process.” (Cumberland, director)

“COVID-19 has caused a great amount of fear in our staff, which has resulted in a shortage of teachers.” (Cumberland, director)

“We had a loss of 90% of our children and four staff members due to the fear of getting COVID-19.” (Cumberland, director)

“Even though COVID-19 makes our position very scary because no one wants to get sick or die, we still love and appreciate our opportunity to educate and bond with our children. We still love what we do even in a pandemic!” (Davidson, director)

“It’s very hard to keep morale up during COVID-19. We are short staffed and are overworked.” (Davie, director)

“I’ve never been more nervous to work, because of the COVID -19 pandemic. However, you have to go one day at a time.” (Durham, teacher)

“Due to COVID -19, anxiety is much higher when it comes to illness and keeping our students healthy.” (Durham, teacher)

“COVID-19 has significantly changed many things in our program: enrollment, staffing, hours, schedules, and materials. It has brought us closer as a community and also really tested our flexibility.” (Durham, director)

“COVID-19 has made it difficult to hire and keep highly effective and qualified teachers.” (Durham, director)

“I am short two teachers who chose not to come back due to health issues that they felt would be impacted by the COVID-19 virus. I have not had any luck in replacing those two teachers yet. Based upon my communications with other directors, we are all having a hard time recruiting new child care teachers.” (Forsyth, director)

“During the pandemic, I lost nine staff members, had to close two rooms, and there is not a pool of people responding to our needs. People are not willing to work in early childhood! I have lost three more staff members to nanny positions, even the funeral home took a good teacher as an administrative assistant!” (Forsyth, director)

“It's hard to maintain adequate staffing at times due to the pandemic. We have had to rework our program to accommodate school age children being here all day long, every day, as well as trying to facilitate their virtual learning.” (Gaston, director)

“I personally have worked during this whole pandemic and I’m thankful to have a job. But at the same time, I don’t think it’s understood and recognized how much we are risking our lives working in this field.” (Guilford, teacher)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has increased our responsibility to maintain a clean, healthy environment and has limited available staff in our classrooms, creating a larger workload for the

staff in the classroom. However, it has also highlighted how much families need high quality care and value the care we provide.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It’s a day by day impact because you never know what to expect and it’s an uneasy feeling to not know how or when the impact (COVID-19) will hit and how bad it will be.” (Guilford, teacher)

“COVID-19 has made me aware to take precautions more seriously. Yes, we engaged in cleaning and sanitizing constantly but it has heightened our awareness and areas that we may not think to sanitize. It also makes us skeptical in a sense because, although we ask families the assessment questions, are they truly being honest? We have to trust them at their words, and that they are taking and following the precautions of our local government, as we put ourselves at risks.” (Guilford, family child care provider)

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been tough to keep all staff employed at full time due to the low number of children enrolled in my center. It has also been hard to fill one position I have for toddlers.” (Harnett, director)

“When COVID-19 hit and numerous families withdrew, it cut down on the number of teachers needed. We did not want to lose any staff, so we created ‘work hours,’ which is basically creating cleaning and odd jobs for teachers to do since their class had withdrawn. Trying to give them their normal hours and pay was very expensive. Thank goodness there was the North Carolina bonus pay.” (Harnett, director)

“Our enrollment dropped tremendously in the beginning of the pandemic. It is starting to pick up, but finding qualified staff is an issue now.” (Harnett, director)

“Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many staff are not working out of fear, but more parents need care because of help from DSS.” (Iredell, director)

“COVID-19 has made a huge impact for many reasons. Staff are afraid to work, so we have lost several valuable staff members. We have reduced our staff child ratios to help social distance in the classroom, which has caused less revenue, but the staff feel more comfortable. The operational grants have helped offset the loss of revenue. COVID-19 has added new costs to our program, PPP supplies, extra cleaning expenses and extra staffing. As an owner, there is always the fear and worry that we will have to close. We already had to close for two weeks due to a cluster, which was a huge financial hardship. We will not survive if this happens again. We did not charge our families, but paid our staff, which was extremely hard financially. On a personal level, there is always the fear of getting COVID-19. The staff and children work closely together. We try to social distance, but you just can't in this line of work. (Lincoln, director)

“Because of COVID-19, staff worry about having to come to work and then go back home to their families. Safety is definitely an issue.” (Martin, director)

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made me feel somewhat disconnected. The children can’t fully see our faces to read our expressions and we can’t cuddle them like we want to.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“The COVID-19 pandemic is the absolute hardest time I’ve ever worked through, but I’ve also never been more humbled by my team. They have showed up every day and done everything they can to keep our school community safe and healthy.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our enrollment is down, morale has suffered, communication with parents is reduced because they are not coming into the buildings anymore, and there is much more work. Everything is much harder.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“Every day I pray for our staff and children. We are following the guidelines, but there is no guarantee with the COVID-19 virus. Enrollment is low. We take it day by day.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has been very challenging for the entire center. The number of children that attend is low. Teachers with underlying issues cannot return to work during this pandemic. The increase of supplies is very expensive, and some supplies are hard to find.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“COVID-19 impacted my well-being because teaching is my life and I missed the interaction with my students as well as my co-workers.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“The pandemic has impacted us terribly. It’s so hard to find and hire qualified staff. People don’t even show up to interviews. We’ve lost children due to parents working from home and it doesn’t look like anything is changing any time soon.” (New Hanover, director)

“A lot of families lost their jobs because of COVID-19. Half of the children are gone. We miss them. As a result, we have less income.” (Pender, family child care provider)

“The stress and anxiety are at an all-time high due to COVID-19, especially because other typical stressors in child care don’t stop during a pandemic. It has been extremely hard to hire teachers during this time and enroll children. (Pitt, director)

“COVID-19 has been very stressful. I lost five teachers who would not return and took jobs at the public school or stayed home. I lost many of our children, and they have not returned. I had to keep school children every day year-round, do virtual school, and virtual school is a nightmare. We do not get full time payment for school children on vouchers as they pay a year-round payment average based on summers off. Also, it is very stressful having to pay quarantine staff and doing without teachers for sometimes a MONTH!” (Randolph, director)

“During COVID-19, I have had three teachers quit. I need to hire six teachers, and I haven’t received one application in over a year. People are not interested in working in child care. My enrollment is down to 20 children out of 100, my waiting list is over 200 children, and I had to dis-enroll children when my last teacher quit to maintain staff to child ratio. I’m not sure how long we can keep our doors open.” (Rowan, director)

“During COVID-19, there are undervalued staff, who are still underpaid. We take in all the healthcare worker’s children and are exposed to greater risks, but are not essential enough for

consistent hazard pay or vaccine priority. Staff stays fearful, and stress is very high.” (Watauga, director)

“During COVID-19, it is insane that in one breath the governor says it is unsafe for MASKED children SEATED in desks to be in a full classroom because THOSE teachers are unsafe. Then, they tell early child care providers to be in FULL classrooms with UNMASKED (and reasonably so as they are so young) children and that our early child care providers are perfectly safe. IT IS A DOUBLE STANDARD!” (Watauga, director)

“It is very challenging. We continue with the uncertainty because we don’t know when this pandemic is going to end. Due to this pandemic, we were forced to close the centers and work virtually with the children. Some teachers were infected with the virus. We have to be in quarantine and all this is very stressful for us.” (Wayne, teacher)

“We work twice as hard now to ensure everyone stays safe. We thought we were working hard before, whew!” (Wayne, teacher)

“We lost a few staff members because they were scared to work in child care with COVID-19 around. It’s also been very difficult to hire teachers. The people that want to work don’t have the qualifications, so we are way down in classrooms, which was a problem before COVID-19, but is worse now. If it were not for a PPP loan and grant money from the state, we would not be open right now!” (Wayne, director)

“COVID-19 has impacted our workforce, and we cannot find qualified teachers. All of our substitutes quit at the beginning of COVID-19, and we have tried to rebuild our substitute pool with little success. We also had several part-time employees quit. Office employees are working in classrooms to keep them open.” (Wilkes, director)



## Appendix C: DCDEE Messages Sample Feedback Collected from AWARD\$ Surveys FY21

“Thank you so much for this supplement. It has been very helpful.” (Beaufort, teacher)

“Thank you. This program helped my program tremendously.” (Beaufort, family child care provider)

“I believe it continues to help with the supplies that are needed” (Beaufort, family child care provider)

“Thank you for the supplement. However, if you have obtained all your educational components and have been and are still committed to child care, is there any way you could receive a bonus stipend for longevity?” (Bertie, teacher)

“It helps a lot.” (Bladen, teacher)

“Thank you for working hard and acknowledging the hard work we do with toddlers.” (Buncombe, teacher)

“Thank you so much for what you do to help us! YOU are appreciated!” (Burke, teacher)

“This is an amazing opportunity and blessing. I love my job, I love teaching the children and this definitely helps keep me going. It’s like the cherry on top.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“Thank you so much for providing this extra incentive to teachers for their education and for giving the children in our care stability.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“Thank you for all the support that you provide. It has truly been a blessing.” (Cabarrus, family child care provider)

“Please continue this program for others who also need support.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“I love it and want to say thank you for your services and making me feel valued in the things that I do for my children in my care and my place of employment. So thank you all.” (Caswell, teacher)

“Thank you so much, it means a lot and please keep the supplement coming.” (Catawba, teacher)

“Thank you so much for providing the AWARD\$<sup>®</sup> supplement. It has helped tremendously and has provided a great incentive to continue working in the field of child care. The supplement is one of the many ways that shows early childhood educators that we are appreciated.” (Catawba, family child care provider)

---

<sup>1</sup> Respondents referred to Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$<sup>®</sup> in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart just for thinking of us educators and the effort that we put in. The fact that the Division recognizes us and our hard work is a phenomenal feeling and again I’d like to say thanks for everything.” (Chatham, teacher)

“Thank you so much! Words cannot express my gratitude.” (Chatham, teacher)

“Thank you for all the support.” (Chatham, teacher)

“Thank you for recognizing child care providers.” (Cleveland, teacher)

“I’m thankful for the funds from the Division and it makes me very happy that I can make a difference in all my students’ lives.” (Columbus, teacher)

“Thank you so very much! This is very much appreciated! The AWARDS\$ program has helped me in so many ways. I can’t express my gratitude!” (Craven, teacher)

“Thank you for supporting infant-toddler teachers. We are often unrecognized for the work we do with young children. This supplement gives us incentive to stay with our current program and be better teachers.” (Craven, teacher)

“Thank you for providing additional funds to help with buying some of the materials for the classroom that the center can’t provide at the time of need.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you for thinking about us and showing it through this supplement.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you. It makes me feel more appreciated.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“I am very happy with the decision to encourage and help teachers feel appreciated. This way they will consider staying in this field.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you for all that you do to keep us afloat.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you. It’s a great supplement.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you for creating this wonderful program!! It is very helpful.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thanks for being supportive.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“I really appreciate this program!” (Cumberland, teacher)

“You have changed the lives of many teachers in the most positive way possible. Thank you for recognizing us and the work that we do. It shows that you realize that our passion for teaching and guiding children in every way possible matches yours.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thanks for the incentive!” (Cumberland, teacher)

“A HUGE thank you!!!! For caring about US!!!” (Cumberland, teacher)

“The supplement has been very helpful.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you for what you have given in times past. Are we going to get an increase because of COVID? Child care attendance has decreased, DSS is not enrolling, parents are afraid to enroll their kids. Providers need more money to make up the slack because of this pandemic.”  
(Cumberland, family child care provider)

“Thank you so much for thinking about us!!!!!!!!!!” (Cumberland, family child care provider)

“Thank you so very much for providing this most appreciated supplement. Such additional resources are used to help provide for the children in our care as well as meeting the needs of my family members. Thank you for this most generous supplement.” (Davidson, teacher)

“It’s very great!” (Duplin, teacher)

“It is greatly appreciated and it is very helpful to all of us.” (Duplin, teacher)

“Thank you for providing a great blessing!” (Durham, teacher)

“I am grateful for the supplement and hope that it continues to be funded.” (Durham, teacher)

“I am thankful for the great financial help the program provides to teachers. Without this supplement, teachers would not have been able to provide for their family nor would they have been able to pay their bills. That would have resulted in teacher burnout. Teachers need to be happy and content in dealing with children. Happy teachers, happy and healthy children.”  
(Durham, teacher)

“AWARD\$ is more than just a financial supplement. It’s groceries that couldn’t be afforded on our usual salary. It’s a savings account that couldn’t be started without this supplement. It is materials and necessities in a classroom that were desperately needed but couldn’t be afforded due to being financially impacted by the COVID pandemic. It’s the only source of income while navigating the shut down and the delay in unemployment. This supplement is so important for so many reasons.” (Durham, teacher)

“It helps out with making ends meet.” (Durham, teacher)

“THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!! The funds from this program have truly helped my family through tough times. Just the anticipation of knowing that extra income is on the way means so much to so many families.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“Thank you for understanding that teachers need the assistance.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“The supplement helps a great deal.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“Thank you for doing this. It is very helpful.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“It helps and is very appreciated.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“Thank you so much. Keep blessing each of us.” (Franklin, teacher)

“It’s a great program that I hope continues.” (Franklin, family child care provider)

“The supplement is very much appreciated. Thanks for caring about us.” (Franklin, family child care provider)

“This supplement has really made a difference in my life financially. Thank you so much.” (Gates, family child care provider)

“Thank you! It is very much appreciated and I need it to supplement my income. I look forward to receiving it.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I just want to say thank you for everything!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“The AWARD\$ supplement is a great incentive.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Please continue to help.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you and I appreciate this program! It is truly a blessing to receive this money and in a timely manner.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It is great to receive this award! I am so grateful!!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“I’m thankful that you value teachers in the early child care education field.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you. This supplement has a trickle down of benefits and helps not only the recipients, but also their families and the families they work with.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I know it’s very helpful to the livelihood of all the recipients.” (Guilford, teacher)

“The supplement is a necessity to keep well-educated staff in the classroom and reduce turnover during the critical infant-toddler years.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I just can't thank you enough. It is truly a blessing and well needed.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thanks for recognizing the early childhood workers.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It is very beneficial.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It has been very beneficial with the pandemic situation.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Love this program.” (Guilford, teacher)

“This supplement is a great asset to educators like me who make below \$12 an hour but have costly bills mounting.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart and God bless you all.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It is a wonderful program.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you DCDEE for blessing early educators with funding! It is greatly appreciated.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you. The supplement helps meet my monthly housing needs.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you so much for caring for educators and their families. The money is so important and it allows me peace of mind knowing I can count on the financial support.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I appreciate and I’m very grateful for this program. Thank you so much.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Let it continue!” (Guilford, family child care provider)

“Thanks to everyone’s thoughts and actions as they pertain to the AWARD\$ supplements. Thank you for including family child care home providers, seeing our value, hard work and commitment to young children.” (Guilford, family child care provider)

“This supplement is so important to the teachers. We were told to increase our education and that was the incentive, to receive AWARD\$.” (Guilford, family child care provider)

“AWARD\$ is a blessing and it has kept me in my position to work with young children.” (Halifax, teacher)

“It is very helpful to have additional funds and makes me feel good to be acknowledged for the job I’m doing.” (Hoke, teacher)

“Thank you. I’m so grateful for the opportunity to be included.” (Hoke, family child care provider)

“Thank you!! This supplement helps so much. This helps me provide for my son.” (Johnston, teacher)

“The supplement is beneficial in many ways and comes at the right times. It is a nice incentive to continue to work with children that I enjoy working with.” (Johnston, teacher)

“I used the money very wisely. It assisted with my schooling and being able to do more things for the children in my classroom.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“It is very helpful to receive this supplement because it helps with my financial needs and to be able to supply materials for the children in my care.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“Thank you for helping the infant-toddler teachers.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“Thank you for remembering us and keep it coming.” (Lenoir, family child care provider)

“It is greatly appreciated and greatly needed.” (Lincoln, teacher)

“Thank you for all you do for all infant, toddlers and twos early educators to receive this supplement. Without you, we wouldn’t be able to get a supplement that is much needed for our children.” (McDowell, teacher)

“I would like to say thank you for starting this AWARD\$ program. It is a financial blessing, because I don’t make much money and it helps me get caught up on my bills throughout the year.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“I am very appreciative of the supplements. I also wish that early educators could see a permanent increase in their monthly and yearly income.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“I would like to thank you for caring about teachers and children.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“I would like to thank you for recognizing and compensating teachers. It means a lot to be appreciated.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you! It has helped out a lot of people financially.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“The supplement is very beneficial and I hope you can continue to help early educators.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“I really appreciate your help and support.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“My program runs for 10 months, not 12. It would be more helpful if I could get it 2x but due to my program, I can only benefit from it one time some years.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It works and thank you so much for caring about the kids as much as I do. Thank you again.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“It has helped offset the cost of things due to a decline in enrollment.” (Mecklenburg, family child care provider)

“Thank you for thinking about the educators who have made this profession their passion.” (Mecklenburg, family child care provider)

“Thanks! We appreciate all you do for us.” (Montgomery, teacher)

“Keep it coming. Thank you!” (Montgomery, teacher)

“Thank you so very much, beyond what words can ever express. I appreciate all that you do for all of us, children, and families as well. It is needed and helps us to be able to focus better on being the best teachers we can be.” (Montgomery, teacher)

“Please keep AWARD\$ coming. We need it.” (Moore, teacher)

“The supplement is a big help.” (Moore, teacher)

“It is a Godsend and I’m very appreciative of it.” (Moore, teacher)

“This is a big help to those that are in need and not really wanting anyone to know that about them personally.” (Moore, teacher)

“I really appreciate it. It has helped a lot.” (Moore, teacher)

“Thanks so much for the AWARD\$ supplement. It is very much needed and appreciated.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“I could not thank you enough.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“I want you to know how incredibly thankful and grateful I am for the checks and how appreciated you make me feel.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“The AWARD\$ supplement is a great help with paying bills and the resources that are needed for the development of the children. I appreciate everything that AWARD\$ has made possible. Thanks.” (Onslow, teacher)

“Thank you so much for all the help. I greatly appreciate it.” (Onslow, teacher)

“Thank you so much for making the difference for me. You’ve made it easier to do my job because I don’t have to worry about some of my finances.” (Orange, teacher)

“It’s very helpful.” (Orange, teacher)

“Continue the great work and I am grateful for the supplement.” (Orange, teacher)

“Thank you. AWARD\$ has helped me in different ways to provide for my family!!” (Orange, teacher)

“Thank you for helping me to achieve my goal.” (Orange, family child care provider)

“Thank you to the Division of Child Development for providing the funds for the AWARD\$ supplement. The funds have really helped me during this time of COVID-19. The extra funds have helped me to be able to purchase items I need to continue to provide safety to the children I care for.” (Pasquotank, family child care provider)

“I would like to say thank you for investing in us providers and the children. Keep up the great work. We appreciate it.” (Pender, family child care provider)

“Thank you very much. I believe in education and this supplement can help me continue on.” (Pender, family child care provider)

“Thank you for all you do to help us be the best and give the best to the children and families we provide care for. Thank you all!” (Pender, family child care provider)

“Keep it going, because it’s very helpful.” (Person, family child care provider)

“Thank you so much for being a huge blessing to me and other early childhood educators.” (Pitt, teacher)

“AWARD\$ has helped pay my child care bill, because COVID-19 put my child care in the negative. Awesome program.” (Pitt, family child care provider)

“Thank you for allowing this program to be opened up. It gives teachers an opportunity to take advantage of the supplement who can’t participate in the WAGE\$ program due to their county not providing it.” (Randolph, teacher)

“Please keep it going.” (Robeson, teacher)

“Thank you for your generosity.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I am very proud that you consider us for these funds.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I want to thank you for giving me the supplement, because it has helped me out a lot.” (Robeson, teacher)

“The supplement has assisted when I needed it the most.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I would like to say thanks for giving in this time of need. It’s a blessing to have a little extra money you can rely on. THANKS SO MUCH!!!!” (Robeson, teacher)

“I would like to say thank you for all you do for us and I appreciate all that you do for teachers. Thank you all again and God bless you all.” (Robeson, teacher)

“The supplement helps a great deal because I find myself buying a lot of supplies and toys for our room. Toddlers do a number on wear and tear on book and toys.” (Rockingham, teacher)

“If you want teachers to stay, you have to give them an incentive to keep them there. Teachers want to know that they’re valued and appreciated. They don’t make much money as it is.” (Rowan, teacher)

“Thank you so much for funding teachers, so that we can continue our education.” (Rowan, teacher)

“Thank you for the support of the children’s welfare.” (Sampson, family child care provider)

“Very helpful.” (Scotland, teacher)

“It is greatly appreciated.” (Stanly, teacher)

“First and foremost. thank you for recognizing child care providers! I think so often child care providers get overlooked and the AWARD\$ program makes us feel appreciated.” (Stanly, teacher)

“It has helped me so much and I am very thankful.” (Union, teacher)

“Thank you for considering us.” (Union, teacher)

“Thanks so much for thinking about teachers.” (Union, teacher)

“I just wanted to thank you so much for this huge supplement.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you guys for the supplement. It has been a tremendous help to me and my family. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I sincerely mean that!” (Wake, teacher)

“It is a great way to keep us encouraged to be better teachers every day.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thanks for making me feel appreciated and valued! It definitely means a lot!” (Wake, teacher)

“I am so thankful and grateful.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you and we appreciate you.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thanks for acknowledging our dedication and hard work...sometimes the schools don’t.” (Wake, teacher)

“I really appreciate the appreciation we are getting from AWARD\$ for taking care of toddlers. Everyone says that this age group is tough and hard to work with, but I love this age group and getting rewarded for what you love to do is amazing. Thank you!” (Wake, teacher)

“More will always be better.” (Wake, teacher)

“It has helped so much to provide for my family as well as my students.” (Wake, teacher)

“I appreciate your help in helping me help the children in my care!” (Wake, teacher)

“It has been a blessing for my family and me.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you! This check is a true blessing and truly helps child care workers feel like we matter.”  
(Wake, teacher)

“It is very helpful in many ways.” (Wake, teacher)

“It’s just great.” (Wake, teacher)

“It is a blessing.” (Wake, teacher)

“Great job!” (Wake, teacher)

“I thank you and if we can do anything, let us know.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“I am very appreciative of the additional income. It has been a tremendous blessing to me!”  
(Wake, family child care provider)

“This supplement is very helpful and it should continue.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“Thank you! We have not always been noticed, so thank you for remembering the early  
childhood educators.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“I hope that we can keep getting the supplements.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“Thank you so much! It is a tremendous blessing.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“Thank you for looking out for the underdogs of the lives of future generations of this nation!”  
(Wake, family child care provider)

“Thank you, it is very helpful. Income for this career path is limited and AWARD\$ helps make it  
possible to continue to offer child care in my home.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“Continue to reward those that are really making a difference in developing the future of our  
children of tomorrow.” (Wake, family child care provider)

“Thank you for caring and helping us through the pandemic, before the pandemic and going  
forward. I appreciate you for being an advocate for child care providers.” (Wake, family child  
care provider)

“Thank you for this amazing program. It’s very helpful.” (Washington, teacher)

“Thank you, thank you for all that you are doing for us. I appreciate being a part of this and I will  
help in any way I can for this program to continue. I work hard for the children and parents that I  
come in contact with. I love to see progress in our youth of tomorrow.” (Washington, teacher)

“Thank you very much for the support of the supplement.” (Wayne, teacher)

“I am very grateful for the help you are giving us and thanks to your kindness, we can continue working in the field of early childhood education.” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thank you so very much!!!! This supplement makes a major difference for me and my family.” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thank you so much! You have helped so many people like me to help children more in the classroom with things they wouldn’t have received without the check. Things like books, and toys. Sometimes we need things to go along with our lesson plans that we don’t have. Also, we are helped with our home lives as well. The best help of both worlds. Thank you!!!!” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! It means the world to me.” (Wayne, teacher)

“I really don’t know how I would have made it if I didn’t have the supplement to help.” (Wayne, teacher)

“This supplement always seems to come through exactly when I could truly use a little extra money to pay a bill or take care of something important.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“I appreciate the support.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“It is wonderful to have the extra money.” (Wilson, teacher)

“I am so appreciative of this supplement and for the ones that put it in place for so many.” (Wilson, teacher)