

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus FY23 Final Report

REPORT CONTENTS

The Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus (AWARD\$ Plus) 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\$ Plus.

Program Impact – Provides information on the program's impact overall

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

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

Program Evaluations – Highlights results from the AWARD\$ Plus 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 by general position category and indicates the percentage of participants at permanent levels *or* who have submitted coursework during the reporting period.

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\$ Plus.

Appendix B – Presents survey messages for the AWARD\$ Plus funder.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers and family child care providers working at least 30 hours per week with children birth through two years of age in North Carolina. The program is designed to increase the compensation, education and retention of those working with our youngest children. AWARD\$

Plus is funded by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

STATEWIDE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus, applicants must:

- work at least 30 hours per week with infants, ones or twos
- earn at or below \$20 per hour
- work in a licensed child care center or home
- have a level of education on the AWARD\$ Plus scale (from regionally accredited schools)
- work at least six months in the same child care program

PROGRAM OVERALL IMPACT

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus 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 infant-toddler workforce. While supplements alone cannot solve the workforce compensation crisis, they are a critical strategy until early educators receive the base pay, benefits and respect they deserve for the important work they do.

As of July 2023, 1,281 child care professionals in 788 child care programs were active AWARD\$ Plus participants (those who have been paid and are still eligible based on their most recent employment confirmation). Of these individuals, nearly 100% are women and 84% work in four and five star licensed centers or homes.

Turnover

Turnover numbers for Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus reflect active participants who left their child care programs, as identified in confirmations completed with employers during the fiscal year.

If participants leave their program and resume eligibility at a new site, they will not be factored into the report at all until they have completed a full six-month period at their new site. Once participants receive a supplement, they will again be recognized as an active participant. Only participants for whom AWARD\$ Plus 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. change of position within the program, center closure) are not considered turnover.

Anecdotally, turnover continues to be a problem for early childhood programs. Employers are challenged to find teachers at all, let alone keep them for extended periods of time. The stabilization grants provided by the state have in many cases been used to provide compensation and/or benefits to try and curb turnover and make the field more attractive. AWARD\$ Plus is another strategy that can help make it possible for committed teachers to stay despite the trend. Having compensation strategies like these will be an essential part of the solution to rebuild and stabilize the workforce going forward.

The turnover rate of AWARD\$ Plus participants for FY23 was 14%. This achieves the retention goal of 75% established in the contract. Perhaps most importantly, this turnover rate is well below what might have been expected during this time of flux.

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). A new workforce study is currently underway. Given the low compensation for early educators, the rate of departure would likely have been much higher without the workforce supports available in North Carolina, including AWARD\$ Plus, 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, 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. Since these rates were reported in the 2019 workforce study, stabilization grants have helped to increase the pay for many early educators. However, the funds currently used to support those increases are temporary and it is unclear if or how employers will be able to maintain those rates once the grants are no longer available. AWARD\$ Plus supplements are a crucial support for infant-toddler educators and enhance the best compensation employers can offer, making it more feasible for educated professionals to afford to teach our youngest children.

In addition to statistical data showing an impact on retention, AWARD\$ Plus 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.

“I love teaching young children, my toddler classroom is my passion. The AWARD\$ Plus supplement has helped make sure I can afford to work in the place where I feel my talents are used in the best way possible. I am excited to go to work every day, and I’m glad I can pay my bills and create a savings account while doing so.” (New Hanover, 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\$ Plus is an incentive to get education and it helps retain those teachers who do.

The education scale was expanded in FY23 when AWARD\$ transitioned to AWARD\$ Plus, enabling more of the infant-toddler workforce to meet eligibility requirements. Prior to that, eligibility was restricted to those who had at least an associate degree with 24 birth to five focused semester hours. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the active FY23 AWARD\$ Plus participants are being funded for these higher levels of education *or* have submitted documentation during the year to verify their pursuit of additional coursework. AWARD\$ Plus now has a number of temporary supplement levels, which require that participants with lower education advance up the scale to remain eligible.

When given a list of possible benefits resulting from AWARD\$ Plus, 86% of participants who responded to the annual survey agreed that the supplements provide an incentive to seek additional coursework or help make the pursuit of that coursework more financially feasible.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the AWARD\$ Plus 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\$ Plus supports, recognizes or rewards their efforts.

“AWARD\$ Plus encouraged me to continue my education in early childhood. I feel more noticed and appreciated for my efforts in furthering my education, but also continuing in the field of child care for 29 years.” (Mecklenburg, family child care home provider)

Compensation

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus 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. Stabilization grants have made it possible for sites to increase compensation through raises, bonuses and/or benefits. In FY21 (two years ago), 65% of the AWARD\$ Plus participants with the highest levels of education earned less than \$15 per hour compared to only 37% in FY23. Considering all AWARD\$ Plus participants on the now-expanded scale, 39% earn less than \$15 per hour. It seems likely that the stabilization grants have contributed significantly to this change. Unfortunately, the stabilization grants are temporary and many employers will have difficulty maintaining higher rates without assistance. Despite this improvement, the median hourly rate of active AWARD\$ Plus participants is only \$15.95.

DCDEE approved temporary policies to protect the eligibility of AWARD\$ Plus participants who might have received increased compensation resulting from the time-limited stabilization grants. The eligibility of active participants has been retained based on pre-stabilization grant rates, but AWARD\$ Plus has collected official rates up to the income cap for reporting purposes. The following were reported to have enhanced compensation as a result of these grants:

- 62% teachers and assistants
- 87% family child care providers
- 73% directors and assistant directors (working directly with infants and toddlers)
- 88% owners (working directly with infants and toddlers)

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 \$35.73 that may be needed for one North Carolina employee with one child to meet basic, fundamental needs (Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2023).

The poor compensation across the board highlights the need for salary supplements in order to attract and retain qualified staff. Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus survey results

support this. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the respondents stated that AWARD\$ Plus encourages them to stay with their current child care programs.

The average six-month supplement payment issued during FY23 was \$1,200. The scale ranges from \$600 to \$4,000 per year. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of evaluation respondents indicated that receiving an AWARD\$ Plus 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:

- 82% are better able to pay their bills
- 75% are more able to address the basic needs of their families (food/housing)
- 70% rely on the supplements to help address transportation costs
- 62% use the funds to provide additional resources for their classrooms or child care programs – in a separate question, a greater number of respondents (94%) stated that providing resources for their programs is a benefit of AWARD\$ Plus

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.

“AWARD\$ Plus is very important to teachers. It has made a difference in my household by helping with gas, food, bills, and things for my classroom. It has helped me keep my head above water. Without it, I don’t know what I would do or how I would make it.”
(Stanly, teacher)

OUTPUTS

This section highlights the projected outputs of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus for FY23 and the program’s effectiveness in reaching these goals. Primary results are shown in Table A below, followed by additional detail as applicable.

Table A: Outputs

	Projected Output	Results
1	1,800 eligible infant-toddler educators will receive AWARD\$ Plus supplements in FY23.	Output partially met. In FY23, 1,483 infant-toddler educators received AWARD\$ Plus supplements. <i>All supplement funds were expended.</i>
2	AWARD\$ Plus will send 2,500 informational or recruitment letters on the salary supplement program through mail or email.	Output exceeded. In FY23, AWARD\$ Plus sent 15,292 recruitment mailings and/or emails.
3	Staff will conduct 25 virtual or in-person outreach activities to provide information	Output exceeded. Staff conducted 39 outreach sessions where information about the AWARD\$ Plus opportunity was shared.

to child care professionals about the salary supplement program.	
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Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus payments: One thousand four hundred eighty-three (1,483) infant-toddler educators were paid for completing at least one six-month period in FY23. These participants worked in 868 child care centers and family child care homes in 89 counties serving approximately 21,357 children. This number is an unduplicated count of supplement recipients for AWARD\$ Plus. Please note that these individuals may or may not still be eligible at the end of the year, so this number is different than the number of active participants discussed elsewhere in this report.

This number represents an increase from FY22, when 1,337 educators were paid. While AWARD\$ Plus did not fully meet the anticipated output, all supplement funds (in excess of \$3 million) were spent. AWARD\$ Plus currently has a waiting list of more than 170 applicants.

Outreach and recruitment: Thirty-nine (39) virtual and in-person outreach sessions sharing AWARD\$ Plus information were completed in FY23. When appropriate, staff discussed opportunities available through AWARD\$ Plus, WAGES\$, and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program. The goal is to give audience members an opportunity to learn about multiple resources supported by DCDEE.

In FY23, 15,292 recruitment and/or informational emails or mailings were sent to 3,885 facilities. AWARD\$ Plus 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.

In addition to the recruitment activities and presentations described above, the monthly social media campaign, Appreciating AWARD\$ Plus, has continued. These designed posts feature feedback from participants about the program’s impact. Additional programmatic and impact highlights were shared through social media, CCSA’s external communications and blogs. The AWARD\$ Plus website pages were maintained and updated as needed. A webinar is posted to assist potential applicants and key materials are available in both English and Spanish. AWARD\$ Plus is shared as a resource through the CCR&R Council website.

OUTCOME

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

Table B: Outcome

	Projected Outcome	Results
1	The retention rate of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus participants for FY23 will be 75%.	Outcome met. The retention rate for AWARD\$ Plus participants was 86%, greater the benchmark of 75%. (Turnover rate = 14%)

2	Eighty-five percent (85%) of Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus survey respondents will state that the supplement helps ease financial stress.	Outcome exceeded. 97% of survey respondents said that the AWARD\$ Plus supplement helps ease financial stress.
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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\$® Plus 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 both participants and directors who had staff on the program. Directors in most counties who potentially had staff members on AWARD\$ Plus and/or WAGE\$ were sent a shared survey to assess the impact of salary supplements. Two counties had more than 50 but less than 100 directors who potentially had staff members on AWARD\$ Plus and/or WAGE\$ and so a 40% sample was created. Finally, one county had more than 100 directors who potentially had staff members on AWARD\$ Plus and/or WAGE\$ so a 25% sample was created to survey. These responses have been integrated into the director feedback.

All individuals in the sample who had email addresses on file with AWARD\$ Plus 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. All respondents were given the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for professional resources.

Overall, 66% of the targeted population completed the survey (851 of 1,295), which included the following:

- 71% of participating teachers/family child care providers (336 of 474)
- 63% of non-participating directors with staff receiving salary supplements (515 of 821)¹

Survey recipients were asked to examine a list of possible benefits resulting from AWARD\$ Plus 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\$ Plus helps me feel more satisfied with my job. – 98%
- AWARD\$ Plus is an incentive for me to seek additional education and/or it helps make pursuing coursework more financially feasible. – 86% (97% of those at temporary levels)
- The AWARD\$ Plus supplement helps ease financial stress. – 97%

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

- AWARD\$ Plus encourages me to stay with my current program. – 96%
- The AWARD\$ Plus supplement helps me to provide more resources for my program or classroom. – 94%
- Receiving the AWARD\$ Plus 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. The few respondents that were not satisfied provided reasons including that the supplements needed to be more, that directors should be eligible for administrative time and that having an education requirement is challenging in the post-COVID world.

For those respondents who had the opportunity to speak with the Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus staff, nearly 100% of those who have had interactions (787 of 789) found the staff to be pleasant and helpful. Many respondents took the opportunity to share additional comments about their interactions with AWARD\$ Plus 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\$ Plus staff has been in terms of participation in the program and pursuit of education. A few examples of participant feedback are listed below:

“The staff has been very helpful in sharing information and helping me in the process. They share information without hesitation. Thank you.” (teacher)

“The staff always answers my concerns about the program and my requirements to continue. Anyone I reach is professional and friendly. I am always called to see if I have any questions about the process and documentation.” (family child care home provider)

“Everyone that I have talked with about anything has been very supportive and helpful.” (family child care home provider)

“They are super friendly, helpful and encouraging.” (family child care home provider)

“The staff have met with our staff online to explain the programs. The AWARD\$ Plus staff make themselves known by name and are available to help with any questions.” (director)

To help ensure that staff continue to offer appropriate customer service, CCSA provided training on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ninety-six percent (96%) of responding directors indicated that staff participation in AWARD\$ Plus 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, 96% of responding directors indicated that staff participation in AWARD\$ Plus 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 salary supplements in their child care programs. Only a few directors indicated that attitudes were not positive, and most did not explain their response. A couple indicated that the supplements should not be tied to education.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of responding participants indicated that, as a result of AWARD\$ Plus, 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\$ Plus 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.

“AWARD\$ Plus is important because it makes you feel good about the importance of working with toddlers and infants to help them achieve their best goals during their early years of life.” (Carteret, teacher)

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

AWARD\$ Plus began seeking a bilingual counselor at the beginning of the fiscal year and, despite many interviews, was unable to hire for this position until July 2023. The new counselor is now being trained and is excited to be part of a program that provides compensation to a deserving workforce. This is a great opportunity for AWARD\$ Plus and all bilingual applicants and participants. While the hiring process took almost a year, AWARD\$ Plus had key documents translated to Spanish early in the year, which were revised to reflect the expansion of program eligibility and the transition from AWARD\$ to AWARD\$ Plus.

In August 2022, AWARD\$ Plus was launched. All new program materials were created, and the website was updated to share the important news about the program’s expanded eligibility:

- More education levels were added to the scale, beginning with 12 semester hours of birth to five focused coursework
- More child care facilities became eligible – staff from all licensed sites were eligible to apply
- A higher income cap of \$20 per hour was implemented

With these new eligibility requirements came increased site recruitment and different messaging to spread the word.

Ongoing outreach was conducted in a variety of ways to ensure that the field learned about these opportunities. New applications were slow to arrive, but with continued education about these changes, numbers increased. AWARD\$ Plus was able to spend the supplement funding provided in the FY23 contract and now has a waiting list of more than 170 applicants, many of which may be paid in FY24.

Growth in the supplement line is not currently expected in the FY24 budget. While changes in

eligibility will free up funds for many new applicants during the year, it is not expected that AWARD\$ Plus could pay 1,800 educators, as stated in the FY23 contract. The output expectation for FY24 was doubled without an increase in funding.

FUNDING

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus implements several strategies to publicize that its funding comes from DCDEE. This is highlighted in letters sent in conjunction with payments and labels are affixed to the outside of each envelope to identify the funder. Emails are sent to recipients to inform them when payments have been mailed or deposited, crediting the funders. The AWARD\$ Plus fact sheets and application-based program agreements identify DCDEE as the funder and AWARD\$ Plus 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 B for a sample of those messages for FY23. 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 very much for continuing to provide this support for my family and me. I look forward to receiving these funds and they are truly helpful! It has kept me at my job even longer. Thank you for your continued support. I appreciate you all advocating for us! Thank you again!” (Guilford, teacher)



Table 1
Demographic Profile of the 1,281 Participants in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



	# of Participants	% of Participants
Race*		
White	379	30%
Black or African American	756	59%
American Indian or Alaska Native	22	2%
Asian	18	1%
Two or more races	17	1%
Other	30	2%
Not Given	59	5%
Ethnicity*		
Not Given	59	5%
Latinx	78	6%
Not Latinx	1144	89%
Gender		
Male	4	0%
Female	1277	100%
Age Range of Participants		
20-24 years	54	4%
25-34 years	275	21%
35-44 years	283	22%
45-54 years	283	22%
55-59 years	149	12%
60-64 years	144	11%
65 and over	90	7%
Not Given	3	0%
Position		
Teacher	992	77%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	19	1%
Teacher (in Small Home)	5	0%
Assistant Teacher	44	3%
Director	10	1%
Director (Owner)	16	1%
Assistant Director	16	1%
Small Home Provider	179	14%
Education Level		
12 birth to five sem. hours	12	1%
18 general sem. hours including 4 birth to five sem. hours	5	0%
16 birth to five sem. hours	23	2%
24 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	30	2%
70 general sem. hours (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	3	0%

*897 participants identify as Latinx or as a person of color, which is 71% of the active population that provided data (1264 participants).

Participants are identified by their primary position. Directors or assistant directors are only funded when working 30 hours or more with infants and toddlers.

**Table 1 (cont.)
Demographic Profile of the 1,281 Participants in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023**

	# of Participants	% of Participants
AAS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	4	0%
36 general sem. hours including 12 birth to five sem. hours	26	2%
70 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	3	0%
AAS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	6	0%
45 general sem. hours including 18 birth to five sem. hours	20	2%
AAS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	7	1%
57 general sem. hours including 24 birth to five sem. hours	42	3%
AAS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	3	0%
BA/BS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	28	2%
MA/MS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	3	0%
PhD/EdD (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	1	0%
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	666	52%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	41	3%
MA/MS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	4	0%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	48	4%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	24	2%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	240	19%
MA/MS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	8	1%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	34	3%
Wage Rate**		
Below \$7.25 per hour	120	9%
\$7.25 - \$9.99 per hour	35	3%
\$10.00 - \$12.99 per hour	140	11%
\$13.00 - \$14.99 per hour	203	16%
\$15.00 - \$16.99 per hour	314	25%
\$17.00 - \$18.99 per hour	317	25%
\$19.00 - \$20.99 per hour	152	12%
Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Report End Date		
0 to .99 Years	35	3%
1.00 to 1.99 Years	182	14%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	89	7%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	101	8%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	102	8%
5.00 or More Years	772	60%

**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. Participants are paid only for eligible time worked at or below the \$20 cap.



Table 2
Child Care Center Profile for North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



	Programs	Participants
Center	607	1,095
1 STAR	7	19
2 STAR	2	3
3 STAR	65	82
4 STAR	141	230
5 STAR	370	734
GS-110	7	8
PROB	2	2
PROV	3	5
SPPROV	2	2
Temporary	8	10
Family Provider	181	186
1 STAR	1	1
3 STAR	27	27
4 STAR	119	124
5 STAR	33	33
Temporary	1	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTALS	<u>788</u>	<u>1,281</u>

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 1,281 Participants
in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



85% have a permanent level on the scale (AAS ECE or above) or are continuing their education as documented by coursework taken since original application to WAGES submitted in the current fiscal year.

	# of Participants		% of Participants Out Of Active
Director	42	100%	3%
Three	2	5%	0%
Six	1	2%	0%
Seven	2	5%	0%
Eight	18	43%	1%
Ten	1	2%	0%
Eleven	16	38%	1%
Twelve	2	5%	0%
Family Child Care Provider	179	100%	14%
Two	2	1%	0%
Three	6	3%	0%
Four	8	4%	1%
Six	3	2%	0%
Seven	11	6%	1%
Eight	77	43%	6%
Nine	10	6%	1%
Ten	15	8%	1%
Eleven	37	21%	3%
Twelve	10	6%	1%
Teacher	1060	100%	83%
Two	15	1%	1%
Three	45	4%	4%
Four	25	2%	2%
Five	9	1%	1%
Six	23	2%	2%
Seven	32	3%	2%
Eight	603	57%	47%
Nine	35	3%	3%
Ten	56	5%	4%
Eleven	195	18%	15%
Twelve	22	2%	2%



Table 4
Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



1,483 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 868 different child care programs in 89 counties, serving approximately 21,357 children. 1289 participants worked in centers and 194 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
	1,483	868	21,357
Alamance	5	5	190
Alexander	5	2	34
Anson	16	11	104
Ashe	14	5	128
Avery	1	1	33
Beaufort	17	8	212
Bertie	14	8	62
Bladen	13	7	101
Brunswick	1	1	34
Buncombe	15	10	312
Burke	19	8	211
Cabarrus	19	13	540
Caldwell	9	5	138
Camden	3	3	13
Carteret	6	4	96
Caswell	5	1	11
Catawba	19	17	531
Chatham	21	13	226
Cherokee	3	2	54
Chowan	7	5	50
Cleveland	4	4	67
Columbus	7	5	69
Craven	6	5	80

Table 4
Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023

1,483 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 868 different child care programs in 89 counties, serving approximately 21,357 children. 1289 participants worked in centers and 194 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
	1,483	868	21,357
Cumberland	59	34	767
Dare	9	7	62
Davidson	16	12	270
Davie	2	2	62
Duplin	26	10	127
Durham	17	14	388
Edgecombe	1	1	3
Forsyth	20	11	438
Franklin	3	3	59
Gaston	12	7	167
Gates	4	4	33
Granville	4	3	75
Greene	3	3	35
Guilford	167	85	1,722
Halifax	7	5	76
Harnett	1	1	27
Haywood	4	4	71
Henderson	3	3	47
Hertford	6	4	25
Hoke	7	5	191
Iredell	13	9	297
Jackson	4	3	24
Johnston	14	11	450

Table 4
Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023

1,483 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 868 different child care programs in 89 counties, serving approximately 21,357 children. 1289 participants worked in centers and 194 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
	1,483	868	21,357
Lee	4	4	39
Lenoir	13	8	156
Lincoln	5	4	98
Macon	11	2	99
Martin	5	3	28
McDowell	14	8	107
Mecklenburg	88	67	2,219
Mitchell	2	1	6
Montgomery	8	2	57
Moore	33	14	250
Nash	3	2	24
New Hanover	27	15	578
Northampton	1	1	6
Onslow	17	12	314
Orange	59	22	517
Pamlico	1	1	23
Pasquotank	7	7	100
Pender	13	12	210
Perquimans	3	2	12
Person	7	6	48
Pitt	47	21	563
Randolph	2	2	58
Richmond	5	2	46

Table 4
Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023

1,483 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 868 different child care programs in 89 counties, serving approximately 21,357 children. 1289 participants worked in centers and 194 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
	1,483	868	21,357
Robeson	43	22	461
Rockingham	6	4	113
Rowan	10	8	194
Rutherford	1	1	6
Sampson	29	11	131
Scotland	16	6	83
Stanly	10	5	101
Stokes	5	3	80
Surry	1	1	43
Transylvania	3	2	32
Union	23	13	431
Vance	9	7	83
Wake	256	145	4,540
Washington	4	4	37
Watauga	11	8	116
Wayne	19	12	271
Wilkes	5	2	36
Wilson	24	10	307
Yadkin	1	1	7
Yancey	1	1	15



Table 5
Annual Turnover Summary of the 1,495 Participants
in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



The annual turnover percentage is based on an overall population of 1495 participants. This population includes those individuals that were active during the reporting period of August 2022 - July 2023 (1281) and those whose turnover was reported during this time (214). 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\$ Plus 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\$ Plus and thus earned active status prior to becoming ineligible.

Annual Turnover (August 2022 - July 2023)	
Total Participants	= 1,495
Active Participants	= 1,281
Left Center	= 214
Turnover Percentage	= 14%



Table 5
Profile of Participants who Left their Programs in North Carolina
Infant-Toddler Educator AWARDS® Plus
August 2022 - July 2023



	# of Participants	% of Participants
Race		
White	84	39%
Black or African American	109	51%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	1%
Asian	5	2%
Two or more races	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Not Given	9	4%
Ethnicity		
Not Given	11	5%
Latinx	9	4%
Not Latinx	194	91%
Gender		
Male	1	0%
Female	212	99%
Non-binary	1	0%
Position		
Teacher	196	92%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	4	2%
Assistant Teacher	5	2%
Director	2	1%
Assistant Director	2	1%
Small Home Provider	5	2%
Education Level		
24 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	1	0%
45 general sem. hours including 18 birth to five sem. hours	2	1%
57 general sem. hours including 24 birth to five sem. hours	1	0%
AAS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	2	1%
BA/BS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	4	2%
MA/MS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	1	0%
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	110	51%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	5	2%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	7	3%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	7	3%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	70	33%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	4	2%
Wage Rate*		
\$7.25 - \$9.99 per hour	5	2%
\$10.00 - \$12.99 per hour	37	17%
\$13.00 - \$14.99 per hour	52	24%
\$15.00 - \$16.99 per hour	62	29%

* 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\$® Plus
 August 2022 - July 2023**

	# of Participants	% of Participants
\$17.00 - \$18.99 per hour	49	23%
\$19.00 - \$20.99 per hour	9	4%
Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Date Ineligible		
0 to .99 Years	186	87%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	3	1%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	5	2%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	3	1%
5.00 or More Years	17	8%
Regulation Type		
1 STAR	1	0%
2 STAR	2	1%
3 STAR	19	9%
4 STAR	46	21%
5 STAR	141	66%
Temporary	3	1%
PROV	1	0%
SPPROV	1	0%

* 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\$ Plus Impact
Sample Feedback Collected from AWARD\$ Plus Surveys FY23

“AWARD\$ Plus¹ makes me feel special and that someone notices what I do! ... It has meant that I will be able to continue caring for children in the Alamance County area of North Carolina! The stabilization grant money ends and this will continue to help me stay in business.” (Alamance, family child care home provider)

“Receiving a WAGE\$ or AWARD\$ Plus supplement encourages staff to want to further their education, which leads to them being better teachers.” (Alamance, director)

“Participation helps to supplement the staff’s salary and encourages them to remain employed. It also provides a financial benefit for their completion or continuation of education in the early childhood field.” (Alexander, director)

“They have made me feel as if I am important in my current teacher position. ... AWARD\$® Plus has helped me be able to purchase supplies and educational toys that the children need in order to make learning more meaningful and more productive.” (Ashe, teacher)

“It helps supplement our income and make us feel more appreciated and recognized as true educators of young children!” (Beaufort, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus makes the teachers feel like someone cares. ... When staff tell others about the help they can receive, they feel like they may be able to work in child care also.” (Bertie, director)

“AWARD\$ Plus makes me want to stay in child care.” (Bladen, family child care home provider)

“I really count on the extra money every six months. It helps out with gas for our generator as we don’t have electricity until it’s entirely rewired, and propane for our heaters in the cold months.” (Buncombe, teacher)

“I think it’s important because it shows that we are valued, and it makes me enjoy my job more.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“It helps teachers continue to stay employed.” (Burke, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus helps me to feel valued and makes me more pleasant in my daily life and on my job.” (Burke, teacher)

“It has helped me to purchase toys and learning supplies for the children in my day care as well as pay for classes that I need to take.” (Cabarrus, family child care home provider)

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

“It is important that quality teachers be compensated for the mission of educating children and securing the future leaders they can become. Investing in our future is so important, and teachers need to be paid accordingly.” (Cabarrus, director)

“AWARDS Plus puts food on my table.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“Being recognized and appreciated in this way has helped immensely with job satisfaction. ... AWARDS Plus has been a nice bonus twice a year to help me feel that my job working with infants and toddlers is needed and important.” (Camden, family child care home provider)

“AWARDS Plus is important because it makes you feel good about the importance of working with toddlers and infants to help them achieve their best goals during their early years of life.” (Carteret, teacher)

“It has helped me to feel appreciated and valued as an infant teacher.” (Catawba, teacher)

“It is so important because it helps relieve financial stress and helps us to feel important in our field.” (Catawba, family child care home provider)

“If it weren’t for the extra payments from AWARDS Plus, I probably would not do child care anymore as we do not receive state benefits like school systems.” (Catawba, family child care home provider)

“AWARDS Plus helps them continue their education and benefits them financially.” (Chatham, director)

“This program eases my financial worries which helps me to have a more positive attitude in my classroom. ... Personally, feeling that my chosen profession is valued and respected is the most important part of AWARDS® Plus.” (Cherokee, teacher)

“Better educated staff corresponds to higher quality care. Without WAGES and AWARDS Plus to help offset some costs of living, many could not afford to further their education.” (Cherokee, director)

“This is important because it is an award not only to the staff, but to the children in their care and to the community they live in. One day these children will grow up to help their community because they were cared for by us.” (Chowan, teacher)

“I catch up bills with the money. ... I am a single parent of three children so the one I got in December helped with Christmas. I’m very thankful!” (Columbus, teacher)

“The incentive helps me to feel appreciated. When I feel appreciated, it helps me to feel happy about what I’m doing and helps me to strive to be and do better.” (Columbus, teacher)

“WAGES and AWARDS Plus provide financial support and stability. It helps motivate staff to remain working in early childhood education.” (Columbus, director)

“It has meant everything to me because it helps me to pay my bills. I feel that I am underpaid for the job that I do, therefore, this helps me feel much better about the job that I do with children.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“The AWARD\$® Plus supplement helps me feel appreciated and recognized for the work that I do.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“AWARD\$® Plus allows me to plan for future special activities for my classroom because I know when my award will be deposited.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“It allows me to keep my lights on, buy items for the day care, and to help low income families. ... It’s important to me because I’ve put 20 years into serving other parents and their children, and this program really sees all that we do. They came up with a way to show providers they care by giving us this award according to our education. So I’m thankful for every check that was given to me.” (Cumberland, family child care home provider)

“The AWARD\$ Plus program makes the financial burden not as rough throughout the year. Our line of work doesn’t pay much for the teachers and administrators such as me to just hang in there and fight the good fight. ... It’s important because many schools would be closed without it. The early childhood community is not well compensated for the education and constant trainings that dedicated caregivers complete. We shouldn’t be financially struggling to maintain the basics of every life.” (Dare, teacher)

“It has helped keep my child care home open and running.” (Dare, family child care home provider)

“It has helped me to finish my last year of school.” (Durham, teacher)

“The AWARD\$® Plus money helps me to address the need of caring for children under the age of three years old specifically because in my county there is a need for infant-toddler care. These days a lot of teachers are feeling undervalued, unsupported, and lacking the necessary resources. As educators, we have to be our best selves while caring for young children. Getting these funds helps boost my confidence and reassures me that there is someone higher up that appreciates the work I do.” (Forsyth, teacher/family child care home provider)

“Teaching students at a young age is important. Salary can be the most significant factor to attract great teachers.” (Forsyth, director)

“AWARD\$ Plus has helped me keep a little bit of food on the table. ... It helps you love what you do!” (Gaston, teacher)

“Receiving a supplement makes staff feel appreciated. It helps with their income and helps keep them in one center – and in the child care profession as a whole.” (Gaston, director)

“It gives us hope and makes us feel valued.” (Gates, teacher)

“It definitely encourages you to stay in one place and not be a job hopper.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It helps in times when everything is going up except our paychecks.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I feel seen and valued. ... For education to be important for all children, especially birth through five, early educators do not get compensated well. This is a helpful resource. It allows me to save, take a vacation that I normally would not be able to, and buy Christmas gifts. It eases some

financial burdens and allows me to be better for my own child and the children in my care. Thank you!” (Guilford, teacher)

“It has made a huge impact in my life. There are things I couldn’t do before, now I can do financially. I am more stress free and loving what I do for the children in my care. Thanks.” (Guilford, teacher)

“This program has been rewarding to me because it comes during a time in my life that I need it most. It also encourages me to want to continue my education and learn more in this field.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I was able to use the money towards a car so I didn’t have to ride the bus anymore.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It helps to be able to meet financial needs of my family. It’s a wonderful supplement to our income because honestly, some of us could not make ends meet without it.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It has led me to further my education.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Teachers work very hard, and we can’t pay them what they are worth. This helps give them living wages.” (Guilford, director)

“Our goal is to maintain qualified and educated staff. The AWARD\$ Plus and WAGE\$ programs help to relieve the financial burden of getting more education and increase teachers’ salaries so that they can support themselves.” (Halifax, director)

“AWARD\$ Plus helps me feel more appreciated for doing my job.” (Iredell, teacher)

“It’s just a great blessing in every way of life.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus is a great way to stay encouraged that this is the right program and field to be working in.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“It helps to feel that others want to help us in the child care workforce keep our jobs because salary is not always enough.” (Macon, teacher)

“It’s a blessing and a motivator to keep working here.” (McDowell, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus is helping me to stay on top of my education without the stress of finances.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus has helped to build my self-esteem and self-worth in this field.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus helps motivate me to stay with my toddlers and continue to love and teach them!” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“The AWARD\$ Plus program is important because it helps with providing materials for our classrooms. It also helps you when you’re in a financial bind in your home. It can help with providing for your children when your income doesn’t meet the need. It has helped me

tremendously in the past few years. I've had some major surgeries which had me out of work longer than expected, so I'm grateful for the program." (Mecklenburg, teacher)

"AWARDS Plus encouraged me to continue my education in early childhood. I feel more noticed and appreciated for my efforts in furthering my education, but also continuing in the field of child care for 29 years." (Mecklenburg, family child care home provider)

"It is a big help to encourage teachers to keep teaching and to know that they are important too." (Montgomery, teacher)

"Without this supplement to my income, I would have left this field and found employment elsewhere with better pay and benefits." (Moore, teacher)

"It's showing us that we are important to children's development." (Moore, teacher)

"I think both WAGES and AWARDS Plus are essential. This incentive has been positive with staff retention and the ability for staff to better take care of their responsibilities. Teachers also have a more positive attitude with the extra funding." (Moore, director)

"Both WAGES and AWARDS Plus help to supplement staff wages in a time when we are all hurting financially due to inflation." (Moore, director)

"It always comes when I am in dire need of assistance with BILLS!" (New Hanover, teacher)

"I love teaching young children, my toddler classroom is my passion. The AWARDS Plus supplement has helped make sure I can afford to work in the place where I feel my talents are used in the best way possible. I am excited to go to work every day, and I'm glad I can pay my bills and create a savings account while doing so." (New Hanover, teacher)

"I have been able to purchase needed items such as a refrigerator, replace the bathroom sink, replace doors to the child care room, and make repairs. I have been able to purchase needed items and make repairs without needing to incur debt. Less worry about finances helps me provide quality care." (New Hanover, family child care home provider)

"The award is important because it helps maintain a qualified staff." (New Hanover, director)

"It has opened up more conversations about education, its importance, and continuing course work. ... The staff love the awards!" (Onslow, director)

"It takes some of the financial stress off of me." (Orange, teacher)

"This program has helped me feel more secure in my job. I feel more valued." (Orange, teacher)

"AWARDS Plus helps takes stress away by relieving financial burdens." (Orange, teacher)

"It has been a financial anchor for me and my family. I have purchased much needed equipment for my facility." (Orange, family child care home provider)

"Financial breathing room makes it more likely that a teacher can think and plan ahead." (Orange, Director)

“At times my job can feel overwhelming and stressful. Before I started receiving assistance from AWARD\$ Plus, it was hard to make ends meet at times. I feel a sense of security, and I feel appreciated for the work I do.” (Pasquotank, family child care home provider)

“It has really helped me to get my household back on track. ... It has helped me to further my education so I can help the children with the knowledge that I have learned.” (Perquimans, teacher)

“Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus has recognized my educational status and the hard work that I maintained in improving my business for over forty plus years.” (Perquimans, family child care home provider)

“It has been a great stress reliever and I look forward to them each year.” (Person, teacher)

“It is important for the teachers to feel appreciated for our hard work. It has meant a lot in my life, being able to pay for bills without worrying and stressing.” (Pitt, teacher)

“It gives more financial security and confidence.” (Pitt, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus helps me financially and lessens stress, which allows me to be focused while working.” (Randolph, teacher)

“It is important because it helps in the time of need, like if you need supplies for class or help on your bills or anything in life. It gives you an extra boost to stay on the job.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I think it’s important because this field is not a high paying field and people have to be able to live and still do what they love.” (Robeson, teacher)

“It encourages staff to continue in the early childhood education field.” (Robeson, director)

“The award helps to take some of the financial burden off of me.” (Rockingham, family child care home provider)

“The supplements help make up the difference in salary. It’s no secret that early childhood educators are chronically underpaid for the services they provide. It’s nice to have that recognized by WAGE\$ and AWARD\$ Plus.” (Rowan, director)

“It pushes me to further my education.” (Stanly, teacher)

“It has helped me to save money for a new car and being able to be financially independent.” (Stanly, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus is very important to teachers. It has made a difference in my household by helping with gas, food, bills, and things for my classroom. It has helped me keep my head above water. Without it, I don’t know what I would do or how I would make it.” (Stanly, teacher)

“It helps me offset the cost of living and everyday expenses.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“Working in child care, we have a big responsibility and little pay. It is hard to find good workers because of the low wages. This supplement is a big help.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“AWARDS\$ Plus encourages you to stay in the child care program and it gives you the extra that is needed to help your ends meet because child care wages are so low.” (Union, teacher)

“AWARDS\$ Plus is important because it gives extra finances to benefit my program, helps to keep my child care prices affordable, and helps with extra classes I may want to take to benefit the children’s learning.” (Union, family child care home provider)

“In today’s economy, any extra funds are much needed and appreciated. It is hard for some to make ends meet, and supplements such as these help the cause.” (Vance, director)

“AWARDS\$ Plus helps to ease the financial burden that teachers encounter and helps to reduce stress that could easily trickle in at work.” (Wake, teacher)

“The child care community is going through a very difficult time. Receiving the award is very encouraging to realize that someone is thinking of me, despite the challenges.” (Wake, teacher)

“It helps to be able to take away stress financially. It makes you feel appreciated for the work we do as educators.” (Wake, teacher)

“I’m able to pay off school debt so I can go back and advance my degree. ... AWARDS\$ Plus has helped me stay in my current position, providing quality care to my children and the field as a whole.” (Wake, teacher)

“It helps so many educators and influences us to stay in the education field. We already have a passion for young children, but of course AWARDS\$ Plus gives us more motivation to continue in that field.” (Wake, teacher)

“I feel that all of my hard work, sweat, and tears are worth it at the end when I receive this award/reward.” (Wake, teacher)

“It is really important for me as it gives me a boost in my child care career. It makes me feel appreciated and encourages me to stay in this field.” (Wake, teacher)

“It helps me with financial needs, needs of my household, and needs for my child care setting.” (Wake, teacher)

“AWARDS\$ Plus is a really good program to help teachers that work in child care to have a better life. I thank God for this program.” (Wake, teacher)

“AWARDS\$ Plus is important as it shows tremendous support to early childhood educators in the form of a financial supplement. With the costs of housing, food, and utilities, it helps with these rising costs.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“I appreciate AWARDS\$ Plus. It always comes at a time when I need it most and I am grateful. ... It means a lot to my program; sometimes it helps me to make it over the finish line.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“AWARDS\$ Plus helped me realize how important and vital my role in child care is.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“It paid for me to finish my associate degree at Wake Technical Community College. Without it I would never be able to pay for my textbooks.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“It lets me know that there are people who want me to know that they care and appreciate what I do.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“I have two teachers that have enrolled into school to better themselves in ECE.” (Wake, director)

“It helps reduce turnover. Teachers are more likely to stay in the field.” (Wake, director)

“It boosts staff to feel more valued, helps them feel like they are working towards a goal of education, and gives them some encouragement.” (Wake, director)

“It motivates staff to continue their education.” (Wake, director)

“AWARDS Plus helps me gain enough money to stay in the field.” (Wayne, teacher)

“It keeps me from seeking another job.” (Wilson, teacher)

“It’s important because it relieves some stress. When I’m stressed and unable to receive resources and proper help, I’m unable to do my best the way I feel it should be done.” (Wilson, family child care home provider)

“Supplements are important because child care workers are among the lowest-paid professions in NC. Staff are so excited to receive the extra income, and it means a lot to them. Some use it to purchase something that they really need, and some put it in savings to use for emergency funds.” (Wilson, director)

“It is a relief to have some savings to fall back on in case of emergencies and increased cost of living expenses. ... I think it is important because receiving the supplement makes me feel valued. Child care teachers typically work in a low paying field. It is nice to know that we are appreciated for the many hours that we dedicate to the children we love and care for.” (Yadkin, teacher)

Appendix B: DCDEE Messages
Sample Feedback Collected from AWARD\$ Plus Surveys FY23

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

“Thank you so very much for offering this for the providers of NC! It means so much to me that you think enough of the providers to offer this program!” (Alamance, family child care home provider)

“I appreciate that you acknowledge infant and toddler teachers. This program makes me feel so appreciated and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness.” (Ashe, teacher)

“Thank you so much for being so supportive of us as educators of young children! The supplement helps us feel more appreciated and recognized as early educators! It helps supplement our income.” (Beaufort, teacher)

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

“Thank you very much for the assistance.” (Beaufort, teacher)

“I am very thankful you help teachers with this award to do our job better.” (Bladen, teacher)

“Thank you for everything you do!” (Bladen, family child care home provider)

“The supplement is very helpful and makes you feel appreciated.” (Bladen, family child care home provider)

“Thank you very much. It’s been a lifesaver more often than not for my family.” (Buncombe, teacher)

“Thank you for your support. I know if the state would provide more funds then you all could do so much more. At least you all are trying hard and I appreciate it.” (Burke, teacher)

“Your care and concern for your teachers are greatly appreciated. You help lighten our load while brightening a part of our life.” (Burke, teacher)

“Thank you. I really appreciate the supplement. It seems like it comes when I really need it.” (Burke, teacher)

“I greatly appreciate it.” (Burke, teacher)

“I really appreciate it and it’s noticed.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“Thank you all. AWARD\$ Plus¹ has truly been a blessing for me.” (Cabarrus, family child care home provider)

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

“The supplement has been a way that I have felt needed and appreciated for what I do. Child care can be a thankless occupation and very mentally and physically exhausting. Knowing that what I do is important has kept me in this field for many years when I’ve contemplated other career options.” (Camden, family child care home provider)

“Thanks for helping early childhood teachers and providers to feel better and do a great job in their classroom.” (Carteret, teacher)

“I feel honored to have this program and be a qualified recipient to receive this award twice in a year.” (Caswell, teacher)

“I appreciate the supplement and I hope funding will continue.” (Caswell, teacher)

“Thank you so much for everything you do for us in child care!” (Catawba, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for recognizing the importance of early childhood educators.” (Cherokee, teacher)

“I appreciate it. It helps me take care of some of my needs for my family and classroom.” (Chowan, teacher)

“Whoever thought of this award realizes what it takes to care for children. They gave us an incentive to keep up the good work and give our children an incentive to be someone great in life. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!” (Chowan, teacher)

“Thank you all for everything. It really makes my life better and it is something great to look forward to every six months.” (Columbus, teacher)

“Thank you. This program has proved to be a huge help to me and my family.” (Columbus, teacher)

“It’s just a great program that builds teachers’ self-esteem and motivation.” (Craven, teacher)

“This supplement has been very beneficial to me and I thank you very much.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you so much for looking out for educators who are underpaid. It’s so sad to say that people who work at fast food restaurants are paid more than some educators and we hold a degree in education. Thanks to AWARD\$ Plus for helping out. Keep up the great work!!!” (Cumberland, teacher)

“It helps with supplies for the classroom.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!! Although not every education institution recognizes or even appreciates their employees, AWARD\$ Plus makes up for that because you recognize us and are saying thank you for all that you do.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“Please don’t cut off the AWARD\$ Plus supplement to child care providers. We are depending on the funding every six months.” (Cumberland, family child care home provider)

“I think that the supplement should be increased.” (Dare, teacher)

“Thank you so much for this help. It really means a lot to me and the children!” (Dare, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for making us feel appreciated for the work that we do.” (Davidson, teacher)

“I am very appreciative of the funds and support that you provide.” (Davidson, teacher)

“Thank you. It has helped my students as well as my family.” (Duplin, teacher)

“Thank you so much for helping early educators to fill in the gaps where they are not paid a living wage.” (Durham, teacher)

“When I relocated to the triad area I couldn’t find any available, quality child care. I took my 18 years of experience and opened my own family child care home. Most recently I found out that over 70% of children in my county are being cared for in an unlicensed child care facility due to the child care shortage. I think a percentage of those unlicensed homes enjoy working with children but lack the resources, funding and support they need to open up. Furthermore, I am grateful to be able to help get children into a licensed, regulated, quality child care setting. I think this AWARD\$ Plus incentive will help motivate those unlicensed providers, and even those seeking to become licensed, to further their education, and of course for the family child care homes that are still left to keep us around a little longer. Knowledge is POWER! So thank you Division of Child Development and Early Education of North Carolina for continuing to seek ways to support early childhood professionals and provide this wonderful incentive ‘lifeline’ for us.” (Forsyth, family child care home provider)

“Keep giving it!” (Gaston, teacher)

“Thank you, Thank you. It has helped me in my life in many ways. I’m thankful and grateful for it all.” (Gaston, teacher)

“Thank you. It is very helpful to my family.” (Gaston, teacher)

“Thank you. It is much needed for both my personal household and for my children at school. Everyone is struggling. We are actually facing challenges to keep our door open to the center.” (Gates, teacher)

“Thank you very much for continuing to provide this support for my family and me. I look forward to receiving these funds and they are truly helpful! It has kept me at my job even longer. Thank you for your continued support. I appreciate you all advocating for us! Thank you again!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you for supporting teachers!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Keep them coming.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you for the additional supplements to help meet basic needs.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It’s a great supplement!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you! This supplement is truly a lifesaver for some of us. Please don’t stop it. God bless everyone that makes it possible.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you. I am very appreciative of the program and supplement.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you with my whole ♥!!!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you for supplement. It really helps out.” (Guilford, teacher)

“I really thank you for this program.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Please continue to support the teachers and help us to feel secure with all the help that you supply.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you for providing assistance for my family.” (Guilford, teacher)

“It’s a great program. Thank you!” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you so much!!” ☺ ♥ (Guilford, teacher)

“Thank you for supporting the needs of family child care homes and providing needed funds for our programs.” (Guilford, family child care home provider)

“Please continue, Guilford County missed out on these helpful benefits [WAGES] for a while and it was certainly felt.” (Guilford, family child care home provider)

“I am very appreciative of all supplements.” (Guilford, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for the acknowledgment.” (Guilford, family child care home provider)

“It is a wonderful thing. It helps in many ways; I would not be able to do without it.” (Hoke, family child care home provider)

“I appreciate AWARD\$ Plus so much. It has been so helpful with paying my bills and buying gifts for the children in my classroom. Thank you, thank you, thank you for allowing me to receive this award.” (Iredell, teacher)

“Keep it as an incentive for teachers to stay at their jobs.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“It comes in handy, but we could use more.” (Macon, teacher)

“Thank you for everything. I appreciate it all and everything you do for teachers.” (Macon, teacher)

“It really helps me buy new things for my child care center.” (Martin, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for providing me with this supplement twice yearly. It’s a great feeling knowing that I’m getting a ‘bonus’ twice a year.” (McDowell, teacher)

“Thank you so much for the AWARDS\$ Plus supplement. It has helped me in many ways.”
(McDowell, teacher)

“I am truly grateful and thankful that the teachers like me have not been forgotten. I’ve been in this field for 26 years and I’ve noticed great improvements and forward strides in our children and programs. The sense of pride and focus on early education is invaluable!!! Much thanks!!!”
(McDowell, teacher)

“Thank you so much for the supplement. I love working with the toddlers, and it helps to get extra money so I can give back to the children.” (McDowell, teacher)

“The supplement helps me with bills.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you very much Division of Child Development and Early Education for awarding me and others with the AWARDS\$ Plus bonuses.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you so much for acknowledging how important our job is.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you for all you do!” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thanks sooo much for recognizing what we do and the impact that we make in a child’s life.”
(Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you. It is very much appreciated.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“I thank you for thinking about us in the child care field. We appreciate the support you provide for teachers.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“We really appreciate DCDEE a lot because these funds help a lot of us in diverse ways.”
(Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Thank you for being our voice and our students’ voice in needing happy, dedicated providers.”
(Mecklenburg, family child care home provider)

“It’s very helpful, useful, and helps me to catch up on things.” (Montgomery, teacher)

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

“This supplement is essential to attracting and keeping teachers in the field of early childhood education.” (Moore, teacher)

“Please continue with the program.” (Moore, teacher)

“I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the blessings you’ve given to me. Your help has been most appreciated. Thank you.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“Thank you for providing the supplement. I think it’s a wonderful idea and I’m sure many, many people are as happy as I am with it.” (New Hanover, teacher)

“Thank you! The comment that I hear most from parents is how difficult it is finding care for infants. Many programs are eliminating their infant care because of increased difficulty in

staffing or there is no space. The award is an incentive for providing care for children in this age group.” (New Hanover, family child care home provider)

“I am grateful for the AWARD\$® Plus program, for even thinking about teachers. It means a lot to me. I know the state could have put the monies somewhere else. Thank you for the extra help that covers some of the cost of the material that we put into the classrooms and our children all year long. Thank you for the supplement that really helps me.” (Northampton, teacher)

“I think it is a good thing that you have a program like this and I hope it will continue forever.” (Orange, teacher)

“Thank you for allowing me to receive this AWARD\$ Plus® supplement. It has indeed been helpful.” (Orange, teacher)

“Thank you for this supplement and it is greatly appreciated!!!” (Orange, teacher)

“I would like to say thank you and please know that the teachers who receive these supplements really need them. It really makes a difference because we sometimes feel burnt out, overworked, and underpaid for all the love and dedication we put into changing the lives of children. It may not seem like much to some, but for early childhood providers those supplements really make a difference.” (Orange, teacher)

“Thank you. This helps with the cost of living, the way inflation is going.” (Orange, teacher)

“I am grateful to receive the supplement. The time and work that I put into my degree, my experience, and dedication are acknowledged.” (Orange, family child care home provider)

“Thank you. The supplement has been a great help to me, my family, and my day care.” (Pasquotank, family child care home provider)

“Great job.” (Pender, teacher)

“AWARD\$ Plus supplements are very helpful. We do appreciate the efforts on your part to see that child care providers are rewarded for providing quality care for our precious children and are able to help ourselves and families as well. Thank you!!!” (Pender, family child care home provider)

“Thanks for everything that you have done to make my business a success. Without the funds that I have received, I really don’t think I would have been able to stay in business. From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU!!!!!!” (Pender, family child care home provider)

“I really feel as if you are letting us know that you appreciate the work that we do for the children and the community.” (Perquimans, teacher)

“Thank you for this supplement. I wish the agency would consider an increase to accommodate for the cost of living increase.” (Person, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for all you do! ♥” (Pitt, teacher)

“Thank you! I’m grateful for anything. It is definitely a blessing.” (Pitt, teacher)

“Great job.” (Pitt, teacher)

“Thanks for this program. I would not stay in child care without it.” (Pitt, teacher)

“Thank you for AWARD\$ Plus. It does make a difference.” (Randolph, teacher)

“It helps me pay my bills and helps me improve in my work.” (Robeson, teacher)

“I thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing us to receive this supplement. It has helped in so many ways. I just can’t explain how much I appreciate it.” (Robeson, teacher)

“It helps out a lot.” (Robeson, teacher)

“It is truly a blessing.” (Robeson, teacher)

“This is a great program. I went to school and got my associate degree and I’m thinking about going back. I do tell others about that program and they are going to school.” (Robeson, teacher)

“It’s a great thing you’re doing!” (Robeson, teacher)

“It’s an awesome program.” (Rockingham, teacher)

“Thank you so much for all your support.” (Rockingham, family child care home provider)

“Thank you so much. I appreciate it greatly!” (Rowan, teacher)

“Thank you for caring.” (Rowan, teacher)

“Thank you for showing appreciation to those of us who love and care for the youngest of children every day.” (Rowan, family child care home provider)

“It has helped me with my grandson, groceries, and bills.” (Stanly, teacher)

“Thank you for taking the time to help us as teachers, this means so much to us and our families. This is a big financial help for our family and helps lift some of the stress off of us. Thank you for all you do and may God bless you.” (Stanly, teacher)

“It is God sent and very much needed in my life.” (Stokes, teacher)

“I would like to tell you how grateful I am and how much the supplement has helped me. It is an important resource to me that I treasure and rely on.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“Make it more widely available and fight to increase the pay of our child care staff.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“We benefit from this program. You get some funds to help with your family and to teach the children better.” (Union, teacher)

“These supplements are very important, especially with prices rising on essential products. I am very appreciative of the gift that you share with me, it has blessed me to continue to do what I love, but to also be able to buy the things I need for extra arts and crafts in my classroom as well as helps to pay my life insurance on myself and my elderly mom. I’ve had so many family

members to die with no insurance, so this is important to me. Thank you so much and I am asking God to bless you all.” (Union, teacher)

“I truly appreciate AWARD\$ Plus and what it has to offer child care workers like me. Thank you!” (Union, teacher)

“The funds have really helped meet the needs of me and my family over the years. I have also been able to enhance some materials at work as well. I look forward to receiving the supplements to help.” (Union, teacher)

“I am very thankful and grateful. I do not take this for granted. I appreciate it very much. Thanks!” (Union, teacher)

“Please continue with this program.” (Union, teacher)

“The supplements are great and are always needed and on time.” (Union, family child care home provider)

“Please continue to help fund this program to help bring relief to child care providers.” (Wake, teacher)

“I wish it was a little more, but I understand it is based on funding.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you so much for providing supplements in a field that historically underpays their people.” (Wake, teacher)

“It encourages us to further our education.” (Wake, teacher)

“I really appreciate the help you guys are giving to educators.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thanks for helping the teachers.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thanks, it’s very much appreciated.” (Wake, teacher)

“I’m very grateful. If you would fund more, I would appreciate it. We are going through many challenges and sometimes I wonder if we will make it.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thanks so much. We need more people and places to help fund it.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you. It has helped me and my family tremendously.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you for the economic help, it has helped me to better solve my family expenses, but I would like the budget to be increased because the price of all the products is going up.” (Wake, teacher)

“Please continue the program. With this inflation, losing it when our income reaches certain wages actually doesn’t seem to be fair, that all of our hard work and dedication will be cut off and we will be excluded from the program. With my personal family situation and financial needs on top of everything, receiving the award has always been my life saver for years. It matters to me. My dedication for this field deserved a little token at the end.” (Wake, teacher)

“This program is really amazing and great for appreciating early child care teachers. Especially when there is so much of inflation right now and child care jobs don’t pay much, the AWARD\$ Plus supplement is helping and encouraging me to stick to the child care education career. I have been working with twos for the last 18 years and love it. The AWARD\$ Plus payment feels like my work is being appreciated. 😊” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you for everything and supporting me. The funds are very helpful to me and my needs.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you very much for the extra money. My family has benefited greatly by it.” (Wake, teacher)

“They are very helpful and make me feel good about what I do.” (Wake, teacher)

“Having this program helps early educators have a positive effect on parents and our future generations.” (Wake, teacher)

“Thank you! We appreciate every dollar your organization contributes to the child care industry workers. We are definitely underpaid. So the additional income helps supplement the regular income.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“I would like to say to the Division to not terminate these funds for educators. It helps our programs very much. Thank you.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“Please keep doing what you are doing. It makes a difference!!!” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“This award has helped tremendously! It has been a blessing.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“I am very grateful and honored for the AWARD\$ Plus program. Please continue the program because it is well needed for providers and our day care children. Thanks for all that you do!” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“The supplement has been used to help me in so many ways.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for the support and the love for child care.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“Please continue to support this funding so that we as providers can continue to do a little bit more for others, children and ourselves. Thanks.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“Thankful for funding AWARD\$ Plus.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“It is definitely needed.” (Wake, family child care home provider)

“Thank you so much. Please don’t stop helping, please don’t.” (Washington, teacher)

“Thank you so much for caring about us and doing everything you can to provide for us.” (Watauga, teacher)

“I really appreciate it. It is very helpful for me. As you know, the infant-toddler teachers are underpaid, and the supplement for me is like a gift from heaven.” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thanks so very much! I hope it continues!” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thank you for showing us that what we do each day is important and that we are truly appreciated.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“Thank you so much for the much-needed help and concern for me and the children I serve.” (Wilson, teacher)

“Thank you for blessing us with this supplement.” (Wilson, teacher)

“It’s helpful.” (Wilson, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for recognizing the hard work and dedication given to the child care profession. It is nice to know that the DCDEE recognizes the sacrifices teachers make to further their education. The supplement makes me feel that I am valued and that the DCDEE appreciates my efforts to provide the best learning environment I can for the kids in my care.” (Yadkin, teacher)