



Policy Brief:

Affordability, Accessibility, Support and Compensation: Higher Education and the Early Childhood Workforce

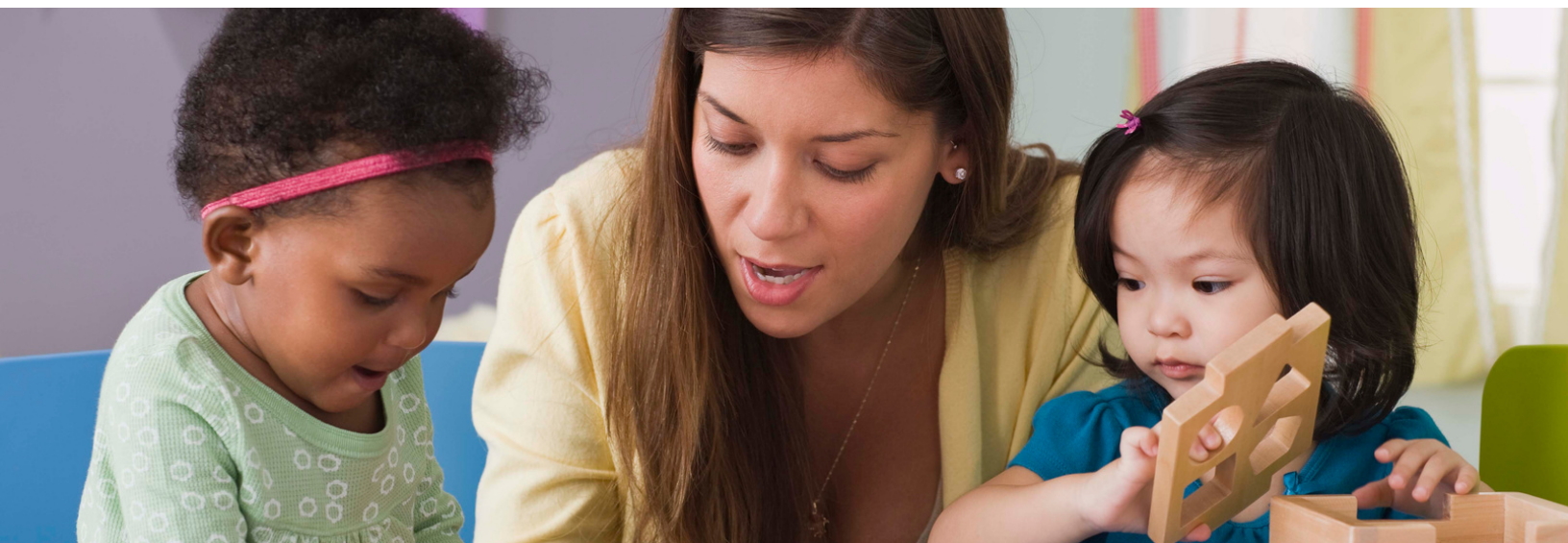
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Every child in an early childhood setting should have a teacher with specialized education to promote that child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and who prepares them for success in school and in life. The National Research Council's report from a panel of experts, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*¹, lays out several recommendations for programs serving children from birth through age 8, notably that teachers "should have at a minimum a bachelor's degree and specialization in the knowledge and competencies needed to serve as a care and education professional."

Although there has been progress in meeting this goal thanks to the tenacity of early childhood educators, far more early childhood educators struggle to overcome barriers of cost, accessibility, and inadequate compensation. Most early childhood educators are very low-income women, racially and ethnically diverse, working long hours that leave their own families financially fragile. Many are the first in their families to go to college. They cannot afford to meet the higher education requirements of Head Start, state prekindergarten, and top-tier quality rating and improvement systems without financial, academic, and non-academic supports. Furthermore, if they do earn more education and credentials, the financing of the early childhood system does not provide a commensurate increase in compensation – a deterrent to more education and a factor in the churning and turnover of teachers.

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.





T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® reduces many of these barriers. It is unique in its approach and integration of five key components, engaging the participation of the program employer and employee.

Comprehensive Scholarship Aid	College Credits and Degrees	Counseling Support	Commitment to the Employer	Compensation Improvements
Provides financial support for the ECE workforce to access college courses, certificates, and degrees in early childhood education without incurring any student debt, by using a shared cost approach that includes a small contribution from the employer and employee.	Requires completion of a specified number of credit hours per contract at a participating college or university.	Provides each recipient with a state-based T.E.A.C.H. counselor to help the student secure a scholarship, navigate college processes, and support work/school/family balance.	Establishes a contract between the employee, employer, and T.E.A.C.H. that requires the recipient to remain in the sponsoring program for a specified period (generally one year) after they receive their education to reduce staff turnover.	Mandates increased compensation through the provision of a bonus and/or raise for recipients as they advance on incremental steps toward degree completion.

Eligibility criteria for access to a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship varies by state and scholarship model. Most scholarship models require recipients to work a minimum number of hours per week in a program licensed or registered by the state child care facility licensing entity. T.E.A.C.H. programs are administered by a single non-profit organization licensed to implement the model in a state. Each program develops tailored scholarship models to address the specific needs of their ECE workforce. Programs are guided by the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center at Child Care Services Association to ensure all programs are accountable, effective, and high performing. The National Center establishes common principles, policies and a set of core values that foster the implementation of the evidence-based model and are guided by a rigorous data collection and evaluation process.

Funding for the T.E.A.C.H. program is a combination of public funds and contributions from the employer and the educator-student. Many states help underwrite the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship with a portion of the quality set-aside in their Child Care and Development Block Grant.



T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Outcomes:

- Debt-free higher education for working educator-students.
- Counseling and other supports for academic success and reducing work-school-family stress.
- Engagement of employers and employees in higher education attainment that benefits the program, and the individual.
- Wage supplements that employers cannot afford to provide on their own and mobility on a career pathway.
- More children in early childhood programs have teachers who are knowledgeable and able to respond to their diverse needs.



Federal Policy Recommendations

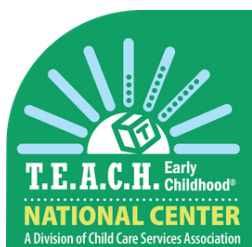
- Create a federal interagency early childhood working group of the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to share data and develop aligned policies to expand debt-free education from apprenticeship through all levels of postsecondary education on an efficient career pathway, where educational milestones are connected to increased compensation.
- Increase the individual Pell Grant maximum award and provide year-round access to the grant; include working in early childhood programs under the Work-Study program; increase Child Care Access Means Parents In School (CCAMPIS) so that more early childhood educators have child care for their children as they earn their degrees; and strengthen outreach to early childhood educators on postsecondary loan forgiveness options.
- Include early childhood education in Registered Apprenticeships.



States Policy Recommendations

- Dedicate a portion of the state CCDF grant's set aside and Head Start Collaboration funding for establishing or expanding T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® to help teachers in licensed center-based and family child care programs earn degrees.
- Conduct a scan of higher education coursework and degrees in early childhood education and remove barriers based on language diversity, scheduling, and physical access.
- Provide state funds to offset the cost of state teacher certification fees for early childhood educators working in community-based settings.
- Strengthen workforce registries and conduct workforce studies on a regular basis to provide appropriate data on the landscape of early childhood educators' education, retention, and compensation and share data across early childhood, higher education, and workforce development systems.

Learn more about the program model and the states that are participating in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship at www.teachnationalcenter.org.



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