



The Early Care and Education Staffing Crisis

As a nation we like to believe that children are our most precious resource; our current early care and education delivery system, however reveals a very different reality.

The wages of the early care and education workforce remain dismally low.

- ❖ The mean hourly wage for preschool teachers in 2004 was \$11.81.
- ❖ The mean hourly wage for child care workers in 2004 was \$8.68.
- ❖ Of the 820 job descriptions surveyed by the U.S. Department of Labor, only 22 and 121 pay less than child care workers and preschool teachers, respectively.

The early care and education workforce continues to receive limited benefits.

- ❖ Like other American workers, the early care and education workforce faces tenuous, and shrinking, support for their health care expenses. But in such settings, given teachers' daily exposure to illness, and, in turn, the children's exposure to oftentimes sick teachers, this inadequate support for health care benefits poses an especially serious risk.

Turnover rates of early care and education teachers and assistants is amongst the highest of any profession.

- ❖ Low turnover rates are critical to quality care as children are proven to thrive better in settings where they receive consistent care.
- ❖ Though early care and education teaching staff enjoy their work, they are overwhelming dissatisfied with their salaries, benefits and social status and find it difficult to remain in the field.
- ❖ Training and professional development initiatives are necessary, but without additional financial supports, are not sufficient to keep qualified staff in the field.

Investments in the workforce such as higher levels of compensation and benefits is linked to higher quality that promotes healthy development for young children and contributes to our nation's capacity to meet its educational, social and economic goals.

- ❖ Children fare better emotionally, socially and cognitively when centers can demonstrate, among other factors, that an investment in the working conditions of staff, including higher levels of compensation, better benefits, staff education and specialized training, are made.
- ❖ Investing in the workforce by increasing teachers pay will save taxpayers money by reducing teacher turnover and providing other economic returns as a result of having high-quality programs.

America depends on early care and education teachers. Our future depends on valuing them.

References

Barnett, W.S. (2003). Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications, *Preschool Policy Matter*, 2. New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER.

Bellm, D., Burton, A., Whitebook, M., Broatch, L., & Young, M. (2002). Inside the Pre-K Classroom: A study of staffing and stability in state-funded prekindergarten programs. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 2004 State Occupational Employment and Wage Data. 2006

Helburn, S.W., Ed. (1995). The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Technical Report. Denver: Department of Economics, Center for Research in Economic and Social Policy, University of Colorado at Denver.

Whitebook, M., Howes, C., and Phillips, D.A. (1990). Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America. Final Report of the National Child Care Staffing Study. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project. Center for the Child Care Workforce

Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., Howes, C. (1993). National child care staffing study revisited: Four years in the life of center-based child care. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project. Center for the Child Care Workforce.

Whitebook, M., Sakai, L., Gerber, E. & Howes, C. (2001). Then & Now: Changes in child Care Staffing, 1994-2000. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.