

Executive Summary

Early Childhood Workforce

INDEX

2016

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
Institute for Research on Labor and Employment
University of California, Berkeley





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Established in 1999, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children's optimal development. CSCCE provides research and expert analysis on topics that include: compensation and economic insecurity among early educators; early childhood teacher preparation, access to educational opportunities, and work environments; and early childhood workforce data sources and systems. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

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Executive Summary

Every day, in homes and centers across the country, approximately two million adults are paid¹ to care for and educate more than 12 million² children between birth and age five. Regardless of setting or role, this almost exclusively female workforce is responsible for safeguarding and facilitating the development and learning of our nation's youngest children.

Early educators play a central role in the environments in which millions of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers develop and learn.³ Our nation relies on their knowledge and skills to provide high-quality early care and education to our increasingly diverse population of children and families. Yet our system of preparing, supporting, and rewarding early educators in the United States remains largely ineffective, inefficient, and inequitable, posing multiple obstacles to teachers' efforts to nurture children's optimal development and learning, as well as risks to their own well-being.

CSCCE's 2014 report, *Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Care and Education Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*, documented that economic insecurity, linked to low wages, remains endemic among those who care for and educate young children from birth to elementary school. This condition has endured despite a much-altered landscape in which developmental scientists, economists, and business and labor leaders have widely recognized the importance of early care and education in shaping children's development, promoting the health of families, and building a strong economy.

In line with this increased recognition of the importance of ECE, there have been notable, but uneven, strides in improving the education and training levels of the ECE workforce over the last quarter century.⁴ But efforts to link these improvements to policies and resources that address teachers' economic well-being have been largely optional, selective, and sporadic. They have not translated evenly to federal policy or funding priorities across programs, nor have they necessarily prompted state actions. A major goal of early childhood services has been to relieve poverty among children, yet many of these same efforts continue to generate poverty in the predominantly female, ethnically and racially diverse ECE workforce, especially for educators who have children of their own.

About the Early Childhood Workforce Index

The case for changing this status quo is incontrovertible. As a matter of justice to the early childhood workforce, their own families, and the children of the families they serve, another 25 years is too long to wait for improvements in early childhood jobs. The time is long overdue for moving from the question of why we must improve early childhood jobs to a focus on how to make it happen.

To that end, the biennial *Early Childhood Workforce Index* represents the first effort to establish a baseline description of early childhood employment conditions and policies on a state-by-state basis in order to improve early childhood jobs. Subsequent iterations of the *Index* in 2018 and beyond will provide the opportunity to identify trends and track progress in the states over time.

The *Index* provides a current appraisal of workforce conditions and policies across states.⁵ It is divided into three topical sections: earnings and economic security; early childhood workforce policies; and family and income support policies across occupations. In the section on earnings and economic security, we provide national and state-level data on ECE workforce pay in relation to other occupations, noting changes over time. For the remaining two sections, we have identified measurable indicators of state policy for each topic, grouped by categories within each section.⁶ These indicators represent opportunities for state policies that have the potential to enhance the lives of the many children and adults affected by ECE employment conditions. Data sources are described within each section of the *Index*.

Based on the indicators, we assign states to one of three groups for each category as follows:

Red represents stalled: the state has made limited or no progress;
Yellow represents edging forward: the state has made partial progress;
Green represents making headway: the state is taking action and advancing promising policies.

In each section, we spotlight recent research or promising developments that advance new policies or improved conditions.

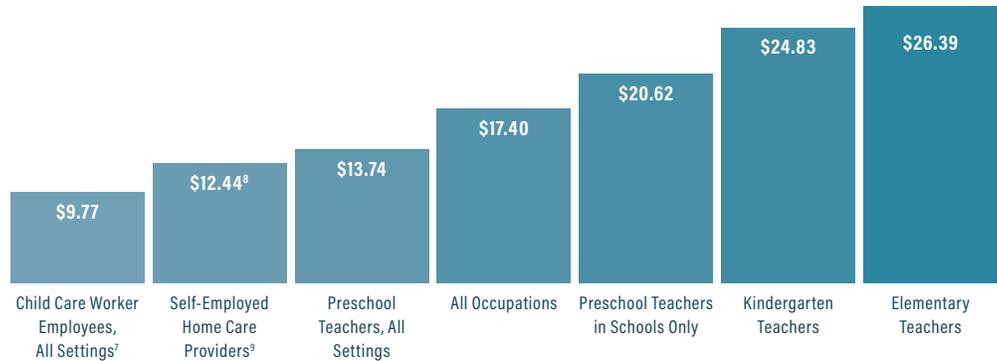
Highlights of Findings

Earnings & Economic Security

Low wages and inconsistent expectations pose risks to the well-being and effectiveness of early educators and undermine our nation's ability to ensure equitable and high-quality services for all young children. Yet our description of early educator earnings across the country demonstrates that low wages and economic insecurity, the absence of a rational wage structure, and the low value accorded to educational attainment continue to persist in the early childhood field, decades after the first calls to remedy these conditions.

The most recent national data attest to the low wages of early educators and demonstrate the earnings gap across early childhood settings and in comparison to other teaching jobs (see Figure 1). Similar patterns emerge at the state level.

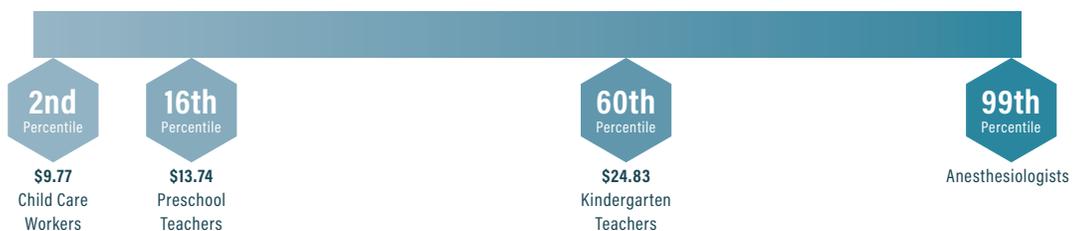
Figure 1 Median Hourly Wages by Occupation, 2015



Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. Retrieved from <http://stats.bls.gov/oes/>
 Note: Kindergarten and elementary school teacher earnings are reported as annual salaries. Hourly wages were calculated by dividing the annual salary by 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year.

Nationally, child care workers are nearly in the bottom percentile (second) when all occupations are ranked by annual earnings (see Figure 2). Preschool teachers fare only somewhat better (16th) compared to kindergarten teachers, who rank 60th.

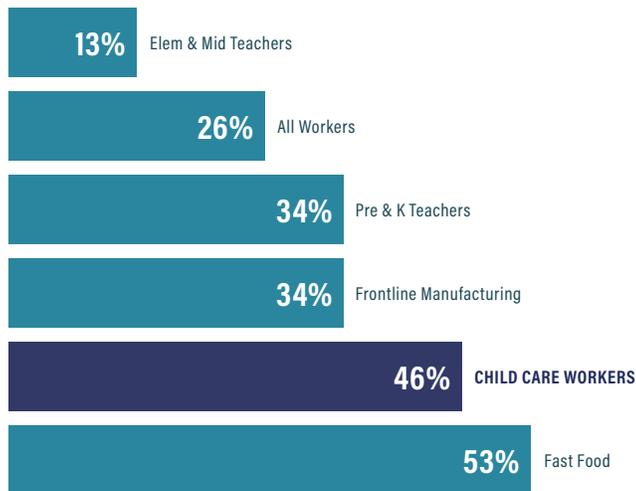
Figure 2 Selected Occupations Ranked by Earnings, 2015



Nearly one-half (46 percent) of child care workers, compared to about one-quarter (26 percent) of the U.S. workforce as a whole, were part of families enrolled in at least one of four public support programs: the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Participation Rates in Public Support Programs by Selected Occupations & for All Workers & Their Family Members (Annual Averages, 2009-2013)



Source: UC-Berkeley Labor Center calculations from 2009-2013. March Current Population Survey (CPS), 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS), program administrative data.

For more information on early educator earnings, see “Section 3: Earnings and Economic Security” from the full Index.

Early Childhood Workforce Policies

State policies play a powerful role in shaping early childhood jobs and, in turn, the quality of early learning experiences available to young children. State decisions regarding early educator qualifications, earnings, and work environments, and about the level of resources available for early care and education, largely determine whether advances are being made in the competencies and well-being of all those engaged in the education and care of young children. Likewise, the level of commitment to building a rigorous and comprehensive workforce data system determines whether states can reliably assess their progress toward that goal.

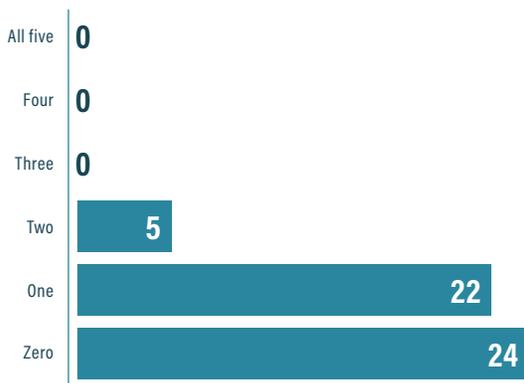
This inaugural edition of the *Early Childhood Workforce Index* is intended to provide a baseline description of early childhood workforce policies related to the preparation, support,

and compensation for early educators and to present a path forward. We have not assessed policy implementation, nor have we defined “making headway” as a benchmark of optimal policy and practice. Rather, “edging forward” and “making headway” represent steps toward reducing the inequity, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness that characterize the current status of preparation, support, and pay for early educators in every state.

Yet, even at this baseline assessment, progress was stalled or only edging forward in the majority of states across the five categories of early childhood workforce policy that we appraised: qualifications and supports for education and training; work environments; compensation; financial resources; and workforce data. No state met the criteria of making headway in all or even most of the categories, and barely half of states were making headway in *any* of the categories (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

States Making Headway By Number of Early Childhood Policy Categories



For more information about each category and individual indicators, see “Section 4: Early Childhood Workforce Policies” from the full Index.

Family & Income Support Policies

Record levels of economic insecurity — not only among early educators, but across occupations in the United States — have prompted some states to adopt or expand policies to mitigate the effects of low earnings and poor job quality for all workers and families. In recognition of the potential for these types of policies to contribute to improved well-being for early educators, the *Index* also provides a baseline assessment of state income support (Earned Income Tax Credit, minimum wage levels) and child care assistance policies as well as supports for health and well-being for all workers and families (e.g., paid sick days and paid family leave). Yet here, too, only a small minority of states were making headway in either of these categories, and only two states were making headway in both.

For more information about each category and individual indicators, see Section 5: Family and Income Support Policies from the full Index.

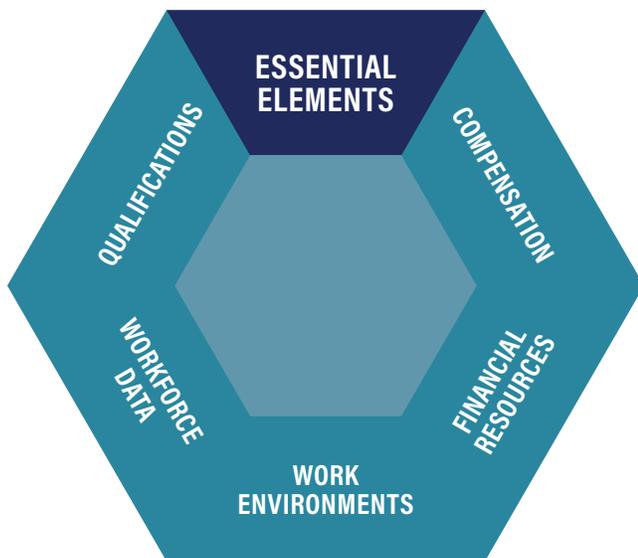
Making Headway: Principles & Recommendations to Guide State Actions to Improve Early Childhood Jobs

The results of this appraisal are made against a backdrop in which multiple stakeholders — policymakers, philanthropists, business leaders, researchers, and advocates — are engaged in efforts to implement evidence-based strategies for continuous quality improvement to ensure better outcomes for young children. Notwithstanding the tremendous concern and commitment of those involved, these efforts continue to shortchange the vast majority of children and their teachers.

To align our expectations for early educators with their professional development opportunities, working conditions, and earnings, we must confront the ways in which many of our state and federal policies reinforce the persistent workforce challenges and inequitable access to high-quality services experienced by most children and families. Disrupting this status quo requires a willingness to engage in more critical assessment of our approach to quality improvement, and the acceptance that effective teaching is dependent on the conditions under which educators work, their well-being, and their skills and knowledge.

Figure 5

Making Headway: 5 Essential Elements of Early Childhood Workforce Policy



Progress toward an equitable, efficient, and effective early childhood system requires advancing preparation, workplace supports, and compensation of the workforce simultaneously. Adequate preparation is necessary for teachers to develop the skills to provide high-quality learning experiences for children, but workplace supports are needed to ensure ongoing reflection, development, and educator well-being. Similarly, appropriate compensation and some measure of economic security are indispensable for attracting and retaining skilled educators. Making progress in each of these three areas additionally requires building solid foundations for these policies by securing sufficient financial resources and collecting quality, comprehensive workforce data. Further sources of public funding are required to stimulate the incubation and testing of sustainable policies to resolve compensation and other issues that have gone largely unaddressed. Data on the early

childhood workforce, across all settings and ages of children, must be collected in order to test the effectiveness of policies for preparation, support, and reward. Each of these five ingredients is essential — one cannot advance without the others — but quality data and sufficient resources are fundamental (see Figure 5).

Recommendations

For each of the five essential categories of early childhood policy included within the *Index*, we offer specific recommendations to inform state strategies, in line with the following **core principles**:



Qualifications

- Establish a minimum educational requirement that reflects foundational knowledge for *all* early educators.
- Develop well-defined career pathways, linked to requirements, from entry through leadership roles.
- Ensure that all members of the current workforce, including historical minority groups and English-language learners, have opportunities to access foundational and advanced training and education along an articulated continuum that encompasses vocational training through college degrees.

QRIS & Work Environments

- Develop workplace standards, such as paid planning time, which are necessary for educators to engage in professional practice and to alleviate conditions that cause educator stress, and revise QRIS rating criteria and other state guidelines accordingly.
- Provide financial resources and other assistance to enable programs and providers to comply with standards in a reasonable period of time.

Compensation Strategies

- Identify a rational and equitable set of guidelines for determining regionally based compensation levels, including benefits, for entry-level to teacher leadership positions in line with education, training, and experience, with the stated intention of raising the current wage floor and achieving parity with the K-12 education system.

- Identify ongoing sources of funding to ensure sustainable raises in base pay, in order to substantially improve the economic circumstances of early educators and to ensure the ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Financial Resources

- Estimate the cost of advancing preparation, workplace supports, and compensation of the workforce in line with the above recommendations.
- Determine the extent of the cost gap between existing resources and what is required to meet recommendations.
- Commit to securing dedicated, sustainable funds to bridge the gap between the status quo and much-needed improvements.

Workforce Data

- Develop a comprehensive, up-to-date workforce data system of sufficient quality to gain a meaningful assessment of the reach of education and training opportunities and whether they are meeting the professional development needs for all early educators, across settings, whether they work with infants, toddlers, or preschoolers.

Many states have begun to embrace the goal of transforming early childhood workforce training and qualifications, even if opportunities for advancing skills and knowledge are unevenly available across the workforce and are largely dependent upon the setting and funding source of the program and ages of children with whom educators work. But states demonstrate only halting acknowledgment to date that the jobs themselves must be transformed. This transformation must include greatly enhanced status and improved material circumstances for the current and future workforce.

Absent this change, our nation will remain unable to deliver on the promise of developmental and learning opportunities for all children. We will continue to place unconscionable demands on the dedicated women who, day in and day out, do their best to support the learning and well-being of children, often against enormous odds. We will continue to witness educators leaving the field in search of employment that offers a livable wage, rewards their educational attainment, and provides the respect that is their due. And the next generation of young women and men will continue to eschew jobs teaching our youngest children.

Transforming early childhood jobs requires transforming wider early childhood policies and infrastructure and embracing early care and education as a public good. A starting point is to ensure that our definition of quality includes appropriate compensation and supportive work environments. We must also be willing to talk about the level of public investment required to provide early educators with what they need in order to enable children to succeed, while simultaneously relieving the financial burdens shouldered by families.

States making headway demonstrate that the potential to make progress is within our grasp. It is our intention and hope that the appraisal offered in this inaugural edition of the *Index* will strengthen those efforts making headway, stimulate the incubation and

testing of sustainable policies and revenue sources, and spur greater advocacy and action. To ensure that a generation from now, we no longer echo a decades-long call to action will require the joining of a chorus of voices — leaders in the ECE field, economic justice advocates, K-12 colleagues, parents, and early educators themselves — to realize a system that is equitable, efficient, and effective for children, their families, and educators.

Endnotes

- 1 The NSECE estimates that an additional 2.7 million *unpaid* home-based teachers and caregivers are regularly responsible for young children not their own for at least five hours each week. We have not included unlisted unpaid providers in this *Index*, focusing only on those who are paid to care for and educate young children. We recognize, however, that unpaid individuals fulfill an important role in the lives of children and families and provide an essential service to our nation.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *How Do We Know? Child Care: An Important Part of American Life*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/how/pdf/child_care.pdf
- 3 We use “early childhood workforce” or “early educators” to encompass all those who work in teaching and caregiving roles serving children prior to kindergarten.
- 4 Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, especially “Chapter 3: Then and Now: Trends in Wages, Education and Turnover Among Early Childhood Teachers” (pp. 13-40).
- 5 Our appraisal reflects policy and practice current at the time of data collection (February to May 2016).
- 6 We recognize the importance of local-level policies and initiatives, but it was not possible to do a systematic comparison across the United States. Throughout the *Index*, we note exceptional initiatives at the local level where relevant.
- 7 Earnings for assistants employed in home-based settings are included in these overall child care numbers.
- 8 The Occupational Employment Statistics data does not include those who are self-employed. This estimate was derived from the March 2013-2015 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC).
- 9 The Census Bureau distinguishes between two types of self-employed home child care providers: those who are unincorporated and those who are incorporated. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) of home-based providers are unincorporated, with average hourly earnings of \$12.44. Incorporated providers report higher earnings (\$29.65 per hour), but comprise only seven percent of all self-employed home child care providers.

About the State of the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative

The State of the Early Childhood Workforce (SECW) Initiative is a groundbreaking multi-year project to shine a steady spotlight on our nation's early childhood workforce. The SECW Initiative is designed to challenge entrenched ideas and policies that maintain an inequitable and inadequate status quo for early educators and for the children and families who depend on them. Through the dissemination of data and analysis, the Initiative identifies new strategies and tracks promising advocacy efforts to secure livable and equitable wages, supportive work environments, and educational opportunities for all early educators.

This inaugural edition of the *Early Childhood Workforce Index* marks the launch of the wider SECW Initiative. Beyond the *Index*, the State of the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative consists of additional resources for advocates, policymakers, researchers, funders, and other stakeholders. Visit our interactive, online database, <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/state-of-the-early-childhood-workforce/interactive-map/>, to view cross-state patterns in early childhood workforce earnings and state policies as well as profiles for each state.

In the coming months, additional SECW Initiative research will examine:

- The stratification of the early childhood workforce by race, ethnicity, and language;
- Cost estimates and financing mechanisms that ensure livable wages and reward educational attainment for the early childhood workforce;
- How states are addressing salary parity for pre-K teachers;
- The implications of new minimum-wage laws for early childhood policy;
- A user's guide to early childhood workforce data sources; and
- Current organizing and advocacy efforts.

The State of the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative is generously supported by the [Foundation for Child Development](#), the [Heising-Simons Foundation](#), the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), the [Alliance for Early Success](#), and the [W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation](#).

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