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# How Can I Use the *Early Childhood Workforce Index* for Advocacy and Action in My State?

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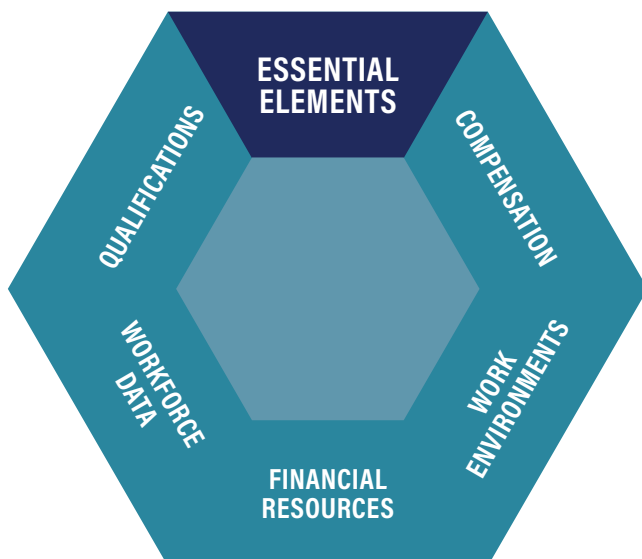
There is scientific consensus that early care and education (ECE) is central to shaping children’s lifelong knowledge and skills. The [Early Childhood Workforce Index](#) provides a description of early childhood employment conditions for the nearly 2 million people — mostly women — paid to care for and educate our youngest children and assesses related policies on a state-by-state basis.

Early educators’ skills, knowledge, and well-being are inseparable from the quality of children’s early learning experiences. Yet, workforce policies that have the potential to bolster the preparation, support, and compensation of early educators currently fall short, undermining early learning for millions of children as well as generating poverty among early educators themselves.

Is your state **stalled**, **edging forward**, or **making headway**?

See your [state’s 2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index profile](#) to find out!

## How does the *Index* assess workforce policies and how can I frame the issue in my state?



### ECE Workforce Policy

Five essential elements of public policy within early childhood are addressed, state by state:

- Qualifications and educational supports;
- Work environments;
- Compensation and financial relief strategies;
- Workforce data; and
- Financial resources.

While the policy areas are interrelated and, ultimately, it will be necessary to address more than one policy, by breaking down this challenge into five ECE workforce policy areas, states can focus on practical next steps that best reflect an individual state’s current context. For each of the five elements, there are policy indicators that help states identify a pathway to making headway for the early childhood workforce.



## QUALIFICATIONS & EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS

Adequate preparation and access to foundational knowledge is necessary for teachers and administrators to develop the skills to provide high-quality learning experiences for children.

### Policy Choices: Qualifications

- Publicly funded pre-K programs: Is a **bachelor's degree** required for all **lead teachers**?
- Publicly funded pre-K programs: Is at least a **Child Development Associate® Credential (CDA)** or equivalent required for all **assistant teachers**?
- Licensed child care centers: Is a **bachelor's degree** required for **directors**?
- Licensed child care centers: Is a **bachelor's degree** required for **teachers** who lead groups of children?
- Licensed child care centers: Is at least a **Child Development Associate® Credential (CDA)** or equivalent required for **assistant teachers**?
- Licensed child care homes: Is a **bachelor's degree** required for **teachers** who lead groups of children?
- Licensed child care homes: Is at least a **Child Development Associate® Credential (CDA)** or equivalent required for **assistant teachers**?

### Policy Choices: Educational Supports

- Are there scholarships to support educational pathways?
  - Bachelor's level
  - Associate level
  - CDA or equivalent level
- Is data collected on scholarship recipients to support policy evaluation and improvement?

#### *Framing the Issue*

“ In our state, the qualifications a child can expect her teacher to meet depend more on what her family can afford and the types of programs available in her area, than on her developmental and educational needs.

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

- » Align qualification requirements with national recommendations: establish minimum requirements that reflect foundational knowledge for all early childhood teaching staff and program leaders, and require a bachelor's degree with ECE specialization for lead teachers and center directors, in line with what is required for teachers of older children.
- » As new qualifications are enacted, simultaneously generate timelines to meet new requirements and resources to support acquisition of any education, training, and certification that may be required.
- » Ensure that all members of the current workforce have opportunities and supports to acquire education and training. These supports should begin with entry-level foundational knowledge and align with a pathway based on degree and competency requirements to support attainment of associate and bachelor's degrees.
- » Develop targeted opportunities and supports for members of minority racial and ethnic groups and individuals who speak English as a second language. This strategy will disrupt systemic barriers to educational attainment that extend beyond their status as early educators.



## WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Workplace supports, such as paid planning time and paid time for professional development, are needed to ensure ongoing reflection, development, and educator well-being.

### Policy Choices: Work Environments

- Does the Quality Rating and Improvement System include **paid professional development time** as a marker of quality for:
  - Center-based providers?
  - Home-based providers?
- Does the Quality Rating and Improvement System include **paid planning and/or preparation** as a marker of quality for:
  - Center-based providers?
  - Home-based providers?
- Does the Quality Rating and Improvement System include **salary and/or benefits packages** as a marker of quality for:
  - Center-based providers?
  - Home-based providers?

### *Framing the Issue*

“Teachers in the K-12 system can typically expect their jobs to include policies and resources that support teacher development and well-being. Unlike their K-12 counterparts, most early educators in our state cannot rely on provisions for professional supports like paid planning time, a salary schedule that accounts for education and experience, and health and leave benefits.”

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

- » Develop workplace standards, such as guidance on appropriate levels of paid planning time, which are necessary for educators to engage in professional practice to support children’s development and learning and to alleviate conditions that cause educator stress.
  - » Use existing models, such as the [International Labor Organization Policy Guidelines](#) and the [Model Work Standards for Centers and Homes](#).
  - » Engage teachers and providers as influential voices in this process.
- » Revise Quality Rating and Improvement System criteria and other state guidelines or requirements (licensing, competencies) accordingly.
- » Identify how work environment issues (and eventual standards) can be implemented in training and higher education for both teachers and ECE leadership.
- » Provide financial resources and other assistance to enable programs and providers to implement standards in a reasonable period of time and sustain compliance with these standards over time.
- » Regularly collect data from early educators to assess how they experience work environment standards.
- » Assess worker protections and possible remedies available to ECE staff to ensure enforcement of work environment standards.



## COMPENSATION & FINANCIAL RELIEF STRATEGIES

Achieving substantial and sustained improvements in the quality of early childhood education services depends on upgrading the rewards associated with employment. Appropriate compensation and economic security are indispensable for attracting and retaining skilled educators.

### Policy Choices: Compensation

- Publicly funded pre-K programs: Is **salary parity** with K-3 teachers provided?
- Settings other than publicly funded pre-K: Are there **required compensation standards** for teachers?
- Settings other than publicly funded pre-K: Are there **plans or guidelines for compensation** for teachers?
- Settings other than publicly funded pre-K: Is there **earmarked public funding for early educators' salaries**?

### Policy Choices: Financial Relief Strategies

- Is there a statewide **stipend** to supplement early educator pay?
- Is there a statewide **tax credit** to supplement early educator pay?
- Is there a statewide **bonus** to supplement early educator pay?

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

- » Articulate long- and short-term goals for increasing annual earnings of early educators as distinct from financial relief and educational support.
- » Establish compensation standards for starting and ongoing wages, benefits, and non-contact time for professional responsibilities, including:
  - » Pay scales for all teaching and auxiliary roles and education levels, using living wage/self-sufficiency standards as a minimum; and
  - » Regardless of setting, the compensation standard for lead teachers with bachelor's degrees should be at least parity with K-3 teachers.
- » Ensure adequate public funding is available to meet articulated compensation standards.
- » Frame advocacy messages to clarify that financial relief initiatives are an interim strategy, not a long-term solution to achieve appropriate wages and benefits.
- » Elevate compensation as an essential component of state workforce strategies and educate policymakers and the public at large about the importance of better pay in ensuring a skilled and stable ECE workforce.

### *Framing the Issue*

“Poor compensation of the workforce in our state undermines our efforts to improve quality and to attract and retain a skilled and stable workforce. While some progress has been made with supplements to wages, we have not yet been able to fundamentally shift the low earnings of the teachers of our youngest children, leaving many unable to support themselves and their families.”



## WORKFORCE DATA

Designing and implementing professional development and strengthening the workforce requires up-to-date and comprehensive information.

### Policy Choices: Workforce Data

- Registry:
  - Is it **inclusive across the ECE workforce**?
  - Does it include **compensation data**?
  - Does it include **race/ethnicity information**?
  - Does it collect data to **report the status of the workforce**?
- Survey:
  - Is it **inclusive across the ECE workforce**?
  - Does it include **compensation data**?
  - Does it include **race/ethnicity information**?
  - Does it collect data to **report the status of the workforce**?

### *Framing the Issue*

“Improving the status of our early educator workforce rests on our ability to describe basic demographic, education, and employment characteristics. Currently, we collect only limited data on the workforce and only for those in certain settings or funded programs. This makes it challenging to answer questions like ‘how prepared is the current workforce to provide effective care and education to all our state’s children’ or to understand the reach and effectiveness of current policies.”

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

Develop and strengthen existing workforce data collection through the following steps.

- » Commit to and develop a plan to enact policies requiring participation in state workforce data systems by all members of the ECE workforce employed in licensed child care settings and in settings receiving public subsidies.
- » Identify potential federal (e.g., Child Care Development Fund), state, and local funding sources and design advocacy strategies to secure funds for workforce data collection, management, and analysis. Prioritize workforce data system development and improvement in state CCDF plans.
- » Ensure that workforce data collection and analysis are part of early childhood governance structures and support the integration of workforce data systems with broader early childhood data, such as licensing databases, resource and referral databases, quality rating and improvement systems, early childhood health data, and K-12 data.
- » Encourage federal leaders to resolve long-standing problems in federally funded datasets and actively support implementation of the National Academies’ recommendation for more cohesive workforce data collection.



## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Upgrading the ECE workforce requires mobilizing additional and more sustainable public funding.

### Policy Choices: Financial Resources

- Is Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) spending **beyond the minimum** reported?
- Is spending on pre-K, on a per-child basis, **more than 50 percent** of spending on K-12?

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

- » Estimate the cost of advancing preparation, workplace supports, and compensation of the workforce in line with other *Early Childhood Workforce Index* recommendations for reform.
- » Determine the extent of the cost gap between existing resources and what is required to accomplish reforms.
- » Articulate a phase-in plan to meet reforms, identify costs associated with each phase, and commit to securing dedicated, sustainable funds to realize reforms.
- » Develop an educational campaign to assist policymakers and the public in understanding what building an equitable system will cost and the benefits of this investment.

### Framing the Issue

“ Multiple funding streams can make it challenging to consider financial strategies to improve conditions across ECE settings. Yet, if we want to ensure that every child in our state has the opportunity to thrive, it is critical that we strategize on how to finance access to affordable high-quality early care and education.





## FAMILY & INCOME SUPPORT POLICY

Two critical areas outside of ECE workforce policy are also included in the *Index*: income supports (including minimum wage legislation) and supports for health and well-being, such as paid sick day legislation. These policies include workers and families across occupations and are not designed specifically to support early educators, yet they provide an important avenue for improving the jobs and well-being of early educators and their families.

### Policy Choices: Family & Income Support

- State Minimum Wage: Is it **higher than the federal minimum and indexed for inflation**?
- Earned Income Tax Credit: Is there a **refundable** credit?
- Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit: Is there a **refundable** credit?
- Is there state-wide mandated **paid sick leave**?
- Is there state-wide mandated **family leave**?
- Is there **expanded Medicaid**?

### *Framing the Issue*

“ The early childhood workforce can benefit from broader work and family supports if we advocate for these policies along with early childhood reforms and public funding to support providers.

### Policy Opportunities: Toward Making Headway (and Beyond)

- » Learn about policies designed to support workers and families across occupations and how they might impact the ECE workforce.
  - » Because wages in ECE are currently very low, minimum wage legislation is likely to have a substantial impact on early educator compensation. Learn more in [At the Wage Floor: Covering Homecare and Early Care and Education Workers in the New Generation of Minimum Wage Laws](#).
- » Support efforts in your state to move family and income support policies forward.

## What are some additional resources I can use to support advocacy and action in my state?

- [Interactive cross-state map](#): View cross-state patterns and access individual state information on early childhood workforce earnings and state policies by exploring an online, interactive database.
- [Infographics](#): Learn about and share key findings about the ECE workforce.
- [Social media toolkit](#): Use example tweets and Facebook posts to spread the word about the need for better preparation, support, and compensation for early childhood educators.