



Washington



550,167

Children age 0-5



20,710*

Members of the early childhood teaching workforce

Early educators are engaged in incredibly difficult and complex work that has been recognized as essential to children’s learning and development, supportive for families, and foundational to the economy. In the best of times, educators do this work in conditions that undermine their well-being, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened the harm caused to this workforce, nearly all of whom are women. Adequate public investment and state policies that appropriately prepare, support, and compensate the early education workforce can remedy these dire conditions by establishing systems that benefit early educators and the children they care for and teach.

Occupation	Median Wage
Child care worker	\$14.57
Preschool teacher	\$15.96
Center director	\$24.12
Kindergarten teacher	\$35.98
Elementary teacher	\$39.58
All U.S. occupations	\$23.15

Earnings by Occupation

- ▶ In 2019, the median wage for child care workers was \$14.57, **a 13% increase since 2017.**
- ▶ For preschool teachers, the median wage was \$15.96, **a 4% increase since 2017.**
- ▶ For preschool or child care center directors, the median wage was \$24.12, **a 4% increase since 2017.**

Early educators pay a penalty for working with younger children.

Washington early educators with a bachelor’s degree are paid 21.4 percent less than their colleagues in the K-8 system. The poverty rate for early educators in Washington is 17.7 percent, much higher than for Washington workers in general (8.2 percent) and 7.9 times as high as for K-8 teachers (2.3 percent).**



Interested in learning more?

- To see how Washington compares to other states, visit our [State Explorer](#).
- [View the 2020 Early Childhood Workforce Index](#) to learn more about each policy area.
- For an overview of data sources for the indicators listed below, see [Appendix 1: Data Sources & Methodology](#).

Early Childhood Workforce Policies

Qualifications & Educational Supports: Edging Forward	Pre-K	BA minimum for lead teacher?	No
		CDA/equivalent minimum for assistant teacher?	Yes
	Licensed centers	BA minimum for director?	No
		BA minimum for lead teacher?	No
	Licensed homes	CDA/equivalent minimum for assistant teacher?	No
		BA minimum for lead teacher?	No
	Scholarships to support educational pathways	CDA/equivalent minimum for assistant teacher?	No
		BA?	Yes
		AA?	Yes
		CDA or equivalent?	Yes
		Collects data on scholarship recipients?	Yes
Work Environments: Edging Forward	Centers	Paid time in professional development?	Yes
		Paid planning and/or preparation time?	Yes
		Salary schedule/benefits?	No
	Homes	Paid time in professional development?	No
		Paid planning and/or preparation time?	Yes
		Salary schedule/benefits?	No
Compensation & Financial Relief Strategies: Stalled	Salary parity for publicly funded pre-K teachers?		No parity
	Compensation standards required?		No
	Compensation guidelines or plans to develop?		Yes: guidelines
	Earmarks for salaries in public funding?		No
	Financial relief: Stipend or tax credit?		No
	Financial relief: Bonus?		Yes
Workforce Data: Making Headway	Registry	Inclusive of all licensed settings?	Licensed +
		Collects wage data?	No
		Collects benefits data?	No
		Collects race/ethnicity data?	Yes
		Reports data publicly?	Yes
	Survey	Inclusive of all licensed settings?	Not Applicable
		Collects wage data?	Not Applicable
		Collects benefits data?	Not Applicable
		Collects race/ethnicity data?	Not Applicable
		Reports data publicly?	Not Applicable
Financial Resources: Edging Forward	State reported extra CCDF spending?		Yes
	Ratio of per-child pre-K to K-12 spending over 50%?		No

Family & Income Support Policies

Income Supports: Stalled	Refundable earned income tax credit?	No
	Higher than federal minimum wage, indexed for inflation?	Yes
	Refundable child care tax credit?	No
Health & Well-Being Supports: Making Headway	Paid sick days law?	Yes
	Paid family leave law?	Yes
	Expanded Medicaid eligibility?	Yes

Notes

*Early educators work in public- and private-sector homes, centers, and schools. This estimate includes the following occupations as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Occupational Employment Statistics: “child care workers,” “preschool teachers, excluding special education,” “preschool teachers, special education,” “education administrators: preschool/child care center programs.” These data do not include the self-employed, although home-based child care assistants, who are employees, are likely included in the “child care worker” category. This estimate is from 2019 and does not reflect employment changes as a result of the pandemic. Demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity and gender are not reported due to a lack of comparable data across states. State-based surveys or registries may provide more comprehensive estimates of the ECE workforce.

**Gould, E., Whitebook, M., Mokhiber, Z., & Austin, L. (2020). *Financing Early Educator Quality: A Values-Based Budget for Every State*. A series of state-by-state reports produced by the Economic Policy Institute and University of California Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/financing-early-educator-quality-a-values-based-budget-for-every-state/>.