
Bold on Early Educator Compensation

Learning Community: Summary of Convening #1 May 25, 2023

After hearing an overview of the project and timeline for 2023 (details on our [website](#)), we dove into a summary of participants' pre-survey responses. The key strategies shared for increasing compensation were:

1. **Raising subsidy rates to impact compensation:** We know that just increasing subsidy rates is an imperfect and inequitable vehicle for raising compensation across the field. However, some states are trying it and working to fund reimbursement rates at the true cost of care and increase eligibility so as many families and programs are impacted as possible. Inevitably this requires state funding.
 - NM is using annual state funds to fully raise subsidy rates as per a cost model that includes wage floors of \$20/hour for lead Teachers and \$15/hour for assistant, with near universal access for families; *New Mexico's new [cost model](#)*
 - VT House recently passed a bill that significantly raises subsidy eligibility and reimbursement rates based on 5-star rating. The bill also sets the intention to adopt minimum pay standards for early childhood educators in the future when subsidy rates expand to include the true cost of care.
2. **Grants/contracts to impact compensation:**
 - IL + MA are moving forward with operational grants that have stable program-level funding with compensation components, modeled off of ARPA grants;
 - NC is considering bill to extend ARPA grants.
3. **Benefits:**
 - WA legislature passed a bill for early educators to have automatic eligibility for child care subsidy for their own kids; In MA, early educators now have eligibility for vouchers in programs where they work;
 - NM is working on health insurance;
 - NC has updated its [Model Salary Scale](#) to include suggested benefits;
 - The group raised questions on how benefits would work for home-based providers and concerns about how wage supplements may impact educators'

ability to access public assistance programs. We had some conversation about income waivers and tax exemption, but this remains a challenge.

4. Governor champions are a key factor, especially in environments with political gridlock or a conservative legislature:

- WI Sen. Johnson advocated for funding from her governor to improve early childhood in her zip code;
- Governors in NM and IL have been huge champions for state investments and compensation

5. Educator engagement and centering equity in designing solutions is crucial:

- WI concluded an equity study about the workforce;
- Some WA DCYF staff took a liberatory design training;
- Reaching educators with information about available resources remains a challenge and concern on the part of state agency staff members.

Participant surveys also shared some common barriers to increasing compensation:

1. Political barriers

- Political will/attitudes towards ECE;
- Lack of funding; the group raised the challenge of shifting a state system to a true cost of care model.

2. Implementation barriers

- Defining qualifications/roles for salary scales; the group raised questions about pay equity for different levels of education and years of experience or implementing a path for educators with experience to demonstrate competence as opposed to course-work based pathways; the group also raised questions about what supports are states putting in place to achieve educational levels/standards.
- *Examples shared: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has a [credit for prior learning](#) pathways for degrees and North Carolina colleges across the state also offer [credits for prior learning](#).*
- Equitable access across settings and communities; the group raised concerns about knowing if funds intended for the workforce were actually reaching individual educators and if there was equitable access to different communities of educators. Some mentioned that a registry may be a vehicle to access and communicate with educators, though not all workforce members are guaranteed to be included. Others touched on the importance of advocacy groups for intermediaries to communicate between state agencies and the workforce.
- Strategies to define and incorporate equity into wage supports.