

August 22, 2023

Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community

Session #2: Deep Dive on New Mexico

Overview:

In this session, participants engaged a panel of changemakers from New Mexico who spoke on initiatives to advance early educator compensation. The panelists included:

- **Sara Mickelson**, Deputy Cabinet Secretary at the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)
- **Matthew Henderson**, Executive Director of the Organizers in the Land of Enchantment (OLÉ)
- **Ivydel Natachu**, an early childhood educator with 18 years' experience and active leader with OLÉ.

This conversation provided context for our upcoming case study on compensation initiatives in New Mexico, a project drawing on interviews with system-level policy makers, advocates, and early educators. After a discussion with panelists, participants shared successes, challenges, and questions about ECE compensation work from their own state contexts.

Take-Aways:

- **Highlights from New Mexico include:**
 - November of 2022 ballot measure for Constitutional Amendment 1 which provides a right to early childhood education for the youngest children of New Mexico and a steady funding stream for early childhood education programs through a state Land Grant Permanent Fund, which will join the state's Early Childhood Trust Fund in funding ECECD initiatives.

- Relationships between community-based groups and policymakers are key; having an inside/outside strategy can drive change with accountability.
 - Educator advocacy and leadership has played a pivotal role in New Mexico.
 - NM used American Rescue Plan funds for a grant program, Competitive Pay for Professionals (CPP), targeting a \$15/hour wage floor for educators in all licensed settings. This program ends in August 2023. ECECD data shows that the program reached 7400 individuals, and around two-thirds of licensed programs in the state.
 - Moving forward, ECECD plans to use higher reimbursement rates based on a cost model and increased access to subsidy for families (up to 400% FPL) to raise compensation; the hope is that providers serving children with subsidies will use the increased rates to continue the \$15/hour wage floor for their staff, building on the impact of the CPP grants.
 - There are also plans for a wage and career ladder that accounts for both credentials and years of experience equitably, a development that OLE is heavily involved with.
- **Insights from Community share-out**
 - Many states are committing additional or new state investments into workforce compensation initiatives (VT, MA, IL, NC, WI).
 - Despite some funding commitments, many shared the challenge of continuing compensation strategies when the ARPA funds run out.
 - Employing enough educators to meet the demand for child care, and recruiting new educators into the field remains a challenge.
 - In states where there is less political support for child care funding, advocates are using sustained media attention or public media campaigns around the child care crisis.