

October 19, 2023

Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community
Session # 4: Deep Dive on North Carolina Compensation Initiatives

Overview:

In our final formal convening for 2023, CSCCE's [Bold on Early Educator Compensation Learning Community](#) learned about how North Carolina is advancing compensation for its early childhood workforce. We heard from panelists: Michele Miller-Cox, Executive Director of the [First Presbyterian Day School](#), Tori Black, Early Childhood Workforce Development Consultant at [NC Department of Health and Human Services](#), and Kristi Snuggs, President of the [Child Care Services Association \(CCSA\)](#). All are actively involved in North Carolina's efforts to increase compensation for early educators across the state.

Take-Aways:

North Carolina is advancing many strategies at once, with attention to removing barriers to career pathways and advanced education and certification. Despite being a majority Republican legislature, they've made inroads on ECE, including starting a bipartisan early childhood caucus.

North Carolina Compensation Initiatives include:

- [NC Early Childhood Compensation Collaborative Salary Scale](#) and [interactive toolkit](#) help programs analyze their own compensation and set targets
- **ARPA stabilization grants to incentivize compensation**
 - NC received \$2 billion in ARPA funds; \$800 million in Child Care Stabilization Grants
 - 1. Grant option to include Compensation (bonus, hourly wage increase, benefits).
 - 2. Grant option to include Educator Relief (stipend or bonus).

- A majority of employers chose to use the grants for compensation purposes. Interestingly, home-based providers were more likely to use these funds for benefits, specifically to establish retirement funds.
- Once NC finished using these funds, they used their discretionary funds to extend the grants to December 2023. NC Congress has granted a 6-month extension that will last until June 2024.
- **NC works to advance career pathways and educational attainment at the same time**
 - NC Department of Health and Human Services collaborates with the North Carolina community college system to offer credit for prior learning, provide scholarships, and apprenticeship programs.
 - TEACH scholarships facilitate access to higher education and WAGES provides education based stipends across the state.
 - Building Bright Futures coordinated by the state division is a pilot program that offers early childhood apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.
- **Educator advocacy and a coordinated PR strategy from the state have helped align the message and raise educator voices**
 - Educator advocacy and teaching others how to be advocates is key to this work; advocacy requires time and resources.
 - At Michele's program, all staff went through an advocacy training during working hours, and she nominates a monthly ambassador to check in with staff about concerns.
 - [Worthy Wages campaign](#) has been revamped in NC.
 - The state organized a public awareness campaign called [Raise NC](#).
- **Challenges include:**
 - Balancing raising wages without raising tuition for parents; many families still can't afford the cost of programs.
 - In an environment with scarcity of resources, distributing resources equitably is a challenge.
 - Change takes time.