Lately I have been thinking about the dichotomies that exist currently in our early childhood field. Researchers, the media, advocates and policymakers continue to debate various approaches to fixing our ECE workforce. One such dichotomy is mandates vs. incentives. A couple of years ago, DC government began requiring early childhood associate degrees for lead teachers in programs receiving public funding. They provided a mandate/deadline and are providing support for incentives such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships. More recently they extended the deadline for teachers currently employed to meet the standards, recognizing that it will take teachers who work full-time longer to earn degrees, as they attend college part-time and continue to work in early childhood settings in DC.

This step-back is a reminder that transformative vs. incremental change takes time and investments to ensure that all goals are achieved, including the maintenance of a diverse, highly qualified workforce. Reading the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment’s recently released Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018, it is clear we have a long way to go to transform our early childhood system with a highly educated, competent, fairly compensated and supported workforce. The authors rated states’ progress on five major categories using three assessment ratings: making headway, inching forward and stalled. In two categories, qualifications and compensation, none of the states were determined to be making headway. In two other categories, financial resources and health and well-being factors such as paid sick leave. Yet these diverse groups worked hard trying to find places to insert a policy, seek new funding, develop a new strategy, collect new data or engage new advocates. With this intentional leadership, dedication and support, states made incremental progress in a relatively short time. I encourage you to read the article later in this edition about some of their advances; we will be there to support their efforts, beyond the life of the project, and the National Center will be there to support their efforts, thanks to continuing support from our funders. It is going to take lots of strategies with lots of engagement over a significant period of time for these states and the rest of our nation to make meaningful headway.

--Sue Russell, Executive Director, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center
Nearly 150 people attended the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE$® National Professional Development Symposium this year, our biggest crowd ever. Twenty-five T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ programs had staff in attendance. Twenty-four presenters from state and national agencies or organizations and higher education supported the learning needs of participants along with 37 staff from T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ programs.

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

The Opening Keynote Address

“The T.E.A.C.H. is a tangible example of how to disrupt. Where did this strength to be bold come from?” These words were spoken by Marica Cox Mitchell, Deputy Executive Director, Early Learning Systems, NAEYC, our keynote speaker as she spoke on Power to the Profession...Looking Toward Compensation and how T.E.A.C.H. disrupts the barriers our workforce faces in accessing affordable, accessible education and improved compensation. She gave a shout out to T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ counselors who “know what is needed to eliminate barriers.” She said coming to the T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ Symposium was reaffirming to her because resources such as T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ are what is getting her through in her work reviewing the resources available in a career ladder. What a great way to kick off the Symposium!

Marica said we are in a moment of transformation that requires us to live with some discomfort as we move from an occupation to a profession. Her analogy of whether she should choose her handyman uncle (occupation) or her licensed electrician (profession) to tackle electrical repairs had us in stitches. It also demonstrated the importance of taking a clear stance on early childhood education as a profession. “We can’t be silent when the public is watching and billions of dollars are at stake; we have to rock the boat,” she said as she ended her presentation. We all need to be bold and not silent as this transformational moment is upon us.

The Plenary Panel Presentation - Education as a Game Changer

What a delight to hear from two former T.E.A.C.H. recipients and a higher education associate professor as they shared their personal thoughts, experiences and knowledge, including their educational journeys, how education has changed the children in their care and how T.E.A.C.H. is helping early educators succeed in college. As facilitator, Sue Russell asked some long and deep questions of the panelists, starting with a question about the debate around setting the standard for lead teachers to have a bachelor’s degree and where the panelists stand on this issue. Tracy Elhert said, “I support the BA. It was that ‘ah ha’ moment; it changed the quality of my care and my program, and I became a leader in my state. The bachelor’s had the most impact.” She started her educational journey as a low-income single mom, so she understands the barriers. What an effective way to start the plenary panel dialog. You can see the entire plenary session here.

Plenary Panel Presenters

• Tracy Ehler, former T.E.A.C.H. recipient, in-home early educator and candidate for the Iowa House, District 70
• Bweikia Foster Steen, Associate Professor, Education, and Director of Early Childhood Programs at Trinity Washington University
• Michele Miller-Cox, former T.E.A.C.H. recipient, SAS Montessori Preschool teacher and Adjunct Instructor at Wake Tech Community College and NC A&T

Why Compensation Matters

• Economic justice. The EC workforce deserves to be paid more for the education they have and the importance of the work that they do. No one thinks it is fair that the workforce makes so little money.
• Turnover’s effect on young children. Turnover can have a very negative impact on young children, particularly infants and toddlers, and turnover is often related to low pay and benefits.
• Need for an educated workforce. The National Academy of Medicine recommends that all lead teachers have a at least a bachelor’s degree in ECE. If we want educated teachers, we have to pay them what they deserve.
• Teacher’s health and well-being. We also know that teachers who live in poverty and worry about how they are going to support their family cannot be as effective. Poor salaries affect program quality and the teachers’ health and well-being.
• Professionalization of the workforce. The workforce deserves a career pathway that recognizes increasing knowledge and skills with increasing compensation.
Perhaps you’ve noticed that early childhood workforce compensation is in the headlines. In the past 2 years there have been hundreds of articles in local and national media that address the abysmal earnings of the early childhood workforce. The articles often examine the low wages, the workforce’s high use of public assistance, and invariably compare early childhood wages to those of other fields. Most link the relationship between high quality teachers with degrees and compensation. Sometimes they talk about turnover and its impact on quality and young children, and a few make the case that child care costs a lot for parents while teachers are not paid well. Rarely do the articles offer solutions.

- “Early Childhood Educators Woefully Underpaid” – U.S. News and World Report
- “Small Children, Small Pay: Why Child Care Pays So Little” – The American Prospect
- “It Doesn’t Pay to Be an Early Childhood Teacher” – National Public Radio
- “Child Care Teachers: Underpaid and Underappreciated” – New America

For the past 18 months, with support from T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center staff, teams of diverse stakeholders from eight T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® states (Florida, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin) have implemented state-based compensation policy, advocacy and funding action plans to move the needle on early childhood workforce compensation, with the goal of raising awareness of early childhood workforce compensation and creating new or significantly expanding existing strategies to improve compensation in participating states. Funding for this effort comes from the Alliance for Early Success and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The Center planned and provided sustained technical assistance support to teams, including resources such as webinars, a monthly resource newsletter, two national Summits and funding to support travel to the Summits and stipends to support in-state team activities. Below are some of the advances states have made in compensation since this project began.

### Next Steps
A full report will be compiled after the project ends in August. It will be available in late fall with a plan to share findings through conference presentations, a blog, white paper and more.
Leadership Voices

Our partners at the National Women’s Law Center said, “the omnibus spending legislation for FY 2018, passed by Congress and signed by the president, includes the largest increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant in history as well as increases for other important child care and education programs. These increases totaled over $3 billion in new funding to expand families’ access to affordable, high-quality child care and early education. The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which provides states with funding to help low-income families afford child care and to improve the quality of child care, received an additional $2.37 billion in discretionary funding, bringing total discretionary funding to $5.226 billion. Together with $2.917 billion in mandatory funding, overall federal CCDBG funding is now $8.143 billion.” Find the entire article here (NWLC, March 2018).

Within weeks of this historic event, T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ state and national staff and our state and national partners gathered in North Carolina for the annual national T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ Symposium. Hallways and lunch tables were a-buzz as we wondered what this new funding might mean for our workforce. Questions from participants at many sessions were directed at the national experts, asking how this increase could (and should) be realized in states. We took the chance to ask several of the national experts to formally weigh in on this question, coming from each one’s area of expertise:

Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education has laid out the case and the price tag for moving toward a fully financed system that supports an educated and fairly compensated workforce across all ECE sectors. We recently had a big win with a large increase in CCDBG funding to help more families afford child care and to provide more dollars to support raising the quality. As you look toward a well-financed system, what do you think are the first steps our federal government, states or local communities should take to address ECE workforce compensation for those lead teachers working with children from birth to five in child care, Head Start and pre-k that have a bachelor’s in early childhood education?

Here are five of the responses collected from our country’s early education leadership:

“Given as of February 2017, only two states paid the federally recommended reimbursement rate for providers receiving CCDBG funds, a first step should be for a state to raise their rates to providers. States should also be using the increase in their quality set-aside to support T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ initiatives. Finally, more children receiving child care assistance will help to ensure that providers in low-income communities have the customers they need to keep their doors open and take advantage of the increased rates.”

“First, start with a rapid response solution. Provide retention grants directly to high-quality programs to support wage supplements and other strategies aimed at recruiting and retaining degreed educators. Strategies should include innovative staffing models and attention to working conditions. Share data on strategies and their impact. Then, begin to lay the groundwork for a more systematic solution. Focus on alignment across systems particularly as it relates to minimal qualifications and the quality of preparation. The systems and sectors named in the question - child care, Head Start, pre-k, Early Head Start - do not have the bachelor’s degree requirement for lead teachers. Therefore, bachelor’s degree holders are comingled with others who are technically qualified for their lead teacher role but hold less than a bachelor’s degree. Alignment and coherence are preconditions for more a more sustainable and comprehensive compensation strategy.”

“To build off what we talked about with using the increased CCDBG funding for compensation, I think the infant-toddler quality set-aside would be a great place to begin. When we talk about supply building in the infant-toddler space, the conversation has usually gone back to QRIS, coaching and infant-toddler specialists, which are all great things. But I’ve been in the classroom and know that because I chose to work in 0-3, I was paid less than my co-workers in the pre-K classrooms with the same degrees/experience and in the same building! We need to make working with infants and toddlers more attractive for professionals with a Bachelor’s. Most importantly for compensation, we must be explicit at the beginning of the process that educators are NOT left out of this conversation, and that compensation is a priority for this business plan. There are examples of success (Head Start, pre-K) that use creative solutions such as embedding this work in statute. But now it’s time to make sure ALL Early Childhood Educators are well-compensated.”

This leader suggests that CCDBG funding cannot do it all and suggests tax credits to support the workforce along with workforce-targeted CCDBG dollars: “The first steps I think our governments must take is a significant tax credit for child care staff in direct services who earn less than $50k per year, which is virtually all of them. Second: A “GI bill” should be available on an application basis to family child care or center-based programs who will be required to use the funds to supplement salaries. Support planning time or otherwise improve working conditions. Third: Offer substantial funds for professional development to help people earn national credentials and degrees.”

“The workforce is the key to building quality outcomes for our children. We have already waited too long. Many states are having a workforce crisis. Every new CCDBG Quality Set Aside and Infant Toddler Set Aside dollar should be used to address workforce education and compensation, as well as helping higher education be more responsive to meeting the needs of a diverse workforce.”

State leadership, responsible for making decisions on the CCDBG expenditures, could benefit from the experience of our national leaders. It’s a critical time for our workforce. Be sure your leadership voice is heard!

The National Center has prepared a resource that can help states think about how to target its new CCDBG dollars to improve the early care and education in states. Click here to see the document.

2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index Released

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment has released The Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018. The index includes an interactive map that allows users to see the current wages and changes over the last 2 years in each state. The report also shows the strides made in improving the education and training levels of the early childhood workforce and provides an updated “About the Workforce” snapshot. Click here to learn more and to view the index.
Eight State Teams Gather for Moving the Needle on Compensation Summit

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” --Margaret Mead

It may not be that the 56 people who participated in the Compensation Summit are exactly out to change the world, but by the end of the two-day summit, everyone realized that significant successes have been made collectively by the eight-state teams toward the project goal of raising awareness of early childhood workforce compensation issues and creating new or expanding existing policy, advocacy, and funding strategies to improve compensation in participating states.

SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

The Opening Keynote Address
The Summit opened with a keynote presentation by Linda Smith, Director, Early Childhood Initiative, Bipartisan Policy Center, on Bipartisan Support for Early Childhood Educator Compensation. She said, “The time for circular conversations is over. We need to move onto defining the problem, identifying solutions and determining what it’s going to cost and why.” She spoke to one of our big problems—the public doesn’t know why they pay so much for child care while the teachers are paid so little. And while they understand the brain science, we have to do a better job of selling it. It’s up to us to deconstruct the black box between what parents pay and what they get, because they can be great allies and advocates. Finally, we need to have data and understand the need and true costs in our states.

Opportunities for Learning and Team Work
On Day 1, team members attended one of three intensive work sessions on the topics of:

- Grounding Early Childhood Workforce Advocacy in Communication Science, presented by Mackenzie Price, Applied Sociolinguist and Senior Associate, Research Interpretation and Application, FrameWorks Institute
- Reconceptualizing Leadership and Advocacy in ECE: Placing Teacher’s Voices at the Center of Workforce Reforms, presented by Lauren Hogan, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, National Association for the Education of Young Children

On each of the two days, state teams had an opportunity to work with a facilitator to continue moving their work forward.

Day 2 Keynote Address
Two members of the Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education Committee, Kathy Glazer, President, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and Helen Ladd, Susan B. King Professor Emeritus of Public Policy, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Affiliate of the Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University, discussed the failures of our current system such as low compensation, unpredictable salaries, limited funding for higher education and professional development, fragmented funding streams, few incentives for quality, the need for building and facilities upgrades and the limited ability of QRIS to support/reward workforce supports; highlighted the four-phase transition process toward implementation and shared the bottom line cost of what the committee thinks it will take to move from failures to successes—$140 billion, including parent fees. Their final thoughts were, “Be bold and keep compensation on the table. Be vigilant because gains can very easily become losses, and don’t be deterred if the system isn’t ready. Keep working locally and statewide. If not us, who, and if not now, when?”

Final Closing Session
In the final hours of the Summit, each state team was allotted time to present their successes, challenges and next steps. As presentations took place, each team had some concern that while their team was certainly making progress, they were not progressing on their action plan as quickly as they had hoped. What was clear to all in the room was that collectively the teams have produced significant outcomes that have helped their states move the needle and will serve to inform the work of moving the needle on compensation nationally.

Shout Out to State T.E.A.C.H. Programs

How Alabama Used a “Business Plan” to Grow State Investments in Pre-K

Alabama state lawmakers approved an $18.5 million expansion of Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program. The Pre-K program was started in the year 2000, and has received increases in appropriations for the sixth year in a row!
- Click here to find how Alabama organizations, including the Alabama Partnership for Children (the home of T.E.A.C.H. ALABAMA), partnered to make this happen.
- Click here to read the press release about the increase.

A Legislative Win for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® FLORIDA

Florida’s 2018 legislative session was victorious for the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program. Legislators approved $10 million for T.E.A.C.H., which provided a huge relief to the program after the cut that was sustained the previous year. T.E.A.C.H. can now provide additional outreach and scholarships for early childhood educators in Florida. There was great support from their funder, key stakeholders, advocates, scholars and sponsors, which definitely made the difference.

New Scholarship Model for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® VERMONT

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® VERMONT has created an Apprenticeship Scholarship model for those working in licensed early childhood settings. The apprenticeship program provides similar benefits to other scholarship models, but also includes a few extras. Click here to learn more.
Save the Date!
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE$®
2019 National Professional Development Symposium

April 23-24, 2019
Chapel Hill, NC

For more information on the symposium, click here.