Strategies in Pursuit of Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity: Lessons from Seven States and Cities

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In Pursuit of Pre-K Parity: A Proposed Framework for Understanding and Advancing Policy and Practice
By Marcy Whitebook, Ph.D. and Caitlin McLean, Ph.D.

Summary: Many pre-K teachers across the nation are expected to earn a bachelor's degree, similar to their peers teaching older children. Yet salaries and benefits remain consistently lower for pre-K teachers than for elementary school teachers. Increasingly, compensation parity is perceived as an achievable policy goal rather than a lofty ideal, yet there is confusion across the field about what parity means. This brief develops a framework for understanding compensation parity in contrast to other forms of compensation improvement. Applying this framework to current state efforts to move toward compensation parity reveals a great deal of variability across states. While some states approach compensation parity, at least for some pre-K teachers, and several states have pursued parity in salaries only, the majority of states do not have any explicit policies intended to move toward parity for pre-K teachers.

Key Findings:
- Compensation parity is defined as parity with K-3 teachers for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, permitted to reflect differences in hours of work in private settings where appropriate, and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning).
- Only 14 states have compensation parity policies that apply to all pre-K lead and assistant teachers, but their pre-K program is delivered via public schools only.
- Ten states have compensation parity policies that include salary, benefits, and payment for professional responsibilities, at least for pre-K lead teachers.
- Eighteen states have policies in place with the goal of meeting salary parity, but only 14 states have policies that meet our criteria of salary parity, with equivalent starting salary and salary schedule, provided.

http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/state-of-the-early-childhood-workforce/pre-k-parity/

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Defining Compensation Parity

“Compensation parity’ is defined as parity for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, adjusted to reflect differences in hours of work (particularly in private settings) and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning).”
## Pre-K Parity Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Compensation Improvement</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Payment for Professional Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parity (defined as equivalent)</td>
<td>Same, prorated for day length and number</td>
<td>Same, prorated for day length and number</td>
<td>Same menu of supports and dosage for non-child contact responsibilities (e.g., planning time, professional development days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Parity (defined as equivalent for select components)</td>
<td>Same, prorated for day length and number</td>
<td>Not same or absent</td>
<td>Equivalent options for some supports, but not full menu of supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Parity (defined as similar but not equivalent)</td>
<td>Same, not prorated</td>
<td>Same, not prorated or not same/absent</td>
<td>Same menu of supports, not equivalent value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Forms of Compensation Improvement</td>
<td>Strategies that improve pre-K compensation in order to close the gap with teachers of older children but fall well short of parity. In theory, compensation improvement strategies could also set goals higher than earnings of K-12 teachers in public schools, though in practice this is rare.</td>
<td>Same package of benefits, not equivalent value</td>
<td>Same menu of supports, not equivalent value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- Alabama
- New Jersey
- New York City
- San Antonio
- Georgia
- Oregon
- West Virginia
Strategies in Pursuit of Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity: Key findings

- No one model - states/cities doing what works in their context
- Road to parity is often incremental
- Positive outcomes: perceptions of better recruitment/retention
- Key challenge: addressing compensation for community-based providers
State example: Alabama

Incremental but state-wide approach to parity

Linking pay to push for high quality pre-K
City example: San Antonio

Compensation: beyond parity

Model program: not for all pre-K teachers

Funding: city sales tax
City example: New York City

Universal pre-K program

Not parity, but working to close the gap

Movement for better compensation for pre-K teachers launching broader discussion about compensation for all early educators
Lessons & Takeaways

Making the case - we need data!

Compensation parity for pre-K teachers is one first step, but it’s not enough
Considerations for Moving Forward

- How do you see yourself applying the parity framework in your own community?
- Barriers to moving toward more adequate compensation?
- What data and information would help you in your efforts?
Conducting research and proposing policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards the early care and education workforce since 1999.