

## T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® STATES

North Carolina,  
Founding State

Alabama  
Colorado  
Florida  
Delaware  
Idaho  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Missouri  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Mexico  
Ohio  
Pennsylvania  
South Carolina  
Virginia  
Wisconsin

## Child Care WAGES® STATES

North Carolina,  
Founding State

Florida  
Kansas  
South Carolina



T.E.A.C.H. Times  
Julie Rogers, Editor

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGES® Projects are programs of Child Care Services Association. For more information contact:

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## Training Teachers: Pre-K Standards in the Making

Libby Doggett, Ph.D., Executive Director, Pre-K Now

As states across the country expand their prekindergarten programs, one question must be at the forefront of policymakers' minds: who's going to teach? Building a well-qualified workforce is vital to providing our country's youngest learners with the highest-quality early education experience.

If we look at the demographics of pre-k teachers across the country, their abilities, training, experience and pay scale differ significantly between states, school districts and even within schools. While some types of diversity are important for any school staff—racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity and diversity of background—diversity in program quality is unacceptable. Parents must know that their child's pre-k teacher is well trained, prepared for a pre-k classroom and well paid.

To ensure consistent quality in every pre-k classroom, a bachelor's degree is necessary but not sufficient. As part of that degree, training in early childhood education is critical. Studies across the country have consistently found that teachers with bachelor's degrees and specialized training in early childhood education engage children in more individualized and developmentally appropriate activities. These teachers are also better able to assess developmental and learning disabilities and direct families to the appropriate resources. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), of the 40 states that funded pre-k for the 2005-2006 school

year, only 19 required BA degrees for pre-k teachers in all settings.<sup>1</sup>

States must pursue policies to support current and future pre-k teachers with the funding, time and resources needed to earn bachelor's degrees, attend specialized trainings and be paid on par with other teachers.

### > Tuition scholarships

The current pre-k workforce must be given the opportunity, time and support to pursue the degrees and training that will improve their classroom practices and better their lives. Across the country, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project and programs modeled after it are providing substantial reimbursements for tuition and textbooks, and incentives for teachers to continue teaching pre-k after they graduate, which are helping to shape a strong and stable professional pre-k workforce. More states need to invest in T.E.A.C.H., build professional development systems and pay equity to assure our pre-k classrooms have a diverse and professionally developed workforce.

### > More colleges and universities offering degrees in early childhood education

Colleges and universities around the country must fill the need for more degree programs in early childhood education. Illinois, North Carolina and New Jersey now require that 2- and 4-year institutions allow teachers

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## Support for a More Highly Educated Early Childhood Workforce – In the Meantime

In public schools throughout the United States, teachers in classrooms from kindergarten through 12th grade are required to obtain, at a minimum, a four-year degree. And yet according to *The State of Preschool 2006: State Preschool Yearbook* (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006), over half (20) of the 38 states that offer at least one state-funded prekindergarten initiative did not require all of its prekindergarten teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree. Even more troubling is the fact

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### Special Thanks

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance Center would like to thank our sponsors for their generous donations toward the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGES® 2007 National Conference.



# Does a Bachelor’s Degree Matter? Addressing the Findings of a New Study

A recent article released in the journal *Child Development*, “Teachers’ Education, Classroom Quality and Young Children’s Academic Skills: Results from Seven Studies of Preschool Programs,” looked at the links between teacher education, classroom quality and children’s academic learning in preschool and child care classrooms. The study, which combined data from seven major studies of preschool and child care, found teacher education alone was not a silver bullet for improving the quality of early education. In most cases, more education, by itself, did not result in better classroom quality or greater learning. However, in past studies, findings have indicated that child care teachers with more education have higher-quality classrooms. So how do advocates for a better-educated workforce respond to this study?

### 1. It takes more than teacher education to create high-quality classrooms.

The study demonstrates what has always been known to be true—a college degree as a single factor is not responsible for quality classrooms or good child outcomes. This means that advocates for college degrees in early childhood education cannot count on those requirements ALONE to make the difference for children. Advocates must also campaign for optimal group size, teacher-child ratios, better compensation and more support for teachers. For as these researchers concluded, child outcomes and classroom quality likely stem from a mixture of many factors.

### 2. Education has a significant effect on lifelong earnings of women and the future of their children.

Providing an impetus for a woman to earn a degree has significant consequences for child well being. Maternal education and stable family income are closely linked to a child’s overall educational success. Most women who work in child care have children of their own. In 2004, 22 percent of families with children

under the age of 6 that were headed by a single woman working full time lived below poverty. 63 percent lived below 200 percent of poverty that same year. Maternal education is imperative to moving women and their children out of poverty. (See Figure 1)

### 3. This study population may not look like the typical child care workforce.

Most teachers in this study already had a bachelor’s degree, so the setting was different from what is found in a typical child care. Many of the best teachers who have bachelor’s degrees are drawn to the K-12 system, which has higher salaries and more benefits than the early childhood field. Therefore the benefits of higher education may not have been fully realized by this study.

### 4. All degrees in early childhood education are not the same.

Within the study populations, the types and content of the bachelor’s and associate degrees were not examined. Over the last 10 years, the Child Care WAGES® Project has examined transcripts of over 15,000 child care personnel. The content of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education can vary significantly depending on what requirements were in place, as well as when and from what institution the degree was earned. The early childhood field consists of people who earned their degree anywhere from two to twenty years ago. Much has changed in what is known and believed about best practice in both early childhood environments and in college teaching.

### 5. Creating effective early childhood degree programs is critical to ensuring positive early childhood outcomes.

Although training and degrees are not the sole contributor to classroom quality, higher education is the foundation for changing behaviors that can impact the quality of a classroom. Learning can help teachers change

the quality of teacher-child interactions, which studies demonstrate to be an important element in producing positive child outcomes. Support must be provided to improve the delivery of early childhood teacher preparation using evidenced-based practices to enhance adult learning.

### 6. This study has a silver lining: the opportunity to think strategically about how to systemically improve the early childhood education system.

Positive outcomes for children and transformation of the early childhood workforce will not occur through advancement in provider education alone. A convergence of contributing factors is required: increased compensation and benefits, supportive work environments, high-quality higher-education opportunities, teacher retention and better, more accessible higher-education institutions. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project blends these variables by providing a comprehensive scholarship program to early childhood teachers using states’ higher-education systems. T.E.A.C.H. works in partnership with the scholarship recipient, the sponsoring child care program and the higher-education system, helping to

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Figure 1

Education Level of Single Female Head of Household	% Living below 100% of poverty	% Living below 200% of poverty
High School Diploma	12%	35%
Some college	8%	25%
4-year degree	5%	11%

**T.E.A.C.H. addresses the full equation of improving the care children receive.**

**Strong higher-education systems**

**+**

**Better-educated teachers**

**+**

**Higher rates of compensation**

**+**

**Lower teacher turnover**

**=**

**Higher-Quality Child Care**



*Bachelors - continued from page 2*

leverage positive change at all three levels.

What is known from science about what best supports young children's development and learning can no longer be ignored. It is known that learning does not happen in the absence of relationships; it is known that adults are the role models children rely on to help them make sense out of the world; it is known that children who benefit from rich language environments, challenging and varied learning experiences, and who have the ability to express their emotions and manage their behavior enter school ready to learn and thrive. Children therefore need teachers who are active learners themselves. Research indicates that the best teachers are those who view themselves as life-long learners. Adults who play such a critical role in the learning and lives of this country's youngest citizens must be ensured that they have access to the same opportunities expected for the children they teach.

This article was co-authored by members of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Advisory Committee including: Helen Blank, National Women's Law Center; Carol Brunson Day, National Black Child Development Institute; Terry Casey, Pennsylvania Child Care Association; Dick Clifford, FPG Child Development Institute; Autumn Gehri, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association; Edith Locke, Child Care Services Association; Sue Russell, Child Care Services Association; Peg Sprague, United Way of Massachusetts Bay; Dianna Wallace, Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children; and Marci Young, Center for the Child Care Workforce American Federation of Teachers.

## **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project States Support Pre-K Teachers with Bachelor's Degree Scholarships**

A recent survey revealed that 68% of states administering the T.E.A.C.H. Project also provide some sort of state-funded pre-k program. In 100% of those states, T.E.A.C.H. provides the pre-k workforce with access to college coursework at the bachelor degree level through educational scholarships. Since it is known that education results in a better prepared workforce, and that one of the quickest ways the early childhood workforce can get the education it needs is to make it accessible and affordable, it is clear that T.E.A.C.H. scholarships are playing a role in increasing the quality and quantity of the pre-k workforce.



*Training - continued from page 1*

with associate degrees to transfer their credits to complete a bachelor's degree. Current pre-k teachers working toward their bachelor's degrees and bachelor-degreed teachers working toward specialized certifications also need flexible programs, night classes and distance learning opportunities so they can learn while working. More alternative routes to secure degrees and specialized training are also needed.

### **> Pay equity**

In a field where teachers with bachelor's degrees are often lured to higher-paying jobs in K-12 schools, we must work to retain great pre-k teachers through pay equity and opportunities for professional growth. In New Jersey, where teacher credentialing standards and pay equity are required, entering kindergarteners scored higher on measures of math, vocabulary and early literacy skills. NIEER attributed the gains to the higher qualifications and higher compensation of pre-k teachers.

### **> Consistent professional development**

If we are to build pre-k programs that focus on developmentally appropriate learning, teachers must know the latest findings in child development and how to apply this research to their classroom instruction. Good policies encourage Head Start, public schools and child care pre-k partners to collaborate on joint professional development opportunities to promote cohesiveness in the early education workforce. For example, Louisiana's Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD) requires 18 hours of in-service per year for all pre-k teachers, as well as a two-day training workshop for all teachers and assistants.

Pre-k teachers need the professional credentials that prepare them to tackle the serious and rewarding task of preparing our country's youngest learners for success in kindergarten and beyond. Together, we can develop policies that work for teachers, policymakers, communities and, most importantly, children.

<sup>1</sup> Although Pennsylvania and Wisconsin fund multiple pre-k programs, there is no consistent statewide BA requirement. Pennsylvania's Kindergarten for Four-Year-Olds does require BA certification, while the Education Accountability Block Grant and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program do not. Wisconsin's state funding to supplement federal Head Start grantees is not tied to a BA requirement, but the state's Four-Year-Old Kindergarten requires a BA (NIEER, *The State of Preschool 2006: State Preschool Yearbook*).



*Support - continued from page 1*

that eight of these 20 states did not require any prekindergarten teachers to have a four-year degree, another eight allowed exemptions for teachers in certain settings such as nonpublic schools.

### **What's getting in the way, and what can be done?**

States face enormous challenges when it comes to requiring and providing support for the early childhood workforce to get more education. Fiscal challenges, which include budget deficits and funding cuts, occur at the federal and state levels. Philosophical differences occur in terms of the level of education it takes to teach and care for young children in group settings. And recent research calls into question the long held belief that



teacher education is a predictor of classroom quality and child outcomes. Until there is a national consensus on minimum educational requirements for teachers in early childhood programs that mirror requirements for kindergarten teachers, states are taking the lead in ensuring resources are in place to help early childhood teachers access higher education.

### **Strategies to enhance systems**

**> Practitioner registries** are in place in many states and are designed to track and validate the education of the workforce; create a coherent professional development system and improve access to educational resources; provide recognition and increased status for teachers; and collect data on the workforce.

**Wisconsin's** Registry is based on core knowledge areas defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Through an application process, training, education, experience and

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professionalism are acknowledged and a certificate is issued. Education and experience that goes beyond the minimum requirement are acknowledged by increasing stars on The Registry's career ladder.

> Many states are using **tiered reimbursement** rates and bonuses tied to quality levels as a way to increase compensation. These strategies are often part of a broader Quality Rating System (QRS) initiative designed to assess, improve and communicate levels of quality in early care and education settings. The most common financial incentive related to a QRS is tiered subsidy reimbursements, whereby higher-quality programs can be paid a higher reimbursement rate for the children in their program who receive child care assistance.

In **North Carolina**, tiered reimbursements for children receiving child care subsidies are also tied to the Star Rated License system in which early childhood programs earn up to a 5-star rating. The rating is based on two components that give parents the best indication of quality—staff education and program standards. In this system, subsidy reimbursement rates increase with the number of stars attained.

> **Wage or salary supplements** are designed to reward early care and education teachers based on their level of education and, in some states, their years of tenure. One of the keys to the components of these programs is that supplements are not tied to the program's

budget or parent fees.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project, created by Child Care Services Association, provides periodic financial rewards and links these graduated salary supplements to attained education. Supplements range from \$200 to \$6,250 annually depending on the participant's education, county of residence and hours worked. The program currently operates in 4 states.

> **Scholarship programs and loan forgiveness programs** help make education affordable to an underpaid workforce. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® Project, created by Child Care Services Association, is a comprehensive scholarship program that provides educational scholarship opportunities for people working in regulated child care centers and homes. T.E.A.C.H. ties educational scholarships to compensation and retention, and creates demand for coursework, which builds the capacity of higher-education institutions in local communities. T.E.A.C.H. is currently available in 21 states.

In **Pennsylvania**, the Quality Early Education Loan Forgiveness Program, funded and administered by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), was initiated in 1993 and offers up to \$9,900 in loan forgiveness. The program assists graduates working in Pennsylvania in the field of early childhood education by offering an annual reduction of student loan principal balance.

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child care for all young children.



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