

2019-2020 **WAGES\$** ANNUAL REPORT

Child Care
WAGES\$
Program



**CHILD CARE WAGES\$® PROGRAM
NORTH CAROLINA**

**COMPENSATION FOR AN
ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE**





ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

COMPENSATION FOR AN ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE

During FY20, North Carolina has suffered the repercussions and threats of a global pandemic. Early care and education has been deemed the essential service that it is, but the impact to the field from COVID-19 has been and will be significant.

While the long-term impact is not yet known, what is clear is that many programs have stepped up to the plate to provide services to other essential personnel and their families, putting their own lives at risk in the process. They are always the workforce behind the workforce, but that has never been more true than it is today.

The frontline professionals that have worked to help people through this crisis could not have done so without early educators. Our society's growing awareness that the child care workforce meets critical needs has resulted in calls for higher compensation. The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is one option for getting these increases into the hands of early educators.



WHAT IS WAGE\$?

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program was created to raise the quality of care children receive by lowering turnover rates and increasing teacher education. The combination of a lack of resources and efforts to maintain affordability for parents means many early childhood teachers are severely underpaid and leave the field for better paying jobs. And others never consider the profession as an option.

WAGE\$ provides tiered education-based salary supplements to teachers, directors and family child care providers working with children from birth to five with the goal of improving this workforce's retention, education and compensation.

In North Carolina, WAGE\$ is made possible through a funding collaboration between local Smart Start partnerships that choose to participate and the Division of Child

Development and Early Education. Child Care Services Association administers the program for participating counties across the state and thanks these supportive funders on behalf of the participants. Please see page 8 for a funder list.

WAGE\$ ENCOURAGES, SUPPORTS AND REWARDS CONTINUED EDUCATION

The early childhood workforce continues to make educational advancements. For example, in 2015, 58% of the teaching staff had at least an associate degree in any field. In 2019, this percentage had increased to 62%.* WAGE\$ plays a role in encouraging, supporting and rewarding educational pursuits.

To earn a WAGE\$ salary supplement, a participant must have credit-bearing coursework. The WAGE\$

*Child Care Services Association. 2019 North Carolina Child Care Workforce Study. Released October 2020.

scale ranges from 12 semester hours of early childhood coursework all the way to a doctorate degree. Participants with education below an associate degree with at least 24 birth to five focused semester hours are awarded temporarily and must make educational advancements in order to retain their eligibility. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships may be available to provide financial assistance with the coursework needed. The programs work hand in hand to make a difference with education.

Three teachers from the same child care program graduated with their Associate Degrees in Early Childhood Education in FY20. Yvette Garner, Tiffany Grace Pointer and Priscilla Rowell in Alamance County didn't let financial struggles or the impact of COVID-19 stop them from achieving their educational goals. With support from the Child Care WAGE\$® Program and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, they kept moving forward. All three participated in WAGE\$ while they continued their education, receiving higher awards as they moved up the education scale. They reported using the WAGE\$ supplement to meet basic needs, to catch up on bills, for car maintenance and to enhance their classrooms.

89%

of WAGE\$ participants working in counties with at least two years on WAGE\$ have an associate degree with at least 24 birth to five focused semester hours or submitted coursework during the year to reflect their ongoing education

92%

of those at temporary education levels responding to the participant survey said that WAGE\$ is an incentive to seek additional education and/or helps pay for it



Yvette said, "WAGE\$ was the incentive to encourage me to keep moving forward in my degree, because each bonus I received made up for the hours missed at work."

Their director, Davina Woods, recognizes the importance of education and the role WAGE\$ plays. She said, "Receiving a WAGE\$ supplement affirms the importance of teacher education to the quality early learning experiences provided for young students. The supplement reinforces early childhood education as a profession and encourages early educators to continue their pursuit of knowledge and skills that are beneficial to all involved."

COVID-19 created unprecedented challenges and consequences for child care providers, but Verma Ellis in Craven County is still recovering from a different kind of disaster. Verma has used WAGE\$ to help make essential repairs to her home after suffering damage due to Hurricane Florence. Verma said, "The WAGE\$ money will help me get a roof over my trailer and get me and my two girls out of the camper that we are calling home. We are not back in the trailer yet. I'm saving money and fixing things up as I can, but WAGE\$ is going to make that possible. It also helps me get food and school clothes for my girls."



3,880

paid in 55
participating counties

\$993

average six-month
supplement (an increase of
nearly \$0.95 per hour for
full-time employment)

98%

of the WAGE\$ participant
survey respondents said
WAGE\$ helps ease
financial stress

COMPENSATING AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE IS CRITICAL, ESPECIALLY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Educated teachers make a difference for children in the classroom. They know how to guide children's development, enhance their learning and help them reach their full potential. Education opens up other job opportunities where compensation is likely higher than in early childhood. Salary supplements are one proven strategy to help keep these professionals in the field.

Teacher well-being, which may be affected by economic strain, can change the interactions teachers have with children. Being fairly compensated is important in any workforce, but it is especially important in early childhood when so much is at stake. As teachers and families deal with additional stress caused by COVID-19, it is critical to ensure the financial needs of this essential workforce are met. The path to a rejuvenated economy goes directly through early childhood, the workforce behind the workforce. Quite simply, compensation for early educators matters. It affects children, teachers, and ultimately the financial health of our state and country.

CHILDREN NEED STABLE AND ENGAGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EDUCATED TEACHERS

WAGE\$ participants must work at least six months in the same child care program to be eligible for a supplement. These financial awards helps teachers afford to be able to afford to work in an undercompensated field. As a result, children benefit in the years when these stable and engaging relationships are most critical.

12%

turnover rate through March
(compared to a 31%
pre-program turnover rate
in the state)*

96%

of the WAGE\$ participant
survey respondents said
that WAGE\$ encourages
them to stay in their
current programs

**Turnover not tracked April–June 2020 due to COVID-19*

Teacher and assistant director Sheila Stewart is a WAGE\$ recipient in Davidson County. With both a two- and four-year degree focused on children birth to five, Sheila said,

"The WAGE\$ Program makes me feel appreciated for the work I do, especially since the pay for the early childhood field is not compatible with the education I have. I could go to work in a public school system and make more money, but I feel that young children deserve a strong educational foundation and the WAGE\$ Program helps support me financially so that I can stay at the facility where I am employed."





EDUCATED TEACHERS DESERVE RECOGNITION FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WAGE\$ and its funders know how important it is to have an educated teacher who stays in the field. WAGE\$ participants often juggle work, family and school all while trying to make ends meet on a minimal salary. In addition to these accomplishments, supporting other families during the COVID-19 crisis is worthy of special acknowledgement. Their dedication is recognized and rewarded through the WAGE\$ supplement.

97%

of survey respondents
said receiving WAGE\$
made them feel more
appreciated and
recognized for
their work

Melissa Ridenour, a participating director in Durham County, said,

"The WAGE\$ Program makes you feel like you are accomplishing something by working in the child care field. It makes you feel counted and appreciated. And now with the essential workforce needing child care in order to do their jobs, I hope this can change some attitudes to bring more to our workers and field as society sees how vital we are as a workforce. We are also essential!"

Child Care Services Association could not agree more. The early care and education workforce *is* essential and it has always been. We appreciate the dedication of the WAGE\$ participants and all North Carolina teachers serving children and their families.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF WAGES

- Alamance Partnership for Children
- Alexander County Partnership for Children
- Alleghany Partnership for Children
- Blue Ridge Partnership for Children
- Buncombe Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Caldwell County Smart Start
- Children & Youth Partnership for Dare County, Inc.
- Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc.
- Cleveland County Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Columbus County Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Craven Smart Start, Inc.
- Down East Partnership for Children
- Durham's Partnership for Children
- Franklin Granville Vance Smart Start, Inc.
- Halifax-Warren Smart Start Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Harnett County Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Hertford-Northampton Smart Start Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Iredell County Partnership for Young Children, Inc.
- Lee County Partnership for Children
- Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Mecklenburg Partnership for Children
- North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education
- Partnership for Children of Johnston County, Inc.
- Partnership for Children of Lincoln/Gaston Counties
- Partnership for Children of the Foothills
- Randolph County Partnership for Children
- Region A Partnership for Children
- Rockingham County Partnership for Children, Inc.
- Smart Start of Brunswick County, Inc.
- Smart Start of Davidson County, Inc.
- Smart Start of Davie County, Inc.
- Smart Start of Forsyth County
- Smart Start of Transylvania County
- Smart Start of Yadkin County, Inc.
- Smart Start Rowan, Inc.
- Stanly County Partnership for Children
- Surry County Early Childhood Partnership
- The Partnership for Children of Cumberland County
- The Partnership for Children of Wayne County, Inc.
- Wilkes Community Partnership for Children
- Wilson County Partnership for Children



Child Care Services Association

P.O. Box 901

Chapel Hill, NC 27514

(P) 919-967-3272

(F) 919-967-2945

www.childcareservices.org/wages-nc

Child Care
WAGES[®]
 Program

