

High-Quality Early Childhood Educators Are the Key to Quality Programs for Children

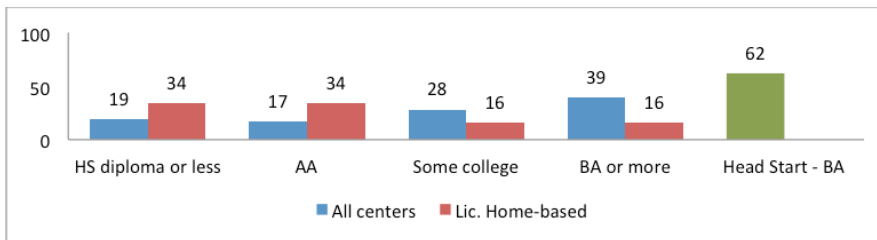
Teachers who have specific preparation and ongoing professional support in child development and learning are more likely to have effective, positive interactions with children and their families, offer richer language and other content experiences, use a variety of appropriate curricula and teaching practices (including play) for individualized and group teaching, and create more high-quality learning environments. NAEYC sets standards for teachers, assistants and directors in its early childhood program accreditation system (centers and schools serving children from birth through kindergarten) and has established standards for professional preparation (birth through age 8) used in higher education programs.

As qualifications for early childhood educators rise at the state and federal levels, there must be a corresponding investment so that educators can meet them. States continue to enhance their early childhood professional development systems, including standards and competencies, pathways and articulation to meet higher qualifications, ongoing professional development, as well as compensation commensurate with growing skills and knowledge. These investments have the return of better recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and other early childhood professionals.

Facts about the Early Childhood Workforce

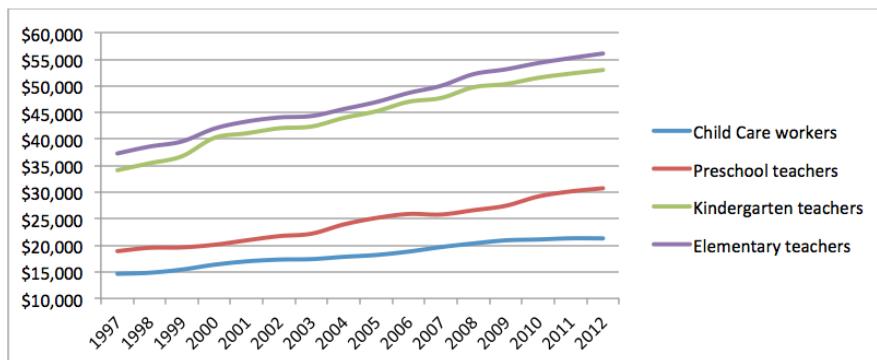
■ **Size of the Workforce:** An estimated 1 million teachers and caregivers working in center-based programs and an additional 3.8 million home-based teachers and caregivers with children from birth to kindergarten. ¹

■ **Degree Attainment:**



Note: 92% of Head Start teachers have an Associate degree or higher.²

■ **Compensation Comparison:**



The wages of early childhood educators are dependent on different financing and requirements for teachers under different programs. ³

NAEYC Recommendations

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) – As Congress reauthorizes CCDBG, it should require state applicants to describe how the state is undertaking a comprehensive state early childhood workforce plan, including standards and competencies, career pathways, workforce data systems, higher education institutions' capacity and articulation agreements, compensation parity, and financing. Among the uses of the quality set aside, states should provide educators and administrators knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate curricula and practices as well as health and safety.

Strong Start for America's Children's Act – Congress should enact the bipartisan Strong Start Act with funding to fulfill its goal of more high-quality preschool opportunities for low-income children. Whether they receive a preschool development grant or prekindergarten grant, states should be required to use a portion of their grant to support teachers and administrators in community-based settings with scholarships, release time and other supports to help teachers earn a Baccalaureate degree in early childhood education (or related field with demonstrated competence in early childhood), provide professional development to directors, and then provide parity of public school teacher compensation for teachers. The current legislation should be strengthened to allow community-providers with teachers enrolled and making progress in meeting the teacher requirement to receive a preschool grant. The result will be a strong mixed delivery system of high quality preschool across all settings that serve the range of family needs.

Elementary & Secondary Education Act reauthorization-- Early childhood spans birth through age 8, and teachers in the early grades of school need professional development in all domains of children's learning and development to help children be successful in academic content and in the skills created by positive social, emotional, and physical development that is essential to learning and that are important skills for future work and community success as adults. The Continuum of Learning Act, introduced with bipartisan sponsorship in the U.S. House of Representatives, would provide more professional development for teachers and principals, encourage more joint professional development between schools and community early childhood providers, and ask states to review and revise their teacher certification policies to create a distinct certification to reflect the specialized knowledge and skills need for early childhood educators.

Higher Education Act – Title II grants focus on improving teacher preparation. These grants should address early childhood teacher preparation programs. By aligning them to NAEYC voluntary national professional preparation standards, there will be greater quality assurance on what teachers know and can as well as greater ability to create articulated two and four-year degree programs. In addition, there must be adequate financial assistance to earn a degree, such as Pell grants that keep pace with the rising costs of college expenses and funding for the current loan forgiveness programs for early childhood educators in child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs.

NAEYC Resources

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation www.naeyc.org/ncate/standards

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/standardsintro

NAEYC Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi

(Endnotes)

¹ NAEYC analysis of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) (2013) www.naeyc.org/blogs/gclarke/2013/11/who-early-care-and-education-workforce-0

² Ibid. For Head Start, see Head Start Participants, Programs, Families and Staff in 2012, Center for Law and Social Policy, 2013. www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/HSpreschool-PIR-2012-Fact-Sheet.pdf

³ NAEYC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, 1998-2012. Data available from www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm