

Low wages=Low quality: Solving the real preschool teacher crisis

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AVAILABILITY

Available online for download.

- Policy brief article in pdf [2]

Excerpts from policy brief:

Recruiting and retaining good teachers ranks as one of the most significant roadblocks to solving the preschool quality crisis facing this country. Evidence points to the low wages and benefits offered to preschool teachers as the single most important factor in hiring and keeping good teachers.

The significance is clear. The social, emotional, educational and economic advantages from high quality preschool programs translate to better lives for children, their families, communities and society as a whole. Yet, poor pay and benefits threaten the delivery of these very high quality programs that can make such a dramatic difference for the nation and its children.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Child care programs in many states and the Department of Defense benefit from current policies that seek to increase access to professional development and increase the financial pay-off to obtaining higher qualifications and remaining in the field. However, their small budgets imply that current initiatives have not yet set a goal of providing three and four year-olds in child care with teachers who are comparable to those in K-12 education.

If this goal is set, then demand-side incentives must be substantially increased. It seems likely that this would require raising the entire salary and benefits schedule (for assistant teachers, teachers, and directors) substantially. Such a policy would be most comparable to the military's strategy for improving child care.

States that do not have such programs now can look to other state supply side initiatives for programs that could assist them in rapidly increasing the supply of highly qualified teachers needed to meet the large initial demand created by raising standards.

Securing access to these programs for current teachers will minimize disruption to the teaching force and ensure that the diversity of the teaching force is not harmed.

As the preschool teaching force stabilizes at new levels of qualifications and compensation, the need for supply-side initiatives will decline though some need will continue to support a career ladder within the early childhood teaching profession.

Region: United States [3]

Tags: economics [4]

quality [5]

child development [6]

funding [7]

staff [8]

pre-school [9]

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