

States' efforts in improving the qualifications of early care and education teachers ^[1]

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Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (Rutgers University) ^[2]

Format: Report

Publication Date: 27 Jan 2003

AVAILABILITY

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Abstract

This paper summarizes research on the importance of well-trained early care and education (ECE) teachers, identifies the barriers to improving teachers' qualifications, and details states' initiatives to clear those barriers and improve teacher preparedness. Among the barriers are the lack of state and national certification standards and the widespread acceptance of minimally educated ECE teachers. Other barriers include low salaries and teachers' family responsibilities that compete with their ongoing training. A number of states are passing regulations to increase the pre-service and ongoing training requirements for ECE teachers. Efforts to overcome these barriers include variations on the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) initiative. The top three monetary strategies in some states to help increase the qualifications of ECE staff are stipends, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs. Some states increase funding to centers hiring better-qualified teachers. A popular non-financial initiative is the career lattice, or continuum of teacher learning, which describes the education, experience, and skills needed to rise in the field.

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