

HOW CAN WE HELP CHILD CARE TEACHERS INVEST IN THEIR CAREERS AND REDUCE TURNOVER?

Empowering teachers to advance their careers

By Shay Everitt, Patrick Gill, and Stephanie Phipps

JULY 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

Helping child care teachers invest in their education can empower teachers to advance their careers while also reducing staff turnover and improving the quality of child care.

Child care teachers are charged with educating children during their most critical years of brain development and preparing them for kindergarten, but these teachers are often underpaid and lack targeted early childhood training. Currently, one-in-four child care educators in Texas has at least an associate's degree, but most teachers, regardless of education, are paid so little that they qualify for government assistance programs such as subsidized child care.¹ These low wages and benefits contribute to high staff turnover – when an educator earns a bachelor's degree, she is likely to leave for a higher paying job at public Pre-K or Head Start. Low-wage jobs tend to experience high staff turnover, but this trend is particularly troubling for child care. Turnover rates at child care providers are often closely related to a program's indicators of quality, and high turnover makes achieving and maintaining Texas Rising Star (TRS) difficult.²

Offer Scholarships with Wage Supplements. Not only is specialized early childhood education (ECE) training shown to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, but degrees and credentials help Texas child care teachers build a career. It is clear that the child care workforce needs to reach higher levels of education, but it is unreasonable to ask them to take on this debt since their wages are so low that they often qualify for welfare programs. When child care providers actually achieve these higher levels of education, they should be compensated appropriately. Tying together scholarships with wage supplements is an ideal model. Financial incentives which encourage child care teachers to pursue higher levels of education can help improve the number of qualified teachers in ECE. .

Coordinate State and Local Investments in Child Care Teachers. With such varied investments at the state and local levels, it is difficult to distinguish which strategies are most fruitful. In order to more efficiently and effectively use public dollars, it would be helpful to understand why:

1. Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards) are creating their own

HOW CAN WE HELP CHILD CARE TEACHERS INVEST IN THEIR CAREERS AND REDUCE TURNOVER?

scholarship programs, rather than using the state-funded scholarships through T.E.A.C.H. Texas; and

2. Local Boards are offering CDA training and scholarships, while the state offers two free online training options.

Local Boards should still maintain local control and implement programs based on what works in their area. However, some programs are more successful than others, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Local Boards might consider studying the outcomes of these investments at the state and local levels. There may be an opportunity to minimize duplication, leverage under-utilized resources, and coordinate state and local dollars in order to fill gaps in the system.

Provide Meaningful Professional Development and Articulation. All Local Boards offer professional development opportunities, but the selection process for the type and content of training varies across the state. Local Boards should still be able to make choices that meet local needs, but training hours could be more meaningful if some or all counted toward a credential or degree.

TWC and Local Boards can work to provide training that prepares child care teachers for a career in the field. These hours could meet child care licensing (CCL) requirements and/or TRS criteria,

while also counting toward a certificate or degree. Using their quality set-aside funds to serve multiple purposes would be a smart use of taxpayer dollars and could slow teacher turnover by investing in their careers. In fact, this type of dual-purpose training is encouraged by House Bill 680, which was passed by the Texas Legislature in 2019.

As a compliment to this work, some areas across Texas are entering into articulation agreements across institutions of higher education. This allows for standalone credentials to count toward 2-year degrees, and then those 2-year degrees to count toward 4-year degrees. TWC and some Local Boards fund training for the common standalone CDA credential, but it does not always count toward a 2-year degree. Coordination at the state level across relevant state agencies would promote more efficient use of taxpayer dollars, while building careers in the child care field.

Improve and Adequately Fund the Texas Workforce Registry. TWC could work with Local Boards and their contractors to identify and gather consensus on specific improvements that need to be made for the Texas Workforce Registry, while also learning from other states that have successfully implemented similar systems. It would be ideal for all child care providers to use the Registry, especially those who are Texas Rising Star. This could help TWC and Local Boards:



CHILDREN AT RISK is a Texas based research and advocacy organization. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for change to improve the quality of life for children through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration, and advocacy.

HOUSTON OFFICE
713-869-7740
2900 Wesleyan St. Ste. 400,
Houston TX, 77027

NORTH TEXAS OFFICE
214-599-0072
2900 Live Oak St.,
Dallas TX, 75204

childrenatrisk.org
@childrenatrisk
#forchildren

HOW CAN WE HELP CHILD CARE TEACHERS INVEST IN THEIR CAREERS AND REDUCE TURNOVER?

1. Understand gaps in training.
2. Reduce duplication between CCL and TRS.
3. Support articulation efforts across the state.

Implement Apprenticeship Programs. An apprenticeship program combines paid on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced workers with related classroom instruction that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages.³ For low-wage workers or those who are unemployed, on-the-job learning helps jump start a career by providing the worker with a paying job while she/he earns a credential or degree. Access to these opportunities with a career pathway to a higher wage can help child care teachers realize long-term positive employment outcomes, such as increased wages and higher retention rates.⁴ New and existing child care teachers could receive training through this model while also meeting employer needs for a skilled and stable workforce.

State and local investments have laid the groundwork for quality improvements that are needed to increase participation and maintenance of TRS, particularly at the highest levels of quality. TWC and Local Boards can build off these efforts to ensure that the child care teachers caring for our children with public funding have access to opportunities that support their career development and encourage them to remain with their employer.

For more information, please contact:

CHILDREN AT RISK
info@childrenatrisk.org
(713) 869-7740

NOTES:

1. CHILDREN AT RISK calculations using American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016. IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
2. Cassidy, D. J., Lower, J. K., Kintner-Duffy, V. L., Hegde, A. V., & Shim, J. (2011). The day-to-day reality of teacher turnover in preschool classrooms: An analysis of classroom context and teacher, director, and parent perspectives. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 25(1), 1-23. doi:10.1080/02568543.2011.533118 ; Korjenevitch, M., & Dunifon, R. (2010). Child care center quality and child development. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University ; Mims, S. U., Scott-little, C., Lower, J. K., Cassidy, D. J., & Hestenes, L. L. (2008). Education level and stability as it relates to early childhood classroom quality: A survey of early childhood program directors and teachers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 23(2), 227-237.
3. Texas Workforce Investment Council. (2018). A guide to apprenticeship in Texas. Retrieved from <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/Guide-to-Apprenticeship.pdf>
4. Johnson, M. & Spiker, K. (2018). Broadening the apprenticeship pipeline: Pre-employment training and affordable childcare are key to access and retention in work-based learning programs. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/broadening-the-apprenticeship->



CHILDREN AT RISK is a Texas based research and advocacy organization. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for change to improve the quality of life for children through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration, and advocacy.

HOUSTON OFFICE
713-869-7740
2900 Wesleyan St. Ste. 400,
Houston TX, 77027

NORTH TEXAS OFFICE
214-599-0072
2900 Live Oak St.,
Dallas TX, 75204

childrenatrisk.org
@childrenatrisk
#forchildren