

Summer 2019

Letter from the Founder

At the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center, we have been focused on how to increase access to and success in higher education for the early childhood workforce. The comprehensive nature of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships is specifically designed to meet the needs of our incumbent early childhood educators, often making poverty-level wages and the first in their families to go to college, who represent the diversity of young children in our nation and who work full time while going to college part time. Each T.E.A.C.H. recipient is supported by a counselor who helps them navigate college, work and family commitments, and meet the expectations of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. These counselors are very familiar with the challenges, as they are often called upon to help them get over the bumps in the road to a degree. Last year we decided to look at these barrier issues more deeply.



In fall 2018, the National Center began a three-part study to examine what T.E.A.C.H. counselors, T.E.A.C.H. associate and bachelor's degree scholarship recipients and their faculty in community colleges and universities believe are the biggest barriers to access and success. Respondents included 61 counselors, 2,071 scholarship recipients and 170 faculty members. Surveys were offered in Spanish and English. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which 49 different items were perceived as difficult. Questions about college affordability were not included because all recipients get scholarship support that allows for graduation from college with no debt.

The top 10 most difficult items for recipients were: (1) the lack of availability of all types of services for English language learners (e.g., classes and textbooks in their native language, advisors who speak their native language, translation services, etc.); (2) past student loans or college debt; (3) juggling college and family responsibilities; (4) the ability to pass the basic math proficiency exam; (5) juggling college and work responsibilities; (6) the mandate that student teaching could not be completed in their own worksite; (7) the ability to pass remedial math classes; (8) finding their desired courses taught on weekends; and (9 & 10) successfully passing Praxis I and Praxis II. While these findings were not surprising, it was surprising that both T.E.A.C.H. counselors and college faculty agreed with the students' assessments. Both groups also rated nine of these top 10 as items in their own top 10 challenges for T.E.A.C.H. students.

The National Center is creating a summary of this research and preparing 8-10 issue briefs that look at these challenges individually. We hope to describe why these items are challenges for T.E.A.C.H. recipients and share some of the promising practices implemented in

community colleges and universities across the country to address these issues. We asked faculty to identify some innovations as part of the faculty survey and we are gathering strategies from our T.E.A.C.H. counselors across the country as well. We encourage you to check the Center Initiatives section of our website, as we will be adding a new section on higher education that will include the full report and issue briefs.

Recently our T.E.A.C.H. Alliance Advisory Council discussed challenges facing our students in higher education. The Council is made up of T.E.A.C.H. graduates, early care and education program directors who sponsor their staff on T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, and higher education faculty. They worried about the high advisor caseloads in colleges that often make it difficult for part-time students to find the help they need. They also talked about the economic struggles of the early childhood workforce, struggles that mean they may not have the money to pay their bills and put food on the table. Often colleges are blind to these issues, but the Council felt strongly that colleges had a responsibility to ensure that students' basic needs were met, and if not, to provide resources to help their students. Pointing to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they questioned how students could learn when their basic needs were not met.

The Council members validated some of the issues raised by the study: math, services for English language learners, options for student teaching, support for those who have no familial experience with college, juggling work, family and college, etc. One issue they raised is the need for all students to take an "introduction to college" course. During the discussion we realized that T.E.A.C.H. recipients and other part-time students may never have this as a requirement. Students often come in seeking to take the coursework leading to a certificate, which may be 4-6 early childhood courses, without any general education requirements. They are not given information about being a college student, using technology, finding tutoring resources, registering for classes, building their study skills, etc.

This particular discussion was extremely helpful and will lead to further exploration with the state T.E.A.C.H. programs to examine the availability of these courses for our students. There is much to unpack on this journey to help the early education workforce attain the coursework, credentials and degrees they need. We are always seeking information on promising practices we can share and encourage you to send us an email if you know of some model solutions to these challenges. Reducing barriers to access and success can only improve the knowledge, competencies and skills of our early educators and produce better outcomes for our young children.

--Sue Russell, Executive Director
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center

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Teresa Graves, Editor

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T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE\$® National Professional Development Symposium 2019 - Wrap Up

Nearly 160 people from 26 states and D.C. gathered for the symposium, where we kicked off a yearlong celebration of 30 years of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®. Over the course of the two days, participants attended workshop sessions specific to the needs of their programs and interests. They heard nationally known speakers talk about public policies and changes in the early childhood industry, higher education faculty discuss access barriers, solutions and promising practices and what leveraging investments in early education has done and continues to do to transform the workforce. Twenty-two staff from 11 T.E.A.C.H. and/or WAGE\$ programs, numerous higher education faculty, and representatives from several national organizations presented 35 workshops. Overall, this was a dynamic conversation among leaders in the field.

SAVE THE DATE!

2020 T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE\$® National Professional Development Symposium

A Rich History, A Promising Future: 30 Years of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®

April 21-22, 2020

Chapel Hill, NC

Our keynote speaker Caitlin McLean from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, presented *Transforming Early Childhood Jobs: Toward a System that Works for Early Educators, Children, and Families*. She shared challenges facing the workforce along with some good news. The challenges our workforce faces are seemingly intractable issues, including a lack of access to the higher education they both need and want, high turnover and economic worries such as food and housing insecurity, having enough money to pay the bills and affordable health care. But there is hope. The good news is we have a vision from the 2016 study, *Transforming the Financing of Early Childhood Education*, for what it will take to fully finance the early education system in our country, including compensation parity for all early educators. We also had \$2.37 billion in the Child Care Development Block Grant last year, a significant increase from previous years, and 46 states were awarded Preschool Development Birth-5 Grants (PDG B-5) designed to improve states' early childhood systems.

McLean ended her presentation with a call to action: the key to building a case for financing is leading with a message that tells the story of why early educators matter, including making the case through the use of values and metaphors that resonate with the public. After all, people need to understand why this issue is important before they will buy into the cost.

On Day 2, a plenary panel discussion on *What it Will Take to Move to a Bachelor's Degree Standard for Lead Early Educators* took place between Helen Blank, former Director of Child Care and Early Learning, National Women's Law Center; Ana De Hoyos O'Connor, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Studies, San Antonio College; and Carol Brunson Day, President, Brunson, Phillips & Day, Inc., and moderated by Sue Russell. Panelists unpacked and discussed the "only ifs" around the bachelor's degree requirement for lead teachers in early childhood classrooms. They are:

- ◆ **Only if the requirement it is not an unfair burden on the workforce.** This requirement feels unfair to the workforce. Some educators worry about losing their jobs and some directors/owners worry about losing their businesses. We

need to help people feel empowered by this requirement, understand the benefits and embrace the possibility that it can be achieved. We must fight the perception that the burden is theirs alone. To do this, the burden must be shared by policymakers, higher education and the collective will of our associations and organizations.

- ◆ **Only if diversity is maintained.** This is a key value for our profession and must be kept on our agenda. We must take a stand that diversity is an asset worth prioritizing, and we need to help make sure teachers know their diversity is an asset and prepare them to become advocates. Higher education institutions must be transformed to address the inequities around access, and we must collect data to measure progress in all aspects of ensuring a diverse workforce.
- ◆ **Only if there is enough time for the workforce to meet the standard.** We need to determine what progress looks like and how we measure it. As a timeline is established, attention needs to be paid to the notion that a short time frame, while motivating, will cause anxiety, while a longer timeframe could cause procrastination. Ultimately, the story of college completion for our workforce needs to change for policymakers, legislators and higher education institutions who still see an associate degree as a two-year endeavor and a bachelor's degree as a four-year endeavor. If it takes five years or more to finish a degree for our full time employed early educators, then they should be afforded that time with out punitive repercussions. Any timeline should ensure success and accountability measures.
- ◆ **Only if the workforce is fairly paid for the education they have received.** We must have reasonable expectations that the requirement will lead to better compensation. Parity across jobs would help. So would holding policymakers accountable for any promises made to support fair compensation.

We take this opportunity to thank our sponsors:

- ◆ Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute for supporting the Center as a sponsored program at the UNC Friday Conference Center.
- ◆ Kinder Care Education and the Council for Professional Recognition for our reception at the end of the first day, replete with food, drinks, and the sounds of DJ Donnie G. Our annual longevity awards were presented to long time T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$ staff, and the beautiful spring weather, allowed for folks to spend some time outside after a long day of conferencing.



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Moving the Needle on Workforce Compensation Summit Roundup

For two days after the Symposium, nearly 40 people convened to advance the efforts of the five Moving the Needle on Workforce Compensation state teams (Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Rhode Island and Texas). Attendees included state team members and presenters representing 12 states and the District of Columbia. Participants heard presentations from national thought leaders, attended workshops on topics of importance to the teams, and shared time with their individual state teams and as a group for team presentations and cross-state conversations.

The event kicked off with a panel discussion between Harriet Dichter, Early Childhood Policy and Strategy, wearing her hat as a state child care administrator; Caitlin McLean, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, wearing her hat as a researcher; and Albert Wat, Alliance for Early Success, wearing his hat as a funder. The topic was *Moving from Incremental to Transformative Change in ECE Workforce Compensation: What Needs to Happen in Communities, States and the Nation?* With Sue Russell moderating, the panelists first talked about their vision of what transformative change in ECE workforce compensation would look like and instances of when they've seen transformative change. They discussed lost opportunities, whether the US can achieve high quality, free early childhood

education for all and if so, who should pay or where funds should be extracted to pay for it. One final thought was consideration of a master plan on compensation across the multitude of funding streams.

Day 2 of the Summit opened with a keynote presentation from Marica Cox-Mitchell, Director of Early Learning at the Bainum Family Foundation. In her presentation, *Moving from Unified Definitions to Improved Compensation*, Marica spoke to the need for shifting the conditions that are holding the compensation conundrum in place including policies, practices, resources, relationships, power dynamics and mental models. She noted that shifting all of this will require us to look both inward at the decisions and choices we've made as we've grappled with becoming a profession as well as outward, where we are seeing that awareness is increasing, support is broadening and synergy is growing. Her summation – we are making history by reclaiming our power and moving from a mode of individual impact to the collective impact of a unified profession.

On balance, the Summit was uplifting and hopeful, with multiple opportunities for team members to learn from the experts, learn from each other and advance their work on moving the needle forward for early educator workforce compensation in their states.

Addressing Barriers to Success in Higher Education for Early Childhood Education Students

Building on the successful team based strategies the Center has used to address intractable issues facing the early education workforce, the Center selected two T.E.A.C.H. states (FL and PA) to participate in a project designed to:

- ♦ Identify barriers within each state to college admission, course-work completion and graduation for the early education workforce;
- ♦ Develop strategies that leverage the investments of T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to facilitate the development and/or replication of solution strategies to identified barriers;
- ♦ Seek outcomes, including but not limited to
 - ♦ reduced costs,
 - ♦ decreased time from entry to degree,
 - ♦ increased access and success for students of color,
 - ♦ improved course and degree completion, and/or,
 - ♦ investments and/or administrative or legislative policies that improve higher education policies and practices.

Currently, both states are making progress. Watch this space in our Winter 2020 newsletter for accomplishments.

We thank the Alliance for Early Success and the Foundation for Child Development for their support in this work.

Celebrating 30 Years of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®

This year marks the 30th year of providing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® comprehensive scholarships and access to debt free college education to thousands of early educators across the country. Center staff are planning some celebratory opportunities and we will update our newsletter list soon. Meanwhile...



Did you know? T.E.A.C.H. began with:

- 21 scholarships in 3 counties in NC? This year T.E.A.C.H. scholarships will be available in 22 states and DC and will have reached nearly 160,000 early childhood educators.
- \$23,100 in funding for scholarships? To date, T.E.A.C.H. programs across the country have raised more than \$500 million for scholarships for the early childhood workforce.
- 200 children in classrooms with a teacher benefitting from a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship? This year, approximately 615,000 children were in a classroom with a teacher benefitting from a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship.

Moving the Needle on Compensation Project Resources

In the Summer 2018 *T.E.A.C.H. Times*, we highlighted some of the advances that eight T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® state teams (FL, IA, IN, MI, NE, NC, TX and WI) made over two years in moving the needle in policy, advocacy and funding toward improved early childhood workforce compensation. Since then the Center has produced a [full report on the project](#) along with two Accomplishment Briefs, one on [Research/Advocacy/Policy](#) and the other on [Strategy/Funding](#).

Meanwhile, a second round of states (MN, OH and RI with two returning states, MI and TX) are finishing a year of work to move the needle on compensation. We will be back with additional accomplishments, lessons learned and next steps in the Winter 2020 edition of the Times.

We thank the Alliance for Early Success and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for their support in this work.

Scenes from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGES® National Professional Development Symposium 2019



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