

# T.E.A.C.H. times

Summer 2020

## T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® STATES

Alabama  
Arkansas  
Colorado  
Delaware  
Florida  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Maine  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Missouri  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Hampshire  
North Carolina  
Ohio  
Pennsylvania  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
Texas  
Utah  
Vermont  
Washington, DC  
Wisconsin

## Child Care WAGE\$® STATES

Delaware  
Florida  
Iowa  
Nebraska  
North Carolina  
Tennessee

## Letter from the Founder

The last six months have been really hard. The impact of COVID on early childhood educators and programs has been horrific. Few programs have been left unscathed by closings, lost revenue, lost staff and/or loss in enrollments. Young children who need the most consistency in routines and relationships have experienced isolation and loss of teachers and friends. And families have had to figure out how to work from home and take care of their preschoolers at the same time and/or suffer from job loss and financial crises.



In our work with states operating T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship or Child Care WAGE\$® supplement programs, we have watched the dedicated work of counselors for these programs try to bring support, guidance and resources to early childhood educators and programs. T.E.A.C.H. counselors carry a caseload of scholarship recipients that they support as they navigate work, college and family. Two big things happened at once. Child care programs closed and college classes all converted to online. Counselors were charged with finding their recipients, assessing what was happening and offering their support. Many T.E.A.C.H. recipients enrolled in community colleges had never taken an online course; some did not have laptops or connectivity at home. Some didn't know how to navigate the learning platforms. And many were in need of financial supports. Counselors jumped in and did what was needed, helping reassure their scholarship recipients and finding the resources they needed. T.E.A.C.H. program administrators worked hard to find extra resources to support the purchase of laptops or to convert scholarship models to put more money in the hands of recipients. Counselors individually helped their recipients learn to get online for their courses or find a resource in their college that could help them. The National Center worked with states to provide guidance on modifications to scholarship models that made sense for this crisis. . . putting more resources and strategic tools in the hands of the early childhood workforce and their employers.

Within the Child Care WAGE\$® Program, participants receive a supplement every six months that is graduated to their level of attained education

and their retention in their site. Typically, before payments are made, their continuing employment is verified. But how do you do a verification if the program is closed? And couldn't a WAGE\$ payment be a lifeline in this pandemic? WAGE\$ programs, working with their funders and the National Center, created a temporary policy that allowed WAGE\$ participants to be paid based on their prior confirmation, getting money in the hands of the workforce to help them straddle reduced or no employment.

The compassion of these counselors is matched by the compassion felt by so many teachers and programs who have tried to keep up with the children and families in their classrooms or programs throughout this crisis. Even facing personal economic ruin, these remarkable educators worry about how the children in their classes are doing at home with their single parent working at home or with their parents newly unemployed. That is why I am so proud to be a part of this early childhood education field. Over and over again our workforce sacrifices themselves for others. And it should not have to be that way. Early educators are and have been essential to the growth and development of young children and to our economy. We ask so much of them and offer so little in terms of fair wages and benefits. But hopefully there will be some powerful lessons from the pandemic about how we need to strengthen the investments in this critical infrastructure for our here and now and for our future.

As I write this blog, I am on the verge of retiring after more than 50 years in our field. I so wish we would have solved our workforce dilemma by now. But I have hope that the pandemic is shining the spotlight on this societal problem that creates the impetus for real investments, real systems and real change for our early childhood educators, our programs and our young children and families. Our field is blessed with amazing young leaders and advocates. In my retirement, I will happily join your efforts to advance early childhood education in our nation.

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

## T.E.A.C.H. Times

Teresa Graves, Editor

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## Addressing Barriers to Higher Education for the Early Childhood Workforce

Addressing Barriers to Higher Education for the EC Workforce (HEB) is a National Center special project that involves three states, Florida, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Each state identified a team of key players, completed a landscape analysis of their higher education systems and identified an action plan to address their most pressing concerns. All of those actions were ongoing prior to the March 2020 COVID-19 changes in education.

It may come as a surprise that COVID-19 has been instrumental in pushing states involved in the HEB project to positive actions that seemed impossible before the pandemic. The virus has devastated higher education. HEB states have scrambled, reacted, refined and are now pursuing goals that are a blend of original goals and responses to COVID-19. The crisis has opened doors to discussions and actions such as technology-based field experiences and computer purchases for recipients. Ongoing change is likely as the virus's impact on higher education evolves. It is a challenging time to work with higher education on behalf of the early childhood workforce, but it may be a very productive time as well.

### State Efforts

Florida is the state with the most experience with project work and higher education. Florida's plan indicates many completed steps and the least changes to their original work.

#### Florida has:

- Completed online curriculum for infants and toddlers that will be released through a partnership with Miami Dade College. The curriculum reflects goals for quality infant toddler training that also encompasses the needs of dual language recipients.
- Completed high school pipeline efforts that involves more than 1,000 high school students being ready for CDA Assessment. The Florida team has also collected and analyzed data about student interests and concerns with careers in early childhood. The results of this work will be included in a report disseminated this fall.
- Integrated responses to the COVID-19 emergency into their plans. Florida obtained permission to provide computer purchases for recipients and support for online learners in a total virtual learning environment.

## T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center Participates In National Stakeholder Conversation Setting a North Star Vision for the Future of Early Childhood Educators

Setting a vision for what the capabilities, qualifications and professional compensation will be for early childhood educators at all levels and in all settings across age groups from birth to 8-year-olds is no easy task. But through a straw man process funded by the Foundation for Child Development and facilitated by the Neimand Collaborative, a group of 30 national thought leaders (researchers, advocates, practitioners and experts in early childhood, including the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center), met twice to help find consensus on this vision. The result is a new document, [Toward a North Star for the early care and education workforce: A 15-year vision](#). Recognizing early childhood education workforce issues as "one of the most complex and intractable issues in early childhood education," the North Star vision is offered as a jumping off point to spur conversation, not as a solution to these issues.

Pennsylvania has found new focus because of the challenges presented by the virus. The Pennsylvania action plan reflects multiple revisions as they try to find the right balance for their work. Pennsylvania's initial action plan was all about infants and toddlers and now it focuses on COVID-19 changes with their original infant and toddler focus as a backdrop for their work.

#### Pennsylvania has:

- Revised their project vision to encompass the current realities to include "high quality online learning" in their statement.
- Addressed immediate strategies to support online success such as online tutorials for recipients and T.E.A.C.H. counselors and identified needs of faculty thrust into a total online environment.
- Utilized existing funding to support recipient technology access needs including hardware and connectivity needs.
- Added funding strategies to address additional funding needs for hardware.
- Focused a goal on elevating technology-based field experiences with strategies that include linking to state apprenticeship models.

South Carolina is the newest state in the HEB project. South Carolina has been an eager participant in HEB but one that has worked hard to complete their first year. The pandemic added urgency to their work and the addition of a consultant group has helped SC move from great ideas to implementation of ideas.

#### South Carolina has:

- Secured funds to provide all recipients with laptops.
- Continued to develop online support for recipients ranging from tip sheets to web-based videos over a variety of topics including uploading/downloading, learning platforms, and more.
- Initiated a Communities of Practice model to support online learners.
- Retained an articulation goal (a goal almost lost in the move to COVID-19 strategies) that helps to keep the focus on degree completion.

While the two meetings occurred before COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd, and the subsequent growing demand for social justice and an end to racism, this vision recognizes the essential role early childhood educators play in the American economy and the urgency with which we must act.

**"The status quo is simply and completely unacceptable: Early educators cannot sacrifice any more than they have for a country and economic system that undervalues their worth as professionals."**

- *Toward a North Star for the early care and education workforce: A 15-year vision*

## Turning on a Dime: Bringing Two National Meetings on Line in Five Weeks' Time

In a fairly short time this past spring, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center swiveled to offer our two-day T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$ National Professional Development Symposium and two-day Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Summit virtually over the course of eight days. It was like the unexpected twister that took Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz from Kansas to the yellow brick road. While there was no yellow brick road to the Emerald City or a Good Witch of the North, there were a lot of unknowns and very helpful colleagues near and far to help us.

### Virtual Forum

We're happy to report the largest attendance for the Symposium/Virtual Forum ever, with more than 200 people registering for one or more of the 17 workshops, and the keynote address by Dr. Marquita Davis, Deputy Director of Early Learning, Pacific Northwest, with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who spoke about *Building an Early Childhood Education System that Supports the Early Educators Our Children Need—A Call to Action*.

In addition to the general attendees, team members from three T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® states (Florida, Pennsylvania and South Carolina) working to address barriers in early childhood higher education participated in a higher education track, including nine workshops. This track drew these team members and many others interested in unpacking these barriers and finding solutions. The link to recordings of the higher education workshops can be found on the Center's website [here](#).

### Virtual Summit

Woven into those eight days were two days reserved for five state teams (Alabama, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio and Rhode Island) to attend workshops and a keynote presentation by Lauren Hogan, Managing Director, Policy and Professional Advancement, with the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Hogan discussed *Power to the Profession through the Lens of Pathways to Better Compensation for the Early Education Workforce*. These states have been working for nearly a year now to move the needle on early childhood workforce compensation.

Workshop evaluation surveys of each event indicated attendees were satisfied with the overall value of the workshops, the presenters' knowledge of topics and the format of the workshops. And, in spite of the limitations that meeting virtually can present around meaningful discussions, each workshop included questions offered

through the question box and some brave attendees who were willing to be unmuted and talk with the presenters. We are grateful to all the presenters who worked with us to ensure it went well.

We also give a shout out to our friends at Scholastic Education. Without their generous donation of children's books, we could not have provided door prizes, something everyone loves at the Symposium.



### Virtual Forum Attendee Comments

- "I learned about organization, data and research about each T.E.A.C.H. state program and the importance of what we each do in our jobs for helping teachers succeed in their education. I have a better perspective of why I do what I do."
- "Hearing from other programs or faculty was very helpful. The session on faculty supporting bilingual students was especially helpful and provided insight into moving that work forward in our own state."
- "Overall I had better understanding of the national picture in ECE and in association with the pandemic as well."
- "The knowledge and thoroughness of each presenter was incredibly valuable."
- "I appreciated the diverse backgrounds of the speakers."

### Virtual Summit Attendee Comments

- "Everyone did an amazing job. I never would have believed I would have benefitted as much from the Virtual Summit."
- "I appreciate the T.E.A.C.H. National Center continuing to support the Compensation work in our state by changing the format to a virtual Summit. I appreciate the work that went into planning and designing the Summit. The sessions and presenters were wonderful. Excellent work by the T.E.A.C.H. National Center staff."
- "You captured great topics to address current and future concerns."

## Welcome Newest States to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Family

In our spring *T.E.A.C.H. Times* (it was COVID early days), we were remiss in not welcoming T.E.A.C.H. ARKANSAS, which became licensed to operate T.E.A.C.H. in July 2019. Welcome! T.E.A.C.H. is housed in the Arkansas Early Childhood Association, a 50+ year old non-profit organization comprising early childhood professionals and parents who share a common concern about the well-being of young children and their families. Find out more about T.E.A.C.H. AR by checking out their webpage [here](#). The page has a short video featuring one of our Voices from the Field contributors and former T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipient, Elizabeth Coakley. You can read her story [here](#).

We also welcome two New England states to the T.E.A.C.H. family – T.E.A.C.H. MAINE and T.E.A.C.H. NEW HAMPSHIRE, both of

which were licensed to operate T.E.A.C.H. in July 2020. In Maine, T.E.A.C.H. is housed in the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children. MaineAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. Find more information about T.E.A.C.H. ME [here](#).

In New Hampshire, T.E.A.C.H. is housed in Child Care Aware® of New Hampshire. The organization's mission is to provide a streamlined, cost efficient and high quality program for children, families and providers in the state of New Hampshire. T.E.A.C.H. NH is currently working on their T.E.A.C.H. webpage and you can check back [here](#).

## Early Childhood Workforce Improvement Initiatives Strengthened by Collaborations with National Partners and State Advocates\*

For the past six years, the T.E.A.C.H. National Center has engaged select T.E.A.C.H. state programs in a cross-state cohort model to move the needle on early childhood workforce issues including articulation, compensation and barriers to higher education access. Through this model we have seen many examples of the impact this approach has had on moving policy, funding and strategy development/implementation.

Of great value to this work is the way project states, using a high-level team approach, are engaging state and national partners who have contributed to the progress made there. During these COVID times, with so much uncertainty and so much at stake, we are proud of these teams' accomplishments as they move their goals forward while also supporting the fragile early childhood industry and struggling workforce. Here are some highlights from the states:

- In Ohio, the team member from Groundwork Ohio, a state advocacy organization, worked with the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT) to ensure early childhood education was included in the state's new *critical occupations* list. Now, occupations deemed critical in Ohio can access the same support as the Department of Labor's *in-demand* occupations, including access to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. Staff of the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) and OWT staff are collaborating on a career pathway website tool for ECE Critical Occupations.
- In Rhode Island, a team member from Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, their state-based child advocacy partner in this work, led the

development and distribution of *Improving the Compensation and Retention of Effective Infant/Toddler Educators in Rhode Island - Recommendations of the Moving the Needle on Compensation Task Force*. The Rhode Island team is currently working to maintain (as a base) the higher Child Care Assistance Program reimbursement rates put in place in response to the COVID-19 child care crisis and made available through CARES funding.

All states working on addressing compensation in two of the cohorts benefitted from the work of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), a national partner. As keynote speaker at a Compensation Summit, Caitlin McLean, Workforce Research Specialist at CSCCE, helped to ground the team members in current early childhood workforce conditions and policies across states. As a panelist in another Summit, Caitlin helped the group to think about moving from incremental to transformative change in ECE workforce compensation. States were also helped by numerous articles and reports by additional national partners including the Bipartisan Policy Center, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Child Trends, the Committee for Economic Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children and New America, and which we highlighted and linked in a bi-monthly *Compensation New\$* newsletter.

A full report on the results of the most recent compensation and higher education barriers team work will be available on our website in December.

### T.E.A.C.H. EARLY CHILDHOOD<sup>®</sup> NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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