

Elevating Early Educators: Innovative Policies and Practices to Support Children, Families, and the Early Childhood Workforce



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GOALS FOR TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- 1 Highlight the importance of early educators and the unique challenges they face
- 2 Share insights from a decade long research policy partnership
- 3 Provide reasons for optimism

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RESEARCH POLICY PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD OPPORTUNITIES



- What we do:
 - Statewide surveys of all early educators in Virginia
 - Statewide surveys of Virginia families with young children
 - Evaluations of early childhood policies and initiatives
 - Particular focus on the early childhood workforce

Laura Bellows * Justin Dormal * Isabelle Fares* Todd Hall * Grace Kegley * Anna J. Markowitz * Molly Michie * Kate Miller-Bains* Anna Shapiro * Kennedy Weisner * Vivian C. Wong




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OUR GOALS

- Better understand the nature of early childhood workforce challenges.
- Build the data systems needed to understand basic ECE workforce questions.
- Evaluate the impact of policies aimed at improving early education systems, especially those aimed at supporting the workforce.

OUR PARTNERS



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Goal 1: Highlighting the importance of early educators and the unique challenges they face

WHY DO WE FOCUS ON EARLY EDUCATORS?

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TEACHERS & INTERACTIONS ARE THE KEY TO HIGH QUALITY LEARNING



- In K-12 the critical role of teachers is widely recognized.
- Sensitive, responsive teaching is also critical to young children's development
- High quality early learning opportunities can make a big difference.

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HOW DOES POLICY IMPACT TEACHING? (K-12)

- 97% of teachers have at least a BA, 49% have a graduate degree
- 99% report receiving on-the-job professional development
- Average annual salary of a K-12 teacher: **\$\$69,544**



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HOW DOES POLICY IMPACT TEACHING? (EARLY CHILDHOOD)

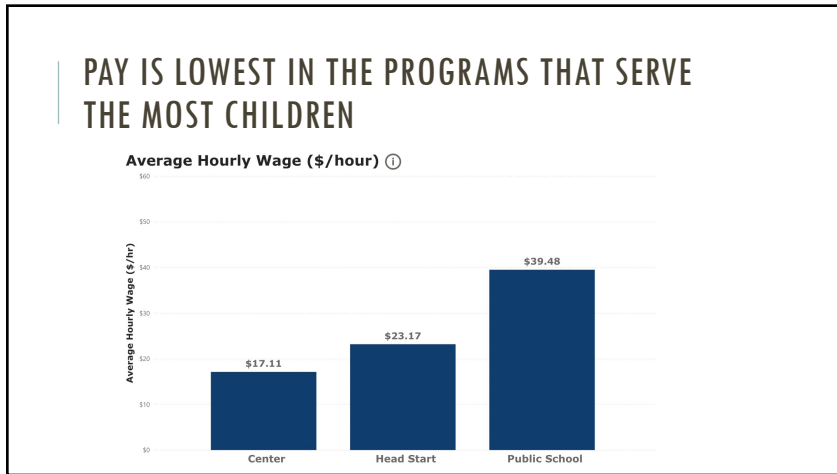


Most states have no requirements to enter ECE teaching; about 35% of teachers have BA

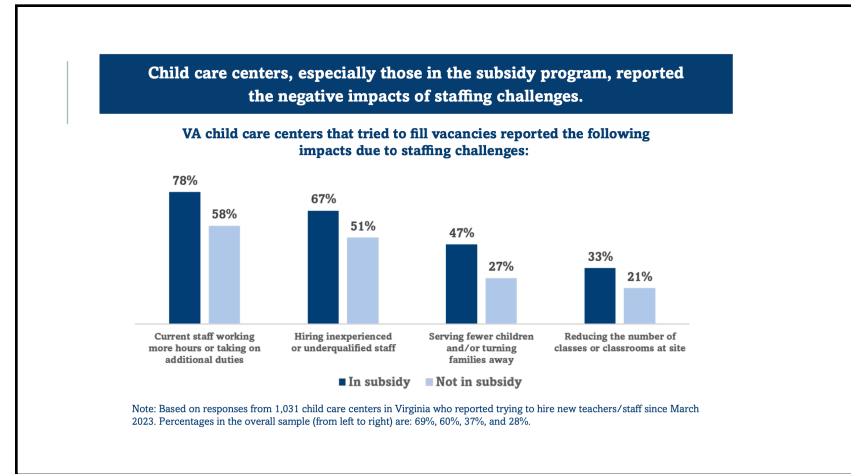
Many programs lack resources for continuous learning

Average annual salary of a preschool teacher: \$31,930

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The New York Times
Why You Can't Find Child Care: 100,000 Workers Are Missing
 Where did they go? To better-paying jobs stocking shelves, cleaning offices or doing anything that pays more than \$15 an hour.

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... AND JUST RECENTLY IN OHIO...

COVID came and what it did was definitely expose the weakness in having a low-wage child care system. You have sectors, like restaurants and customer service, offering salaries of \$20 and above. This is devastating the early child care system."

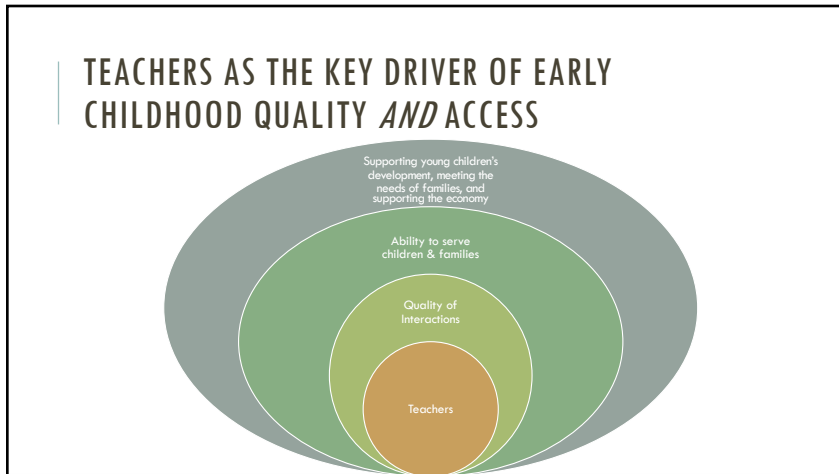
Not having reliable child care has potentially undermined the educational growth of children and the job stability of their parents. And 60% of providers surveyed said lower enrollment, most often triggered by the staffing shortages, has negatively impacted their center's bottom line.

Staffing shortage has child care centers turning away families

Low-wage jobs have workers spring for better pay in other fields. If shortages continue, many fear an already tattered child care system may be headed for ruin.

by Olivia Pankras August 26, 2022

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SO WHY ARE OUR MOST IMPORTANT TEACHERS PAID THE LEAST?

- Providing high quality early learning opportunities is costly and labor intensive.
- Child care is simultaneously too expensive for many families, and **too underfunded to be high quality and stable.**
- The early childhood landscape is fragmented and uncoordinated.
- There is an early childhood "data deficit."
 - It is hard to solve problems we cannot see
 - It is hard to track progress without data

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Goal 2

SOME INSIGHTS FROM A DECADE LONG RESEARCH POLICY PARTNERSHIP

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University of Virginia
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University of Virginia
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TEACHER TURNOVER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: LONGITUDINAL EVIDENCE FROM THE UNIVERSE OF PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS IN LOUISIANA

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TURNOVER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

- Teacher turnover—particularly within-year turnover— creates instability for children & undermines investments in quality improvement
- Early childhood education (ECE) work is characterized by very low wages & poor working conditions
 - Many child care teachers lack education beyond a high school diploma, earn about \$13 per hour, and rely on government assistance programs
- We have many anecdotal accounts of the negative impacts of those conditions, especially about workforce shortages
- However, estimating ECE teacher turnover is difficult due to data limitations

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A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

The familiarity with existing administrative data that allows researchers to identify unique opportunities

- In 2012, Louisiana passed legislation to introduce a unique Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) (or ECE accountability system)
- All lead teachers across child care, Head Start, or school-based pre-k are observed at least once a semester, Fall 2016 through Fall 2019
- Although the goal of the QRIS was system-wide quality measurement, in practice the QRIS tracked all lead teachers
- We followed over 5000 teachers in ~ 1,6000 sites
- **The first longitudinal dataset tracking all lead teachers in publicly funded ECE in a state**

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WHAT DID WE LEARN

Teacher turnover is very high in early childhood settings.

There are major differences in turnover rates both by sector and by age of children served.

Nearly half of child care teachers left their site from one fall to the next.

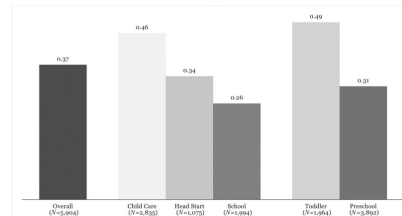
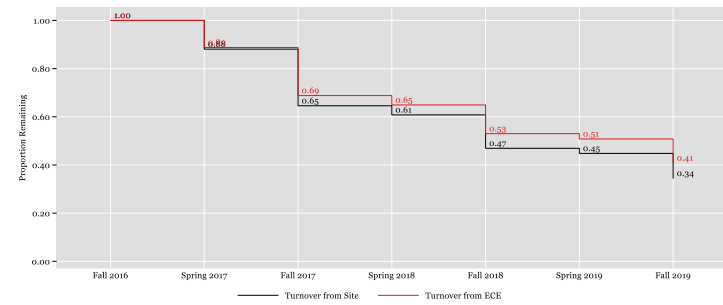


Figure 1. Early childhood teacher turnover in Louisiana: Proportion of 2017-2018 teachers no longer teaching in the same program in 2018-2019.

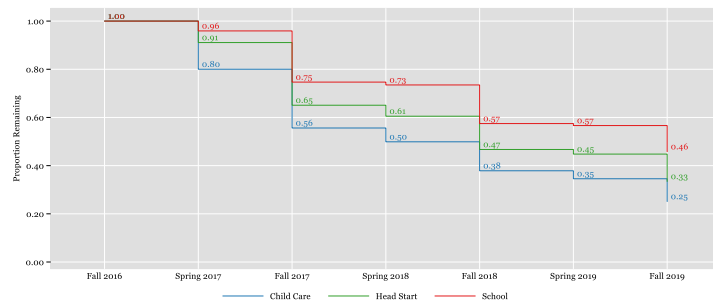
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ECE TEACHER TURNOVER IS EXTREMELY HIGH



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OVERALL ECE TEACHER TURNOVER MASKS HUGE AMOUNTS OF VARIATION ACROSS SECTOR



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KEY FINDINGS

- Extremely high turnover in early childhood settings
 - Nearly all job exits leave ECE altogether
- Particularly pronounced among child care teachers
 - 1 in 5 child care lead teachers in fall 2016 were no longer there by the spring
 - Three years out, 75% of child care teachers no longer at their site
- This level of instability has negative implications for children
- Heightened interest in strategies to “transform the workforce” and address compensation disparities across sectors

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Daphna Bassok
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THE EFFECTS OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES ON TEACHER RETENTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: NEW EVIDENCE FROM VIRGINIA

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HEIGHTENED INTEREST IN FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR EARLY EDUCATORS

New Mexico Launches Incentive Pay Program to Support Child Care Professionals


July 13, 2023, 1:40 AM ET
Herald on Morning Edition
Jennifer Ludsen

Bonus checks! One year free! How states are trying to fix a broken child care system

6-Minute Listen

City To Distribute Stipends To Early Childhood Educators Through New Program

Bay City News Service - Published 7:10 pm PDT, Wednesday, October 3, 2019



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LIMITED RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS

Evaluation of R.E.E.T.A.I.N. Minnesota's Child Care Workforce Retention Program
Final Report

Source: Child Trends R.E.E.T.A.I.N. online survey data 2018.

- Seventeen existing retention programs, 11 provide salary supplements as their primary retention activity
- Existing research has been informative, but has not isolated the effect of pay incentives/supplements

Figure 3. Respondents' level of agreement that receiving a bonus influenced their decision to stay in the workforce (N = 300)

Level of Agreement	Percentage
Strongly disagree	12%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Neutral	28%
Somewhat agree	28%
Strongly agree	27%

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A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY: VIRGINIA'S PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BIRTH-FIVE

Virginia Receives \$9.9 Million Federal Preschool Development Grant to Unify and Strengthen Early Childhood Education

Nearly half of federal funds will directly support innovative early educators


RICHMOND—First Lady Pamela Norham today announced that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), in partnership with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and the University of Virginia (UVa), received a one-year \$9.9 million competitive Federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

"These federal funds will be used by VDOE and its partners to support statewide initiatives that bolster Virginia's early childhood system. These initiatives include producing a statewide needs assessment and strategic plan, aligning early learning standards, and developing kindergarten-readiness tools for teachers and families.

"Every child in Virginia is capable of entering kindergarten ready with the skills they need to succeed in school, regardless of who they are or where they live," said First Lady of Virginia Pamela Norham. "This grant will enable our innovative local leaders and teachers to build skills, engage families in their children's learning and development, and measure progress all while being financially rewarded for their efforts."

Nearly \$4 million of this funding will directly support early childhood educators across the Commonwealth. The funds will support initiatives to train innovative communities to unify child care, Head Start, and pre-K at the local level. To accelerate the implementation of higher standards and reduce turnover, leaders and teachers in these communities who agree to strengthen standards, participate in trainings, and improve quality will receive financial incentives at the end of the grant.

In these ten early adopter communities, this funding will allow Virginia to evaluate 1,000 publicly funded infant, toddler, and pre-K classrooms, to better understand the quality landscape. This effort will be unique in that it will work to involve



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THE MOST EXCITING PART

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In these ten early adopter communities, this funding will allow Virginia to evaluate 1,000 publicly funded infant, toddler, and pre-K classrooms, to better understand the quality landscape. This effort will be unique in that it will work to involve all infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms in publicly funded early childhood programs, including family day homes, child care, Head Start and schools. Furthermore, the communities will conduct focus groups and surveys to gather insights on quality.

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THE DETAILS

- One-year federal grant; \$4 million allocated toward funding "recognition program"
- Funds were hypothesized to reduce stress and improve well-being, teacher-child interactions, job satisfaction & stability
- Many time sensitive decisions on how to deliver the incentives, and to whom
 - Who gets the incentives?
 - How large are they?
 - Can we provide rigorous (experimental) evidence on the impact of financial supports for the early childhood workforce?

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WHERE WE LANDED: VIRGINIA'S TEACHER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

- \$1,500 financial incentives
- Tied to retention at a specific PDG site
- Eligibility:
 - Any early childhood educators (teachers, assistant teachers, aides, staff)
 - Working directly with children 0-5
 - Working 30+ hrs per week
 - In PDG sites (publicly funded ECE settings, e.g. child care centers, Head Start, pre-k)

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OUR SAMPLE

- Initially the PDG Birth-Five Initiative included 25 Virginia cities and counties
 - All publicly funded ECE programs were invited to participate
- A large, urban county was also interested in participating in the PDG B-5, but insufficient resources to include all sites and teachers in the county

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OUR SAMPLE

The opportunity to introduce random assignment into the roll-out of state policies

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OUR EXPERIMENT

- **Research question:** *What is the impact of the offer of a financial incentive on teacher retention?*
- **Sample & Method:**
 - 75 sites and 584 teachers in this one urban county
 - Oversubscribed; multi-site cluster randomized trial used to determine eligibility
- **Treatment contrast**
 - Treatment group: Up to three payments of \$500 in roughly three-month intervals
 - Comparison group: \$0 received through Teacher Recognition Program

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STUDY SAMPLE: BY SECTOR & ROLE

Study 1: Three versus no payments					
Variable	Overall	Child Care		Schools	
		Assistants	Leads	Assistants	Leads
Race/ethnicity					
White, non-Hispanic	26%		24%		71%
Black, non-Hispanic	19%		21%		8%
Hispanic or Latino	24%		25%		4%
Other/two or more races	32%		30%		17%
Age (in years)	42		42		42
Years of ECE experience					
	10		12		12
Bachelor's degree or higher	48%		48%		100%
Estimated annual earnings (\$)	38,211		35,704		70,487
Healthcare from site	80%		73%		98%
Employment verified at 8 months	82%		83%		96%
Sample Size	584		253		48

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Black, non-Hispanic	19%	20%	21%	13%	8%
Hispanic or Latino	24%	27%	25%	24%	4%
Other/two or more races	32%	37%	30%	24%	17%
Age (in years)	42	40	42	50	42
Years of ECE experience					
Years of ECE experience	10	8	12	13	12
Bachelor's degree or higher	48%	36%	48%	41%	100%
Estimated annual earnings (\$)	38,211	30,556	35,704	32,601	70,487
Healthcare from site	80%	82%	73%	100%	98%
Employment verified at 8 months	82%	75%	83%	92%	96%
Sample Size	584	245	253	38	48

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FINDINGS

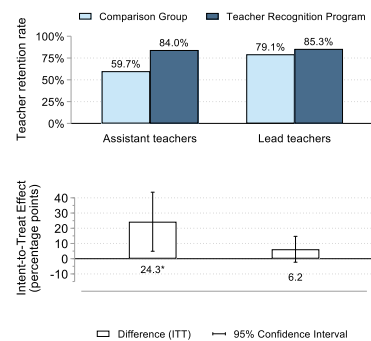
Main results

- Over one quarter of teachers in control group left their program
- Incentive program increased retention probability by about **11 percentage points**

Results by subgroups

- Impacts driven by child care centers
- Larger effects for child care assistant teachers relative to lead teachers

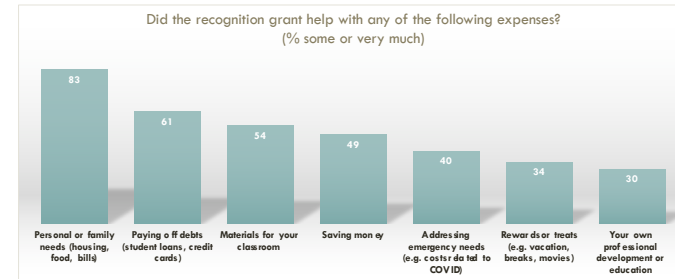
Treatment Effects: Child Care Assistant versus Lead Teachers



Regression-adjusted means; based on 75 sites and 568 teachers (full sample)

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MOST TEACHERS REPORTED USING INCENTIVES FOR BASIC NEEDS



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“I REMEMBER THE DAY TEACHERS STARTED RECEIVING THEIR CHECKS AND THERE WAS SUCH A BUZZ OF EXCITEMENT. I KNOW FOR ONE OF THE TEACHERS, RECEIVING THAT CHECK MEANT SHE COULD FINALLY MAKE NECESSARY CAR REPAIRS AFTER HAVING AN ACCIDENT SEVERAL MONTHS PRIOR. I KNOW ALL OF THE TEACHERS WHO WERE ELIGIBLE APPRECIATED IT AND IT DEFINITELY MADE AN IMPACT ON HOW LONG THEY CONTINUED TO WORK AT [SITE].”

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“THANK YOU. EARLY EDUCATORS ARE SO OFTEN LEFT OUT OF THE CONVERSATION WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING. THIS GRANT HAS SHOWN THAT OUR WORK MATTERS. I AM HOPEFUL THAT ONE DAY, BEING RESPECTED AND RECOGNIZED FOR WHAT WE DO WILL BE A NORM IN OUR SOCIETY.”

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KEY FINDINGS

Strong experimental evidence that financial incentives meaningfully reduce turnover in ECE

- Among child care teachers, 8-month turnover rates were cut in half.. from 30% to 15%
- Teachers in settings/roles with greater instability (higher turnover, lower wages) seem to benefit most

Direct Policy Implications: This past year “Recognize B5” provided \$3000 financial incentives to all child care teachers in publicly-funded child care sites.

Year	Number of Teachers
Year 1	1,696
Year 2	3,092
Year 3	6,301

Year	Amount Disbursed
Year 1	\$2,171,000
Year 2	\$4,900,000
Year 3	\$9,540,700

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VIRGINIA'S UNIQUE DATA AND THE EVIDENCE THEY PROVIDE MAKE THE COMMONWEALTH A POLICY EXEMPLAR

Study of Early Education in Virginia
Teacher Recognition Program Evaluation
December 2023

The Effects of Financial Incentives on Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood Settings: Experimental Evidence from Virginia

ECONOMIC REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming

A Rule by the Health and Human Services Department on 08/21/2024

TRANSMITTED TO CONGRESS | MARCH 2023

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Finding ways to capture the unique challenges of early educators throughout the pandemic.

TACKLING THESE CHALLENGES DURING COVID

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COVID EXACERBATED CHALLENGES FOR CHILD CARE TEACHERS

Although there was extensive anecdotal evidence about the impact of COVID for teachers generally, and especially for child care teachers the lack of systematic data made it difficult to understand the scope of the problem.

The ability to build off on existing partner activities for data collection

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BUILDING DATA COLLECTION INTO PARTNER ACTIVITIES

Louisiana's Teacher Support Grants (TSG) allowed us to get a statewide look

Provided funding for child care sites to be spent specifically on teacher compensation (stipends, bonuses, wages, etc.)

- All sites that received public dollars (e.g., subsidies) were eligible, all applicants received funding
- As part of application, Louisiana collected data from center leaders on staffing, compensation, and enrollment at their sites

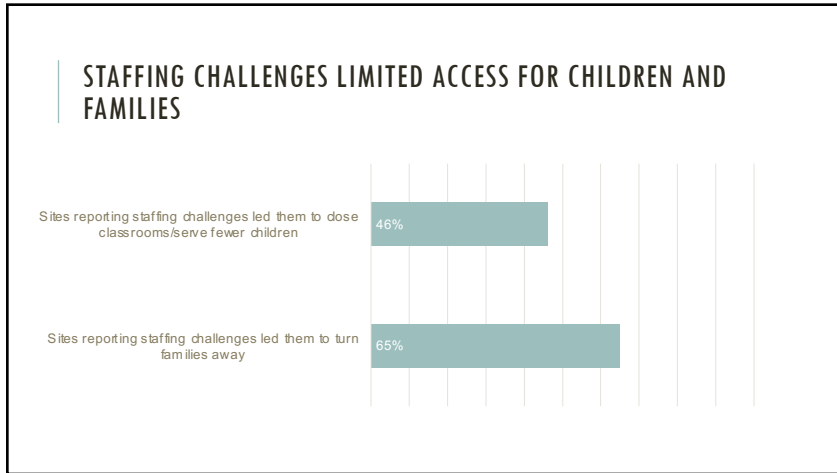
In January/February nearly 800 center leaders (90% of all Type III centers) applied for funding.

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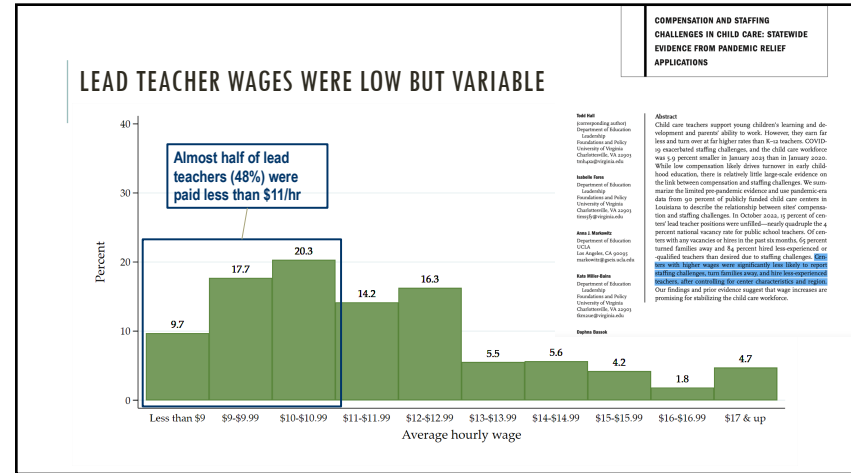
STAFFING CHALLENGES WERE VERY COMMON

Staffing Challenge	Percentage
Sites with at least one lead teacher vacancy	56%
Average lead teacher vacancy rate	15%
Sites with a lead teacher vacancy rate of at least 25%	33%
Sites reporting losing teachers was "very challenging"	43%
Sites reporting asking more of staff	90%
Sites reporting hiring less qualified teachers	84%

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Advocating for and helping to build the data systems needed for better research

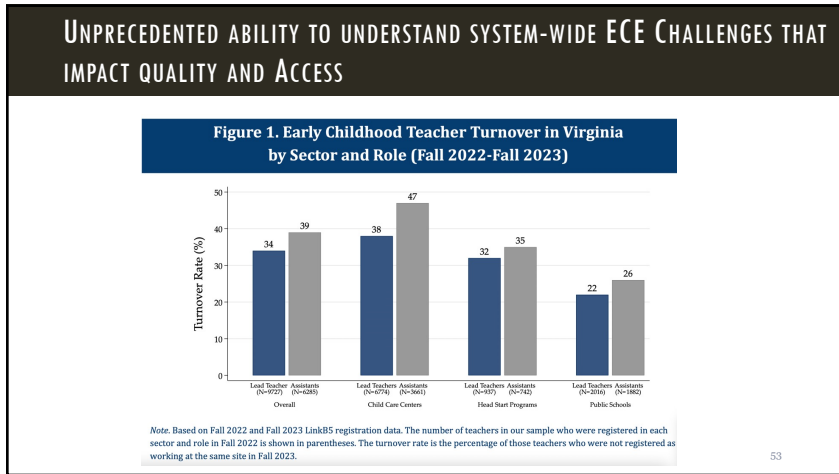
MOVING PAST AD HOC SOLUTIONS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DATA

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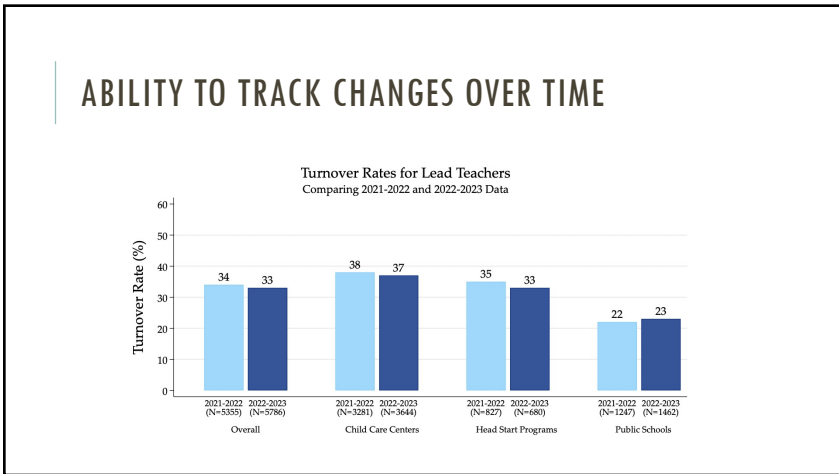
BUILDING A TRULY SYSTEMWIDE DATA SYSTEM

- **INNOVATION:** UVA worked with VDOE to develop **LINKB5** a data system that includes **ALL** publicly-funded sites include all state-funded preschool, Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, Child Care Subsidy sites including family child care, Mixed Delivery sites, and Department of Defense child care sites.
- In 2024 this included 3,121 sites, 10,681 classrooms and 24,621 teachers.
- Includes detailed information about quality, teachers, access (waitlists and openings), safety, children enrolled, etc.
- Unprecedented resource for informing policy, tracking the impacts of investments, allowing research, and supporting regional improvement.

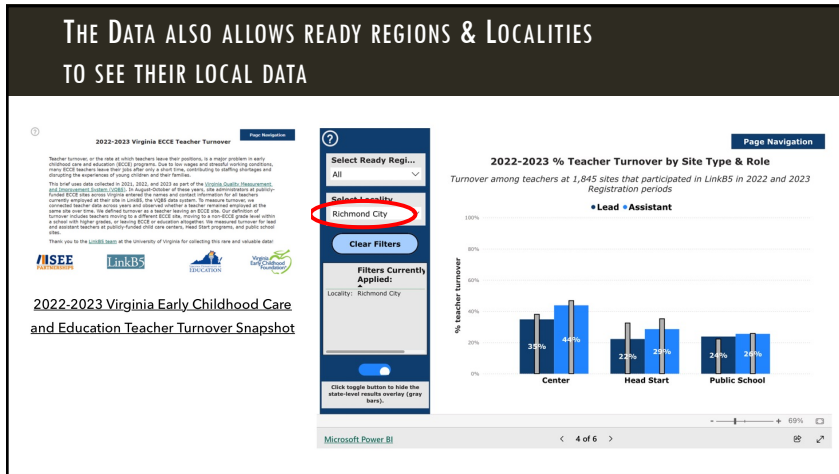
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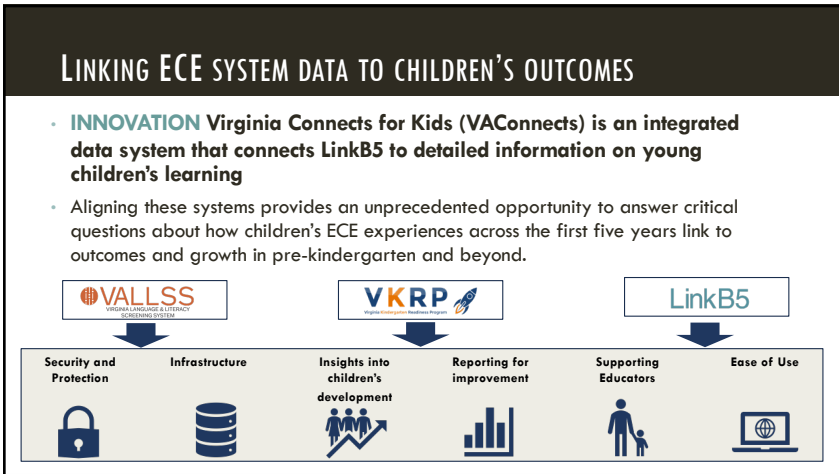
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Goal 3

ONGOING CHALLENGES & REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

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CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

- Compensation strategies will be an essential part of efforts to improve ECE quality and access.
- The end of federal COVID relief funds poses a serious challenge
- But COVID also showed us that ECE workforce problems are not intractable!


“The real solution has got to be long-term and come from the state and from the federal government,” said Mendez of Starting Point. “There has to be an understanding of the value of child care, and not just in terms of the child’s success in education. It’s a lifeline for many parents, who desperately need affordable child care so that they can go to work and prosper.”— Nancy Mendez, Starting Point

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FEDERAL EFFORTS

NEWS | AUGUST 22, 2024

Head Start Final Rule Makes Big Changes to Staff Compensation, Program Eligibility, and More



Final Rule Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming

- Requirements for Head Start programs to pay educators higher salaries, comparable to local public preschool teachers. OHS predicts that this change will raise most Head Start teacher annual wages by about \$10,000.
- The updated Performance Standards also address the need for better benefits. For full-time staff, programs will be responsible for offering paid leave, offering access to free or low-cost short-term behavioral health services, and providing or helping employees access health insurance.

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Administration | Priority

APRIL 18, 2023

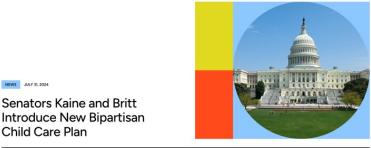
FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Announces Most Sweeping Set of Executive Actions to Improve Care in History

BRIEFING ROOM | STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

FEDERAL EFFORTS

Boost job quality for early educators. Early care and education professionals are among the lowest-paid workers in the country. Child care workers earn a median wage of less than \$18 an hour, while the typical nonsupervisory worker in the U.S. earns over \$28 an hour. While the average salary of a public preschool teacher and kindergarten teacher is about \$49,000 and \$60,000, respectively, the average annual salary for Head Start and preschool teachers is about \$35,000. To address this, HHS will take steps to increase the pay and benefits for Head Start teachers and staff. HHS will implement policies so that more child care providers benefiting from CCDBG receive higher reimbursements for the children they serve. Additionally, the Department of Education (ED) will encourage grantees of the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program—which supports thousands of student-parents across the country pay for care while going to school—to improve the quality of the services they provide, including higher wages for child care workers.

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Senators Kaine and Britt Introduce New Bipartisan Child Care Plan

The package would increase supply and reduce turnover by:

- Implementing a competitive grant program for states, localities, Indian Tribes, and Tribal organizations who are interested in adopting or expanding pay supplement programs for child care workers.

FEDERAL EFFORTS

Kaine: When I visited the Quantico Child Care Development Center a couple of weeks back, they really have a problem holding on to people. As salaries are going up—child care work is satisfying—but it's tough. And if you can make more in a retail establishment than as a child care worker, you may want to stay in the classroom, but you may gravitate elsewhere. We're seeing that all over the Commonwealth.

So we have a pilot project in our bill that would give incentive dollars to states if they do retention bonuses. Virginia has done this very successfully and probably about 13 or 14,000 child care workers in Virginia have received a grant. This is through our State Legislature, Governor Youngkin, a Republican Governor, and two Democratic houses. They came up with this strategy to provide incentives for people who come into this field and then stay.

The dollar incentive is really important. But the respect message that goes along with it might even be more important. "We notice you. We care about you. We want you to stay. We value your work." And so that's the other component of this bill that's not related to the tax code. But it's just honoring the professionals who stick with this.

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STATE & LOCAL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT EARLY EDUCATORS

- **Subsidy Reimbursement Rates:** States are increasing subsidy reimbursement rates.
 - DC, New Mexico, and Virginia use the "cost of quality" to set subsidy reimbursement rates based on the estimated cost of high quality care.
- Massachusetts will invest \$475 million in new state funding for its Commonwealth Cares for Children grants to child care providers to offset their operating costs, including higher educator pay.
- New York is investing \$500 million for its Workforce Retention Grant Program, supporting 150,000 child care workers through bonus payments ranging from \$2,300 to \$3,000.

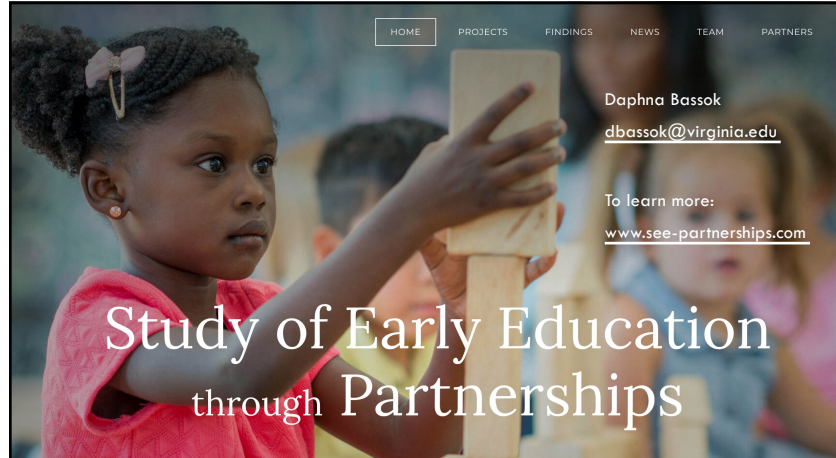
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FINAL THOUGHTS

- Early educators play an absolutely critical role in early childhood quality and access.
- [Much] Greater and more stable funding is needed.
- Although there is much more work to be done, there are also reasons for optimism.
- And a final note on partnered research:
 - Partnerships can foster more rigorous and more innovative research studies than those conducted by researchers independently.
 - Partnered research can expedite the link between research & practice



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Study of Early Education through Partnerships

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