

Winning Beginning NY Early Childhood Workforce Development Program

Creating a highly-qualified workforce is key to assuring quality in early childhood programs and creating better outcomes for young children. Study after study confirms that young children learn more with teachers and adults who have the education and training to foster healthy social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and to create a healthy and safe learning environment.¹ The National Institute of Early Education Research has even concluded the quality of an early childhood program can be measured by staff credentials and compensation.²

Yet New York State does not currently have a **systematic approach to creating a highly-qualified early childhood workforce**. The Early Childhood Workforce Development Program creates a framework of incentives to reach that goal, by taking a three-pronged approach to the issue. This plan **supports individuals** who seek higher education and training and better credentials. It **rewards individuals** as they move to better credentials. Finally, this plan **recognizes the need for more equitable compensation** for all early childhood professionals, regardless of setting. Compensation now depends on the type of program, location and source of funding. That approach creates inequities for children and teachers alike. This workforce development proposal seeks to assure that all teachers will eventually be equitably compensated for similar credentials, an approach which studies show will lead to more stable, higher-quality services for all children. This proposal also recognizes the need for accountability, and incorporates a system of assessment to measure progress in reaching these goals.

At its heart, this Early Childhood Workforce Development proposal aims to realize the Board of Regents' vision of assuring that every child in our state has access to high-quality early learning experiences, starting at birth.

¹ See J. Shonkoff and D. Phillips, eds, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: the Science of Early Childhood Development*, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002, for an overview of the latest research on the need for quality early childhood programs that support healthy development. See also N. Halfon, E. Shulman and M. Hochstein, *Brain Development in Early Childhood: Building Community Systems for Young Children*. UCLA: Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, August 2001 for an overview of the need to systematically address the needs of the whole child.

² Barnett, W.S. "Low Wages =Low Quality: Solving the Real Preschool Teacher Crisis" available at www.nieer.org advises policymakers and parents that staff compensation is the best indicator of quality in an early childhood program.

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Goal 1: To create a system of educational supports and incentives that will ensure a stable, highly qualified early care and education workforce.

❑ **Early Care and Education Workforce Partnership Program** –

Creates a partnership between the managing agency and a sponsoring regulated early care and education program³ and their staff⁴. The Partnership establishes supports and incentives for further educational attainment. Programs will be able to apply for funds to support staff that are currently pursuing; and to reward those who have completed a professional credential⁵, degree and/or certification in early childhood or a related field⁶. Eligibility requirements for staff are that they operate or are employed by a sponsoring early care and education program. The Partnership funds will enable sponsoring programs to provide:

- **Release Time:** Programs will provide a minimum of six hours per week of release time for staff currently pursuing a professional credential, degree and/or certification to attend classes; the funds will be used to pay substitute staff.
- **Reimbursements:** Programs will reimburse staff for verifiable expenses incurred by them and not currently reimbursable by existing programs (e.g. EIP), for tuition, books, test/portfolio preparation, and professional memberships.
- **Reward Bonuses:** All staff will be eligible for a bonus after 12 consecutive months of employment. The bonuses will be based on educational attainment; determined by the credential, degree or certification they currently hold or their progress toward completion. Based on these terms, staff will be eligible for bonuses for up to four years.
- **Early Childhood Mentorship Program:** Establish a program to approve, coordinate and compensate highly qualified early childhood professionals to provide mentoring services to individuals pursuing a professional credential, degree and/or certification.

\$8,075,000

³ Includes licensed child care centers, group family child care homes and registered family child care homes

⁴ Staff refers to any person responsible for developing and/or implementing an early care and education program, e.g. center directors, teachers, assistant teachers, group and family child care providers and their assistants and support staff who contribute to maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment.

⁵ Professional credentials refers to the Child Development Associate (CDA), Children’s Program Administrators Credential (CPAC), and the Infant/Toddler Credential

⁶ Related field refers to those outlined in the New York’s Child Day Care licensing requirements

<p>❑ <u>Loan Forgiveness</u> – Provide up to \$4,000/year in loan forgiveness for education staff currently working in early care and education programs that have completed an associate, bachelor or master’s degree in early childhood education or related field; and/or initial or professional certification. Individuals must have been employed full-time⁷ in an early care and education program for the twelve consecutive months preceding the year during which loan forgiveness is requested. Individuals are eligible for one year of loan forgiveness for each consecutive year of full-time employment for up to four years.</p>	\$4,800,000
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Goal 2: To ensure equal compensation for all equally credentialed early care and education professionals, regardless of setting.

<p>❑ Early Care and Education Teacher Equity Compensation Fund – This fund would be used to strategically address the disparities in compensation among teachers with identical credentials working in different settings. In year one, the fund would address disparities between certified teachers working in state pre-k programs. To access these funds, a district must demonstrate partnership with local early childhood community, including local child care resource and referral agencies and present a plan for addressing salary disparities. Participating school districts will be required to document strategies used and outcomes. It is assumed this fund will be administered by SED.</p>	\$1,250,000
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Goal 3: Create a system of educational supports and incentives to encourage legally-exempt providers to become regulated.

<p>❑ <u>Professional Pathways for Legally- Exempt Providers</u> – This effort would fund local agencies able to provide intensive technical assistance to legally-exempt providers who have been in the field for six months and make a commitment to seeking credentials and becoming regulated. The local agencies will provide a report that includes evaluation and reporting on outcomes, as a way of creating a clear career path for legally-exempt providers who wish to improve their credentials and eventually seek licensed status.</p>	\$275,000
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⁷ Group family child care and family child care providers would be required to have been operating a regulated program for the twelve consecutive months preceding the year during which loan forgiveness is requested

Goal 4: To provide oversight and management through existing statewide agencies with expertise in early care and education.

<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Management/coordination Agency</u> – Establish a process that would allow existing statewide organizations to bid to implement and coordinate one or more of the individual components including: the Workforce Partnership Program; the Mentorship Program and the Evaluation and Reporting.	\$500,000
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Evaluation and Reporting</u> – Design and launch evaluation and assessment strategy, to ensure the program achieves its goals.	\$100,000
Total Cost	\$15,000,000