

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program: Florida's Pipeline towards an Equitable and Diverse Early Childhood Workforce. Compensation Must Follow

A report released in 2015 entitled *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth to Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* from the National Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council examined the science of child development and early learning and the competencies required of the workforce to ensure the best outcomes for the nation's children. The report outlined 13 recommendations from a broader systems perspective to move forward in our efforts to improve systems of care for our youngest citizens. Recommendation 2 addresses the issue of educational preparation as follows: "Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multiyear timelines at the individual, institutional, and policy levels for transitioning to a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8." This recommendation drew criticism and caution from experts that changing the requirements to a bachelor's degree for lead teachers in early childhood settings would "whiten" the early educator pool and lead to a workforce that does not represent the population of children served. Most experts agree that children benefit when they see themselves reflected in educators from the perspective of race and ethnicity.

Concern

There is reason for concern as the K-12 educator pool in Florida does not reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of the student population served. As shown in Table 1, in Florida students of color or Hispanic ethnicity represent approximately 58% of the K-12 population. However, the K-12 workforce data show that only 23% of educators are of color or Hispanic ethnicity, a rate less than half of the minority student population. National data mirror these disparities as well. Approximately 49% of the national student population are students of color or Hispanic ethnicity. Conversely, only 20% of educators are of color or Hispanic ethnicity. It should be noted that there has been a gradual increase in educators of color since the 1980s when the percentage was only 13%.

Table 1: K-12 Demographics

| Geographic Region | % Students of Color/Hispanic Ethnicity | % Workforce of Color/Hispanic Ethnicity |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Florida | 58% | 23% |
| National | 49% | 20% |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/27/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/>

Table 2 below shows the demographics for children versus the early childhood workforce in Florida and nationally. In Florida, 59% of children from birth through age four are of color or Hispanic ethnicity compared to a national percentage of 47%. Whereas national statistics in K-12 showed that the percentage of the workforce who are of color or Hispanic ethnicity is less than half that of K-12 students, in Florida the percentage of the early childhood workforce who are of color or Hispanic ethnicity is 35%, which is more than half that of birth through age four children. Comparably, national data show that 38% of the national early childhood workforce is of color or of Hispanic ethnicity versus 47% of children.

The diversity of the early childhood workforce may reflect the lower educational requirements for work in early childhood settings, a concern addressed by the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

Table 2: 0-4 Demographics

| Geographic Region | % Students of Color/Hispanic | % Workforce of Color/Hispanic |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Florida | 59% | 35% |
| National | 47% | 38% |

Source: <https://ledextract.ces.census.gov/static/data.html>



April Nickey Williams

April Nickey Williams is T.E.A.C.H. Florida's first master's degree graduate from the University of North Florida's Early Childhood Leadership Program.

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Existing Strategy

T.E.A.C.H. EARLY CHILDHOOD® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program was created by the Child Care Services Association of North Carolina in 1992. The goals of the program are to increase the education, compensation, and retention of those working in early childhood settings. Because of its broad success, the program model is licensed and now operating in 22 states.

In Florida, T.E.A.C.H. received statewide funding in 1998. The program provides a three-way partnership between T.E.A.C.H., the sponsoring center/home, and the scholar. The sponsoring center/home pays a small portion of the cost for the scholar to attend school to earn a credential or degree. The sponsor also provides three hours of paid release time weekly and a bonus or raise of at least 2% to the scholar upon completion of their contract (typically between 9-18 college credit hours or upon completion of an FCCPC credential). The scholar agrees to attend school, pay a portion of the tuition, and remain employed at their sponsoring program at least one year beyond the end of their contract. This commitment to the sponsoring program has resulted in an annual turnover rate for T.E.A.C.H. scholars of less than 6%, while national turnover rates are 30-40%, according to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

A goal of T.E.A.C.H. is to provide education and upward mobility for the existing workforce, who often cannot afford college tuition or student loan debt. Since people of color or Hispanic ethnicity represent a higher percentage of this workforce, there is greater likelihood that these educators will take advantage of the opportunities provided through the program. T.E.A.C.H. data support this.

Table 3 shows that 59% of the population from birth through age four in Florida are children of color or Hispanic ethnicity. Fifty-eight percent of T.E.A.C.H. scholars pursuing an associate degree are of color or Hispanic ethnicity, which mirrors the demographics of children in Florida. Forty-five percent of T.E.A.C.H. scholars who have graduated with an associate degree are people of color or Hispanic ethnicity. Even more encouraging, the percentage of bachelor's degree scholars who are of color or Hispanic ethnicity is 57%, and bachelor's degree graduates represent 59%. These data demonstrate that the T.E.A.C.H. Florida program is a valuable resource in increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the early childhood workforce while also boosting educational attainment and providing a more enriching experience reflective of the children in their care.

Table 3: Comparison of Florida's 0-4 Children of Color/Hispanic Ethnicity Population with T.E.A.C.H. Florida Associate and Bachelor's Degree Scholars and Graduates of Color/Hispanic Ethnicity

| % Children of Color/ Hispanic Ethnicity | % Associate Scholars of Color/Hispanic Ethnicity | % Associate Graduates of Color/ Hispanic Ethnicity | % Bachelor's Scholars of Color/ Hispanic Ethnicity | % Bachelor's Graduates of Color/ Hispanic Ethnicity |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| 59% | 58% | 45% | 57% | 59% |

Source: T.E.A.C.H. Florida annual report to T.E.A.C.H. National, 2017-18, Children's Forum, Tallahassee, FL



Because of support from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, my teachers are happier at work, the children are reaping the rewards of a teacher with more knowledge, and my teacher turnover is reduced. They LOVE T.E.A.C.H. as one of the benefits of our company.

-Susan
T.E.A.C.H. Sponsor

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Barrier

POOR COMPENSATION FOR THE WORKFORCE

Another challenge for the early education workforce is the poor compensation of early childhood educators. Statewide, the average wage is approximately \$10 per hour with few benefits such as employer-paid health insurance, paid time off, vacation, and retirement plans. While specialized training is critical in preparing early childhood educators to become highly-qualified, the turnover rate is high at 30-40% nationally and exacerbated by low wages and limited benefits. Unfortunately, this compounds the problem of maintaining a competent workforce.

One of the T.E.A.C.H. goals is to improve compensation through the requirement of a raise or bonus upon completion of each contract. While the requirement is either a bonus or 2% raise, annual report data (2017-18) showed an average rate of increase of 8%, suggesting the increasing value of the early childhood educator to the program where the scholar is employed.

Table 4 shows the average hourly wage of active T.E.A.C.H. scholars by scholarship type. While increases over the state average are modest and do not provide for a living wage, there is evidence that the salaries are higher for those receiving T.E.A.C.H. scholarships than the workforce in general. T.E.A.C.H. scholars pursuing a Florida Staff Credential earn an average of \$10.06 per hour.

The Florida Staff Credential is the first step on the professional development pathway and qualifies an educator to teach in the

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program or child care/preschool settings. The Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential is a national credential that is transferable between states. The average salary for scholars pursuing a national credential is \$10.33 per hour. Associate degree scholars pursuing a degree through one of Florida's community or state colleges in early childhood education and/or child development earn an average wage of \$11.70 per hour. Every licensed child care center director in Florida is required to hold a Director Credential. T.E.A.C.H. scholars pursuing this credential earn \$12.38 per hour. Bachelor's degree scholars pursuing a degree in early childhood education and/or child development earn an average of \$13.92 per hour. T.E.A.C.H. Florida now offers a master's degree in early childhood education leadership to prepare the next cohort of leaders in the field. The average wage for those pursuing a master's degree is \$17.00 per hour. The higher wages earned as education increases demonstrate the value of education to the early childhood field; however, they still do not reflect the true value of the work or the education attained.

In stark contrast, the average annual salary of a kindergarten teacher in Florida holding a bachelor's or master's degree is \$45,850 annually or \$30.81 per hour according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Considering the competition for teachers possessing degrees, it is clear that strategies must be deployed to attract and retain a qualified workforce.

Table 4. Hourly Wages of T.E.A.C.H. Participants by Scholarship Type

| Staff Credential Scholars | CDA Credential Scholars | Associate Degree Scholars | Director Credential Scholars | Bachelor's Degree Scholars | Master's Degree Scholars |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$10.06 | \$10.33 | \$11.70 | \$12.38 | \$13.92 | \$17.00 |

Source: Florida T.E.A.C.H. scholars report by scholarship type as of 4/24/19, Children's Forum, Tallahassee, FL.



Pamela Moxley and Annie Robinson

T.E.A.C.H. graduates Pamela Moxley and Annie Robinson are employed with East Coast Migrant Head Start Project.



Tawanda Kai Brown

T.E.A.C.H. graduate Tawanda Kai Brown is the owner of Brown Family Day Care Home.

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Promising Practice**CHILD CARE WAGES® FLORIDA**

The Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA program was also created by the Child Care Services Association in North Carolina and licensed to selected states. It has been operating in Florida since 2004 in selected counties through the Children's Forum as the license holder of the program. WAGE\$ provides semi-annual salary supplements based on the participant's education level and progress towards improving competencies through continued educational attainment. Salary supplements range from \$200 per year at the lowest level to \$3,000 at the highest level annually. Funding for the program is derived from local sources, including children's services councils and coalition funds. A workforce report for Miami-Dade County completed in 2018 shows that early childhood educators receiving scholarships and Child Care WAGES® salary supplements perform better in the classroom as indicated by CLASS scores measuring teacher-child interactions. Further, turnover is decreased as indicated by annual reports of the WAGE\$ program to less than 13% annually as compared with 30-40% nationally.

Recognizing the value of wage supplements and the importance of retaining qualified staff in early childhood settings, The Children's Trust in Miami-Dade County has nearly doubled their investment in the program. As of 2019, all early childhood educators working throughout the county are invited to apply. Prior implementation of the program was limited to a targeted set of participants.

Conclusion

The Florida T.E.A.C.H. program is an effective model for increasing the diversity of the early childhood workforce and makes progress towards meeting the *Transforming the Workforce* report recommendations. Providing opportunities for those currently employed in early childhood settings where the workforce is already more diverse is an effective strategy towards meeting the goals of an equitable and diverse workforce serving young children. The challenge, however, is retaining early childhood educators upon completion of educational credentials and degrees. Without compensation supports and interventions like the WAGE\$ program in place, early childhood educators may not be able to remain in the early childhood field, as economic factors may force them to seek other employment opportunities such as the K-12 system. Florida should consider systemic solutions to ensure that the best and brightest early childhood educators can remain in the birth to kindergarten classroom and use their talents to educate and nurture our youngest and most vulnerable children. Protecting the investment in early childhood educators is essential to ensure the most positive outcomes for young children.



Phyllis Kalifeh, EdD
President & CEO
Children's Forum
www.flchild.com



Child Care
WAGES®
FLORIDA

The WAGE\$ salary supplement is the only reason I am able to stay in this field. Every dollar helps me stay in teaching. I feel my 26 years in the field have had a positive effect on the children, and the world. The financial support from WAGE\$ lets me do what I love.

-Maria
WAGE\$ Participant



T.E.A.C.H. scholars **Jessica Alexander**, **Lianne Betancourt**, and **Licinia Sierra** graduated from Florida International University with bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education.