

RIGHTS, RAISES, RESPECT

News and Issues for the Early Care and Education Workforce

A monthly electronic newsletter

From the Center for the Child Care Workforce,

A Project of the AFT Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF)

December 2003

Please feel free to send this to anyone you think would be interested in supporting our efforts. Visit our web site at www.ccw.org for the latest information on the early care and education workforce, CCW/AFTEF activities and the online order form for our publications.

(E-Newsletters you receive from CCW/AFTEF will be sent by ccw@v2.listbox.com.)

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THIS MONTH:

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Making the Connection

Businesses and Labor Unions are Making the Connection

Employers, including businesses and unions, are beginning to “make the connection” of the importance of high-quality early care and education in support of working families. Below are specific projects that can connect the business and labor communities to important issues impacting young children, their families and the early care and education workforce:

- Labor Unions Can Start a Child Care Fund

The fall edition of the Labor Project for Working Families newsletter includes information on how to start a child care fund, identifying critical steps that unions can take to address the issue of child care and its impact on the workplace:

1. Organize the membership around the issue of child care
2. Start a Labor/Management Committee to address child care needs
3. Conduct a needs assessment survey to identify members' needs
4. Identify no-cost resources that can be made available to members
5. Use the data from the needs assessment survey in negotiating the next contract
6. Look for a fund that is under-utilized and see if it can be diverted
7. Build a support network with other unions

For more information on establishing a child care fund within your union, or on the Labor Project for Working Families, call 510-643-7088 or email lpwf@uclink.berkeley.edu.

- Businesses can Educate their Employees about the EITC

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a tax refund of up to \$4,000 for working families who meet certain income requirements.

Corporate Voices for Working Families, a nonprofit coalition of companies committed to issues affecting working families, has created an EITC Toolkit designed to assist businesses in educating their employees about the EITC. For more information, visit the EITC Toolkit page on the website of Corporate Voices at <http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org/toolkits/eitc/index.html>.

Federal News

States Call Incentive Programs Valuable

As part of President Bush's early childhood initiative, *Good Start, Grow Smart*, states were required to report in their Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) 2003 Biennial State Plans on the progress they are making in the implementation of several areas within early childhood education, including early learning guidelines and the professional development of early care and education professionals.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, the State Plans highlight the value of incentive programs that invest in the early care and education workforce. Eighty-four percent of the states reported outcomes such as increased wages and decreased turnover as a result of creative state incentive programs that reward providers for skill development. One of the most popular programs is the T.E.A.C.H.[™] Early Childhood Project, first instituted as a statewide initiative in North Carolina, which provides educational scholarship opportunities and salary increases or financial bonuses for people working in regulated child care centers and homes.

To view a sample of incentive programs throughout the country, visit the State Policy & Initiatives page on CCW/AFTEF's website at www.ccw.org.

New Initiative Launched by Administration will Focus on School Readiness

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson announced a new joint initiative with the Department of Education that will focus on school readiness by conducting research around early learning and curriculum.

The first year of the five-year research initiative will distribute \$7.4 million in research grants to eight institutions that will focus on testing preschool curricula, parental involvement and Internet-based teacher training.

For more information, visit www.hhs.gov.

Overtime Pay is Threatened, Again

The Administration's proposed change to overtime pay, which failed several months ago after debate in the House and Senate, has been revived once again. The Administration has tacked the proposal onto the overall spending "omnibus" bill that passed the House early this month.

The proposal includes changing classifications in overtime pay that will make over 8 million workers, including pre-K teachers, ineligible for overtime pay.

Organized labor and other advocates have stood up against these efforts. The AFL-CIO organized a petition of more than 180,000 signatures for Congress and the White House. To learn more about the petition, visit www.saveovertimepay.org.

The Senate will not be voting on this bill until it returns from recess in 2004.

State News

More Teacher Training Leads to Higher Reading Scores for Maryland Kindergarteners

A recent mandate in the state of Maryland calls for all-day kindergarten for all children by 2007. Montgomery County, one of the first in Maryland to move to full-day kindergarten, has released a study that shows significant increases by kindergarteners in the areas of reading and comprehension. Montgomery County Superintendent Jerry Weast makes clear that increasing the number of hours of children in kindergarten was not the sole reason for doubling the reading level. He explains it as a comprehensive effort that included more teacher training, a revision of curriculum, and a mandate for smaller classes. In addition, teachers of young children receive benefits and wages comparable to elementary and secondary school teachers in the county.

Montgomery County's initiative further reinforces the tremendous benefits of investing in children's early learning experiences. Advocates are optimistic that these kind of worthwhile investments, in both programs and teachers, will be expanded to include preschool education, since research proves that high-quality early childhood education prior to kindergarten contributes greatly to children's future success in school.

For more information, visit the website of Montgomery County Public Schools at <http://coldfusion.mcps.k12.md.us/press/index.cfm?page=showrelease&id=1222>.

Resources

R.E.E.T.A.I.N. Grants Available in Minnesota

On December 1, 2003, the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network began accepting applications for retention grants.

R.E.E.T.A.I.N. is a workforce retention program that rewards child care providers who have already graduated with at least a two-year associate degree or who currently hold a CDA Credential. Child care providers that are awarded this grant may receive between \$1,000 and \$3,500. The last day to submit an application is January 31, 2004.

Because the program is not yet funded statewide, only applicants from certain counties are eligible. For more information on the R.E.E.T.A.I.N. programs or eligibility, please visit the website at www.mnchildcare.org, or call the MNCCR&R Network at 651-290-9704 or 888-308-3224.

"This Cup is Half Full"

"This Cup Is Half Full" is a 25-minute documentary film that takes the viewer through the process of how the early care and education workforce in Seattle organized to improve the quality and compensation of their jobs by unionizing.

To obtain a copy of the video, contact Melissa Parsons at videoartists@earthlink.net.

ERIC/EECE Clearinghouse to Close

After 36 years, the telephone services and the website of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE) will close on December 31, 2003. The clearinghouse provided resources and information on the development, education and care of children from birth through early adolescence. ERIC/EECE was one of 16 clearinghouses in the ERIC system, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, that has become the world's most frequently used collection of documents, journal articles and information on education. Many are concerned that this move reinforces the federal government's lack of support for quality early care and education. The Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative (ECAP) of the University of Illinois will house ERIC/EECE Digests and other ERIC/EECE publications at <http://ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/info>.

**THE STAFF AT CCW/AFTEF WOULD LIKE TO WISH EVERYONE A SAFE AND HAPPY
HOLIDAY SEASON!**

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The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, and in 2002 merged with the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF). CCW/AFTEF is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving early care and education quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of early childhood professionals.