



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)**

January 2006

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MAKING THE CONNECTION - ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

Thousands Mobilize for Human Rights and Worker Rights

International Human Rights Day, Dec. 10, was the anniversary of the ratification of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognized the right to join a union and bargain collectively as a basic human right. To commemorate the anniversary, union members and leaders joined thousands of trade unionists, civil rights and religious leaders, elected officials and others in cities across the country last month to draw public attention to the fact that here in the United States, the basic right to form a union can no longer be taken for granted.

From Sacramento to Boston, rallies, town hall meetings and other events put a spotlight on the increasing assaults on worker rights by corporations and anti-union politicians. In Washington, D.C., more than 200 AFT members and staffers were among the nearly 3,000 unionists and others who gathered on Dec. 8 for a rally in front of the AFL-CIO headquarters and then marched to the White House, chanting slogans and carrying signs.

AFT early childhood members made their voices heard as they carried signs with the message, "We know worker rights help kids, too!"

AFL-CIO executive vice president Linda Chavez-Thompson told the crowd, "America used to stand proud before the world as a land where the right of working people to have a union was respected. But today, that right has been destroyed."

Other speakers included AFT president Edward J. McElroy, AFT executive vice president Antonia Cortese, National Education Association president Reg Weaver, American Federation of Government Employees president John Gage, and Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

To learn more, visit the AFT's Web site, www.aft.org/december10/index.htm.

POLICY

New NAEYC Accreditation System Holds Teachers to Higher Education Standards

Five years after beginning an extensive and expansive process to revamp its accreditation system, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has replaced its old system. Currently, there are more than 11,000 accredited programs. The new process will take effect in September 2006 and includes more than 400 different criteria in areas ranging from curriculum to physical environment and child health. One of the broadest changes relates to teacher qualifications. Phased in over 15 years, all teachers in accredited programs will now be required to have an associate's degree or the equivalent by 2020, and 75 percent must have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, early



childhood education, special education or a related field. While acknowledging the challenge of achieving these new standards, NAEYC representatives believe it will make the system more accountable and reliable.

With these kinds of changes sweeping the nation, from voluntary systems such as NAEYC accreditation to mandatory requirements in state prekindergarten and the federal Head Start program, new teacher requirements must be accompanied by appropriate funding to support teachers in getting their education, such as scholarships for tuition, books, and release time from their current jobs so that they may meet the new requirements. CCW/AFTEF and our allies will continue to fight for policies and legislation that include targeted investments for the workforce to achieve higher quality.

For more information about the new NAEYC accreditation system, visit www.naeyc.org.

LEGISLATION

Early Childhood Programs Stand To Suffer Major Blow in 2006

The holiday cheer bypassed Washington last month when Congress finished its annual discretionary appropriations bill for programs in the departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor. Left out in the cold were major early childhood programs, such as Head Start and Even Start, whose 2006 funding will experience another 1 percent cut on top of any cuts or freezes in the Labor/HHS/Education bill.

Programs that target early childhood teachers, such as the Early Childhood Professional Development Grant program and Title I, which many districts use to recruit and retain qualified teachers in school-based early childhood programs, are projected to see millions in cuts. These already severely underfunded programs are crucial to ensuring high-quality early childhood education for all children.

We are very concerned about the capacity of early childhood professionals to sustain or meet higher quality for standards in this climate of budget cuts, specifically those targeted to children, families and the workers responsible for their care and education. CCW/AFTEF will continue to follow the developments when Congress returns to work later this month and will let you know what you can do to help. For the latest information about the ongoing budget battle or to join the AFT e-Activist Network, go to <http://www.aft.org/news/2006/budget-battle.htm>.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

The Effects of State Prekindergarten Programs on Young Children's School Readiness in Five States

Researchers from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University measured the effects of attending state prekindergarten programs in five states (Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina and West Virginia) on entering kindergartners' academic skills. The study's findings show that children



enrolled in the program beginning at age 4 have positive effects for cognitive school readiness indicators such as vocabulary, phonological skills, print awareness and mathematical skills. While the report indicates some evidence of slightly larger effects for poor children, results are mostly similar for all children. The five states differ with regard to several variables, such as programs being universally available versus being targeted to poor children. However, they all show a commitment to higher standards for teacher qualifications and appropriate compensation for teaching staff. For a copy of the report, visit

<http://nieer.org/resources/research/multistate/fullreport.pdf>.

New Report Confirms that Wages Bring Results

Investments in innovative strategies to recruit and retain qualified early childhood educators are working, says a new report from the Child Care Services Association. T.E.A.C.H. and Child Care WAGE\$ were designed to increase the education, compensation and retention of early childhood educators by offering them scholarships to improve their education and training along with salary supplements once they complete an educational program. The 2004-05 Annual Program Report: T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Early Childhood and Child Care WAGE\$® Project reports a 27 percent increase in the number of early childhood teachers in North Carolina with two- and four-year college degrees. Awards under the WAGE\$ project range from \$200 to \$6,250 per educator per year. T.E.A.C.H. operates in 22 states and WAGE\$ projects are in four states. For more information, visit www.childcareservices.org.

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.