



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)

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MAKING THE CONNECTION – ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

Last Chance to Sign the AFT Everyday Heroes Quilt



If you have not yet signed the AFT Everyday Heroes Quilt, now is your chance. The deadline to sign the quilt that will be displayed on Worthy Wage Day is February 15, 2007. **Send your name, city and state today to firstclassteachers@aft.org to be sure your name is attached to the message that "Early childhood educators are Everyday Heroes."**

We will keep you updated on the progress of the quilt.

What Are Your Professional Development Needs? Complete This Survey!

We need to hear from you! AFT First Class Teachers and the Center for the Child Care Workforce have developed a survey to assess the professional development needs of early childhood educators. Increasingly, early childhood educators are being required to meet higher educational standards. Yet the challenges of meeting those demands are overwhelming for far too many of you. We have developed the survey to find out from you, early childhood educators, what professional development you need to do your job, what types of courses are realistic for your busy lifestyle, and what supports you need to participate in various professional development opportunities.

Please take a few minutes now to complete this survey. What you have to say is important to us, so please let us know your professional development needs.

<http://leadernet.aft.org/surveymaker/take/survey.cfm?id=79b79abc-f043-0187-f821-4c5adb6ae21b>

POLICY & LEGISLATION

Federal Funding for Early Childhood Programs

A bill recently passed in the U.S House of Representatives that would allow many early childhood programs to remain at the fiscal year 2006 funding levels, with others receiving increases: Head Start would increase by \$103.7 million, Title I grants to school districts by \$125 million, and IDEA Part B by \$200 million. The maximum Pell Grant awards would increase from \$4,050 to \$4,310. Unfortunately, child care did not receive an increase in the fiscal year 2007 appropriations bill. These funding levels are for 2007. Congress will begin work on the 2008 budget in the next few weeks. The president released his 2008 budget proposal on Feb. 5. Under the president's budget, Head Start will be cut by \$100 million, which is on top of the 11 percent cut Head Start has faced since 2002. These dramatic cuts will be felt by the staff at Head Start centers and the families the program serves.

Eligible families who need child care assistance to work are falling further behind. Parents are facing rising copayments, tighter eligibility limits and waiting lists for assistance, as states deal with the lack of sufficient federal child care funding. These



changes are depriving many families of the child care assistance they need to support their basic needs. Child care providers also are paying the price. The number of states that adequately reimburse child care providers dropped from 22 in 2001 to only 9 in 2006. As a result, it is becoming increasingly challenging for providers who are working with low-income children to stay in business, let alone to provide high-quality programs.

The AFT recently sent letters to Congress supporting increases in federal funding for important programs that affect early childhood education, such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which would provide families with the assistance they need for child care. The AFT also supports a \$104 million increase in Head Start, which will restore last year's 1 percent budget cut and also provide a small cost-of-living adjustment for Head Start grantees.

Minimum Wage Bills Pass in the House and Senate

The new leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate delivered on their promise to raise the federal minimum wage. On Jan. 10, the House passed a bill that will increase the wage from its current \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25. The vote was a convincing 315-116, with 82 Republicans joining 233 Democrats in support. The Senate passed their version of the bill on Feb. 1. The Senate bill would increase the minimum wage at the same rate as the House bill, but also includes controversial language allowing for a set of tax cuts for small businesses. The House and the Senate will now meet to combine efforts on their versions before sending the minimum wage bill to the president for his signature.

The 35 percent of the early childhood education workforce who earned less than \$6.88 an hour in 2005 will benefit most from this increase if it is signed into law.

New Senate Caucus on Children, Work and Family

Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) have formed the Senate Caucus on Children, Work and Family. The caucus will convene bipartisan discussions among senators and their staff on a variety of issues that affect children, families and economic security.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

Recognition and Response – Helping Young Children with Learning Challenges

A new Web site, www.recognitionandresponse.org, was launched to provide the tools needed to identify and help young children (3- to 5-year-olds) who show signs that they may not be learning in an expected manner, even before they begin kindergarten. The site is full of free, easy-to-read resources for early childhood educators and parents, along with detailed policy and research papers.

The product is a collaboration between the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and several other groups.



Pesticide Residues Routinely Found in Child Care Centers

In September 2006, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released the findings of a study that found pesticide residues in 100 percent of a sample of child care centers across the country. According to the lead scientist, at least one pesticide was found in every one of the 168 child care centers studied. Over two-thirds of the studied centers reported routinely using pesticides. As many as 10 different pesticides were used in some of the centers.

These findings are particularly disturbing because significant residue was found on floors where young children spend much of their time sitting, playing and crawling. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) estimates that 50 percent of lifetime pesticide exposure occurs during the first five years of life. Early pesticide exposures may increase risk of illnesses such as cancer later in life.

The AFT health and safety program recommends that child care centers adopt integrated pest management (IPM) to reduce or eliminate their use of pesticides. IPM incorporates several methods and techniques, including many that don't involve applying any pesticide. For instance, IPM recommends "pest-proofing" building structures--caulking, door sweeps etc.--so that pests cannot enter a building.

States are moving toward regulating the use of pesticides in schools and child care centers. The state of Massachusetts now mandates that schools and child care centers file IPM plans that outline infestation problems and identify steps for correcting the problems.

For more information about IPM in schools and child care centers, contact the AFT health and safety program at 202/879-4400.

SOURCES & CONTRIBUTORS

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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.