



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)

July 2007

THIS MONTH

Making the Connection - Advocacy & Outreach

- Early Childhood Education Workshops Featured at AFT's QuEST Conference

In the States

- Child Care Providers Granted Right To Unionize in New York

Policy & Legislation

- Congressional Joint Economic Committee Holds Hearing on Early Childhood Education

- Head Start Bill Passes the Senate

Research & Resources

- New Study Shows Gains for Children in the Abbott Preschool Program

Please Note: There will not be an August edition of Rights, Raises, Respect. We will send any pressing information through our e-mail listserve. Our next newsletter will be sent in September. Have a wonderful summer!



MAKING THE CONNECTION – ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

Early Childhood Education Workshops Featured at AFT's QuEST Conference

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) recently held its biennial QuEST (Quality Educational Standards in Teaching) conference devoted to professional issues. Once again, QuEST was an exciting time for learning, debate and discussion among AFT members, leaders and the entire education community, including early childhood educators. This year's program featured several workshops designed for early childhood educators and included prominent experts from the field.

For more QuEST highlights, visit www.aft.org.

IN THE STATES

Child Care Providers Granted Right To Unionize in New York

New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer signed an executive order in May granting home-based child care providers throughout his state the right to unionize. The order, which covers child care providers who receive payments directly or indirectly through state, city or local government funding, marks a milestone in the United Federation of Teachers' campaign to organize 28,000 workers in New York City. UFT president and AFT vice president Randi Weingarten called the executive order "just the beginning of the providers' quest to get the respect, recognition and fair wages they deserve."

Family child care providers in New York City earn \$19,000 annually, on average, with few or no benefits. One of them, Bronx provider Melvina Vandross, said that hearing the news was "like a hundred birthday parties all at the same time."

Elections will now be held among providers to determine if they want union representation. More information on the UFT campaign is available at www.uftproviders.org.

POLICY & LEGISLATION

Congressional Joint Economic Committee Holds Hearing on Early Childhood Education

The Joint Economic Committee's Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), vice chair, and Sen. Robert Casey (D-Pa.) hosted a hearing last month on the economic impact of investments in early childhood education. "Investing in Young Children Pays Dividends: The Economic Case for Early Care and Education" brought together Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and child development expert Harriet Dichter to tout the benefits of high-quality education. In her testimony, Gov. Sebelius highlighted the importance of an increased federal role in early childhood programs: "Young people face a range of challenges, but education has the remarkable ability to arm them with the knowledge and skills needed to



overcome these challenges. A federal commitment to early childhood education will give countless young Americans the start they need to succeed in school and in life.”

To learn more about the hearing, visit <http://jec.senate.gov/>.

Head Start Bill Passes the Senate

The U.S. Senate recently unanimously approved S. 556, the Head Start for School Readiness Act. The bill makes some positive steps, yet there is still cause for concern because there are relatively small funding increases, leaving the Head Start program grossly underfunded.

Among its key components, the bill:

- Sets the goal that by September 2013, 50 percent of center-based Head Start teachers in each state will have a bachelor’s degree. The bill also sets a goal that, by Sept. 30, 2010, all assistant teachers will have at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. In addition, each Head Start teacher will be required to attend at least 15 clock hours of professional development per year.
- Continues to require that at least 2 percent of funding be set aside for training, half of which is reserved for Head Start grantees. A portion of the remaining funds are used for State Training Offices.
- Increases the income eligibility limit to 130 percent of the federal poverty level (\$26,845 per year for a family of four).
- Encourages greater collaboration between Head Start and other early childhood education programs, and creates state-based early learning councils.
- Terminates the use of the controversial National Reporting system, the test created and required for all four-year-olds enrolled in Head Start.

The next step is for the House bill, Improving Head Start Act of 2007, which was approved in May 2007, to join the Senate version in conference committee to work out the differences between the two versions of the bill. For more information, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/thomas>.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

New Study Shows Gains for Children in the Abbott Preschool Program

A new study published by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) follows, through the kindergarten year, children who are participating in New Jersey’s Abbott Preschool program. The program began in 2005-06 as a result of a N.J. Supreme Court decision requiring the state to establish high-quality preschool for the highest-poverty school districts. A longitudinal study of the program is being conducted by NIEER in partnership with the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC). This phase of the study has found improvements in child outcomes as well as program quality. For example, children who attend the program, regardless of setting, improve in language, literacy and math skills through the end of their kindergarten year. Future reports will present results through the end of fourth grade.



To read the full report, visit <http://nieer.org/resources/research/APPLES.pdf>.

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.