



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

Thousands of “Everyday Heroes” Sign on to AFT Quilt

Over 2,000 early childhood educators and supporters added their names to the AFT’s “Everyday Heroes” Quilt which will be presented to Congress as part of Worthy Wage Day 2007. The first opportunity to sign the quilt was at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Atlanta earlier this month. Conference participants came in droves to the AFT booth to be a part of the movement to recognize early childhood educators as “everyday heroes” who deserve improved wages, benefits and professional development opportunities.

For the last 14 years, CCW/AFTEF has initiated campaigns for Worthy Wage Day to draw national attention to the issue of early childhood educators’ wages. Last year, we delivered 3,000 letters, with jars of Play-Doh®, to Congress with the message, “We are tired of working for ‘Play-Dough.’”

To mark 15 years, we want to highlight the real “everyday heroes” – you. Teachers are one of the most important factors for achieving quality in early childhood education programs. Unfortunately, too many children are left behind because preschools can’t recruit and keep good teachers. Wages and benefits are too low and teachers don’t have the resources they need in the classroom. The AFT “Everyday Heroes” Signature Quilt is one way for us to draw attention to the issues of early childhood educators.

If you weren’t able to make it to the conference but would like to have your name included on the quilt, please send us an e-mail to firstclassteachers@aft.org and include your name, city and state. You can also send us a statement about why your work makes you an “everyday hero.”

POLICY & LEGISLATION

Increase in Minimum Wage May Benefit Early Childhood Educators

November elections shifted the power in both the Senate and the House, putting the Democrats in control of the federal government’s legislative body. At a Capitol Hill rally on Nov. 16, Democratic senators made a vow that one of the first issues they will address in the new Congress will be raising the minimum wage. Voters in Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio got a head start by voting in November to increase the minimum wage in their states.

Democratic Sens. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer of New York lead the way, promising to shift into high gear in January to raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. Kennedy promised to restore fairness to the workforce: “Anyone who works 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year in the richest country in the world should not live in poverty.” This



message will resonate for many early childhood educators, especially the 35 percent of child care workers who earned less than \$6.88 an hour in 2005.

Early childhood educators continue to be one of the lowest paid professions in the United States. According to a Center for the Child Care Workforce/AFTEF report, only 22 out of the 820 job descriptions in a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey pay less than child care workers and 124 job titles pay less than preschool teachers. The report finds that while preschool teacher wages have shown an increase over the past five years, child care workers actually have seen a slight dip in salaries. As a result of this unequal increase in wages, the quality of care our youngest children receive could suffer, and additional pressure will be put on a field that already is experiencing high turnover rates and difficulty attracting high-quality applicants.

While increasing the minimum wage is a step in the right direction toward increasing the wages of early childhood educators, that alone is not enough. Efforts on all levels - federal, state and local - must be made to secure compensation that will reduce turnover and retain highly-qualified staff.

To view the *CCW/AFTEF report, Low Salaries for Staff, High Costs to Children: State-by-State Wage Data for the Early Childhood Education Workforce*, visit <http://ccw.cleverspin.com/pubs/2005Compendium.pdf>.

Bachelor Degrees and Quality – Another Perspective

In his latest article, Robert Pianta from the University of Virginia, examines the impact of teachers with and without B.A. degrees. His definition of a high-quality program doesn't necessarily translate into a program with teachers who have a four-year degree.

To improve quality, Pianta calls for more effective professional development focused on the specific challenges of teaching young children, such as:

- * Standardizing descriptions of teacher-student interactions,
- * Direct assessments of teacher and classroom tied to incentive and credentialing systems, and
- * Improved alignment of early childhood education with K-12.

The teacher training that is necessary for teaching young children includes child development information and how to apply that information in preschool settings.

Robert Pianta's article, "Preschool is School, Sometimes" is available online in the new issue of Education Next at www.EducationNext.org.

IN THE STATES

State Legislatures Pre-K Funding for Fiscal Year 2007

The many years of research and advocacy on the positive effects of high-quality early childhood education are beginning to pay off. This year marked the first time not one state legislature voted to decrease funding for state pre-K programs. States saw an



increase in funding of nearly 12 percent over one year, with 31 states and the District of Columbia appropriating more than \$450 million in new funds for early childhood education in fiscal year 2007.

Some states have allocated money in their budget to invest in one of the most important factors of quality—the workforce. Georgia increased its budget to provide teachers with a salary increase of up to 4 percent. Professional development opportunities are being funded in Texas' budget to help preschool teachers.

Pre-K funding priorities across the country are highlighted in Pre-K Now's annual report, *Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2007*. The report is available on their Web site at www.pre-know.org

Votes in Favor of Early Childhood Education

On the November ballot, voters in two states passed initiatives that will advance early childhood education in their states.

* In Arizona, a proposition was passed to add an 80-cent-per-pack tax to tobacco to fund preschool programs, health screenings and other services for young children and their families. The proposition including language that will provide “training and support” to early childhood development providers. To read the proposition in its entirety, visit www.azsos.gov/election/2006/Info/PubPamphlet/english/Prop203.htm.

* Nebraska voters approved a constitutional amendment that will permit school funds to be used for early childhood education programs. The amendment also creates a public/private Early Childhood Endowment Fund, some of which is anticipated to be allocated for pre-k programs. For a copy of the amendment visit www.unicam.state.ne.us/legal/SLIP_LB1006.pdf.

As plans for implementation move forward, we encourage teachers and advocates in both states to remain actively involved in the development of the programs to ensure that issues that affect the workforce, such as wages, resources for the classroom and professional development opportunities, are addressed.

In addition, newly elected governors in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio, as well as the mayor-elect of the District of Columbia, all campaigned on the promise to support pre-K. Advocates in those states should be sure to hold their elected representatives accountable in the coming legislative session.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

Addressing Issues of the PreK–Grade 3 Workforce

Two new reports from the Foundation of Child Development (FCD) examine the teaching workforce in pre-K to grade 3 models:



* *Ready to Teach? Providing Children with the Teachers They Deserve* captures a discussion among leaders in the field of education reframing the debate about what constitutes a "highly qualified teacher." The report addresses challenges in recruitment, preparation, and support of preschool and elementary teachers.

* *Carrots and Sticks: New Jersey's Effort To Create a Qualified PK-3 Workforce* show how New Jersey established a set of mandates supported by incentives to upgrade the qualifications of the PreK-3 teaching workforce in the state's poorest school districts.

To download the reports visit www.fcd-us.org.

SOURCES & CONTRIBUTORS

Inside AFT, Dori Mornan, Pre-K Now

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.