



## **A Model for Establishing a Salary Schedule for Early Educators**

The Compensation and Education Task Group of the [NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development](#) developed the attached salary schedule model in June 2008 for use by communities and child care programs as they work toward improving the compensation for the early childhood workforce.

Schedules are formatted in Excel. To access an individual schedule by role click on the tab located at the bottom left side of your computer screen.

### **Closing the Gap**

Data from workforce studies conducted at both the county and statewide level indicate that often child care teachers are not paid according to their level of education or responsibility. This salary schedules shown here were constructed knowing that suggested earnings are still not equivalent to those earned by teachers in public schools. The NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development recognizes the continuing need for salary supplements that are tied to the attainment of college education, such as [Child Care WAGE\\$®](#) and supports the allocation of additional resources to help close the gap for all early childhood teachers.

Salary supplements and education bonuses are available in over 90% of North Carolina's counties through the Child Care WAGE\$® Project or other Smart Start-funded efforts. These supplements increase as more education is earned.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project is an education-based salary supplement project available across North Carolina in any county where the Smart Start Partnership has elected to provide funding. Additional funding for administration comes from the Division of Child Development. For the 07/08 Child Care WAGE\$® participant population, the turnover rate was equal to the national findings among K-12 teachers of 16%. This evidence strongly supports linking education and compensation.

### **Understanding the Salary Schedule**

This model salary schedule is not intended to be limiting, but rather a place to begin. In some communities, because of very low wages and low market rates, the amounts cited in the salary schedule may be too ambitious. In other communities, or for some centers, these salary ranges may not be adequate. (Note: Programs receiving More at Four funding will use the salary levels adopted by the North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction available at [www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary)).

### **Connecting Compensation, Education & Certification**

The salary schedule is linked to the level of attained education and the level of responsibility of those teaching young children. The schedule also corresponds to the Early Educator Certification scale. Early Educator Certification is the *verification of the education of the college education of individuals working with or on the behalf of young children to determine a certification level* (<http://www.ncchildcare.org/nc.html>).

## Connecting Compensation & Levels of Responsibility

The levels of responsibility of teachers are defined as follows:

- An assistant teacher is one who teaches young children under the direct supervision of a lead teacher;
- A lead teacher is one who has responsibility for the preparation of activity plans, supervision of a group of children and is able to work independently; and
- A master or mentor teacher is one who provides special guidance and support to teachers or students who are in training.

The schedules recognize increased education within all job types. Teachers with degrees are paid significantly more than teachers who do not have them. The rationale for this was to try to provide teachers, who have earned degrees with salaries that more closely mirror those in the public schools or professions.

## Connecting Compensation & Longevity

Where degrees are required longevity is also recognized by a standard increase of 3% for each year of service within each education level. This means that teachers have multiple ways to increase their earnings. Their earnings can increase because they move up to a higher position (for example, from assistant teacher to lead teacher), increase their education (for example, from a credential to a certificate) or stay in the center for another year. In one year, all three conditions could occur. We recommend that, if changes are made to the salary schedule that they follow some of the logic applied when creating this document.

When hiring, directors will also need to decide how much credit they want to give an individual with a certain level of education that has been in the profession for a number of years. This would apply to someone newly hired into the center with experience somewhere else. For example, when hiring, a director may want to count each year of service in the field as one-half year of experience on the schedule. So, a person with two years of experience would come in at the one year level, not the beginning teacher level.

## **Using the Salary Schedule**

These model schedules can be used in developing strategies at the child care center and community levels. Sample strategies include:

- Create initiatives that support programs in implementing salary schedules and rewarding those that accomplish this.
- Include creating and implementing salary schedules in the technical assistance given to programs in quality improvement projects.
- Move programs toward meeting the Smart Start Performance Standards (PBIS) related to compensation and education by implementing a salary schedule.
- Train child care staff on how salary schedules work and the benefits of achieving equity in salaries.
- Train child care center board members and/or owner on using the salary schedule to plan for the best use of their salary dollars and work in an intentional way toward improvements.
- Advocate for allocating public resources so that programs can achieve the suggested salary levels if they are not able to with current resources.