

# WHO is EDUCATING

## Missouri's **YOUNGEST** Children?

**EARLY** childhood professionals are among the most *dedicated, caring* people in our society. They are not walking away from our children. They are being pushed away... through our *complacency, extremely low pay, low respect,* and *societal neglect* for the professionals who work with our children.

*James H. Squires, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>*

The total size of Missouri's early childhood workforce is unknown. We do know that approximately 16,000 early childhood professionals work in the over 4,000 licensed programs. The workforce also includes about 5,150 persons who are paid to care for children through the subsidy program each month, but do not need a license because they care for four or fewer children. However, the number of teachers who work in the 550 license-exempt\* programs is unknown. In addition, we do not know how many other persons provide informal care – those keeping neighbors' children or grandchildren – and do not receive subsidies. Therefore, we can only account for the licensed early childhood workforce and the quality of services these professionals provide.

### Important Training Components

Training for early childhood professionals should be focused on the following eight competency areas:

- ⇒ Child Growth & Development
- ⇒ Learning Environment & Curriculum
- ⇒ Child Observation & Assessment
- ⇒ Families & Communities
- ⇒ Health, Safety, & Nutrition
- ⇒ Interactions with Children
- ⇒ Program Planning & Development
- ⇒ Professional Development & Leadership

In Missouri, only those early childhood professionals working in *licensed* programs are required to complete 12 hours of training each year.

# SOLUTIONS

## T.E.A.C.H.<sup>®</sup>

Missouri should provide funding to support the education of early childhood professionals. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps Project is an educational scholarship opportunity for early childhood professionals in Missouri. T.E.A.C.H. helps pay for college credit and associated costs.

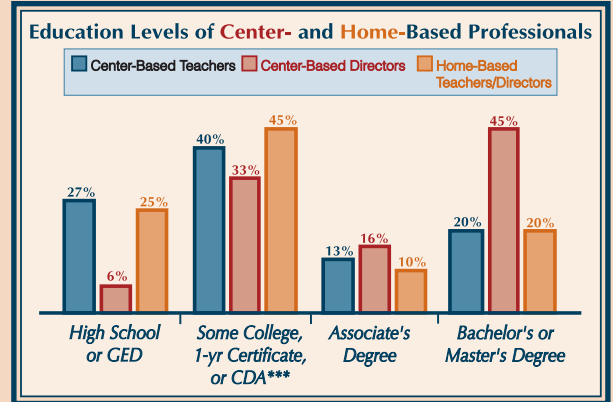
### Improve Technical Assistance System

Missouri should increase state funding for comprehensive training and technical assistance in order to provide support to programs in all communities.

# Who Is Missouri's Early

## Majority of Teachers Lack Formal Degrees

Although teacher education is a vital aspect of quality early childhood programs,\*\* the majority of Missouri's early childhood professionals do not have adequate formal education. In fact, **67%** of center-based teachers and **70%** of home-based teachers do not have college degrees (Associate's degrees or higher). Center-based directors, as administrators of programs, should have a college degree. However, **39%** do not meet this standard.<sup>2</sup>

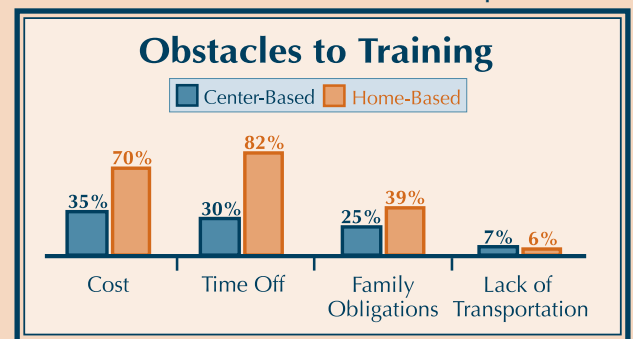


### Did You Know?

Before cosmetologists can receive a license to cut children's hair, they need 1,500 training hours. But, to teach the same children, there are zero pre-service training requirements for most early childhood educators.

### Obstacles to Training

The state provides some funding for training and technical assistance. However, the funding is inadequate to support the majority of early childhood programs. In fact, there are 53 rural counties and portions of some urban and suburban counties with no comprehensive training and technical assistance available for programs, other than federal funds for Head Start programs.<sup>2</sup> Although training has a significant impact on the quality of early childhood programs and child outcomes, **61%** of center-based and **85%** of home-based teachers reported experiencing barriers to training.<sup>3</sup> Noted in the graph above are the most commonly cited obstacles to training.



\* License-exempt refers to facilities that legally operate in Missouri but are not required to meet licensing standards. Most of these programs are faith-based.

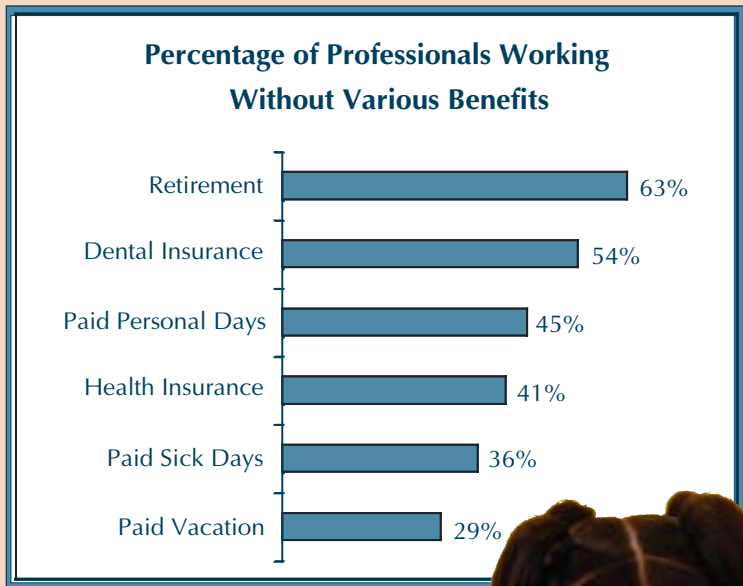
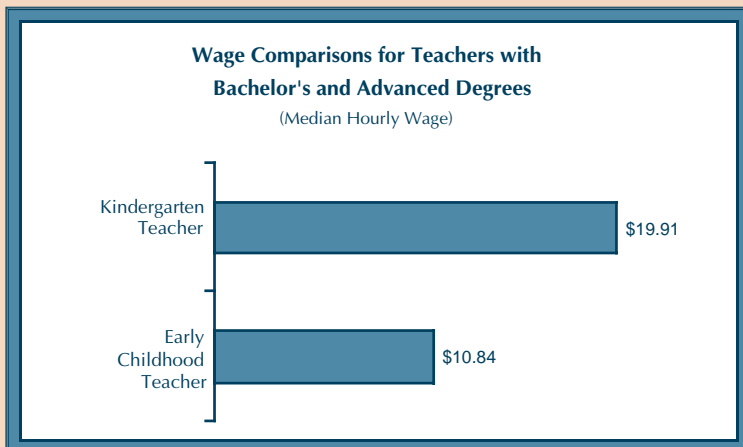
\*\* For the purposes of this document, the term *early childhood programs* is used to refer to both center- and home-based programs. Center-based programs are often referred to as child care, day care, preschool, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs. Home-based programs are often referred to as family child care or family day care homes.

\*\*\* The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a national credential that requires a minimum of 120 training hours in early childhood education and 480 hours of work experience, an on-site observation, and an assessment by an outside observer.

# Childhood Workforce?

## End the Wage Gap

When comparing educators who have at least a four-year college degree, a striking disparity exists among the salaries of those who teach kindergarten<sup>4</sup> versus the salaries of those who teach infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.<sup>2</sup>



## Missouri Wage Comparisons<sup>4</sup>

Although the occupations listed below may require specialized training, most do not require formal education. When comparing occupations, early childhood teachers (listed below as “preschool teachers” and “child care workers”) fall toward the bottom of the list, even though one-third have at least a two-year college degree.\*

Occupation	Median Hourly Wage
Food Service Managers .....	\$16.94
Utility Meter Readers .....	\$13.46
Parking Enforcement Workers...	\$12.75
File Clerks .....	\$10.06
Receptionists .....	\$9.92
Casino Cage Workers.....	\$9.67
Crossing Guards .....	\$8.73
<b>Preschool Teachers .....</b>	<b>\$8.67</b>
Maids & Housekeepers.....	\$7.69
<b>Child Care Workers .....</b>	<b>\$7.39</b>
Dish Washers .....	\$6.98
Fast Food Cooks .....	\$6.70

[Median hourly wage is the midpoint of all reported wages.]

### Too Few with Benefits

Not only are salaries low, but many early childhood professionals work full time without receiving benefits.<sup>2</sup>

# SOLUTION

## Provide Access to Benefits

Both salary and benefits are associated with the stability of the early childhood workforce and program quality. Missouri should provide early childhood professionals access to benefits, particularly health and dental insurance and retirement.

\* Because of tax laws it is difficult to accurately & consistently report salaries of home-based teachers/directors.

# Who Is My Teacher Today?

## The Turnover Crisis

Employee turnover is a concern for all industries and businesses. Although it is reasonable to expect more turnover in low-wage industries, it is unreasonable to accept high turnover in early childhood programs. Consistent teacher-child relationships play an important role in supporting young children's well-being and development, including their readiness for school. Therefore, measures must be taken to reduce teacher turnover.

### Impact of Turnover

In Missouri, the annual turnover rate for early childhood teachers and directors is **23%**.<sup>2</sup> Higher turnover rates have been conclusively linked to lower quality programs, which have a negative impact on children's cognitive and social-emotional development.<sup>5</sup>



### WIN Lowers Turnover Rate

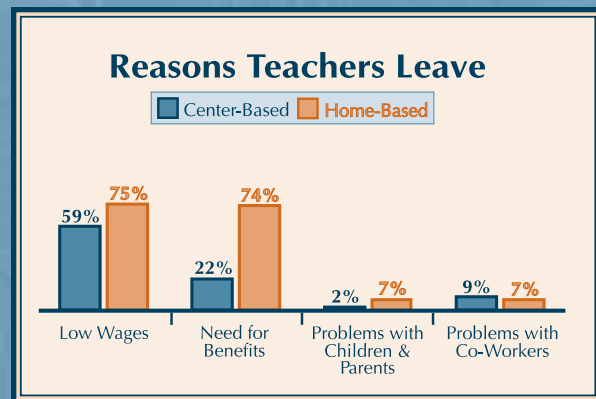
Although the overall turnover rate for early childhood professionals is 23%, those participating in the Workforce INcentive (WIN) Project left their positions at a much lower rate – 10.5%.<sup>2</sup> By decreasing turnover, WIN increases the consistency and continuity of early childhood services provided to children and better supports working parents.

### Why Teachers Quit

A national study found that highly trained teachers were more likely to leave their jobs if they

- ⇒ earned lower wages,
- ⇒ worked in a program with teachers who have little training,
- ⇒ experienced a change in program leadership, or
- ⇒ worked with a large percentage of teachers who did not have a Bachelor's degree.<sup>5</sup>

In Missouri, teachers are not leaving their jobs due to problems with children, parents, or co-workers. The two primary reasons reported by teachers for possibly leaving the early childhood profession were low wages and the need for benefits.<sup>3</sup>



# SOLUTION

### Workforce INcentive (WIN)

Missouri should provide funding to support WIN in increasing the retention of the early childhood workforce. Missouri's WIN Project is a privately-funded pilot initiative that addresses teacher and director recruitment and retention through the provision of cash incentive payments. Incentive payments range from \$750 to \$3,000 a year based on the WIN participant's education.

# What Is the Quality of Missouri's Early Childhood Programs?

The quality of early childhood programs has an important influence on children's ultimate readiness for school. Research has shown that as the quality of early childhood programs increases, children demonstrate enhanced academic and social outcomes. High quality programs are associated with several workforce indicators, including higher levels of teacher education and training, lower teacher turnover, positive teacher/child interactions, smaller class sizes, better teacher/child ratios, age-appropriate curriculum, and positive teacher/parent interactions. These indicators are critical aspects of high quality programs.

## SOLUTION

### A Quality Rating System

Missouri should finance a multi-level Quality Rating System (QRS).

QRS is a mechanism to evaluate and rate the quality of early childhood programs on a multi-level scale. Quality Rating Systems

- ⇒ assist parents in their selection of high quality early childhood programs.
- ⇒ provide directors and teachers with information regarding program improvement and professional development in relation to key quality indicators.
- ⇒ create an accountability mechanism for policymakers and funding agencies.

### Only 43% of Programs Are Considered Good Quality

In a recent study of center-based and home-based programs in Missouri, 57% of programs had overall quality scores that were rated as "less than good," with 11% of those programs rated as providing "poor" care.<sup>6</sup> This study only rated programs that were licensed. Little to no data exists for unregulated programs.

### Helping Families Find High Quality Programs

Although parents are children's most important teachers, the majority of parents with young children work outside of the home. On average, these children spend approximately 40 hours a week in early childhood programs.<sup>3</sup> Parents face the challenge of identifying an appropriate and affordable early childhood program for their children. The Missouri Resource and Referral Network reports an average of 1,400 monthly inquiries from parents needing assistance in finding an early childhood program.<sup>7</sup> However, there is no mechanism in place to rate the varying levels of program quality. This makes it difficult for parents who are seeking an early childhood program to find the best environment for their children.



**A CHILD'S** experiences in the first months and years of life determine whether he or she will enter school eager to learn or not. By school age, family and caregivers have already prepared the child for success or failure. The community has already helped or hindered the family's capacity to nurture the child's development.

**T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.**  
Pediatrician<sup>8</sup>

# Child Outcomes:

## Are Missouri's Early Childhood Programs Preparing Children for School?

Research indicates that the first five years of life have a powerful influence on children's development, including their ultimate success or failure in school. High quality early childhood programs have a positive impact on children's brain growth, including cognitive and social-emotional development.<sup>9</sup> Long-term studies found that children who attended high quality early childhood programs, when compared to a similar group of children who did not, were more likely to have higher math and reading achievement scores, pursue higher education, and be employed as young adults.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, these children were less likely to repeat a grade or need special education services.

The lack of appropriate experiences in early childhood programs is a contributing factor to the alarming percentage of children in Missouri – approximately 25% – that enter kindergarten without the knowledge and skills to succeed in school.<sup>11</sup> In order to support children's school readiness, teachers must provide activities and learning experiences in all domains of development (e.g., social, emotional, cognitive, language and literacy, and physical). The scores to the right indicate that many children are not being exposed to high quality experiences that have been shown to lead to school readiness.<sup>6</sup>

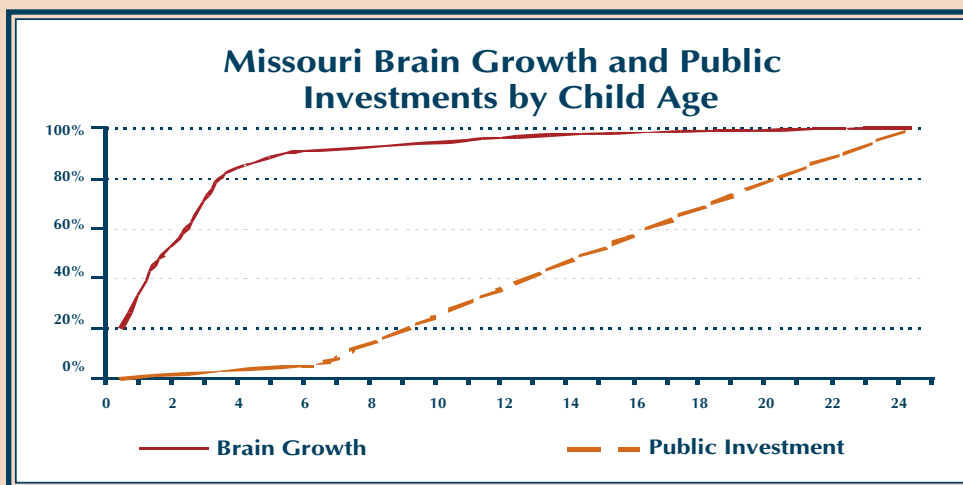
## Will They Be Ready for School?

Missouri's early learning standards<sup>12</sup> state what most preschool children should know and be able to do by the time they enter kindergarten. These standards outline shared sets of expectations in the following areas:

- ⇒ Literacy
- ⇒ Social & Emotional Development
- ⇒ Approaches to Learning
- ⇒ Mathematics
- ⇒ Science
- ⇒ Physical Development, Health & Safety

## Is Missouri's Investment Too Late?

Although 85% of a child's brain structure is formed by age three, only 2.2% of Missouri's general fund expenditures are allocated for early learning.<sup>13</sup> The chart below shows that Missouri's public investments in education come years after the crucial period for brain growth and development. In addition, on a per child basis, Missouri's public investments are \$698 per year during the early learning years (birth to five), as compared to \$3,652 per year during the school-age years (ages 6-18) and \$3,522 per year during the college years (ages 19-23).<sup>13</sup> Funding for programs and infrastructure must be made available so Missouri can build a strong early childhood system.



### Observed Program Quality on Important Subscales\*

	Inadequate to Minimal	Minimal to Good	Good to Excellent
Learning Activities	25%	51%	24%
Language/Reasoning	16%	36%	48%

**ON** a purely economic basis, it makes sense to invest in the very young.

**James J. Heckman, Ph.D.**  
Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences<sup>14</sup>

\*Each program was observed for two to three hours using either the Family Day Care Rating Scale or the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised. The rating scale indicates: 1.0 = inadequate; 3.0 = minimal; 5.0 = good; 7.0 = excellent. The Learning Activities subscale addresses items such as math/numbers, nature/science, fine motor skills, and play activities (dramatic play, blocks, and sand/water experiences). The Language/Reasoning subscale addresses items such as emerging literacy, communication skills, and reasoning skills (using such concepts as size, color, and numbers).

# Who Pays for Missouri's Early Investment Gap?

The state and federal governments provide inadequate funding to support high quality early childhood education. Although Missouri supports child care subsidies for approximately 46,000 children a year at an average cost of \$3,300 per child, thousands of children from poor working families do not receive subsidies due to low eligibility guidelines. In fact, Missouri's income eligibility requirements rank 50th in the nation.

A stronger subsidy system could support families' ability to purchase early childhood services for their children and programs' ability to improve the quality of the early childhood learning environments. Directors could opt to use the additional subsidy funds to address workforce issues (e.g., compensation).

## Parents, Professionals, and Children Are Paying

**Most parents cannot afford to pay any more.** Program tuition is beyond the financial means of many working families. These families pay a disproportionate amount of their incomes on early childhood expenses when compared to families with higher incomes. In addition, because of Missouri's income eligibility requirements, a mother with two children who earns \$8.56 an hour (\$17,800 a year) makes too much money to qualify for child care subsidy funds.

**Early childhood professionals cannot afford to subsidize the system any longer.** Teachers subsidize Missouri's early childhood programs by working for extremely low wages and receiving few benefits.

**Children cannot afford to wait!** Children attending poor quality programs pay the highest price – at the expense of their healthy development and school readiness.

## SOLUTION

### Improve the Subsidy System

Missouri can improve the current state of the subsidy system by

- ⇒ raising family income eligibility requirements so that more families are able to receive support.
- ⇒ increasing reimbursement rates for licensed early childhood programs.
- ⇒ linking subsidy rates to the quality of early childhood programs.



## Are You Ready to Invest?

### Policy Recommendations

1. Provide state funding for WIN (a wage supplement program) and T.E.A.C.H. (an education program) to increase the retention and education of Missouri's early childhood workforce.
2. Invest in Missouri's early childhood workforce by providing access to benefits, particularly health and dental insurance and retirement.
3. Increase state funding for comprehensive training and technical assistance in order to provide support to early childhood programs in all communities.
4. Finance a multi-level Quality Rating System to support parents' selection of early childhood programs and programs' quality and accountability to funders.
5. Raise family income eligibility for child care subsidy to 120% of the Federal Poverty Level.
6. Increase provider base reimbursement rates for licensed care by 10%.
7. Link early childhood program subsidy rates to the Quality Rating System.

**WHY**, in the wealthiest nation in the world, [do] we invest such a pitifully small percentage of our resources and our concern in the early years on the people who will obviously inherit the nation – our youngest children?

**Harold Hodgkinson, Ph.D.**  
*Demographer*<sup>15</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Squires, J. H. (2004). *America's other divorce crisis*. *Young Children*, 59, 74-76.
- <sup>2</sup>University of Missouri-Columbia Center for Family Policy & Research. (2004). Columbia, MO: Author.
- <sup>3</sup>Thornburg, K. R., & Fuger, K. L. (2003). *House Bill 1519 early childhood project: Final evaluation report*. Columbia and Kansas City, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Center for Family Policy and Research and University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development.
- <sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2003, May). *Missouri Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. Retrieved June 11, 2004, from <http://www.bls.gov>
- <sup>5</sup>Whitebook, M., & Sakai, L. (2003). Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 273-293.
- <sup>6</sup>Thornburg, K., Mayfield, W. A., & Scott, J. (2004). [Missouri Midwest Child Care Research Consortium Quality and Workforce Data]. Unpublished raw data.
- <sup>7</sup>Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral 2003 Data Report.
- <sup>8</sup>Brazelton, T. B. (1994). *Why children matter: Investing in early childhood care and development*. Boston, MA: Bernard Van Leer Foundation.
- <sup>9</sup>Burchinal, M. R., & Cryer, D. (2003). Diversity, child care quality, and developmental outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 401-426.
- <sup>10</sup>The Carolina Abecedarian Project. (2003, July). *Early learning, later success: The Abecedarian study (Executive summary)*. Retrieved June 8, 2003, from [http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Eabc/executive\\_summary.htm](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Eabc/executive_summary.htm)
- <sup>11</sup>*Ready or Not Here We Grow! Cultivating Successful Learners: Tracking School Readiness*. (2004, January). Jefferson City, MO: Author.
- <sup>12</sup>Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2004, April). *Missouri Pre-K standards*. Retrieved June 11, 2004, from [http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/PreK\\_Standards.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/PreK_Standards.html).
- <sup>13</sup>Voices for America's Children and the Child and Family Policy Center (2004). *Early learning left out: An examination of public investments in education and development by child age*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- <sup>14</sup>Heckman, J.J., Ounce of Prevention Fund (2000). *Invest in the Very Young*. Chicago Ill: University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy Studies.
- <sup>15</sup>Hodgkinson, H. L. (2003). *Leaving too many children behind: A demographer's view on the neglect of America's youngest children*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

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For additional information about Missouri's workforce, please contact the Center for Family Policy and Research at 877-782-0185.

