2022 Arkansas Workforce Study: Instructional Staff in Early Childhood Care & Education

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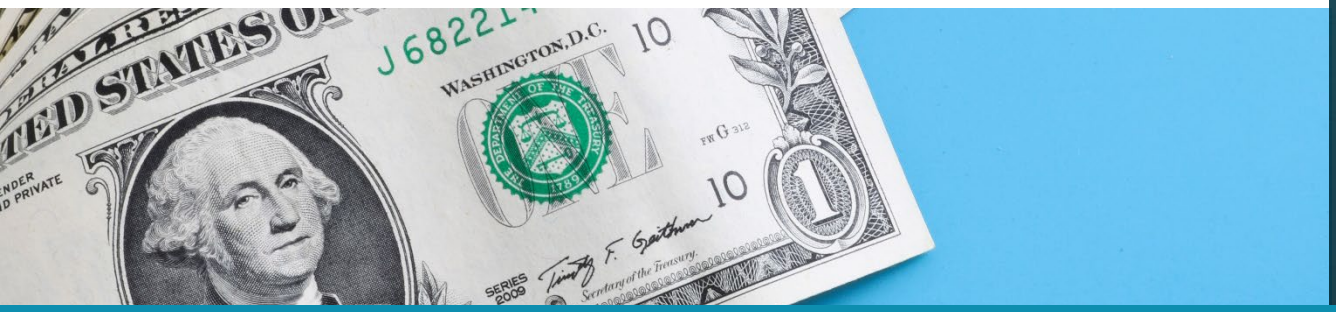


Executive Summary

Purpose

The most critical period of human brain development occurs in the first 5 years of life. Having high-quality care and stimulating environments in that first 5 years can influence how well children will learn in school, how well they will be able to find employment and support their own families, and how much they will give back to their communities.[1]

While parents are their children's first and most important teachers, they are often not their children's only teachers. Half of Arkansas's children under age 5 are in non-parental care for at least 10 hours per week.

To optimally support a child's development, teachers in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) require specialized education and training as well as structural supports to implement what they have learned.

The last statewide workforce study took place in 2017.[2] Results highlighted low wages, minimal benefits, and a small proportion of the field having specialized education and training. Nearly 60% of ECCE teachers had trouble meeting basic economic needs, and 40% were food insecure.

HALF *of Arkansas's children are in* **non-parental care** *at least 10 hours per week.*

Since 2017, the ECCE sector has been impacted by several waves of economic change.

Minimum Wage Increases

On November 6, 2018, Arkansas voters passed Issue 5 to increase the state minimum wage. Over the last few years, the minimum wage has increased from $8.50 to $11 per hour.

Establishment of an Educator Scholarship Program

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Arkansas Scholarship Program, funded by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE), was launched by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA) in 2019. It provides scholarships and support to early educators to help them earn Child Development Associate® Credentials or ECCE-related associate's or bachelor's degrees.

Pandemic-Related Changes

Programs experienced financial distress related to disruptions in enrollment and staff attendance during the COVID pandemic.[3] Several waves of financial relief have been issued to providers throughout the state, including support through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), reimbursement for cleaning expenses, essential worker child care assistance, and quality improvement grants.

Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Arkansas has committed funds to support stability of the ECCE sector in this precarious time. DCCECE is issuing program grants to expand services to more children and to raise the quality of care and education. ARPA funds will also be used to expand the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program.

In a national survey, providers reported that these relief funds prevented program closures,[4] but we do not know to what extent they protected teachers from economic distress.

In light of these changes and the positive influence early educators can have on children's future growth, **this study was designed to learn about compensation and benefits, education and professional development, and common barriers and supports present in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE).**

Methodology

Teachers in the state's ECCE Professional Development Registry who had participated in training within the prior 6 months were invited to participate in an online survey. Nearly 1,300 professionals responded.

Participants included 1,151 current and 141 former educators from center-based and family child care programs. Job roles for current staff were split between 55% lead teachers in centers and 45% assistant teachers in centers and family child care (47%/54% for past staff). Respondents were representative of the invited sample with regards to race and ethnicity and geographic location. The responding sample was slightly better educated and more experienced than what would be expected from the proportion of those invited to participate.

40%
of current teachers had 4 or fewer years of experience.

40%
of current teachers had higher education related to the field.

Results

Results of the study highlight characteristics and experiences of teachers in the Arkansas ECCE workforce that make it difficult to maximize children's growth and development during that critical first 5 years of life. The workforce is reporting a high level of turnover, as many teachers are both new to the field and at-risk to leave.

High turnover means children often have less stability in their caregiving relationships. Also, caregivers who are less experienced and less educated may be less equipped to care for children.

This high turnover risk is driven by teachers having:

- **Lower pay and fewer benefits than other educators.**
- **Difficulty paying for typical household expenses, such as food and rent.**
- **High risk for depression.**
- **Limited organizational support for professional development.**

Demographics

Many teachers in this survey were new to the ECCE field. Fourteen percent (14%) had less than 1 year of experience, and 26% had between 1 and 4 years. Only 40% of teachers have college education related to young children's learning.

Compensation & Economic Security

Although 77% of Arkansas ECCE teachers work full time, many still do not earn enough to pay for basic necessities. Annual salaries range from $24,000 - $45,000 depending on education, years of experience, race, and the age of children in their classrooms.

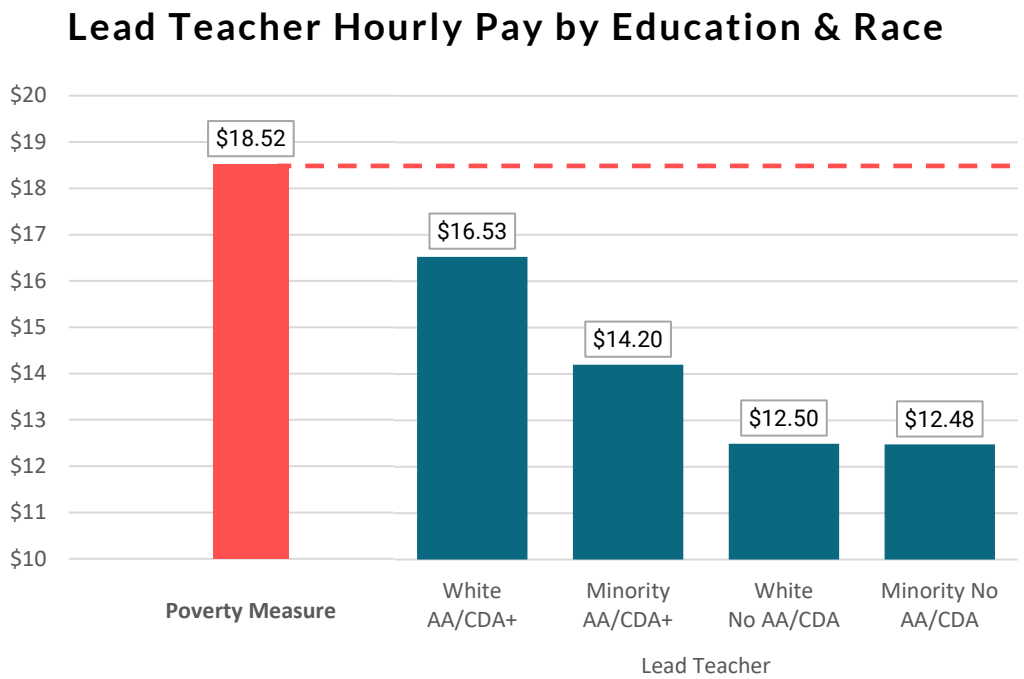
Despite the complex needs of children younger than age 3, **teachers of infants and toddlers make about $3,500 less per year** than colleagues in older classrooms.

An ECCE-related education (bachelor's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field or any education level with a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) increases annual pay by $5,297 or more per year. However, there are racial inequities. We found statistically significant evidence that **teachers of color experience less return on investments of time and money spent on college education.**

There are **INEQUITIES** *for* **teachers of color** *and for* **infant/toddler teachers.**

Many teachers do not have access to common job benefits, such as paid time off or medical insurance. More than half (52%) of teachers said they are not offered health insurance, and 68% are not offered retirement plans. Paid time off was more commonly available. About 80% said their job paid them for holidays or sick days.

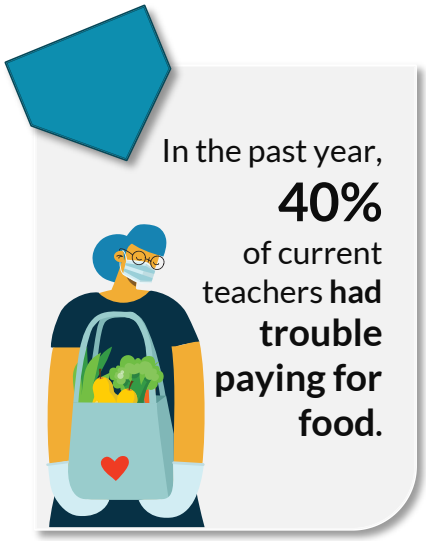
Only 22% of the sample reported receiving cost-of-living adjustments or raises based on performance. In fact, 50% of ECCE teachers reported having trouble paying for their basic household expenses, such as rent, utilities, and transportation.



Based on the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed measure (ALICE), even lead ECCE teachers do not make enough to pay for basic household necessities.
To use the ALICE calculator, visit unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Nutrition is also a common concern. **Nearly 4 in 10 teachers reported having run out of food, cutting meal sizes, or skipping meals due to financial instability within the past year.**

Although most teachers work full time, many still need financial assistance to make ends meet. Just under half of teachers (46%) said they use some form of financial support, such as SNAP/WIC nutrition support or Medicaid/AR Kids First insurance.



Wage Compression

Minimum wage increases likely lifted some teachers out of poverty. However, most child care programs have little to no room in their operating budgets for rising personnel costs.

By federal standards, only 18% of families in Arkansas can afford child care at current costs.[5] Private-pay programs risk losing customers and jeopardizing their businesses if they increase tuition. We were concerned that more senior personnel might be forfeiting income to compensate for higher entry-level wages.

Thus, in addition to conducting the teacher survey, we examined state occupational employment and wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics[a] and compared inflation-adjusted salaries reported in this study and in our 2017 workforce study.[6] **In both, we see evidence that minimum wage increases were paid for, at least in part, with cuts in pay for staff with higher qualifications.**

Wage compression of this nature disincentivizes ECCE workforce retention and professional development.

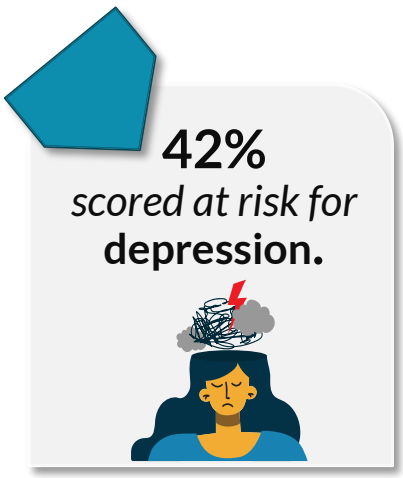
Mental Health & Professional Well-Being

There were risks and protective factors present in the sample's responses to questions about mental health and sense of professional purpose.

On one hand, a high percentage of teachers (81%) reported finding their work to be meaningful. This outlook is associated with workforce retention.[7]

Those who did not find their work to be as meaningful or who reported more disengagement from children were more likely to also report economic insecurity, food insecurity, and symptoms of depression. In this sample, symptoms of depression were common, with 42% of ECCE staff reporting risks.

High levels of teacher stress have been associated with workplace turnover and lower engagement in classroom learning activities.[8]



[a] We compared salaries for Child Care Workers (SOC 39-9011); Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (SOC 25-2011); Education Administrators, and Preschool and Child Care Center/Program (SOC 11-9031).

Behavior Regulation Concerns

Thirty-six percent (36%) of teachers reported that they are not well prepared to work with children who display challenging behaviors. Twenty-seven percent (27%) reported at least one child being suspended or expelled from the program in the past year. These forms of discipline have been associated with long-term harm to children's learning and development.[9]

HALF
lack access to professional development supports.

Teacher Retention

One in 10 teachers (11%) said they plan to leave the field within the next 2 years, 22% said they plan to leave within 5 years, and 37% were not sure

Teachers who intend to leave the field within 2 years are more likely to work part time, have less than 5 years of experience, and to screen at risk for depression than other teachers.

Professional Development & Support for Continuing Education

Half (50%) of current teachers reported receiving no professional development support, including mentoring, coaching, individualized professional growth plans, or substitutes and compensation to cover training and planning outside of the classroom.

Most former teachers (76%) indicated that they had not been paid to participate in professional development required by state licensing standards.

Considerations for the Future

The influx of ARPA funds presents an opportunity to invest in policies and programs that will yield benefits after the 2-year funding period. Long-term solutions should ensure that ECCE businesses have steady revenue outside of family tuition and that this revenue be spent, in large part, on teacher compensation and professional development. We see a number of possibilities for acting on the results of this study.

Address barriers to professional development access.

Arkansas has a strong network of professional development providers, but many teachers are new to the field and have not had as many opportunities to engage in these learning opportunities. Barriers need to be addressed, especially in lower-quality programs, to help programs pay teachers for time spent learning outside of the classroom or outside of typical program hours.

Two possible strategies that stakeholders may consider are:

a. **Coordinating a statewide communications campaign where all licensing and quality improvement staff as well as all state training partners promote the purpose of professional development and advertise free or low-cost options available to programs.**

b. **Use ARPA funds to help programs in socially vulnerable areas pay for substitute teachers or program-wide professional development days.**

Sustain and expand efforts to promote higher education for ECCE staff.

ECCE teachers with college education are more likely to view teaching as a long-term profession. Arkansas is using ARPA funds to expand its T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, but the state will need to determine other funding sources to sustain it. Suggestions for supporting participation in higher education in the next 2 years are to:

a. **Use data to steer communications plans and recruitment into T.E.A.C.H., particularly among teachers of color.**

b. **Forgive college loans for individuals who earned ECCE-related degrees prior to T.E.A.C.H.**

c. **Evaluate whether T.E.A.C.H. participation supports workforce retention and quality.**

Develop sustainable policies and programs that support financial stability for the ECCE workforce.

Arkansas is in the process of implementing a program called Step Up to WAGE$ Arkansas (WAGE$), which will provide salary supplements to teachers based on education and experience.

Similar to the T.E.A.C.H. expansion, the WAGE$ launch will be temporarily funded through ARPA, and Arkansas will need to identify other long-term funding streams.

Meanwhile, Arkansas should consider braiding other programs and policies to improve teacher compensation. For example, the state could:

a. **Offer refundable tax credits for ECCE staff based on education level, years of experience, and the quality rating of their program.** Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credit, established in 2007, has been a key driver of statewide improvements in teacher education and program quality. [10]

b. **Fold model salary scales that incentivize college attendance and experience into grant and contract funding formulas, director training, and technical assistance.** For instance, North Carolina programs that receive ARPA-funded grants will receive higher amounts if they commit to pay staff according to the state's model salary scale.

Build equitable compensation and education systems.

In Arkansas, ECCE teachers of color have fewer opportunities for professional and financial growth. They are paid less and do not see a return on their investment in higher education. These are factors that increase turnover risk and, as a recent Louisiana study showed, risk in the quality of interactions that children experience with their teachers.[11] Actions that would support equity in the state's early childhood infrastructure include:

a. **Use data from the CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)[b] to adjust funding formulas for communities of greatest need and to shape communications, policies, and programs for T.E.A.C.H., WAGE$, and other professional development programs.** SVI takes into account minority status and socioeconomic status at the county level.

b. **Ensure that trainers, technical assistants, and coaches who support program expansion and quality improvement receive training and practice to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment, program policies and practices.**

[b] https://svi.cdc.gov/map.html

Brain development in the early years has a lifelong impact on a child's success in school, careers, and relationships. For every dollar we spend on high quality early childhood education, we get back a 13% per year return on our investment.[a]

The most influential component of quality is the teacher. Teachers with specialized knowledge shape learning environments that stimulate children's growth and development and provide stability for children while parents are at work.

When we support the education, professional growth, and financial security of our early childhood educators, everyone benefits.

Introduction

This study examines the experiences of professionals who care for and educate Arkansas's youngest children. In Arkansas, 53% of children ages birth to 5 years are in non-parental care at least 10 hours per week.[12] To attract and retain teachers in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) field, stakeholders must understand the experiences and perceptions of staff in the existing workforce.

This is of critical importance because research has established:

- **Birth to 5 years is a period of rapid brain development.**
- **A child's development is shaped by a combination of stable, positive relationships and stimulating learning experiences.**
- **Having high-quality care and stimulating environments in that first 5 years can influence how well children will learn in school, how well they will be able to find employment and support their own families, and how much they will give back to their communities in adulthood.**[13]

Arkansas's previous statewide early education workforce study of instructional staff was conducted in 2017 by UAMS-RED, the Research and Evaluation Division of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. [14] The goal of that study was to establish an understanding of Arkansas's ECCE workforce. Results showed that the wages and benefits that many educators received were inadequate to cover basic needs for their family and most were working in the field without adequate education and access to professional development.

Since 2017, there have been significant changes that impact the ECCE workforce:

1. **Arkansas has implemented three minimum wage increases.** On November 6, 2018, Arkansas voters passed Issue 5 to increase the state minimum wage. Over the last few years, the minimum wage has increased from $8.50 to $11 per hour. Many ECCE staff work at or near minimum wage, so these adjustments would be expected to help improve their economic stability. However, there are potential side effects to increasing the minimum wage that need to be monitored. To afford increased wages, especially in the absence of increased tuition,

program administrators might need to reduce staff hours, positions, and benefits.

2. **The state revised voucher reimbursement rates.** Some ECCE programs receive payments to serve low-income families who qualify for child care assistance. In the past, rates were tied solely to market prices that ECCE providers charge paying parents. However, most families cannot afford the true cost of care, so ECCE programs sacrifice their own financial stability and undercharge for their services. Thus, voucher rates tied to market rates tend to be less than the amount needed to cover a program's cost to provide care.

   To inform voucher rate adjustments, the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) recently combined findings from market price studies with cost analyses conducted by UAMS-RED. Results of the cost analyses show the true cost to provide care at different levels of quality, not just the prices that families are able and willing to pay.[15]

   DCCECE increased voucher rates substantially in 2021 for urban and rural programs and introduced higher rates for counties with higher private-pay tuition costs and those providing the highest quality care.[16]

3. **Arkansas established a college scholarship program for early childhood educators.** The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Arkansas Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) was launched by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA) in 2019 with funding from the Arkansas Department of Human Services. It provides scholarships and support to upgrade the level of education for staff in centers and family child care programs. Goals of the program are to improve the quality of care for children and also reduce staff turnover. Recipients have 90% of their tuition and book costs covered, and their employers are reimbursed for substitute teachers. Programs must pay the student teacher regular wages when they are off-site for courses and pay a bonus after the teacher completes a 1-year educational contract. Arkansas will expand this program using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). The state is also in process of implementing Step Up to WAGE$, a salary supplement program for staff who meet education and experience requirements.

4. **The COVID pandemic had a huge impact on the ECCE sector.** Programs endured temporary closures, staff absenteeism, fluctuations in group sizes and ratios, changing safety protocols, and revenue loss. To monitor changing needs, from the end of 2020 through the beginning of 2021, three groups collected COVID-related workforce surveys: UAMS-RED, AECA, and SRI International with the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP).[17] In all surveys, programs reported financial hurdles, layoffs, elevated stress, and an increase in challenging behaviors among children.

   Several waves of financial relief have been issued to providers throughout the state, including support through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), reimbursement for cleaning expenses, essential worker child care assistance, and quality improvement grants.

   DCCECE will disburse millions of ARPA dollars over a period of 2 years to stabilize and improve ECCE infrastructure:[18]

   - $258 million distributed in subgrants to increase program quality, to pay for operational expenses associated with COVID, and to expand existing facilities.
   - $25 million to create new child care programs.
   - $130 million to pay for child care for the state's Essential Workers.
   - $40 million to expand the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program.

   Providers across the United States have reported that emergency funds distributed thus far have prevented *program* closures, but we do not know to what extent they protected *teachers* from economic distress.[19]

5. **Arkansas has built infrastructure to support early childhood mental health.** This includes building a triage system, called BehaviorHelp, to help ECCE staff address challenging child behaviors. The system coordinates three tiers of supports, including phone support, on-site technical assistance, and infant and early childhood mental health consultation. Teachers who participate in BehaviorHelp report improvements in children's behavior, and there is evidence that it has been effective at preventing suspension and expulsion, two discipline methods that can cause long-term harm to children's development.[20]

Given these changes in the Arkansas ECCE landscape, it is time to reassess the experiences of its workforce. Quality improvement and expansion grants will be distributed at the program level, and administrators will choose how to invest the money. A workforce study can help administrators determine priorities.

Methodology

Survey Design

This study uses a similar approach and many of the same survey questions as the 2017 workforce study. We asked questions related to compensation and economic security, education and experience, opportunities for career advancement, job satisfaction, and mental health.

For the present study, we were interested in two additional issues:

First, we wanted to gauge awareness of and intent to apply for the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program for ECCE professionals.

The program will receive $40 million in ARPA funds. It is important to know whether awareness of the program is sufficient to attract diverse candidates throughout the state. AECA can use this information to develop communication strategies.

Second, we added questions specific to the impact of the state's minimum wage increases on staff economic security and experiences in the field.

Sampling

Participants were members of the Arkansas Professional Development Registry (PDR). The system is used to track professional development credits for licensed center- and home-based ECCE programs. DCCECE provided UAMS-RED with PDR data for all registrants (*N*=17,738). UAMS-RED filtered registrants based the criteria listed in Figure 1. A total of 1,295 teachers participated in the survey (1,151 said they were currently employed in the field and 144 were previously employed in the field).

Qualifying registrants were invited to participate in the survey using emails available in PDR. The survey, which was built and implemented using the online platform REDCap,[21] was open to accept responses from February 8, 2022 to March 13, 2022. Participants were entered into a drawing to receive 1 of 100 Walmart gift cards in the amount of $25.

We received 1,295 valid responses (1,105 full and 190 partial responses) out of 9,400 final valid email invitations, yielding a 14% response rate. This is 2% higher than our 2017 study. See *Figure 1* for the response rate calculation.

Sample Representativeness

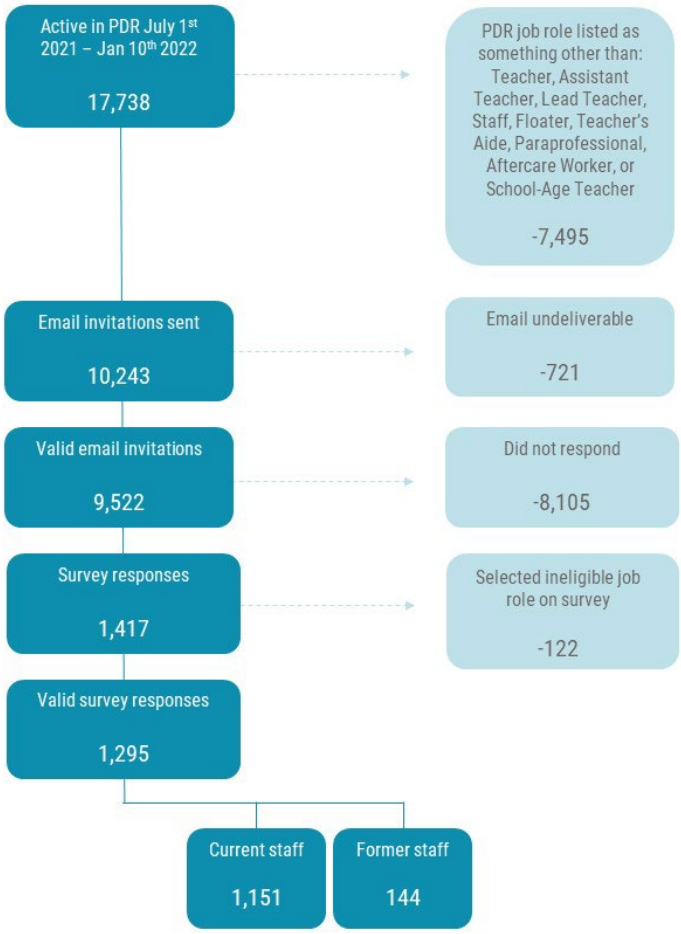
To estimate the representativeness of the individuals who responded to our survey, we compared the characteristics of the individuals invited to participate (everyone from the PDR registry who met the conditions described above) and those who responded to the survey. We compared the invited and responding samples on race and ethnicity, education and experience, and geographic location. Program quality ratings were not available in PDR, so we were not able to check for representativeness based on what type of programs employed the teachers. The sample of those invited to take the survey was racially similar to the general population in Arkansas.

The analysis of PDR data suggests that we were more likely to have responses for individuals with higher education and more experience than those we invited to take the survey, but the proportions of the sample were still a rough approximation of the field.

Race/Ethnicity. There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and those who responded based on race and ethnicity. Data for race and ethnicity are provided in *Table 1.1*.

Education. There were differences in educational levels between those who were invited to take the survey and those who responded based on education. Those with a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED) and those with some college credits were underrepresented among the respondent group (71% invited vs. 59% responded) and those with a Child Development Associate® Credential (CDA) or a college degree were overrepresented (28%

Figure 1. Flow chart of participant inclusion/exclusion



invited vs. 42% responded) in our study. Data for education are provided in *Table 1.2*.

Experience. There were differences between those who were invited to take the survey and those who responded based on years of experience. There were no differences in the proportion of the sample with 1 to 4 years of experience, but teachers with less than 1 year of experience were underrepresented (46% invited vs. 35% responded), while those with 5 or more years of experience were overrepresented (30% invited vs. 43% responded) in our study. Data for experience are provided in *Table 1.3*.

Geographic Location. There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and those who responded based on region or urban/rural geography. Data for geographic location are provided in *Table 1.4*.

Our resulting sample is relatively representative of those invited to participate in the survey with some overrepresentation of individuals who are more established in the ECCE workforce.

Measures

This study used a variety of measures and subscales borrowed from the national ECCE workforce study,[22] as well as from previous studies in ECCE literature.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked their job roles and if they were current or former members of the ECCE workforce. Then, they were directed to the appropriate questions based on their response. The sections below briefly describe the types of questions that appeared in the survey.

Demographics & Workplace Characteristics

Staff who indicated they were currently employed in the ECCE field were asked about their demographic characteristics, such as age, education, and experience; the age group of children they primarily serve; and the Better Beginnings quality rating of their employer. A Better Beginnings rating of Level 1 or 2 or being unsure of their program's Better Beginnings participation or rating was defined as "lower quality." Better Beginnings rating of Level 3 was defined as "higher quality" in analyses.[c]

Wages, Benefits, & Economic Security

Respondents were asked about their average weekly work hours, their pay, and the benefits offered by their employer, such as paid vacation, paid sick/personal days, or health insurance. Respondents selected the per-hour pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00," listed in $0.25 increments). We then multiplied that number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full time and those who work part time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.

We asked participants to check all of the benefits they have access to through their job (or did when they left their job) from a list of 14 benefits, which included health insurance, maternity leave, paid sick time, and free/reduced tuition for their own children to attend the program. A full list of benefits is provided in *Table 2.9*.

To measure economic security, we used items from the Family Map Inventories.[23] Selected items inquire about the family's ability to provide basic needs during the last year, using a scale of 1

[c] Staff in programs with unknown Better Beginnings ratings were statistically similar to those whose programs did not participate in Better Beginnings/had a rating of 1 or 2 when examining teacher pay and education. Those who reported unknown BB ratings were significantly more likely to be new to the field.

to 3 (*None; 1 or more; Don't know)*. Items asked if respondents:

1. *"Had any of your utilities such as gas, electric, water, or telephone service turned off because there wasn't enough money to pay the bill?*
2. *"Were unable to pay an important monthly bill such as rent, car payment, house repair, childcare, or other outstanding payment?"*
3. *"Were unable to afford medical care, dental care, or medicine?"*

We also included a measure of food insecurity, assessed with two items from the Household Food Security Survey[24] that are rated on a 1 *(Never true)* to 3 *(Often true)* scale:

1. *"The food that you bought just didn't last and you didn't have money to get more."*
2. *"You or others in your household cut the size of your meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food."*

We asked about fear of reduced hours and job loss using a Likert scale (1=*Strongly Disagree* to 5=*Strongly Agree*) and whether respondents had a second job.

Finally, we asked respondents to check types of federal, state, and private financial assistance they were receiving from a list that included programs such as SNAP, WIC, and child care vouchers.

Mental Health & Professional Well-Being

Respondents were screened for depression risk using the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2).[25] The two-item tool is efficient, well validated, and recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force as a good screening option for depressive symptoms.

Response options on the PHQ-2 include 0=*Not at all*, 1=*Several days*, 2=*More than half the days*, and 3=*Nearly every day*. Sum scores on the PHQ-2 range from 0 to 6. We used a cutoff score of 2 for a positive screening, which has a sensitivity of 93% for predicting major depressive disorders.

We also used three of the six items from the Interpersonal Disengagement subscale from the Stanford Professional Fulfillment Index (SPFI)[26]. Responses are provided based on a 0 to 5 scale from *Not at All* to *Extremely*. The questions ask if in the last 2 weeks, teachers have been feeling *less empathetic with children in their classroom*, *less sensitive to others' feelings/emotions*, or *less connected with children in their classroom*.

Behavior Regulation Concerns

Respondents were asked if there had been any suspensions or expulsions of children in their workplace in the last year. Response options included: 1 = *No;* 2 = *Yes, a parent has been asked to pick up a child early on one or more days;* 3 = *Yes, parent has been asked to keep a child home for a full day or more;* and 4 = *Yes, a parent has been asked to withdraw a child from the program permanently*.

We also asked how prepared they felt to work with children with behavior challenges or social-emotional delays. Likert scale responses ranged from 1=*Not at all prepared* to 4=*Totally prepared*.

Professional Development & Support for Continuing Education

Respondents were given a list of various in-service training and professional development supports and were asked to check each they currently receive from their employer. Options included an individualized professional growth plan, paid wages for conference attendance, or mentoring/coaching.

The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program enables teachers to complete ECCE-related higher education. Respondents were asked to rate their familiarity with the program and its eligibility requirements on a 5-point Likert scale from *Very familiar* [with benefits, eligibility, requirements, etc.] *and plan to or have applied* to *Never heard of it*.

Those who indicated they were familiar with the program but not interested in applying were

asked why and could respond *I know I don't qualify* or *Some other reason*. Those who chose the latter were asked to specify what those reasons were in an open response field.

Workforce Retention

Respondents were asked how much longer they thought they would remain in the field. Those who indicated 5 years or less were also asked to rate reasons that would motivate their potential exit using a 1-to-5 Likert scale from *Not at all important* to *Very important*. Some of the options to rate included impending retirement, seeking higher pay, or health-related reasons.

Experiences of Former Staff

Staff who no longer worked in the ECCE field were asked demographic questions (age, education, experience in the field, etc.), the age group they primarily worked with, and the Better Beginnings level of their last employer.

Respondents were asked about their average weekly work hours, their former pay rate, and the benefits offered by their last employer. We also asked respondents to review a list of various types of federal, state, and private financial assistance and to check all they were receiving at the time they left the field.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate the importance of various motivators to leave the field using a 1-to-5 Likert scale ranging from *Not at all important* to *Very important*. Examples of reasons included impending retirement, seeking higher pay, and health-related reasons.

Results: Current Staff

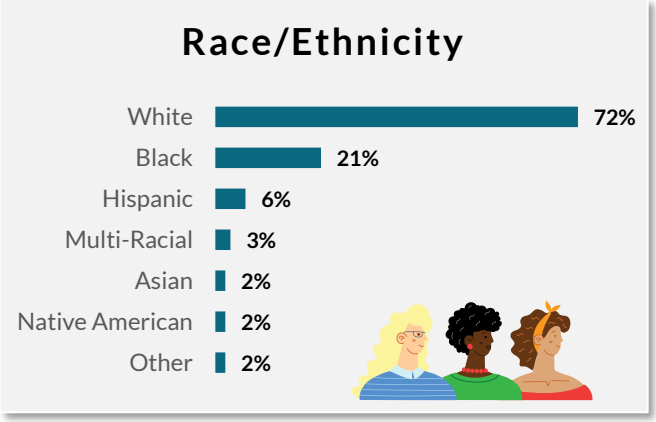
Demographics & Workplace Characteristics

The following section summarizes the demographics of current teachers, their education and experience, and the quality of the programs for which they work. Full results tables can be found in *Appendix 2*.

Demographics

Our sample of 1,151 teachers employed in the field was similar in median age and racial makeup to the general population of Arkansas,[d] with an average age of 38 years and a racial/ethnic breakdown of 72% White/Caucasian, 21% Black/African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino(a), 3% Multi-Racial, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Native American, and 2% Other. Because of the small sample sizes, categories were combined for analyses.

Job roles were 55% lead teachers in centers and 45% assistant teachers in centers and family child care homes.



Education & Experience

A total of 51% of participants said they had an associate's degree or less without a CDA, 21% had associate's or less with a CDA, 11% had a bachelor's degree or higher in an unrelated field, and 18% had a bachelor's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field.

When education in an ECCE-related field and CDA status were taken into account, 40% of respondents had an ECCE-related education.

As expected, there was a significant association between teachers' education level and the quality of the programs they work for, where teachers with an ECCE-related education were more likely to work for programs with a Better Beginnings Level 3 rating ($\chi 2$=40.5, df=1, P<.001; Φ=0.2).

Fourteen percent (14%) of teachers in the sample had less than 1 year of experience, 26% had 1 to 4 years, 24% had 5 to 10 years, and 36% had 11 or more years.

There was a significant association between length of time in the workforce and program quality ($\chi 2$=40.23, df=1, P<.001; Φ=0.2). Those with fewer than 5 years' experience were more likely to report working in lower-quality programs.

[d] 2019 data from datausa.io/profile/geo/arkansas

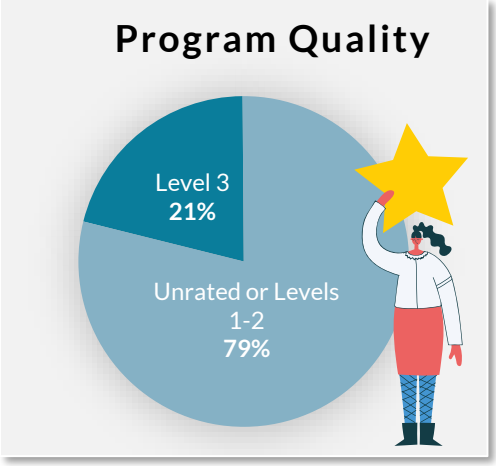
Environment

Half of teachers (54%) reported working primarily with preschool-aged children, which is roughly equivalent to the percentage of slots available for preschool in the DCCECE licensing database (55.7%).

When asked about operational calendars, 70% of teachers reported working in year-round programs, 30% in school-year-only programs, and fewer than 1% in summer-only programs.

The majority of teachers (79%) in this year's sample reported either working for a program with Better Beginnings rating of Level 1 or 2 OR being unsure of their program's Better Beginnings participation or rating.

Twenty-one percent (21%) work for higher-quality programs (those with a Better Beginnings Level 3 rating), 77% of teachers in this study work full time (31+ hours), and 23% work part time. See *Tables 2.4 and 2.5* for full results.



Wages, Benefits & Economic Security

The following section reports on hours worked, pay for different levels of education and experience, and current staff access to benefits.

Wages

Average annual pay of survey participants was $27,883.[e] Lead teachers earn an average of $30,035 per year, and assistant teachers earn $25,730.

There was a statistically significant difference in pay when comparing teacher role and program quality. Lead teachers in higher-quality programs reported making significantly more per hour than those in lower-quality programs ($16.44/hr. vs. $13.86/hr.), but compensation for assistant teachers is similar ($12.82/hr. vs. $12.27/hr.) across program quality (F=11.6, df=1,P=<0.001,η^2=0.012). Only 22% of teachers reported receiving regular wage increases, such as cost-of-living adjustments or raises based on performance or education.

Tables 2.6 , 2.7, and 2.8 show data related to wages.

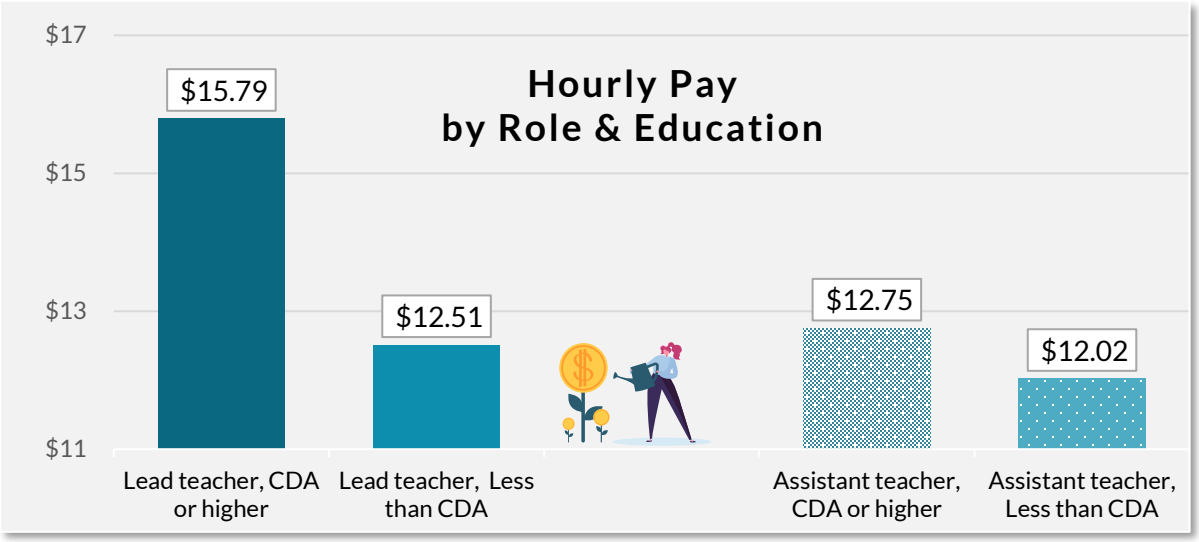
[e] Respondents selected the per-hour pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00," listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00. We then multiplied their reported number by 2,080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full time and those who work part time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.

Experience

Pay increased with more years of experience. Teachers with less than 1 year of experience earned an average of $24,690 annually, while those with more than 20 years of experience made an average of $33,197.[f] This difference in pay was statistically significant (Experienced, M=$14.47, SD=4.47; t(726.21)=$11.33, p<0.001, d=-0.649, Less than 5 years M=$12.14, SD=1.51).

Education

As expected, average pay increased with education, from $26,000 per year for those with some high school and no CDA to $44,581 per year for those with a master's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field (with or without a CDA). Those with an ECCE-related education (bachelor's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field or any education level with a CDA) made an average of $5,297 more per year than those without a related education. This difference in pay was statistically significant (ECCE-related, M=$15.08, SD=5.07); t(432.07)=8.97, p<0.001, d=0.72, No ECCE-related, M=$12.54, SD=2.13).

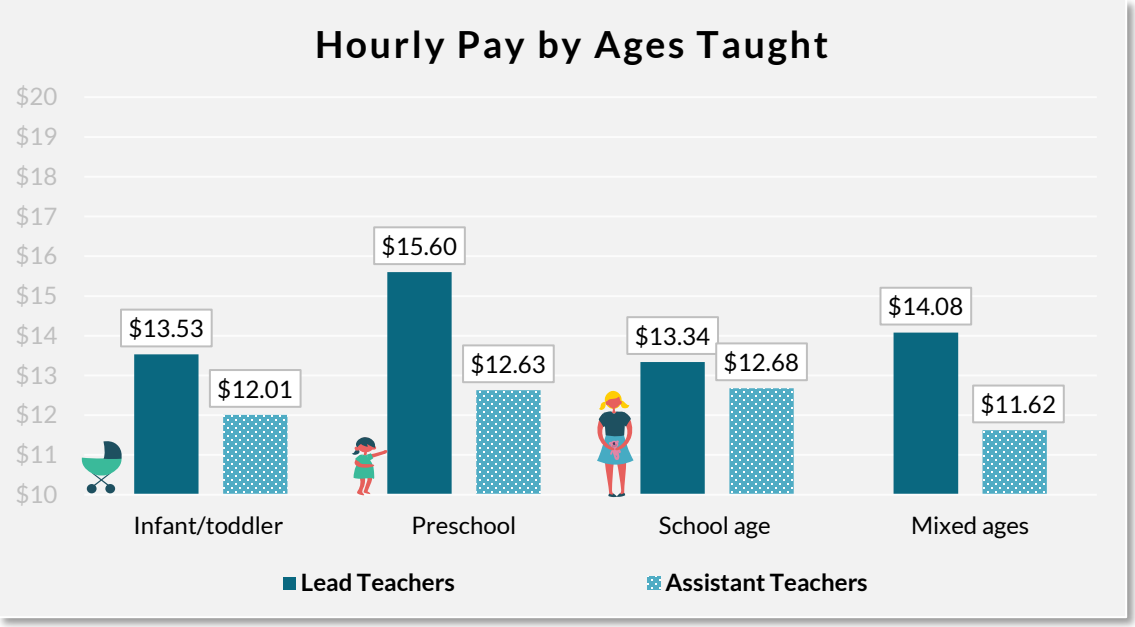


There is also a significant difference in pay based on the interaction of job role and education level (F(1,917)=31.2, p<0.001, η=0.03). There is not much difference in pay between lead teachers and assistant teachers when they have less than an associate's degree/CDA, but lead teachers make significantly higher pay than assistant teachers when both have an associate's degree/CDA or higher.

[f] These wages are similar to those reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics when adjusting for the fact that the latest BLS data is from May of 2022. The average annual wage for child care workers is $23,050 and for preschool teachers is $32,930. *https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ar.htm (child care worker 39-9011, preschool teachers 25-2011.*
BLS definitions of child care workers vs. preschool teachers are not clearly divided when it comes to the practical roles they work in, but both groups are part of what would be considered the ECCE field. *https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/preschool-teachers.htm* and *https://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm*

Class Age

Infant/toddler teachers earn an average of $26,374 per year ($12.68/hr.), preschool teachers earn an average of $29,827 ($14.33/hr.), and school-age child care providers earn an average of $26,894 ($12.93/hr.). Those who primarily work with mixed age groups, such as assistant teachers in family child care programs, average $25,230 ($12.13/hr.). For a complete breakdown of pay by job role and class age, see *Table 2.8*.

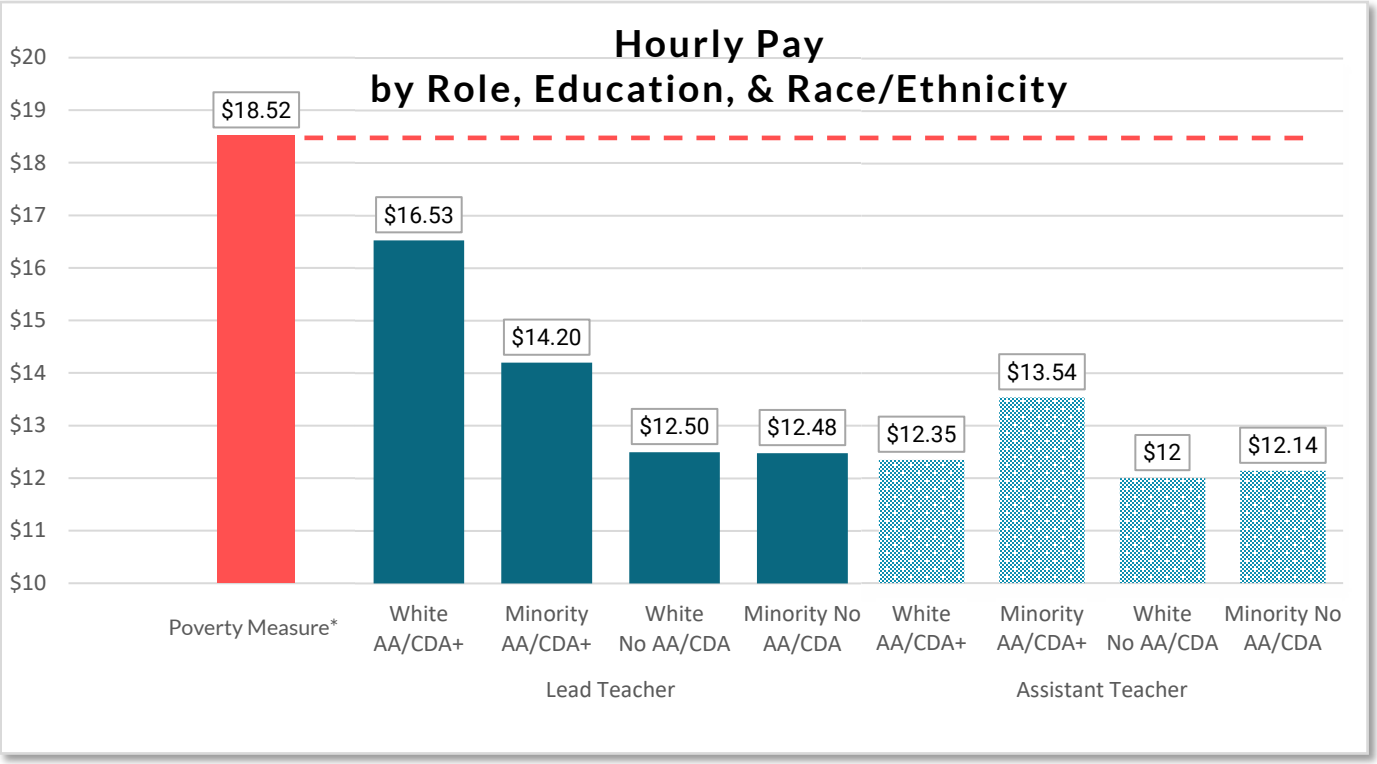


Race

Recent national reports document salary inequities based on race and ethnicity.[27] Therefore, we examined pay differences between lead and assistant teachers based on their race/ethnicity. Results showed that the interaction between job role, education, and race/ethnicity was statistically significant ($F(7,903)=35.3$, $p<0.001$, $\eta=0.22$).

White lead teachers with an associate's degree or CDA make significantly more than everyone else, including minority lead teachers with comparable education. Minority teachers with and without associate's degrees or CDAs make similar salaries.

Regardless of race or job role, Arkansas teachers with an education of an associate's degree or less do not earn enough to pay for basic necessities in a one-adult, one-child home using the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed poverty measure (ALICE; https://www.unitedforalice.org/wage-tool).



*Based on the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed measure (ALICE) for a 1 adult, 1 child household.
To use the ALICE calculator, visit unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Job Benefits

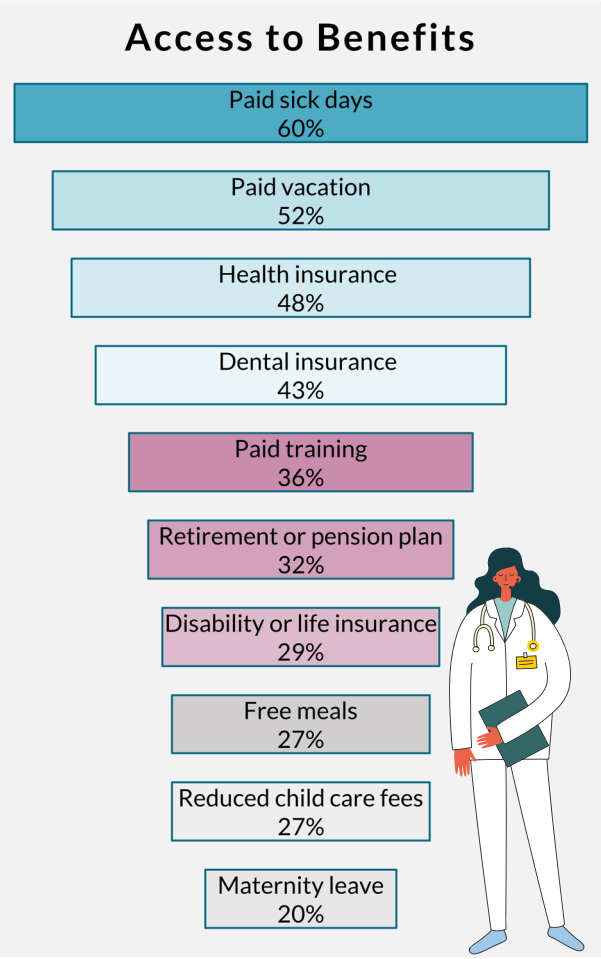
The current Arkansas ECCE workforce has limited access to workplace benefits. Forty-eight percent (48%) were offered health insurance, and 43% were offered dental insurance. Retirement benefits were offered to 32% of teachers.

Access to maternity leave was rare (6% for paid maternity leave, 14% for unpaid leave). However, most staff (78%) had access to some form of paid leave for holidays, vacation, illness, or personal time off (PTO).

Forty-four percent (44%) reported other benefits that financially help families, such as free on-site meals and free or reduced child care fees for their own children.

There were often statistically significant differences in benefits offered to teachers based on the quality rating of their program. Staff working in Better Beginnings Level 3 programs were offered more benefits compared to staff in other programs.

For a more detailed breakdown, see *Table 2.9*.



Economic Security

Most teachers reported feeling secure in their jobs. Only 13% agreed they were concerned about being laid off or having their work hours reduced.

Fifteen percent (15%) of teachers reported having a second paying job at the same time of year as their job in early education. For example, some teachers work in programs that are open year-round, but they also work second jobs in the summer.

Just over half of teachers (54%) said they are not currently using any financial assistance, either from institutional sources or from family/friends. Thirty-five percent (35%) reported using Medicaid/AR Kids First, 16% free/reduced lunch for school-aged children, 14% SNAP/WIC, and 6% assistance from parents or other family members. Only four teachers (<1%) said they were receiving hero/hazard pay at the time of the survey.

Infant/toddler teachers
are more likely to use public assistance than those who teach older children.

Infant/toddler teachers were significantly more likely to use at least one type of financial assistance than teachers who primarily taught other age groups ($\chi 2$=5.28 df=1, P<0.05; Φ=0.07). See *Table 2.10* for a full list of financial assistance reported. Teachers who did not report working in a Better Beginnings Level 3 program were more likely to report economic risks than those who reported working in lower-rated or unrated programs ($\chi 2$=4.94, df=1, P<0.05; Φ=0.07).

Half of ECCE teachers reported risk in their ability to meet their basic needs. This includes difficulty paying for important monthly bills like rent (34%), transportation (20%), utilities (15%), and medical expenses (34%).

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of participants reported experiencing food insecurity, either "running out of food and not having money to buy more" or "cutting the size of meals or skipping meals to make food stretch."

42%
of teachers are
at risk for depression.

Mental Health & Professional Well-Being

Psychological factors affect the quality of adult-child interactions and staff workplace satisfaction. Teacher stress and depression are associated with less active engagement in children's learning activities and less responsiveness to children's needs.[28] Children in these classrooms acquire fewer behavior regulation skills.[29]

Recent years have been difficult for children, families, and teachers in ECCE communities. Classroom routines and protocols fluctuated in response to COVID-19, and teacher stress was elevated.[30] We would expect these conditions to affect children's behavior, teacher mental health, and teacher responses to challenging behaviors.

Teacher Depression

We asked respondents to complete a widely used depression screener. Results showed that 42% are at risk for depression. This is much higher than rates that have been documented in home-based (8%), center-based (10.7%), and PreK (9.6%) programs.[31]

While screening as "at risk" for depression is not the same as a clinical diagnosis, it is an important sign of the elevated levels of stress that many ECCE teachers experience.

A teacher's sense of purpose is a protective factor in the midst of such challenges. Teachers who feel intrinsically motivated to work with children are more likely to remain in the ECCE sector.[32]

Teacher Engagement

When asked to think about the past 2 weeks, 81% of teachers said their work feels meaningful to them (answered *Very true* or *Completely true*). Teachers' meaning in their work was not associated with their pay, experience, or class age. However, teachers were statistically less likely to say they found their jobs meaningful if they were at risk for:

- **economic insecurity** ($\chi 2$=15.8, df=1, P<0.001; Φ=-0.13).
- **food insecurity** ($\chi 2$=15.5, df=1, P<0.001; Φ=-0.13).
- **depression** ($\chi 2$=53.9, df=1, P<0.001; Φ=-0.24).

We also measured teachers' emotional engagement with children. Very few teachers reported feeling disengaged. Only 14% said that in the last 2 weeks their job has contributed (*Moderately*, *A lot*, or *Extremely)* to having been less empathetic with children in their classroom, 14% said their job contributed to being less sensitive to others' feelings/emotions, and 12% said it contributed to being less connected with children in their classroom. There were no statistical differences in disengagement by pay, experience, or class age.

As above, teachers were more likely to report greater levels of disengagement if they were at risk for:

- **economic insecurity** (At-Risk for Economic Insecurity (M rank= 530.66, n= 492), z= -5.26, $p<0.001$, r=0.24; Not At-Risk (M rank= 463.95, n= 501).
- **food insecurity** (At-Risk for Food Insecurity (M rank= 540.04, n= 369), z= -3.97, $p<0.001$, r=0.21; Not At-Risk (M rank= 487.25, n= 643).
- **depression** (At-Risk for Depression (M rank=587.9, n=429), z= -10.92, $p<0.001$, r=0.34; Not At-Risk (M rank=446.6, n=583).

Professional Development & Continuing Education

Teachers' access to professional development is an important component in delivering quality care to children and can reduce the risk of turnover. When ECCE teachers have support to participate in ongoing learning and to advance their careers, they are more likely to use effective teaching practices and to remain in the field.[33]

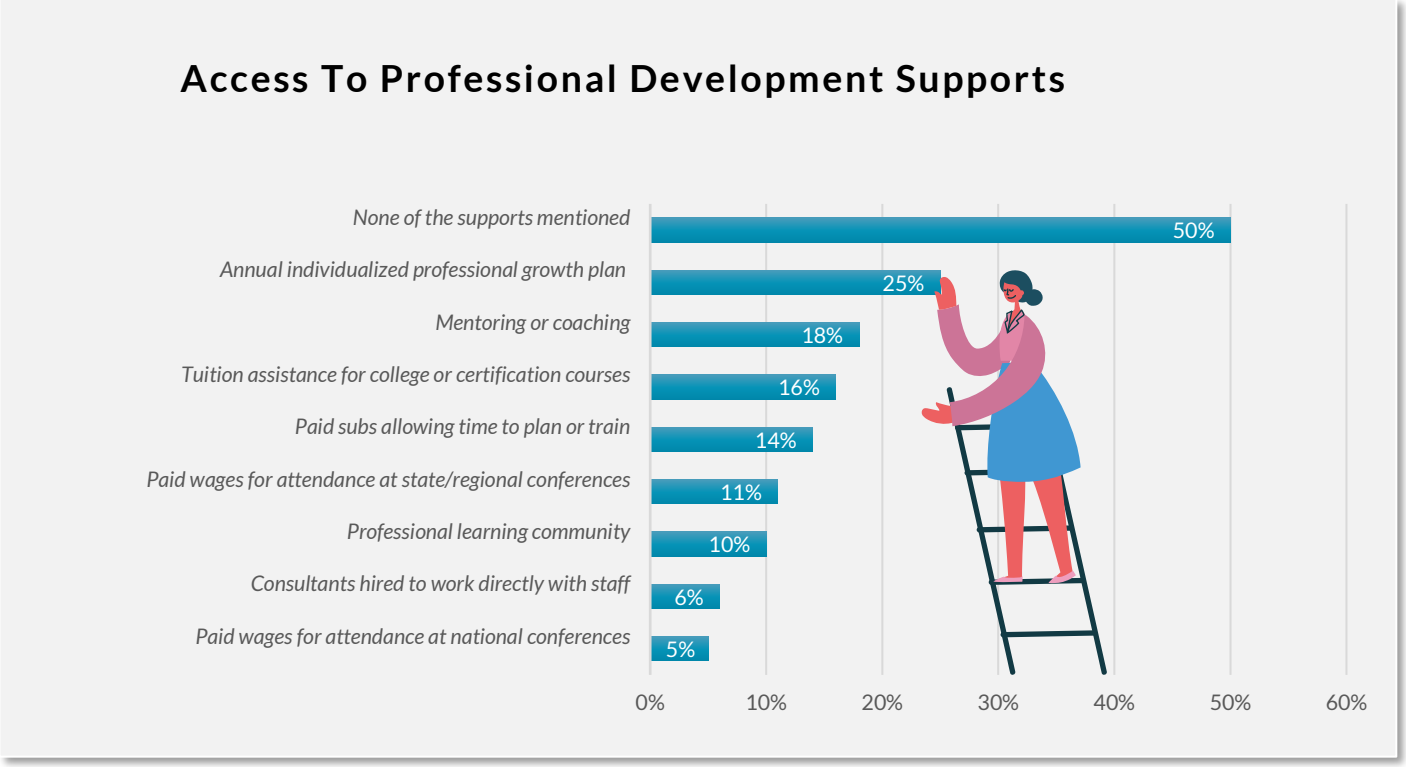
The following section reports on staff access to professional development supports, such as an individualized professional development plan, mentoring/coaching, and paid wages for conference attendance.

Professional Development Supports

Half of respondents (50%) reported not having access to any of the professional development supports we asked about, such as participating in coaching or being paid to attend conferences. Similarly, only 25% reported having an individualized professional growth plan that was updated at least once a year.

Only about 1 in 3 (31%) teachers was paid regular wages for the state's annual requirement of 15 hours of professional development per year, and only 14% were paid or reimbursed for training beyond the required hours.

Many professional development opportunities were put on hold or modified for online delivery during the pandemic, but this did not change expectations to complete annual training hours required for licensing. It is possible that directors may have expected teachers to complete training (likely flexible online sessions) on their own time without compensation.



As expected, there were differences in access to professional development supports based on program quality:

- Teachers working in lower-quality programs were less likely to receive professional development supports in general ($\chi 2$=20.5, df=1, P<0.001; Φ=-0.15).
- Teachers who worked for higher-quality programs were significantly more likely to report access to mentoring/coaching ($\chi 2$=5.71, df=1, P<0.05; Φ=0.08) or to substitute teachers ($\chi 2$=6.72, df=1, P<0.05; Φ=0.08). They were also more likely to have an individualized professional growth plan ($\chi 2$=28.6, df=1, P<0.001; Φ=0.17).

See *Table 2.13.* for full results.

Familiarity & Interest in T.E.A.C.H.

The Arkansas T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program was launched in 2019. It provides financial support to help staff complete ECCE-related education (CDAs, associate's degrees, or bachelor's degrees). The state has committed to spending $40 million on the program using ARPA funds. Because of this, we were interested in knowing who was aware of the program, and if they knew about it, whether there were barriers to their participation.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of teachers said they had never heard of the program, 21% said they knew about it but were unsure of all the details, 21% had heard of it, but didn't know what it was, 5% were very familiar with the program and planned to apply or have applied already, and 4% were very familiar but did not plan to apply.

We asked the 4%, who were very familiar with the program but did not want to apply, what kept them from doing so. Most identified one of the following reasons:

- Already had a degree and could not/did not want to go back to school again.
- Pursuing a degree in a different field and had plans to leave upon graduation.
- No longer wanted to continue teaching in the ECCE field.
- Planned to retire soon.[g]

We compared teachers who said they were very familiar with T.E.A.C.H. across a variety of demographic categories to see if particular groups had more or less familiarity with the program than statistically expected.

Based on tests of job role, race, education, experience, geography, program quality, and class age, only race showed a significant difference. Black teachers were less likely to be familiar the scholarship program), while White teachers were more likely to be familiar than statistically expected ($\chi 2=11.0$, $df=2$, $P<0.01$; $\Phi=-0.11$).

Behavior Regulation Concerns

When teachers perceive children's behaviors negatively, they are more likely to resort to discipline methods that can do more harm than good, including suspension or expulsion.[34] Excluding a child from their program does not address the root causes of challenging behaviors, such as environmental instability, developmental delays or disabilities, and untreated trauma. Moreover, exclusionary discipline practices are unnecessarily disruptive to parents' work. This is especially true for families of color, whose children are suspended/expelled disproportionately more often.[35]

Failure to detect and treat root causes of challenging behaviors in the first 5 years can lead to greater need for special education services, delinquency, and failure to graduate high school.[36] Interventions to appropriately address behavior concerns are more effective when they start early and in coordination with adults who have established relationships with the child.[37]

Teacher Preparation for Behavioral Challenges

In this study, about two thirds of teachers (64%) reported feeling *generally prepared* or *totally prepared* to work with children who have social-emotional or behavioral problems. No significant differences existed based on Better Beginnings level.

Results can also be found in *Table 2.12*.

[g] Employers of T.E.A.C.H. scholars are also required to contribute financially and to arrange substitutes to allow teachers time off for study. Thus, it will be beneficial to assess potential barriers at the program/director level.

Exclusionary Discipline Practices

We asked teachers how frequently during the last month they or someone at their program had called parents to report children's challenging behaviors.

To understand the severity of suspensions/expulsions, we organized results based on the most severe action taken in each center rather than count each type of suspension/expulsion as separate categories.

For example, teachers who reported a partial-day suspension and an expulsion in their program were counted under the expulsion category only.

Results were:

- 18% of teachers reported that they or someone in their center called a parent to pick up a child early (partial-day suspension).
- 5% stated their center had at least one full-day suspension.
- 4% had at least one expulsion.
- 73% reported no suspensions/expulsions in the last year.
- There was no statistically significant difference in suspension/expulsion activity based on Better Beginnings levels (measured as any suspension/expulsion activity in the last year).

Regardless of program quality rating, ECCE programs who provide care for children receiving tuition subsidies are prohibited from exclusionary discipline practices by state policy. Although we did not collect data about program funding, the lack of difference reported across program quality may indicate the effectiveness of state policies to prevent the use of exclusionary discipline.

In personal communications, stakeholders involved in early childhood mental health consultation spoke of sharp increases in the severity of BehaviorHelp requests and in staff resistance to DCCECE's expulsion prevention policies in the past year. Thus, it is possible that teachers are reporting practices they know to be desirable rather than the actual practices in their programs.

Workforce Retention

The following section addresses teacher retention and turnover. We asked participants about their intent to stay in or to leave the field as well as timelines and motivations for leaving.

If a teacher reported intent to leave because they wanted to pursue their education further, we asked if they planned to return to teaching later. Those who said yes were removed from any turnover calculations because they do not represent true turnover risk.

Intention to Leave the Field

One in 10 teachers (11%) said they plan to leave the field within the next 2 years, 22% said they plan to leave within 5 years, and 37% were not sure (see *Tables 2.14* and *2.15* for full results). This level of turnover risk is likely affecting the quality of teacher-child relationships as well as the general availability of child care for parents.

According to a recent national study,[38] two thirds of survey participants reported experiencing a staffing shortage that affected their ability to serve families. Additionally, 37% of those with staffing shortages needed to expand their waiting lists, and 52% were forced to serve fewer children altogether.

Motivation for Leaving the Field

We asked those who planned to leave the field within the next 2 years about their reasons.

Overwhelmingly, staff reported one or more financial reasons (78%) as *Important* or *Very important* in their decision. Those reasons included:

- Wanting a higher paying job.
- Wanting better benefits.
- No opportunity for career advancement.
- The minimum wage increase making jobs outside of child care more attractive.

In fact, the minimum wage increase made jobs in other sectors more attractive to 52% of the respondents.

Beyond financial reasons, top motivators to leave the field included the work being too stressful (47%), wanting a job with more flexibility in hours or fewer hours (40%), personal reasons (39%), and retirement (30%).

Characteristics of Teachers Leaving the Field

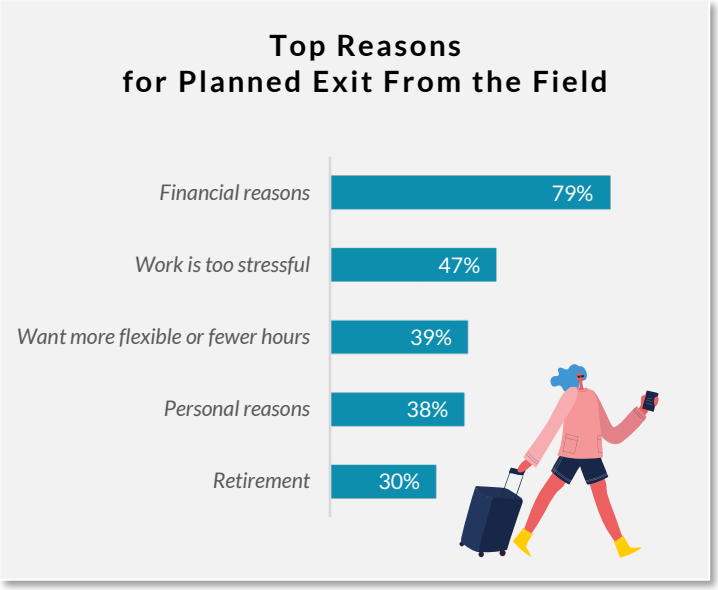
We ran statistical tests to see if there were differences between teachers planning to leave the field and those planning to stay. We looked for these differences in the following areas: job role, race, education, ECCE-related education, full-time/part-time status, new/experienced teacher, urban/rural workplace, program quality, age of classroom, pay, economic insecurity, food insecurity, and depression.

Results showed that the following types of teachers are statistically more likely to plan to leave within 2 years:

1. **Work part time**
   ($\chi 2$=18.17, *df*=1, *P*<0.001; Φ=0.14)
2. **Have less than 5 years of experience**
   ($\chi 2$=9.22, *df*=1, *P*<0.01; Φ=0.1)
3. **Screen at-risk for depression**
   ($\chi 2$=8.58, *df*=1, *P*<0.01; Φ=0.1)

Those who intended to leave within 2 years *because of financial reasons*, were more likely to:

1. **Identify as non-White**
   ($\chi 2$=6.94, df=1, *P*<0.01; Φ=-0.24)
2. **Work full time**
   ($\chi 2$=6.31, *df*=1, *P*<0.05; Φ=0.23)
3. **Screen at-risk for economic insecurity**
   ($\chi 2$=6.02, *df*=1, *P*<0.05; Φ=0.23)
4. **Screen at-risk for food insecurity**
   ($\chi 2$=6.09, *df*=1, *P*<0.05; Φ=0.23)
5. **Screen at-risk for depression**
   ($\chi 2$=9.48, df=1, *P*<0.01; Φ=0.29)



Wage Compression

Typically, we expect pay to increase as one's education and experience increase. However, some conditions can cause pay scales to shrink. In other words, those who are most qualified do not get paid much more than those who are least qualified. This is called "**wage compression**."

Wage compression deters interest in professional development and increases turnover and attrition in the workforce. Better-qualified employees may seek out better-paying positions in other programs, or they may leave their field altogether.

One of the economic factors associated with wage compression is an increase to a state's minimum wage.[39] On November 6, 2018, Arkansas voters passed Issue 5 to increase the state minimum wage in three phases:

- From $8.50 to $9.25 effective January 1, 2019.
- From $9.25 to $10 on January 1, 2020.
- From $10 to $11 on January 1, 2022.

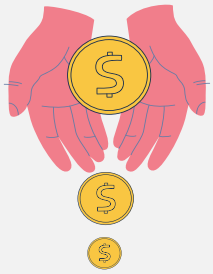
Arkansas ECCE programs were legally required to comply with minimum wage laws, but they were not required to increase wages for staff who were being paid at or above the new minimum wage already.
It would have been difficult for most providers to increase salaries across the board without also raising tuition for families.

By federal standards, only 18% of families in Arkansas can afford care at current costs.[40] ECCE providers know that by raising prices they will reduce their market and potentially endanger their businesses. Therefore, we looked for evidence of wage compression in this study.

Entry-level pay *(minimum wage)* **has increased** *since 2018.*

HOWEVER . . .

There is now **less financial incentive** *for career advancement.*



Statewide Estimates of Wage Compression

Using state occupational employment and wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics,[h] after adjusting for inflation, these salary changes occurred between 2017 and 2021:

Child Care Workers *increased 7%.*

Preschool Teachers *decreased 10%.*

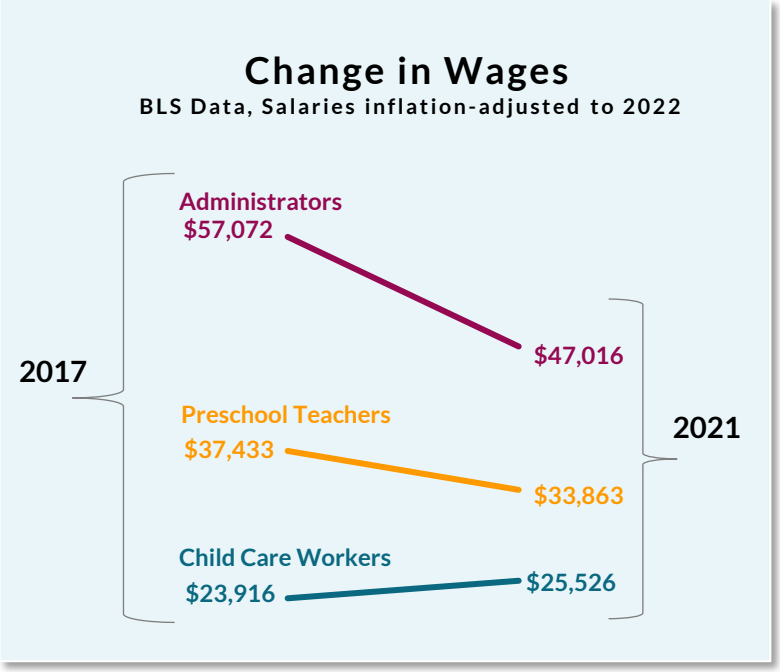
Administrators *decreased 18%.*[i]

Over a period of 4 years, the spread of salaries from lowest paid to highest paid positions shrank by $11,666.

We see similar changes when comparing data from our 2017 instructional staff study to data from this study. Adjusting for inflation, pay differences between teachers:

- with the most and least **experience** *decreased by* 43% to $6,493.
- with the most and least **education** *decreased by 20%* to $4,625.
- with an **ECCE-related education** and those without one *decreased by 33%* to $2,588.

Our method for calculating these results is described in *Appendix 3.*



https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ar.htm. Classifications are 39-9011 Childcare Worker; 25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education; and 11-9031 Education Administrators, Preschool and Child Care Center/Program

[h] Child Care Workers (SOC 39-9011); Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (SOC 25-2011); Education Administrators, Preschool and Child Care Center/Program (SOC 11-9031)

[i] While the focus of this study is on teaching staff, we provided the BLS data for administrators here to demonstrate that wage compression is an issue across the ECCE sector.

Results: Former Staff

Demographics & Workplace Characteristics

The following section summarizes the demographics of former teachers, their education and experience, and aspects of their former employers' program quality.

Demographics of Former Teachers

The sample of former teachers was nearly a decade younger and slightly more diverse than the sample of current teachers. The median age of former teachers was 29 years old, and 69% identified as White. The median age of current teachers was 38 years, and 72% identified as White.

Assistant teachers (54%) were more likely to have left the field than lead teachers (47%).

See *Table 3.1.* for full results.

Education & Experience of Former Teachers

When education in a related field and CDAs were taken into account, 27% of former teachers had an ECCE-related education, compared to 40% of current teachers.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of former teachers left the field within 4 years of starting to teach in the ECCE field.

See *Tables 3.3* and *3.4.* for full results.

Characteristics of Working Environments

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the former teachers worked in urban counties; 43% worked in rural counties. There was an even split among infant/toddler and preschool teachers (43% and 42%).

The survey asked for the Better Beginnings quality rating of teachers' last employer. Only 11% reported working for a Level 3 (higher-quality) program, 16% reported working for a Level 1 program, 8% for a Level 2 program, 23% said their program was in Better Beginnings but did not know the level, and 22% were unsure whether their program was a part of Better Beginnings.

These results align with research on how turnover risk changes with role, education, experience, and program quality. Higher-quality programs provide workplace supports that reduce staff interest in leaving.[41]

See *Table 3.2.* for full results.

Wages, Benefits & Economic Security

The following section reports average pay rates and access to benefits of former teachers.

Wages of Former Teachers

Former teachers reported lower hourly wages ($12.07) than current teachers ($13.52). Pay varied according to program type and teaching position. Lead teachers in centers reported higher hourly rates ($12.53) than assistant teachers in centers and home-based programs ($11.62).[j]

Wages were higher among preschool teachers ($12.41) than among infant/toddler teachers ($11.92). Only 10% of the total sample reported receiving a cost-of-living pay increase during their time as an ECCE teacher.

Results also showed that former teachers with an ECCE-related education were paid statistically significant higher wages than those without a similar education. Those who worked in Better Beginnings Level 3 programs were paid significantly more than those who worked in lower-quality programs (ECCE-related, M=$13.50, SD=3.17); $t(117)=5.025$, $p<0.001$, $d=1.07$; No ECCE-related, M=$11.64, SD=0.88) (Higher-Quality, M=$13.00 ,$SD$=2.53); $t(120)=1.91$, $p<0.05$, $d=-0.56$, Lower-Quality, M=$11.96, SD=1.77).

[j] Respondents selected the per-hour pay that was closest to their own, from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments. Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00. We then multiplied their reported number by 2,080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.

Benefits of Former Teachers

Although 72% worked full time, former teachers reported less access to common workplace benefits than teachers still in the field. For example, 31% of former teachers reported having been offered health insurance benefits compared to 48% currently teaching. Only 16% had access to retirement benefits compared to 32% of current teachers. Paid time off was more commonly available than other benefits for former teachers; 60% reported access.

Most former teachers (76%) indicated that they were not paid to participate in professional development required by state licensing standards.

For a more detailed breakdown, see *Table 3.9*.

Economic Security of Former Teachers

While 46% of current teachers reported receiving some type of financial assistance for themselves or their children, the percentage was slightly lower for former teachers (39%). The most common forms of assistance former teachers had received were Medicaid/ARKids First insurance (28%), SNAP (12%), and free/reduced lunch for children (11%).

Motivation for Leaving the Field

We asked former staff to rate how important various factors were in their decisions to leave the ECCE workforce. (See *Table 3.10* for details). When a former teacher reported that going back to school was an important factor in their decision to leave the field, we asked if they planned on returning to ECCE after graduation. Those who said yes were removed from any turnover calculations.

Motivations were like those of current teachers who intend to leave the field within 2 years. Results showed that 74% teachers left because of financial reasons, which included:

- Wanting higher pay.
- Wanting better benefits.
- The minimum wage increase made jobs outside of child care more attractive.
- No opportunity for career advancement.

The financial reason most often rated important was wanting a higher paying job (64%). Although the raise in the January 2021 minimum wage likely increased economic security for some teachers, it probably led to teacher loss as well. More than half of former teachers stated that the minimum wage increase made other jobs outside of child care more attractive.

Besides financial concerns, leading drivers to leave the field were personal reasons (57%), desire for greater flexibility to work different hours (49%), the work was too stressful (43%), health reasons (28%), and returning to school (30%). Of those returning to school, 37% said they plan to return to ECCE after graduation, while 63% said they are going back to school to enter a different field.

We compared those who said a financial reason was *very important* or *important* to those who left the field for a non-financial reason. Results showed no statistically significant differences between the two groups by race, in wages, ECCE-related education, length of time in the field, urban/rural job setting, ages of children served, or the quality rating of their last center. However, African Americans were statistically overrepresented among those that left for financial reasons ($\chi 2$=15.85, df=2, P<.001).

Discussion

All young children deserve high-quality early child care and education that prepares them for success in school and life. This will require a well-trained pool of educators who receive livable salaries and workplace benefits, such as health insurance and paid time off.

Most ECCE programs primarily rely on parent tuition to operate, but what parents can afford to pay is not enough to cover well-qualified educator salaries.

This study describes an ECCE workforce that is inexperienced, financially insecure, and prone to high turnover.

Forty percent (40%) of teachers have 4 years or less of experience. The same percentage are at risk for depression. One-third of Arkansas educators report intention to leave the field, in large part, due to low compensation. The average annual salary reported by participants of this study is $27,883, an amount that will not support a one-parent, one-child household in any Arkansas county.[42]

Half of the respondents in this study reported difficulty paying for basic expenses, such as rent, transportation, and utilities, and 35% of the workforce uses at least one type of public assistance.

Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to instability in the workforce.

They have less optimal brain development when their caregivers change frequently or when caregivers do not provide high-contact, positive attention and learning opportunities. Despite the importance of infant/toddler teachers, our study indicates that they earn less than their preschool colleagues and require more public assistance than other teachers.

Brain development in the first 3 years has a lifelong impact on a child's success in school, careers, and relationships. That is why ECCE is a public investment. Economic analyses demonstrate that for every dollar we spend on the quality of a young child's education, we get a 13% per year return on investment.[43]

Since our last workforce study in 2017 there have been positive developments for the Arkansas ECCE workforce: a higher minimum wage, voucher reimbursement rates that are more likely to cover the provider's costs to provide care, and establishment of a college scholarship program.

While all of these tactics to support ECCE infrastructure are helpful, they may not enough to ensure that every child has the well-prepared, well-compensated teacher that they deserve.

For example, the minimum wage increases likely lifted some teachers out of grave financial insecurity, but there is evidence that these raises were paid for, at least in part, by administrators and directors making cuts to their own pay, a development that will de-incentivize ECCE career advancement.

Arkansas should use ARPA funds to invest in programs that will yield benefits after the 2-year funding period. Long-term solutions should ensure that ECCE businesses have steady revenue outside of parent tuition and that this revenue be spent, in large part, on teacher compensation and professional development.

To make progress toward a better future for teachers and young children, stakeholders could address key implications of this study's results.

1) Address barriers to professional development access.

Half of teachers in our study reported lack of access to professional development supports such as mentoring, coaching, individualized professional growth plans, or substitutes and compensation to cover training and planning outside of the classroom.

Arkansas has a strong network of professional development providers, but there are barriers at the program level to providing these opportunities, especially in lower-quality programs. Two possible strategies that stakeholders may consider are:

a. **Coordinating a statewide communications campaign where all licensing and quality improvement staff as well as all state training agencies promote the benefits of professional development and advertise the free or low-cost options available.**
Messaging from the Arkansas Department of Labor could remind program directors and administrators of the legal obligation to pay staff for training required by the workplace. This includes each employee's 15 hours of annual training required by minimum licensing as well as additional hours needed to meet higher program quality standards.

c. **Providing programs in socially vulnerable areas with funds for substitute teachers or program-wide professional development days.**
The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program is designed to help programs and staff afford to participate in high-quality professional development, but participation in college courses will continue to be less feasible for staff in socially vulnerable areas of the state. Intermediary forms of professional development are still needed.

Although programs have had access to various forms of pandemic-related emergency funding, results of our study indicate that professional development likely took a backseat to other urgent needs, such as paid sick leave or personal protection equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies.

DCCECE has done an excellent job making free or low-cost training, technical assistance, and coaching available throughout the state, but the current workforce is fairly inexperienced and has not had much time to participate in these forms of professional development. Therefore, it could be helpful to dedicate a portion of ARPA funding to cover staff wages for time spent learning outside of the classroom or outside of typical program hours.

2) Sustain and expand efforts to promote higher education for ECCE staff.

ECCE staff with college education are more likely to view teaching as a long-term profession. Implementation and expansion of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program should help not only with skills development but also with higher pay and staff retention. In other states, participants who have completed an associate's degree through a T.E.A.C.H. program are paid up to 23% more than the average ECCE salary.[44]

To date, the program has served 150 educators, and its 2022 goal is to enroll 250 more. Arkansas is using ARPA funds for this expansion. The state will need to determine other funding sources to sustain T.E.A.C.H. when ARPA ends. Some suggestions to support expansion and long-term sustainability are to:

a. **Use data to steer communications plans and recruitment into T.E.A.C.H.** DCCECE, AECA, and partner colleges can use data to recruit scholarship candidates who would benefit the most. In particular, our study shows that Black educators are less likely to less likely to be aware of T.E.A.C.H. and less likely to receive higher compensation from their degrees. All communications related to recruitment should include information about the new salary supplements that will be available through the WAGE$ program.

b. **Forgive college loans for individuals who earned ECCE-related degrees prior to T.E.A.C.H.** Loan forgiveness may bring back some educators who have left the field and encourage current staff to remain in their positions. Loan forgiveness could be contingent on staff completing a number of months or years of service in a licensed ECCE program, similar to the 1-year requirement for T.E.A.C.H. recipients.

c. **Evaluate whether T.E.A.C.H. participation supports workforce retention and quality.** To show the value of the T.E.A.C.H. program, scholars should be tracked after their studies are complete. Data should be collected on movement in and out of programs and on the quality of their interactions and instruction with children. This will enable stakeholders to demonstrate its value, or if outcomes are not ideal, to adjust scholarship policies and higher education curricula.

3) Develop sustainable policies and programs that support financial stability for the ECCE workforce.

To encourage more teachers to pursue ECCE-related higher education, there need to be long-term financial incentives. Unfortunately, we see evidence of wage compression since 2017. In other words, there is less financial incentive to pursue additional education than there was a few years ago. Because child care is already unaffordable for many families, funding to incentivize career advancement needs to come from sources other than parent tuition.

Arkansas is in the process of implementing a salary supplement program called Step Up to WAGE$ Arkansas (WAGE$). In other states, WAGE$ programs have improved compensation, teacher education, and job retention.[45]

In Arkansas, this program will provide wage enhancements to child care teachers and directors who make $23 or less per hour in licensed centers or family child care programs. Stipends will be issued twice a year based on the person's level of education and hours worked within a 6-month period of time in the same child care program.

Similar to the T.E.A.C.H. expansion, wage incentives will be funded through ARPA, but Arkansas will need to develop more comprehensive, long-term strategies that keep ECCE programs in business and its workforce paid livable wages. Meanwhile, Arkansas should

consider braiding other programs and policies together.

a. **Offer refundable tax credits for ECCE staff.** Louisiana and Nebraska offer refundable tax credits for ECCE teachers and directors. Credits are based on education level and years of experience, as well as on the quality rating of their employer's program. Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credit, established in 2007, has been a key driver of statewide improvements in teacher education and program quality.[46]

b. **Fold model salary scales into funding formulas and director training and technical assistance.** Arkansas workgroups recently developed a suggested salary scale for ECCE programs. Such scales can be used to incentivize college attendance and long-term career advancement. Arkansas should fold these scales into cost modeling, funding decisions, and financial awards. For instance, North Carolina programs that receive ARPA-funded grants will receive higher amounts by committing to pay staff according to the state's model salary scale. Arkansas could use similar strategies when setting voucher reimbursement rates or when awarding quality improvement or expansion grants and contracts.

4) Build equitable compensation and education systems.

Results of our study highlight disparities in opportunities for White teachers and teachers of color. Black teachers are less likely to be aware of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program. Furthermore, they see very little return on their investments of time or money spent gaining an ECCE-related college education. In our study, minorities with and without associate degrees or CDAs are paid similarly.

These are factors that increase turnover risk and, as a recent Louisiana study showed, risk in the quality of interactions that children experience with their teachers.[47]

Stakeholders are encouraged to use data from this study, from Arkansas's Professional Development Registry, and from the CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)[k] to plan systems that provide the most support to communities with the greatest needs.

a. **Use SVI to determine grant funding and to shape communications, policies, and programs for T.E.A.C.H., WAGE$, and other professional development programs.** SVI uses 15 U.S. Census variables to help state officials identify communities that may need support before, during, or after disasters, such as the COVID pandemic. It takes into account minority status and socio-economic status at the county level. Other states are using SVI to advance equity through the use of ARPA funds. For example, Louisiana's ARPA-funded workforce stipends will be 20% higher for educators in socially vulnerable census tracts, and Connecticut is using SVI in its quality bonus funding formula.

b. **Ensure that trainers, technical assistants, and coaches who support program expansion and quality improvement receive training and practice to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in program policies and practices.** For example, they should refer directors and administrators to the state's new model salary scale to ensure that all teachers are paid equitably.

Arkansas's ECCE infrastructure has strengths upon which to build. However, the field is in need of sustainable systems that promote:

- equitable career advancement and financial stability for teachers;
- higher education and professional development opportunities that enable teachers to nurture better brain development for children;
- and a much more reliable workforce for programs, children, and families.

[k] https://svi.cdc.gov/map.html

Appendix 1. Representativeness of Study Sample vs. Arkansas ECCE Population

Table 1.1.

Demographics of PDR data vs. demographics of all staff in 2022 workforce study

Race (total n = 10,243; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample** *(current & former staff)*
	There are no significant differences in racial or ethnic demographics. Therefore, our workforce study is representative of the wider AR ECCE population based on race and ethnicity.	
White/Caucasian	70% (7,123)	71% (1,001)
Black/African American	23% (2,301)	20% (289)
Multi-Racial	n\a	n/a
Asian/Pacific Islander	1% (123)	2% (23)
Native American	1% (103)	1% (15)
Other	4% (455)	4% (61)
Not Given or Missing (Race)	(138)	(28)
Hispanic Ethicity (total n = 10,243; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample** *(current & former staff)*
Hispanic/Latino(a)	8% (803)	7% (101)
Not Given or Missing (Hispanic Ethnicity)	(765)	(115)

NoteData for this table includes all respondents, including those who were removed from survey results due to choosing an invalid job role. Percentage results are computed based on valid responses (i.e., exclude missing data). Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.2.

Demographics of PDR data vs. demographics of all staff in 2022 workforce study

Education level (total n = 10,243; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample**
	There were significant differences in the proportion of teachers across most educational categories included in the PDR. *A smaller proportion of teachers with a high school education and some college responded to the survey than would be expected based on the invitations sent to the field. Those with higher levels of education, an associate's degree or greater, were overrepresented as survey respondents.*	
Less than Associate's		
Some high school	2% (174)	1% (17)
High school/GED*	45% (4,617)	37% (520)
Some college*	24% (2,498)	21% (292)
Associate's		
Associate's degree without CDA*	9% (912)	13% (177)
CDA*	5% (558)	7% (98)
4yr+ degrees		
Bachelor's*	12% (1,223)	18% (247)
Master's or higher*	2% (227)	4% (53)
Not Given or Missing	(34)	(13)

NoteData for this table includes all respondents, including those who were removed from survey results due to choosing an invalid job role. Percentage results are computed based on valid responses (i.e., exclude missing data). Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.3.

Demographics of PDR data vs. demographics of all staff in 2022 workforce study

Experience level, years (total n = 9,651; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample**
	There are fewer teachers with less than 1 year of experience than would be expected based on the emailed sample (those we invited to participate). There were also significantly larger proportions of participants in all categories over 5 years of experience.	
Less than 1 year	46% (4,305)	35% (483)
1-4 years	23% (2,186)	22% (302)
5-10 years	16% (1,492)	19% (260)
11-15 years	6% (601)	10% (135)
16-20 years	4% (395)	6% (85)
20+ years	4% (418)	8% (103)
Not Given or Missing	(254)	(49)

Note: Data for this table includes all respondents, including those who were removed from survey results due to choosing an invalid job role. Percentage results are computed based on valid responses (i.e., exclude missing data). Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.4.

Demographics of PDR data vs. demographics of all staff in 2022 workforce study

Geography, Urban/Rural (total n = 9,651; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample**
	Geographic locations are similar across groups, suggesting our workforce respondents were representative of the wider PDR population.	
Urban	51% (4703)	50% (675)
Rural	49% (4,579)	50% (687)
Not Given or Missing	(369)	(55)
Geography, AECA Region (total n = 9,651; 1,417)	**PDR Data for Those We Emailed**	**PDR Data for Those in Our Sample**
	Geographic locations are similar across groups, suggesting our workforce respondents were representative of the wider PDR population.	
Central	30% (2,780)	31% (417)
Northwest	23% (2,127)	23% (314)
East	14% (1,334)	13% (170)
River Valley	12% (1,118)	12% (169)
Southwest	8% (774)	9% (124)
North Central	7% (605)	7% (88)
Southeast	6% (544)	6% (80)
Not Given or Missing	(369)	(55)

Note: Data for this table includes all respondents, including those who were removed from survey results due to choosing an invalid job role. Percentage results are computed based on valid responses (i.e., exclude missing data). Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Appendix 1.5. Current Teachers

Table 1.6.
Demographics & job role of Arkansas ECCE teachers

Age (n = 984)	*Our sample was similar in age to the general population in Arkansas.*
Median Age	38.0 years
Race/Ethnicity (n = 1,094)	*Our sample was racially similar to the general population of Arkansas.*
White/Caucasian	72%
Black/African-American	21%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	6%
Multi-Racial	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%
Native American	2%
Other	2%
Job role (n = 1,151)	
Lead Teacher (center-based)	55%
Assistant Teacher (center-based or family child care home)	45%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. Race/ethnicity use a check-all-that-apply format and may add to over 100%. Multiracial did not appear as a category on the survey but was calculated based on participants' answers. A total of 5% did not identify a race/ethnicity.

Table 1.7. Education of current Arkansas ECCE teachers	
Education level (n = 1,090)	*Only 40% of teachers have an ECCE-related education (CDA and/or any degree in ECCE-related field).*
Associate's degree or less *without* CDA	Category Total = 51%
Some high school	1%
High school/GED	24%
Some college	21%
Associate's degree	6%
Associate's degree *with* CDA	Category Total = 21%
High school/GED + CDA	6%
Some college + CDA	10%
Associate's degree + CDA	5%
Any degree in *unrelated* field	Category Total = 11%
Without CDA	9%
+ CDA	2%
Bachelor's degree or higher in *related* field, regardless of CDA	Category Total = 18%
Bachelor's degree	14%
Master's degree or higher	4%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.8. Experience of current Arkansas ECCE teachers	
Experience level, years (n = 1,106)	*Half of Arkansas's teachers have between 1-10 years of experience in the classroom.*
Less than 1 year	14%
1-4 years	26%
5-10 years	24%
11-15 years	12%
16-20 years	11%
20+ years	13%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.9.
Employment settings of ECCE teachers in Arkansas

County of employer (n = 951)	*Our sample of teachers was split evenly between urban and rural settings.*
Urban	49%
Rural	51%
AECA region of employer (n = 951)	*The majority of participants were from the Central or Northwest AECA regions.*
Central	31%
Northwest	22%
East	14%
River Valley	12%
Southwest	9%
Northcentral	6%
Southeast	6%
Program quality rating (n = 1,061)	*Over three quarters of our sample work in lower-quality programs.*
Not part of Better Beginnings	14%
Level 1	13%
Level 2	11%
Level 3	21%
Part of Better Beginnings, unsure of level	20%
Unsure if part of Better Beginnings	21%
Seasonal operation of employer (n = 1,068)	*Most teachers worked for programs that operate year-round.*
All year	70%
School year only	30%
Summer only	< 1%
Primary age group of classroom (n = 1,066)	*A slight majority of teachers worked primarily with preschool-age children.*
Infants/Toddlers (0-35 months)	37%
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	54%
School age (6+ years)	6%
Mixed ages (family child care homes)	3%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. Urban/rural counties are based on 2013 USDA Rural-Urban Continuum codes. Programs were rated "higher-quality" if participants said their program held a Better Beginnings Level 3 rating. Those that were unsure of their level were given a lower-quality rating.

Table 1.10. Hours worked per week for current Arkansas ECCE teachers	
Average hours per week (n = 1,050)	*Just over three quarters of teachers worked full-time schedules.*
Part time	Total = 23%
0-10 hours	8%
11-20 hours	8%
21-30 hours	8%
Full time	Total = 77%
31-40 hours	60%
41-50 hours	15%
51-60 hours	1%
60 hours or more	2%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.11.
Average pay by experience for current Arkansas ECCE teachers

Experience level, years
(n = 931)

As expected, average pay increased with experience. However, pay is far below the average kindergarten teacher's salary in Arkansas of $50,650.

In Arkansas, the minimum wage in 2022 is $11 per hour, higher than many states' minimum wage of $7.25. According to the United for ALICE project's Household Survival Budget, even the $16/hr earned by teachers with more than 20 years experience will not support a one-parent/one-child household in any county in Arkansas.

	Per Hour	Per Year
Less than 1 year	$11.87	$24,690
1-4 years	$12.29	$25,563
5-10 years	$13.41	$27,893
11-15 years	$14.46	$30,077
16-20 years	$15.25	$31,720
>20 years	$15.96	$33,197

Note: Respondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.. One participant was removed as an outlier due to the combination of their listed income, education, and experience. Average kindergarten pay sourced from http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm. ALICE data sourced from unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Table 1.12.
Average pay by education for current Arkansas ECCE teachers

Education level (n = 919)	*As expected, pay typically increased with education and credentials. Those with an ECCE-related education (bachelor's degree or higher in a related field OR any education level + CDA) are paid an average of $5,297 more than those without a related education.*	
	Per Hour	Per Year
Associate's degree or less *without* CDA		
Some high school	$12.50	$26,000
High school/GED	$12.12	$25,204
Some college	$12.33	$25,647
Associate's degree	$13.37	$27,800
Associate's degree *with* CDA		
High school/GED + CDA	$12.31	$25,615
Some college + CDA	$12.83	$26,688
Associate's degree + CDA	$14.41	$29,967
Any degree in *unrelated* field		
Without CDA	$13.55	$28,185
+ CDA	$14.48	$30,120
Bachelor's degree or higher in *related* field, regardless of CDA		
Bachelor's degree	$16.78	$34,900
Master's degree or higher	$21.43	$44,581

Note: Respondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.. One participant was removed as an outlier due to the combination of their listed income, education, and experience.

Table 1.13.
Average pay by job role &class age for current Arkansas ECCE teachers

Job role (n = 932)	*Average annual pay reported by all current teachers in our sample ($28,122) is slightly higher than reported by the May 2021 Bureau of Labor Statistics for Arkansas ($24,220). Pay for ECCE teachers is far below the average kindergarten teacher's salary in Arkansas ($50,650).* *According to the United for ALICE project's Household Survival Budget, neither role's average earnings will support a one-parent/one-child household in any county in Arkansas.*	
	Per Hour	Per Year
Lead teacher	$14.44	$30,035
Assistant teacher	$12.37	$25,730
Class age (n = 928)	*Preschool teachers are paid more than infant-toddler teachers.*	
	Per Hour	Per Year
Infant/toddler (0 to 35 months)	$12.68	$26,374
Preschoolers (3 years-5 years)	$14.34	$29,827
School age (6+ years)	$12.93	$26,894
Mixed ages (for example, family child care Homes)	$12.13	$25,230

Job role x Class age (n = 932)				
	Lead Teachers		Assistant Teachers	
	Per Hour	Per Year	Per Hour	Per Year
Infant/toddler (0 to 35 months)	$13.53	$28,142	$12.01	$24,981
Preschoolers (3 years-5 years)	$15.60	$32,440	$12.63	$26,270
School age (6+ years)	$13.34	$27,747	$12.68	$26,374
Mixed ages (for example, family child care Homes)	$14.08	$29,286	$11.62	$24,170

Note: spondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they work full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes. One participant was removed as an outlier due to the combination of their listed income, education, and experience. Average child care provider and kindergarten pay sourced from http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm. ALICE data sourced from unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Table 1.14.
Job benefits offered to current Arkansas ECCE teachers by program quality

Benefits offered	*Only 47% of teachers have access to health insurance through their job.*		
	All Staff (N=1,032)	Higher-Quality Programs (N=218)	Lower-Quality Programs (N=814)
Insurance (offered at least one type)***	52%	71%	46%
Health insurance***	48%	67%	43%
Dental insurance***	43%	62%	38%
Disability and/or life insurance***	29%	47%	24%
Holidays and leave (offered at least one)	78%	91%	74%
Paid vacation days (or PTO)	52%	54%	51%
Paid holidays**	60%	69%	58%
Paid sick days (or PTO)***	60%	81%	55%
Maternity leave (offered at least one)	20%	23%	19%
Unpaid maternity leave	14%	17%	14%
Paid maternity leave	6%	6%	6%
Paid training* (offered at least one)	36%	43%	35%
Regular pay for the 15 PD hours required by licensing*	31%	38%	29%
Regular pay and/or reimbursement for training beyond required PD hours	14%	18%	13%
Cost reductions (offered at least one)	44%	47%	43%
Free meals for staff	27%	33%	26%
Free/reduced child care fees	27%	28%	26%
Raises and retirement (offered at least one)	46%	67%	40%
Periodic increases in wages based on cost of living or performance/ education**	22%	30%	20%
Retirement or pension plan***	32%	53%	26%
Bonus pay/financial incentives to gain additional education or PD*	10%	14%	9%
No benefits***	9%	3%	11%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. *P < .05, **P < .01, ***P < .001. Chi-square was used to test statistical comparisons.

Table 1.15.
Financial assistance benefits utilized by current Arkansas ECCE teachers

Financial assistance benefits (n = 1,018)	*A third of teachers are utilizing Medicaid and/or AR Kids First. The average teacher utilizes roughly one benefit below (0.9).*
Insurance	Uses one or more in this category = 35%
Medicaid/AR Kids First	35%
Food	Uses one or more in this category = 22%
Free or reduced lunch for your school-aged children	16%
Food stamps/SNAP	8%
WIC (women, infants, children) program	6%
Income supplement/replacement (institutional sources)	Uses one or more in this category = 15%
Social Security	7%
Childcare vouchers	8%
Housing vouchers or rent forgiveness (ex: Section 8, COVID rent forgiveness)	1%
TEA (Temporary Employment Assistance)	0%
Unemployment	0%
Workers compensation	0%
Hero/hazard pay	0%
Income supplement/replacement (family/friends)	Uses one or more in this category = 6%
Assistance from parents or other family members (such as help with rent or other bills)	6%
None/other sources	
None of these	54%
Other	1%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.16.
Economic & food security of current Arkansas ECCE teachers

In the last year, how many times have/has... (n = 1,011-1,029)	*Half of teachers are at risk for economic insecurity and over a third for food insecurity.*
Economic security	Economic Risk = 50%
...you been unable to afford medical care, dental care, or medicine?	34%
...you been unable to pay an important monthly bill, like rent, car payment, house repair, etc.?	34%
...you had problems with transportation because you could not afford gas, car repairs, bus/cab fees, or other transportation?	20%
...you had any utilities turned off because there wasn't enough money to pay them?	15%
Food security	Food Insecurity = 37%
...the food that you bought just didn't last and you didn't have money to get more?	34%
...you or others in your house cut the size of your meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food	27%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. A larger proportion of teachers in lower-quality programs had economic risks than those in higher-quality programs. There was no significant difference in economic security based on classroom age.
Teachers who worked full-time were slightly more likely to be at risk for food insecurity than those who worked part-time. There was not a significant difference in food insecurity based on quality of program or classroom age.
Chi-square was used to test statistical comparisons for both economic and food insecurity.

Table 1.17.
Preparation to work with challenging behavior &suspension/expulsion activities of current Arkansas ECCE teachers by quality

Calls home due to challenging behavior	*Most teachers say they have not called home to report challenging behavior in the last month*		
In the last month, how frequently have you called parents to report children's challenging behaviors?	All Staff (N=972)		
Not at all	71%		
One or two times per month	23%		
One time a week or more	6%		
Preparation to work with children who have social-emotional challenges	*About two thirds of teachers feel prepared to work with children who have social-emotional and/or behavior challenges.*		
I feel "generally prepared" or "totally prepared" working with children who…	All Staff (N=967)	Higher-Quality Programs (N=208)	Lower-Quality Programs (N=759)
Have social-emotional and/or behavior problems	64%	63%	65%
Occurance of suspension/expulsion	*Most report having no suspensions/expulsions in the last year.*		
In the last year, have you or your program asked a parent to:	All Staff (N=960)	Higher-Quality Programs (N=208)	Lower-Quality Programs (N=752)
None of these occurred in the last year	73%	76%	72%
[Combined results: Had ANY of the below in the last year]	27%	24%	28%
Pick up a child early (partial-day suspension)	18%	17%	18%
Keep a child at home for a full day or more (full/multi-day suspension)	5%	1%	6%
Withdraw a child from the program permanently (expulsion)	4%	5%	4%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. *P < .05, **P < .01, ***P < .001. Chi-square was used to test statistical comparisons.

Table 1.18.
Professional development supports available to current Arkansas ECCE teachers by program quality

Types of PD support	*Half of staff reported no professional development supports.*		
	All Staff (N=955)	Staff in Better Beginnings Level 3 Programs (N=207)	Staff in Lower-Quality Programs, including unknown BB level (N=748)
Individualized professional growth plan updated at least annually***	25%	39%	21%
Mentoring or coaching*	18%	23%	16%
Tuition assistance for college or certification courses	16%	19%	16%
Paid substitutes (or increase staff) to allow teachers time to prepare, train, and/or plan*	14%	19%	12%
Paid wages for attendance at state/regional conferences	11%	13%	10%
Access to a community of learners, also called a professional learning community, facilitated by an expert	10%	13%	9%
Consultants hired to work directly with staff	6%	9%	5%
Paid wages for attendance at national conferences	5%	5%	6%
None of these***	50%	36%	54%

Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. *P < .05, **P < .01, ***P < .001. Chi-square was used to test statistical comparisons.

Table 1.19.

Years until current Arkansas staff plan to leave the ECCE workforce

Planning to exit workforce in... (n = 1,101)	*About one in five (22%) current teachers planned to leave the field within 5 years.*
Less than 1 year	4%
1-2 years	7%
3-5 years	11%
6-10 years	11%
11 years or more	28%
Not sure	37%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 1.20.

Factors motivating current Arkansas ECCE teachers who plan to quit within the next 2 years

Factors that are "Important" or "Very Important" to their decision. (n = 81-118)	*Nearly 80% of staff cite one or more financial reasons as a motivating factor in planning to leave the field within 2 years. Stress was also a significant factor at 47%.*
Financial Reasons	One or more is Important /Very Important = 78%
I want a higher paying job	64%
I want better benefits	61%
The minimum wage increase has made jobs outside of child care more attractive	52%
I have no opportunity for career advancement	41%
Workplace environment/job characteristics	
The work is too stressful	47%
I want a job that has more flexibility (ex. working different or fewer hours)	40%
I'm not given enough hours	18%
Personal reasons	
I'm leaving for other personal reasons	39%
I'm retiring	30%
I'm leaving to go back to school (to do something else)	26%
I'm leaving for health reasons	11%
Other/reason not listed	3%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. Those who said they went back to school for more ECCE-related education and planned to return after graduation (n=14) were removed from all turnover calculations and reporting.

Appendix 2. Former Teachers

Table 2.1.
Demographics & job role of former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Age (n = 131)	*Former teachers tended to be younger than the general population in Arkansas and 9 years younger on average than current teachers.*
Median Age	29 years
Race (n = 133)	Our sample was racially similar to the general population of Arkansas and to the current teachers in this study.
White/Caucasian	69%
Black/African-American	19%
Hispanic	8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%
Native American	2%
Other	2%
Multi-racial	1%
Job role (n = 144)	
Lead teacher (center-based)	47%
Assistant teacher (center-based or family child care home)	54%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. Race/ethnicity used a check-all-that-apply format and may add to over 100%. Multiracial did not appear as a category on the survey but was calculated based on participants' answers. A total of 8% did not identify a race/ethnicity.

Table 2.2.
Employment settings of former Arkansas ECCE teachers

County of employment (n = 132)	*Former teachers were slightly more likely to have worked in urban counties than current ones.*
Urban	57%
Rural	43%
AECA region of employer (n = 132)	*The majority of respondents lived in either Central or Northwest Arkansas.*
Central	33%
Northwest	30%
River Valley	11%
East	7%
Southwest	7%
Northcentral	6%
Southeast	6%
Better Beginings level (n = 135)	*Former teachers were less likely than current ones to be employed by quality-rated programs, especially programs rated Level 3.*
Not part of Better Beginnings	21%
Level 1	16%
Level 2	8%
Level 3	11%
Part of Better Beginnings, unsure of level	23%
Unsure if a part of Better Beginnings	22%
Seasonal operation of employer (n = 135)	*Most former teachers worked for programs that operate year-round.*
All year	85%
School year only	13%
Summer only	2%
Primary age group of classroom (n = 132)	*The sample contained an even mix of infant-toddler and preschool teachers.*
Infants/Toddlers (0-35 months)	43%
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	42%
School age (6+ years)	5%
Mixed ages	10%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%. Urban/rural counties are based on 2013 USDA Rural-Urban Continuum codes. Those unsure of their level were given a lower-quality rating.

Table 2.3.

Education of former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Education level (n = 132)	*Only 27% of former teachers had an ECCE-related education (CDA and/or any degree in ECCE-related field) compared to 40% for current teachers.*
Associate's degree or less *without* CDA	Total = 60%
Some high school	2%
High school/GED	22%
Some college	32%
Associate's degree	5%
Associate's degree *with* CDA	Total = 14%
High school/GED + CDA	4%
Some college + CDA	5%
Associate's degree + CDA	5%
Any degree in *unrelated* field	Total = 16%
Without CDA	14%
+ CDA	2%
Bachelor's degree or higher in *related* field, regardless of CDA	Total = 11%
Bachelor's degree	10%
Master's degree or higher	1%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 2.4.
Experience of former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Experience level, years (n = 142)	*The majority of teachers who left the field did so within their first 4 years.*
Less than 1 year	35%
1-4 years	28%
5-10 years	23%
11-15 years	8%
16-20 years	4%
20+ years	3%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 2.5.
Hours worked per week for former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Average hours per week (n = 134)	*Most teachers worked full-time schedule, and the FT/PT split was similar to current teachers.*
Part time	Total = 28%
0-10 hours	6%
11-20 hours	5%
21-30 hours	17%
Full time	Total = 72%
31-40 hours	53%
41-50 hours	16%
51-60 hours	2%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may add to more than 100%.

Table 2.6.
Average pay by experience &education for former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Experience level, years (n = 122)	*As expected, average pay increased with experience. However, pay is far below the average Arkansas kindergarten teachers' salary of $50,650.* *At the time of the survey, the minimum wage in Arkansas was $11/hour. According to the United for ALICE project's Household Survival Budget, even the $14.50/hour earned by teachers with more than 20 years experience, will not support a one-parent/one-child household in any county in Arkansas.*	
	Per Hour	Per Year
Less than 1 year	$11.53	$23,982
1-4 years	$11.89	$24,731
5-10 years	$12.02	$25,002
11-15 years	$14.29	$29,723
16-20 years	$13.25	$27,560
20+ years	$14.50	$30,160
ECCE-Related education (n = 119)	*ECCE-related education was defined as a bachelor's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field OR any education level with CDA.*	
No High School/GED	$11.00	$22,880
High School/GED	$11.36	$23,629
Some College	$11.80	$24,544
HS/GED, plus CDA	$12.94	$26,915
Some College, plus CDA	$11.95	$24,856
AA, No CDA	$11.70	$24,336
Any College Degree in Unrelated Field, No CDA	$11.78	$24,502
BA in Related Field, CDA Yes and No	$14.69	$30,555
MA or higher in Related Field, CDA Yes and No	$13.50	$28,080

Note: Respondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they worked full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes. Average kindergarten pay sourced from http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm. ALICE data sourced from unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Table 2.7.

Average pay by job role &class age for former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Job role (n = 122)	*Former lead teachers were paid $1.45 less per hour than lead teachers who remained. There was a smaller difference for former assistant teachers, who made $0.75 less than current assistant teachers.*	
	Per Hour	Per Year
Lead teacher	$12.54	$26,083
Assistant teacher or family child care provider	$11.62	$24,170
Class age (n = 120)	Per Hour	Per Year
Infant/toddler (0 to 35 months)	$11.92	$24,794
Preschoolers (3 years-5 years)	$12.41	$25,813
School age (6+ years)	$12.33	$25,646
Mixed ages	$11.42	$23,754

Note: Respondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they worked full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes Average kindergarten pay sourced from http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm. ALICE data sourced from unitedforalice.org/wage-tool.

Table 2.8.
Average pay by job role &experience for former Arkansas ECCE teachers

Job role (n = 122)	*Among current teachers, pay increased consistently with more years of experience. This same consistency was not evident for former teachers, Results should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes.*	
Lead teacher in a center (n = 60)	Per Hour	Per Year
Less than 1 year	$11.58	$24,086
1-4 years	$12.09	$25,147
5-10 years	$12.46	$25,917
11-15 years	$14.21	$29,557
16-20 years	$13.25	$27,560
More than 20 years	$15.67	$32,594
Assistant teacher or aide in a center or family child care home (n = 62)	Per Hour	Per Year
Less than 1 year	$11.51	$23,941
1-4 years	$11.69	$24,315
5-10 years	$12.46	$25,917
11-15 years	$11.57	$24,066
16-20 years	$14.75	$30,680
More than 20 years	$11.00	$22,880

Note: Respondents selected the per-hour-pay that was closest to their own (from $11.00 to "More than $40.00", listed in $0.25 increments). Any data marked "More than $40.00" was recoded as $40.00)). We then multiplied their reported number by 2080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) to get the annual pay listed in this report. Data from participants who stated they worked full-time and those who work part-time were combined for analysis and reporting purposes.

Table 2.9.

Job benefits offered to former Arkansas ECCE teachers in Arkansas

Job benefits, former teachers (n = 134)	*The majority of teachers had limited access to common job benefits.*
Insurance (offered at least one)	34%
Health insurance	31%
Dental insurance	22%
Disability and/or life insurance	15%
Holidays and leave (offered at least one)	60%
Paid vacation days	36%
Paid holidays	45%
Paid sick/personal days	37%
Maternity leave (offered at least one)	15%
Unpaid maternity leave	9%
Paid maternity leave	6%
Paid training (offered at least one)	28%
Paid for training hours required by licensing	24%
Paid or stipend for additional training beyond required hours	11%
Cost reductions (offered at least one)	45%
Free meals for staff	24%
Free/reduced child care fees	34%
Raises and retirement (offered at least one)	22%
Periodic increases in wages based on cost of living or performance/education	10%
Retirement or pension plan	16%
Bonus pay/financial incentives to gain additional education or PD	3%

Table 2.10.
Factors motivating former Arkansas ECCE teachers to exit the field

Factors that are "Important" or "Very Important" to their decision. (n = 116-119)	*More than 70% of former teachers reported financial motivation to exit the field. The most important financial considerations were pay and benefits; slightly less than half (45%) also said the change to the minimum wage influenced their decision.*
Financial Reasons	One or more is Important /Very Important = 74%
I wanted a higher paying job	64%
I wanted better benefits	52%
The minimum wage increase made jobs outside of childcare more attractive	44%
No opportunity for advancement	38%
Workplace environment/job characteristics	
I wanted a job that has more flexibility (ex. working different or fewer hours)	49%
The work was too stressful	43%
Layoffs/hour reductions	
I was laid off	13%
I wasn't given enough hours	9%
Personal reasons	
I'm left for other personal reasons	57%
I'm left for health reasons	28%
I went back to school (to do something else)	21%
I retired	7%
Other/reason not listed	23%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Those who said they went back to school for more ECCE-related education and planned to return after graduation (n=14) were removed from all turnover calculations and reporting.

Appendix 3. Wage Compression

Average pay by experience for our sample

Between 2017 and 2022, the average inflation-adjusted pay difference between teachers with the most and least experience dropped by 43% to $6,493 from 2017 to 2022. Here is how we calculated that result:

First, we looked to see if there were differences in the pay range from most to least experienced teachers between the 2017 workforce study and now.

In 2017, pay for the most experienced teachers was $32,406 ($15.58/hour) and $19,365 ($9.31/hour) for the least experienced teachers, a difference of $13,041. To make an accurate comparison to 2022, we also have to adjust for inflation.

When adjusting that $13,041 difference from October 2017 dollars (when the 2017 workforce study data was collected) to February 2022 dollars, the inflation-adjusted pay difference for 2017 is $15,000.[I]

As reported above, the average annual pay for teachers with more than 20 years' experience is $33,197 ($15.96/hour), and the average for those with less a year's experience is $24,690 ($11.85/hour). That is a difference of $8,507.

Therefore, the average inflation-adjusted pay difference between teachers with the most and least experience dropped by 43.3% to $6,493 ($3.12/hour) from 2017 to 2022.

Average pay by education for our sample

The inflation-adjusted pay difference between teachers with the most and least education dropped by 20% to $4,625 from 2017 to 2022.

Additionally, the inflation-adjusted pay difference between those with an ECCE-related education and those without one fell by 33% to $2,588 from 2017 to 2022. Here is how we calculated those results:

- In 2017, annual pay for teachers with the most education was $40,206 ($19.33/hour) and $20,030 ($9.63/hour) for those with the least education, a difference of $20,176.
- When adjusting that $20,176 difference from October 2017 dollars to February 2022 dollars, the inflation-adjusted pay difference for 2017 is $23,206.
- As reported above, current pay for teachers with the most education is $44,581 ($21.43/hour) and $26,000 ($12.50/hour) for those with the least education, a difference of $18,581.
- Therefore, the average inflation-adjusted pay difference between teachers with the most and least education dropped by 19.9% to $4,625 (or $2.22/hour) from 2017 to 2022.

[I] Inflation calculations made using Consumer Price Index calculator at www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm and using October 2017 and February 2022 as reference months (when data was finished being collected for each study). The BLS submits revisions to this measurement of inflation (C-CPI-U) for three quarters after a given month (see page five, paragraph four at bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf). Therefore, exact dollar figures may change over time and differ from what is reported above.

We see a similar drop over time based on ECCE-related education (bachelor's degree or higher in an ECCE-related field OR any education level with a CDA).

- In the 2017 study, teachers with an ECCE-education reported making an inflation-adjusted average of $7,885 more than teachers who didn't have an ECCE-related education.
- As reported above, the average increase in pay for having an ECCE-related education is $5,297.
- Therefore, the average inflation-adjusted pay difference between those with an ECCE-related education and those without one fell by 32.8% to $2,588 (or $1.24/hour) from 2017 to 2022.

Wage compression: Average pay for the ECCE field statewide, Bureau of Labor Statistics data

To further validate our findings around wage compression, we also consulted salary data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics tables) on three ECCE-related job classifications.[48,m] The data are released each May, and we examined Arkansas data from May 2017 and May 2021. We then converted salaries from both years to the equivalent of February 2022 dollars to match the other inflation adjustments described above.

According to this data, the inflation-adjusted average pay for Arkansas "Child Care Workers" increased by 7% to $25,526 from 2017 to 2022, while "Preschool Teachers" decreased by 10% to $33,863, and "Education Administrators" decreased by 18% to $47,016.

Here is how we calculated those results:

- The average annual pay in Arkansas in May 2017 was $20,630 ($9.92/hour) for Child Care Workers, $32,290 ($15.52/hour) for Preschool Teachers, and $49,230 ($23.67/hour) for Administrators.
- The average annual pay in Arkansas in May 2021 was $24,220 ($11.65/hour) for Child Care Workers, $32,130 ($15.45/hour) for Preschool Teachers, and $44,610 ($21.45/hour) for Administrators.
- When adjusting May 2017 salaries to February 2022 dollars, the inflation-adjusted average pay was $23,916 ($11.50/hour) for Child Care Workers, $37,433 ($18.00/hour) for Preschool Teachers, and $57,072 ($27.44/hour) for Administrators.
- When adjusting May 2021 salaries to February 2022 dollars, the inflation-adjusted average pay was $25,526 ($12.27/hour) for Child Care Workers, $33,863 ($16.28/hour) for Preschool Teachers, and $47,016 ($22.60/hour) for Administrators.
- Therefore, the inflation-adjusted average pay for Arkansas "Child Care Workers" increased by 7% to $25,526 from 2017 to 2022, while "Preschool Teachers" decreased by 10% to $33,863, and "Education Administrators" decreased by 18% to $47,016.

While this method of calculating wage compression does not consider education or experience, as our previous calculations above did, it does offer the advantage of showing the field as a whole, rather than only those who responded to our 2017 and/or 2022 surveys.

[m] We used these classifications: 39-9011 Childcare Worker; 25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education; and 11-9031 Education Administrators, Preschool and Child Care Center/Program.

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