

From birth to age eight a child's brain is developing faster than at any other time in their life. The experiences a child has in those first eight years provide a foundation for their future. Children who receive high quality early learning experiences are more likely to live healthier lives, earn higher wages and contribute to society.

The quality of early care and education a child receives is directly linked to teacher education and compensation, but in Iowa, many early educators do not have higher education degrees and earn less than \$15 an hour. The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program provides education-based salary supplements to early educators to address the key issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover in the early childhood workforce. The WAGE\$ supplements make the early childhood field a more affordable and attractive professional option, thus reducing turnover rates. WAGE\$ offers higher financial awards as participants earn additional education, creating an important incentive to return to school. Ongoing supplements at the lower levels of education on the WAGE\$ scale are contingent upon completion of more coursework.

In Iowa, the **Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children** administers Child Care WAGE\$[®]. In FY23, the program provided salary supplements to **1,565** child care professionals for education earned and for their commitment to their early childhood program. These teachers, directors and family child care educators worked in **613** different programs serving approximately **26,668** children.

Education

- **54%** of active participants either had an associate degree in ECE or higher or submitted education documentation to show progress in college.

Compensation

- **35%** of WAGE\$ participants earned less than \$15 per hour from their employers.
- WAGE\$ recipients earned an average six-month supplement of **\$2,045**, or approximately **\$4,090** more per year, as a result of their participation.

Retention

- Only **15%** of WAGE\$ participants left their early education programs.

Demographics

- **13%** of WAGE\$ participants were people of color and/or Latinx
- **87%** of WAGE\$ participants worked in early care and education centers.
- **13%** of WAGE\$ participants worked in family child care homes.

Personal Impact

In surveys of WAGE\$ participants:

- **97%** said receiving a WAGE\$ supplement helped ease financial stress.

This year alone, **26,668** of Iowa's children benefited from consistent care provided by a better educated teacher.

"WAGE\$ encourages teachers to stay with their programs and continue to do this important work despite the fact that the pay for this job generally undervalues how important early childhood educators are within our society. We are paid as 'babysitters' and not educators. Until wages for this pivotal work increase across the board, the WAGE\$ Program helps teachers like me to make ends meet and to remain with teaching." - WAGE\$ participant

The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program is currently licensed and operating in five states. National outcomes can be found in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] and Child Care WAGE\$[®] 2022-2023 Annual National Program Report.





Child Care WAGE\$[®] Iowa FY23 Voices From the Field



Marilyn Babcock is an early care and education provider in Polk County at UnityPoint Health Child Development Center. She has been providing care with the same system for 45 years, and has known since she was 12 years old that she wanted to work with children.

Marilyn has an Associate Degree in Child Development that she earned in the 1980s. She initially started part-time at her program while she was finishing coursework at Des Moines Area Community College, but switched to full-time after she finished her degree. When asked what has kept her at her program all these years, Marilyn said, "The love of children and the families. The center is my second home and always will be." Marilyn also

shared that the turnover rate has impacted her and her program and that pay is still not enough for the work child care providers do.

Marilyn received her first WAGE\$ check in March 2016. She phased off the program in February 2019 when she went over the income cap in Polk County. WAGE\$ went statewide in Iowa July 2021 and the income cap was raised at that time. This allowed Marilyn to get back on the program for a few more payments before again phasing off the program for going over the income cap. The WAGE\$ income cap again increased for FY24, which allows for Marilyn to re-apply for WAGE\$. She has received a total of \$10,737.50 in WAGE\$ supplements since first getting on the program.

When asked how WAGE\$ has impacted her, Marilyn shared that she has used her WAGE\$ supplements to help pay off some medical bills, along with recently using the funds to pay for updates on her AC/furnace. Her WAGE\$ supplements also helped her to purchase books, toys, etc. for her classroom.

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iowaaeyc.org/programs/wages/