

Child Care WAGES[®] Iowa

FY24 RESULTS

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 are still working toward higher education degrees and earn less than needed to take care of themselves and their families. The Child Care WAGES[®] 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 WAGES supplements make the early childhood field a more affordable and attractive professional option, thus reducing turnover rates. WAGES 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 WAGES scale are contingent upon completion of more coursework.

In Iowa, the **Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children** administers Child Care WAGES[®]. In FY24, the program provided salary supplements to **1,636** 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 **617** different programs serving approximately **27,444** children.

EDUCATION

- **66%** of active participants either had an associate degree in ECE or higher or submitted education documentation to show progress in college.

COMPENSATION

- **26%** of WAGES participants earned less than \$15 per hour from their employers.
- WAGES recipients earned an average six-month supplement of **\$2,085**, or approximately **\$4,170** more per year, as a result of their participation.

RETENTION

- Only **15%** of WAGES participants left their early education programs.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- **14%** of WAGES participants were people of color and/or Latinx.
- **87%** of WAGES participants worked in early care and education centers.
- **13%** of WAGES participants worked in family child care homes.

PERSONAL IMPACT

In surveys of WAGES participants:

- **95%** said receiving a WAGES supplement helped ease financial stress.

This year alone, **27,444** of Iowa's children benefited from consistent care provided by a better educated teacher.

"WAGES 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 WAGES Program helps teachers like me to make ends meet and to remain with teaching."

WAGES participant

The Child Care WAGES[®] Program is currently licensed and operating in five states. National outcomes can be found in the TEACH Early Childhood[®] and Child Care WAGES[®] 2023-2024 Annual National Program Report.

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FY24 VOICES FROM THE FIELD



Mary Loftus

My name is Mary Loftus, and I am a preschool teacher at Stella Sanford Child Development Center in Sioux City, IA. I have worked in the early childhood field for 20 years, and in that time, the TEACH Early Childhood[®] and Child Care WAGES[®] programs advanced my career when I didn't think it would be possible. Without these programs, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing today.

My career at Stella began in 2003 when I graduated with an associate degree from Western Iowa Tech Community College in early childhood education, after following a dream to work with young children. I completed my field experiences at Stella and was offered a position as a floater when I graduated. After a couple of years, I applied for a position as the lead teacher in the 2-year-old classroom, where I enjoyed 6 years of watching the youngest in our center grow. When my older children started school, I took a position in the preschool room as an assistant, as my associate's degree was not enough to put me in a lead teaching position. I was content as an assistant, but there was a little something inside of me that wanted to be more. I knew I had the potential, but financially I was held back. In 2015, that all changed when a counselor from Iowa AEYC walked into the center and told us about the TEACH and WAGES programs.

It was a great feeling knowing I would be getting a bonus check from WAGES every 6 months for the work I'd already put in to make myself a better educator, as we know this field is not known for its high financial payout. My stipend checks have been put towards a variety of things, depending on what stage in life my family has been at when it arrived. Some examples are, back to school clothes, a new bathtub for our renovated bathroom after a pipe had burst in our basement, and we put some away into savings when we knew I'd be busy for 20 weeks with student teaching.

With the TEACH Early Childhood[®] scholarship, I was given a chance to achieve something I never imagined. As a mom of two young children, I knew we couldn't afford for me to go back to school on my child care wage and my husband's income. The TEACH scholarship was the catalyst that launched me to earn a bachelor's degree. In May 2023, I graduated from Buena Vista University with a bachelor's in Elementary Education with Reading and Pre-K endorsements. I am now qualified to be a Preschool Teacher with the Sioux City Preschool Initiative, and am the lead teacher in the preschool classroom where I was formerly the assistant. Not only did earning my degree advance my career, but it gave me the personal satisfaction that I could achieve this goal that once felt out of reach.