Strategies in Pursuit of Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity

Lessons From Seven States and Cities

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Established in 1999, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children's optimal development. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) conducts academic research to inform policy supporting high-quality early education for all young children. NIEER provides independent research-based analysis and technical assistance to policymakers, journalists, researchers, and educators.

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Executive Summary

Teachers in publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs across the nation are increasingly expected to earn educational qualifications and credentials similar to their peers teaching older children. Yet salaries and benefits remain consistently lower for pre-K teachers than for kindergarten and elementary school teachers.

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), in partnership with the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), has produced a series of materials that explore state policy efforts to move toward compensation parity between pre-K and K-3 teachers. This report — *Strategies in Pursuit of Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity: Lessons from Seven States and Cities* — forms the third part of the series, examining a small set of states and cities with the goal of understanding the policy rationale and process for moving toward compensation parity in different contexts. Cross-state analysis of the status of compensation parity policies revealed an astonishing array of variation, but no clear model of best practice. Consequently, the purpose of this report is to explore examples of strategies that states and cities have successfully taken forward along the path toward compensation parity for pre-K teachers.

Additional Resources in the Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity Series

The first two materials in this series on pre-K teacher compensation parity include a brief — *In Pursuit of Pre-K Parity: A Proposed Framework for Understanding and Advancing Policy and Practice* — which outlines an original framework for defining and understanding pre-K compensation parity, and a report — *Teacher Compensation Parity Policies and State-Funded Pre-K Programs* — which describes the status of pre-K parity policies across all 50 states as of the 2014-15 school year.

What We Did

This report is a qualitative study of pre-K teacher compensation parity policies in five states (Alabama, Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, and West Virginia) and two cities (New York City and San Antonio). We interviewed state or local pre-K program administrators for each case, in order to understand the rationale and approach taken for these policies, and supplemented this analysis with an examination of reports and news coverage of movement toward parity in these contexts, where available. For each state/city, we report information on the background and financing of the pre-K program, the current status of compensation improvement, the approach and rationale for getting to that stage, and successes and challenges along the way (see **Appendix**). In addition to a description of the path toward parity for each case, this report examines common approaches, challenges, and solutions across the states and cities included in the analysis.

Summary of Findings

The problem of low wages for early educators has been stalled for decades, but pre-K appears to be an area gaining momentum on how to address this pervasive issue. States and cities across the nation are increasingly pursuing compensation parity between teachers in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs and K-3 teachers.

"Compensation parity" is defined as parity for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, adjusted to reflect differences in hours of work, and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning). We distinguish between compensation parity and other forms of compensation improvement that may be close to parity, but do not quite meet the definition, referred to in the report as "partial parity," "sub-parity," or "other forms of compensation improvement."

The five states and two cities examined in this report reveal a variety of paths toward compensation parity or, in the case of San Antonio, beyond parity. Some have moved toward parity by establishing salary requirements for their pre-K programs right from the start, particularly newer programs, such as Pre-K 4 San Antonio and Oregon Preschool Promise, while others have recently introduced requirements or built on previous requirements over time, as seen in Alabama and Georgia. Most of the states and cities examined here have taken incremental steps toward full compensation parity, either by starting with their pre-K teachers in public schools or by starting with one component of compensation, such as salary rather than benefits. Some cities have forged ahead, with or without state support, and have the potential to serve as models to other local communities as well as the state.

A key strategy for states and localities in advocating for pre-K teacher compensation parity has been to link teacher compensation with the provision of a high-quality learning environment for children. In their rationales for taking action on disparities in pre-K salaries, administrators have pointed to data on turnover in their states and the need to recruit and retain skilled educators. Others have framed the issue around a commitment to equity, not only for children, but also for the teachers themselves, something many advocates have historically been reluctant to do.

While there is still much to learn about the impact of these policies, administrators have already pointed to some unexpected benefits, including kindergarten teachers becoming interested in working in pre-kindergarten classrooms, rather than simply vice versa, and increased discussion about improved compensation for early educators outside of pre-K, including infant-toddler teachers.

This movement has not been without its challenges. Most commonly, pre-K administrators referred to the problems they faced in ensuring equivalent salaries and, especially, benefits for pre-K teachers in smaller private community-based settings. However, many of the issues they raised — disparities in wages between pre-K and other early care and education (ECE) classrooms at the same site, for example — reflect wider problems caused by an ECE system that is currently segmented by age of child and funding stream, rather than a problem specifically caused by pre-K compensation parity policies. Differences in public funding amounts and processes continue to perpetuate a sharp divide between "education" and "care" services, despite being provided to the same children, in the same setting, and sometimes by the same teacher, thus hampering efforts to reduce inequities in working conditions for early childhood educators.

In this respect, it is important to recognize the limited reach of compensation efforts that address pre-K teachers only. We do not currently have data that can show precisely who is affected by these policies. States and cities vary in the size and scope of their pre-K programs; in some cases, high standards for working conditions have been put in place that only apply to a select number of teachers, as in San Antonio; in others, compensation improvement efforts fall short of parity, yet impact a much wider swath of teachers, as in New York City. Yet, nationally, pre-K teaching staff only make up about a quarter of the center-based ECE workforce,[1] and thus, only a relatively small proportion of children reap the benefits from having more highly qualified, adequately compensated teachers. Furthermore, state and city policies currently do not always apply to all pre-K teaching staff. Policies sometimes only address lead teachers (and not assistants) or only teachers in public schools and not in private settings.

Despite these hurdles, this report demonstrates that states and cities are capable of taking action and moving forward. Although there is no clear model of best practice at this early stage in the development of these policies, it is clear that decision-makers in states and cities face several key considerations when deciding how to approach compensation parity in their respective contexts, including:

1. *Which members of the early childhood workforce will be targeted by the policy effort?*
2. *What benchmark should be used to identify the level of compensation improvement?*
3. *How will "equivalent" be defined for the purposes of education, experience, and working hours?*
4. *Should compensation parity be pursued incrementally or initiated all at once?*

This report provides a snapshot of how current policies have been adopted and approached in a variety of contexts, but further research is needed on the impact of these policies over time. What will these pre-K programs and their teachers look like — and what impact will they have had on children's development — in two, five, and 10 years down the road? We also need a better understanding of the immediate impact of these policies, particularly with respect to community-based providers: how are they implementing parity policies in their own programs, and what supports do they need to do so effectively?

Over time, a key goal of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment is to build a toolkit of strategies that states and localities can use to take action on this issue. Our hope is that the things we learn about the movement toward better compensation for pre-K teachers can also be applied to the movement for better compensation for *all* early childhood educators. Practical and political considerations often determine the initial scope of compensation efforts, and it is understandable that decision-makers have so far gained the most traction within pre-K, but the science of child development is clear that high-quality early care and education should not be limited to certain funding streams or to children of certain ages, and neither should it be dependent on parental income.

Ultimately, the goal should be broader system reform that is not only in line with the science of what children need, but will also help to alleviate some of the stresses currently borne by providers as they navigate very different funding streams and standards while nevertheless striving to maintain a consistently quality service for children. Those stakeholders involved in designing compensation parity policies for pre-K teachers should be intentional about addressing disparities that may be heightened as they move forward initially with one part of the sector and should use this effort as an opportunity to articulate the need for a more rational system of early care and education financing for all children.

Understanding Compensation Parity

The first brief in the series — *In Pursuit of Pre-K Parity: A Proposed Framework for Understanding and Advancing Policy and Practice* — outlined an original framework for defining and understanding pre-K teacher compensation parity (see Table 1).

"Compensation parity" is defined as parity for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, adjusted to reflect differences in hours of work (particularly in private settings) and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning). The framework distinguishes between compensation parity and other forms of compensation improvement, which are commonly (albeit misleadingly) labeled "parity." For simplicity, we distinguish between four types of compensation improvement: parity, partial parity, sub-parity, and other forms of compensation improvement. We also highlight three core components of compensation (salary, benefits, and payment for professional responsibilities), each of which could be set at the level of parity, just below, or at some other level of compensation improvement.

Our framework was developed to understand current policy efforts to move toward compensation parity between all state-funded pre-K teachers and K-3 teachers and has been used in this research series primarily to analyze policies directed toward lead teachers. However, the framework could also be applied to parity and other compensation improvement approaches for the early childhood educator workforce more generally. For example, while we focus on lead pre-K teachers in this analysis, a few states have pursued compensation parity policies for assistant teachers in pre-K, although primarily for those working in public schools, as described in a previous report in this series.[2]

Table 1: Compensation Parity and Related Forms of Compensation Improvement: A Framework				
	Components of Compensation			
Type of Compensation Improvement	Salary		Benefits	Payment for Professional Responsibilities[4]
	Starting Salary	Salary Schedule[3]		
Parity (defined as equivalent)	Same, prorated for day length and number	Same, prorated for day length and number	Same package, same options for coverage for health, retirement, and vacation/ holiday/sick leave	Same menu of supports and dosage for non-child contact responsibilities (e.g., planning time, professional development days)
Partial Parity (defined as equivalent for select components)	Same, prorated for day length and number	Not same or absent	Equivalent options for some benefits, but not full package of benefits	Equivalent options for some supports, but not full menu of supports
Sub-Parity (defined as similar but not equivalent)	Same, not prorated	Same, not prorated or not same/absent	Same package of benefits, not equivalent value	Same menu of supports, not equivalent value
Alternative Forms of Compensation Improvement	Strategies that improve pre-K compensation in order to close the gap with teachers of older children but fall well short of parity. In theory, compensation improvement strategies could also set goals higher than earnings of K-12 teachers in public schools, though in practice this is rare.[5]			

Source: Whitebook, M. & McLean, C. (2017). In Pursuit of Pre-K Parity: A Proposed Framework for Understanding and Advancing Policy and Practice. *Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley and New Brunswick, NJ: The National Institute for Early Education Research.*

What We Did

This report is a qualitative study of pre-K teacher compensation parity policies in five states and two cities. The process for case selection was as follows. After a review of states' and cities' pre-K teacher compensation parity policies,[6] 12 states/cities representing different stages on the road to parity in a variety of contexts were selected for interview. Pre-K program administrators for each case were identified and interviewed using a structured protocol over the period from December 2016 to May 2017, in order to understand the rationale and approach taken for these policies. As part of the interview process, state or local pre-K program administrators were given the opportunity to review and correct any errors in the interview notes. Following review of the interview data, a smaller number of states and cities were selected for analysis and publication based on the extent to which they represented various paths on the road to parity as outlined in the framework (see Table 1) and also because of the variation in geographical and political context they displayed.

The final selection of seven cases included five states and two cities (Alabama, Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, West Virginia, New York City and San Antonio) that allow us to explore how stakeholders have achieved particular levels of compensation improvement in their contexts — from narrowing existing salary gaps somewhat, to meeting parity with K-3, to moving beyond parity with K-3. Our focus was primarily on salary parity, but we have included information on parity in benefits and payment for professional responsibilities, as well. Additionally, we analyzed policies and practices that apply to lead teachers only. Some states have policies in place to address compensation parity at the assistant teacher level, as described in a previous report in the series, but further analysis is warranted in future research.[7]

Given the nature of the interviews, which represent the perspective of administrators and decision-makers within the public sector and the pre-K program specifically, additional documentary evidence (such as existing reports and news articles on each case) was also reviewed, where available, in order to provide further context.

Lessons from the States and Cities: Approaches, Challenges, and Solutions in Moving Toward Pre-K Teacher Compensation Parity

For each state/city, we report information on the background and financing of the pre-K program, the current status of compensation improvement, the approach and rationale for getting to that stage, and successes and challenges along the way (see **Appendix**). This report analyzes common issues and ways that these issues have been addressed by the states and cities included in the analysis.

What strategies and approaches are states and cities taking in their efforts to improve pre-K teacher compensation?

Parity in Salaries

The states and cities profiled in this report represent a variety of approaches to moving toward better compensation for pre-K teachers as best suits their local context. In terms of salary parity, each of the states and cities can be placed somewhere on the parity framework matrix for pre-K teachers across settings, including community-based providers. **Table 2** provides an overview of the current status of the states and cities examined here with regard to salary parity and the strategies taken in each case.

Ultimately, three states — Alabama, New Jersey, and Georgia — have salary parity policies that meet the criteria for full salary parity as set out in our framework for lead teachers in all settings. New York and West Virginia meet the criteria of full salary parity for their pre-K teachers in public school settings and are actively involved in improving compensation for teachers in their

community-based settings, as well. Oregon meets the criteria for sub-parity. No states fall into the category of partial parity, as defined in the framework. One case — San Antonio — falls into the category of "other compensation improvement," yet actually goes beyond parity, setting pre-K teacher pay at a level higher than K-3 teachers, but only for the teachers employed in its four model centers.

Table 2: States and Cities on the Road to Salary Parity

	Salary Parity Status (all settings unless otherwise noted)	Salary Parity Status Description	Parity Approach/Strategy
San Antonio	Beyond parity	Salaries are deliberately set above market rates and, in practice, are higher than those of K-3 teachers, but only for teachers in the four model programs	Salary levels are built in from the start of the program
New Jersey (former Abbott)	Full parity	See box on NJ compensation parity regulations	Built in from the start, as mandated by the NJ Supreme Court
Alabama	Full parity	Pre-K teachers across settings receive the same starting salary; pre-K teachers receive annual raises designed to be in line with K-12 teacher levels, though on a different schedule	Incremental approach: pay scales were implemented from the start, but a focus on parity was introduced recently
Georgia	Full parity	Pre-K teachers in public and private settings receive the same minimum salary based on equivalent education; ongoing raises were recently introduced, as well	Incremental approach: Georgia's parity policy previously addressed starting salary and has recently introduced salary supplements based on experience and credentials
New York City	Full parity (public schools) Other compensation improvement (community-based)	Public school teachers part of the City's teacher union and paid on the same salary scale. Funds budgeted to increase salaries in community-based settings, but a substantial gap remains despite equivalent education levels	Collective bargaining is required for all unionized staff; school-based teachers and community-based organization teachers are represented by different unions, and negotiations resulted in different agreements
West Virginia	Full parity (public schools) Other compensation improvement (community-based)	Equivalent salaries are required for public pre-K teachers, but not for community-based providers; salaries are ultimately decided by school districts	Decisions about compensation are made at the local school district level, but the state provides guidance and appropriate funding for moving to parity
Oregon (Preschool Promise)	Sub-parity	Target starting salaries as funded by the pre-K program are intended to be comparable to K-3; however, mandatory minimum salaries are set lower, suggesting that the policy is closer to "similar" than "equivalent"	Built in from the start as mandated by legislation, but legislation was subsequently revised and weakened requirements

The push toward parity is a more recent phenomenon, with policies built in from the start in newer programs (e.g., San Antonio, Oregon Preschool Promise) and recent reforms having been introduced in older programs (e.g., Alabama, Georgia). An explicit goal of parity was rare in older programs, a key exception being New Jersey (see the sidebar **New Jersey State Regulations Governing Compensation Parity**). Driving this surge of emphasis on improved pre-K teacher compensation has been a push for high-quality ECE services in general and improving recruitment and retention of highly qualified pre-K teachers in particular (see the section **How are states and cities making the case for taking action on pre-K compensation?**).

In order to move toward parity, a combination of state- and local-level strategies are being employed. For example, in West Virginia, decisions about pre-K compensation are ultimately made by the school districts and local partners; however, the state has been involved in developing standards and providing guidance documents to local decision-makers, including a model budget template. In other contexts, the state has taken a more active role — for example, in Oregon, legislation was passed to give pre-K administrators the authority to set salary standards for pre-K teachers by region.

States and cities also vary in their standards or benchmarks for meeting parity. In some cases, pre-K teachers are simply placed on the same salary scale as K-3 teachers; in others, administrators came up with other benchmarks (e.g., median kindergarten salaries in Oregon) to establish either equivalent or similar salary levels. San Antonio was exceptional in that it set a standard that was not benchmarked to K-3, but guided by what they thought appropriate for attracting the best teachers and ensuring high-quality services in ECE, which in practice was higher than the current K-3 level of compensation.

New Jersey State Regulations Governing Compensation Parity

New Jersey's regulations state:

> "The district board of education shall ensure that compensation for certified teachers and teacher assistants in contracting private provider or local Head Start settings is comparable to that of a teacher or teacher assistant employed by the district board of education and based on equivalent certification and credentials.
>
> "The district board of education shall ensure that the certified teachers and teacher assistants in contracting private providers and local Head Start agencies receiving the comparable compensation meet comparable work schedule requirements for both student contact time and teacher contract time, including the equivalent number of hours per day and the equivalent number of days per contract year established by the district board of education for its certified teachers and teacher assistants. The work schedule shall also include the same amount of preparation time and lunch time as the district board of education certified teachers and teacher assistants."

While the New Jersey code is specific about ensuring the same amount of preparation time for pre-K teachers, it is less specific about benefits. Benefits are included within the requirement for comparable compensation, but while salary comparability is enforced by looking at the district salary scale, benefits are not necessarily provided as an equivalent package or at equivalent value for community-based pre-K teachers.

Source: N.J.A.C. 6A:13A, Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs*. Retrieved from http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap13a.pdf.*

Parity in Benefits

Most of the states and cities included are not as far along the path toward parity in benefits as they are on the path toward parity for salaries, in part because of the unique challenges of funding equivalent benefit packages in mixed delivery settings (see the section **What challenges have states and cities seen in their efforts to improve pre-K compensation?**). Many of the states include funds for benefits, but what benefits are provided to teachers may be entirely left to the individual pre-K setting (for example, in Alabama and Georgia). Even where there are policies in place specifying that there should be comparability, such as in New Jersey, funds may not be adequate to actually providing equivalent benefit value, due to the ability of school districts to purchase better benefits at lower cost compared with smaller private settings.

San Antonio sets benefit packages in line with those offered to city employees because teachers in the Pre-K 4 SA program are employed directly by the city. However, these benefits only apply in the four model centers of the Pre-K 4 SA program and not to pre-K teachers more broadly in schools or community-based settings, even when funded by Pre-K 4 SA partnership grants. However, pre-K teachers in public schools are subject to district policy and are paid the same and receive the same benefits as K-3 teachers.

Parity in Payment for Professional Responsibilities

There is also wide variation in the extent to which paid time for professional responsibilities — defined as paid non-child contact time to complete professional responsibilities, such as planning, collegial sharing, and reporting, as well as paid time for professional development — was also included in state and city efforts to move toward parity. In some places, there is no explicit policy or guideline (e.g., Oregon). However, some states have made an explicit effort to ensure that pre-K teachers have the same paid non-child contact time as K-12 teachers (e.g., Alabama, New Jersey). Other states/cities have specified paid time for professional responsibilities, which is not designed to match what is afforded K-12 teachers, but is instead based on what is considered best practice in early childhood education (e.g., New York City, San Antonio).

How are states and cities making the case for action on pre-K teacher compensation?

A common refrain across the pre-K administrators interviewed was the importance of a skilled and stable teaching workforce in order to provide and maintain a high-quality early learning experience for children, which is in line with the consensus from the research community.[8] Across states, pre-K programs with some type of salary parity policy in place are more likely than those without a parity policy to demonstrate a commitment to higher-quality standards more generally.[9] Similarly, some of the states analyzed in this report (Alabama, New Jersey) are consistently rated among the highest-quality pre-K programs in the nation.[10]

Linking teacher compensation to the provision of a high-quality learning environment for children was therefore a key strategy for states and localities in framing the debate about pre-K teacher compensation parity. In this regard, several interviewees explicitly mentioned

recruitment and retention as a major reason for moving toward compensation parity for all pre-K teachers. In New York City and San Antonio, a key consideration for improving compensation was the ability to recruit highly educated and skilled teachers into the program. New York City was undergoing vast expansion of its pre-K program and needed to be able to recruit teachers with bachelor's degrees. Similarly, San Antonio's model was predicated on having the most highly qualified teachers and high compensation levels were specifically included as a means to attract those teachers.

As research has demonstrated that high turnover rates undermine efforts to improve service quality, several states (Alabama, Georgia, Oregon) referred to a desire to improve retention of skilled teachers, specifically, to reduce movement of pre-K teachers from community-based settings to public schools. Even when teachers remain within the ECE field but leave one site for another, this churning poses challenges to providing the continuity of relationships essential to young children's optimal development.[11]

The strategic use of data and evidence has been crucial to building the case for investing in teacher compensation as a means to ensure high-quality services. For example, administrators in Georgia used data on teacher retention to argue that turnover was a problem in their pre-K settings and, specifically, that salary differentials were a key contributor to the problem. Similarly, administrators from Oregon were able to use data collected on their early childhood workforce to show relationships between low wages and low retention rates. Several of the states/cities also referred to general efforts to build the case for investing in high-quality pre-K by pointing to evaluations of their programs and their contribution to improved child outcomes.

A less data-driven but still powerful frame used in other contexts was the issue of equity. Famously a New Jersey court case examining disparities in access to children's educational opportunities prompted the development of the Abbott Preschool Program. The Abbott decision deliberately specified compensation parity for its teachers due to the wider educational problem of children living in economically disadvantaged communities becoming further disadvantaged by being more likely to have teachers with poor working conditions, which can affect the quality of their teaching. In Oregon, administrators took a different tack — they pointed to the basic inequity of paying teachers different amounts for the same work. Depending on the context, commitments to equity for both children and teachers have been used to prompt investment in pre-K teacher compensation.

How do states and cities working on compensation improvement finance their pre-K programs?

In general, states with a compensation parity policy in place also tend to have better-funded pre-K programs (the ratio of pre-K to kindergarten spending per pupil is higher), compared to those without such policies, as would be expected.[12] Accordingly, all of the states for which we had spending data had pre-K spending ratios of at least 50 percent when prorated to account for differences in school-day and -year length, and three were at 75 percent or more (see **Table 3**).

Yet these states and cities do not all use the same financing mechanism for their pre-K programs; several use discretionary or formula-based grants, and West Virginia is the only example that uses a school financing formula approach. Most of the states use general or education-specific state funds; the cities combine state pre-K funds with other sources (local sales tax in San Antonio and state and federal grant money in New York City).

While it is evident that financing pre-K parity requires adequate funding for a pre-K program more generally, it is not clear at this stage whether particular financing mechanisms or strategies are more or less supportive of attaining compensation parity for pre-K teachers. In part because states and localities have often addressed some components of compensation parity, but not all, and also because many of these policies are very new, it remains to be seen whether a particular financing mechanism is more or less successful in reaching and maintaining compensation parity over time.

Table 3: How the States and Cities Finance Their Pre-K Programs

	Funding Sources	Funding Mechanism[13]	Pre-K/ K-12 Per Pupil Spending (2014)[14]
Alabama	State Education Trust Fund and federal pre-K grant	Discretionary Grant	.80
Georgia	State education lottery	Discretionary Grant	.52
New Jersey (former Abbott)	State education funds	Formula Grant	.76 (.78 prorated)
Oregon (Preschool Promise)	State general funds	Discretionary Grant	Not available
West Virginia	State pre-K funds (multiple grant sources, including federal funds), city tax levy, and federal pre-k grant	K-12 School Funding Formula	93 (.99 prorated)
New York City	Local sales tax and state pre-K funds	NY state: Formula Grant	NY state: .4 (.5 prorated)
San Antonio	Local sales tax and state pre-K funds	Discretionary Grant	Not available

Note: The pre-K/K-12 spending ratio is an indicator of how much is spent on pre-K relative to what is spent on K-12, per child. A ratio of 1 would mean the state spends the same amount on both. The prorated ratio takes into account differences in the length of the school day for pre-K versus K-12.

What positive outcomes have states and cities seen in their efforts to improve pre-K compensation?

Information on outcomes related to these efforts is currently limited, in part because many of the efforts to move toward parity analyzed in this report were implemented very recently and in part because there remain persistent data limitations for analyzing impacts on the early care and education workforce more generally (see the sidebar **What Types of Data Are Needed to Better Assess Impact of Pre-K Compensation Parity Policies?**).

New Jersey is one of the few states to have implemented compensation parity sufficiently long ago to have a sense of its impact. Nevertheless, the compensation parity element of the New Jersey Abbott program has been little studied to date, partly due to a lack of baseline data on the workforce. However, a 2008 study of center directors participating in the New Jersey Abbott pre-K program found that center directors attributed the higher salaries to reduced teacher turnover in their sites.[15] More generally, New Jersey pre-K programs have been found to be of high quality when evaluated for their effects on child outcomes,[16] which is likely to be at least partly a result of having adequately paid pre-K teachers, given the relationship of compensation, recruitment, and retention of highly skilled teachers with program quality, as explained below.

Although most of the other states/cities have implemented their compensation parity policies very recently, the pre-K administrators interviewed were able to point to positive outcomes they had observed so far. For example, in Alabama, an unexpected benefit was increased interest on the part of kindergarten teachers in working in pre-kindergarten classrooms. In both Georgia and New York City, those interviewed expressed the view that the debate about improved compensation for pre-K teachers spurred discussion about improved compensation for early educators more generally, including infant-toddler teachers.

> *"The debate about improved compensation for pre-K teachers also spurred discussion about improved compensation for early educators more generally, including infant-toddler teachers.*

In New York City, the city's child care union was able to negotiate increased compensation for certified ECE teachers outside pre-K to the same salary level as that of certified pre-K teachers in community-based settings.[17]

In line with research on the link between low compensation levels and teacher turnover,[18] several pre-K administrators also expressed their views that, over time, their programs would benefit from lower turnover levels, resulting in higher-quality programs. Similarly, although not mentioned by the interviewees, research has also shown a link between more adequate compensation and teacher well-being, which contributes to higher-quality teacher-child interaction.[19]

What Types of Data Are Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Pre-K Compensation Parity Policies?

Crucial to the success of pre-K teacher parity policies, as well as other investments in ECE teacher working conditions, is the ability to demonstrate the benefits of building a skilled and stable workforce for program quality and child outcomes. Administrators should be able to track progress related to recruitment and retention of qualified staff and be able to link these improvements to data on teacher characteristics and working conditions (including salary levels and access to benefits). At the same time, data on the workforce should be linked with program- and, ideally, child-level data in order to assess the impact on quality.

At a minimum, this will require:

- Individual-level data:
  - Basic demographics (age, race/ethnicity);
  - Role;
  - Educational attainment;
  - Years of experience/tenure;
  - Salary/wage levels;
  - Benefit packages (e.g., health insurance, retirement contributions);
  - Hours/days of employment; and
  - Turnover rates and reasons for leaving;
- Program-level data:
  - Setting type;
  - Auspice/sponsorship;
  - Funding; and
  - Quality assessments; and
  - Geographical identifiers to understand regional differences, particularly across states.

These data should be collected on an ongoing basis. Ideally, information would be collected before any new policies have been implemented in order to set a baseline for comparison after the reform. Pre-K administrators understand the importance of data on their workforce, but do not necessarily have the data to use in their state or locality, a problem often confronting those wishing to study the early care and education workforce more broadly.[20] Even when considering pre-K alone, rather than the entirety of the ECE workforce, many states are unable to report average salary levels, much less more detailed breakdowns of salaries by education and experience.[21] An example from our case studies — Oregon — has taken steps toward monitoring progress on pay parity: an initial report to the Oregon Legislature describes average pre-K teacher salary data by education level, which provides the baseline that will enable the state to document changes to salary levels over time.[22]

What challenges have states and cities seen in their efforts to improve pre-K compensation?

The most pervasive challenge has been moving toward pre-K teacher compensation parity for teachers in private community-based settings. In part, this is due to existing salary disparities in the field, where the salary gap between K-12 teachers and ECE teachers is higher for those working in community-based settings compared with those working in schools, even when they have similar educational attainment (see Table 4).

Such salary disparities are partly a result of how ECE is provided in community-based settings — usually in much smaller facilities with greater numbers of staff per child compared with most K-12 schools, which makes reducing service costs through economies of scale more difficult. On top of the already higher costs of providing ECE, these services remain largely dependent on parent fees, and where there is public funding, the amount tends to be lower per child when compared with K-12, including for public pre-K and especially for child care subsidies. Due to these historical disparities in the educational system, moving toward salary parity is a bigger step and requires the marshalling of greater funding per teacher when parity policies specifically target teachers working in community-based settings rather than just those working in school districts.

Table 4: Mean Annual Salaries for Teachers, by Setting (2012)

K-12	ECE for 3- to 5-year-olds			
		School-sponsored	Pre-K funded, but not school-sponsored (community-based)	Other center-based ECE
$53,100	Teachers with at least a bachelor's degree	$47,632	$39,520	$35,568
	Teachers regardless of education level	$40,352	$29,952	$28,496

Source: Source: K-12 data is from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) for 2011-12, and all ECE data is from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) (2012). Mean ECE salaries are derived from mean hourly wages as reported in National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013). Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings, National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*, assuming full-time work: 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Note that due to the way the NSECE data was collected, the ECE teachers referred to in the table may be working in pre-K funded sites, but are not necessarily pre-K teachers, i.e., teachers working in a pre-K classroom within that site.*

While the challenge is partly one of funding, it is exacerbated by a lack of existing mechanisms to reform compensation outside of school settings. State and/or local decision-makers can draw on public school infrastructures for setting and funding compensation for pre-K teachers in public school districts, which makes it easier for states to implement parity requirements for this group. For example, budgets and funding formulas may already be set up to take into account the costs of school-based delivery, but may be unequipped to fully assess the costs of delivery in small community-based settings; similarly, salary schedules and collective bargaining agreements may already exist for K-3 teachers in public schools, which can be extended to pre-K teachers. The lack of such infrastructure for community-based settings, coupled with the fact that, in many cases, states and local pre-K programs only fund specific classrooms or specific children within community-based early care and education settings, means that both the authority and the means to influence compensation levels in such settings is more difficult, but not impossible, as the states and cities in this analysis confirm.

Despite the challenges, each of the states and cities analyzed in this report have been working toward better compensation for pre-K teachers in private settings, with some at the level of parity with K-3 teachers (e.g., Georgia) and others currently working toward narrowing existing gaps (e.g., New York City). Key to these strategies has been ensuring appropriate budgeting for salaries for community-based providers so that they are able to cover the costs of the higher standards.

Representatives from the states and cities in this analysis mentioned several specific issues they faced as they worked toward compensation parity for pre-K teachers in community-based settings, most of which can be traced back to inequitable systems of funding in the early care and education sector more broadly. In some cases, providers have been unwilling or reluctant to attempt to meet compensation parity requirements because of the additional problems this could potentially create for service delivery in their own programs. Administrator interviewees specifically mentioned the difficulties for providers in meeting the costs of increased compensation, particularly for benefits, as greater funding would be required to purchase the same benefits package for staff in a small center, compared with a large elementary school. At the same time, because pre-K funding is limited to specific classrooms within a program and because other classrooms likely rely on lower funding amounts from parent fees or child care subsidies, providers may be reluctant to increase salaries only for certain pre-K teachers, while being unable to increase salaries for other teachers, some of whom may be doing equivalent work, have equivalent qualifications, or may even have significantly greater tenure and experience, yet earn much less (see **Table 4**).

Although not specifically mentioned by the interviewees, another key source of tension may be disparities between lead teachers in pre-K classrooms and directors of those private centers, many of whom may make substantially less than K-3 teachers — the median annual earnings for center directors nationally was $45,790 in 2016,[23] compared with $52,620 for kindergarten teachers and $55,800 for elementary school teachers.[24] While there is a tendency to justify this disparity based on differences in the minimum qualification requirements for these jobs — elementary school teachers across the country must have a bachelor's degree and certification at minimum, while many states have minimal or no educational requirements for child care center directors[25] — salaries in the broader labor market are not solely a reflection of educational attainment, but also the nature of the job. Management roles often command a pay premium. Furthermore, many center directors do have a bachelor's degree or higher, even though it may not be required.[26] As a result, directors may also be personally affected by wage disparities arising from parity requirements for pre-K teachers only.

Because of these issues, already pressed community-based providers may be more likely to seek exemptions from parity requirements, rather than deal with increased challenges that come from trying to navigate standards that address one segment of the early care and education system and not others. Notably, this issue is not specific to pre-K teacher compensation parity policies, but rather a general problem of bifurcating early care and education into separate systems of pre-K versus child care (and Head Start), with different standards and funding models for each.

A 2008 study of centers in the New Jersey Abbott pre-K program noted that, despite the challenges, center directors found a great deal of benefit from participation.[27] The higher salaries reduced teacher turnover in their sites, and stable pre-K funding helped them to cover the costs of providing early care and education services in their centers more generally. Further research on the effects of parity policies on community-based providers is warranted in order to better understand how to support these providers to meet increased standards.

Key Considerations for States and Localities in Moving Toward Compensation Parity

States and localities looking to move forward on the issue of compensation parity or compensation improvement efforts more generally face a series of decision points in getting from A to B. Our analysis of these communities suggests several key questions and areas for consideration.

1. Which members of the early childhood workforce are targeted by the policy effort?

Our research series has focused on teachers in state-funded pre-K programs, whether in public schools or in mixed delivery settings, and lead pre-K teachers in particular, as this group has been the core focus of compensation parity efforts to date. However, going forward, there is no reason that parity policies or broader compensation improvement efforts should be limited to this group. Thus, a key consideration for state and city administrators designing compensation policies is: who is included?

If pre-K teaching staff in particular are the focus of policy efforts, parity policies sometimes begin with pre-K teachers in public schools, whether through state- or district-level agreements. Increasingly, however, whether due to concerns about inequities for teachers or problems arising from turnover between pre-K sites, pre-K administrators are seeking to ensure that pre-K teachers in community-based settings are also included in policies about compensation.

But in addition to consideration of teaching staff across settings, decision-makers should also consider which roles to target: does the policy effort include assistant teachers as well as lead teachers? Are any other roles included, such as directors or support staff? Attention to roles beyond those of lead teachers will help to ensure coherent pathways for early educators to move between roles but continue to stay in the field — and perhaps even the same setting — over time.

Decision-makers in the states could also apply the compensation parity framework to teachers outside the pre-K program and may wish to consider ways to improve compensation for such teachers to prevent turnover, not only between pre-K classrooms in different settings, but also between pre-K and other ECE classrooms. More broadly, this points to a need to have a strategy for ensuring appropriate working conditions for early childhood educators across funding streams, whether that involves streamlining existing funding streams within the city or state or allowing providers greater leeway in blending funds across classrooms. While this issue was not a focus of this particular report, it nevertheless bears consideration for those looking to improve their own state or local systems, even as they consider next steps for their pre-K programs specifically.

2. What benchmark should be used to identify the level of compensation improvement?

Our research series has primarily been concerned with compensation efforts that aim to move pre-K teacher compensation into parity with K-3 teachers. This focus arises partly in response to the recent implementation of such efforts in many pre-K programs, but it is also because of a commitment to the idea that education starts before formal schooling, and therefore, teachers should be paid equivalently, regardless of the age of the children they serve. However, decision-makers looking to improve compensation for ECE teachers may decide to set a benchmark that extends beyond K-3 salaries.

In San Antonio, for example, compensation standards were not set in line with K-3 teachers, who after all, may also be considered underpaid for the important work they do,[28] but instead at rates above what K-3 teachers in their locality earn. The benefit of such an approach, beyond higher earnings for the teachers, is that it avoids the issue of a "moving target," which can potentially be the case with a relative benchmark like parity with K-3. For example, if funding is sought and awarded for adjustments to the salary scale for K-3 teachers, then these adjustments will also need to be made for pre-K teachers in order to maintain parity. To the extent that there is a different funding process for the pre-K system compared with K-3, maintaining parity will not be automatic and will necessitate intentional strategies to advocate for appropriate funding on the pre-K side. The "moving target" issue is likely to be less of a challenge in contexts where there has been movement to bring the governance and funding of pre-K more in line with that of the wider education system or where there are strong partnerships between the two. Accordingly, in some contexts, parity with K-3 may be the best approach, either because it serves as an important political frame for raising the wages of teachers of early education or because there are already close ties between the pre-K program and the public school system (e.g., a high percentage of pre-K teachers work in public schools, or the pre-K program is funded via the school funding formula).

Administrators who decide on the benchmark of parity with elementary school teachers nevertheless face additional considerations, such as whether to peg salary levels to the exact same scale used for K-3 teachers or to employ an alternative measure, such as median or average salaries, as has been done in some cases. Overall, it seems preferable to use the exact same salary scale, in part because median or average wages conceal a great deal of variability in education and experience levels. Moreover, in many states, median wages for kindergarten teachers are lower than those for elementary school teachers in the higher grades,[29] which raises the question of whether administrators will elect to benchmark to lower median kindergarten salaries rather than higher median elementary school salaries and, in doing so, perpetuate the current lower status and economic disadvantage of teachers of younger children.

Nevertheless, there could be legitimate reasons for using different benchmarks rather than the exact same salary scales for all pre-K teachers. For example, in cases where it is not currently feasible to move forward on benefit parity, it may be more equitable to set higher salary levels for pre-K teachers in community-based settings, compared with those in schools, in compensation for lower-value benefit packages, rather than pursuing a strictly identical policy.

3. How will “equivalent” be defined for the purposes of education, experience, and working hours?

We defined compensation parity as parity for salary and benefits for “equivalent” levels of education and experience as well as working hours. But for the purposes of implementation, decision-makers will need to be more specific about what qualifies as equivalent. As noted in the previous section with regard to salary benchmarks, in some cases, decision-makers may want to define equivalent as “strictly the same,” either for reasons of equity or for practical purposes. Nevertheless, there may be instances in which decision-makers may wish to define equivalent as “the same in essence, but not absolutely identical,” in order to take into account relevant differences and reach a more equitable outcome.

One question is whether equivalent salaries means identical. In New Jersey, salary parity has been interpreted as putting pre-K teachers on the exact same salary schedule as K-3 teachers. However, in Alabama, pre-K teachers begin with the same starting salary, but their ongoing salaries are raised at different rates than K-3 teachers, with pre-K teachers getting raises more quickly (annually instead of every three years) but at lower percentages, calculated to meet the same salary benchmark as K-3 teachers over a 10-year period.

Similarly, a common question is whether the same salaries should be paid only where pre-K teachers have identical credentials and experience to K-3 teachers. However, it is common in labor markets more generally to pay based on education and experience that has been deemed substantively equivalent, rather than exactly the same. In practice, this could mean taking into consideration different types of coursework and bachelor’s specialties, different types of certification (for example, in West Virginia, salary levels are determined by whether or not a pre-K teacher is certified, but pre-K teachers can have an alternate form of certification than K-3 teachers), or even perhaps certain amounts of experience in exchange for certain types of credentials (e.g., a master’s degree or X number of years worked in the field).

Working Hours and the Issue of Pro-Rating

With regard to working hours, we have defined "equivalent" as the same number of hours or days worked or otherwise prorated to reflect differences in working time, for the purpose of drawing attention to the possibility that pre-K teachers in community-based settings may work longer hours/days than those in public schools. However, it is unclear whether this type of pro-rating is occurring (with pre-K teachers in private settings being paid at the same rate for longer hours).

In West Virginia, for example, pro-rating sometimes occurs downward: part-day pre-K classrooms receive fewer funds, and pre-K teachers working less than full-time get prorated salaries and benefits.[30] Also in West Virginia and elsewhere, it appears that private settings are usually funded for a pre-K teacher to work the same hours as a pre-K teacher in a public school, and that private centers accordingly structure their pre-K classes in terms of funded preschool hours with the possibility of wraparound care services outside those hours. Such services may be provided by a different (presumably lower paid) teacher — as for example, in San Antonio[31] — or potentially by the pre-K teacher herself for additional pay. For example, in some West Virginia counties, the pre-K teacher in the private setting (who could still potentially be a district employee) contracts individually with the child care center to provide before/after services for additional pay but not necessarily at the same rate.

More research on this issue is warranted, but it appears that even when providers blend or braid public funds in their setting, differences in public funding amounts and processes continue to perpetuate a sharp divide between "education" and "care" services — despite being provided to the same children, in the same setting, and sometimes by the same teacher — thus hampering efforts to reduce inequities in working conditions for early childhood educators.

4. Should compensation parity be pursued incrementally or initiated all at once?

Due to political debates, funding challenges, or other practical reasons, administrators may wish to consider moving toward compensation parity in an incremental way: starting with certain groups of staff in pre-K programs or a compensation improvement that is not quite parity, but narrows existing gaps. Such incremental strategies can get the ball rolling toward more adequate pay for early educators, even if they do not initially solve all compensation-related problems in the field. However, incremental strategies may also create new challenges by virtue of addressing the problem only in part. This was one of the key challenges raised by pre-K administrators in addressing compensation for pre-K teachers, but not other ECE teachers within the same centers, which creates new inequities while solving others, leading to tension and the potential for pushback from providers.

In contrast, while strategies that go all in from the beginning may be more difficult to implement initially, especially for large and/or universal pre-K programs, they may also avoid or limit problems arising from pursuing improvements step by step. For example, if salary increases are pursued incrementally, it can be easy to get stuck at lower levels rather than sustain the momentum to gain increases over time. A middle strategy might be to set standards across the board from the beginning, but with a graduated phase-in or allowable time for staff and providers to adjust to the new policy.

Conclusion

The problem of low wages for early educators has been stalled for decades, but pre-K appears to be an area gaining momentum on how to address this pervasive issue. States and cities across the nation are increasingly pursuing compensation parity between teachers in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs and K-3 teachers.

“Compensation parity” is defined as parity for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, adjusted to reflect differences in hours of work, and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning). We distinguish between compensation parity and other forms of compensation improvement that may be close to parity, but do not quite meet the definition, referred to in the report as “partial parity,” “sub-parity,” or “other forms of compensation improvement.”

The five states and two cities examined in this report reveal a variety of paths toward compensation parity or, in the case of San Antonio, beyond parity. Some have moved toward parity by establishing salary requirements for their pre-K programs right from the start, particularly newer programs, such as Pre-K 4 San Antonio and Oregon Preschool Promise, while others have recently introduced requirements or built on previous requirements over time, as seen in Alabama and Georgia. Most have taken incremental steps toward full compensation parity, either by starting with their pre-K teachers in public schools or by starting with one component of compensation, such as salary rather than benefits. Some cities have forged ahead, with or without state support, and have the potential to serve as models to other local communities as well as the state.

A key strategy for states and localities in advocating for pre-K teacher compensation parity has been linking teacher compensation to the provision of a high-quality learning environment for children. Administrators have pointed to data on turnover in their states and the need to recruit and retain skilled educators in their rationales for taking action on disparities in pre-K salaries. Others have framed the issue around a commitment to equity, not only for children, but also for the teachers themselves, something many advocates have historically been reluctant to do.

While there is still much to learn about the impact of these policies, administrators have already pointed to some unexpected benefits, including kindergarten teachers becoming interested in working in pre-kindergarten classrooms, rather than simply vice versa, and increased discussion about improved compensation for early educators outside of pre-K, including infant-toddler teachers.

This movement has not been without its challenges. Most commonly, pre-K administrators referred to the problems they faced in ensuring equivalent salaries and, especially, benefits for pre-K teachers in smaller private community-based settings. However, many of the issues they raised (disparities in wages between pre-K and other ECE classrooms in the same site, for example) reflect wider problems caused by an early care and education system that is currently segmented by age of child and funding stream, rather than a problem specifically caused by pre-K compensation parity policies. Differences in public-funding amounts and processes continue to perpetuate a sharp divide between “education” and “care” services — despite being provided to the same children, in the same setting, and sometimes by the same teacher — thus hampering efforts to reduce inequities in working conditions for early childhood educators.

In this regard, it is important to recognize the limited reach of compensation efforts that address pre-K teachers only. We do not currently have data that can show precisely who is affected by these policies. States and cities vary in the size and scope of their pre-K programs; in some cases, high standards for working conditions have been put in place that only apply to a select number of teachers, as in San Antonio; in others, compensation improvement efforts fall short of parity, yet impact a much wider swath of teachers, as in New York City. Yet, nationally, pre-K teaching staff only make up about a quarter of the ECE workforce,[32] and therefore, only a relatively small proportion of children reap the benefits from having more highly qualified, adequately compensated teachers. Furthermore, state and city policies currently do not always apply to all pre-K teaching staff. Policies sometimes only address lead teachers (and not assistants) or only teachers in public schools and not in private settings.

Despite these hurdles, this report demonstrates that states and cities are capable of taking action and moving forward. Although there is no clear model of best practice at this early stage in the development of these policies, it is clear that decision-makers in states and cities face several key considerations when deciding how to approach compensation parity in their respective contexts, including:

1. Which members of the early childhood workforce will be targeted by the policy effort?
2. What benchmark should be used to identify the level of compensation improvement?
3. How will "equivalent" be defined for the purposes of education, experience, and working hours?
4. Should compensation parity be pursued incrementally or initiated all at once?

This report provides a snapshot of how current policies have been adopted and approached in a variety of contexts, but further research is needed on the impact of these policies over time. What will these pre-K programs and their teachers look like — and what impact will they have had on children's development — in two, five, and 10 years down the road? We also need a better understanding of the immediate impact of these policies, particularly with respect to community-based providers: how are they implementing parity policies in their own programs, and what supports they need to do so effectively?

Over time, a key goal of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment is to build a toolkit of strategies that states and localities can use to take action on this issue. Our hope is that what we learn about the movement toward better compensation for pre-K teachers can also be applied to the movement for better compensation for *all* early childhood educators. Practical and political considerations often determine the initial scope of compensation efforts, and it is understandable that decision-makers have so far gained the most traction within pre-K, but the science of child development is clear that high-quality early care and education should not be limited to certain funding streams or to children of certain ages, and neither should it be dependent on parental income.

Ultimately, the goal should be broader system reform that is not only in line with the science of what children need, but will also help to alleviate some of the stresses currently borne by providers as they navigate very different funding streams and standards while nevertheless maintaining a consistent quality service for children. Those involved in designing compensation parity policies for pre-K teachers should be intentional about addressing disparities that may be heightened as they move forward initially with one part of the sector and should use that as an opportunity to articulate the need for a more rational system of early care and education financing for all children.

End Notes

1. According to the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education, only about 6 percent of ECE teaching staff are employed by schools, and a further 21 percent work in community-based centers that receive pre-K funding, see National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (NSECE). (2013). Number and characteristics of early care and education (ECE) teachers and caregivers: Initial findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). *OPRE Report #2013-38*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_wf_ brief_102913_0.pdf.

2. See Barnett, S., & Kasmin, R. (2017a). *Teacher Compensation Parity Policies and State-Funded Pre-K Programs*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research and Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

3. Defined as a scale with clearly differentiated salary increments based on qualifications and years of experience, which provides guidance for salary increases over time.

4. Defined as non-child contact time to complete professional responsibilities, such as planning, professional sharing, and reporting, as well as paid time for professional development.

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12. Barnett et al. (2017a).

13. Barnett, S., & Kasmin, R. (2016c). Funding Landscape for Preschool with a Highly Qualified Workforce. Paper prepared for Funding Landscape for Preschool with a Highly Qualified Workforce An Expert Meeting, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine — Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Retrieved from http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/dbassesite/documents/webpage/dbasse_176099.pdf.

14. Ibid. Data from 2014.

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24. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2015). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers*. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/kindergarten-and-elementary-school-teachers.htm.

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26. There is currently no nationally representative source of information on center director credentials. A review of data from nine state registries suggests that just over half of center directors (53 percent) have at least a bachelor's degree, see Abel, M., Talan, T., & Newkirk, M. (2017). *Closing the Leadership Gap: 2017 Status Report on Early Childhood Program Leadership in the United States. Executive Summary*. Wheeling, IL: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National Louis University. Retrieved from http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-LEAD-ECC_Executive-Summary.pdf. Registry data may or may not be representative of the entire center director population in those states, depending on who is included in the registries. A recent survey in North Carolina estimates that 60 percent of center directors in the state have at least a bachelor's degree, see Child Care Services Association. (2015). *Working in Early Care and Education in North*

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31. Barnett et al. (2016b).

32. According to the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education, only about 6 percent of ECE teaching staff are employed by schools, and a further 21 percent work in community-based centers that receive pre-K funding, see NSECE (2013).

APPENDIX: Descriptions of the Path to Parity in Each State and City

Alabama First Class Pre-K[1]

Background

Administered by the Office of School Readiness in the Department of Early Childhood Education, Alabama's pre-K program provides preschool funding for four-year-olds through a mixed delivery system. In the 2016-17 school year, about 25 percent of Alabama's four-year-olds were enrolled in pre-K classrooms.[2]

How is the pre-K program financed?

Alabama's pre-K program is funded by the state Education Trust Fund and a federal Preschool Development Grant. Public and private schools, Head Start programs, child care centers, and other organizations are eligible to apply for funds via a supplemental grant program.[3]

What is the current status of state efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: An explicit salary parity policy was introduced in Alabama during the 2015-2016 school year.[4] The policy originally addressed starting salary across settings, and more recently, ongoing increases in salary over time have been introduced. Pre-K teachers receive raises on a different schedule than K-12 teachers (annual rather than every three years). The levels are set so that parity is met at a 10-year benchmark (thus, a pre-K teacher would earn the same salary at the end of 10 years as she would if she were working in K-12). In addition, supplemental funds for pre-K teachers with master's degrees were introduced and are being fully implemented during the 2017-2018 school year.

Benefits: Alabama's policy does not specify parity in benefits. Funds are included for pre-K teacher benefits, but what is provided depends on the individual grantee.

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: All teachers are required to have an hour of daily planning time and are paid for seven days of non-contact time per year. This schedule is equivalent to that of the K-12 system.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

In recognition that teacher efficacy is the key to quality, explicit attention to teacher pay has been part of Alabama's pre-K program from its inception in 2000-2001. Pay scales have been specified in classroom grant agreements, and there has been funding for incremental increases in pre-K teacher salaries since 2007. The recent push beyond compensation

1 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Jeana Ross, Jan Hume, Tracye Strichik, Trellis Smith, and Laura Baker, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).

2 Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. (2017). *First Class Pre-K Growth*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from http://children.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/07/First-Class-Pre-K-Growth.pdf.

3 Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. (2017).

4 Barnett et al. (2016b).

improvement toward compensation parity was driven by a desire to retain trained pre-K teachers in the face of an immediate concern that pay disparities between community-based centers and school settings was driving turnover and instability in community-based settings.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Alabama administrators have taken an incremental approach toward moving pre-K teacher compensation to be more in line with that of K-12 teachers, beginning with starting salary. Initial budget calculations were performed to determine the cost of raising starting salaries for all pre-K teachers across settings to be in line with starting kindergarten teacher salaries. State administrators submitted a request to the legislature for an increase in the budget and were successful in getting not only an increase for the original estimate, but also an additional increase, since the legislature approved a pay raise for K-12 teachers during the same session.

The plan did not originally include a means to provide pre-K teachers with raises over time, but later, calculations were made to provide funds for step-raise increases similar, but not equivalent to, the process for K-12 teachers.[5]

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

Wider support for the pre-K program has been crucial in building toward better compensation for pre-K teachers in Alabama. For example, in 2011, the Alabama School Readiness Alliance formed a statewide Pre-K Task Force representing a wide array of stakeholders, including several members of the business community. By 2015, the taskforce had outlined a vision for increased investment in pre-K over a 10-year period, with an emphasis on providing high-quality services.[6] The focus on quality has been supported by the use of evidence, particularly child-level data evaluating academic outcomes[7] as well as high ratings in NIEER's pre-K quality benchmark assessments.[8]

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

State administrators expect these salary increases to have several benefits, including the retention and motivation of good teachers, increased professionalism of pre-K, and more high-quality teachers attracted to early childhood jobs. An unexpected benefit that has already been observed is an increased interest on the part of kindergarten teachers in working in pre-kindergarten classrooms. The intention is also to monitor the effects of reform over time in terms of teacher turnover and child outcomes.

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Technical implementation — budgeting, database building — has been a difficult process, according to state administrators. They also note that there has been opposition from within the early childhood field: community-based providers that have pre-K classrooms in the same building as Head Start or child care classrooms raise concerns about disparities not just between pre-K and K-3 teachers, but between pre-K and other early educators.

5 The public school model calls for bumps at three-year intervals, which grow successively smaller. The pre-K model is designed with annual increments to be equivalent over a 10-year period so that at the end of 10 years, a pre-K teacher would make what she would have made had she been in the public school.

6 Alabama School Readiness Alliance Pre-K Task Force. (2015). *Recommendations for the Expansion of First Class Pre-K in Alabama*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama School Readiness Alliance. Retrieved from http://www.alabamaschoolreadiness.org/uploadedFiles/File/ASRA_Legislative_FullRecs2015_WebREV3.pdf.

7 See, for example, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. (2016). *School Readiness and Growth among Students in First Class Pre-K. First Class Pre-K Issue Brief No. 3*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from http://children.alabama.gov/uploadedFiles/File/First_Class_PreK_Gold_Performance.pdf.

8 Barnett et al. (2017b).

Georgia Pre-K[9]

Background

Georgia's pre-K program began as a small pilot in 1992 and was expanded to universal eligibility for all four-year-olds in 1995.[10] About 60 percent of Georgia's four-year-olds participated in pre-K in the 2015-16 school year.[11]

How is the pre-K program financed?

Georgia pre-K is funded by a state lottery for education. Grants are awarded to a variety of providers, including schools and child care centers.[12] Guidelines stipulate that the grantee must use at least 90 percent of the funds allocated to base salary for teacher salaries specifically, and the other 10 percent can be used for benefits or other program purposes. The intention is to encourage programs to hire more highly qualified teachers, with the higher salary that this entails; for example, 10 percent of a $30,000 base teacher salary is an additional $3,000 to be used as the grantee sees fit, compared with 10 percent of a $40,000 base teacher salary ($4,000). Unlike the funds for the base salary, the salary supplement, based on levels of experience, is 100-percent tied to the teacher for its intended purpose.

What is the current status of state efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: All settings are funded for a base salary amount and are required to pay a minimum salary, which differs by qualification level. These requirements are not identical to K-3 teacher salaries, but are intended to be equivalent where educational qualifications are the same (e.g., where a pre-K teacher has a bachelor's degree plus state certification). Although pre-K teachers are not required to be certified in either public or private settings, more than 80 percent of pre-K teachers in both public and private settings are certified. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, for both public and private settings, a supplement to this base salary is awarded based on years of experience — a cumulative 3-percent increase in base salary for each two years of experience up to 20 years, paid as part of a teacher's regular salary and not as an annual bonus.[13] Because individual grantees may set higher salaries than required by Georgia pre-K policy, disparities may still exist in practice.

Benefits: Georgia's policy does not specify parity in benefits for pre-K teachers in community-based programs. Funds are included specifically for benefits, but what is provided depends on the individual provider. Public schools are required to provide benefits by law.

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: The pre-K program pays for an eight-hour workday: 6.5 hours for instruction and 1.5 hours for planning. All pre-K teachers are funded for an additional 10 days beyond classroom instruction, which are to be used for planning as well as staff development and training.[14]

9 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Susan Adams, Georgia Department of Care and Early Learning, December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).
10 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (n.d.). *History of Georgia's Pre-K Program.* Retrieved from http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/History.aspx.
11 Barnett et al. (2017b).
12 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (n.d.). *Becoming a Georgia Pre-K Program Provider.* Retrieved from http://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/StartingAGeorgiaPreKProgram.aspx.
13 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2016). *Georgia's Pre-K Program 2016-2017 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines*. Retrieved from http://decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/Guidelines.pdf.
14 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2016). *Georgia's Pre-K Program 2016-2017 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines*. Retrieved from http://decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/Guidelines.pdf.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

Turnover with pre-K teachers migrating to K-3 prompted recent improvements to Georgia's pre-K teacher salary policies.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Georgia has one of the oldest pre-K programs with a history of more than 20 years. At the outset, consideration was given to the base or starting salaries for teachers, and funding was set at the same amount for pre-K teachers across settings, with different amounts for certified and uncertified teachers. However, this scale did not include adjusted pay for experience or further training beyond a bachelor's degree, known as the salary supplement, which is normally paid for K-12 teachers through Georgia's state budget. State funds were made available to pay for these supplements for pre-K teachers in public school settings, but not for teachers in community-based settings, until a budget cut in 2010-11. Funds for the supplement continued in K-12, however, which prompted turnover of pre-K teachers in public schools who increasingly left for K-3 positions.

In 2015, the governor created an Education Reform Commission, which included early education. The commission recommended the development of a pay scale for pre-K teachers that would take into account education and experience.[15] This recommendation was taken forward beginning in 2016-17.

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

Pre-K in Georgia enjoys broad-based support by the general public as well as government officials. In terms of compensation efforts, data on teacher retention was used to make the case that turnover was a problem and that salary differentials were a key contributor to this problem. Similarly, a survey of providers was used to show that compensation was perceived as a key challenge for the implementation of a high-quality pre-K program.

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

Pre-K administrators expressed the view that discussion of improved compensation for pre-K teachers has opened the door to discussion of improved compensation for early educators more broadly, including infant-toddler teachers specifically.

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Public perception that the work of a pre-K teacher (or even elementary teacher) is not as deserving of high salaries compared to teachers of older children has made movement on this issue more difficult, according to pre-K administrators interviewed.

15 Education Reform Commission. (2015). *Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal*. Atlanta, GA: Office of the Governor. Retrieved from https://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/FinalGovERCReport_121415.pdf.

New Jersey Pre-K[16]

Background

New Jersey funds three targeted pre-K programs with different eligibility and operating schedules.[17] All three programs are overseen by the Division of Early Childhood Education in the state Department of Education. The largest program, formerly known as the Abbott Preschool Program, served about 19 percent of the state's three-year-olds and 21 percent of the state's four-year-olds during the 2015-16 school year, compared with about 1 percent of three-year-olds and 8 percent of four-year-olds served in the other two programs combined.[18] In 2015-16, across all pre-K programs, 57 percent of children were served within the district and 43 percent in private or Head Start centers.[19]

The former Abbott Preschool Program was created in 1998, following a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling in the Abbott v. Burke school funding case, which required the state to fund high-quality pre-K open to all three- and four-year-olds in certain high-poverty districts.

How is the pre-K program financed?

Resources are transferred from the state to local school districts, using a formula based on enrollment. Due to the New Jersey Supreme Court decision, the funds for pre-K are protected, but there is no guarantee of increases over time.

School districts have the option of providing pre-K services directly or contracting with private providers. More than half of children are served in Head Start or community child care settings rather than classrooms in schools.

What is the current status of state efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Two out of the three New Jersey pre-K programs, including the former Abbott Preschool Program, require compensation parity with K-3 teachers for all pre-K teachers, whether in private contracted programs or public schools.[20] For exact language governing this requirement, see the sidebar New Jersey State Regulations Governing Compensation Parity in the report.[21] The following discussion refers to the former Abbott Preschool Program specifically.

Salary: Parity in both starting salary and ongoing salaries is required for teachers with equivalent certification, credentials, and working hours. While the state regulations use the term "comparable," this standard is enforced by looking at the district salary scale.

16 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Vincent Costanza and Ellen Wolock, New Jersey Department of Education, April 2017 (Follow-up: August 2017).
17 For further information on each of the three programs, see the New Jersey profile in Barnett et al. (2017b).
18 See the New Jersey profile in Barnett et al. (2017b).
19 Education Law Center. (2017). *NJ's State Funded Preschool Program*. Retrieved from http://www.edlawcenter.org/research/preschool-data.html.
20 Barnett et al. (2016b).
21 Also available from N.J.A.C. 6A:13A, *Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs*. Retrieved from http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap13a.pdf.

Benefits: Benefits are included within the requirements for comparable compensation, but while salary comparability is enforced by looking at the district salary scale, benefits may not necessarily be provided as an equivalent package or at equivalent value for community-based pre-K teachers because, in practice, it is easier to buy better benefits at lower cost in larger school districts than in smaller private settings.[22]

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: Paid time for planning and professional development is also included in the requirements for equivalent time to K-3 teachers.

The problem of low wages for early educators has been stalled for decades, but pre-K appears to be an area gaining momentum on how to address this pervasive issue. States and cities across the nation are increasingly pursuing compensation parity between teachers in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs and K-3 teachers.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

The New Jersey Supreme Court case ruling made the provision of high-quality pre-K a matter of educational equity, with the goal of narrowing children's educational achievement gaps. Included in the elements of high quality were teachers with education and compensation equivalent to other district teachers.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Compensation parity, along with parity in educational qualifications, was required by the New Jersey Supreme Court, but implementation of these requirements called for the creation of a pipeline of appropriately credentialed teachers, particularly in the community-based settings. As a result, there was a concerted effort to establish clear guidelines for when teachers must achieve their bachelor's degrees and state certification in order to remain employed as pre-K teachers, to fund supports such as scholarships, and to build higher education programs with appropriate coursework to meet those needs.[23]

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

A binding legal ruling was clearly the main impetus for moving toward compensation parity requirements in New Jersey, but this achievement would not have been possible without an understanding that high-quality pre-K must include teachers who are as well qualified and well compensated as teachers of older children.

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

The emphasis on high-quality pre-K services, including professional workplace supports for teachers, in the former Abbott Preschool Program has demonstrated positive educational outcomes for children. The Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) estimated the effects of preschool education programs on academic skills in language arts and literacy, mathematics, and science based on standardized tests given to all New Jersey children in 4th and 5th grade.[24] The study found persistent gains in all tested subjects on the state assessments, with greater test-score gains for children who participated in two years rather than one year of preschool.

22 Coffman, J., Green, M., Bruner, C., & Daniel, Y. (2010). *Reaching for Quality: Lessons from New Jersey on Raising Preschool Teacher Qualification While Maintaining Workforce Diversity.* Boston, MA: BUILD Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/ArticleId/261/Reaching-for-Quality-Lessons-from-New-Jersey-on-Raising-Preschool-Teacher-Qualifications-While-Maint.aspx.

23 Coffman et al. (2010).

24 See Barnett et al. (2013).

Abbott Preschool Program participation was also linked to lower grade retention and special education placement rates. An explicit link between the quality of the Abbott program and the high compensation levels of pre-K teachers has not been documented. However, a 2008 study of center directors participating in the New Jersey Abbott pre-K program found that center directors attributed the higher salaries to reduced teacher turnover at their sites.[25]

What has been challenging about these efforts?

The pre-K administrators interviewed did not specifically mention challenges related to achieving compensation parity in the former Abbott Preschool Program. However, a broader challenge for the New Jersey approach has been securing sufficient funding for substantial expansion of the program to serve three- and four-year-olds outside the former Abbott districts and ensuring that compensation parity requirements apply across all three pre-K programs. Some progress has been made recently with regard to funding — the 2017-18 state budget included an additional $25 million to expand preschool to further school districts.[26]

25 Whitebook et al. (2008).

26 InsiderNJ. (2017, June 26). Senate budget committee approves budget plan. *Insider NJ*. Retrieved from https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/senate-budget-committee-approves-budget-plan/.

Oregon Preschool Promise[27]

Background

Since 1987, Oregon has funded pre-K for three- and four-year-olds with its Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten program, which allocated state dollars to expand early education enrollment beyond what is possible with federal Head Start funding. As of the 2015-16 school year, about 7 percent of three-year-olds and 10 percent of four-year-olds participated in this program. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, Oregon initiated an additional state pre-K program called Preschool Promise.[28] This discussion focuses on rules applicable to this new program.

How is the pre-K program financed?

Preschool Promise is financed via state general funds. Early Learning Hubs (by region) apply for funding from the state, and providers are sub-contracted to deliver services.[29]

What is the current status of state efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: HB 3380, the authorizing legislation for Preschool Promise, directs Oregon's Early Learning Council to establish minimum salaries and target salary requirements for lead preschool teachers employed in Preschool Promise classrooms, regardless of setting. The legislation originally specified that "target salary requirements shall be comparable to lead kindergarten teacher salaries in public schools," which in practice have been set based on the median salary of kindergarten teachers.[30]

This language has since been weakened to read "Target salary *guidelines* shall be, *to the extent practicable*, comparable to lead kindergarten teacher salaries in public schools, [emphasis added]" and the requirement for lead pre-K teachers to have a bachelor's degree has been removed.[31] The targets are set regionally, rather than by school district. The current targets address starting salary and do not have a mechanism that accounts for experience. Unlike the minimum salary requirements, the target salaries are non-binding for providers; however, target salaries — rather than minimum salaries — are used to determine funding levels in the cost-modeling process.

Benefits: Benefits were not directly included in the legislation, although health and retirement benefits were included in the cost-modeling process. The state's QRIS includes basic standards related to the provision of benefits, but does not specify which types of benefits must be included in the package or what value they should have (e.g., a set number of days off). The legislation does specify that pre-K providers must be 4- or 5-star level in the QRIS.[32]

27 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with David Mandell, Gwyn Bachtle, and Dana Hepper, Oregon Division of Early Learning, November/December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).
28 See the Oregon profile in Barnett et al. (2017b).
29 Early Learning Division. (2017). *Oregon Preschool Legislative Report*. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division. Retrieved from https://oregonearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Oregon-Preschool-Legislative-Report_020917.pdf.
30 Enrolled House Bill 3380. 78th Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2015 Regular Session. Retrieved from https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3380/Enrolled.
31 Enrolled House Bill 2013. 79th Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2017 Regular Session. Retrieved from https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2013/Enrolled.
32 The Research Institute. (2014). *Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System — Standards for Center-based Child Care Programs*. Research Institute, Western Oregon University. Retrieved from http://triwou.org/projects/qris/earlylearning.

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: Working conditions more generally are not directly addressed in the legislation. The annual hour requirement for instruction and associated funding is the same for all pre-K teachers, regardless of setting, but there are no specific guidelines about time for planning and professional development. As above with benefits, the QRIS includes standards related to professional responsibilities, but does not specify what must be included (e.g., a certain amount of paid planning time/paid professional development days).

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

Equity was a strong driver — there was a perception that it is not fair for teachers of younger children or teachers in certain settings to be treated differently from other teachers. In addition, there was concern that low compensation was driving Head Start teachers with bachelor's degrees to leave their positions.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

The strategy was to move incrementally, beginning with those aspects of compensation that seemed easiest to improve, namely starting salary. Legislation gave the Early Learning Council the authority to set minimum salaries for teachers funded by Preschool Promise.

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

In their memo to the Early Learning Council, "Establishing Minimum and Target Salaries for Preschool Promise Teachers," administrators from the Early Learning Division were able to point to data collected on Oregon's early childhood workforce to show relationships between low wages and low retention rates.[33]

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

This program is very new, and so few outcomes can be assessed at present. An initial report to the Oregon Legislature describes average salary data by education level, which will help to document changes to salary levels over time.[34]

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Pre-K administrators noted several challenges in moving toward salary parity for pre-K teachers, including:

- Preventing wage compression (higher wages for newer workers relative to older workers, given that the latter have more experience), when the funding model is not set up to take into account teacher experience over time;
- Ensuring that increases in educational qualifications do not exacerbate existing racial inequities with regard to who has access to more highly qualified, better-paid positions; and
- Implementing parity requirements in private settings, when private settings may have both pre-K and other types of classrooms and may be unwilling to implement policies that lead to salary disparities within their programs.

33 Mandell, D., & Bachtle, G. (2016). *Establishing Minimum and Target Salaries for Preschool Promise Teachers*. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division. For the information cited on Oregon's early care and education workforce, see Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education and Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. (n.d.). *Oregon Early Learning Workforce: One Year Beyond Baseline Comparison of 2012 and 2013*. Portland, OR: Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education and Corvallis, OR: Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. Retrieved from http://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/occrp/pdf/oregon-early-learning-workforce-one-year-beyond-baseline-2015-09-02-final.pdf.

34 Early Learning Division. (2017). *Oregon Preschool Legislative Report*. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division. Retrieved from https://oregonearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Oregon-Preschool-Legislative-Report_020917.pdf.

West Virginia Universal Pre-K[35]

Background

Local school boards have been allowed to fund preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds in West Virginia since 1983, but in 2002, legislation was passed which required universal access to pre-K for all four-year-olds by 2012.[36] Targeted access for some three-year-olds is also available, and as of 2015-16, 66 percent of four-year-olds and 11 percent of three-year-olds in the state were enrolled in public pre-K.

How is the pre-K program financed?

Funding for West Virginia Universal Pre-K is part of the State School Aid Funding Formula, which means that as enrollment increases, funding to implement pre-K programs also increases.[37] Public schools receive pre-K funding to deliver services directly or partner with Head Start and other early care and education centers. There are requirements in place to ensure mixed delivery, and in 2016, 81 percent of classrooms were provided in collaboration with community partner organizations,[38] up from 75 percent in 2014-15.[39] Head Start programs form the majority of the community partnerships.

What is the current status of state efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: There is no state-level policy requirement, but school districts require salary parity for pre-K teachers in public school settings.[40] State guidelines recommend that county decision-makers support community-based programs to increase compensation, with appropriate funding;[41] however, local school districts, in collaboration with community partners, are ultimately responsible for establishing salary agreements.

Benefits and Payment for Professional Responsibilities: As with salaries, decisions about benefits and payment for professional responsibilities ultimately reside with local school districts, in collaboration with community partners. However, private settings are less likely to be able to afford benefit packages similar to those in public schools. There has been a push by the state to work with localities on establishing equivalent working hours for pre-K teachers across settings, including paid planning time.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

There is a recognition on the part of local decision-making committees that teachers make the most important contribution to a high-quality pre-K service.

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35 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with W. Clayton Burch, West Virginia Department of Education, April 2017 (Follow-up: August 2017).

36 Office of Early Learning. (2015). *West Virginia's Journey: An Ongoing Commitment to High-Quality Early Learning Opportunities for All Children — History, Studies, Current Projects, and Looking Forward.* Charleston, WV: West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Early Learning. Retrieved from https://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/static/docs/west-virginia-ec-history-2015.pdf.

37 Office of Early Learning. (2016). *Early Learning Annual Report.* Charleston, WV: West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Early Learning. Retrieved from http://static.k12.wv.us/oel/docs/spotlight/2016-early-learning-annual-report.pdf.

38 Office of Early Learning. (2016).

39 Office of Early Learning. (2015).

40 National Institute for Early Education Research. (2016). *Appendix A: State Survey Data 2014-2015.* New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2015_YB_Appendix_A.pdf.

41 See, for example, Office of School Readiness. (2012). *West Virginia Universal Pre-K Partnerships — Collaborating with Community Programs: Funding, Contracts and Budgets.* Charleston, WV: West Virginia Department of Education and Department of Health & Human Resources. Retrieved from https://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/docs/WV_Pre-K_Partnerships_Collaborating_with_Community_Partnerships_2012.pdf.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

West Virginia has taken an incremental approach to the issue of pay parity, starting with moving toward equivalent working hours (same work day and week, including time for planning, using the public school district as the standard), then moving to improve teacher education levels and, more recently, salaries. The state strategy has been to provide model information to localities and to work with them to move forward on the issue. This type of strategy — where the state's role is largely to provide guidance — is, in part, due to a strong emphasis on localism within the public education system, but also to a collaborative decision-making structure in the pre-K program, whereby a representative from child care, Head Start, and a school district in each county must each sign off on collaborative agreements.

State representatives are currently in conversation with the local school districts about tackling pay disparities. To help advance pay as part of teacher quality, the state agency is starting by providing a model of what should be occurring at the local level with the budgeting for pre-K.[42] They have developed and circulated an Excel template for the counties to use that shows the categories to fund and support high-quality pre-K. However, this model does not suggest target salary levels.

Some school districts are moving toward pay parity by increasing funding for private settings to increase their pre-K teachers' salaries, while others are directly placing district employees in the private settings to teach in their pre-K classrooms. Note that these actions are in at least some instances at the behest of the private center.

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

An effort to increase pre-K teacher qualifications, including the development of a new certificate for early childhood, has been helpful for demonstrating that pre-K teachers, regardless of setting, are certified. The state representatives implied that this push for higher qualifications was part of the reason that there has been more movement on pay parity in recent years.

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

The focus on pay parity in West Virginia is relatively new, but an emphasis on quality assessment has been a key component of the pre-K system[43] and has the potential to allow for a greater understanding of the link between higher compensation levels and program quality over time.

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Similar to other states, representatives for West Virginia noted that a key challenge is that community-based organizations are resistant to raising pay for some of their teachers but not others.

42 West Virginia Department of Education. (n.d.). *Universal Pre-K: County Collaborative Team Resources*. Charleston, WV: West Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from https://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/county-resources.php.
43 See West Virginia Department of Education. (n.d.)

New York City Pre-K for All[44]

Background

New York City pre-K expands on New York state's Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK) in order to achieve universal full-day pre-K for four-year-olds in the city. New York City's pre-K expansion (Pre-K for All) began in the 2014-15 school year, and as of the 2015-16 school year, about 70 percent of all four-year-olds in the city participated in full-day pre-K in schools or community-based centers.[45]

How is the pre-K program financed?

New York City funds Pre-K for All through a mix of state grants (78 percent), city tax levy (21 percent) and federal grants (1 percent). [46]The city has a mixed delivery model: in addition to classrooms in traditional public schools and pre-K centers (dedicated pre-K facilities operated and led by the New York City public school system), nonprofits and private organizations contract with the city to deliver pre-K services.

New York state UPK funds were also supplemented in 2015 by a federal Preschool Development Grant.

What is the current status of city efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: Pre-K teachers in New York City public schools are part of the city teacher's union and are paid according to the same salary scale; in contrast, pre-K teachers in community-based organizations are either unrepresented or members of a union representing staff in child care centers.[47] The focus in New York City is currently on narrowing the substantial salary gap between pre-K teachers in school districts and pre-K teachers in community-based organizations, rather than achieving parity.

Benefits: New York City Department of Education does not track benefits information for its contracted pre-K providers.

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: Opportunities to participate in professional learning and coaching are available to all pre-K sites[48] and are founded on evidence-based research for best practices in early childhood education, rather than being set comparably to the supports that K-12 teachers receive.

44 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Josh Wallack and Sophia Pappas, New York City Department of Education, December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).
45 See page 8 of Barnett et al. (2017b).
46 Data for the 2016-17 school year.
47 Barnett et al. (2016b); Potter, H. (2015). *Lessons from New York City's Universal Pre-K Expansion: How a focus on diversity could make it even better.* New York, NY: The Century Foundation. Retrieved from https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/production.tcf.org/app/uploads/2015/05/13222611/TCF_LessonsFromNYCUniversalPreK-11.pdf.
48 New York City Department of Education. (n.d.). *Professional Learning.* Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/educators/pd.htm; see also Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.). *Evaluation of the New York City Pre-K for All Initiative, 2014-15 — Implementation Study Report: Program Supports*. New York, NY: New York City Center for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Department of Education. Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/slidercontent/IndependentResearch.htm.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

Teacher recruitment was the key consideration. The need for greater comparability between pre-K teacher salaries in school districts and community-based settings was apparent from the initial roll-out of the Pre-K for All expansion in 2014-15.

The rapid expansion depended on increasing availability of pre-K in community-based settings, which required recruiting teachers with bachelor's degrees to work in those settings.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Beginning in the first year of the roll-out, funds were added to raise the starting salary for certified pre-K teachers in community-based settings to $44,000 (bachelor's) and $50,000 (master's), which was about $6,000 less than the starting salaries of district teachers with equivalent levels of education. In the second year of the program, an additional incentive program was established to aid recruitment and retention in community-based settings.

Funds for those incentives were set at roughly $2,500 to aid with initial recruitment of certified teachers and $3,500 for retention of certified lead teachers when they chose to remain at the same contracted provider from one year to the next.[49] Crucially, these funds are not simply part of the general cost per child set out in contracts; they are earmarked specifically for the purposes outlined and cannot be used to pay for the base salary of the teacher.

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

Interviewees framed their goals in terms of an emphasis on teacher quality and the role of adequate compensation in recruiting and retaining skilled teachers.

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

New York City pre-K representatives expressed the view that efforts to raise salaries for pre-K teachers in community-based settings aided the separate effort by the city's child care union to increase compensation for certified ECE teachers outside pre-K to the same salary level as that of certified pre-K teachers in community-based settings.[50]

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Interviewees noted that the current approach is not a complete solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining talented teachers in all settings. Although the majority of site leaders surveyed in the Year One evaluation reported that staff recruitment and retention did not pose significant challenges, community-based site leaders were more likely to report challenges than leaders in district schools and pre-K centers.[51] The persistent salary gap has been a source of contention for community-based providers[52] and has received additional attention as a four-year expansion of the pre-K program to all three-year-olds, 3-K for All, is now in its first year.[53]

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49 See also New York City Department of Education website. (n.d.). *Educators: Lead Teacher Incentive Program*. Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/educators/LeadTeacherIncentive.htm.

50 See also City of New York. (2016). *City applauds contract agreement between District Council 1707 and the Day Care Council of NY.* Retrieved from http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/778-16/city-applauds-contract-agreement-between-district-council-1707-the-day-care-council-ny.

51 Gonser, S. (2017). Can private Pre-K for All providers survive in New York City? *The Hechinger Report*. Retrieved from http://hechingerreport.org/can-private-pre-k-providers-survive-new-york-city/; Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.).

52 Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.).

53 Taylor, K. (2017). Is "3-K for All" Good for All? De Blasio's Preschool Plan Troubles Some. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/nyregion/free-preschool-deblasio-new-york-city.html.

Pre-K 4 San Antonio[54]

Background

In 2013, San Antonio created a model pre-K program funded and operated by the city, which also directly employs the staff in the program. The initiative began with four model pre-K centers strategically placed throughout San Antonio. Pre-K in these model programs is open to four-year-olds for a full school day plus before- and after-school care; tuition is paid on a sliding scale based on parental income and is free for qualifying students.[55] Beginning in 2016, the model centers were supplemented with a grants-based program for school- and community-based partners.[56]

How is the pre-K program financed?

Funding for the program was approved via a 2012 ballot initiative that raised the local sales tax 1/8th of a cent.[57] Seven of the local school districts are currently contributing a portion of their state pre-K money to help finance the effort.

What is the current status of city efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

Salary: Pre-K teachers in the Pre-K 4 San Antonio model program are city employees and are paid in line with the city's policies, not school district policies. In practice, these Pre-K teachers are paid substantially more than beginning K-3 teachers ($65,000 versus $45,000 annually).

City policy also provides for raises over time, including periodic cost-of-living adjustments, as well as opportunities for merit raises based on performance (2 percent if standards were met, 3 percent if above standards, and 4 percent for exceptional performance).

Benefits: Benefits (paid holidays, annual and personal leave, health insurance, retirement plan contribution, and tuition reimbursement) are included, but similar to salaries, they are set in accordance with the City of San Antonio's policies, not school-district policy.

Payment for Professional Responsibilities: Paid time for professional responsibilities is included, and there is a heavy emphasis on professional development opportunities for teachers, including coaching. Teachers participate in three weeks of paid professional development before school starts, as well as weekly group learning sessions during the school year, and receive about an hour for planning in the afternoons.[58]

The policies outlined above apply specifically to pre-K teachers in the four model Pre-K 4 SA programs, as they are employed by the city. Pre-K teachers in public schools are subject to district policies and are paid the same and receive the same benefits as K-3 teachers, but this standard does not apply to pre-K teachers in community-based settings.

54 All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Sarah Baray, Pre-K 4 SA, December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).
55 City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Pre-K 4 San Antonio: Enrollment Overview.* Retrieved from http://www.sanantonio.gov/Pre-K-4-San-Antonio/EnrollmentOverview.
56 City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Pre-K 4 San Antonio: Competitive Grants*. Retrieved from http://www.sanantonio.gov/Pre-K-4-San-Antonio/Competitive-Grants.
57 Lantigua-Williams. (2016, March 8).
58 Barnett et al. (2016b).

Partners receiving a San Antonio pre-K program grant could potentially use these funds to increase compensation for their teachers; however, there does not appear to be any explicit policy or guidelines in place to encourage or require partners to adopt these compensation for their teachers.

What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

From the beginning, there was an emphasis on high-quality services in order to see the best possible results from the initiative. In 2011, the mayor convened a task force of educational and business leaders to identify the most effective method for improving the quality of education in the city, which resulted in a recommendation to develop high-quality pre-K services for four-year-olds.[59] As part of this recommendation, there was an understanding that the best services required the best teachers, and attracting them would require appropriate compensation.

What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Appropriate compensation for pre-K teachers was built into the model from the beginning. An emphasis was placed on what is needed for high-quality teaching in early childhood, rather than setting a benchmark with K-12.

What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

Popular support through a local ballot initiative as well as independent evaluations demonstrating the impact of pre-K on children have both contributed to general support for high-quality pre-K in San Antonio.

What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

Local administrators suggest that, due to high starting salaries, more teachers are interested in pre-K jobs, resulting in an excellent applicant pool, including from elementary schools.[60] Independent evaluations for the first three years of the program have shown positive results in child outcomes,[61] and there is an intention to investigate the specific link between higher teacher pay and the quality of the service, using data on teacher turnover and comparisons with school districts.

What has been challenging about these efforts?

Local administrators report that working with other stakeholders, particularly local school districts, has been a challenge. Seven local school districts provide a portion of their state pre-K funds to help finance the program, but this support may not continue if the program does not show improved school readiness for children. There is also some tension about higher salaries for city pre-K teachers compared with other pre-K teachers, including those in public school districts.[62]

59 City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Pre-K 4 San Antonio: About.* Retrieved from http://www.sanantonio.gov/Pre-K-4-San-Antonio/about; Lantigua-Williams. (2016, March 8).
60 See also Lantigua-Williams. (2016, March 8).
61 City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Pre-K 4 San Antonio: Student Assessment.* Retrieved from http://www.sanantonio.gov/Pre-K-4-San-Antonio/Facts/StudentAssessment
62 Lantigua-Williams. (2016, March 8).

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