



## *System for Early Education Development* **Professional Development and Retention of Early Educators** **(Public Policy Priority for 2010)**

### **THE ISSUE**

- The turnover rate for early care and education teachers in Alaska is approximately 46% (2003, Market Rate Survey). Teacher retention promotes attachment and quality relationships between young children and those who care for them which are crucial to optimal brain development and learning.
- Low wages and lack of financial resources for teacher's professional development impacts recruitment and retention of a qualified and stable workforce.
- Positive child outcomes are increased with higher levels of teacher preparation and formal education.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF EARLY EDUCATORS**

- Three factors are positively associated with teacher quality: compensation, participation in professional development, and stability. Compensation appears to be the strongest predictor of classroom quality in child care centers (Kagan, et al., 2006). **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network, has the infrastructure to incentivize teachers with current credentials through the ROOTS (Retaining Our Outstanding Teacher) Awards. To impact retention, these awards must be calculated and distributed at significant levels that follow the SEED Professional Framework. Formal evaluation has shown that compensation programs have demonstrated considerable increased retention rates in states where initiatives exist.
- Scholarship type programs can reduce financial barriers to further education and training for teachers. **thread** provides up to \$500 per year for qualified education expenses for early educators working in licensed programs. Increasing these annual awards an additional \$500 would facilitate the completion of additional professional development and improve the quality of early care and education for Alaska's children.
- Research has consistently shown that higher levels of provider education and training are associated with more positive and stimulating teacher behavior resulting in more positive child outcomes. Education and training that increase positive interactions between adults and children impacts multiple areas of development (Pianta, 2006; Ramey et al., 2008).

### **ACTION NEEDED**

- \$1.5 million to increase professional development opportunities for early educators and to provide financial incentives to increase retention in the early education field



Connected with **thread**.

## Rationale for Alaska SEED ROOTS Awards

The Alaska 2009 Child Care Market Rate Survey with 395 respondents provides data that supports the need for wage increases tied to increased professional development. The majority (81%) of responding programs report needing to hire new staff from once every month to 2-3 times per year and 61% of all providers report hiring and retaining qualified staff as “very difficult.” Responses to questions about challenges with staff retention include lack of qualifications/education as the number one factor with lack of ability to offer benefits as second. Center/group home providers reported to hire and retain qualified caregivers requires on average \$12.50 per hour.

Other national programs such as WAGES® has produced the following recent outcomes:

- The annual turnover rate was 15% for WAGES® Project participants, far less than the pre-program statewide turnover rate of 31% per year and less than the current statewide turnover rate of 24%.
- Sixty percent (64%) of WAGES® Project participants indicated that they had taken college level coursework since applying to the Child Care WAGES® Project and 86% plan to do so in the future.
- Eighteen percent (19%) of WAGES® Project participants moved up a level on the supplement scale due to continued education.

To increase early educators’ wages from the statewide average of \$ 11 per hour (2008, wage survey, Alaska Department of Labor) to the desired \$12 per hour would require the following increases. Each tier is tied to incremental educational attainment with a 60% increase for each one. Calculations are based on the current professional development of the early childhood field to include child care and Head Start.

<b>TIER I:</b> Child Development Associate Level (used SEED level 6& 7) includes CDA and unrelated AA with credits or Occupational Endorsement	223	223 x \$2080= \$463,840
<b>TIER II:</b> AA/AAS Level (used SEED levels 8 &9) includes related AA and ECE AA and unrelated BA	119	119 x \$3328=\$396,032
<b>TIER III:</b> BA/BS/MA Level (used SEED levels 9, 10, &11) related BA, unrelated BA with ECE credits, BA in ECE, & MA	129	129x \$5324=\$686,796

TOTAL:

\$1,546,668