

4E Contra Costa

Enhancing Early Educator Earnings for Contra Costa:
An innovative wage-boosting solution for retaining early educators

Early education is in crisis.

Low pay leads to early educators leaving their jobs, which creates a shortage of programs that working families (and our economy) depend on.

Many early educators in our county make an **hourly wage that is one-third** of what is needed to make ends meet; and yet, these professionals are responsible for educating the next generation of learners.

Early learning programs struggle to stay fully staffed, with many closing their doors or enrolling fewer children because they can't meet required staff-to-child ratios. With fewer spaces in early learning programs, many parents can't stay in the workforce.

Nearly 20,000 children under the age of 5 in our county are not utilizing the state subsidized child care that they qualify for, largely due to these staff shortages.

Wage-boosting programs are a crucial part of the solution.

Investing in early educator wages is a solid investment strategy, and the right thing to do...

- for our early educators,
- for our economy,
- and for our children.

High-quality early learning programs are critical to positive child development, and the lack of available and affordable programs leave families scrambling. Although state reforms for early education are being considered, given state budget deficits, the horizon for those reforms continue to move further away.



"If it takes too long to get funding, a lot of the family child care programs will fail before help arrives."

Home-based early educator in Contra Costa County

What works?

Investing in early educator wages.

- ✓ Wage-boosting programs lead to **higher retention of early educators**¹
- ✓ Higher retention leads to **more stability and quality in early care and education**²
- ✓ Access to high quality early care and education leads to **huge returns on investment for children, families, and the local economy**³, with each dollar invested generating a boost of **\$1.88 in economic activity**⁴

The 4E Contra Costa model:

By piloting a wage-boosting model, our county can ensure stability for hundreds of families who depend on early learning programs to keep their jobs, invest in our economy, and maximize impact of other public funding.

Research-based: The model is based on best practices from existing evidence, informed by local lived experience, and endorsed by local individuals and organizations who want to see the model implemented to address our local crisis.

Equitable: Prioritizes zip codes where families currently have the fewest early learning program options (so retention of educators is critical), and sites that receive the least assistance from state funding contracts.

- 18 payments of \$1,000+ per month
- home-based and center-based educators can apply
- full- and part-time direct care roles are eligible
- sites chosen by lottery

Contra Costa County must act urgently to address the local crisis.

If we don't act, we risk more early educators leaving the profession, fewer early learning programs for families who can't keep their jobs without a quality program for their children.



Caring for tomorrow means addressing the unmet needs of our early educators today.

Learn more about the research and community voice behind this wage-boosting model, and sign up for updates: bit.ly/early-learning-workforce

¹ Reducing Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood Education Settings: Lessons from Research Policy Partnerships in Louisiana and Virginia. childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu

² Understanding teacher turnover in early childhood education. medicine.yale.edu

³ Examining the Significant Return on Investment from High-Quality Early Learning & Care. ffyf.org

⁴ Investing in Early Care and Education: The Economic Benefits for California. laborcenter.berkeley.edu



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