



Child Care  
**WAGES<sup>®</sup>**  
*Program*

**Child Care WAGES<sup>®</sup> Program North Carolina  
2017-2018 Annual Report**

# About WAGE\$

**The Child Care WAGE\$® Program** was created in response to research that showed the quality of care children receive in child care centers or family child care homes is lowered by high teacher turnover rates and inadequate teacher education. However, a lack of resources and efforts to maintain affordability for parents mean many early childhood teachers are severely underpaid and leave the field for better paying jobs. And others never consider the profession as an option. WAGE\$ provides tiered education-based salary supplements to teachers, directors and family child care educators working with children from birth to 5 years old, leading to better educated teachers and greater continuity of care for young children.

**In short, compensation matters** for our early childhood educators. And early childhood educators matter for our children. Through WAGE\$, participants can earn education-based supplements after completing a six-month commitment period in the same child care program, making it possible for them to continue working in an undercompensated field, and giving them a chance to focus on the children in their classrooms instead of their own financial concerns. And the children benefit from stable, happy, educated teachers who stay.

**In North Carolina, WAGE\$ is funded** by a collaboration between local Smart Start partnerships that choose to participate and the Division of Child Development and Early Education. Child Care Services Association administers the program for participating counties and extends gratitude on behalf of the participants to the funders (see page 5 for the 2017-2018 funders).

**WAGE\$ makes a difference for people, their families and communities.** This report highlights the program's effect using the voices of the recipients themselves. WAGE\$ empowers and enables a new generation to focus on teaching our youngest children while helping those educators better take care of themselves and their families.

**98% of the WAGE\$ participant survey respondents said WAGE\$ helps ease financial stress. Participants earned an average six-month supplement of \$992.**

**Participants say. . .** The low compensation in early childhood education causes stress and makes it difficult for the participants to support themselves and their families. WAGE\$ supplements help improve their lives and allow them focus more on the children in their care.

“It is important because it helps people like me to be a little more stress free and being stress free helps us to give better care and better education to the children.”  
--Teacher

“Let's face it, early childhood education teachers are paid very little. I still do the best I can for each child every day. The extra supplement helps me to be a little less stressed financially and lifts me up more.”  
--Teacher



Naukisha Wray-Darity is back in school after many years without the financial means to do so, receiving WAGE\$ supplements and a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship.

“WAGE\$ has helped me want to continue on with school,” she said. “As a single mom at the time, my checks have helped me pay for child care and feed my kids. It helped me pay for books and classes.

I don’t know what it hasn’t helped me do! Without WAGE\$, it would be hard to stay in the business even though I love it. It has saved me from leaving the industry. I remember when my boys were starting school one year and I didn’t have the funds to buy what they needed. I had no idea how I was going to get through it. That Saturday, the WAGE\$ check came. It was like Christmas because I could make sure my children had what they needed. They didn’t understand how hard things were for me.”

And now she uses her story to encourage other teachers.  
“It gives them hope.”

***In FYI 18, 90% of active WAGE\$ participants had either an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or higher, or they submitted coursework during the year to document their efforts to advance.***

***Participants say...*** Education impacts quality and WAGE\$ helps encourage and support their educational pursuits.

“Without (WAGE\$), I couldn’t have continued my education and my program couldn’t have grown. The WAGE\$ supplements I receive help me gain my education and be able to provide a better program for the children and families in my care.”

*--Family child care educator*

“With WAGE\$, I am able to further my education and work toward my bachelor’s degree. Without WAGE\$, this would not be possible. Also, getting a little extra help twice a year really helps to relieve some of the financial burden that can accrue throughout the year. . . I love my children, my job and my classroom, and thanks to WAGE\$ I am learning more every day through my education to be better prepared to provide care for my children and their families.”

*--Teacher*

## WAGE\$ Story: Stacey Graham



Stacey Graham was a substitute teacher in the public schools when a friend opened a family child care home and shared how rewarding it was. Stacey decided to start her own program in 2007 and earned the NC Early Childhood Credential. But she knew that wouldn't be enough. Stacey earned her Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education while maintaining her child care home. She wants to prepare her children for the next level and believes the WAGE\$® supplements help her do that.

“I love WAGE\$. Most of my check goes back into my program for the children. It often supports a special outing and helps my single parents who cannot afford that extra money. It was definitely an encouragement to return to school. I appreciate WAGE\$ and T.E.A.C.H. A lot of things wouldn't have been possible without those two programs working together. They help providers get and do more. I hope both continue.”

Stacey has accomplished so much, but she's not stopping. She took a summer course toward her bachelor's degree and plans to take a full course load and continue teaching in the fall.

## WAGE\$ Facts and Impact

***98% of participants said receiving the WAGE\$ supplement makes them feel more appreciated and recognized for their work, and 97% said WAGE\$ help them feel more satisfied in their job.***

***Participants say. . .*** Early educators are professionals and they do not always receive the recognition or appreciation they deserve. WAGE\$ acknowledges the important role they play for children, families and communities.

“(WAGE\$) has been a blessing to me as well as my staff. The supplements awarded show us that what we are doing in early childhood education is important to the leaders of our county and state and go to show that we are appreciated. This in turn has led to a higher morale among my staff that is reflected in the high quality of care our children are receiving on a daily basis.”

*--Teacher*

“It helps teachers feel more appreciated and valued in such a low income field of occupation. It has helped me feel as if my community and state are behind me.”

*--Teacher*



Growing up in Honduras, Maria Milla always wanted to be a teacher. That dream came true when she moved to the U.S. and began working as a child care center substitute. She worked, took English (ESL) classes and began her early childhood coursework. Now, she has a Birth-Kindergarten Bachelor's Degree.

T.E.A.C.H. helped her pay for classes; she said she couldn't have done it otherwise. She's proud of her degree, and believes WAGE\$ helped her reach that goal.

"WAGE\$ is a good motivator.

I'm very thankful for all that WAGE\$ and my partnership do with this incentive. I love my job and I'm happy, but I don't make much money and this incentive helps a lot of us stay in our jobs. WAGE\$ helps everybody. It helps children have the same teachers. Children feel safe, secure and happier. It helps parents feel more trust. They can leave their child with someone who has been there a long time rather than someone who comes and goes. It helps families because we don't have to charge them more than they can pay. It helps teachers a lot."

"Teaching is my passion. I want to stay in the classroom."

***The turnover rate of WAGE\$ participants in FY18 was 14%, leading to increased stability for children.***

***Participants say. . .*** Children need consistency, and WAGE\$ makes it more possible for participants to stay in their early childhood programs and classrooms.

"The Child Care WAGE\$® Program gives early childhood professionals a positive incentive that encourages them to continue to work with their child care program, build trusting relationships and bonds with the children and families they serve and provide a reliable, continual child care resource for their community."  
--Teacher

"This program gives an incentive to those who work hard and love the job of caring for and teaching young children. Without the extra money, really good teachers and caregivers would move on to better paying jobs, just so they can financially take care of their families."  
--Teacher



# Thank you for your support of WAGE\$

Alamance Partnership for Children  
Alexander County Partnership for Children  
Alleghany Partnership for Children  
Blue Ridge Partnership for Children  
Buncombe Partnership for Children  
Caldwell County Smart Start: A Partnership for Young Children  
Children & Youth Partnership for Dare County Inc.  
Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc.  
Cleveland County Partnership for Children  
Columbus County Partnership for Children  
Craven Smart Start Inc.  
Down East Partnership for Children  
Durham's Partnership for Children  
Franklin Granville Vance Smart Start Inc.  
Halifax-Warren Smart Start Partnership for Children Inc.  
Harnett County Partnership for Children Inc.  
Hertford-Northampton Smart Start Partnership for Children  
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children Inc.  
Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children Inc.  
NC Division of Child Development and Early Education  
Partnership for Children of Johnston County Inc.  
Partnership for Children of Lincoln/Gaston Counties  
Partnership for Children of the Foothills  
Randolph County Partnership for Children  
Region A Partnership for Children  
Rockingham County Partnership for Children Inc.  
Smart Start of Brunswick County Inc.

Smart Start of Davidson County Inc.  
Smart Start of Davie County Inc.  
Smart Start of Forsyth County  
Smart Start of Transylvania County  
Smart Start Rowan Inc.  
Stanly County Partnership for Children  
Surry County Early Childhood Partnership  
The Partnership for Children of Cumberland County  
The Partnership for Children of Wayne County Inc.  
Wilkes Community Partnership for Children  
Wilson County Partnership for Children



**Participants say...** The support for WAGE\$ from Smart Start Partnerships and the Division of Child Development and Early Education is greatly appreciated, and helps improve the quality of care in the communities that participate.

“It is very important for the children in our community to have professional and educated teachers and we need you to keep fighting to keep this life-changing program going year after year. Thanks for all your help.”  
--Teacher

I greatly appreciate the funding that has been allotted to myself and others. My gratitude can't be put into words. I just try to be the best teacher I can be as a repayment. Thank you again.”  
--Teacher/Director