Title

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Finding A Better Way: Defining and Assessing Public Policies to Improve Child Care Workforce Compensation

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Parents can't afford to pay,
Teachers and providers can't afford to stay,
Help us find a better way.
Worthy Wage Campaign Jingle, 1992

The Worthy Wage Campaign, initiated by the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) in the early 1990s and embraced by teachers, providers and advocates in numerous communities throughout the United States, sought to educate the early childhood community and the larger public about the crisis in securing a skilled and stable child care workforce. Initial efforts focused on exposing the problems of high turnover and low pay among child care workers, the resulting mediocre and poor quality of services available to the majority of young children, and the inability of families to cover the costs of child care services, let alone an increase in fees to improve child care wages. The above, often-quoted jingle captures the economic dilemma that characterizes child care services in the United States. Through it, the Campaign sought to expose this funding impasse and to engage a broad-based group of stakeholders in envisioning and designing policy alternatives and organizing efforts that would improve both child care jobs and services.

In the early days of the Campaign, Worthy Wage advocates encountered considerable resistance to the idea of raising child care wages.[2] As a result, the Campaign

[2]2 A fuller discussion of the resistance within the child care community to the call for higher wages will be included in a forthcoming history of the child care compensation movement. For more information, contact Marcy Whitebook.

focused its efforts more on *why* wages should be increased than on *how* best to do so. Initially, advocates expended energy on disseminating the findings of the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes and Phillips, 1990), which demonstrated the links among skilled and educated child care personnel, higher-quality programs, and better outcomes for children. Other studies which followed (Helburn, 1995; Kontos, Howes, Galinsky and Shinn, 1995) reinforced the need for a well-trained and well-compensated workforce to deliver high-quality services, which in turn were found essential in ensuring school readiness, addressing the developmental needs of children in low-income families, and realizing the promise of early brain development.

As the Worthy Wages movement has grown and matured, it has stimulated public awareness of the child care staffing crisis, moving the question of *how* to improve child care jobs to center stage. What is a " better way"? While there is minimal discussion of raising parent fees, charging the "full cost" of care, or corporate involvement in child care funding as strategies, a growing number of advocates and allies concerned about inadequate child care compensation recognize that a "better way" must necessarily involve a new and substantial public investment in services for young children, most recently expressed in the call for universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds. Although proposals for greater public investment vary with regard to the level of education and training required of personnel, the extent of educational focus of the curriculum, the level of accountability regarding child outcomes, and the funding and delivery mechanisms, there is a widespread acknowledgment that the dual need for better-paying child care jobs and more accessible high-quality child care services will not be solved by market forces alone. This understanding encompasses a fairly broad spectrum of advocates and consumers, including many in the labor, business and education communities.[3]

Even when advocates agree that the solution to the staffing crisis lies with a major public investment, the complexity of the current early childhood services delivery system creates many challenges. Because services are so decentralized, with multiple funding sources and regulatory requirements, and because providers are so diverse with regard to professional preparation, location of care, and demographic characteristics, it is an especially daunting task to craft and fund policy reforms targeted to improving child care jobs.

Still, the number of actors and communities engaged in some effort along these lines is rapidly increasing. Until recently, anyone interested in starting a local program to benefit the child care workforce had only a few models to consult. But in the last three years, driven in part by a robust economy and a shortage of trained workers, many states, among them California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin, have initiated or expanded publicly-funded programs focused on building a more skilled and stable child care workforce. Initiatives are also being developed in Connecticut, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri and Pennsylvania. In some states, local governmental entities are also establishing programs. In California, for example, the availability of tobacco tax revenues at the county level, as well as other state revenues, has stimulated almost all 58 counties to create some type of monetary retention incentive

[3] Amidst the discussion of health care reform in the mid-1990s, some groups edited the final line of the Worthy Wage jingle to read "Help us find a third-party payer way."

for child care workers based on their level of education and tenure. Dane and other counties in Wisconsin are using "pass-through" federal dollars to support compensation initiatives.[4] Keeping track of the various initiatives, understanding their differences and similarities, and determining their strengths and weaknesses, is a challenge even to those who are immersed in the issues, not to mention those who are just beginning to design programs.

This proliferation of child care workforce policies requires a common vocabulary and a framework or schema for categorizing these efforts. As the number and types of initiatives continue to increase, a more precise vocabulary will be required to advance our thinking and help us clarify goals. What exactly is a compensation initiative? What is the advantage of one approach over another? What can we learn from different approaches, and how will we know if they are successful? This paper attempts to serve as a "users guide" to current compensation initiatives, and it will require updating as new initiatives are developed and lessons are learned. Our goals are threefold:

- to clarify terminology currently in use, and to propose classifications to more accurately describe existing programs and initiatives;
- to stimulate awareness and discussion about the issues and dynamics that influence the particular design of various policies; and

[4] The charts provided at the end of this article provide a brief description of many of these efforts. For summaries of various longer-running initiatives, consult the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) (Bellm, Burton, Shukla and Whitebook, 1997) and the Urban Institute (Montilla, Twombly and De Vita, 2001). The CCW Web site also provides routine updates of proposed, newly-funded and existing child care compensation efforts (http://www.ccw.org).

- to propose criteria by which to assess a "better way" to build a skilled and stable child care workforce.

Defining our terminology: What exactly is a compensation initiative?

Advocates, policy makers, program developers and child care workers often use the term 'compensation initiative' imprecisely. It has come to encompass a broad range of activities that augment the delivery of early childhood services in some way, but do not necessarily lead to improved compensation for workers. A recent article by the Urban Institute, for example, distinguishes between direct and indirect models for increasing child care compensation (Montilla et al., 2001). In the direct category, the authors include programs that increase employee benefits or wages, which would rightfully be considered compensation initiatives. But in the indirect category, the authors include reimbursement rate increases, as well as training and professional development initiatives. As the report suggests, these latter strategies may bring more resources to the child care system and/or assist in building the skills of the workforce, but they do not directly improve the wages of child care workers. We agree, and as a result, we think it is confusing to continue to call such indirect strategies "compensation initiatives." A more accurate and inclusive label for these efforts would be "system enhancement initiatives." This may seem like splitting hairs, but by continuing to classify such efforts as compensation initiatives – even of an 'indirect' variety – we muddy the definitions of both types of initiatives and the strategies that are required to pursue them. In practice, this can lead to an assumption by policy makers that they have dealt with the compensation problem by increasing training opportunities or facilitating accreditation. While these are positive steps, more often than not they leave compensation and related retention problems untouched (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber and Howes, 2001; Whitebook, Sakai and Howes, 1997; Whitebook and Sakai, 1995).

Thus, we propose reserving the "compensation" label only for those initiatives that lead to immediate financial gain for child care workers. We would not label as compensation initiatives, for example, programs that cover the cost of training or provide release time to teachers to attend training. While these supports keep child care workers from incurring additional job-related expenses or losing pay while they pursue their professional development, and they may ultimately contribute to workers' long-term earning power by increasing their education and training, they do not immediately provide workers with financial resources which they can determine how to use as they would a higher salary or provide an ongoing increase in income in the form of a benefit, such as health coverage. Likewise, we cannot assume that increases in reimbursement rates to child care programs are compensation initiatives. By doing so, we obscure the fact that in the majority of cases, there is no requirement that rate increases be targeted to worker pay. Only those reimbursement rate increases that are tied to wage improvements should be called compensation initiatives.[5]

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[5] Rate increases have sometimes led to better pay for child care workers even when programs are not required to raise wages, particularly when combined with intensive advocacy by workers and unions, as in Massachusetts. Mon Cochran at Cornell University has gathered some evidence that individual child care program directors in New York are also using rate increases to improve salaries, although this is not required. Colorado's Educare program is requiring programs to use reimbursement rate increases for either improved salaries or to increase staffing to improve ratios. (See the description of Educare in the chart accompanying this paper.)

Terminology for Public Investments in Child Care

System Enhancement Initiatives: A number of programs and initiatives expand public investment in the child care system with the goal of improving services. These include:

quality improvement initiatives, such as training and professional development programs, or projects to facilitate accreditation;
reimbursement rate increases or differential reimbursement rates for accredited or high-quality services;
compensation initiatives, such as wage increases, health benefits, and financial reward programs.

Payment Method: Wage or salary increases vs. financial rewards

In the Urban Institute typology, direct initiatives (or what we here call "compensation initiatives") are labeled as wage initiatives or increments. This label may blur important distinctions among programs, and we again propose more specific terminology. There is a substantial difference between initiatives that provide an ongoing raise in workers' base salaries or hourly earnings, or an ongoing health or retirement benefit, and those that provide some periodic financial reward in the form of a stipend or incentive. The latter might be substantial in dollar amount, as are many of the stipends received by workers through the California C.A.R.E.S and North Carolina Child Care Wage$ programs, but the reward is independent of a worker's regular pay. While the additional monetary award is no doubt welcome, it is not as dependable as an ongoing increase in benefits or pay for the duration of a child care worker's employment. In the case of stipends, the recipient must periodically apply for the additional funds, must independently arrange to pay taxes on them, and may have to meet other criteria to continue to qualify. Strictly speaking, financial rewards in the form of stipends are "addons" rather than wage or salary improvements.[6] In contrast, programs such as the Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan in U.S. Military Child Care programs, the Early Childhood Education Career Development Ladder in Washington state, and San Francisco's WagesPlus initiative offer an ongoing, dependable salary improvement to child care workers, and the terms "wage increase" or "increment" should be reserved for efforts of this nature.

Our point is not to diminish the importance of financial reward programs; in some political climates and delivery systems, as we discuss below, they may be the most politically feasible option for addressing child care workers' compensation. Beyond their financial component, these efforts recognize and reward an individual's career investment, encourage professional development, and contribute to retaining trained workers. Yet if the long-term goal of the movement for better child care jobs and services is to be met, policy interventions to increase child care workers' income will ultimately need to be delivered in a more dependable and less cumbersome form, as predictable, ongoing income.

Target recipient: Individual child care workers or child care programs

What are the differences and similarities among the various wage, benefit and financial reward initiatives, beyond their method of payment? Another way to categorize these efforts is to organize them according to whether the direct recipient is an individual child care worker (e.g., a home-based provider or a center-based teacher or director), or

[6] Some refer to these stipends as bonuses (REWARD program in Wisconsin) or incentives (some counties implementing the CARES program in California).

whether it is an institution (e.g., a center, or a group of centers and/or homes supported by a particular funding stream) which receives the funds and then distributes them to individual workers. With initiatives targeted toward individuals, the recipient may need sponsorship or approval from an employer to participate, and the employer may be asked to make a contribution in the form of release time or even a bonus, but the decision to participate in the initiative lies with the child care worker herself. It is she who must take the necessary steps to apply to the program and who must meet the criteria (educational or otherwise) for eligibility. When an organization is the recipient, individual child care workers also benefit, but their involvement is a by-product or condition of their employment status and of their employer's involvement in the program. The employer or organization must meet the program's eligibility criteria. Some examples may help to clarify this distinction.

Many California counties have implemented, or soon will implement, a version of the Child Development Corps, a component of the California C.A.R.E.S. program targeted toward individual child care workers in center- and home-based care.[7] The program provides a professional development stipend, typically ranging in value from $500 to $6,000 per year, to child care teachers, directors and home-based providers who meet certain education and training qualifications, commit to continuing their

[7] C.A.R.E.S. (Compensation and Recognition Encourage Stability) was the umbrella acronym given for two programs, the Child Development Corps and Resources for Retention, described in Assembly Bills 2025 and 212 carried by Assemblywoman Dion Aroner. The legislation was developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW), and co-sponsored by CCW, the California Association for the Education of Young Children, the California Worthy Wage Campaign, and the California State Labor Federation. The Child Development Corps targeted individuals, and Resources for Retention targeted programs. To date, Resources for Retention is only being implemented in San Francisco and Napa counties, while a version of the Child Development Corps has been implemented or planned in most counties in the state.

professional development (as defined by each county) and agree to provide (or have provided) services for a specified period of time, usually 9 to 12 months prior to the receipt of the stipend. Stipends, which must be applied for annually, reward individuals both for attained education and for continuing education and professional growth. Stipend amounts are based on an individual's level of formal education and specialized early childhood training, and vary somewhat from county to county. As originally designed, Corps members were required to participate in periodic Corps meetings with other recipients in their community, although not all counties have implemented this program component. Similar initiatives targeted to individuals include stipend programs in Idaho (CARES), Illinois (Great Start), New York (Statewide Worker Retention Program), and North Carolina (Child Care WAGE$).

Initiatives which target an institution as the recipient can be subdivided into two categories: those which apply to all programs of a given type or are supported by the same funding source (system-based) and those for which programs must meet certain criteria to participate (eligibility-based).

System-based initiatives include the U.S. Army's Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan (and similar programs developed for other branches of the U.S. Military), and the Head Start Quality Improvement Act established by Congress in 1990. The Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan (National Women's Law Center, 2000; Bellm et al., 1997) establishes a career ladder that includes specific educational requirements and pay schedules for all centers and homes participating in the Army child care system. All child care settings operated by the military are eligible for and required to participate in the program. The

Head Start Quality Improvement Act made funds available to all Head Start grantees in the U.S. for improving salaries and training opportunities. Because Head Start funds are commingled with other local dollars, and because programs are operated under different auspices such as school districts, Indian tribes, and community action agencies, no single career ladder has been established which programs are required to meet. Consequently, the results of the initiative are less uniform than in the military, yet all programs within the Head Start system are eligible and have made improvements of varying degrees in wages or benefits (Whitebook, 1996). In both of these federally-supported delivery systems, funding for these compensation initiatives is ongoing.

Eligibility-based initiatives targeted toward institutions include Washington state's Early Childhood Development Wage and Career Ladder, WagesPlus in San Francisco, and Rhode Island's health benefits programs. In Washington, centers that serve a fixed percentage of low-income families, and that either have a collective bargaining agreement or include certain working conditions in their employment contracts, were eligible for inclusion in the pilot program. San Francisco's WagesPlus program offers additional county funds for ongoing wage increases to centers in which at least 10 percent of the children qualify for subsidized services, provided that centers meet a certain wage floor for employees with varying levels of education and training. In Rhode Island, teachers and family child care providers whose programs serve a fixed percentage of subsidized families are eligible for health benefits through the state insurance plan.

Pre-kindergarten programs are more difficult to classify with respect to system-based or eligibility-based initiatives. Many pre-kindergartens operating exclusively in the public schools require teaching staff to meet the qualifications of K-12 teachers and pay them on the same scale. These would be considered system-wide initiatives, similar to the Army programs. But other pre-kindergarten services are subcontracted to local community-based programs, and staff qualifications and payment can be quite variable. Georgia's universal pre-K program provides an interesting system-based model of compensation. The state subcontracts with local community-based programs, but requires all contracted programs to meet minimum salary requirements based on the education and training of their staff. Reimbursement rates vary depending on the credentials of the teaching staff, student enrollment and program auspices.

Distinguishing Among Compensation Initiatives

- The method of payment may be a direct wage or benefit increase which becomes part of a worker's ongoing earnings, or it can be a supplement in the form of a periodic stipend, bonus or incentive.
- An individual child care worker, or an institution such as a center or family child care network, may be the target recipient..
- When an institution is the recipient, the program may be system-based (applicable to all programs within the system) or eligibility-based (applicable to programs meeting specific criteria).
- Initiatives vary with respect to their emphasis on the link between compensation and education and training.

Factors Influencing Initiative Design

What are the potential benefits of designing a compensation initiative that targets individual workers, versus one that identifies an institution or a program as the recipient? And if a program is the recipient, what are the advantages of creating a system-based or eligibility-based initiative? On the face of it, a system-based initiative such as the U.S. Military Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan would likely be the first choice of most program developers, because it is comprehensive and efficient. But even a brief encounter with the child care delivery system makes obvious the vast difference between military child care programs – with their single funding source, uniform standards, and more generous resources – and the vast majority of child care in the United States. Even the more diverse Head Start system is characterized by far greater homogeneity than the rest of the child care system with regard to staff qualifications and funding streams. It is hardly surprising that these sectors of the industry were pioneers in designing and implementing compensation initiatives, and were able to make them available to all child care workers within their system. With the exception of some pre-kindergarten programs operated in public schools and sharing the K-12 pay scale, most states and communities face a patchwork of service types which greatly complicates not only the efforts to design workable initiatives to address the child care staffing crisis, but also the process of building the political support necessary to winning any type of reform.

In the absence of a more streamlined, universal system for early care and education, decisions about which approach to take are driven by complex realities.[8] Advocates must navigate the diverse political interests and philosophies that exist within the child care community, and among other stakeholders and decision makers in the world of public policy who influence the use of resources. Many compromises are made

[8] For a discussion of these issues in relation to the California CARES model, see Burton, Mihaly, Kagiwada and Whitebook, 2000. The CCW Web site also includes transcripts of panels describing the political processes of establishing child care compensation initiatives in California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina and Washington.

in the process of bringing a proposal to life. The issues that influence program design include:

- the primary objective of the program;
- the degree of consensus among stakeholders, allies and program developers about program goals;
- the nature of any opposition to the initiative;
- the target population;
- the degree of exclusivity that is believed to be desirable or politically viable; and
- the level and type of resources.

Almost all of the initiatives currently in place seek, in varying degrees, to increase the recruitment and retention of skilled child care staff, and to reward staff for attaining education and taking part in ongoing training and professional development. While strategies vary, most initiatives seek to accomplish these goals through some form of financial reward or wage increase that does not result in an increased financial burden on parents using services. Thus, most of the existing programs have the objective of enhancing the skills and the stability of the child care workforce. Advocates who are more focused on child development concerns are likely to place greater emphasis on the link between educational qualifications and compensation. Others may view the low wages of child care workers from a perspective of economic justice, and as a result, their focus may lean toward rewarding establishing a living wage with greater emphasis on tenure and experience.[9] The Washington State Early Childhood Education Career

[9] The degree of emphasis on education and training in many initiatives is viewed as problematic for family child care providers who typically have lower levels of formal education and child-related training and may have restricted access to relevant, affordable and accessible training.

Development Ladder, developed with significant input from the union representing child care workers in Seattle, creates a wage and career ladder which emphasizes the link between compensation, and education and training, but also rewards years of experience. San Francisco's Wages Plus program was developed as a response to the local Living Wage Campaign, but nevertheless has been structured to build a career ladder based on the attainment of formal higher education.

The different ways in which people experience the child care staffing crisis will also influence their decisions about initiative design. Consider two child care center directors working on a committee to design a local compensation initiative. One director feels she can always find well-trained staff, but is unable to keep them because of pay; she wants to make sure that increases will be sufficiently large and targeted toward experienced staff. Her colleague, on the other hand, experiences tremendous frustration with the low level of training and skill in her employee pool, regardless of salary level. She wants to be sure that the program will encourage new people entering the field to get more training. As the coalition of stakeholders supporting a particular initiative expands, such potential disagreements about program design are likely to surface, and decisions will be made in response that shape the program's character.

Various stakeholders may be satisfied with different outcomes. For some, knowing that the initiative resulted in a measurable decline in staff turnover may render it a success, while for others, learning that many more people received training will be its selling point. The popularity of the T.E.A.C.H. program, which provides scholarships to individual workers for education and ensures a financial reward at the end, either through an employer contribution or a bonus, may well derive from its ability to deliver on both counts.

The perspective of the person or persons who will ultimately decide whether a program receives funding can exert a great deal of influence on initiative design. In California, for example, C.A.R.E.S. advocates were deeply committed to crafting an initiative that could unite the child care community. There had been a long history of contention among center-based and home-based providers in the state, as well as among different sub-sectors of the center-based world, serving children of different ages (infants and toddlers, preschoolers and school-agers) and operating under a variety of auspices (subsidized programs with contracts with the Department of Education, community-based and church-sponsored nonprofits, and for-profit programs). Legislators in Sacramento were impatient with child care advocates who often presented conflicting points of view toward child care policy issues. Because advocates recognized the uphill nature of securing funds for a compensation initiative, a proposal that everybody could rally behind was a precondition of its ultimate success. Thus, the legislative proposal for C.A.R.E.S. was carefully written to represent input from all sectors of the workforce. The community exhibited an unusual degree of consensus and rallied behind the C.A.R.E.S. legislation, in part perhaps because all felt a sense of ownership in it, and also perhaps because no one believed the bill would pass any time soon. Yet the bill *did* pass the first year (1998) in which it was introduced, only to be vetoed by outgoing Governor Pete Wilson, and was reintroduced the following year but put on hold by Governor Gray Davis. Finally, in its third year, the bill passed again, and Governor Davis agreed to commit $15 million to the program only if the funds would be spent exclusively in state-subsidized programs – thus violating the inclusive spirit of the original proposal. The sponsors reluctantly accepted the compromise, resulting in a degree of exclusivity in the program that was never intended, and leaving many who had worked on the bill understandably feeling shortchanged.[10]

The type and amount of funding will also influence program design. If the funding source is one-time only or likely to be short-lived, it is unfeasible to grant permanent wage or salary increases. Even a longer-term pilot program is risky if there is a good chance that money for wage improvements could be withdrawn down the line. This fact lies behind the decision in many states and communities to establish a stipend or financial reward program rather than wage increases.[11] Additionally, because many child care programs have no formal link to public funding, or receive vouchers to cover the costs of only a small percentage of children in their care, it is difficult to design a mechanism that establishes a career or wage ladder for all workers in a given community. But it is widely recognized that improving wages in only one segment of the child care market will drain workers from other sectors who will seek the better-paying jobs.

Inadequate funding levels also drive program design. Although many of the initiatives have budgets in the millions of dollars, these funds can easily be insufficient when the cost of granting substantial financial rewards or salary increases to child care

[10] Luckily, the final compromise allowed for local distribution of the funds in such a way that they could be combined with local and state Proposition 10 (tobacco tax) dollars which are not restricted by program auspice, although these funds can go only to providers serving children ages 0-5.

[11] The Washington State Career Ladder is an exception to this approach. Although it is a three-year pilot program, designers created an ongoing wage increase for the pilot. If the funds are withdrawn after the pilot, many workers could face a pay cut. On the other hand, the implications of reducing pay will pose a political challenge to policy makers that cutting a stipend program may not.

workers is calculated. In Alameda County, California, local Proposition 10 (state tobacco tax) funds for the first year of the Child Development Corps totaled more than $4 million dollars. But when 2,200 workers applied for a stipend, many of them eligible for the highest level set at $5,000, program administrators decided to cut stipend amounts slightly across the board rather than exclude some eligible applicants. Across the bay, administrators of the San Francisco C.A.R.E.S. program reached a different decision when first-year funds were sufficient for only 400 of the 1,200 applicants. Priority was given to workers earning lower wages, and while the full stipend amount was paid, only a third of the eligible applicants received it. Thus, in one county, child care workers were disappointed about receiving less than they anticipated, but in the other, many of the two-thirds of eligible workers excluded from the program were understandably angered.

Conclusion: Assessing Initiatives

What are we learning about how to improve child care jobs and services from the many initiatives now underway? Given that most of the initiatives are far from comprehensive, and provide necessary but relatively small improvements for this underfunded sector of the workforce, how do we determine success? Can we expect these initiatives to lead to measurable improvements in outcomes for children, or to make child care wages competitive with K-12 teacher salaries in order to attract and retain highly educated and trained personnel? Although some supporters and designers of these initiatives believe that they hold such high promise, most who are involved in these efforts recognize their limitations, and would consider it a successful outcome to achieve a measurable decrease in turnover, or an increase in the training and education of child care teachers and providers, since greater stability among caregivers and higher levels of training are associated with higher-quality services.[12]

But what level of stability and education shall we consider sufficient? If teachers and providers engage in 20 clock hours of training per year, is that enough? Is a five-percent decrease in turnover a reasonable return on the investment of public dollars? And what if the financial rewards or salary increases are not large enough to retain staff beyond a short period of time? A $2,000 wage increase or stipend may keep a skilled teacher or provider on the job for an additional year, but what if she really needs $4,500 a year to keep pace with increases in energy bills, rent, or her own child care expenses? What if, even with a $5,000 stipend, she could still make $10,000 more per year as a starting kindergarten teacher, receive full benefits, and work for ten months instead of twelve?

We will begin to have answers to these questions as evaluations of current initiatives are completed.[13] Here, we suggest another dimension by which to assess compensation initiatives, and one that can become part of program designs before other data become available. Namely, we should appraise the extent to which various initiatives contribute to a movement to secure a better child care system. Specifically,

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[12] The degree to which these initiatives penetrate a program or a community may also contribute to their effectiveness. Prior research (Whitebook and Sakai, 1995) suggests that improvements in individual performance resulting from training may be insufficient in the context of a poor-quality program. However, if sufficient numbers of staff at any one center improve their practice, they may impact positively on overall program quality. Similarly, if a large number of home-based providers participate in training and improve their practices, a new standard for good care may emerge in a community.

[13] Many of these programs are being evaluated. For example, in addition to local assessments, a comprehensive statewide evaluation is being funded by the California Proposition 10 Commission, which oversees the tobacco tax dollars being used to support CARES. Washington state, and a variety of private foundations, are also supporting evaluations of various initiatives.

does the initiative contribute toward building the necessary will to support a greater public investment in comprehensive services for all young children? Is it well-publicized? Is there a growing awareness of the need for skilled workers in child care, and how the initiative is taking steps to achieve this goal?

We should ask whether an initiative contributes to an ever-expanding group of stakeholders who understand the components of quality child care and are willing to advocate on its behalf. Specifically, we should be asking whether these efforts develop “articulate practitioners” (Takanishi, 1980) who will join with parents and others in a call for universal early childhood services and who will be “at the table” to ensure that the particular needs of those who work directly with children are not overlooked. Teachers and providers and advocates with direct caregiving experience initiated the movement for worthy wages, but because most child care workers are not represented by a collective bargaining agreement or are not members of a work-related or professional organization, they have not necessarily been represented or engaged in the development or implementation of policy initiatives intended to meet their needs.

Planners of several of the initiatives have taken these issues into account. For example, the statewide legislative campaign in California was viewed as a vehicle to expand stakeholders, and the advocacy effort created many grassroots spokespersons who were well-positioned when local dollars became available for county-based initiatives. Because efforts to win compensation increases have been hampered by the lack of organizational affiliation among child care workers in California, the designers of C.A.R.E.S. intentionally created the requirement of participating in a Child Development

Corps, in order to create a group affiliation for workers in every community for advocacy, organizing and professional development efforts. In San Francisco, existing organizations such as Coleman Advocates and Wu Yee Children's Services have organized participants in the C.A.R.E.S. and WagesPlus programs into a powerful provider association with a strong community presence. In Rhode Island, home-based providers spearheaded the push for health benefits that has now been extended to center-based practitioners, and has led to the creation of a providers' Day Care Justice Coalition. A policy initiative can also be an outgrowth of an ongoing union organizing drive, as was the case in Washington state, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, or it can lead to more involvement by organized labor in child care organizing and policy work, as has happened in California as a result of the C.A.R.E.S. legislation, co-sponsored by the California State Labor Federation.

Seeking better pay and status for those who care for young children challenges basic assumptions in our society about the importance of caregiving work, the role of mothers of young children in the workforce, the role of government in the delivery of child care services, and the private marketplace. It requires a redistribution of societal resources upon which there are many claims. Change of this magnitude takes time, and progress will not be entirely linear. There are missteps and setbacks along the way which can and should inform our efforts. But it is clear that policy makers are unlikely to grapple with this urgent social need unless there is a strong movement of their constituents demanding that they become involved.

It is worth recognizing that it took kindergarten teachers nearly 100 years to become considered the equals of other teachers in the public school system (Beatty, 1995). Their task, while challenging, was made easier because they worked for the most part in the public schools already, and were seeking inclusion in a relatively uniform, coherent system of services for which there was widespread public support. Child care workers, by contrast, face an unwieldy, cumbersome and inefficient mix of services, and find themselves spread across a variety of very diverse settings. In addition, there remains a vocal minority opposed to expanding early childhood services, and considerable ambivalence about child care even among its consumers. The relatively young, quarter-century-old movement to improve child care jobs faces added challenges. Its success requires simultaneously building a larger movement for public investment in services for young children, and designing and implementing reforms to incrementally improve the compensation and skills of the millions of women and men who provide those services.

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