

ACTION 3.14

Examine hiring practices and other human resources policies and adjust as needed to ensure vacancies are filled with high quality educators.

ADJUST HIRING PRACTICES to ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATORS



Teacher vacancies impact student learning and achievement. They also require schools and districts to expend more resources on hiring and training new staff from year-to-year. It is critical that child care programs and school districts keep pace with innovative human capital innovations and best practices. Providing a livable wage is central to hiring and retaining high quality child care staff and preschool teachers and many organizations are advocating for these improvements in North Carolina. There are several ongoing initiatives to increase educator compensation and create better working environments for educators across the state. These resources are compiled by the Institute for Child Development Professionals initiatives like WAGES, which supports low-income teachers and family care providers, and reports from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment that highlight racial wage gaps in early childhood employment.

While those efforts push forward, reviewing and adjusting hiring practices and professionalization opportunities can help to minimize vacancies and ensure students have consistent access to high-quality teachers and caregivers.

WHAT WE KNOW

Teachers are among the many factors that significantly impact student learning. Recruiting and then retaining quality candidates are key parts of a strong, professionalized workforce. Research shows that when recruitment efforts fall short, schools address teaching vacancies with options that have negative consequences for the quality of teaching—hiring individuals who are insufficiently prepared, increasing class sizes, canceling classes, using short-term substitutes, or assigning teachers from other specialties or grade levels.

Two months into the 2022-2023 fiscal year in North Carolina, there were still **MORE THAN 5,000 VACANCIES**, which is a **58% INCREASE** since 2020-2021 and a **200% INCREASE** over the 2018-2019 school year.

An important first step in recruitment is identifying vacancies early, by motivating staff to announce their intention to leave by providing a monetary incentive for early notification of resignation or retirement and a monetary penalty for late notice. This helps to ensure that late hiring timelines are not a barrier to recruitment.

A critical second step is generating a high quality candidate pool that reflects the diversity of the student population. When students see themselves among the educators in their school they are more likely to feel a strong sense of school belonging, which increases their level of engagement in learning.

A necessary third step is investing in retaining these quality educators once hired. School districts can do this by providing a livable wage and positive school climate where educators feel like they have a voice in the change and improvement process.

Dive Into the Data

Explore the need for actionable data indicators, related to policies that help retain high quality educators, such as [paid leave](#) and other metrics on the [Pathways Data Dashboard](#).

WHAT WE NEED

The critical role that staff in early childhood programs play in providing high quality education and care is under acknowledged. Public investments in early childhood education programs that acknowledge the crucial role our educators play in forming the foundation for children's success will help lessen teacher turnover and enable students to form stronger relationships with their educators.

These investments should align with strategies identified by researchers and practitioners that have been shown to [lessen teacher turnover and strengthen retention](#).

Child care and preschool classrooms across the country are [experiencing the strain of being understaffed](#) because the pipeline of trained educators and caregivers just isn't there. The result is large class sizes and burnt out educators.

Some strategies, in addition to ensuring a living wage, include:

- Changing the narrative around early childhood education jobs by promoting their status in popular discourse.
 - » NC Child is doing this by ensuring that the general public understands the importance of educators in shaping the foundation for the future.
- Boosting staff qualifications through professional development initiatives.
 - » NC's Division of Child Development and Early Education is doing this by investing in skills training that enable early educators to enhance their competencies and qualifications.
- Increasing emphasis on applied experiences during teacher training to prepare candidates for their positions.
 - » NC's statewide apprenticeship programs are doing this by providing applied learning in settings that reflect the reality of circumstances they will encounter once employed.

INITIATIVES WORKING IN THIS AREA



Child Care Services Association

is committed to ensuring accessible, affordable high-quality care for all children and families. They improve the quality of child care in North Carolina for all children by helping families find child care, offering informational events for families, professional development opportunities and programs for providers and comprehensive child care research for policymakers.



The **Child Care WAGES® Program** is an education-based salary supplement program for teachers, directors and

family child care providers working with children from birth to age five, in licensed settings. The program provides financial awards after six-month periods completed in the same child care program, thus increasing the retention of participants. It rewards attained education and encourages additional coursework, supporting the professional development of the early childhood workforce.

Visit the Pathways Action Map to learn more about these and other initiatives leading efforts in this area.