

**Early Childhood Planning Task Force
Briefing Paper**

***Early Childhood Programs
Wage and Benefit Comparisons***

**Collective Impact, LLC
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Introduction

Wages and benefits of early childhood program workers in West Virginia vary considerably from one program to another. Workers holding positions that require a similar level of education and training may be paid at much higher levels in one program than in another. There are also large variations in the types of fringe benefits provided by early childhood programs. Health insurance, retirement, paid vacation, holidays, sick leave, and other benefits are generally provided at much lower levels within local non-profit programs than is the case within programs operated by state agencies or local Boards of Education.

There is a particularly notable difference in wages and benefits within the collaborative Pre-K model operated within West Virginia. Teachers and Teacher Assistants employed by Child Care Centers and some employees within the Head Start programs are generally paid less than local Board of Education employees with the same duties and responsibilities. In some counties, this discrepancy has been alleviated through steps taken by local school systems to employ the Pre-K teachers working in collaborative settings. Several local Boards of Education have employed these teachers at the rate of pay and benefit levels applied to other similar positions within the public schools.

Low salaries and minimal benefits of workers within Home Visiting Programs and Child Care Centers are of particular concern. Recruitment and retention of high quality staff is challenging for these programs when other available healthcare or social service jobs offer substantially better pay and benefits. Program directors cite many examples of investments made in training home visitors or child care workers only to see them leave for a better job.

Comparing Salaries and Benefits

A number of reports and data sets related to salaries and benefits of the early childhood workforce in West Virginia were reviewed including:

- A recent study of salaries and benefits of West Virginia's in-home family education workers (home visitors).¹
- Results of wage surveys conducted by the WV Head Start Association.²

- Wage data available through the West Virginia State Training and Registry System (STARS).³
- Survey of Head Start worker benefits.⁴
- National and state salaries by occupation.⁵
- West Virginia Department of Education minimum salary scales with equity.⁶
- County Boards of Education –Average Contracted Salaries of Teachers and service Personnel.⁷

In order to establish some common basis for comparison of salaries, minimum starting salaries, average salaries by position type, and median salary levels by position type were compiled for positions commonly found within early childhood programs. Hourly wages are compared to the extent possible for the positions of Teacher, Teacher Assistant, and Home Visitor across different programs within West Virginia’s early childhood system. Salaries are also compared to the state average or median for positions requiring similar education and experience to the extent that available data allows.

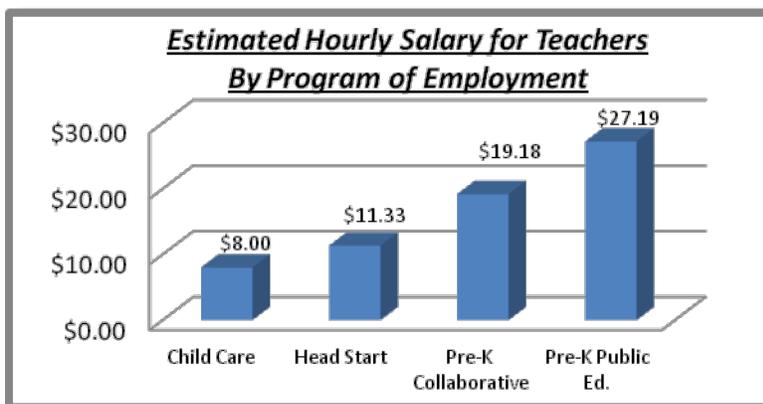
Given the extremely wide variation in benefits provided within individual programs and very limited data about the types of benefits offered, this brief does not attempt to analyze the differences in fringe benefits provided to early childhood workers. Review of the available information on benefits within early childhood programs does, however, lead to the following conclusion:

On average, the level of fringe benefits provided by local non-profit programs providing Home Visiting and Child Care services are far below the level of benefits provided to employees of state agencies and local Boards of Education.

Teachers and Teacher Aides

Median hourly salaries for personnel classified as “teachers” working in different early childhood programs are summarized in the following table:

There is a significant variation in wages paid to teachers based on the type of program



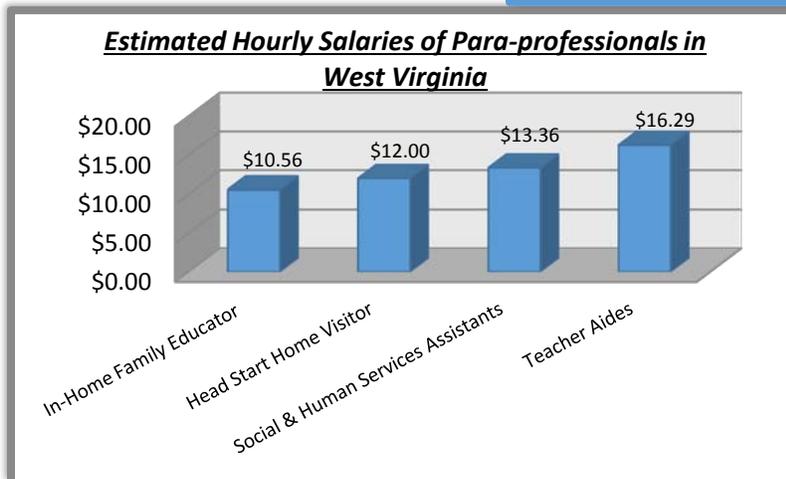
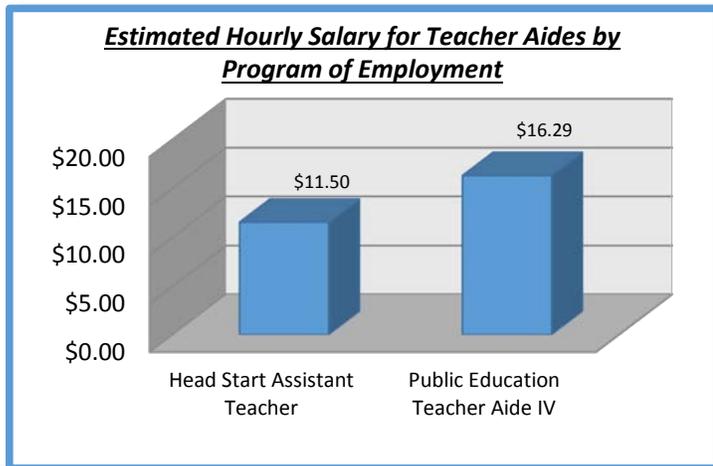
employing the teacher. Using data available from the WV State Training and Registry System related to salaries of persons classified as “teacher” in different early childhood settings, the median salary was computed for each type of early childhood program employing teachers. The results of this

comparison are seen in the chart. Given the limitations in the data, it is not possible to verify

that the education and experience levels are equivalent from one place of employment to another; however it is obvious that median wages of teachers in child care and Head Start settings are well below the level of wages paid in Pre-K collaborative sites and Public schools.

Wage data collected by the WV Head Start Association for “assistant teachers” can also be compared to wage data published by the WV Department of Education for “teacher aides”.

The maximum average hourly wage paid in West Virginia’s Head Start programs for an Assistant Teacher is \$11.50 and the average wage paid to a Teacher Aide IV in the public education system is \$16.29.



Home Visitors

Salaries of home visitors (in home family education workers) employed by evidence-based programs can also be compared to positions requiring similar levels of education and experience in other early childhood or similar social service settings.

The chart above provides a comparison of the estimated average hourly wage for positions requiring similar levels of education and experience in West Virginia. Wage data is compiled from several sources including the In-Home Family Education Compensation Study, the Head Start Association Survey, U.S. Department of Labor Wage Estimates for WV, and the WV DOE Average Contracted Salaries for Service Personnel.

As can be seen in the chart, home visiting staff working in evidence-based programs tend to have lower wages on average than comparable staff working in other settings.

End Notes

¹ Whitley, A; *West Virginia In-Home Family Education Compensation Study*, December, 2012.

² West Virginia Head Start Wage Comparability Survey Results, September, 2011.

West Virginia Head Start Wage Comparability Survey Results, September, 2013.

³ Database of wage information for 5,553 early childhood workers.

⁴ West Virginia Head Start Association 2010-11 Head Start Benefit Survey Compilation.

West Virginia Head Start Association 2012-13 Head Start Benefit Survey Compilation.

⁵ United States Department of Labor: Bureau for Labor Statistics. *National employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics Survey by occupation*, May 2012.

⁶ WV Department of Education – Office of School Finance, *Professional and Service Personnel State Minimum Required Salary Schedules*, 2012-13.

⁷ WV Department of Education – Office of School Finance, *Average Contracted Salaries – Classroom Teachers, and Average Contracted Salaries –Service Personnel*, 2012-13.

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