

ACHIEVING HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE: HOW TEN PROGRAMS DELIVER EXCELLENCE PARENTS CAN AFFORD

By

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation for their generous support of the Program Recognition Project. We would also like to express our appreciation to the staff of the ten programs profiled in this book for their time and willingness to provide materials for this study. Also critical to the work of the project were members of the advisory committee for the Program Recognition Project: Kay Albrecht, Innovations in Early Childhood Education; Douglas Baird, Associated Day Care Services; Richard Clifford, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Gayle Cunningham, Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity; Jerlean Daniel, University of Pittsburgh; and Deborah Eaton, National Association for Family Child Care. Special thanks goes to Barbara Willer of the National Association for the Education of Young Children for serving as the project liaison and providing invaluable guidance for the project.

We would also like to thank Carol Markley for helping to coordinate and train PRP site visitors, Sherri Oden for her advice on shaping this publication, and Ashby Kinch for his steadfast support of the completion of this book.

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Chapter 1

The Case for High-Quality Child Care

Families in the United States turn to child care with ever-increasing frequency. Seventy-three percent of children under age five with an employed parent or guardian were in nonparental child care for all or part of the day in 1999 (Sonenstein et al. 2002). In 2001, 64 percent of mothers with children under age 6 and 78 percent of mothers with children ages 6 to 17 were in the labor force (U.S. Department of Labor 2001). Fifty-five percent of mothers with infants (under age one) were in the labor force in 2000 (Bachu & O'Connell 2001). Child care is a necessity for most families, and for many families the need is for child care during nontraditional work hours or for programs that can meet the needs of children who are not native English speakers or who have disabilities. These factors make access to quality programs even harder for many families.

Financing early childhood care and education is generally a parental burden in the United States. Public resources for early childhood education programs are insufficient to help families afford care and to ensure high-quality programs that are accessible for all children. The longitudinal studies of the Abecedarian Project, the Chicago Parent Child Centers, and other research shows, however, that high-quality early childhood programs offer lasting positive results for children and communities, such as better readiness for school and higher rates of school graduation, better behavior in school and lower rates of juvenile crime, and higher rates of later employment and lower rates of teen pregnancy. The research shows that these benefits are especially pronounced for children from low-income families.

This book portrays the efforts of 10 exemplary early childhood programs to provide high-quality programs that are affordable for families. Program profiles reveal solutions to problems of management, financing, and staff development. They also highlight the types of high-quality classrooms that should be available to all young children. While such lessons alone cannot create a universally high-quality child care system, they can help programs take practical steps toward better services.

While improvements in program quality are badly needed, they do not come cheap. Improving quality means paying higher salaries to attract and retain staff and increasing funding for training and education. For example, according to the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study (Helburn et al. 1995), which surveyed 401 child care centers, the single largest expenditure for centers already is personnel costs; the labor average was 70 percent of all costs per month.

But improving quality requires more investment in personnel. Studies find higher quality of care associated with specific staff such as good staff-child ratios, higher levels of teacher education and specialized training, better teacher wages, and lower staff turnover (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1990; Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook 1991; Helburn et al. 1995). For instance, children in North Carolina child care programs that had teachers with bachelor degrees, provided ongoing professional development, as well appropriate class size and ratios, comprehensive services, and good curricula, showed better early literacy and math skills and better behavior skills (Campbell et al. 1999).

Yet programs face a fundamental quandary: they cannot improve quality without charging families higher fees or getting funds from elsewhere, which are very scarce. Families are the primary source of revenue for most programs. Parents pay roughly 60 percent of all expenditures for child care in the country (Stoney & Greenberg 1996; Mitchell, Stoney, &

Dichter 1997). Federal, followed by state, and local governments, provide most of the remaining funding for child care. Most of the public resources, however, go to low-income working families (for example, through the Child Care and Development Block Grant) or to Head Start or state prekindergarten programs, or to families' tax credits. Such limited public funding forces typical child care programs to rely heavily on parent fees. The need to raise quality and increase staff compensation forces early childhood directors to confront a difficult set of choices between the interests of families, children, and staff. The dilemma is quality and compensation versus affordability: Children need program quality; staff work to supply program quality; and compensation influences a staff's ability and willingness to supply program quality and families' ability to purchase it. When programs must rely exclusively on parent fees for funding, this dilemma is particularly challenging; directors are forced to ask families, many of whom have limited resources, to pay more in order to enhance quality.

Teachers and the Dilemma

Affordability and quality hinge on one of the most important factors: the quality of the staff. More than two-thirds of full-time teachers are paid salaries that fall below the poverty threshold (Whitebook & Phillips 1999). Even well-paid child care teachers are usually compensated less than their counterparts in elementary schools. As a result, early childhood teachers often look for alternate forms of "compensation," deriving in part from a sense of social purpose.

But teachers we interviewed expressed frustration with what they see as a general lack of respect for the educators of young children. Miriam Perreira, a teacher at KCAA Pre-Schools of Hawaii, says, "We are not taken seriously. I think some people think of us as highly paid babysitters. They don't think of us as professionals." She adds, "I feel I am doing something really important." Sofia Silva, with UCLA Child Care Services, points out, "It would be great to have the financial compensation, but what teachers are often really looking for is acknowledgment that we are professionals, not just babysitters, especially when the latest brain research is backing up the importance of providing the best educated and qualified teachers to meet the potentials of children under five."

Jane Haddox, director and lead teacher at River Valley Child Development Services in West Virginia, says, "The money is just not there.... There are so many expenses, the tuition just can't cover it, especially for the high salaries." Linda St. John of UCLA notes that infant care is especially expensive to provide because it requires lower child-staff ratios. She explains, "Infant care in particular does not pay for itself; it has to be subsidized in some way. Infant-toddler programs can't stand alone."

While frustrated with poor compensation, teachers nevertheless understand the dilemma and are highly sympathetic to the needs of children and their families. Indeed, many make financial sacrifices to keep child care affordable (see chapter 2). When River Valley's Sharon Freeman calculates the numerous expenses incurred in running a child care center against the cost of classroom materials and toys, she accepts the tradeoff and says, "It wouldn't be fair for me to get a big lump sum and the kids not to have anything in their classrooms." Similarly, teachers empathize with struggling families (Schulman & Adams 1998). Susan Burns of KCAA says, "The parents only have so much money. We know in a lot of cases that all of the salary [of

one parent] is going to child care simply to hold her place in the workforce.... I think the parents are in a terrible bind.”

The Program Recognition Project

How can programs simultaneously meet the needs of children, staff, and families? To address this question, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, in collaboration with NAEYC, established the Program Recognition Project (PRP) in 1996. Inspired by the work of NAEYC’s Program Panel on Quality, Compensation, and Affordability, the project sought to identify programs that offer high-quality services and above-average staff compensation yet still maintain affordable fees for families. The project was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

One hundred and four programs in 32 states either applied or were nominated to be considered by the PRP in January 1997. High/Scope staff conducted initial reviews of the applications, using quantifiable indicators of quality, compensation, and affordability to rank the programs. Through this initial selection, High/Scope staff identified 23 organizations to receive on-site assessments. These programs were visited by validators who assist in NAEYC’s accreditation process and other early childhood specialists trained in early childhood education and experienced in classroom observation. Visitors conducted classroom observations using High/Scope’s Program Quality Assessment (1998) and also interviewed teaching staff and directors.

The classroom observation items assessed the quality of care being provided to the children (including child-staff ratios and group sizes), the learning environment (including quality of materials and activities and safety of the environment), and adult-child interaction. Visitors interviewed teachers and directors about topics such as professional development opportunities, parent involvement, classroom planning, and services for children with special needs. The agencies also provided High/Scope with copies of their audited budget reports, lists of in-kind contributions, and copies of materials they provide to families.

Using this information, High/Scope staff selected 10 programs (see Table 1.1) that were judged to have higher-than-average quality, compensation, and affordability. The 10 exemplary programs represent a range of service types and sponsorship: family child care homes, nonprofit programs with different levels of public funding, for-profit programs, Head Start programs, large-scale early childhood initiatives, and public-school-based prekindergarten programs. The programs also reflect a diversity of affiliations, service populations, geographic regions, and funding structures.

Table 1.1. Exemplary Programs Selected by the Program Recognition Project

Bridges Family Child Care	Madison, Wisconsin
Child Care Services Association	Chapel Hill, North Carolina
Children’s for Children	Cincinnati, Ohio

KCAA Pre-Schools of Hawaii	Honolulu, Hawaii
Kennewick Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program	Kennewick, Washington
Lakewood Avenue Children’s School	Durham, North Carolina
Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. (Head Start)	Dayton, Ohio
River Valley Child Development Services	Huntington, West Virginia
Sycamore Tree Preschool	Bremerton, Washington
UCLA Child Care Services	Los Angeles, California

PRP staff conducted site visits to the 10 selected programs. In each we observed classrooms to collect anecdotes about the quality provided.* We also interviewed administrators, teachers, parents, advisory board members, and representatives of affiliated organizations to explore the management, policies, and experiences of the programs. By collecting such detailed information about what makes the programs work, we sought to identify steps, both small and ambitious, that can help other programs. While none of the 10 programs has found a simple solution to the dilemma of quality and compensation versus affordability, their approaches to the problem reveal creative methods of program management, professional development, and fund-raising. Their work offers many practical ideas to programs seeking to improve services.

Steps to Improving Quality, Compensation, and Affordability

Analysis of the PRP interviews revealed five areas of excellence common to the programs: commitment to quality, staff compensation, professionalization of staff, meeting family needs, and financial and structural support. Through profiles of the programs, this book attempts to provide a picture of exemplary work in these areas. Detailed below, their achievements provide good starting points for programs seeking to better meet the needs of children, employees, and families. They also clarify practical strategies for program improvement, ranging from ways of encouraging staff to obtain additional education to innovative methods of fund-raising.

Following a look below at the five areas of excellence, chapter 2 addresses the important issue of child care financing in more detail and provides an estimate of the cost of care in some of the exemplary programs. Chapters 3 through 12 are profiles of the 10 exemplary programs

* In descriptions of the classrooms in this book, pseudonyms are used for all children.

structured to describe their work in the five areas. Finally, Chapter 13 offers a brief conclusion, addressing issues for future consideration in seeking quality, compensation, and affordability.

Five Areas of Excellence

Commitment to quality

The 10 programs establish high standards for quality and develop procedures to implement them. They provide staff with written standards of quality such as program mission, philosophy, educational approach, and hiring practices. Administrators communicate standards using staff reviews, parents' program evaluations, self assessments, accreditation, and staff training. The exemplary programs also implement policies that help staff achieve high standards. Examples include ensuring continuity of caregivers for infants and toddlers and maintaining permanent substitutes to guarantee consistent low child-staff ratios. The programs hire and retain well-qualified staff. One agency administers an extensive in-house training program to guarantee that all staff are ready for the classroom, while others maintain minimum education requirements for new teachers. Some programs promote higher education once staff have been hired, paying for college tuition and offering financial incentives for additional education. Programs encourage lower turnover by using higher wages and financial bonuses as rewards for longevity or simply by promoting the professional status of teachers.

Setting high-quality service standards not only directly benefits children and families but also positively impacts staff continuity by encouraging teachers to see themselves as professionals. A firm commitment to high-quality care and education also may increase the interest of outside funders or maintain institutional support. One exemplary program obtained additional funds from local foundations to implement a quality improvement plan that included specific goals for boosting classroom quality and updating administrative systems. Another center used an annual parent survey to demonstrate to its corporate sponsor that high-quality, on-site care improves corporate employee job satisfaction and productivity.

Staff compensation

All the 10 programs offer above-average compensation to staff. As in any profession, wages communicate the professional status of the job. In 1998, U.S. child care teachers earned a median salary of only \$7.80 per hour and family child care providers earned only \$3.37 per hour (Center for the Child Care Workforce 1998), yet the exemplary programs (including a family child care provider) paid starting salaries ranging from \$7.80 to \$13.25, with some offering pay scales that reached more than \$15 per hour. By 2000, average salaries for family child care providers and preschool teachers nationwide were \$4.82 and \$9.43, respectively (Center for the Child Care Workforce 2001); the mean *starting* salary in the exemplary programs was \$11.82 in 2002-03.¹

¹ Programs applying for the Program Recognition Project were assessed using data from 1997 and 1998. For informational purposes, however, we have updated all listings of salaries and benefits to reflect compensation offered in 2002-03. We also relied on data collected during site visits in 1998 and 1999.

On average, the programs provide much better benefits for the typical early childhood teacher. For example, in 1997, while 41 percent of child care providers in a five-city sample provided fully paid health care insurance (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1998), 78 percent of the exemplary programs offered this benefit. All of the exemplary programs provide at least two weeks of paid vacation and at least one week of paid sick leave, and two out of three offer retirement benefits. Benefits depend on a program's financial resources and/or sponsorship by another organization. A number of the programs include their staff in a sponsoring organization's benefit plan. Good benefits packages move compensation closer to that offered in other industries. This helps programs achieve two crucial elements involved in delivering quality care: recruiting and retaining skilled staff.

Professionalization of staff

Directors of all 10 programs stress the importance of improving the professional status of staff, a difficult task when teachers report feeling that both society and families do not value their work. Directors advocate for their staff and make it clear that their pay and professional status are a primary concern of the program. They know that, without skilled teachers, their ambitions for their programs are limited.

The exemplary programs encourage their teaching staff to see themselves as professional educators in many ways: by paying higher salaries and providing good benefits, offering additional education, facilitating attendance at professional conferences, and encouraging staff to become leaders among local communities of educators. Every program pays some portion of the costs to attend professional conferences and offers paid leave time for professional development activities. In addition, 67 percent pay for their staff to belong to NAEYC and 44 percent offer payment for the full costs of continuing education courses. One program, funded through a state grant, sets aside \$50 per child for staff training.

Staff are encouraged to become involved in their local early childhood communities, an activity that enhances their professional expertise and facilitates the exchange of ideas. Teachers visit other programs, give presentations at local conferences, or help mentor other teachers seeking to improve classroom quality. Administrators serve on local and statewide child care committees and lobby state governments for increased funding for quality child care. Three of the programs organize or staff early childhood education conferences in their communities. Through these efforts, PRP programs help to raise the standards of child care in the communities that surround them as well as in their own facilities.

Meeting family needs

Families using child care face numerous sources of stress: the strain of long hours of work, financial and material needs, and the demands of children with special needs. Recognizing family needs and trying to work flexibly with parents is critical to making programs work for parents. The 10 programs have developed services to meet such needs and to be easily accessible. Several offer extended hours for parents who work long shifts. Others offer sliding-fee scales or subsidies to families who have difficulty paying for care. Many programs also make special efforts to reach children and families whose native language is not English and get support services for parents of children with special needs.

Reciprocally, families play an active role in the programs. Whether working on boards that help run the programs or volunteering in their children's classrooms, parents are offered opportunities that match their skills and level of interest. Program staff also educate parents about child development and about their educational approach. Family involvement benefits everyone: parents understand more about their child's experience and development; teachers provide better care for children when they develop partnerships with parents; and programs gain the skills and insights of families.

Financial and structural support

Nearly all of the 10 exemplary programs use financial resources beyond parent fees to fund their services. By raising money from private and public sources and obtaining in-kind contributions, they break the direct connection between what parents can pay and the quality of care their child will receive. An average of only 56 percent of the revenue of the exemplary programs comes from families.² By comparison, the parent contribution to centers in the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study represented 71 percent of total revenue (Helburn et al. 1995).

To supplement fees, the programs turn to a wide variety of sources. Several programs send annual fund-raising letters to local companies, while others make requests to community organizations for in-kind donations of everything from tricycles to children's books. Programs often seek out organizations or individuals with whom they have some historical tie, such as family foundations, parents of former participating children, or neighboring businesses. Programs also make use of other connections, contacting local hospitals, teacher training facilities, and housing authorities. When they serve children from low-income families or with special needs, programs receive funds from state and federal governments.

Three programs are sponsored by outside organizations—a university, a church, and a hospital. These organizations offer facilities and playground space, allowing the programs to use more resources on personnel expenses. Key to their success is ensuring that the child care program meets the needs of its sponsoring organization. The hospital-based program documents its effectiveness by annually surveying parents about the center's role in supporting their work, while the university-sponsored program has university administrators on its board of directors.

Parents and community members serve as advisors to and supporters of the programs. All but two of the programs have formalized these relationships by establishing a board of directors and/or advisory committees. The two programs that do not have boards, both of which are quite small, frequently ask groups of parents to assist with special projects or to advise the directors. In addition to serving as a source of input for staff, advisory committees and boards raise the level of involvement, thus increasing members' motivation to help the programs succeed. Board members advise administrators, help raise money, provide connections to outside organizations, and even complete funding applications. They also help increase public awareness of the programs and of the importance of child care quality.

One of the programs, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), serves as a source of support to other early childhood programs. As a nonprofit agency, CCSA works to promote high-quality care and improve compensation for teachers. At the county and state level, CCSA provides financial resources to supplement low teacher wages and to increase salaries for

² This calculation excludes the value of in-kind contributions. If they are included, the percentage of income that parents provide would be even lower.

teachers gaining additional education. CCSA's financial support bolsters quality and compensation without asking families to pay more.

Moving Ahead

The 10 exemplary programs creatively cultivate diverse forms of support to bolster their work in providing high-quality services, good compensation, and low fees for families. Not only do they identify new sources of funding, but they successfully harness the energy of parents and community representatives. Administrators develop systems for both requiring and rewarding high-quality work by teachers and provide support to teachers trying to upgrade their skills.

The programs provide helpful models for other programs seeking to improve quality, yet they would like to do even more. Directors note that they want to further increase staff compensation and augment their programs. Many also recount their frustration in constantly needing to raise funds and find sources of in-kind support. Administrators describe the challenges created by high rates of teacher turnover (including teachers leaving for another field of work) and by the generally low levels of education of teacher applicants.

Some of these problems may require large-scale public and community solutions. Yet smaller steps can help to improve the experiences of children, teachers, and families. While the 10 programs do not have all the answers, their stories offer some practical solutions to the dilemma of quality and compensation versus affordability. Their work should inspire all programs to raise the bar for child care quality and staff compensation and to look for systemic solutions.

Chapter 2 What Does High-Quality Care Cost?

To fund their exemplary care, all 10 programs access resources beyond parent fees. Indeed, the variety of funding streams for these programs is much greater than those for a typical child care program. The chapters that follow describe in detail the sources of revenue for each program, but this chapter briefly addresses a different question: What does high-quality care cost in high-quality programs like these?

The real cost of child care is more than the daily operating costs. The full cost of programs includes attracting, training and retaining qualified professionals, facilities issues, working with resource-and-referral agencies, coordinating with other services, materials and meals, and much more. There are attempts to determine the cost, but there is no one price tag. (Brandon, Kagan, & Joesch 2000; NAEYC 2001b).

Staff salaries is the greatest expense of a program, ranging from 50 to 80 percent of a center's total budget (NAEYC 2001a). This may seem odd given the extremely low salaries—roughly \$16,000 a year without benefits—typical for most child care workers. Attracting high quality staff for low pay, and retaining staff who earn degrees and could leave for higher pay in public schools, is a constant struggle for programs (Helburn et al. 1995).

In these highlights, we provide some examples of how quality programs deal with costs. The program examples include sources of funding, private and public as well as in-kind. Each program has had unique opportunities and circumstances that have made it possible to provide high quality care and support their staff.

Table 2.1.
Annual Expenses for a Full-Time Program with No In-Kind Contributions:
1997

Budget Expenses	
Personnel and related expenses (includes benefits and training)	\$205,496
Other expenses (largely infrastructure costs)	\$93,537
Profit*	\$186
Total expenses	\$299,219
Expenses per child	\$9,067

*Does not include the value of the center property, which is owned by the director.

Table 2.2 illustrates the costs for a program in a western city with a largely agriculture-based economy. This multi-site prekindergarten program, based in a public school system, serves families 36 weeks out of the year, for an average of 11 hours per week. All out-of-pocket expenses are paid with grants from the state, and services are provided to families free of charge. Most direct costs of care are listed as program expenses, a category that includes wages and

benefits, supplies, and training conducted by staff. Table 2.2 lists a separate category of staff development paid by a grant and covering off-site training, college classes, and attendance at conferences. The program receives funds for costs related to a state evaluation and grants for dental and health care programs for the children.

Table 2.2 also lists estimates for the value of in-kind donations made to the program. Many donations come from the school district in which the program is housed. We reviewed these contributions with program staff to ensure that they were valuable to the program. The contributions allow the program to spend most grant money on staffing costs and supplies. By including both program expenses and in-kind contributions, we can calculate what Stoney (1994) calls the *market cost* of child care, or the value of all of the contributions to care. The market cost of the center's part-day, part-year care is \$6,205 per child.

Table 2.2.
Annual Expenses for a Part-Day Preschool Program Receiving In-Kind Contributions:
1997-98

Budget Expenses	
Program expenses (includes personnel expenses, benefits, overhead, materials and supplies)	\$476,775
Staff development	\$11,006
Evaluation	\$1,362
Dental care and supplemental program funds	\$26,054
Total budget expenses	\$515,197
Budget expenses per child	\$3,845
Expenses Covered by In-Kind Donations (Estimated Value)	
Facilities and transportation	\$183,315
Food from USDA	\$53,263
Books, toys, and games	\$7,500
Physical equipment and playground space	\$40,000
Parent volunteers	\$12,280
Teacher training	\$6,000

Custodial services	\$12,600
Miscellaneous	\$1,300
Total in-kind donations (estimated)	\$316,258
In-kind donations per child (estimated)	\$2,360
Market cost of care per child (direct expenses plus estimated in-kind donations)	\$6,205

Table 2.3.
Annual Expenses for a Full-Time Program Receiving In-Kind Contributions:
1997-98

Budget Expenses	Total	Toddlers	Preschool
Personnel expenses	\$422,662	\$143,705	\$278,957
Overhead	\$89,323	\$21,438	\$67,885
Technical services	\$3,500	\$840	\$2,660
Supplies and copier	\$9,540	\$2,290	\$7,250
Facilities and utilities	\$73,158	\$7,558	\$65,600
Cleaning/laundry	\$4,500	\$1,080	\$3,420
Equipment	\$680	\$163	\$517
Repairs on equipment and vehicle gas, oil, and repairs	\$1,600	\$384	\$1,216
Food	\$32,640	\$7,834	\$24,806
Travel (in region)	\$1,000	\$240	\$760
Medical tax	\$8,986	\$2,157	\$6,829
Total budget expenses	\$647,589	\$187,689	\$459,900
Budget expenses per child	\$11,564	\$15,641	\$10,452

Expenses Covered by In-Kind Donations (Estimated Value)			
Equipment and volunteer time	\$27,240	\$5837	\$21,403
In-kind donations per child (estimated)	\$486	\$486	\$486
Market cost of care per child (direct expenses plus estimated in-kind donations)	\$12,050	\$16,127	\$10,938

Finally, Early Learning Child Development Center, which serves many disadvantaged families, provides a detailed picture of the types of expenses incurred by a high-quality program in a rural, low-income area. The center is part of a large multi-site, nonprofit agency providing both child care and other services to families. The teachers are paid higher salaries than other early childhood teachers in the same town, but, because of the rural nature of the area, their salaries are lower than in more urban areas. As illustrated in Table 2.3, the program devotes two-thirds of its budget to paying its teachers and staff, and the rest goes to nonpersonnel expenses such as facilities, supplies, and food for the children. The program provides care for 40 hours per week and serves both toddlers and preschoolers. This center receives only volunteer assistance and some equipment as in-kind gifts; the value of these contributions is shown in Table 2.3.

The annual market cost of care at this full-time center was \$12,050 in 1997-98. Because of the high cost of child-staff ratios for toddlers, the market cost of toddler care exceeds \$16,000 annually, even in this rural community. Parents pay an average of only 38 percent of the direct costs of care (excluding in-kind contributions). There is a sliding fee scale; some families pay more, some less. Expenses not covered are paid for by federal and state grants for families with low incomes.

These are three examples from 1997-98 of the costs of providing high-quality child care. The programs' weekly costs ranged from \$172 per child (\$107 excluding in-kind donations) for a part-day preschool program to \$231 for full-time care. Annual cost per child in the two full-time programs equaled \$9,067 and \$12,050. These figures provide a good baseline for the cost of quality. Financial data from the other exemplary programs reveal that the value of full-time, full-year care topped \$10,000 (including estimations of in-kind contributions). Costs at two programs approached \$15,000 per child.

Others might estimate even higher values for the full costs of the 10 programs. Even though some of the programs offer starting salaries comparable to public-school elementary teachers, few are able to offer salary step increases commonly provided to teachers of older children. Thus, one could argue that the value of foregone earnings should be included in any estimate of what high-quality programs would cost to sustain over long periods. Either method reveals the annual cost of high-quality care to be great. Thus, the need to increase the public investment in quality child care for all children.

Several outside parties bear the cost of the three programs described above—primarily federal dollars, followed by state and local public dollars, and private resources. The chapters

that follow portray how each program addresses its need for adequate funding, revealing both innovative fund-raising methods and sources of sponsorship. Without such support, most of the programs would never succeed in providing exemplary care to children and families.

Chapter 3

Children's for Children

Children's Hospital Medical Center

Cincinnati, Ohio

The on-site child care facility at Children's Hospital Medical Center (CHMC) in Cincinnati, Ohio, was designed to help recruit hospital staff but has succeeded in increasing staff productivity and reducing absenteeism as well. According to a survey of hospital employees who use the center, the program also boosts job satisfaction and employee pride. The Children's for Children program serves 128 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergartners in a building on the medical center campus.

Because more than 80 percent of the hospital workforce is female, the hospital's ability to provide high-quality child care is critical in attracting new employees. Walter Flynn, CHMC vice president of human resources, says on-site child care gives them an edge over other hospitals in attracting female recruits. "I know of two recruits just this year that made their decision predicated on their access to our child care center," he says. "The implications of that are incredibly far reaching."

Flynn recalls, in the mid-1980s, "Child care issues were impacting on career choices, availability, flexibility, etc." A nursing shortage eventually pushed the issue to the forefront and convinced hospital administrators to start the center. Flynn explains, "It was part of a multifaceted effort to deal with the nursing shortage. But we also understood that it would be a significant commitment from an employee relations perspective, a benefit administration perspective and, I think, a quality of work-life perspective."

The hospital initially hired a child care management company to provide services, but was dissatisfied with the quality of care offered. CHMC then started to manage the program internally, hiring a well-qualified director. In 1989 the hospital established the child care center as an independent department. Center director Chris Burroughs notes that the center's position as a hospital department makes the child care staff feel they are "really valued employees" and that they have a role to play in the hospital's mission.

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

Every infant in Angie Hicks's classroom shares the attention of a teacher with just one or two other children. Designated caregivers have primary responsibility for three or four children. These teachers spend the bulk of their day with their children and monitor their basic needs. On the day of our visit, this arrangement is evident in the children's behavior. When one of the caregivers goes to get a bottle, Samantha's eyes trail after her, then start to tear up. The other teacher, seeing Samantha's concern, says comfortingly, "Are you getting sad because Jeannie is leaving?"

The large infant rooms are very calm. Soft music plays for the children who are awake. Two additional rooms contain cribs as well as a quiet area where mothers can breast-feed. Caregivers rock children to sleep in their arms and often sing lullabies before placing the babies in a crib.

The room is well-organized and well-labeled so caregivers do not have to spend time searching for supplies. Personal belongings, including diapers and pacifiers, are all kept in labeled locations. Food allergies and sunscreen requirements are posted in large letters on the wall. The providers are fastidious about health precautions, maintaining clean facilities, washing their hands between feedings and diaper changes, and using rubber gloves while wiping children's noses. The room has a voice-activated speaker phone that picks up in the active part of the classroom, so that no teacher has to lift a telephone receiver. Parents frequently call to check on their children.

Most important, the CFC infant teachers have worked consistently with babies for many years. As director Burroughs says, "The teachers in this room prefer to work with very young children and have not experienced the burnout" so common in the infant care profession. Their devotion to the children is apparent. One caregiver lovingly hugs a child who had just awakened, then rubs his back, allowing him to transition slowly into the activities of the day. Conversations are filled with encouraging and caring comments. "Keep crawling—you are almost there!" "Thank you for handing that to me!" Teachers convey their excitement to parents, proudly reporting on the children's activities.

The teachers follow the children's lead. When one child carries a book to one of the teachers, the gift prompts a group reading session. When an infant pushes back on the pillows supporting him and begins to cry, a teacher takes the cue to move him onto his back, where he becomes immediately content. Another teacher asks a toddler, "What are you trying to tell me, Jenny? Do you want me to blow the bubbles?" Jenny gives an enthusiastic "Bubba ba ba." The teacher helps Jenny blow the bubbles herself, then encourages other children to come join the activity.

Since toddlers learn to communicate verbally, most of the conversation in the CFC toddler room develops out of the children's ideas. Astar hold out a plastic ice cream cone and says "Daddy." The teacher responds, "Does Daddy buy ice cream?" When Astar then picks up a milkshake cup, she asks, "Is that a milkshake you are making? Let's all go and get some ice cream." In the house area, the toddlers play ice cream scenarios. After a while, a boy excitedly announces that he has made a cake. The teacher and the children start to sing Happy Birthday.

Program characteristics

Half of the CFC classrooms cater to children under the age of two-and-a-half, the age range for which it is most difficult to find center-based care. The program became accredited by NAEYC in 1990, and 95 percent of the teaching staff have degrees in early childhood education. Staff turnover is low, averaging 10 percent in 1996 and 1997, and never topping 12 percent in any of the last 10 years.

Parents appreciate the stability of the staff. Mary Gilene says that before she enrolled her child at CFC, "Staff turnover at the center where we had my oldest child was very high....After one lady left who had been with [my child] for 13 weeks, I never saw the same person again. They had a part-time person who [my child] got attached to, but that was the only person that [my child] knew." In contrast, parents report that many of the caregivers at CFC have taught more than one of their children.

Children's for Children maintains accreditation staff-child ratios and employs a set of "floater" teachers who are always available as substitutes. Teachers appreciate this system and

the center and hospital administrators’ support for high-quality programming. Kathy O’Rourke, lead teacher of the young toddlers class, points out, “Even when we are short-staffed, we’re overstaffed compared to some centers.”

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

With hourly wages for teachers ranging from \$8.89 to \$23.36 and lead teachers’ salaries starting at \$11.60 per hour (see Table 3.1), salaries offered to the teaching staff at CFC are among the highest in Cincinnati. Good compensation is one of the fundamental characteristics of the program. Its mission statement reads, “We elevate the status of child care workers in the community by being leaders in providing livable wages and desirable benefits.”

Table 3.1.
Hourly Wages of Children’s for Children Full-Time Staff: 2002-03*

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Directors	\$20.08	\$51.32
Site Managers	\$15.45	\$39.48
Lead teachers	\$11.60	\$23.36
Other teaching personnel	\$8.89	\$17.97

*Salary ranges increase approximately 5 percent each year.

According to Chris Burroughs, good salaries allow CFC to attract and retain well-qualified staff “The hospital wants to have the highest quality, best center and we feel that one way to get there is to pay them [teachers] fairly.” Vice President Flynn explains that when the center became administered directly by the hospital, “We decided that we would pay rates that were really hospital health care worker rates versus child care....I think that speaks volumes to our commitment to the quality of the program plus the retention of the staff.” He adds, “We have an incredibly competent staff..... If you want good service delivery, you need good people.”

Because teacher salaries are determined through placement in one of the hospital’s labor grades, based on both education and years of experience, Teachers at CFC tend to compare their status and wages to those of other hospital employees rather than to local child care teachers. Teachers appreciate the opportunity for advancement to higher labor grades and are grateful for the consistency with which raises are offered to staff. Lead teacher Angie Hicks says, “I think you need some kind of scale where you can strive and work for something more.” Promotions and raises are based on annual staff reviews. When asked whether she thought her salary reflects the value of her work, teacher Kathy O’Rourke says, “I think that it does reflect that the hospital views us as professionals.”

However, since teachers fall into a lower labor grade than most hospital employees, some want higher status within the hospital community. Indeed, a few teachers have left the program for better-paying positions within the hospital.

Staff express frustration with the generally low pay offered in the child care field. Michele Klysz-Robben says, “People don’t understand the profession. I wish they had a better understanding of what we do. It’s not babysitting; it’s an education. It’s getting children off to a better early start.” Angie Hicks adds, “Some people out there think what we do is not important.”

The staff at CFC receive the same benefits package offered to all hospital employees, which includes health insurance and dental care (see Table 3.2). Staff select from a broad menu of additional benefits, ranging from a pension plan to a family vision plan. They accumulate leave days for holidays, personal leave, vacation, and short-term sick leave through a paid-time-off bank. They can sell back accumulated paid-time-off credits if they do not use them. Program employees also hold memberships in professional organizations, such as NAEYC, and receive paid leave for professional development activities.

Table 3.2.
Benefits Offered to Children’s for Children Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Paid-time-off bank	Up to 41 days of holidays, personal, vacation, and short-term sick leave
Health insurance paid	80% of individual benefit employer-paid
Dental insurance	Employer-paid with employee contribution of \$78 per year
Vision plan	Employer-paid with employee contribution of \$24 for family plan
Retirement plan	Pension benefits; option to invest in tax-deferred annuities
Discount for children to attend program	Up to 50% reduction in tuition
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Long-term disability	Employer-paid
Dependent and health care costs	Flexible spending account for health care and dependent care expenses

Other benefits

Funeral leave, counseling services, child care referral services, pharmacy discount, credit union, home and auto insurance discounts

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

When they hire new staff, the program's director and assistant director look for people with a solid understanding of early childhood education but who are also learners and thinkers. These traits make CFC staff well-suited to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Most of the teachers at CFC have degrees in early childhood education, and the program encourages them to take additional classes. Through the hospital's continuing education program, the center reimburses full-time employees for up to \$1,700 each annually for continuing education expenses.

CFC also offers in-house training throughout the year. Training is required in diversity appreciation, CPR and first aid, and recognizing childhood illnesses and signs of child abuse. Staff members are also offered opportunities to attend professional development trainings on a wide range of topics. CFC provides paid leave for required training (including overtime). For voluntary training, the program covers conference fees, travel expenses, and leave time (if on a weekday).

CFC staff often attend local AEYC functions and the annual NAEYC conference. Teachers also attend seminars provided by other departments of the hospital and serve on hospital committees. Each year CFC holds a staff retreat on a topic selected by employees; a planning team plans the retreat and invites outside speakers. Teachers also receive release time to visit other programs.

Overall, teachers describe CFC as a nurturing place to work and report that they have a lot of autonomy. "I enjoy the freedom in my classroom to do what I want," says teacher Michele Klysz-Robben. "There's a lot of freedom and a lot of trust."

Involvement in the early childhood community

The CFC staff is heavily involved in the local early childhood community. Each year the staff and families plan a conference for the Southwestern Ohio and Northern Kentucky early childhood communities. The conference usually features at least one nationally recognized speaker as well as local presenters. CFC staff also conduct brown-bag seminars for all hospital employees.

Mentoring is offered to several local centers. Staff mentor a custodial child care program for the residents of a local drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. CFC works with the Good Neighbor Project, a program that serves low-income children. Staff from the two programs are matched and participate in guided observations in both settings. They also provide training to caregivers at a local infant/toddler center. They work to improve program quality in the Cincinnati community by testifying on city licensing standards and welcoming students from local universities and vocational education programs to conduct observations in their classrooms.

CFC is a member of Comprehensive Community Child Care, commonly known as 4C, which works to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of early childhood education in Southwestern Ohio and Northern Kentucky by assisting families, child care programs, family child care providers, and employers. In 1993, 4C gave its Child Care Recognition Award to CHMC for being a leader in corporate child care and setting a new standard for quality care in Cincinnati. In 1997, CFC was selected as a filming site for Ohio's RISE's Winning Teams project, a videotape parent education program on developmentally appropriate activities. CFC staff make appearances on local television and radio programs and write articles for professional journals and national parenting newsletters.

The director has served as president of the local AEYC Affiliate and sat on the Ohio AEYC board. Staff have chaired AEYC committees and planned events. The center frequently hosts a meeting of the directors of accredited programs in the region, and two staff members are in AEYC's Seasoned Society, a study and peer group for experienced staff.

The hospital administration is supportive of the child care staff's work in the community and sees it as part of the hospital's mission to promote child health in Cincinnati. In turn, part of the child care center's mission is to be a model for best practices. Some CFC staff have gone on to direct other programs in the community, "I think we have contributed significantly to the overall quality of child care, certainly in Cincinnati if not the region, says Walter Flynn.

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

CFC fees are set to equal the average fees charged by accredited centers in the city, as determined by the director's annual survey of local centers. In 1998 the program charged between \$116 and \$138 per week, depending on the age of the child. Some families receive fee help through a fund established by the city of Cincinnati and managed by the local 4C. To serve additional families with low incomes, CFC staff have looked into the county voucher system. But, as Chris Burroughs explains, "They would only reimburse us to a certain level, so we would lose \$50 per week per child."

Parents whose children attend the program report that the fees are affordable. Mary Gilene notes that CFC fees may be slightly higher than fees in other child care programs, but that the difference in quality is much higher than the difference in price. Program administrators know that they could charge more for their services and retain demand, but CFC's price is pegged at an average fee intentionally. This allows the center to be available to the vast majority of the hospital staff, not just those with the highest incomes. Chris Burroughs says that keeping CFC open to families with a range of incomes is a priority, but it requires balancing quality, compensation, and affordability. Because the center has a strong commitment to high-quality services and staff compensation is relatively fixed within the hospital labor scales, it is a challenge to prioritize affordability. Burroughs admits, "I wrestle with the affordability part a lot."

Accessibility

Children's for Children offers extended hours, staying open 13.5 hours per day to accommodate the schedules of hospital personnel. The typical hospital employee workday can last up to 11 hours. CFC also remains open on holidays that fall on weekdays if there is sufficient demand for child care. On such days, teachers volunteer for short shifts and get paid double time and a half. Families do not pay any additional fees for this service. The center's hours meet their needs, according to 97 percent of parent-survey respondents.³

The center offers an evening program, including dinner, and parents can elect on a daily basis to have children stay late. Lisa Witte says when she asks teachers if her child can stay into the evening, "They are always willing to work with me. They certainly wouldn't leave a room out of ratio, but there is always that effort to make this work for all of us." The program also provides child care for evening events held for hospital personnel.

Being on the hospital grounds makes the program very convenient for families, and a number of parents visit their child during the day or volunteer in the classroom. Parents say it is reassuring to have their children nearby during the workday. One mother, who visits her child's classroom every day at lunch, says, "It is so nice to be part of the room. I feel such a strong sense of where my kids are, even on any given day." But parents report that quality, not convenience, was their principal reason for selecting CFC. Lisa Witte explains, "So many people come and say, 'It must be so wonderful to have day care at work,' and I say, 'It is nothing unless your program is good.'"

In response to demand on the annual parent survey, the center has decided to open a full-day kindergarten classroom in the fall. The director notes that families face difficulty finding after-school care for their children once they start kindergarten, and many of the children face multiple transitions in one day. "We could see the stress in the families with kindergarten-age children," Burroughs says.

Parent support

Parents say teachers go out of their way to accommodate their children's needs. For example, teachers study the medical conditions of children in their classrooms and provide support to parents with ill children. Some teachers have helped parents identify serious illnesses or developmental delays. Others know sign language, and the program also has access to translators when needed. One teacher is learning Mandarin to help make a young toddler feel at home.

Parent involvement and education

Children's for Children has developed the Child Care Center Support Committee, which serves both as a recommending board and as a mechanism for coordinating volunteer efforts by parents. This committee consists of parent representatives from each classroom as well as experts in early childhood development. The center receives approximately 1,300 volunteer

³ Mary L. Marx, *Children's for Children Parent Satisfaction Survey*, Spring 1997. QRS Consulting, 21.

hours per year, mostly from families. According to Chris Burroughs, the parents are concerned about quality and see the committee as “a way that they can assure that their voice is going to be heard and that their value of quality is always going to be present.” The support committee has seven subcommittees that help organize events, review policies, and maintain facilities.

There is a high level of communication between families and staff; parents receive daily reports on their child’s experiences and they are welcome to telephone staff during the day. Parent Peggy Finch says of staff, “They take the time to really make you feel like your child is special and to give you details of the day. It is really nice.” At two annual teacher conferences, parents receive a progress report on their child. Some teachers also develop portfolios of children’s work. Finch says, “I have learned a lot...from these teachers who have so much insight. They are so positive.” Lisa Witte adds, “Jeannie [an infant teacher] taught me so much about being a new mother.”

CFC holds five parent events each year. Its spring festival is open to the entire hospital community. In a newsletter, *Offspring*, the director and teaching staff write columns offering parenting advice and explaining developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers also give publications to parents if they have specific concerns. Teaching staff have created a video describing the mission of the program. Shown during parent orientations, it enables parents to understand their style of teaching and the developmental theories that underlie the program’s approach.

As a result, CFC families are well-educated on the components of high-quality early childhood programs, such as the appropriate staff-child ratios for each classroom. When parents call to ask if their child can stay late, they frequently ask if the classroom will still be “in ratio” (that is, meeting accreditation and licensing standards for ratios) if their child remains.

Teachers find the parents to be well-informed about child development and appreciative of their work. Peggy Corcoran, a parent on the support committee, acknowledges the critical role of the teachers when she says, “The people who care for my child are an extension of my family.” Lisa Witte credits the program with improving her own work as a child health care professional. She says, “I feel like I have learned so much from my kids’ teachers in this center and from the philosophy.... I know I take it right into the workplace. I am in the recovery room, so I am waking up children that are half asleep, without their parents, that hurt, that are scared, that are frightened. I know that my skills and the verbiage that I have learned from Children’s for Children—the approach that I have learned—has fallen right over into my work area. And people that I work with have picked up on the same traits.”

Financial and Structural Support

Support Committee

The Center Support Committee serves as a resource for CFC, engaging parents from numerous hospital departments as well as outside experts. The committee holds staff appreciation activities and keeps parents informed about center events and policies. The committee sponsors small fund raisers that support special projects and purchases, conducts environmental rounds, and reviews research proposals.

Revenue

Children's for Children receives a sizable amount of support in direct subsidy from CHMC and, as discussed above, receives some tuition assistance from 4C to help struggling families pay for child care (see Table 3.3). The center also receives some funding for meals from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Table 3.3.
Sources of Revenue for Children's for Children: 1996-97

Sources of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Parent fees
Children's Hospital Medical Center subsidy
Child Care Food Program
Tuition assistance from 4C

In-kind support

In addition to a substantial monetary donation from the hospital, CFC is supported through in-kind contributions from the hospital (see Table 3.4). The facilities, housekeeping, maintenance, utilities, and staff benefits for the program are all provided by the hospital. The value of these subsidies amounts to more than five times the value of the financial subsidy given by the hospital to the program. Assistant director Mary Alice Callahan says simply, "We are quite blessed."

Table 3.4.
In-Kind Donations to Children's for Children: 1996-97

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Facilities and playground space from hospital
Housekeeping, maintenance, security, and telephone services from hospital
Capital improvements by hospital
Tuition reimbursement for staff paid by hospital
Teacher training from hospital personnel (first aid, etc.)
Tuition assistance given to parents by local 4C

Parent volunteer time

Volunteer aides from community

Hospital support

One valuable tool in maintaining hospital support for the child care center is an annual parent satisfaction survey conducted by QRS Consulting, an independent assessment organization.⁴ The survey reveals the CFC's effect on the attitudes and job performance of parents. From 1992 to 1997, between 73 and 86 percent of respondents said that the program added to their general job satisfaction. In 1997, 72 percent reported that the center increased their productivity and 60 percent said that the center increased their pride in their employer. The survey also investigates whether employee attendance is affected by the child care services. Of the respondents, 58 percent reported that the on-site center reduced their absenteeism and 54 percent said it reduced their tardiness.⁵

The hospital administration's expectations for the program have changed as it has developed. Walter Flynn recalls that CFC "was viewed as a recruitment tool—and initially it probably was—but given the quality and the success of the program, I think we learned very quickly that it is in fact an [employee] retention tool." As one parent says, "If I wasn't happy with my job, I would never leave until my children were old enough to leave the center." Lisa Witte admits, "There was a time when I was being courted by another hospital and [CFC] played a huge role in my decision to stay." Another parent in a similar situation agrees. "It was something I wouldn't consider giving up."

Flynn says, "We know, based upon qualitative survey data, that [CFC] has a lot of power in terms of retention. Even those people who don't participate in it feel good that we do it because of what it symbolizes: our commitment to not only employees but also to high-quality child care."

Because the support of the hospital is critical to the existence of the CFC program, the director spends a lot of energy keeping hospital officials informed about developments in the program. The center maintains a high level of visibility within the hospital, which Burroughs says helps increase support among staff. The center takes part in hospital-wide activities, submits material to the hospital newsletter, and encourages its staff to serve on hospital committees. These efforts have led to a strong working relationship between the center staff and the hospital administration, both of whom value high-quality services, good staff compensation, and affordable fees for families.

4 In 1997, 63 percent of the families using Children's for Children responded to the survey.

5 M.L. Marx, 1997.

Chris Burroughs, director of Children's for Children, offers some advice to any corporation or community considering opening a child care center.

1. Conduct a *meaningful* survey of potential clients, including an assessment of projected family growth.
2. Be certain that start-up funds allocated for equipment and furnishings equal at least \$1,000 per child.
3. Purchase top-quality equipment whenever possible. (Much of our equipment is 10 years old and still in excellent condition.)
4. Involve experienced child care professionals from day one.
5. Regardless of who operates the program, insist on funds for an outside early childhood evaluation of the program at six months, one year, and annually until the program is accredited.
6. Develop parent satisfaction surveys and administer them at six months, one year, and annually thereafter. Share the results with funders, program sponsors, and maybe even the media.
7. It is helpful for corporate sponsored centers to have one or more strong, influential, highly respected upper managers giving advocacy and other support from the earliest days.
8. Develop an involved parent/community advisory group prior to opening.
9. Hire a director with strong public relations skills who can speak with eloquence and pride about the project.
10. Constantly educate about components of quality care. New community leaders and new corporate personnel need to know how a strong child care program helps strengthen the community culture.

Chapter 4

Lakewood Avenue Children's School

Durham, North Carolina

Upon entering the renovated home that now houses Lakewood Avenue Children's School, you catch a glimpse of the office of the director. The office, what used to be the kitchen pantry, is just big enough to accommodate one guest—and one chair—at a time. As one parent sees it, this choice of rooms reflects the program's allocation of resources: Whenever possible, they go to the children. She says, "I thought something that spoke volumes before Margaret [Edwards, the director] had even said a word was seeing her in that little closet. She could have given herself a bigger space here somewhere and taken a window, but she didn't."

In interview after interview, teaching staff and parents attest to the child-centered focus of the Lakewood program. Teacher Maria Sell explains why. "Children come first, families are valued, and people work together." Parent Karen Prus recalls her first visit: "Everything about the school seemed to be designed with the children in mind. It was totally child-centered."

Lakewood Avenue is a small for-profit center that serves 33 children ages 12 months through 5 years. Director and owner Margaret Edwards bought the building in 1985 and then set out to visit programs around the country to assess how to best renovate it. She found her model at Yale University in a network of small centers in adapted houses.

Following substantial work on the building, Lakewood opened in the summer of 1986 to offer full-day, full-year care. Eighteen months later, it became the first full-day program in North Carolina to be accredited by NAEYC. From the start, Edwards wanted Lakewood to provide both high-quality services for children and professional positions for staff in a small setting. She says, "We started out to try and make the best school that we could for children and also wanted to make the best working environment that we could for teachers." Illustrating her commitment to this goal, Edwards chose to pay herself nothing the first year so she could pay her staff salaries that were above average for local child care teachers (\$9,000 in 1986).

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

The toddler room at Lakewood is divided by low, wooden walls so the children can form two small groups. According to one of the toddler teachers, splitting the children into groups of four makes the class run smoothly and keeps the children calm. As the year goes on and the children get older, the amount of time they spend together in a large group increases. Maria Sell explains, "The room allows them to do the things that come naturally to them at that age." For example, there is a long, low sink and a tile floor on one side of the room where children can play in the water at any time. This side of the room also contains open shelves with toys, books, and manipulatives. The other half of the room is carpeted and has structures (sets of stairs, a climbing wall, and a ramp) that encourage large-motor skill development. It also includes a quiet area, house area, dress-up space, and block-building area.

Teachers facilitate toddlers' communications with one another and help them develop language skills. When Marco, for example, grabs a toy farm that Andre, a younger child, was using, André starts to cry and Maria Sell steps in.

Teacher [to Marco]: Do you know what André's telling you? I'm going to help André use his words.

Marco: I want to use it.

Teacher [suggests that Marco ask André if he is finished with the toy]

Marco [to André]: Are you done with it?

André: No.

Teacher: No, not yet.

André: No, not yet. My turn.

Teacher: That's great. You're using your words. I heard you say 'My turn.'

The teachers build off of the ideas of the children. On the day of our visit, for example, while the children put pictures onto sticky contact paper, one child notices a picture of a bear and asks the teacher, "Can you sing bear hunt song?" Another child starts to sing the song, and the teacher encourages him to continue by repeating each line. Two other children join in, laughing and moving their arms to the lyrics. When the children finish, the teacher starts to sing another song about bears.

In the "middler" room, the two-year-olds largely serve themselves at snacktime. A child spills some milk and the teacher asks him to use a paper towel to clean it up. "It looks like a cloud," the boy says, and the rest of the children say what they think the puddle resembles—a moon, a ghost, a milkshake—before they clean it up. There is an atmosphere of cooperation among the children. When Kristie comes over to a project table and says, "I want to do it," Nathan steps aside. Pointing to his place, he says, "Here's your place, Kristie."

The teachers help children discover new things through their play. When a wood-block structure falls from a low shelf, a boy comments on the loud noise. Sharon Winston says, "If you built it on the carpet, would it make a loud crash when it fell?" The boy says he doesn't think so, and Winston suggests, "Let's try it and see." After the new structure falls, Winston asks, "Was that as loud?" and another child replies, "No, not as loud." Later in the day, teacher Steve Shumate sits on the front porch swing reading a story to a group of children. They hold an extended discussion about the book, sharing their comments and revisiting earlier pages to see if characters previously appear in the story.

Stephanie Drumheller and Maureen House's preschool classroom is large, with numerous areas for children to work. Children take turns performing different helper jobs, such as feeding a pet rabbit or getting the program mail from the mailbox. These jobs are discussed during group time, which the class calls their "meeting." For many decisions, such as which songs to sing, the group votes on choices suggested by individual children.

Although classes are divided by age, there are numerous opportunities for interaction between different classrooms. Children share time on the playground and often communicate between the classes. A window in the wall between the toddler classroom and the preschool classroom facilitates interaction. Children have the freedom to visit their previous classroom and teachers if they desire. The director considers it developmentally appropriate to allow children to part from the classroom at their own pace. Edwards says, "Growth isn't linear; it's more like two steps forward, five steps back. So it just seems to me to be really appropriate to be able to be a toddler and go visiting in the preschool room for 30 minutes and then go back to the toddler room. It seems that it honors growth for preschoolers to be able to go back to the toddler room for a day."

Much of the classroom arrangements at Lakewood have been developed over years of running the program. Maria Sell says, “I kept seeing things done here that I’d never seen before. So much thought is put into what’s really going to work for the children.” Steve Shumate adds, “If it doesn’t work, [the director] is not going to do it again. That says a lot for her.”

Program characteristics

Lakewood Avenue Children’s School holds an AA license, meeting higher standards for staff-child ratios, training, and curriculum than A licensed centers in North Carolina. All six teaching staff members have bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education; one also has a master’s degree. Edwards holds a master’s degree in early childhood special education.

Parents appreciate both the qualifications and skills of the teaching staff. Parent Karen Prus says, “One of the exceptional things about Lakewood is that the teachers know how to deal with young children. That is a very different thing from other places. They are not just teachers—they are educators. And they are surrogate mothers too.” Terry O’Halloran, another parent, notes, “Here the teachers have definitely chosen to be teachers.”

Many identify the staff as the top reason that they picked Lakewood. “The staff are incredible,” says Ranota Hall. Roslyn Mannon adds, “They remind you that, God forbid, there is some horrible tragedy, they would throw their lives out for these kids. They really love them.” “They are sort of the ideal parents that we would like to be if we were more patient,” says Sally Kornbluth. They definitely have very long fuses.” And Karen Prus says, “The teachers here really are exceptional. Not only are they highly skilled professionals, but they are just wonderful, warm people.”

The average tenure of staff at Lakewood is a little more than 4.5 years. Maria Sell was impressed by the low turnover when she first started teaching at Lakewood. At another school where she had taught, she gained seniority over all of the staff, including the director, after only four months on the job. Edwards points out that low turnover also gives the children time to develop relationships with all the teachers in the school, not just the ones in their classroom.

Several systems help maintain high-quality services at Lakewood. One allows children to have consistent caregivers for all of the day (except naptime). Teachers do not work in shifts, but instead have longer workdays with breaks in the middle. For example, in the toddler classroom, one teacher works from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with a two-hour lunch break, while the other teacher works from 8:30 to 5:30 with a one-hour break. Each week the teachers switch schedules so that they do not always have to work longer days. A part-time staff person comes in to observe while the children are napping. Toddler teacher Maria Sell says, “It makes for a long day, but I think it’s such a valuable thing to have the same two people here—for the kids’ sake and the parents’ sake. It feels a lot more professional and allows for better communication with the parents.”

In addition to providing consistent daily care, the center fosters continuity of care as the children get older by advancing at least one of the teachers to the next class with each group of children. This also provides opportunities for teachers to work with different age groups. Teacher Steve Shumate appreciates this and, after moving from one-year-olds up to two-year-olds, decided to permanently switch to working with this age group.

Lakewood has a unique in-house solution for securing reliable substitutes. One of the teachers in the two-year-old room substitutes if any teacher is absent. The program maintains a lower-than-required child-staff ratio in this class to ensure that it meets licensing standards when

a teacher is pulled out to substitute. On top of her regular wage, the teacher who covers the two-year-old room alone receives the additional money that would have been paid to an outside substitute.

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

Lakewood teachers are paid salaries that, on average, are equivalent to the starting salaries for teachers in local public schools. In 2002-03, Lakewood salaries ranged from \$14.90 to \$16.35 per hour, high above the market rates for early childhood teachers in the community (see Table 4.1). Staff receive pay increases based on performance, and Edwards tries to pay an end-of-the-year bonus whenever finances allow. Staff are also given the opportunity to earn between \$500 and \$3,000 per year extra for performing administrative or maintenance tasks in the program, such as shopping, cleaning, or doing laundry.

Table 4.1.
Hourly Wages of Lakewood Avenue Children’s Center: 2002-03

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Directors/Managers	\$25.90	\$25.90
Teachers	\$14.90	\$16.35

Many of the teachers have come from other centers, so they know firsthand that they are now paid far above average. Sell says, “I’m so fortunate to make so much more than so many people in this field do. I couldn’t be anything but very satisfied.” Stephanie Drumheller, who was making \$16,000 per year before coming to Lakewood, appreciates both the salary and the benefits and admits that having a higher salary influences the way she thinks about her job. “I do feel more like a professional. I feel like a real person. When I worked at the old center, it was kind of demeaning. You work so hard and you are broke at the end of the month.” Drumheller, who in her previous position read the classifieds every week, still thinks that teachers should be paid more. “As much work as I put into this place, I should probably get more. Right now, my life revolves around this school.”

Steve Shumate admits, “It’s the first place I’ve worked that I have not had to have a supplemental income. It’s nice to be paid as a professional and not just as an employee.” Teacher Valerie VanOosten worked at a catering company after getting her early childhood education degree because she could not find a well-paying job. She says her Lakewood salary “makes me feel like [the director] really respects us and what we do. In turn, it makes the

parents respect us because they pay for it.” Maria Sell adds, “She’s [Edward’s] not going to do it unless she can pay her staff well. That’s a commitment on her part.”

In addition to exemplary salaries, Lakewood staff receive vacation and sick leave, health insurance, paid professional days, paid planning time, and life insurance (see Table 4.2). At the time of our visit, Edwards was working to also obtain dental coverage.

Table 4.2.
Benefits Offered to Lakewood Avenue Children’s Center Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days and holidays	30 days per year plus federal holidays
Sick leave or personal days	4 days per year
% health insurance paid	100% employer-paid for individual coverage; family benefits paid for by employee
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Worker’s compensation	Employer-paid

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

Lakewood provides up to \$2,000 per teacher per year for professional development expenses. The center pays 50 percent of all off-site training expenses and asks teachers to pay the other half. Teachers opt for a wide range of training. The most unusual was a one-week trip made by two teachers to Italy to participate in Reggio Emilia seminars and lectures and to visit child care programs. Other activities have included Reggio conferences in Virginia and Missouri, an infant-toddler conference at Bank Street College in New York City, and a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit a model Reggio program.

Lakewood pays the full cost of all on-site staff development activities. Approximately once a month a paid speaker or workshop leader attends staff meetings. The topics for these sessions are selected from teacher suggestions. The teachers also receive released time to take classes at local universities or technical institutes, to attend lectures, or to observe other nearby high-quality programs. Teaching staff receive a formal evaluation at the end of each year as well as daily feedback from the director, who is frequently in the classrooms.

Staff say they are given substantial control over decisions made about their classrooms. For example, teachers get \$100 per month to use for discretionary supplies. They participate in decisions that affect the program. They meet annually to discuss how money is being

allocated and to choose benefits. Valerie VanOosten says director Edwards “gives us a lot of freedom,” and Edwards says, “I really work hard to be a yes person” And be responsive to staff ideas. The director adds that she seeks out teachers who “have an intellectual bent and want to experiment.”

Involvement in the early childhood community

In 1997, Lakewood staff initiated a project to increase their involvement in the Durham community. They wrote a proposal and received a grant to share an arts teacher with a kindergarten class at a public magnet school. One of the products of the project adorns the entrance to the preschool room at Lakewood: a huge oil-paint heart covers the door and surrounding wall. In a similar collaborative effort, Edwards started a directors group with other Durham providers to discuss administrative issues and advocacy needs for the community.

The most substantial contribution that Lakewood makes to the surrounding community is in training staff in high standards of quality and helping seed new centers. In response to high demand for Lakewood’s services and parents’ pleas for Edwards to open additional centers, the director has encouraged her staff to gain training at Lakewood and then move on to open their own centers. Indeed, most staff members leave after four or five years to become directors of other programs, to start new schools based on Lakewood, to attend graduate school, or to work for advocacy organizations. Edwards serves as a mentor during these transitions and uses her professional resources to help teachers get established in new positions. She has even provided materials and equipment to teachers opening new schools. Thus, indirectly, Edwards helps expand the number of high-quality early childhood programs in her community.

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

Lakewood families pay higher than average fees because there are neither private nor public subsidies for the school. Fees for 1997-98 ranged from \$3.39 to \$3.62 per hour, depending on the age of the child. Parents report they are willing to pay these higher prices, especially for quality programming and well-educated teachers. In a written submission to High/Scope, parents make the case that Lakewood’s hourly rate is lower than the hourly cost for a local Head Start program, even though Lakewood has better-paid teachers with higher levels of education than those in the Head Start program, and that child-staff ratios are lower at Lakewood than in Head Start. Similarly, parents argue that one of Lakewood’s direct competitors, a university-sponsored program, offers the same child-staff ratios but charges over \$2 per hour more.

Parents may feel so strongly about the value of Lakewood’s child care services because the director provides a breakdown of costs (in categories). This breakdown reveals that the bulk of the school’s revenue goes to staff compensation, not to reaping a large profit. Lucy Martindale, a former parent in the program, first convinced Edwards that she should describe to families how their tuition was used. Martindale and Edwards produced a simple breakdown that showed that over 80 percent of the budget was going into staffing costs. Edwards says, “The parents here appreciate the value of the commodity they are purchasing. In every other area, you

expect greater quality if you pay more. Why shouldn't that be the case with child care?" She says she would like to take children who receive public subsidies, but the subsidy amount is insufficient to cover her costs.

Many parents describe the expense of sending their children to Lakewood as substantial but worthwhile. Artoro DeLozanne admits, "It's difficult, especially when there's two [children in the program]." Terry O'Halloran says child care tuition is her family's highest expense, higher than their mortgage. Teresa Perrien points out, "But it is our most precious commodity," then Ann Saunders adds "Worth every penny." Sue Reeder says, "It depends what your priorities are, what's important to you. For me, my son's education is very important."

Kim Frankel argues, "I think we may pay a little bit more than a lot of other centers, but when you look at the types of activities and the teacher-to-child ratios, how can you really put a dollar value on the experience of a toddler teacher who's been there six years? How do you measure whether you are willing to pay for that or not?" Ranota Hall adds, "These folks are trained, they went to school, they have debt, they have a life, they have bills, etc. They are professionals and they should be compensated appropriately, just like anyone else in a profession. I don't know how you can expect to get this quality of child care and not pay the people that are providing it a competitive salary." John Woodmansee agrees. "I wouldn't want to pay any less; I wouldn't want to pay those teachers any less. It would be insulting."

The overall level of quality appears to be worth the cost. Mary Tereul says, "This is what a day care should be like.... I think we pay the same [as parents in other programs] and we get much more." According to Richard Schmalbeck, "We really have to look at it at the margin. The choice is not between whatever you spend here and \$0. It is between whatever you spend here and whatever you would spend someplace else.... You get extra value from paying just a little bit more." And John Woodmansee adds, "We looked at a lot of other places. Per dollar, we're getting higher quality care than at any of these other places. That's what it boiled down to."

Accessibility

From its inception, Lakewood Avenue has provided 10 hours of care each day, from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., and worked to keep the number of days that the program is closed to a minimum. Parents report that, in certain instances, Edwards has made exceptional efforts to serve the families' needs. On the day after a hurricane, for example, she opened for half a day because she knew that some parents who are medical personnel would need to be on the job.

Family support

The families find Lakewood's hours convenient and report that the staff are very flexible and supportive of families. In the past, teachers have agreed to come in 5 or 10 minutes early or even accompany a child home to accommodate families' needs. When Ann Saunders was pregnant with her second child, the teachers gave her their home numbers just in case her child care plans fell through when she was ready to deliver. Saunders said, "I think that the teachers and Margaret and the families, after a period of time, become like an extended family."

The center offers speech and language screenings as well as dentist check-ups for children and maintains records of immunizations. It serves children with special needs and

provides parents with referrals to supplementary community services. The staff also holds workshops on subjects of interest to parents, such as discipline or sibling rivalry.

At the beginning of each year teachers conduct home visits to acquaint themselves with the children's home environment. They also hold two other parent-teacher conferences each year, and parents may request additional conferences as needed. Teachers create a developmental profile for each child at the end of the year. Teachers in the toddler room also give parents a yearly log of their child's activities.

Parents frequently discuss their concerns with teachers. Laura Underkuffler said, "There is a willingness here from the beginning to listen to the parents and to try to accommodate any concerns we had, and there is a lot of flexibility to work with children of different needs.... It wasn't like they had a mold and you had to fit into it. It was that they would try to accommodate whenever the children needed it."

The staff work hard to address parental concerns. For example, Edwards often serves as a resource when parents are trying to decide where to send their children to kindergarten. According to Ranota Hall, Edwards even visited a new elementary school for one of the parents because she did not know much about it. Lakewood also allows a few kindergarten children to return for the summer before first grade. This helps both parents, who are looking for summer child care, and the center, which has a dip in enrollment in the summer.

Parent involvement and education

Families are strikingly devoted to the program, and there is a culture among parents of taking an interest in the education of their children. This involvement and appreciation has many beneficial effects on the school, ranging from the in-kind contributions that parents make to their involvement with the children and their support of teachers. Teacher Stephanie Drumheller says, "The parents are definitely one of our greater strengths."

Toddler teacher Maria Sell notes, "We're really appreciated on the whole. We are thanked so often." Her co-teacher, Valerie VanOosten, says, "It's hard to explain how nice the parents are. There is one set of parents that say thank you every day." Sell recalls that parents gave very generously to a teacher who left to start her own family child care home. "Their appreciation and their support is tangible to us. Having people appreciate what you do and tell you so is such a great feeling." VanOosten sums it up: "It just seems like a family."

Parents participate in two workdays each year, go on field trips, and hold social events. The teachers post weekly lesson plans and daily notes about classroom activities and ask parents to participate whenever they are able. Parents have played musical instruments, celebrated Chinese New Year, set up tents so children can pretend that they are camping, and cared for pets. Many also volunteer on a more informal basis, making repairs, maintaining computers, providing project resources, and gardening. Parents even volunteered to complete the nomination materials for Lakewood's consideration by High/Scope's Program Recognition Project.

When a new teacher is hired, parents participate in the final round of interviews alongside the director and teaching staff. Maria Sell says that she was surprised by the inclusion of parents in the interview process but was impressed by their interest in the candidates. "It was great to see how much the parents cared."

Family viewpoints are often communicated to staff through the parent representatives for each classroom. These representatives are chosen by the teachers and serve for one-year terms. Parents also provide input to staff through the annual program evaluation.

Financial and Structural Support

Revenue

As in many programs across the country, fees make up the only consistent source of revenue for Lakewood. But unlike in many programs, Lakewood has spent considerable time educating its families about the value of the child care they are purchasing and Edwards sets fees high enough to fund high-quality services and good staff salaries. The director notes that most providers worry about both affordability for families and running their programs, thus making their jobs very difficult “I don’t think it should be our problem to figure out how to pay for it,” Edwards says. “It is hard enough just to figure out how to do it really well.... You don’t ask [corporations] to both sell top-quality goods and then figure out how to help people pay for them. That’s someone else’s responsibility.... For our profession to have taken on all of it; I really question whether we shouldn’t all as professionals question that underlying premise.”

Edwards describes two camps of people who open for-profit programs. “There are people who are wanting to make money and that’s their primary goal.... And then I think there are people in the other camp who are like me, for whom it’s much more of a lifestyle decision.... They do it because they like to have a lot of control over their life.” She points out, “I think the one camp with the primary goal of making money isn’t very well-suited to making really good places for young children and their teachers.” She added that the other type of for-profit providers can achieve very high-quality services and “It can be immensely rewarding and you can make a good living and, at the end of that time, you can sell your practice to somebody else and that can be the basis for your retirement.” Former parent Lucy Martindale cautions, “You have to be careful when describing [Lakewood] as a for-profit. It’s not run as a business; it’s run for children.... I truly do think it is a model for how good day care can be.”

Lakewood occasionally receives some outside funding. As mentioned above, in the year prior to our visit, it received a \$10,000 grant from North Carolina’s Smart Start program to conduct a joint art project with kindergartners. This funding went into a separate outside organization that Lakewood developed called Art Share.

In-kind Support

Lakewood receives some in-kind donations, mostly from parents in the program (see Table 4.3). These include equipment, supplies, and maintenance of facilities. The center also makes use of teacher training services available to providers in Durham and occasionally receives volunteer work from local early childhood education students.

Table 4.3.
In-Kind Donations to Lakewood Avenue Children’s School: 1997-1998

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Repairs and maintenance of facilities by parents

Food, books, toys, and equipment donated by families

Teacher training provided by Durham Day Care Council and Lucy Daniels Foundation

Practicum student volunteers and parent volunteer time

This list highlights the critical role that families play at Lakewood. Their contributions and their understanding of the value of high-quality child care have allowed the program to maintain strict quality standards and offer professional wages to its staff.

Chapter 5

Kennewick Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

Kennewick, Washington

Every Wednesday in the Kennewick Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), teachers meet with the program's family educators to discuss the needs of both the children in their classrooms and their families. The family educators conduct weekly home visits, discussing family concerns, modeling parenting skills, and doing activities that reinforce the teacher's classroom work. The two complementary components of the ECEAP program—high-quality classroom experiences and home visits to families—reflect the program's comprehensive, family-focused approach.

ECEAP is Washington state's prekindergarten program for families with low incomes. In 1987 it gave one of the first three contracts ever granted to a school district to the Kennewick School District. At that time the publicly funded program was largely being implemented by Head Start programs. Started initially in one school, today Kennewick ECEAP has classrooms in four elementary schools, each of which is a targeted Title I school that serves a substantial portion of low-income families. Kennewick is now one of 34 ECEAP sites in the state, all of which are funded through the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED). By 1998–99, these sites served 8,141 four-year-old children and their families statewide, with 134 being served by Kennewick.

The statewide program was initially created in 1985 by Governor Booth Gardner, with input from an advisory group of corporate executives, to serve the needs of a growing number of low-income families. Kennewick Program Manager Barbara Brauer says it was designed to help children and families not being served by any preschool program. She describes ECEAP's approach: "From day one, it was built on [the idea] that a parent is the child's most important and most influential teacher."

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

Many of the children in Rosanna Manthey and Bonnie Drollinger's prekindergarten classroom are recent immigrants from Bosnia and Russia. The elementary school in which this class is housed has staff members who speak both languages and help facilitate the teachers' communications with families.

On the day of our visit, the class is examining butterflies. The group talks about the development of butterflies, and the teacher asks numerous open-ended questions. They discuss how to observe butterflies without touching them and where you might see butterflies in the wild. At the end of the class the children release the butterflies outdoors.

The atmosphere in the classroom is positive and relaxed. Children's voices dominate the discussions, and teachers often participate in child-initiated conversations. During our visit, Manthey enters in the imaginative play of two girls in a large playhouse.

Krista: Sonja helped me go shopping. We filled a whole bag full.

Manthey: I'd like to know what's in your basket.

Krista: "Cookies, corn, bacon, chicken."
Sonja: You eat bacon in the morning times with waffles.
Manthey: Sometimes I like to eat it in a sandwich at lunch.
Krista: You like bacon with eggs?
Manthey: "Oh yes!"
Sonja: I do.

In addition to their ECEAP teachers, children in this classroom are also served by specialists from the elementary school. The class enjoys weekly sessions with the school music teacher, book-time with the librarian, and gym with the physical education teacher. This interaction helps familiarize children with the elementary school staff and prepares them for the routines common in kindergarten.

Teachers Christy Cox, Khammoune Luangphaxay, and Eileen Jennings run a bilingual ECEAP classroom rich with many materials labeled in both English and Spanish. On the day of our visit, as children sit down to read a story together, the teachers encourage them to describe their playground activities. One child tells of painting a wheelbarrow with a big brush. Another child reports, "Hey, me and Ricardo were squishing our feet in the mud. It was fun!" During this group time, the teachers read stories in both English and Spanish. The group then sings a song, which one teacher interprets in sign language. When a mother arrives to pick up her child, the teachers invite her to stay and participate in the reading and singing.

Home visits

Kennewick ECEAP serves over 70 percent of the children's families through weekly home visits. Each of the visitors, called family educators, works with 12 families and assists in a classroom. The home visits promote parenting skills and keep parents involved in their child's educational experience.

Family educators describe ongoing classroom topics to parents and model adult-child activities. They also discuss school events, community resources, and any concerns. They help families arrange medical or dental checkups, assist with enrolling in and finding scholarships for summer programs, and remind parents of deadlines for services. Home visits are frequently conducted in the family's native language.

Family educators also teach in the classroom, which allows them to stay informed about individual development and build a strong rapport with each child. In meetings with the teachers, family educators discuss issues for the children and ways to support the parents. School psychologists may also contribute to planning for some of the children.

We accompanied family educator Melly Varela on a home visit to a Spanish-speaking family with two children, a son Eduardo in ECEAP and a new baby girl. The mother seemed pleased to see Varela, and the visit was filled with pleasant conversation. Varela inquired about the baby, who had been ill, and asked the mother about her own health. Then she performed a sorting exercise with Eduardo and the mother talked to him while he worked. The family educator explained to the mother what the child was learning and modeled ways to encourage the independent work. After they completed the activity, Varela informed the mother about the process for enrolling Eduardo in kindergarten and provided her with the required forms. Before she left, she also reminded the mom about the end-of-the-year picnic for the program and gave Eduardo crayons and a book.

Program characteristics

Kennewick ECEAP's classes run part-day, four days a week. The program is designed to help the whole child, with four areas of focus: education, health and nutrition, parent involvement, and family support. Staff turnover is low, averaging 5 percent annually in 1996 and 1997. Staff attribute this low turnover rate to the good benefits and the supportive work environment. Teacher Rosanna Manthey reports, "There is a strong bond among the adults. We really work well together." Program manager Brauer said, "I think the support that we offer one another is...a benefit that can't be explained on paper anywhere. I think there are some extremely close personal relationships that have developed with the staff."

According to staff members, morale is quite high. Vivian Whitman had not intended to take on a full-time position when she started at ECEAP, but she says enjoyed her work so much that she agreed to become a full-time teacher. Family educator Torres explains, "This is our second family. We all take care of each other and help each other."

Parents report that they appreciate the qualifications and training of the staff. Becky Chacon said, "They really make sure they keep their teachers up to date on what's going on. Whenever there is a different class or something that they need to be informed of, they make sure they send teachers, and parents sometimes too, to go to those classes." Parents also note that teachers are very flexible and cooperative. Jennifer Hills says, "They are really easy to work with. It's a neat program. I can't wait to put my son through."

Paul Rosier, Kennewick School District superintendent, says, "The family educator is a real key to the program. They create that home-school connection for families who, quite honestly, probably had quite negative school experiences or no school experiences at all." Parents report that their children get very excited about the family educators' visits and that everyone in the family benefits from the visits. Hills says, "The kids love it. I have a two-year-old son at home and, when our home educator comes, he's right there and wants to be involved. It's great." She adds, "You learn how to involve the family and not do a project only geared towards one age. If you have older and younger [children], you can involve everybody."

Marie Elliott, a community representative on the program's parent council, says the family educators "have been able to touch so many families and have given the parents the help and encouragement to go on. Many of them have gone on to get their GEDs or have gone back to school."

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

The teachers and family educators at Kennewick ECEAP received between \$10.40 and \$12.63 per hour in 2002-03 (see Table 5.1). Staff members work 35 hours per week and are given compensatory time if they must work beyond normal hours. Starting salaries are determined by education, experience, and longevity within the school district. Staff are given annual raises and can receive pay increases for completing college classes.

**Table 5.1.
Hourly Wages of Kennewick ECEAP Full-Time Staff: 2002-03**

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Administrators	\$22.74	\$23.79
Teachers and family educators	\$10.40	\$12.63

Teacher Vivian Whitman believes the ECEAP staff members are paid well, especially when compared to other early childhood teachers in the local community. Bonnie Drollinger, who has worked for the program for 10 years, points out, “For the time, the effort, the work that we put in, it’s peanuts.” But she adds, “If we were to leave and go to work for another preschool site out there, we’d be making minimum wage and we wouldn’t have insurance benefits.”

Many staff members see the benefits as the best part of their pay package, making their overall compensation better than preschool teachers in other local programs and keeping turnover low. Family educator Torres says, “That’s why most of us are here, because of the good benefits.” The program offers paid vacation and sick leave, health and dental insurance, vision care insurance, and retirement benefits (see Table 5.2). ECEAP teachers are included in the school district benefits system, although the state program covers the cost.

**Table 5.2.
Benefits Offered to Kennewick ECEAP Full-Time Staff: 2002-03**

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days and holidays	14 or more days
Sick leave and personal days	12 days
% health insurance paid	100% of individual benefit, 15% of benefit for children
Dental insurance	Employer-paid, family benefits
Vision plan	Employer-paid, family benefits
Retirement plan	Most employees participate in a plan in which employees contribute 4.65% of income and ECEAP provides a 7.5% match
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Bereavement leave	5 days per occurrence

Administrators have also developed programmatic structures that support the work of the ECEAP staff. For example, no classes are held one day a week; the day is used for staff development, classroom planning, meetings, conferences between family educators and teachers, and home visits. For an additional half day per week, teachers are given troubleshooting time to work on portfolios, complete assessments, contact parents, and finish paper work.

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

The state ECEAP program allocates \$50 per child specifically for staff development activities, although the Kennewick program spends more than this amount annually. Staff members develop plans for their professional development each year, including a continuing education plan. Kennewick ECEAP pays up to 100 percent of the cost of continuing education and half of the cost of all books. Staff are encouraged to complete in-service training and attend lectures and classes in the community. They have attended both in-house seminars and community lectures on topics ranging from fostering language and literacy to welfare reform.

Professional conferences throughout the year include the Washington AEYC annual conference and the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs Conference. ECEAP pays for conference fees, travel expenses, and time spent at conferences. Many of the staff belong to NAEYC and attend meetings of the local AEYC. The program subsidizes staff NAEYC dues by paying \$21 toward each staff person's membership.

According to Barb Brauer, the administrators have developed steps "to recognize that we value them [staff] as professionals. We give them opportunities and encourage them to be self directed." Education coordinator JoAnn Hare reports that staff tell her they have quite a bit of flexibility in their jobs and influence on the program and their classrooms. For example, teachers regularly participate in selecting equipment and purchasing materials. Manthey says administrators frequently ask for teachers' input. "They trust our judgment. We are a part of the decision making." Christy Cox adds, "We have a lot of autonomy."

Involvement in the early childhood community

The Kennewick staff make a concerted effort to maintain the visibility of ECEAP in the local community. Administrators are involved in numerous community organizations that relate to the mission of the program. For example, JoAnn Hare serves on the advisory board for the Columbia Basin College Parent Education/Early Childhood Education Department, helping them determine family and staff needs for training. Administrators also belong to a local Human Services Coalition of 25 service agencies and work with Community Networks, an effort to streamline social services and evaluate the service needs of local communities. Kennewick staff members serve on the Consortium for Kennewick Advantage (a readiness-to-learn program) and are on the steering committee for Even Start. Much of the teaching and parent education staff is involved in both the local- and state-level AEYC affiliates. They also participate in a local children's festival and in Title I Learning Assistance Program parent workshops.

Meeting Family Needs

Accessibility

Kennewick is a racially and ethnically diverse region. In addition to English-speaking families, Kennewick ECEAP serves families who are Spanish, Lao, Russian, Bosnian, and Serbian and provides materials in these languages. Program staff assign children to classrooms with peers of similar ethnic heritage and try to match the ethnicity of family educators with that of the families. Many on staff are bilingual, and there also are translators employed by the school district. In addition, each classroom has at least one Spanish-speaking person.

The families served by ECEAP live within the school-district boundaries. Many of the parents say the classrooms are located close their homes or are a reasonable distance by bus. Children are bussed if they live more than one mile from school.

Affordability

Funded by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED), Kennewick ECEAP's services are free to eligible low-income families. Ninety percent of the participating families fall below the federal poverty line.

Most of the parents work in agriculture-related jobs, and many work two jobs. Teacher Vivian Whitman notes that private preschools in the area are too expensive for the families. According to the eight parents we interviewed, they have not explored child care arrangements other than ECEAP or Head Start, both of which are free. One parent points out that it would take all of her income to pay for private child care.

Parent support

A central part of Kennewick ECEAP's work is to serve families, and parent input plays a critical role in shaping the program's offerings. Education coordinator Hare says, "We look to our parents for advice" and do not make assumptions about what families need. Parent involvement coordinator Patti Benton adds, "To respect and value the parents—that really has been our philosophy."

Kennewick ECEAP collaborates with a number of agencies to provide services for families. The program helps parents access the Even Start Family Literacy program, which provides ESL, ABE, and GED classes. It informs parents of classes offered through the Kennewick Community Schools Program, such as computer literacy skills training. ECEAP pays the tuition for these classes with state discretionary funds designated for parent training. Kennewick ECEAP sponsors on-site classes such as parent empowerment workshops or computer classes given in Spanish. Family educators may provide information about obtaining basic services like housing and electricity.

The program has several community collaborators that help provide services to families. For example, Columbia Industries (a job training organization) and the Department of Social and Health Services provide job training and skill development to families transitioning from welfare to jobs and help recruit families for ECEAP. The program also cooperates with Head Start, Readiness-to-Learn (a family support agency), and the Health Department to provide families with the support services required to achieve self sufficiency.

ECEAP provides health and nutrition services. At the beginning of each year, the program screens all children to assess medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional needs, and to ensure that they have appropriate immunizations. Then family educators work with families to locate any needed health care services.

Another way the program supports families is by easing the transition from preschool to kindergarten. Parents are given information on kindergarten classrooms and on elementary school registration. ECEAP teachers hold conferences with children's kindergarten teachers and share child records and portfolios with them. The program has garnered suggestions for school readiness and transition to elementary school from a committee of parents, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and program administrators.

Family involvement and education

Kennewick ECEAP funds a parent involvement coordinator position that is devoted solely to working with families. Patti Benton, who holds this position, offers a general orientation in the fall to all parents who want to volunteer in the classroom. This provides an opportunity for staff to teach parents about the classroom and appropriate staff-child interactions. Parents initiate classroom activities (for example, cooking or playing an instrument with the children), go on field trips, donate classroom materials, or write a parent newsletter. The teachers work to take advantage of the skills of each volunteer, and parents report that they feel welcome in the classrooms. Each month, Benton calls parents or writes notes to thank them for volunteering.

To facilitate parent involvement, the program partners with Volunteer Center, a local non-profit organization that formally enrolls ECEAP parents as volunteers. This organization gives parents liability insurance, tracks and documents their volunteer hours, and provides them with job references.

Benton conducts an annual written survey of parents to determine family needs and interests. Based on the results, she organizes monthly parent meetings and classes on topics such as fire prevention, parenting with dignity, health and nutrition, and family literacy. ECEAP provides translators for these events, and parents are offered free on-site child care or are reimbursed for other care. Parent Tawnya Krewson credits ECEAP's "Don't Quit" program on obtaining training to go back to work for spurring her on to go to college to get her associate's degree.

A few ECEAP parents participate in advocacy training at the beginning of the school year. They assist with recruitment and may travel to the state legislature to give testimony on behalf of ECEAP. Cheryl Bayle, a program manager in the state DCTED, acknowledges, "Our parents are our best advocates for the program."

Despite the active involvement of families in the program, welfare reform has decreased the number of hours that parents are available to volunteer. Volunteer hours decreased by almost 40 percent from 1996-97 to 1997-98, which administrative staff attributes to new work mandates for families receiving welfare.

Financial and Structural Support

Parent Council and Health Advisory Committee

Kennewick ECEAP's parent council is a forum for exchange of ideas about the program. In addition to parents, three community participants and nonvoting staff members serve on the board. The council frequently reviews curriculum changes and new program developments. It also holds an annual rummage sale or other fund-raising events to earn money for specific projects for the children. The proceeds go into an account managed by the parents.

The community members of the council report that service on the board increases the confidence and self-esteem of the elected parent representatives. Roger Krebs says, "It's neat to see them step up to the plate and take on the challenge.... They are not standing back [nor are they] just customers that just drop their kid off and pay a buck. There is a lot of personal ownership and pride in seeing this thing be a success." Marie Elliott adds, "The parent group is getting stronger and stronger and stronger."

The program also has a health advisory committee made up of parents, representatives from the health department and WIC, a mental health consultant, dental care providers, a school district nurse, and ECEAP administrators. The committee meets twice a year and informs the ECEAP staff of changes in the policies of local agencies (WIC, health department, etc.) and coordinates a health fair for ECEAP families. The committee also takes on special projects, such as working to obtain access to local dentists for the children.

Union

All of the Kennewick ECEAP staff belong to the Public School Employees Union. Both teachers and family educators credit the union with making a difference in their salaries. Drollinger says the union also helps ensure that the teachers receive good benefits. Two teachers point out that administrators also work toward improving staff compensation.

Education coordinator Hare notes that the program sometimes runs into problems because ECEAP teachers, who do not have certification, are designated as paraprofessionals—not teachers—by the union and the school district. She says, "There needs to be a different classification for them, but the only way that that can ever occur is for [teachers] themselves to request it." Manthey agrees, saying, "We should be in a different category.... A lot of the things that the paraprofessionals union covers really doesn't apply to us because we work so much more than a paraprofessional." Drollinger adds, "We do teachers' work but we don't have the certification and we don't have the pay." She would like to see a category created between paraprofessionals and public school teachers to accommodate the ECEAP teachers.

Revenue

The only direct source of revenue for the Kennewick ECEAP program is state funding provided through the DCTED. In 1997–98, the program received \$515,000 in state funding, which included a small amount of money for the longitudinal evaluation of the program and one-time funds for dental work and extra slots. In that year, Kennewick ECEAP incurred estimated costs of \$3,900 per child, excluding the value of in-kind donations.

State funding for the prekindergarten program has increased significantly over its history. In 1985 it began with a \$35,000 planning grant and by 1997–98 was receiving \$55 million and serving more than 8,000 children. In recent years, however, funding at individual sites increased at a rate lower than inflation. Simultaneously, program costs have gone up significantly due to inflation, union agreements, and mandatory cost-of-living raises. Today, a significantly higher percentage of the Kennewick program budget goes to salaries and benefits (93 percent) than when the program was first started (74 percent). State program manager Bayle admits, “ECEAP needs to be better funded—that is just the bottom line.”

Because Kennewick ECEAP has a single direct funding source, staff expend considerable effort advocating for the program and parents lobby for its continued funding. The director estimates that 10 to 15 percent of the administrators’ time is spent networking and advocating for ECEAP. This includes trying to gain the interest of local legislators and school officials, who are frequently invited to visit the program.

The Kennewick ECEAP program indirectly receives federal funding through programs such as the Child Care Food Program and Title VII (for translation services). These resources are given to the program in the form of services from the school district rather than direct revenue (see below).

In-kind support

The largest in-kind donations received by the program come from the Kennewick School District (see Table 5.3). The district’s donations consist of contracted services funded by outside funding sources (such as the Child Care Food Program) and facilities and equipment. No levy or bond dollars are used to fund the program.

The Kennewick School District provides facilities and playground space, maintenance, and transportation (ECEAP pays for part of the cost of transportation). The school district also offers access to benefits and training opportunities. Its Bilingual and Special Services Department translates materials for the ECEAP program, offers staff training, and helps arrange for substitutes. Brauer says, “The district is one of our very strongest parts of our foundation of success.”

Public school staff have been enthusiastic supporters of the program and are eager to have ECEAP classrooms in their schools. “What we have seen is that these schools have genuinely wanted this program,” says Brauer. “They really believe in what it is we are doing.”

School district administrators report that the partnership between ECEAP and the district is an effective one. Superintendent Rosier says, “One of the big side effects of this is the commitment on the parents’ part to Kennewick School District coming out of ECEAP.” Greg Fancher, director of elementary education for the school district, explain, “One of the things that we have found in the long-term ECEAP studies is that ECEAP parents who become involved through the preschool program tend to stay involved through elementary school, which is not typical of that population of parents.” He adds that bilingual parents seem to feel very comfortable in the ECEAP classrooms and find confidants in the staff.

Table 5.3.
In-Kind Donations to Kennewick ECEAP: 1997

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Transportation by school district (for children to and from school and for field trips)
Food from school district—funded through Child Care Food Program
Physical equipment (including playground space) from school district
Custodial services from school district
Parent volunteers
Facilities from school district
Books, toys, and games donated by the Kiwanis and Optimists clubs
Teacher training through school district and Educational Service District
Medical services, including health screenings, immunization clinics, and referrals
Translation services from school district—funded through Federal Title VII bilingual grant
Clothes for rummage sale and clothing for families in need from the First Presbyterian and the First Methodist Churches*
Tricycles from the Lutheran Brotherhood of the Lutheran Church

*Proceeds from the rummage sale go into the parent fund and not the agency’s budget; other donated clothing goes directly to families.

There are drawbacks to being a school-district site. Brauer points out that the program is held accountable to both the school district and the state, and their requirements do not always mesh. For example, the job qualification requirements and employment policies differ between the two. Brauer explains, “I’m directed by the state to do A, B, and C and then told by the school district you can’t do A and B.” Another problem is that ECEAP staff, after training, are frequently hired by the school district at higher wages. Brauer says, “We are thought of as a training pool for these women, especially our bilingual teachers because the demand for them is incredible.”

In addition to the support of the school district, Kennewick ECEAP receives donations from a variety of community organizations. For example, the Tri-Cities Reading Foundation often gives books to the program. The Kennewick Kiwanis Club has an ongoing commitment and provides books and reading materials for the classrooms and for children to take home. The Tri-Cities Optimist Club hosts activities for the ECEAP children, purchases books to take home at the end of the year, and adopts needy families, providing food baskets, clothing, and

household items for the holidays. The Optimists Club and St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic thrift store, help fill specific family needs identified by the family educators. These in-kind contributions help ensure that Kennewick ECEAP effectively meets the basic and the educational needs of its children and families.

Chapter 6

Sycamore Tree Preschool

Bremerton, Washington

Teachers at Sycamore Tree Preschool are effusive about how much they enjoy their work and appreciate their co-workers. Echoing her colleagues' sentiments, teacher Susan Myhre declares, "I feel really proud to work here.... Staff morale is through the roof." Working in a small house, the five members of the teaching staff have become quite close and very supportive of one another. The director also enjoys a close relationship with the teachers and constantly advocates with the school's board on their behalf.

Sycamore Tree Preschool was founded in 1981 in affiliation with Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Bremerton, Washington. The nonprofit center offers part-time classes for 85 children aged 18 months to 5 years in a building owned by the church. Its mission, according to the staff, includes a "total child" approach to early childhood education, addressing children's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

Established by a group of church members, several with backgrounds in early childhood education, the program was started with high standards for quality and staff compensation. One founder, Jan Becker, who then served as the parish education coordinator and was previously with the Home and Family Life Department of Olympic College, recalls, "In my work I had seen preschool programs operated by churches who apparently saw this as a way to help pay for their new buildings. I also saw that...the environment just did not look like a desirable preschool setting. Usually there would be two very nice ladies as the 'teachers,' but their role was more that of babysitters." Becker worked with fellow church member Susan Quick to gain the support of the church's pastor and the congregation for a child care program. After three years of soliciting support and obtaining permits, they opened Sycamore Tree.

From the beginning, Quick and Becker prioritized adequate salaries for the teachers at Sycamore. Becker says, "Through teaching at Olympic College, I was aware that we would train women in our program who would get their associate's degree in early childhood education, but they were unlikely to be able to make a significant contribution to their family income." She adds that equitable wages help keep the program's turnover rate low. "Teachers will stay if they can afford to." Becker continues to advocate for good wages. She says people in the church need to be reminded that "the church is about justice and equality, and women should not be paid less for their work because they are doing something involving children rather than something involving nuclear power."

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

In Sycamore Tree's cozy house, the same rooms are used for all classes, although they are modified for each age group. On the day of the High/Scope visit, a group of three-year-olds is using magnifying glasses to examine a hermit crab in the science area with teachers Andrea Campbell and Barb Crisman. Campbell asks the children questions about the crab and takes it out of its cage so that they could get a closer look. One child asks why the crab is moving its legs in the air, and another child responds, "Because he's trying to walk." The children then ask

to have him put on the ground and start talking about how the crab carries his home on his back. Crisman sees another child looking at two lava rocks. She asks him if he had tried rubbing them together and, when he does so, she asks about the smell emitted.

Both teachers encourage the children to investigate problems and make their own decisions. For example, when one child requests that the class eat outside, Campbell leads everybody outdoors to check the weather. The children discover that the grass is wet with dew and decide it is too wet to eat outside. Campbell is supportive of the children's discovery and asks them, "What will happen if we eat outside?" The children respond that their pants would get wet.

Andrea Campbell also teaches a class for two-year-olds with teacher Carol Makins. In this class, the teachers encourage the toddlers to cooperate and share. When two children fight over the use of a wooden car, Campbell had the following exchange with them:

Campbell [to Jesse, who had just lost his place in the car]: When you got up, Carston thought you were done. Are you done, Jesse?

Jesse: No.

Campbell: Carston, Jesse got up to do something else. He was not done. Maybe both of you can ride together now. Carston, do you want to slide over and ride together in the car?

Carston: [nods in agreement and slides over]

In Susan Myhre's prekindergarten class, children drive most of the conversation. At group time, Myhre starts a story and lets the children finish it. She then asks provocative questions about their story and about each of the characters they created. Myhre encourages communication between the children as well.

Kathy: Jill threw water on my shirt. And we weren't playing at the same sink.

Myhre: How did that make you feel?

Kathy: I didn't like it.

Myhre: Did you tell her how you felt?

Kathy: No.

Myhre: Tell her now. You have time now.

Kathy [turning to Jill]: Don't do that again.

Similarly, when one boy hits another child's baby doll, the teacher encourages the children to talk to each other about it. The offended little child said, "Tommy, I don't want you to make him [the doll] cry. Please do not make noise. He wants to sleep in peace."

Program characteristics

Much of Sycamore Tree's quality can be attributed to its well-trained staff and maintenance of high standards. Four of the five teachers at the center have a bachelor's degree in education or early childhood education, and one has an associate's degree. Two also have early childhood education certificates. The program has a very consistent staff, with the average tenure being more than eight years. Teacher Carol Makins explains, "Nobody wants to leave. It's a great place to work."

Parents recognize that the teachers are effectively trained in early childhood teaching practices. Kim Beckett, mother of a three-year-old, says, “This isn’t just a center where some people decided that they will take care of kids for a living. They are very educated and they know a lot about the psychology of children.” Renee Setterlund, another mother of a three-year-old, says the teachers get to know each child’s personality and make each child feel special. “I really like the way that the teachers talk to the children. They show the children just as much respect as they do the adults. My philosophy on parenting is teaching your children to make successful decisions on their own and I feel that they follow that same guideline.”

Members of the program’s board of directors echo the parents’ confidence. Board treasurer Jay Dunlap says, “We’ve always thought this was a great program. The kids that we’ve seen come out of it have done very well in school.” Board president Patty Dunlap, whose teenage children attended Sycamore Tree as preschoolers, adds, “We feel like we are seeing the benefits of their having gone here. They are both doing very well in school, and we attribute a lot of that to the good start they got here.”

At the program level, Sycamore Tree is accredited by NAEYC and plans to complete a self-study for the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA). Sycamore has also completed the Congregation and Child Care Self Study, a project of the Ecumenical Child Care Network and the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs that focuses on a program’s organizational design and mission.

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

Teachers at Sycamore Tree are paid salaries that are above average for child care in Bremerton. Lead teachers make \$14.25 per hour and aides \$10.25 (see Table 6.1). Staff also receive one week’s salary as a Christmas bonus and receive raises at least every other year. The program director, the only full-time employee, is paid slightly less than the teachers but receives retirement benefits of \$100 per month and medical benefits of \$120 per month.

Table 6.1.
Hourly Wages of Sycamore Tree Preschool Staff: 2002-03

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Program director/financial secretary	\$12.00	\$12.00
Teachers	\$14.25	\$14.25
Teaching aides	\$10.25	\$10.25

Teaching staff assume different positions in each class. When teachers lead a class, they are paid a teacher salary, and when they assist another teacher, they get an aide’s salary. Lead

teachers are paid for a full hour of preparation time and one half hour of clean-up time per class per day; aides are paid for one half hour of preparation time and one half hour of clean-up time. Because the classes at Sycamore Tree are only a few hours in length, it is possible for teachers to have more than one class in a day and receive preparation and clean-up time accordingly.

The teachers know their wages are higher than those offered in other local centers. Makins points out, “A lot of programs pay the teachers what they pay the aides here.” Susan Myhre says her salary reflects “a good percent” of the value of her work. “When you are paid a good wage for the work that you do and for the education that you have, that says something to everyone in our whole field—that we are willing to pay our teachers a good price because we believe in the value of the work that they do.”

Director Jocelyn Bright⁶ frequently describes the quality of the teaching staff’s work to the board of directors to encourage them to further increase salaries. Bright has a short-term goal of increasing wages to \$15 per hour, yet she’d like to see teachers make more than \$20 an hour because “their heart and soul are in it.” In the past she presented data on salaries in comparable fields to the board. She says this helped sway board members to raise salaries.

Brown says of Bright, “She’s a leader in the field and tries to make people aware that there needs to be adequate salaries.” And Myhre says, “Jocey’s really good about helping to keep our wages where they are.” Bright believes it is critical for directors to acknowledge the importance of their staff’s work and to “work hard to pay them better.” She says, “The value or importance of an occupation in our society is generally reflected in salaries. If we are willing to pay or accept a minimum wage for a preschool teacher, we are devaluing the teacher’s worth.”

Although its employees work only part-time, Sycamore Tree offers paid vacation days and holidays, sick leave, paid planning time, and partial payment for early childhood education conference costs (See Table 6.2). The center also pays staff for five professional days each year. As mentioned above, the program offers retirement and health insurance benefits to full-time employee. The preschool also provides 25 cents per hour in retirement contributions to any part-time teacher who has worked in the program for five years.

Table 6.2.
Benefits Offered to Sycamore Tree Preschool Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Staff
Vacation days and holidays	18
Sick leave or personal days	Number of days employee typically works in one week
Retirement	After 5 years, part-time staff receive \$.25 per hour in retirement contributions; full-time staff member receives \$100 per month
Health insurance	Full-time staff member receives \$120 per month, which is the employee's share of a state health

⁶ Jocelyn Bright has retired since our visit. Teacher Andrea Campbell now serves as program director and Barb Crisman serves as financial secretary.

	insurance plan
Discount for children to attend program	Registration fee (\$30) waived, but employees pay tuition
End-of-year bonus	One week's salary as Christmas bonus

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

The staff members at Sycamore Tree share a strong sense of professionalism and commitment to their work. Myhre says, “I think that [the greatest strength of the center] is our staff because we are all committed to early childhood. For me—and I think I can speak for the others—this is my life career. This is my work for life. And I think the others feel that same way too. It is nice to be able to work with staff that are all... headed in the same direction.” She adds, “We all continue to learn and grow...every day and every year with new workshops and conferences” and “Not only are we supported professionally with each other, but personally too.... We help each other out whenever it is needed.”

The director devotes significant resources to professional development activities and conferences. Sycamore Tree directly finances workshops and seminars on site and provides teachers with information on community opportunities, including evening classes that offer early childhood education certificates. All staff members attend Red Cross first aid/CPR certification classes and special sessions on topics such as speech development and language acquisition. The staff also take advantage of various free activities offered through Olympic College and community agencies.

The program closes for the annual conferences of the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) and ELEA. Travel and registration fees are covered for these events, as well as most of the staff's time. The program also pays the conference fees for the Kitsap (County) AEYC conference and membership fees for NAEYC and ELEA. Bright explains, “I want to try to treat [staff] like real professionals because we *are* professionals and this is what professional employers do for their employees. It also tells them continuing education is important.” The program also pays for the director's membership in Kitsap County Child Care Directors Association.

Bright believes in expressing appreciation of her staff and creating a work culture that supports pride in teaching. She says, “It is so important to really value what they are doing, and I *really* do. They are important, and what we do is important and matters.” She nominated all of her teaching staff for—and they received—an Early Childhood Appreciation Award at the Kitsap AEYC dinner held in conjunction with the national Stand for Children event in 1997.

Sycamore Tree also offers a flexible work environment. Many staff say the flexibility of part-time positions is one of their favorite things. Staff also appreciate the institutional support when they face a family or medical emergency. Indeed, in such cases, teachers do not incur any reduction in pay. One teacher describes how she retained full job security when she had a child; the director assured her she would be able to return whether she decided to take off six months or

a full year. Myhre points out that the director and other staff cover for teachers on sick leave. She said, “If I have a sick child, I have never been made to feel guilty about it. All of the staff are right behind you saying they will cover for you.”

The director shares much of the decision-making with the teaching staff. For example, teachers decide collectively which classroom materials to buy and give each other feedback about teaching practices. Myhre sums it up, “I really believe that we are one of the best programs here in our area, because of the high quality of the staff, because of the continual learning and growing that we do in early childhood. I just really feel like it is a neat place for children to be, and it is a great place for teachers to work.”

Involvement in the early childhood community

Staff at Sycamore Tree are leaders in their local early childhood education community. They are presenters at the Kitsap AEYC conference, as well as the regional ELEA conference, and staff members have held many offices in Kitsap AEYC. As Crisman says, “We have learned, and now we are ready to share what we have learned with other teachers.”

Several teachers are on the Kitsap AEYC annual conference committee and have chaired numerous planning committees. Bright, who has served as president of Kitsap AEYC and as its affiliate representative to the Washington AEYC, co-chaired the annual conference for four years. She also is a member of the Kitsap County Child Care Directors Association and serves on the Vocational Advisory Committee for Olympic College’s Home and Family Life Department. In addition, she is on the board of the Kitsap Children’s Visual and Performing Arts Association and is in charge of the early childhood section of the its Children’s Festival of the Arts.

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

The program’s fees vary according to the age of the child served and the number of hours in attendance, but are roughly equal to average fees charged in the community. Fees in 1998 ranged from \$3.27 to \$5.33 per hour, depending on the age and the number of days in care. All of the classes are short, with none lasting more than 2.5 hours, so the total expenses each month for families vary from \$25 to \$105. Families with two children pay \$10 per month less, and members of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church have a slightly lower registration fee. Sycamore Tree’s board has traditionally raised tuition only every other year.

When the founders of Sycamore Tree established the fee structure, they conducted a market survey of fees and decide to charge fees that were at or above average. Susan Quick recalls, “We priced ourselves very fairly, but we decided not to price ourselves at the bottom deliberately. We wanted to start high to high-average, partly because we wanted to pay our people well, but partly because people shop by price for quality. We wanted our price to reflect the quality that we knew they would find and we did not want to keep raising tuition every year.” Becker adds that, because of the heavily subsidized fees charged at a local college’s programs, “There was no way we could have competed with price.”

Because Sycamore Tree serves families with a wide range of incomes, “It’s an option for a lot of families,” says director Bright. The program has a small fund for scholarships to needy families. They are distributed by the program director and financial secretary and financed through fund-raisers and general revenue.

Parents report the program is more affordable than other child care options they explored. One parent with three children manages it on a single income. Another says, “This is what I want, and I figured out how I can afford it. When it is your child’s education, you figure out how to pay for it.” Denise Foiles, mother of a four-year-old, said, “We are getting quality care here and its well worth every penny, especially comparing it to the other programs available in our area.” One of the board members believes so much in the value of the program that he pays for one of his friend’s children to attend.

Accessibility

Sycamore Tree caters to parents looking for part-time early childhood education experiences for their children. One parent expressed frustration with other centers whose staff had told her that her child had to attend full day or not at all. Parents also appreciate Sycamore’s range of class options. The standard program runs nine months out of the year, but there is also a mixed-age program in the summer. Younger and older siblings (through first grade) can attend the summer program.

Family support

The program offers family services on site and encourages families to take advantage of community resources. For example, it held a three-week parenting class (including child care) on site and refers families to other parenting classes in the community. Staff arrange for hearing, speech and language screenings for the children through a United Way agency and inform parents about Project Family, a public agency offering family counseling. Parent Kathy Garguile said, “They are very willing to try to get parents to do extra things to be a better parent—through classes and programs...so people don’t say, well, I can’t do it because I don’t have a babysitter. They are always providing support for parents.”

A parents’ night out is offered once a year, with child care at the center for enrolled children and older siblings. The event serves the interests of both staff and parents by allowing staff to earn a little extra money and offering parents four hours of quality child care while they do something special.

Staff frequently hold parent conferences and make themselves available for informal discussions. For the oldest class of children, the program offers a student-led conference in which parents and children complete activities together and discuss their work at the end. The prekindergarten teachers develop a portfolio for each child.

Parent involvement and education

The program encourages family involvement, even offering a class for the youngest children and parents. Several parents say they like the smooth transition from this parent-child class to classes for older children because it eases the transition from home to school for young children. Parents also report that they appreciate the opportunity to be closely involved in any of

the classes. Kari Wiler explains, “You can stay for class if you want.... A lot of places don’t even want you there, or you have to make an appointment to let them know that you are coming.” Wiler added that another center would allow her only to observe her child through a window.

Having parents in the classroom also provides teachers with opportunities to model developmentally appropriate behavior and demonstrate how early activities provide the foundation for later skills. Bright says, “We like having the parents visit the classroom anytime. They see what is happening, hear us talking with the children, and observe the positive interaction the teachers have with the children.”

Parents also are involved in the program in various support roles. They help with field trips, work on fund raisers, do odd jobs, and supply materials for special projects. The center holds special events for families, such as a fathers’ pumpkin-carving party or class picnics.

Family education at Sycamore Tree starts before children have had their first day of class. At fall orientation the staff begins to explain the developmental concepts behind their teaching approach, using terminology such as *eye-hand coordination skills*, *small-muscle skills*, and *manipulation* to describe classroom activities. Bright says, “If you use that kind of terminology, then parents say, ‘I see—he is not *just* playing.’” She adds that if you give parents the right kind of information, “they recognize that playing is really okay and that this is the way [children] grow and develop.”

The program distributes a newsletter for all families and maintains an adult library. In addition, staff send home materials from their professional conferences and articles on parenting and child development. Teachers distribute the *Puget Sound Parent* and *Parent* magazine and post community phone numbers for services related to families and children.

Family involvement in the program has resulted in some close parent-teacher relationships. Ginger Hicks says, “Of the three adults that I come into contact with here, I feel that they have become role models for me, especially Jocey Bright.... Jocey is very involved in the community. I really admire that.... For me, it has become something more than just my child’s education, it has become something that I would like to aspire to.” Denise Foiles says the teachers “set a good example for us.” Parents report that they feel free to ask advice of the teaching staff, sometimes even consulting them about their older children.

Financial and Structural Support

Board of directors

Sycamore Tree has a board of directors made up parents, former parents, and church members. By mandate, at least half of the board members and the board treasurer are members of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church. The board helps with fund-raising by staging two major events each year, traditionally a fall carnival and a silent auction, and by heading smaller efforts such as t-shirt and sweatshirt sales. Fund-raising events allow the board to resist increasing fees and to fund scholarships. Individual board members frequently make in-kind contributions by performing small maintenance tasks at the preschool.

The board is responsible for determining salaries, bonuses, and family fees. When making salary determinations, the board members assess how much money they can raise in a year and whether they should increase the fees. Board member Jay Dunlap says, “We don’t want

to make it too expensive, but then we want to be able to pay the teachers well because their time is valuable.” Board member Patty Dunlap agrees: “You want everybody to have the best of both worlds. You want to pay the teachers well, you want the kids to have a great program, and you want the parents to be able to afford to send their children to preschool.”

In addition to working with the board, Bright also reports monthly to the Church Council, which consists of members of the church and the church pastor. She helps maintain support in the congregation by writing in the church’s monthly newsletter and annual report.

Revenue

The financing for Sycamore Tree is typical of programs across the United States that receive a majority of their funding from family fees. In this circumstance, the tradeoff between compensation and affordability is clear. When the program needs to raise the salaries, it often must increase the fees. To weaken this link, the director of Sycamore Tree has set a goal of trying to keep family fees to no more than 80 percent of the total revenue.

**Table 6.3.
Sources of Revenue for Sycamore Tree Preschool: 1996-97**

Sources of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Tuition
Registration
Fund-raising income
Donations
Parents Night Out fees (income goes to staff)
Fees for services (e.g., child care)

Funding beyond family fees comes largely from fund-raisers. (See Table 6.3 for principle sources of revenue.) At one time, these were open to the public, but the church pastors believe the church should support its own ministries and should not solicit funds from the public, thus limiting the audience to families of current and former students and the church population.

Sycamore Tree occasionally receives donations through estates or designated church offerings. The church itself donates a small amount to Sycamore Tree every month. The program also has received funds from the Aid Association for Lutherans, which matches fund-raising income for specific projects up to \$800, and the Lutheran Brotherhood, which matches up to \$100 in member contributions.

In-kind support

The preschool receives substantial resources from in-kind donations (see Table 6.4). The program is given use of its building, playground space, grounds-keeping services, utilities, and phone service from Our Saviour's. In exchange, the church uses the preschool for its nursery on Sunday mornings. Parents and church members provide volunteer labor for many repair and building projects.

Table 6.4.
In-Kind Donations to Sycamore Tree Preschool: 1996-97

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Facilities and playground space from the church
Electricity, water, phone, and insurance from the church
Maintenance from the church
Parent volunteer work
Playground equipment constructed by volunteers
Transportation for field trips from parents
Snacks provided by parents
Speakers provided by community organizations

In-kind donations contribute to the value of Sycamore Tree's early childhood education by allowing the program to devote 88 percent of its cash revenue to personnel expenditures. Without in-kind resources, family fees would have to increase by 23 percent to cover current costs.

Despite the fact that its fund-raising opportunities are limited to the church and school community, Sycamore Tree has made substantial achievement in compensating staff and creating a professional work environment. The director maintains a consistent staff by providing above-average salaries; offering a flexible, supportive work environment; and advocating for better compensation and professional opportunities for her staff. These are approaches that programs of any size can emulate.

Chapter 7

UCLA Child Care Services

Los Angeles, California

At the Bellagio Center at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Child Care Services, a path of granite stepping stones leads to the front door. Etched on the face of the stones are the names of individuals and companies whose donations built the backbone of the program's \$1 million endowment. Created through years of hard work and fund-raising, the endowment helps fund scholarships for children from low-income.

Established in 1971 by a student association, UCLA Child Care Services started as a small program with uncertain funding. In its early years the program faced an average staff turnover rate of 37 percent and an unstable directorship. Indeed, between 1973 and 1978, five different people held the position of administrative director. In 1977 and 1978, after funding from student organizations declined, the university threatened to close down the program.

In 1978, following negotiations with the university administration, center staff, the employees' union, students, and parents, it was agreed that the program would become largely self-supporting. UCLA Child Care Services had to dramatically cut its budget and develop fund-raising plans to guarantee its continuance. The program pursued fund-raising efforts ranging from bake sales and walkathons to long-range development plans.

One of the most effective approaches during this crucial time was the creation of a support committee by then executive director June Sale. This group, called Friends of UCLA Child Care Services, organized major fund-raising activities, including soliciting of foundation and governmental agencies, appealing to local merchants, and conducting special benefit events and mailings. The committee was composed largely of members of the surrounding community who might not have otherwise been involved with the child care program. At the same time, Sale also established an advisory committee for the program, made up of liaisons to other departments within UCLA, child development experts, and representatives from student organizations and community groups. Gay Macdonald, the current executive director, said Sale's work was critical because she "had the foresight to set up a system that would have longevity."

As the program became more self-sustaining and the demand for child care increased, the university expanded its support, eventually using child care as a recruitment tool for faculty and graduate students. The university provided facilities for two additional centers to allow the program to expand. Today UCLA Child Care Services provides care for 250 children from infancy to six years of age, all from student, faculty, and staff families.

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

Outside of Juanita Salter's spacious preschool classroom is a large outdoor playground and a covered classroom area that allows light but no rain. The outdoor classroom contains many of the same interest areas and materials as the indoor one and offers endless opportunities for children to generate their own activities. Salter makes the most of this environment, capitalizing on children's initiative and supporting their play. On the day of our visit, some

children discover earthworms in the ground, and the teachers facilitate their exploration by fetching a bucket and setting up a table where the preschoolers can examine the worms up close. Salter also rounds up a table and materials for another child who wants to do an art project.

Later, inside Salter's classroom, discussion is focused on teeth because one of the children has just lost a tooth. Salter asks Nathaniel to tell the class about his experience and then she reads a book about going to the dentist. When Keesha notes, "Teeth go both up and down," Salter replies, "That's a wonderful observation. You're really thinking." After the reading, a boy with special needs asks Salter if he can visit a friend in an adjoining classroom. Salter responds with delight and makes sure the two teacher aides heard his request; later, she follows up to make sure they carried through on his plan. Salter's enthusiasm and concern for the children in her classroom is clear. She shows respect and patience for each child.

Linda St. John cares for infants at UCLA's newest center, built in the middle of a student housing complex. Outside the classroom is a small playground designed specifically for the infants. Pinwheels, chimes, and ribbons float in the air, a large sandbox is shaded, and there is small maze of nontoxic bushes. The harder surfaces made from recycled tires make for a cushy, yet sturdy surface. Inside the classroom, everything is soft and clean. Lights are dim and music plays softly. The windows are low enough for the children to see out to the play yard, and bookshelves and mirrors are set low on the floor. Pictures of the children in the class decorate the shelves. Many toys and soft books are within easy reach.

The teachers are attentive to the needs of the babies and offer them a comforting and nurturing environment. During our visit, Taku taps on the window with his block. St. John asks, "Are you saying you want to go outside?" and then takes Taku to the play yard to join another teacher. A few moments later, St. John comforts a distressed Jailing, and, after checking his written feeding record, offers him a bottle as she cradles him in a rocker. St. John has enough time to give this kind of attention to one infant because there is a one-to-three staff-child ratio in her classroom.

Parents in UCLA's program appreciate the skill of the teaching staff. Glenn Burks, for example, says he's never met anyone more dedicated than St. Johns. "She would dive in front of a speeding car—anything—for these children. It's really tremendous." Tamra Loeb, who used to work in a therapeutic preschool setting, says she never "worked with people who are of the quality of those that are working with my child. They are very knowledgeable." Parents say the teachers offer helpful advice, especially to new mothers and fathers. Victoria Irigoyen says, "I think the teachers are really good at sharing things with you that you can take home. It's not just child care. It's like we are all parenting." Another parent adds, "They [teachers] were so in tune with exactly what to do with the children. I learned a lot about parenting from the teachers."

Program characteristics

UCLA teachers' skills stem from their extensive experience and education. Over 60 percent of the Child Care Services' teaching staff have bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or related fields. All hold the California Child Care Center Permit, which requires the equivalent of an associate's degree in early childhood education.

In addition to being well-trained, the staff is now quite stable. Between 1996 and 1997, the program maintained a low turnover rate of 13 percent, which staff members attribute to the compensation package and professional opportunities offered by the program. In 1997–98, there were some staff losses due to a reduction in kindergarten class size by the California Department

of Education and an increased demand for kindergarten teachers. Director Macdonald says it is difficult to compete with public schools, which offer senior teaching positions and summer leave.

The centers in UCLA’s program are accredited by NAEYC. Their pursuit of accreditation reflects a larger commitment of both the program and the university to providing high-quality child care services. Sam Morabito, UCLA associate vice chancellor of business and finance, stresses, “First and foremost, the emphasis has to be on quality. As a university administrator, I have no interest in providing child care of lower level quality.... If your emphasis is not on quality, you may as well not start your own child care.”

The university continues to support Child Care Services because the program appeals to potential faculty and graduate students. Indeed, one of the centers was started during a period of heavy faculty recruitment. “It’s a very important recruiting tool for us,” says Morabito, “especially when recruiting younger faculty. One of the most important things that faculty first talk to us about—after salary, benefits, and laboratories—is their children.”

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

According to a survey of local child care providers, UCLA Child Care Services teachers receive wages and benefits that are above average for their community. Teacher pay ranges from \$10.80 to \$20.52 per hour at UCLA, and there is a written pay scale on which staff advance (see Table 7.1).

Teachers receive the same benefits as all employees of the University of California, including paid vacation and sick leave, health and dental insurance for them and their families, and life insurance (see Table 7.2). Teachers participate in the university’s pension plan and receive short- and long-term disability insurance. UCLA also offers partially paid maternity and family leave and facilitates the pre-tax payment of dependent and health care expenses. Even part-time staff members and their families receive benefits, including major medical health insurance.

Table 7.1.
Hourly Wages of UCLA Child Care Services Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Center directors	\$18.47	\$33.22
Supervisory teacher	\$13.51	\$24.36
Teachers	\$10.80	\$20.52
Teaching assistants	\$9.66	\$11.66

Table 7.2.
Benefits Offered to UCLA Child Care Services Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days and holidays	15-24 days
Sick leave or personal days	12
% health insurance paid	95% of family benefit
Dental insurance	Employer-paid, family benefits
Vision plan	Employer-paid, family benefits
Retirement plan	University of California Retirement System, a pension plan funded by the university. The amount contributed depends on the years of service and position. Employees can contribute to a tax-deferred 403(b) retirement plan as well.
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Short- and long-term disability	Employer-paid
Accidental death and dismemberment insurance	Employee-paid
Legal insurance	Employee-paid
Paid family or maternity leave	Partially paid for a limited time period
Dependent care costs	Pre-tax payment of dependent and health care costs

The teachers acknowledge that they are paid well for the field, but point out that child care and education is generally undervalued and undercompensated. Linda St. John, who used to be a family child care provider, explains, “Compared to the rest of the community, we do well, but compared to comparable jobs and the value of the work, we are underpaid.” However, she notes that staff members are frequently promoted from within, which she says is an “important part of keeping and retaining staff.” Laura Hernandez, who teaches in a mixed-age classroom, says, “I’m very aware that I’m getting paid very well, in comparison to what most teachers [in the field] are able to make.... I’m really pleased with what UCLA has been able to do. But I think teachers in general should be able to get paid an awful lot more money.”

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

To ensure high quality, UCLA Child Care Services directors devote a lot of effort to promoting the development of teachers and to respecting their expertise. Teachers are recognized as professionals, given control of their classrooms, and offered opportunities for professional development. Macdonald says, “We think if we ask teachers to value individual differences among children and families, we have to value individual styles, individual talents, individual thoughts and levels of development, and a number of other things in teachers.”

From recruitment policies to staff development opportunities, the program has a focus on growth of its staff. It promotes from within, offers mentors for less experienced staff, and provides a career ladder for teachers and directors. Hernandez, who has taught at the program for seven years, says, “Probably the best thing about UCLA is they encourage so much growth.”

Teachers are treated as professionals. They give and receive feedback on their work and the functioning of the center and have both informal and formal evaluations. Teaching staff are included in planning, with directors often sharing the budgets and encouraging them to select resources for their classrooms.

Staff have the opportunity to attend national and local professional conferences, which, in the past, have included the annual NAEYC conference and a local AEYC conference. (The center pays for all but \$10 of each teacher’s NAEYC membership fee.) Four times a year UCLA holds staff in-service meetings, which often feature guest lecturers. One of the program’s greatest benefits is free continuing-education classes through UCLA’s Extension Program. Staff schedules are adjusted to accommodate attendance in courses and teachers can use classroom computers to complete schoolwork. Center director Susan Wood says, “I think there’s a sense of professionalism. I think in a profession where there’s not a lot of rewards, that being part of a big organization like UCLA has meaning.”

Involvement in early childhood community

Staff see themselves as leaders in the early childhood field. Program administrators from around Southern California have come to visit the state-of-the-art facility and to consult with the staff about center construction. Staff have helped other campuses within the University of California system develop child care programs. Bernie Mueller, a member of the board of directors, sees UCLA Child Care Services “in the vanguard.”

Program staff participate in local and state commissions on child care, including an advisory committee to the mayor of Los Angeles, and are involved (as described below) in improving the quality of child care offered in the community. Terry Ogawa, a board member who works for the Los Angeles Commission for Children, Youth, and Their Families, says UCLA is the only university child care in the L.A. area that regularly participates in community and city organizations.

Science curriculum project

UCLA Child Care Services is open to new initiatives. One example is the Pathways to Preschool Science, conducted with the university’s psychology department and funded by

NASA, which examined the development of scientific ways of thinking, talking, and working in preschool. Results of the research will be published for other programs to use. As an outgrowth of this project, UCLA Child Care Services staff and the psychology department are developing a science curriculum for preschoolers; they are field testing it in their own classrooms and plan to publish it.

Gay Macdonald says one reason the program pursued the development of the science curriculum was “so the staff can feel like they are on a cutting edge of some part of their profession.” “Which they are,” adds Susan Wood. “We deliberately want that feeling,” Macdonald says. “We are going after it. It’s not an accident.”

Meeting Family Needs

UCLA Child Care Services tries to meet the needs of its families by providing high-quality care that is both convenient and affordable. The three facilities are located on campus or near campus housing, and there is a scholarship program for low-income student families. In addition, the program works to get parents involved and educate them about child development.

Accessibility

Convenience for families is an important factor at the facilities. Two UCLA Child Care Services centers serve faculty and staff on campus, and the newest center is located within a student housing complex. Built in 1996, this last facility houses a family cooperative nursery school and a Head Start program as well. The variety of program set-ups and locations meets the needs of students, faculty, and staff.

To meet student parents’ ongoing needs for full-time, affordable child care, the newest child care center recently opened a developmental kindergarten. Executive director Macdonald explains, “One of the things that was happening was that especially student parents couldn’t afford the child care during the kindergarten year when the school day is very short.” The new kindergarten allows families to have access to continuous full-day care, funded largely through scholarships.

Affordability

Program fees in 1996-97 ranged from \$655 per month for preschool students to \$780 and \$810 for infants, or approximately \$3.27 to \$4.05 per hour. These rates are competitive within the surrounding community. For student families with lower incomes, UCLA provides services at low rates on a sliding scale (under a contract with the Child Development Division of the California Department of Education) or free of charge. UCLA offers over \$660,300 in subsidized child care tuition and scholarships each year. The program supplements state funding with university student registration fee funds and returns from the program’s endowment. Department of Education funds alone cannot support the high-quality care and good salaries offered by UCLA. Macdonald points out, “I know programs that exist purely on their contract funds, and you can only do that if you are prepared to exploit the staff.”

Family support

The children at UCLA Child Care Services come from all over the world, representing over 20 countries and a wide variety of ethnicities. The teaching staff is equally diverse, in all speaking 13 foreign languages. The program matches work-study students who speak second languages with children whose families speak those same languages. The teachers work hard to include every child's culture and to make all children feel comfortable in the program. For example, Bellagio Center parents report one teacher tries to learn a few words of every foreign language spoken by the children. According to families, teachers encourage them to share cultural celebrations in the classrooms.

Family involvement and education

The program holds quarterly family meetings, during which staff demonstrate to parents how the children are learning. The program also offers biannual parent-teacher conferences. In addition, parents are required to volunteer in the program, doing everything from grocery shopping to conducting fund-raisers. A few times each year the parents are asked to attend a Saturday work party, where they help make repairs to facilities.

One way some parents become deeply involved in the program is to sit on interview committees for teachers. When there is a classroom opening, a team of three staff members and two parents develop interview questions and meet with job candidates. The executive director notes that participating on this committee helps parents learn about the skills of a good teacher. Macdonald says, "It's the greatest parent education tool that I have ever come across. Once a parent has sat on one of those committees and heard all the discussion about what we are looking for... it makes them much more aware of what goes into early childhood, and it gets them buy-in in the classroom. It fine tunes their observation skills."

Outreach

When the program was started, demand for child care far outweighed the capacity of the single center and waiting lists were very long. To address the child care needs of the university community, the program developed an outreach effort that provides free information about child care and school-age care community resources to approximately 700 families each year. Two outreach coordinators service these families, providing them with consumer information and guidance on selecting child care services. The outreach coordinators hold frequent brown bag seminars for parents and produce *Working Parents* newsletter.

In addition to serving families directly, the Outreach Program also works to improve the quality of child care in the West Los Angeles community. It coordinates monthly meetings of a child care center directors network and support groups for family child care providers. Staff offers consultations on quality care to centers and homes. Neither families nor providers are asked to pay for these community services. When describing their pro bono work with community providers, Judy Bencivengo, Outreach Program coordinator, says simply, "We do believe that good things come back to us." Indeed, outreach work has produced benefits for UCLA Child Care Services. Bencivengo explains, "To be well-connected with as many different sources of information as possible seems to have a very real effect on the quality of care we provide."

To help student families, UCLA started a family resource center within its housing facilities. Funded by the student registration fees and UCLA Child Care Services, the center helps families new to the university find community resources. For example, the center staff help establish play groups and cooperative babysitting arrangements. They also offer parenting classes on such topics as speech development, play, and potty training and help families find counseling and social supports as well as special education services.

The centers that make up UCLA Child Care Services offer some of these same services, providing referrals to families and diagnostic assessment of children. Recently, the program collaborated with the Children's Bureau of Southern California, a nonprofit social services agency, to offer a series of parenting classes to new parents.

Financial and Structural Support

Board of directors

The current board of directors developed from the two committees that were created in 1980 to support UCLA Child Care Services. The board includes past and present parents, community members, university officials, and experts on early childhood education. Many of the members serve as strong advocates for the program, both within and outside the university community. Sue Abeles, the assistant vice chancellor of corporate financial services at UCLA, says, "The board played a critical role in persuading the [university] administration to support ongoing child care."

Union

Teaching staff at UCLA Child Care Services are represented by the Association of Federal, State, Municipal, and County Employees Union (AFSCME) because they are California university employees. Staff report mixed sentiments about the union. Directors and teachers acknowledge that the union has helped achieve higher salaries, which helps the program attract well-qualified staff. But directors say that unionization makes it difficult to dismiss unsuccessful staff and sometimes gives staff false hopes in negotiations. Another drawback to being in a large union serving diverse kinds of jobs is that the program cannot offer the benefits that are unique to child care staff. Discounted fees for child care, for example, cannot be given to staff without being extended to all California university employees under the union contract.

Endowment

UCLA Child Care Services has an endowment of over \$1 million, established over the past 20 years. The program works hard to maintain ties to the larger university community and the neighboring community, both of which have both provided support for the endowment. Additional funds for the endowment come from ongoing fund-raisers that include an arts benefit and an annual solicitation of former donors and parents of former children in the program. "If people don't know how much work went into piling up nickels and dimes until we had a million, they might think we are lucky," says executive director Macdonald. "But really, an extraordinary amount of work has gone into that. When you see how little the donations are individually, I

don't think it's luck at all, I think it's extremely hard work. It's like climbing Mt. Everest in order to have a nice ride on the way down."

Revenue

Revenue comes largely from parent fees, state tuition grants, and university discretionary funds. These support child care provision and/or tuition support for families. State and city grant money, along with parent fund-raising money, paid for the renovation of one of the center playgrounds. The program also receives a number of grants from the Student Registration Fee Committee at UCLA, for such projects as partial funding of the Family Resource Center, and tuition support for student families. Table 7.3. lists the program's sources of funding, in order of largest source of revenue to smallest.

**Table 7.3.
Sources of Revenue for UCLA Child Care Services: 1996-97**

Sources of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Parent fees
State Department of Education grant for tuition support
University chancellor's discretionary money and student registration fees for tuition support and Family Resource Center
Parent fees for lunch program
Child and Adult Care Food Program
Private corporation for a contract to provide resource and referral services
Application fees
Grant tuition
Newsletter subscriptions to <i>Working Parents Newsletter</i>
Placement fees and other revenue
Scrip, a fundraising effort in which parents sell certificates to grocery stores

In-kind support

The program's in-kind support is critical to successfully functioning in a high-rent area of Los Angeles. The university provides facilities at no charge and maintenance at reasonable rates.

The child care program is responsible for the operating costs for its centers, although each receive some maintenance help from families. Once every quarter the centers hold a work Saturday when parents and staff perform the extra cleaning and maintenance needed to keep classrooms safe and healthy. Table 7.4 lists sources of in-kind resources.

Table 7.4.
In-Kind Donations to UCLA Child Care Services: 1996-1997

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Facilities from UCLA
Physical equipment from University Housing*
Books, toys, games from University Housing*
Parents and staff work one Saturday per quarter doing cleaning and maintenance
Teacher training from University Extension School
Books, toys, games from State Department of Education

*These contributions from the University Housing Department were provided for a new center located within a university housing project and are not annual donations.

Because UCLA Child Care Services does not have to pay rent, it is able to dedicate much of its revenue to offering good compensation to teachers and providing high-quality care. The grants make care affordable to families, who pay according to their income. The program has built up these resources slowly over time, cultivating additional donations, grant money, and university support every year. Program directors also work steadily to build up the program's endowment. These tireless efforts ensure that UCLA child care will continue to be affordable.

Chapter 8

Bridges Family Child Care

Madison, Wisconsin

Each day the children at Bridges Family Child Care have a myriad of opportunities to interact with people from their community. Bridges children go on a field trip almost every day, perhaps to use the local university gymnasium or to see chicken eggs and chicks at the University of Wisconsin's Poultry Research Lab. Back at the family child care home, a volunteer lays out cots for the children's naps, and another volunteer delivers food donated by a local grocery store. Later in the afternoon a neighbor may come over to play the violin for the children.

The care provided at Bridges reflects the power of community collaboration; the contributions of volunteers and local businesses are key to the program's success. As Maria Hansen, coteacher at Bridges, believes, the family child care provider's philosophy is "that child care should be a community responsibility."

Vic McMurray, the owner of Bridges, has worked in child care for 23 years. She started her family child care home in 1992. Sixteen children of ages two to five are now served in the program, and most attend on a part-time basis. Along with another teacher, McMurray has eight children participating in her program daily.

The program offers an inclusive environment and serves a great diversity of families. The program is housed in an addition to the McMurray's home that was constructed by volunteers.

Commitment to Quality

Bridges Family Child Care meets Madison city certification standards, which are more stringent than state licensing requirements. Child-staff ratios are half those required by the state; the state allows one adult to take care of up to eight children age two to seven, while each adult at Bridges takes care of only four children.⁷ McMurray has a CDA and mid-junior-level status at the University of Wisconsin, and her co-teacher has a bachelor's degree in elementary education.

McMurray admits that the secret to Bridges success is developing structures that support the most important activities and the high standards of quality. For example, she has made a commitment to having good staff-child ratios. To maintain these, she hires a co-teacher who works 40 hours per week and another assistant who works 5 hours per week. The part-time assistant can serve as a substitute if necessary. McMurray also has a large pool of volunteers. Many are prepared to fill in on short notice, and parents step in to help in the classroom. All of these resources ensure that Bridges can maintain high standards. Even if all of these backups fall through and McMurray has to work alone for a day, she is still in compliance with state licensing standards. McMurray stresses, "If your goal is to meet a minimal standard, what happens when things fall through the cracks?... You need to create safety nets for situations. Instead of

⁷ The 8:1 ratio was reported by Anne Carmody, Office of Registration and Licensing, State of Wisconsin, Spring 1999.

meeting minimal standards, you should regularly go to higher standards. That way, if anything falls through the cracks, you only fall down to minimal standards.”

McMurray’s standards for food preparation work the same way. She prefers to serve freshly prepared hot meals using organic food, which on the day we visited include a breakfast of homemade biscuits and fresh fruit and a lunch of homemade lasagna and steamed fresh vegetables. McMurray avoids resorting to standard peanut-butter-and-jelly fare unless she does not have any staff there to help her cook.

McMurray believes that child care programs should move beyond minimum requirements. She says, for example, “Some people say that it is a luxury to have an extra person to do one-on-one. I’m not sure that shouldn’t be challenged.” She has a second teacher in the program because she feels it enables them to improve the quality for each child. McMurray thinks many family child care providers are limited because they work alone. For instance, at naptime, “What can they do if there is one person alone in a family child care? They just put children into a crib and let them comfort themselves.” McMurray prefers two people so that one can devote herself to providing individualized attention and reading to children before they fall sleep.

The staff at Bridges focus on building the self-confidence of children and encouraging their exploratory nature. They spur imagination by centering much of the curriculum around children’s initiatives and ideas. Maria Hansen explains, “There is a great deal of respect for the children.... The program is very much designed around the children. It’s not that we are asking children to come into this environment and fit into the environment. The environment is molded around them and their needs.”

One of the most striking things about Bridges is the respect that children are taught for each other and the sense of cooperation that pervades the program. We visited on the birthday of a child. While she is napping, the other children make a sign for her birthday. Their excitement is obvious. One exclaims, “Jeanne is going to be so surprised by this sign!” Teachers’ efforts are reflected in the children’s behavior. The children frequently point out achievements of others. For example, after a boy completes a project, another child says proudly, “Look, Tommy has taken out these screws!”

Children are taught to work cooperatively. When a boy is upset because he wants a turn at using a rolling pin to make biscuits, the teacher encourages the children to cooperate and communicate. The teacher says to the boy, “If you want it, you can ask her for a turn. She’s good at sharing.” The teacher then turns to the girl and says, “Kaya, will you let him have a turn?”

Parents are pleased with the program’s approach. Ron Arm, father of a four-year-old, says, “I’m really pleased. I’m happy he is here. There is a lot he has gained from it. When we looked at all the set-ups that were around, we couldn’t have thought of a more nurturing environment than this. There’s a lot of respect for who the children are. The children are allowed to be who they are. They are honored for it.”

Vic McMurray’s experience in working with children is readily apparent. She is supportive, energetic, and sincere around the children and seems joyful in her work. Jenny Ohlsen, who works a few hours each week at Bridges, said, “I have never seen anybody that is more intuitive with children than Vic is.... Children just beam when they are around her.”

Bridges staff pursue a “barn-building” approach to special projects; one child thinks of a group project and everyone works to make it a reality. Projects have included transforming a

climbing structure into a tree house and making a fire engine out of a cardboard refrigerator box. McMurray explains, “The greatest strength of these projects is the sense of community that is created in accomplishing our mission as a group to help a child realize their dream. This is a true community.” Jan Schaefer, mother of a five-year-old, appreciates that each child is given the opportunity to direct the creation of a single project and to be a leader. Since her child came to Bridges, Schaefer says, “Her leadership and confidence has exploded.” Ron Arm is also grateful that “Projects, plans, and activities are directed by the kids and guided or assisted by the teacher. They are so open to the suggestions of the kids.”

Co-teacher Hansen compares the program to others in which she has worked: “I can’t say enough that’s good about it. How lucky the children are to be there.” At her previous place of employment, she says it was obvious that “Even the children who are really doing well could be doing a whole lot better.” At Bridges, though, she says, everyone agrees that, “If these kids weren’t here, they would not be doing as well as they are.” As Schaefer says, “We are overwhelmed by what our daughter has learned, how she has grown, and what she has been offered as far as experiences and stimulation. I truly believe she is a better person for having attended here.”

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

McMurray pays her co-teacher \$12.50 per hour and her part-time assistant \$10.00 per hour, which is significantly more than the median wage paid to family child care providers across the country. Full-time staff also receive between \$850 and \$1,500 per year (based on level of education) from the state for staff retention and between \$2,400 and \$2,600 from the city of Madison for retention. McMurray set her co-teacher’s salary higher than her own, and perhaps higher than she can even afford, because she feels it is important to offer wages that reflect a teacher’s training and experience. McMurray first based her staff salaries on the Madison’s Living Wage Campaign, which set \$8.50 per hour plus benefits as a livable wage in 1997. Although she admits that is a struggle to pay good salaries, she is strongly committed to higher wages for child care staff. Co-teacher Hansen acknowledges, “I think that Vic is probably paying me more than she can afford, to be honest, but she just really values people who are there to support her. [Having another person there] makes her job easier and makes the experience for the children better.”

In addition to above-average wages, McMurray offers staff paid vacation and sick-leave time, retirement contributions, paid holidays, and paid planning time (see Table 8.1). She also covers the costs of two and a half days of continuing education per year.

Hansen says McMurray is very accommodating about providing sick leave and sees the value in having time off. “If I ever called in sick, she would find a way to get people to be there to help her out. At my last job, I worked for them for eight months without a sick day, and I called them when I wasn’t feeling well one day and I got the runaround. She [the former employer] even said to me, ‘Do you want to come in for a while and try it?’ That is something that is totally overlooked in other centers.”

Table 8.1.
Benefits Offered to Bridges Family Child Care Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days and holidays	19 days
Sick leave or personal days	10 days
Retirement benefits	\$2,000 per year
Paid professional days	Two and a half days of paid time for continuing education

Professionalization of Staff

Involvement in the early childhood community

McMurray is very active in the Madison early childhood community. She has lectured on early childhood education and family child care at the Madison Area Technical College and conducted a number of workshops at Madison’s resource-and-referral agency. She developed a videotape on the cost and availability of U.S. child care and the need for providing quality early childhood services to families of all incomes. The video was aired on Wisconsin Public Broadcast System channels in Madison and Milwaukee.

McMurray belongs to a group of experienced family child care providers called Senior Providers. The group promotes networking, offers workshops, lobbies to effect public policy, and engineers creative solutions to problems facing child care providers. For example, the group helped develop a respite provider system that is run through the local child care resource-and-referral agency. Family child care providers can use this system of backup caregivers for planned absences. “This is really crucial for family child care,” McMurray says. “Before the creation of a respite provider, they had no way to go to the doctor. Providers used to bring in children with them to the doctor’s office.” She notes how hard it is to find skilled substitutes. “My personal philosophy is to have a backup system so that you are always meeting ratios and have enough people there.”

Senior Providers also encourages family child care programs to mobilize parents and to educate them about the importance of contacting members of Congress about national child care legislation. McMurray herself testified before the state legislature during a debate on adult-infant ratios. She also advocates for good teacher salaries in Madison and across the country by volunteering her time for the Center for the Child Care Workforce, a nonprofit organization that works to improve compensation, working conditions, and training for teachers and family child care providers.

Professional development

McMurray attends the NAEYC Annual Conference every year. She gives Hansen opportunities to develop professionally, keeping her informed about educational opportunities in the community and paying for two-and-a-half days of continuing education. McMurray also provides feedback on an ongoing basis to her co-teacher and encourages her to help guide the program. Hansen says she feels involved in the decisions “to the fullest extent that I feel comfortable.”

McMurray is open to suggestions for program changes and respects the expertise of her co-teacher and assistant. She is similarly responsive to volunteers and tries to make the most of their strengths. She says, “I often try to support it when someone says they want to do things differently.” As a result, morale among the teachers and volunteers is strong. Hansen describes the work environment as “supportive, affirming, loving and warm,” and adds, “I have never felt more affirmed in a job than I feel here.”

Meeting Family Needs

Bridges works to meet the needs of its families by offering fees that vary according to family income, flexible schedules, and a commitment to including diverse families in the program.

Affordability

There is a sliding fee scale by which fees are based on family income. Because the program offers hours that are similar to a center, McMurray used center rates from a county survey of programs as a benchmark for setting her fees. The full-day charge for most families in 1998 ranged from \$28 to \$42, with the higher fee closest to the true cost of the care provided. McMurray also creates in-service agreements, through which the majority of the parents work for the program in exchange for lower fees. The combination of these two systems allows each family to design a payment structure for care that meets their needs. McMurray says, “I have a real commitment to making services affordable to families.”

To enter into an in-service agreement, families must provide proof of low-income status. Single-parent families and families with a member who has a disability are exempt from meeting the in-service requirements. In-service work varies widely with the skills of parents. In recent years, parents have provided veterinary services, built an iguana cage, fixed plumbing, helped build an addition to the building, installed a heating system, produced a parent newsletter, and identified health insurance carriers. The compensation for in-service work in 1998 was set at \$8 in reduced child care fees for every hour of work. In this way, McMurray compensates parents at roughly the same rate that she pays her staff. She says most parents are good about fulfilling their obligations. “I feel like they honor me,” she says, “and I really appreciate that.”

Because of McMurray’s willingness to allow parents to work to pay off part of their fees, she spends a lot of time and energy on bookkeeping and meeting with parents. She admits, “It is very complex. It takes a lot of work to meet the needs of families.” For the 16 families in her program in 1998, McMurray had 13 different financial arrangements.

Over the years, she has simplified her accounting system, however. She used to spend her weekends trying to prorate the cost of holidays, and she now charges families a fee that includes her staff's paid holidays. She also got to a point where she hired an outside accountant.

Five of the families in the program receive public support for child care. County support used to pay only two-thirds of the local market rate and represented the lowest rate on McMurray's sliding fee scale. From 1997 to 1998, however, the county increased its rates to almost \$42 per day per child for city certified care. McMurray credits the increase to the politics of the time. "It's because of welfare reform that I'm getting paid more." Parents whose child care is covered by a public grant are responsible for co-payments. While McMurray thinks that these co-payments are too high for some families, she sees value in requiring some form of payment for care. She said the requirement "encourages the parents to be good consumers demanding quality."

Families seem to find the program to be affordable and worth its cost. Jan Schaefer notes that Bridges is more affordable than other programs, given the value of the high-quality care and the organic food. Christina Stebbins says her resources are limited, so even her co-payment seems expensive, but she sees real value in the care given to her son. She adds, "It's his future. Money is not the issue as long as he can stay here."

Accessibility

In addition to offering fees that match different families' incomes, Bridges offers its 16 families their own schedules of care. After being displeased with another care provider, Ron Arm was impressed with McMurray's accommodating approach to scheduling. McMurray allowed Arm to ease into full-time care by starting his child off on a part-time schedule.

McMurray also allows some children to attend the program after school once they enter kindergarten. One mother of a six-year-old appreciates the opportunity for her son to continue in the familiar setting after he goes to public school in the morning. Says Mary Carol Reisdorf, "I think he loves it and needs it. He loves the freedom and counting on what he knows."

Parent support

The families at Bridges are racially and socio-economically diverse and reflect a variety of professions and family structures. Reisdorf says that one of the main reasons she picked Bridges was for the diversity of families and children that it includes. Ron Arm also likes the diversity of children and families at Bridges. Co-teacher Hansen says, "Diversity is very, very important to [McMurray]. She wants it to be an everyday part of [children's] lives."

McMurray makes a special effort to always include at least one teenage single mother in her program. She tries to provide as much support as possible to these mothers. In one case, she kept a child overnight so that the single mother could have a break. She also helped one young family find housing and assisted another family with a move.

Parent involvement and education

When parents come to pick their children up at Bridges, they can read notes about the children's day or write in a parent log, both of which facilitate communication between families and staff. Teachers make lots of time for discussions with parents at the end of the day, and

parents are encouraged to come early to spend time with the class. Parents report that they feel very welcome. According to Jan Schaefer, McMurray repeatedly says to parents, “We really want you to be here.” The staff also arranges one-on-one meetings with parents and is available for telephone calls at specific times of the day. In addition, the parents receive a monthly newsletter and are invited to family events throughout the year. These include potluck dinners, a volunteer appreciation event, and a graduation party for the children leaving to go to kindergarten. Parents often go on field trips or volunteer their services in other ways.

Bridges staff share information with families about community services. For example, they direct some parents to Extended Day Care Services, a nonprofit program in Madison that provides support services for children with special needs. The program also has a clothing exchange every spring for families.

McMurray works to educate parents about the elements of quality care. For example, she discusses the benefits of low child-staff ratios and quality food. She documents the work of the children and the approach of the program in an ongoing log book and encourages parents to participate in the classroom. Jan Schaefer says Bridges has had a positive effect on her family. She feels she has learned effective parenting techniques by observing the classroom.

Through her in-service agreements with parents, McMurray has the opportunity to explain the costs involved in providing care and the value of in-kind contributions to the programs. Ron Arm says, “She goes out of her way to get resources to do these things. If we were to have to pay for these, it would be much more expensive. Even at these prices, I don’t think other places could provide what we get here.”

McMurray also tries to educate families about wider issues in the early childhood field. She shares the video she created on early childhood education and wages with parents, and she includes information on child care issues in the program’s newsletter. She keeps families informed about public policy and has even taken the children to the Wisconsin capitol to advocate for better funding for child care.

While McMurray talks about low compensation in the field of early childhood education, she rarely reveals to parents how low her own wage is. As co-teacher Maria Hansen notes, “A lot of [parents] don’t really have a true sense of how much she herself makes...how little she takes in for herself.” McMurray has begun to discuss with parents the hourly costs of providing quality care and fund-raising ideas. She says said that when she first started out in the business of family child care, she also needed to take care of her own children and there was not nearly enough time to think about innovative ways to improve the financing of her program. Although she still works long hours, she says she now has more time to think of creative financing strategies and to get parents involved.

Financial and Structural Support

McMurray admits that over the years she has refined her methods for running her program. To new provider, he recommends development of management systems. “The typically long hours and additional demands of business-related tasks, meetings, and training requirements take a serious toll on many child care providers,” she says. “I have found that creating systems for my own efficiency and support has been a necessity. Through years of experience and training we have been developing a model that I believe can be applied to fully enrolled family child care.”

As described earlier, McMurray’s staffing and volunteer structures serve as critical supports for maintaining her high standards of quality. McMurray has refined her volunteer system over the years to make it more reliable. She assesses volunteers’ skills and clearly defines their responsibilities. Her cadre of volunteers work in the classroom, make repairs on the child care home, and pick up and deliver food to Bridges. According to Hansen, McMurray “is also good at holding up whoever is there in such a way that they feel they made a difference,” thereby instilling a sense of responsibility. By delegating support work to other people, McMurray can devote more of her energy to caring for the children.

McMurray advises other family child care providers to “Get organized and be thoughtful in making systems and in terms of paperwork. Look at patterns in your program and make systems that work.” McMurray continually assesses her program by observing patterns in the children’s behavior. For example, she has noticed that she needs to make a different plan for Fridays than for other days. The children are tired by Friday, and activities that day need to be more nurturing and offer more opportunities to rest.

Revenue

Most of Bridges’ revenue comes from parent fees or county grants for children from lower income families. Because of the in-service agreements, however, families’ fees do not cover the full cost of care provided. Because families cannot afford to pay more, McMurray ends up subsidizing them. To address this problem, she is exploring new options for funding, including a plan to encourage local businesses to help sponsor child care.

Additional support comes from the Federal Child Care Food Program and city grants to improve child care quality. Bridges has also received money to cover part of the fees of parents who are university students and grants from the state Workforce Development Division to support one-time quality improvement projects. Table 8.2 lists Bridges’ sources of revenue.

**Table 8.2.
Sources of Revenue for Bridges Family Child Care: 1997**

Source of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Parent fees
County funding for child care, which covers fees for lower income families
Child Care Food Program
City funding for child care
University child care grant, which helps support child care fees for university students
State grant for child care improvement funded through the Workforce Development Division, which funds one-time quality improvement projects

In-kind support

McMurray is very visible in her community. “Incredible things happen when we put ourselves out there,” she says. In addition to attracting a cadre of volunteers, the program receives a wide assortment of donated materials and food (see Table 8.3).

According to Hansen, McMurray is skilled at communicating the program’s needs to community businesses. A local appliance store calls the program when it has extra boxes, which the children use for group projects. A local cooperative, a health food store, two bakeries, and an organic food warehouse donate organic food for meals. Parents also facilitate community support. One parent arranged for Bridges to get a discount at a local music store for a set of drums for the children.

Table 8.3
In-Kind Donations to Bridges Family Child Care: 1997

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Volunteer aides (including local university students, members of the local community, and parents)
Volunteer services (equipment repair, delivery of groceries, facility improvement)
Facilities (owned by the family child care provider)
Food (from a local cooperative, a health food store, two bakeries, and an organic food warehouse)
Teacher training (offered by community organizations)
Books, toys, clothing, and office supplies (from parents)

The classroom addition on the back of McMurray’s house was built through donations of time and resources from the community. She has an architect friend who specializes in nontoxic work environments. He donated his time to the project and conducted a series of workshops on natural building techniques during construction. Workshop participants came from all over the country to learn the techniques as they worked on the Bridges addition.

Jenny Ohlsen says of McMurray, “She is the most resourceful person I have ever met. She touches people and figures out how she can get what she needs in order to make what she’s doing thrive. It is really impressive.” When asked how McMurray accomplishes this, Ohlsen replies, “I think it is motivated by her personality and also her will to make what she is doing succeed. It’s her motivation for what she believes in.... She has a great ability to make a community come together.”

Ohlsen's advice to other programs looking for support is "Just be resourceful—not to be afraid to do it.... Just talk to people. If you just get out there and try, you can get so much support. People really do want to help out; they just don't know how."

Chapter 9

Miami Valley Child Development Centers

Dayton, Ohio

Family needs and staff professional interests converge at Miami Valley Child Development Centers Inc. (MVCDC) in Dayton, Ohio, where 21 percent of the staff are parents whose children have attended the program. Because it has a policy of hiring qualified parents and of promoting from within, the agency offers significant professional opportunities and experience to parents. It may be this personal connection that makes MVCDC staff deeply committed to meeting the needs of both families and children.

Originally part of a community action agency, MVCDC ran one of the first summer Head Start programs in the nation. The nonprofit agency was independently chartered with three operating centers in 1965, the same year Head Start was initiated by the federal government. Since then, the agency has steadily expanded, all the while pursuing innovative programming opportunities. MVCDC has extended its child care services (for example, opening one of the first Head Start infant and toddler centers in the country) and implemented a wide variety of support services for families (for instance, family literacy and family advocate programs). Today MVCDC serves more than 4,000 children and their families in 45 centers and home-based programs in three Ohio counties—Clark, Madison, and Montgomery.

Commitment to Quality

Classroom characteristics

The children who spend their day in Betty Jo Phillips and Nikki Tuttle’s class in Springfield, Ohio, receive warm greetings as they walk through the front door. “Good morning friends!” exclaims Phillips as she sets the tone for a day full of excitement and investigation. Children arrive by bus and are greeted enthusiastically as they receive brief, subtle health checks

The teachers provide both materials and encouragement to promote the children’s creativity. On the day of the High/Scope visit, Antoine, a boy whom Phillips calls her “little scientist,” finds materials to create his own set of binoculars. He gets two paper-towel tubes from the art area and attaches them together with a rubber band. Phillips speaks proudly of this child’s creativity and his other “inventions.” Phillips then asks another child about his work with magnets and inquires why they stick together. Together, they explore the effect of magnets on different objects in the room.

Sharon Hunter and Donald Graham’s classroom offers a wide variety of activities, particularly within large dramatic-play, art, and science areas. Objects are labeled and children’s drawings are hung at a child’s eye level around the room. As in Phillips and Tuttle’s class, teachers here build on children’s interest in specific materials to initiate new activities. For instance, when some children finish with molding dough, the teacher demonstrates a sorting exercise, dividing the dough back into separate colors.

The teachers encourage the children to use toys creatively. Shawn chooses to use a dump truck as a pretend swimming pool and teacher Sharon Hunter joins his play. At the end of the day, when Hunter asks each of the children about their day, posing probing questions to

encourage them to talk about their activities and their interests, she asks him, “Where did you work, Shawn?”

Shawn: Blocks.

Hunter: What did you make?

Shawn: A swimming pool!

Hunter: What was I at the swimming pool?

Shawn: The lifeguard.

Hunter: It is always important to have a lifeguard to watch over people while they swim. And what was Peter?

Shawn: A swimmer.

This discussion continues, with Shawn providing a full description of the day’s activities at the imaginary pool.

Teacher Donald Graham expresses the program’s philosophy when he says, “If the children have their minds set on doing an activity, who am I to tell them I don’t want to do it? Here at Head Start they have choices and a chance to express their desires.” Parents say they appreciate that approach. Tajuana Shepherd likes it when teachers focus on the activities that children initiate. She says, “They wait to see what the child is interested in and they work from that.” She adds, “My kids have been in day care and I have seen the difference between being in day care and being in Head Start.”

Teachers welcome the presence of parents and volunteers. They educate them about child development and the value of classroom activities whenever possible. In all of the classrooms at MVCDC, for example, there are written explanations posted about the skills that can be learned in each of the learning areas. Parents report that the teachers encourage them to participate in the classroom whenever possible.

Program characteristics

The warmth of the teaching staff reflects the larger agency’s commitment to being supportive of families. Staff development manager Sandy West says, “This agency invests a lot in creating an environment that is open, that’s welcoming, that’s supportive.... We work a lot with staff to make it socio-emotionally open and welcoming. That is really, really important. It is at all levels out there at the center.” If a child has a particular need, West says, people at all levels “invest a lot of time and energy in trying to find the best way to serve that child and to serve that family.”

Genevieve Gray, who has two children in MVCDC, declares, “This is the best program I have ever been involved in.” She says she is impressed by how well the teachers know the Head Start families and how often the staff go out of their way to assist them. “They are helping me raise my children,” she says. “I wish there was a way that I could show the teachers and the staff of my appreciation.”

MVCDC’s quality is supported by administrative efforts to continuously advance the program. The agency raised outside funds for one such effort: an evaluation of the program. Julie Biddle, who serves as chairperson of the board of trustees and is a researcher at the University of Dayton, is designing the evaluation. She says, “Commitment to improvement in

practice that is driven by close scrutiny is laudable. There are very few places that are willing to take that risk.” MVCDC is also working to get more of its centers accredited by NAEYC. Administrators consistently pursue innovative practices. Tony Evans, program developer for Family and Community Partnerships at MVCDC, calls president and chief executive officer (CEO) Marilyn Thomas proactive. “If it is a good idea and she gets wind of it, we’ll be doing it,” he says. MVCDC has been creative in locating services for families and has attracted numerous demonstration projects. Such projects have included the Family Advocate program in 1982 and 1984; Parent Home Visitor Project in 1987; a 1989 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) demonstration for full-day child care for ages zero through five years; a family literacy program in 1990; and the Belmont Infant and Toddler program in 1993 to help parenting teens remain in school.

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

MVCDC salaries are above average for the local community, with teachers’ hourly pay ranging from \$11.65 to \$21.10 (see Table 9.1). While most teachers earn salaries toward the lower end of this range, staff are compensated according to a pay scale that takes into account employee qualifications, performance, and seniority. Employees can receive both cost-of-living and merit increases in pay as well as promotions in position and salary. Staff are also compensated for pursuing additional education. If a staff member receives a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, for example, she either will advance on the pay scale and receive a higher salary or, if she has already reached that higher salary level through seniority, receive a one-time \$400 bonus.

The agency offers a comprehensive benefits package, which includes paid vacation and sick leave, health and dental insurance, retirement benefits, and life and disability insurance (see Table 9.2.) Staff report that MVCDC offers more benefits than comparable employers in the local community. Teacher Betty Jo Phillips says that many of the staff first came to the organization for its benefits package.

Table 9.1.

**Hourly Wages Offered in Salary Scale for Miami Valley
Child Development Centers Full-Time Staff: 2002-03**

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Operating managers	\$15.88	\$28.52
Teachers	\$11.65	\$21.10
Teaching assistants	\$7.85	\$14.25

Table 9.2.
Benefits Offered to Miami Valley Child Development Centers Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days and holidays	2-4 weeks vacation, 12 paid holidays, and 2 personal leave days per year
Sick leave	Earned at a rate of 11 hours per month
% health insurance paid	86% of family benefit, comprehensive health insurance
Dental insurance	Employer paid for individual coverage
Vision plan	Discount plan, employer-paid
Retirement plan	Profit-sharing trust, fully paid by employer
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Long-term disability	Employer-paid
Accidental death and dismemberment insurance	Fully paid by employer
Additional benefits	Medical savings plan; access to tax-sheltered annuities, a credit union, and an employee assistance program, which offers counseling services to employees' families

According to teachers, while MVCDC's pay and perks are better than other agencies in the community for comparable positions, the field is generally underpaid. Lisha Wilson explains why she thinks early childhood teachers' salaries do not reflect the full value of their work: "Our pay really comes from [government] funding. Until our government decides our children are important enough, my pay is not going to be good."

MVCDC provides many opportunities for advancement. Announcements about open positions are circulated within the program and to parents before being posted to the public. Employees are given preferential consideration. Indeed, most of the current senior administrators have advanced through the ranks of the agency.

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

Because the local community colleges do not turn out large numbers of early childhood education graduates, MVCDC is faced with the challenge of finding qualified, reliable staff. Director of human resources Sharon Baber says, "Finding people that have the experience that we need...is difficult." She adds that the administrators recruit staff "everywhere and anywhere."

To address the dearth of qualified job candidates, MVCDC has developed an extensive in-house training system that offers over 200 workshops each year. Chief operating officer Betty Toney explains, "One of our biggest assets in this agency is that we really believe in a lot of training.... If we can get you here, I feel we can build you to what we need you to be." CEO Thomas said, "By having this strong training capacity within our organization, we find that we can be flexible." Indeed, because the agency has trainers on staff, it can offer trainings throughout the week, on weekends, and in the evenings to cater to the schedules of staff. The agency's staff development department tracks all completed coursework and is capable of issuing continuing education units (CEUs).

MVCDC's monthly training calendar includes instruction in the High/Scope curriculum, CDA classes, music training, assessment, health and safety, and training on administrative procedures. Topics are selected from suggestions by staff. Scott Siegfried, an area manager for MVCDC, says, "We always have an opportunity as staff to request a specific kind of training and in most cases that training is added to the training calendar." Staff also attend regional AEYC conferences and National Head Start Association conferences, and MVCDC pays for conference fees, travel costs, per diem charges, and staff time.

Staff are reimbursed for seminars, college courses, and CDA training. Funds allowing, staff can be reimbursed for up to two satisfactorily completed college courses each year. Once each year MVCDC spends approximately \$10,000 to host an on-site college class. Donald Graham, who received a CDA through the agency and has completed agency-funded college courses, appreciates the agency's financial support and rewards for education. He says, "If you show the initiative to get a degree, the agency is willing to pay for your efforts."

Training is part of a broader effort by administrators to treat staff as professionals and to set high expectations for employees. Board chairperson Biddle says, "At every level, there is a real sense of leadership, professionalism, and commitment to the agency. Passion begins at the top, but it filters down." Much of the turnover at the agency, which has been under 20 percent in the past few years, stemmed from the dismissal of staff who did not meet MVCDC's standards. The CEO says, "This agency has a philosophy that we will not continue to offer employment to people who do not meet our performance standards."

Teachers reflect this professionalism when they are accountable for the quality of their classrooms and the children's preparation for kindergarten. Lisha Wilson says of her students, "Ultimately, their early education is a reflection of me." Teachers are encouraged to express their ideas about both their classrooms and the center. Area manager Siegfried expects the staff who work with him to make recommendations about equipment, systems, and their own training. He says, "They are the ones doing the work, and I think they can best make it effective."

Thomas describes treating staff as professionals as part of a larger effort to create a positive work environment. The CEO says, "We try to create an organizational environment and atmosphere that is conducive to people wanting to work here. We have a lot of people who are

here and have been here over the long term because they appreciate it; they are happy in this organization. They are sophisticated enough to recognize the differences between working here and working in a large bureaucracy like the public school system. We take that very seriously and are conscious of strategies that support that.” Managers frequently recognize the achievements of individuals and celebrate the accomplishments of the organization. Marilyn Thomas says that staff value such recognition. “We get a lot of feedback on how significant those efforts are and how much they are really appreciated.”

Involvement in the early childhood community

As part of a national Head Start initiative, MVCDC influences the quality of early child care programs throughout the region by developing collaborative partnerships with local child care centers. Designed to provide larger numbers of children with full-day, year-round care and Head Start support services, these partnerships allow local child care programs to extend their hours and to access training and additional services for families.

In 1997–98, MVCDC established six such partnerships, and each year more are created. The collaborative centers provide classroom space, playground equipment, supplies, and preschool education services for up to 18 children eligible for Head Start/Child Care Block Grants. MVCDC devotes case managers, health specialists, and support supervisors to the centers and offers training and technical assistance to help them meet Head Start performance standards.

Meeting Family Needs

Many of the families served by MVCDC have few child care options. In accordance with Head Start guidelines, 90 percent of the children at MVCDC are from low-income families. The agency aims to serve the neediest of all the families eligible for its services. Almost half of the children served come from families with less than \$6,000 in annual income, and 72 percent live in one-parent households.

Affordability

Funded primarily by federal Head Start funds and state child care grants, MVCDC’s services are free to eligible low-income families. Parents report that free access is a significant draw, offering their children an opportunity to have a preschool experience that the family could not have otherwise afforded

Accessibility

While the majority of MVCDC’s centers are open part-time, MVCDC runs some full-day centers and collaborates with other programs to serve parents who are working, in training or attending school. Over one-fifth of MVCDC children are in such full-day programs, and the staff is working to expand such services. The agency also offers home-based services, which include weekly home visits and bimonthly group socialization activities.

The agency makes a strong effort to have conveniently located centers. Many centers are located within low-income neighborhoods or in housing projects. The agency also provides bus transportation. To meet the needs of families from throughout Dayton, MVCDC established a drop-in child care program in the city's Job Center, a multi-service facility where families can apply for public assistance, enroll in training or GED preparation, or sign up for a myriad of other programs.

Family support

MVCDC's philosophy centers around serving the whole family. As a result, the agency offers social services referrals and health, nutrition, and disability services to all participating families. It also has developed collaborative relationships with many local organizations. For example, Wright State University developed a wellness clinic in one of the centers to provide developmental screenings for children and, with MVCDC, administers family therapy programs. With support from the Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board (ADAMHS), Wright State and MVCDC also implemented a conduct disorders prevention program to address the needs of children who show early signs of aggressive and antisocial behavior.

MVCDC also serves many children with special needs—more than 300 the year we visited the program. MVCDC offers or arranges for services for emotional and behavioral disorders, speech and language impairments, hearing and vision impairments, orthopedic impairments, learning disabilities, developmental delays and multiple disabilities. A registered nurse is on staff to screen for physical disabilities when children enter the program and to work with parents and children throughout the year.

The agency also provides numerous services targeted directly to families, such as job training and parenting education. MVCDC participates in Project Fast Start, which offers GED preparation, computer, and literacy classes at two computer labs at MVCDC. Families also have access to the Jobs Skills for Employment Purposes (JSEP) computer lab, which offers job preparation and literacy development programs in Dayton. Parent Erin Nichols notes, "When I first came into Head Start, we were living on almost nothing. They got me in with a place that could help me pay my bills—that helped me get my medication." Genevieve Gray says, "I recommend Miami View [one of MVCDC's centers] to others because they care about you and your family. It doesn't stop at the end of the day; they go the extra nine yards.... If they see any type of need, they address it."

Staff go to great lengths to help families. CEO Thomas says that MVCDC staff do everything that they can for families, but she worries about families with problems beyond the agency's reach. She says, "The reason that is the worst thing for the [child] is that if we can't do it, nobody will."

Parent involvement and education

In addition to receiving services, parents work to support MVCDC. One of the principal governing boards for the agency, the MVCDC Head Start Policy Council, is composed of over 50 percent Head Start parents. The council establishes policies, approves funding requests, and reviews the appointment and dismissal of staff. Parents also regularly participate in classrooms and volunteer for activities such as science and art projects, field trips, lending libraries, and

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) book distribution. They are invited to center-based parent groups and program meetings at the center and county levels, and they participate in the focus groups used to assess MVCDC's quality. Parents who work full time often volunteer to wash sheets and blankets, transport children home for other families, or work in the classroom during their vacations. All volunteers are recognized by the agency at an annual banquet.

MVCDC offers numerous opportunities for parents to learn about early childhood development and parenting practices. Teachers hold parent-teacher conferences and provide observation-based reports on children's experiences. The agency also participates in Ohio's Winning Teams project, a series of video conferences and seminars for families and teachers on the ways that young children learn. Parents have participated in parenting workshops conducted by the Children's Defense Fund and preventive training on child abuse and neglect, funded by the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. As part of a male involvement project, MVCDC offers activities and workshops targeted to fathers.

Financial and Structural Support

Board of trustees

MVCDC has a board of trustees representing many sectors of the local community—business, education, health care, and financial services. Its members bring a range of skills, offering expertise in areas such as research, public relations, and financial management. The board has fiduciary responsibility for MVCDC and sets many of its policies. Chief operating officer (COO) Betty Toney says of the board members, "Usually they are very, very good advocates. They really know child care. They are really interested and are active—and that has been true from the very beginning." Several board members continue to help the agency long after leaving the board.

Collaborations

Senior administrators realized early on that the agency does not have the funding to meet all new and ongoing needs of families. As a result, MVCDC systematically formed links with service providers in the community to leverage resources and services. For example, for years MVCDC provided bus transportation, a costly and difficult-to-administer service, so the agency decided to contract out for transportation. Marilyn Thomas explains, "We stepped back and said our expertise is in providing child care services, not transportation."

Other collaborations result in in-kind support for the program. Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority (DMHA) provides space for some of MVCDC's classrooms and helps to recruit families for Head Start. RIF and MVCDC pool their resources to give a free book to each child in the program three times a year. MVCDC is collaborating with the Dayton Art Institute on a two-year pilot project called Museum as a Resource, which aims to teach families to use museums as educational resources. MVCDC's success in developing collaborative partnerships was recognized in 1993 by the Ohio Department of Education, which gave MVCDC the Irene Bandy-Hedden Early Childhood Education Program Award for collaboration.

Management

The success of the agency's many collaborations can be attributed to the inventiveness of MVCDC's administrators, who have not shied away from new projects. Barbara Haxton, executive director of the Ohio Head Start Association Inc., says, "MVCDC has shown great flexibility in their program operations and has always responded immediately to opportunities for being involved in special projects and innovative efforts." Kathleen Emery, community affairs Manager for Dayton's Department of Planning and Community Development, points out that CEO Marilyn Thomas "is very willing to be the one to step forward and take some risks."

In addition to aggressively pursuing projects to serve families, administrators have identified ways to improve the management of the agency itself. The latest of these efforts is the implementation of a site-based management system in which center-level staff are asked to be more accountable. This system spreads responsibilities over the center positions, allowing staff to gain a better understanding of their colleagues' jobs and promoting a collective sense of responsibility for meeting the needs of children and families. Administrators say the new system encourages teamwork and faster resolution of problems. As a result, according to area manager Sandy Beard, "Everybody this year knows more about their children and their families."

MVCDC has a history of strong management and financial accountability. CEO Thomas has emphasized fiscal accountability throughout the life of the agency. As one administrator notes, "If you don't have that in order, nothing else matters." The administrative staff is skilled in grant writing and in developing strong relationships with people in the local community and across the state. These relationships often help the agency attract funding and spread MVCDC's reputation as a reliable, accountable agency.

Revenue

MVCDC attracts local, state, and national sources of funding, most of which are targeted to children from low-income families (see Table 9.3). The federal government is its largest source of revenue, providing direct Head Start program funding and support for training and technical assistance as well as funds from the Child Care Food Program. In 1997-98, MVCDC served additional children through grants from the Ohio Department of Education.

Supplementing funding for child care slots, local non-profit organizations help provide for MVCDC's support services for families and resources for children. These organizations have included Multi-Cultural Supporters, Inc., Reading is Fundamental, and the United Way.

Table 9.3.
Sources of Revenue for Miami Valley Child Development Centers: 1997*

Sources of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Head Start Program Funding
Ohio Department of Education for Head Start Continuation and Expansion
USDA Child Care Food Program

Head Start Training and Technical Assistance funds

Multi-Cultural Supporters Inc. for parent resource rooms

Ohio Children’s Trust Fund for parent training on child abuse prevention

Montgomery County Department of Human Services for staff training

Reading Is Fundamental, United Way, and other corporate donations

Ohio Department of Human Services for child care for TANF-eligible families

*Note: State funding and use of federal TANF have significantly changed since this data.

The single largest cash outlay for the program is for personnel expenses, roughly 80 to 85 percent of total expenses. Marilyn Thomas says, “The challenge is to do everything else you are supposed to do with the little crumbs that remain.”

As mentioned above, MVCDC has collaborated with numerous partners during its history and has received grants from a great variety of sources. Table 9.4 lists some of the funders and collaborators in prior years years.

Table 9.4.
Past and Current Funders and Collaborators of
Miami Valley Child Development Centers: 1988-1998

Funders and Collaborators
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and HHS to provide full-day care
United Way to support a family literacy program and family services
HHS to run a family service center program and to develop a model science/math curriculum
IBM to provide computer hardware and training
Family Satellite Program to deliver services in a subsidized housing community
Society National Bank to purchase computers
Ohio Department of Development to renovate child care facilities
Dayton and Springfield Metropolitan Housing Authorities to provide facilities
Local public school districts to provide mental health consultants to classrooms

County departments of human services and health to provide social services

City of Dayton to provide land and classroom space

ADAMHS Board for mental health services to help support an alcohol and drug prevention program

Montgomery County's Job Center to provide child care for people using the center

Foster Grandparent Program to place senior volunteers in classrooms

These collaborations result in both in-kind donations and direct revenue. For example, the city of Dayton provides MVCDC classrooms in four city recreation centers. It also donated the land for the agency's administrative building. Kathleen Emery, of Dayton's Department of Planning and Community Development, says the city donated the land because "MVCDC will be an important institutional anchor" in a historic neighborhood in which there had been significant disinvestment.

In-kind support

Table 9.5 lists sources of in-kind resources. According to Head Start guidelines, MVCDC must receive in-kind contributions totaling 25 percent of its federal grant award. These include volunteer services, facilities and land, and donations of classroom materials.

Table 9.5.
In-Kind Donations to Miami Valley Child Development Centers: 1997

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Facilities and playground space from housing authorities and private individuals
Volunteer time
Donations of books, toys, games, field trips, classroom supplies, parent activities

Families in the program also receive services and donations directly from MVCDC's collaborative partners (see Collaborations above.) The agency's success in attracting such a vast array of contributions stems from its reputation as a professional and accountable organization. The program's high standards equip it to effectively meet the needs of Head Start children and their families.

Chapter 10

Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association (KCAA) Pre-Schools of Hawaii Honolulu, Hawaii

For much of the 1990s, Hawaii faced a severe recession. Between 1994 and 1998, preschool enrollment statewide decreased almost 30 percent. Enrollment in the Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association (KCAA) Pre-Schools of Hawaii dropped from 930 to 622, and the agency lost approximately \$1 million in revenue.

In the face of this large loss in revenue, KCAA administrators did not lay off a single teacher; instead, they worked to improve classroom quality and agency financial stability. This was accomplished through aggressive fund raising (more than \$500,000 in one year), implementation of a three-year plan to strengthen the organization, and development of a cooperative relationship with the teachers' union.

KCAA is a descendent of Hawaii's first kindergartens and preschools. In 1895 a group of women from the Hawaiian Board of Missions founded the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association of the Hawaiian Islands (FKCAA). The program provided services at no charge to immigrant and working families. In 1896, FKCAA opened a culturally integrated classroom and, after another five years, the organization became committed to totally desegregated education, a revolutionary idea for that period.

In the 1920s the founders of FKCAA started to lobby for public kindergartens. When 12 public kindergartens were created by the governor in 1943, FKCAA administered many of them, in addition to running private kindergartens. In 1949 the organization began to charge tuition for kindergarten and was renamed KCAA, but it continued to provide a substantial amount of tuition aid. As public funding for kindergartens increased, KCAA shifted its focus to preschool education. Today KCAA serves approximately 622 children ages three months to five years and has nine centers, including two high school-based infant and toddler programs. The program serves nearly 6 percent of the children in Hawaii who attend center-based preschools.

Commitment to Quality

Classrooms characteristics

At KCAA's Na Lei center, two-year old Hana is developing sensory skills while improving his eye-hand coordination. On the day of our visit, his legs and arms are lathered in shaving cream, and his teacher Carol Nakashima sits beside him, covering her arms in cream to encourage him. She asks, "How does that feel on your legs?" and Hana smiles in reply. Moving to bins of water, sand, and rice, the toddler starts spreading shaving cream on a small slide and using sponges to rinse it. Nakashima brings out a wheelbarrow for the children to cover with shaving cream and to wash off. Hana pours water from one of the water buckets into the wheelbarrow.

The children in the toddler class are playing in an enclosed outdoor area created especially for them. Window boxes line the fence and the atmosphere is pleasant and calm. A large tree provides shade and wind chimes hang from its branches. There is a wading pool and

two other water play areas as well as a dramatic-play area. On the day of our visit, the teachers craft a play barbecue from a cardboard box and the children roast plastic hamburgers and hotdogs. The teachers enthusiastically engage in the pretend luncheon.

This classroom is filled with materials that reflect the diverse cultures of Hawaii. Indeed, play areas in all of the KCAA centers include Chinese bowls and cooking utensils; Japanese handbags and kimonos; Hawaiian shirts, mumus, and hula skirts. During our visit, we saw one classroom focused on making Hawaiian musical instruments and clothing and another in which children were creating collages using coconut husks, local flowers, and shells.

Program characteristics

KCAA's teaching staff and children are very diverse. Many staff members are fluent in Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Spanish, French, and American Sign Language. The program is ethnically rich, with more than 21 ethnicities being represented among the children and 15 among the teaching staff.

Such diversity has been a part of the program since inception, when it sought to serve immigrant families and families with low incomes. Though the program has changed through the years, this mission is still honored by the current staff. Teacher Susan Burns says, "I really like what KCAA stands for. I love the fact that...it was started to help families that really needed it. [The founders] were really caring about immigrant families." Beth Rice, director of the Laura Morgan Center, notes that KCAA remains very supportive of low-income children. "It is in the company's heart and goes to the origins of the program."

To promote quality services for these children, KCAA pursues NAEYC accreditation in all of its centers. At the time of our visit, five programs were accredited and two were awaiting the results of validation visits. The remaining two centers were newly created programs not yet eligible to apply. In addition to pursuing outside recognition of quality, staff in all of the centers use the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) for self-assessment.

KCAA maintains a well-trained teaching staff. Turnover averaged only 9 percent annually from 1996 to 1998. President and CEO Jackie Dudock thinks the low turnover rate is achieved because the agency "takes really good care of people" and the teachers who have remained in the program are very committed to early childhood education. Two teachers also attribute the low level of turnover to the strong relationships among the staff members. Teacher Geraldine Hee, at the Na Lei center, says, "We're *ohana*, a family. We all work together.... We work for the children's sake."

Barry Ching, father of a five-year-old child, chose KCAA because of the continuity in the staff. He says, "At the preschool that my oldest son went to first, he had a new director every single year. He changed teachers maybe seven times in a two-year span. For a small child that is learning to depend on a teacher, that is really really tough."

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

KCAA offers a three-level salary scale based on education and longevity raises for every five years of service (see Table 10.1). Salaries are on the high end of the range of salaries paid to

early childhood educators in Hawaii. Indeed, the board of trustees has set a goal of trying to reach parity with salaries in the public school system. In the recession, however, teachers' salaries were affected by the economic downturn; for instance, the organization could not offer raises between 1995 and 1998.

Table 10.1.
Hourly Wages of KCAA Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Center Directors	\$17.25	\$18.31
Teachers	\$11.57	\$12.55
Teaching aides	\$7.47	\$8.52

Teacher Geraldine Hee says wages could be higher but admits that they meet her needs and that she is very satisfied with the benefits. Berl Kaneshiro thinks the teachers' salaries should be better, pointing out that experience—along with education—should be rewarded in the salary scale. Teacher Miriam Perreira says, “I feel I am doing quality work. I feel I am a professional and I know the salary could be better.” When asked why it is difficult to pay higher salaries to child care workers, teacher Cora Gibo surmises, “There are a lot of grandmas and grandpas here [in Hawaii] that will watch children for little or nothing. When you weigh that, you have to be flexible in the amount you charge.” Another teacher says she knows families will leave if KCAA dramatically increases its prices.

Teachers expressed frustration at the low level of compensation in the field of early childhood education as a whole. Teacher Kathy Tom points out, “This profession is not taken seriously. We are building foundation here.”

Many of the teachers report that their benefits are very good. KCAA offers a comprehensive package that includes vacation and sick leave, health and dental insurance, and a retirement plan (see Table 10.2). Another perk is a 50 percent tuition discount for children of employees. Dudock believes the agency benefits help retain good staff.

Table 10.2.
Benefits Offered to KCAA Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff
Vacation days	19 days
Sick leave days	12 days
% health insurance paid	85% of individual benefit
Dental insurance	85% employer-paid

Prescription plan	85% employer-paid
Retirement plan	KCAA contributes \$40 per month to a tax-deferred annuity for teachers and 1% of salary for administrators; staff can also contribute to the plan.
Discount for children to attend program	50% off tuition for employee's children
Financial awards for longevity	After 5-9 years:\$45 per month After 10-14 years: \$80 per month After 15-19 years: \$105 per month After 20+ years: \$130 per month

The recessionary environment forced KCAA to make some changes in benefits. It revised vacation policy, for example, to mandate that 8 of 19 annual vacation days be during set times when the agency is closed. The president says this change alone saves approximately \$50,000 in substitutes' salaries.

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

KCAA staff have seven paid professional days each year. The agency conducts most professional development activities on site and frequently uses its own staff for trainings. There are Saturday workshops by curriculum specialists and teacher institute days with a variety of workshops.

KCAA pays for teachers to complete certification and training classes. For example, when the program started serving babies and toddlers, it paid for all new staff to take certification classes for infant and toddler care (and subsidized the classes for other staff members interested in that stage of development). The program funds first-aid and CPR training and gives teachers paid release time to visit other centers. KCAA teachers receive leave to attend the Hawaii AEYC conference, and KCAA contributes \$25 toward a NAEYC membership for each staff person.

Miriam Perreira, who has worked at KCAA for nine years, says the program paid for her to obtain her CDA. "KCAA really supported me," she says. "They take care of their employees." Kathy Tom, who has taught at the Mother Rice Center for 20 years, notes that the staff constantly share ideas and are dedicated to helping each other learn. She says, "It is definitely a growing place."

Teachers see themselves as very involved in decisions made about their centers. "Our center director really tries to trust us in decisions that we make," says one. Perreira adds, "We're treated like professionals here. They really listen to us." Opportunity for teacher input at the agency level has increased since the development of monthly advisory board meetings, which include one teacher representative from each center, two center directors, and the president of

KCAA. Teachers report that the committee has improved communication with administrators and also between staff of the various centers. Kaneshiro says it encourages communication within the centers as well, since center staff meet to discuss issues before each advisory committee meeting. The advisory board helped revise standard operating procedures and develop job descriptions.

According to Dudock, in the mid-1990s the board and administration developed some of the goals for quality improvement and agency restructuring with input from the teachers. When the recession hit the agency, Dudock educated staff on the budget and endowment and explained the relationship between enrollment and staff compensation. Informing the teachers encouraged them to voice their opinions and to understand the bigger picture, Dudock says. “Seeing the whole system helps them to be able to put financial demands in perspective.”

Dudock also has helped staff learn more about all of the centers that make up KCAA, or—as she says—develop a feeling of “system family.” For example, she arranged a bus tour for staff to visit each other’s centers. Administrators report that this helped teachers appreciate the needs of the program as a whole and to think of themselves as a part of the agency, not just of a center.

Dudock says one of the things that helped KCAA to improve the quality of its care in the 1990s was encouraging teachers to recognize themselves as professionals. To achieve this, KCAA expanded opportunities for professional development, informed teachers about the issues facing the entire agency, gave staff recognition for outstanding work, and encouraged self-evaluation and more extensive staff reviews by directors. Reflecting her approach, Dudock respectfully refers to KCAA teachers as “teaching faculty.”

Involvement in the early childhood community

KCAA’s administrators are very involved in the state early childhood education community. Dudock works with other program directors to design a training curriculum for early childhood administrators, which would be the first of its kind in Hawaii. She is frequently asked to serve on community committees or to make public presentations on child care or issues concerning young children. Staff participate in the Good Beginnings Alliance, a council of agencies that identifies demand for child care in Hawaii and tries to improve both the quality and affordability of the care offered.

Center staff frequently serve the local communities surrounding KCAA facilities. For example, 10 from the Laura Morgan Center worked the phone bank for hospital telethon because a child from their center was the hospital’s poster child. Another program helped organize a neighborhood watch program and provides its meeting place. Centers host student interns from the University of Hawaii, Honolulu Community College, and Chaminade University. KCAA also corresponds with sister schools in China and Japan, which send staff to visit KCAA schools.

The director of the Atherton Center, Genee DeMello, says her staff frequently attend community gatherings. She adds, “Anything that has to do with young children on this side [of Oahu], we’ll do it.” One year this center was adopted by a battalion of marines from a nearby military base; the soldiers helped install a climbing structure on the playground. DeMello notes, “The community itself is very supportive.”

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

In 1997-98, KCAA's annual fees were \$5,580 for full-time care for preschool children and \$5,700 for full-time care for toddlers. Staff say these rates fall in the high mid range of fees charged in their area, but KCAA also offers a sliding fee scale based on family size and income. President and CEO Dudock estimates that the average KCAA family pays only 55 to 70 percent of the full cost of services.

In its early years, volunteers provided the care at KCAA at no charge to families. Today KCAA serves a significant number of low-income families by offering scholarships. In 1998, 36 percent of families were given some form of scholarship. Of these, one-third received tuition subsidies through the state Department of Human Services or other outside funding, and two-thirds received tuition assistance raised from private sources. Dudock notes that staff try very hard not to turn people away, saying, "We feel strongly about equity issues—that all children are entitled to a quality education."

Parent Barry Ching notes that child care prices in Honolulu do not vary greatly. He points out, "We are paying what generally everybody pays and we are lucky we are getting a good service.... I know we made a good choice; I know we could pay exactly the same amount of money and be getting poorer services."

Accessibility

Twelve months out of the year, KCAA is open from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Early drop-off or later pick-up times are available at some centers, allowing families to extend care to 6:30 a.m. or 5:30 p.m. Two centers also offer half-day programs. Centers are located throughout the island of Oahu to be convenient for families. The centers that are farther from Honolulu maintain longer hours to accommodate parents commuting to the city. Because the two infant-toddler centers aim to serve teen parents who are trying to continue in school, so they are located within high schools.

Family support

Staff frequently help families access services for their children. KCAA arranges for screening assessment of at-risk children through the Department of Health and for a psychologist to work with these children and their families (often paying for the initial psychological assessment). It helps the families of children with special needs obtain supplemental services from the Department of Education. In 1997-98, KCAA served 26 children with special needs in its inclusive classrooms. One center, Mother Rice, serves 16 additional children from a local preschool's special education program, who visits the center weekly to interact with the Mother Rice class of four-year-olds.

Individual KCAA centers offer locally funded services to families. For example, the Lions Club pays for eye screenings and speech therapy services for the Laura Morgan Center. The American Pediatrics Association maintains a collaborative relationship with the program to provide pediatric consultations and training to staff at each center. All of the centers offer

supplementary classes that families can purchase for their children, including Japanese language, Hawaiian language and culture, swimming, and movement and dance.

More than one-fifth of the families served by KCAA have limited English proficiency. To address the language barrier between families and staff, KCAA conducts an orientation session and program materials in Chinese and is creating materials in Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean. KCAA also offers Saturday School—bilingual sessions for children, parents, grandparents, and teachers that focus on child development and involve families in children's acquisition of English vocabulary. This program is funded through foundation grants.

Parent involvement and education

At KCAA, parents regularly participate in the program by volunteering in the classrooms, sharing cultural lessons with the children, and going on field trips. Holiday celebrations encourage children and parents to complete activities together. Teachers say that they show parents that they are happy to have them involved in the program. As Muriel preschool teacher Susan Burns says, "We really make it clear that we respect them."

Parents report that communication with the staff is very good and that they feel well informed about what is going on at school and about things they can do to support their children's learning. Each day, teachers write messages to parents about class activities and notes are about their child's activities. Each family has at least two parent-teacher conferences each year. Teachers also distribute monthly calendars of lesson plans and activities, and both the centers and the agency produce parent newsletters.

KCAA provides parenting and grandparenting education throughout the year. Each center holds parent participation days, during which the adults complete activities with their children that focus on different skills. At the beginning of the year, parents attend a three-day orientation with their children, which helps families fully understand the classes and allows teachers to present ideas for extending activities at home. Dudock is particularly pleased with the positive response KCAA has received to parenting classes offered for teenage parents. She says, "It's so easy. All we did is make it comfortable to be there."

KCAA trains its teachers in supporting positive parenting through understanding of cultural values. Jeb Chang, whose son did not speak any English when starting at KCAA, recalls, "The teacher over there was very helpful. She even asked me, 'Can you give me some basic words in Chinese?' That really helped. She was very cooperative.... She made sure [my son] was comfortable in school. That's why we stayed there."

Financial and Structural Support

Board of trustees

Since its inception, KCAA has had a board of trustees. Originally the board directly managed the agency, but today the board provides long-range planning, fiscal and programmatic oversight, and helps with fund-raising. The board has both a standing finance committee and a development committee. For new projects, such as the development of the infant-toddler centers, the board creates special advisories that include community experts. Members of the

board include independent business people, foundation representatives, experts in early childhood education, and community volunteers.

Union

The teachers are members of a local Teamsters Union and are the only preschool teachers in Hawaii who are unionized. They joined the union about 20 years ago during a period when they felt disenfranchised. They had first attempted to join the teachers union, but were rejected, and turned to the Teamsters Union.

Dudock thinks that joining a union has offered a mechanism for staff to become involved in decisions that affect them. For example, when the economic recession resulted in severe financial obstacles for KCAA, the union helped to convince teachers that the agency's financial assessments were accurate. The teachers then asked the nonprofit arm of the union for help in providing funds for staff raises. They were unable to get the financial help, but the effort exemplified the increased involvement of teachers in working to improve the program. Teacher Berl Kaneshiro notes that the shop steward meetings have even focused on ways to raise money for the agency. But, as teacher Susan Burns admits, "In hard economic times, [the union's] hands are tied."

The relationship between the union and KCAA administrators has changed dramatically in the past few years, moving from an adversarial one to a more collaborative partnership. Trustee Greg Pai attributes this change to the impact of the recession and to president and CEO Dudock. Pai says, "The economic situation...really set a stage for some revolutionary thinking... Jackie is able to talk to people freely. She is able to just walk across boundaries that other people would just simply not cross." Dudock has developed a positive rapport with representatives from the union. As one teacher notes, "They trust her now. She's really pro-staff."

Many KCAA teachers credit the union with a historic push for higher salaries and an increase in job security. Teacher Kaneshiro adds that the union has also helped to negotiate good benefits for staff.

Revenue

The largest sources of program revenue are family fees and the products of fund-raising efforts (see Table 103). Fund raising provides both direct contributions to the operating budget and income through returns on the program's endowment. The program also receives grants to offer services (such as U.S. Department of Agriculture funding for meal service) and to finance scholarships (through funds from the Aloha United Way and gifts from foundations). Additional revenue is generated by center-based fundraising events and KCAA's thrift shop, which is run by volunteers.

In recent years, KCAA has received funding from three family foundations established by the same missionaries that founded KCAA. (Two of the three continue to have a designated interest in early childhood education projects.) These historic ties have been advantageous for KCAA in seeking funding and have led some foundation trustees to serve on the KCAA board. Susan Jones, a program officer for the Hawaii Community Foundation, points out, "There is a real commitment and interest because they see KCAA living out what their great-great-grandparents envisioned."

Table 10.3.
Sources of Revenue for KCAA Pre-Schools of Hawaii:
January 1995-August 1996

Source of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Parent fees
Contributions from individuals and foundations
Fees and grants from government agencies (including USDA funding)
Endowment return from investments
Investment income
Contributions received indirectly (mostly Aloha United Way funding for tuition support)
Thrift shop profit
School fund-raising events (by individual centers)

KCAA's long-range planning

In the mid 1990s, Dudock developed a three-year master plan for KCAA, called the Model Comprehensive System for the Delivery of Early Childhood Education and Care, to improve the quality of care and to update administrative structure. The plan focused on improving child-staff ratios and group sizes, expanding professional development opportunities, and improving teacher aide training. It also called for streamlining operations, giving center directors more responsibility, and seeking new sources of income.

The teachers seem quite pleased with the initial results of the plan. Geraldine Hee, who has worked for KCAA for 41 years, notes that the changes have made teaching easier. She appreciates the smaller group sizes, the resource workshops, and the aides in her classroom. Center director Diane Nishida says the program changes “were primarily for KCAA’s children, but it really affected the teaching quality in keeping the number of children at a minimum.” Burns points out, “We’ve got great leadership... [Dudock] works tirelessly. Nothing defeats her. She just doesn’t give up. I think that’s an inspiration to everyone.”

Started one year before the sharpest decline in Hawaii’s economy, the fund raising associated with the plan helped cushion the blow of a significant drop in enrollment (and revenue). Indeed, the agency used the period of decreased enrollment as an opportunity to improve child-staff ratios. Developing a master plan gave KCAA access to new sources of funding. Dudock says, “To me, quality is and can be a financial strategy.”

The foundation community was very supportive of the master plan and donated funds for both the agency’s endowment and special projects. Susan Jones, of the Community Foundation, says, “The comprehensive system [proposal] was very complex, but that was part of its strength in that it wasn’t just one thing that needed to be addressed. It was putting in place a system that would support, over the long term, quality, affordability, accessibility.”

Endowment

As a prelude to program improvements, KCAA initiated an extensive fundraising campaign in 1994-95. The program received gifts for its endowment amounting to more than \$500,000 that year. Many of the gifts were spurred by the Henry Clark Challenge, a 3:1 matching effort by a local philanthropist. Donations came from more than nine local corporations, as well as numerous foundations and individuals, including alumni and families of enrolled children. Between 1994 and 1996, 13 foundations and trusts gave money for the endowment and to support specific scholarships and projects.

As of 1997, the value of KCAA’s endowment totaled approximately \$2.3 million. One million is held in a fund established by the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation that provides full scholarships for homeless and low-income families. By providing roughly \$50,000 each year in scholarships, Dudock says, the grant allows the agency to serve some of the poorest families in Hawaii.

In-kind support

One of the greatest contributions to the program is the donation of facilities. KCAA owns one facility and rents six others for \$1 each from local family foundations. Two public high schools donate classroom space for the infant and toddler programs. The infant-toddler programs also receive some of their staff costs, supplies, and equipment from the State Department of Education. One of the programs also receives support from the State Department of Human Services.

The in-kind contributions listed in Table 10.4 significantly reduce expenses for KCAA and allow the program to maintain moderate parent fees. When combined with extensive fund-raising efforts, these consistent gifts have allowed the agency to not only weather the state’s economic downturn but also to expand its services and improve the quality of its classrooms.

Table 10.4.
In-Kind Donations to KCAA Pre-Schools of Hawaii: 1996

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Facilities from Atherton Family Foundation, Bishop Estate, and public high schools
Services funded by other organizations (State Department of Education for infant and toddler programs; Atherton Family Foundation for improved information systems)
Volunteer aides from University of Hawaii, local high schools, and Honolulu Community Action Program; and parent volunteers

Services for families (for example, eye screenings) donated by local organizations such as Lions Club, pediatric associations

Training for center directors, teachers, and aides funded by the Department of Labor, Hawaii Community Foundation, and the Castle Foundation

Chapter 11

River Valley Child Development Services

Huntington, West Virginia

In Hamlin, West Virginia, a small community nestled in the rolling hills of Appalachia, River Valley Child Development Services' Children's Center is the only full-time child care center in town. Many of the families struggle with illiteracy, low incomes, and unemployment. Ninety percent of families served by the center in 1997-98 earned less than \$30,000.

Assistant Director Cathy Jones illustrates how River Valley helps these families by telling the story of a parent volunteer who had asked to share a storybook with the children but who could not read. The teacher welcomed her offer. "Well," she said, "just take the book and tell them about the pictures." After sharing the delight of the book, the mother proudly announced to the staff that she had read to the children. Jones says, "It was really an exciting thing for her, and of course it is going to make things that much better for her child—the child's building of self-esteem and that constant day-to-day exposure to best practice in working with children."

River Valley Child Development Services is a nonprofit agency that serves as contractor for numerous publicly funded services for children and families in an eight West Virginia counties. The state Department of Education established River Valley in 1971 as a demonstration kindergarten program. After kindergartens went statewide, the agency turned to providing early childhood programs, initiating demonstration child care, early intervention services, and training for early childhood educators. Then it began to administer subsidy and food programs, resource-and-referral services, and after-school programs.

River Valley has grown from a staff of two in 1972 to more than 100 full-time (and 30 on-call) employees today. The program now runs four early childhood education centers, which serve approximately 375 children (infants to five-year-olds). Through all of its programs, the agency serves more than 1,200 children each year.

Commitment to Quality

Classrooms characteristics

In Sharon Freeman's classroom, the teachers warmly greet the preschoolers and their parents. On the morning of our visit, Daniel urges to Freeman, "Look! Look!" while he points to his shoe, newly tied. Freeman asks, "Did you learn that over the weekend?" and when Daniel shakes his head yes, she says, "Very good. I am so proud of you, Daniel!" She then asks the other children, "Who else needs to learn how to tie shoes?" When a few children raise their hands, she encourages Daniel to show them how it is done.

In Alice Butcher and Brenda Porter's preschool room, much activity is driven by the children's ideas. The teachers not only facilitate projects but also actively join in the imaginative play. For example, on the day of our visit, a group of children are constructing a bus out of blocks. Butcher offers a round block to Peter to use for the steering wheel.

Butcher: Peter is a good bus driver.

Peter: Here we go.

Katherine: Drive to school.
Porter [joining in by getting on the back of the bus]: Where are we going?
Peter: To the store.
Porter: What are we going to buy when we get there?
Peter: We're here.
Porter: Let's get off and see what we can buy.
Katherine: I like these little hats.
Peter [pointing to the hats]: How much are these?
Porter: Two dollars.
Peter: I have four dollars.
Porter: Then you can buy two hats.

Jane Haddox teaches at a center housed in a vocational-technical school. It serves teen student mothers and their children, infants to five-year-olds. It is the only center in the town that serves children under three. Vocational students frequently work as interns in the classroom or volunteer to do projects with the children. On the day of our visit, animal husbandry students talk with the preschoolers about taking care of pets. Then, when the children began clapping their hands, dancing, and swinging their arms to music, Haddox notices one toddler turning circles and she asks, "Do you want to do ring around the rosie?" And a new game is on. Both Haddox and an early intervention specialist in the classroom respond to every child with warmth and enthusiasm.

Program characteristics

River Valley's child care centers include the first NAEYC-accredited center in West Virginia. Two of its four centers are accredited, and the other two, in new facilities, are in the accreditation process. Every parent we interviewed knows that the centers are NAEYC-accredited and what that entails. José Antonio Simental, for example, says, "From my point of view, it means that somebody else is looking, someone from the outside. It makes you feel more secure about your child's welfare." Holly Spears, who is both a teacher and a parent in the program, says accreditation standards are important for maintaining a level of high-quality care throughout the center. "I know everybody is unified in the goals we are striving for with children."

Teachers and administrators report that staff morale at River Valley is high and that the agency is well respected. Sandy Poore, the agency's quality assurance support coordinator, says, "There's an amount of pride in saying that you work for River Valley." Perhaps as a result, staff turnover is low, averaging just under 10 percent in 1996 and 1997. To maintain its standards, the agency requires that all teaching staff possess a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential plus an Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialists (ACDS) degree. The ACDS program is administered statewide for early childhood educators by River Valley.

Parents say they are pleased with the care their children receive at River Valley centers and the skills of the teachers. Terry Hale believes the center has helped to make his children more independent and provide positive opportunities for socialization. Another father says he is particularly impressed by the way the children are taught to communicate with their peers. "I am continually surprised by the quality of care," says Richard Badenhause. "I have brothers and sisters across the country who are parents, and we have by far the best situation of any of them—across the board." Holly Spears notes that her infant's teachers always look for the best qualities

in her child and nurture her. One parent with older children says that River Valley well prepared her children for kindergarten and first grade.

In addition to serving as a child care provider, River Valley acts as a contractor for numerous other programs. The agency provides the following services:

- a five-county child care resource-and-referral that manages all public subsidies for child care and conducts training for local providers
- a home-based parent-education program and parent-education services for families referred by Child Protective Services
- seven after-school programs for elementary school children
- three full-day summer programs for school-age children
- early intervention services for infants and toddlers with special needs (both in centers and home-based)
- management of the child care food program for family child care providers as well as monitoring and training of the providers
- administration of training for a statewide child care apprenticeship program
- development of a statewide training calendar for early childhood education professionals.

Staff Compensation

Salaries and benefits

River Valley's salaries are the highest among early childhood teachers in the region (see Table 11.1).⁸ "There's no other child care center in this area that pays comparably and offers the benefits that we do," Jones says. Teacher Christy Takach believes her salary "reflects what they [administrators] can do for me. They pay me as high as they can.... The money is just not there in this field." Takach adds, "If I was somewhere else, I know I wouldn't be making what I do here."

⁸ River Valley maintains a 37.5 hour scheduled work week, so that on weeks when there are staff meetings or parent meetings, staff are not required to work more than 40 hours per week and the agency does not have to pay for overtime.

Table 11.1.
Hourly Wages of River Valley Child Development Services Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Position	Lowest Hourly Wage	Highest Hourly Wage
Administrators	\$11.34	\$16.00
Teachers	\$8.72	\$12.45

Teachers are paid according to a salary scale based on education level. The program provides a \$440 increase in annual salary whenever professional staff reach any of these educational milestones: 15 credit hours above bachelors; masters; masters plus 15 credit hours; or masters plus 30 credit hours. Paraprofessionals receive a \$600 annual salary increase for reaching the following levels: 15 college credit hours; 30 credit hours; completion of apprenticeship program; or completion of CDA. Many staff pursue study to increase their salaries. Teacher Gail Turley did. Without them, she says, “I probably never would have gone to school.” River Valley also offers an annual financial reward for each year of experience in the program: \$200 for paraprofessionals and \$400 for professionals.

Each staff member working at least 20 hours per week gets a full benefits package—health insurance, a minimum of 23 days of vacation and paid holidays, sick leave, and life and disability insurance (see Table 11.2). The agency also offers a retirement plan by which staff may contribute up to 4.5 percent of their gross salary and the agency contributes up to 7.5 percent. The Cabell County Board of Education acts as the fiscal agency for River Valley, allowing it low-cost access to the board’s life insurance and retirement programs.

While River Valley administrators prioritize good benefits for staff, they struggle with the financial consequences of doing so. For example, its board of directors decided in 1996 to reduce the number of sick-leave days from 15 to 7 days per year, yet purchased short-term disability insurance that takes effect if more than 7 days are lost to illness. At the same time, the amount of vacation for staff members was increased by 3 days. This change freed the agency from having to maintain a large cash reserve to cover sick-leave accumulations.

Staff members say they are grateful for the quality of their benefits. According to teacher Sharon Freeman, “I don’t think there is any place around that has as good benefits.” Teacher Diana Ruley credits executive director Norma Gray. “I know [she] is the main reason we have what we have,” Ruley says. “I worked at another center where they couldn’t get insurance.”

Table 11.2.
Benefits Offered to River Valley Child Development Services Full-Time Staff: 2002-03

Benefit	Amount Offered Per Year for Full-Time Staff*
Vacation days and holidays	15-21 days annual leave plus 8 paid holidays

Sick leave or personal days	7 days
% health insurance paid	80% of individual benefit; partial payment of family benefit
Retirement plan	River Valley contributes 7.5% of gross salary when employee contributes 4.5%
Life insurance	Employer-paid
Short-term disability	Employer-paid
Educational leave	After two years of services, employee may take up to 5 months unpaid leave to attend school
Worker's compensation	Employer-paid

* Benefits available to all employees who work at least 20 hours per week

Professionalization of Staff

Professional development

Educational certificates and diplomas line the hallway at River Valley's Enterprise Center. As pointed out above, teachers are strongly encouraged to obtain additional education and they are rewarded financially for doing so. Jim Snyder, an administrator in West Virginia's Department of Education, sees the certificates and diplomas on the wall as indicative of the "growth and personal investment that those individuals are making to improve and grow that particular program."

River Valley administrators also offer guidance in professional development. Directors at the centers meet with staff four times each year to discuss individual professional growth goals. Annually, each staff member completes a self-evaluation and creates an individual staff development plan, in which she or he designate three professional development projects to complete within a year. Such projects have included teaching or taking a class, completing a degree program, and writing an article on child care. Wendy Swann says River Valley is "a great place to work. You never stop learning."

Staff members are encouraged to attend local, state, and national conferences, such as NAEYC's Annual Conference and professional development conference; conferences of West Virginia's and Ohio's AEYC Affiliates, the Southern Early Childhood Association, and Save the Children; and a statewide conference on brain development. The agency provides \$400 per year to each teacher to attend conferences and offers adjusted time within the work week to staff who attend a conference on a weekend. Staff attend numerous inservice training programs and events on the statewide training calendar that is administered by the agency. Teachers also get paid release time to visit other programs.

Administrators and teachers say the agency maintains a high level of professionalism. Assistant director Cathy Jones says Norma Gray “has set a standard for this agency, and there is not any employee who is not aware of that. She does the best and she expects the best. I think that expectation permeates the culture of this agency far and wide.” Center director Judy Kachelreis notes that staff members are encouraged to contribute however they see fit. She says, “I feel very fortunate to be here. You are allowed a lot of creativity and flexibility.”

Staff describe open communication between administrators and teachers. “If there is a problem,” says Gail Turley, “it is really considered and taken to heart. What you think and what you feel counts.” Representatives from each center sit on a Peer Advisory Council, which addresses programmatic issues and allows for direct communication with the executive director.

Involvement in the early childhood community

River Valley promotes professional development not only for its own staff but also for teachers across the state. The agency runs the statewide Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialists (ACDS) program, which includes both classroom learning and on-the-job training. Developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training and the W.Va. Department of Education, the apprenticeship consists of 300 hours of classroom instruction combined with 4,000 hours of supervised on-the-job training. Executive director Gray explains, “We had always provided as much training to staff as possible, but it was always piecemeal. With the apprenticeship, it is week after week of going to class and taking what you learned back to the children. That’s where you see real differences in what’s happening between adults and children in the classroom” (U.S. Department of Labor 1998, p.3).

River Valley staff members train the instructors in the apprenticeship program and supervise the family child care providers taking the courses. They also ensure that center directors who have a teacher participating in the apprenticeship program sign an agreement to give the student a pay increase upon completion of the program. In 1997 the Department of Labor announced that it wanted to use River Valley’s apprenticeship program as a model for training across the nation.

River Valley makes other contributions to West Virginia’s early childhood community. Through a contract with the State Bureau of Health, the agency manages the statewide early childhood training calendar. It also offers courses on management and financing for child care directors and seminars on starting a child care program. Annually, River Valley provides administrative support for a two-day early childhood conference sponsored by the Huntington Early Childhood Council. Administrators serve on more than 20 local and state committees, including the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families and the State Coalition for West Virginia’s Children. Through such committees, River Valley staff members help shape state-level child care policy.

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

River Valley is committed to making child care affordable for families and has implemented a sliding fee scale based on family income. Over half of the children in River

Valley's child care centers are from families with low incomes, and roughly 50 percent are in one-parent households. At least 20 percent of River Valley's children are eligible for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) support, which pays their tuition. The agency accepts these children at the state reimbursement rate, although it is lower than their cost of care. Jones admits, "Our reimbursement rate for subsidy, although it has improved, still doesn't cover the full costs for the state average, let alone for our agency."

In 1998 the weekly fees for preschool-age children in River Valley's centers ranged from \$48 to \$120, while fees for toddlers (under 24 months) ran from \$58 to \$130. According to Gray, the board has worked to limit fee increases to only every other year. When raising rates, the agency has tried to equalize the percentage of income that families are paying, rather than simply raising all fees by the same amount. As a result, recent fee increases have not affected families at the lower end of the fee scale.

Gray says, "We are usually a step ahead of other centers; we usually charge more, but then that brings the fees up locally. We set the precedent." River Valley's highest fee may be above others in the city, but few other programs adjust fees to accommodate family need. "There are not many centers with a sliding fee scale in the state," Gray says. "It is our way of trying to help those who are struggling."

When River Valley was first established, all families were charged the same, regardless of income. The sliding fee scale when administrators realized the wide contrast in incomes among the families that they were serving. As Gray recalls, "It was when a Porsche drove up out front and they were only paying \$40 a week for child care—all of a sudden it hit us that we are asking our staff to subsidize this person's child care so that he can buy a Porsche.... That was the light bulb that went off."

Still, the full cost of care provided by River Valley is not paid by the families on the highest end of the sliding fee scale. An analysis of fees charged at one River Valley center in 1998 showed that all families are subsidized by grants raised by the agency. The highest fee charged represented only 31 percent of the actual cost for infants and toddlers and 43 percent of the cost for preschoolers.

Parents say that River Valley's fees are comparable to those of other community programs, but Dawn Norman points out that the agency offers higher quality services. Terry Hale even says, "We did look into a few other [child care] places and this was more affordable." Simental adds, "It's affordable with the sliding fee scale." Parent and board member Richard Badenhausem points out that no parents complained after a recent tuition increase, adding, "That seems to prove that point that people are willing to pay for quality care and that they still see it as affordable." Kristina Golden. A mother, says, "I think some parents feel that they can't afford *not* to send their child to River Valley. It's an important part of a broad-based socialization experience for young children."

Accessibility

According to River Valley parents, the program does a good job of including all children and families. One points to the mixture of ethnicities in the classrooms, and Simental adds, "'Everybody's equal'—they teach that here. I'm impressed with that." The program also aims to be convenient for families. The four centers are open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., five days a week, and they offer services year-round. The agency also provides after-school care and full-day summer programs for elementary school children.

River Valley tries to make child care convenient for populations with special child care needs. For example, one center provides infant care in an isolated rural community. Another program is located within a vocational school to serve teen parents. Roger Rainey, assistant director of the vocational school, says of the on-site program: “One of the large benefits is that they offer day care to high school students who have small children. That’s of tremendous value to us. Before, students would have to drop out because they couldn’t find adequate child care.” He also points out that the program provides valuable parenting education to the high school students.

Family support

River Valley is particularly outstanding in its efforts to serve children with special needs. In its inclusive classrooms, the agency has early intervention specialists for the 13 percent of its children who have special needs. Center director Suzi Brodof stresses that the early intervention specialists are “a plus for the regular staff and for the other children. The regular staff has someone else there to consult with when they have concerns with their children, and the parents of the typical children see that as a plus for their children to be around all kinds of other children.” Although they work in the classrooms, early intervention specialists are not included in the agency’s calculations for child-staff ratios. The agency also works to retain these staff members. Out of the organizations serving the 12 early intervention regions in the state, River Valley has the lowest turnover of early intervention specialists and offers the best benefits and salary package for them.

Outside the classroom, River Valley provides services to families of children with special needs that include respite care, physical and speech therapy programs, psychological assessments, and transportation. Much of this care is provided at home. The agency also offers early intervention services to families using family child care programs.

Parent Kristina Golden says she was thrilled to enroll her 18-month-old child with Down’s Syndrome in River Valley. “It is an inclusive program,” she says, “and I think an incredibly progressive program because the early intervention is included in a day care setting.” Golden describes Gray’s “vision of inclusion,” explaining, “She’s been doing it for 25 years—there’s been inclusion of special needs children. I believe West Virginia was the first state to go for early intervention as an entitlement, and River Valley led the service delivery. I am really proud of that.”

River Valley informs all families of supportive services available in their communities. For example, they refer families to health clinics and let parents know about opportunities to obtain free immunizations. The agency has also offered dental checkups and interagency screenings on site.

Family involvement and education

Parents say they are kept well-informed about classroom activities and that it is easy to communicate with the teaching staff. Teachers provide daily reports on the children’s activities, naps, and eating; weekly progress reports on children’s activities and skills; and agency newsletters. Teachers also provide suggestions for activities that can be done at home. Parent Simental says a daily report “helps you communicate with the children.”

Families are invited to participate in open houses, quarterly parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and annual evaluations. They are also encouraged to visit the classroom during the day or to come for lunch. Seats are reserved on the board of directors for parents. Each center also has a parent advisory committee, which helps to plan parent meetings, family activities, community involvement, and fund-raising events. Activities have included center dinners, field trips, and fix-up days. Parent fund-raising events have included selling ice cream at a county fair, hosting a pancake festival, and helping with a community carnival and petting zoo.

Financial and Structural Support

Board of directors

The agency has had a board of directors since its inception. The board, which meets bimonthly, includes parents and representatives from collaborating agencies, community groups, local universities and colleges, and the West Virginia Department of Education. The board oversees the finances for the program, advises the director, and helps set policies for the agency. Although it does not conduct fund raising for River Valley, the board does help create a budget each year.

Members say the central purpose of the board is to help River Valley maintain its high program quality. Board member Kristina Golden describes the agency as a state leader that serves as a model of service delivery for other organizations. She adds, "The board is committed to River Valley providing the best services in the state of West Virginia."

Revenue

In 1996-97, River Valley had a budget of over \$4.9 million for all of its services. Table 11.3 lists the sources of revenue for the whole agency. Some of these funds go to providing services other than child care, such as early intervention services, teacher training, or resource-and-referral services. For all of its services, River Valley strives to find multiple sources of funding. Jim Snyder of the W.Va. Department of Education, one of the program's funders, praises River Valley administrators for their outstanding fund-raising skills. He says, "We really appreciate that they take what they receive and grow that money.... I think that River Valley has maximized the use of their resources...be they personal, financial or physical. They have done an exceptional job in that respect."

The agency received just under \$2 million in grants in 1996-97 from the W.Va. Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), the W.Va. Department of Education (DOE), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). DHHR supports child development services, the resource-and-referral program, and parent education. Funding from DOE goes to child development centers, special needs education, school-age child care, and services for Title I children and families at risk. USDA contracts with River Valley to be the sponsor of the food program for family child care providers in six counties and to provide food for children at its centers.

The agency also received \$1.46 million that year in Part C Medicaid funds for its array of early intervention services. The Huntington Clinical Foundation supplemented these funds by

supporting therapy for children not eligible for Medicaid. In addition to these large grants, River Valley got money for managing projects for the state and for conducting training throughout West Virginia. Parents also raised small amounts through fund-raising events at each center. Profits from these activities were distributed directly by the parent advisory groups.

To help finance its two newest facilities, River Valley administrators raised approximately \$59,000 in private donations. These came largely from West Virginia foundations, such as the McDonough Foundation, Greater Kanawha Foundation, and Huntington Foundation. Furnishings and playground equipment for one center were provided through grants from the James H. and Alice Teubert Charitable Trust and the Huntington Foundation. One of the buildings was built with funds from the City of Huntington’s Enterprise Community Grant and a Community Development Block Grant. The agency may hold the center lease as long as the property is used as a child care facility.

Table 11.3.
Sources of Revenue for River Valley Child Development Services: 1996-1997

Source of Revenue (from Largest to Smallest)
Grant revenue from State Department of Education (child care services and school-age child care), State Department of Health and Human Resources (parent education, early intervention services, resource and referral program), Part C Medicaid (early intervention services), Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families (expansion of apprenticeship program) and USDA (food program for family day care providers)
Parent fees
Fees for management of publicly funded programs
Child Care and Development Fund through State Department of Health and Human Resources (reimbursement for child care for low-income families)
Donations from foundations for new facilities and services
City of Huntington’s Enterprise Community Grant and a Community Development Block Grant for new facilities
Fees for other contracted services (such as training and referral services)
Interest income

Local foundations also support some of the agency’s activities. For example, the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation has provided significant funding for the agency’s apprenticeship program. The Governor’s Cabinet has given River Valley funds to expand the apprenticeship program to include Head Start staff and TANF recipients.

In-kind support

In addition to grants, River Valley receives in-kind contributions from the communities that it serves (see Table 11.4). At each of the child care centers, volunteers support the professional staff. These volunteers include college interns, some of whom go on to become River Valley staff, and participants in a foster grandparents program. Centers also receive donations of equipment, books, and toys from parents, the parent advisory committees, and community members. Community organizations occasionally offer in-kind services. The year we visited the agency, Appalachian Power Company covered the costs of moving and storing power equipment during construction of a new facility.

Table 11.4.
In-Kind Donations to River Valley Child Development Services: 1996–97

Type of Donation (from Largest to Smallest)
Volunteers (including interns and foster grandparents)
Discounted land provided by local businessman for new facility
Facility provided by vocational school
Custodial services, utilities, and paper supplies provided by vocational school
Equipment, books, and toys donated by parents and communities
Moving and storage of equipment for new facility by Appalachian Power Company

Expenses at River Valley facilities are partly covered by in-kind donations. For example, when the newest center was envisioned, a local businessman sold land to the agency at a reduced price. At Children’s Village, housed in a public vocational school, River Valley pays no rent and is given free custodial services, utilities, and paper supplies.

Historically, when all of River Valley’s facilities were provided by school districts, in-kind donations played a larger role in the agency’s finances. But the agency lost all but one of these sites over the last decade. Executive director Gray admits finding and maintaining facilities is an ongoing concern. Indeed, she notes that the cost of new facilities is the principal budget item against which she has to balance teachers’ salaries. “Rewarding our staff is primary in our budget considerations,” she says, “but having to deal with facilities now has given us another financial burden to carry.” In the face of such obstacles, River Valley administrators diligently seek out new sources of funding and in-kind donations. They have earned a reputation for both high-quality services and effective use and growth of resources.

Chapter 12

Child Care Services Association

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Unlike the other nine exemplary programs in the Program Recognition Project, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is neither a child care center nor family child care home. The nonprofit agency supports the work of teachers, centers, and homes rather than directly providing services to young children. CCSA works at the local, state, and national level to promote affordable, accessible, high-quality child care.

CCSA's efforts to address quality, compensation, and affordability include administering projects to advance program quality and teacher education; advocating for child care; and conducting research on child care public policy issues. CCSA is best known for developing the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project (or Teacher Education and Compensation Helps), a scholarship program for early childhood providers designed to increase teacher education, reduce turnover of staff, and reward additional schooling with higher wages. CCSA's other programs also aim to meet multiple goals – often simultaneously addressing the problems of poor compensation and low education levels.

The origins of CCSA date to 1975 when the local United Way established a committee to explore ways to support affordable child care for low-income children. After researching how United Way funds were being used, members of the committee decided to restructure local funding for child care and give resources to families rather than to centers. The committee also helped develop an accountability system to track every dollar of local United Way funding. Helping families directly and being accountable for every dollar of funding would become central tenets of CCSA. By 1986, child care needs in the community had increased and the committee incorporated CCSA as an independent no-profit organization staffed by volunteers. In 1988, CCSA began to hire paid staff and, by 1993, had a staff of six and a \$500,000 budget. By 2001 the organization had a staff of 120 and a \$17 million budget.

Commitment to Quality

CCSA works to improve the quality of early childhood education both in its surrounding community and throughout North Carolina. Locally, the agency administers quality initiatives aimed at improving the care provided to children and increasing the skills of teachers. Across the state the agency conducts research to inform policymakers about the provision, quality, and cost of child care.

In Orange County, for example, CCSA offers free technical assistance to providers seeking to upgrade their programs. For programs seeking to become NAEYC accredited or to obtain an AA license (i.e., a state license with stricter quality requirements than a standard license), CCSA staff help directors develop new program policies and improvement strategies.. A master/mentor teacher provides role modeling and feedback to teachers at no charge. CCSA also organizes the work of community mentors, center directors, and family child care providers who have completed a program upgrade and can offer advice on strategies for improving quality. The agency's efforts have helped boost the quality of child care in Orange County. Between

1993 and 1998 there was a 250 percent increase in AA (higher) licensed care and the number of accredited preschools doubled.

Once programs obtain a higher licensure status or accreditation, they are eligible to apply for an incentive minigrant from CCSA. These small grants are meant to encourage higher quality programs to better address child care needs in the community and to improve facilities. Grants have been given for projects such as creating model playgrounds or developing infant and toddler slots.

CCSA works with an AmeriCorps team who supports programs trying to improve quality. Americorps members serve as substitutes for teachers in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, serve as volunteers in classrooms, and promote early literacy by developing family lending libraries in programs. CCSA maintains a resource library for all child care providers in Orange County.

To offer educational opportunities, CCSA coordinates a calendar of training events for Orange County child care providers. The calendar's offerings range from health and safety classes to courses in management and child development. Course fees are kept low to make them accessible to all teachers in the county.

CCSA also administers a central food preparation service for participating programs in Orange County, saving centers the expense of running their own kitchens. The meal service program operates from two central kitchens and serves 10 centers. Centers pay for the service, with those serving over 50 percent low-income children receiving a 5 percent discount. At the Community School for People Under Six, CCSA delivers breakfast, lunch, and snacks for the children. Beth Pierce, assistant director for the school, says, "It saves us [money] because we don't have to have a commercial kitchen.... A lot of child care programs can't afford that." The meal program is more efficient and cost-effective in preparing nutritious meals than an individual center, and it meets all of the health and safety standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. (Only centers that have children who participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program are eligible for the meal service program.)

Community School for People Under Six also participates in a number of other services offered by CCSA. Anna Mercer-McLean, director of the center, says CCSA has succeeded in identifying the needs of programs and creating services to meet them. "Usually whenever they come up with a proposal to do something," she says, "I want to be a part of it because I know it is going to benefit our children and families." Lynn Wray, former director of Kidsworks, a work-site child care facility in Raleigh, adds that CCSA is always looking for new ways to help. "They are very big advocates for children and for programs that affect children," she says.

In addition to directly aiding local providers, CCSA helps communities throughout North Carolina to identify their child care needs and the areas of their child care system that need attention. It conducts workforce studies at both the county and state level. These allow counties to compare themselves to each other and to state averages on statistics such as education of providers, availability of care, teacher compensation, and child care policies and practices. Amy Staples, CCSA director of research, says research "allows us to give people really hard, fast data on which to make decisions.... Because we get information from the stakeholders, from the provider community, from the families, we are able to get an accurate, truer picture of current conditions and preferences." CCSA staff members have made presentations to county directors of local Smart Start programs to help them decide how to allocate grant funds. (Smart Start grants are provided by the state of North Carolina to counties to improve services for young

children.) CCSA administrators encourage county officials to assess everything from health insurance coverage for child care providers to the availability of training for teachers and directors.

CCSA also conducts numerous surveys for the state, offering a picture of child care demand and use, classroom quality, and working conditions, salaries, and benefits. The agency has explored topics such as fees charged by all regulated providers in the state or length of time families are on waiting lists for child care. These studies allow policymakers to understand the current status of child care and to see where there is room for improvement.

Professionalization of Staff

CCSA's largest project promotes quality care by improving the education of teachers. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project provides scholarships and financial incentives for teachers, family child care providers, and directors across the state to obtain additional education. CCSA started T.E.A.C.H. in 1990 to address the problems of an undereducated and poorly paid early childhood workforce in North Carolina. Edith Locke, director of the project, says, "T.E.A.C.H. really gets at the root of what quality is when you start talking about child care. The child care provider is at the root of quality."

Through T.E.A.C.H., teachers also are guaranteed salary increases upon completion of a specified number of credit hours. The program provides funds for quarterly travel stipends, a percentage of tuition and books, and one-half of the release time given. T.E.A.C.H. also provides counseling to participants and centers. Centers contribute part of tuition, provide teachers with paid release time each week, and agree to give teachers either a bonus or a pay raise upon completion of designated amounts of schooling. (The raises are above and beyond any other raises teachers receive.) Teachers, in turn, pay a portion of tuition and book expenses. According to participants, the scholarships for tuition and paid release time have been particularly critical to the program's success. Teacher Pat Holman says, "T.E.A.C.H. is a very much needed program because if we didn't have it, we wouldn't be going to school. I know I wouldn't...go to school; it's just too expensive. And we wouldn't have anyone to work with us in juggling time, to get time off from work, or to help pay for our books or traveling time."

To be eligible for T.E.A.C.H., teachers have to be employed at least 20 hours per week in a licensed child care center or a registered family child care home and to have hourly wages that fall below \$14.45 per hour. Employers must also agree to sponsor participating teachers. Participants can use T.E.A.C.H. to obtain a North Carolina Early Childhood Credential (a four-credit credential in child development), an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. Teachers who already have a bachelor's degree in early childhood development are not eligible to participate, unless they want to become a model mentor teacher.

T.E.A.C.H. has had a pervasive impact on the educational programs available to teachers in North Carolina. When T.E.A.C.H. was first started, 28 of the 58 community colleges in the state offered two-year degree programs in early childhood education. Now, with targeted funding from CCSA, all 58 offer them. CCSA staff also helped develop requirements for a new state Family Child Care credential and Early Childhood Administration credentials. Executive director Sue Russell says, "We see ourselves as partners in this process of educating the workforce. We are not really the direct providers of education...but we partner with all of these

various educational institutions, whether it's our community colleges or our four-year schools, to build an effective system for education for the provider community in our state."

In addition to raising education levels, T.E.A.C.H. tries to address the problem of high teacher turnover. All participants are asked to commit to stay at their centers one year for every year of T.E.A.C.H. they complete. For students obtaining an associate's degree, the requirements can lead them to stay in one center for at least six years, since it takes five years to obtain the degree going to school part time. CCSA's evaluation of T.E.A.C.H. shows progress in retaining teachers. In 1997, participants working toward an associate's degree had only a 10 percent rate of turnover, compared with a rate of 42 percent for all teachers in the state.

Directors say that low turnover is linked to increased professionalism among staff participating in T.E.A.C.H. Lynn Wray of Kidworks notes that her center has always encouraged staff to obtain additional education, "but with T.E.A.C.H....there is an air of professionalism. Not only are you going to school, but as a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipient, you kind of get on that advocacy wavelength too, and the teachers share that throughout the whole center." Director Mercer-McLean of the Community School for People Under Six describes the eight teachers from her program who participate in T.E.A.C.H.: "Their total image changes. You have to look at some of our teachers from the beginning to where they are now; it is just a total turnaround.... It's just a more positive feeling about who they are and what their job is as child care professionals. It makes a big difference."

Directors also report that T.E.A.C.H. improves morale. Margaret Shelton Fousher, who runs Blossoms Home Day Care, explains, "It makes you feel more like a professional because you are going to school to learn about something you love doing. The more you learn about what you are doing, the better you get at it. The better you get at it, the better you feel about it. You can pass that on not only to the children but also to the parents. They feel that you really know what you are talking about." Pat Holman, a teacher studying to obtain a bachelors degree, says, "It made me feel better about myself, knowing that I could go to school and I could learn what child care is about and help families in the community. It gives me a sense of pride about it."

Due to advocacy by CCSA, T.E.A.C.H. has been extended to all 100 counties in North Carolina. The legislature and governor jointly supported an increase in state funds to support the expansion. T.E.A.C.H. has also been implemented in 17 other states using both private donations and public funds.

Staff Compensation

To address low levels of compensation for Orange County's teachers, CCSA administers the Child Care WAGES® (Workers are Gaining Education and Salary) Project. Established in 1994, the project aims to raise levels of teacher compensation, promote continuing education, attract better educated providers, and reduce turnover. According to CCSA executive director Russell, "WAGES was really started to try to keep our best educated people from leaving and to encourage those folks who have some level of education to see its value and to continue moving forward." She says the project is based on research that cites education as a predictor of positive outcomes for children. "WAGES is really there to try to speak to that and to put a value on it, an economic value, as opposed to just lip service. It's there to try to say, 'People who have more

education should be paid more. They are worth more because we know that they will produce better outcomes for kids.”

The program provides annual salary supplements to teachers, directors, and family child care providers working in regulated programs in the county. The amount of the supplement is based on an individual’s education and increases for higher education levels. To participate, teachers need to have education beyond a high school diploma and earn less than \$14.45 per hour as a teacher or home provider or less than \$15 per hour as a director. Annual supplements for teachers working full-time range from \$200 to \$4,000.

WAGE\$ does not cost employers anything, although they must agree not to reduce participating teachers’ salaries or withhold wages. It is funded using a Smart Start grant designated for Orange County. Smart Start is a state government program designed to improve health and child care for children under age six in North Carolina. Smart Start is administered by councils of local community leaders and encourages public and private collaboration. The WAGE\$ program has been initiated in 62 other counties, which rely largely on Smart Start grants for funding.

WAGE\$ discourages turnover by generally increasing compensation and by paying supplements to teachers only if they have been employed for six continuous months in one center or home. The program has produced significant reductions in turnover. Before the program was implemented, CCSA conducted a survey of teachers eligible for WAGE\$. Their annual turnover rate was 36 percent. Four and a half years later, however, CCSA found that in Orange County the average annual turnover rate for the WAGE\$ participants to be markedly lower, just 10 percent.

WAGE\$ also offers a one-time signing bonus to teachers who hold associate or bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education and take their first teaching job in Orange County. Teachers with associate degrees earn \$500 and those with bachelor’s earn \$1,000 for agreeing to work in a program for a year. Since these individuals also receive annual WAGE\$ supplements, teachers with a bachelor’s degree can receive \$3,000 in their first year over and above whatever they are paid by their employer. Allison Miller, director of the WAGE\$ project, reports that the signing bonus has attracted well-educated teachers to the county. “The signing bonus is working,” she says. “We have actually doubled the number of bachelor’s degree teachers—early childhood education bachelor’s degree or higher—in Orange County over the last year as a result of the signing bonus.”

Teacher Hallie Montgomery says the signing bonus “definitely drew me to stay in Chapel Hill.... It definitely makes me want to stay at the center where I am now, and it gives me a better feeling about staying in this profession.” And teacher Erika Konrad reports that, with the supplement, “I am making close to what I could be making in the public school system.”

CCSA staff notes that WAGE\$, like T.E.A.C.H., has increased professionalism among teachers. Miller says the supplement makes them feel appreciated. “To them that translates into a sense of professionalism too because someone recognizes them as a professional, and all of a sudden they have a career, not just a job that they go to.” She adds, “And I think that also affects their willingness to keep getting education, because their whole perspective about what they are doing changes.” Family child care provider Shelton admits, “Without T.E.A.C.H., there’s no way I could have afforded to go to school. Without WAGE\$, there’s no way that I could be excited on a daily basis. For a home provider, it’s really a boost.” Janice Thompson, director of Victory Village Center, said, “It’s one of the biggest morale boosters from an administrative point of view. It’s not tied into their salary; it’s not something that they have to do anything

extra for, other than be a consistent, committed worker—that’s it.” WAGE\$ “takes the wind out of salaries being a morale depresser,” Thompson adds. Teacher Hallie Montgomery says the supplements convey that “someone else thinks you are doing a good job.”

WAGE\$ complements T.E.A.C.H., increasing the motivation for teachers to pursue additional education and raising compensation levels when they do so. The two programs together increase stability in the early childhood workforce, creating incentives for teachers to stay in the profession and to remain at a single center or home. Center director Mercer-McLean says, “The connection between T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$ has brought about continuity for many centers. I know it has for ours. It has made a big difference. We used to have a 50 percent turnover rate when I first came to the school, and we have a 0 percent turnover rate right now. That is a nice difference that has set in and it’s because people were feeling that someone else cared about them...that they weren’t just out there by themselves.”

Meeting Family Needs

Affordability

Both the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood and the Child Care WAGE\$ projects address affordability by helping underwrite the cost of training and/or increased staff compensation without putting the burden on families. Parents, as Russell says, “are gaining better quality care...without a real, substantial cost to their program.” To directly help reduce the fees that families pay, CCSA administers a child care subsidy program for low-income parents who live and/or work in Orange County. Each year the agency gives out over \$1 million in subsidies, funded mainly by the United Way and Smart Start.

The subsidy program was developed to complement the subsidy system of the Department of Social Services (DSS). CCSA’s program mainly serves families whose incomes fall above the limits sets for the DSS program or working families who are eligible for DSS but for whom funds are not available. CCSA gives priority to homeless families and teen parents with low incomes. Families must be working, in school, or looking for work to receive assistance in paying for child care. Anna Mercer-McLean says, “I don’t think our families could do without it. I think that is one of the most crucial programs. Parents benefit greatly from that because they couldn’t afford the real cost of child care.”

CCSA’s subsidy system is designed to pay higher reimbursement rates to programs meeting at least one of a set of tougher quality standards. These standards include accreditation, higher licensing level, and whether 50 percent or more of the staff is working toward a credential or possess a degree beyond a high school diploma. Teresa Smith, director of family support programs at CCSA, says, “We have really tried to recognize all the different ways people might be working toward quality and reward them for that and recognize that in their reimbursement rate.” She notes that the enhanced reimbursement rates have made a greater range of child care options available to low-income families. “It opens up the doors for families. Some providers, before we had this enhanced reimbursement rate system, could not afford to take subsidized children because they were going to take such a loss on what they were getting paid. As soon as we started doing these enhanced reimbursement rates, the doors just opened up. All different kinds of providers, both for-profit and nonprofit, that have these higher quality criteria are taking subsidized children. It has really expanded the affordability piece.” Many families change

providers when they become eligible for subsidy because they are able to select higher quality programs.

CCSA also helps families find child care. The agency runs a resource-and-referral service, through which they have tried to educate parents about the elements of quality child care. Staff highlight the programs that meet higher quality standards and teach parents how to shop for child care. They also work with programs and encourage them to develop sliding fee scales that reflect the true cost of care at the higher end of the scales.

Financial and Structural Support

Board of directors

CCSA has a board of directors composed of one-third recipients of services (parents or child care providers), one-third early childhood professionals, and one-third other representatives from the community. The board assists with fund raising, offers guidance on administrative and policy decisions, and contributes to the creation of new services. Each of CCSA's major programs, such as T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$, also has an advisory committee that guides its development. These committees include recipients (parents or teachers), program directors, educators, and community collaborators.

Revenue and in-kind support

Funding comes from counties, the state of North Carolina, foundations, private corporations, the United Way, and individuals (see Table 12.1). CCSA is the largest funded United Way agency in Orange County. The majority of funding comes from the North Carolina Division of Child Development, which supports both WAGE\$ and T.E.A.C.H. Indeed, the only source of funding for the WAGE\$ program is Smart Start, a state initiative.

Because CCSA's programs are dependent on public funding, many recipients attend legislative hearings on T.E.A.C.H. and Smart Start. Teachers say that their interest in such programs has encouraged them to be advocates. Center director Janice Thompson notes, "It has built some confidence in people." Family child care provider Shelton added, "It [WAGE\$] has given you a reason to fight. If it wasn't here, we wouldn't have a reason to talk about it. The same with Smart Start and the same with T.E.A.C.H...this has given us a reason to fight for our profession."

T.E.A.C.H. gets state and federal government dollars as well as contributions from private foundations. The program enjoys bipartisan support in the North Carolina legislature. CCSA's Edith Locke explains this broad support: "T.E.A.C.H. is unlike many other programs in that it is not just a program giving away money. There is that partnership that is there, and we produce outcomes." Private foundations help disseminate T.E.A.C.H. in a number of states. IBM has provided \$450,000 in scholarships for teachers and directors in targeted T.E.A.C.H. programs.

Funding for local quality initiatives comes from Smart Start, block grant funds, and local foundations. Such initiatives include, for example, a second kitchen to provide food to centers in northern Orange County. The agency receives fees for services from centers for providing

training and meals, which are offered at cost. CCSA also receives money from private employers and Orange County to provide resource-and-referral services.

Orange County, the cities of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, United Way, Smart Start, the University of North Carolina, churches, and individuals fund the subsidy program in Orange County. Funding for research by CCSA has come from Smart Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, resource-and-referral agencies, North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, the North Carolina Division of Child Development, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Most fund raising occurs through special events or grant writing. CCSA also receives a small amount of money that is not targeted to a specific project (about 1 percent of the agency's budget). These funds come from consulting work, fund-raising events, and direct solicitation of private donors.

Table 12.1.
Sources of Revenue for Child Care Services Association: 1998

Sources of Revenue
North Carolina Division of Child Development (includes support for T.E.A.C.H., resource-and-referral services, and research as well as Smart Start funding for WAGE\$ and quality initiatives)
Triangle United Way
Fee for service income for training costs and meal service program; fee for service income from corporations that buy referral services for their employees
IBM funding for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships
Foundation grant for dissemination of T.E.A.C.H. on the Eastern Seaboard
Contributions from teachers and providers for T.E.A.C.H.
University of North Carolina funding for scholarships for families
County funding for resource-and-referral services
Municipal funding for scholarships
Foundation funding for development of a new kitchen for food service in Orange County
Private foundation, resource-and-referral agency, and local Smart Start funding for research

CCSA also receives in-kind donations from members of the community. For example, part of the agency's building space was donated by a private individual and one of the kitchens is

offered to the agency at a subsidized price. In the past, CCSA has also received free legal services and real estate consultant services as well as contributions to agency fund-raising events and raffles.

Lessons learned

CCSA has developed numerous programs that address quality, compensation, and affordability in child care in North Carolina and beyond. Its efforts are designed to upgrade programs and teacher skills without asking families to foot the bill. The agency has been a catalyst for change at all levels—whether guiding a family child care through accreditation or creating educational incentives for all teachers in the state. Anna Mercer-McLean’s center receives a number of services through CCSA, and she praises its staff. “They are really advocates for child care and for children. I think they have foresight before anyone else can see the need for the community.”

CCSA’s executive director Russell offers a number of lessons for other agencies in administering programs aimed at advancing child care or helping teachers.

- Start demonstration programs on a small scale, allowing them to be fine-tuned before expansion.
- Use data to monitor the impact of a program and focus on performance targets from the very beginning. CCSA places a heavy emphasis on evaluating its programs and publicizing the results.
- Be inclusive and collaborative, working with existing programs and agencies to achieve goals.
- Adhere to your original principles and mission.
- Be political and strategic. Engage in the political process and be wise about how you craft your programs. For example, CCSA created T.E.A.C.H. so that it could only be used for education provided by public colleges and universities, which increased legislative interest in the program.
- Advocate system change. For example, CCSA has used data from recipients to encourage the community college system to be more responsive to teachers by extending hours and adding classes or degrees.
- Find matching funds. CCSA’s ability to combine public funds with private contributions has been a selling point for the North Carolina legislature.

Using these approaches, CCSA has gained the trust of both the provider community and funders. The agency has increased public and political interest in child care and enacted reforms that benefit thousands of young children.

Chapter 13

Conclusion

The 10 centers, family child care homes, and agencies in the Program Recognition Program demonstrate innovation, commitment, and determination in striving to provide quality care, treat staff professionally, and meet the needs of families. Their work both raises the bar for other programs and offers guidance on reaching it. Yet the experiences of the PRP programs also point to larger needs that persist in the child care community. In this chapter, we briefly describe some systemic changes that would support the attainment of quality, compensation, and affordability in all early childhood settings.

The exemplary qualities of the program directors in this book prompt questions about the larger role of directors in improving the quality of child care nationwide. Each program featured here has a motivated director and a network of supportive individuals. Directors of exemplary programs are visionary individuals who have excellent skills in managing staff and planning for the future. They know how to tap into the human capital of families and community supports. To replicate the success of such exemplary programs, other directors need expertise in child development, management, networking, and fund raising. But rather than expecting directors to shoulder the burden of improvement alone, we should push for county- or state-level agencies to provide coordinated support for programs. For example, such agencies could offer accounting or fund-raising services to multiple homes or centers in a region. The successful work of CCSA (see chapter 12) points to the efficiency of agency efforts that can affect dozens of programs at once.

Similar systems should be developed in every state to promote additional education and to tie education to compensation. Providing training and additional education to teachers helps programs raise standards of quality. One of the exemplary programs, River Valley Child Development Services, has developed an early childhood apprenticeship program to give all teachers in West Virginia an opportunity to gain training specific to early childhood education. Financial incentives to gain additional education also boost the professional preparation of early childhood teachers. Programs like the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project and the Child Care WAGES® Project in North Carolina successfully promote professionalism and reduce staff turnover.

As mentioned throughout this book, many early childhood teachers do not feel that their work is valued by the general public. Low wages reflect this sentiment, with teachers being paid less than many unskilled workers. The programs here have succeeded in providing above-average compensation to teachers, but even most of them are not able to provide pay scales comparable to those offered in public schools. Only by substantially raising the salaries and pay scales of child care teachers nationwide can we hope to deliver high-quality care in every center and home. Better wages would attract highly qualified individuals to the field, recognize the importance of the work of early childhood teachers, and lower turnover.

The importance of outside funding to the success of the programs in this book points to a nationwide need for infusing additional resources into the child care system. On average, families in these exemplary programs pay just slightly more than half of the costs of care provided (excluding the value of in-kind contributions). The high-quality care they receive costs more than \$10,000 annually to provide. For children across the nation to benefit from such care, government and community institutions, like those supporting the programs here, need to

commit to making marked increases in child care funding. Without significant outside financial support, exemplary care is too expensive to provide to every child.

Developing local, state, and national supports for quality would help centers and homes across the country operate at levels comparable to those of the programs. Such supports seem most practical in raising the standards for management, training, staff compensation, and funding. At the same time, all programs can learn from the model programs how to augment classroom quality, reduce turnover, create structural supports like advisory boards, and supplement funding. These lessons can lead to quality child care and education and better staff compensation and, at the same time, keep care affordable for families.

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