

Child Care WAGES® Program

Statewide Final Report

Fiscal Year 2024

“I have had the pleasure of witnessing first hand WAGES benefits to child care programs, child care workers and the child care workforce as a whole. Here is a brief synopsis of my observations:

- *Establishing a Positive Corporate Culture: WAGES helps child care programs develop a positive corporate culture by demonstrating a commitment to valuing and investing in our employees. This leads to increased job satisfaction and morale among child care workers, which ultimately benefits the children in our care.*
- *Attracting Educated and Experienced Practitioners: In today's competitive environment, attracting and retaining educated and experienced child care practitioners is essential for maintaining high-quality programs. WAGES is an excellent marketing strategy, signaling potential employees that our program values their expertise and is willing to invest in their compensation.*
- *Supporting Early Educators: By providing financial support through salary supplements, WAGES helps early educators feel supported, appreciated and valued for the vital work they do. This leads to increased job satisfaction and motivation, ultimately improving our children's quality of care.*
- *Creating Retention, Stability and Longevity: High turnover rates in the child care workforce disrupt children's development and outcomes. WAGES helps create retention, stability and longevity among child care workers by offering financial incentives to remain in the profession. This continuity of care benefits children by providing them with consistent relationships and nurturing environments.*
- *Improving Children's Outcomes: Research has shown that the quality of early childhood education programs significantly impacts children's cognitive, social and emotional development. By supporting child care workers through initiatives like WAGES, programs improve overall quality, leading to better outcomes for children regarding school readiness, academic achievement and long-term success.*

Overall, WAGES plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of child care programs, supporting the workforce and ultimately improving outcomes for children.” (Alamance, director)

REPORT CONTENTS

The Child Care WAGES® final report includes a detailed narrative, data tables to support many of the findings discussed and appendices that showcase participant feedback. Please see below for more information on the report's contents, which are listed in the order they are presented.

Program Description – Includes a brief overview of the program and its funding support.

Program Eligibility – Highlights primary requirements to participate in the Child Care WAGES® Program.

Program Overall Impact – Reviews the WAGES impact by providing a summary and select

tables for the following categories:

- Participation Overview (Table A: Tier and Income Cap Selections)
- Turnover (Table B: Turnover Rate Comparison, Table C: Turnover by Education)
- Compensation (Table D: Compensation by Tier)

Outputs – Includes the contracted outputs in table format with additional information on the activities that supported output achievement. (Table E: Outputs)

Outcomes – Includes the contracted outcomes in table format. (Table F: Outcomes)

Program Evaluations – Highlights from the WAGE\$ surveys for recipients and their employers.

Program Challenges – Summarizes the primary challenges faced within the reporting year.

Smart Start – Describes the notification procedures for recipients regarding Smart Start's supplement funding.

Table 1 – Provides a demographic profile of active participants. Active participants are those who have been paid at some point in their participation and are still eligible based on their most recent employment confirmation.

Table 2 – Lists the participation results of active participants by the star rating or license status of employing child care facilities.

Table 3 – Identifies the number of participants funded at each education level by general position category and indicates the percentage of participants at permanent levels *or* who have submitted coursework during the reporting period.

Table 4 – States the number of individuals paid, their programs and the number of children impacted. Please note that these individuals may or may not still be eligible at the end of the year, so this number will likely be different than the number of active participants represented on other tables.

Table 5 – Describes turnover reporting methods, summarizes turnover data and provides the demographic overview of those who left their programs.

Partner Organizations – Lists funders for the reporting year.

Appendix A – Presents sample survey feedback regarding the WAGE\$ impact on retention.

Appendix B – Presents sample survey feedback regarding the WAGE\$ impact on education.

Appendix C – Presents sample survey feedback regarding the WAGE\$ impact on compensation.

Appendix D – Presents sample survey feedback regarding the WAGE\$ impact on recognition.

Appendix E – Presents survey messages for Smart Start partnerships.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is an education-based salary supplement program for teachers, directors and family child care home providers. The education, position and work schedule for each applicant are assessed to determine the annual award. To encourage consistency, installments based on half of the annual award are issued after each six-month period the participant completes in the same early care and education program. Because these supplements reward teacher education and continuity of care, children ages birth to five benefit from more stable relationships with better educated teachers. WAGE\$ provides compensation that helps build quality. In FY24, WAGE\$ was a funding partnership between Smart Start and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

GENERAL PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for at least one six-month payment during the fiscal year, applicants must:

- work in a county that uses Smart Start funds to support the Child Care WAGES® Program
- work in a licensed child care program (center, home or public school site)
- work at least 10 hours per week with children birth to five
- earn at or below the income cap selected by the funding partnership (out of available options)
 - \$23 per hour
 - \$19 per hour
 - \$17 per hour
- have a level of education funded on the Child Care WAGES® scale (from regionally accredited schools)
- work at least six months in the same child care program
- be employed at this same child care program when funding is available and a final confirmation has been completed

PROGRAM OVERALL IMPACT

The Child Care WAGES® Program impacts the community by improving the quality of early care and education for young children. Most evidence suggests there are three primary factors associated with teacher quality: education, stability and compensation. WAGES addresses all three. Through graduated salary supplements, the program helps decrease turnover and encourages the continued educational pursuits of the child care workforce. While supplements alone cannot solve the workforce compensation crisis, they are a critical strategy until early educators receive the base pay, benefits and respect they deserve for the important work they do. As of June 2024, 3,502 child care professionals in 1,665 child care programs from 64 North Carolina counties were active participants in the Child Care WAGES® Program. Robeson County joined WAGES in the second half of the fiscal year. Of these individuals, 99% are women and 59% reported being a person of color and/or Latinx. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the participants work in four and five star licensed centers or homes.

As of June 2024, 664 of the active participants were reported by their employers as being NC Pre-K teachers and assistants. Of this group, 222 are teachers and 442 are assistant teachers in NC Pre-K classrooms. These individuals work in 447 different child care programs in 63 counties. Of these, 99% are women and 53% indicated they are Latinx and/or a person of color. Ninety-four percent (94%) work in four and five star licensed centers.

Participation Overview

Smart Start partnerships were given options for their participation that included tier selection (award amounts increase with higher tiers) and income cap requirements. Forty-nine of the participating counties (77%) funded Tier Two or higher for at least half the year; this includes nine counties who shifted to a higher tier in the second half of the year.

Table A below depicts the breakdown of the partnership choices for their counties.

Table A: Tier and Income Cap Selections*

	\$17 per hour	\$19 per hour	\$23 per hour	Totals
Tier One	9	5	1	15
Tier One / Tier Two Split	3	1	0	4
Tier One / Tier Three Split	0	2	0	2

Tier Two	6	16	14	36
Tier Two / Tier Three Split	0	3	0	3
Tier Three	2	2	0	4
Totals	20	29	15	64

**Numbers represent unduplicated counties participating in each category.*

Out of the new FY24 applicants from participating counties that did not qualify for WAGE\$, 46% did not yet have the education needed to participate, and 26% were over the income cap for their county or region.

To help partnerships handle budget constraints and keep the WAGE\$ opportunity in place for early childhood professionals in their counties, the Education and Compensation Advisory Committee approved several county-level eligibility and/or payment options. Partnerships may:

- Fund only those working in sites with at least three stars *or* fund only those working in sites with at least four stars.
- Eliminate funding for administrator/director time. Directors are still eligible for time spent in the classroom.
- Eliminate funding for participants at level two on the WAGE\$ scale (which includes, for example, the CDA and 12 semester hours of birth to five focused coursework).

Twenty-nine (29) counties implemented one or a combination of these strategies. Please note that income caps are not discussed here; partnerships *must* choose an income cap each year. See below for additional information on the eligibility cuts applied for FY24.

- Cut administrator time only – three counties
- Cut those working in sites with fewer than three stars only – 17 counties
- Cut administrator time and those working in sites with fewer than three stars – six counties
- Cut administrator time and those at level two on the scale – two counties
- Cut those working in sites with fewer than three stars and those at level two on the scale – one county

More than half of the participating counties (33) were able to fund a percentage increase over their base tier and/or provide year-end enhancements.

Turnover

Turnover numbers for the Child Care WAGE\$® Program reflect active participants who left their child care programs, as identified in confirmations completed with employers during the fiscal year.

If participants leave their program and resume eligibility at a new site, they will not be factored into the report at all until they have completed a full six-month period at their new site. Once participants receive a supplement, they will again be recognized as an active participant. Only participants for whom WAGE\$ could have impacted the decision to stay or leave are factored

into the turnover data. For example, participants who become ineligible for reasons other than leaving their child care programs (i.e. change of position within the program, center closure) are not considered turnover.

The turnover rate of WAGES participants for FY24 was 15%, a significant overall improvement compared to the 31% full-time teacher turnover rate in North Carolina prior to WAGES becoming a statewide opportunity (Child Care Services Association, 1998). This rate is also below the contract goal of 25%. Perhaps most importantly, this rate is well below what might have been expected during this time of flux. The turnover rate among WAGES NC Pre-K teachers and assistants was only 9%.

The participant turnover rate compares favorably to the 38% turnover rate of full-time teachers and assistants in the state’s early childhood workforce overall, captured in 2023 workforce data (Child Care Services Association, 2024). The study also states that 23% of all teaching staff indicate they plan to leave the field in the next three years. Continued efforts to make it possible for teachers to stay are essential.

Given the low compensation for early educators, the rate of departure would likely have been much higher without the workforce supports available in North Carolina, including WAGES, Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

The WAGES turnover rate covers all eligible positions, including part-time employees, and is not a straightforward comparison to the workforce study data in general. Additionally, it is expected that the WAGES population of educated professionals would typically have more job opportunities than the child care workforce at large. A comparison of turnover data can be seen in Table B below.

Table B: Turnover Rate Comparison

	Statewide Workforce Pre-Program	Statewide ECE Workforce 2023	Contract Goal	WAGES FY24
Turnover Rates	31%	38%	25%	15%

With directors reporting difficulty finding and keeping staff, particularly qualified staff, it is clear that North Carolina’s \$14.42 per hour average rate of pay for teachers and assistants is simply not enough. While this rate is an increase from the \$12 per hour rate reported in workforce data from 2019, it has not kept pace with inflation. Someone earning \$12 per hour in January 2019 would have the buying power of someone earning \$14.70 in January 2024.

Though additional compensation is still needed, the stabilization grants have helped to increase the pay for many early educators. While the legislature has approved partial funds for the next few months to continue these grants, it is unclear if they will approve continued support or for how long. It is still expected that these funds will be temporary, making it difficult for many employers to maintain those rates once the grants are no longer available. WAGES supplements

are a crucial support for early educators and enhance the best compensation employers can offer, making it more feasible for educated professionals to afford to teach children.

Of all WAGES participants statewide with an associate degree focused on early childhood education or higher, only 12% left their programs this past year. Of all participants with less education, 26% left their programs. This figure may differ for the workforce not receiving higher compensation through supplements, but it appears that if salaries are supplemented or teachers are more fairly compensated, those with higher education will not leave at a higher rate, which is a common belief. In fact, for the past several years, retention has been *better* among the more highly educated participants, as shown in Table C below.

Table C: Turnover by Education

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
AAS ECE or higher	11%	10%	13%	13%	12%
Below AAS ECE	17%	19%	19%	21%	26%

Research makes it clear that children need stable and engaging relationships with the best-educated teachers to help facilitate their development during these most critical years. The higher retention of this educated group of WAGES participants is key; the field must aspire to stabilize this group to provide children and families what they really need.

In addition to statistical data showing an impact on retention, WAGES participants shared through evaluation feedback that supplements play a role in the decision and ability to stay in the field. See Appendix A for selected survey comments regarding retention.

“WAGES motivates child care workers to continue working in the field and pursue more education. I probably would have left the child care field without the WAGE\$ supplement. I feel like I’ve made a big difference to all the kids I’ve taught over 23 years, and they’ve had a big impact on me as well.” (Henderson, teacher)

Education

The WAGES population is well educated, with the bulk of participants having at least a two-year degree. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the active FY24 WAGES participants whose counties have participated two or more years (and 93% of those participants working in NC Pre-K classrooms) are being funded for having an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education, its equivalent or higher based on the WAGE\$ scale *or* have submitted documentation during the year to verify their pursuit of additional coursework. The WAGES Program has a number of temporary award levels, which require that participants with lower education advance up the scale to remain eligible.

Many participants at temporary levels were surveyed during the year to learn more about their educational plans and potential barriers. Out of 303 completed calls, 73% indicated that they do still intend to take coursework to remain eligible for their WAGES supplements and 48% said they had completed new coursework since their last submission. Out of the 35 respondents that identified barriers, 49% indicated that they face time constraints that make it difficult to further

their education and 37% have financial concerns. When participants share this barrier, WAGES staff provide information on the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program. WAGES also called a number of recipients to follow up on their original survey and update their education status.

When given a list of possible benefits resulting from WAGES, 87% of participants overall who responded to the annual survey agreed that the supplements provide an incentive to seek additional coursework or help make the pursuit of that coursework more financially feasible.

When examining education by ethnicity across all participating counties, 83% of the participants who reported being a person of color and/or Latinx have earned an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education, its equivalent or higher on the WAGES scale compared to 82% of the White/European American participants. WAGES is encouraging a diverse population to pursue education and helping to retain these early educators. Given the diverse population of children attending child care in North Carolina, this educational equity is very important.

Through survey feedback, participants and directors with participating staff took the opportunity to express the importance of education and how WAGES has made a difference in their educational pursuits. See Appendix B for samples.

“I am the first and only person in my family who has received a degree because of WAGES. ... WAGES is important because it helps teachers further our education and be able to provide quality care for our students.” (Caldwell, teacher)

Compensation

The Child Care WAGES® Program increases the compensation of participants through salary supplements. Despite obtained education, compensation in the field continues to be low and is not competitive with many other professions. Stabilization grants have made it possible for sites to increase compensation through raises, bonuses and/or benefits. In FY21 (three years ago), 77% of the WAGES participants earned less than \$15 per hour compared to only 28% in FY24. It seems likely that the stabilization grants have contributed significantly to this change. Despite this improvement, the median hourly rate of active WAGES participants is only \$16.16.

Looking only at those participants working in NC Pre-K classrooms, 7% earn less than \$15 per hour. Seven percent (7%) of the NC Pre-K teacher assistants and 6% of the teachers earn less than \$15 per hour.

DCDEE approved temporary policies to protect the eligibility of WAGES participants who might have received increased compensation resulting from the time-limited stabilization grants. The eligibility of active participants has been retained based on pre-stabilization grant rates, but WAGES has collected official rates up to the chosen income caps for reporting purposes. The following were reported to have enhanced compensation as a result of these grants:

- 58% teachers and assistants
- 91% family child care home providers

- 68% directors and assistant directors
- 83% owners

Even with improved hourly rates, early educators are underpaid for the work they do, which is illustrated by a comparison to the rate of \$21.56 per hour needed for one North Carolina employee to meet basic, fundamental needs. The needed rate increases to \$36.68 per hour if that adult has one child (Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2024).

The poor compensation across the board highlights the need for salary supplements to attract and retain qualified staff. WAGES survey results support this. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the respondents stated that WAGES encourages them to stay with their current child care programs.

The average six-month supplement payment issued statewide during FY24 was \$1,281. The average payment amount includes all participating counties and all applicable tiers. Since the supplements are based on the education earned, the average will vary by county even within the same tier category. The average six-month supplements statewide ranged from \$778 to \$1,981. The average six-month supplement at each tier level can be seen in Table D below. Thirty-three (33) counties provided increases over their base tier awards.

Table D: Compensation by Tier

Tiers Funded FY24	Number of Participating Counties by Tier	Average Six-Month Supplement
All Tiers	64	\$1,281
Tier One	15	\$1,005
Tier One/Tier Two Split	4	\$974
Tier One/Tier Three Split	2	\$1,711
Tier Two	36	\$1,328
Tier Two/Tier Three Split	3	\$1,633
Tier Three	4	\$1,917

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of evaluation respondents statewide indicated that receiving a WAGES supplement helps ease financial stress. When asked about the financial impact, recipients selected from a list of potential benefits. A sample of responses is below:

- 81% are better able to pay their bills
- 66% are more able to address the basic needs of their families (food/housing)
- 58% rely on the supplements to help address transportation costs
- 55% use the funds to provide additional resources for their classrooms or child care programs

In a separate question, a greater number of respondents (89%) stated that providing resources for their programs is a benefit of WAGES.

Economic insecurity impacts teacher well-being, and can have consequences for the quality of interactions they have with the children in their care. Stress and adversity can affect the health of teachers and thus how effective they can be in promoting the supportive environments and engaging interactions children need. Especially now, easing financial stress is critical for the participants, their families and for the children they serve.

Throughout the survey, respondents discussed the importance of this additional compensation. Please see Appendix C for sample comments.

“The WAGE\$ Program is very important for child care providers because it helps us to be less stressed when trying to deal with the cost of living. Children benefit when their teacher can give 100% to them and not be stressed over how to pay a necessary bill.”
(Forsyth, teacher)

OUTPUTS

This section highlights the projected outputs of the Child Care WAGE\$® Program across all participating counties for FY24 and the program’s effectiveness in reaching these goals. Primary results are shown in Table E below followed by additional detail as applicable.

Table E: Outputs

	Projected Output	Results
1	Approximately 3,050 eligible participants will receive WAGE\$ payments as of June 30, 2024.	Output exceeded. As of June 2024, 4,079 applicants had received WAGE\$ payments.
2	Child Care WAGE\$® staff will conduct 18 outreach opportunities to child care professionals to offer information about the program.	Output exceeded. WAGE\$ conducted 34 outreach sessions.

WAGE\$ payments: Four thousand seventy-nine (4,079) participants were paid for completing at least one six-month period on the Child Care WAGE\$® Program during FY24. These participants worked in 1,846 facilities serving approximately 89,709 children. This number is an unduplicated count of supplement recipients. Of these, 742 were NC Pre-K teachers or assistants. Please note that these paid individuals may or may not still be eligible at the end of the year, so this number is different than the number of active participants discussed elsewhere in this report. More than 800 applicants are currently on the waiting list, either waiting for funding and/or completing their initial or reactivated six-month commitment period.

Outreach and recruitment: Thirty-four (34) outreach sessions, both virtual and in-person, were done upon request or because of WAGE\$ solicitation during the year. WAGE\$ representatives also discuss opportunities available through Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, thus giving audience members an opportunity to learn about all three initiatives. In some cases, staff from the supplement and scholarship programs provide joint outreach sessions.

In addition to the outreach listed above, 8,480 recruitment emails or mailings were sent to 3,195 sites. WAGE\$ also sent recruitment information to Smart Start partnerships, resource and referral agencies, community colleges and Head Start grantees in participating counties. Follow-up calls were made to many of the non-participating sites to verify receipt of the email/packet, answer questions and encourage participation. During each employment confirmation completed with a participating site, the specialist inquired about any possible eligible staff not yet accessing a supplement.

OUTCOME

Table F below details the primary outcome of the Child Care WAGE\$® Program.

Table F: Outcome

Projected Outcome	Results
By June 30, 2024, the turnover rate of WAGE\$ participants will be less than 25%.	Outcome met. The turnover rate for WAGE\$ participants was only 15%, well below the benchmark of 25%.

This is a positive, strong outcome. The WAGE\$ supplements are essential to help teachers who want to work with young children be able to do that and still take care of themselves and/or their families.

This outcome is measured through employment confirmations completed as each participant concludes a six-month commitment period on the program. The information regarding turnover is entered into a database that produces the percentage.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

The information below reflects the impact of WAGE\$ from the perspectives of participants and their employers. Salary supplement recipients and center directors who did not receive supplements but who had recipients among their staff participated in an annual evaluation of the Child Care WAGE\$® Program.

Survey samples were created based on the number of potential respondents by position in each county. If the pool of participating teachers in a county was between 1 and 50, the entire teacher recipient population was mailed a survey. A 40% sample was drawn when the teacher recipient population was between 51 and 100 and a 25% sample was drawn if the teacher population was 101 or more. All participating directors were also surveyed. Directors in counties funding WAGE\$ who were not personally participating but who had staff members on WAGE\$ and/or Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus were sent a shared survey to assess the impact of salary supplements. They were sampled using the same protocol described for teachers and responses have been integrated into the director feedback.

All participants in the sample who had email addresses on file with WAGE\$ were invited to complete the survey online. Reminder emails were sent to encourage online response. Those who did not participate online or who did not have email addresses on file were mailed surveys. One final attempt was made to secure non-respondent surveys via phone in counties with low

response rates. All respondents were given the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for professional resources.

Overall, 70% of the sampled population completed surveys (1,854 of 2,650), which included the following:

- 71% of participating teachers/family child care home providers (1,148 of 1,609)
- 75% of participating directors (229 of 304)
- 65% of non-participating directors with staff receiving salary supplements¹ (477 of 737)

Sample responses

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of responding WAGES participants indicated that their receipt of a supplement had an impact on either their inclination to stay in the field *or* on their pursuit of further education. When asked to examine a list of possible benefits resulting from the Child Care WAGES® Program and indicate whether or not they are true for the respondent, nearly 100% indicated that WAGES either encourages them to stay in their current programs or to pursue further education. Responses to the individual options were as follows, listed in survey order:

- WAGES helps me feel more satisfied with my job. – 95%
- WAGES is an incentive for me to seek additional education and/or it helps make pursuing coursework more financially feasible. – 87%
- The WAGES supplement helps ease financial stress. – 98%
- WAGES encourages me to stay with my current program. – 96%
- The WAGES supplement helps me to provide more resources for my program or classroom. – 89%
- Receiving the WAGES supplement makes me feel more appreciated and recognized for my work. – 96%

Ninety-four percent (94%) of responding directors indicated that staff participation in WAGES benefits the children in their centers in some way. When asked to select from a list of options explaining how participation may be beneficial to the children in their programs, including an option stating that no benefits have been noticed, 94% of responding directors indicated that staff participation in WAGES benefits the children in some way. The two most popular examples of impact were that improved morale has created more positive child-teacher interactions and that staff members are seeking more education, which leads to higher quality care for children.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of all respondents stated that they are satisfied with the program and its administration.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of responding directors reported positive attitudes toward WAGES in their child care programs.

¹ Non-participating directors in some cases may have responded about participants in WAGES and/or AWARDS Plus.

For those respondents who had the opportunity to speak with the WAGES staff, 99% of those who have had interactions found the staff to be pleasant and helpful. Many respondents took the opportunity to share additional comments about their interactions with staff. Not only did the respondents report that they received helpful and pleasant customer service, but many also talked about how important the encouragement from staff has been in terms of participation in the program and pursuit of education. A few examples of participant feedback are listed below:

“They have always been encouraging, supportive and kind. They feel like advocates for those seeking WAGES.” (teacher)

“The staff has been a contributing factor in helping me to complete my academic goals in the ECE industry. The staff members have supported me from my first year EDU 118 class to my achieving a bachelor’s degree from Mount Olive University. They sent me postcards and assorted encouraging words many times.” (teacher)

“I always have the best interactions with the WAGES staff. I always brag on them when I share with fellow co-workers about my experience.” (teacher)

“My interactions with the WAGES staff have always been pleasant. The team goes above and beyond to answer my questions, ensures all eligible teachers are signed up and keeps me up to date with employment confirmations. The WAGES team is resourceful and delightful.” (director)

“We LOVE our folks at WAGES. They are knowledgeable, clear, timely and supportive!” (director)

Ninety-six percent (96%) of responding participants indicated that, as a result of WAGES, they feel more appreciated and recognized for their work. Recipients and directors with participating staff continue to emphasize the importance of the recognition and appreciation associated with the receipt of the WAGES supplements and the impact this has on self-esteem, professionalism and morale. Not only are these things significant in themselves, but they enhance the likelihood that participants will stay in the field and seek additional education. See Appendix D for examples of feedback regarding recognition and appreciation.

“WAGES is important to show child care workers that they are appreciated. The child care field is full of unsung and underpaid heroes who go above and beyond for the children in their care. This extra supplement shows that someone acknowledges their work.” (Columbus, teacher)

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Teachers continue to receive compensation that is not commensurate with their skill and education and struggle in the face of inflation. Many participants expressed their hope in survey responses that the WAGES supplement amounts will be increased. Examples are shared below. Partnerships have the opportunity to increase the compensation levels they fund within the

current WAGE\$ system; CCSA will work with any funder interested in adjusting the amounts offered.

“Child care is one of the lowest-paid careers. The WAGE\$ Program helps us survive through this rough economy. Any increase is very appreciated.” (teacher)

“The supplement needs to increase with inflation.” (teacher)

“The supplement is needed and appreciated by many of us. I could use more, I am not going to lie, but it is a very good start for all the hard work that we put in day in and day out.” (teacher)

“I would like to say thank you all so much for what you do. I wish that you had more money to give increases due to the way that rent is skyrocketing. I'm afraid that centers are going to lose a lot of teachers. Many centers are short-staffed right now, because teachers are barely surviving on the pay that we receive.” (teacher)

“I wish they could increase the amount. It has been over 15 years since there was an increase.” (director)

Although WAGE\$ has implemented temporary policies to retain the eligibility of active participants based on pre-stabilization grant hourly rates, the income caps are a common concern expressed by survey respondents and this year was no exception.

“The income cap for my county is too low.” (teacher)

“The income cap is discouraging.” (teacher)

“I believe I am over the income cap. This is going to be a hard year financially for me.” (teacher)

“Please keep the income cap high so that everyone can receive the funds.” (director)

While some participants would prefer that taxes be taken out of the education-based supplements like a pay check, since that cannot occur, it is important that recipients plan accordingly. Other recipients talk about how the supplements help them pay taxes. For example, one survey respondent said, “It helps me pay my land taxes every year so I don't worry about where I will live.”

SMART START

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program works hard to publicize the collaboration with local partnerships and identifies the funding sources in a variety of ways. Special notices are sent in conjunction with payments stating which specific Smart Start partnership, along with the Division of Child Development and Early Education, provides funding. The county/region partnership is listed on hard copy check stubs and labels are attached to payment letter envelopes to identify the funder. Emails are sent to recipients to inform them when payments have been

mailed or deposited, crediting the funders. The Child Care WAGE\$® fact sheets, application-based program agreements and letters clarify the funding arrangement for the program and WAGE\$ representatives explain the funding for the program in presentations. Finally, the program evaluations state that the funds for the Child Care WAGE\$® supplements are provided by local Smart Start partnerships and respondents are given the opportunity to share messages regarding the supplements with their local Smart Starts. See Appendix E for a sample of those messages for FY24. Please note that, in addition to the sample comments included, a large number of recipients shared their gratitude through “thank you” messages that are not listed.

“The WAGE\$ Program has been incredibly beneficial. The funds have helped ease the fear of not making enough money to care for myself and my family. It can be challenging working in a field that doesn’t historically pay their staff livable wages. The funds serve as an incentive to remain in the child care field providing high quality service to children and their families.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)



Table 1
Demographic Profile of the 3,502 Participants in
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



	# of Participants	% of Participants
Race*		
White	1430	41%
Black or African American	1798	51%
American Indian or Alaska Native	38	1%
Asian	27	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0%
Two or more races	33	1%
Other	51	1%
Not Given	123	4%
Ethnicity*		
Not Given	166	5%
Latinx	143	4%
Not Latinx	3193	91%
Gender		
Male	32	1%
Female	3470	99%
Age Range of Participants		
15-19 years	2	0%
20-24 years	120	3%
25-34 years	672	19%
35-44 years	849	24%
45-54 years	854	24%
55-59 years	400	11%
60-64 years	315	9%
65 and over	287	8%
Not Given	3	0%
Position		
Teacher	1965	56%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	7	0%
Assistant Teacher	765	22%
Director	244	7%
Director (Owner)	88	3%
Assistant Director	204	6%
Small Home Provider	229	7%

*2048 participants identify as Latinx or as a person of color, which is 59% of the active population that provided data (3452 participants).

**Combination classrooms including two and three year olds are included in the category "Mixed Ages."

Participants are identified by their primary position. Directors or assistant directors may only be funded for time in the classroom depending on county choice.

Table 1 (cont.)
Demographic Profile of the 3,502 Participants in
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024

	# of Participants	% of Participants
Ages of Children Served**		
Birth up to Three	813	23%
Three to Five	1846	53%
Mixed Ages	843	24%
Education Level		
CDA Credential	2	0%
12 birth to five sem. hours	22	1%
18 general sem. hours including 4 birth to five sem. hours	22	1%
Early Childhood Education Certificate	5	0%
16 birth to five sem. hours	54	2%
24 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	81	2%
70 general sem. hours (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	11	0%
AAS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	31	1%
36 general sem. hours including 12 birth to five sem. hours	54	2%
70 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	5	0%
AAS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	15	0%
45 general sem. hours including 18 birth to five sem. hours	62	2%
AAS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	15	0%
57 general sem. hours including 24 birth to five sem. hours	126	4%
AAS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	13	0%
BA/BS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	90	3%
MA/MS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	10	0%
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	1599	46%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	83	2%
MA/MS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	18	1%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	195	6%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	73	2%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	784	22%
MA/MS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	19	1%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	112	3%
PhD/EdD including 18 birth to five sem. hours	1	0%
Wage Rate***		
Below \$7.25 per hour	208	6%
\$7.25 - \$10.00 per hour	104	3%
\$10.01 - \$13.00 per hour	353	10%
\$13.01 - \$15.00 per hour	532	15%
\$15.01 - \$17.00 per hour	1030	29%
\$17.01 - \$19.00 per hour	718	21%
\$19.01 - \$21.00 per hour	276	8%
\$21.01 - \$23.00 per hour	281	8%
Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Report End Date		
0 to .99 Years	53	2%

***The first category under Wage Rate reflects those earning below 's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue.

Table 1 (cont.)
Demographic Profile of the 3,502 Participants in
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024

	# of Participants	% of Participants
1.00 to 1.99 Years	299	9%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	500	14%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	312	9%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	261	7%
5.00 or More Years	2077	59%

***The first category under Wage Rate reflects those earning below 's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue.



Table 2
Child Care Center Profile for North Carolina
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



	Programs	Participants
Center	1,431	3,264
1 STAR	17	41
2 STAR	2	3
3 STAR	160	274
4 STAR	345	701
5 STAR	815	2,046
GS-110	37	80
PROB	2	5
PROV	4	11
SPPROV	3	6
Temporary	46	97
Family Provider	234	238
1 STAR	1	1
3 STAR	28	28
4 STAR	156	159
5 STAR	49	50
TOTALS	<u>1,665</u>	<u>3,502</u>



Table 3
Educational Award Levels Profile of the 3,502 Participants
in North Carolina
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



89% have a permanent level on the scale (AAS ECE or above) or are continuing their education as documented by coursework taken since original application to WAGES submitted in the current fiscal year. *Participants need time to continue their education and move up the supplement scale, thus the percentage includes only those counties who have participated for two or more years.*

	# of Participants	% of Participants Out Of Position	% of Participants Out Of Active
Director	536	100%	15%
Three	14	3%	0%
Four	8	1%	0%
Six	9	2%	0%
Seven	16	3%	0%
Eight	225	42%	6%
Nine	14	3%	0%
Ten	43	8%	1%
Eleven	172	32%	5%
Twelve	34	6%	1%
Thirteen	1	0%	0%
Family Child Care Provider	229	100%	7%
Two	2	1%	0%
Three	8	3%	0%
Four	3	1%	0%
Five	1	0%	0%
Six	8	3%	0%
Seven	4	2%	0%
Eight	90	39%	3%
Nine	4	2%	0%
Ten	14	6%	0%
Eleven	71	31%	2%
Twelve	24	10%	1%
Teacher	2737	100%	78%
Two	44	2%	1%
Three	118	4%	3%
Four	86	3%	2%
Five	19	1%	1%
Six	61	2%	2%
Seven	118	4%	3%

Positions are categorized into the groups listed above. For example, both assistant teachers and teachers are shown in the teacher category.

Table 3 (cont.)
Educational Award Levels Profile of the 3,502 Participants
in North Carolina
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024

	# of Participants	% of Participants Out Of Position	% of Participants Out Of Active
Eight	1383	51%	39%
Nine	83	3%	2%
Ten	211	8%	6%
Eleven	560	20%	16%
Twelve	54	2%	2%

Positions are categorized into the groups listed above. For example, both assistant teachers and teachers are shown in the teacher category.



Table 4
Total Participants that Received a Supplement in North Carolina
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



4,079 unduplicated participants received a supplement for completing a six month period that ended during this reporting period; these participants worked in 1,846 different child care programs serving approximately 89,709 children.

	Total Paid*	Total Programs	# Of Children 0 to 5
Center	3,824	1,593	88,628
Family Provider	256	253	1,081
<u>Total</u>	<u>4,080</u>	<u>1,846</u>	<u>89,709</u>

* This may reflect a duplicated number of people paid if participants moved between a center and a home and were paid from both locations. Refer to the number at the top for an unduplicated count of people paid.



Table 5
Annual Turnover Summary of the 4,110 Participants
in North Carolina
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



The annual turnover percentage is based on an overall population of 4,110 participants. This population includes those individuals that were active during the reporting period of July 2023 - June 2024 (3,502) and those whose turnover was reported during this time (608). Active participants meet all eligibility requirements and have worked at least six months in their child care programs. Active participants might also include individuals who have left a child care program, but have since worked six eligible months in a new site. (These “reactivated” participants are not factored into the report at all until they have completed this six month period.) The annual turnover percentage is obtained by dividing the total number of participants who left their center into the total number of participants.

People who became ineligible for other reasons (i.e. position change within center, became over-income due to raise, center closure, noncompliance with the program’s income documentation guidelines, failure to obtain necessary coursework) are not included in the table. They have been removed from the overall total and the turnover numbers since they were no longer eligible for the Child Care WAGES® Program, and the supplement could not have been an incentive for them to stay.

Individuals who left their child care programs and those who became ineligible due to other reasons may or may not have been paid during the current fiscal year for completing one or more commitment periods. However, they have all been paid at some time during their participation on WAGES and thus earned active status prior to becoming ineligible.

Annual Turnover July 2023 - June 2024

Total Participants	=	4,110
Active Participants	=	3,502
Left Center	=	608
Turnover Percentage	=	15%



Table 5
Profile of Participants who Left their Programs in
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024



	# of Participants	% of Participants
Race		
White	300	49%
Black or African American	249	41%
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	1%
Asian	3	0%
Two or more races	10	2%
Other	11	2%
Not Given	26	4%
Ethnicity		
Not Given	49	8%
Latinx	29	5%
Not Latinx	530	87%
Gender		
Male	10	2%
Female	595	97%
Non-binary	2	0%
Not Given	1	0%
Position		
Teacher	421	69%
Teacher (Head Start In Home Educator)	2	0%
Assistant Teacher	111	18%
Director	28	5%
Director (Owner)	5	1%
Assistant Director	27	4%
Small Home Provider	14	2%
Education Level		
12 birth to five sem. hours	6	1%
18 general sem. hours including 4 birth to five sem. hours	8	1%
Early Childhood Education Certificate	1	0%
16 birth to five sem. hours	18	3%
24 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	16	3%
70 general sem. hours (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	7	1%
AAS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	6	1%
36 general sem. hours including 12 birth to five sem. hours	17	3%
70 general sem. hours including 6 birth to five sem. hours	5	1%
AAS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	8	1%
45 general sem. hours including 18 birth to five sem. hours	20	3%
AAS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	6	1%
57 general sem. hours including 24 birth to five sem. hours	34	6%
AAS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	4	1%
BA/BS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	39	6%
MA/MS (less than 6 birth to five sem. hours)	4	1%
AAS including 24 birth to five sem. hours	217	35%
BA/BS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	16	3%

Table 5 (cont.)
Profile of Participants who Left their Programs in
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024

	# of Participants	% of Participants
MA/MS including 6 birth to five sem. hours	3	0%
90 sem. hours toward BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	27	4%
BA/BS including 12 birth to five sem. hours	20	3%
BA/BS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	113	18%
MA/MS including 18 birth to five sem. hours	12	2%
PhD/EdD including 18 birth to five sem. hours	1	0%
Wage Rate		
Below \$7.25 per hour	11	2%
\$7.25 - \$10.00 per hour	15	2%
\$10.01 - \$13.00 per hour	106	17%
\$13.01 - \$15.00 per hour	135	22%
\$15.01 - \$17.00 per hour	163	27%
\$17.01 - \$19.00 per hour	102	17%
\$19.01 - \$21.00 per hour	40	7%
\$21.01 - \$23.00 per hour	36	6%
Years in Child Care Program: Participant's Start Date to Date Ineligible		
0 to .99 Years	35	6%
1.00 to 1.99 Years	131	21%
2.00 to 2.99 Years	112	18%
3.00 to 3.99 Years	74	12%
4.00 to 4.99 Years	54	9%
5.00 or More Years	202	33%
Regulation Type		
1 STAR	6	1%
3 STAR	64	10%
4 STAR	129	21%
5 STAR	370	60%
GS-110	16	3%
Temporary	19	3%
PROB	4	1%

* The first category under Wage Rate reflects those earning below 's minimum wage, typically home providers or owners whose income is dependent upon revenue.



**50 Partner Organizations
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024**



Alamance Partnership for Children
Alexander County Partnership for Children
Alleghany Partnership for Children
Alliance for Children (Union County)
Blue Ridge Partnership for Children
Buncombe Partnership for Children, Inc.
Burke County Smart Start, Inc.
Cabarrus County Partnership for Children
Caldwell County Smart Start
Cleveland County Partnership for Children, Inc.
Columbus County Partnership for Children, Inc.
Craven Smart Start, Inc.
Down East Partnership for Children
Durham's Partnership for Children
Franklin Granville Vance Smart Start, Inc.
Guilford County Partnership for Children
Halifax-Warren Smart Start Partnership for Children, Inc.
Harnett County Partnership for Children, Inc.
Hertford-Northampton Smart Start Partnership for Children, Inc.
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children, Inc.
Lee County Partnership for Children
Martin-Pitt Partnership for Children, Inc.
Montgomery County Partnership for Children
North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education
North Carolina Partnership for Children
Partners for Children & Families Inc. (Moore County)
Partnership for Children of Johnston County, Inc.
Partnership for Children of Lenoir and Greene Counties
Partnership for Children of Lincoln/Gaston Counties
Partnership for Children of the Foothills
Randolph County Partnership for Children
Region A Partnership for Children
Richmond County Partnership for Children
Robeson County Partnership for Children

*Henderson County



**50 Partner Organizations
Child Care WAGES® Program
July 2023 - June 2024**



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

*Henderson County

Appendix A: Retention

Feedback Collected from WAGES Surveys FY24

“WAGES¹ helps with the turnover rate in child care. This is important, especially for the children.” (Alamance, director)

“WAGES is important because it has helped me stay in my current program and not go find employment elsewhere. A bit of financial assistance has made it possible to do what I love and make an impact in the lives of the future generations.” (Alexander, teacher)

“The supplement keeps people interested in working in child care. It gives them something to look forward to, considering the low pay in the field.” (Alleghany, director)

“WAGES really encourages me to stay with my current employer.” (Brunswick, teacher)

“The WAGES supplement means we are recognized for our hard work and effort as early childhood educators. It means we can live more comfortably at a time when the cost of living rises exponentially-- and always faster than our school is able to keep up with from a wage standpoint. It means I am more likely to stay at my current job to receive these biannual benefits.” (Buncombe, director)

“WAGES motivates me to continue in this field.” (Burke, teacher)

“Assistant teachers in the school system can choose to work in K-12 classrooms instead of preschool. Preschool classrooms in most districts are inclusion classrooms with moderate to significant special education needs. These positions are mentally, physically and emotionally challenging. WAGES has helped us keep staff in preschool and supported 16 assistant teachers returning for BK degrees over the last 8 years -- much higher than surrounding counties.” (Caldwell, director)

“Staff participating in the WAGES Program are often our lowest paid. This program helps them to continue working with our students and be fully invested rather than seeking part-time work outside of the education system.” (Cherokee, director)

“WAGES helps staff stay in their place of employment.” (Cleveland, teacher)

“WAGES allows teachers to stay in their job by receiving supplements.” (Columbus, teacher)

“WAGES encourages staff to stay with a child care program, reducing teacher turnover, improving stability and consistency for the children. I have appreciated the extra money over the years. Being able to do something extra, or to just get a balance paid down a little more on a credit card, has helped to ease different stressors. Thank you!” (Cumberland, teacher)

¹ Respondents referred to the Child Care WAGES® Program in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“WAGES\$ allows me to stay in the profession I love and helps relieve burdens, which in turn makes my classroom less stressful and more enjoyable.” (Davidson, family child care home provider)

“I love working with children, but after taxes and insurance are taken out of my check I only have enough left over for my important bills. The money I get from WAGES\$ helps to fill in the gaps so I can stay doing what I love.” (Davie, teacher)

“I feel that the WAGES\$ Program has encouraged me to provide continuity with my child care center, which benefits the children. When you run into a child that started in your class and is now in a bigger class, and they run and hug you tightly, it is so rewarding!!” (Durham, teacher)

“WAGES\$ has made me want to stay in child care.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“It is important because it provides the staff with additional income. It keeps them staying at the center because they look forward to getting the supplement.” (Franklin, director)

“WAGES\$ has helped the children in my care keep experienced teachers with no turnover, creating a consistent and lasting relationship with families and children. Stability is key in early education.” (Gaston, teacher)

“WAGES\$ helps me to provide the children in my care with the stability of a consistent relationship.” (Granville, family child care home provider)

“It is important to attract more qualified teachers, and they stay because of the supplement.” (Guilford, director)

“WAGES\$ allows me to continue in my current job and do what I love.” (Halifax, teacher)

“WAGES\$ is important because the education industry is severely underpaid. It’s very difficult to do a job you love when you’re struggling with the pay and are forced to get a higher-paying job in another industry.” (Harnett, teacher)

“WAGES\$ helps me afford to stay in child care and support my family.” (Haywood, teacher)

“WAGES\$ motivates child care workers to continue working in the field and pursue more education. I probably would have left the child care field without the WAGES\$ supplement. I feel like I’ve made a big difference to all the kids I’ve taught over 23 years, and they’ve had a big impact on me as well.” (Henderson, teacher)

“I honestly do not think I would still be in this field if it wasn’t for the WAGES\$ Program. Teaching can be stressful, and our wages have not matched the cost of living in recent years. I love what I do, but do not think I would be able to survive on what I make alone.” (Iredell, teacher)

“WAGES\$ has been a deciding factor for me to stay in my chosen profession.” (Johnston, director)

“Teachers in early childhood education are vastly underpaid. The WAGE\$ and AWARD\$ Plus programs allow teachers who love their jobs but need more income to survive to stay in ECE.” (Lenoir, director)

“WAGE\$ motivates me to stay in child care when other professions pay much more.” (Lincoln, director)

“WAGE\$ helps us keep staff.” (Macon, director)

“We need great teachers, and WAGE\$ helps great teachers to keep teaching.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“Salaries make up the bulk of our program expenses. Tuition only covers a part of our operating expenses. By providing additional income to those who have worked towards more education, WAGE\$ helps to retain employees.” (Mitchell, director)

“WAGE\$ provides incentive to continue working with children.” (Montgomery, teacher)

“Any supplement that supports early educators is important! We need to encourage employees to stay in the field, and this is a great way to do that.” (Moore, director)

“The supplement helps the staff survive. It helps them to continue doing the job they enjoy.” (Nash, director)

“The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is awesome. I don’t think I would have stayed in the same Pre-K program as long as I have (19 years) without the support or funds from this program. I love working with my Pre-K students, but having a job as a Pre-K teacher assistant does not pay enough money.” (Pitt, teacher)

“Child Care WAGE\$® allows teachers to work in child care and still meet their financial needs. Without WAGE\$, the pay rate alone is not enough.” (Randolph, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ Program is important to help those of us who are low-income. We have dedicated our careers not to being rich, but to helping children in our care to be successful individuals. It warms my heart when I see a child light up when they’ve accomplished something that they’ve struggled to do. These funds help me stay in this career that I love.” (Rockingham, teacher)

“The Child Care WAGE\$® Program has helped me stay in the NC Pre-K classroom. Without the extra money, I would have to find a second job or possibly change jobs.” (Rowan, teacher)

“WAGE\$ has motivated me to stay at my current center. It makes me feel valued.” (Stanly, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ bonus is basically the reason I haven’t turned in my license yet.” (Surry, family child care home provider)

“WAGE\$ is a wonderful benefit to keep me in the early education field! We need quality workers, and I feel like I embody those qualities.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“WAGE\$ allows me to stay in a career that is very important to the families I serve. There continues to be debate about affordable, quality child care. WAGE\$ helps provide the quality.” (Union, teacher)

“WAGE\$ provides motivation to stay at my current job.” (Vance, director)

“The WAGE\$ Program is a good reward for those who are sticking it out in this profession, even though it will not make you rich. You really must love it to put your all in and stay, so a supplement is necessary.” (Warren, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ Program helps so much. We are so underpaid, and any extra help we receive is so incredibly appreciated. It really does encourage me and makes me feel appreciated, and it makes me want to continue working in child care.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“WAGE\$ helps the center to keep professional teachers.” (Wilson, teacher)

“The supplement motivates teachers to stay in the child care field. It increases morale so our program can grow, and it helps to retain staff.” (Yadkin, director)



Appendix B: Education

Feedback Collected from WAGES Surveys FY24

“WAGES¹ helped me finish my degree in early childhood education.” (Alamance, teacher)

“WAGES keeps me motivated to continue going to school and helps me provide the best for the kids in my class.” (Brunswick, teacher)

“WAGES is important because it shows teachers in this field that furthering their education benefits them financially. Most fields pay people with a higher education more, but early child care centers are limited in what they can pay due to the costs of running a program and the realities based around what they can realistically charge parents. WAGES encourages teachers to continue their education, which has positive effects on them and the children in their care.” (Buncombe, director)

“WAGES has encouraged me to go back to school to get my bachelor’s degree.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“I am the first and only person in my family who has received a degree because of WAGES. ... WAGES is important because it helps teachers further our education and be able to provide quality care for our students.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“WAGES is a great supplement for people working in the early education field who are striving for higher education.” (Clay, director)

“WAGES motivates child care staff to continue their education which helps them to better support the children.” (Cleveland, director)

“Three staff members who are on the WAGES Program are taking courses to complete their bachelor’s and associate’s degrees. Another is working on her master’s degree.” (Columbus, director)

“WAGES helped me to get my Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. It has helped me to be better equipped to teach in child care.” (Craven, family child care home provider)

“The WAGES Program is important because it gives the incentive to keep striving to be the best teacher that you can be and expand your education in child care.” (Cumberland, teacher)

“The money I receive from WAGES has helped me pay for books for my college classes, and it has also helped me save money for future classes.” (Davie, teacher)

“Early childhood education professionals are not paid a lot, therefore those that are in the profession are there for the interest of child development and growth. WAGES encourages staff to further their education to become better educators.” (Durham, teacher)

¹ Respondents referred to the Child Care WAGES[®] Program in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“The WAGE\$ supplement is important to my staff because it serves as a benefit and an incentive for seeking higher education. The staff depend on this supplement and look forward to receiving it.” (Forsyth, director)

“I have used the money from WAGE\$ to pay for tuition and books. I am currently getting my early childhood education degree.” (Gaston, teacher)

“WAGE\$ helps with continuing my education.” (Graham, teacher)

“WAGE\$ encourages teachers to go to school and stay with the program they work for.” (Granville, teacher)

“WAGE\$ makes child care workers feel like they are more appreciated and makes them more interested in continuing education in the child care field.” (Greene, director)

“I achieved the next level of Child Care WAGE\$® by completing an additional early childhood education class that deepened my understanding of child development.” (Guilford, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ Program has been a blessing to my family. It has helped me financially while I went on to complete my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. I am forever grateful.” (Halifax, teacher)

“My staff love receiving their WAGE\$ supplements, and it really motivates them to stay in school or to enroll.” (Harnett, director)

“The supplement helps in a very low-salary field. It encourages teachers to continue their education so they can earn more money and be more knowledgeable.” (Henderson, director)

“The supplement is important because it motivates teachers to pursue higher education. The additional education increases the teachers’ ability to teach and improves the learning experience for the children.” (Iredell, director)

“WAGE\$ keeps me motivated to stay on top of my continued education plan as well as keeping me content at my current position.” (Johnston, teacher)

“WAGE\$ encourages people who are interested in working in the child care industry to value their education and keep moving forward for a better future for themselves and their families.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“WAGE\$ has allowed my staff to obtain continuing education for a degree.” (Lincoln, director)

“It is very rewarding to receive supplements for my educational level from WAGE\$. The funds are very helpful and encouraging to advance my career.” (Mecklenburg, family child care home provider)

“The extra supplement gives teachers an incentive to be more educated so they can earn more, since the salary is so low in the child care field.” (Pitt, director)

“The WAGES Program allowed me to get my associate’s degree without putting a financial burden on my family.” (Randolph, teacher)

“When I first started in WAGES I didn’t really know much about it, but as the years have gone by, I have noticed that WAGES is a consistent program that helps providers who have gone to school, are in school, or want to go to school. The program encourages me to hang in there. I really appreciate the WAGES Program and how it has helped my family child care home. The extra funds are such a blessing and are needed to help with so much.” (Rowan, family child care home provider)

“The WAGES Program inspires me to continue my education. The better educated I am, the better I can help inspire someone else.” (Rutherford, teacher)

“Staff that are participating in the WAGES Program at my center are seeking higher education, and we are experiencing no turnover with these staff.” (Stanly, director)

“Teachers appreciate the supplement. It encourages them to get more education and helps them to interact better with the children and parents.” (Surry, director)

“WAGES is important because it gives employees an incentive to better themselves by pursuing a higher education! It allows people to have extra money for supplies, bills, or just savings for emergencies.” (Swain, teacher)

“WAGES helps staff to further their education and improve future opportunities.” (Transylvania, director)

“The supplement emphasizes the importance of educated preschool teachers. It allows teachers to know they are valued for their educational efforts. Educated teachers are more likely to see their work in child care as a career, not just a job. This has a positive impact on their work and their interactions with the children.” (Union, director)

“WAGES has kept my staff interested in continuing or receiving higher education, and it has reduced staff turnover.” (Vance, director)

“The WAGES Program has been beneficial in many ways for me and my family. It encouraged me to stay in school, and that alone was an incentive to my family.” (Wayne, director)

“The staff at the Child Care WAGES® Program encouraged me to complete my degree, which helped me implement strategies to improve my curriculum in my classroom.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“The Child Care WAGES® Program is important to many people for many different reasons. It is just a great program. It helps encourage teachers to start or return to school. When you work hard, good things do come out of it.” (Wilson, teacher)

“I was a single mom. WAGES helped me to finish my education, which had a big impact on my family.” (Yadkin, teacher)



Appendix C: Compensation

Feedback Collected from WAGES Surveys FY24

“WAGES¹ helps me feel more comfortable with paying my bills and keeping my worries from interfering with my job.” (Alexander, teacher)

“The WAGES Program is important to early childhood teachers in so many ways! We do this job not for the money--because it does not pay enough--but for the love of the children! This program makes it easier to do that! It has helped me feel more stable in my life!” (Avery, teacher)

“The Child Care WAGES® Program has helped supplement my paycheck during times when finances have become scarce. It has gotten me through many times when I was afraid that I would have no money to pay bills or buy groceries. ... WAGES has eased a lot of anxiety regarding finances. Having the supplement has helped enormously for unexpected expenses.” (Brunswick, teacher)

“Anything to help with retention is good. Anything to make a low-wage, low-respect workforce feel respected and appreciated is good. Anything that helps me keep the lights on is good.” (Buncombe, teacher)

“I know my WAGES supplement is coming so when an emergency arises, I try to work it out until it arrives. ... WAGES is a blessing. The financial support helps to maintain my home and takes some of the stress away. By the time I receive the funds, I really need it.” (Burke, teacher)

“WAGES helps me financially so I can focus on my job better.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“WAGES is extremely important. I love working in early childhood education, but the truth is the pay is terrible. The Child Care WAGES® Program is a lifesaver. We are lucky to have it.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“It seems my family is always in need of catching up on bills or needing a little extra to help us get through, and the WAGES supplement is a very welcome sight. We look forward to getting it.” (Cleveland, family child care home provider)

“The supplements from WAGES help relieve some of the stress from rising costs. Knowing that I have that help allows me to be a better teacher.” (Columbus, teacher)

“WAGES is like a lifeline for me. I am the provider for my mother. It really helped supplement my income.” (Craven, teacher)

“The WAGES Program is important because sometimes when you receive that money, it’s like a sigh of relief. We all know about unexpected car repairs, when you don’t know where the funds are coming from--then you check your bank account and see something wonderful in there that you didn’t have before. Now you can get that repair taken care of.” (Cumberland, teacher)

¹ Respondents referred to the Child Care WAGES® Program in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“I love receiving the WAGE\$ supplement. It’s wonderful knowing I’m going to receive it and the burdens that it takes from me. ... WAGE\$ helps me buy materials for my classroom, and it eases financial strain in my life.” (Davidson, teacher)

“The Child Care WAGE\$® Program has been important to me because it has helped when I didn’t have enough money to pay bills. It has also helped the children in my care because it has helped me to get some items in the classroom that the children need for some of their lessons. It has also helped in getting some of the much-needed items on our playground.” (Davie, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ Program makes it possible for me to contribute more to my family's income while I choose to do work that is satisfying, energizing and puts the children first.” (Durham, teacher)

“Teachers are underpaid. This supplement eases the burden when it comes to buying extras for the classroom. It is priceless just to see the smiles on kids’ faces knowing that they have what they need in their class to continue creating.” (Edgecombe, director)

“The WAGE\$ Program is very important for child care providers because it helps us to be less stressed when trying to deal with the cost of living. Children benefit when their teacher can give 100% to them and not be stressed over how to pay a necessary bill.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“The WAGE\$ Program is important for keeping staff happy in the child care field. The extra money helps us with bills and the cost of living.” (Franklin, family child care home provider)

“The supplement has been helpful because payments from parents alone are not enough to stay in business. We need all the help we can get.” (Gaston, family child care home provider)

“WAGE\$ has helped me financially. I am not coming to work stressed over money.” (Granville, teacher)

“I am glad I can have extra cash for broken appliances or plumbing, or wherever I need to make ends meet. Sometimes I need the money from WAGE\$ to pay back taxes, pay for workshops or pay contractors for fixing. WAGE\$ is important because it really helps with where I’m lacking financially.” (Guilford, director)

“WAGE\$ helps to ease the financial strain of doing what I love.” (Halifax, teacher)

“Because the cost of everything in the world has spiked up, my employment funds have been insufficient to cover my normal finances—especially while attending college at the same time. My need for additional funds to cover gas, car maintenance and bills within my house has increased. The classes I have taken in college have improved my skills and education level with class activities and strategies, so I have utilized WAGE\$ funds to provide me with resources to improve my classroom. Without the funds from WAGE\$, I would be struggling to pay my bills and attend college to better my education for the future of our youth. WAGE\$ has been there to fill the holes in my financial status where my employment funds have lacked what I need.” (Hertford, teacher)

“WAGE\$ helps offset financial stress with the increased cost of groceries.” (Iredell, teacher)

“The supplement alleviates some of the financial burden for staff and gives them peace of mind. It boosts morale, and they look forward to their payment cycles. They feel valued and cared for.” (Johnston, director)

“WAGE\$ has helped me to not stress about being able to provide for my family.” Martin, teacher)

“Child care is rewarding, and I love seeing the development and difference I contribute to the children I work with. WAGE\$ is important because financial stability is a big stressor in my life, and when I undergo stress it’s hard to wake up and choose to go to work in a field that barely helps pay the bills.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“WAGE\$ has helped me pay bills and overcome burdens that I have had. It makes me feel more valuable and more appreciated by the state and county.” (Moore, teacher)

“Staff members appreciate the extra pay, and they are more focused on doing a better job. It has increased morale and self-esteem in staff who participate in the supplement programs. It has also helped with staff retention. The children in our care have happier and more positive adults working with them, so their experiences are better.” (Nash, director)

“The WAGE\$ Program is important because our pay is not enough from teaching. It has meant a miracle has come my way.” (Northampton, teacher)

“WAGE\$ is important because it helps with income. As teacher assistants we have a lot of days that we do not work, and when we are not working there is less income. You cannot live off teacher assistant pay. You must find other resources to provide for your family.” (Pitt, teacher)

“WAGE\$ has freed me from financial burdens several times throughout the years. I love this program because it makes me feel valued as an early educator.” (Randolph, director)

“WAGE\$ literally means the difference between a bill being paid or not at times. Other times, it allows me to get things outside my usual financial restrictions such as shoes or clothes to wear to work.” (Rockingham, teacher)

“WAGE\$ allows a little peace of mind just from knowing it is available.” (Rowan, teacher)

“WAGE\$ helps make ends meet at home, work and school.” (Rutherford, teacher)

“WAGE\$ adds to our income and improves our family lives and expenses. It keeps quality teachers at their centers and helps them go back to school.” (Stanly, teacher)

“WAGE\$ has lifted a financial burden and released some of my stress.” (Surry, director)

“Specifically teaching assistants are underpaid in this profession. They can easily work in the food service industry and make more money per hour. WAGE\$ helps to offset that lack of salary

and encourages continuing education to lift morale and increase quality of care.” (Swain, director)

“WAGES\$ helps relieve financial stress and allows me to be a more relaxed and effective teacher.” (Union, teacher)

“WAGES\$ is important because it provides extra financial support when all your bills hit at once.” (Vance, teacher)

“WAGES\$ is very important because it helps me financially--especially with the cost of food increasing.” (Warren, family child care home provider)

“WAGES\$ has helped me provide for my family when my actual salary from working in child care is not enough.” (Wayne, teacher)

“Being an early childhood educator does not pay well, so having a supplemental income is very much needed and appreciated. Every good teacher I know spends money out of their own pocket for their classroom. Any extra income helps with personal finances and benefits the classroom.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“WAGES\$ is important because providing this service or incentive helps. Knowing that I have a little financial freedom frees my mind. I can be more productive in my class and not worry about not having a bill paid.” (Wilson, teacher)

“Pay is so low for what I do. It is just nice for there to be programs like WAGES\$ that help us make more money. I love what I do, but it is hard to live on what teachers make.” (Yadkin, teacher)

“WAGES\$ helps me buy extra things for my classroom, and it helps me pay for fuel in the winter for heat and lights.” (Yancey, teacher)



Appendix D: Appreciation/Recognition Feedback Collected from WAGES Surveys FY24

“WAGES¹ makes me feel good about myself. ... WAGES lets child care staff know they are important and appreciated, and that someone cares to help them.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“WAGES makes me feel appreciated and proud to do what I do. I love working with children.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“WAGES is important to show child care workers that they are appreciated. The child care field is full of unsung and underpaid heroes who go above and beyond for the children in their care. This extra supplement shows that someone acknowledges their work.” (Columbus, teacher)

“WAGES makes child care providers feel recognized and that what they do matters.” (Craven, teacher)

“The WAGES Program allows me to believe, as an educator in the rural community, that I am an asset to the next generation.” (Cumberland, director)

“WAGES makes me feel like my job is worthwhile and I matter.” (Davie, teacher)

“WAGES is important because it helps to supplement the low salaries in our profession. It also helps to validate that what we do as early educators is important, and we deserve to be compensated for our hard work.” (Forsyth, teacher)

“WAGES makes educators feel valued and seen.” (Guilford, director)

“Child Care WAGES[®] helps me to feel appreciated and that my labor is not overlooked. It helps me to purchase resources that contribute to my students’ happiness.” (Halifax, teacher)

“The supplement shows staff that they are seen, heard and appreciated.” (Harnett, director)

“WAGES makes me feel that what I do matters. It makes me feel appreciated and that I have a purpose-filled career--not just a job.” (Iredell, teacher)

“It feels good to be recognized as an educator. So much emphasis is put on K-12, but the WAGES Program focuses on early childhood education, which to me is equally important.” (Johnston, teacher)

“Child care teachers are often underpaid, overworked and underappreciated. Programs like WAGES show that their work does not go unnoticed. It also helps provide some relief to a career that is important but often does not provide a livable wage.” (Lee, director)

“WAGES helps teachers financially. It causes them to have a greater drive in working with the kids, and it makes them feel that they and the work they do are important.” (Lenoir, director)

¹ Respondents referred to the Child Care WAGES[®] Program in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“When teachers are happy and feel important, then the children are happy.” (Lincoln, director)

“WAGE\$ gives early childhood teachers a sense of belonging in the field of education. They feel like they are more than babysitters.” (Mecklenburg, director)

“Early childhood teachers are a major contributor to parents being able to work, and I believe they have not received the recognition they deserve. Having a program like WAGE\$ is great because teachers feel seen and heard.” (Montgomery, director)

“The supplement gives staff a feeling of professionalism and importance in a low-paid profession.” (Moore, director)

“WAGE\$ is important because it make teachers feel that our job is important to others.” (Nash, teacher)

“WAGE\$ gives educators a sense of appreciation. It lets us know that we are recognized, and we are exactly what this world needs.” (Pitt, director)

“The WAGE\$ Program has made me feel like I am a valued employee at my center, and I am recognized as a teacher--not just a babysitter.” (Randolph, teacher)

“WAGE\$ is important because it lets the teachers know that we see them, and they are important. Teachers in general do not get paid a lot, and the supplement is very helpful in the world we live in now. Staff are very grateful for the program. I love seeing the excitement in their face when they are about to receive their funds.” (Rowan, director)

“WAGE\$ is important because it helps child care staff and educators feel more appreciated and helps them to provide for their families and classrooms. These all benefit our community. People who feel appreciated stay at their job longer and do a better job, which benefits the children we serve.” (Surry, teacher)

“WAGE\$ is important for us to feel valued and appreciated.” (Transylvania, teacher)

“WAGE\$ makes teachers feel seen. Teachers often tell me they feel invisible or like just another piece of furniture. WAGE\$ reminds them that they have value and are important.” (Vance, director)

“WAGE\$ means I have someone who takes pride in what I do. It helps me and everyone around me feel special.” (Wayne, teacher)

“WAGE\$ is important because it is encouraging to know someone out there realizes the value of what we do in the field of early childhood education.” (Wilkes, teacher)

“The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is important to me because the program shows me my worth. The program recognizes how important I am in what I do. It is a great incentive to have

when starting and even continuing in child care. I truly appreciate the support WAGES provides.” (Wilson, teacher)



Appendix E: Smart Start Messages Feedback Collected from WAGES Surveys FY24

“Thank you so much for prioritizing this program. It is the single most effective resource that we find impacting our program, teachers and children.” (Alamance, director)

“Thank you. The supplements are very beneficial.” (Alexander, teacher)

“I want you to know that I really appreciate your support and that this extra money is really appreciated, because this is not a very well-paid job. It is a hard but very rewarding job, so having this extra support is very important.” (Alleghany, director)

“The supplement is appreciated and helps me a lot.” (Avery, teacher)

“Thank you so much. Times are getting progressively more difficult, and the cost of living continues to rise. The supplement has taken many burdens off my shoulders. Thank you and thank you.” (Brunswick, teacher)

“These funds have helped my family with unexpected expenses that have popped up, like healthcare needs. It eased some of the financial stress. It also makes me feel appreciated and valued as a professional in the community. Thank you so much for directing these funds in this manner!” (Buncombe, teacher)

“The supplement encourages me to stay in my current career. It also helps me to catch up on things I may be putting off, like doctor’s appointments and home repairs. Thank you so much for caring enough to fight for us financially.” (Burke, teacher)

“I would like to say a big thank you for providing us with the bonus. We feel like we are worthy to be in school with the little children.” (Cabarrus, teacher)

“Thank you. The supplement has made a huge difference in my life.” (Caldwell, teacher)

“I appreciate you thinking of all the child care workers. Working in child care is challenging, but this supplement makes it worthwhile. I appreciate you all so much.” (Cleveland, teacher)

“Thank you for supporting local child care workers. Every penny that goes to a recipient is appreciated and used to make our lives better.” (Columbus, teacher)

“Thank you for all you do. The supplement really helps teachers continue doing the job they love.” (Craven, teacher)

“WAGES¹ makes a big difference in our lives and gives us the ability to cope financially.” (Cumberland, director)

¹ Respondents referred to the Child Care WAGES[®] Program in a variety of ways. Throughout the quotes, the name has been corrected when necessary. Abbreviated references have been retained.

“This supplement program benefits my family and the families I serve. It enables me to offer a high-quality early education experience for children at the lowest possible cost.” (Davidson, family child care home provider)

“Thank you for the supplement. It helps me to stay in the classroom instead of seeking other employment. It makes a big difference in my income as a single person.” (Davie, teacher)

“Thank you so much for seeing child care workers as valuable and important in the lives of families and in our community and recognizing that we are worthy of care ourselves.” (Durham, teacher)

“Thank you so much for this program. It has been a godsend for me.” (Edgecombe, teacher)

“Please continue these funds, because sometimes they make a difference between staying in the business and choosing to leave. WAGE\$ offers the funds as well as superior customer service.” (Forsyth, director)

“Please continue providing us with WAGE\$. It makes our jobs less stressful knowing we have something extra coming to help tide us over. What we receive from our families or subsidies is not enough. Thank you, you are appreciated.” (Gaston, family child care home provider)

“This program is a lifesaver.” (Granville, teacher)

“Thank you very much for supplying this supplement. It helps a lot. I pray that funds will still be available to continue helping us out.” (Greene, teacher)

“This supplement is essential to the holistic well-being of early childhood educators. When we can take care of ourselves through supplemental funding, then and only then can we begin the work of taking care of others.” (Guilford, teacher)

“Thanks. The supplement has helped me and the children in my care for years. It made it possible for me to continue working in child care.” (Halifax, teacher)

“Thank you. Sometimes when finances get tight, it helps me to hold on knowing that I will get financial help soon.” (Harnett, teacher)

“Please continue the supplement. It encourages staff to stay. Sometimes it is just nice to hear that you are important.” (Haywood, director)

“WAGE\$ is a necessity for the community. Without it, providing proper child care would be more challenging than it already is.” (Henderson, teacher)

“Thank you for the supplement. It helps so much in times of need. Extra income is always nice to help with daily expenses.” (Hertford, director)

“Thank you will never be enough. This supplement is what keeps me in the field and helps my family survive.” (Iredell, teacher)

“Thank you for supporting us in a field that is not paying enough to cover the cost of living. Teaching is a job that comes from the heart.” (Johnston, teacher)

“The supplements continue to be a blessing.” (Lee, teacher)

“The supplement I receive is very helpful to me and my family. It helps me to get food and pay some of my bills.” (Lenoir, teacher)

“The funds help supplement my wages. I could make more money working in another field, but I chose to work in a field where I feel like I make a difference. The extra money helps pay a few bills.” (Lincoln, director)

“Thank you for thinking of teachers and being willing to show support and appreciation.” (Macon, teacher)

“Thank you all so much. I am grateful for the supplement and thank God every day for the program. I pray it continues to prosper, because we need it and our schools and loved ones need it.” (Martin, teacher)

“The WAGES Program has been incredibly beneficial. The funds have helped ease the fear of not making enough money to care for myself and my family. It can be challenging working in a field that doesn’t historically pay their staff livable wages. The funds serve as an incentive to remain in the child care field providing high quality service to children and their families.” (Mecklenburg, teacher)

“This is so important for our program. Thank you!” (Mitchell, director)

“Thanks! The supplement is a great way to show appreciation for the work we do.” (Montgomery, teacher)

“The WAGES Program gives me more motivation to continue working in child care. I am thankful for the fact that you are seeking ways to show support and appreciation for what we do. Thank you.” (Moore, teacher)

“Thanks for knowing our value. Please continue your support. It is very important.” (Nash, teacher)

“WAGES is a beneficial program that helps so many teacher assistants financially. Without it, I would be behind on so many bills and I would not be able to provide for my family.” (Pitt, teacher)

“The supplement is important because it has kept me in the same program and age group. I appreciate you for funding the money and for seeing that Pre-K is a very important program. Keeping the same teachers in our school has been a challenge. It is not good for the children if they are changing teachers in the middle of the school year or starting with a long-term substitute and then hiring another teacher three to six months later. Children at this age need consistency

and stability. Children in our low-income program may not get that at home, so we want them to have it with us. The teachers I work with have been together going on nine years. Hopefully we can remain together until our retirement.” (Randolph, teacher)

“Thank you. WAGE\$ encouraged me to seek higher education.” (Richmond, teacher)

“I would not be able to make it in this job without this supplement since educators are so underpaid. It is a necessity to help me get through the summer months. It has been a lifesaver when unexpected car and home repairs have come up. This is a much-needed program because there is such a shortage of teachers! Thank you all so much for these desperately needed funds!!” (Rockingham, teacher)

“Thank you so much for funding the WAGE\$ Program. It is keeping teachers motivated, staying in the child care field and continuing education!” (Rowan, teacher)

“Thank you! These funds have helped my family through hard times. They have also encouraged many, including myself, to keep pushing forward with furthering education. Thank you for making early childhood educators feel like real educators and not babysitters.” (Rutherford, director)

“Keep supporting the teachers who support the children. I love watching their faces as they learn, and I’m so excited to learn. Thank you for helping us. We have needed it for years.” (Stanly, teacher)

“Thank you. The supplement is important to me and helps me stay at a job I love.” (Surry, teacher)

“Thank you for making my life more successful.” (Transylvania, director)

“The funds helped me to complete my degree back when I first started working on child care classes.” (Union, teacher)

“Since I have been receiving supplements from the Child Care WAGE\$® Program my life has been a lot easier, and it is easier to provide things for the children I serve.” (Vance, teacher)

“Thank you for all you do. WAGE\$ is a big help with providing for our children and our personal needs as well. I count on these funds to help me out.” (Warren, teacher)

“You are greatly appreciated. You show that you care by giving us the means to show up for our children.” (Wayne, teacher)

“Thank you so much for boosting my finances to help provide for my family.” (Wilkes, director)

“I appreciate the support and dedication of those who continue to fight for the funds provided to WAGE\$. The supplement allows me to have financial freedom and makes life a little easier. Thank you.” (Wilson, teacher)

“Thank you so much for everything you have done to keep the Child Care WAGES® supplement going for us.” (Yadkin, teacher)

“Thank you so much for providing this for me and my family!!” (Yancey, director)