

Groundwork Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that advances quality early care and education as the most transformative strategy to improve school outcomes, increase the life-long success of Ohio's children, and lay a strong foundation for economic prosperity in our state.

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Ohio's future prosperity and quality of life are important to all of us. We understand that our state's economic success is linked to a productive workforce and secure, welcoming communities. What is not widely understood, however, is how much Ohio's economy is influenced by the health and development of our youngest children who, in a matter of years, will be our workforce.

This is why so many renowned economists, business leaders and public safety officials understand that early care and education is a foundation for community and economic development, as capable children become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society. The early years are a critical time when neurological connections create the foundation for future intellectual, emotional, social and physical development. Like building a new house or office building, establishing a strong foundation will determine the likelihood of success in the development, learning and behavior that will follow. Our brains develop through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined, and learning, behavior and physical and mental health are all inter-related over the course of our lifetimes. Getting everything right the first time is easier and less costly than trying to fix it later.

Developed with the growing realization that increasing investments in high-quality early care and education results in increased school readiness, student success, and overall economic returns to the state, Groundwork Ohio has created a set of policy recommendations to move Ohio toward a comprehensive, high quality, early care and education system. These recommendations are based upon five key areas of focus necessary for building a strong, comprehensive system for high-quality early care and education in Ohio: Quality, Infant and Toddler Care, Preschool, Accountability, and Workforce Sustainability.

Things to Know:

Step Up To Quality

Step Up To Quality is a five-star quality rating and improvement system administered by the Ohio Departments of Education and Job and Family Services. Step Up To Quality recognizes and promotes learning and development programs that meet quality program standards that exceed licensing health and safety regulations. The program standards are based on national research identifying standards which lead to improved outcomes for children.

Rated programs are able to register for a renewal or an increase to their rating and unrated programs are able to register for an initial rating. All registrations must be completed and submitted using the Ohio Child Licensing and Quality System.





POLICY AGENDA

The Big Goal

Current base reimbursement rates fall well below the 75th percentile

Date PFCC Reimbursement Rates Updated	Year of Child Care Market Rate Survey	Percentile of Market Rate
January 1, 2001	1999	75th
July 1, 2005	2004	60th
May 1, 2007	2006	65th
July 23, 2009	2008	26th*

Table 1. History of updates to Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) base reimbursement rates for early care and education providers in Ohio and corresponding percentiles of the market rate based on the Ohio Child Care Market Rate Survey. Based on research by Dr. Howard B. Fleeter.

* In 2009 the state introduced a tiered reimbursement rate system with additional premiums based on the Step Up to Quality star ratings. These premiums were updated in 2013 and again in 2016, however even with these premiums a 3-Star provider typically receives reimbursement at a rate below the 75th percentile of the current market rate.

Our big goal is to serve all infants, toddlers, and preschoolers receiving Publicly Funded Child Care subsidies in high-quality settings with access to full-day, full-year programs to meet their families' needs. Equal access to quality is critical to building a comprehensive system of early care and education but has remained one of Ohio's most significant challenges. The federal government recommends that states set their reimbursement rates at the 75th percentile of the market rate to ensure that high-needs children have equal access to high-quality early care and education programs. This means that the state's reimbursement levels should provide access to three of out of four programs. As demonstrated in Table 1, the state's base reimbursement rates have dropped significantly lower than the federal benchmark and currently require additional premiums to provide access to quality. Even with these premiums, however, a 3-Star provider typically receives reimbursement at a rate below the 75th percentile of the current market rate.

Ohio has made significant investments in early care and education programs throughout the years but much work remains to build a comprehensive system that is high-quality and meets the needs of our children and families. Groundwork Ohio's Policy Agenda provides multiple recommendations to help build a strong, sustainable system of early care and education but the foundation for that system must be built upon a reimbursement structure that pays for quality access. To ensure that public dollars are being invested wisely, Groundwork Ohio deeply believes that reimbursement rates must be increased to pay for high-quality before expanding funds to put more children in low-quality or unrated settings.

Our immediate priority recommendation is to increase funding for Ohio's reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality providers are funded at the 75th percentile of the market rate or higher based on the state's most recent market rate survey. This is a common theme throughout this policy document because, without the proper investments in Ohio's rate structure, our other recommendations for a comprehensive, high-quality system will remain under-funded and unattainable.

Here in Ohio, we have worked diligently over the past few years to transform our early care and education system, encouraging, increasing and replicating high-quality programs for young children, and addressing professional development issues for the early childhood workforce. In order to ensure that our investments in young children yield the greatest benefit, we must continue and extend our current work to improve the quality of the early childhood system. Because it is so clear that quality is important, especially for our children with the highest needs, Ohio implemented Step Up To Quality, the state's quality rating system. In Step Up To Quality, early care and education programs earn 1- to 5-Star ratings based on meeting nationally researched quality program standards that exceed licensing health and safety regulations programs that are 3- to 5-Star rated are designated as high-quality.

Children in Ohio need consistent high-quality early care and education experiences regardless of the setting in order to achieve successful school readiness outcomes. Parents in Ohio need access to a wide variety of stable quality early care and education services while they are working or in school, but currently high-quality options simply are not readily available to parents, with only 9.3% of all providers licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services rated as high-quality. Currently, only 13% of children receiving Publicly Funded Child Care subsidies attend high-quality programs and 21% attend 1- or 2-Star Rated programs, leaving the vast majority (65%) of our publicly funded, highest needs children in unrated settings. The best opportunity Ohio has to maximize its investments and increase the number of children who receive a strong start is to increase the quality of the care and experiences for the children we are already serving.

In order to build a quality, comprehensive system of early care and education Ohio must focus on investments that support the Step Up To Quality mission and goals. As such, Groundwork Ohio strongly makes the following policy recommendations:



Things to Know:

Ohio's Quality Mandates

As part of Ohio's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant, 100% of licensed childcare providers in Ohio serving children who receive Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) subsidies must be Star Rated in the Step Up to Quality five-star quality rating and improvement system by 2020. As of 2015, only 35% of licensed childcare centers, 26% of Type A, and 3% of Type B home providers are Star Rated*.

Ohio statute also mandates that 100% of licensed providers (excluding Type B) that serve PFCC children should be high-quality (3 to 5 Stars) by 2025. In order to reach this goal, the following thresholds must be met:

- By June 30, 2017, 25%
- By June 30, 2019, 40%
- By June 30, 2021, 60%
- By June 30, 2023, 80%
- By June 30, 2025, 100%

As of 2015, only 15% of licensed childcare centers and 5% of Type A home providers are high-quality*.

* Percentages include providers that only serve school-age children

In 2016 only 1 in 7 Ohio PFCC children under age 5 are served in high-quality settings—2 out of 3 are in unrated programs

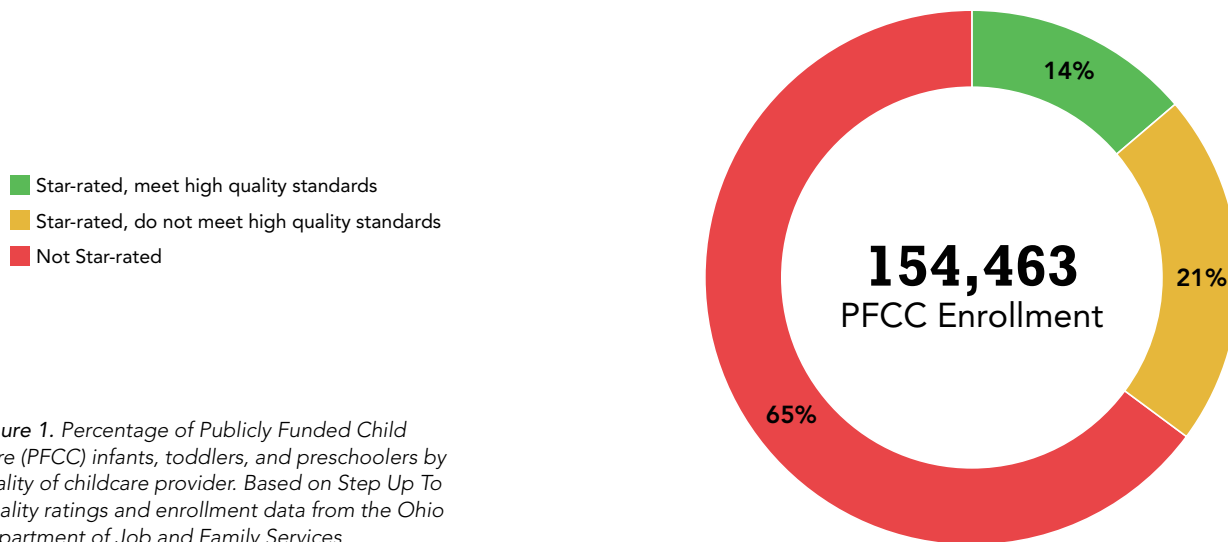


Figure 1. Percentage of Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by quality of childcare provider. Based on Step Up To Quality ratings and enrollment data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase funding for Ohio's reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality programs are *funded at the 75th percentile* of the market rate of higher based on the state's most recent market rate survey
2. Maximize investment in high-quality programs by ensuring the availability of federal, state, and local dollars to support the cost of quality early care and education services

SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop and implement a tax credit program for providers who invest in meeting and maintaining quality standards within Step Up To Quality as an incentive for programs to achieve the highest levels of quality
- Proactively market the Step Up To Quality program to parents through the PFCC application process and other public support programs to educate them on the importance of high-quality early care and education for their children's development and school success



A Focus on Infant and Toddler Care

Research has consistently demonstrated that achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers can be detected as early as 18 months of age. Current brain research has taught us that a substantial amount of brain development occurs during the ages 0–5 and that children who receive quality early care and education enter school with better math, language, and social skills. Quite simply, children immediately begin learning and developing at birth and the experiences they have as infants and toddlers significantly impacts their school readiness and ability to be successful throughout life.

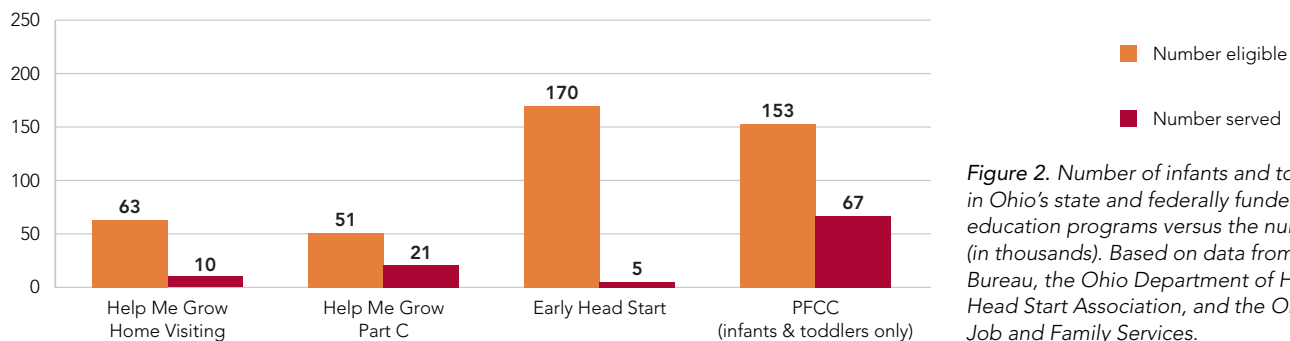
In order to realize the educational, developmental, and economic benefits of investments made in the early years, it is vital to provide high-quality settings for our most at-risk children while also supporting our low-income working families. The childcare subsidy system was designed with the intent of helping low-income working parents get to work and become self-sufficient by providing a safe childcare environment for children while parents work. However, the research has clearly demonstrated that we must provide more than a safe place—children, especially those identified as economically disadvantaged, need high-quality early care and education with intentional teaching to develop the skills needed for success in kindergarten, grade 3 reading, and beyond. It is critical that we focus on the quality of early learning settings. *Quality matters.*

In order to build a quality, comprehensive system of early care and education that focuses on learning and moves beyond simple “child care,” Ohio must focus on investments that increase the quality of education and care delivered to infants and toddlers. As such, Groundwork Ohio strongly makes the following policy recommendations:

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase funding for Ohio’s reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality programs are *funded at the 75th percentile* of the market rate of higher based on the state’s most recent market rate survey

Current funding levels do not allow all eligible Ohio infants and toddlers to be served in early care and education programs



Things to Know:

Ohio’s State and Federally Funded Programs for Infants and Toddlers

Help Me Grow

A free Home Visiting program is available to first-time parents with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Additionally an Early Intervention (Part C) program is available to children birth to age three who have an identified developmental delay or disability, regardless of income.

Early Head Start

Early Head Start serves children in poverty from birth to age three and includes child care, home visits, and health services.

Publicly Funded Child Care

Subsidies for year-round child care are provided to children from birth to age 12, whose parents are working or in school and have income at or below 130% FPL.

Figure 2. Number of infants and toddlers served in Ohio’s state and federally funded early care and education programs versus the numbers eligible (in thousands). Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Head Start Association, and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Reimbursement rates for Ohio's infants & toddlers fall well below market rates for early care & education in most settings

Infant Care
 Market Rate
 Reimbursement Rate

Toddler Care
 Market Rate
 Reimbursement Rate

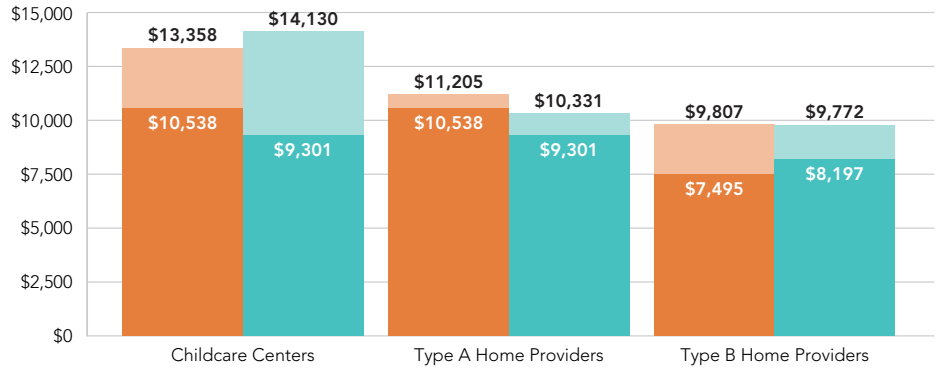


Figure 3. Estimated 75th percentile annual market rates and current maximum annual Publicly Funded Child Care “base” reimbursement rates (including the 18% premium for 3-Star programs) for infant and toddler care providers in Ohio. Dollar amounts reflect state averages. Based on an analysis of the Ohio Child Care Market Rate Survey by Dr. Howard B. Fleeter.

2. Provide 12 months of continuous eligibility for parents and revise the state’s reimbursement process to pay based upon enrollment, similar to how payment works in the private market and for public preschool

SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase the availability and affordability of publicly subsidized high-quality infant and toddler child care and education opportunities so that low-income families can work toward economic stability by *increasing income eligibility thresholds to 200% FPL* and provide *full-day, full-year options*
- *Work toward increasing eligibility to 200–300% FPL*, partially subsidized though a sliding fee scale based on income for *full-day, full-year* services
- Encourage coordination and articulation between early care and education programs and K–12 education to foster quality learning experiences and integrated supports throughout children’s early years, and build off of promising local practices that seamlessly connect infant-toddler care, preschool, and early elementary education
- Provide evidence-based home visitation programs, with culturally appropriate child development information, learning activities and family supports, for pregnant and newly parenting families, specifically families identified as economically disadvantaged
- Promote family engagement in learning activities to support emerging literacy for all children and expand professional development opportunities for early care and education professionals
- Improve methods of identifying children with special learning needs early and provide better training and ongoing professional development for early care and education professionals to ensure children have access to programming that will better prepare them for success in school
- Keep health care, including prenatal care, available and affordable for low-income children and increase funding for programs that focus on children’s social and emotional development, reducing toxic stress, and improving children’s overall health



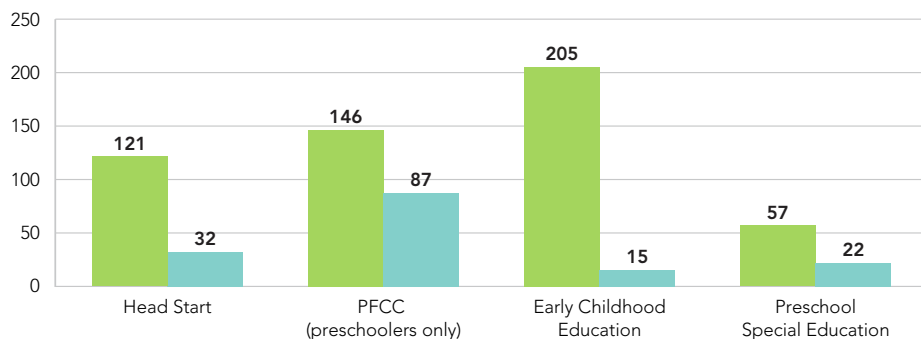
Research has long proven that high-quality preschool experiences can significantly impact how children develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to manage their own emotions and behavior to form healthy social interactions. According to the Ohio Department of Education, nearly one-third of the 130,000 children entering kindergarten each year are not prepared to succeed. In many cases, these children will go on to be identified for special education services, be held back a grade, and need other costly interventions.

Recent studies have proven the benefits of investment in high-quality preschool experiences, particularly for economically disadvantaged children. For example, studies of public programs in Cincinnati, New Jersey, Tulsa, and Boston all demonstrate improvements in grade retention, social behavior, and a decreased need for special education services. Furthermore, researchers agree that a meta-analysis of studies on the impact of high-quality early learning programming provides significant evidence regarding the importance of investments in such programs.

Several long-term research studies have shown that the positive outcomes of quality early care and education programs can save the state from \$7 to \$17 in future public expenditures for every \$1 invested through a reduction in costly interventions such as special education, grade retention, and costs associated with crime and imprisonment later in life. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that for every dollar invested in high-quality prekindergarten, \$1.62 was returned to the state of Ohio because of less need for grade retention and special education, reduced crime, and higher overall lifetime earnings. Simply put, not only is high-quality preschool important for children to be prepared for kindergarten, grade 3 reading and beyond, early care and education is a good investment for Ohio’s children, families and economy.

In order to build a quality, comprehensive system of early care and education Ohio must focus on investments that increase access and the quality of education and care provided to three- and four-year-old children. As such, Groundwork Ohio strongly makes the following policy recommendations:

Current funding levels do not allow all eligible preschoolers in Ohio to be served in early care and education programs



Things to Know:

Ohio’s State and Federally Funded Programs for Preschoolers

Head Start

Head Start serves children in poverty ages three to five with comprehensive preschool and family support services.

Publicly Funded Child Care

Subsidies for year-round child care, including preschool, are provided to children from birth to age 12, whose parents are working or in school and have income at or below 130% FPL.

Early Childhood Education

The state’s public preschool program serves children ages three to five at or below 200% FPL with half-day preschool in public school settings and highly-rated community-based programs.

Preschool Special Education

Special education services are offered in public school settings to children ages three to five with an identified developmental delay or disability, regardless of income.

Figure 4. Number of preschoolers served in Ohio’s state and federally funded early care and education programs versus the numbers eligible (in thousands). Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Ohio Head Start Association, the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Data Center.

Reimbursement rates for preschoolers in Ohio fall well below the market rates for early care and education in all settings

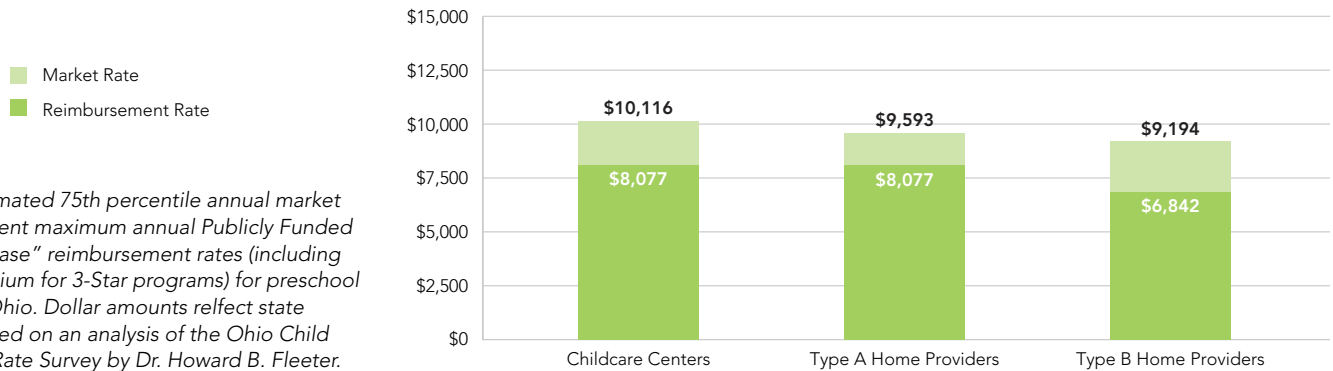


Figure 5. Estimated 75th percentile annual market rates and current maximum annual Publicly Funded Child Care “base” reimbursement rates (including the 18% premium for 3-Star programs) for preschool providers in Ohio. Dollar amounts reflect state averages. Based on an analysis of the Ohio Child Care Market Rate Survey by Dr. Howard B. Fleeter.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase funding for Ohio’s reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality programs are *funded at the 75th percentile* of the market rate of higher based on the state’s most recent market rate survey
2. Ensure that all low-income three- and four-year-olds have access to *high-quality* preschool

SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase the availability of publicly subsidized high-quality preschool opportunities so that low-income families can work toward economic stability by *increasing income eligibility thresholds to 200%* of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and provide *full-day, full-year options*
- *Work toward increasing eligibility to 200–300% FPL*, partially subsidized though a sliding fee scale based on income for *full-day, full-year* services
- Ensure that access to high-quality early learning programs expands in all communities across Ohio to enroll more eligible children not currently being served and market Step Up to Quality so that all parents are aware of high-quality opportunities in their community
- Encourage coordination and articulation between early care and education and K–12 education to foster quality learning experiences and integrated supports throughout children’s early years, and build off of promising local practices that seamlessly connect infant-toddler care, preschool, and early elementary education
- Consider innovative approaches to funding preschool, such as scholarship programs funded by tax-deductible charitable contributions from businesses and individuals or state-subsidized vouchers that can be utilized in high-quality settings

As Ohio works to expand high quality in early learning and child care through Step Up To Quality, Ohio's quality rating system, the state must also develop tools to measure program outcomes and track progress for children from birth to kindergarten entry. Measuring success will help improve accountability, inform data-driven policy decisions, and identify best practices in delivering high-quality care and education to Ohio's young children.

The five state agencies that serve Ohio's young children—the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services, Education, Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Developmental Disabilities—have collaborated through Early Childhood Ohio to establish an early childhood accountability system. While the five agencies currently share data to improve results for children and better identify successful state investments, the system could be better integrated. An integrated data system—made possible through the use of unique identification numbers for children—is needed to do this.

An integrated data system helps link privacy-protected individual-level data from multiple agencies, often dealing with the same children and families. These protected data can be used for case management as well as program monitoring and evaluation. Unique identification numbers linked to privacy-protected data will enable longitudinal research into child development and delivery of high-quality early care and education. This will lead to more informed policy decisions and investments in early care and education.

To improve accountability, annually updated program and provider-level data should also be made freely available to the public to use and redistribute for information and research purposes. However, no data made publicly available should allow for the identification of individual children or families.

In order to build a quality, comprehensive system of early care and education Ohio must focus on accountability measures to allow policy makers to make informed data-driven decisions. As such, Groundwork Ohio strongly makes the following policy recommendations:



Things to Know:

Ohio's Kindergarten Assessment Tools

Early Learning Assessment

Ohio, in partnership with Maryland, has developed an assessment for preschool-aged children—the Early Learning Assessment (ELA). The ELA is a part of Ohio's Ready for Kindergarten Assessment System, a joint project of Ohio's Department of Education and Department of Job and Family Services.

The assessment is designed to aid teachers in determining where children are in their readiness for kindergarten. The ELA will provide information for teachers about children from early preschool to kindergarten.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

At the beginning of each school year, children in public school kindergarten programs will be assessed using Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Starting with the 2014/15 school year, the new KRA is meant to replace the previously-used Kindergarten Readiness Assessment—Literacy (KRA-L) measure.

This assessment includes ways for teachers to measure a child's readiness for engaging with instruction aligned to the kindergarten standards.

Ohio needs an integrated data system across the five state agencies serving young children

Figure 6. Model of an integrated data system across the five state agencies that serve Ohio's young children. The following is a list of early care and education programs and services that could be integrated:

Ohio Department of Education

- Early Childhood Education
- Early Learning and Development Standards
- Early Learning Assessment
- Head Start Collaboration
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
- Preschool Licensing
- Preschool Special Education
- School Age Child Care Licensing
- Step Up To Quality (jointly with ODJFS)
- Third Grade Reading Guarantee

Ohio Department of Health

- Child & Family Health Services
- Children with Medical Handicaps Program
- Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Help Me Grow
- Maternal and Child Health Program
- Nutrition Services
- Ohio Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality
- Primary Care and Rural Health
- Project LAUNCH
- Women, Infants, Children (WIC)

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

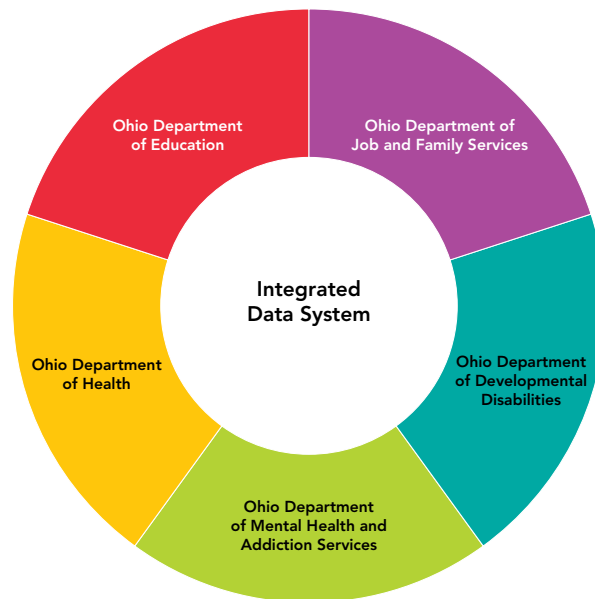
- Child Care Food Program
- Child Care Information Data System
- Child Care Licensing
- Publicly Funded Child Care
- Step Up To Quality (jointly with ODE)

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

- Early Childhood Mental Health

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities

- Facility-Based Care
- Home and Community-Based Services Waiver Program
- Locally Funded Services



IMMEDIATE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION:

1. Increase funding for Ohio's reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality programs are *funded at the 75th percentile* of the market rate of higher based on the state's most recent market rate survey
2. Establish a *common integrated data system* across all five state agencies serving Ohio's young children—the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services, Education, Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Developmental Disabilities

SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Adopt the existing system of unique identification numbers currently used by the Ohio Department of Education to monitor progress across the five state agencies that serve Ohio's young children
- Evaluate the results from existing measures—such as Step Up To Quality, the Early Learning Assessment, and the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment—annually to *connect data to outcomes* and determine the need for new measures to improve accountability
- Provide the public with access to annually-updated program and provider-level data across all five state agencies for download from a single website
- Allow users to disaggregate child data by age, sex, race, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, disability, limited English proficiency, and receipt of public subsidies all while ensuring the *highest levels of privacy protections for students and families*

A Focus on Workforce Sustainability

A strong, educated workforce is critically important in creating and maintaining a high-quality system of early care and education, especially as demands upon the system to grow beyond “babysitting” increase. Because brain development between the ages of 0–5 is so critically important it is imperative that teachers and staff serving our children, especially those in highest-need, have the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to prepare our children for a life invested in learning. The qualifications of early care and education professionals play a significant role in children’s outcomes and directly impacts the quality of programming provided.

Despite significant investments in early care and education programs and increased requirements for higher levels of educational attainment for early care and education professionals the compensation for such educators remains woefully inadequate. Ohio’s preschool teachers are the fourth lowest paid in the country, according to a new report from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services on the low wages of early care and education teachers. Additionally, the pay gap between early care and education professionals and elementary school teachers significantly impacts the sustainability of high-quality programs due to the inability to compete with the K–12 education system. The median annual wages for a preschool teacher in Ohio is \$23,690, less than half of the annual wages earned by kindergarten teachers in the state. Furthermore, Ohio was identified as one of 37 states wherein early care and education professionals, due to low wages, are eligible for some form of public assistance.

Such conditions negatively impact the ability of early care and education programs to attract and retain highly educated and skilled professionals and the significant gaps in compensation between community-based centers, Head Start, and public preschool add further strain on an already burdened system. According to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Ohio’s childcare workers have seen an 11% decrease in median wages since 2010 and 37% of childcare workers’ families participate in some sort of public assistance at a cost of \$40.1 million to the state of Ohio.



Things to Know:

Common Credentials for Early Care & Education Professionals in Ohio

Child Development Associate

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is a widely recognized national credential in early care and education. CDAs may specialize in birth to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, or birth to 5 years.

Pre-K Teaching License

Most of Ohio’s two-year programs in early care and education or child development offer an associate’s degree and a Pre-K Teaching License. This focuses on children from birth to 5 years with generally more attention on ages 3 to 5.

Early Childhood Teaching License

Ohio’s four-year programs in early care and education or child development offer a bachelor of science degree and an Early Childhood Teaching License. This license focuses on age 3 through grade 3 with an emphasis on K–3.

Montessori Certification

Teachers must obtain a special certification in order to teach in the Montessori style. Training for a Montessori Certification includes a year of study followed by a supervised practicum. Montessori teachers may specialize in one or more of several age ranges from birth to age 18, including birth to 3 years and 2.5 to 6 years.

Ohio's preschool teachers earn less than half as much as kindergarten teachers—a greater disparity than the U.S. average

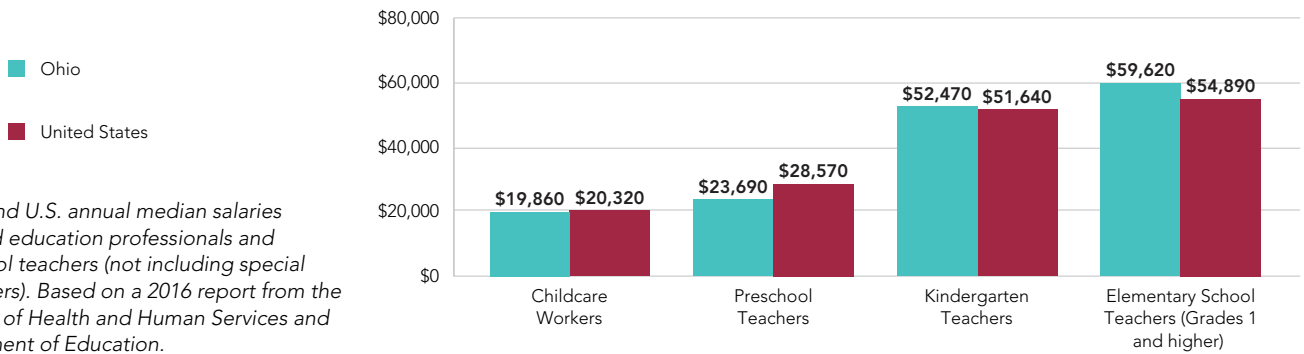


Figure 7. Ohio and U.S. annual median salaries for early care and education professionals and elementary school teachers (not including special education teachers). Based on a 2016 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education.

In order to build a quality, comprehensive system of early care and education Ohio must focus on investments that support its workforce. As such, Groundwork Ohio strongly makes the following policy recommendations:

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase funding for Ohio's reimbursement rate system to ensure that all high-quality programs are *funded at the 75th percentile* of the market rate of higher based on the state's most recent market rate survey
2. Examine ways to address the early care and education compensation crisis through Step Up To Quality, the state's quality rating and reimbursement system

SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish specific qualifications and ongoing professional development mandatory for all early care and education professionals and kindergarten teachers focused on diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence
- Utilize state tax policy to provide tax credits for early care and education program operators that support personnel in accessing improved credentials and professional development
- Provide state-sponsored scholarships and incentives for early care and education professionals who enroll in an early childhood associate's, bachelor's or master's degree program
- Develop and implement clear career pathways for early care and education professionals to promote continuous improvement within the profession and assist professionals navigating within the early care and education sector, or joining the sector from another field
- Require institutions of higher education to develop articulation agreements to allow early care and education professionals to seamlessly move between associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree programs among programs and institutions without a loss of credits

