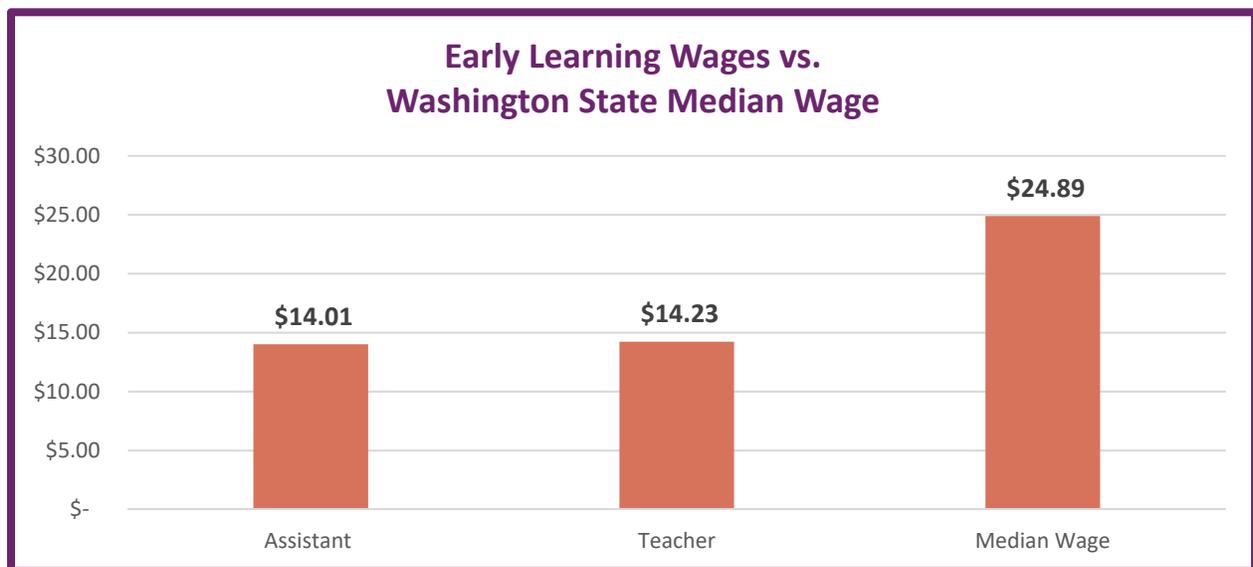


## Good Compensation for Teachers Is the Anchor for High Quality Early Learning

Early Learning is critical to child development, family wellbeing, and community economic prosperity. Washington State has invested in building a supervisory and incentive structure for early learning through Early Achievers, including QRIS, the Quality Rating and Improvement System.<sup>1</sup> However, the state has failed to address fundamental building blocks for affordable and high quality child care:

- **Early learning and childcare staff earn near-poverty level wages.**
- **State reimbursement rates for low income children remain far below the cost of care.**
- **The cost of quality child care is out of reach for working class and middle class families.**

The failure to fully compensate early learning teachers and caregivers reinforces and further embeds racial inequity and gender discrimination. Women make up 89% of the early learning workforce, which is also disproportionately composed of Latinas and people of color.<sup>2</sup> Poverty level compensation violates the State of Washington’s intent to build the “organizational capacity to advance racial equity.”<sup>3</sup>



Sources: Employment Security Department, State of Washington, Median and Hourly Wages: <https://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/median-hourly-wages>; State of Washington Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report and earlier reports: [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/2018\\_Washington\\_State\\_Market\\_Rate\\_Survey.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/2018_Washington_State_Market_Rate_Survey.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> <https://del.wa.gov/earlyachievers>

<sup>2</sup> Sources: Total count for workers in Washington, 2017 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: QWI Explorer: <https://qwiexplorer.ces.census.gov/static/explore.html#x=0&g=0>; Total count of early learning workers, NAISC Code: 6244 Child Day Care Services

<sup>3</sup> Racial Equity Initiative Data Report 2017, Washington State Department of Early Learning, P.1 [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Equity\\_Initiative\\_Data\\_Report\\_1.18.2017.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Equity_Initiative_Data_Report_1.18.2017.pdf)

Poor compensation compounds institutional racism and gender inequity in Washington State. If compensation in early learning was commensurate with that of other workers, or, indeed, commensurate with the importance and value of this work, then disproportionality in the make-up of the workforce would not be of great concern. But compensation for the early learning workforce is well below typical compensation, and, indeed, hovers just above poverty for thousands of these workers, to whom we entrust the care and education of our youngest children.

Low compensation negatively impacts quality of care, the well-being of our children, and the parents reliant on child care for work and their own education. It encourages high rates of turnover and discourages early learning teachers from investing in education and career advancement. If we are sincere in establishing high quality early learning, we must advance compensation for the early learning workforce.

In 2018, the legislature commissioned a task force to research early learning compensation and develop recommendations.<sup>4</sup> The task force has drafted several alternatives.

- **The primary vision is to compensate early learning teachers referencing kindergarten teacher compensation.<sup>5</sup> This would increase the average wage from about \$32,000 annually to about \$58,000. The net new cost for the state to put this salary scale into effect is approximately \$950 million a year. This could be a legislated goal to be phased in over 6 years.**
- **A step down is to compensate early learning teachers referencing the state's general salary scale for early learning program specialists.<sup>6</sup> This would increase salaries by about \$10,000 on average, with a total annual cost of \$360 million. Lead teachers would be compensated at about \$42,000 under this arrangement, still \$10,000 less than the median wage in our state.**

*An immediate step is for the Legislature to fund RCW 43.216.675, which provides for implementation of the early learning career ladder. Funding for the career ladder should extend to all licensed child care facilities, including centers and family child care providers.*

*Participation in the early achievers program established by RCW 43.216.085 would be a prerequisite for any child care center's or provider's participation in the career ladder. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families may additionally assist child care facilities adopting the career ladder with wage increments for child care workers who gain additional work experience or work responsibility, pursuant to RCW 43.216.675.*

*A \$40 million budget proviso will fund \$2.00 an hour wage enhancements (a \$4,000 annual increase) for 4800 workers. This cohort composes approximately 40% of the entire early childhood education workforce in Washington.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/budget/lbns/171Omni5883-S.SL.pdf> Section 615, p. 263

<sup>5</sup> Draft Task Force Report, October 30, 2018, author Angela Abrams

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ofm.wa.gov/state-human-resources/compensation-job-classes/ClassifiedJobListing/Specifications/1446>

<sup>7</sup> See [http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/WA\\_Facts.pdf](http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/WA_Facts.pdf) 2017 State Child Care Facts in the State of Washington and [https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/State%20Fact%20Sheets/Washington\\_Facts.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/State%20Fact%20Sheets/Washington_Facts.pdf) 2018 State Child Care Facts in the State of Washington for updated numbers