

Charting a Path Toward Equitable Pay



A Revised Career Ladder and Parity Salary Scale for the New York Early Childhood Workforce

New York is entering an exciting new era for early care and education (ECE) with Governor Hochul and Mayor Mamdani's promise of making pre-K truly universal throughout the state, facilitating access to 3-K in the city, and the development of 2-K. As the City charts a pathway to universal ECE, this will require a growing workforce of prepared early educators — an estimated 30,000 new educators.¹ ECE professionals, many of whom are women of color, are some of the lowest paid employees across the State — yet their work with young children sets the stage for all future learning. They care for and educate children during a crucial period of development, with more than one million neural connections forming every second in a child's first years of life.² According to a 2023 report by the NYS Department of Labor, 12% of child care workers live below the federal poverty level, compared with 5% of other occupations.³

Unlike K–12 education, ECE lacks uniform educational requirements for educators, with prerequisites varying by modality (center-based, home-based, or school-based), funding stream, and regulatory agency. Due to this, New York's early childhood workforce does not have access to a consistent career progression with increasing credentials and degrees leading to more responsibility and higher pay. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to recruit new educators into the field and harder still for current educators to grow professionally. A clearly defined career ladder offers a path for educators to follow, and role-aligned salary scales support increased compensation according to educator credentials, responsibilities, and experience.

To create this structure and define fair compensation for the field, the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute convened a group of leaders from across New York State to form the **Child Care Workforce Collaborative**. The group focused their work on a **revised career ladder and aligned parity salary scale**. After the initial draft, the Collaborative gathered feedback through five focus groups of New York early childhood professionals (including family child care providers, center directors, and child care business owners from across the state). The Collaborative made revisions based on this input and continues to share the career ladder and salary scale with the broader field for further discussion.



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About the Proposed Career Ladder

The career ladder mirrors, in part, Power to the Profession's Unifying Framework, a national collaboration to define the early childhood profession, which identified ECE I, II, and III as the core levels of the early childhood profession.⁴ It is rooted in opportunities that currently exist for New York early childhood providers and educators, including center- and home-based professionals. The 'A' and 'B' career ladder levels recognize educators who are on the path to earning higher degrees, since it takes years longer for working adult learners to earn a degree when compared to traditional students.

About the Proposed Parity Salary Scales

Salary scales for educators were developed using the 5th percentile salary for teachers in K–12 schools in each county across the state, annualized to reflect 12 months of work (versus the 10-month K–12 school year). The tables represent an average of these salaries — an average across the five counties of New York City, and an average of the 57 counties in the rest of the state. Once teachers reach ECE 3A (a bachelor's degree in ECE with a B–2nd grade teacher certification), they would make a salary similar to that of a K–12 teacher. The entry-level salary for teachers begins at 65% of the 5th percentile salary, and pay gradually increases with higher credentials and degrees. We also propose an experience progression to reward time spent in the field (Table 6). The Collaborative hopes this illustration of parity compensation will inform public investment in New York's early care and education system.

About the Collaborative

The Child Care Workforce Collaborative is a philanthropically funded working group that includes members from the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute at CUNY, the New York Association for the Education of Young Children, the Day Care Council of New York, the New School, the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, and the Early Care and Learning Council.

References

1. Liss, E. (2025). Building a Stronger Child Care Workforce for New York City. Day Care Council of New York.
2. Harvard University. (2019, August 20). Brain architecture. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brainarchitecture/>
3. Child Care in New York State (2023). New York State Department of Labor, Division of Research & Statistics.
4. Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Profession (2020). Power to the Profession. <https://powertotheprofession.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Power-to-Profession-Framework-03312020-web.pdf>



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Table 1. Proposed Revised Career Ladder for the Early Childhood Workforce

Level	Credential
Entry	• High school diploma/GED or • Six hours of training and education in early childhood development
ECE 1	• Current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or • NYS Infant Toddler Credential or • NYS Family Child Care Credential or • Early childhood certificate issued by institution of higher education (IHE) with nine credits in early childhood education
ECE 2	• Associate degree in early childhood education (ECE) or • Associate degree in another area with at least nine credits in ECE or • Associate degree and a Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE)-approved birth-3 years or 3-6 years Montessori Credential or • Associate degree and NYS Children's Program Administrator Credential (CPAC) or • Currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree program in ECE with at least 60 credits
ECE 2A	• Associate degree in ECE (or in another area with at least nine credits in ECE) + 30 credits (verified academic study plan in the Aspire Registry) or • Currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree program in ECE with at least 90 credits
ECE 3	• Bachelor's degree in ECE or • Bachelor's degree in another area with at least 18 credits in ECE or • Bachelor's degree + MACTE-approved birth-3 years or 3-6 years Montessori Credential or • Bachelor's degree + CPAC
ECE 3A	• Bachelor's degree in ECE + NYS initial B-2 ECE certification
ECE 3B	• Bachelor's degree in ECE + NYS ECE certification + 15 credits of graduate coursework in ECE (verified academic study plan in the Aspire Registry)
ECE 4	• Master's degree in ECE or • Master's degree with at least 15 credits in ECE or • Master's degree + MACTE-approved birth-3 years or 3-6 years Montessori Credential or • Master's degree + CPAC
ECE 4A	• Master's degree in ECE + NYS initial ECE teacher certification
ECE 5	• Master's degree in ECE + NYS professional ECE teacher certification or • Master's degree + NYS professional ECE teacher certification + School Building Leader certification
ECE 6	• Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE



Table 2. Teacher Parity Salary Scale

The entry-level salary for teachers begins at 65% of the 5th percentile salary, and pay gradually increases with higher credentials and degrees. Teachers reach 'true' parity compensation with K–12 teachers at ECE 3A. Per Aspire Registry data, the current median salary for teachers is \$46,231 in New York City and \$37,528 in the rest of the state.

Level	NYC	Hourly NYC	Rest of State	Hourly Rest of State
Entry	\$53,771	\$25.85		
ECE 1	\$57,907	\$27.84	\$43,370	\$20.85
ECE 2	\$66,510	\$31.98	\$49,813	\$23.95
ECE 2A	\$71,166	\$34.21	\$53,300	\$25.63
ECE 3	\$76,147	\$36.61	\$57,031	\$27.42
ECE 3A	\$82,724	\$39.77	\$61,957	\$29.79
ECE 3B	\$85,206	\$40.96	\$63,816	\$30.68
ECE 4	\$87,762	\$42.19	\$65,730	\$31.60
ECE 4A	\$90,395	\$43.46	\$67,702	\$32.55
ECE 5	\$93,107	\$44.76	\$69,733	\$33.53
ECE 6	\$95,900	\$46.11	\$71,825	\$34.53

Table 3. Assistant Teacher Parity Salary Scale

The entry-level salary for assistant teachers begins at 55% of the 5th percentile salary, and pay gradually increases with higher credentials and degrees. This pay scale ends at ECE 3 given the scope of responsibilities of an assistant teacher, and to encourage movement into roles with greater responsibilities. Per Aspire Registry data, the current median salary for assistant teachers is \$33,804 in New York City and \$32,221 in the rest of the state.

Level	NYC	Hourly NYC	Rest of State	Hourly Rest of State
Entry	\$45,498	\$21.87	\$34,076	\$16.38
ECE 1	\$49,634	\$23.86	\$37,174	\$17.87
ECE 2	\$57,902	\$27.84	\$43,370	\$20.85
ECE 2A	\$62,314	\$29.96	\$46,671	\$22.44
ECE 3	\$66,676	\$32.06	\$49,938	\$24.01



Table 4. Family and Group Family Child Care Parity Salary Scale

The entry-level salary for family and group family child care providers begins at 75% of the 5th percentile teacher salary, in recognition of the additional administrative work required of FCCs as business owners. Per Aspire Registry data, the current median salary for family child care providers is \$35,707 in New York City and \$37,793 in the rest of the state.

Level	NYC	Hourly NYC	Rest of State	Hourly Rest of State
Entry	\$62,043	\$29.83	\$46,468	\$22.34
ECE 1	\$66,179	\$31.82	\$49,566	\$23.83
ECE 2	\$70,315	\$33.81	\$52,663	\$25.32
ECE 2A	\$75,237	\$36.17	\$56,350	\$27.09
ECE 3	\$80,504	\$38.70	\$60,294	\$28.99
ECE 3A	\$88,515	\$42.56	\$66,294	\$31.87
ECE 3B	\$91,170	\$43.83	\$68,283	\$32.83
ECE 4	\$93,905	\$45.15	\$70,331	\$33.81
ECE 4A	\$96,722	\$46.50	\$72,441	\$34.83
ECE 5	\$99,624	47.90	\$74,614	\$35.87
ECE 6	\$102,613	\$49.33	\$76,853	\$36.95



Table 5. Center Director Parity Salary Scale

The center director pay scale is based on the 5th percentile salaries of principals and assistant principals in the state. Once center directors reach ECE 5 (a master's degree in ECE with a professional teacher certification and School Building Leader certification), they would make a salary similar to that of a K–12 principal or assistant principal. Per Aspire Registry data, the current median salary for center directors is \$57,036 in New York City and \$53,376 in the rest of the state.

Level	NYC	Hourly NYC	Rest of State	Hourly Rest of State
Entry				
ECE 1			\$60,334	\$29.01
ECE 2			\$64,644	\$31.08
ECE 2A			\$66,368	\$31.91
ECE 3	\$90,563	\$43.54	\$68,954	\$33.15
ECE 3A	\$96,223	\$46.26	\$73,273	\$35.22
ECE 3B	\$98,487	\$47.35	\$74,987	\$36.05
ECE 4	\$101,884	\$48.98	\$77,573	\$37.29
ECE 4A	\$107,544	\$51.70	\$81,882	\$39.37
ECE 5	\$113,204	\$54.43	\$86,192	\$41.44
ECE 6	\$116,600	\$56.06	\$88,778	\$42.68

**Table 6. Experience Progression Example:
Family Child Care Provider (Entry-Level) with a High School Diploma**

The Collaborative proposes an experience progression to recognize and honor those who commit their careers to early care and education. This would ensure that each professional receives pay increases according to their time spent in the field, regardless of credential and degree. Professionals would receive 5% salary increases at the experience increments noted below. The experience progression is weighted towards early career professionals to retain new educators who are mostly likely to leave the field.

Years	0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
NYC	\$62,043	\$65,145	\$68,402	\$71,823	\$75,414	\$79,184
Hourly NYC	\$29.83	\$31.32	\$32.89	\$34.53	\$36.26	\$38.07
Rest of State	\$46,468	\$48,791	\$51,231	\$53,792	\$56,482	\$59,306
Hourly Rest of State	\$22.34	\$23.46	\$24.63	\$25.86	\$27.15	\$28.51