

Early Education Workforce Development

Minnesota's young children and families need a stable, well-trained early care and education workforce. There are several ways Minnesota leaders could promote important workforce-oriented goals:

PUT MORE RESOURCES INTO THE EARLY ED SECTOR. In order to attract and retain well-trained early educators, this sector needs more families with the ability to pay for quality programs. Doing so would make training and retention goals more financially feasible.

- **Early Learning Scholarships.** The best way to do this would be to give 31,000 left-behind Minnesota children uncapped Early Learning Scholarships (Pathway I type) so they could access high-quality early education. These new Scholarships would bring in more families with the ability to pay, which would help with training and retention. Beyond the workforce benefits, Scholarships are also the best tool for closing Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation achievement gaps, because they: 1) start early in life; 2) target resources to the most at-risk children; 3) demand the use of kindergarten-readiness best practices; and 4) are flexible and portable to meet individual families' needs.
- **Reformed CCAP.** Another way to stabilize the early education sector would be to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), but only if CCAP was first reformed to require the use of kindergarten-readiness best practices and was made more flexible and portable. These reforms were recommended by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) in 2011 and are needed to make CCAP a more effective and efficient tool for closing achievement gaps.

HELP EDUCATORS THROUGH TAX CREDITS. Another way to attract and retain well-trained early educators would be with a state income tax credit. In 2011, MELF recommended tax credits for early educators who met these criteria:

- **Expertise.** Tax credits would be available to early educators at all levels of experience, and would increase in amount based on higher levels of education and training.
 - Rationale: Children benefit from well-prepared early educators, so education and training should be rewarded and incentivized.
- **Continuity.** Tax credits would be available to early educators that have been at the same position for at least a year.
 - Rationale: Children benefit from educator continuity, so continuity should be rewarded and incentivized.
- **Quality.** Tax credits would be available to early educators who were working for a Parent Aware-rated program.
 - Rationale: Children in rated programs are making significant kindergarten-readiness gains, so those programs and their educators should be rewarded and incentivized.

These policy changes would help give us a more stable, well-trained early education workforce. They would also help close Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation achievement gaps, which pose such a serious threat to our communities, economy and children.