Child Care and Early Education Workforce Recruitment and Retention:
Insights from a Current Landscape of Strategies

Building and Sustaining the Child Care and Early Education Workforce

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The challenges of recruiting, strengthening, and retaining the child care and early education (CCEE) workforce are well documented.[1] Members of the CCEE workforce typically have low levels of formal education and compensation; limited opportunities for education, training, and professional development; inconsistent working conditions; and high levels of stress and burnout.[2] Additionally, the field is well known for high turnover rates,[3] which can strain remaining educators and decrease the quality of care they offer.[4] Turnover can also lead to diminishing returns on an organization's professional development investments.[5] The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these issues.[6]

The Building and Sustaining the Child Care and Early Education Workforce (BASE) project conducted an environmental scan to identify and review strategies that are currently being implemented across the country to build, advance, and sustain the CCEE workforce in the face of these challenges. In particular, the research team sought to understand the context in which these strategies are implemented and how that might influence their operation. The team also examined how strategies reach or are tailored to prospective and current CCEE educators, especially

The **Building and Sustaining the Child Care and Early Education Workforce (BASE)** project aims to increase knowledge and understanding in child care and early education (CCEE) by documenting factors that drive workforce turnover and by building evidence on current initiatives to recruit, advance, and retain a stable and qualified CCEE workforce.

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educators from historically marginalized racial, ethnic, indigenous, immigrant, or linguistic groups.[i] (See Box 1 for definitions of key terms used in the BASE project.)

Box 1. Terminology

While terminology varies in the field, in this brief key terms are defined in the following ways:

CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION (CCEE) refers to programs and the workforce educating and caring for children from birth to 13 years of age. This includes educators in centers and in home-based settings caring for infants, toddlers, and preschool- and school-aged children. CCEE refers to a larger age group than Early Care and Education (ECE), which consists of services for young children only (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start, public pre-K, and centers serving children from birth to age 5). ECE programs are included in the definition of CCEE.

CCEE EDUCATORS and CCEE WORKFORCE refer to current and prospective educators who are paid to care for children from birth to 13 years of age in center- and home-based settings. This includes educators in different positions and roles. For example, center administrators, directors, lead and assistant teachers, and home-based educators are included in this definition. This definition also includes both licensed and license-exempt center- and home-based settings. While the CCEE workforce also includes support staff in centers, like coaches, education coordinators, and behavioral specialists, these individuals are not the primary focus of this brief.

CCEE SETTING refers to the physical location (for example, a center, school, or home) where children receive care. Settings can include Head Start child care centers; community-based child care centers; licensed and license-exempt home-based child care settings that receive subsidies; and the home or location of relatives, neighbors, or other individuals who are paid to care for children.

CCEE TYPE OF CARE refers to how caregiving is distinguished by different funding streams and federal, state, and local policies, regulations, and oversight. The BASE project primarily focuses on center-based or home-based care. But the research team also makes further distinctions within those two types, such as Head Start or Early Head Start programs, community-based child care settings, home-based child care settings, and publicly funded pre-K.

STRATEGY refers to an intervention, initiative, or policy designed to build, advance, or sustain the CCEE workforce. It can include a single **APPROACH**—for example, offering a scholarship—or an assortment of approaches, such as offering both a scholarship and coaching.

WORKFORCE DYNAMICS encompass entry into and exit out of the CCEE field as either a self-employed business owner or an employed individual. For those in the field, it includes tenure and advancement, as well as entry into and exit from different roles, settings, and types of care. Workforce dynamics include multiple phases of

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[i] Historically marginalized groups are defined as populations and communities that experience discrimination or exclusion from mainstream cultural, social, political, and economic activities. Examples of marginalized groups include, but are not limited to, groups for whom there is an imbalance of power due to race, sex, age, immigration status, or language.

This brief summarizes important themes that emerged from the environmental scan, which was conducted between March 2021 and January 2022. The conclusions presented draw from a combination of activities, including a review of the literature, assessment of recommended sources and materials submitted in response to an open call for information, as well as interviews with key informants from the agencies responsible for putting strategies into place. (See Box 2 for a description of how the team identified and reviewed strategies. Figure 1 depicts the CCEE workforce dynamics that those strategies were designed to address.) It concludes with recommendations for building additional evidence and knowledge about CCEE workforce strategies in the United States.

Box 2. Methodology for Identifying and Reviewing CCEE Workforce Strategies

The research team used a multipronged approach to identify and review current strategies to build, advance, and sustain the CCEE workforce:

1. **Search and identification**: The team identified 144 active strategies aimed at building, advancing, and retaining the CCEE workforce by issuing an open call request for information, searching prominent CCEE research and advocacy organizations' websites, conducting a literature review,[*] and collecting recommendations from CCEE workforce development experts.

2. **Initial screening**: The team accessed basic, publicly available information on the 144 strategies, including the populations they targeted and the settings in which they were delivered. The team categorized the strategies according to which lever(s) of change they were associated with. (Levers of change are key factors that influence the recruitment, retention, advancement, and turnover of CCEE educators. Levers were first developed by the team based on existing research and suspected drivers of CCEE workforce dynamics, and later refined in response to insights gleaned from CCEE topical advisors to the project.[†] See Table 1 for more information.)

3. **In-depth review:** The team conducted 36 interviews with key informants from implementing agencies between September 2021 and January 2022. Of the 144 strategies identified in the initial scan, 38 of them had key informants involved in their development or implementation. These strategies were selected for in-depth review based on:

   • how well they represented the overall range of strategies associated with each lever of change

   • whether they targeted workers in diverse roles and in different settings

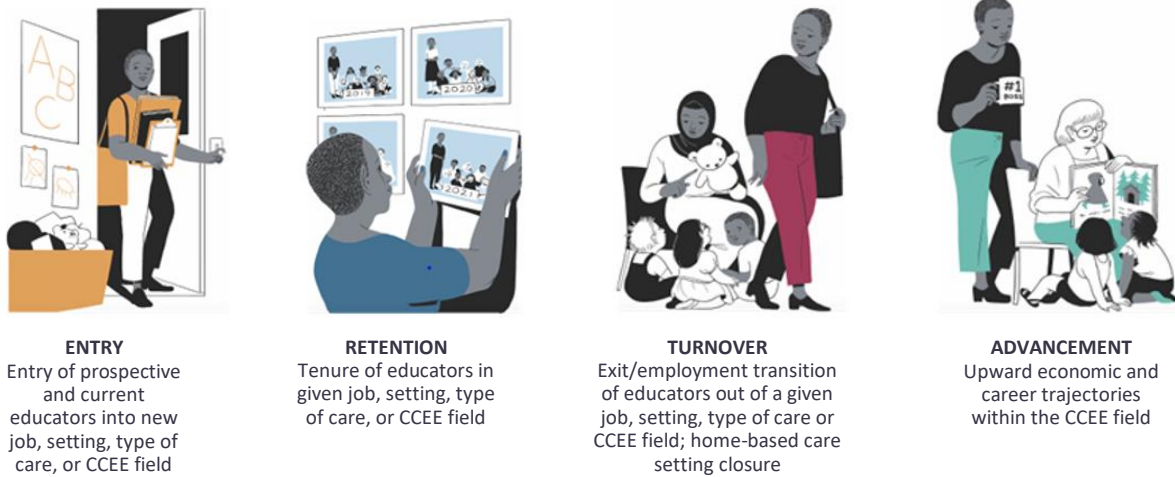   • how well they represented a geographic mix of states and regions in the United States

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[*]Taylor, Harrison. 2023. *An Annotated Bibliography of Select Literature on the Child Care and Early Education Workforce: A Supplement to the BASE Knowledge Review Series*. *OPRE Report* 2023-243. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/building-and-sustaining-early-care-and-education-workforce-base

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Figure 1.

Child Care and Early Education Workforce Dynamics

ENTRY
Entry of prospective and current educators into new job, setting, type of care, or CCEE field

RETENTION
Tenure of educators in given job, setting, type of care, or CCEE field

TURNOVER
Exit/employment transition of educators out of a given job, setting, type of care or CCEE field; home-based care setting closure

ADVANCEMENT
Upward economic and career trajectories within the CCEE field

Summary of Findings

Strategies Identified by the Environmental Scan

- **Strategies target five *levers of change* that influence recruitment and retention among CCEE educators.** These levers are educator economic well-being, educator qualifications and competencies, educator psychological well-being, workplace demands or supports, and CCEE system alignment and inequities (see Table 1).

- **Most strategies are intended to improve the economic well-being, qualifications, and competencies of CCEE educators.** Fewer strategies target other levers of change, like workplace demands or supports, or CCEE system alignment and inequities.

Overarching Challenges

- **Most strategies are limited in reach.** Most strategies serve fewer than 50 participants at a time and are in the early stages of development. They have broad eligibility criteria, but implementing agencies may not recruit or enroll all eligible individuals.

- **Strategies are limited in breadth and scale due to fragmentation of the CCEE system.** Strategies are typically either customized to target a narrow segment of the workforce or they target a broader swath of the workforce with less tailored approaches.

  - If strategies target a broad segment of the workforce, they do not always align their eligibility criteria and program offerings with the varying standards, requirements, and resources of disparate funding sources and regulatory oversight agencies. The need to coordinate across an array of systems can inhibit the provision of more synchronized and robust support.

  - Strategies are often developed with a particular context in mind, based on their target state or locality. This makes scale-up efforts difficult.

- **There is limited evidence on whether these strategies are effective.** Additionally, at times the approaches do not reflect what research literature suggests would bolster the recruitment, retention, and advancement of the CCEE workforce. A majority of strategies reviewed in the environmental scan focus on increasing educators' qualifications and competencies, yet evidence on the association between educational attainment and turnover is mixed.

- **A limited number of strategies intentionally support educators from historically marginalized backgrounds.** Many implementing agencies assume that they are reaching these educators because they are overrepresented in the CCEE field. Implementing agencies rarely have or use state and local data on demographic characteristics and workplace settings to inform intentional recruitment.

- **Strategies are not always responsive to local conditions or system-level challenges.** Though strategies often are created to address local needs, implementing agencies do not always consider community conditions, such as local labor markets or workforce demographics, when designing them. Furthermore, strategies are developed to target educator-level outcomes (such as increasing individual wages or credentials), rather than to initiate systemic change in how the workforce is valued and compensated or how workforce services and supports are coordinated.

- **Many strategies were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.** In response to the pandemic, implementing agency staff adjusted priorities and activities, including a shift from offering in-person to remote services, and temporarily waiving eligibility criteria.

Table 1. Characteristics of Strategies Associated with the Five Levers of Change

Lever of Change	Strategy Characteristics and Associated Approaches
Educator economic well-being	These strategies aim to improve the income, earnings, or economic well-being of participating individuals and may include approaches that offer or put into place financial incentives, wage increases, wage supplements, benefit supports (for example, expanding access to health insurance), career ladders, collective bargaining, or business coaching models and other business supports.[a]
Educator qualifications and competencies	These strategies aim to improve the qualifications and competencies of participating individuals and may include approaches that offer apprenticeships, scholarships, or credentialing assistance.
Educator psychological well-being	These strategies aim to enhance how participating individuals perceive or cope with existing job demands and may include approaches such as workshops and training sessions on topics like mindfulness and stress management.
Workplace demands or supports	These strategies aim to address structural-, social-, and setting-level factors or job-related factors. They may include approaches that aim to reduce job stressors or provide resources to help educators accomplish work-related goals and may include coaching, work-hours-scheduling practices and support, and substitute networks.
CCEE system alignment and inequities	These strategies aim to coordinate and align strategic initiatives underway to support and advance the CCEE workforce. They may include approaches that make efforts to integrate and align data systems, and may also attempt to align, create parity, or bring cohesion to regulatory; funding; and monitoring activities, resources, and supports.

[a] A career ladder is a structured sequence of related job positions that represent a career. It is accompanied by well-defined education and experiences that are needed move to the next job level, and it provides clarity and structure to career paths.

Main Findings

The strategies that are currently underway to build and retain the CCEE workforce are diverse and target five *levers of change* that influence recruitment and retention among CCEE educators: educator economic well-being, educator qualifications and competencies, educator psychological well-being, workplace demands or supports, and CCEE system alignment and inequities. (See Table 1.) Characteristics of these strategies are described in more detail below, followed by a discussion of challenges facing strategies that emerged from the scan.

Strategies Identified by the Environmental Scan

This section summarizes the 144 strategies that were reviewed, including their characteristics and components. The team categorized the strategies according to the five levers of change—developed with internal experts—that are hypothesized to shape CCEE workforce dynamics.

Distribution of Strategies by Associated Lever of Change

As seen in Figure 2, most of the strategies target educators' economic well-being or qualifications and competencies. They are almost evenly split between those that serve educators in center-based settings and those that serve educators in home-based settings. The number of strategies that target administrators versus teaching staff are also relatively even. Most strategies are designed to support and sustain the current workforce, rather than to recruit potential educators. The team identified only a small number of strategies that explicitly focus on educators from historically marginalized populations.

Some strategies target multiple levers of change, most often educator qualifications and competencies and educator economic well-being. They often combine scholarships with wage supplements or stipends. However, a few strategies target other combinations of levers of change. Some offer business development supports and licensing for home-based providers. Others offer credentialing components alongside assistance with substitute staff coverage; scheduling; paid professional development, planning, and break times; and assistance obtaining licensing. For the sake of simplicity, Figure 2 does not reflect the overlap of the levers targeted by strategies.

Figure 2.

Number of CCEE Strategies Identified by the Environmental Scan, by Targeted Lever of Change, Setting, Workforce Status, Educator Role, and Population
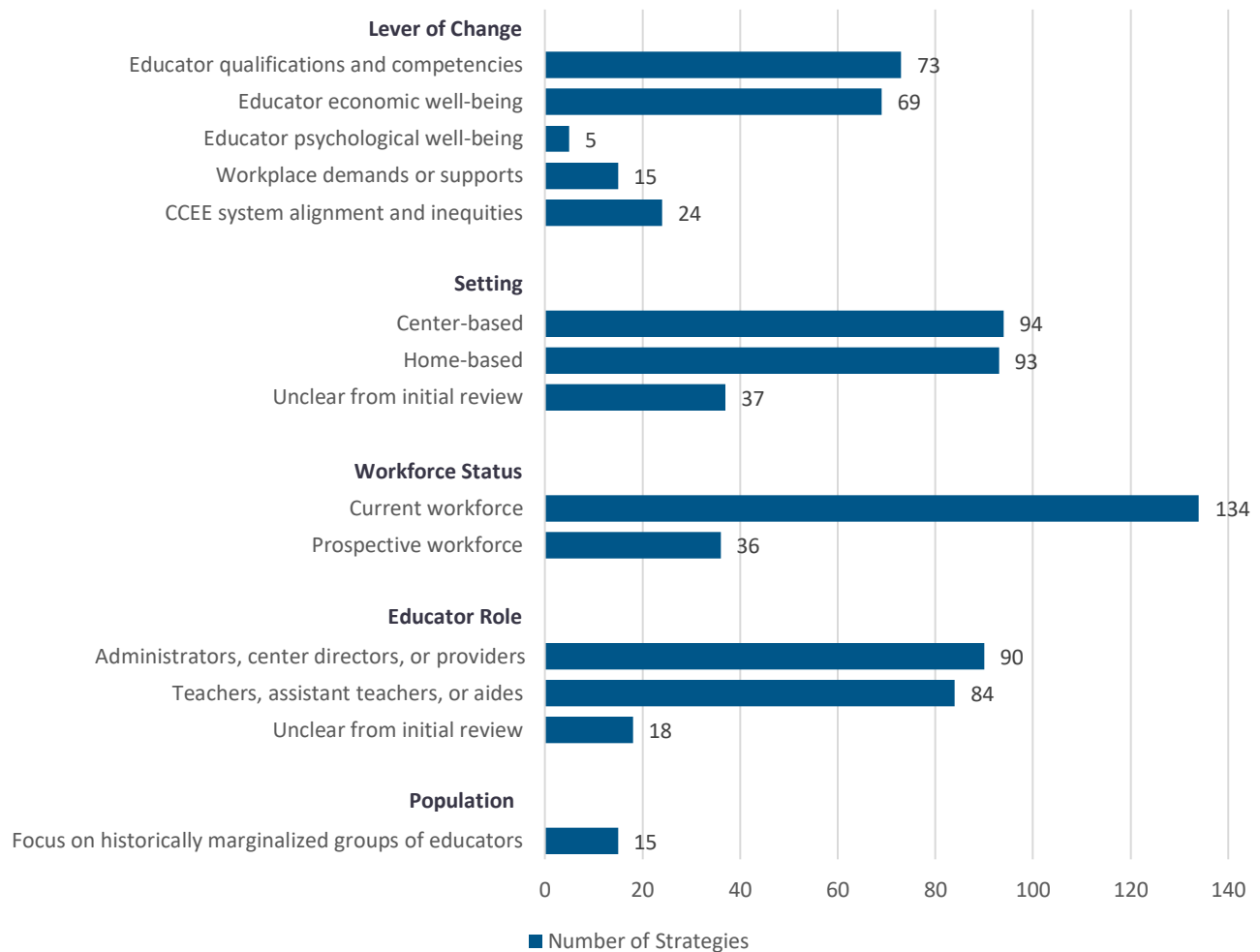
Strategies Targeting Educator Economic Well-Being

Table 2 describes the core features and components of the different strategies that target the economic well-being of CCEE workers. In this brief, core component refers to a defining feature or characteristic of an approach, such as the amount of a tuition subsidy or number of hours of required training for an apprenticeship. Among strategies aiming to improve the economic well-being of CCEE workers, approaches include financial incentives, wage supplements, wage increases, career ladders, collective bargaining, and business development and management supports. Almost all the strategies reviewed offered monetary payments or opportunities to secure increased compensation in the form of wages and, less commonly, benefits. For example, the Compensation and Retention Early Educator Stipend (CARES) 2.0 program, designed and operated by the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education, offers a roughly $6,000 annual payment to all city-funded educators in the county who work directly with children for at least 20 hours a week. In doing so, program staff hope to retain educators who work in a county with an especially high cost of living. The CARES 2.0 wage supplement is fairly large compared with amounts offered by other compensation strategies implemented in other locations nationwide. This may be due to relatively high

costs of living in San Francisco compared with other geographic regions of the United States, as well as other factors, that may be important to explore. A subset of strategies intended to improve the economic well-being of CCEE workers did not directly offer monetary payments to participants, including unions as well as some business coaching models and support strategies.

Some strategies offer opportunities for education, training, and professional development as a means to increase earnings, but the approaches vary. For example, strategies that implement career ladders frequently offer specialized training and coursework opportunities with financial incentives available to participants when they reach critical milestones, such as earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. In contrast, other strategies, like many wage supplement strategies, offer financial incentives contingent upon continued employment in a particular job, provider, or setting, and do not tend to offer training, coaching, or other support.

Table 2. Core Components of Strategies That Target Educator Economic Well-Being, by Approach

Core Component	Approach			
	Financial Incentives and Wage Supplements	**Career Ladders and Pathways**	**Collective Bargaining**	**Business Development and Management Support**
Examples	*CARES 2.0, Great START Wage Supplement Program, Child Care WAGE$ Program*	*New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District, District 1199C Training Fund*	*Child Care Providers United*	*First Children's Finance Training and Workshops, Explore FCC, WeeCare*
Stated outcomes	Retention (and reduction in turnover) of workers; enhanced quality of care at providers	Retention of workers, enhanced quality of care at providers, and worker pay parity	Retention of workers; enhanced quality of care at providers	Retention of workers; increase in CCEE provider supply
Settings	Usually target educators in all settings	Typically target center-based educators	Typically target home-based providers	Typically target home-based providers
Duration of services	Varies; participants engage in services at will. Examples include one-time payments to biannual wage supplements; provided for at least a program year (e.g., 9 months) up to an unspecified time	Varies; length depends on the education level a participant seeks or attains	Varies; duration is dependent on union membership	Varies; participants engage in services at will, and duration is dependent on stage of business development and the program model or level of support
Requirements	Typically requires full-time employment as a CCEE worker for a specified time frame; participation is often contingent upon enrollment in a workforce registry or QRIS participation of workplace	Conditioned on current full-time employment and the attainment of additional degrees, certifications, or qualifications	Primarily available for home-based providers and nonmanagement center staff	Sometimes dependent on QRIS participation or licensing status

Financial support	Ranges from $300–$6,000 per year; payments are typically scaled to education level or time in the workforce	N/A	N/A	Varies from no monetary support to loans that range from $5,000–$25,000
Individual or group-based supports	N/A	Coaching and specialized competencies and skills (e.g., literacy) trainings, coursework, or certifications	Training funds provided in some localities	Financial analysis, business management training, coaching, or consulting
Other support	N/A	N/A	National office support and the facilitation of connections between local chapters	Varies but can include online manuals, communities of practice, and trauma-informed training

Strategies Targeting Educator Qualifications and Competencies

Strategies to improve educator qualifications and competencies include apprenticeships, scholarships or planned higher-education pathways, and credentialing models. The core components of these approaches are described in Table 3. Training opportunities range in intensity and focus. Some trainings do not have formal attendance and participation requirements, which allows participants to progress at their own pace. For example, some states' strategies include providing online CDA training programs that allow participants to complete the modules at their own discretion. Other strategies, such as the Department of Defense's system for child care educator training and wage progression, have formal participation requirements and offer training that is intended to be completed in a specific order.

Many strategies offer incremental stipends to incentivize continued participation in and completion of coursework and training. These stipends, often described by developers as tokens of appreciation, are not typically sufficient to offset the cost of participation. These stipends also differ from the financial incentives of strategies, like career ladders, where there are explicit wage increases associated with furthering training or coursework.

To support participant engagement and persistence, strategies often include individual coaching, mentorship, or counseling that varies in intensity. For example, the Early Education Apprenticeship Program—implemented by Camp Fire First Texas, a chapter of the national nonprofit organization Camp Fire—is a two-year program that offers ongoing mentorship and coaching that can be applied toward credit accumulation at local colleges. Some strategies involve enrolling and engaging participants in cohorts, with the goal of building participant social networks and support. Chicago Commons, a nonprofit community organization and network of CCEE centers, offers scholarships to cohorts of current or past parents who are interested in becoming CCEE educators. Similarly, the Early Care and Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) apprenticeship program, originally run by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and now operating as an independent organization, recruits participants in cohorts of current educators. These educators complete higher education coursework at a convenient location in the community while they receive on-the-job training from a qualified supervisor in their CCEE program setting. ECEPTS is an apprenticeship approach that focuses more on supporting educators' needs than employers' needs.

Table 3. Core Components of Strategies That Target Educator Qualifications and Competencies, by Approach

Core Component	Approach		
	Apprenticeships	Scholarships	Credentialing Assistance
Examples	*Early Care and Education Pathways to Success, Camp Fire First Texas Early Education Apprenticeship Program*	*T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Chicago Commons Pathways for Parents*	*Maine Credentials, Pamoja Early Childhood Workforce Program*
Stated outcomes	Recruitment, retention, and advancement of CCEE workers; enhanced quality of care at providers	Recruitment, retention, and advancement of CCEE workers; enhanced quality of care at providers	Recruitment, retention, and advancement of CCEE workers; enhanced quality of care at providers
Settings	Typically geared toward center-based educators with examples of adaptations for home-based educators	Typically geared toward center-based educators and sometimes focused on home-based educators	Typically geared toward center- and home-based educators
Duration of services	Length depends on the education level a participant seeks and needs; typically, at least 2 years for associate's degree	Typically one academic year; total length depends on the education level a participant seeks	CDA programs provide 120 hours of services; other credentialing programs vary
Requirements	Typically requires full-time employment with an employer sponsor	May require full-time employment, the completion of a minimum number of credits per semester, and/or a commitment to remaining in the field after graduation; occasionally employer sponsorship is required and employers may need to participate in the state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)	N/A
Financial support	Varies; can cover up to 100% of the costs of credits and materials, most require employer-paid wage increases at program milestones, and some include one-time program payments at these milestones	Varies; can cover up to 100% of tuition and books, with small stipends (often around $500) for different levels of completion	Varies; can cover up to 100% of the costs of credits and materials, with additional awards/bonuses offered after the acquisition of credentials
Professional development, education, or training	In-practice training aligned with on-the-job training with a mentor	Postsecondary education coursework	Postsecondary education coursework
Individual or group-based supports	Structured on-site and/or virtual coaching and job mentorship	Varies; most strategies include individual coaching and counseling but intensity varies.	Varies; some strategies include advising sessions and portfolio support

| Other support | Sometimes includes peer-to-peer support via a cohort approach | Can include transportation and child care support; may include peer-to-peer support via a cohort approach | Often includes peer-to-peer support via a cohort approach |

Strategies Targeting Workplace Demands, Supports, or Educator Psychological Well-Being

The research team identified a limited number of strategies that target workplace demands or supports or that target educator psychological well-being. With so few strategies in use, it is challenging to define their core components. Based on the small sample in this study, the strategies that target workplace demands or supports usually aim to adjust workload and work pace. For example, WeeCare, a for-profit CCEE management service business, offers administrators and small business owners a combination of business management supports, such as marketing services, enrollment support, tuition payment processing, IT support, and insurance coverage, in order to ease job demands and foster stable business operations. Colorado Child Care Substitutes, a for-profit staffing agency, fills temporary staffing vacancies for center-based providers.

Educators who care for young children may face long hours, low pay, and a lack of workplace support, which can take a toll on their mental and physical health. Strategies to address educators' psychological well-being include training and coaching on mindfulness, stress management, and coping mechanisms for dealing with stressful working conditions. These skills are taught in group or individual formats. The strategies vary in frequency and intensity, but most are limited in duration and relatively short term. For example, the Step Up program, developed and implemented by the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, provides six group-based social-emotional learning training sessions, with topics including educator stress management, to cohorts of educators.

Strategies Targeting CCEE System Alignment and Inequities

The research team identified a limited number of strategies that target CCEE system alignment and inequities, and three general categories emerged.

"*Advocacy strategies*" include implementers and developers of strategies sharing information about their advocacy and coalition-building activities with different oversight agencies, and local, state, and federal policymakers. Key informants who were implementing a wage supplement strategy to enhance educators' economic well-being said that advocating for system-level change was an equal goal for their organization, given that they only had resources to provide educators with a modest level of support. Although advocacy-focused strategies were not explicitly included in the initial scan of CCEE workforce strategies, advocacy-focused strategies were explored when being used by program implementors in conjunction with other strategies.

"*System-level restructuring strategies*" involve implementing agencies consolidating oversight of different settings within a single agency to establish consistent standards, requirements, resources, and supports available to educators. Restructuring at the system level is also intended to reduce administrator burden and streamline educational and advancement pathways. For example, Boston Public Schools' Department

of Early Childhood centralized oversight of public school pre-K programs and community-based CCEE programs that served families who spoke languages other than English and who lived in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty.

"Saturation of individual-level strategies" focus on individual educators' economic well-being or qualifications and are overseen by a single implementing agency or a cluster of implementing agencies. The goal is to bring cohesion to diverse strategies that are deployed within the same ecosystem. Colorado and Vermont have a wealth of strategies at the state and local levels underway to recruit, retain, and advance prospective and current educators. In Colorado, these strategies include apprenticeship programs and other credentialing pathways, data modernization efforts, and higher education articulation agreements.[ii] Other approaches ensure complementary strategies are available for educators. For example, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Program, which provides scholarships to current educators, and the Child Care WAGE$ Program, which provides financial support to current educators, are often implemented together to amplify each program's impact.

Overarching Challenges

Most strategies are small in scale and in the early stages of development. Most of the strategies reviewed here are in the early stages of development and implementation and operate on a small scale (for example, serving fewer than 50 participants). Few strategies have formally identified the components, benchmarks, and operational supports needed to ensure consistent and strong implementation over time and across locations. Many of these strategies have gathered feedback from participants and are being modified to drive program improvement and make adaptations to respond to participant needs.

Few strategies operate on a large scale (for example, across a state or large city), and those that do often have short implementation histories. CARES 2.0, a program that offers stipends and aims to retain educators in home- and center-based care settings in San Francisco, has only been in operation since 2019.

There are a few notable exceptions. The Department of Defense's Military Child Care Training and Wage System, which standardizes compensation, training, and benefits and automates career ladders across all their child care providers—has been in operation for over 40 years. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, which oversees T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ affiliates in 23 states and the District of Columbia and offers the CCEE workforce supported pathways to professional development and higher wages, has been in existence for over 30 years. All Our Kin, which provides licensing, business development and management coaching, and professional development opportunities to home-based providers, has been in existence for close to 20 years and has expanded to over 20 states. However, not all of the strategies that operate on a larger scale have codified the core components of their models.

Most strategies include broad eligibility criteria but may not recruit or enroll all potentially eligible participants. Eligibility criteria for most strategies are broad. Some strategies are open to all

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[ii] Articulation agreements are official agreements between two or more higher education institutions that guarantee that coursework and associated credits from one school will be accepted at another.

educators who are employed full time by providers that receive subsidies and participate in state and local Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).[iii] However, many of these strategies, in particular those that focus on educator economic well-being or educator qualifications and competencies, require specific behaviors or activities. Some strategies require recipients of monetary payments to maintain full-time employment with a particular provider or within the local CCEE system for a 9- or 12-month period. There may also be additional criteria. In order to receive a bonus payment through the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning INCENTIVES program, educators must work a minimum of 25 hours per week over the course of one year of continual employment with the same employer. They also must have earned an eligible credential, such as a CDA, BA, or MA, within the last five years.

Overall, these criteria tend to favor individuals who are employed in center-based care settings, who are lead teachers, and who work with 3- and 4-year-olds. Fewer strategies explicitly target individuals who work in smaller community-based child care settings or in home-based settings, who are assistant teachers, or who care for infants and toddlers. For example, Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credits are available to all educators who are enrolled in the state's workforce registry and QRIS. However, Louisiana's QRIS does not include home-based child care providers, so educators who work in that setting are ineligible for the tax credit.

Most strategies operate on a "first come, first served" basis. Their recruitment and intake processes rely heavily on whether eligible participants are motivated to seek out and engage in support services. Few organizations actively market or advertise their strategies beyond sharing information on their websites and existing workforce registry listservs—in part because they have limited capacity or resources to serve a large number of participants. Most strategies have very minimal application, screening, and intake processes, but others can have multistep processes that require sustained engagement from participants. Some educators, typically those with fewer resources, may not be able to commit the time and effort necessary to enroll in these strategies. Thus, many strategies have eligibility criteria that may systematically exclude or deter some educators from applying and receiving support, given existing inequities in CCEE systems.

A patchwork of funding sources may make scale-up efforts challenging. Many of the strategies are supported by multiple funding streams that are awarded or renewed on an annual basis via public or private funders. Some receive state or local contracts for services that target different segments of the workforce. These funding streams, such as targeted legislative allocations, Child Care and Development Funds, Department of Education or Department of Labor grants, or private philanthropic grants, often come with different requirements and foci. In some instances, there is a correlation between funding availability and scaling. As organizations seek or receive additional funding, they may choose to expand to different populations or allocate money differently. For example, one apprenticeship program reviewed in the environmental scan has historically been privately funded, but staff members are seeking funding from other sources that will enable the program to expand and serve new populations. When organizations with

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[iii] Quality Rating and Improvement Systems set and award quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs.

well-established strategies have stable funding streams, they tend to provide coordinated, aligned, and robust support.[iv]

There is limited evidence on whether current strategies are effective. Few researchers have conducted implementation or impact studies on strategies that target educator economic well-being and educator qualifications and competencies. One exception is an experimental study of Virginia's Teacher Recognition Program, which offered early educators a $1,500 retention bonus. The study found that, over an eight-month period, teacher turnover in CCEE centers dropped dramatically, from 30 percent to 15 percent.[7] A study of a multipronged initiative in Louisiana that offers center-based educators scholarships, a financial incentive tax credit, and other supports found that many participants were not able to earn their credentials, but there is limited implementation research to explain why this might be.[8] Nonexperimental evidence suggests that All Our Kin's support services for home-based child care providers do improve the supply, availability, and quality of home-based child care.[9]

The evidence for an association between teachers' education levels and turnover is mixed. Some studies suggest that higher education requirements can increase turnover; others suggest the opposite.[10] Although the limited evidence suggests that higher education is not currently a major driver of advancement in the CCEE field and may even increase sector-level turnover, a majority of the strategies reviewed in the environmental scan target educator qualifications and competencies. Efforts to build evidence may be stymied by the fact that most implementing agencies do not have the capacity to analyze the data that they collect. Most do not collect data on participants who stop engaging in services or follow participants past completion of a program. In addition, there are no known evaluation or implementation studies of strategies that directly target workplace demands or supports, educator psychological well-being, or CCEE system alignment and inequities.

Few strategies target supports to educators from historically marginalized groups. Though most implementing agencies want to support a workforce largely made up of women, many of whom are women of color,[11] only a few explicitly tailor supports to current or prospective educators with historically marginalized racial, ethnic, indigenous, immigrant, refugee, or linguistic backgrounds. Most strategies that the research team reviewed in depth were not intentionally designed or implemented to address the structural and systemic influences that disproportionately disadvantage educators from these backgrounds. However, there are some exceptions, including the First Children's Finance Community Conversations for Early Childhood Entrepreneurs, which offers business and resource management workshops that are designed explicitly for entrepreneurs of color. The program acknowledges financial barriers that are unique to women and people of color and uses a group-based, trauma-informed approach to workshop and training sessions.[v]

Strategies that support individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds tend to target educators in home-based child care settings. This is partially based on the assumption that educators in these settings

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[iv] Examples of well-established strategies include the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies wage supplement and scholarship programs; Louisiana's Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program; Virginia's Teacher Recognition Program, which offers retention bonuses; and the Department of Defense's system for child care educator training and wage progression.

[v] Trauma-informed trainings aim to acknowledge individuals' potential experiences with historical and racial trauma and promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing.

have unique cultural or linguistic needs or experience other barriers to accessing supports due to their demographic backgrounds. Most commonly, strategies provide supports or materials in languages other than English (most often in Spanish). Some implementing agencies noted that their efforts to tailor supports and services to historically marginalized groups of prospective and current educators were not sufficient to address structural and systemic challenges.

Some strategies may unintentionally exclude educators from historically marginalized groups. Strategies that target center-based settings exclude home-based providers, which employ a high percentage of educators who speak languages other than English and were born outside of the United States.[12] Many implementing agencies do not systematically track and understand reach, engagement, or completion rates for participants overall (or among participants with different backgrounds). Thus, it is not clear who participants are or if they disengage from strategies during enrollment, during service delivery, or upon completion.

Community contexts did not often directly inform the level and intensity of supports included in strategies. The community context, such as local labor market conditions, often did not directly inform the specific levels and intensity of supports that were offered. In most cases, implementing agencies do not closely coordinate their strategies with others in the area, even if they target the same eligible educators. In some instances, the requirements of different strategies may conflict with each other. For example, wage supplements are often only available to CCEE educators who work a certain number of hours per week, typically 25 or more. This may prevent them from participating in postsecondary education strategies that assist with credential attainment. Thus, they may not be able to benefit from career ladder or pay parity approaches, which often require that participants possess certain degrees or education levels.[vi]

Strategy developers often emphasize the need to address structural or system-level factors, yet activities and supports included in strategies tend to target individual-level outcomes. There often seems to be misalignment between strategies' underlying or implicit theories of change and their explicit models of support. Though implementing agencies and developers of strategies often theorize that the challenges that confront the CCEE workforce stem from larger systemic issues in how the workforce is valued and compensated, most strategies focus on changing individual outputs and outcomes.[vii] For example, economic well-being strategies may provide additional monetary compensation to increase *individual* educators' income, as opposed to offering structural interventions that are more lasting and universal. Strategies that target educator qualifications and competencies similarly aim to increase *individual* educators' engagement in educational, training, or professional development opportunities, as opposed to making system-, community-, or provider-level changes. Agency staff noted that the supports offered aim to enhance individuals' perceived value as a member of a professionalized workforce. Strategies to support psychological well-being and workplace demands often focus on individuals' social support networks and teach coping methods for dealing with stressful working conditions, as opposed to targeting and modifying the demands that make jobs stressful from the start.

[vi] Pay parity means fair and equal pay for educators in the same job and location. Approaches that target pay parity aim to close the pay gap between educators in different settings.

[vii] Outputs are the immediate results of a strategy's activities and are expected to contribute to later further outcomes. Outcomes are the successive effects that a strategy is expected to have on the target population as well as others.

Most of the strategies identified in the environmental scan were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many strategies adjusted their priorities or shifted from their core services toward offering crisis management supports, while others provided information on COVID-19-related forms of financial aid and assistance. Many strategies that required in-person engagement pivoted to remote activities. Some temporarily adjusted or waived eligibility requirements (such as employment requirements) when providers were closed and unable to operate. Some key informants stated that a wider range of educators were able to engage in strategies due to these changes. For example, remote activities allowed some educators in rural areas to participate more frequently in trainings and classes.

Conclusion

In sum, current strategies that focus on building, advancing, and retaining the CCEE workforce offer support that varies in intensity. They generally have broad eligibility criteria, but may differentially target, reach, and engage segments of prospective and current CCEE educators. Most strategies are also in the early stages of development, implementation, and program improvement. Most strategies are small in scale and have not yet defined what would constitute fidelity to the intended model, or finalized their theories of change, critical components, or implementation supports.

Furthermore, there often seems to be a discrepancy between a strategy's underlying or implicit theory of change and its intended supports. Implementing agencies and developers of strategies often theorize that the challenges confronting the CCEE workforce stem from larger systemic issues in how the workforce is valued and compensated. Yet most strategies focus on changing individual CCEE educator outputs and outcomes.

Current strategies appear to be a result of the patchwork of funding that comes with different standards, requirements, and resources for workers in different CCEE settings. This appears to be a significant challenge to the development, implementation, and reach of strategies, and it makes scale-up efforts difficult. Some funders and oversight agencies tend to prioritize certain CCEE educators and settings over others. If agencies receive inconsistent or low levels of funding, they are not able to develop implementation infrastructure that has the capacity to provide robust services and supports or to serve a large number of participants.

Overall, there appears to be a disconnect between the strategies that are implemented and what the research literature suggests drives turnover in the CCEE workforce.[13] Importantly, there is limited evidence on which strategies are effective, and few studies that describe how current strategies are implemented. Thus, it is not clear whether these strategies effectively address the challenges facing the CCEE workforce through their programming and activities.

The environmental scan highlights the importance of defining theories of change; codifying and strengthening critical components, activities, and implementation supports, and aligning eligibility criteria, recruitment, and enrollment approaches to account for the diversity of the CCEE workforce, settings, and systems and local conditions. Future directions where evidence-building activities may be directly relevant to strategy design and operation could include testing theories of change to examine whether core activities yield their intended change. Additional research could help programs determine which components to codify and how to structure them. Further research that examines participant engagement could provide a better understanding of whom these initiatives serve and support, how they interact with one another, and the degree to which they mitigate or exacerbate inequities across the prospective and current CCEE workforce. Greater research into strategies designed to support entry or recruitment of the

prospective workforce would be of value to building a stable supply, with particular attention paid to family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care as FFN care may be one path of entry to the CCEE field. More research is needed on how implementation supports and local contextual conditions influence the relevance, implementation, and effectiveness of strategies.

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank several Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation staff for their thoughtful feedback and contributions to the preparation of this brief, including Ann Rivera, Project Officer, and Krystal Bichay-Awadalla, Dianna Tran, and Brian Tchen, Project Team Reviewers. We thank MDRC colleagues Katie Beal, Dan Bloom, John Hutchins, and Therese Leung who reviewed and provided valuable comments, and Jillian Verrillo, who edited this brief. We also recognize several BASE team members whose work contributed to this brief: from MDRC, Caitlin Anzelone, Michelle Maier, Cynthia Miller, Frieda Molina, Victor Porcelli, Kelsey Schaberg, Harrison Taylor, and Carolyn Thomas; and from MEF Associates, Erin Bumgarner, Lorraine Perales, Marisa Putnam and Kate Stepleton. We would like to thank ICF for their contributions in the production of this brief, and Eleanor Davis for the illustrations featured. We thank the members of the BASE expert advisory group (Juliet Bromer, Debra Pacchiano, Aisha Ray, Amy Roberts, and Diana Schaack) for providing guidance on all aspects of the project. Finally, we express deep gratitude to the child care and early education practitioners, administrators, and teachers who participated in the project and allowed us to learn from their knowledge and experiences.