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New Research Finds Strong Bipartisan Support among American Voters for Investing in the Early Childhood Profession

Recognizing the connection to a quality education, voters call for stronger public investments to increase early educators' wages

Washington, D.C. – Results from new bipartisan [research](#) released today by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) finds American voters strongly support higher wages for early childhood educators. With policymakers, voters, parents and non-parents focused on the value of early childhood education, the research highlights widespread support across political parties and demographics for making investment in the early childhood education profession a national priority.

“Highly skilled and well-compensated early childhood educators are essential to ensuring that all children have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education,” said Rhian Evans Allvin, executive director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. “We’re working to ensure policymakers share this understanding and make needed state and federal investments in the early childhood profession.”

Research results show that 6 in 10 voters recognize that a child’s earliest years are crucial for learning and development, and nearly 9 in 10 voters believe that early childhood educators are an integral part of our society, valued at levels similar to firefighters and nurses.

“This research proves that a significant majority of American voters from all parties and races recognize the critical role of early childhood educators and know they are paid far too little,” said researcher Dave Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, or FM3. “Voters believe both compensation and professional development are critical to ensuring children receive a quality education.”

Despite the public’s strong support for early childhood educators, 72 percent of educators still believe that the community doesn’t respect the importance and difficulty of their work. While they would like to make early childhood education their long-term career, 84 percent of early childhood educators identify low pay as a significant challenge to doing so.

“I love working with children and their families. It is so rewarding to go to work every day and help set the stage for a child’s future success and well-being,” said Eleanor Johnson, lead preschool teacher at Rosemount Center in Washington, District of Columbia. “While there is a

lot of passion in the field, there is also a lot of anxiety around the low pay and benefits and what it means for our future.”

Sixty-one percent of voters believe that early childhood educators are paid too little and a majority of voters support raising their wages across all settings. The research shows voters agree the nation’s early childhood education policies and investments need to focus on advancing the profession to ensure America’s young children receive a quality education.

Research Findings Summary (see full research results [here](#))

- **Six in 10 voters** recognize that a child’s earliest years are crucial for learning and development, and **nearly 9 in 10 voters** believe that early childhood educators are an integral part of our society, valued at levels similar to firefighters and nurses.
- **Seventy-two percent of early childhood educators** believe that the community doesn’t respect the importance and difficulty of their work.
- **Eighty-four percent of early childhood educators** identify low pay as a significant challenge.
- **Sixty-one percent of voters** believe that early childhood educators are paid too little and a majority of voters support raising their wages across all settings.
- **Eighty-five percent of voters** believe that having well-compensated teachers is a ‘very important’ indicator of quality early education programs.
- **Voters’ support of public investments in early childhood education increased from 80 percent to 83 percent** when told the investment would specifically focus on increasing the profession’s wages.
- Educators of color were more likely to report an even greater range of obstacles for staying in the profession, including college inaccessibility and a lack of career guidance, mentoring and training. For example, **51 percent of educators of color** cited college affordability as a barrier, compared to **37 percent of white educators**.
- **Eighty-three percent of educators** believe it is fair to require current and future early childhood educators to meet a baseline set of qualifications in order to receive a higher salary and benefits.

Methodology

NAEYC commissioned the research with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation. A bipartisan team of researchers, including Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Public Opinion Strategies, led the effort.

The research included four phases: in-depth, online qualitative interviews with early educators; a quantitative online survey with early educators; four focus groups with current educators and those interested in entering the field; and a national survey of 950 voters.

Founded in 1926, the National Association for the Education of Young Children promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.