

# Raising the Quality of Childcare

## Examples of Private/Public Training Partnerships in Childcare & Other Industries

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### Introduction

High quality childcare is an essential foundation for a strong community. Yet the largely private system of American childcare often falls short: the quality of care is often lower than parents, communities and the children themselves need; the cost is often too high for parents; and the wages paid to the dedicated workforce taking care of our babies, toddlers, and preschoolers are too low to retain high quality early educators.

As former director of the Madison, WI Office of Community Services and childcare expert Dorothy Conniff says, “Providing quality care to little people with great curiosity and little impulse control requires patience, intelligence, and a fine sense of humor. Caring for groups of little children requires both excellent planning skills and flexibility. It’s not possible to achieve a high-functioning staff on wages that won’t pay the rent. Turnover kills planning, worry about past-due bills makes it impossible to maintain humor, flexibility and patience. Low wages and quality care just don’t work.” Quality childcare requires a workforce with a strong foundation of education and training. Equally essential is adequate compensation.

In childcare, communities, parents, children, and teachers all share the same goal: high quality care. High quality care requires and fosters a highly skilled workforce. Quality jobs are the foundation of that workforce. **These three factors – high quality care, a skilled workforce, and quality jobs – are integrated and inseparable, different facets of the same prism.** Any community seeking to develop a strong system of high quality care will need a strong approach to building the skills of childcare workforce and a way to ensure childcare jobs offer decent wages, hours and benefits. Maybe it sounds impossible: more skilled childcare workers, better care for kids, better job opportunities in the economy. It’s not. But all three must move together.

To give a stronger sense of the way that training can integrate into a strategy to improve care and offer better jobs, this paper provides examples of successful education and skill initiatives

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### About COWS

#### (Center on Wisconsin Strategy)

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS is a national think-and-do tank that promotes “high road” solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.

from diverse industries. In these examples, industry leaders have come together and built partnerships that, using a combination of public and private resources, have developed training systems to build skills and improve job quality, especially for current workers who have shown commitment to the field and are eager to upgrade their skills and advance their careers.

The first two cases are union-inspired industry partnerships that have worked with local technical and community colleges to develop training programs to meet industry's needs for a more highly skilled workforce while providing improved job and career prospects to workers without much previous post-high school education. The third case looks at a widely heralded program designed to raise education and wage levels in the childcare industry. Focusing on North Carolina, where the program was initiated and has been in place longest, we note that it has succeeded in substantially increasing education levels among childcare workers in North Carolina and brought significant wage gains to many individual childcare workers. These are important effects. But the NC program has not affected overall wage levels of childcare workers which, despite the increase in workers' skills, are lower on average than they were ten years ago.

While these examples should help inspire the possibility, we also note that the case for training and quality in childcare is stronger than many other industries. After all, childcare is not just any industry. High quality care is what allows parents of young children to work outside the home. It helps children thrive, providing the emotional, social, and intellectual resources and experiences that allow children to succeed in school and in their careers. And childcare isn't just an individual, private "good". High quality childcare can help reduce achievement gaps at the ground floor in schools, can provide a stronger foundation for economic and community development, and help develop a stronger workforce for the future.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, quality childcare is increasingly a public community and economic development priority. The concern and need for investment in kids is community-wide, but until kids get to kindergarten the market for their care is largely private. Public investment in quality care – increasing

**In childcare, communities, parents, children, and teachers all share the same goal: high quality care.**

<sup>1</sup> See J. Heckman and D. Masterov, "The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 13016, April 2007 available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13016.pdf>; R. Grunewald, "The Economic Case for Investing in Young Children," Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, December 2012 available at [http://www.minneminds.com/assets/The\\_Economic\\_Case\\_for\\_Investing\\_in\\_Young\\_Children\\_Dec\\_2012\\_for\\_Jan\\_23.pdf](http://www.minneminds.com/assets/The_Economic_Case_for_Investing_in_Young_Children_Dec_2012_for_Jan_23.pdf)

both job quality and the skills and education of the childcare workforce – is one way to help realize the best possible future, for children, parents, workers, and the entire community.

## Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) Milwaukee, WI

### *Manufacturing Skills, Workforce Diversity, and Opportunity in Wisconsin*

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership was founded more than twenty years ago as a labor-management partnership to retain, support and otherwise develop the base of high-wage manufacturing jobs in the Milwaukee region. Over two decades, the WRTP has found many ways to build the skills of current and future workers for the state’s leading manufacturers. In this work, the WRTP and its partner BIG STEP have grown to be a national leader in sector-based industry partnership solutions to workforce issues in manufacturing, construction, utilities and other sectors.<sup>2</sup>

At the heart of the partnership is the joint interest of workers and managers in improving skills and jobs. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, growing Wisconsin manufacturers could draw on a large pool of existing skilled manufacturing labor that had been let go by firms that were shrinking, moving, or going out of business. As the economy picked up in the mid-1990s, skilled labor became harder to find. And as manufacturers updated their production processes, they could see that both traditional technical college certificate and degree programs and their own internal job classification and job training systems were becoming outdated. Unions had already identified a large pool of potential skilled labor staring the firms in the face, if anyone could figure out how to access it: the existing semi-skilled and unskilled workforce. Many were trapped in entry-level, lower skill manufacturing jobs because they had little higher education and/or were constrained in other ways from succeeding at the advanced skills training that could offer them better skills and rewards.

Thus the WRTP began as an effort to develop specific, targeted training programs providing real workplace skills to current workers that were not “traditional college material.” From there, the WRTP spread into training the future workforce as well. Weaving together private and public funding sources, the WRTP now helps to support and develop incumbent worker training, and designs recruitment, assessment, and

**The WRTP is a longstanding example of how genuine industry labor-management partnerships can address both the needs of employers for a more highly skilled workforce and the needs of industry workers for better career opportunities.**

<sup>2</sup> See Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), “The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership,” February 2003 available at <http://www.cows.org/the-wisconsin-regional-training-partnership>; and A. Bernhardt, L. Dresser, and J. Rogers, “Taking the High Road in Milwaukee: The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership,” *Working USA*, Winter 2001-02, pp. 109-130. COWS) and WRTP available at <http://www.cows.org/taking-the-high-road-in-milwaukee-the-wisconsin-regional-training-partnership>, “Manufacturing Better Opportunity & A Stronger Economy,” May 2013 available at <http://www.cows.org/manufacturing-better-opportunity-a-stronger-economy>

training processes to connect new workers to industry. Their work in training has covered everything from basic math to advanced manufacturing skills for both current and future workforces.

The WRTP operates as a workforce intermediary, working with industry partners to identify skill needs, then working with colleges to tailor training to these specified needs. The partnership does not provide the training itself. Instead, it has been instrumental in helping local technical colleges adapt and refine existing programs and develop new training to meet the needs of the industry.

**The voices of workers - in designing training and defining rules around training, grades, etc. - are essential to the model.**

### *Strong Results Founded in Partnership*

In 2009, the WRTP was one of three training partnerships included in a rigorous study done by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) and the Mott Foundation comparing outcomes for people who had been through sectoral-focused training in one of the three programs to similar individuals who did not receive such training. The results:

- **WRTP-program participants earned significantly more than control group members.**
- Participants were significantly more likely to be working, and working in steadier jobs than control group members.
- **Participants were significantly more likely to work in jobs that paid higher wages, that offered benefits, and that offered union representation.**
- Participants in WRTP healthcare and construction training programs were also **more likely to have obtained training certification** than non-participants.<sup>3</sup>

### *An Important Partnership, a New Direction for the Community*

The WRTP was among the first union-led industry-based worker training efforts and serves as a longstanding example of how genuine industry labor-management partnerships can address both the needs of employers for a more highly skilled workforce and the needs of industry workers for better career opportunities. The WRTP has demonstrated, in the variety of sectors where it now operates, that labor-management partnerships can develop new ideas for training of incumbent and future workers and help connect educational institutions more effectively to the student/worker population.

<sup>3</sup> S. Maguire, et al., "Tuning In to Local Labor Markets: Findings From the Sectoral Employment Impact Study," Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), 2010 available at [http://ppv.issuelab.org/resource/tuning\\_in\\_to\\_local\\_labor\\_markets\\_findings\\_from\\_the\\_sectoral\\_employment\\_impact\\_study](http://ppv.issuelab.org/resource/tuning_in_to_local_labor_markets_findings_from_the_sectoral_employment_impact_study)

A key distinguishing characteristic of the WRTP is that it is driven by the **full spectrum of industry workforce needs**. Many, perhaps most, industry-focused worker-training programs are designed to train new workers so that they can fill open entry-level positions. These programs often end up serving employers who have frequent job openings because of high turnover, low investment in training, and few opportunities for worker advancement. In contrast, WRTP-led training programs encompass programs for experienced workers as well as new hires, and are driven by the needs of the sector's leading firms. The partnership helps reorient private and public resources toward better jobs and better employers, securing stronger outcomes for the training programs and ensuring that the regions' better employers are connected to public training systems.

The **voices of workers** – in designing training and defining rules around training, grades, etc. – are essential to the model. Since its inception, workers have helped shape curriculum, been trained to provide mentoring and orientation to new workers, jointly engaged in questions of workplace education, and shaped workplace training in every way. Their voices and work on training projects ensures that training is relevant and that skills are acknowledged and rewarded. Worker engagement is a unique ingredient of the WRTP model and one source of its unique success.

**Industry buy-in is also key**, not only to ensure that the training is directly relevant to employer needs but also to adapt work processes, job classifications, and wage scales to accommodate more highly skilled workforces. The WRTP helps promote the possibility of a long career in a single firm or industry and allows development of a variety of programs encompassing all stages of working life.

***“WRTP/BIG STEP has been instrumental in understanding our needs and developing a curriculum to meet those demands.”***

**Milwaukee  
Manufacturer**

***“They gave me the skills and the knowledge that I can do something more than I was doing and to step into a career. I didn’t know I could even go to school anymore. More importantly, they gave me the confidence to know that I did not have to settle for a minimum wage low skilled job, that I was capable of so much more.”***

**Milwaukee  
Worker**

## Hospital Employee Education and Training Program (HEET) Washington State

### *Skills for Incumbent Health Care Workers*

HEET is a Washington State-funded grant program initiated at the behest of the Washington State Hospital Association and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW. Begun in 2008, it provides \$2 million a year in grants to community and technical colleges to develop, in partnership with industry, training programs designed to allow the existing healthcare workforce to move up into more skilled and technical positions.<sup>4</sup> The program is intended to address the shortage of skilled medical professionals in health care, the relative lack of diversity in the skilled health care workforce, and the barriers to skill and career enhancement that low-wage hospital industry workers confront.

Faced with a projected shortage of skilled health care workers, the hospitals and union identified an obvious pool of workers to target: the entry-level frontline workforce already working in the industry. Many were eager to access training that could improve their career prospects but again faced barriers to traditional schooling including cost, the inability to meet degree- or certificate-program standards and prerequisites, and the difficulties of balancing work, family and school. Enabling access to the education and skill training that could move them into higher-skilled jobs would also help address health care's vexing diversity problem, where the large low-wage workforce is overwhelmingly female and/or minority but becomes much less diverse further up the skill ladder.

Labor and management in the health care industry came together to design and lobby for the program which is administered through the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. Since 2008, HEET has provided more than \$11 million in grants to 22 college-industry collaborations to develop innovative health care training for current health care workers.

HEET specifically requires colleges to collaborate with industry partners – management and labor - in order to receive funding. As with the WRTP, the idea is to get the colleges to innovate and support partnerships of labor, management, and education to develop training and education strategies to meet employer skill needs by “upskilling” the health care industry’s current workers.

**HEET supports partnerships of labor, management, and education to develop training and education strategies to meet employer skill needs by “upskilling” the health care industry’s current workers.**

<sup>4</sup> This section, including quotes, draws heavily from L. Chenven and L. Dresser, “Turn Up the HEET! Reflections on Washington’s Six Years of Investment and Innovation in the Health Care Workforce,” forthcoming from COWS.

These workers already possess a range of pre-existing skills, resources and experience but also come with pre-existing needs that had often been deal breakers in accessing more traditional education.

And that industry partnership approach, as with the WRTP, has led to industry buy-in, a flexible, problem-solving approach to employer and worker needs, and a variety of new innovative programs that make it easier for industry workers to attend classes, obtain credentials, fulfill prerequisites and move onto higher-skilled career pathways.

HEET has driven real innovation in how technical and community colleges in Washington provide training for healthcare workers. The number and range of program innovations initiated under HEET is truly impressive: worksite-based classes offered at convenient times; case managers and a full array of specialized services and supports designed particularly for student/workers; cohort-based programs where students pursue an entire program with the same co-worker/students; amended entrance requirements that allow more workers to access higher skills training; curriculum changes that contextualize and integrate basic skills training with higher-level occupational skills training; competency-based approaches that give credit for pre-existing skills and knowledge current workers already have; and coordinated programming across campuses are just some of the changes to healthcare industry training inspired by HEET grants.

### *Strong Results for Worker/Students*

With five years of programming completed, HEET has served almost 900 workers taking over 1200 courses. Four out of five HEET students are female, with a median age of mid-to-late 30s. Over 40% of HEET participants statewide are minorities; some Seattle-based HEET programs serve a worker/student body that is 70-80% minority. Thirty percent of HEET students have no education beyond high school and more than half have no post-high school degree or certificate. Given the demands of job and home, and the long time out of school for many of these workers, it is clear that many if not most HEET students would not otherwise be able to access such skill training.

Yet the dramatic increase in the number of industry workers able to access higher education and skill development has not lowered academic standards or outcomes. **In courses where comparative data was available, HEET students performed as well or better than non-HEET students in 28 of 33 unique courses.**<sup>5</sup>

***“We have a tool that can help workers move up. Too many workers face barriers in moving up a ladder. This program opens doors in the most profound way to people who wouldn’t have had opportunity before.”***

**Labor Leader**

***“We are not changing the standards of our programs. We are changing the approach.”***

**Community College Leader**

<sup>5</sup> “Turn Up the HEET,” p. 3.

This provides the colleges with the confirmation they need to target more programming for non-traditional students, whose experience, desire and commitment can, with appropriate support structures in place, drive high levels of academic achievement.

### *Making Training Work for Current Workers*

HEET provides further evidence that collaborations between industry partners and technical and community colleges can develop innovative, high quality programming that both meets employer workforce-training needs and offers real skill enhancement opportunities to industry workers that often have difficulty accessing traditional college degree or certificate programs. Moreover, it does so in **an industry with a low-skill, low-wage workforce** that bears a strong resemblance to the childcare workforce: overwhelmingly female, heavily minority, often with constraining family obligations and sometimes with little education past high school.

It is also instructive that, as with the WRTP, HEET program rely on both unions and management to provide industry input. Unions can use various strategies to increase the economic opportunities available to their members, and HEET provides further evidence that many unions are eager to pursue skill-upgrading strategies that benefit employers as well. HEET partnerships of labor, management, and education develop new solutions for training working adults, solutions focused on both the education and the work of HEET worker/students. The hospitals provide their worker/students (as well as their supervisors and co-workers) with the resources and supports to succeed and provide the colleges with the access, insight, and support to develop new training initiatives. The partners jointly monitor student success, offer early intervention when problems arise, and provide support services.

HEET has helped Washington hospitals address skilled labor shortages, and in ways that improve diversity across the healthcare workforce. **HEET's success has provided a direct challenge to pre-existing notions of who can succeed in higher education and in higher skilled jobs in healthcare.**

*“Just last week I ran into a young lady. She was a certified nursing assistant and ... got involved with the HEET program. She’s become an RN. She told me again how grateful she was and how much of a difference it had made. How it had changed her life, her family’s life; and she can now provide for her family.”*

**Labor Leader**

## TEACH/WAGE\$ for childcare workers North Carolina

### *A Training and Wage Approach to Quality Child Care*

The TEACH Early Childhood Project is a foundation-led professional development program offering scholarships and bonuses, mostly to current childcare industry workers, for taking courses, achieving credentials, and earning degrees in early childhood education. Many TEACH scholarship recipients are also sponsored by their employers, who agree to pay a bonus or higher wage to employees who obtain a degree in exchange for a commitment to remain with that employer. Acknowledging the link between low workforce education levels and low wages, TEACH holds three goals: increasing the education levels of the early childhood workforce; raising their compensation; and reducing workforce turnover. The program was founded in North Carolina in 1990 and now operates in 22 states and Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup> Child Care WAGE\$ is a related program run by the same foundation and operating in four states, including North Carolina, that similarly offers periodic, on-going salary supplements (bonuses) to childcare workers who both further their early childhood education and commit to staying with their current employer.<sup>7</sup>

TEACH has a number of different credential programs. Some pay for basic industry credentials but the most popular help current childcare workers pursue associate's or bachelor's degrees in early childhood education. There is also a program that provides subsidized health care to a limited number of childcare teachers and families. Over 16,000 scholarships were given (in all TEACH states) in FY2013, with more than half the recipients further sponsored by their employers. Nearly two-thirds were working toward a two- or four-year degree.<sup>8</sup>

In combination, TEACH and WAGE\$ allow North Carolina childcare workers to further their early childhood education without having to run up student debt that could be hard to repay on industry wages, and to receive bonuses and sometimes wage increases for achieving their degrees and committing to stay with their current employer (at least one year per year of scholarship). The amounts are not large (typically in the hundreds of dollars) but wages in the industry are so low they are meaningful to workers, who report considerably higher job satisfaction

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<sup>6</sup> See Child Care Services Association, "TEACH Early Childhood North Carolina Annual Report, July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012" available at [http://www.childcareservices.org/\\_downloads/TEACH\\_NC\\_AnnualReport\\_11\\_12.pdf](http://www.childcareservices.org/_downloads/TEACH_NC_AnnualReport_11_12.pdf) and TEACH Early Childhood, "TEACH Early Childhood and Child Care WAGE\$ Annual National Program Report, 2012-2013: The Promise of Education for the Early Childhood Workforce" available at [http://www.childcareservices.org/\\_downloads/TEACH\\_AnnualReport\\_2013.pdf](http://www.childcareservices.org/_downloads/TEACH_AnnualReport_2013.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Child Care Services Association, "Child Care WAGE\$ Project Statewide Final Report, Fiscal Year 2014." available at [http://www.childcareservices.org/\\_downloads/StatewideFinalFY14full8\\_22\\_14-1.pdf](http://www.childcareservices.org/_downloads/StatewideFinalFY14full8_22_14-1.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> "Annual National Program Report, 2012-2013," p. 5.

and commitment to the field than non-recipients.<sup>9</sup>

Funding for the scholarships and wage incentive awards is a combination of foundation and public funding. Unfortunately but unsurprisingly, state government has ebbed and flowed in both its commitment and its ability to fund the initiative.

### *Education and Training for the Childcare Workforce*

The TEACH program is a recognized industry leader in pushing for and achieving higher levels of education and training in the childcare workforce. The design explicitly acknowledges the link between low levels of worker education and low wages, and the bonus program strives to raise wage levels as education of the workforce increases.

TEACH's impact on overall education levels in the childcare workforce is impressive. In the twelve years from 2001 and 2013, **the percentage of North Carolina childcare teachers with an associate's or bachelor's degree in ECE rose from 10% to 33% and the number with at least an associate degree and some ECE training from 20% to almost 50%**. A majority of childcare centers in the state have had a teacher on a TEACH scholarship at some point and perhaps a fifth of the childcare teaching workforce or more has received one. There is no question the North Carolina childcare workforce is both more educated overall and better trained in early childhood than it was before TEACH came into being.<sup>10</sup>

TEACH makes clear that demand for early childhood education from the childcare workforce is very high. Low education levels among workers in the field are a product of the very low wages and the difficulty of trying to access further education, not a lack of interest in education or a lack of ability.

The impact of the modest scholarships and salary supplements offered by TEACH and WAGE\$ reinforce two distinct points: First, childcare workers don't do it only for the money. The supplements are small enough that they might more accurately be thought of as recognition awards or bonuses. Yet they have a measurable effect both in terms of work satisfaction and in slowing industry turnover. Second, industry wages are so low that even these small scholarships and bonuses are critical to providing many childcare workers the opportunity to further their education.

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***“With my Child Care WAGE\$ checks, I was able to save up and get out of public housing and into my own apartment. Now I am not constantly worried about how to make ends meet.”***

**Childcare Teacher**

<sup>9</sup> “TEACH North Carolina Annual Report 2011-2012.”

<sup>10</sup> Child Care Services Association, “Working in Early Childcare and Education in North Carolina: 2013 Workforce Study,” March 2014, p. 10. available at <http://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Final-2013-WorkforceReport-dated-6-12-14.pdf>

### *Strong Results for Education Levels, Room for Improvement on Wages*

The evidence regarding the large number of teachers aided by TEACH and WAGES and the large impact the programs have had on recipients, in terms of both higher wages and job satisfaction, is impressive. Teachers in both the associate degree and bachelor's degree scholarship programs experienced wage increases on the order of 5-10% per year of participation (some of this no doubt a result of moving into a higher paying position). The programs are also effective in reducing industry turnover. Annual turnover among **WAGES recipients with at least an associate's degree was only 11% compared to about 20% for the entire childcare workforce.**<sup>11</sup>

Survey responses show a high degree of satisfaction with the program. Fewer than half of TEACH scholarship recipients would have been able to take as much advanced coursework as they did except for the scholarship. And over 95% of both teachers and center directors report satisfaction with the program.<sup>12</sup> (The high quality data and evaluative information on the program is another notable strength.)

On the other hand, as much as the program can show gains for program participants and a substantial increase in the overall education levels of North Carolina childcare teachers, **there is no corroborating evidence of higher industry wages.** A large-scale survey of childcare workers in North Carolina in 2013 showed **real wages for most childcare teachers to be lower than they were in 2003.** There were two exceptions. The lowest paid childcare teachers in the state saw a small increase in real wages in 2013 compared to 2003, entirely due to two increases in the state's minimum wage. And a handful of teachers in the state's Pre-K program employed by public school districts that were required to have comparable qualifications and be paid comparably to kindergarten teachers saw substantial wage increases.<sup>13</sup>

As of 2013, the self-reported wage of the median childcare teacher in North Carolina was \$10.00 per hour, lower in real terms than in 2003 despite the substantial increase in overall education levels of the workforce. While more highly educated teachers were paid more, their pay was in no way comparable to workers in other industries with similar education levels. Teachers with an associate degree in early childhood education reported a median wage of \$10.68 per hour. Teachers with a bachelor's in early education reported a median wage of \$13.00 per hour.<sup>14</sup>

The TEACH program has been spectacularly successful in getting current childcare workers to access early childhood education courses and degrees. It has helped to dramatically raise education levels among the early childhood workforce in North Carolina in recent years. And it has provided meaningful financial supplements to many teachers who have obtained early childhood degrees and certificates.

But it has not succeeded either in raising overall pay levels to acknowledge the higher commitment to education by the workforce, or in forcing other changes to the structure of the industry that would provide real avenues for higher wages or more satisfying careers. As a result, while scholarship recipients show lower levels of turnover than other childcare workers, industry turnover is still very high and many talented childcare workers leave the industry every year due to the low wages and benefits.

<sup>11</sup> "Annual National Program Report, 2012-2013," p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> "TEACH Early Childhood North Carolina Annual Report, July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012," p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> "Working in Early Childcare," pp. 6, 13.

<sup>14</sup> "Working in Early Childcare," p. 14.

## Conclusion

These three examples – from diverse industries and with varied approaches to the issues of skills and training – are intended to suggest **the potential and promise of a training and education strategy that could be integrated into the existing childcare workforce system in Seattle**. No single example is a perfect model. But if the manufacturing sector, labor and management in hospitals, and the state of North Carolina can all find new, effective, and lasting ways of building quality in both jobs and the workforce, then surely new approaches are available for Seattle’s childcare workforce as well.

The three examples suggest some **essential lessons** as Seattle considers the community approach to early childhood development.

First, **build a strong partnership among interested parties**. The good news here is that the partnership for childcare extends beyond the workforce and childcare providers to embrace parents and the broader community as well.

Second, **make sure to include the current childcare workforce, including workforce representatives, from the ground up** on training design, tuition strategies, course organization, and support. No amount of expert advice can substitute for real input from the devoted childcare teachers whose long experience is a measure of their commitment to kids and a real gauge of skills in their work. These teachers and care providers need to be supported in transitioning to higher levels of education and skill, not simply skipped over or worse, facing job loss without the necessary credentials or support to move up. A worker-centered strategy provides a means of driving change and innovation in existing training systems that can help make education work better for people already working in the industry.

Third, develop strategies at the intersection of interests – quality childcare, quality jobs, qualified workers. **Increasing education levels need to be met with increasing job quality**. Otherwise the investment in training will be lost as workers leave the industry in search of better jobs.

Finally, and unique to the childcare industry, **use industry partnership and workforce engagement to build public support for investing in job and workforce quality**. Parents’ budgets are stretched thin already and new resources for increased wages and educational supports will likely have to be developed outside the private revenue streams currently funding the early childhood system. Coalitions focused on systemic improvement of childcare quality are addressing the quality of the very future of the community. The answer must involve a growing public commitment to children. The partnership that can help build the best training will also be the source of the political change needed to put our youngest children on the map.