

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

Genesis Center Early Learning Center Evaluation

Produced for:

The Genesis Center

620 Potters Ave, Providence, RI 02907

OCTOBER, 2020

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Acronyms and Definitions

CCAP - Child Care Assistance Program

DHS- Rhode Island Department of Human Services

DLT - Department of Labor and Training

ECERS-3 - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition

ECERS-R - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised

ECJSS - Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey

Genesis ELC - The Genesis Early Learning Center

ITERS-R- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised

PD - Professional Development

PPP - Paycheck Protection Program

QIP - Quality Improvement Plan

RIELDS - Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards

RJRI - Real Jobs Rhode Island program

TAs - Teaching Assistants

URI - University of Rhode Island

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

The following report presents a program evaluation of the impact of DLT infrastructure funds on the Genesis Early Learning Center. Specific program evaluation questions included:

1. Did the influx of resources to the Early Learning Center increase the quality of instruction?
2. Did the influx of resources to the Early Learning Center increase the longevity/sustainability of the program?
3. Was the Early Learning Center able to attract and retain more qualified employees?
4. Did RJRI funding help to support the Genesis Center during the COVID-19 Pandemic shutdown?

Method

We surveyed and conducted follow up interviews with 9 Genesis ELC teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators. We also analyzed wage data for ELC teachers and teaching assistants and BrightStars quality rating reports from 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Findings

- DLT infrastructure funds allowed the Genesis Center to increase wages for all ELC staff by approximately \$2/hour, resulting in approximately \$4000 of extra salary per year.
- Based on staff interviews, our overall determination is that the DLT infrastructure funds helped to make changes in the following areas:
 - Fostered a person-centered approach to high-quality leadership, including an environment of culturally-responsive practice resulting in improved employee morale.
 - Resulted in an increase in high quality teachers and support staff, particularly by hiring support staff who were able to relieve teachers from the classrooms to attend to their personal care routines and planning and coordination meetings.
 - Provided classroom teachers with much needed materials, infrastructure and organizational items to improve the classroom environment.
 - Increased professional development opportunities and other indicators of quality instruction that inform BrightStars accreditation standards.
- The ECJSS survey data revealed that Genesis ELC staff are **highly satisfied with CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS** and **least satisfied with PAY AND PROMOTION**

OPPORTUNITIES and SUPERVISOR RELATIONS. However, dissatisfaction with supervisor relations appears to be targeted toward former management.

- The combination of wage increases, classroom supplies and infrastructure and professional development opportunities helped the Genesis ELC to earn its 5-star BrightStars Quality Rating.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic introduced a major hurdle to the normal operations of the center. However, **the DLT funds acted as a buffer to keep Genesis ELC staff employed and also likely helped to retain families by providing needed resources.**

Recommendations

- Future funding considerations should include providing teachers dedicated **“off the floor time”** for professional development and quality improvement efforts.
- When a center has both private and public-preK/Head Start programs, there can be perceived and actual inequity between classrooms. **In order for centers to achieve and maintain high-quality Brightstars ratings, which impact their CCAP reimbursement rates and family retention, DLT infrastructure funds should be used to promote equity in providing private classrooms with the materials and equipment needed to achieve their curricular goals.**
- Administrative management had a significant impact on staff morale. The Genesis ELC has a diverse workforce and co-worker relationships should be nurtured by committing to hire trained and **culturally-responsive leadership** who can promote cohesion amongst leadership and staff. Leadership should also engage teaching staff in collaborative quality improvement efforts.
 - Teaching staff should be encouraged to be involved in future Quality Improvement Plans to help facilitate collaborative and cohesive quality improvement efforts.
- The combination of wage increases, classroom supplies and infrastructure and professional development opportunities will help the Genesis ELC to retain its 5-star Brightstars Quality Rating.
- Pay wage increases are important for two reasons. First, pay wages help to increase rates to a living wage likely resulting in better retention of staff at the Genesis ELC. Second, the global pay inequities in the early childhood labor workforce require broader

systemic change to provide the largely female workforce with equitable pay. **The DLT infrastructure funds provided Genesis ELC with the ability to increase pay by approximately \$2/hour, resulting in approximately \$4000 of extra salary per year.** Although a wage increase was an important first step in closing the pay gap at the Genesis ELC, state and national wage trends must also make movement toward providing a living wage for early childcare workers.

- The Genesis ELC appears to be well equipped to attract employees. Additionally, 5 employees have longevity of over 2 years at the center. Retention rates have increased in 2020. However, **retention rates could be improved through continued efforts to increase wages and maintain a leadership environment that fosters mutual respect, collaboration, understanding and cultural responsiveness.**
- **As future funding becomes available, Genesis ELC staff would benefit from additional equipment and materials in their classrooms.** Additional furnishings or equipment to provide staff comfort, such as technology needs and break room amenities, may lead to further increases in job satisfaction.
- Equity amongst Genesis private and publicly funded classrooms was a common theme throughout the project. Programs such as the DLT infrastructure funds are essential in helping to maximize equity across the classrooms and allows teachers, children and families within the same center a comparable early childhood experience. Increased equity across all classrooms at the Genesis ELC will also likely result in longevity and sustainability of the private classrooms at the center. **Educational equity is a social justice priority that the DLT infrastructure funds can directly impact by incentivizing equal access to materials and high-quality teaching staff.** Working in conjunction with other quality improvement efforts (e.g., the DHS Apprenticeship Model) will likely maximize the convergence of high-quality staff and well-resourced classrooms.

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BACKGROUND

The Genesis Center and DLT partnership

The University of Rhode Island (URI) SSIREP team from the Department of Human Development & Family Science was commissioned to complete an analysis of the Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program at the Genesis Center. The project includes two major parts: I) an evaluation of the Genesis healthcare training programs, and II) an evaluation of the impact of resource allocation on the Genesis Child Development & Learning Center. The following report addresses the impact of RJRI resource allocation, also referred to as the DLT infrastructure funds, beginning in February of 2019 on the operations of the Genesis Early Learning Center.

The following report addresses the following program evaluation questions:

1. Did the influx of resources to the Genesis Early Learning Center increase the quality of instruction?
2. Did the influx of resources to the Genesis Early Learning Center increase the longevity/sustainability of the program?
3. Was the early learning center able to attract and retain more qualified employees?
4. How did RJRI funding help to support the Genesis Early Learning Center during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown.
 - a. *Note: This question was added during the evaluation process, as the timing of data collection corresponded with the Rhode Island state-wide pandemic shutdown of childcare centers*

The Landscape of Early Childhood Education and Care in Rhode Island

The RI Preschool Development Grant B-5 Workforce Needs Assessment (2019) indicates that many members of the birth - 5 workforce have financial concerns, which likely contribute to stress and turnover. There are not only inequities between the compensation for early childhood teachers and elementary school teachers, but also notable inequities between different sectors in ECE. For example, average pay for lead teachers in private child care centers in 2019 was \$33,152 per year, while lead teachers in state-funded pre-k classrooms made an average of \$58,903 (p. 11). Strategies suggested to increase pay and retain staff include compensation incentives and scholarships for continuing education as well as direct wage supplements (p.16).

Providing sufficient staff support and professional development, especially in key areas of need such as supporting children with disabilities and challenging behaviors, may also help to retain staff while also leading to quality improvements. Engagement in ongoing quality improvement efforts is necessary for early childhood educators and programs, but some teachers report having little time or compensation to do so. In recent years, the state has increased access to free professional development through the Center for Early Learning Professionals and the Preschool Development Grant, for example, and has provided a variety of individualized supports for programs seeking to improve their BrightStars ratings. Quality improvement efforts have been strong across RI with RI Kids Count data from 2020 showing a steady increase in the percentage of programs rated as high-quality by BrightStars. It is known that birth - age 5 is the most important period for brain development and access to high-quality care will lay the foundation for long term positive outcomes.

Quality Improvement Efforts and Ratings

While the quality of early learning programs has been improving in recent years, only 25% of licensed early learning centers had a high-quality (four or five star) BrightStars rating in 2020 (RI Kids Count Factbook, 2020). Data from December 2019 show only 20% of preschool children utilizing the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) were attending programs with high-quality BrightStars ratings. Access to high-quality care for utilizing CCAP is of concern with only 17% enrolled in a high-quality program. Participation in the BrightStars quality rating system requires an ongoing commitment to program evaluation and continuous quality improvement. Teaching and administrative staff must allocate significant time and resources to maintaining a quality program.

Although the implementation of tiered reimbursement has increased CCAP payment rates to high-quality programs, there is still a substantial gap between the revenue generated from these payments and the costs associated with providing high quality early care and education. It is well established that high-quality teacher-child interactions lead to better outcomes for children, yet retaining highly qualified early educators remains a challenge for the field due to low wages. While important, wages are certainly not the only factor in job satisfaction. Early childhood educators' job satisfaction is also directly impacted by the quality of support and supervision they receive on the job. The PDG B-5 Workforce Needs Assessment shows that 45% of center-based lead teachers report often feeling burned out from their job (p. 23). Strong program leadership with an emphasis on systematic supportive supervision can lead to increased job satisfaction for early educators.

About the Genesis Early Learning Center

Genesis ELC Quality Improvement and Ratings. The Genesis ELC has demonstrated a commitment to continuous quality improvement through participation in BrightStars and by working with independent consultants to provide feedback aligned with the ITERS. Furthermore, participation with the SUCCESS consultation program shows that the Genesis ELC is supporting teachers in their work with children who have social, emotional, behavioral, and/or mental health challenges. After being rated as a three star program by BrightStars in April 2019, the program worked diligently to make the improvements needed in the areas of teacher qualifications and continuous quality improvement to then achieve a five star rating by the end of 2019. A search of BrightStars rated centers in Providence indicates that as of June 2020, the Genesis ELC was one of only six programs in the city rated as five stars and was one of only four five-star rated centers in Providence that accepts CCAP.

Genesis ELC Revenue Structure. According to the Genesis ELC administration, the Genesis ELC is funded by multiple sources including CCAP, state funding of public Pre-K and Head Start classrooms, private pay, United Way funding and other small revenue sources. Because federal and state funds must be spent only in the public Pre-K and Head Start classrooms, these classrooms are generally better resourced than the privately funded classrooms.

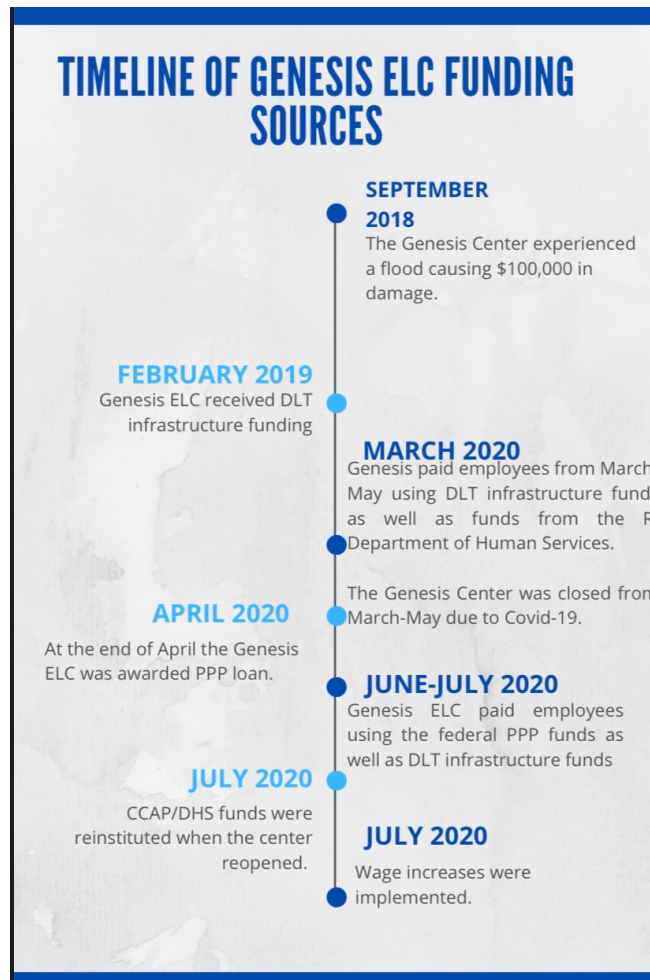
The monthly DLT childcare infrastructure payment provided additional \$6,000/month in revenue that helped the Center to cover the gap between traditional revenue sources (i.e., CCAP/DHS payments and other small revenue sources) and the true cost of service delivery. In addition to ongoing overhead, the true cost of service delivery included a wage increase effective July 6, 2020 from \$12/hour to \$14/hour for teaching assistants and lower paid staff, and between \$14.58/hour to \$16.25/hour for teachers. A pay increase provided staff with a competitive wage to help retain high quality staff, above and beyond the combination of cost-of-living annual increases and merit raises. The DLT infrastructure funds also helped to provide financial resources to support families in need.

Extenuating Circumstances: Pandemic Support and Flood. During the time period before the initial resource allocation in February of 2019 and the data collection in July of 2020 two significant and extenuating circumstances occurred at the Genesis ELC. First, in September of 2018 the Genesis ELC experienced a flood that caused damage throughout their building. Genesis ELC experienced \$100,000 in damage, \$30,000 of which was reimbursed by insurance. The Genesis ELC used unrestricted revenue to cover the remainder of the repairs, and it took many months to renovate the existing space, during which time the affected classrooms moved

to a different building. A significant amount of storage and large furniture was lost due to the flood.

In March, April, and May of 2020 the Genesis ELC was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff physically returned to the center in June, followed by children in July of 2020. The Genesis ELC was awarded a PPP loan at the end of April 2020. The Genesis ELC paid employees in March, April, and May of 2020 using a combination of DLT infrastructure funds and funds from the RI Department of Human Services. Employees were paid in June and July of 2020 using a combination of federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds and DLT infrastructure funds. CCAP/DHS funds were reinstated when the center reopened to children in July of 2020. Wage increases were implemented in July of 2020 and having a combination of PPP and DLT infrastructure increased confidence in the center's ability to sustain wage increases during the pandemic.

Figure 1. Timeline of Genesis ELC funding sources



METHOD

Sample. During the summer of 2020, research assistants at the University of Rhode Island recruited early childhood educators from the Genesis ELC by email to participate in the study. Data collection for this project commenced upon the return of teachers to the facility in July. Due to low yield, Center supervisors allowed participants to complete the survey during work hours. A total of 9 Genesis ELC staff members completed the survey. The participants comprised 2 lead teachers, 3 teaching/administrative assistants, 1 administrative assistant and 3 administrators (2 current and 1 former). Please see Table 1 for demographic information of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants (n=9)

Variable	Demographic Breakdown	Number of Participants
Staff Title		
	Administrators	3
	Leader Teachers	2
	Teaching Assistants	3
	Administrative Associate	1
Gender		
	Female	9
	Male	0
Race		
	White	2
	Black/AA	1
	Latina	4
	Do not wish to answer	2
Marital Status		
	Married	4

	Divorced	1
	Never Married	3
	Do not wish to answer	1
Education		
	High school degree or equivalent	2
	Some college but no degree	1
	Associate degree	1
	Bachelor degree	4
	Graduate degree	1
Number of people living in home		
	2 people living in the home	3
	3 people living in the home	2
	4 people living in the home	2
	5 people living in the home	2

Of the 9 ELC staff members who completed the survey, 4 of the participants completed the survey with a Spanish interpreter. These participants were able to complete the survey while on a speaker phone call with both the graduate research assistant and a Spanish interpreter. As the ELC staff members completed the survey, they were able to ask the Spanish interpreter additional clarifying questions. This ensured that all participants properly understood the content material. The study received IRB approval and followed all IRB protocols from the University of Rhode Island. Study participants received a \$50 Amazon gift card for completing both parts of the research protocol.

Existing Data. During June of 2020, the Genesis ELC shared a variety of reports with URI.

Reports included:

- 1) the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised(ECERS-R) reports for January of 2014 and for April of 2019,
- 2) ECERS-3 (Third Edition) report for December of 2019,

- 3) Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ITERS-R) for April of 2017, 2018, and 2019 and May of 2016,
- 4) Genesis ELC staff roster,
- 5) DCYF monitoring reports, and
- 6) Quality Rating Surveys: BrightStars assessment report, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), and Family Surveys.

Table 2. ITERS Scores from 2016-2019

Year	Space and Furnishings:	Personal Care Routines	Listening and Talking	Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
2016	3.00	2.17	5.0	3.44	3.75	3.00
2017	4.80	3.33	5.00	2.89	3.00	3.00
2018	4.20	3.50	7.00	5.50	5.50	7.00
2019	5.20	3.17	5.33	6.56	6.25	6.75

Table 3. ECERS-R~ and ECERS-3^ Scores from 2019

Year	Space and Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language and Literacy	Learning Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
Dec. 2019^	4.43	4.25	5.80	5.50	5.80	4.33
Apr. 2019~	4.88	3.67	5.25	5.89	4.80	6.25

Wage data of Genesis ELC employees between February 2019 and July 2020 was also requested through the larger studies' data request from DLT and DataSpark (URI's state data repository). Given some challenges obtaining data via this method, the Genesis Center shared the financial data about teacher wages directly with the study Principal Investigator.

Part 1: Survey Data

Two waves of data were collected from Genesis ELC staff. The first part included an electronic or paper survey that took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This survey collected demographic information on the respondent's gender, race, education, marital status, education, and number of people living in the home. An early childhood job satisfaction survey was also administered via a google form and data was subsequently converted and analyzed using SPSS v.25.

The Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey. The Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey is a career guidance measure created in 1988 by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood that is commonly used by early childhood directors to assess five specific facets of their staff's job satisfaction and organizational climate: co-worker relations, supervisor relations, the nature of the work itself, pay and opportunities for promotion, and general working conditions (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). The ECJSS is both psychometrically valid and reliable, normed on a sample of 3,579 early childhood workers (Bloom, 2010). Each subscale has demonstrated sound reliability and appropriately reflects change when it occurs (Bloom, 1989). Additionally, overall internal consistency for the measure is .89 (Jorde-Bloom, 1988), and other studies have found adequate internal consistencies ranging from $\alpha = .76$ to $\alpha = .90$.

The ECJSS measure is broken up into five sections. The *first* section requires participants to rate their experiences regarding **Coworker Relations, Supervisor Relations, The Work Itself, Working Conditions, Pay and Promotion Opportunities**. Each subscale is calculated with a minimum score of 10 and a maximum score of 50. We used the data from this *first* section as the primary source of quantitative data in this analysis. See Appendix A for the complete list of ECJSS questions.

Part 2: Phone Interviews of Staff

Semi-structured Interviews. Qualitative interview research was used to obtain “the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). After the completion of the ECJSS, a URI graduate research assistant conducted follow-up semi-structured phone interviews with each of the 8 participants (one of the original participants did not respond to our request for an interview). The interviews assessed the perceived improvements in workplace morale, support, infrastructure, engagement, leadership and integrated systems resulting from the Department of Labor and Training funding. Interview questions were created broadly to allow teachers and administrators to describe factors that impact their work environment. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes in length, was recorded, and then professionally transcribed. Genesis ELC administrators (n = 3) received additional questions regarding their opinions on both the DLT funds and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Specifically, they were asked about:

- 1) their opinions regarding how the DLT funds impacted the longevity and sustainability of the ELC,
- 2) how the DLT funds helped to support staff retention during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, and

- 3) how the DLT funds supported the Early Learning Center's infrastructure and classrooms before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown.

Appendix A includes a detailed list of survey questions.

Four of the interviews involved a Spanish interpreter. The graduate research assistant, Spanish interpreter, and ELC staff member participated in a three way phone call. The graduate research assistant asked the questions in English to the interpreter, who then translated the question in Spanish to the participant. The interpreter then translated the participant's response in English to the graduate research assistant.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis. The ECJSS was reverse coded and subscale scores were calculated by summing individual items. Univariate analyses were conducted to analyze the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Scale. Means, standard deviations and ranges were calculated to examine ECJSS subscales, total scores, and individual items analyses. The quality measures provided by the Genesis ELC were reviewed by an expert in Rhode Island early childhood quality ratings. Patterns were identified based on the review of multiple years of quality rating reports.

Qualitative Data Analysis. Interview data was transcribed for analysis by a professional transcription agency. Three forms of systematic coding were used in this study (Creswell, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, the interviewers independently reviewed the transcripts and compiled lists of possible themes generated from the participant interviews. Second, the first-level codes were grouped into 'a smaller number of sets, themes or constructs' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 68). Third, a codebook was created containing a detailed coding frame that included a description of the codes and how they were related. Lastly, emergent themes were examined for intersections and connections among themes.

FINDINGS

The qualitative interview data provided rich and detailed descriptions of a number of common themes at the Genesis ELC. The themes and quotes below are representative of the comments made across multiple participants. They are organized into three overarching sections: Personnel, Classroom and Infrastructure. After each theme, quantitative data is presented as a way to enhance the reader's understanding of the thematic pattern.

To begin, all of the current and former administrators were aware of the DLT infrastructure funds. Genesis ELC staff (teachers and TAs), however, were generally unaware of DLT infrastructure funds. Most of the staff members were unclear what the funding was or when it was allocated. For example, one teacher stated:

"I have heard the governor talking about giving money as funds, but to that extent I don't know how much was it or anything else."

However, another teacher who has worked at the Genesis ELC for a number of years confirmed that she was aware of the funds:

"I have been there for a while at the job, that's when I was aware of it [the funding]"

Although Genesis ELC staff were aware of structural changes that were happening at the center, it may have been difficult for them to discern the cause of the change. Multiple changes happened at the same time, including a change in leadership, an influx of PPP funds, and recovery from the flood.

THEME 1 (Personnel): Wage Increases

Low wages among the female-dominated early learning workforce is an issue that plagues most ELCs across the country. In Rhode Island, significant efforts have been made over recent years to increase the hourly wage to a living wage. The DLT infrastructure funds played an integral role in increasing wages and employee benefits of Genesis ELC teachers and TAs. At the time of the interviews the wage increases had not gone into effect for the teaching staff. The Genesis ELC directors, however, reported that the DLT funds directly impacted Genesis ELC's ability to increase wages:

"I would say that having this [DLT] funding where we are able to increase teacher salaries..."

Another administrator stated that the funds directly impacted employee benefits which result in better retention of qualified teachers:

“[The DLT funds] That was a huge change. Being able to feel like we had the money to offer everyone employee benefits which is huge for retention. Especially in a low wage job.”

The following quote illustrates how training and professional development goals align with pay wage increases at Genesis ELC.

“We definitely were able to increase wages...We were able to provide raises because we have that United Way funding and also people were increasing their qualifications and credentials but the big change was the entry-level employees were starting out higher by a \$1.50 than they had then and guaranteed with as long as they enrolled in some type of educational program and that could have been English as a second language if that's what they needed.”

Quantitative Job Satisfaction Data.

Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey: Across all domains of the ECJSS measure, results revealed that the Genesis ELC staff scored the lowest domain of the ECJSS as **PAY AND PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES** (mean score = 30.9; range 20-45). It should be noted that Genesis ELC staff were unaware of the pay raises during the time that URI collected this data and therefore, it is not reflected in the findings.

Wage Data:

Table 5. The federal poverty guideline calculations for the 48 contiguous US states and D.C. are as follows:

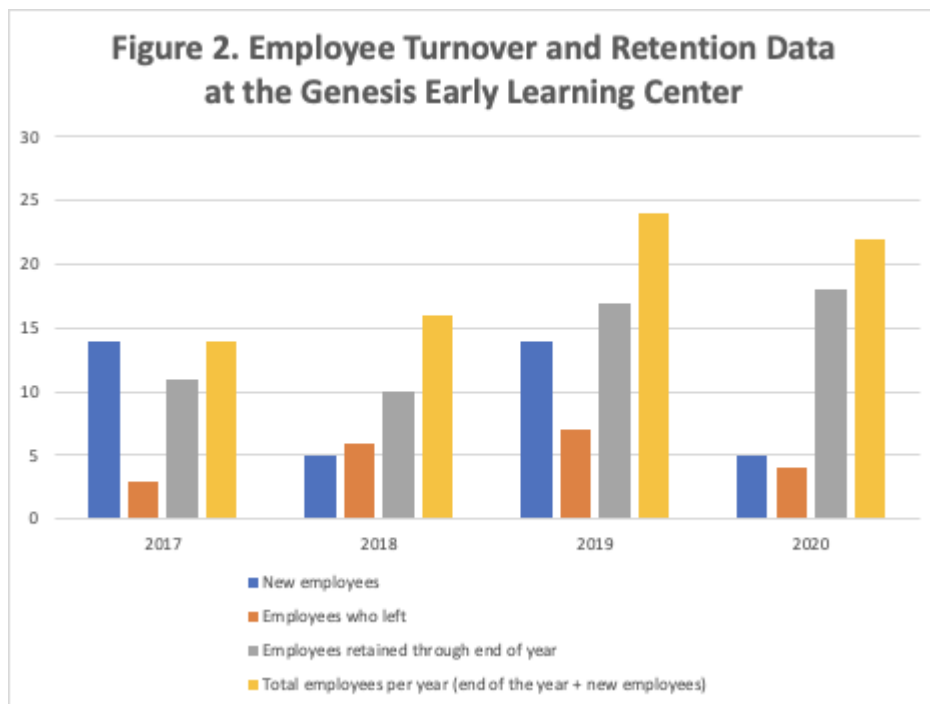
# of people living in the home	Monthly Pay	Hourly Rate @ 40 hrs/week
2	\$1063	\$6.64
3	\$1437	\$8.98
4	\$1810	\$11.31
5	\$2183	\$13.64

Source: <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/federal-poverty-level>

On 7/14/2020 Genesis ELC staff were told that they would be receiving a pay increase for the pay date of 7/7/2020. The Genesis administrative staff waited until the re-opening of the center to implement the pay raises due to COVID-related uncertainty. For the lowest paid teachers at the Genesis ELC, the DLT infrastructure funds provided gross wage increases from \$12/hour to \$14/hour. When compared to the table above, this places workers with either 4 or 5 members in their household hovering at the federal poverty guideline.

Employee Turnover and Retention Data:

Over the past 3 years, wage reports revealed a significant amount of employee turnover at the Genesis ELC (see Figure 2). Thirty-eight employees began working at the site between 2017-2020 and 20 employees left Genesis ELC by 2020. Five employees have worked at the Genesis ELC for longer than 2 years. The percent employee turnover rate for 2018 was 38%, for 2019 was 29%, and for 2020 was 18%. To place this into context, a national study of 5 states found that the average annual turnover rates for early childcare workers is 11% (<https://teachechnationalcenter.org/child-care-wage/results/>). Per the Genesis Center data, all employees who left the center did so at their own will with the exception of 2 employees who were laid off in 2019. Despite that, in both 2019 and 2020 the Genesis ELC employed its highest number of employees since 2017 and 2020 had the fewest proportion of employees leave.



It appears that the Genesis ELC administrators chose to sparingly allocate the DLT infrastructure funds at the beginning of the grant period. There appears to have been less grant spending in 2019, and the majority of spending occurred in 2020. This allowed Genesis ELC to ensure that the funds would be able to sustain wages and infrastructure improvements over an extended period of time.

Although low wages and general workforce trends may have contributed to this finding, at least one employee noted that there are other supports that teachers may lack and may lead them to leave as illustrated in the following quote:

“There has been teachers that have left because they didn't have appropriate supervision or because they didn't feel listened to or heard when they had concerns in the classroom.”

THEME 2 (Personnel): The importance of person-centered and high-quality leadership

Genesis ELC staff highlighted the strengths of a collaborative work environment. Supervisors who are viewed as approachable, trusting, supportive, collaborative and culturally-responsive create an environment of respect and cohesion at the center. Teachers appreciate the opportunity to receive direct supervision from their director, including constructive feedback and discourse, which translates into more cohesion among staff at the center:

“...They [supervisors] come and they actually conversate with us, they check in to see if we need anything with the children. If we need extra support staff, they'll provide that for us. They come in and out throughout the day to check on us, just to check in, conversate with us and supervise.”

Given the diverse workforce at the center, staff also referenced the importance of leadership with strong cultural competence and understanding of the existing workforce:

“I want to say that [remove name] and myself have really made a conscious effort to let the staff know that they are not going to be criticized, that they are

appreciated for their experience and their efforts and their opinions, their ideas. They are supported culturally.”

Quality Rating Data. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) submitted by a former Genesis ELC administrative staff member showed the administrator listed as the sole individual responsible for carrying out each of the action steps listed within the plan. The lack of involvement of teaching staff in developing and carrying out this plan is congruent with staff reports of lack of collaboration between former supervisors and the classroom teachers. Staff interviews demonstrate that that appreciate collaborative, inclusive, and supportive supervision. Investments in these areas result to boost staff morale.

Quantitative Job Satisfaction Data. Results of the ECJSS measure revealed that **SUPERVISOR RELATIONS** continue to be an area of growth for the Genesis ELC. The mean score is 31 (range 18-49). Given that the majority of qualitative data was overwhelmingly positive about recent changes in management, The ECJSS scores may be reflective of incongruence between staff and former administrators.

THEME 3 (Personnel): Increase in Qualified Teachers and Support Staff

Before February of 2019, staff commented on the difficulty of having a lack of support staff present in the classrooms. Consequently, it was difficult for teachers to be released for personal self-care needs (e.g., using the restroom or lunch breaks). Since February of 2019, Genesis has been able to hire and retain qualified support staff. This extra staff has undeniably helped the teachers feel more supported in the classrooms by having a colleague who supported the cleanliness of the classrooms (e.g., cleaning the children’s belongings (blankets, beds) and the outside play areas).

“...When I needed to use the bathroom myself, I had actually no help. That was severe for me. Now it is like they have teachers to come and help support because it's an urgent need that they need within their room, that they could relax and not have stress within the classroom.”

The DLT infrastructure funding also was noted for allowing the center to hire highly-qualified teachers who are skilled at their jobs. For example, one respondent said:

"I have seen a big difference. The teachers are more experienced, professional, they speak well, they have a love for the kids and very educated."

The funding also was commended for allowing the center to hire high-quality staff with credentials comparable to teachers in the publicly funded classrooms at the Genesis ELC:

"The funding allowed us to hire a master's level preschool teacher which we would not have been able to do without that additional funding because the CCAP funding is enough and we obviously can't use Head Start or Pre-K funding to that person's salary."

Quality Rating Data. Review of BrightStars reports and ratings indicated that the Genesis ELC made measurable improvements in the area of staff qualifications in 2019. The area of Teacher Qualifications was rated as a level 3 by BrightStars in April 2019, but later in 2019 BrightStars rated the program at a level 5. This indicates that the Genesis ELC saw an increase in the percentage of teachers with at least 12 credits in ECE or a related field and the percentage of teachers with RIELDS certification relevant to their position.

Quantitative Job Satisfaction Data. Also noteworthy is that on the ECJSS measure, **CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS** was the highest rated domain (mean = 41, range = 33-47). Genesis ELC staff clearly have respect, collegiality and trust for their co-workers. These co-worker relationships are a strength of the Genesis ELC and may be a protective factor, as reflected in the longevity of a number of staff who have worked at the Genesis ELC for at least 3 years.

THEME 4 (Classroom): Positive Changes in Classroom Practices

Genesis ELC staff overwhelmingly reported that overall quality of classroom practices and instruction was improved after the implementation of the DLT infrastructure funds. Teachers tended to follow more consistent routines and appeared more focused in the classrooms. Classroom practices were improved by the support staff. Critically, due to the funding, teachers were able to engage more with children's Individual Education Plan planning meetings because they were able to step out of the classroom.

Staff noted these developments in follow up interviews, both regarding the structure of the day and the ability to be present in important meetings.

"[Because of the funding] Teachers follow more rules and have been consistent with it, being consistent with the structure and the rules in the classroom setting."

"I would say that having this funding allowed for a little bit more flexibility with our staffing, which allowed us to be able to use those services where previously, we may have been so short-staffed that we wouldn't be able to hold our key meetings with those types of people."

Genesis ELC staff also commented that classroom practices have improved as a result of active and reflective supervision. Genesis ELC staff were able to reflect on classroom practices that were not working, make a change and/or ask for help to improve their classroom practices:

"I see people feeling more confident in making changes and speaking up and taking the initiative to make a change or ask if a change should be made. "Gee, this really isn't working out. My Science Center isn't working out," or "I don't have a plug to be able to put music," or "I don't have-- My CD broke, and I really feel music is important." I think that was from watching other people who were teaching."

Quality Rating Data. Positive changes in classroom practices were also exemplified by increases in the overall ECERS scores for: 1) Personal Care Routines and 2) Interaction. Significant increases in these two areas were noted from the April 2019 ECERS-R report to the December 2019 ECERS-3 report. In the area of Interaction, the April 2019 report mentions lapses in supervision whereas the December 2019 report notes that teachers carefully supervised children. The comments included in the reports indicate that teachers became more systematic in their supervision of children over time. Staffing improvements (number of support staff, qualifications of staff) likely contributed to the positive changes seen in these areas.

Quantitative Job Satisfaction Data. The ECJSS results indicated moderate to high job satisfaction with the **WORK ITSELF** (mean=36.6, range = 25-47). Some of the items on the Work Itself subscale of the ECJSS align with qualitative descriptions of factors that promote job

satisfaction. Specific items and means are highlighted in Table 6. Results indicate that Genesis ELC staff members are satisfied with the Work Itself at the center. They endorsed:

- 1) higher than average ratings on the work being stimulating and challenging, the job being creative, and making a difference in children’s lives.
- 2) Scores on factors such as too much paperwork and record keeping and too little time to do all there is to do, with lower average scores equaling more satisfaction.

Table 6. Average scores of Work Itself

ECJSS Item	Mean Score
Answer Options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)	Mean (SD)
21) My work is stimulating and challenging.	4.2 (.97)
23) My job involves too much paperwork and record keeping.	3.7 (.71)
24) My job doesn’t offer enough variety.	2.6 (1.4)
25) My job is not very creative.	2.2 (1.5)
26) I make an important difference in the lives of students.	4.3 (.5)
27) My job doesn’t match my training and skills.	2.0 (1.1)
29) There is too little time to do all there is to do.	3.4 (1.2)

THEME 5 (Personnel): Increase in Professional Development Opportunities

Teachers perceived more opportunities for professional development, such as partaking in Center of Early Learning Professionals and RIELDS Curriculum Training Standards. This increase and focus in professional development is consequently refining the early educator’s knowledge and teaching methods, as well as their confidence in their teaching ability. For example, they learned about trauma informed care and techniques on how to help self-regulate the children such as breathing techniques and distraction techniques, and this helped them feel confident to handle these situations. For example:

“Due to the teachers gaining more knowledge of curriculum and professional development, we are able to grow within ourselves and we are able to impact that, into our curriculum, into our classroom.”

Genesis ELC staff also noted the multi-faceted approach to professional development. Staff were able to engage in multiple types of PD experiences that ranged from webinar-based trainings to intensive on-site coaching.

“Quality of instruction, it really improved. Our teachers were engaged in professional development, apprenticeship work, or higher ED in all different programs to improve their earned credentials. They received coaching and mentoring and then through those programs”

Staff also noted improvements to infrastructure and technology that allowed them easier access to professional development trainings:

“You couldn't get the trainings before. Children's Friends, there would be different trainings, and we didn't have enough computers. Now, we have a large-screen TV-- or a couple of teachers could be covered, and they could watch what pertained to their classroom or what they were interested in improving, like the STEM. A lot of teachers want to get better with the STEM initiative.”

However, it was noted that free professional development opportunities were available to all staff members prior to the DLT infrastructure funds.

“No, I wouldn't say that [the funds] impacted it. They had it regardless.”

Likely, the COVID pandemic closure allowed teachers the opportunity to use paid work hours to partake in professional development training. Being able to complete professional development during the normal work day likely increased teacher satisfaction, as evidence by this quote:

"We did a lot of hours of professional development away from the center during the COVID crisis. We have a lot of documented certificates and professional development logs"

Quality Rating Data: The increase in staff qualifications needed to increase the Genesis ELC BrightStars rating from three stars in April 2019 to five stars later in 2019 required an increase in the percentage of teachers with relevant RIELDS training. Teachers reporting that they had more opportunity and support to partake in RIELDS training indicated that teachers were generally willing to engage in training, but could only capitalize on the free PD opportunities available to them after the Genesis ELC made improvements to staffing and leadership. The COVID pandemic closure also provided time to engage in PD beyond the time that was generally available for PD while children were attending the center in person.

THEME 6 (Infrastructure): Impact of Funds on Infrastructure and Classroom Resources

Since the DLT infrastructure funds were introduced, there has been an influx of resources, classroom materials, equipment and space for staff. Before February of 2019, teachers often relied on parents for baby materials (wipes, diapers, etc.). The classrooms are now equipped with items such as changing tables, blocks, toys, art supplies, baby strollers and developmentally-appropriate and engaging decor. Larger classroom equipment has also been provided including new learning materials, cabinets, furniture and trash cans. Sound panels have been added in the preschool classrooms to prevent echoing, as well as a cozy listening center (audiobooks, headphones, cozy space). Further, an old room that used to contain broken toys and equipment was transformed into a private staff area with a microwave, dishwasher, and sink. Genesis ELC has also hired people to clean the classrooms and the teachers were given cleaning supplies in their classrooms both before and during the pandemic.

One administrator described that the DLT funds provided an increased sense of flexibility to make purchases that improved the classrooms while not having to sacrifice other required expenditures:

"After receiving that funding, I felt like I had more flexibility to be able to make purchases for things that we needed....it felt like we could buy more things that we wanted and I didn't have to analyze and scrutinize every purchase to try to place value as how much we really needed it. I felt we have a surplus of money."

The improvements to the classroom environment likely reduced everyday stressors and hassles and were appreciated by the teachers:

“Yes, I feel now we are really given the materials and given the resources that we need to provide for the children.”

Staff also noted that space improvements have impacted their daily lives and ability to interact with each other in social situations:

“The place now has a working dishwasher and a new sink and space for staff together and to have lunch, that was not a priority before and now, we've made that change.”

“Before, we would share space with the kids' bottles and different things. Now we have our own individual refrigerator that's just for the staff to put their meals and their lunches in their private area”

Teachers also noted that the cleanliness of the classrooms improved due to teachers having more time to focus on both the children and classroom environment.

“Cleanliness because we have more people, more teachers. It was cleaner, it was the displays were more intentional because the teachers had the time to focus on the environment and by having extra people, you can do that because when there's only two people, you're really just trying to keep the kids safe.”

Quantitative Job Satisfaction Data: The ECJSS results indicated moderately high job satisfaction with **WORK CONDITIONS** (mean = 34.8, range = 22-49). Many of the items on the Work Conditions subscale of the ECJSS directly align with qualitative descriptions of changes to classrooms and infrastructure. Specific items and means are highlighted in Table 7. Results indicate that Genesis ELC staff members are satisfied with the Work Condition at the center. They endorsed:

- 3) higher than average ratings on items including teacher/child ratio, classroom organization, and cleanliness.
- 4) Scores on factors such as having enough space in the classrooms, center decor, and noise conditions in the classrooms were also rated above average (lower average scores equaling more satisfaction).
- 5) The single item that was slightly above average was “I need new equipment to do my job well.”

Table 7. Average scores of Work Conditions

ECJSS Item	Mean Score
Answer Options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)	Average = 3
32) The teacher/child ratio is adequate	3.9 (1.2)
33) I always know where to find the things I need	3.7 (1.4)
34) I feel too cramped in my classroom	1.8 (.97)
35) I need new equipment to do my job well	3.4* (1.1)
36) The decor of my center is drab	2.9 (1.1)
37) The center meets my standards of cleanliness	4.0 (1.1)
38) I can't find a palace to carry on private conversations	3.1 (1.1)
39) This place is too noisy	2.2 (1.4)

Quality Rating Data. ITERS reports indicate that measurable changes were made in the area of Space and Furnishings from April 2018 to April 2019. It was noted that furniture for play and classroom displays were suitable for infant and toddler care. However, adequate comfortable seating for the teaching staff remained an area for improvement. Improvements in the furniture for routine care, play, and learning at the preschool level were noted between the April 2019 and December 2019 ECERS reports. Qualitative staff reports and quantitative quality rating reports both show that the influx of funding had a positive impact on infrastructure and classroom resources.

THEME 7: Coronavirus-related Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down provided a unique and unplanned outcome of the DLT infrastructure support. During the COVID pandemic shut down, the Genesis Center was able to keep their staff employed and paid while the childcare center was closed. Employees were able to work virtually and in the comfort of their own home. The teachers were able to call and interact with the children and parents and still allowed to use their medical benefits and paid time off during the shutdown. Teachers were also able to engage in free professional development opportunities while the center was shut down. If teachers and teaching assistants wanted to engage in something that wasn't free during the COVID shutdown, the Genesis ELC administration made an extra effort to assist them. For example, one participant had to renew her CDA certificate and Genesis was able to pay for it. It is important to note that most of the teachers and supervisors believe that the DLT funds acted as a safety net for the center during the pandemic.

"They kept paying us and we worked from home. That was very beneficial and they did that. That was a big help for us."

It was also acknowledged that the DLT infrastructure funds had a positive impact on the larger community during the pandemic:

"I feel like they [Genesis] have been an overall community to help others with resources during the COVID-19."

Perhaps the most poignant description of the impact of DLT infrastructure funds came from this one supervisor:

"I think we would have withered [Without the DLT funds], really, and people would've been home and been on unemployment. I think that without the funds and keeping people engaged in the community and with the parents and with the learning, that we would have lost so much and had to start from fresh, because you don't get a lot of time off when you're working with children all the time, and you're constantly learning from each other, that if we just shut down, we wouldn't have the focus when we came

back, and I don't think we would have had the commitment to make all the changes we needed.”

The actual and perceived importance of DLT funding to help support jobs during the global pandemic highlights the importance of the funding on the economic viability of early childhood care centers. Although children were not attending the center during the period between March and July 2020, this paid time without the children resulted in teachers having dedicated time to: 1) engage in multiple professional development activities, 2) reorganize their classroom spaces, 3) planning time to reevaluate their curriculum, and 4) promotion of self-care during an economically turbulent time. Since early childhood care is a job that traditionally does not include much “off the floor time”, having dedicated time to engage in professional development activities ultimately enhanced the skills of the Genesis ELC workforce.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- DLT infrastructure funding directly aligns with policy recommendations in the RI Preschool Development B-5 Workforce Needs Assessment (2019) and was a model for translating policy recommendations into strategic and innovative initiatives.
- DLT infrastructure funds allowed the Genesis Center to increase wages for all ELC staff by approximately \$2/hour, resulting in approximately \$4000 of extra salary per year.
- Based on staff interviews, our overall determination is that the DLT infrastructure funds helped to make changes in the following area:
 - Fostered a person-centered approach to high-quality leadership, including an environment of culturally-responsive practice resulting in improved employee morale.
 - Resulted in an increase in high quality teachers and support staff, particularly by hiring support staff who were able to relieve teachers from the classrooms to attend to their personal care routines and planning and coordination meetings.
 - Provided classroom teachers with much needed materials, infrastructure and organizational items to improve the classroom environment.
 - Increased professional development opportunities and other indicators of quality instruction that inform BrightStars accreditation standards.
- The ECJSS survey data revealed that Genesis ELC staff are **highly satisfied with CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS** and **least satisfied with PAY AND PROMOTION**

OPPORTUNITIES and SUPERVISOR RELATIONS. However, dissatisfaction with supervisor relations appears to be targeted toward former management.

- The combination of wage increases, classroom supplies and infrastructure and professional development opportunities helped the Genesis ELC to earn its 5-star BrightStars Quality Rating. Increased funding and PD opportunities enabled the program to make necessary improvements in the space and furnishings scores and program structure scores received on ECERS and ITERS reports and ultimately resulted in improvements in teacher qualifications as measured by BrightStars.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic introduced a major hurdle to the normal operations of the center. However, **the DLT funds acted as a buffer to keep Genesis ELC staff employed and also likely helped to retain families by providing needed resources.** During this time, staff were able to focus on professional development and making strategic improvements to their classroom environments and curriculum. By keeping staff employed during the pandemic, The Genesis ELC reopened with a more organized, refreshed and calm approach to working with children and families during an incredibly stressful time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future funding considerations should include providing teachers dedicated **“off the floor time”** for professional development and quality improvement efforts, thus maintaining high quality teaching in the classroom. Currently they are asked to do these things outside of paid time but given the low salaries many cannot afford to make additional time for training.
- When one center has both private and public-preK/Head Start programs, there can be perceived and actual inequity between classrooms. **In order for centers to achieve and maintain high-quality BrightStars ratings, which impact their CCAP reimbursement rates and family retention, DLT infrastructure funds should be used to promote equity in providing private classrooms with the materials and equipment needed to achieve their curricular goals.**
- Administrative management had a significant impact on staff morale. The Genesis ELC has a diverse workforce and co-worker relationships should be nurtured by committing to hire trained and **culturally-responsive leadership** who can promote cohesion

amongst leadership and staff. Leadership should also engage teaching staff in collaborative quality improvement efforts.

- Teaching staff should be encouraged to be involved in future Quality Improvement Plans to help facilitate collaborative and cohesive quality improvement efforts.
- The combination of wage increases, classroom supplies and infrastructure and professional development opportunities will help the Genesis ELC to retain its 5-star BrightStars Quality Rating.
- Pay wage increases are important for two reasons. First, pay wages help to increase rates to a living wage likely resulting in better retention of staff at the Genesis ELC. Second, the global pay inequities in the early childhood labor workforce require broader systemic change to provide the largely female workforce with equitable pay. **The DLT infrastructure funds provided Genesis ELC with the ability to increase pay by approximately \$2/hour, resulting in approximately \$4000 of extra salary per year.** Although a wage increase was an important first step in closing the pay gap at the Genesis ELC, state and national wage trends must also make movement toward providing a living wage for early childcare workers.
 - Given that program evaluation data was collected before employees knew of the wage increases, we are unable to assess how the wage increased employee morale.
- The Genesis ELC appears to be well equipped to attract employees. Additionally, 5 employees have longevity of over 2 years at the center. Retention rates have increased in 2020. However, **retention rates could be improved through continued efforts to increase wages and maintain a leadership environment that fosters mutual respect, collaboration, understanding and cultural responsiveness.**
- **As future funding becomes available, Genesis ELC staff would benefit from additional equipment and materials in their classrooms.** It appears that staff are very pleased with recent additions of items such as decor, dishwashers, and supplies to organize classrooms. Genesis ELC staff members should be polled about additional items that would help them to more easily perform their daily duties so that they feel heard and engaged in the process of improving the classroom. Additional furnishings or equipment to provide staff comfort, such as technology needs and break room amenities, may lead to further increases in job satisfaction.

- Equity amongst Genesis private and publicly funded classrooms was a common theme throughout the project. Programs such as the DLT infrastructure funds are essential in helping to maximize equity across the classrooms and allows teachers, children and families within the same center a comparable early childhood experience. Increased equity across all classrooms at the Genesis ELC will also likely result in longevity and sustainability of the private classrooms at the center. **Educational equity is a social justice priority that the DLT infrastructure funds can directly impact by incentivizing equal access to materials and high-quality teaching staff.** Working in conjunction with other quality improvement efforts (e.g., the DHS Apprenticeship Model) will likely maximize the convergence of high-quality staff and well-resourced classrooms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey

Part I. Check the corresponding space to indicate how you feel about each of the statements in the categories below.

Answer Options = Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Co-worker Relations:

1. My co-workers care about me.
2. I feel encouraged and supported by my colleagues.
3. My co-workers share their personal concerns with me.
4. My colleagues are hard to get to know.
5. My co-workers are critical of my performance.
6. I feel my colleagues are competitive.
7. My co-workers are not very helpful.
8. My co-workers share ideas and resources with me.
9. I feel i can't trust my co-workers
10. My colleagues are enjoyable to work with.

Supervisor Relations:

11. My supervisor respectes my work.
12. My supervisor is too busy to know how I'm doing.
13. I feel I am supervised too closely.
14. I am given helpful feedback about my performance.
15. My supervisor asks for my opinion.
16. My supervisor is tactful.
17. My supervisor is not very dependable.
18. I feel I am encouraged to try new ideas.
19. My supervisor makes me feel inadequate.
20. My supervisor is unpredictable.

The Work Itself:

21. My work is stimulating and challenging.
22. I feel I am respected by the parents of my students.
23. My job involves too much paperwork and recordkeeping.
24. My job doesn't offer enough variety.
25. My job is not very creative.

26. I make an important difference in the lives of my students.
27. My job doesn't match my training and skills.
28. My work gives me a sense of accomplishment.
29. There is too little time to do all there is to do.
30. I have control over most things that affect my satisfaction.

Working Conditions:

31. My work schedule is flexible.
32. The teacher-child ratio is adequate.
33. I always know where to find the things I need.
34. I feel too cramped.
35. I need some new equipment/materials to do my job well.
36. The decor of my center is drab.
37. The center meets my standards of cleanliness.
38. I can't find a place to carry on private conversation.
39. This place is too noisy.
40. The center's policies and procedures are clear.

Pay and Promotion Opportunities:

41. My pay is adequate.
42. My pay is fair considering my background and skills.
43. My pay is fair considering what my co-workers make.
44. I'm in a dead-end job.
45. My fringe benefits are inadequate.
46. I feel I could be replaced tomorrow.
47. I have enough time off for holidays and vacations.
48. I'm being paid less than I deserve.
49. Opportunities for me to advance are limited.
50. I expect to receive a raise during the next year.

Part II. If you could design your ideal job, how closely would your present position resemble your ideal job with respect to the following.

Answer Options: Not like my ideal at all (1) to Is my ideal (5)

1. Relationships with co-workers.
2. Relationships with supervisors.

3. The work itself.
4. Working conditions.
5. Pay and promotion opportunities.

Part III. What are the two most satisfying things about your current job. What are the two most frustrating things about your current job?

Satisfactions	Frustrations
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____

Part IV. Different people value different aspects of their work. Below is a list of some of the ways jobs can be rewarding and contribute to personal and professional fulfillment. Put a check next to the three job characteristics that you value the most.

- Colleagues - working with people I like
- Altruism - helping others
- Achievement - that feeling of accomplishment from doing a job well
- Pay - earning a good living to pay for the things I need
- Intellectual stimulation - learning new things
- Variety - the opportunity to do different kinds of things
- Challenge - the opportunity to master new skills
- Security - the assurance that my position is secure
- Creativity - developing new ideas, creating new things
- Autonomy - being independent in making decisions
- Recognition - getting respect and acknowledgement from others
- Environment - working in pleasant surroundings
- Leadership - having the opportunity to guide and influence the work of others
- Promotion - having the opportunity for advancement
- Other: _____

Part V. This section asks questions that relate to your commitment to your center and to the early childhood field. Check all boxes that describe how you feel about your organization.

- 1. I intend to work here for at least two more years.
- 2. I often think of quitting.
- 3. I'm just putting in time.
- 4. I take pride in my center.
- 5. I put a lot of extra effort into my work.
- 6. I feel very committed to this center.
- 7. I don't care what happens to this place after I leave.
- 8. It would be difficult for me to find another job as good as this one.
- 9. It's hard to feel committed to this place.
- 10. I sometimes feel trapped in this job.

On a scale of 1 (not committed) to 10 (very committed), please rate your level of commitment to early childhood education as your life's vocation.

Not committed			Committed				Very committed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

If you could do it all over again, would you choose a career in early care and education?

- Yes
- No

Why? _____

Appendix B. Genesis ECE Teacher/Administrator Interview Guide

Thank you for participating in this research study. Today we will meet for about an hour and I will ask you a variety of questions about your experience at the Genesis Early Learning Center.

- 1) When did you begin working at the Genesis Early Learning Center?

- 2) Have you worked in other early childcare centers in the past?
 - a) If Yes, how is the Genesis Center similar and different in resources?
 - b) If Yes, how is the Genesis Center similar and different in the way it operates?
 - c) If yes, how is the Genesis Center similar or different in terms of staff support (e.g., regular supervision, time and funds for professional development, etc.)?
- 3) Tell me about the different classrooms at the Genesis Center. In your opinion, are they equal in terms of resources?
- 4) Since receiving the DLT funds, has the Genesis Early Learning Center been able to attract and retain more qualified employees? Please explain.
- 5) What are some of the ways that you have noticed that the early childcare classrooms have changed over the past year?
- 6) Since February of 2019, tell me about any changes that you have noticed with regard to the following factors:
 - a) Having access to the things I need
 - b) Ratios of children to teachers
 - c) An organized classroom environment
 - d) Equipment and materials to do my job
 - e) Nice decor in the classrooms/classroom equipment and materials
 - f) Standards of cleanliness
 - g) Private spaces for staff
 - h) Qualified substitute teachers
 - i) The quality of instruction
 - j) Access to free professional development opportunities
 - k) Regular supervision and feedback sessions with supervisors and other teachers
 - l) Resources to support inclusive classroom practices (e.g., *Individual Education Plans (IEPS), challenging classroom behavior, access to specialists, materials and equipment to support children with special educational and/or behavioral need*)
 - m) Teacher Salaries
- 7) For Administrators Only: In your opinion, how have the DLT funds impacted the longevity and sustainability of the Early Learning Program?
- 8) For Administrators Only: How did the DLT funds help to support staff retention during the COVID-19 economic shutdown?

- a) Were you able to keep your teachers employed during the childcare center closure?
 - b) Were you able to allow employees to use accrued leave?
 - c) Were you able to pay for benefits for your employees (full or partial)?
 - d) Were you able to have staff take advantage of unemployment insurance?
 - e) Were you able to pay employees for time spent on professional development, staff meetings or remote work with families?
 - i) If not, were employees volunteering time on PD and remote work with families while closed?
- 9) **For Administrators Only:** How were the DLT funds able to support the early learning center's infrastructure before, during and after the shutdown?
- a) How do you think the way your center functioned during the pandemic would have changed if you did not have access to DLT resources?

CLOSING REMARKS:

Thank you for participating in this important research study! Please be on the lookout for your \$50 amazon gift card which will be delivered to your email address. We will send your gift card to the email address you entered on your survey."