



# Assistant Teachers in State-funded Preschool Programs

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## Key Takeaways

- Assistant teachers are an integral component of the preschool classroom and often bring linguistic, cultural, and racial/ethnic diversity to the workforce.
- Most state-funded preschool programs only require assistant teacher to have a high school diploma or the equivalent.
- Fewer than one-third of state-funded preschool programs required assistant teachers to have a CDA or the equivalent in 2020-2021.
- States that follow ESSA’s paraprofessional requirements for assistant teachers typically do not require any early education experience or knowledge.
- Some states have adopted or enhanced workforce policies to include assistant teachers in stipends or scholarship opportunities, wage scales, and ongoing professional development.

## Introduction

State-funded preschool is a critical component of both public education and child care. In 2020-2021, 44 states and D.C. funded 63 center-based programs serving over 1.3 million children.<sup>1</sup> Most preschool programs operate within mixed-delivery systems, with classrooms in public schools, Head Start, and/or child care programs. Preschool programs have an education focus including supporting children’s early learning and development and well-being. To accomplish this, preschool programs need a workforce that is responsible for creating “meaningful bonds with the children in their care, and their interactions, behaviors, and teaching practices all influence children’s development, as well as their later school readiness.”<sup>2</sup> Most state-funded preschool programs require two adults in each classroom,<sup>3</sup> typically a lead teacher and an assistant teacher<sup>4</sup> (see text box for the various titles used for this position). Assistant teachers are an integral component of the preschool classroom, planning and implementing educational activities and supporting individual children and small groups. These educators are a crucial part of the preschool system in the United States and often bring linguistic, cultural, and racial/ethnic diversity to the teaching field.

**Some of the names used interchangeably with “assistant teacher” in the preschool classroom:**

- Aide
- Associate teacher
- Auxiliary teacher
- Educational aides
- Educational assistant
- Instructional aide
- Paraeducator
- Paraprofessional
- Staff aide
- Teacher aide
- Teacher assistant
- Teacher associate

Although much research has been published on the impact of lead teacher qualifications and training (including delivery and content of training programs) on child outcomes and teacher compensation,<sup>5</sup> there is limited analogous research for preschool *assistant* teachers.<sup>6</sup> This lack of research makes it more challenging for state administrators, policy makers, and advocates who want to understand how best to develop, support and/or implement workforce policies that are inclusive of assistant teachers.

The information we do know about assistant teachers is presented in this report, including the type of certification, qualifications, and/or other credentials states require for assistant teachers prior to being employed in a state-funded preschool program. We present a summary of the state requirements and variations based on settings, focusing on the most common requirement: the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and its equivalent. We then review the various pathways and ongoing professional development states have established to support assistant teachers, highlighting a few innovative models. Finally, we discuss the inequitable ways assistant teachers are treated, despite the important role they play in the preschool classroom.

## Assistant Teacher Qualification Requirements in State-Funded Preschool

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) releases an annual *State of Preschool* report that examines state preschool policies, including information on child enrollment, spending, staffing, and quality standards. NIEER identified ten research-based policy benchmarks that are viewed as the minimum standards needed to support a high-quality preschool program. To meet the assistant teacher degree benchmark, state policy must require all assistant teachers hold a CDA credential or have equivalent preparation based on coursework; however, most programs only require a high school diploma or the equivalent. In 2020-2021, only 19 programs out of 63 (30%) met or exceeded the assistant teacher benchmark, see Table 1. It is important to note that these are the **minimum** requirements for assistant teachers. A few states do exceed this requirement by requiring at least an AA in ECE or a related field (e.g., Mississippi and New Mexico).

In some states that have more than one state-funded preschool programs, some but not all the programs in the state meet the assistant teacher benchmark. For example, in six states (Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington) at least one state-funded preschool program did not meet NIEER's assistant teacher benchmark, but at least one other program did. Requirements for assistant teachers also vary within state-funded preschool programs, for example, by setting type such as Title 1 schools, public school settings, Head Start programs, etc. (e.g., Connecticut, Iowa, and the District of Columbia). Finally, some state-funded preschool programs accept work experience (e.g., Nebraska), while others allow a designated time-period to meet program requirements (e.g., Delaware).

### Child Development Associate (CDA)

The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential was developed by the [Council for Professional Recognition](#) as the entry-level qualification for the field.<sup>1</sup> The CDA is widely used in early childhood programs beyond state-funded preschool,<sup>1</sup> including Head Start.

For more information see: [CDACouncil.org](http://CDACouncil.org)

#### Center-based Preschool CDA Credential Components

- 480 hours working in center-based preschool
- Completed coursework
- Portfolio
- Verification visit

**Variation in Mixed-Delivery & Required Program Standards.** There are several state-funded pre-K programs that follow the Head Start Performance Standards (HSPS); these are often state supplements to Head Start but include a few others that model their programs after Head Start (e.g., Delaware). As prescribed in the Head Start Act ([section 648A\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#)), “a program must ensure Head Start assistant teachers, at a minimum, have a CDA credential or a state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, are enrolled in a program that will lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree or, are enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.” In 2021, only 42% of Head Start assistant teachers had a CDA, while 34% had an associate degree or higher.<sup>7</sup> This means that 24% of Head Start Assistant teachers have less than a CDA or a degree (associate, bachelor's or advanced degree) in a field unrelated to early childhood education. These Head Start classrooms may include those that are funded with blended state dollars.

Other state-funded preschool programs follow the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) requirements for assistant teacher qualifications. As part of NAEYC accreditation,<sup>8</sup> assistant teachers must obtain at minimum, a CDA or 12 higher education credits in

ECE, early childhood special education, elementary education, and/or child development (e.g., Connecticut and Iowa).

In addition to following Head Start and/or NAEYC guidance, most states have additional requirements based on state-developed program standards. The following are some ways that states/programs describe the minimum policies assistant teachers must meet in their state-funded preschool program.

- Connecticut: Assistant teachers in public and nonpublic settings must meet either NAEYC/licensing professional development and/or Head Start requirements.
- Iowa: Program staff must meet the educational qualifications within the selected program standards (i.e., Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS), NAEYC, and Head Start (HSPPS)). IQPPS requires assistant teachers to have a high school diploma or GED and 50% of assistant teachers have at least a CDA or equivalent, 100% of assistant teachers who do not have at least a CDA are enrolled in a program leading to a CDA or equivalent, are actively participating in the program, and are demonstrating progress toward the CDA or equivalent.
- Kansas: Preschool classrooms operate in a mixed delivery system, however only those assistant teachers employed by school districts are strongly recommended to have at least a CDA or AA in early childhood education or a related field.
- Minnesota VPK/SRP: Assistant teacher requirements are determined by the district/charter school hiring and personnel practices. In the case of a mixed-delivery Head Start or community-based partner, the assistant teacher would follow the regulatory agency requirements for that position.
- Oklahoma: In programs located in Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms, assistant teachers must meet all Head Start/Early Head Start requirements.
- District of Columbia: Community-based Organizations (CBOs) require assistant teachers have the following minimum education requirements: (a) AA in CD, ECE, early childhood special education or child and family studies or (b) AA in a field other than child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education, or child and family studies and have earned nine (9) credits in early childhood education. DCPS (public school) requires an AA, a 48-college credit hour transcript, or a high school diploma and have passed the ParaPro Assessment. Charter schools establish their own requirements for assistant teachers, consistent with their charters and federal law.

**U.S. Department of Education Requirements.** The federal [No Child Left Behind Act of 2001](#) (NCLB) defined highly qualified teachers, including standards for the qualifications of instructional paraprofessionals/teacher aides employed with Title I funds in public schools. NCLB was replaced by the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA); however, requirements outlined in NCLB for paraprofessionals are often still required by many states, including preschool programs that operate in Title 1 public schools. NCLB required Title 1 paraprofessionals to have two years of postsecondary education, an associate degree or higher, or a passing score on a formal state or local academic assessment of ability to assist in teaching reading, writing and mathematics. This was a general requirement for all grades, not specific to early learning or preschool. Some states (i.e., Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey,

Hawaii's preschool program operates solely in public schools. Rather than simply having the same requirements for paraprofessionals in the K-12 grades, Hawaii's DOE established an Education Assistant (EA) position within the DOE specifically for the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-K program. This position allows EAs to achieve an added layer of requirement and permanent position status (most DOE EAs hold temporary positions).

Oklahoma) have adopted or refined these regulations for implementation in Title 1 schools that operate preschool programs. However, none of these states have added additional requirements (i.e., coursework in early childhood education (ECE) or child development (CD), etc.) for assistant teachers in preschool programs. Most states require the [Educational Testing Service](#) (ETS) administered [ParaPro Assessment](#) which is a general aptitude test for paraprofessionals (all grades) that consists of “90 multiple-choice questions, approximately two-thirds of which focus on basic skills and knowledge. The remaining one-third focus on applying skills in the classroom.”<sup>9</sup>

**ECE Specialized Training is Not Required.** To meet the NIEER Assistant Teacher benchmark, programs must require a CDA or the equivalent (at least nine credits in ECE or a related field). If policy allows for an elementary education only option (i.e., K-5, K-8, elementary education, etc.) the program does not meet the benchmark. As described previously, Title 1/ESSA assistant/para requirements are not specialized for grade level and therefore does not include ECE training, so it would not meet the benchmark. Similarly, NAEYC accreditation defines a CDA equivalent as “12 college credits in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, and/or early childhood special education.”<sup>10</sup> This means that assistant teachers who obtain the equivalent, may be able to do that with *only* elementary education credits. There are also some state-funded preschool programs that do not require ECE/CD coursework to meet assistant teacher licensing certification or requirements (e.g., Nebraska and New York).

**Timeframe for Meeting State Requirements.** Six programs (Delaware, Hawaii, Michigan’s GSRP, New Mexico, Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK), and Pennsylvania’s HSSAP) provide a defined time-period to meet the CDA or equivalent assistant teacher requirements. For example, Michigan’s GSRP allows Intermediary School Districts (ISDs) the ability to monitor and sign-off on a plan for an individual who is not in compliance. The regulations allow preschool programs to hire an assistant teacher without the CDA or AA in ECE/CD, but the person must have completed at least one credit-bearing course in child development to begin and complete the requirements within two years. In both Hawaii programs, assistant teachers must have a current CDA or have completed the preparatory coursework for a CDA upon hire. Similarly, in New Mexico, assistant teachers in both public and nonpublic settings are expected to have an AA in ECE but may be hired without an AA with an approved professional development plan to complete at least six college credits annually toward the requirement. Oregon’s Pre-K Program provides training/technical assistance to support assistant teachers in obtaining their CDAs within the two years.

North Carolina, on the other hand, stipulates that assistant teachers must have a high school diploma or GED and must hold, or be working toward, a minimum of an AA in ECE/CD or CDA without a specified time frame. Similarly, Tennessee requires that assistant teachers demonstrate active progress toward completion of a CDA to be rehired.

**Work Experience.** Some states do not require specific coursework or certification or licensure but instead require experience working with preschoolers (e.g., Arizona and South Carolina), while others offer experience as one of several options to meet the assistant teacher requirements (e.g., Nebraska). While previously working with young children is valuable, prior work experience does not meet the NIEER Assistant Teacher benchmark.

In Arizona, 50% of Quality First Scholarships assistant teachers must have a minimum of six months of experience working in an early care and education program. Similarly, assistant teachers in South Carolina’s First Steps 4K program (only operates in nonpublic schools) must, at minimum, have a high school diploma or its equivalent and two years of documented experience working with children under five years of age. Nebraska offers two options to meet the assistant teacher

requirement, a K-6 Elementary Endorsement or 12 college credits in ECE or an approved equivalency, which includes experience.

**Preparation that Meets or Exceeds CDA Requirements.** Many states have developed what can be deemed at a minimum as equivalent to the CDA based on preparation and coursework that is relevant for working with children in preschool settings. For example:

- Alabama: Assistant teachers must have a CDA or 9 college credits in ECE/CD.
- Arkansas: Assistant teachers must have a CDA or an AA degree in ECE/CD. If the AA is in another subject, they must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours in ECE/CD. The Birth to Pre-K Credential and Technical Certificate in ECE/CD are also options for the state-funded preschool program. The Technical Certificate requires 24 Early Childhood Education coursework hours in ECE and/or CD.
- Maine: All assistant teachers must have an Educational Technician II (Maine DOE Certificate) that requires a minimum of 60 college credit hours, including at least 9 credits in ECE or a related field.
- Mississippi: Assistant teachers are required to have an AA in ECE, CD, or an equivalent field; or an associate degree in any field and a CDA credential, a Montessori certification, or an equivalent certification.
- Missouri Pre-K FF: Assistant teachers must have at least an AA in ECE/CD or 60 college hours (including 9 credits in ECE or CD).
- Rhode Island: Assistant teachers in public schools must have 9 (or more) college credits in ECE/CD; and those in nonpublic schools are required to have a HSD plus 12 college credits in ECE/CD or a CDA.
- Washington ECEAP: All persons serving in the role of ECEAP assistant teacher must meet one of the following qualifications: Initial or higher Washington State Early Childhood Education Certificate or equivalents (12 credits) or a current CDA.
- West Virginia: All assistant teachers must have a CDA or equivalent, determined by the WVBE. The Early Childhood Classroom Assistant Teacher Authorization is a license required for all pre-K and kindergarten assistant teachers who complete a CDA or state equivalent.

**Pathways and Support for Assistant Teachers to Meet Qualifications & Beyond.** There are several ways states can support assistant teachers in meeting required qualifications for the position as well as strategies to “grow” an assistant teacher workforce with the ECE system. In this section we report on some innovative practices that include and go beyond pre-K assistant teachers and address the larger ECE system.

- Alabama [Department of Early Childhood Education \(ACDECE\)](#) operates First Class Pre-K (FCPK) in high school settings. High school students are encouraged to complete a CDA while in high school, which would allow them to serve as assistant teachers in FCPK or in other roles in the field. Students can use the FCPK classrooms to satisfy some of the 480 hours of preschool work experience that are required. Additionally, the ADECE encourages at least one staff member from each region to become a Professional Development Specialist in order to assist with CDA observations.
- New Mexico’s [Professional Development Pathway](#) includes a career lattice that illustrates how each level articulates to the next and identifies possible careers for each level, including assistant teachers. The document also includes the identification of the state’s educator preparation programs, which implement a [fully aligned and articulated curriculum](#) to facilitate streamlined transfer of credits and consistency of program requirements across programs and IHEs.

- Oklahoma is creating a virtual training aligned to the CDA training requirements and designed with Oklahoma Pre-K assistant teachers in mind.
- Washington state has developed a set of [stackable early childhood certificates](#) that students can earn. These certificates build upon one another and lead to an associate degree in ECE and may be transferred to other institutes of higher education throughout the state if a student enrolls at a different school or seeks a different ECE position.
- In West Virginia, all pre-K assistant teachers must hold an [Early Childhood Classroom Assistant Teacher \(ECCAT\)](#) authorization. An assistant may be hired with temporary authorization upon hire, but progress must be made, and it is only valid for three years. To support assistant teachers in meeting qualifications, there are three pathways: 1) obtaining a CDA; 2) attending the WVDE E-Learning Series. The [WVDE E-Learning Series](#) is offered at no charge to schools, programs, or assistant teachers and covers content specifically geared for assistant teachers; and 3) participating in the West Virginia Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) registered apprenticeship program with the US Department of Labor. While the ACDS program is not credit bearing, it has articulation agreements with Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) that offer an AAS degree in early childhood. Transcripts from the ACDS program are provided upon enrollment with the IHEs for credits toward the AAS degree.

**Tuition Support, Wage Supplements & Stipends.** Some states have supported assistant teachers through direct financial assistance, including opportunities to receive scholarships, such as T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® and wage supplements and stipends. The [T.E.A.C.H.](#) program is active in 22 states and D.C. and provides scholarships and support to eligible early educators (e.g., center-based teaching staff and administrators, and family child care providers) to pursue coursework leading to early childhood credentials and degrees. T.E.A.C.H. eligibility is determined state by state but generally depends on minimum hours worked per week and is not dependent on educator role. Similarly, Virginia’s [G3 tuition assistance program](#) is designed for students who qualify for state financial aid with a household income less than \$100,000 (400% FPL). Each of Virginia’s 23 community colleges has a list of approved G3 programs. The programs are in the state’s five most in-demand industries, including ECE. ECE careers that qualify include, teacher assistant/aide, lead teacher, child care provider, assistant director, and director.

The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council’s [Transforming the Workforce for Children, Youth Through Age 8](#) (2015) describes one of the essential features of child development and early learning as having “Secure and responsive relationships with adults (and with other children), coupled with high-quality, positive learning interactions and environments, are foundational for the healthy development of young children. Conversely, adults who are underinformed, underprepared, or subject to chronic stress themselves may contribute to children’s experiences of adversity and stress and undermine their development and learning.” (p.3)

To support assistant teachers in Hawaii’s preschool programs in obtaining certification, the Executive Office on Early Learning connects assistant teachers with the community college early childhood programs. The Executive Office on Early Learning also with the local IHE to administer the Early Childhood Stipend Program for both lead and assistant teachers in covering tuition costs (2-year follow-up commitment to work in an EC program required). The Stipend Program was legislatively established in [Act 210 \(SLH 2021\)](#).

Maryland provides full financial assistance for assistant teachers earning a CDA. The [CDA Development Fund](#) is open to registered family child care providers and licensed child care staff. The Fund covers the costs of the CDA training: \$425 initial online application fee; \$125 renewal online application fee; \$33 for The Child Development Associate® National Credentialing Program and CDA® Competency Standards book (shipping is included). The state has been able to use

federal relief funds to support substitutes and other costs not covered by the Fund. Similarly, Georgia's [DECAL Scholars](#) provides financial support to ECE professionals, including assistant teachers, in gaining additional education and skills. This includes scholarships to cover the cost of CDAs and bonuses for the completion of eligible degrees/credentials.

New Mexico's [Wage Supplement](#) Program includes both assistant and lead teachers in public and community-based preschool. Eligibility for the supplement does not require a person to have a specific position but rather they must work in qualifying program or classroom for at least 20 hours per week; have successfully completed five credit hours in ECE; and be earning less than \$16/hour. Supplement amounts increase as educators gain additional educational credits and credentials.

## The Question of Equity

Assistant teachers bring cultural and racial/ethnic diversity and multilingualism to the teaching field at higher rates than lead teachers.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, a recent study of California's ECE workforce found that there are more teaching staff of color in ECE (68%) than TK-12 (39%), and more assistant teachers (79%) than lead teachers (64%) identify as persons of color.<sup>12</sup> Yet despite the critical role they play in the classroom implementing curriculum and supporting children's learning, assistant teachers are less likely to have salary and benefit parity or opportunities for professional development than lead teachers, especially when the assistant teacher works in a nonpublic setting.

**Salary & Benefit Parity.** The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), identified several key policy levers to improve compensation throughout the ECE field. One of these strategies is the development and implementation of wage scales, which have the potential to improve the recruitment and retention of early educators, as well as reward educators who pursue additional credentials. In addition to more equitable compensation, assistant teachers also deserve work environments where they are respected as professionals, are supported by leadership and fellow educators, and have the resources and tools they need to implement best teaching practices and build strong relationships with the children and families they serve.

As previously described, several states have included assistant teachers in their career pathway documents, and some are going one step further and addressing pay equity for both assistant and lead teachers. In some states, assistant teachers include those in the state-funded program as well as individuals employed in other early childhood programs. These supports include:

- Georgia: During the 2022 legislative session, the [Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students \(GEEARS\)](#) successfully advocated for including assistant teachers in the \$2,000 pay increase for pre-K teachers. Prior to this, pre-K assistant teachers were typically not included in other teacher pay raises or bonuses approved by the Georgia General Assembly.
- Minnesota: The [Early Care and Education Wage Scale](#) follows NAEYC's Power to the Profession model. Similar to other states, it has three levels of educators categorized according to both their professional training and certification and their roles and responsibilities, with progressively greater educational requirements and professional responsibilities. This model is inclusive of assistant and lead teachers and recommends wages and compares to other professions.
- District of Columbia: In its [Final Report \(March 2022\)](#), the *Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force* proposed a salary scale for early childhood educators differentiated by role (teacher vs. assistant teacher) and by credential level (not setting). The scale is equivalent to educators with equivalent roles, credentials, and experience in public schools. The recommendations in the report, including a description of the long-term

mechanism for increasing wages through the Pay Equity Fund, were submitted to the D.C. Mayor and Council.

Developing a wage scale is the first step; funding and implementing it is the next. During the 2020-2021 school year, only Hawaii offered both salary parity and parity for health care benefit for lead and assistant pre-K teachers, commensurate with their K-3 counterparts<sup>13</sup> (see Table 2). In all other states, parity policies vary by setting (public vs nonpublic) and by position (lead vs assistant), and lead teachers in public settings were most likely to have parity. Three states (Alabama, New Jersey, and Rhode Island) offer salary parity for all lead and assistant teachers, but only offer health care benefits to lead and assistant teachers in public schools, excluding nonpublic employees. Other states (Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, etc.) only require parity for individuals working in public settings.

Still others require parity only for some teachers in a given setting. For example, Washington, D.C. requires salary parity and health benefits for lead and assistant teachers working in D.C. Public Schools, the same starting salary for lead and assistant teachers working in CBOs, but there are no policies about parity for individuals that work in Charter Schools. In the Iowa Shared Visions program, only lead teachers with active teaching licenses have parity, while unlicensed teachers and all assistant teachers do not. Similarly, in Virginia, parity policies exist only for lead teachers in public settings, not for nonpublic lead teachers or any assistant teachers.

**Professional Development Opportunities.** Sosinsky and Gilliam (2011) examined lead teachers' perspectives of the role that assistant teachers play in classroom management and teaching using a nationally representative sample of 3,191 state-funded prekindergarten classrooms. They found that "assistant teachers were rated as most useful to teaching duties when the classroom was in a Head Start setting, when the discrepancy between the lead and assistant teachers' education was smaller, and when there were more shared release hours for planning."<sup>14</sup> It is concerning that assistant teachers are not always included in ongoing professional development. For example, assistant teachers are required to have fewer hours of annual professional development than lead teachers in approximately a third of state-funded preschool programs; and some programs (e.g., Florida, Illinois, Texas, etc.) require no professional development for assistant teachers.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, 30% of programs require annual individualized professional development plans for at least some lead teachers, but not for assistant teachers.<sup>16</sup>

New Jersey serves as an example of these discrepancies when, in 2017, some school districts began contracting with external entities for the assistant teacher position.<sup>17</sup> The contractors were not required to provide a professional development plan for assistant teachers, some may have done so, but it was not a requirement. Some states have tried to be intentional in addressing the entire pre-K classroom workforce. For example, Mississippi has created and offers a [specialized training](#) for both teachers and assistant teachers to participate in so they can meet qualifications for working in the state's pre-K program. Jacoby (2021) even suggests developing professional development content specifically for assistant teachers, including them in targeted coaching, and creating professional learning communities specifically for assistant teachers.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

The important role of an assistant teacher in preschool programs requires a solid foundation of child development knowledge and pedagogical skills to effectively support children's growth and learning and to implement best teaching practices. However, the required qualifications, including coursework in ECE or child development, and the compensation afforded this position are often

limited. Fewer than one-third of state-funded preschool programs required a CDA or equivalent for all their preschool classrooms in 2020-2021. States have several opportunities to enhance their current policies or develop new ones that specifically support assistant teachers. For example, some states have developed pathways or supports for assistant teachers in meeting qualifications including scholarships and stipends. States should examine these to ensure assistant teachers are included or create new ones that target assistant teachers. For those programs that use the USDOE requirements for paraprofessionals, these could be enhanced to specify additional requirements such as early childhood education or child development coursework. Some states, typically with the support of advocates and/or task forces, have developed wage scales that are inclusive of assistant teachers. Examining and, if needed, updating the wage scale is another opportunity for states to support assistant teachers. Finally, including the entire teaching team in ongoing professional development and requiring all to receive job-embedded support, such as coaching, is critical to increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the preschool classroom.

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### About NIEER & CSCCE

Since 2002, the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#) (NIEER) has provided independent, research-based analysis and technical assistance to inform policy supporting high-quality early education for all young children. NIEER is committed to providing nonpartisan research that enhances the early childhood education field and encourages policies and practices promoting the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development children need to thrive in school and beyond.

The [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#) (CSCCE) was founded in 1999 to focus on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable and reward the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts cutting-edge research and proposes policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards the early care and education workforce to ensure young children's optimal development.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2022). *The state of preschool 2021: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Medicine, & National Research Council. (2012). *The early childhood care and education workforce: Challenges and opportunities: A workshop report, (p. 2)*. The National Academies Press.

<sup>3</sup> There are a few exceptions to this. Generally, transitional kindergarten (TK) programs are operated on a kindergarten model, which requires only one adult in each classroom (e.g., California TK). Additionally, if the class size goes over a certain number, some programs require an additional adult in the room. For example, in Kansas, programs can request a waiver for 25 children in the classroom (up from the typical maximum class size of 20), but a third teacher is required to maintain a 1:10 staff to child ratio.

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this brief, the authors will refer to all aides/associate teachers/auxiliary, etc. teacher as assistant teachers.

<sup>5</sup> See: Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children, youth through age 8*. The National Academies Press; Bowman, B. T., Donovan, M. S., & Burns, M. S. (Eds.). (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. The National Academy Press; Manning, M., Garvis, S., Fleming, C., & Wong, G. T. (2017). [The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment: A systematic review](#). The Campbell collaboration; Bogard, K., Traylor, F., & Takanishi, R. (2008). Teacher education and PK outcomes: Are we asking the right questions?. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1): 1-6; Falenchuk, O., Perlman, M., McMullen, E., Fletcher, B., & Shah, P. S. (2017). Education of staff in preschool aged classrooms in child care centers and child outcomes: A meta-analysis and systematic review. *PloS one*, 12(8), e0183673; Lin, Y. C., & Magnuson, K. A. (2018). Classroom quality and children's academic skills in child care centers: Understanding the role of teacher qualifications. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, (42): 215-227; Bassok, D., Fitzpatrick, M., Greenberg, E., & Loeb, S. (2016). Within- and between-sector quality differences in early childhood education and care. *Child Development*, 87(5): 1627-1645; King, E. K., Johnson, A. V., Cassidy, D. J., Wang, Y. C., Lower, J. K., & Kintner-Duffy, V. L. (2016). Preschool teachers' financial well-being and work time supports: Associations with children's emotional expressions and behaviors in classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 44(6): 545-553; and Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. *Center for the Study of Child Care Employment*.

<sup>6</sup> There is a body of research on the impact the presences of assistant teachers have had on student outcomes. However, this is typically related to the reduction in class sizes in the elementary grades (not preschool), for example see: Clotfelter, C. T., Hemelt, S. W., & Ladd, H. F. (2016, October). [Teaching assistants and nonteaching staff: Do they improve student outcomes?](#) National Center for Analyses of Longitudinal Data in Education Research; Hemelt, S. W., Ladd, H. F., & Clifton, C. R. (2021, June 1). Do teacher assistants improve student outcomes? Evidence from school funding cutbacks in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 43 (2), 280-204.

<sup>7</sup> Data are from Head Start Program Information Reports (PIR) for 2020-2021.

<sup>8</sup> NAEYC. (n.d.). [NAEYC accreditation of early learning programs. Streamlined: Teaching staff qualifications option guide](#). National Association for the Education of Young Children.

<sup>9</sup> ETS. (2022). [About the ParaPro assessment](#). Website.

<sup>10</sup> NAEYC. (2019). [NAEYC early learning program accreditation standards and assessment items](#), (p. 81). National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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<sup>11</sup> See: Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L. J. E. (2016). *Early childhood workforce index 2016*. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California at Berkeley; Figueras-Daniel, A. (2016). *Key influences on the quality and outcomes of preschool education for dual language learners: Professional development and bilingual staffing patterns* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (No. 10479076). Rutgers University.

<sup>12</sup> Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (2020). *Demographics of center-based teaching staff* [Unpublished data]. The 2020 California Early Care and Education Workforce Study; Williams, A., Montoya, E., Kim, Y., & Austin, L.J.E. (2021). *New Data Shows Early Educators Equipped to Teach TK*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>13</sup> Note: California TK reports parity, but that is because TK is considered a kindergarten program & teachers are paid commensurate with their kindergarten counterparts only.

<sup>14</sup> Sosinsky, L. & Gilliam, W. (2011). Assistant teachers in prekindergarten programs: What roles do lead teachers feel assistants play in classroom management and teaching? *Early Education and Development* (22): 676-706, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2022).

<sup>16</sup> Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2022).

<sup>17</sup> Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. & DiCrecchio, N. (2019). *The State of Preschool 2018: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

<sup>18</sup> Jacoby, J. W. (2021, August). *Assistant teachers in head start: Important drivers of a diverse and competent workforce*. Urban Institute. [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104621/assistant-teachers-in-head-start\\_1.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104621/assistant-teachers-in-head-start_1.pdf)

**Table 1: Assistant Teacher Credentials Requirements in Each State-Funded Preschool Program**

State & Preschool Program(s)	Requirements for Public School Programs	Requirements for Nonpublic School Programs	Met NIEER Benchmark (2020-2021)	Notes
<b>Alabama</b> - First Class Pre-K	CDA or 9 college credits in ECE/CD	CDA or 9 college credits in ECE/CD	Yes	
<b>Alaska</b> - AK Pre-Elementary Programs	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	See this <a href="#">link</a> for the regulation addressing teacher assistant/paraprofessional requirements.
<b>Arizona</b> - Quality First Scholarships	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	Fifty percent of QF Scholarships assistant teachers must have a minimum of six months of experience working in an early care and education program.
<b>Arkansas</b> - Arkansas Better Chance/Arkansas Better Chance for School Success	CDA or AA in ECE/CD	CDA or AA in ECE/CD	Yes	If an assistant teacher has an AA in another subject, they must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours in ECE/CD. The Birth to Pre K Credential and Technical Certificate in ECE/CD are also options for the state-funded preschool program. The Technical Certificate requires 24 Early Childhood Education coursework hours in ECE and/or CD.
<b>California*</b>  - CA State Preschool Program (CSPP)  - CA Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Program	HSD or Equivalent  HSD or Equivalent if there is an aide	HSD or Equivalent	No  No	CSPP: Assistant teachers in CSPP are required to have a high school diploma or equivalent. The optional Child Development Assistant Teacher Permit requires six credits in ECE or CD. The permit is issued for five years and is renewable for successive five-year periods upon completion of 105 hours of professional growth.  TK: There are no TK Assistant Teachers. There are Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support must have: (1) high school diploma or the equivalent, and (2) two years of college (48 units), or (3) AA degree (or higher), or (4) pass a local assessment of knowledge and skills in assisting in instruction. Many districts use the California Basic Educational Skills Test for this purpose.
<b>Colorado</b> - Colorado Preschool Program	None	None	No	Staff aides must meet the following Colorado Department of Human Services Licensing Requirements: at least 16 years of age and have a favorable background check.
<b>Connecticut*</b> - CT Child Day Care Contracts (CDCC) - CT School Readiness (SR) - CT Smart Start		HSD or Equivalent HSD or Equivalent	No No No	Assistant teachers must meet either NAEYC, licensing professional development and/or Head Start requirements.
<b>Delaware</b> - DE Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP)	Working towards CDA or Equivalent	Working towards CDA or Equivalent	Yes	Federal HSPPS require that assistant teachers must have at least a CDA, be enrolled in a program leading to an associate or bachelor's degree or be enrolled in a CDA program to be completed within 2 years.

<b>District of Columbia</b> - DC Universal Pre-K	Paraprofessional Certificate (DC Public Schools); Determined locally (Public Charter Schools [PCS])	Associate Degree	No	CBOs require assistant teachers have the following minimum education requirements: (a) hold an associate degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child and family studies or (b) hold an associate degree a field other than child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education, or child and family studies and have earned nine (9) credits in early childhood education. DCPS requires an associate degree, a 48 college credit hour transcript, or a high school diploma and have passed the ParaPro Assessment. <sup>1</sup> For ECE aides, at least 12 credit hours in early childhood education is preferred but not required. PCS have autonomy to establish their own requirements for assistant teacher education and credentials, consistent with their charters and federal law (where applicable).
<b>Florida**</b> - FL Voluntary Prekindergarten Program	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	Assistant teachers do not have to meet any degree requirements, but must complete a 40-hour training course if employed at a licensed child care facility.
<b>Georgia</b> - GA's Pre-K Program	CDA	CDA	Yes	A CDA is the minimum requirement, however, 1,409 assistant teachers hold a state paraprofessional license issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Additionally, many assistant teachers have a higher ECE credential: 215 have a Technical College Diploma, 330 have a Technical Certificate of Credit, 286 have an AA, 419 have a BA, and 68 have an advanced degree.
<b>Hawaii*</b> - HI's Executive Office on Early Learning Public Prekindergarten Program - HI State Public Charter School Early Learning Program	CDA  CDA		Yes  Yes	Educational assistants must have a current CDA or have completed the preparatory coursework for a CDA.
<b>Illinois</b> - IL Preschool for All and Preschool Expansion	Educator License	Educator License	No	To be eligible for an Educator License, an individual must be at least 20 years of age, hold a HSD or GED, and meet one of the following requirements: (1) Hold an associate degree (or higher) from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, (2) Completed at least 60 semester hours of credit from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, (3) Presents an official score report from Educational Testing Service (ETS) showing a score of 460 or higher on the ParaPro test, or (4) Presents evidence of earning the following scores on the Work Keys test: Reading for Information (4), Writing or Business Writing (3), and Applied Mathematics (4).
<b>Iowa*</b> - IA Shared Visions (SV)  - IA Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP)	HSD or Equivalent  HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent  HSD or Equivalent	No  No	Program staff must meet the educational qualifications within the selected program standards. (1) NAEYC requires all assistant teachers/teacher aides have, at minimum a CDA OR 12 higher education credits in early childhood education, early childhood special education, elementary education, and/or child development. (2) IQPPS requires assistant teachers to have a high school diploma or GED and 50% of assistant teachers have at least a CDA or equivalent, 100% of assistant teachers who do not have at least a CDA are enrolled in a program leading to a CDA or equivalent, are actively participating in the program, and are demonstrating progress toward the CDA or equivalent. (3) HSPPS requires assistant teachers, at a minimum, have a CDA credential or a state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, are enrolled in a program that will lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree or, are enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.

<b>Kansas</b> - Preschool Offered by Public School Districts	Other	Other	No	It is strongly recommended that school districts employ paraprofessionals or aides who have at least a CDA or AA in early childhood education or a related field. Other accepted qualifications for assistant teachers are: HSD or GED with 48 credit hours at an institution of higher education; OR an AA (or higher); OR Pass a State approved assessment that determines an ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics; or reading, writing, and mathematics readiness. More information may be found <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Kentucky</b> - KY Preschool Program	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	In Title I schools, assistant teachers must complete two years of higher education, hold an associate degree, or achieve an acceptable score on the Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment (KPA). Kentucky continues to review the possibility of recognizing the CDA as equivalent to the KPA for Title I qualification.
<b>Louisiana*</b>  - LA 8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program  - LA Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program (LA 4)  - LA Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD)	Other  Other	   CDA	No  No  Yes	8(g) & LA 4: All paraprofessionals/teacher assistants must meet LEA specific requirements for employment and one of the following requirements: (1) meet the definition of 'highly qualified,' which may include passing of the ParaPro test <sup>1</sup> or achievement of a CDA or AA credential, (2) possess a high school diploma or equivalent, (3) have extended experiences of assuming responsibility and care for a group of preschool-age children (children younger than five years of age), or (4) possess proficient oral and written communication skills.  NSECD: New NSECD teacher assistants must be certified with at least a CDA or AA or higher in Early Childhood, Education, or Family Studies. Incumbent NSECD teacher assistants who are not state-certified must be enrolled in a CDA program or Early Childhood associate degree program, be continually enrolled, and complete the certification within three years of their date of hire.
<b>Maine</b> -ME Public Preschool Program	Educational Technician II	Educational Technician II	Yes	All assistant teachers must have an Educational Technician II (Maine DOE Certificate) that requires a minimum of 60 college credit hours, including at least 9 credits in ECE or a related field.
<b>Maryland</b> - MD Prekindergarten Program	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	Regulations also allow a CDA for assistant teachers. Paraprofessionals in Title I schools must also have completed two years of college, hold an AA, or have a qualifying score of 455 on the ParaPro assessment. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Massachusetts*</b>  -MA Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)  -MA Chapter 70	  Determined locally	 HSD or Equivalent  	No  No	

<p><b>Michigan*</b></p> <p>-MI Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)</p> <p>-MI Developmental Kindergarten (DK)</p>	<p>CDA or AA in ECE/CD</p> <p>HSD or Equivalent</p>	<p>CDA or AA in ECE/CD</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>GSRP: If a suitable person cannot be hired, someone can start while out of compliance, but must have completed at least one credit-bearing course in CD to begin and complete the requirements within two years. ISDs must sign-off on and monitor the compliance plan.</p> <p>DK: Paraprofessionals are required to hold a high school diploma (or equivalent), regardless of their assignment. Michigan Department of Education (MDE) does not issue a certificate or license for paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals providing instructional support in Title I, Part A buildings must meet additional requirements beyond a high school diploma which include completing at least two years of study at an institution of higher education (equal to 60 semester hours), obtaining an associate's degree (or higher), or meeting a rigorous standard of quality demonstrated through passage of an approved formal state academic assessment. Currently the only MDE approved test for new paraprofessionals is the ETS ParaPro Assessment.<sup>1</sup></p>
<p><b>Minnesota*</b></p> <p>- MN Head Start</p> <p>- MN Voluntary Prekindergarten and School Readiness Plus (VPK/SRP)</p>	<p>CDA</p> <p>Determined locally</p>	<p>CDA</p> <p>Determined locally</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>MN Head Start: Assistant teachers must meet Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed child care center regulations in addition to the Head Start program performance standards, which includes a CDA.</p> <p>VPK/SRP: Assistant teacher requirements are determined by the district/charter school hiring and personnel practices. In the case of a mixed-delivery Head Start or community-based partner, the assistant teacher would follow the regulatory agency requirements for that position.</p>
<p><b>Mississippi</b></p> <p>- MS Early Learning Collaborative</p>	<p>AA in ECE or CD</p>	<p>AA in ECE or CD</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Assistant teachers are required to have an associate degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or an equivalent field; or an associate degree in any field and a Child Development Associate credential, a Montessori certification, or an equivalent certification.</p>
<p><b>Missouri*</b></p> <p>- MO Preschool Program (PP)</p> <p>- MO Pre-K Foundation Formula (Pre-K FF)</p>	<p>CDA, AA in ECE or CD, or 60 college hours (including 9 in ECE or CD)</p> <p>AA in ECE or CD, or 60 college hours (including 9 in ECE or CD)</p>	<p>CDA, AA in ECE or CD, or 60 college hours (including 9 in ECE or CD)</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>PP: Assistant teachers must have a CDA, two-year Associate Degree in Child Care/ECE or 60 college hours with a minimum of nine college credit hours in early childhood, child development (CD), or child/family related courses and experiences working in a program with young children and their families. Assistant Teachers hired prior to July 1, 2018, may meet sixty college hours with a minimum of three college credit hours in early childhood, CD, or child/family related courses and experience working in a program with young children and their families.</p>
<p><b>Nebraska</b></p> <p>- NE Early Childhood Education Program</p>	<p>K-6 Elementary Endorsement, 6 semester hours of credit in CD or ECE, or equivalent in prior training and experience</p>	<p>K-6 Elementary Endorsement, 6 semester hours of credit in CD or ECE, or equivalent in prior training and experience</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Assistant teachers are required to have a K-6 Elementary Endorsement, 6 college credit hours in early childhood or an approved equivalency (including experience) by the end of the first year of employment and 12 college credit hours in early childhood or an approved equivalency by the end of the second year of employment. A CDA is considered an equivalency for the entire 12 college credit hours.</p>
<p><b>Nevada</b></p> <p>- NV Ready! State Pre-K</p>	<p>HSD or Equivalent</p>	<p>HSD or Equivalent</p>	<p>No</p>	

<p><b>New Jersey*</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NJ Preschool Expansion Program (Former Abbott Preschool Program)</li> <li>- NJ Former Non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA)</li> <li>- NJ Former Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)</li> </ul>	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	<p>In districts or schools supported by Title I funding, assistant teachers are required to meet the education/degree requirements specified for Title I.</p>
<p><b>New Mexico</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NM PreK (4s) and NM Early PreK (3s) and NM Mixed Age PreK (3s &amp; 4s)</li> </ul>	Associate Degree	HSD or Equivalent	Yes	
<p><b>New York</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NY State Administered Prekindergarten Program</li> </ul>	Level I Teaching Assistant Certification	HSD or Equivalent	No	
<p><b>North Carolina</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NC Pre-Kindergarten Program</li> </ul>	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	<p>All teacher assistants must have a high school diploma or GED and must hold, or be working toward, a minimum of an AA in ECE/CD or a CDA. Teacher assistants working toward the AA or CDA shall make progress by completing a minimum of six documented semester hours per year. Teacher assistants employed by public schools may meet the employment requirements outlined by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation and have one of the following: (1) 6 documented semester hours of coursework in ECE, or (2) 2 years of work experience in an early childhood setting. There are child care rules going through the rule-making process that will require a CDA or higher.</p>
<p><b>North Dakota</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ND Early Childhood Education Grant Program</li> </ul>	HSD or Equivalent	None	No	
<p><b>Ohio</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OH Early Childhood Education</li> </ul>	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	

<p><b>Oklahoma</b> - OK Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program</p>	<p>HSD or Equivalent</p>		<p>No</p>	<p>Teacher assistants are only required to hold a high school diploma or GED and pass the FBI criminal history check. Teacher assistants employed in a Title I school must be highly qualified using one of the following methods: (1) An AA or higher; (2) At least 2 years or 48 credit hours of study at an institution of higher education; (3) Pass the Oklahoma General Education Test; or (4) Pass the ETS ParaPro Assessment<sup>1</sup> or the Work Keys Assessment. Oklahoma is working on an updated policy for pre-K teacher assistants. In programs located in Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms, teacher assistants must meet all federal requirements. School districts must ensure teacher assistants are provided professional development in early childhood education.</p>
<p><b>Oregon*</b> - OR Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) - OR Preschool Promise</p>	<p>CDA (OPK); Other (Preschool Promise)</p>	<p>CDA (OPK); Other (Preschool Promise)</p>	<p>Yes (only OPK)</p>	<p>OPK: Assistant teachers may start their positions without the degree requirement with the understanding that they must complete their degree requirement within two years. OPK programs offer T/TA to support this attainment.</p> <p>Preschool Promise: The minimum is Step 3 in the Oregon Registry Online. Licensing regulations for an Aide II: (a) Be at least 18 years of age; (b) Have worked at least six months at the center where they are now employed; (c) Have current certification in first aid and CPR. Training must have practical hands-on instruction; therefore, online training is not acceptable.</p>
<p><b>Pennsylvania*</b> - PA Ready to Learn Block Grant (RTL) - PA Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) - PA Kindergarten for Four-Year-Olds and School-Based Pre-K (K4/SBPK) - PA Pre-K Counts (PKC)</p>	<p>Other (RTL, K4 &amp; SBPK, PKC); CDA (HSSAP)</p>	<p>Other (RTL, K4 &amp; SBPK, PKC); CDA (HSSAP)</p>	<p>Yes (only HSSAP)</p>	<p>RTL/K4/SBPK: Beginning in 2009-2010, assistant teachers were required to have two years of post-secondary education/60 college credits, an AA or higher, or the ability to meet a rigorous standard of quality and to demonstrate through formal state or local assessments knowledge of the ability to assist in instruction.</p> <p>HSSAP: Head Start assistant teacher qualification requirements. As prescribed in section 648A(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Act, a program must ensure Head Start assistant teachers, at a minimum, have a CDA credential or a state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, are enrolled in a program that will lead to an AA or BA or, are enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.</p> <p>PKC: Teacher aides in any classroom of eligible students supported by Program funding shall meet one of the following criteria: (1) Completion of at least 2 years of full-time postsecondary study or the equivalent; (2) Possession of an AA or higher; (3) Ability to meet a rigorous standard of quality and demonstration of knowledge through a formal state or local academic assessment or a CDA.</p>
<p><b>Rhode Island</b> - RI State Prekindergarten Program</p>	<p>Nine (or more) college credits in ECE/CD</p>	<p>HSD plus 12 college credits in ECE/CD or a CDA</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p><b>South Carolina</b> -SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program and EIA/4K</p>	<p>HSD or Equivalent</p>	<p>HSD or Equivalent</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Each instructional assistant employed by a First Steps 4K program (nonpublic school settings) must, at minimum, have a HSD or its equivalent and two years of documented experience working with children under five years of age. Assistant teachers in both public schools and private centers are required to enroll in the ECD 101 TEACH college class within one year of being in the position.</p>

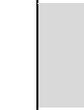
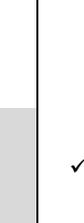
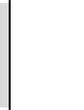
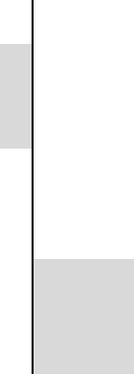
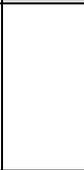
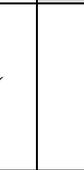
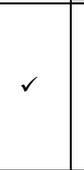
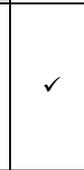
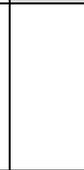
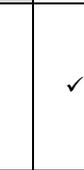
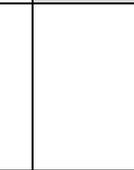
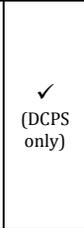
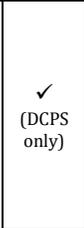
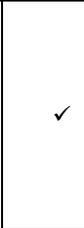
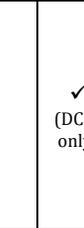
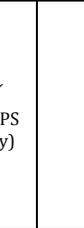
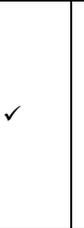
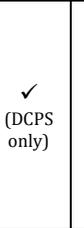
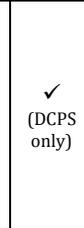
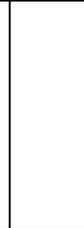
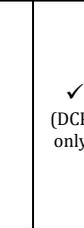
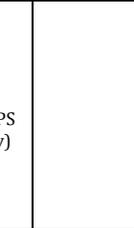
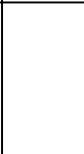
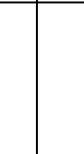
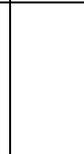
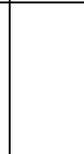
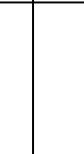
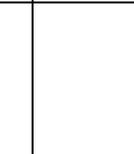
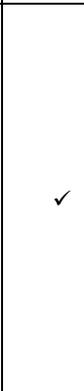
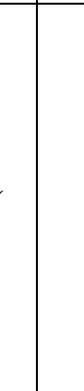
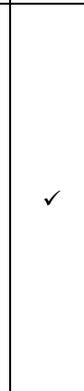
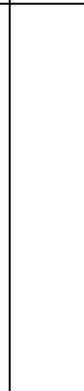
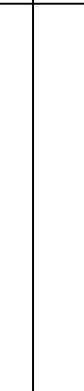
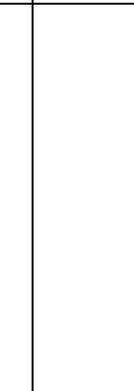
<b>Tennessee</b> -TN Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	State law passed in 2005-2006 requires that at least one educational assistant per classroom hold a CDA or AA or be actively working toward such credentials. If no person with these credentials is available, state law allows a person with a HSD & relevant experience working with pre-K children or other EC program to be employed. Assistants must demonstrate active progress toward completion of a CDA to be rehired. Assistant teachers are required to receive a minimum of 30 hours of state approved PD on ECERS, ELLCO, Personal Safety, ELDS, Child Care Rules and Regulations, and Social Emotional Learning Foundations. At least 6 hours of the training must be in developmentally appropriate literacy practices. Training may occur prior to, or during employment.
<b>Texas</b> - TX Public School Prekindergarten	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	Paraprofessionals serve as Educational Aides I, II, and III. Educational Aide I requires at least a HSD and experience working with students or parents. Educational Aide II requires at least a HSD and one of the following requirements: two creditable years of experience; a minimum of 15 college credit hours with emphasis on CD or related subject areas; demonstrated proficiency in a specialized skill area, as determined by the school district; or experience working with students or parents. Educational Aide III requires at least a HSD and one of the following: three creditable years of experience; 30 college credit hours with some emphasis on child growth and development or related subject areas; or experience working with students or parents.
<b>Utah</b> - Expanded Student Access to High Quality School Readiness Programs (ESA)	None/Determined locally	None/Determined locally	No	Each program determines the qualification and training requirements for their assistant teachers.
<b>Vermont</b> - VT Universal Prekindergarten Education (Act 166)	HSD or Equivalent	HSD or Equivalent	No	Vermont has teacher associates and teacher assistants, both of whom are required to have a HSD or GED and preservice training in ECE or education and 15 hours of in-service training annually.
<b>Virginia</b> - VA Preschool Initiative	HSD or Equivalent	None/Determined locally	No	Nonpublic employers determine required credentials and specializations. School divisions determine training and specialization requirements for assistant teachers.
<b>Washington*</b> - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) - Washington Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	CDA or Initial or higher Washington State Early Childhood Education Certificate or equivalents (12 credits) (ECEAP); HSD or Equivalent (TK)	CDA or Initial or higher Washington State Early Childhood Education Certificate or equivalents (12 credits) (ECEAP); NA (TK)	Yes (only ECEAP)	All persons serving in the role of ECEAP assistant teacher must meet one of the following qualifications: Initial or higher Washington State Early Childhood Education Certificate or equivalents (12 credits); or a current CDA.
<b>West Virginia</b> - WV Universal Pre-K	CDA	CDA	Yes	All assistant teachers must have a CDA or equivalent, determined by the WVBE. The Early Childhood Classroom Assistant Teacher Authorization is a license required for all pre-K and kindergarten assistant teachers who complete a CDA or state equivalent.
<b>Wisconsin</b> - WI Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K)	HSD or Equivalent	Other	No	The WI DPI only licenses special education paraprofessionals, which requires a HSD or its equivalent; however, there are requirements under federal law that may impact the assistant teacher's need to have a higher degree/schooling to be considered a highly qualified paraprofessional. That will be dictated by the distribution of federal money in the building in which the paraprofessional works.

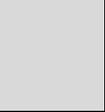
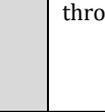
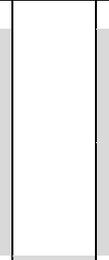
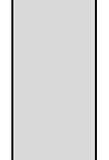
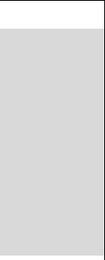
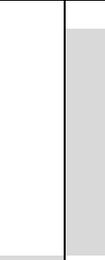
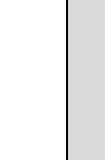
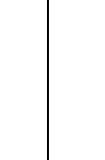
\* The state has multiple programs. Each program's requirement is included.

\*\*Data are from the 2019-2020 school year

<sup>1</sup> The ParaPro Assessment is administered by the Education Testing Services (ETS). For more information, see: <https://www.ets.org/parapro/about>



<b>Connecticut*</b> - CT Child Day Care Contracts (CDCC)  - CT School Readiness (SR)  - CT Smart Start	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 		While state policy does not specifically address parity in pay and benefits, teachers in Smart Start classrooms must be certified and employed by the local school district. Therefore, union agreements regarding pay and benefits would apply to teachers in Smart Start classrooms, thereby ensuring parity.
<b>Delaware</b> - DE Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP)														
<b>District of Columbia</b> - DC Universal Pre-K														PCS have autonomy to establish their own policies and practices related to staff compensation, consistent with their charters.
<b>Florida**</b> - FL Voluntary Prekindergarten Program														
<b>Georgia</b> - GA's Pre-K Program														Georgia's Pre-K program guidelines outline policies and requirements for salary and benefits for pre-K lead and assistant teachers. These are updated annually to reflect any changes. In addition, any salary or benefit increases for K-12 teachers in the state budget are also allocated in the pre-K budget annually. This allows for the pre-K program to maintain parity with the K-12 system. The starting salary for all Georgia's Pre-K assistant teachers is higher than the starting salary for K-12 assistant teachers. Funding for benefits for pre-K assistant teachers are allocated in the Pre-K grants at the same rate as K-12 teachers. However, private pre-K programs may determine benefits at the local level. This allows programs to align pre-K benefit packages with other employees in the program.

<b>Hawaii*</b> - HI's Executive Office on Early Learning Public Prekindergarten Program (EOEL) - HI State Public Charter School Early Learning Program (SPCSP)	✓  ✓	  	✓  ✓	  	✓  ✓	  	✓  ✓	  	✓  ✓	  	✓  ✓	  	All lead and assistant teachers are members of the Hawaii State Teachers Association (public school teachers' union) and have contracts which determine their salaries and benefits and ensure parity across all grade levels pre-K through 12.
<b>Illinois</b> - IL Preschool for All and Preschool Expansion													Lead Teachers: Public School District salaries and fringe rates are set by union bargaining agreement at a local level. Nonpublic employees in PFA Expansion sites are required to receive salaries comparable to the local K-12 school salary schedule at entry level. Parity is not required in PFA sites.
<b>Iowa*</b> - IA Shared Visions (SV) - IA Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP)	✓ (some)  ✓				✓ (some)  ✓				✓ (some)  ✓				SV: Only lead teachers with an active license have parity.
<b>Kansas</b> - Preschool Offered by Public School Districts													
<b>Kentucky</b> - KY Preschool Program	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		Information about teacher salaries is available on <a href="#">KDE's website</a> .
<b>Louisiana*</b> - LA 8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program - LA Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program (LA 4) - LA Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD)	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	



<b>Missouri*</b> - MO Preschool Program - MO Pre-K Foundation Formula (Pre-K FF)	✓				✓								
<b>Nebraska</b> - NE Early Childhood Education Program													School district personnel contracts are subject to collective bargaining agreements that cover both K-12 and Pre-K lead teachers. All collective bargaining agreements are locally determined. Early Childhood programs are operated by school districts but may be collaboratively operated with a community based provider or Head Start program. The NDE has no authority to require parity in private organization salary scales.
<b>Nevada</b> - NV Ready! State Pre-K	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				
<b>New Jersey*</b> - NJ Preschool Expansion Program (Former Abbott Preschool Program) - NJ Former Non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) - NJ Former Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		If assistant teachers are school district employees, they must receive the same salary and benefits as K-3 teachers.
<b>New Mexico</b> - NM PreK (4s) and NM Early PreK (3s) and NM Mixed Age PreK (3s & 4s)	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
<b>New York</b> - NY State Administered Prekindergarten Program													



<b>Rhode Island</b> - RI State Prekindergarten Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	RI lead pre-K teachers in nonpublic schools are paid on par with public school teachers at step 1 to 3. Budgets are reviewed yearly to ensure annual increases are applied to those salaries. Nonpublic assistant teachers receive a higher salary than public school assistant teachers. The only difference is in retirement benefits; though most nonpublic schools do offer retirement options such as 401K.
<b>South Carolina</b> -SC Child Early Reading Development and Education Program and EIA/4K	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		For nonpublic schools, lead and assistant teacher salaries are determined by each private provider. First Steps guidelines require paid time for professional responsibilities. First Steps 4K teachers and assistants receive a stipend for PD participation with all costs being covered.
<b>Tennessee</b> -TN Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		According to the VPK Scope of Services, "Salaries for personnel in community-based agencies shall be reasonably comparable to those currently in effect in the LEA where the respective VPK program is located. Reasonably comparable is defined as a range of compensation that would ordinarily be paid for like services within the school system. Final salaries within the range may be commensurate with qualifications and experience."
<b>Texas</b> - TX Public School Prekindergarten	✓				✓				✓		✓		
<b>Utah</b> - Expanded Student Access to High Quality School Readiness Programs (ESA)													
<b>Vermont</b> - VT Universal Prekindergarten Education (Act 166)	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
<b>Virginia</b> - VA Preschool Initiative	✓				✓				✓				

<b>Washington*</b> - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) - Washington Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	✓				✓				✓				
<b>West Virginia</b> - WV Universal Pre-K	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		All teachers (lead and assistant) employed as public school employees are required by state code to receive the same salary and fringe benefits as K-12 teachers. Nonpublic school employees in collaborative programs receive salaries and fringe benefits according to program with which they are employed.
<b>Wisconsin</b> - WI Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K)													Lead teachers for 4K in school buildings fall within the district K-12 salary range and benefits. Teachers in 4K Community Approaches may or may not be hired by the school district. Based upon the community approach and school district contracts, there may be variations in salary and benefits as the local level.

\*The state has multiple programs. Each program's requirement is included.

\*\*Data are from the 2019-2020 school year