

**THE ENDURING VALUE OF THE EARLY
CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE**

Why New York City Must Complete the Path to Parity for the Community-Based Early Childhood Education Workforce

**By New York City Council Black, Latino and
Asian Caucus and the Day Care Council of
New York**

September 2023

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Executive Summary

I. Child Care After COVID

In 2019, the Day Care Council of New York published its first report on salary parity for New York City’s early education workforce. This report, “The Value of Early Childhood Educators,” cites decades of existing research on the impact of high-quality early childhood education.¹ Early learners who spend their days in caring and intellectually-stimulating environments benefit from life-long positive outcomes in school readiness and later professional opportunities. Such gains are particularly strong among historically under-represented communities and low-income families.² Investing in children and their early education offers economic advantages which continue through the duration of students’ lives.

Executive Summary

In the wake of COVID-19, such findings remain valid. Another DCCNY report, “Supporting New York City’s Unsung Heroes,” cataloged the lessons learned through the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the report detailed the economic ramifications of this years-long cultural shift.³

Ultimately, the pandemic demonstrated the economic imperative to support child care services and early learning providers. The financial strain of COVID-19 shutdowns induced many women to leave the workforce in order to care for their children. At the same time, centers lost tuition from families amid safety concerns and widespread unemployment. In the midst of the pandemic, more New York City early child care sites closed than opened.⁴

Throughout COVID, young learners spent their formative years adjusting to the often-distanced pandemic setting. To make up for these social and emotional setbacks, children require connection with peers and meaningful engagement with talented and experienced caregivers. New York’s economic recovery depends on parents returning to work, which cannot happen unless parents feel confident that their children will spend their day in a safe, nurturing, and educational space.

II. Child Care Staffing Crisis

Against that backdrop, New York City’s early childhood education system remains in the throes of a staffing crisis. This crisis is driven by the inadequate wages of the early care workforce, which in turn produces staff burnout and employee turnover.⁵



Executive Summary

Some Federal policies that aimed to mitigate COVID fallout at child care centers, such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, supplied bonuses to early care and education providers. Such funding was a short-term, unsustainable solution to addressing long-standing funding shortfalls, whereas the City's "Path to Parity" agreement in 2019 enabled certified teachers to earn starting salaries on par with peers in NYCPS.⁶

For its success, the "Path to Parity" agreement failed to factor in longevity increases. Long-serving teachers, staff, and directors at CBOs stand to lose millions of dollars over the course of their career by remaining at their sites instead of working at New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). In order to provide incentives for continuity and community development, true parity must include longevity increases. The new United Federation of Teachers (UFT) agreement includes a series of COLA increases through 2026 and includes salary increases based on teachers' years of service. These COLA increases, coupled with existing longevity increases at NYCPS, create an ever-widening chasm between NYCPS salaries and those of the early childhood professionals working for CBOs.

III. Opportunity in Renegotiation

This year's collective bargaining negotiation offers the opportunity to address true parity and ensure that CBO workers obtain salaries, bonuses, and benefits commensurate with their training and years of experience.



Executive Summary

The path to parity, we argue, involves achieving a fair wage through factoring in NYCPS longevity increases and including dedicated professionals in non-teaching roles.

This report begins by discussing a letter presented to Mayor Eric Adams by the New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus. In this letter—and through subsequent actions from City Council members and Speaker Adrienne Adams—the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and allies in the City Council called upon City officials to achieve racial equity through pay parity for teachers, staff, and directors at CBOs.

Our report then cites a body of evidence demonstrating the measurably-high quality of education offered at community-based organizations. We explain the current state of the system and close with a case-by-case demonstration of the stark salary differences between CBOs and NYCPS over the duration of employees' careers.

About Us

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early childhood provider organizations in New York City.

DCCNY's mission is to support its member organizations and New York City's early childhood field at-large through policy research and advocacy; labor relations and mediation; professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors, and staff; and referral services for parents looking to find child care. DCCNY member organizations provide early care and education at more than 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs.

New York City Black, Latino and Asian Caucus

The mission of the New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus (BLAC) is to protect, empower and advocate for the City's over five million New Yorkers of color through its utilization of the legislative, oversight, and budgetary powers of the Council.

PART I

BLAC

Advocacy

I. BLAC Calls for Salary Parity

Recognizing the need for salary parity across the early childhood workforce, the New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus (BLAC, referred to hereafter as the Caucus) recommended seven immediate actions to address pressing issues in New York City’s early childhood education sector. The Caucus recognized the need for salary parity across the early childhood workforce in its February 28, 2023, letter to Mayor Eric Adams.

Salary parity remains essential to prevent the loss of qualified staff from child care programs and to create a sustainable early childhood system.⁷

The Caucus recognized the inherent inequality in the CBO-NYCPS salary disparity: women and women of color constitute the majority of the community-based early education workforce. It is essential that the City close salary gaps facing the early childhood workforce in order to fulfill its commitment to racial and gender equality.

In the letter, the Caucus called upon the City to “[b]uild upon salary parity for the early childhood education workforce by funding a new labor contract that advances parity between the workforce in community-based organization (CBO) settings and their counterparts in DOE 3-K and Universal Pre-K (UPK) settings.”



II. New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus Early Childhood Policy Proposals

Twenty-nine members of the New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus called upon Mayor Eric Adams to take seven crucial actions to protect and strengthen early childhood education in New York City. This report examines the disparities behind the third recommendation. The full list includes:

- 01** **Immediately address the crisis of late payments** to DOE-contracted child care providers, ensuring that all providers are reimbursed for the services that they provided in FY'22 and FY'23, and that operational systems are put in place to support on-time payments moving forward.
- 02** **Release a new Request for Proposals for the expansion of 3-K for All** that emphasizes access to Extended Day / Extended Year slots, which better match the needs of working parents who cannot afford to pick up their children in the middle of the work day.
- 03** **Build upon salary parity for the early childhood education workforce** by funding a new labor contract that advances parity between the workforce in community-based organization (CBO) settings and their counterparts in DOE 3-K and Universal Pre-K (UPK) settings.

II. New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus Early Childhood Policy Proposals

- 04** **Develop a two-pronged enrollment system** that allows parents the option of enrolling directly through CBOs or through the DOE, giving more agency to families and entrusting them to make the best decision for their children.
- 05** **Ensure that the distribution of early childhood care and education seats** (for infants and toddlers, 3-K, and UPK) addresses high-need communities, service deserts, and prioritizes meeting the full-day, year-round needs of working families.
- 06** **Make it easier for families to access care** by investing in an extensive multi-lingual and culturally competent outreach campaign to inform New York families about their options and improve enrollment in services.
- 07** **Ensure home-based family child care providers benefit** from the increased rate of reimbursement, which has increased to 80 percent from 65 percent.

PART II

Recommendations & Data

I. Recommendations

Focusing on the Caucus's third recommendation, this report compares CBO salaries with the salaries of their NYCPS counterparts. The data shows the ever-widening chasm between salaries over the course of educators' careers. The data also demonstrates the compounding losses of the directors, teachers, and staff who choose to devote their careers to serving young children and their families at community-based organizations.

The City must address the disparities identified in this report by making new investments in the early childhood workforce, including:

- **Funding new labor contracts that keep pace with NYCPS wages**, ensuring equality in wages between the teachers, directors, and staff at community-based organizations and the teachers, directors, and staff at New York City Public Schools. This includes COLA adjustments and bonuses included in the 2023 UFT Contract.
- **Including summer Per Diem rates for year-round programs** (The 2024 UFT negotiated rates: \$211.41 for a teacher; \$176.82 for a paraprofessional; \$157.72 for a school secretary).⁸
- **Including staff excluded from the first phase of parity** (this includes early childhood directors, support staff in community-based organizations, and preschool special education teachers and support staff).
- **Factoring longevity** differentials into salary increases.
- **Establishing a \$25 minimum wage** floor for all support staff. (For educational support staff, this would include a wage floor of \$45,500 per year for a 35 hour per week schedule. For janitors and cooks, this would include a salary floor of \$50,000 for a 40 hour per week schedule.)

II. Community-Based Organizations and New York City's Early Care and Education Landscape

New York City's early care and education system is complex and reflects the size and diversity of the City. Public funding from the City, State, and Federal governments support young children receiving early care and education in a variety of settings. This includes:

- **Child care centers**, many of which operate with contracts with NYC Public Schools, and
- **Home-based programs**, where providers care for small groups of children in their own homes.

Community-based child care centers and home-based family child care programs are the only publicly-funded, affordable options offering:

- **Year-round child care** that includes the summer,
- **Care for children under three years old,**
- **Extended-day programs** based on the workday instead of the school day, and
- **Wraparound services**, including connections with social services and family support.

A 2016 study by United Neighborhood Houses and Campaign for Children compared the average ratings of Department of Education-contracted community-based organizations with the average ratings of Department of Education public schools.

The assessment relied on two nationally-recognized metrics: Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which examines children’s interactions with adults, and the Early Childhood Rating Scale (ECERS), which assesses classroom environments.

This study concluded that community-based organizations out-performed public schools in nine of the ten metrics. These results are displayed in the two following figures.⁹

Fig. 1: The Early Childhood Rating Scale Study (ECRSS) Results

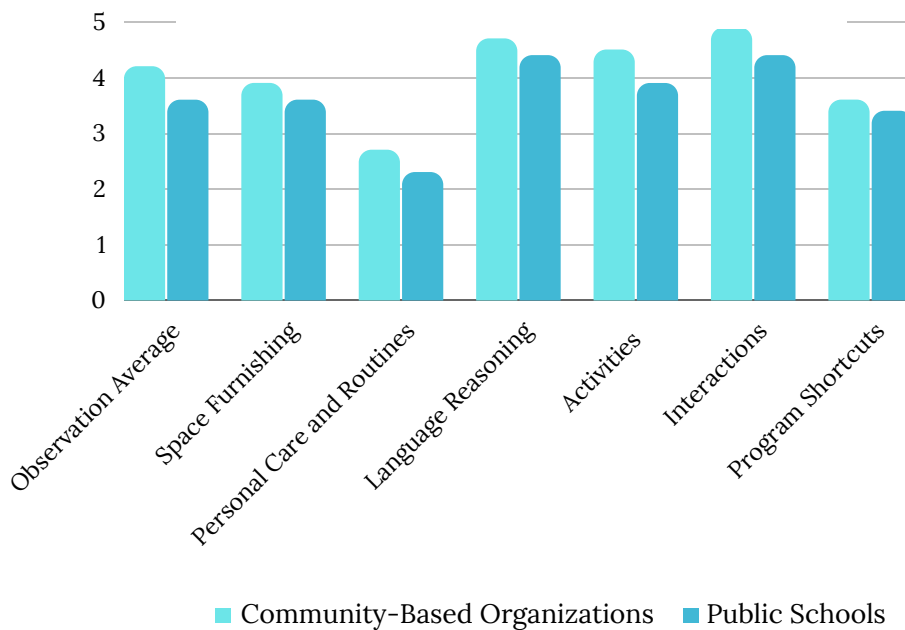
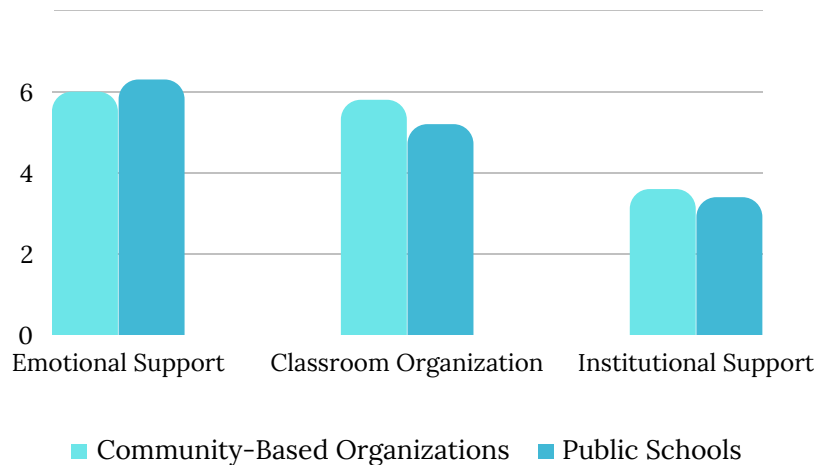


Fig. 2: Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CASS) Results



CBOs are more likely to serve Black families and dual-language families, and the quality of care at CBOs demonstrably surpasses that of public schools.¹⁰ Despite the myriad of advantages available to early learners at CBOs, the staff, teachers, and directors at these sites do not receive compensation commensurate with their public school peers.

Similarly, a 2020 report from the University of California, Berkeley, maintained that community-based programs delivered higher-quality education than their counterparts at city public schools. This study, published in *Early Education & Development*, also found CBO advantages across multiple metrics.¹¹

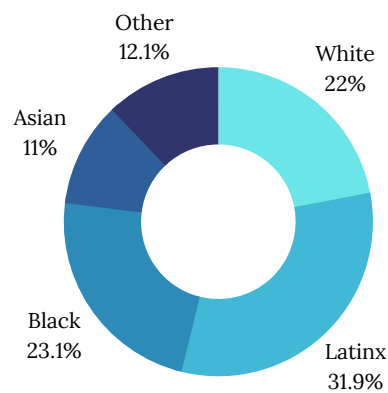
III. New York City's Early Childhood Workforce

In New York City, women of color comprise the overwhelming majority of the early care and education workforce. In fact, women of color are more heavily represented in the workforce of community-based early care and education programs than they are in the K-12 workforce.¹²

The teachers, staff, and directors at community-based early childhood centers remain underpaid through a legacy of discriminatory policies that devalue the work of women, particularly women of color. Every member of the early care and education workforce—whether they be teachers, directors, custodians, cooks, or support staff—takes responsibility for the safety and growth of New York City's most precious asset: its children. Yet, many of the lowest-paid child care staff earn wages less than they would if they transitioned to working in the fast food or retail industries.

In fact, many leave their roles because they can no longer afford to work within the early childhood field.

Fig. 3: Racial Composition of the Early Childhood Workforce in NYC

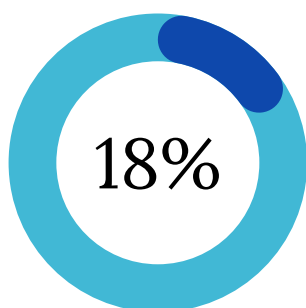


The majority of early childhood education workers in New York City are women of color.

Source: Raising New York: New York State's Infant Toddler Workforce. https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/State-of-the-Childcare-Report_F_3.17.2021.pdf March, 2021

IV. The Staffing Crisis in Child Care Programs

Intense staffing shortages at early care centers lead to an over-extended workforce. Directors and teachers often wear multiple hats, filling in as cooks, substitutes, and janitors in order to keep centers afloat amid such vacancies. To better understand staffing challenges, the Day Care Council of New York and allied organizations track shortages and measure the impact of this operational hurdle.¹³



In a 2021 DCCNY survey about Center Directors, 18% of centers with DOE contracts reported that they used outside funds to enhance their directors' salaries.

Caring adults play a critical role in supporting children's social, emotional, and intellectual development. Child care centers want to retain staff committed to the children, families, and communities they serve. Still, much of the early childhood workforce at CBOs remain transient. In NYC, staff often depart for similar positions with NYCPS, or pivot to higher-paying opportunities in other industries, often taking on entry-level roles.

In 2023, DCCNY surveyed its members and found that 83% of DCCNY centers dealt with staff vacancies in the past year. Among that 83%, nearly a quarter of respondents experienced seven or more vacancies in a single year.

A March 2023 study by Empire State Campaign for Child Care and Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy that surveyed child care programs across New York State indicated that staffing challenges prompted a state-wide child care crisis. Of the 1,660 respondents:

- 90% of child care centers are short-staffed,
- 766 classrooms closed in community-based child care centers and after-school programs because centers could not find staff,
- 3,857 contended with unfilled staff positions, and
- 28,462 children could not receive care because of the workforce shortage.¹⁴

90%

of child care centers are short-staffed

776

CBO classrooms closed because centers could not find staff

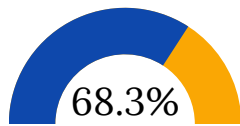
With 98% of occupations paying more than child care in New York City, workers at all levels in the CBO system struggle with the decision to stay in their jobs.

Region	Child Care Median Annual Wage	Overall Median Annual Wage	% of Occupations that Pay More than Child Care	Difference in Salary
New York State	\$31,885	\$50,850	97%	\$18,965
Capital Region	\$30,680	\$49,681	97%	\$19,001
Central New York	\$30,036	\$48,818	99%	\$18,782
Finger Lakes	\$30,529	\$48,132	96%	\$17,603
Hudson Valley	\$35,788	\$49,910	94%	\$14,122
Long Island	\$32,752	\$50,269	97%	\$17,517
Mohawk Valley	\$30,971	\$40,450	92%	\$9,479
New York City	\$35,491	\$62,820	98%	\$27,329
North Country	\$29,889	\$46,211	99%	\$16,322
Southern Tier	\$31,181	\$48,426	93%	\$17,245
Western New York	\$30,326	\$47,764	97%	\$17,432

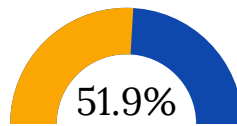
Fig. 4: Child care wages in New York by Region¹⁵

Despite the recruitment and retention challenges, most child care centers have at least one long-standing employee. A 2023 DCCNY survey indicated that 43.1% of sites include a staff member serving at the same location for over 20 years. Further, at a significant proportion of sites, 25.2% of the staff, teachers, and directors stay at the same center between ten and twenty years.

Still, there is a trend toward early-career attrition. 51.9% of centers report that their newly-recruited CBO teachers, on average, leave their teaching roles at a site within five years.¹⁶



68.3% of child care centers include a staff member serving ten or more years working at the site



51.9% of centers report that, on average, their newly-recruited child care teachers leave within five years

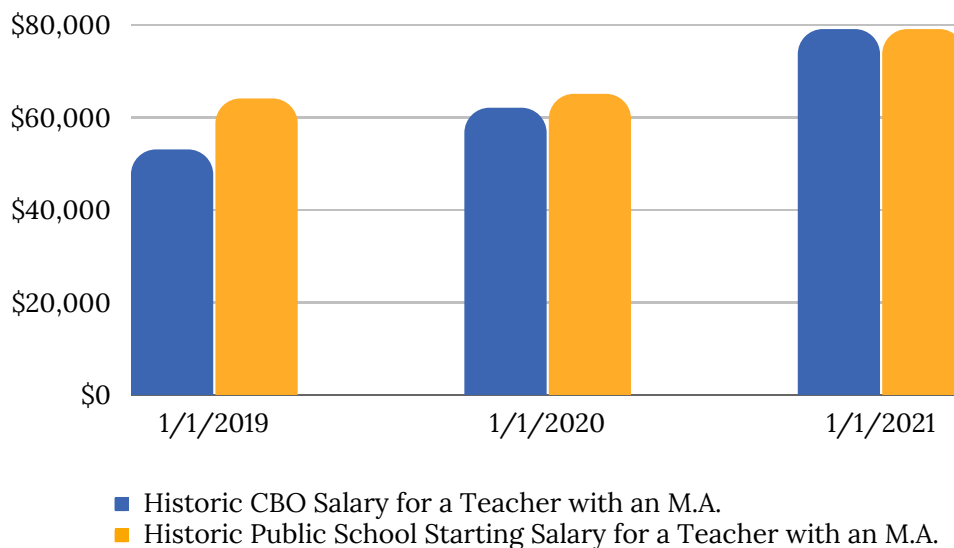
In a system where many centers face retirement cliffs, the inability to retain newly recruited staff presents a significant operational challenge.

V. The 2019 "Path to Parity" and Next Steps

In 2019, the City made an historic commitment toward a path to salary parity for educators at community-based organizations. While this agreement represented a significant first step, the work remains unfinished. With the 2019 labor agreements now expired, the City must act in the FY 2024 Budget Year to truly achieve salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

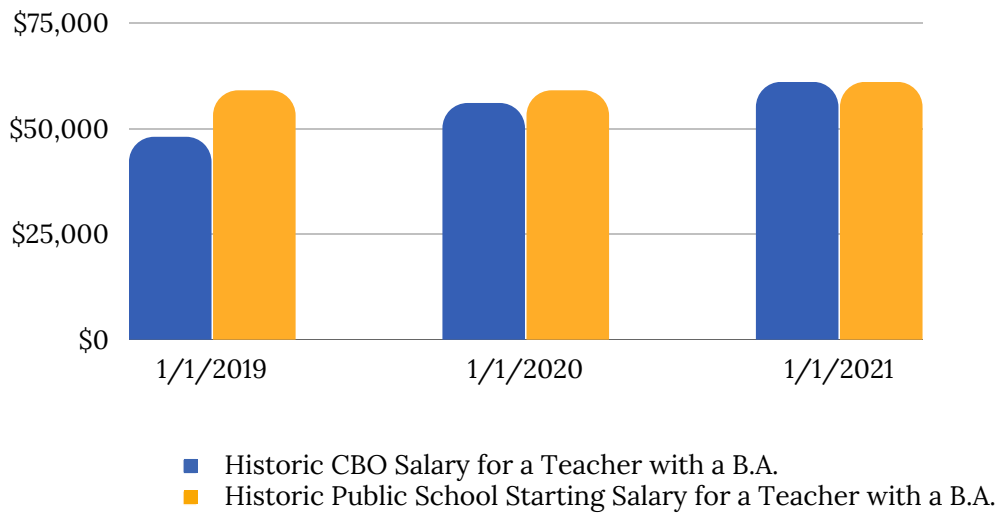
As of September 2020, certified teachers in community-based organizations earn salaries on-par with the starting salaries of teachers in the public schools. Community-based organizations do not receive the longevity increases available to public school teachers, nor do their salaries increase annually; automatic COLAs were excluded from the 2019 agreement.

Fig. 5: Result of "Path to Parity" on CBO Teachers' Starting Salaries



V. The 2019 "Path to Parity" and Next Steps

Fig. 6: Result of "Path to Parity" on CBO Teachers' Starting Salaries



A certified early childhood educator in a community-based organization may earn only 53% of what a similarly-experienced certified teacher earns in a public school.

Over a 25-year career, a certified teacher at a CBO will sacrifice more than \$700,000 in earning power by staying in the center-based system. This stark disparity presents a constant challenge to organizations looking to retain teachers with years of developed expertise.

The unfinished work of salary parity also includes supplementing the salaries of directors and support staff in community-based early childhood programs. Directors continue to receive significantly lower salaries than their counterparts working in public schools. Many centers struggle to retain directors, since directors could earn more as a DOE ECE teacher than as a community-based center director.

V. The 2019 "Path to Parity" and Next Steps

The time to act is now.

New York City must fund new collective bargaining agreements that bring the workforce in community-based organizations to true parity with their counterparts in public schools.



VI. Salary Disparity By the Numbers

The City's 2019 "Path to Parity" agreement brought CBO teacher salaries to par with the *starting salaries* at public schools. Without longevity and COLA included, this pay chasm remains wide.

\$2.2M

Directors at CBOs stand to lose more than \$2.2 million over the course of a 25-year career by remaining at a CBO.

\$1.7M

Certified Teachers with a Master's Degree at CBOs stand to lose more than \$1.7 million over the course of a 25-year career by remaining at a CBO.

\$235K

Assistant Teachers at CBOs stand to lose more than \$235,000 over the course of a 25-year career by remaining at a CBO.

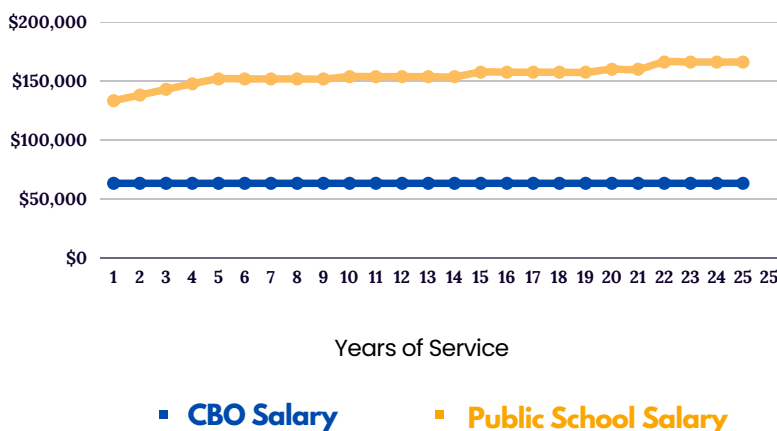
Directors

Child care directors are responsible for the oversight and management of every aspect of a child care program. In addition to their administrative functions, directors often perform other duties, including managing finances and subbing in classrooms. Their range of responsibilities and required expertise is extensive and includes:

- Supporting teachers and other classroom staff in implementing developmentally-appropriate and educational classroom activities;
- Ensuring compliance with health codes and other performance standards;
- Liaising with other NYC agencies, such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Fire Department, and building inspectors;
- Communicating with parents and leading strategies for recruiting families; and
- Managing expenses and cash flow to maintain the fiscal health of the organization.

Most early childhood directors work in community-based organizations that have contracts with NYC Public Schools Division of Early Childhood Education. A smaller number of directors work for NYC Public Schools in sites that NYCPS itself manages. Those directors whose sites are operated by NYC Public Schools are paid significantly more than directors performing the same job in sites where NYCPS contracts with a community-based organization.

Fig. 7: Salary Disparities Over Time for a Director



\$2.2m

CBO directors lose out on more than \$2.2 million of income over a 25-year career by staying with a CBO.

\$90k

After 10 years, Public School Directors make \$90,000 a year more than CBO directors.

Directors

Unequal from the Start:

For a CBO Director, the starting salary is just \$62,090. NYCPS Directors who manage standalone child care programs operated by NYC Public Schools receive salaries starting at \$133,375.

Disparities Increase Over Time:

These already-stark disparities increase over time. After ten years, the disparity for directors with a Master's Degree rises from \$71,825 to \$91,648.

A lifetime of lost earning:

A CBO Director with a 25-year career will lose \$2,279,802 over the course of their career by working in a community based organization instead of NYCPS.



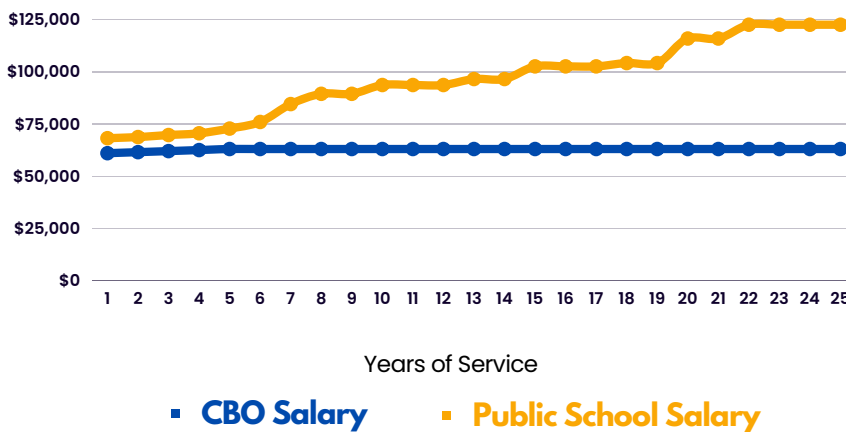
Teachers

Successful early childhood programs depend on the caring and educational interactions between children and teachers. In community-based child care programs, New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulations require a certified teacher or a teacher working toward certification to be on site at all times when children are present.

Teachers' responsibilities include:

- Developing lesson plans and classroom activities;
- Supervising assistant teachers, Teacher's Aides, and other support staff;
- Evaluating the developmental needs of each child and ensuring that educational activities meet their needs.

Fig. 8: Salary Disparities Over Time for a Teacher with a Bachelor's Degree



\$692k

A certified teacher with a Bachelor's Degree will lose \$692,475 over the course of a 25-year career by working in a community-based organization instead of a public school.

\$30k

After 10 years, certified teachers with a Bachelor's Degree at CBOs make \$30,000 less per year than public school teachers with similar qualifications.

In both public schools and community-based organizations, certified teachers with Master's Degrees are paid higher salaries than teachers with Bachelor's Degrees. However, due to longevity increases for teachers in public schools, a teacher with a Bachelor's Degree and four years of experience in a NYCPS-based program will earn \$12,370 more in just one year than a Teacher with a Master's Degree in a community-based organization.

The 2019 Path to Parity Agreement brought the annual starting salaries of teachers in community-based organizations to parity with the annual **starting salaries** of teachers in public schools. The agreements did not account for:

- A longer work year in many community-based programs that do not have summers off, requiring 12 months of work rather than the NYCPS standard of 10 working months per year;
- Benefits including health insurance, dental, and pension, which remain unequal; or
- Longevity increases which account for 43.3% of the most veteran teacher’s salaries.

When the City agreed to fund the 2019 Path to Parity Agreement, the starting salary for a certified teacher with a Master’s Degree was \$17,168 less than the starting salary of a teacher in a public school. For a teacher with a Bachelor’s Degree, there was a \$17,435 gap in annual starting salaries. These gaps closed through a series of salary adjustments occurring in October 2019, 2020, and 2021. This brought the starting salaries to \$68,652 for a teacher with a Master’s Degree and \$61,070 for a teacher with a Bachelor’s degree.

While an important step toward parity, the 2019 agreement did not complete the task. Now is the time for the city to fulfill its commitment to those who educate and care for the youngest New Yorkers.

Disparities Increase Over Time:

Over time, these disparities widen significantly. After ten years, a certified teacher with a Bachelor's Degree in a CBO will earn \$23,210 less than her or his counterpart in a public school.

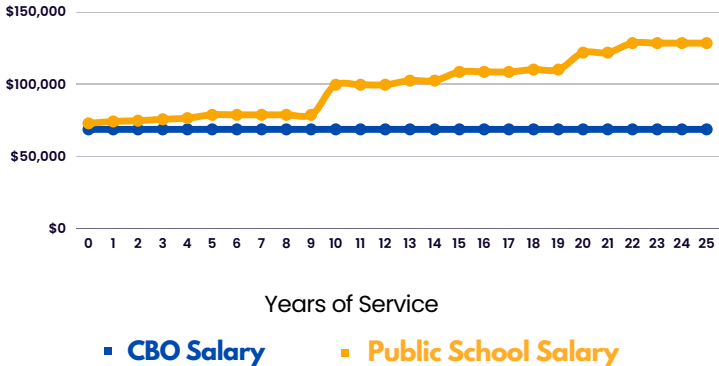
\$1.7m

A certified teacher with a Master’s Degree will lose \$1,716,300 over the course of a 25-year career by working in a community-based organization instead of a public school.

\$30k

After 10 years, certified teachers with a Master's degree at CBOs make \$30,000 less per year than public school teachers with similar qualifications.

Fig. 9: Salary Disparities Over Time for a Certified Teacher with a Master's Degree

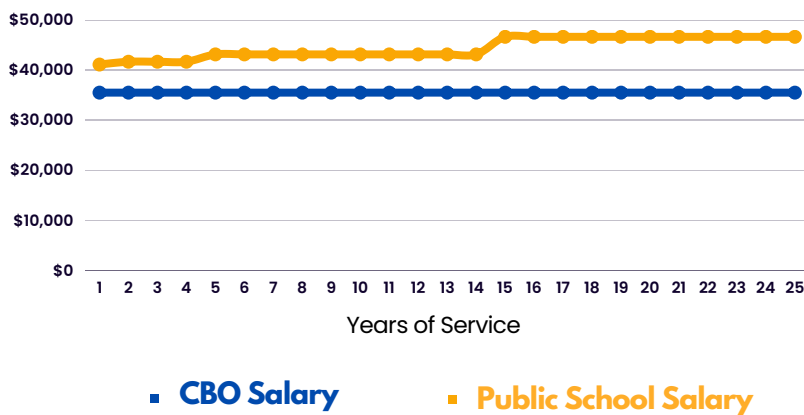


Assistant Teachers

Assistant Teachers are essential for providing the individual attention young children need. Typical job duties of an assistant teacher job duties include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting a head teacher or education director in the planning and implementation of developmentally appropriate curricula;
- Inspecting children for signs of injury or illness;
- Ensuring compliance with children’s Individualized Education Program (IEP); and
- Supervising the classroom when the teachers is engaged in other activities.

Fig. 10: Salary Disparities Over Time for Assistant Teachers



\$235k

An assistant teacher at a CBO will lose \$235,622 over the course of a 25-year career by working in a community-based organization instead of a public school.

\$7k

After 10 years, assistant teachers with a Bachelor’s degree at CBOs make \$7,632 less per year than public school teachers with similar qualifications.

Assistant Teachers in community-based organizations perform comparable work and have similar qualifications to the Assistant Teachers in public schools. In public schools, Assistant Teachers must have a Level 1 New York State Education Department Certificate, which requires a high school degree or equivalent, but not college credits.¹⁷

In community-based organizations, assistant teachers are required to have a high school degree or equivalent and pass background checks through both the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

PART III

Appendix

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A note on salary data used for charts and graphs: The charts in this report compare salaries from several collective bargaining agreements:

- The NYC Department of Education's Agreement with United Federation of Teachers ratified July 10th, 2023 <https://www.uft.org/your-rights/contracts/contract-2023/contract-2023-salary-schedules>. This agreement covers teachers and staff in public schools
- The Day Care Council of New York and District Council 37 Local 205 Agreement signed on July 3rd, 2019. This agreement covers teachers and staff working in community-based child care programs operating under contracts with New York City Department of Education.
- The New York City Department of Education Contract with the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators salary schedule for early childhood directors. This agreement covers directors working for the Department of Education leading DOE-operated child care centers.
- The Day Care Council of New York Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators signed February 13th, 2017.