

Early Care & Education

Education-based salary bonus program motivates teacher to become a knowledgeable early childhood professional

Shartarka Carmon, lead teacher at Primary Colors Day Care, sums up her commitment to early childhood education simply with, "I just love kids."

Shartarka, who has worked in the child care industry for nearly nine years, says her love for kids comes with challenges as today she works full-time, goes to school full-time, and is a single mother.

However, Shartarka's initial goal of completing minimum required early childhood credentials has extended to four years working to earn her associate's degree in Early Childhood thanks to education-based salary supplements through The Child Care WAGES[®] Project.

The program is funded in Durham County through Durham's Partnership for Children and delivered through Child Care Services Association. The national program provides education-based salary supplements to teachers, directors, and family child care providers working with children ages 0 to 5. The supplements help early childhood educators pay for school and help augment child care salaries which are typically half of earnings of teachers working in public schools across North Carolina.

The project also is designed to provide preschool children more stable relationships with better educated teachers by rewarding teacher education and continuity of care to address the high turnover rate which in North Carolina averages 24 percent.

"The supplements help encourage educated providers to stay in their programs, which benefits children because continuity of care is an important factor in high-quality child care. Many are also increasing their levels of education to access higher supplement awards, and they are sharing this knowledge with their classrooms. It's a win-win situation," says WAGES[®] Project Counselor Samantha Rochelle.

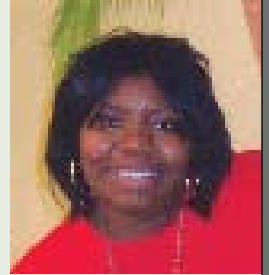
Shartarka learned about WAGES[®] through a co-worker nearly four years ago. After contacting a counselor with WAGES[®], Shartarka was soon on a professional development track. Before entering the program, she had only taken two classes in early childhood education, now she sees the benefits beyond the classroom.

"WAGES[®] has helped me do terrific things," Shartarka explained. "Going back to school allowed me to get access to more resources to help improve my classroom. And it's also helped me to become a better parent to my daughter."

Shartarka's experience seeking higher education and building her competencies as a lead teacher has inspired her to continue towards a bachelor's degree after she earns her associate's degree.

As she works hard to increase her own education, she acknowledges that the salary supplements really make a difference, but that in the end it is all being done on behalf of the children. She encourages others to do the same by not just stopping at getting Early Childhood Credentials I & II, but by advancing their own education.

In Fiscal Year 2006–2007, Durham's Partnership for Children investment in Child Care WAGES[®] Project enabled 486 child care professionals to work towards their higher education goals and remain teaching in their facilities providing continuity of care for several thousand children.



Shartarka Carmon