

Compensation Philosophy and Recruitment and Retention Practices

Compensation Philosophy

Early Connections Learning Centers recognizes that employees are critical to the success of our mission. Early Connections intends to attract, retain and motivate the best-qualified employees by establishing a compensation program in which rewards are based on individual, team and overall organizational performance.

There are several reasons an employee may choose to work for Early Connections which include the satisfaction of working with children and an opportunity to share a passion for education and comprehensive support services. But, compensation and benefits are important factors and they are central to our philosophy that the compensation and benefits element be viewed as a positive one.

Early Connections compensation and benefits package is designed to:

- Attract and retain highly-qualified individuals
- Recognize each employee's contributions
- Establish internal equity
- Ensure external competitiveness

Early Connections reviews the compensation program regularly to:

- Determine our position to comparable organizations in the child care industry and the community in which we operate
- Establish salary ranges which reflect the value of the various positions
- Ensure that compensation is not influenced by sex, age, race, color, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or any other category protected by law

Compensation Administration

Salary

Each position at Early Connections is assigned to a salary range* based on:

- The scope of the position's responsibilities
- The knowledge and skills required
- Market data

In determining individual pay rates, Early Connections may consider criteria such as:

- Nature of the assigned position
- Contribution and sustained level of performance
- Length of employment
- Staff qualification
- Employee participation, team performance and drive toward continuous improvement in the quality of all processes and products
- Financial condition of the employer
- Comparisons with similar organizations
- Other factors, as appropriate

*See attached Salary Scale

Benefits

Early Connections recognizes that a comprehensive compensation package includes a full range of Employee Benefits. The Employee Benefit package is reviewed annually to determine effectiveness of support to Staff.

Employee Benefits include:

- Paid Vacation, Sick leave, Anniversary Leave, United Way Leave, Emergency Leave, Domestic Abuse Leave, Bereavement Leave
- Eleven Paid Holidays per year
- Medical, Dental and Vision Insurance – Early Connections contributes to employee medical premium
- \$300 HRA if you participate in the medical plan
- 15K of Paid Life Insurance
- 40 hour work weeks
- M-F schedules
- Retirement Plan/401K
- A full range of voluntary benefits including:
 - Short Term Disability,
 - Cancer Insurance Policy,
 - Accident Insurance
- One day off with pay on hire anniversary
- Get Well Center for Staff's children so they do not have to miss work,
- Reduced Childcare Tuition
- Paid planning time
- Paid on-going professional development to enhance job growth
- Curriculum and Instruction coaching and support
- Behavioral Health training and support
- Tuition Reimbursement Program
- School scholarships available through CPCD – Giving Children a Head Start for teachers in partnership classrooms
- The ability to convert unused sick leave to vacation leave
- CPR/FA certification
- Teachers DO NOT have to purchase supplies for their classroom,
- Literacy Lending Library (Curriculum Boxes to support classroom instruction,)

Recruitment Strategies

Bonus Program

Early Connections funds employee sign-on bonuses for new hires and referral bonuses for Staff referring teachers to our organization.

The staff bonuses are available after six month of employment with the program. The following is the current bonus implementation process:

- \$250 teacher sign-on bonus after six months of employment
- \$1000 director sign-on bonus (\$500 at 6 months and \$500 at 12 months)
- \$250 referral bonus after six months of employment for referred hire

Retention Strategies

Early Connections believes that all employees should have opportunities to grow, advance and improve their work experience. Teacher turnover is a real concern for the early care and education profession. It is imperative that programs provide consistent high quality staff to work with children and families. Children deserve to have well trained and committed staff in all aspects of the early care and education profession. Early Connections has developed the following process to retain staff but as importantly allow teachers to grow into their field, feel confident in their work and become leaders in the field of Early Education.

Staff Onboarding

New Staff complete a comprehensive orientation process which begins on the first day of employment and continues for the first four months of employment. New staff are given an orientation manual divided into 15 sections designed to target specific areas of the program (Required Trainings, NAEYC/Ethics, Health, Nutrition, Curriculum/Assessment, Classroom Operations, Behavioral Health, Facilities, Infant/Toddler, Families, Home Visits/Conferences, Partnerships, Subs/Volunteers, Quality Program, and State Rules and Regulations). Each area contains policies, procedures, and sample forms. Several sections are reviewed prior to the new employee working directly with children. A member of our leadership team (Director, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Curriculum/Instruction Coordinator, Behavioral Health Specialist, and Mentor Teacher) goes through their specific sections with the employee to ensure the information is clear and questions are answered. New Staff spend one week in a mentor classroom with a Mentor Teacher allowing the new Staff to experience a 'real' classroom environment and gain a better understanding of the routines, curriculum, and goals of our program.

Continuous Support

Children who are nurtured and taught by sensitive and well-trained teachers and caregivers are more likely to progress toward both developmental and academic goals and are more ready to enter kindergarten. Undoubtedly, the quality of children's experiences depends on the knowledge, skills and experience of the people who work with them. As the professional interests and the demands of the early childhood field change, it is important to evaluate and expand skills and knowledge. The Professional Development Plan is designed to meet the individual needs of Staff and help them build on skill to improve staff credentials and competencies.

Program Staff are required by the Colorado Department of Human Services to receive a minimum of 15 hours of ongoing professional development per year.

Early Connections Professional Development Plan is determined annually in several ways:

- Staff surveys on training topics that are most interesting to teachers
- Goals selected by staff during the annual appraisal process
- The Quality Improvement Plan created based on an annual program evaluation
- Reflective Practice Observations completed by Center Directors

PDIS (Professional Development Information System) – The PDIS is a web-based system supporting career and professional development for Colorado’s early childhood workforce. The system supports individual professionals, provides online self-paced courses, connects professionals with and tracks training and education, and calculates state credentials.

- The state wide credentialing system is managed through the PDIS. State Credentials (I-VI) are awarded on a point system. Points are earned for years of experience, higher education, professional development hours, and demonstrated competencies.
- PDIS training categories include:
 - Child Growth and Development,
 - Child Observation and Assessment,
 - Children with High Needs, Coaching,
 - Colorado Shines Level 2 Courses,
 - Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation,
 - Espanola,
 - Face to Face,
 - Family and Community Partnerships,
 - General Professional Development,
 - Guidance,
 - Health, Safety, and Nutrition,
 - Learning about Infants and Toddlers,
 - Online,
 - Pre-Service and/or Required Trainings,
 - Professional Development and Leadership,
 - Program Planning and Development,
 - Social and Emotional Development,
 - Teaching Practices,
 - Training and Trainer Support

Child Development Associate (CDA) – Early Connections offer CDA classes twice per month. The CDA program is offered year round so employees can start the process at any time. Our Curriculum/Instruction Coordinators are CDA Professional Development Specialists and provide support and direction to staff striving for the credential.

College Information Nights – Prior to each semester Early Connections hosts college information night for staff to meet advisors from Pikes Peak Community College and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. A representative from the Alliance for Kids Office of Professional Development is also present to assist staff with scholarship applications. Staff receive \$150 tuition reimbursement for each pre-approved college class completed with a “C” or better. The reimbursement also applies to CDA and other forms of trainings that support the continued growth of the employee.

Early Connections Required Trainings – All center staff are required to attend/participate in several specific trainings in their first year of employment. These trainings are:

- Standard Precautions (annually)
- Teaching Strategies GOLD (monthly)
- Creative Storybook Journey Orientation / DAP (offered monthly)
- Diversity and Special Needs (offered 6 times per year)
- Working as Part of a Team and Leadership Development (offered 6 times per year)

Pyramid Plus – Pyramid Plus is a framework for supporting children with social/emotional challenges. It is offered twice per year and is a series of 10 classes (46 hours).

In-Service Trainings – In-Service Trainings are determined annually. During the appraisal process staff complete a survey indicating the professional development topics in which they are most interested in gaining knowledge and skills. These trainings are incorporated into the CDA classes and the staff that indicated interest are invited to attend.

Center Trainings – One-on-one and/or group trainings are provided to staff monthly. During the appraisal process the staff reflect on their interests and career goals. An individualized Professional Development Plan is developed and used to guide trainings and higher education.

Ethics – A review of the Code of Ethical Conduct is reviewed quarterly. An ethical dilemma is presented and discussed at the centers' staff meetings in March, June, September, and December.

Coaching – Staff receive on going coaching monthly by the Center Director. Monthly coaching is based on the employee's individual professional development plan. Coaching is also provided quarterly by a curriculum/instruction coordinator.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) – PLCs are small groups of staff with a common goal. The groups meet to learn from each other and grow as professionals. Groups change annually depending on the interests of the staff. The following is an example of a PLC:

- Center Administration Prep PLC – designed for staff that are director qualified and interested in becoming a Director in their career. The goal is to provide leadership skills that will help build successful strategies in preparation for a position in administration.

Reflective Supervision – Early Connections offers two Reflective Supervision groups that meet to provide ongoing support and conversations around a specific topics. Currently the reflective practice groups are focusing on:

- Pyramid Plus Coaches Group
- Pyramid Plus Teachers that have completed the full year of coaching

Teacher Representative Group – Early Connections provides this opportunity for leadership development for a staff member from each center to provide information and feedback to Early Connections Administrative Leadership. Members gather information from co-workers and bring their thoughts to the Teacher Rep Meeting. This information is used to educate Early Connections leadership on issues, concerns, and perspectives from each center. This is valuable for guiding program policies and procedures.

Ongoing Professional Development/Support – Early Connections provides specific professional development on an ongoing basis. These include:

- Ethics – Quarterly the director will pose an ethical dilemma for teachers to discuss at staff meetings.
- Teaching Strategies GOLD – Once per month Early Connections hosts a GOLD Night for teachers to receive a 30 minute training and time to gather, input, and discuss data.
- Reflective Practice Observations – Center Directors conduct an observation in each classroom monthly and review it with the teachers assisted to that classroom.
- Coaching – Center Directors are coaches for all education staff. They spend their days working directly with teachers to coach, mentor, and help teachers improve their skills. The Curriculum/Instruction Coordinators also conduct classroom observations and provide coaching during classroom planning times.

Community Professional Development – The El Paso county Early Childhood Council, Alliance for Kids, offers monthly trainings on a variety of topics. A calendar is posted on the staff Professional Development Boards at each center for teachers to review.

Administration Development – Individualized Professional Development Plans are created for Center Directors. Additional coursework, workshops, credentials are targeted for each director. Examples may be:

- State Coaching Credential
- State Trainers Credential
- Pyramid Plus Coaching Credential
- CLASS Assessor Credential
- Environmental Rating Scale Reviewer
- Data-Based Decision Making – Clayton Early Learning
- Embedded Professional Development – Clayton Early Learning.

All of the strategies that have been developed by Early Connections are not relevant if the Leadership does not evaluate regularly, provide feedback to Staff and improve upon those opportunities for growth.

Work Climate Assessment

Early Connections recognizes that the work climate of our Organization is important in employee satisfaction and commitment to the mission and values. Early Connections conducts an annual climate survey specific to early education*. After the survey data are compiled results are shared with staff at each site. Employees at each site then develop specific goals to improve the climate for their teachers.

*See attached summary

