# WORTHY WAGES

*Why Every ECE Program Needs a Salary Scale*

**Dr. Tamar Andrews, EdD**

American Jewish University | Early Childhood Education

Webinar

## Welcome — About Today's Presenter

### Dr. Tamar Andrews, EdD

- 40+ years in ECE & child welfare
- Author
- Preschool director
- PD trainer for early childhood educators
- Expert witness, ECE child care/custody cases
- University professor

### What We'll Cover Today

1. The ECE retention crisis & what research tells us
2. Why salary scales are the answer
3. The 5-Level teacher framework
4. Building your salary scale step-by-step
5. Weighted scoring — education, years, performance
6. Finding the money to fund higher wages
7. How to talk to your board & make the case
8. Implementation tips & live Q&A

# Part 1

## The Retention Crisis in ECE

## The Numbers Don't Lie

**40%**
of ECE teachers leave within the first year

**$600B+**
economic cost of poor-quality child care annually (US)

**$14.22**
median hourly wage for child care workers (BLS 2023)

*Meanwhile — qualified teachers are choosing other fields where they can earn a living wage.*

## What Research Tells Us About Teacher Retention

**Intrinsic Motivation Grows — But Needs Feeding**

Teachers who stay long-term do so because of purpose, mastery, and connection — intrinsic motivation. But even the most passionate teacher cannot pay rent on passion alone.

Research shows that when basic compensation needs are unmet, even deep vocational commitment erodes over time.

*Chiong, Menzies & Parameshwaran (2017). British Educational Research Journal.*

**What Long-Serving Teachers Need:**

- ✓ Sense of purpose & mission
- ✓ Opportunity for growth & mastery
- ✓ Autonomy in the classroom
- ✓ Recognition & appreciation
- ✓ Collaboration with colleagues
- ★ **AND — fair, predictable compensation**

## Why Teachers Leave: The Top 10 Complaints

1. Abusive or unsupportive directors
2. Unfair or inappropriate assignments
3. Inadequate classroom supplies
4. Ad hoc, inconsistent discipline policies
5. No time to collaborate with colleagues
6. No opportunities for professional growth
7. Excluded from decision-making
8. Lack of appreciation & recognition
9. Insufficient onboarding time for new teachers
10. Too much oversight of experienced educators

## What Does Teacher Turnover Actually Cost You?

**50–200%**

of annual salary
per teacher lost

*Source: Center for American Progress*

**Recruitment**

Job postings, admin time, background checks

**Onboarding**

Training, orientation, paperwork, mentoring

**Lost Quality**

Instability harms children's learning & wellbeing

**Reputation**

Word spreads — families choose other programs

*A salary scale is not a cost — it's your most powerful retention investment.*

# Part 2

## What Is a Salary Scale — and Why Does It Work?

## What Is a Salary Scale?

*"A salary scale is a structured, transparent system that determines how teachers are compensated based on clearly defined, objective criteria — not on who asks loudest or who you like best."*

**Equity & Fairness**

Every teacher is evaluated on the same objective criteria

**Transparency**

Staff always know where they stand and how to advance

**Retention Power**

Teachers stay when they see a clear, rewarding career path

**Director Confidence**

You have data to back every compensation decision

# Part 3

## The 5-Level Teacher Framework

10

## Five Levels of Teaching Excellence

| Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Entry* | *Developing* | *Proficient* | *Advanced* | *Expert* |
| **New to the Field** | **Assistant / Teacher-in-Training** | **Lead Teacher** | **Lead Teacher + Mentor** | **Lead Teacher + Admin** |
| Learning the basics; needs close mentoring and support | Growing skills; stepping into lead role responsibilities | Independently runs a high-quality classroom | Supports colleagues' growth alongside their own classroom | Shares leadership responsibilities; partner in program quality |

11

## Why Levels Matter — Clarity Creates Motivation

**Without Levels:**

✗ Raises feel arbitrary & political
✗ No clear path to advancement
✗ Experienced teachers resent new hires
✗ You can't explain your decisions
✗ Trust erodes over time

**With Levels:**

✓ Every teacher knows exactly where they stand
✓ Clear criteria for moving forward
✓ Peer mentoring is built into the culture
✓ Decisions are data-driven and defensible
✓ Trust and morale improve

12

# Part 4

## Building Your Salary Scale: The 4 Factors



## The 4 Factors That Drive Salary Increases

Each factor is scored 0–5 and carries a weight that reflects its importance in your program's values:

**🏫 Teaching Level** — 20%

Which of the 5 levels does the teacher currently hold? Level 1–5 score.

**🎓 Education & Courses** — 20%

ECE units, AA, BA, MA — scored 1–5 on a defined rubric.

**🗓️ Years at Your Center** — 10%

Loyalty matters. Longer tenure earns a higher score.

**⭐ Performance Review** — 50%

The most important factor. Formal evaluation on a 1–5 scale.



## The Scoring Rubric — Turning Criteria Into Numbers

| Score | Teaching Level | Education | Years at Center | Performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Entry (New to field) | 0–12 ECE units | 0–1 years | Probationary |
| 2 | Developing (Asst.) | 12–24 units | 1–2 years | Below Expectations |
| 3 | Proficient (Lead) | 24 units / AA | 2–5 years | Meets Expectations |
| 4 | Advanced (Mentor) | BA degree | 5–8 years | Exceeds Expectations |
| 5 | Expert (Lead+Admin) | MA degree | 8+ years | Significantly Exceeds |

Weighted Score = (Level × 0.20) + (Education × 0.20) + (Years × 0.10) + (Performance × 0.50) | Max Raise = 7%

## Setting Salary Bands by Level

Salary bands define the range for each level — giving structure without being rigid:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Level 1 Entry** | *New to field* | $13 – $16/hr |
| **Level 2 Developing** | *Asst. / in-training* | $16 – $24/hr |
| **Level 3 Proficient** | *Lead teacher* | $24 – $34/hr |
| **Level 4 Advanced** | *Lead + Mentor* | $34 – $37/hr |
| **Level 5 Expert** | *Lead + Admin* | $37+/hr |

***Tip: Review and adjust bands annually. Share them openly with all staff.***

16

## The Formula in Action — A Real Example

*Teacher: Lead teacher, BA degree, 6 years*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teaching Level (Level 3) | 3.0 | × 0.20 | = |
| Education (BA) | 4.0 | × 0.20 | = |
| Years at Center (5–8 yrs) | 4.0 | × 0.10 | = |
| Performance (Exceeds) | 4.0 | × 0.50 | = |

**Weighted Score: 3.80 out of 5**

Raise: (3.80 ÷ 5) × 7% = 5.32%

**What This Means:**

✓ Transparent — teacher can verify the math
✓ Objective — based on documented criteria
✓ Motivating — score of 4 instead of 3 means a bigger raise
✓ Consistent — applied the same way to everyone
✓ Defensible — you can explain every decision

**Your spreadsheet does all this math automatically!**

17

# Part 5

## Finding the Money — Funding Higher Wages

18

## Where Can the Money Come From?

### Go Year-Round

Move from 10-month to 12-month calendar — charge 12-month tuition, pay 12-month salaries. Teachers earn more; families get consistent care.

### Reallocate Supplies Budget

Go zero-waste. Reduce consumable purchasing. Redirect those dollars to salaries — teachers appreciate fair pay more than new craft supplies.

### Leverage Technology

Apps like Playground, HiMama, and Instacart Business save admin time and supply costs, freeing budget. Time saved = money saved.

### Revisit Benefits Structure

Offer teachers a choice: full benefits OR opt-out stipend. If 40% don't use health insurance, redirect that premium cost.

### Apply for ECE Grants & Subsidies

CCDBG, Child Care Stabilization funds, state pre-K grants, and JCC/synagogue foundation grants can supplement wages directly.

### Make Your Case to the Board

A congregation or board that values equity must practice it. Present turnover costs vs. salary scale investment — the math makes the case.

19

## Beyond the Paycheck — Non-Salary Compensation

*Remember: benefits cost the center ~23% more than the salary amount — use them strategically!*

### Pay for Degrees

Tuition reimbursement for ECE courses creates loyalty and raises their scoring rubric level

### Pay for PD

Conference attendance, webinars, and coaching — invest in their growth, invest in your program

### Planning Time

Protected weekly prep time tells teachers their professionalism matters

### Extra PTO

Bonus days off for high performance scorers — low cost, high value

### Resource Access

Curated music playlists, shared lesson libraries, teaching toolkits — make their job easier

### Voice & Autonomy

Budget control over classroom supplies; input into curriculum decisions

20

# Part 6

## Making It Real — Implementation & Advocacy

21

## How to Implement Your Salary Scale — 6 Steps

**1 Define Your 5 Levels**

Write clear, observable descriptions for each level — involve teachers in the process

**2 Build Your Rubric**

Set the 0–5 scoring criteria for education, years, performance, and level

**3 Set Your Weights**

Decide what matters most in your program — adjust the 4 factor weights accordingly

**4 Create Salary Bands**

Establish minimum/maximum ranges for each level based on your budget reality

**5 Share It Transparently**

Give every teacher a copy; walk through it at a staff meeting; celebrate it!

**6 Commit to Annual Review**

Review bands and weights each year; adjust for cost of living and program growth

22

## Making the Case to Your Board or Funders

*"You cannot promote equity, equality, and justice if you do not practice it at home." — Dr. Tamar Andrews*

**💰 Lead with the math**

Turnover costs 50–200% of salary. A $2,000 raise costs far less than one replacement cycle.

**📊 Show the data**

Present your current turnover rate, average tenure, and what that has cost in real dollars.

**⚖️ Frame it as values**

Your mission is child development. That requires stable, qualified, motivated teachers.

**🏆 Connect to reputation**

Low wages lead to poor reviews, weak enrollment, and loss of accreditation standing.

**📋 Bring a draft scale**

Come with the framework ready. Make it easy to say yes by doing the homework first.

**🙋 Invite teacher voice**

A teacher sharing their experience is more powerful than any spreadsheet.

23

## From the Field — Temple Isaiah Preschool

**A Real Salary Scale in Action — 40+ Staff, 30+ Years, Sustained Quality**

**The Challenge**

Jewish preschool, temple-based, operating on a tight budget with a deeply dedicated but underpaid staff

**The Approach**

Created a 5-level, 4-factor salary scale with transparent bands. Shared openly with every teacher on day one.

**Key Moves**

Went 12-month, cut consumable waste, reallocated supplies budget, renegotiated benefits structure

**The Results**

Teachers with 15–30 year tenures. Low turnover. Strong classroom quality. Staff who feel respected and valued.

**What We Learned**

Transparency builds trust. A clear path forward changes the conversation from 'why am I not getting a raise' to 'here's what I'm working toward'

**The Board Conversation**

"We cannot promote tzedek if we don't practice it with our own staff." That framing changed everything.

24

?

## Questions & Discussion

*What questions do you have? What will you try first?*

## 5 Things to Take Home Today

1. Teacher retention starts with fair, transparent compensation — not just passion.
2. A salary scale removes guesswork, favoritism, and distrust from your center's culture.
3. Four factors — level, education, tenure, performance — drive every raise decision.
4. The money is there: go 12-month, reallocate, apply for grants, make your board case.
5. Share it openly. Transparency is your most powerful retention tool.

## Thank You!

*Your teachers are waiting for you to lead this change.*

**Dr. Tamar Andrews, EdD**

tamar.andrews@aju.edu

American Jewish University | Senior Director of Degree Programs

Resources: NAEYC.org | CCSA.net | TryPlayground.com | TEPcharter.org

## Additional Resources

- *Salary Scale Sheet*
- *Teacher Evaluation*