

The Lowly Child-Care Worker

January 12, 2011

Spilt water cannot be gathered up again.

-Japanese Proverb

This was the title of the January 5, 2011 entry by Sue Shellenbarger in the **Wall Street Journal Blogs** (<http://blogs.wsj.com/juggle/2011/01/05/the-lowly-child-care-worker/>). Long-time advocate for child care, Shellenbarger observed...

"Most talk of child-care costs focuses on how much families have to pay - a tab that for many parents rivals the cost of the mortgage or groceries. Since 2000, child-care costs have been rising twice as fast as families' median income and the average cost that parents paid for full-time care for a 4-year-old child in a center ranged from more than \$4,050 in Mississippi to more than \$13,150 a year in Massachusetts.

"But a new survey reported in today's **Wall Street Journal** underscores another harsh truth about child care - that it is also a costly and demanding profession for workers to enter. In a study comparing 200 occupations based on income, working environment, stress, physical demands, and the job outlook, child-care workers rank in the lowly 186th spot - barely higher than taxi drivers, roofers, and roustabouts...

"The economics of child care have long been out of whack. Amid an absence of the government subsidies offered by some European nations, few U.S. parents can afford to pay the full cost of high-quality child care. This forces child-care centers to survive partly by cutting labor costs, driving trained, educated, skilled people to abandon the field... Yet numerous studies have shown that the core ingredient of high-quality child care is a child's relationship with his or her teacher, a factor that is linked to higher teacher training and education. Higher pay tends to draw better trained, better educated teachers..."

Shellenbarger closes her blog entry with...

"Readers, do you think child-care workers should be paid higher wages, or would it take too much of a hit out of your pocket? Would you ever want to be a child-care worker?"
