



A Childhood Educator's Take on Investing in Caregivers

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Alvirleen Scott is an early childhood educator/caregiver at the On Purpose Academy Mentoring and Learning Center, a childcare facility in Dayton, Ohio. In August, Secretary Marty Walsh visited this daycare facility for a roundtable about the care economy and the need to invest in caregivers. We asked Alvirleen to share her experience as a caregiver and her perspective on what investments are needed to support caregivers.

What led you to a career in early childhood education?

I love kids. I have always wanted to make a difference in young peoples' lives. In my mind, early childhood education was the best opportunity for me to make the largest impact in the lives of young people. I remember how my early teachers impacted my life, so I wanted to be that person people come to when they need help.

What do you enjoy most about being an early childhood educator?

I have an associate degree in law but I have been working with children for over 10 years and I love what I do. I don't feel like I have a job, I feel like it is a calling. Being around kids is one of the best part of my day. Kids are the future and I do it all for them.

I love to see their face light up when they learn something new. It is amazing to see, for example, when they learn to write their name or solve a problem that was a challenge to them before. It is pure joy to witness a child learning through play and then being able to articulate in their own words what they have learned.

How would you describe care work to someone who isn't familiar with what you do?

Care work is about believing you can make a difference by the service you provide. It is about realizing it is not about you but about the children. As a caregiver, I have to be whatever the situation requires at that time. In addition to being a teacher, it can mean being a second mom or a nurse or just the giver of a hug. Care work is about being whatever is needed in the moment so that others can be the best they can be in the moment.

What are some barriers or issues you've faced as a caregiver?

I feel like we need to be taken seriously as teachers. We are educators and not babysitters. We don't sit around and play with kids all day but the perception is we do. There is a lot that goes into my job. Not only are we required to be educated but we prepare lesson plans, perform formal observations and assessments, and hold quarterly parent-teacher conferences. Even when we do this, we are still perceived as just a daycare and not a school, and we are compensated as a daycare worker and not a professionally trained teacher.

How would the Build Back Better agenda's investment in childcare support caregivers like you?

I think the No. 1 priority to value childcare providers like myself is by giving better pay and the workplace benefits we need through the Build Back Better agenda. I think it is important to educate the public about the importance of being a childcare provider and show the significance of why what we do really matters.

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