



### **Dawn Leech, Austin (child care)**

It's a very demanding job physically and emotionally to work with children and families. Every child is different, every child's needs are different, and we've continued to raise the expectations of what we expect teachers to do. They should be able to assess children, they should be able to plan individually for children, they should have objectives on their lesson plans, and they're still making \$10 an hour.

It's so challenging to be giving your best every day and really most people think that anyone can do this, and they can't. It takes a special person. It takes a set of knowledge and skills to be able to care for young children every day.

Our students often talk about the fact that they're learning all these things in their coursework, but they're having a difficult time implementing it in the classroom because of the number of children that they're responsible for.

I think that somehow our state or our nation have to realize how foundational those early learning years are and find a way to subsidize or support early childhood programs. It's an investment in the future. Again, the research shows: for every dollar you spend in early childhood, you're going to save it in prisons, you're going to save it in education, you're going to save it in lots of other areas.

Kids don't start learning when they hit kindergarten or pre-K. They start learning in the womb, and somehow we have to convince those people who have the power to fund things how important these years are.