



Daycare bonds: A wise investment

BRIGHT IDEA

Caregiver Bonuses

When a teacher at Old Firehouse School, a daycare center in Lafayette, CA, quit last year because she could make \$14,000 more a year selling telephones, it was the straw that broke the camel's back; she was the third caregiver to leave the small school since it opened two years ago.

To reduce turnover and help the center remain faithful to its continuity program—which pairs kids with the same caregiver from infancy through age 5—this month parents will begin making contributions to a “staff stability fund.” They’ll pay \$1,000 extra every year, which will be put aside for their youngster’s caregiver. If she stays until the child leaves for kindergarten, she gets the money—which could total as much as \$31,000.

While the additional cost may seem pie in the sky for some families, the fund can still serve as a model to other centers around the country, says Old Firehouse director Dorothy Stewart, who devised the plan. For instance, she says, “parents could contribute \$100 annually and the teachers could receive the money at the end of each year. Any effort would help.” —EMILY BLOCH