

Empowering Early Educators

An Evaluation of the Alameda County Early Educator Apprenticeship Program

Executive Summary



In anticipation of the opportunities that Measure C funding would bring to early care and education (ECE) in Alameda County, First 5 Alameda County contracted with the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) to conduct an evaluation of the Early Educator Apprenticeship Program (EEAP) at the YMCA of the East Bay. This Registered Apprenticeship (RA) has been in operation since 2015. First 5 Alameda County and the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA) began a unique partnership with the program in 2019, funding cohorts of parents to participate in the apprenticeship with CalWORKs (TANF) funding. To our knowledge, Alameda is the first county in California to use TANF funding in this way. The CSCCE evaluation incorporates administrative data as well as data from apprentices and other key stakeholders to explore the perceived impacts and promising practices of the program, with a focus on the EEAP's potential to continue to bolster the ECE workforce in Alameda County through increased funding and scaling.

Program Overview

The EEAP is sponsored by Early Care & Education Pathways to Success, and the YMCA of the East Bay is the employer. Apprentices' on-the-job training consists of 2,000 hours of supervised work experience with a mentor teacher. For related instruction, participants complete college courses at local institutes of higher education (IHEs), for example, Berkeley City College. Apprentices receive compensation increases and stipends for reaching milestones as they progress, and those who successfully complete their program or "tier" receive the corresponding credential and/or the California Child Development Permit associated with the education achieved (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Early Educator Apprenticeship Tiers

	Educational Requirement	Credentials and Degrees Earned
Tier 1	12 early childhood education units, equivalent of 4 early childhood education courses	CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit
Tier 2	60 units, including both early childhood education and general education courses	CA Child Development Teacher Permit; Associate Degree
Tier 3	120 units, including both early childhood education and general education courses	CA Child Development Site Supervisor Permit; Bachelor's Degree

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Evaluation Findings

Program Participation

- Survey data indicate that apprentices are primarily women of color—43 percent identified as Latina, 29 percent as Black, 9 percent Asian, 6 percent White, and 13 percent as some other race or ethnicity—and more than two thirds (69 percent) of apprentices have children under 18. In addition, nearly one half (44 percent) of apprentices were born outside the United States.
- As of February 2024, three quarters (76 percent) of past participants completed at least the first tier, and one half (51 percent) of current apprentices have already completed Tier 1 or 2.
- On average, it took just under three years for apprentices to complete the first two tiers, earning two permits and an associate degree. The time to complete these milestones is similar to, if not better than, students participating in “traditional” higher education programs.

Program Implementation

- A complex web of funding streams and careful coordination by apprenticeship partners allows the EEAP to incorporate holistic support services that eliminate barriers (including program costs) and facilitate the attainment of credentials.
- Three of the top four most important program elements apprentices indicated were related to financial support, stipends, and higher wages upon program completion.
- Financial investment in holistic services appears to be removing barriers to participation: approximately one half (54 percent) of survey respondents report that they did not experience any challenges while engaged in the program.

- Among apprentices who did note obstacles, the most common concern was balancing the responsibilities of work, school, and personal commitments. Slightly more than three quarters (77 percent) of current apprentices supported by CalWORKs funding indicated that the provision of child care for their own children was extremely important to their participation.

Program Impact

- Apprentices reported growth in their knowledge and teaching practice as a result of participating in the EEAP.
- Apprentices also identified positive effects of the program on their parenting and their personal relationships. This result may not be the primary purpose of the apprenticeship, but it reflects the potential impact of the EEAP on multiple generations.
- The majority of apprentices (83 percent) acknowledged their intention to remain in the ECE field after completing their apprenticeship.
- EEAP participants also noted improvements in their economic and personal well-being as a result of higher wages and anticipated earning potential.

Financial Analyses of Program Costs and Apprentice Earnings

We examined available annual budget and salary scale data for the EEAP program to understand program costs per participant and likely effects of program participation on participant earnings. We also looked at participant survey data to explore any relationship among program completion, salary increases, and participants' perceptions of the program's financial benefits.

Analyses Highlights

- Considering the most recent annual budgets after the COVID-19 pandemic peak (i.e., 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024), the cost per participant averaged \$17,022/year.
- The EEAP offers a comprehensive suite of supports and services that apprentices identified as critical to their success, but are not available in a typical higher education program. Services include on-site child care, technology training, tutoring, and tailored academic counseling, resulting in a higher cost per participant than the average annual cost of tuition, fees, and supplies at a four-year public IHE in California.
- Participants can expect hourly wage increases between 15 and 70 percent upon the completion of each tier. Participants who complete Tier 3 (earning a bachelor's degree and

working as a site supervisor) experience the largest bump in pay, both upon completion and over time.

Recommendations

The EEAP is a viable investment to achieve the aims of enhancing access to and the quality of ECE programming, along with professional development programs for educators and providers. Given the findings presented in this report and the opportunity that Measure C presents, we offer the following recommendations. These recommendations should be considered together to ensure that program development and systems-building efforts are coordinated.

Program Development

Design holistic supports for apprentices.

Holistic supports are key to equitable access and participant success. Service and resources such as embedded tutoring, success coordinators, child care, and computers not only help to take the guesswork out of higher education, they also provide students with the scaffolding they need to be able to attend, engage with, and succeed in school. Ensure that a wide array of supports are included in the design of any apprenticeship.

Guarantee adequate resources for apprentice supports.

The average annual cost for apprenticeship participation between 2021 and 2024 was \$17,022 per apprentice. This sum includes the holistic supports described above and also tuition, transportation, stipends, the salaries of the staff who provide the supports, and much more. Ensure that when program budgets are designed, they include these supports and utilize community partners as resources—for example, the ACSSA supports the EEAP by recruiting apprentices.

Improve data collection and infrastructure.

Establish and maintain a comprehensive data infrastructure for program- and apprentice-level data to better track completion rates, time to completion, retention of apprentices in the field, and long-term program impacts on apprentices' economic well-being.

Systems Building

Keep equity at the forefront of the apprenticeship.

Equity was identified as a driver in the development and implementation of the EEAP. As the program develops and expands, continually revisit how equity inspired the creation of

the program, how stakeholders currently consider and define equity, and how these definitions are realized in the programming, so that equity remains at the forefront.

Blend and braid funding to meet program costs and wages.

There is no single source of funding to cover all program costs. The EEAP masterfully blends and braids a variety of funding sources to meet the financial needs of the program. Streamline this process and alleviate bureaucratic burden by blending contracts under one reporting entity.

Champion government, philanthropic, and employer investment to enable ECE apprenticeship expansion.

So that program benefits might unfold over time, apprenticeships require sustained investment from government, philanthropies, and employers—such as the ACSSA, workforce development boards, Tipping Point, and First 5 Alameda County—over multiple years.

Leverage the success of this local model to continue progress on ECE working conditions.

Address the wage gap in Alameda County with additional funding from Measure C. Set the floor at a living wage, creating a family-sustaining wage so that apprentices are rewarded for their preparation and have incentive to remain in the field.

Areas for Further Research and Consideration

- Collect administrative and apprentice-level data and conduct further analyses to better understand the costs and financial impact of the program.
- Encourage private and public entities to fund further research on the impact and fidelity of RA models to further develop our understanding of how these programs impact the ECE workforce.
- Identify the supports apprentices need to be successful, utilizing various sources of data. The EEAP program will benefit from advocates, county and city administrators, RA program administrators, and employers iterating programming to meet changing needs in the community.
- Support the expansion of language access in apprenticeships and other professional development in the county.
- Continue authentic engagement of the ECE workforce in the development and implementation of the EEAP and other apprenticeships in the county, so that the programs might accurately address the educational aspirations and needs of early educators.