

Empowering Educators



Early Childhood Education Career Pathways

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Career Pathways program implemented a comprehensive approach to addressing the staffing challenges in early childhood education from Spring 2023 to Spring 2025. Workforce Recruiters actively engaged with high school and community college students to expand the talent pipeline, encouraging more individuals to consider careers in ECE. Workforce Recruiters also supported career changers transitioning from other fields by providing essential training for their new roles. Additionally, the program assisted current ECE professionals in upskilling, helping them renew certifications and refresh key competencies.

To facilitate this, Workforce Recruiters developed a self-paced online course offering 27 hours of training aligned with Virginia Department of Education licensing requirements for ECE employees. They also collaborated with childcare center directors to streamline recruitment, hiring, and training processes—reducing administrative burdens, expediting hiring, and providing professional development for both new and existing staff.

By serving emerging, incumbent, and new ECE professionals while also supporting childcare centers in workforce development, the program played a vital role in stabilizing and strengthening the ECE workforce in Southwest Virginia.

Who Entered the Program?

As part of enrollment into the program, participants were asked to complete an entry survey to understand their background and interest in the program. 277 participants responded.

Over half (61%) of respondents had either a high school diploma or some college as their highest level of education. Participants were predominately white women (>90%) between the ages of 18 and 34 (56%). Many of these individuals came from human services jobs or have an existing background in childcare. More than 1/3rd of participants (38%) reported making less than \$20,000 annually, and a similar number (36%) reported making between \$20,000 and \$35,000.

Issue:

The Early Childhood Education sector in SWVA faces significant staffing shortages which leaves children without opportunities for high-quality early education.

Challenge:

Childcare operators have a difficult time recruiting and retaining qualified employees on their own.

Solution:

The Early Learning Careers Pathway Project was created to recruit, train, upskill, and place educators in jobs at childcare providers throughout the region.

Hear From Our Participants

Participants were overwhelmingly interested in the program due to their love of children and seeing early education as a fruitful career:

"I am passionate about children and seeing them succeed."

-Program Participant

"I am wanting to open my own Child Care center. I have most of the details planned out, but I want to learn as much as possible to ensure success in my business."

-Program Participant

Our Impact

The team has worked with **55 childcare sites** to support staffing and training needs.

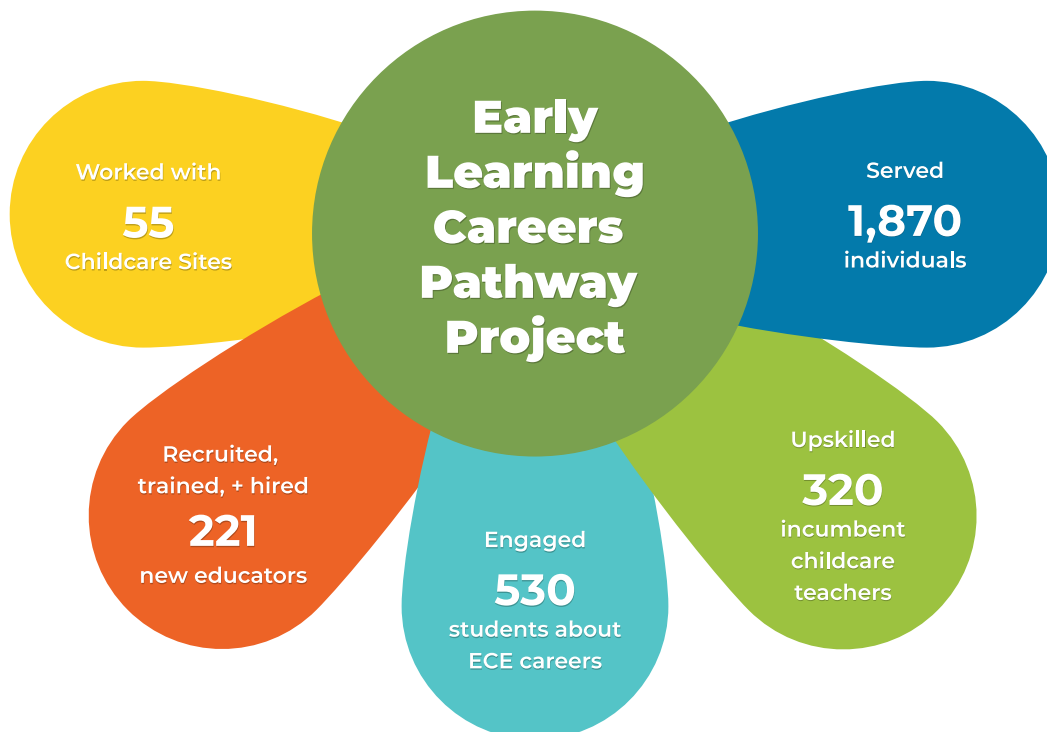
221 new early childhood educators were recruited, trained, and hired.

320 incumbent childcare teachers were upskilled.

The team has engaged the emerging workforce by connecting with **530 students** and supporting **63 individuals in pre-apprenticeships/internships** in the ECCE field.

Due to these staffing supports, there have been **39 classroom expansions/new sites established** that have staff they need, in turn allowing them to **serve 297 children** that were not previously being served due to staffing shortages.

Through outreach and hiring events, trainings offered, individuals enrolled in the program, and expanded slots to children across the region, **this project has served, in total, 1,870 individuals.**



Our Data

Target Population	Goal	Final Number Served
New Early Childhood Educators Hired	100	221
Incumbent Workers Upskilled	250	320
Emerging Workforce Participants Served	250	530

	Eligible for Follow Up	# Responded	# Retained	Retention Rate
90-Day Retention Check	181	147	95	65%
6-Month Retention Check	112	86	68	79%
1-Year Retention Check	56	39	26	67%

**The last retention check was conducted in January, 2025*

Hear From Our Partners

“You know, the childcare field, it’s dwindling and there’s a high turnover rate. But if you can get into a spot where you can have something like this program helping you, it changes your whole outlook on it”

-Childcare Program Director

A full evaluation of this project and
its impacts, conducted by Virginia
Tech's Center for Economic and
Community Engagement,
can be found here:

