



Transforming the _____
Early Childhood Workforce
_____ *in Colorado*

2018

GRANTEE REPORT
SUMMARY

An innovative public-private partnership to advance
the early childhood workforce in Colorado.



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS



**BUELL
FOUNDATION**
Investing in Colorado's Future



**GARY
COMMUNITY
INVESTMENTS**



COLORADO
Office of Early Childhood
Department of Human Services



COLORADO
Department of Education

First Year Accomplishments

Denver attracted diverse and bilingual educators through an **accelerated program that included career navigation** support. Seven participants became Early Childhood Teacher qualified. The initiative partnered with **Denver Economic Development & Opportunity** to make early childhood education a key workforce issue.

Recruitment & Retention

Larimer County developed a **cultural consciousness training for mentor teachers** to welcome and support diverse staff. Participants reported these efforts had a positive impact on staff skills, teamwork, and child interactions.

Working Conditions

Summit County developed a **shared services human resources manager** position to oversee the expansion and implementation of workplace benefits, human resources, and leadership development across programs. Within six months, this position was considered a “game changer.”

Compensation

They also collected key salary and benefits data from public and private settings to inform a **compensation parity plan** that will be tied to the county’s new universal pre-kindergarten program.

Mesa County planned **Child Care 8,000**, a local initiative to increase the availability of early care and education slots by stabilizing businesses and building efficiencies (i.e., centralized food preparation). The county is now expanding the use of shared services with the goal of applying all savings to quality improvements and expanded capacity through a focus on teacher wages and supports.

Education & Career Pathways

The goal in La Plata County is a 50% increase in qualified workforce. The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County partnered with Fort Lewis College to create the **Early Childhood Intensive Institute**, which has resulted in 13 new Early Childhood Teacher Certificates and two new Director-qualified professionals.

The Durango 9-R School District expanded offerings in the high school Career and Technical Pathway with four concurrent enrollment classes. 24 students completed two classes, and 12 students completed four, with 86% receiving at least a “C” grade.

St. Vrain Valley School District and the University of Colorado Denver launched a high school **concurrent enrollment program, P-TEACH**. The first cohort of 17 students—80% from first-generation Hispanic families—completed six college credits and a 30-hour internship with a certified Early Childhood Teacher. More than 50 students enrolled in the Fall 2019 P-TEACH cohort.

“One participant joined our program with a food service background. When her young daughter said that she wanted to be just like her mother when she grew up, the participant chose to build a new career path to which her daughter could aspire. This participant has been successful with the program and has launched her teaching career.”

**Denver’s Early Childhood
Workforce Initiative**

“Over the course of this grant, we have engaged our county commissioners, and they are now supportive of Child Care 8,000 and have embraced the business community involvement.”

**Child Care 8,000,
Mesa County**

“Program administrators reported positive differences after mentor teacher training including the use of new skills and practices with parents children.”

**Expanding Possibilities in
Early Childhood,
Larimer County**

“I’ve loved this program, and I wish I could take Field Experiences again, because I had the best time of my life and *wanted to be in the classroom all day, every day.*”

**St. Vrain Valley High
School Senior, P-TEACH**

Local Lessons

1 COHORTS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL.

The St. Vrain and Denver cohort models cultivated a sense of community and peer support. Pairing interns at worksites and keeping cohorts studying together creates an additional layer of camaraderie and shared experiences.

3 IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN.

Essential skills (or *soft skills*), such as problem-solving, time management, and workplace professionalism, was an emerging area of need across several innovations. Standardizing the skills needed and providing effective training will be critical to recruitment and retention outcomes. For some recruits, career navigators invested considerable resources into lack of transportation, child care, and other personal and family challenges.

5 A STABLE BUSINESS IS KEY TO A STABLE WORKFORCE.

The health and stability of early childhood education sites is foundational to recruitment, retention, and working conditions. Sites want back-office and centralized business support and may need additional training in business practices. Communities should continue to explore support for wages, benefits, and emerging practices like contracted slots for child care subsidies to help stabilize and grow businesses in the sector.

2 CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT IS A WIN-WIN-WIN.

Learning the profession and gaining college credit has obvious benefits for high school students (and provides significant college savings for their families); it also felt good for educators. Veteran teachers felt reinvigorated by having interns in their classrooms. Principals and teachers reported higher levels of collegial conversation and richer collaboration from the interplay of mentor teachers and students.

4 QUALIFIED CANDIDATES ARE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK.

A substantial population of “nearly qualified” or “already qualified” candidates emerged in the first year, though these professionals were unaware of their qualifications. The current Professional Development Information System (PDIS)—Colorado’s EC workforce registry—needs enhancements to help communities find professionals who may require only small steps to re-enter the workforce or rise through the ranks.

Policy Opportunities

Based on the local lessons learned, Early Milestones has identified three key state-level policy opportunities to increase Colorado’s early childhood education workforce.

- ☐ Increase the availability of the qualified workforce by enhancing data systems to identify local “nearly qualified” and “already qualified” populations.
- ☐ Support “grow your own” models that create pathways for communities to develop the next generation of early childhood education professionals with concurrent enrollment, apprenticeships, and other options.
- ☐ Build skills and reduce workplace frustrations by providing adequate staffing of mentor teacher positions in early childhood programs.

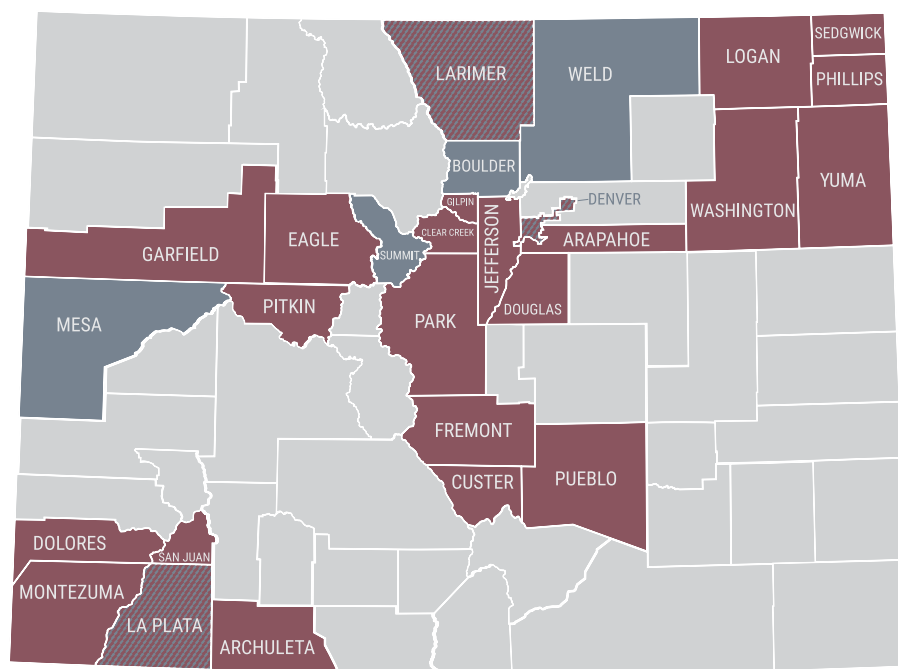
About the Initiative

Early childhood educators are a major contributor to a child's healthy development. Yet, many Colorado communities still lack an effective workforce and the need is growing.

70% of early childhood education directors report difficulty filling early educator positions, and the crisis is getting worse. Colorado predicts a 33-43% increased need for teachers and leaders in the next six years.

To address these issues, **Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado**, a public-private partnership initiative was created to develop sustainable, innovative approaches for increasing and supporting the state's early childhood education workforce. The initiative's current phase tests solutions on four key levers: recruitment & retention, working conditions, education & career pathways, and compensation. Six partnerships—representing urban, rural, and resort communities—were awarded **Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants**.

Prior phases included extensive research on the sector and the development of *Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan*.



Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grantee Service Areas

2018

2019

The Initiative's Theory of Change

