



Transforming the _____
Early Childhood Workforce
_____ *in Colorado*

2019-2020 Grantee Report Summary

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

January 2021



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

Accomplishments

Five Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants supported local innovative solutions to compensation, recruitment, education and career pathways, and working conditions. These projects were chosen based upon readiness, quality partnerships, flexibility, and approaches to tackling EC workforce challenges that held promise for systemic and sustainable change. The 2019 cohort of grantees has generated an array of positive results.

Apprenticeship and Teacher Preparation Initiative

Red Rocks Community College (RRCC)

La Plata County Early Childhood Workforce Initiative

Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (La Plata)

Expanding Professional Possibilities in Early Childhood

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (Larimer)

Denver's EC Workforce Initiative

Denver's Early Childhood Council (Denver)

Creating Pathways to Early Childhood Training for Rural

Latinx Caregivers Valley Settlement

Valley Settlement and Denver each focused on recruiting diverse candidates who are underrepresented in the ECE workforce into community-based Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) pathways. Valley Settlement **launched a Spanish-language Child Development Associate (CDA) course** for high school students and informal care providers. **30 students** in the Eagle River and Roaring Fork valleys enrolled in this CDA course. Denver's "No Wrong Door" model combines a participant's prior experience, education, and training with **customized career navigation**.

La Plata partnered with Durango High School to increase student recruitment into their popular EC training program. **34 high school students enrolled** through this effort. La Plata also **created an ECE Concurrent Enrollment Manual** outlining the program and class requirements that lead to a CDA and/or credit toward an associate's degree. Other high schools can use the manual to help launch or increase student enrollment in programs that lead to an ECE career.

RRCC's federally registered apprenticeship program allows educators to **choose their own path** toward ECT or director qualification while gaining on-the-job skills with on-site support. Upon completion of the program, participants earned an average \$14.14 per hour, **an increase of \$0.70**.

RRCC's apprenticeship program developed **three courses to train and support student apprentice mentors**. As a result, students reported stronger connections with their mentors. These courses are now approved to be taught at any community college in Colorado.

Larimer supported on-site new teacher mentoring with a focus on inclusiveness through cultural consciousness training and resources. Larimer provided **in-depth diversity training** so mentees could quickly apply new skills. The training offered a safe space to discuss the importance of honoring different backgrounds in the mentor-mentee relationship. Through this project, **20 mentor-teachers were trained** in culturally appropriate support and coaching for provisional ECTs.

Denver and La Plata enhanced workforce pathways through **relationships with local colleges**. Denver supported students' unique needs through personalized education and career navigation resources, and **22 students earned an ECT** through the accelerated pathway. La Plata's local champion worked with two local colleges to streamline how students earned early childhood education (ECE) credentials.

Recruitment & Retention

Working Conditions

Compensation

Education & Career Pathways

Local Lessons

COURSEWORK IS JUST ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.

Career navigation services help students interested in joining the EC workforce to understand complex systems with multiple pathways. They can also increase the diversity of the workforce. To be effective, career navigation services should:

- Leverage existing relationships with partners to build trust with students upfront
- Tailor personalized onboarding approaches to meet individual needs
- Be available in multiple languages or with interpretation support
- Offer training opportunities for new mentors

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS LEAD TO A STRONG WORKFORCE.

Students and informal caregivers see more success when supported by partnerships that:

- Provide internship stipends
- Offer coursework in multiple languages
- Dedicate time for navigating systems

LOCAL CHAMPIONS ARE VITAL TO LONG-TERM GOALS.

Partnerships create momentum and build public will through collaboration with local champions. To generate long-term change, champions:

- Create working partnerships to improve coordination with local systems like community colleges
- Reach out to decision-makers promoting economic stability to gain buy-in on the EC workforce as a key driver

GROW YOUR OWN MODELS REQUIRE FLEXIBILITY.

Partnerships support high school students through education and employment pipelines when they:

- Create flexibility to accommodate for different high school class schedules, extracurricular activities, homework, etc.
- Prioritize clear communication with high school counselors and administrators
- Provide transportation and on-site child care programs for high school interns

Policy Considerations

Based on grantee experiences, Early Milestones has identified the following state-level policy considerations to support Colorado's early childhood education workforce.

- Make entry and career development more equitable for EC professionals whose primary language is not English.
- Establish policies and procedures to streamline background checks and fingerprinting for student interns.
- Increase recruitment by exploring ECT qualification reciprocity with other states.
- Explore both local and state-level compensation models to recruit and retain a qualified EC workforce.

“Teachers often feel overlooked and underappreciated. Becoming a mentor is a retention tool because it honors the value of a teacher’s education, commitment, and years of experience.”

*Christina Taylor, Executive Director,
Early Childhood Council of Larimer County*

“Through this class, I learned the responsibility that comes with the job and gained insight into what EC teachers experience. This class really made me think hard and helped to prepare me for my future teaching career.”

*Concurrent Enrollment Student,
La Plata County EC Workforce Initiative*

Responding to a Crisis

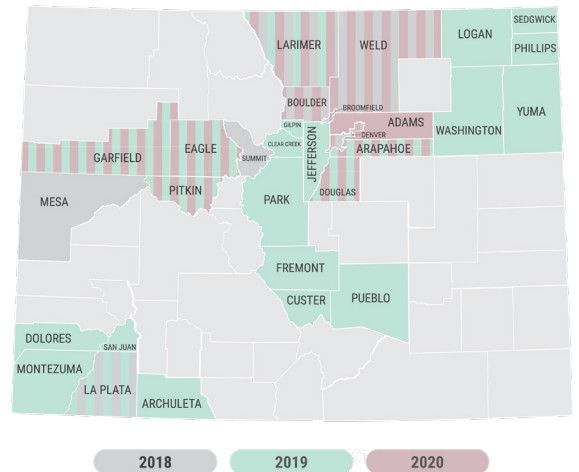
Early childhood educators proved essential during Colorado’s emergency response to COVID-19 and will remain crucial to the state’s economic recovery. To support and retain teachers during the pandemic, partnerships pivoted to online learning platforms, made coursework adjustments, and increased access to technology for their students. As the industry moves forward, the impact of each grantee’s dedication, flexibility, and spirit of innovation will be realized across the state.

Colorado Public Radio’s series *The Workforce Behind the Workforce* highlights the work of 2020-2021 Innovation Grantees. Click here to read and listen to the series.

About the Initiative

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

The **Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Colorado Initiative** (the Initiative) was created to develop sustainable solutions to strengthen the state’s early childhood education workforce. This map displays the reach of the Initiative’s first three years of pursuing creative solutions to the state’s most significant EC workforce challenges. Twelve partnerships have been awarded **Early Childhood Workforce Innovation Grants** between 2018 and 2020. For more information about the Initiative and its grantees, visit coloradoecworkforce.org.



Partners

Thank you to the many partners who make this initiative successful, including local communities implementing the work, the state agencies that serve as resource partners, and the two Colorado-based foundations that provide funding and serve as the Initiative advisory team.

