

# The EarlyEdU Alliance®

Increasing access to credits that count  
and degrees that matter

## Paper 1: Issues & Impact



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# Introduction

**More than 2 million people in the United States work as early care and education professionals, providing services for about 10 million children birth to age 5.<sup>1</sup>**

Their role is one of surpassing importance because they support the health and development of our youngest learners during their crucial early years. To fulfill this responsibility, these teachers and care providers need effective education and training in the science, theory, and strategies that achieve long-lasting positive outcomes for young children.

Education policymakers have debated whether elevating the credential requirements—up to and including bachelor's degrees—is the best approach to building the necessary base of knowledge and skills in the early care and education (ECE) workforce.<sup>2</sup> Those who support the professionalization of the educators of young children embrace the principle that early learning begins at birth and that early care and education credentials should be as firmly established as those of K-12 teachers. This policy direction generally has gained support over the past three decades and has been explored in scores of local, state, and federal initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

Policymakers must address the barriers to achieving this goal. Current educators in ECE environments often struggle to find the time and money to take college courses and complete traditional degree programs. The quality of the higher education programs available to them is also an issue. Our current system to prepare early care and education providers is an uneven, ever-changing mix of public and private programs, regulations, and funding sources.



To achieve effective professional preparation for ECE teachers, degree programs must offer consistent access to relevant coursework and meaningful, field-based learning.

The EarlyEdU Alliance—a collaboration of early care and education experts and stakeholders from higher education, government agencies, and community organizations—provides pathways to relevant and affordable bachelor's degrees for ECE educators. Our national network of early care and education experts has developed 16 ECE courses, available for in-person and online delivery. Each uses innovative technology to incorporate video, competency-based assignments, coaching, and opportunities for students to reflect and improve on their practices. Before our courses become widely available, we pilot them in the University of Washington's Early Childhood and Family Studies (ECFS) Program and participating instructors and students provide feedback and suggest revisions to strengthen course effectiveness for a broader audience. We also gather and incorporate ongoing feedback from faculty, from across the country, who are using the courses.

EarlyEdU works closely with the college and university faculty who use our courses in 69 institutions of higher education (IHEs), including 32 four-year and 37 two-year schools, and we engage with state policymakers to explore ways to increase the access and affordability of degree programs. Since we began our work in 2013, we estimate that EarlyEdU has reached close to 5,000 early care and education teacher preparation students and nearly 50,000 children.<sup>4</sup>



1. Early Childhood Workforce Index, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, (Berkeley, CA, 2018) <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/>
2. Marnie Kaplan, "It Takes a Community: Leveraging Community College Capacity to Transform the Early Childhood Workforce," Bellwether Education Partners, (Sudbury, MA, 2018) <https://bellwethereducation.org/publication/it-takes-community-leveraging-community-college-capacity-transform-early-childhood>
3. Hannah Putman, Kate Walsh, and Amber Moorer, Some Assembly Required: Piecing Together the Preparation Preschool Teachers Need, National Council on Teacher Quality, (Washington DC, 2016) <https://www.nctq.org/publications/Some-Assembly-Required:-Piecing-together-the-preparation-preschool-teachers-need>
4. Data are accurate as of 9/21/2018.

Nationwide, as Figure 1 below indicates, only about 45% of teachers and care providers in center-based care for children aged 3-5 hold degrees at the bachelor's level or higher. For those caring for children aged 0-3, the share drops to barely 19%.<sup>5</sup> Most childcare providers are based in homes and not centers,<sup>6</sup> an arrangement that complicates issues of access to further training.

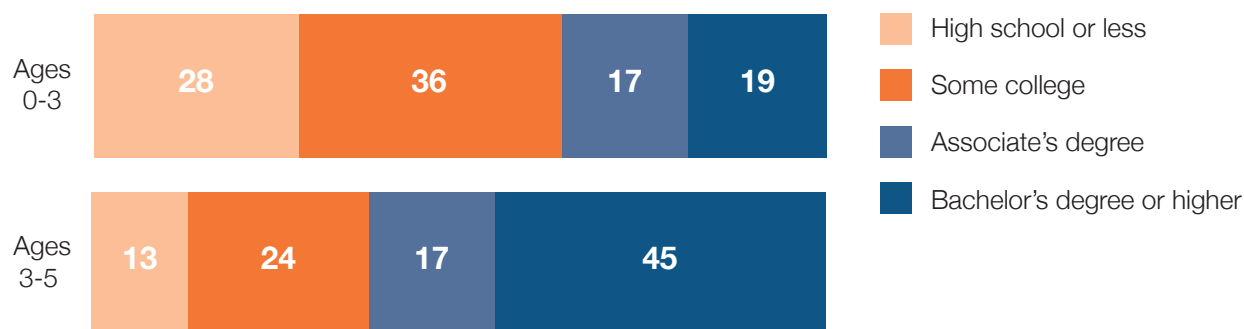


Figure 1: Percentage of Degrees Held By Center-based Teachers and Caregivers

Education researchers have shown that the knowledge and competencies of ECE practitioners contribute to improved child outcomes,<sup>7</sup> but research has not yet established a clear relationship between outcomes and the type of certification a teacher holds.<sup>8</sup> In five years EarlyEdU has demonstrated the benefit of integrating early care and education theory and evidence-based practices, along with adult coaching, into early childhood teacher preparation—particularly when these approaches reach children from low-income households and those who speak languages other than English at home. We add immense value to college and university programs with our high-quality courses and practice-based components. Students can learn both in the classroom and in authentic early care and education settings and apply these courses to their degrees. We also promote partnerships with state systems to make these courses and degree programs more accessible and affordable.



5. Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), Project Dir. A. Ruppia Datta, U.S. Office of the Administration of Children and Families, 11 (Washington DC, 2013) [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece\\_wf\\_brief\\_102913\\_0.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_wf_brief_102913_0.pdf)
6. Katherine Paschall and Kathryn Tout, "Most Child Care Centers in the United States are in Homes, not Centers," Child Trends (blog), May 1, 2018 <https://www.childtrends.org/most-child-care-providers-in-the-united-states-are-based-in-homes-not-centers>
7. LaRue Allen and Bridget B. Kelly, eds. Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation, National Academies Press, (Washington DC, 2015), 325–54.
8. Jeneen Interlandi, moderator, "Pre-K Teachers and Bachelor's Degrees: Envisioning Equitable Access to High-Quality Preparation Programs," New America, February 2018. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/events/preparing-pre-k-teachers-envisioning-equitable-pathways-high-quality-bachelors-degrees/>

# A Strong Policy Direction

The drive to professionalize the early care and education (ECE) workforce rose from the combined influence of local, state, and federal policies and court decisions. Together, these influences helped grow and expand ECE programs and recognize the value of early childhood educators. State and local programs led the way, starting in the 1960s. These programs include:

## **The HighScope Perry Preschool Project of 1962-67**

This project offered high-quality preschool to 3- and 4-year-old children.

## **The North Carolina's Abecedarian Project**

Beginning in 1972, this provided intervention for children from birth to age 5 in childcare settings.

## **The Chicago Child-Parent Center Program**

Beginning in 1986, this program explored early and extensive intervention for high-risk young children and kindergartners in the Chicago public schools.

Evaluations revealed early childhood and care programs' value to improve the lives of children living in poverty and otherwise at risk to fail in school. Although they did not require specific degrees for teachers, these programs supported ongoing professional growth.

During the 1990s, states began rewarding high-quality early care and education providers with accreditation and higher reimbursement rates. But they discovered that few providers could meet the accreditation standards. The federal government addressed this problem by urging states to design Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) as the federal government supported policy innovations that improve quality and accountability in early care and education. Since Oklahoma applied the first statewide QRIS in 1998, more than half of the states in the nation have followed suit. Most of the rest of the states are developing QRIS as a tool to organize ECE quality initiatives into coherent systems. Work at the local and state levels has informed the national education initiatives that have emerged during the past three decades. These include:

## **Head Start Credential Requirements**

Serving more than 1 million low-income children a year, Head Start set the first minimum credential requirement for its teachers in 1990 when it required that at least one teacher in

each classroom hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. It raised the degree requirement again in 1998 and still again in the 2007 reauthorization of the federal Head Start law when Congress required half of all lead teachers working with 3- and 4-year-olds to hold bachelor's degrees with a focus in early childhood. Today more than 70% of Head Start teachers have bachelor's degrees.

## **Goals 2000**

Based on work at a 1989 educational summit and partly embodied in the 1994 Educate America Act, Goals 2000 listed national objectives that focused attention and resources on ECE and school readiness. Among the goals were ensuring that:

- Every child begins school ready to learn.
- "The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills ... needed to instruct and prepare all American students for [the 21st] century." This effort led directly to a series of national education initiatives, which we discuss below.

## **Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Program**

This 2009 federal initiative awarded more than \$4 billion in competitive grants to select states to encourage educational innovations and reforms that would help children with high needs achieve more. Race to the Top built on federal programs like the National Educational Goals 2000 and the 2001 No Child Left Behind acts. Race to the Top was mainly a K-12 program but kept an early learning challenge to improve programs for children birth to age 5. The law brought issues such as educator effectiveness and performance-based evaluations to the forefront of federal education policy and stressed program quality—especially how it affects the educational paths of children from low-income households. Part of the program's focus has been supporting the ECE workforce through professional development, career advancement opportunities, appropriate compensation, and a common set of standards for workforce knowledge and competencies.

## **Preschool Development Grants**

This Obama Administration program supported states that built-up preschool program infrastructure and expanded high-quality preschool programs in targeted communities to serve as model programs for all 4-year-olds from moderate-income families. The grants were intended to lay the groundwork for the Preschool for All Initiative, a nationwide expansion of preschool services to moderate-income families.





## National Direction

**The work of EarlyEdU is built, in part, on local and state education initiatives that have emerged during the past three decades.**

These strategies preceded the release, in 2015, of an influential report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies: “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation,” which established a clear direction for the ECE workforce. The report recommended that states and other organizations build a system that requires all lead teachers of children birth to age 8 to meet “a minimum bachelor’s degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies” (p. 513).

The 800-page IOM and NRC report lays out five competencies that form a shared base of knowledge and skills that early care and education professionals need:

- Core knowledge of developmental science and content knowledge
- Mastery of practices that help children learn and develop on individual pathways
- Knowledge and skills for working with diverse populations of children
- Development in the use of partnerships with families and support services to bolster child learning and development
- Ability to access and engage in ongoing professional learning to keep current in their knowledge and improve their professional practice (pp. 328–329)





The report has 13 recommendations for the field (pp. 511–554). Two of the recommendations describe the content and approach needed in higher education to improve the quality of early care and education. EarlyEdU has been engaged in this work since its inception.

Recommendation 4: Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development.

Recommendation 5: Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals:

- Child development
- Subject matter
- Instructional practices
- Field-based experiences
- Demonstration of competency

## EarlyEdU Courses

EarlyEdU's mission is to improve higher education for early care and education professionals. We support early education faculty in the most direct way possible by developing engaging, interactive courses that students can readily access and complete. Our team of early education experts has created 16 courses that include complete syllabi, learning objectives, schedules of sessions and topics, presentation materials, learning activities, and recommended readings and assignments.

Faculty benefit from course materials that incorporate innovative approaches to teacher preparation. The courses are ready for classroom use, and they align with new technologies such as the Coaching Companion™ video-sharing and coaching platform. Students can watch videos of effective teaching practices and engage in feedback about their own and their peers' work. EarlyEdU course materials are competency-based and draw from both theory and practice.

### We offer foundational courses such as:

- Becoming a Teacher Leader
- Child Development
- Child Development: Brain Building
- Child Observation and Assessment
- Intentional Teaching
- Resilience and Wellness for Educators

### Our practice-based courses include:

- Children's Health and Well-Being
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Engaging Interactions and Environments
- Executive Function and Approaches to Learning
- Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning
- Learning with Digital Media in Early Childhood
- Positive Behavioral Support for Young Children
- Practice-Based Coaching
- Supporting Dual Language Learners
- Supporting Language and Literacy Development in Preschool

Many EarlyEdU courses are available to both bricks-and-mortar classrooms and online, which facilitates access for students and teachers who might live and work rurally or are otherwise place-bound. Because faculty who use EarlyEdU courses do not have the time-consuming responsibility of course development, they can dedicate more time as instructors and coaches who promote field experience and offer feedback. We continually refine our courses in ways that make them more relevant to the career aspirations of students who have often been under-served by conventional higher education programs.



## Role of Higher Education

### **Teacher preparation is traditionally housed in higher education.**

Early care and education providers hold degrees and credentials from two-year colleges as well as four-year colleges and universities—nearly 3,000 programs prepare early care and education providers for 60 types of degrees.<sup>9</sup>

While the route to K-12 teaching credentials—including a bachelor's degree, practicum, and licensure—is well established and mostly consistent across the nation, there is no uniform route to early childhood teaching. Until the 1990s preschool teachers, if they had any preparation, were more likely to emerge from human development and home economics programs—not necessarily from teacher preparation programs.<sup>10</sup> Even after more than two decades of debate over the best way to prepare the early education workforce, there is no agreement about what level of education should be required in the field.

Nonetheless, higher education is increasingly involved in preparation for early care and education providers and teachers, with two-year colleges taking the lead. More than 75% of the nation's 1,047 community colleges offer early care and education or family studies programs.<sup>11</sup> Some students graduate from community college programs with technical associate degrees that qualify them for specific roles in the early

education workforce. However, those degrees do not routinely transfer to bachelor's degree programs. Others seek associate degrees they can transfer to four-year child development or elementary education teaching tracks. Some community colleges now offer bachelor's degrees, though colleges in fewer than half of the states currently do so. The two-and four-year programs are not well-aligned. Traditional bachelor's degree programs tend to begin in the freshman and sophomore years with general education requirements, not courses applicable to a major in education or other fields. Those who hold two-year early education credentials may have taken some ECE courses, but they often lack general education requirements when they reach four-year college and university education programs. In fact, general education requirements at the lower division level, particularly for math, can be a significant roadblock to education students with two-year degrees who are attempting to pursue degrees at four-year colleges.<sup>12</sup>



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9. Mary Harrill, "Tomayto, tomahto: What's in a [degree] name?" New America (blog), December 1, 2017 National Association for the Education of Young Children. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/tomayto-tomahto-whats-degree-name/>
  10. Ilen and Kelly, *Transforming the Workforce*, 633–47
  11. Kaplan, *It Takes a Community*.
  12. Soleil Boyd, *Pre-Service Teachers' Mathematics Language and Reflection In the Context of Early Childhood Mathematics Methods Course*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, (PhD Diss, University of Washington, 2016).





## The EarlyEdU Approach

**National experts in teacher preparation and the science of child development have informed the development of EarlyEdU courses, which target ECE majors.**

National experts in teacher preparation and the science of child development have informed the development of EarlyEdU courses, which target ECE majors. Each faculty member who teaches an EarlyEdU course receives a syllabus, reading lists, lecture material, and learning activities that engage students in applying the content to practice. They also receive essential classroom videos and video tools to support coaching in the context of higher education. We create all these materials with guidance from content specialists, faculty, and additional experts. More than 100 faculty members across the country use EarlyEdU courses, and they benefit from having ready, up-to-date content so they can focus on coaching students in their practice. All the courses incorporate recent breakthroughs in research and policy. When faculty work with EarlyEdU, they access a wide body of knowledge and a set of practices that are informed by research and are uniform in their application across the country.

The conceptual framework that undergirds our approach is that of intentional teaching, which requires teachers to know what to do in the moment, see effective teaching in themselves and others, do these practices in the classroom, reflect on what works and what does not, and improve with thoughtful practices. All EarlyEdU courses, whether in-person or online, incorporate the Know-See-Do-Reflect-Improve approach, or the Intentional Teaching Framework, as depicted in Figure 2.<sup>13, 14</sup>



Figure 2: Intentional Teaching Model used in EarlyEdU

Reinforcing the Intentional Teaching Framework in EarlyEdU courses is the Coaching Companion™, a web-based video annotation learning tool that supports coaching in higher education by enabling students to view and refine their teaching practices. The tool is integrated throughout EarlyEdU courses. With the Coaching Companion, students see classroom interactions on video and then reflect on the degree to which they incorporate evidence-based practices. Coaching Companion eliminates the traditional separation of theory and practice in college-based teacher preparation. While education students typically waited until they completed coursework to experience teaching in real settings—often waiting until their final quarter in school—practice is now part of EarlyEdU courses from the outset.

Together, the Intentional Teaching Framework and the Coaching Companion transform the course instructor into a job-embedded coach. The instructor watches student interactions with children on video using the Coaching Companion and looks specifically for interactions defined in course assignments, readings, and lectures. Based on these observations, the instructor offers feedback and proposes next steps.

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13. Gail E. Joseph and Carolyn Brennan, "Framing Quality: Annotated Video-Based Portfolios of Classroom Practice by Pre-service Teachers," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 41, no. 6, (November 2013): 423-430, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-013-0576-7>.
14. Bridget K. Hamre et al., "A Course on Effective Teacher-Child Interactions: Effects on Teacher Beliefs, Knowledge, and Observed Practice," *American Educational Research Journal* 48, no. 1, (February 1, 2012): 88-123. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831211434596>

In addition to incorporating the Intentional Teaching Framework, EarlyEdU courses are designed to mobilize the most recent research-based ECE pedagogy as well as adult learning theory. EarlyEdU integrates into its courses several features to reflect this foundation:

### **Science of child development**

The knowledge and skills that form the basis of the EarlyEdU courses are based on the most recent child development research, including brain science and the interplay of biology and environment, as well as research on effective teaching practices. This work aligns with the 2015 IOM and NRC report, which among other recommendations, urges education policymakers to build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education that supports child development and to create programs of study that incorporate child development science, subject matter expertise, teaching practices, field-based experiences, and demonstration of competency.

### **Competency-based learning**

This feature refers to what early care and education providers should know and be able to do to design and implement high-quality care and education programs that produce positive outcomes for children and families. EarlyEdU course objectives align with national organization and state standards. The courses include activities and assignments aimed at helping students learn and demonstrate competencies.

### **Practice-based assignments**

EarlyEdU courses include assignments that provide students authentic opportunities to learn and apply effective teaching practices. Students implement their assignments in classrooms and other early learning environments.



### **Video sharing and feedback**

EarlyEdU courses use innovative video tools—embedded video of classroom activity, models from our video library, and teacher interviews. In our practice-based assignments, students typically take video of themselves working with children, and they share the videos with instructors and peers.



By identifying practices, using focused observations, commenting and encouraging their peers to continue learning and applying these practices, participants have multiple opportunities to develop their competencies.



### **Communities of Reflection and Practice (CORP)**

The CORPs—a compelling feature of EarlyEdU courses and the Coaching Companion—allows instructors to model and participants to learn to give feedback. The process incorporates positive observation, connection to the assignment and readings, and suggestions for improvement. It also provides social support by bringing together participants with similar career paths and interests. When participants engage together in authentic and useful conversations about their practice, they enact an important aspect of becoming a professional in the field.

### **Coach-quality feedback**

Instructors of EarlyEdU courses are expected to provide frequent and productive feedback to participants. When participants video record themselves demonstrating practices that are targeted in assignments, instructors assume the role of coach and provide specific feedback on the participants' use of the practice and progress toward mastery. Feedback—shared either in-person or through video—is based on focused observation and occurs within an instructor-student partnership that is supportive and focused on learning.



## Issues and Barriers

**Bachelor's degrees have become “the default credential for a growing number of professions,”<sup>15</sup> and the most sought-after credential for the ECE workforce.**

But early care and education professionals, on the whole, represent a non-traditional student population compared with most undergraduates at colleges and universities.<sup>16</sup> EarlyEdU creates course materials appropriate for participants who are likely to be mid-career adults, more racially and ethnically diverse than in most professions, who may work close to home but far from colleges and universities, and who are likely to make little more than minimum wage in work environments that are intense and stressful. Their financial, personal, and career needs are more complex than those of more traditional student groups. For this reason, one popular EarlyEdU course addresses resilience and wellness to prevent teacher stress and burnout. (See below for a discussion of resilience training.)

We work to address a range of barriers that ECE professionals face when pursuing degrees, including:

## **Affordability**

ECE providers are encouraged—even pressured—to seek advanced education credentials. But the return on investment is questionable. Higher education is expensive; in addition to tuition cost, students must find the resources to cover childcare, transportation, technology (computers and Internet connections), and other expenses.<sup>17</sup> And unlike most other degree pursuits, increased education for the ECE workforce does not necessarily translate into substantially higher earnings. Some critics of the push toward more professional credentialing of ECE educators warn that the policy creates an expensive barrier to a career in teaching. Also, ECE courses are not known to be revenue-generators for IHEs.

## **Access**

Many early care and education providers do not live near colleges and universities that offer the classes and degrees they want. And since most work full-time, the window for exploiting educational opportunities is small. This is one of the reasons that about 30% of the participants enrolled in EarlyEdU courses access them online. Quality adds another complication to access; many ECE degree programs are understaffed and under-resourced, and some have closed in recent years.

## **Relevance**

Many early care and education providers seeking new credentials take courses and workshops on a piecemeal basis, and they accumulate training hours that do not lead to credits and college degrees. One of the key aims of EarlyEdU is to support competency-based courses that work in conjunction with field-based learning and lead to degree completion. We develop coursework that applies to degrees and practices students will need to master and demonstrate in ECE settings—in other words, that are relevant to their current and future work with young children.

## **Effectiveness**

The point of higher education for ECE providers is to offer courses and competency-based assignments that impart the knowledge and skills that lead to improved outcomes for children. EarlyEdU courses are designed so that students learn about and learn to use teaching practices that they will need in the field, that are based on research, and have demonstrated effectiveness.

## **Connection**

Students seeking higher credentials in ECE need connections to instructors, peers, institutions, and to professionals in the field. EarlyEdU fosters such connections through our CORP groups. In addition to providing a context for online video review and feedback, the CORPs help online students stay in courses and complete degrees.

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15. Mary Alice McCarthy, *Rethinking Credential Requirements in Early Education*, New America, (Washington DC 2017).

16. Allen and Kelly, *Transforming the Workforce*, 365–420

17. Allen and Kelly, *Transforming the Workforce*, 365–420





## What We have Accomplished

**The work of the EarlyEdU Alliance is built on research evidence as well as our professional experiences.**

We nurture a spirit of innovation in college teaching, introduce our courses and resources with the expectation of gaining useful feedback from users, and engage in the process of continuous improvement. In this section, we summarize a few of our recent activities.

### **Building math instruction skills**

EarlyEdU's course in General Cognition and Knowledge reflects our approach to helping ECE educators develop relevant skills. One area of focus in the course is on early mathematics knowledge and skills. Early math knowledge is considered the best predictor of school success.<sup>18, 19</sup> But ECE providers routinely enter the field with little knowledge about strategies to engage young children in mathematics, and there is inadequate early mathematics professional development for pre-service teachers.

The General Cognition and Knowledge course is focused on building instructional skills to work with young children in ways that promote logic and reasoning. The course's competency-based assignments align with the Know-See-Do-Reflect-Improve Intentional Teaching Framework. Participants receive multiple opportunities to observe and test practices in early learning settings and to use the framework to develop core competencies.

The course includes discussion forums, assignments, lectures, and video of practices designed to help students master instructional strategies that support children's learning in developmentally appropriate ways. Course goals are to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of how children develop early logic, reasoning, and mathematical and scientific thinking and how instructional practices can support this development.
- Provide opportunities for participants to see teacher-child interactions and specific instructional strategies that support children's logic, reasoning, and mathematical and scientific knowledge and skills.
- Use strategies that support and elicit participants' logic, reasoning, mathematical and scientific knowledge and skills, taking advantage of informal and formal opportunities to engage in instruction.
- Provide opportunities for students to become more effective in the classroom by inviting participants to analyze and assess their classroom strategies, review their peers' work and give feedback, receive constructive guidance, and then plan for improvement.

Soleil Boyd, PhD, designed and implemented a research study to examine the impact of the course on students' use of early math teaching practices and their beliefs about mathematics. All of the students were pre-service ECE teachers. Using a mixed methods approach, Dr. Boyd examined students' video submissions of their teaching as well as their reflective journal entries. Results showed that students increased their use of mathematics



language in their interactions with children as well as their use of responsive math language—that is, they increased their awareness and use of learning opportunities as they occurred in the classroom.<sup>20</sup>

Results also showed that students engaged in deeper reflection and analysis of their thinking about their teaching of mathematics throughout the course and that course readings and video examples combined with practice-based and reflective assignments resulted in improvements in these students' use of intentional teaching practices that support children's learning of mathematics. These findings, in turn, inform the design and delivery of the EarlyEdU course and learning activities.

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18. Arthur J. Baroody, The Development of Adaptive Expertise and Flexibility: The integration of conceptual and procedural knowledge. In A. J. Baroody & A. Dowker (Eds.), *Studies in Mathematical Thinking and Learning. The Development of Arithmetic Concepts and Skills: Constructing Adaptive Expertise*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers. (Mahwah, NJ, 2003): 1-33.

19. Kimberly Denton and Jerry West, *Children's Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Kindergarten and First Grade*. U.S. Government Printing, (Washington DC, 2002). Greg J. Duncan et al, "School Readiness and Later Achievement," *Developmental Psychology* 43, no. 6, (2017): 1,428-46.

20. Boyd, Pre-Service Teachers' Mathematics Language



### **Supporting resilience**

Teaching at any level can be a high-stress profession, with exhaustion and burnout leading to high attrition rates. The social and emotional well-being of early care and education providers is critical if they are to implement evidence-based practices that lead to positive child outcomes. But research indicates that most teacher preparation programs place little emphasis on

promoting teachers' well-being and helping them develop routines to manage job-related stress.<sup>21</sup>

EarlyEdU designed a 10-session course, Resiliency and Wellness for Educators, which focuses on supporting the physical and emotional well-being of ECE professionals. Research shows the connections across resilience skills, strategies, and routines to nurturing and successful teaching environments.<sup>22</sup>

Based on that research, the course uses the Intentional Teaching Framework to develop resilient educators—those with the confidence to address stressful situations, demonstrate perseverance, and strive to maintain mental and physical health. Participants learn to teach from the inside out as they practice resiliency skills—such as mindfulness, altering unhelpful thoughts, and anxiety reduction—that apply to all aspects of their lives. These skills, in turn, support the warm and nurturing relationships that are central to children's learning and improved outcomes.

Gail Joseph, PhD, developed and studied the impact of short modules and exercises related to resiliency and wellness that were embedded into the EarlyEdU course on Positive Behavior Support. Children's challenging behavior can be stressful for their teachers, so it makes sense to pair this wellness content for adults with the practices needed to support children who are having difficulties with social and emotional learning. Students responded to surveys after the class ended and grades were submitted. They reported that the materials were enjoyable, helpful, and useful in their daily lives.

The materials and exercises are based, in part, on the ACHIEVER resilience curriculum<sup>23</sup> that has been studied with both early childhood coaches and secondary teachers. Teachers have reported<sup>24</sup> that the curriculum served to reduce their job-related stress, improve their teaching efficacy, and support stronger intentions to use evidence-based classroom practices. These studies on resiliency and wellness are among a growing body of research literature that has led to the development of the EarlyEdU course on this topic and the refinement of the resiliency and wellness exercises that are embedded into other courses.

### **Connecting course content and field experience**

The EarlyEdU approach emphasizes the importance of connecting course content with practice. The Alliance has demonstrated the value of using video as a teaching tool to help transfer knowledge of effective practices to the ECE workforce and to overcome time and resource barriers to high-quality professional development. We have maximized our use of video in professional development and teacher



preparation by using the best features of video-sharing platforms and implementing a systematic and iterative design process that led to the Coaching Companion.

Joseph and Brennan<sup>25</sup> demonstrated the benefits of the Intentional Teaching Framework, peer learning teams, and systematic use of video. They developed a course for undergraduate students in early childhood and family studies aimed at improving teacher-child interactions. Using the framework to guide course development, students were trained on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and received instruction on identifying high-quality interactions. Students then completed practice-based assignments that focused on demonstrating quality interactions. Student videos were collected into showcase portfolios. Students viewed the videos in peer coaching learning teams (precursors to the CORPs) and commented on the extent to which each example was indicative of high quality. Results showed that the portfolios and peer coaching learning teams improved students' abilities to see their growth and improvement. Student comments to each other increased in specificity over the term. In addition, the study demonstrated a way to strengthen the connection between coursework and field experience through practice-based assignments. The findings from this study, as well as additional iterations of our courses and complementary research literature, provide constructive feedback to enhance the features of EarlyEdU courses.

In 2014, Joseph studied the impact of a 10-week Engaging Interactions and Environments course. She looked at two cohorts of students and collected a baseline (pre-course) video and final video from every student. She then examined the change in the quality of teacher-child interactions—specifically instructional support. The videos were randomly distributed to be coded by CLASS reliable observers. The outcomes showed significant improvements in Instructional Support and two of the three dimensions (Concept Development and Quality of Feedback). Figure 3 summarizes these data.

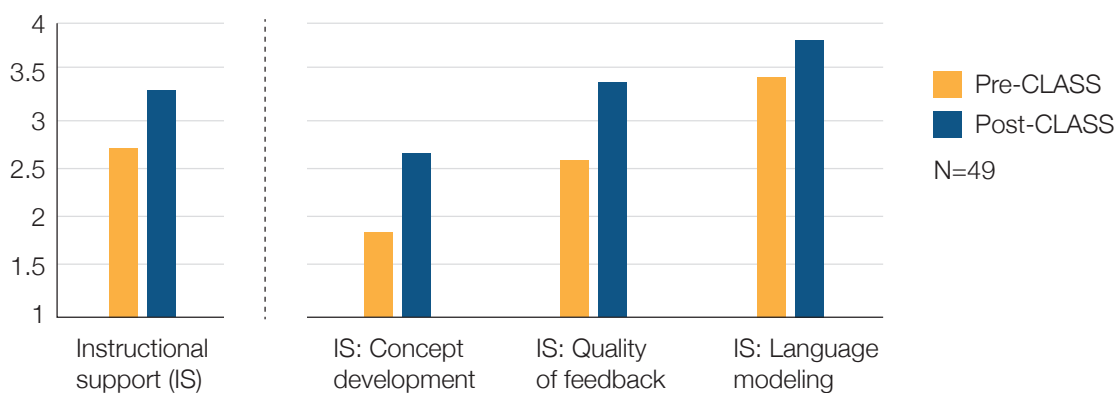


Figure 3: Improvement in Teacher-Child Interactions Following EarlyEdU Course

21. Clayton Cook et al, "Promoting Secondary Teachers' Well-Being and Intentions to Implement Evidence-Based Practices: Randomized Evaluation of the ACHIEVER Resilience Curriculum," *Psychology in the Schools* 54, no. 1 (2017) 13–28.
22. Megan S. Frye, "Promoting caregiver and child resilience: The ACHIEVER Adult Resilience Curriculum," (PhD Diss, University of Washington, 2015).
23. Gail Joseph et al, *Developmentally Appropriate Coaching: Exploring a Coach Framework that Addresses the Whole Provider*. Filmed at NAEYC PDI, San Francisco, CA. (2013).
24. Cook et al., "Promoting Secondary Teachers' Well-Being," 13–28.
25. Joseph and Brennan, "Framing Quality."



## Conclusions and Next Steps

**With this paper, we introduce the EarlyEdU Alliance and its place in the rapidly changing field of early care and education workforce preparation.**

We believe our work addresses barriers to meaningfully preparing early care and education professionals and shows how new technology, combined with our Intentional Teaching Framework, strengthen professional development both for those entering the field and those who have been working in it.

Our courses facilitate the dissemination to colleges and universities of timely, research-tested strategies to prepare teachers of young children. Research confirms the benefit of our focus on connecting theory and practice in higher education coursework. The EarlyEdU approach also supports a professional learning community of higher education, government, and non-profit and philanthropic stakeholders that encourages the application of evidence-based strategies in training of early learning professionals across the nation.

Through our continued work with states and IHEs, we will build pathways to relevant degrees for early care and education professionals—a goal consistent with recent trends in state and federal education policy.





**EarlyEdU Alliance**

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