



# Ideal Pathways

How Ideal Learning Approaches Prepare and Support Early Childhood Educators



Trust for Learning

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*This report is dedicated in loving memory to Jackie Cossentino and Serena Simmons Connelly, both of whom devoted their careers to the expansion of Montessori and other ideal learning approaches in pursuit of a more just and equitable world.*

## Foreword

In recent decades, convergent evidence from developmental scientists, economists, educators, and advocates for social and racial justice has rightly centered attention on the importance of early investment in children. Scientists have demonstrated the critical importance of rich early childhood interactions on short- and long-term outcomes across domains<sup>1</sup> and across generations;<sup>2</sup> groundbreaking models have projected long-term economic returns;<sup>3</sup> and public funding for early childhood programs has grown with bipartisan support.

Over the last century, vibrant early learning traditions emerged in relative isolation – in impoverished communities of Rome with Maria Montessori; in the small town of Reggio Emilia after World War II; in Ypsilanti, Michigan through the Perry Preschool Project; in low-income Dallas communities through AVANCE; and many other places – led by educators who believed that underserved children have limitless potential and the right to grow and thrive.

Over the last decade, as the United States has begun to scale access to publicly funded early childhood programs, leaders from these child-centered, developmental approaches have come together from across the U.S. as the Ideal Learning Roundtable, united by [common principles](#) including equity, play, personalized learning, and the importance of relationships and the learning environment. They learn from one another’s distinctive approaches, develop joint resources for the field, and advocate for ideal learning environments for every child, especially those who have been historically underserved.

In pursuit of the holistic growth of young children, **these approaches have also created distinctive pedagogies of adult learning and development.** This report examines these adult development approaches to inform the educator training and support models needed – at scale – to create ideal learning environments for all children. In it, we ask and begin to answer several questions:

- What distinguishes preparation in ideal learning approaches from mainstream educator preparation?
- What barriers stand in the way of expanding access to ideal learning educator development approaches?
- What additional research is needed to support the expansion of ideal learning-aligned training for early childhood educators in all stages of their careers?
- How can philanthropists and policymakers support the expansion of high-quality educator development programs aligned with the principles of ideal learning?



Photo courtesy of the Montessori Institute of North Texas

The report includes snapshots of eleven educator development approaches and analyzes themes, tensions, barriers, and opportunities to scale within and across them. While many early childhood programs around the country align with the principles of ideal learning, analysis of this sample sheds light on a range of universally important equity factors including cost model, training format, use of public funding, alignment with credentialing systems, and approaches to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. The report concludes with tangible recommendations for advocates, policymakers, and philanthropists.

As we release this report, the overlapping contexts of COVID-19 and widespread demands for real and lasting racial justice underscore both the urgency and possibility of co-creating early learning environments that embody our shared ideals. Thank you for bringing your wisdom, vision, and creativity to this effort!

Ellen Roche  
Executive Director, Trust for Learning

# Introduction

Members of the Ideal Learning Roundtable, whose approaches are profiled in this report, represent a range of progressive, developmentally-based approaches to early care and education.\* These approaches serve young children ages 0-8 in equitable, relational, play-based, and interactive environments and share a core philosophical vision of what every child needs to grow and thrive. While approaches range from parenting programs to home child care networks to centers and schools, all include core components like a unifying curriculum, educator preparation, or professional development.

In addition to joint efforts around assessment, policy, and public awareness, Ideal Learning Roundtable partners are committed to addressing systemic inequities in educator preparation and development.

This research project emerged from a shared awareness of the urgent need for well-prepared, diverse early childhood educators, particularly in light of recent expansion of public early childhood programs across the country. As colleagues across ideal learning approaches analyzed this collective challenge, several barriers were identified:

- the current conditions and standing of the profession of early childhood education;
- the high cost of many training programs in light of low compensation in the field;
- the time required to undertake intensive coursework;
- geographic access to programs relative to areas of greatest need; and
- the challenges of developing an educator workforce that is culturally responsive and reflective of the communities it serves.

As a first step, this report is meant to facilitate collective understanding of the continuum of training pathways affiliated with ideal learning approaches, which reveals a range of entry points for innovation and expansion of these effective adult learning models. We hope to establish a baseline of knowledge about key elements across approaches and document how each navigates the broader context of policy, credentialing, and funding.

The programs and models reviewed intersect with early childhood educators at many points in their own career pathways, from undergraduate education to in-service

professional development to advanced training. While there is some emphasis on pre-service preparation, **we use the term “educator development”** to capture the breadth of these pathways and to underscore the idea that educators should be supported throughout their careers to reach their own potential as learners, teachers, and leaders.

The report also examines known systemic barriers to high-quality educator development through the lens of ideal learning, including demographics, costs, geographic distribution, integration with higher education, and credentialing.

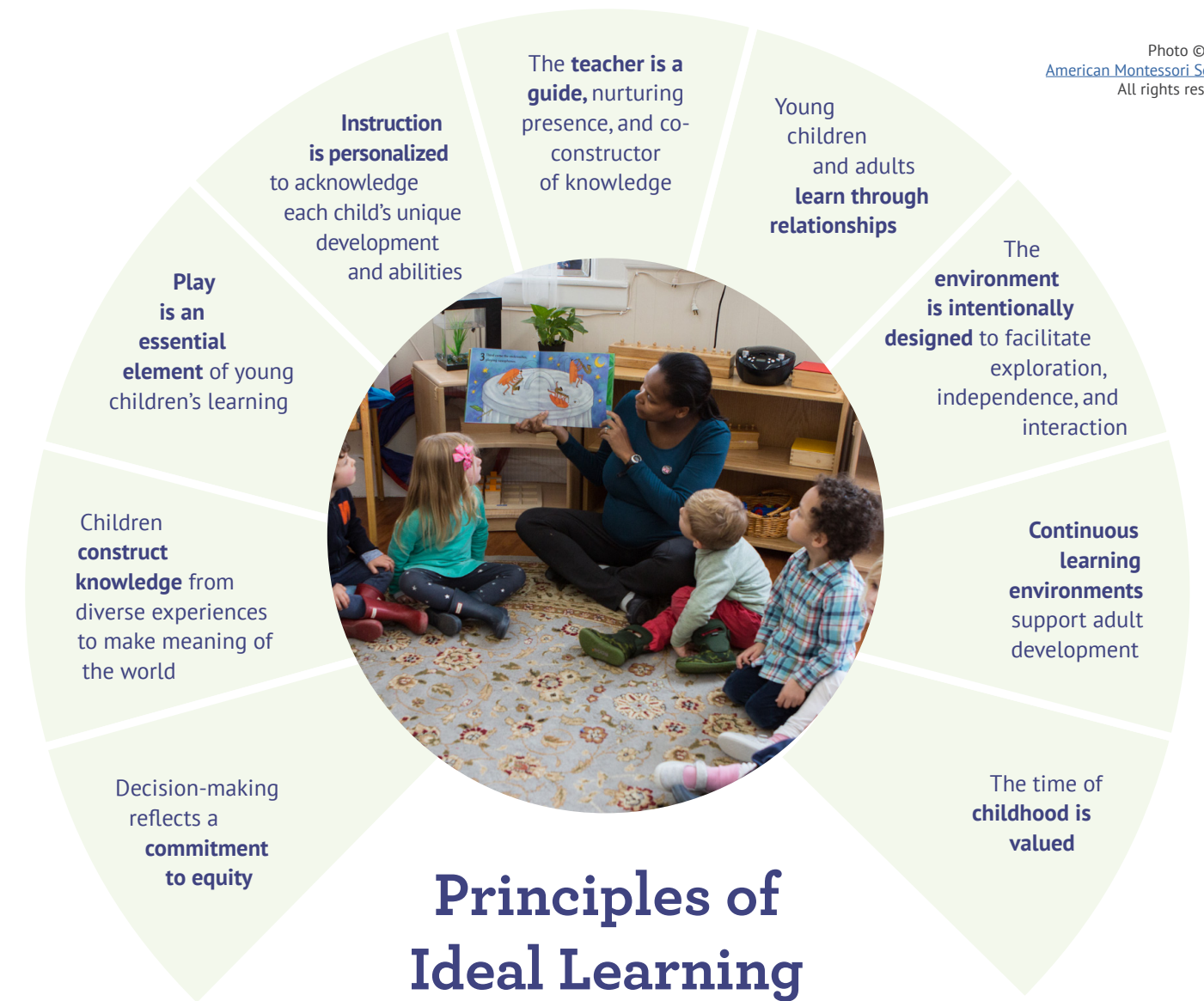
Based on data within the eleven program snapshots, we analyze additional challenges and opportunities and recommend specific actions for policymakers, researchers, and philanthropists.

## Vision of the educator

All ideal learning approaches recognize the profound, formative influence of educators – parents, caregivers, child care providers, and classroom teachers – in a child’s earliest years. This recognition has strong support in theory and empirical science, from Bowlby’s theory of attachment,<sup>4</sup> to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs,<sup>5</sup> to recent evidence documenting the lifelong impact of toxic stress<sup>6</sup> and benefits of nurturing relationships<sup>7</sup> for young children. Early childhood educators have a direct impact on children’s physical, emotional, and cognitive development, and a lifelong impact on each child’s ability to learn, socialize, and self-regulate.

While educator development manifests differently across models, ideal learning approaches unite around **common principles** that form the foundation of quality early childhood education:

- Decision-making reflects a **commitment to equity**;
- **Children construct knowledge from diverse experiences** to make meaning of the world;
- **Play is an essential element** of young children’s learning;
- **Instruction is personalized** to acknowledge each child’s unique development and abilities;
- **The teacher is a guide**, nurturing presence, and co-creator of knowledge;
- Young children and adults **learn through relationships**;
- The **environment is intentionally designed** to facilitate exploration, independence, and interaction;



## Principles of Ideal Learning

- **Continuous learning environments** support adult development; and,
- The time of **childhood is valued**.

Ideal learning approaches bring a developmental perspective to adult learning, supporting each educator to grow and develop as a learner, teacher, and person. At a minimum, ideal learning educator development includes:

- a philosophy of learning and development that **centers the child in relationship** with family, caregivers, community, and environment;
- a belief in the **innate potential of every child** and a continuous **equity mindset**;
- a robust knowledge of the **science of child development**;
- training in materials and strategies that support young children’s need for **connection, unhurried time, play, story, and nature**;
- **developmentally appropriate practices** that support co-development of social, emotional, and cognitive domains;
- **foundational content knowledge** in language, mathematics, science, creative expression, and issues of equity in early childhood;
- **observational skills** to continually reflect on and support each child’s development;
- listening and **communication skills** to learn from, and with, children, families, peers, and mentors; and,
- **emotional regulation and planning skills** to stay present with children, manage stress as it arises, collaborate with colleagues, and model executive functioning for children.

4 \* Ideal learning partners include the following exceptional early learning approaches: All Our Kin, AVANCE, Bank Street College of Education, Educare, EL Education, Friends Center for Children, HighScope, Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired, Tools of the Mind, and Waldorf.

# National Landscape of Early Care & Education Pathways

Ideal learning educator development pathways do not exist in isolation, but reflect the values, trends, markets, policies, and practices in our society. Here, we briefly examine the current context of higher education, teacher preparation, and workforce conditions in the United States.

## Higher education

Recently, institutions of higher education (IHEs) have seen a decline in enrollment. This trend is due in part to an erosion of public support and funding for higher education. In 2018, states spent 13% less per student on higher education than they did a decade prior.<sup>8</sup> Rising tuition, increased student debt, and a changing job market have further diminished public confidence in higher education. In parallel, the growth in merit-based aid has outpaced the growth in need-based financial aid, making it more difficult for low-income students to attend college affordably.<sup>9</sup> Overall, two-thirds of Americans report that they are unsatisfied with U.S. higher education.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, some small liberal arts colleges have closed or merged with other institutions.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, online degree-granting programs, self-paced curricula, and continuing education options have provided new means of flexible instruction.<sup>12</sup> College enrollment, which was already predicted to continue declining over the next decade,<sup>13</sup> will face new pressures and market forces as the effects of COVID-19 continue to ripple across the economy.<sup>14</sup>

## Teacher preparation

Within colleges of education, fewer students are enrolling in traditional teacher preparation programs, which typically consist of undergraduate coursework and supervised student teaching over two to four years. There has been a significant decline from a peak of almost 200,000 education degrees in the early 1970s to under 100,000 today.<sup>15</sup> This trend shows no sign of slowing as bachelor's degrees in education declined by 15% between 2005 and 2015.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, the gender imbalance in teaching and in schools of education has widened over the past 30 years; the majority of faculty in schools of education are female, and over 75% of pre-K-12 teachers are female. While there has been increased awareness of the need for racial, cultural, ethnic,



“The real preparation for education is a study of one’s self. The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than the learning of ideas. It includes the training of character, it is a preparation of the spirit.”

— Dr. Maria Montessori (*The Absorbent Mind*)

and linguistic diversity in the teaching workforce, gaps persist. Twenty-five percent of those earning undergraduate degrees and certificates in education are persons of color, despite the fact that people of color comprise about 39% of the nation’s population and 51% of all public elementary and secondary school students.<sup>17</sup>

Within the early childhood education (ECE) workforce specifically, data show that degree completion varies significantly by program setting and the ages of children served. Ninety-six percent of public school teachers hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, whereas only 58% of educators in school-based preschool programs; 72% in Head Start center-based programs; and 34% in other center-based programs hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.<sup>18</sup>

There has been a significant national push in recent years toward ensuring that all early childhood educators have a bachelor’s degree in order to obtain a state credential or teaching license.<sup>19</sup> However, most states still do not require it, especially for those working with children ages 0-3. Rather, these early childhood educators must typically obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or associate’s degree. Overall, there is significant variability among states in educator certification and licensing requirements (e.g., coursework taken, degree earned, duration of teaching experience, or exam passed).

## Non-traditional pathways

A significant portion of the early care and education workforce does not participate in traditional teacher education programs. Instead, a patchwork of professional learning programs provide educator development; these include non-traditional degree programs, non-credit workshops, experiential learning, competency-based certification, and embedded professional development.

In public school settings, alternative pathways to teacher certification have become increasingly popular. These programs — such as state, district, and university pathways that expedite the transition of people into a teaching career — account for approximately 13% of new elementary teachers. Compared to traditional pathways, alternative programs enroll a higher percentage of Black (13% vs. 5%), Hispanic (15% vs. 8%), and male (32% vs. 22%) students.<sup>20</sup>

Many educators who serve children under age 5, especially those working with children ages 0-3 in home- and center-based settings, do not have formal pre-service preparation. Instead, they pursue coursework and other training opportunities after entering the field.<sup>21</sup> These options often do not articulate toward college degrees or state licensure requirements, which means that early childhood professionals may not be recognized for the skills they possess.

## The “leaky funnel”

Recent national and state studies have identified multiple variables that inhibit the growth of a highly qualified early childhood workforce and the ability of providers to retain early childhood educators in the profession.<sup>22</sup> National data indicate a shortage of qualified educators across the country.<sup>23</sup> These shortages are especially pronounced for educators working with specific populations like infants and toddlers, children with special needs, and multilingual learners. Yet the need for knowledgeable and experienced early childhood educators is growing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of preschool teachers alone has been projected to increase by 7% between 2018 and 2028, creating an additional 36,900 jobs.<sup>24</sup>

Sadly, not much has changed over the past 25 years since the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published the *Early Childhood Career Lattice*<sup>25</sup> in 1994, despite increased demand for early childhood education. In that publication, Gwen Morgan describes the systemic problems that affect early learning career pathways as a “leaky funnel,” where many early childhood practitioners leave the pathways that do exist due to a lack of individual support, institutional barriers, and structural inequities.

While universities and professional organizations across the U.S. offer many pathways for individuals to earn early childhood degrees, state licensure, and specialized credentials resulting in highly qualified educators, the reality is that the large majority of the early childhood workforce, especially those disconnected from public school systems, find it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve these credentials due to a multitude of barriers (e.g., time, cost, location).<sup>26</sup> Early childhood educators seeking college degrees often encounter challenges paying for school; balancing school, work, and family commitments; and navigating higher education requirements and systems.<sup>27</sup>

Multiple studies and reports expose the low wages earned by early childhood educators across the U.S. While higher pay is often associated with teachers in school district settings, compensation can vary considerably based on program funding source (e.g., child care subsidies, Head Start, state-funded preschool, etc.). Compared to other fields, early childhood education and elementary education are among the lowest-earning majors among college graduates.<sup>28</sup>

Data show that early childhood educators earn more with increasing levels of education, whether they advance to an associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, or higher. However, these “wage bumps” are relatively small compared with other professional fields. At every education level, there are significant wage inequities for teachers working with infants and toddlers compared to older children.<sup>29</sup> In 2019, the average hourly wage across all settings was \$11.65 for child care workers, \$17.34 for preschool teachers, and \$33.76 for

## Early childhood accreditation

Requirements for early childhood educator development programs vary by state, but most degree-granting programs exist within regionally accredited universities. Some schools of education also seek professional accreditation through the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Early childhood degree programs within regionally or CAEP-accredited programs can seek further recognition through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which evaluates programs against its own standards for early childhood teacher education programs. Programs that obtain specialized early childhood accreditation through NAEYC may be more aligned with ideal learning principles given their developmentally-informed standards.

Kindergarten teachers.<sup>30</sup> Further, vacation, health insurance, and other benefits are often nonexistent or reduced for infant and toddler educators compared to their peers who work with older children in schools.

**Median hourly wage across early childhood education settings, 2019**

Child care workers	\$11.65
Preschool teachers*	\$17.34
Kindergarten teachers*	\$33.76

\*note: wages calculated based on a 10-month school year  
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook (2019)

Low wages across the board make it difficult for educators to meet basic needs, let alone access professional development and higher credentials.<sup>31</sup> Unsurprisingly, the turnover rate among early childhood educators is high, exacerbating the shortage of stable, high-quality care and learning environments for children.<sup>32</sup>

## Regulatory framework

As public investment in early childhood education has grown over the past two decades, so has scrutiny around program effectiveness and child outcomes. This focus on public accountability has led most states to develop regulatory frameworks — such as a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) — for assessing program quality. Educator training is often one component of these systems, and in some states, is tied to increased levels of compensation. Federal and state policymakers have also increased the qualification requirements for educators in Head Start and many state pre-K programs.

Despite these shifts, there is still enormous variability in early childhood educator requirements across the U.S. Expectations of what early childhood educators should know and be able to do — and the education and training needed to ensure those competencies — vary widely across states and programs. Requirements pertaining to state certification and licensure often differ by program type (e.g., family child care, preschool, home visiting, etc.), age of children served (0-3, 3-5, 5+), and setting (e.g., home, school, center), and are not based on a coherent career ladder. As a result, educators are left to

navigate a complex landscape of regulations that affect where and in what capacity they are able to participate in the field — which also limits their portability between learning environments and districts.

This complexity has led many leaders to advocate for a new, shared national framework to capture the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to support young children from birth through age 8. Recent national efforts, including the [National Academies' Transforming the Workforce](#) report and the [National Association for the Education of Young Children's Power to the Profession](#) initiative, seek to clarify and streamline professional preparation in the field.

## Emerging equity analyses

Issues of education have always intersected with social and cultural inequities. From restrictions on teaching girls, women, and enslaved people in the colonial period to forced assimilation schools for indigenous children and the continued suppression of dialects, languages, and cultures today, explicit and implicit barriers to education have always existed. So, too, have homegrown alternatives to mainstream schooling led by those it sought to omit. These formal schools and informal educational settings, created by free and enslaved African Americans, indigenous peoples, women, disabled people, and other historically marginalized groups, emerged throughout history in direct refutation of systems of oppression.

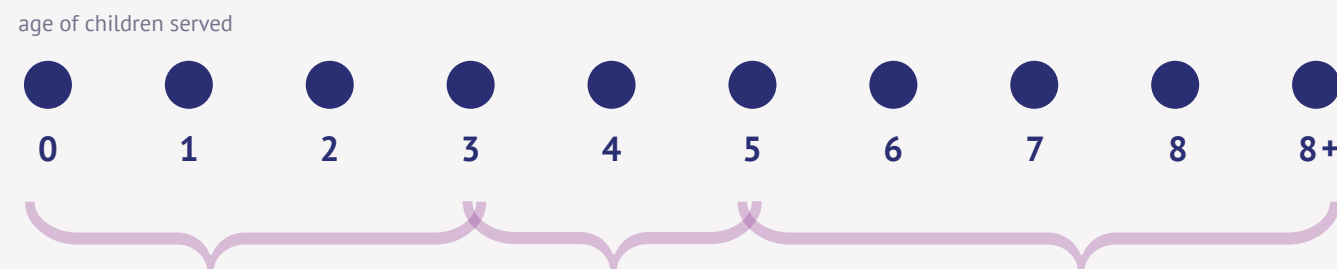
From the early 20th century on, while U.S. public education has espoused common goals of literacy, civic engagement, and more recently, equality for women and girls, people of

color, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, our educational system has never lived up to its expressed ideals and in many ways has continued to perpetuate injustice.

Only in the last few decades has an analysis of systemic racial and cultural inequities penetrated mainstream conversations about educational disparities, beginning to shift the frame from a deficit-based analysis toward a strengths-based vision of equitable education. For generations of educators who have worked for social, racial, and cultural justice over centuries, this explicit analysis of structural inequity is long overdue. The continuing harm to children of color has been well-documented,<sup>33</sup> as have the benefits of diverse, culturally responsive educators.<sup>34</sup> Yet, application of anti-bias, anti-racist strategies is still emergent in most educational contexts. Ongoing efforts to build racial and cultural equity in early childhood must begin with an understanding of *adults as learners*.

**It is abundantly clear that our early childhood system must transform at all levels to meet the needs of every child, align with developmental science, and create parity and career paths for its vital workforce. Ideal learning approaches, with several combined centuries of experience supporting educators to nurture the unique potential of every child — in the context of their own development as educators — are well-poised to serve the field as it evolves.**

**High-quality learning opportunities are critical from birth, yet educator credentials and preparation vary widely in early childhood. The younger the child served, the more variability by state in terms of in preparation and credentials required.**



**Informal care, child care, Early Head Start.**

Requirements for educators supporting children from 0-3 range across states and differ based on setting of care (home, center-based, etc.). Many states do not require any formal training.

**Preschool, child care, and Head Start**

Educators supporting children in preschool programs are more likely to have formal training, but credential requirements (CDA, AA, BA) vary by state, type of program (Head Start, public pre-K, child care) and setting (schools, community-based organizations, etc.).

**Elementary**

Public elementary school teachers are likely to have at least a bachelor's degree and state teaching credential. States may issue credentials for various grade spans, such as P-3, K-6, or K-8.

## Ideal Learning Educator Pathways Snapshots

**The following snapshots capture core elements of educator preparation and development in 11 ideal learning approaches.**

These models and programs target different segments of the early childhood workforce, including parents, home-based providers, preschool educators, and elementary school teachers. These snapshots show that **there are many ways to effectively train educators in alignment with the principles of ideal learning — as well as many opportunities to inform the field and expand these high-quality educator development programs.** They range from an immersive internship model serving ten new educators each year to internationally known pedagogical approaches serving thousands. Each snapshot was developed through phone interviews, online questionnaires, and in-person meetings with program leaders. Initial data obtained through interviews and internet searches were supplemented by focus groups at an Ideal Learning Roundtable meeting, held in Washington, D.C. in January, 2020.

## All Our Kin

All Our Kin is a staffed family child care (FCC) network that supports home-based child care providers. It works to build high-quality sustainable FCC programs that provide a nurturing, supportive environment for young children during their critically important first years. Through its programs, child care professionals receive support as business owners; working parents receive stable, high-quality care for their children; and children gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and in life.

All Our Kin is a local community-based network, located in neighborhoods and towns in Connecticut and in the Bronx. It is one of a handful of organizations nationwide that addresses child care and workforce development simultaneously, targeting interconnected economic, social, and educational factors by supporting primarily low-income parents and providers from a variety of communities.

### Educator development overview

All Our Kin offers a range of supports – including mentorship, professional learning, advocacy, and leadership opportunities – to home-based child care providers at every stage of their professional development. All services are provided in Spanish and English. Supports include:

- **Coaching:** All Our Kin takes a relationship-based approach to educator preparation and assistance. Its Family Child Care Network directly supports providers through experienced coaches who are trained in a framework including knowledge of child development, characteristics of high-quality early care and education, reflective practice, adult learning theory, and the distinctive characteristics of FCC. Coaches build on existing strengths, working with providers on mutually identified areas of need. Support is offered at the provider's program, with coaches modeling lessons, observing, demonstrating best practices, providing new materials and resources, reflecting with the caregiver on their practice, and developing goals and action steps. As a responsive model, there is no prescribed curriculum. Rather, the curriculum is emergent, designed to meet the identified current needs of the providers. An additional coaching program helps educators obtain accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care after they have completed at least 45 hours of All Our Kin educational programming.

All Our Kin coaches learn from each other through monthly reflective practice workshops, where they share strategies and new ways of thinking about their work. Coach development also includes curriculum

**FOUNDED:** 1999

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
in-home care providers

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
approximately 900 annually

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** Regional - sites  
in New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford,  
Norwalk, and the Bronx



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



work, mentoring, and ongoing learning about child development. The pathway for coaches arises directly from the field; coach candidates have prior experience in a center or in FCC. As such, they are likely to have received coaching themselves. The preferred background for coaches includes work experience as an early childhood educator; an understanding of FCC skills and practices in early childhood care; knowledge of child development; and familiarity with the principles and practices of coaching and of adult learning.

- **Workshops and training:** The Family Child Care Network brings together providers on a regular basis to alleviate the isolation that can come with home-based child care, build connections between educators, and provide ongoing support. Meeting topics include best practices in child and adult learning, family engagement, curriculum, and FCC business management support. An annual conference offers further professional development and support.
- **The Tool Kit Licensing Program:** The Tool Kit Licensing Program provides FCC providers with support in meeting state licensure requirements, thereby increasing the availability of licensed, high-quality child care. It includes instruction in health and safety topics and in use of developmentally appropriate curricula and materials, such as toys and books. It also offers mentoring and coaching throughout the application process.

- **Business development:** All Our Kin offers workforce and economic development opportunities, including technical assistance, business workshops, a comprehensive thirty-hour business curriculum, and a business coaching model. These services provide a pathway to greater economic sustainability for All Our Kin providers.

### Format

Coaching is provided on site in providers' homes. Coaches are taught how to respond to providers in a direct, respectful, culturally relevant, individualized manner. Each coach has twelve providers in their caseload.

### Cost model

There is no charge to providers to be part of the Network or to receive services; it is an opt-in model in which one becomes a member by showing up. The only fees are for mandated CPR and medication administration training. All Our Kin also offers zero-interest business loans and grants to providers. The program is funded primarily through private philanthropic support. A portion of All Our Kin's work is funded by government sources, including Early Head Start.

### Duration

Coaching lasts up to 2 years on a 10 month calendar. Each educator receives up to 4.5 hours a month of direct, personalized support. Providers who pursue NAFCC (National Association for Family Child Care) accreditation receive an additional 3 hours a month of coaching support.

### Credential, degree, or certification

All Our Kin's coaching model is not a degree pathway. Certification is provided upon completion of compliance courses only (e.g., CPR training). An additional coaching program helps educators obtain accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care after they have completed at least 45 hours of All Our Kin educational programming. However, All Our Kin is working to offer its business training program for college credit.

### Affiliation with higher education

All Our Kin was founded in New Haven, CT in 1999 by two Yale graduates working with five community members. An annual conference is held in partnership with the university. All Our Kin also hosts interns from several institutions of higher education.

Photo courtesy of All Our Kin



### Demographics

All Our Kin trains and supports nearly 900 FCC providers a year who can provide services for over 4,300 children. The population of FCC providers is predominantly low-income, female, and Latinx. Approximately 72% of the FCC providers receive subsidy payments for children in their programs, which is based on the family's status as low-income.

### Recruitment

Participants typically hear about the program through word-of-mouth in communities. All Our Kin also sends out monthly newsletters publicizing orientations, workshops, and other offerings to meet providers' needs. All services are opt-in.

### Strengths and challenges

- + The approach provides a network of support and learning to an underserved, low-income population.
- + Coaches come from the community, have direct understanding of the work, and are able to respond to providers in respectful, culturally responsive ways.
- + The strengths-based model builds on what is already in place, providing ongoing support to address individuals' needs and questions and improve current practices.
- While opportunities for career advancement exist through program licensure and business sustainability, the knowledge and skills developed through coaching and practical experience do not articulate with any higher education pathways.

## AVANCE

For over 45 years, AVANCE has provided high-quality, innovative, two-generation education and support programming for low-income Latinx children and families in Texas. Its targeted programs assist families based on their unique needs and reflect the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background of the community. AVANCE offers support programming to children's first teachers: parents. Emphasis is placed on the interconnected, interdependent educational, social, economic, and community factors in children's lives and the resulting need to provide a range of support services.

AVANCE uses a multi-pronged approach to support families in a holistic, community-based model. There are three main areas of programming – parent education and support, early childhood education, and workforce development – that reach over 7,000 families annually. AVANCE operates regionally, with several locations in Texas and one site in Sonoma, California. By working within communities, the approach builds social capital and creates networks of knowledge, relationships, and support. AVANCE recognizes and supports the primary importance of home and family for the health and wellbeing of young children, emphasizing that “home is the first classroom and parents are the first teacher.”

### Educator development overview

AVANCE'S core Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) focuses on parent education, child development, and community engagement. While parents attend classes, children are cared for in an environment that models the developmentally appropriate approach and techniques for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers that parents are learning. Participants learn in a cohort, building connections and support across families. PCEP includes three main components: parent education; socialization through toymaking; and community engagement and advocacy.

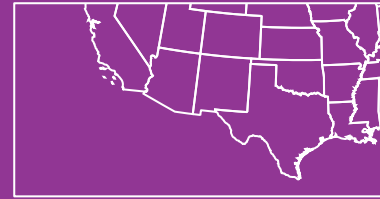
- AVANCE's **parent education** curriculum teaches parents how to become their child's first teacher through a child development curriculum.
- In AVANCE's **toymaking** classes, parents learn through traditional crafting activities, involving design, problem-solving, play, skills (e.g., sewing), and fellowship. Led by experienced toymakers, these sessions teach parents how to engage their children in developmental play, supporting “serve and return” language development, social skills, and hand-eye coordination. Toys are created from readily available objects and reflect the cultures and festivals of the community.

**FOUNDED:** 1972

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
parents of young children

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
approximately 7,000 annually

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** California  
& Texas



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



- During the **community engagement and advocacy** portion of PCEP, AVANCE facilitates the development of networks of support between parents and across the community. Topics often include skill-building sessions about community resources (i.e., eligibility requirements for support services).

AVANCE's programs are offered in two languages (Spanish and English) by certified instructors, many of whom began as program participants. After attending a four-day PCEP course, instructors are supported with ongoing coaching and training. The asset-based curriculum draws on families' (and instructors') knowledge to build skills and confidence, modeling how parents can support their child's development in a culturally responsive manner. All families are eligible to participate in the PCEP as long as they have children ages 0-4 and a parent or guardian able to participate in the full nine-month program. In 2019, AVANCE created a parent workbook in Spanish and English to support in-home work.

### Format

AVANCE is offered in some communities through Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Because the model supports parents, many of whom go on to become instructors, it represents both a pre-service and in-service model.



Photo courtesy of AVANCE

### Cost model

There is no cost to parents, who also receive free transportation and free child care as part of the two-generation approach. AVANCE is funded through a mix of public and private dollars including federal and state grants, school district fees for service, and national and local family foundations.

### Duration

PCEP runs for nine months, meeting for three hours each week (a total of 27 sessions or approximately 81 hours).

### Credential, degree, or certification

No formal certification or licensure is offered for completion.

### Affiliation with higher education

AVANCE was founded in 1972 by two Cornell University doctoral students, and partners with Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, which supports ongoing updates to the PCEP curriculum.

### Demographics

Over the past two years, AVANCE has served approximately 1,350 parents and their children through PCEP. Ninety-six

percent of PCEP participants identify as Hispanic/Latinx/Chicano, and 72.7% primarily speak Spanish at home. Seventy-seven percent of AVANCE's staff identify as Hispanic/Latinx/Chicano.

### Recruitment

AVANCE does door-to-door recruitment and works with community agencies and school districts to identify participants. Parents are also referred to AVANCE by current and past participants.

### Strengths and challenges

- + AVANCE's two-generation approach provides parents with ECE skills alongside other supports to improve their family's overall wellbeing.
- + The program offers a career path within early childhood education; instructors and the majority of staff are graduates of PCEP.
- + Training is culturally relevant to the communities served; instruction is offered both in Spanish and English.
- Currently, the approach is geographically limited in the Southwest.

## Bank Street College of Education

[Bank Street College of Education](#) is a private, not-for-profit educational institution with a primary campus in upper Manhattan, New York. For over a century, Bank Street has been recognized as a leader in progressive teacher preparation, helping educators and children develop to their full potential. The college maintains a Graduate School, which is regionally accredited and offers master's degrees, graduate-level teacher training, and a range of professional development certificates and workshops. Bank Street also houses a school for children ages six months through 8th grade and the [Bank Street Education Center](#), which works with a range of school systems, higher education institutions, and community organizations to expand the college's public impact.

Bank Street's nationally recognized approach is based on a developmental-interaction model of education. It has a commitment to social justice and equity and has expanded online, part-time, and in-service options to serve the needs of a wide range of students and educators. Professional development opportunities are available on the college's campus or at a school or center site and can be customized to meet specific needs. One example is [New Haven ChILD](#), a place-based Ideal Learning District envisioned by the Ideal Learning Roundtable and supported by Trust for Learning, where the Bank Street Education Center has partnered to advise and provide professional development for educators of children from birth to age 8 across the city. Given its history and national profile, Bank Street is one of the few approaches reviewed that is also itself a national voice and convener on workforce policy issues (see the recent release of a milestone report, [Investing in the Birth-to-Three Workforce: A New Vision to Strengthen the Foundation for all Learning](#)).

### Educator development overview

Bank Street's rich historical and philosophical commitment to progressive education is evident in its approach to teaching and learning for both children and adults. All graduate programs at Bank Street College are grounded in the study of human development, learning theory, and sustained clinical practice to produce well-prepared educators ready to help children thrive and develop to their full potential.

Bank Street offers a range of graduate (master's) degree programs and certificates, including a Master of Science in Education, Master of Education, and Master of Science. Within these, programs include Early Childhood Education, Elementary and Childhood Education, Bilingual Education,

**FOUNDED: 1916**

#### EDUCATORS SERVED

pre-service and in-service teachers (early childhood and elementary)

#### NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED

approximately 673 in 2019

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** Local - site in NYC (some online options)



#### AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED



Literacy, Educational Leadership, and Child Life. The majority of programs are New York State credential-eligible, providing students a pathway to a range of teaching and associated positions.

Bank Street places significant emphasis on the role of extensive field work as an essential part of teacher preparation. Field work allows students to link theory to practice and to receive observation and mentoring from Bank Street faculty. Most students complete two semesters of field work (fall and spring). This includes a range of placements across grades in public, independent, or early child care settings. Students who hold initial certification complete one semester of field work (fall or spring). Most working teachers complete an additional summer fieldwork placement outside of their regular classroom. As part of fieldwork, students enjoy a cohort experience, forming a professional learning community of 5 to 7 students with a faculty advisor. This model provides support as educators enter the profession, allowing them to develop reflective capacities and deepen their practice.

### Format

Bank Street programs provide three basic pathways:

- **on campus programs** for in-service working and pre-service student teachers as well as aspiring leaders;
- **fully virtual programs** in early childhood and childhood special education as well as some leadership programs (all online programs combine online classes with field

experience using video supervision); and

- **a competency based program** (a pathway for experienced non-credentialed educators).

Most programs allow students to remain in their current teaching positions if the position is appropriate to the degree.

Bank Street launched several nationally available online master's programs in 2019 to widen access to its approach. The flexible online programs combine theoretical coursework with supervised field work, mentoring, and peer support to help students bridge theory and practice.

### Cost model

The per unit cost is currently \$1,565-\$1,612, resulting in an overall cost of a graduate degree between \$46,950-\$95,108. There are several funded programs that provide reduced tuition. The Early Childhood General Education degree (birth-second grade) is 45 units, and costs \$72,540.

As an accredited institution of higher education, Bank Street administers federal financial aid (loans and grants) to eligible students, which may lead to loan forgiveness if a graduate works for a required amount of time in an eligible school. Bank Street also offers a variety of scholarships. A number of these are designated for members of federally recognized ethnic minority groups. These range from \$14,000 over two years to 80% of tuition for the entire program. In all, over 50% of Bank Street students receive some form of financial aid. Further, programs are structured to allow many students to remain in a teaching role while enrolled, which helps with net affordability.

### Duration

Degree programs are typically two years (full time), but many students are working professionals and complete their studies on a part-time basis.

### Credential, degree, or certification

Bank Street offers graduate degree programs leading to a Master of Science, Master of Science in Education, or the advanced Master of Education. Programs range from 30-59 units; more intensive programs offer dual certification in bilingual education, special education, infancy, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and educational leadership. Certificate programs are also offered, ranging from 15-24 credits. The Early Childhood General Education master's, focused on birth-second grade, requires 45 credits; 12 of these units are for two semesters of field

work. Most degrees make students eligible for New York state credentialing.

### Affiliation with higher education

Bank Street has been regionally accredited since 1960 by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and is accredited as a teacher college by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

### Demographics

In 2019, there were 673 students enrolled in the Graduate School of Education. Of these, 51% identified as White, 16% Black, 22% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 7% other. Additionally, 86% identified as female.

### Recruitment

As a nationally and internationally recognized college with a distinctive approach to education Bank Street is able to rely on its reputation for recruitment. It has a comprehensive website and is profiled on various higher education review websites. Research, publications, conferences, and briefs further enhance its reputation and serve as outreach tools.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Eighty-seven percent of graduates enter and remain in the field of teaching. The overall retention rate in Bank Street's teacher education programs is 95%.
- + Bank Street offers a competency-based program for experienced non-credentialed educators, which honors their experience in the field.
- Compared to other ideal learning educator pathways, Bank Street has a particularly high cost (mitigated somewhat by financial aid).
- With only one location in New York City, in-person programs are not accessible to many students, although online programs are rapidly helping to expand access.



## Educare

The [Educare Learning Network](#) is comprised of 24 birth-to-5 schools serving nearly 4,000 children and their families across 15 states, Washington, D.C., and the Winnebago territory. As one of the nation's most diverse and effective national early childhood networks, Educare's mission is to give young children in under-resourced communities the best chance for success in life. The approach extends beyond the classroom to help children, families, and neighborhoods thrive, and incorporates everything science says young children need to flourish. The use of data and research to improve the schools is foundational to the approach, and teachers and staff are empowered to continually develop their passion and practice. This network of schools relies on strong local leadership to adapt the Educare model of high-quality early learning, family engagement, and support services, including connections with community programs to help children and families access health and mental health services. Ongoing professional development – through reflective supervision, facilitated team lesson planning, coaching, and reflective practice groups – is an embedded hallmark of the Educare model. [Rigorous evaluation over several years](#) indicates that when children leave Educare for elementary school, the majority are academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for Kindergarten.

### Educator development overview

Educare provides a rich and intentional growth environment for teachers and staff by offering a range of professional development training for both Educare staff and educators within each school's local community. One such offering is the Educare Best Practices Training (EBPT), a professional development series for early childhood leaders, teachers, and family engagement staff. This training consists of four modules, each addressing a core feature of the approach:

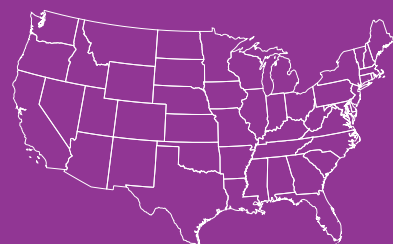
- **Data utilization:** Use routinely-collected data to evaluate program performance and optimize practice.
- **Embedded professional development:** Develop and establish routines that incorporate professional development, coaching, and reflective supervision into the learning and collaboration of day-to-day work.
- **High-quality teaching practices:** Implement and sustain an organizational culture and systems for high-quality instructional practices.
- **Intensive family engagement:** Empower and strengthen parents' capacity to fully realize their role as strong nurturers, educators, and leaders in their families, schools, and communities. Educare also offers to its staff

FOUNDED: 2000

EDUCATORS SERVED  
center-based educators

NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED  
approximately 4,000 currently in-service

GEOGRAPHIC REACH National - 24  
schools across 15 states, D.C., and the  
Winnebago territory



AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED



various trainings around the hallmarks of the Educare model, which include learning the foundations of family engagement; how to properly practice reflective supervision; Leadership Onboarding; Master Teacher Core Training; and a variety of other opportunities for embedded professional development. In addition to the many trainings provided to staff, Educare provides opportunities to connect with peers throughout the network via workgroups and committees.

### Format

For EBPT trainings, authorized providers offer training to Educare programs, Early Head Start-Child Care Partners, and other center- and school-based early childhood programs in their communities. The providers recruit participants; deliver instruction and provide support around practice; share data on training and participants' practice; and participate in implementation, continuous improvement, and quality assurance activities. For trainings specific to Educare staff, members of the Educare Learning Network backbone team facilitate the trainings, which are often co-facilitated with Educare Network trainers either in person or via webinar.

### Cost model

There is no charge to Educare staff for training. All costs (including fees and travel expenses) are covered by the Educare Learning Network's partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. Non-Educare organizations pay a fee

to become authorized providers of EBPT; organizations that are unable to pay the full fee may receive a reduced rate. EBPT providers may charge a fee to participants in their communities, though most offer it for free.

### Duration

Each of the four Educare Best Practices Training modules includes two trainings – a 4 to 5 hour “Foundations of” training to build knowledge and an 8 to 12 hour “In practice” training to develop practical skills and competencies. The overall time required to complete the training depends on the modules chosen. Educare staff engage in professional learning through a variety of trainings offered on an ongoing basis.

### Credential, degree, or certification

No degrees are offered. The EBPT modules are accredited by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET). Continuing education units (CEUs) are available, which are accepted in some states and school districts.

### Affiliation with higher education

No affiliations with institutions of higher education are currently in place; however, this possibility is being explored in some locations.

## Demographics

In the past year, nearly 3,000 individuals have participated in Educare professional development offerings, 1,335 of whom have participated in EBPT. Data show that 65% of program participants have a bachelor's degree or higher, and over 20% have an associate's degree or some college-level experience. Participants work in a range of settings, including school-based (42%), community-based (31%), and family child care (13%) – the overwhelming majority of which are supported by federal Head Start and Early Head Start grants (78%).

## Recruitment

Educare's partnerships, website and newsletter serve as vehicles for communication and recruitment. There are no prerequisites from Educare for admission to its EBPT training.

## Strengths and challenges

- + Educare offers substantial training for practitioners at no cost to Educare employees and most community participants.
- + The EBPT model is available to educators outside of Educare schools, and is scaling up to provide greater access through a train-the-trainer approach for early childhood professionals outside of the network.
- No agreements have been established with universities or colleges to articulate training programs with credits toward degree programs. CEU acceptance varies by state.



## EL Education

[EL Education](#) is a national network of schools in thirty states and the District of Columbia implementing a specialized approach to learning, curriculum, and school culture for 60,000 students in pre-K through 12th grade. Founded in 1991 and originally known as Expeditionary Learning, EL Education was developed out of a partnership between the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound U.S. Its mission is “to create classrooms where teachers can fulfill their highest aspirations and students achieve more than they think possible, becoming active contributors to building a better world.”

EL Education combines a character-infused philosophy with an action-oriented approach to learning. Educators are encouraged to create classrooms alive with discovery, problem-solving, challenge, and collaboration. EL Education is based on 10 founding principles, which include: primacy of self-discovery, diversity and inclusion, responsibility for learning, and the natural world, among others. Three dimensions of student achievement are emphasized: mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high-quality student work. Each is guided by criteria for students, teachers, and leaders. EL Education schools and teachers may choose to adopt specific curricula in language arts, life science, and social studies in addition to the overall pedagogical approach.

### Educator development overview

EL Education provides targeted professional development and coaching to help schools and districts adopt its active learning approach and curriculum. Schools and districts may elect to implement all or part of the comprehensive EL Education model. The approach provides scaffolded development for teachers, school leaders, and entire schools through immersive institutes followed by observation and coaching to support ongoing growth.

Training is for in-service teachers who are already credentialed, and includes:

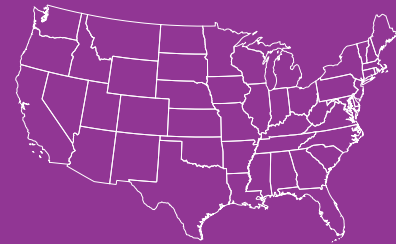
- **Site seminars** tailored to the needs of a district or school to provide customized professional development in EL practices. EL facilitators work with teachers and school leaders to explore active learning approaches that “challenge, engage, and empower students through deeper instruction and strategic leadership.” Leadership development and coaching are seen as essential to implementation, which is enhanced by ongoing teacher coaching and professional development to support the transfer of learning from seminar to classroom.

**FOUNDED: 1991**

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
pre-K and elementary

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
Approximately 4,000 teachers currently serve in EL schools.

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** 152 schools across 30 states and D.C.



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



- **Institutes** addressing specific topics, such as Leading Schoolwide Improvement; Coaching for Deeper Instruction; Curriculum Services; and the Starting Strong series, which focuses on the K-2 language arts curriculum. Institutes are regional, allowing schools to share knowledge and experience. They incorporate and demonstrate EL Education’s best practices and books, including *Leaders of their Own Learning and Management in the Active Classroom*. Institutes use interactive webinars and lesson studies, typically lasting three to five days.
- **A national conference** for approximately 1,400 participants provides professional development through masterclasses and panel discussions, plus the opportunity for professional networking and community building. The conference is primarily for EL Education practitioners, but also attracts individuals who are exploring the approach.

EL Education also has a mentorship program that provides new staff with support to successfully bring their strengths, experience, and talents to their new role and contribute to EL Education’s mission and vision. Mentees meet with their more experienced mentors on a monthly basis to build relationships, support learning, and reflect on successes and challenges. The program follows an “Empowered Mentoring” model where mentoring is collaborative, respectful, and reciprocal.

### Format

EL Education contracts directly with districts and schools to provide educational coaching through site seminars and institutes. Coaches are primarily drawn from EL schools; some come from compatible education programs. They must have at least five years of teaching experience. A curriculum coach must have taught the curriculum or have served as an instructional coach in an EL Education school.

### Cost model

There is no cost to individual teachers since EL Education contracts directly with schools and districts. Professional curriculum institutes run for 1-3 days, and the bundled cost is \$4,500 per participant for 25 participants (this includes follow-up coaching and strategic planning guidance). National five-day institutes cost \$1500 per participant, and three-day institutes cost \$900 per participant. National site seminars cost \$500 per participant. The *Starting Strong* series costs \$900 per participant for two days and \$1,500 for four days.

### Duration

Programs are primarily site-based or regional, and typically run from one to five days. Teachers and school leaders receive follow-up coaching as they implement the approach.

### Credential, degree, or certification

EL Education does not award formal credits. Schools, not individual teachers, receive certification. Typically, training participants are already credentialed teachers.

### Affiliation with higher education

EL Education was started in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It does not have any current affiliations with institutions of higher education.

### Demographics

The EL Education network includes 152 schools, 60,000 students, and 4,000 teachers. EL Education does not currently track the number of people who have taken its training, and does not report data on gender, race, ethnicity, or age among its educators. Its 2019 national conference attracted 1,400 participants from within and outside of the EL network.

### Recruitment

EL Education has Field Directors in specific regions throughout the country who build professional connections with organizations, schools, and districts that are interested in exploring adoption of the approach. The Partnership Development Process typically takes 4-5 months and culminates with a decision on the part of the district, school staff and EL Education leadership regarding whether or not to proceed.



Photo courtesy of EL Education

### Strengths and challenges

- + While EL Education recommends high-fidelity, comprehensive implementation, its flexible structure allows schools or districts to adopt parts of the model or to become full EL Education schools, and the approach can be adopted over time.
- + Training and implementation are customized to address the specific needs of each school.
- + Coaches are central to the approach and provide ongoing professional development, which ensures a continuous loop between training and practice.
- The model is restricted to in-service teachers whose schools have made a commitment to adopt the EL model.
- While the approach serves schools with pre-K students and has developed some shared pre-K resources, its comprehensive early childhood curriculum begins in Kindergarten.

## Friends Center for Children

[Friends Center for Children](#) (Friends Center) provides early childhood care and education for children from three months to five years old. Their year-round, full-time program offers a child-centered learning experience, values-based curriculum, and a community of care including skilled and dedicated educators, families, and a comprehensive emotional wellbeing program. This ideal learning approach incorporates the Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship through its emphasis on play, exploration, and relationship-building. It offers emotional wellbeing services led by a licensed social worker who operates in partnership with a co-coordinator, teachers, staff, and families to support social and emotional intelligence and raise awareness of the impact of adverse experiences and individual and cultural trauma on children and families.

Friends Center commits to racial, socio-economic, and developmental diversity in regard to all aspects of its program, including admissions, financial aid, curriculum, policies, and systems. It supports its educators with competitive wages, ongoing professional development, and an employee support program. It is currently working with donors to provide future housing for employees. In partnership with several universities and local colleges, Friends Center offers an internship program to support the development of new educators.

Friends Center is committed to maintaining no racial majority, striving for ratios that reflect the diversity of its broader community. It offers sliding-scale tuition to ensure that it serves families with a range of incomes.

### Educator development overview

Through partnerships with local colleges and universities, Friends Center offers training and professional development for pre-service and in-service interns and student teachers enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Some of the school-university partnerships focus on internships for psychology and social work students. These internships enable candidates to be immersed and mentored in the principles and practice of ideal learning

Friends Center also offers extensive, ongoing professional development to all employees within the center, including emotional support and mentoring. Typically, head teachers hold a bachelor's or master's degree; assistant teachers are working toward a bachelor's degree; and classroom support personnel are working toward an associate's degree.

**FOUNDED: 2000**

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
center-based educators

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
approximately 10 supported per year

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** Local - two centers in New Haven, CT



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



### Format

Friends Center offers 7 to 10 teaching internships or student teaching placements each year across its two campuses.

### Cost model

The costs of professional development for educators is covered by the school. Interns are not charged and their tuition for courses taken during the internship is paid by Friends Center. All staff are supported financially to pursue higher levels of education, including external workshops or conferences and on-site professional development opportunities.

### Duration

Student teachers work 10 hours per week, and most interns work full time.

### Credential, degree, or certification

Friends Center does not directly offer degrees or credentials through training programs, although participating student teachers and interns often receive credit through their degree program.

### Affiliation with higher education

Friends Center has established affiliations or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with several higher education partners in regard to internships and student teaching. These include:

- Albertus Magnus College (psychology and social work departments)
- Gateway Community College (associate's in ECE program)
- Quinnipiac University (bachelor's and master's education and psychology programs)
- Southern Connecticut State University (bachelor's in ECE program)
- Yale University (Center for Emotional Intelligence)

### Demographics

Faculty and staff in each location reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the local community. Children served across the two centers are 30% Caucasian, 40% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 5% other. In regard to family

income, 46% are below the State Medium Income level (SMI); 21% are at the 50–75% SMI level; and 33% are above the 75% SMI level.

### Recruitment

Community partnerships, networking, and the Friends Center's website and local reputation are the primary avenues for recruitment and outreach.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Friends Center demonstrates a strong commitment to professional development through its pedagogical, emotional, and financial support for employees.
- + It focuses intentionally on creating, supporting, and sustaining an economically and ethnically diverse staff and student body.
- Across its two locations, Friends Center is able to accommodate only 7–10 internships per year.

Photo courtesy of Friends Center for Children



## HighScope

HighScope is a nonprofit foundation that provides research- and practice-based services for infant-toddler and preschool educators and home-based care providers supporting children from birth to age five. It offers products and services including:

- Preschool and infant-toddler curricula
- Training for teachers and administrators
- Books, DVDs, and music CDs
- Evaluation of early childhood programs

HighScope arose out of the 1962 HighScope Perry Preschool Project which studied the impact of high-quality early education in the lives of 123 Black children at risk of failing in school. Positive results led to the founding of the HighScope Research Foundation in 1970. HighScope's continuous research-practice model examines links between practice and outcomes at the individual and program levels, considering opportunity and achievement gaps, workforce development, and community change. Its professional development model supports researchers, educators, and administrators.

From its founding, HighScope has maintained a commitment to equity by providing quality early education for all children. The name "HighScope" reflects the organization's purpose and far-reaching mission, which is based on five core values: equity for all children; high-quality education; teachers as leaders; evidence-based practices; and strength in community.

HighScope's approach can be used in any age-appropriate setting; individual programs can also become HighScope certified. HighScope works with educators in every state in the U.S. and in 20 other countries.

### Educator development overview

HighScope offers curriculum training and a range of courses and resources for administrators, curriculum specialists, teachers, and child care providers. The goal of all of these is to build strong instructional leaders who create capacity for sustained positive outcomes.

HighScope's approach emphasizes the importance of practice and is designed to provide scaffolded development responsive to individual or program needs. Training is specific to the HighScope approach, but tailored to the needs of the provider. While HighScope recommends the full program, a provider may choose to adopt and train in parts of the approach. All training modalities are focused on mastery of the HighScope curriculum and child development. HighScope emphasizes an active learning, inclusive approach that develops individuals and teams at all experience levels.

**FOUNDED: 1970**

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
in-service teachers (0-5)

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
approximately 6,000 in 2019

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** International -  
across 50 states and 20 countries



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



### HighScope's infant-toddler and/or preschool curricula

Both trainings take place over four weeks (completed over two summers) with extensive classroom practice in between to support the effective implementation of the HighScope infant-toddler and preschool curricula. HighScope describes the learning process as a simplified step-by-step approach with extensive curriculum resources to support early childhood educators and ensure that the transition to the HighScope curriculum is successful and effective. Teams of instructors provide expert guidance focused on practical application to help teachers gain proficiency in the principles and practices of active learning and support all children's individual needs and interests.

### Trainer of Trainers course

In the three-week Trainer of Trainers program, participants learn how to train adults, model the HighScope curriculum, and support implementation through ongoing coaching. The HighScope fidelity tool provides data-driven guidance to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Once HighScope certified, trainers are certified to provide training in the HighScope curriculum and coaching to their staff for three years. Renewal involves the same steps as the original application, ensuring a continuous cycle of professional development and reflective practice.

### Additional HighScope professional learning

HighScope offers an annual conference for early childhood educators which has a strong international presence. HighScope membership provides ongoing access to a wide range of resources, designed to support curriculum implementation.

### Format

HighScope works predominantly with existing programs and centers, although occasionally pre-service individuals will enroll in courses. It offers face-to-face and online training options. In-person workshops take place in summer or, if site-based, during the school year. Online courses offer scheduling flexibility and one-on-one support.

### Cost model

The cost of HighScope professional development varies depending on the number of participants and location. Many programs have only a few teachers; in these instances, HighScope encourages regional groupings or summer courses to lower costs.

Curriculum training (infant-toddler and preschool) ranges from \$900-\$3800, depending on the number of weeks. Online courses range from \$100 to \$350, depending on length and topic. HighScope works with programs to make costs manageable and offers scholarships such as a "two for one" arrangement. Services are contracted directly by the program or center, and tuition costs are typically supported by the provider at no cost to the individual. Funding sources include state and federal grants as HighScope works with many federally funded Head Start and state-run programs.

### Duration

Teacher curriculum training comprises four weeks (completed over two summers) with extensive classroom practice in between. The training is six hours per day, five days per week (120 hours total of direct instruction), plus online courses and classroom work with coaching between summer sessions.

The Training of Trainers program requires three weeks over two summers (90 hours of direct instruction), with coursework during the year.

### Credential, degree, or certification

HighScope offers three types of certification: teacher, trainer, and program. Entry to the HighScope pathway is typically at the in-service level. Teachers are encouraged to become certified after a period of practice and upon demonstrating high-fidelity implementation of the curriculum (4.5 or higher on the HighScope fidelity tool). Trainers receive HighScope Trainer Certification upon successful completion of the Trainer of Trainers course. Programs receive certification once all lead teachers have become HighScope certified and upon completion of the program fidelity tool with a 4.0 or higher.

Participants can use HighScope training as part of a Child Development Associate application. HighScope is self-authorized to offer CEUs through its training.

### Affiliation with higher education

HighScope has some pre-service linkages with community colleges and universities. Some trainers are also professors who use the curriculum in their courses.

### Demographics

In 2019, approximately 6,000 educators participated in face-to-face training. This does not include any online or international training. Participants range from recent high school graduates to older adults in their sixties. Educators are predominantly female (although HighScope has seen an increase in male teachers in recent years) and inclusive of multiple races and ethnicities. HighScope estimates that over 95% of participants are already active in the field.

### Recruitment

HighScope works with federal, district and local agencies and providers. As an established organization, it is active and visible in all states.

### Strengths and challenges

- + The approach has developed tools to support ongoing assessment of children, teachers, and programs.
- + There is a cycle of professional development and improvement embedded in coaching and the requirement for re-certification every three years.
- + Educators have access to a wide range of materials and resources. Online training provides self-paced options to expand access.
- + The trainer pathway offers opportunities for career development.
- HighScope has limited data on participant demographics or retention in the field.
- Oversight of field experiences is variable; some sites track and document experiences carefully, others do not.

## Montessori

The Montessori method was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori a century ago through her work with underserved children in Rome, Italy and it continues today in schools all over the world. This child-centered approach is based on scientific observations of the child and how children learn. Montessori supports children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development through thoughtfully prepared educational environments that encourage each child's intrinsic drive to initiate learning and acquire knowledge.

Although a range of practices exist under the name "Montessori", the Montessori community has identified the [Montessori Essentials](#) as critical for successful implementation of the approach. For example, early learners ages 0 to 3 years old and 3 to 6 years old are grouped together in environments prepared explicitly for their common developmental needs. Because children are seen as capable and are empowered to make choices, all aspects of the classroom – including furniture, materials, and food preparation and cleaning supplies – facilitate agency, foster independence and build confidence. Classroom environments minimize unnecessary visual and aural stimulation and emphasize beauty and order to spark engagement.

Over the course of 3 years in an early childhood Montessori classroom, children work with more than 300 hands-on materials tailored to isolate and scaffold the development of early academic capacities as well as concentration, working memory, and other social, emotional and executive function skills. Materials are designed to stimulate the senses and inspire hands-on exploration and experimentation. The mix of ages lets younger children learn from older peers; older children teach and reinforce concepts they have already mastered while developing communication and leadership skills.

### Educator development overview

An array of Montessori teacher preparation programs offer pathways for becoming skilled in the approach, though interpretations differ. Programs that are accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) must align with the Competencies and Standards for Montessori Teacher Preparation Programs, which include human growth and development; the Montessori philosophy and methods; use of Montessori materials; and instructional planning; among others.

Students become well-versed in the psychological, social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of the young child in order to create a "prepared" learning

**FOUNDED: 1907**

#### EDUCATORS SERVED

infant and toddler, preschool, and elementary

#### NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED

approximately 6,000 in 2019

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** International - approximately 150 accredited teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S.



#### AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED



environment that is healthy, nurturing, safe, respectful, supportive, nutritionally sound, and developmentally individualized for each child. Educators learn a variety of specific observation techniques, appropriate application, and competence in documenting each child's development and learning. Educators must also demonstrate competence in the scope and sequence of the research-based Montessori curriculum (sensory activities, self-care skills, fine and gross motor development, practical life, language and literacy, mathematics, science, physical and cultural geography, the arts, the peace curriculum, and grace and courtesy lessons), and the use of the Montessori didactic materials.

Training also includes a mentored practicum, in which students are supported in the ongoing process of self-analysis and examination of their practice.

### Format

There are many training institutions and programs that offer Montessori teacher training across the U.S. MACTE, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 150 of these, ensuring the delivery of high-quality training for the field. Many accredited institutions and training centers are also affiliated with various Montessori organizations.\* Some teacher education programs offer online delivery of courses along with a requirement of 120 hours of in-person instruction.

### Cost model

On average, it costs \$13,000 to \$15,000 to complete a Montessori certificate or diploma. The cost is significantly higher if the student completes a bachelor's or master's program with state certification (e.g., Whitworth University charges \$665 per credit hour for master's degree coursework). Several free-standing, MACTE accredited programs offer Title IV financial aid (federal grants and loans) to their students. Many of the programs embedded within traditional colleges and universities also offer Title IV funding to students.

### Duration

Infant-toddler (birth to 3 years) and early childhood (2.5 to 6 years) training programs include 600 total hours of teacher preparation, including a mentored practicum. Elementary programs (6 to 12 years) include 1,200 total hours of preparation. Program completion ranges from 9 months for full-time programs to two years for part-time programs, with some variation. Most Montessori training programs are full time, but some have moved to offer preparation over 3 summers to accommodate in-service educators and candidates who work full time. A few Montessori residency programs embed the entire training at the school where the teacher works. For programs at universities and which culminate in a degree, the number of courses or modules may vary.

### Credential, degree, or certification

Students who graduate from a MACTE accredited teacher education program receive a Montessori credential. If they graduate from one of the 13 colleges or universities with MACTE accredited programs, they also earn a bachelor's or master's degree. Most Montessori credential candidates already have a bachelor's degree, and individual training centers only occasionally admit candidates who do not. Currently, ten states recognize Montessori credentials toward a state teaching license.

### Affiliation with higher education

Approximately 10% of MACTE accredited programs are affiliated or aligned in some way with degree-granting institutions, but articulation agreements vary. Affiliations with institutions of higher education are usually at the graduate level.

### Demographics

In 2019, there were 3,253 graduates from MACTE accredited programs. While MACTE does not collect racial demographics on adult learners or faculty, survey data reveal that trainees in

AMS, AMI, and other affiliated teacher training programs are primarily white, female, and over 30 years of age. The majority of respondents also held degrees and 30% of respondents held state teaching credentials. Of those, 55% reported seeking Montessori training because they were dissatisfied with traditional approaches to education, and 9% were asked by their district to enter training in order to support a district Montessori program.<sup>35</sup>

### Recruitment

Recruitment is led primarily by individual programs. MACTE also provides robust communication about opportunities for educator preparation through its website. Adult learners find Montessori training programs in various ways. Respondents to the 2016 Montessori Trainee Survey indicated that internet research and recommendations from trained teachers were most influential. Sixty-eight percent said they only considered one training program. Within this, 31% of respondents reported choosing their program based on location.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Freestanding, MACTE accredited programs are eligible to apply to the U.S. Department of Education to offer Title IV funding (federal grants and loans) to their students.
- + A small but growing number of Montessori teacher preparation programs are joining with universities to embed training programs and develop articulation agreements, which enable students to earn credits toward degrees.
- + Teacher preparation programs graduate several thousand educators each year (over 3,200 in 2019).
- Only ten states recognize Montessori credentials as part of a pathway toward state licensure to teach in public schools or programs.
- The average costs of training programs can be prohibitive for low-income candidates. Programs that require full-time attendance may also be a challenge for those who are employed. While there are a number of training centers throughout the US, many are not easily accessible by public transportation.

\* Affiliations include: American Montessori Society (AMS), Association Montessori International (AMI), Association Montessori International – USA (AMI-USA), Christian Montessori Fellowship (CMF), Independents Not in A Consortium (IND), International Association for Progressive Montessori (IAPM), International Montessori Council (IMC), Montessori Educational Programs International (MEPI), Montessori Institute of America (MIA), and Pan American Montessori Society (PAMS).

## Reggio Emilia-Inspired

The [Reggio Emilia approach](#) to early education was developed in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy. After the end of World War II, Loris Malaguzzi, together with local leaders, administrators, and citizens (primarily women), envisioned and developed municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools grounded in the belief that high-quality education is the right of all children and a shared community responsibility.

The approach's relational philosophy is grounded in the presence of a plurality of adults (teacher, *pedagogista*, *atelierista*, cook, janitor, and other support staff) in work with children. Several core principles are noted in the Reggio publication *Indications: Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia* (2010):

- Children are active protagonists in their growth and development.
- Children possess one hundred languages, ways of thinking, expressing themselves, understanding, and encountering others. It is the responsibility of the schools to give value and equal dignity to all the verbal and non-verbal languages.
- Observation and documentation are integral parts of education that allow the nature of individual and group learning processes in both children and adults to be visible, explicit, and accessible.
- *Progettazione* is a process of responsively designing teaching and learning activities, the environment, opportunities for participation, and the professional development of the personnel without applying predefined curricula.
- Professional development occurs through daily observation and documentation and weekly reflection during staff meetings and learning sessions.

In Reggio Emilia itself, educators complete a bachelor's degree in early childhood and then compete via examination for positions in a preschool or infant-toddler center. After being hired, they are paired with an experienced co-teacher and become part of their school's collaborative pedagogical reflection team. These teams of teachers and other instructional leaders observe, document, and analyze children's progress to design new learning experiences – this continuous, embedded professional development supports both adult and child development in each school.

Today, the Reggio Emilia approach is recognized throughout the world and is present in more than 145 countries and territories through an international network, professional development events, consulting, publications, exhibitions, and dissemination of research.

**FOUNDED:** 1945

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
pre-service and in-service educators

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
unknown (several thousand)

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** International



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



### Educator development overview

Educator development services are designed and led by Reggio Children, an international organization created to ensure fidelity to the Reggio Emilia approach throughout the world, and to promote the rights and potential of all children. [The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance](#) (NAREA), a member of the Reggio Children International Network, consists of advocates and educators committed to supporting Reggio Emilia-inspired education. The organization engages parents, advocates, educators, and policymakers through conferences, networking, and resource sharing with the goal of providing more quality and excellence in education.

### Format

Primary pathways for educator development in Reggio-inspired education include:

- study group visits to Reggio Emilia, Italy organized by Reggio Children, which include visits to schools, presentations by Reggio educators, interactive learning workshops, and cultural experiences;
- annual winter and spring conferences organized by NAREA featuring educators from Reggio Emilia as well as smaller professional development workshops called Brick by Brick;
- professional consulting services provided by Reggio educators and affiliates in the U.S. to schools and networks of educators; and
- university courses on the Reggio-inspired approach at schools of education, as well as student teaching opportunities in lab schools.



Photo courtesy of Charlestown Nursery School

Several other formal and informal professional development networks dedicated to the Reggio Emilia approach exist locally and regionally across the U.S.

### Cost model

The average cost of U.S. Reggio Study Tours in 2019 was \$2,750, which covers fees from Reggio Children and 5 hotel nights, but does not include travel expenses. Fees for conferences and workshops offered by NAREA and other U.S. organizations vary greatly, typically ranging from \$100 to \$750. The costs of school-based consultation and tuition for university coursework vary as well.

### Duration

Study group visits are approximately one week in length, while professional development workshops and conferences vary from 1-4 days. Coursework offered through universities varies by program.

### Credential, degree, or certification

For the most part, these opportunities do not result in college credit, credentials, or degrees in the Reggio approach. However, some universities offer a credit option in conjunction with study visits to Reggio Emilia, usually at the graduate level. A few offer online graduate certificate programs or courses that are specific to the Reggio approach.

### Affiliation with higher education

Several universities offer courses focused on or inspired by the principles and practices of the Reggio approach. Programs at University of Colorado, Denver, Lesley University, and University of East Tennessee offer professional development courses, some of which articulate toward credit or a degree program. For example, University of Colorado Denver offers a 16-week, 3-credit course, *Colorado Interpretation of the Reggio Approach*, which articulates with an Innovate Early Childhood Education master's degree.

### Demographics

There is no central repository for the number, age, and race of students or teachers trained per year. Many public early childhood programs self-identify as Reggio-inspired, but no comprehensive database for these schools exists. NAREA has over 16,000 members, which includes both individuals and organizations. Conference attendance data from 2002-2015 indicate that in the U.S., 2,885 institutions were represented from all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Demographic data on participating educators were not collected.

### Recruitment

Outreach and recruitment take place through NAREA and Reggio Children events, websites, newsletters, and journals. Additionally, many schools and local study groups advertise their learning opportunities.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Professional development in the Reggio approach is viewed as the lifelong formation of educators, and ongoing professional development is embedded in the work environment.
- + Multiple opportunities exist – both pre-service and in-service – for professional development related to Reggio-inspired education, which vary in terms of time, cost, and location.
- + A few universities offer coursework and internship opportunities that align with the Reggio philosophy and culminate in an education degree with teacher certification.
- Although many U.S. universities have sponsored professor and student groups to visit and study the preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia, no data have been collected to verify or describe the scope of their study.

## Tools of the Mind

[Tools of the Mind](#) (Tools) is an early childhood curriculum and professional development program based on Vygotskian theory, developmental science, and neuroscience research. Tools' comprehensive Pre-K and Kindergarten curriculum supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Teachers gain professional development in face-to-face workshops and are taught to assess children's progress and differentiate instruction through materials and a professional development app.

In a Tools classroom, activities are multi-level so that children of different ages and developmental levels can participate in a shared social context. Tools teachers build an inclusive classroom community, engaging children in co-construction with peers, and the curriculum is carefully structured to help children become intentional and reflective learners, supporting executive function development through make-believe play and playful learning across literacy, mathematics, and science. As children learn key concepts, they simultaneously develop self-regulation skills.

Tools extends its reach with PowerTools, an iPad app designed to ensure that all children reach grade-level reading benchmarks by third grade. PowerTools applies the same theory as the comprehensive Tools' program – using playful learning, peer scaffolding, and intrinsic motivation – and automatically provides teachers with meaningful data to continually personalize instruction.

### Educator development overview

Tools offers a one-year core training for practicing teachers in district, school, or Head Start programs that implement its curriculum. Through a series of professional development workshops over the year that align with the developmental trajectory of children's growing skills, educators learn the underlying Vygotskian theory as well as:

- how to embed self-regulated learning into all activities;
- research-based core curriculum content aligned with state standards and commonly-used observation and assessment tools;
- how to plan instruction using make-believe play themes to build background knowledge; support executive function; and incorporate authentic math and literacy learning experiences; and
- classroom management techniques to maximize time, facilitate productive interactions, and nurture student engagement.

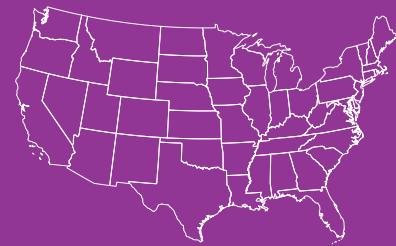
The professional development process also includes the creation of a strong community of practice. Tools staff build a customized program structure for each partner

**FOUNDED: 1993**

**EDUCATORS SERVED**  
preschool and Kindergarten teachers

**NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED**  
approximately 5,600 teachers actively used Tools resources in 2019

**GEOGRAPHIC REACH** National



**AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED**



to support teachers in maintaining high-fidelity practice in their context. Partnership involves joint analysis of district- and Tools-collected data to help educators make developmentally appropriate instructional decisions and improve child outcomes.

After completing the core professional development training, districts can continue to partner with Tools through the purchase of site licenses for access to resources like PowerTools, the Developmental Writing Assessment (DWA, a Pre-K and Kindergarten iPad writing assessment), iScaffold (an iPad app providing teachers with a range of avenues for learning), and eTools (a professional development platform that supports workshop training). Customized technical assistance helps coaches, administrators, and teachers build a deeper understanding of the Tools of the Mind approach. In technical assistance sessions, Tools partners with sites to reflect on children's engagement and provides feedback on how to use Tools' practices to support children's development. Further site-wide training is available, which can lead to a Tools program endorsement based on a set of capabilities that have been identified as key to program fidelity.

### Format

Head Start programs and public, charter, and private schools partner with Tools to launch the curriculum and accompanying professional development. Training is delivered through in-person workshops, webinars, e-learning modules, and iScaffold.

### Cost model

The cost for school districts and programs is \$3,750/classroom for Year 1 Core PD, which includes five days of workshops; technical assistance visits from a Tools staff person; and curriculum manuals and subscriptions to eTools, iScaffold, DWA (PreK and K), and PowerTools (K). Programs can contract for Year 2 training for \$2,500/classroom, which includes two days of workshops and continued subscriptions. Programs pursuing endorsement attend a Year 3 workshop for \$1,500/classroom. After receiving endorsement, classrooms can purchase annual site licenses and build capacity to train new staff internally and present at Tools' regional and national Community of Practice events.

### Duration

Tools of the Mind offers one year of core training with the possibility of two subsequent years of in-service training, ending with the opportunity for endorsement. To receive endorsement, a program must attend 4 workshops and 5 total days of professional development in Year 1; 2 workshops in Year 2; and 1 workshop in Year 3.

### Credential, degree, or certification

At this time, Tools of the Mind PD is not externally accredited – although teachers in at least 23 states can use Tools' PD certificates for required PD hours with their state departments of education. Tools is also working to create ways for teachers to receive undergraduate and graduate credit for professional development.

### Affiliation with higher education

Tools of the Mind was co-developed by professors Dr. Elena Bodrova and Dr. Deborah Leong, and was formerly administered out of the Center for the Improvement of Early Learning at the Metropolitan State University of Denver. Currently, the program operates as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is not affiliated with an institution of higher education.

### Demographics

In 2019-2020, Tools was in active use by over 5,600 teachers in pre-K and Kindergarten, reaching upwards of 75,000 children. Although beneficial for all children, Tools is most widely used in programs that serve children at risk of low achievement outcomes related to low-income/poverty status. A majority of Tools programs are in districts with a high proportion of low-income families. Tools materials are available in English and Spanish and the organization has many years of experience supporting families whose home language is Spanish.

### Recruitment

Tools of the Mind's website showcases and advertises its training programs and resources. Drs. Leong and Bodrova and their team frequently present their approach, its underlying philosophy, and ongoing research on its impact at national



Photo courtesy of Tools of the Mind

and regional conferences. Their book, *Tools of the Mind*, was first published in 1995 with a second edition published in 2006. In addition, they and other researchers have authored numerous chapters, educational videos, and journal articles about the principles, practices, and research related to Tools, the Vygotskian approach, the development of play and playful learning, and the development of self-regulation and executive functions.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Training incorporates ongoing technical assistance to help teachers with classroom practice.
- + The cost of training is borne by the school district or center, not the educator.
- Educators do not currently receive undergraduate or graduate credits for their participation in training.

## Waldorf

[Waldorf education](#) is a comprehensive pedagogical philosophy for all ages. It was founded in 1919 in post-World War I Germany by Rudolf Steiner, who believed that a “new art of education” was the only effective path to a better future at a time of considerable social, economic, and political upheaval. Waldorf education is also called Steiner education in several countries, and the terms are interchangeable.

Over the last century, Waldorf education has grown into an international movement with over 1,100 schools in 67 countries. Early childhood education (ECE) has a broader reach with over 1,900 Kindergarten programs on record, although actual numbers may be higher. In the U.S., there are estimated to be over 150 Waldorf ECE programs, 124 independent K-12 schools, and an additional 50 public schools affiliated with the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. In the U.S., Waldorf education originated exclusively in independent settings from its introduction in 1928 until the early 1990s. Expansion into public education and global expansion more broadly have resulted in ongoing work to adapt the core curriculum to better serve diverse children and families and have raised questions of equity, inclusion, and access.

In Waldorf, early childhood is considered to be a cohesive developmental stage, and ECE may be offered either within a PreK-12 school or as a stand-alone center (which may be home-based); infant-toddler parent-child programs may be standalone or attached to Kindergartens or schools. The Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) oversees programs and educator preparation, which are aligned with the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education. WECAN describes its mission as “foster[ing] a new cultural impulse for the work with the young child...committed to protecting and nurturing childhood as a foundation for renewing human culture.”

### Educator development overview

The Waldorf teacher preparation pathway is specific to those teaching in or wishing to teach in a Waldorf-oriented school or center, and teacher education programs must align with the [Principles for Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education](#).

Training centers are approved and recognized by WECAN. Based on their development and courses offered, centers may be designated with associate or full membership. This distinction is not a regional or national accreditation, but rather a membership affiliation recognized by Waldorf schools worldwide. Approval entails an extensive self-study and peer

**FOUNDED: 1919**

#### EDUCATORS SERVED

pre-service and in-service teachers  
(early childhood and elementary)

#### NUMBER OF EDUCATORS TRAINED

approximately 150 in the U.S. and  
Canada in 2019

#### GEOGRAPHIC REACH International -

13 training centers in North America



#### AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED



review process that is similar in scope to the process for accreditation. Self-study and peer review include an analysis of the program’s alignment with WECAN’s shared principles.

Training programs have three major components:

- philosophical foundations and human development (based on the foundational philosophy of Waldorf education, anthroposophy);
- personal development of the teacher’s capacities (this includes arts, music, speech work, and skills in observation and reflection); and
- early childhood practices and pedagogy (for ages 0-3 and/or 4-6).

The first two components are common to all Waldorf teacher preparation, reflecting the belief that the presence and capacities of the educator have a profound effect on the learning environment and children.

Programs differentiate between working with children 0-3 and 4-6 years of age. All programs include extensive practicums, mentoring, and classroom experience under the supervision and observation of a lead or mentor teacher.

### Format

There are eight full member and five associate member training centers in North America, which offer pre-service and in-service pathways for educators (with in-service currently the most popular). Full-time and part-time options are available, although most students attend part time. There is

currently only one full-time program in North America (in Toronto, Canada). One program offers the option of a two-year weekend program, which consists of weekends during the school year plus summer courses.

### Cost model

Costs vary by site, design, and length, ranging from \$11,500 to \$28,800. Limited scholarships are available; these are typically funded from within the Waldorf movement and are administered by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). They include grants and loans. There is a loan forgiveness program after an agreed-upon period of teaching in a Waldorf school, typically 3 years after the completion of training. In some instances, a school or center may pay all or part of the costs of training, but many schools do not have the resources to do so.

### Duration

WECAN requires a minimum of 450 class contact hours, which equates to 30 academic units in a university framework. Field experience or practice teaching hours are additional. Training takes 2 to 4 years. WECAN has recently developed and is now implementing a 300-hour training for lead teachers in 0-3 programs. The longer 450-hour training may require additional, specialized coursework for the 0-3 age group, depending on course content.

Most students are already working in classrooms and are able to fulfill the majority of their practice requirements onsite. To broaden their experience, they are required to spend some time observing and practice teaching in a different school. The length is determined by the program.

### Credential, degree, or certification

Training culminates in a Waldorf early childhood education certificate. With the exception of the master’s degree programs, an undergraduate degree is not required, although it is preferred and may be required at the local level for employment. Member schools and centers accept certificates from WECAN member institutions as evidence of the educator’s qualification for early childhood positions.

WECAN also approves and recognizes schools and centers, which must have a high percentage of trained teachers in order to attain WECAN membership.

### Affiliation with higher education

Two Waldorf teacher education centers have master’s degree options through articulation agreements with universities: Sunbridge Institute, in association with Empire State University; and Great Lakes Waldorf Institute, in association

with Mount Mary University in Milwaukee. Several community colleges offer an introduction to Waldorf education within their programs; these are typically introduced as a result of individual relationships and familiarity with the approach. There is one regionally-accredited university (Antioch New England) with a specialization in Waldorf education and a master’s degree in Waldorf education, but it does not include early childhood.

### Demographics

There are currently 150 students enrolled in WECAN institutes and more in institutions that are currently completing self-studies (pre-membership). Enrollment ranges from 2 to 35 students per institute. Waldorf has limited data on participating early childhood educators, but it is known that a large majority of students are female and are practicing teachers who typically have completed their bachelor’s degree.

### Recruitment

Waldorf largely conducts recruitment for its early childhood teacher preparation programs through combined outreach with grade and high school programs. Additionally, Waldorf schools and publications are a source of recruitment; many Waldorf trainees are connected to Waldorf school communities. Schools may have classroom assistants or after-school staff who are then encouraged to begin teacher training.

### Strengths and challenges

- + Waldorf educators are a part of a global learning community that shares a common vision of adult growth and self-reflection.
- + Training focuses deeply on who the teacher is, teacher presence, and teacher capacities. There is sustained attention to developing skills in observation and reflection in preparation and in practice.
- Currently, only one state (Oregon) recognizes WECAN-approved teacher preparation as meeting early childhood teaching qualifications.
- There are geographic limitations, as training is offered in only a few locations and all programs require face-to-face attendance. Cost and length are also barriers to access, retention, and completion.



# What We Know

The 11 educator development snapshots in this report highlight how various ideal learning approaches recruit, train, and sustain an effective workforce. Together, they reveal a continuum of development that supports educators throughout their careers across settings – including direct support of parents and home-based caregivers; specialized training for teachers in centers, schools, and districts; certification in distinctive pedagogies; and degrees from accredited universities. As these snapshots make clear, cost, duration, and degree or certification earned vary significantly between approaches. In this section, we synthesize some of the data that have been collected and explore key similarities and differences between ideal learning educator pathways and other types of training in the field.

## Overview of data collected

Initially, we attempted to gather data on the following factors for each approach:

- Geographic reach
- Educator development overview
- Format
- Cost model
- Duration
- Credential, degree, or certification earned
- Affiliation with higher education
- Demographics
- Recruitment
- Strengths and challenges

As expected, some of these data points were more difficult to collect than others. For example, while most approaches have reliable data on the total number of educators supported and their gender (predominantly female), few systematically collect data on age, income, race/ethnicity, or language. These are critical gaps given the importance of building and sustaining inclusive educator pathways, and for creating equitable learning environments for children.

As snapshots of each pathway emerged, additional factors came into focus, which we have documented where available to inform the report's recommendations:

- prerequisites to entry
- integration with available public funding (i.e., federal student financial aid)

- portability of training from one setting to another or between states
- career pathways within the approach
- approach to scaling

## Ideal learning educator development in the context of the field

In many ways, the concerns and pressures at play in ideal learning educator development approaches mirror those of the field. For participants, concerns about cost and compensation are paramount. For training providers, recruiting and sustaining diverse faculty and students remains a hurdle.

Ideal learning pathways also reflect the challenge of preparing a diverse workforce within a fragmented landscape. While there are multiple ways for ideal learning educators to enter, develop, and grow in the field, most do not count directly toward any degree, credential, or license. While most of the ideal learning approaches prepare and support educators outside of the context of colleges and universities (with the exception of Bank Street College of Education and several partnerships that Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired, and Waldorf have developed) the movement to require bachelor's degrees for all lead teachers is creating both pressures and opportunities for ideal learning pathways to further align with institutions of higher education. Finally, like many in the field, ideal learning approaches are experimenting with innovative delivery models like competency-based, blended, and virtual learning formats.

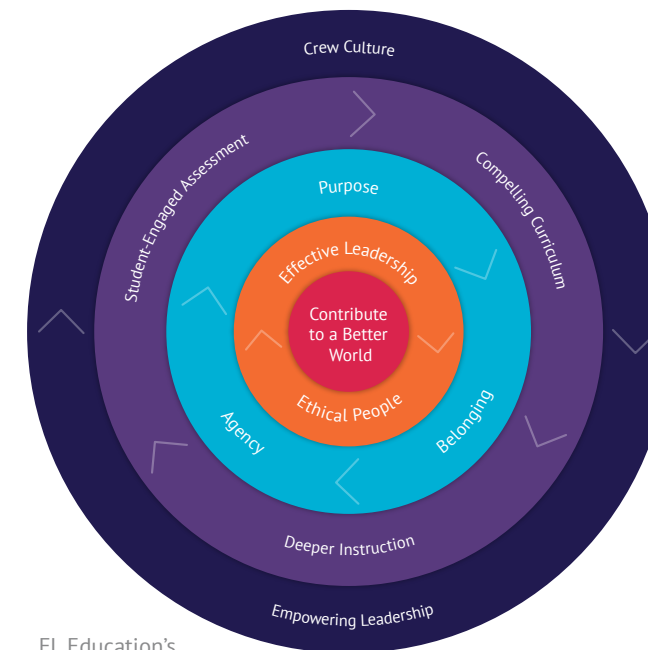
## Distinguishing characteristics of ideal learning educator development approaches

There are also key commonalities among ideal learning educator development pathways that are not always seen in the rest of the field.

- **All of the ideal learning models take a lifelong, holistic view of human development.** All ideal learning models operationalize developmental, interactive models of early childhood *and adulthood*.
- **Ideal learning approaches explicitly center educator presence and self-regulation.** In educator Parker Palmer's words – "we teach who we are." This awareness runs through all approaches and is a strong feature of Montessori and Waldorf, where a significant part

of training is devoted to personal development and self-transformation. The Waldorf pathway emphasizes this development through artistic practice and skills in detailed observation and reflection. In Reggio Emilia-inspired education, educator development emphasizes a pedagogy of listening and ongoing self-reflection – as well as collective reflection with colleagues, parents, and children – to consciously develop shared community understanding. These become daily practices for the educator, supporting ongoing formative assessment and responsive teaching. Other approaches may directly incorporate mindfulness practice so that educators can teach presence and self-regulation to children while modeling it themselves.

Another way that educators model character traits with children is through shared culture. At EL Education, educators and children co-create cultures of shared expectations embodied by Kurt Hahn's vision that "we are all crew, not passengers." These shared values inform educator training, in-school educator collaboration and ongoing professional development.



EL Education's shared core values

- **In ideal learning approaches, the educator curriculum is closely aligned with the child curriculum.** This internal coherence is a critical distinction in the context of the patchwork of educator development programming that many early childhood educators experience.

For example, while all trained early childhood educators are likely to learn about the importance of play, in AVANCE's unique toy-making workshop, parents learn how play supports child development by making toys that they will use for guided play with their children.

- **All ideal learning approaches incorporate a strong emphasis on one-on-one or small group coaching, reflective practice, and opportunities for continued career and personal development.** Most of the approaches offer regular conferences and workshops to facilitate professional development and deepen expertise. Mentoring by experienced practitioners is emphasized, which gives younger educators longer-term career pathways to observe and aspire to.
- **Ideal learning educator development approaches emphasize meaningful, ongoing child observation and assessment.** Personalized education that nurtures the unique potential of every child is only possible through regular, holistic observation and evaluation of children's learning. While many approaches also coach educators on how to integrate required state or local assessments, ideal learning assessment tends to be regular (even daily), low-stakes, and formative to create personalized, responsive learning environments.

For example, Educare schools build a "culture of data," emphasizing family voice and continuous improvement. In Reggio Emilia-inspired education, teachers similarly build a culture of research through ongoing observations and shareable documentation of children's words, work, and actions. In Tools of the Mind, assessment is often woven directly into teaching and learning, allowing educators to adapt support for students in the moment and as they develop.

Ideal learning educator development pathways recognize that these observation and assessment practices are integral to ongoing professional development and, when shared transparently, help families to examine, question, and participate in critical dialogue about how to support children's learning.

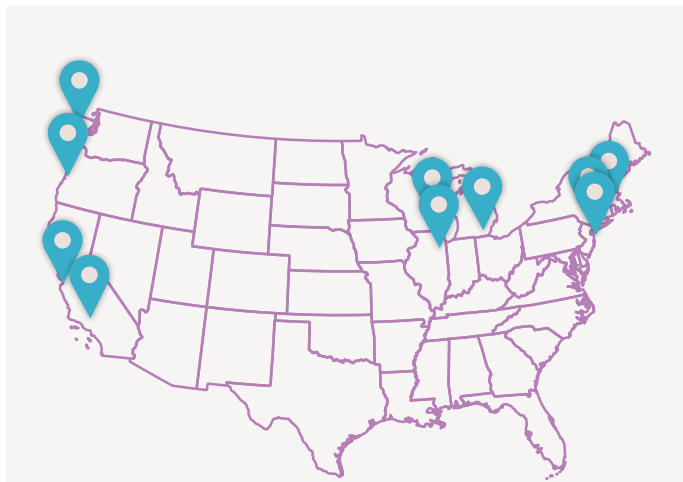
- Finally, **all ideal learning educator development approaches begin with an ethos of social justice and a belief in the unique potential of every child.** This is a critical commonality in a field where young children who have been historically underserved are often described as "behind."

## Divergent elements within ideal learning approaches

While ideal learning educator development pathways share many elements, they also differ amongst themselves in a number of ways. For example, the cost to participants among approaches ranges from \$0 for job-embedded professional learning to more than \$70,000 for a two-year master's degree at a private institution. Likewise, the duration of programs can vary between a series of immersive workshops to hundreds of formal study hours. While each approach coherently supports educator development, they diverge in the following areas:

### Location and access

Ideal learning pathways range from small, deeply-rooted local networks to international pedagogical movements. Local networks provide immersive support in a particular community but typically have limited national or international reach. Pathways that provide training and professional development through schools or districts have wide geographic spread, and typically support a network of trainers throughout the country through a centralized hub. International pedagogies have multiple training centers throughout the U.S., but they are not typically located in areas of greatest need.



Waldorf training centers in the United States are concentrated in the Northeast, West, and Midwest.

### Cost

Cost to participants ranges from \$0 (training is entirely paid by public and private funds or is contracted by a school or district) to more than \$70,000 for a two-year master's degree

A new report from Bank Street College of Education – [Investing in the Birth to Three Workforce](#) – emphasizes the need for residency-based educator pathways.<sup>36</sup> It offers a detailed explanation of how these residencies can be implemented for prospective, new, and experienced infant-toddler educators in home- and center-based settings. The report also presents budget projections and potential funding sources for each aspect of the residency programs.



with certification. Some programs are structured to allow participants to work, reducing the net expense. Affordability is a critical consideration given low incomes in the field and the need to recruit and support a more diverse workforce.

### Duration

Program duration varies between targeted workshops and seminars to upwards of 1,200 hours over two years, including field experience. These differences often coincide with the type of program. Pre-service models tend to be longer, where models for in-service educators and parents do not require as many up-front hours but may include extended coaching.

When educators or leaders choose to affiliate with a particular ideal learning approach, ongoing educator development may last for years or even decades. For example, within the HighScope approach, which certifies teachers, trainers, and programs, individual educators may benefit from ongoing support and training over the many decades of their careers.

### Format

Historically, some ideal learning training models were structured as full-time, yearlong or multi-year courses of study. Now, nearly all ideal learning models offer multiple training formats and entry points. Some offer coursework over summers or weekends, or part-time courses that allow educators to work (inside or outside of the classroom) while training. Others support educators through on-the-job coaching and technical assistance.

### Approaches to scaling

While nearly all models are working to expand their presence in public settings, the speed with which approaches are able to scale varies substantially. Some training models,

like Reggio Emilia-inspired and Waldorf, typically require individual educators to actively opt in, which may create barriers to entry in terms of awareness, recruitment, application processes, and limited financial aid. Other training models, like HighScope and Tools of the Mind, rely on center, school, or district leaders to opt in, which means that as leaders choose these approaches, dozens or hundreds of educators are engaged.

Other factors that impact scalability include business management capacity; relationships or lack thereof with school districts and community partners; distinctiveness of pedagogy; and technical capacity to allow for virtual learning elements.

### Entry points to educator preparation and development

Individuals embark upon ideal learning pathways in different ways. Some approaches, like Montessori, Bank Street College of Education, and Waldorf, require individuals to undergo an extensive application process. Others, like Educare, HighScope, and Tools of the Mind, are offered as part of employment and particular job-embedded practice. Parent and provider networks are open to all.

Photo courtesy of Bank Street College of Education



For example, at Friends Center for Children in New Haven, CT, educators begin their in-service practice through an immersive apprenticeship. The small school setting and cohort model facilitate regular feedback and reflection as educators learn and develop in concert with the children they support.

### Orientation to issues of social justice and racial equity

While all approaches share a commitment to social justice, their origins range from early to mid-20th century post-war visions of universal human potential to more recent visions of social and racial justice in the United States. Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf, which originated in Europe in the early- to mid- 20th century, each emerged in the context of specific social crises, and have only more recently accelerated efforts to adapt their broad visions of equality and human potential to the context of systemic racial inequity in the U.S. Other ideal learning approaches were founded in the second half of the twentieth century in the U.S. upon explicit missions of racial, ethnic, language, or cultural equity. While each model includes diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies, approaches can learn from one another as they continually evolve to be more inclusive and equitable.

# Ideal Learning Educator Development Approaches At-a-Glance

	Approach	Model	Participants	Geographic reach	Number of educators trained in the U.S.	Duration	Cost model	Ages of children served	Degree, credential earned
Parent and home child care support	<b>AVANCE</b>	parent education and support for low-income Latinx children and families	parents	regional: TX and CA	1,350 (bi-annually)	9 months; 81 total hours	no cost to individual participants; funded through public and private dollars	0-4	no degree or credential awarded
	<b>All Our Kin</b>	coaching and professional learning for home-based child care providers	home-based child care providers	regional: CT and NY	900 (annually)	up to 2 years; 4.5 hours per month	no cost to individual participants; funded primarily through philanthropy	primarily 0-5	no degree or credential awarded
Connected, independent centers	<b>Educare</b>	cohort-based professional learning for Educare staff and other providers	center-based educators	national	3,000 (annually)	50-68 total hours depending on modules; plus ongoing PD	no cost to Educare staff; non-Educare organizations pay per module	0-5	continuing education units (CEUs) are awarded, which are accepted in some states and school districts
	<b>Friends Center for Children</b>	educator development for student teachers and interns enrolled in degree programs	center-based educators	local	10 (annually)	10 hours per week for student teachers; full-time for interns	no cost to individual participants; Friends Center pays costs and tuition for higher education courses	0-5	no degree awarded by Friends center, but student teachers and interns receive credit through their degree programs
In-service, curriculum-aligned programs	<b>HighScope</b>	curriculum training and professional learning courses based on HighScope materials	center- and school-based educators	international	6,000 (annually)	4 weeks over two summers with extensive classroom practice in between; 120 hours total	services are contracted for directly by the program or center; tuition costs are typically supported by the provider at no cost to the individual	0-5	HighScope certification for teachers and trainers; aligns with CDA certification and CEUs
	<b>Tools of the Mind</b>	series of workshops and technical assistance for teachers in schools implementing the curriculum	school-based educators	national	5,600 (total)	one year of core training with the possibility of two subsequent years of in-service training	no cost to individual participants; Tools of the Mind contracts directly with a school or district	3-6	professional development certificate (recognized by some states for required PD hours)
	<b>EL Education</b>	site seminars, institutes, and coaching for schools adopting its learning approach and curriculum	school-based educators	national	4,000 (total)	1-5 days with follow-up coaching	no cost to individual teachers; EL Education contracts directly with a school or district	4-8 and up	no individual degree or credential awarded; schools receive certification
International pedagogical movements	<b>Waldorf</b>	teacher preparation for those teaching in or wishing to teach in a Waldorf-oriented school	school-based educators	international	150 (annually)	2-4 years; 400 hours plus field experience	individual tuition (ranges from \$11,500 to \$28,800); some scholarships available	0-8 and up	Waldorf early childhood education certificate; a few programs have articulation agreements with universities where individuals receive degree credit
	<b>Montessori</b>	teacher preparation for educators based on Montessori philosophy and materials	school-based educators	international	3,250 (annually)	9 months to 2 years; 600 - 1,200 hours of preparation depending on age group	individual tuition (average cost \$13,000 to \$15,000); some scholarships and financial aid available	0-8 and up	Montessori credential; a few programs are articulated with colleges or universities where individuals receive degree credit
	<b>Reggio Emilia-Inspired</b>	study groups, workshops, and conferences based on the early childhood approach in Reggio Emilia, Italy	pre-service candidates and existing educators	international	unknown (thousands)	varies: study group visits are approximately 1 week, workshops and conferences 1-4 days	individual costs vary based on offering and school or center policies	0-5	no individual degree or credential awarded; some universities offer credit options for coursework or study visits to Reggio Emilia
Institution of higher education	<b>Bank Street</b>	graduate degree and certificate programs from accredited university	pre-service candidates and existing educators	local	673 (annually)	varies by program: 1-2 years	individual tuition (unit cost ranges from \$1,565-\$1,612); ECE degree requires 45 units	0-8 and up	master's degree, typically recognized for purposes of state licensure

## Patterns among similar programs

Given the overlapping and distinctive elements of approaches, it can be useful to analyze them grouped by key features. While none of the programs are identical, five general categories emerged:

- **Parent and home child care support**
- **In-service, curriculum-aligned programs**
- **Connected, independent centers**
- **International pedagogical movements**
- **Institution of higher education**



### Parent and home child care support

All Our Kin and AVANCE

All Our Kin and AVANCE support educators working with infants and toddlers. These programs exemplify locally-driven, responsive, community-based ideal learning. Both place strong emphasis on relationship-based educator development through individualized, culturally responsive, and strengths-based training and coaching.

Both approaches primarily and intentionally serve low-income families. All Our Kin's community-based network supports home child care providers; AVANCE's programs for parents have proven especially effective with families who have not been well-served by existing programs. Both

address participants' economic security through workforce development support in addition to early childhood education.

AVANCE and All Our Kin are funded primarily through private philanthropy and state and federal dollars. While each program is expanding gradually (and there is significant demand around the country for high-quality programs like these), broad expansion is in some tension with the deep local roots through which these organizations were founded (in Connecticut and Texas).

<b>Geographic reach</b>	local and community-based in CT, NY, TX, and CA
<b>Children served</b>	primarily ages 0-4; exclusively low-income families
<b>Educator development model</b>	in-service for current practitioners and parents
<b>Content</b>	education strategies and coaching supports, including practical support like business and financial skills
<b>Cost model</b>	funded through public and private resources and grants; no cost to participants
<b>Prerequisites</b>	none
<b>Credential / degree / articulation</b>	training does not articulate towards college credit, degrees, or state teaching credentials; All Our Kin supports licensing of home child care businesses
<b>Career ladders</b>	career development within the organization; All Our Kin supports caregivers to launch or sustain their small businesses
<b>Expansion model</b>	both are in high demand, but are expanding slowly as they remain committed to community-driven growth; these kinds of programs can also provide blueprints for new efforts in other communities

### In-service, curriculum-aligned programs

EL Education, HighScope, Tools of the Mind

These approaches support in-service educators in districts, schools, and centers to use a school-wide curriculum and are typically offered through workshops and ongoing coaching and technical assistance. The cost for these programs is paid by school districts, individual schools, and centers.

These approaches offer flexible delivery and the ability to customize training to meet the needs of a particular site. They align closely with specific materials, curricula, and tools. There is often strong emphasis on ongoing assessment of children, teachers, and schools.

EL Education, HighScope, and Tools of the Mind have developed a continuum of workshops and education modules that result in varied and increasing levels of recognition for teachers and schools, but at present, none of these credentials articulate toward a degree. HighScope has the broadest reach, working with educators across all 50 states; EL Education supports schools in 30 states; and Tools of the Mind works in a number of states with density in Colorado and New Jersey.

<b>Geographic reach</b>	national reach with varying concentrations in states and districts; HighScope is international
<b>Children served</b>	high concentrations of students from low- to middle-income families and presence in public schools; HighScope offers an infant-toddler curriculum, Tools of the Mind supports pre-K/Kindergarten, and EL extends from pre-K to 12th grade
<b>Educator development model</b>	in-service models typically include summer professional learning workshops and coaching during the school year
<b>Content</b>	approach-specific curriculum and tools with emphasis on implementation and ongoing professional development
<b>Cost model</b>	typically no cost to practitioners; school, district, or center contracts for baseline services which can range from \$3,750/classroom to \$4,500/participant per school year
<b>Prerequisites</b>	educators work in a school, district, or center that has adopted the approach, therefore educators must meet any certification prerequisites required by their employer
<b>Credential / degree / articulation</b>	do not articulate towards college credit, degrees, or state teaching credentials
<b>Career ladders</b>	possible advancement within the approach, e.g., becoming a trainer or coach
<b>Expansion model</b>	schools and districts can transition to one of these approaches; training is not bound to a specific location and offers some level of customization

## Connected, independent centers

Educare, Friends Center for Children

Two of the approaches are rooted in specific centers that embody local, high-quality ideal learning within a larger network or shared ethos. These include the Friends Center for Children in New Haven, CT and Educare centers throughout the U.S. Both approaches offer immersive, financially supportive models of educator development.

Friends Center for Children, which operates two centers in New Haven, provides both pre- and in-service support for educators. Its internship program gives novice educators site-based training, while providing senior staff with training opportunities and scholarships for advanced coursework at nearby institutions of higher education. Educare, comprised of 24 centers throughout the country, offers its own training for directors, teachers, and staff paid for by the Educare Network. Training is offered throughout one's career.

These approaches have a strong commitment to serving low-income families and developing a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce, reflecting the populations they serve.



Photo courtesy of Friends Center for Children

<b>Geographic reach</b>	early childhood centers serve specific communities throughout the U.S. (24 Educare centers; 2 Friends Centers for Children)
<b>Children served</b>	ages 0-5; Educare serves only children from low-income families; Friends intentionally uses a mixed-income model
<b>Educator development model</b>	job-embedded and/or apprenticeship-style training for educators
<b>Content</b>	training in both theory and practice coupled with on-the-job experience
<b>Cost model</b>	no cost to individual participants; Educare and Friends Center pay the cost
<b>Prerequisite</b>	no formal prerequisites; most participants will already meet state/local requirements
<b>Credential / degree / articulation</b>	Friends training may be part of college-based practicum experience; Educare participants can earn Continuing Education Units
<b>Career ladders</b>	Some advancement within site or Educare Network possible
<b>Expansion model</b>	Educare expands via a school-based application process and also offers standalone training to non-Educare sites; Friends recently added a second site

## International pedagogical movements

Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired, Waldorf

Approaches like Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired education, and Waldorf are grounded in specific pedagogical philosophies and practices that originated in Europe and have an international scope. They offer pre-service and in-service options for both new and practicing educators across a variety of formats. While Montessori and Waldorf offer teacher education programs in the U.S. and internationally that provide a specialized certification or credential, Reggio Emilia-inspired offers extensive professional development opportunities but no credential or certification.

The cost of training in these approaches is typically borne by participants and can range from a few hundred dollars for an individual seminar to tens of thousands for a master's degree. Basic training to become a Montessori or Waldorf educator is around \$15,000 and can take 1-4 years to

complete. If affiliated with a degree-granting institution, the cost is usually significantly higher.

Training centers in these approaches are scattered throughout the U.S. and not widely accessible. In addition, the specificity of these approaches often limits their portability within the broader field. Although there is movement toward greater recognition of coursework and professional learning within these educational philosophies, most states do not currently count these programs toward teacher certification. As a result, they tend to have a greater presence in private and independent schools than in traditional public schools, though each of these approaches is expanding in public pre-K and early primary education.

<b>Geographic reach</b>	International scope (all originated in Europe) with limited geographic presence in the United States; some online options
<b>Children served</b>	0-8 and beyond; all operate in the private and public sectors to some degree
<b>Educator development model</b>	pre-service and in-service options for new and existing educators
<b>Content</b>	a comprehensive philosophy of human development, pedagogical practice, and supervised field work
<b>Cost model</b>	participants cover the costs; financial aid may be available
<b>Prerequisite</b>	differs based on training institution
<b>Credential / degree / articulation</b>	Montessori and Waldorf educator preparation culminates in a specialized certification or credential recognized within their approaches; a few programs articulate towards college credit/degrees; and a small number of states recognize credentials toward licensure
<b>Career ladders</b>	educators are incentivized to remain in the pedagogical approach over their career and become a coach, trainer, or school leader
<b>Expansion model</b>	educator preparation and development is limited by geography, cost, and time needed for completion; each approach is experimenting with modified training formats and blended learning, but each emphasizes in-person learning when possible

## Institution of higher education

Bank Street College of Education

Bank Street College of Education (Bank Street) is a historic, internationally recognized leader in progressive teacher preparation. Given its location in New York City, it is not widely accessible, although the school has begun offering online programs. Bank Street offers multiple graduate programs that lead to recognized state credentials and professional development programs, culminating in a certificate.

Unlike other approaches described in this report, Bank Street is an accredited institution of higher education, which administers federal financial aid (loans and grants) to eligible students. The cost of degree programs is significant, ranging upwards of \$70,000 for a two-year master's degree.

<b>Geographic reach</b>	single site in NYC with international recognition; online options available
<b>Children served</b>	0-8 and up; teachers practice in progressive schools throughout the U.S. and Bank Street's demonstration school and Head Start lab school
<b>Educator development model</b>	regionally-accredited institution of higher education offering a range of master's and certificate programs; provides some consulting and professional development to school districts through their Center for Education
<b>Content</b>	coursework and fieldwork in progressive education philosophy and practice
<b>Cost model</b>	high cost to participants, with some access to federal financial aid; districts pay for professional development
<b>Prerequisite</b>	bachelor's degree required for admittance to master's programs
<b>Credential / degree / articulation</b>	credit-bearing coursework with pathway to state teaching credentials
<b>Career ladders</b>	advanced degrees recognized in both public and private school settings
<b>Expansion model</b>	limited access due to its physical campus; online scalability is promising

Photo courtesy of Bank Street College of Education



# Challenges & Opportunities

Several important factors inhibit the overall accessibility of ideal learning educator development approaches, especially for low-income educators and educators of color.

## Challenges

### Cost to participants

In programs that culminate in greater levels of certification or a degree, the cost to participants is often prohibitively high – particularly in the context of low compensation for early childhood providers, especially those working with children under the age of 3. This creates an active financial disincentive for educators to invest in career development and an active incentive for high-quality models to innovate to reduce costs to participants.

Free models like AVANCE and All Our Kin use a blend of public funding (e.g., Head Start and public child care funds) and philanthropic support. Others, such as HighScope and Tools of the Mind, are able to leverage public professional development dollars when working with an entire school, district, or network of schools. These are all effective models, but ideally, educator development would be more coherently funded to reduce reliance on sources that may fluctuate, like philanthropy and public funds – both of which will likely be further stretched in the wake of COVID-19.

### Geographic reach

While cost is indeed an important factor that varies across approaches, location is also a major barrier for some ideal learning approaches. Overall, four of the approaches are in local communities or a specific region (All Our Kin, AVANCE, Bank Street, and Friends Center for Children), making them highly accessible to local communities but limiting their broader impact. Three of the approaches (Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired, and Waldorf) are widespread in their reach with children, but educator training centers are scattered across the country, often located away from public transportation and areas of greatest need.

## Gap between mainstream credentialing systems and ideal learning programs

This is perhaps the biggest systemic barrier to the widespread expansion of ideal learning approaches in the public sector. While ideal learning training models are high-quality, aligned with research, and often demonstrate efficacy through child-level program outcomes, they rarely count directly toward degree programs and state licensure requirements. As a result, an individual wishing to complete an ideal learning educator development program and work within public education may be required to complete multiple, duplicative trainings, creating additional cost and time barriers. Of the approaches in this report, Bank Street is the only one that aligns directly with degree attainment and state licensure. Montessori has made strides in some states toward recognition of credentials, and there are a handful of training centers or programs with articulation agreements (mostly at the master's level), which enable candidates to receive a university credential, but these are the exception, not the rule. As the field continues to move toward the requirement of a bachelor's degree for all ECE educators, this misalignment will only become more challenging.

## Tension between fidelity and scalability

Some ideal learning approaches have struggled to scale while maintaining high fidelity to their pedagogical philosophies. Montessori and Waldorf in particular have grappled with how to articulate and maintain a high standard of fidelity while adapting to serve as many children as possible. This is particularly important because studies that have evaluated Montessori and Waldorf programs emphasize the importance of fidelity to the model as a key factor that influences child outcomes.<sup>37</sup>

## Perception

For leaders with the power to choose a pedagogical approach and its affiliated teacher development model (e.g., school leaders, college deans, state officials, and district policymakers), awareness issues can hamper the adoption of ideal learning models. In Trust for Learning's work with policymakers, district and state leaders often remark that their own children and grandchildren are enrolled in Montessori or another ideal learning program. Rarely do these same leaders understand that ideal learning programs are possible (and in many cases thriving) in the public sector. These perceptual barriers may include the false beliefs that high-fidelity ideal learning models are too expensive to flourish in the public sector or that they do not meet state standards.

## Lack of racial/ethnic diversity in some approaches

Racial, ethnic, and language diversity varies widely across approaches. Waldorf and Montessori in particular have struggled to recruit, train, and sustain educators of color. Both approaches have made recent efforts to incorporate anti-bias, anti-racist (ABAR) practices into their pedagogical approaches and recognize that more work is needed to deepen and operationalize racial equity in their philosophies.

## Lack of diversity among teacher educators and trainers

Another critical challenge in highly-specialized approaches like Montessori, Reggio Emilia-inspired, and Waldorf is the shortage of highly qualified teacher educators and trainers who are themselves diverse and culturally responsive. For example, Montessori's training of trainers can take 5-7 years, and the cost is often borne by individual educators, making it particularly inaccessible.

## Opportunities

Changes in higher education, demographics, and recent efforts around career readiness are all potential opportunities for the adaptive expansion of ideal learning training programs within, in partnership with, and outside of institutions of higher education. While there are drawbacks to the fact that most ideal learning educator programs have developed at some distance from traditional teacher preparation programs, the silver lining may be that they can adapt to meet the growing demand, shifting demographics, and evolving market pressures more nimbly than traditional models. As knowledge of early childhood learning and development continues to gain ground, there will be increasing demand for educators who have a deep understanding of the principles of ideal learning. Promising opportunities exist for ideal pathways to expand, adapt, and share their expertise during this critical moment.

## Leverage the momentum of the national conversation around quality

Recent efforts – such as [Power to the Profession](#) and [Transforming the Workforce](#) – have challenged the field to adopt a unified professional framework and prompted individual states to re-examine their educator workforce requirements. As a result, now may be an opportune window

for ideal learning models to showcase their alignment with new state and national standards and competencies so that their affiliated educator pathways can be appropriately recognized.

## Influence public early childhood programs as they expand

Over the past several years, we have seen increased state and federal investment in early childhood education programs to build infrastructure, improve quality, and expand access for low-income children. As a result, there is a growing need for more early childhood educators in particular districts and states and a near-term opportunity to influence local policies to ensure high-quality programming. The timing is right for ideal learning approaches to participate in these discussions and shape how new public resources will be operationalized.

## Support excellent models to create even greater continuity for children from 0-8

While a few of the approaches reviewed (Bank Street, Montessori, and Waldorf) support children from birth to 8 and beyond, most focus on a narrower age range – either infants and toddlers or the pre-K/Kindergarten years. For some of these programs, there may be potential to expand their own scope of practice to support younger or older children (and their educators), creating an early care and learning continuum that reflects the continuity of young children's development. Or, programs that continue to specialize in a particular age range could deepen documentation, training and communication systems to ensure that children and families transitioning between contexts experience a seamless developmental trajectory of learning environments as they grow.

## Emphasize alignment with trauma-informed pedagogy

Ideal learning educator pathways emphasize deep knowledge of human development, cultivation of personal competencies in the candidate, and pedagogical principles and practices that prepare teachers to support social-emotional learning and mitigate childhood trauma. As the field has become more aware of the long-term impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and intergenerational trauma, ideal learning approaches should codify how the principles of ideal learning align with trauma-informed pedagogy, emphasizing the importance of safety, positive relationships, play, creative expression, routine, and nature.

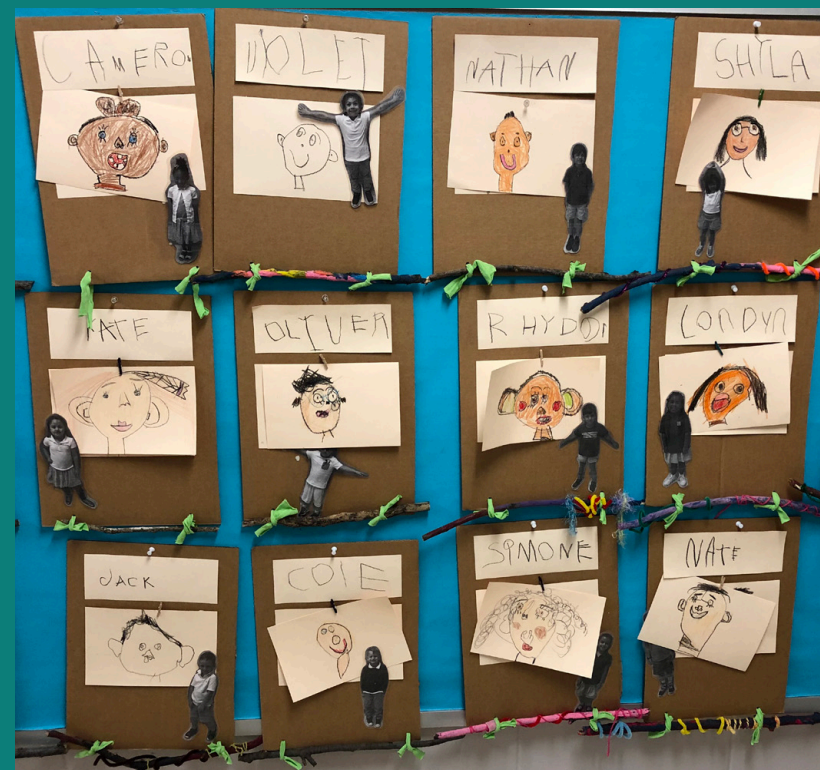
## Adapt in the wake of COVID-19

While the long-term effects of the pandemic are still unfolding, COVID-19 presents both opportunities and challenges for ideal learning educator pathways. As millions of people have been forced to work and learn virtually, there is a new openness about the possibilities for blended learning and adult online educator preparation, and every ideal learning approach has rapidly mobilized to provide services for educators, parents, and children during this crisis. Even just a few years ago, an organization attempting to shift from in-person to blended training would have faced significant technical hurdles. Now, with the rapid expansion of free and low-cost platforms, ideal learning providers are translating key parts of their training models online.

Further, the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the fragile, patchwork state of the early childhood system and the keystone role that early childhood educators play not only in supporting our youngest community members but in supporting our entire society and economy. We hope that the value of public investment in teaching and learning will become even more clear and inspire efforts to “build it better” as our country begins to reopen.

“I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift.”

– Septima Clark, educator, civil rights activist, and leader in the Citizenship Schools movement.



Within Montessori, a growing movement of individuals and organizations is advancing racial equity and cultural competency across the approach.

In addition to individual schools and leaders, Embracing Equity and Montessori for Social Justice work to create sustainable, affirming, and inclusive Montessori environments that nurture children and adults while dismantling systems of oppression.

Further, organizations like Montessori for All, the Montessori Public Policy Initiative, and the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector focus on expansion of public Montessori as a way of reaching and supporting underserved children and families.



# Recommendations & Conclusion

This analysis has revealed opportunities for the early childhood field to learn from ideal learning educator development models and points to specific opportunities for policymakers, philanthropists, and researchers to support a more inclusive, sustainable early childhood workforce educated and practiced in the principles of ideal learning.

## Recommendations for the field:

1. **Continue to center compensation as a fundamental driver of inequity.** Without a serious national commitment to recognize and reward early childhood educators of all kinds with compensation that reflects their value, we will continue to face high turnover rates and waning interest in the profession while perpetuating an early care and education field in which underserved children, educators and families of color shoulder the burden of systemic inequities.
2. **Build field-wide articulation to meet educators where they are.** National data show a decline in traditional pre-service teacher preparation programs and a shift toward unconventional pathways into the field. Educators need a variety of on-ramps to ongoing development no matter where they are starting. As a field, we must attend to the needs of both current educators seeking learning and career advancement and the pipeline of future educators. Ideal learning approaches exemplify a range of options for educators at different points in their careers.  
  
To accomplish this, there needs to be clear articulation between the current patchwork of education, training, and professional learning that educators experience. A unified professional framework will ensure that time and money spent acquiring knowledge and skills build toward a career ladder. While several recent initiatives have attempted to create a framework for advancement in early childhood, they fall short of recognizing many of the pathways in this report. Any future efforts outlining advancement within the field should incorporate the diverse range of experiences (pre-service, in-service, and non-traditional) that contribute to educator development.
3. **Pay educators while they work and learn in schools.** Given the time and cost barriers related to pre-service education and the shortage of early childhood educators,

the field should move toward models that employ teachers while they learn whenever possible. District-sponsored professional learning, residency programs, and apprenticeships offer promising models for compensating educators while they learn and grow.

For example, at Libertas Memphis, the only public charter Montessori school in Tennessee – educators have developed a [comprehensive teacher residency model](#) in which paid educators complete full Montessori training and earn state licensure while serving as an assistant or intervention teacher in exchange for a commitment of three years of service.

4. **Recognize prior experiential learning through assessment.** The approaches highlighted in this report place a strong emphasis on work with children and families in the field. However, the broader field does not always equally weigh work and life experiences that may be equivalent to traditional degree requirements and coursework. Colleges and universities can address this by formally assessing prior experiential learning.

For example, the [Council for Adult and Experiential Learning \(CAEL\)](#) sets standards for assessment processes which are approved by regional and national accreditors of higher education and involve rigorous assessments to evaluate whether experiential learning is college-level and applicable to degree requirements. This can involve testing or portfolio assessment. In the latter case, candidates may submit portfolios that document what they have learned outside the college classroom. This process can also include a performance-based assessment and/or oral interviews. Prior learning assessment offers an opportunity for experienced educators to gain formal recognition for the valuable knowledge and skills developed through field experience.

5. **Collect demographic data on educators.** There is a widespread need for demographic data on ethnicity, race, language, and socioeconomic status of candidates and practitioners. This is particularly critical given the challenges of building and maintaining an inclusive educator workforce and for advancing the equity goals of the ideal learning movement. Unfortunately, many of the approaches highlighted here do not have reliable demographic data on children or educators in their programs. Accurate, disaggregated data on key equity factors will inform deeper equity analyses and operational changes, and should be standard for the field.

## Recommendations for policymakers:

1. **Recognize coursework in specialized approaches for state licensure.** States should recognize the extensive coursework and hours of training that individuals complete in distinct pedagogical approaches (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf) toward state certification and licensure. For example, although Montessori educators undergo 1,240 hours of teacher preparation and field work, they are often not eligible for state teaching licenses because their training did not occur at a degree-granting institution and culminate in a bachelor's degree. This policy barrier is a significant impediment to the expansion of public Montessori programs.
2. **Fund state-based TEACH scholarships and teacher professional development grants** to reduce the costs of educator development for individuals. The T.E.A.C.H. program has helped to alleviate financial barriers for aspiring early childhood educators in many states and has an impressive track record of \$540 million to date in direct public and private investments. This initiative has created an array of scholarship models for early childhood education credentials and certificates, which address the continuum of educator development. One way to disrupt systemic barriers and create multi-generational benefits is through direct support for underserved racial and ethnic groups and multilingual educators.
3. **Recognize in-service, competency-based training for state requirements.** Individuals who participate in ideal learning educator development models amass significant knowledge and skills, yet these educator development experiences rarely count toward state requirements for licensure or continuing education credits. States should develop policies that recognize the knowledge and skills obtained through these and other high-quality educator development approaches to count toward competency-based pathways in the field.

## Recommendations for funders:

1. **Support local, innovative partnerships between educator development programs, institutions of higher education, and school districts or child care networks** to address both the supply and demand of teacher preparation in concert. These efforts are likely to be successful in creating sustainable pathways for educators within a city or region that is interested in scaling up a specific approach and/or a location that is on the verge of expanding public pre-K or early childhood programs

(like Colorado, Washington, D.C. and others). Funders can increase the capacity of ideal learning programs to develop these types of partnerships by supporting outreach positions charged with developing strategic relationships with local public systems. At the Montessori Institute of North Texas, described below, funders have supported local public Montessori growth in tandem with support for the training center, including its outreach capacity and formal partnerships with degree-granting institutions.

2. **Consider the creation of a national ideal learning field network and mentoring program for pre-service teachers** who wish to complete their student teaching experience in an ideal learning setting. Institutions of higher education often find it difficult to find high-quality schools in which to place teacher candidates. This network could partner with university-based teacher preparation programs and offer paid internships for students along with site-based mentorship to help them strengthen their practice in the principles of ideal learning.
3. **Support the development of freely available introductory coursework about ideal learning** in conjunction with a CDA credential or associate's degree. This coursework would support early childhood educators in their development and could be a springboard into further study of a specialized approach appropriate to their experience and location. It would provide an affordable pathway to entry for educators who are interested in learning about different ideal learning approaches, without the up-front commitment and expense. This type of introductory coursework – especially if centered at a community college – could articulate with credit in a degree program.

### New Haven ChILD's Professional Learning Communities

In Connecticut, New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District (NH ChILD) has recently piloted professional learning communities to train educators in the principles of ideal learning. This cohort model has brought together in-home care providers, parents, Head Start teachers, and other professionals working with young children to share knowledge and reflect on key elements of high-quality practice. The Trust hopes to support this model's growth through credit-bearing coursework at a local community college, creating an on-ramp to a degree pathway.



4. **Help ideal learning approaches leverage untapped financial resources.** Across the ideal learning models, there are a variety of relationships with federal and state funding sources. However, not all approaches are fully leveraging the public resources available to support adult learners. For example, some programs may be eligible to apply for Title IV status (which requires time- and resource-intensive administrative work and regional or national accreditation), enabling them to offer federal financial aid, like grants and forgivable loans, to educator candidates. Others may be able to expand services to parents and teachers through successful Head Start and Early Head Start or professional development grant applications. Funders can support programs to plan and apply for these opportunities. By leveraging available public resources as well as philanthropic support, organizations will be able to create more affordable and sustainable educator development models.
5. **Support innovative teacher preparation models that reduce barriers to participation** by experimenting with online, blended learning, and teacher residency programs. In particular, the rapid virtual learning innovations occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic may help to mitigate some of the geographic barriers associated with whole-school pedagogical approaches.
6. **Support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at all levels in ideal learning educator development models.** In particular, invest upstream to help ideal learning educator models develop deeper anti-bias, anti-racist educator training materials and create more inclusive leadership teams and educator trainers. Consider requiring grantee partners to collect demographic data on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and language (and support their capacity to do so).
7. **Support approaches to document alignment with state certification and licensure standards.** While indicators of quality in early childhood educator preparation programs are evolving, ideal learning approaches can work to explicitly examine and “cross-walk” the components of their models with elements of accreditation in recognizable terms (i.e., subject and pedagogical knowledge; knowledge of child development; observations and evaluations in clinical practice; and evidence of success with candidates). This will help pave the way toward articulation with state certification requirements.

## Recommendations for researchers:

1. **Examine the efficacy of ideal learning educator development approaches.** Based on anecdotal reports, there is reason to hypothesize that some ideal learning educator approaches may prime educators for greater job satisfaction and retention than more traditional pathways. A longitudinal study could examine particular training conditions (e.g., mentoring, ratio of field work to coursework, curriculum factors) that predict educator outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, job performance, compensation, retention) to shed light on the data that exist, disaggregate and analyze by educator demographics, and inform the field.
2. **Document the extent to which university early childhood educator preparation programs embed ideal learning principles** or offer in-depth preparation for specific ideal learning approaches at the bachelor’s level. With the exception of Bank Street, little is documented about how much depth of study in ideal learning approaches is incorporated into university early childhood teacher education programs. While a small percentage of Montessori preparation programs (and one Waldorf program) are embedded and recognized in university degree programs or have articulation agreements toward degree programs, few other approaches have developed such agreements.

## Conclusion

Decades of research confirms the essential role that supportive adults play in the healthy development of young children. A child’s interactions with parents, caregivers, and teachers help them connect with the world, express themselves, and develop foundational knowledge and skills they will use throughout life. To create equitable, joyful, dynamic ideal learning environments for children, adults should be seen and supported as lifelong learners ourselves.

Ideal learning pathways offer adults many ways to become the educators our children and our communities need to flourish. This report establishes a baseline of data around scalability, credentials, costs, and barriers and opportunities to growth. We hope it encourages decisionmakers to act on the opportunities at hand and develop new ways to expand adult development approaches in support of ideal learning environments for every young child in the United States.

## Spotlight: Montessori Institute of North Texas

Affiliated with Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the Montessori Institute of North Texas (MINT) began offering educators a flexible new training option in 2019. The Montessori Core Principles and Blended Primary Course pilots use a blended learning format, split between in-person instruction, distance learning, and field work. In order to provide the same high-quality training as full-time, in-person models, MINT uses innovative tools including practice teaching evaluation and online mentoring by video.



Photo courtesy of the Montessori Institute of North Texas

By offering a blended model, MINT helps transition traditional teachers into Montessori classrooms while they are training. Students who complete the Montessori Core Principles Course receive a certificate, and those who complete the Blended Primary Course receive both the Montessori Core Principles Certificate and the AMI Primary diploma. In the Blended Primary Course, students can earn graduate credit from three colleges and universities affiliated with MINT.

The model has made this high-quality training much more accessible for those working full time and people who don’t live near Montessori training centers. Enrollment in the 2019-2020 courses consisted of 48% public school teachers and 48% people of color, and the project is already having an impact on the availability of highly-trained and qualified Montessori educators, especially in public schools. Many of the teachers in the pilot courses were from large urban public school districts, two of which opened their first public Montessori campuses last fall with 10 classrooms led by educators trained in the Blended Primary Course.

The MINT blended format model is an excellent example of strategic philanthropic investment in the public expansion of ideal learning. In this case, funders helped an excellent training center expand and diversify its reach, with direct impact on the public sector and clear inclusion metrics. Funding for the design phase of the project was provided directly to AMI by Wend Collective. Program support for the two MINT pilot courses, including start-up and development of the blended format, was provided to MINT by the Kyle & Jimmy Galbraith Education Fund at The Dallas Foundation and The M.R. & Evelyn Hudson Foundation. Additional funding from Serena Simmons Connelly and The Galbraith Education Fund supported staff capacity (including outreach to public Montessori schools) and scholarships for candidates.

“First, I want to say how excited I am to be here and how thankful I am for this opportunity. **If it wasn’t for this particular blended program, I wouldn’t be able to get this training.** It is the end of the first day, and I feel like I’ve already got a new understanding of Montessori. I am so excited for tomorrow!”

-Kayleigh

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## About Trust for Learning

Trust for Learning is a philanthropic partnership dedicated to the expansion of ideal learning programs for all children ages 0-8. In addition to our work to create more equitable educator pathways, we invest in movement building, ideal learning Head Start expansion, policy change, and place-based networks of practice.

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