



Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

Building Education Pathways, Increasing Professional Recognition

HB2264 | Rep. Talarico

The Texas Early Childhood Workforce needs access to educational pathways which allow them to obtain higher levels of education and increase the professional recognition of the early childhood profession. A good first step to building these educational pathways is **requiring all community colleges to award a minimum of six credit hours to students who already have their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential**, an industry-based certification requiring 120 hours of training, a classroom observation, and an exam.

Current Education Levels of the Early Childhood Workforce

Early Childhood Educators have varying levels of education and qualifications. In Texas, Minimum Standards for Child Care Licensing requires a caregiver in child care to have a high school diploma or equivalent and 24 hours of pre-service training.

According to a recent report compiled by the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center¹, in Texas:

“Most commonly, early childhood educators have no degree or certification beyond high school (58%). Owners are typically high school educated (39%) or have a CDA or associate’s degree (39%). Overall, only 17 percent of the collective ECE workforce holds a bachelor’s degree or higher, including 22 percent of owners, 17 percent of home-based educators, and 14 percent of center-based educators. Comparing the [early childhood workforce] workforce to the general population of Texans, early childhood educators are disproportionately less educated than the general population, with 33 percent of Texans 25 years and older holding a bachelor’s level of education or higher, compared, to just 17 percent of the ECE workforce.

Notably, approximately one in six, or 17 percent, of all early childhood educators and owners attended “some college” but have not completed a degree, underscoring the need to better understand potential barriers to college completion.”

Low Education Leads to Low Compensation

The low entry requirements into the field and lack of consistency in education levels and qualifications creates challenges to raising the compensation of early childhood educators. In Texas, **the average wage of an early childhood educators is \$12/hour²**. This leaves 1 in 10 early childhood educators earning a living wage.

Texas must work to provide early childhood educators with equitable access to professional preparation pathways which build upon an early childhood educators’ prior experience, training, and education resulting in professional compensation.

¹ Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center. (2022). *Workgroup Recommends to Inform the 2022 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan*. Retrieved at https://pn3policy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/PN3PIC_Workgroup-Recommendationsto-Infomthe-2022StrategicPlan.pdf

² Texas Workforce Commission. (2023). *Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025*. Retrieved at https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/agency/commission_meeting_materials_01.06.23_item3_hbB619_strategic_plan.pdf

Current Pathway Landscape

Texas lacks clearly defined educational pathways for early childhood educators. Many early childhood educators begin their educational journey by obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, a nationally recognized industry-based credential requiring 120 hours. This training may be provided through a training organization or a community college. When offered through a community college, there is a lack of consistency as to the type of college credit awarded. This means that early childhood educators obtaining their CDA training through a community college may or may not be able to apply the classes completed toward an associate degree.

At the community college level, there is a bifurcated system that distinguishes between workforce education degrees and academic degrees. The most notable difference is that workforce education degrees may not require a student to complete all the courses in the Texas Core Curriculum. The associate degree most obtained by early childhood educators is the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Child Development, which is a workforce education degree.

One of the benefits of workforce education degrees is that community colleges have more latitude in awarding credit for prior learning and/or awarded credit to students possessing an industry-based certifications. Many community colleges award early childhood educators credit for their CDA credential when pursuing an A.A.S. in Child Development. However, not all institutions do so, and the number of credit hours varies from 0-12.

Laying the Foundation for Educational Pathways

Building bridges between the CDA credential and associate degrees is a strong first step to establishing the road from CDA credential to bachelor's degrees, resulting in higher compensation for the early childhood workforce. To achieve this, **Texas should require all community colleges to award a minimum of six credit hours to students who already have their CDA credential.**

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About TXAEYC

The Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEYC) is a professional membership association that celebrates, educates, and advocates for young children, their families, and early childhood professionals. Through our advocacy efforts, we work to ensure all young children, birth to age eight, have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education and that the early childhood workforce is effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated. With nearly 3,000 members and 20 local chapters, TXAEYC the largest membership organization in the state of Texas for early childhood professionals and is committed to providing programs and services that equitably meet the needs of young children, their families, and early childhood professionals.

TXAEYC is the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA), and ACCESS - Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators.