



A Professional Development Pathway for Spanish-Speaking Family Child Care Providers: Program Report of an ECEPTS FCC Apprenticeship



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CONTENTS

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3
- INTRODUCTION 5
- BACKGROUND 7
- PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION 11
- OUTCOMES AND FEEDBACK 18
- IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE 21

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FCC Apprenticeship was launched in 2021 to serve Spanish-speaking Family Child Care (FCC) providers in San Bernadino, California. The pilot project was an innovative initiative and serves as a successful model of professional development for this large, diverse, and often underserved segment of the early care and education (ECE) workforce. This report examines how the program was designed, implemented and received by participants, highlighting major successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

The design of the FCC Apprenticeship was based on the Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) registered apprenticeship model, which has been shown to be effective with similar populations of ECE workers. To address specific systematic barriers that Spanish-speaking FCC providers face in attaining professional development, special supports were embedded into the program design: classes were offered on weekends to avoid conflicts with apprentices' work schedules, the program was conducted entirely in Spanish, the program was offered at no cost to the apprentices, instructors and mentors were carefully selected to ensure they had experience working with FCC providers and Spanish-speaking populations, and program participants received academic supports to overcome a potentially steep learning curve in taking college coursework.

One lesson learned from implementing the FCC Apprenticeship was that personal connections are crucial in supporting this population to successfully complete a rigorous professional development program. This was true both during the outreach phase and in completing the work-based learning and academic portion of the program. Many FCC workers already knew each other and the program mentor before the apprenticeship launched, which influenced their decision on whether to take part in the program. Participants reported that these connections encouraged them to enroll because they felt assured that they would have some support within the program and not have to figure everything out by themselves. The apprentices developed strong relationships over the course of the program, and several described the group as a "sisterhood" by the end. The close-knit community that developed helped participants overcome challenges that arose as they worked together to solve problems and encouraged each other to persist in completing the program.

The support from the program mentor was equally valuable and vital to participant program success. She made herself available to apprentices at times that were convenient to their busy schedules, and supported them to address issues or requests around homework assignments, time management concerns, interpersonal conflicts, technology-related problems, and emotional encouragement. Feedback from participants made it clear that they would not have been able to complete this program without support from the mentor and each other.

Program outcomes of the FCC Apprenticeship were extremely positive. Fifteen of the 20 apprentices successfully completed the program, and the majority earned A's or B's in the four college courses that were part of the apprenticeship program. The five apprentices who were unable to complete the program withdrew because of serious health or family issues that needed to be prioritized. No one dropped the program due to academic problems or anything related to the program itself. After speaking with each graduate about their future plans, the mentor reported that every apprentice would enroll if a next-level apprenticeship program was offered as a pathway to continue college education and professional development.

Significant challenges remain in replicating programs such as the FCC Apprenticeship. In particular, there is a lack of reliable, ongoing funding for programs aimed at ECE workers considered outside of the mainstream, such as Family Child Care providers. This dilemma is increasingly being confronted by Registered Apprenticeship sponsors and policymakers trying to develop sustainable alternative pathways, policies, and funding streams that can lead to career advancement and family sustaining wages for non-traditional workers. To truly address the barriers, sustainable funding will be necessary alongside targeted efforts to meet the unique needs of workers who represent low-income communities, immigrants, first generation college students, and marginalized populations.



INTRODUCTION



In 2021, Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) launched a Family Child Care (FCC) Apprenticeship in San Bernadino, California. It was the first of its kind in many ways, in that the Apprenticeship aimed to meet the specific needs of Spanish-speaking FCC providers, a critical segment of the workforce that is too often overlooked or excluded in Early Care and Education (ECE) professional development initiatives. The Apprenticeship was highly successful, as indicated both by program outcomes and participant feedback.

In order to glean lessons learned and implications for future programs, this program report examines why the FCC Apprenticeship was created, how it was designed and implemented, what factors contributed to its success, and the project's main impacts and outcomes. The report concludes with a discussion about the feasibility of replicating this model and what gets in the way of making such programs more widely available for FCC providers.

Data collection methods for this report included interviews with program staff, a focus group with program participants, a review of relevant literature and research, and participants' written program evaluations and college course evaluations.



BACKGROUND



THE NEED FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE

The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) estimates that nearly seven million children from birth to age five are cared for by roughly four million caregivers in home-based child care settings,¹ almost double the estimated 3.8 million children in center-based child care. Families who choose home-based care for their children do so for many reasons. Home-based care offers more flexible schedules, convenient locations, and an intimate setting well-suited to the developmental needs of very young children.

About half of home-based child care providers are located in areas of moderate or high poverty density.² In communities where cost, location, and transportation barriers significantly limit child care options, family child care fills a critical need.³ Moreover, many FCC providers are multilingual and serve immigrant families who share their native language. This not only helps families communicate more easily with the providers, but also helps to support children's development of fluency in their home language.

Research has demonstrated that there is a positive impact on early literacy outcomes for young children with caregivers who speak their home language.⁴ This is significant, given that one third of children from birth to age five are Dual Language Learners (DLLs)⁵ nationally, and 59% of young children in California are DLLs. Furthermore, because nearly 80 percent of DLLs speak Spanish at home, Spanish-speaking FCC providers, specifically, are in high demand across the country, especially in California.⁶

It is clear that home-based child care offers unique logistical, cultural and linguistic benefits to the families who utilize it. And given the crisis-level scarcity of affordable, high-quality child care nationwide, home-based care is integral to enabling parents to enter and remain in the workforce and keeping the child care system afloat.⁷

¹ National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, OPRE Report #2016-13.

² Holli A. Tonyan, Diane Paulsell & Eva Marie Shivers (2017). Understanding and Incorporating Home-Based Child Care into Early Education and Development Systems. *Early Education and Development*, 28:6, 633-639, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2017.1324243>.

³ Family Child Care Research & Data Fact Sheet. National Association for Family Child Care. <https://nafcc.org/our-work/public-policy-and-advocacy/research-resources/family-child-care-research-data/>.

⁴ Castro, D.C., Paez, M., Dickinson, D.K., & Frede, E. (2011). Promoting language and literacy in young dual language learners: research, practice, and policy. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(1), 15-21.

⁵ Young Dual Language Learners in the United States and by State. Migration Policy Institute, tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2015-2019 American Community Survey.

⁶ Williams, C. (2017). Contours of the Field: Native Languages of Dual Language Learners. *New America*. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/dllsnativelanguages/>.

⁷ Bishop, Sandra (2023). \$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis. Council for a Strong America. <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2038-122-billion-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis>.

THE NEED FOR FORMAL TRAINING FOR FCC PROVIDERS

Decades of research have confirmed a positive correlation between highly trained caregivers and better outcomes for young children, both academically and in terms of social-emotional development.⁸ This link has been observed across various countries, cultures, and socioeconomic populations. However, systemic barriers have created a situation in which many Spanish-speaking FCC providers have little or no college-level education. According to the 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education, only 15% of those listed as home-based providers with high-Hispanic enrollment reported having a Bachelor's degree or above, while 29% of center-based providers with high-Hispanic enrollment reported having the same credentials.⁹

Systematic barriers that most often preclude this group from attaining higher education include:

- » Long working hours that conflict with professional training and college classes that are usually offered during traditional business and school hours.
- » FCC providers typically receive extremely low compensation, often earning poverty-level wages. Unless scholarships or no-cost programs are available, professional training and college courses are financially out of reach for most home-based providers.
- » FCC providers often do not possess the literacy skills needed to succeed in college classes conducted in English. Many FCC providers serve non-English speaking families, so they conduct their business in languages other than English and lack work-based opportunities to build their English proficiency.
- » FCC providers often lack experience navigating the formal education or higher education systems. They may feel intimidated by, or incapable of completing, college coursework.
- » FCC providers are typically left out of ECE professional development policies and programs, research about the ECE workforce, and ECE funding formulas. Often viewed as delivering services of inferior quality and possessing sub-standard skills (i.e., viewed more as babysitters than as trained and committed early educators and caregivers), some state quality improvement efforts exclude home-based providers completely. And unlike the experience of their counterparts who provide center-based care, there are often no incentives to pursue the limited professional development opportunities that do exist for family child care providers.¹⁰

⁸ Manning, M., Wong, G. T. W., Fleming, C., & Garvis, S. (2019). Is teacher qualification associated with the quality of the early childhood education and care environment? A Meta-Analytic Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(3), 370–415. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319837540>.

⁹ NSECE Project Team (National Opinion Research Center) (2021). National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), [United States], 2019. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR37941.v3>.

¹⁰ Sager, Jessica (2018). It's Tough to Step up without Steps: Building a Ladder for Family Child Care Providers. *New America*. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/its-tough-step-without-steps-building-ladder-family-child-care-providers/>.

In taking these barriers into account, it is no surprise that securing formal training for FCC providers - especially providers whose native language is not English - remains a huge challenge with significant implications. Children from marginalized families who may be immigrants, low-income, and/or families of color tend to be a major population served by FCC providers and perhaps need access to quality child care more than other groups.¹¹ But until the barriers that prevent FCC providers from becoming skilled, knowledgeable ECE professionals are addressed, ensuring quality child care for marginalized groups will continue to be elusive.

BENEFITS OF THE APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

The Registered Apprenticeship (RA) model has a well-established record of success in developing workers' skills, knowledge, and competencies across many fields since its inception in 1937.¹² Since 2014, RAs have also been proven to be uniquely well-suited as a training vehicle for the ECE workforce.

Unlike internships and student teaching, RAs allow participants to be employed and receive wages throughout their program, making professional training opportunities much more accessible to low-income workers who cannot afford to be unemployed while developing job skills. Additionally, an RA program must align with and award industry-recognized credentials (e.g., Child Development permit, AA and BA degrees) to successful program completers. As such, workers are assured of employability and career mobility after completing an apprenticeship and can avoid training programs which, although they might be useful, do not guarantee that program graduates will have the qualifications necessary to assume employment and progress on a career ladder.

ECEPTS has been a leader in developing and sponsoring RAs for the ECE workforce since 2019. It has designed RAs to specifically meet the needs of ECE workers - including DLLs, first generation college students, immigrants, and other marginalized, underrepresented groups - and has demonstrated the success of their models. Recognizing the major gap in availability of formal professional training for FCC providers, ECEPTS undertook designing an apprenticeship program for Spanish-speaking FCC providers to address the need for, and test the viability and impact of, such an approach.¹³ The FCC apprenticeship program design mirrored the RA model that ECEPTS had successfully developed, implemented, and sustained with other sub-sectors of the ECE workforce (i.e., entry-level center-based teachers, home visitors).

¹¹ Holli, et al.

¹² Office of Apprenticeship: Our History. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/about-us/our-history#:~:text=In%201937%2C%20the%20National%20Apprenticeship.>

¹³ While the program is referred to as an apprenticeship, at the present time FCC providers are ineligible to participate in Registered Apprenticeships because of circumstances related to their status as small business owners. See the final section of this paper, Implications for Policy and Practice, for more information.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION



APPRENTICESHIP PARTNERS AND STAFF

The ECEPTS FCC Apprenticeship was launched through a partnership between ECEPTS, Child Care Resource Center (CCRC), and San Bernardino Valley College (SBVC). ECEPTS was the program sponsor and technical assistance provider, CCRC was the resource and referral agency that provided training, on-the-job mentoring, and overall program coordination, and SBVC provided the required college coursework and related academic supports. The pilot program was funded through a grant from the Heising-Simons Foundation.

The Apprenticeship was built upon a model previously developed for FCC providers, delivered through a collaboration between ECEPTS and CCRC. The pilot program provided an opportunity to adapt and expand that model to meet the specific goals and needs of Spanish-speaking apprentices and to test the impact of intentionally recruiting and supporting a monolingual cohort of non-native English speakers.

The design process was led by ECEPTS, in partnership with CCRC staff and SBVC faculty, through a series of planning meetings that also helped to build relationships and trust across institutions. Staff and faculty from ECEPTS, CCRC, and SBVC attended a three-part training, led by a nationally recognized researcher, on working effectively with DLL young children and ECE providers. This was intended to ensure that all staff contributing to the program had an understanding of current research and relevant best practices.

The program staff who would be working most closely with the apprentices were carefully selected to ensure their ability to connect with the apprentices and understand the challenges and circumstances that this population would likely face in an apprenticeship program. The apprenticeship mentor who was selected had been working with FCC providers for over 20 years in San Bernadino County. The college course instructor had experience working with FCC providers and child care resource and referral organizations like CCRC. She was also bilingual and grew up in Mexico, which made it easier to bridge cultural and linguistic divides between apprentices and staff. Finally, the embedded tutor was selected because she was bilingual and known to have strong interpersonal skills.

OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

CCRC program managers conducted participant outreach and recruitment. As a recruiting strategy, they sought out Spanish-speaking FCC providers from their database who had not previously taken any college coursework. This helped ensure that program participants would get the most out of the apprenticeship program and minimize potential overlap with training programs previously completed.

They also established specific eligibility requirements, aligned with the goals of the pilot program, including:

- » Providers had to operate a licensed FCC program that was in good standing.
- » Providers had to work at least 20 hours per week and children enrolled in their programs had to be from birth to age 12.
- » Providers had to be able to speak and write in Spanish.
- » Providers had to meet the basic requirements of the apprenticeship program (e.g., at least 18 years old, eligible to work in the United States).

Emails and flyers were sent to providers in the CCRC database who matched these criteria. The CCRC program manager then called each person on the list to talk with them about the opportunity and address their questions or concerns. Those who expressed interest in participating were given an application to complete and submit.

Of the more than 30 applicants, 20 met all eligibility requirements and were enrolled in the apprenticeship program. Candidates who were not enrolled were deemed ineligible either because they had already taken the college courses that would be offered during the program or because they had personal travel plans that conflicted with the program's schedule.

LESSONS LEARNED

Personal connections played a major role in the success of the outreach and recruitment process. One factor that apprentices said contributed to their interest in applying was that many of them already knew and trusted the CCRC program manager who reached out to them. As one participant stated, "I had already taken some shorter classes with her at CCRC. And I knew if she's saying I should do it, it's because it's something good."

Beyond inviting them to apply, the program manager offered personal reassurance to the candidates. During the recruitment calls she made to each provider, she told anyone who expressed hesitation, or doubt in their ability to complete the program, that she would be there to support them along the way and they would not be alone in taking on this challenge. She also reminded them that the apprenticeship was designed with them in mind and there were many provisions in place to promote participant success, including logistical, financial, and language supports.

Another factor that helped participants decide to apply was knowing other FCC providers interested in participating. Talking with each other about the program and recognizing that they would have built-in peer support if they did it together helped them to feel more confident about their ability to manage anticipated or unforeseen challenges. Reflecting the importance of knowing other applicants as an element that encouraged potential participants to enroll, one apprentice explained that it helped boost her self-confidence because she realized that “if this person can do it, then maybe I can too.”

RELATED SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

The Related Supplemental Instruction (RSI) portion of the program consisted of four college courses: Child Growth and Development; Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children; Introduction to Curriculum; and Child, Family and the Community. These courses were selected because they fulfill the academic requirements needed to earn the CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit. As such, the courses represented the professional content widely recognized as the foundational core needed to work in the field of ECE, whether in center-based, home-based, or school-based programs.

Classes were mostly held in-person at CCRC to offer a more welcoming and familiar space than meeting on campus. When COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were required, classes met virtually every other week over Zoom and in person on alternate weeks. Emphasis was placed on in-person learning as much as possible, because the personal support from staff and the other participants was so essential to the group’s success.

Throughout the two-year program, the same course instructor and embedded tutor facilitated all four courses. The benefits of this arrangement were that the trust and understanding that developed between the instructor, tutor, and apprentices could be sustained over the course of the program. As well, the tutor was able to make herself available to apprentices during evenings and weekends, when they were most likely to be working on assignments. Apprentices could ask her for help in-person before or after classes, or they could speak with her during the week over the phone or on Zoom.

The mentor also attended all of the classes alongside the apprentices. In doing so, she was able to stay up to date on course materials and assignments and offer moral support and encouragement. For instance, because she was present during the classes, she could help apprentices address concerns or interpersonal challenges being encountered. She was also able to encourage apprentices by checking in with them throughout the semester to see how their assignments were coming along and to remind them about upcoming deadlines.

Other academic supports incorporated into the program design to promote program completion included a financial incentive and program materials provided at no cost to the participants. In lieu of wage increases that would typically be part of a Registered Apprenticeship program, participants received a \$500 stipend each semester if they earned a grade of C or better in the course. They were given laptops to use during the program which were theirs to keep after they graduated. Textbooks were provided at no cost and, significantly, were translated into Spanish so that the curriculum was fully accessible to everyone.

LESSONS LEARNED

Personal connections had a major influence on apprentices' RSI experience. Apprentices leaned on each other for help with homework, collaborating on projects, and seeking peer support and moral encouragement. As one apprentice reported, "the classmates became like a sisterhood to us. We looked at each other as more than classmates, as sisters, like we're in this together. That's what I thought was magnificent about [the program]. Without the support from them, we would not be where we are."

Open communication between staff, apprentices, and faculty was another key factor that contributed to the successful delivery of RSI. One example was during the first semester of the program when some apprentices felt that the instructor's expectations of them were too high and that she was not being sensitive enough to their time commitments and gaps in formal education. After discussing this with each other and the apprenticeship mentor, they decided to write a collective letter to the instructor voicing their concerns. Rather than getting defensive, the instructor worked with them to find mutually acceptable solutions, including breaking down course assignments into more manageable pieces.

Open communication between staff and across institutions was also beneficial. A debriefing session was held after the first semester that included ECEPTS staff; the SBVC college instructor, embedded tutor, Dean, and Department Chair; and the CCRC program managers and mentor. For some, this was the first opportunity to meet staff from outside of their institution, which gave them a broader understanding of the undertaking and everyone's roles and contributions. The ECEPTS project manager found the session to be extremely helpful, both because many positive stories were shared about how the program was unfolding, and because it provided a context in which to discuss and collectively tackle any challenges that had arisen. She noted that the positive stories far outweighed the problematic ones, and that that helped build group morale and set a good tone for continuing to work effectively throughout the duration of the program.

If this program were to be replicated in the future, one staff member suggested that it might be helpful to have more than one college instructor involved. She said while the consistency over the four courses helped apprentices build a bond with the instructor, it was a lot of responsibility for one person to assume. Beyond that, having exposure to a variety of teaching styles and perspectives could be beneficial to the apprentices.

Another suggestion offered to strengthen program replication was to provide a roadmap to apprentices right from the start that explained the role of each staff member and their availability. In particular, apprentices were not clear about what topics the tutor could help with and when she was available to help them. If that had been laid out more clearly from the beginning, it would have minimized confusion and optimized her role.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

The On-the-Job Training (OJT) component of the FCC Apprenticeship consisted of professional trainings and mentoring to augment the hours they worked as providers. Professional trainings covered topics such as small business administration, disaster preparedness, and Dual Language Learning (DLL) pedagogy. Some trainings, such as disaster preparedness, were already-established programs that were hosted by CCRC. Other trainings, such as DLL pedagogy, were led by content experts brought in as subcontractors. Trainings were generally offered in the summer when they were not enrolled in college courses.

Ongoing technical training was also offered to apprentices who needed assistance with using their laptops and with computer applications such as Canvas. The mentor was the main person who provided this ongoing support, and that ended up being a significant part of her job.

Mentoring consisted of regular meetings between the mentor and each apprentice to ensure that they were achieving their professional development goals. These meetings, both weekly and monthly, were planned around apprentices' schedules and lasted as long as needed. The mentor checked in weekly with apprentices to track their progress and address questions or concerns. She also met with each apprentice at least monthly to evaluate their progress on mastering skills and knowledge set forth by the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. The mentor would describe the competency goals for the month, ask how the apprentice was putting those skills and knowledge into practice in their FCC program, and then discuss successes, challenges, and next steps.

LESSONS LEARNED

Apprentices found both the professional skills trainings and the mentoring to be very helpful. They said that the trainings gave them excellent information and that they would take them again, if given the option. The meetings that focused on competency goals also worked out well. The mentor reported that every apprentice achieved all the competencies by the end of the program. She noted that the apprentices found the discussions helpful because, oftentimes, they were already demonstrating the competencies but could not name them and did not have a conceptual understanding of the competencies per se. Having that information gave them an extra boost in confidence about their professionalism and their skills as early childhood educators.

The mentor support provided to apprentices throughout the program turned out to be invaluable. Apprentices were able to contact the mentor whenever needed, at times that were convenient to their schedules. This made a substantial difference to them, as one apprentice explained, "she was always there for us if we had any questions with homework or concerns."

In future program replications, program staff suggested that mentoring should be a full-time role, rather than one aspect of a more generalized job. In this case, mentoring was only one aspect of the mentor's job, and she had other responsibilities aside from working with the apprenticeship program. She ended up splitting her time evenly between the apprenticeship program and her other responsibilities. But she said being able to focus solely on the apprenticeship would have been ideal.

OUTCOMES AND FEEDBACK



The outcomes of the FCC Apprenticeship program and feedback from the apprentices were overwhelmingly positive. In terms of outcomes, 15 of the 20 apprentices graduated from the program, with the majority of apprentices earning A's and the rest earning B's in their college courses. The five apprentices who started the program but were unable to complete it had serious health or family issues that had to take priority. No one dropped the program due to academic problems or anything related to the program itself. Each graduate earned and received their Child Development Associate Teacher Permit from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

In terms of feedback, apprentices were extremely enthusiastic about the experience. Comments provided on written course evaluations after the first semester included:

"It has been a goal for me to fulfill my dream of studying at a college level. I always had the fear of not speaking English; that's what has kept me from attending college."

"My child care business will be rewarded with all that I have learned, and there is still more to learn. I am ready for the next course."

"In the 22 years that I have been in this profession of caring for and educating children, I have never taken a course like this. I always signed up for other courses but never continued or didn't attend. With the motivation of [the mentor], I could complete the course because there is going to be lots of support to achieve my goal. Thank you for this opportunity!"

"There are no words to express the gratitude I feel!"

Feedback from a focus group conducted with participants following the conclusion of the program demonstrated that their enthusiasm was just as strong 18 months later. Participants expressed excitement about how the program had improved their business practices:

"We understand how to talk with children and their behaviors now. Instead of wondering why they act a certain way, we observe them, we analyze them, we try to understand the problem, and we work with the parents moving forward!"

"Another thing we did was research resources for families. For instance, we look for dentist services or things that happen in the community around us. We looked for them and file them in a folder for parents. That is something new that's good!"

“We learned to make our own curriculum, how we want to plan it and implement it. The teacher gave us many examples, how we can do them, and we liked it very much. But being able to create our own and be able to do it however we want, whatever works best for us, that's a really good tool!”

“I learned to make a profile for a child. I'm already fascinated because I'm going to start...a folder where you put all their information and where you add their work, the observations you've made of them. At the end of the year, they will be delivered to the parents and have conferences with them, talk about how they are progressing, how did they start the program, and how they are finishing the program.”

Beyond the vital knowledge apprentices gained from the program, the confidence they built in themselves was reportedly life changing. As one apprentice said, **“I no longer look at myself as a babysitter. I now consider myself an early childhood educator.”** This confidence was in evidence not only within their classrooms but also in their higher education experiences. One staff member explained, **“They felt empowered. A lot of them now feel like they can continue with their education. And they're going to know how to navigate the college system and the portals.”**

When asked about their plans for the future, many apprentices said they hoped to continue their education. Several wanted to take more college courses, while another planned to get her General Education Diploma (GED). Apprentices felt very strongly that they wanted to continue taking courses to keep their Associate Teacher Permits active or to earn the more advanced Teacher Permit. After speaking with the cohort about this possibility, the mentor concluded that every apprentice would enroll if a next-level apprenticeship program was offered as a pathway to continue college education and professional development.

Although program graduates were eager to continue what they started through the FCC Apprenticeship, the obstacles that initially prevented them from embarking on such a journey could similarly prevent further academic advancement. While the program was clearly successful and impactful, it underscores the fact that without the kinds of ongoing supports and services embedded in the design of the FCC Apprenticeship, further academic pursuits could prove to be out of reach and/or present insurmountable challenges. Some of the apprentices stated that they would not feel capable of taking classes not offered in Spanish, both in terms of instruction and reading materials. Others stressed that without the option of weekend classes it would be impossible for them to enroll in more courses.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE



Recognizing the urgent need for highly trained, home-based providers who speak the language of the families they serve, it is significant that the FCC Apprenticeship pilot program demonstrated the strong desire and capability of Spanish-speaking providers to successfully advance their academic and professional training. Such programs provide a field-tested model for how to effectively provide the multi-faceted, holistic support necessary for early educators and caregivers who are DLLs to develop the competencies and confidence needed to provide critical, quality early care and education for young children.

Despite the evident success and impact of the FCC Apprenticeship, and the recognition that such programs are critically important toward providing equitable, accessible training pathways for all segments of the ECE workforce, there are persistent systemic barriers that make it impossible to realize and replicate the full potential of such programs. Understanding these obstacles and how to address them is critical in developing policy and practice around inclusive ECE professional development systems.

The impediments to widespread replication of FCC Apprenticeships are reflective of the ways in which FCCs are often excluded from professional training opportunities because of their unique circumstances as home-based workers (e.g., source of their income, limited earning capacity, status as small business owners). In the case of apprenticeships, these impediments widely render FCCs ineligible to participate in the Registered Apprenticeship system entirely.

The RA system is focused on training workers who are employees, but FCC providers are small business owners. As such, they cannot meet basic RA eligibility requirements. For example, as small business owners they do not receive wages in the traditional sense and, thus, may not have control over their minimum wage nor can they be assured of incremental pay increases over the course of their apprenticeship. Also, they do not have on-site journeypersons (i.e., supervisors, mentors) and do not qualify for Workers' Compensation Insurance.

Because of these barriers to participation, while the program described in this paper is referred to as an FCC Apprenticeship, it could not be registered as such in California. Instead, it was registered as an On-the-Job Training Program, even though it was designed to identically mirror the work-based and academic content, structure, and participant supports and services embedded in the ECEPTS Associate Teacher Registered Apprenticeship. And because the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) does not offer a Registered On-the-Job Training Program as an alternative, the FCC program could not be registered with the DOL in any form.

The problem at hand is not whether exclusion from the Registered Apprenticeship system will necessarily impact the development of effective programs. Given the ability and experience of ECEPTS to design and implement excellent models of professional development, registering the program as an On-the-Job Training Program in California and not registering it with the DOL did not impact the quality or outcomes of the FCC Apprenticeship. The problem is that exclusion from the Registered Apprenticeship system renders programs like the one described in this report as financially unsustainable and, therefore, not replicable.


Funding for Registered Apprenticeships is currently a key driver in building a pipeline of qualified, well-trained workers across essential industries, including ECE. But it is unrealistic, if not impossible, to create a sustainable, quality system of professional development on the basis of sporadic funding from private philanthropy or state and federal ECE workforce initiatives. Furthermore, federal programs such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), intended to sustainably fund employment training, are too often inaccessible to apprenticeship programs because they are set up to support individual job seekers rather than organizations that work with cohorts of workers, as is the case with the ECEPTS model.

Without the support of a stable, government-funded system such as Registered Apprenticeship, there is no sustainable source of funding to ensure replication and scaling of programs like the FCC Apprenticeship to meet the training needs of this large and diverse critical workforce. This dilemma is increasingly being confronted by RA sponsors and policymakers trying to develop sustainable alternative pathways, policies, and funding streams that can lead to career advancement and family sustaining wages for non-traditional workers. To truly address the issues, vastly expanded and targeted efforts will be needed.

Spanish-speaking FCC providers provide a vital service to families who are often from marginalized communities, and they play a crucial role in keeping a struggling childcare system afloat. The strong success of the ECEPTS FCC Apprenticeship demonstrates that providing professional training opportunities uniquely tailored to the needs of dual language FCC providers can boost the confidence, skills, and competence of those who care for our youngest, most vulnerable populations. The need for such programs is widely and increasingly recognized. But until we invest adequately to make them widely accessible and sustainable for all who wish to benefit from them, the consequences of leaving FCC workers unsupported and insufficiently prepared will continue to negatively impact the workers themselves, the families they serve, the ECE industry, and the overall economy.



A Professional Development Pathway for Spanish-Speaking Family Child Care Providers: Program Report of an ECEPTS FCC Apprenticeship

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