PLAYBOOK

Orleans Parish Early Care + Education Workforce Task Force

Strategies for Strengthening the Early Care + Education Workforce

Spring 2023

AGENDA FOR CHILDREN

NOEEN
NEW ORLEANS EARLY EDUCATION NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

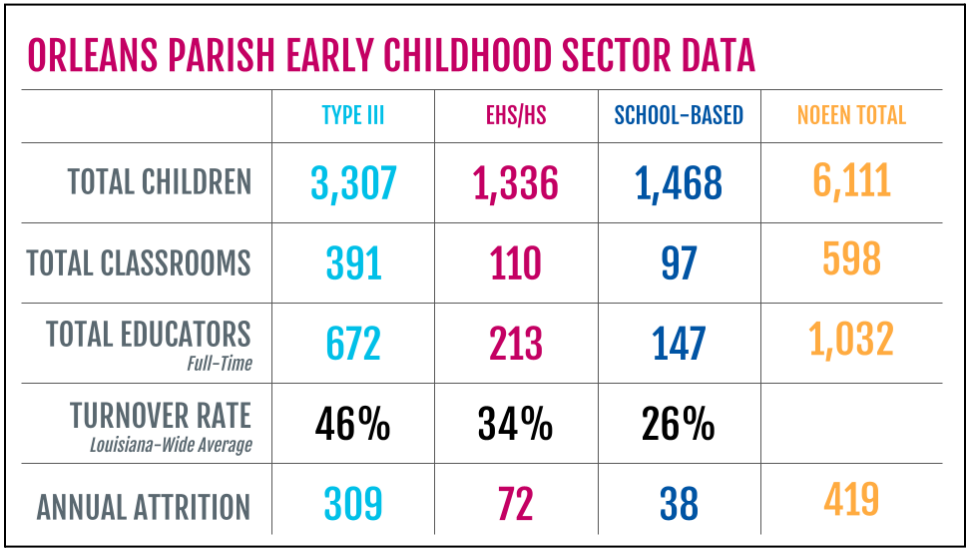
With the passage of the early childhood education millage in April 2022, New Orleans joined the ranks of fewer than 50 municipalities in the country to dedicate voter-approved funding to early care and education and is now one of the only cities to use local investment to focus specifically on infants and toddlers, the age group least served by existing publicly-funded early childhood programs. The millage is expected to generate up to $21M annually which will fund at least 1,000 seats and wraparound services, such as mental health and social work services and developmental and health screenings, for young children enrolled in the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) City Seats program. With matching funds from the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund, Orleans Parish could see a dollar-for-dollar match, an additional $21M investment, for a total annual new investment of $42M which would expand access to care for up to 2,000 children under age five, most of them three years old and younger, by the fall of 2023.

The NOEEN City Seats program currently serves 400 children and will serve at least 600 additional children in Fall 2023 with millage funding. Based on an average classroom size of eight children, the Task Force projects that to meet capacity by Fall 2023, early learning programs will need to open around 75 new classrooms, or as many as 200 with a full state match.

To appropriately staff these new classrooms, we project that we need anywhere from 519 to 819 new early childhood educators. As outlined in Figures 1 and 2, each year we lose nearly one in every two Type III early educators, one in every three Head Start teachers, and one in every four school-based pre-k teachers. We have layered these sector-wide attrition rates by program type on top of our classroom growth projections to outline a medium and high estimate for the number of new educators needed to appropriately staff the increase in classrooms by both millage-only funding and by millage funding with a full state match.

We are at the beginning of an incredible period of growth for the early care and education sector in New Orleans. Yet, despite the increase in demand, attention, and municipal funding for early childhood, attrition rates for early childhood educators in Louisiana are at a crisis level. Orleans Parish early educators earn, on average, less than $25,000 annually. We have both an exodus of educators and a lack of incentives for new educators to join the profession at a time when we are poised to significantly increase the number of children we are able to serve, and this inevitably has a significant impact on the early care and education ecosystem as we look toward expanding the number of seats available to children and families.

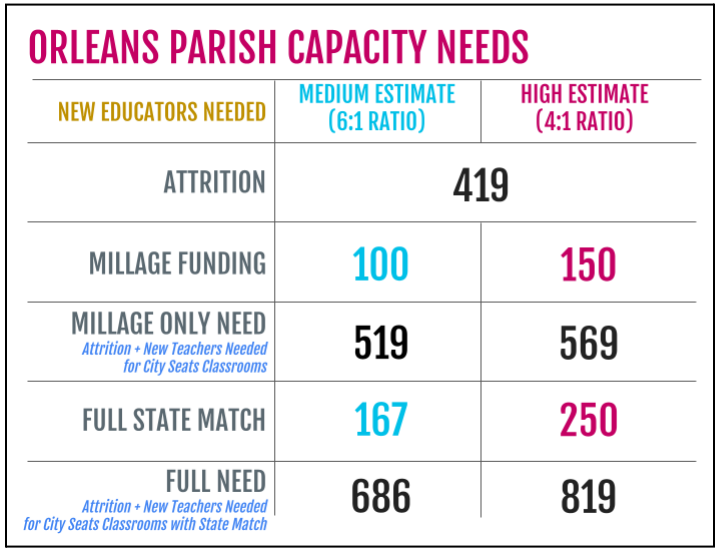
Figure 1: Orleans Parish Early Childhood Sector Data



ORLEANS PARISH EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR DATA

	TYPE III	EHS/HS	SCHOOL-BASED	NOEEN TOTAL
TOTAL CHILDREN	3,307	1,336	1,468	6,111
TOTAL CLASSROOMS	391	110	97	598
TOTAL EDUCATORS *Full-Time*	672	213	147	1,032
TURNOVER RATE *Louisiana-Wide Average*	46%	34%	26%	
ANNUAL ATTRITION	309	72	38	419

Figure 2: Orleans Parish Capacity Needs



ORLEANS PARISH CAPACITY NEEDS

NEW EDUCATORS NEEDED	MEDIUM ESTIMATE (6:1 RATIO)	HIGH ESTIMATE (4:1 RATIO)
ATTRITION	419	
MILLAGE FUNDING	100	150
MILLAGE ONLY NEED *Attrition + New Teachers Needed for City Seats Classrooms*	519	569
FULL STATE MATCH	167	250
FULL NEED *Attrition + New Teachers Needed for City Seats Classrooms with State Match*	686	819

As the Orleans Parish Ready Start Network, Agenda for Children convened the Orleans Parish Early Care & Education Workforce Task Force on behalf of the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) to bring together community leaders and organizations currently working to improve early care and education and the local workforce to identify and prioritize strategies to address this immediate workforce shortage as quickly as possible.

Goals of the Task Force included:

- identifying local and state efforts related to improving the early childhood educator ecosystem;
- identifying constraints and challenges and generating programmatic and systemic solutions; and
- identifying and clarifying roles and responsibilities for the organizations involved in this work and necessary timelines.

Over 30 community partners comprised the Task Force, which convened eight times in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. This working playbook is a summary of the Task Force's recommendations and includes associated strategies, work plans, and timelines for strengthening the early care and education workforce in Orleans Parish.

PLAYBOOK USE

This playbook was created to be used by those who influence policy and funding decisions and those who are in spaces to positively impact the early care and education workforce ecosystem in Orleans Parish and in Louisiana. The playbook is meant to guide both policy and program decisions and serve as a collaborative accountability tool to help orchestrate priorities and work streams across organizations.

In this playbook the early care and education workforce refers to the folks who provide early care and education to children, birth through age five, on a consistent basis. Workforce therefore refers to early childhood educators, program leaders and directors, and family child care providers. Those providing important services such as occupational therapists or social workers are not included in this workforce definition since the focus of this playbook is to outline strategies to rapidly increase the infrastructure of early childhood classrooms, teachers, and leaders.

To maintain accountability and to move forward the work outlined in this document, the Task Force recommends that NOEEN create a new working group, to be known as the Workforce Task Force, to monitor progress on outlined work and to share out at NOEEN Steering Committee meetings at least through the end of Spring 2024.

PLAYBOOK ORGANIZATION

In its early convenings the Task Force defined three primary areas of focus to frame the challenges and articulate solutions to improving the early care and education workforce landscape in Orleans Parish. The playbook is divided into three parts based on each focus area:

For each focus area, the playbook outlines the working definition used by the Task Force; a brief background of current work, constraints, and challenges in the particular area; and associated goals and strategies.

For each focus area, there are short-term strategies with a timeline of January through June 2023 that are primarily related to millage implementation and long-term strategies with a timeline of July 2023 and beyond for both millage-related and general capacity building activities. These timelines reflect priorities that support rapidly responding to the workforce challenges of the sector as it prepares to expand by at least 600 seats and several hundred teachers by Fall 2023.

For each short- and long-term strategy, the playbook outlines recommendations, partners, and related deliverables and timelines. Below is an example of how strategies are formatted and what each component entails:

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
Short- or long-term strategy.	*Recommendations and considerations for strategy implementation.*	***Lead Partner**: Primary leader(s) of strategy, either a specific person or organization.* ***Key Partners:** Partners that should be involved for successful implementation.*	***Deliverables:** Tangible products or outcomes associated with the strategy.* ***Timeline:** Timelines associated with the strategy or deliverable.*

CONTACT

Please direct comments or questions about this Playbook to Derrick Toups (dtoups@agendaforchildren.org).

GLOSSARY

Below is a list of key terms or entities that appear throughout the document along with their definitions. Key documents, policies, or information about these and other important entities and programs are hyperlinked throughout this document.

Agenda for Children - *local nonprofit designated by the Louisiana Department of Education to serve as the co-lead agency (along with NOLA Public Schools) and the sole Ready Start Network to ensure program accountability and quality as well as to expand access to and capacity for publicly-funded early learning programs in Orleans Parish*

Apprenticeship - *arrangement between an early learning program and early educator that allows the educator to work while participating in on-the-job training and related academic coursework*

BESE - *the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is the administrative body for all Louisiana public elementary and secondary schools and oversees regulations, policies, and funding for publicly-funded early learning programs*

CDA - *the Child Development Associate is the nationally-recognized minimum credential for lead teachers in the early childhood profession*

Early Childhood Education - *(also Early Care and Education) is the profession related to the care and education of children from birth through age five*

Early Educators - *(also Early Childhood Teachers) are the professionals who comprise the early childhood education sector and work with young children in early learning programs*

Early Learning Programs - *(also Early Learning Providers) the licensed programs or "centers" that provide care and education for young children on a daily basis*

ECAC - *the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate is the Louisiana minimum credential for lead early childhood teachers that must be obtained within two years of entering the classroom*

For Providers by Providers - *local nonprofit championing Louisiana's early care and education providers and enhancing the quality of the sector through policy advocacy, professional development, and networking, primarily*

through direct work with directors and staff of early care and education programs

Louisiana Pathways - *state-funded early learning center career development system with the goal of improving the quality of child care throughout the state and supporting early childhood professionals through providing scholarships for training and education and tracking continuing education and career advancement through a standardized career ladder*

Louisiana Policy Institute for Children - *state nonprofit that serves as a nonpartisan, independent source of data, research, and pertinent information for policymakers, stakeholders, and the public at large around issues related to children ages birth through four in Louisiana*

Millage - *property tax approved by Orleans Parish voters in April 2022 that will generate up to $21M annually to fund early childhood seats and wraparound services*

NOEEN - *the New Orleans Early Education Network is the community network lead agency for Orleans Parish and is tasked with unifying all publicly-funded early childhood programs in Orleans Parish, improving family access to high-quality early learning experiences for children, and increasing support and capacity for early learning programs*

Ready Start Network - *(Agenda for Children, on behalf of NOEEN, in Orleans Parish) LDOE-funded entity tasked with expanding access to quality early learning experiences through creating and implementing a strategic plan to address local gaps in the early childhood sector, recruiting stakeholders to expand early childhood collaboration, establishing a local governance structure to make collaborative decisions (NOEEN), and implementing fundraising strategies to meet local objectives*

PREPARATION + PATHWAYS

Working Definition	Examples
Preparation The acquisition of skills and knowledge through academic or hands-on means, either before entering the sector or while in the sector.	• An early childhood educator completes a CDA or ECAC program while teaching full time. • A student enrolls in an internship or apprenticeship program to become an early childhood educator. • A community college student completes observation hours in an early childhood classroom. • An early childhood educator attends a professional development workshop.
Pathways The ways educators and leaders enter the sector and transition to and between various roles and/or program types.	• A high school student completes a CDA program to become an assistant teacher in an early childhood classroom. • A paraprofessional completes an associate's degree program to become a lead teacher. • An infant teacher in a Type I program becomes an Early Head Start teacher. • A teacher becomes an administrator or program leader.

PREPARATION + PATHWAYS BACKGROUND

Beginning in July 2019, lead teachers working in Type III licensed child care centers were required by the Louisiana Department of Education to obtain the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate (ECAC) as a minimum credential within two years of entering the classroom. Requirements for the ECAC include either: a Child Development Associate (CDA) and a high school diploma or equivalent; an approved Career Diploma where coursework began prior to July 1, 2018; a Technical Diploma or Certificate of Technical Study in an early childhood related field from an accredited technical or community college from a BESE-approved ECAC Program; an Associate's Degree in an early childhood related field from a college or university accredited in accordance with 34 CFR 602; or a Bachelor's Degree or higher from a college or university accredited in accordance with 34 CFR 602.

There are currently fewer than 10 programs serving Orleans Parish that are approved by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to offer coursework as an approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program, such as AVZ Health Place, Career Training Group, CLL Cornerstones, C3 Lab School, and Elite Teachers University. Each year most local ECAC programs credential two cohorts of around 25 participants each, which if all were fully enrolled, would yield around 250 credentialed teachers annually. This number excludes local community college programs and other online CDA programs.

Delgado Community College is the only post-secondary program in the parish that offers an early childhood (birth to age five) Associate's degree (referred to as Care and Development of Young Children or CDYC). A handful of Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) schools offer hybrid or online ECAC and CDYC programs, including nearby Nunez Community College, Northshore Technical Community College, Baton Rouge Community College, and Fletcher Technical Community College. Individuals who teach full time in early learning programs and enroll in an approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program are eligible for a tuition scholarship through Louisiana Pathways.

Currently Louisiana does not have a consistent stackable credential across academic institutions, meaning that some institutions may apply CDA or ECAC coursework toward an Associate's or Bachelor's degree while some may not. The Board of Regents is currently working with post-secondary institutions across the state and with the Louisiana Department of Education to improve the consistency of courses of study and thereby the ability for early childhood educators to transfer credits.

The Task Force pointed out that there are a number of barriers to successfully participating in and completing a CDA or ECAC program, such as literacy, cost, transportation, child care, time, and technology.

Outside of traditional academic preparation programs, there are currently no early childhood apprenticeship programs in Orleans Parish. However, Southern University New Orleans is opening a lab school with an internship/apprenticeship component in Fall 2023, and the New Orleans Workforce Development Board and the Louisiana Workforce Commission have been actively working to shape the policy pathway for drawing down federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) dollars to fund apprenticeships and early educator preparation in New Orleans and in the state.

Currently For Providers by Providers and Propeller provide peer-to-peer business coaching and support opportunities to early learning program leaders, and Agenda for Children's New Leaders Fellowship supports program leaders within their first five years of leadership as well as leaders who are opening new programs.

There are a number of organizations and Pathways-approved individuals who provide professional development to in-service educators in the parish.

Outside of the early childhood space, YouthForce NOLA has successfully run career exposure programs and dual enrollment (earning college credit while in high school) and created industry-based credential programs for high school students and opportunity youth. Other parishes in Louisiana have utilized dual enrollment and Jump Start, Louisiana's career and technical education (CTE) program, as vehicles for supporting high school students to graduate with a CDA or ECAC along with their high school diploma.

Louisiana Pathways has developed Career Development Tracks for a handful of roles in the early childhood sector. These outline minimum education and experience levels tied to eligibility for School Readiness Tax Credits, however, beyond education and experience, there are no clear definitions of the day-to-day roles. Nor are these roles tied to any compensation expectations. Furthermore, there is currently no tool that outlines how folks can transition between different roles and between different program types.

While Louisiana Pathways offers CDA, ECAC, and post-secondary degree scholarships, these are relegated to folks currently working in an early childhood center, and the application and funding processes are often slow. There are currently no consistent teacher preparation funding streams for folks outside of the early learning sector.

PREPARATION + PATHWAYS GOALS

- Reduce barriers and increase access to early educator preparation programs.
- Increase the number of non-traditional preparation opportunities (ex. apprenticeship, mentorship, high school).
- Clearly define the various roles in the early care and education sector and the paths between them.

PREPARATION + PATHWAYS SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES *(January - June 2023)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
1. Clearly define the various roles in the early care and education sector and the paths between them by creating an Early Educator Pathways Tool.	*We recommend creating a tool that maps career pathways for early childhood educators and K-12 teachers and provides definitions, requirements, and average salaries of various roles within the early childhood sector as well as ways to move between roles.* *Once created, this tool will need to be shared with stakeholders along with resources and guidance that outlines its benefit and how to use it.* *Funding for this strategy comes from the Ready Start Network Community Supply Building and Access Expansion (CSBAE) Grant.*	***Lead Partners:*** *This work is currently underway by Alice Martin Allen, who is consulting with YouthForce NOLA and Agenda for Children.* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Educators* *Early Learning Programs* *NOLA-PS* *Louisiana Pathways* *CDA + ECAC Programs* *Higher Education*	***Deliverable:*** *Early Educator Pathways Tool* ***Timeline:*** *Complete Early Educator Pathways Tool by March 2023.*
2. Better leverage existing funding streams to expand educator preparation opportunities for high school students.	*While there is career and technical education (CTE) infrastructure in Louisiana for high school students to participate in dual enrollment and Jump Start programs to graduate with a CDA or ECAC along with their high school diploma, these pathways are currently not utilized in Orleans Parish.* *We recommend engaging a consultant to operationalize a pathway into the early childhood sector in Orleans Parish. We recommend ensuring that coursework is eligible for college credit should*	***Lead Partners:*** *Consultant* *Agenda for Children* *NOLA PS* *New Orleans Career Center* *YouthForce NOLA* ***Key Partners:*** *CDA + ECAC Programs* *Higher Education* *High Schools*	***Deliverable:*** *Operationalize high school CDA/ECAC pathway.* ***Timeline:*** *Consultant to operationalize high school CDA/ECAC pathway by Fall 2023.*

	students later want to pursue a two- or four-year degree. *We need to identify the most effective way to deliver instruction (in-person and/or virtual), ideally partnering with a local community college. We need to identify local early learning program partners to facilitate apprenticeship opportunities.* *Bossier Parish, Rapides Parish, and East Baton Rouge Parish have successfully implemented high school CDA/ECAC programs.*	*LDOE* *Board of Regents*	
3. Better leverage existing funding streams and identify new funding streams to expand educator preparation opportunities for those not currently working in the sector.	*While Louisiana Pathways funds higher education for early educators currently working in early childhood programs, there is limited funding for non-educators.* *Given current capacity in existing CDA/ECAC programs and local institutions of higher education, we recommend leveraging federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and state M.J. Foster Promise Program funding as well as identifying additional funding streams, such as millage or Ready Start Network funds, to subsidize credentials for those who are not eligible for Pathways scholarships.*	***Lead Partners:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* *Agenda for Children* *City of New Orleans* ***Key Partners:*** *YouthForce NOLA* *Board of Regents* *New Orleans Workforce Development Board* *GNO, Inc.*	***Deliverable:*** *Greater access to funding sources for non-educators to obtain credentials.* ***Timeline:*** *Secure and operationalize funding prior to Summer 2023.*

PREPARATION + PATHWAYS LONG-TERM STRATEGIES *(July 2023 - Beyond)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
4. Remove barriers to continuing education and professional development.	*To increase participation in continuing education and professional development opportunities, we recommend providing funding and support to pre-service and in-service early childhood educators to access education and training, potentially through WIOA, millage, or Ready Start Network funding.* *Outside of tuition scholarships, we recommend identifying funding and support for providing transportation, work release, child care, technology, books, and supplies.* *Given that Louisiana Pathways tuition scholarships are only open to early educators currently working in early childhood classrooms, we recommend identifying funding sources to support early educators not working in Type III programs and individuals who are not currently in the sector who want to enter.*	***Lead Partners:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* ***Key Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* *LDOE* *Louisiana Pathways* *Office of Youth & Families* *CDA + ECAC Programs* *Higher Education* *RTA* *Philanthropy* *Corporate Partners*	***Deliverable:*** *Work plan detailing opportunities and funding streams for removing listed barriers.* ***Timeline:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force to develop work plan with opportunities and funding streams by Fall 2023.*
5. Increase mentorship opportunities for early childhood educators currently in the sector.	*As a mechanism for both encouraging retention and strengthening teacher preparation, we recommend increasing financial support and opportunities for mentoring current teachers in center-based and family child care providers.*	***Lead Partners:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* ***Key Partners:*** *Agenda for Children*	***Deliverable:*** *Increased funding and access to mentorship opportunities.* ***Timeline:***

	Agenda for Children, For Providers By Providers, TrainingGrounds, the Center for Literacy and Learning, and individual Pathways trainers currently offer professional development for leaders. Additionally, LDOE's Louisiana Early Leaders Academy (LELA) provides a cohort-based learning model. *We recommend the NOEEN Workforce Task Force to lead this work.* *This work could be funded through millage and Ready Start Network capacity building funds.*	*Early Learning Programs* *For Providers By Providers* *LDOE* *TrainingGrounds*	*NOEEN Workforce Task Force to identify plan and funding streams for increasing mentorship opportunities by April 2023.*
6. Remove barriers to credit matriculation in higher education by developing stackable credentials.	*We recommend developing stackable credentials and strengthening matriculation agreements among ECAC programs, community colleges, and universities so that educators can maximize their education experiences.* *The Board of Regents is currently working with post-secondary institutions across the state and with the Louisiana Department of Education to improve the consistency of courses of study and thereby transfer credits.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Board of Regents* ***Key Partners:*** *CDA + ECAC Programs* *Higher Education*	***Deliverable:*** *Matriculation agreements.* ***Timeline:*** *Board of Regents is currently in the process of developing comprehensive matriculation across the state.*
7. Introduce an accessible Bachelor's degree program focused on working teachers into the local ecosystem.	*We recommend partnering with Reach University, an accredited Bachelor's degree program with a history of success among working teachers, to introduce a low-cost degree program for teachers working in early learning programs.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* *YouthForce NOLA* *Reach University*	***Deliverable:*** *Operationalized Bachelor's degree program.*

	The potential to earn a Bachelor's degree while teaching would increase teacher preparation, serve as a recruitment and retention mechanism, and prepare teachers to explore various pathways within the early learning space.	***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs*	***Timeline:*** *Reach University to offer initial coursework in Fall 2023.*

RETENTION + RECRUITMENT

Working Definition	Examples
Retention Keeping existing educators and leaders in the sector.	• Reducing attrition of early educators over time. • Retaining early educators by increasing their salaries and/or providing bonuses and stipends. • Retaining early educators and leaders by increasing workplace support and/or access to benefits.
Recruitment Bringing new educators and leaders into the sector.	• Increasing the number of early educators and leaders in the sector. • Recruiting new folks, such as high school students or retirees, to work in the early care and education sector.

RETENTION + RECRUITMENT BACKGROUND

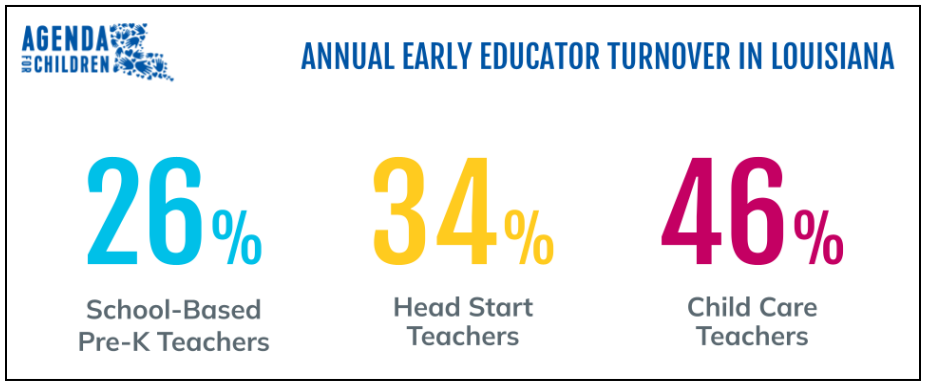
In a November 2020 survey of child care providers by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 69% of respondents across the nation said that retaining and recruiting qualified staff was a significant challenge.

Survey data from the Fall 2021 Study of Early Education – Louisiana (SEE-LA) Leader Survey from the University of Virginia (UVA) echoed this, revealing that the vast majority of program leaders in Orleans Parish are experiencing staffing shortages and are struggling to fill teacher vacancies. Seventy-three percent of early learning programs reported at least one teacher vacancy, and programs reported an average of three teacher vacancies. Leaders are trying to fill these vacancies, with 95% of leaders reporting that hiring was “at least a little challenging,” yet 81% of leaders reported too few or no applicants or that applicants were not qualified for vacancies. SEE-LA data also revealed that due to teacher shortages in Orleans Parish, 73% of staff are working more hours or taking on additional duties, 70% of programs are hiring inexperienced or underqualified staff, 57% of programs had to turn away families due to staffing problems, and 49% of programs are reducing the number of classrooms at their sites.

We know that without early childhood educators, there is no early childhood education. Furthermore, we know that inconsistencies in caregivers in the early years (due to attrition or other factors) have negative consequences on child development. Consistent, nurturing caregiving early in life is essential for healthy neural, behavioral, and social and emotional development. Decades of research have shown that severe disruption to early caregiving routines alters long-term development and increases a child's risk for mental health disorders across the lifespan. It is therefore imperative that we bolster early childhood systems to retain teachers and recruit new teachers that see early childhood education as a viable long-term career.

Using administrative data collected twice each year by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) as part of their Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that follows all teachers in publicly-funded, center-based early learning programs across Louisiana over three years, Bellows, Bassok, Markowitz found high rates of both within-year and multi-year turnover, particularly in child care, for teachers of toddlers, and for entrant teachers. In Louisiana, 31% of teachers working with preschoolers turn over from one year to the next, compared to 49% of teachers working with toddlers. Furthermore, in Louisiana, 46% of child care teachers left their site in a single year, compared to 34% of Head Start teachers, and 26% of teachers in school-based prekindergarten (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Annual Early Educator Turnover in Louisiana



The SEE-LA study further notes: "That over half of early educators in publicly-funded [early childhood] programs are gone within three years has serious implications for returns on large scale teacher-centered quality improvement investments (e.g.

coaching and professional development). These types of investments will only yield the benefits desired if coupled with efforts to reduce turnover both at sites and in the field more broadly."

The most alarming revelation is that data suggest that nearly all teachers who leave their sites are leaving publicly-funded early childhood education in Louisiana entirely. Contributing factors likely include physically-taxing and high-stress work, limited embedded support, low compensation and earning potential, limited benefits, and a lack of societal value of the profession. Of particular note here is the lack of societal value of early care and education as a profession. While the National Association for the Education of Young Children has recently advocated for greater professionalism in the sector, there has been a historic lack of public investment and support of early care and education which is often equated to babysitting and even codified by the Bureau of Labor Statistics not as "educational instruction" but rather as "personal care and service" along with animal trainers, gambling dealers, baggage porters, and tour guides. Given that 90% of brain development occurs by age five and that children under age six spend, on average, over 30 hours per week with caregivers other than their parents, it is imperative that we strengthen the supports that benefit those who work with our youngest children during such a critical period of development.

Given such high attrition rates and the cost of recruitment, the Task Force has acknowledged retention as a primary recruitment strategy. New Schools for New Orleans data suggest that the average costs to recruit, select, train, and place a new teacher costs are around $25K (inclusive of substitute pay, job postings, administrative time devoted to hiring), with national estimates ranging from $15K-$35K per teacher. This cost equates to slightly more than the average child care teacher's annual salary and provides a sobering economic incentive for the sector to focus on strengthening not only recruitment tactics but also the factors that contribute to long-term retention in the field.

Some retention strategies in Orleans Parish include ongoing mentorship, wellness initiatives, benefits, and bonuses, though there is still an alarming exodus of educators each year. The Task Force identified the following incentives as the most important for retaining and recruiting educators: supportive directors and systems, competitive pay, flexible schedules, a positive work environment, and robust benefits.

RETENTION + RECRUITMENT GOALS

- Reduce sector attrition and retain early childhood educators and leaders currently in the sector.
- Recruit qualified educators into the sector.
- Increase pathways and reduce barriers into the sector.

RETENTION + RECRUITMENT SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES *(January - June 2023)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
1. Develop retention and recruitment strategies specific to various communities of interest.	*We recommend identifying various sub-demographics of current educators and potential educators and developing retention and recruitment strategies focused on these groups.* *For example, a 50-year-old teacher may prioritize contributions to a 401k, while a 20-year-old educator may prioritize paid maternity leave.* *We need further details for this strategy and recommend hiring a consultant to engage this work.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Consultant* *Agenda for Children* *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* ***Stakeholders:*** *Early Learning Programs* *Public*	***Deliverable:*** *Work plan for retention and recruitment messaging and strategies.* ***Timeline:*** *Work plan completed by Summer 2023.*
2. Distribute $3M+ of earmarked funding to current educators through retention bonuses and pilots.	*See Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section.*	*See Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section.*	*See Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section.*

3. Improve the public perception of the early care and education sector through a media campaign.	*As a tool to highlight pathways into the sector and to strengthen the public perception of the value and professionalism of the early childhood sector, we recommend developing and launching a media campaign to share positive images and narratives of early childhood educators in local broadcasting, print, and social media.* *Agenda for Children should coordinate with the current NOLA-PS early childhood information campaign and bring in stakeholders to help define messaging.* *Funding for this strategy comes from the Ready Start Network Community Supply Building and Access Expansion (CSBAE) Grant.*	***Lead Partners:*** *This work is currently being led by Agenda for Children with media production and placement by FatHappy Media and Search Influence.* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs* *Office of Youth and Families* *NOLA-PS* *Local Media Outlets* *Child/Pediatric Spaces*	***Deliverable:*** *Media Campaign* ***Timeline:*** *Launch media campaign by Fall 2023.*
4. Create a "one-stop shop" for interested applicants to apply for early educator positions.	*We recommend creating a centralized website for those interested in applying to early childhood positions, ensuring that this resource includes the Early Educator Pathways Tool, a job board, and resources for obtaining early childhood credentials.* *While this has been identified as a potentially high-yield shared service that would support all early learning programs, we need to consider if programs are interested in a centralized recruiting system, how this service would be utilized (ex. who gets priority to candidates), and who would "own" and manage this.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* *New Orleans Career Center* *New Schools for New Orleans* ***Key Partners:*** *YouthForce NOLA* *GNO, Inc.* *Potential Educators* *Early Learning Programs*	***Deliverable:*** *Centralized website.* ***Timeline:*** *Launch website in Fall 2023.*

RETENTION + RECRUITMENT LONG-TERM STRATEGIES *(July 2023 - Beyond)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
5. Advocate for policies that provide sustainable and increased funding to increase educator salaries and benefits.	*This is outlined in the Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section of the playbook but is listed here since increased, savings-wage compensation has been named over and over as one of the most important retention and recruitment strategies.*	*See Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section.*	*See Compensation (Pay and Benefits) section.*
6. Increase infrastructure for leadership and middle management support and supervision.	*We recommend identifying existing opportunities or creating new opportunities to offer a community of practice model to support middle managers and mentor teachers in early learning centers.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children For Providers by Providers* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs For Providers by Providers*	***Deliverable****: Community of practice or similar opportunity for middle managers and mentor teachers.* ***Timeline****: Develop work plan by Fall 2023.*
7. Create infrastructure for paid fellowships, internships, and apprenticeships, inclusive of two-generation strategies.	*We recommend launching a pilot demonstration project that allows participants to apprentice in an early learning program, while receiving, at minimum, a CDA or ECAC and potentially a two- or four-year degree.* *We recommend expanding WIOA funding to support early childhood apprenticeships in Louisiana (outlined in Preparation and Pathways section).*	***Lead Partners:*** *Consultant Agenda for Children For Providers by Providers* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs Higher Education ECAC Providers*	***Deliverable:*** *Paid fellowship, internship, or apprenticeship program.* ***Timeline:*** *Develop strategies for operationalizing program by Fall 2023.*

	We recommend exploring avenues for embedding early childhood credentials into high school programs (outlined in Preparation and Pathways section). *We recommend embedding consistent, free credentialing into the onboarding process for new educators.*		
8. Embed internships or observations in early care and education programs into child- or pediatric-focused professional training programs, such as medical or dental schools.	*As a short-term stop gap and potential long-term recruitment mechanism, we recommend working with non-early childhood institutions of professional training and education to embed internships or observations in early care and education programs into child- or pediatric-focused professional training programs, such as medical or dental schools.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* *For Providers by Providers* ***Stakeholders:*** *Higher Education*	***Deliverable:*** *MOU or program outline with local professional training program and participating early learning provider.* ***Timeline:*** *Develop strategies for operationalizing program by Fall 2023.*

COMPENSATION (PAY + BENEFITS)

Working Definition	Examples
Compensation Pay or benefits received by an early educator or leader for their work.	
Pay Wages paid to early educators and leaders for their work (defined as annual wage or hourly wage) or other financial pay, such as bonuses or stipends.	• The hourly wage or annual salary paid to an early educator or leader in return for their work in an early childhood program. • An end-of-year retention bonus for an early educator who taught in an early childhood program for the entire year.
Benefits Non-wage compensation for early educators and leaders.	• Health, dental, or vision insurance • Paid time off, vacation time, or maternal/family leave • Employer contributions to retirement plan • Tuition reimbursement, transportation vouchers, School Readiness Tax Credits

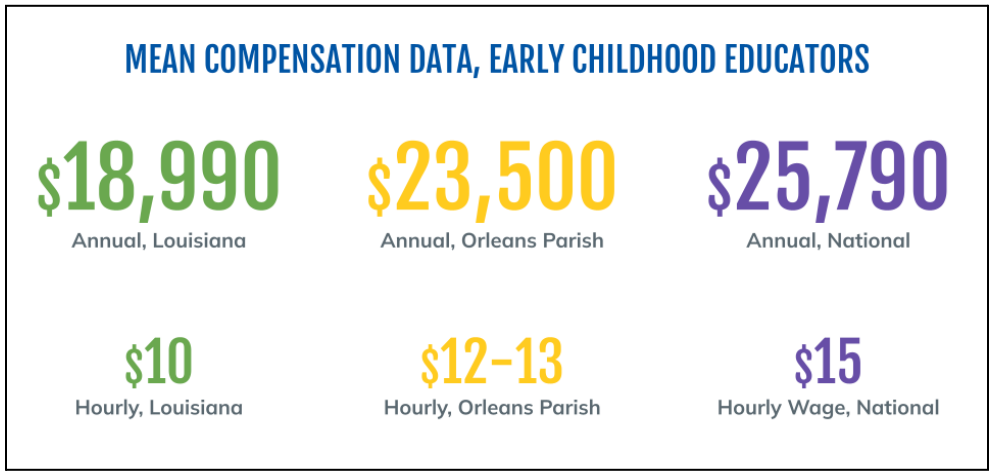
COMPENSATION BACKGROUND

There are roughly 20,000 children under age five in Orleans Parish, and fewer than half of them are enrolled in early childhood programs which are served by 1,000 early educators in approximately 600 classrooms.

Averaging multiple wage data sets (Figure 4), including the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Louisiana Department of Education, the Task Force found that most early educators in Orleans Parish earn an annual salary of $23,500 ($12-13 per hour) which is above the Louisiana mean annual salary for early educators of $18,990 ($10 per hour) but less than the national mean annual salary of $25,790 ($15 per hour). When discussing the pay of early educators, the Task Force made the decision to discuss pay in terms of annual salary rather than hourly wage in order to advance recognition of the early childhood sector as

an important and viable profession and to combat the perception that early education, where the majority of educators are paid hourly, is babysitting.

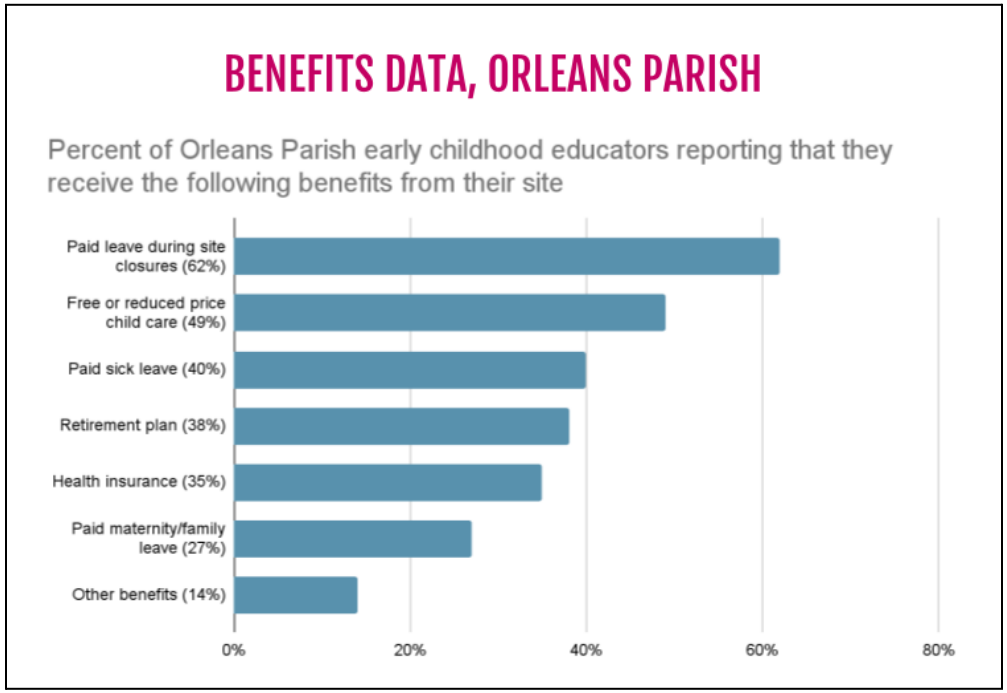
Figure 4: Mean Compensation Data, Early Childhood Educators



According to the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children's "Professional Wages for Professional Educators: Recommendations for Improving Early Childhood Workforce Compensation in Louisiana" report: "Pay disparity also exists between early care and education teachers in Louisiana who work at Head Start and school-based pre-kindergarten programs compared to those who do not. The average salary for Head Start and pre-K teachers in Louisiana is approximately $34,000 and $40,000, respectively, compared to approximately $20,000 for those in child care." Research further shows that early educators work more hours weekly than school-based teachers despite the gaps in compensation, and the lack of competitive compensation results in high turnover rates for early educators who tend to leave the profession early.

In addition to earning low wages, most early educators in Louisiana do not receive robust benefits, such as paid time off or employer contributions to retirement accounts, and many educators qualify for public subsidies, such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Survey data from the Fall 2021 SEE-LA Teacher Survey (Figure 5) show that early educators in Orleans Parish receive some benefits, though benefits are inconsistent and vary by program.

Figure 5: Benefits Data, Orleans Parish



The Center for American Progress has developed an interactive cost estimation tool that estimates the true cost of high-quality child care in each state ($1,000-$2,000 per child per month in Louisiana, depending on age), and this tool helps illustrate the gap between the per child rate programs receive from public subsidies and from families paying out of pocket. On average, the true cost of high-quality early care and education for an infant is 43% more than what providers can be reimbursed through the child care subsidy program. This indicates that we do not have a compensation problem, but rather a funding problem. To strengthen the early care and education ecosystem, it is critical that we advocate for increased public funding to close the gap between current subsidies and the true cost of high-quality early care and education.

Notable local work currently underway in the compensation space includes an ongoing research partnership between the Louisiana Department of Education and the University of Virginia as well as the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children's Tiger

Team, which convened several child care providers, industry consultants, advocacy groups, and representatives from state agencies to develop compensation scales for early care and education professionals.

Emerging local projects include a teacher retention compensation pilot from the Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Public Policy Center at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, LDOE expanding the Navigators for a Healthy Louisiana program to support early childhood educators with information and assistance enrolling in navigating affordable health insurance through the federal marketplace, and Louisiana State University Human Development Center exploring ways to expand paid leave, paid holidays, and tuition reimbursement benefits.

COMPENSATION GOALS

- Offer a competitive salary to early educators and leaders.
- Advocate for policies that provide sustainable and increased funding to increase educator salaries.
- Identify the most attractive benefits to the early care and education sector and explore shared services (ex. centralized benefits, business supports, recruiting) to reduce program overhead and improve access to benefits.

COMPENSATION SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES *(January - June 2023)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
1. Distribute $3M+ of earmarked funding to current educators through retention bonuses and pilots.	*As we work to implement sustainable, long-term policy solutions to increase educator pay and benefits, we recommend implementing short-term solutions to increase educator salaries.* *Currently, Agenda for Children has earmarked $677,750 to support workforce development through retention bonuses and pilots. We recommend using some of these funds to correct for variability among public subsidies through a*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* *City of New Orleans* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs*	***Deliverable:*** *Direct payments to early educators and early learning programs.* ***Timeline:*** *Disburse funds in Spring 2023.*

	pilot in some programs who receive multiple subsidies, for example, closing the gap between City Seats, B-3, and Early Head Start per child subsidies for programs receiving all three, ensuring that the per child rate is consistent. *Additionally, the Office of Youth and Families in the City of New Orleans Mayor's Office has earmarked $2.4M for retention bonuses for early childhood teachers (roughly $3K per teacher). Agenda for Children will lead the disbursement of these funds to all Orleans Parish early childhood educators employed in Type III programs as well as to Family Child Care Providers with Academic Approval.* *In addition to these funds, we recommend identifying additional short-term funding streams, such as School Readiness Tax Credits, to bolster educator salaries.*		
2. Map the local benefits landscape and prioritize a hierarchy of benefits for local educators.	*Before recommending strategies related to increasing specific benefits, we first recommend further mapping the local benefits landscape and identifying the top five in-demand benefits for early educators. We recommend engaging educators through existing channels, such as Director's Collaborative meetings or the annual teacher survey, to gauge what benefits are desired most.*	***Lead Partners:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children* *Mayor's Office of Youth and Families* ***Key Partners:*** *Agenda for Children*	***Deliverable:*** *List of benefits desired by educators and directors, in order of most desired.* ***Timeline:*** *Map local benefits landscape and identify hierarchy of benefits by*

	Once the hierarchy of benefits is identified, we can then create work plans for increasing the infrastructure for named benefits.	*Early Learning Programs*	*Spring 2023.*

COMPENSATION LONG-TERM STRATEGIES *(July 2023 - Beyond)*

Strategy	Recommendations	Partners	Deliverables + Timeline
3. Fully leverage School Readiness Tax Credits among early childhood educators and directors as a mechanism to increase salaries.	*The School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC) is an existing policy mechanism that can provide between $1,894 to $3,787 in tax credits to early childhood educators and directors, depending on eligibility. Taking advantage of the SRTC equates to roughly a 10%-15% increase in annual salary.* *In order to fully leverage School Readiness Tax Credits among early childhood educators and directors, we recommend increasing awareness of the annual opportunity and helping reduce barriers for educators and directors to take advantage of them, such as professional help with filing taxes.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Agenda for Children* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs* *LDOE* *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children*	***Deliverable:*** *One-pager and presentation at director's convenings.* ***Timeline:*** *Share SRTC awareness document and support prior to Fall 2023.*
4. Identify sustainable infrastructure for offering shared services for most in-demand benefits.	*Once we map the local benefits landscape and identify the top three to five in-demand benefits for early educators, we recommend creating work plans for increasing the infrastructure for named benefits.*	***Lead Partners:*** *NOEEN Workforce Task Force* *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children* *Mayor's Office of Youth and Families*	***Deliverable:*** *Work plans for expanding access to top three to five in-demand benefits.* ***Timeline:***

		Key Partners: *Agenda for Children* *Early Learning Programs*	*Create work plans for expanding access to top three to five in-demand benefits by Fall 2023.*
5. Advocate for local policies that provide sustainable and increased funding to increase educator salaries and benefits.	*In order to support early learning programs in operating their businesses at the true cost of care, we recommend advocating for local policies and identifying sustainable local funding streams that increase the per child subsidy rate or that dedicate funds to increasing educator salaries or benefits.* *Additionally, we recommend supporting the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children's Standardized Compensation Scale by exploring ways to pilot and gradually implement the scale.* *In order to accomplish this level of advocacy, we recommend developing a comprehensive local policy agenda specifically for increasing educator salaries and benefits.*	***Lead Partners:*** *Judy Watts Center for Policy and Advocacy* *Agenda for Children* *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children* ***Key Partners:*** *LDOE* *New Orleans City Council* *Mayor's Office* *Early Learning Programs*	***Deliverable:*** *Local compensation advocacy guide.* ***Timeline:*** *Develop policy agenda by Fall 2023.*
6. Advocate for state and federal policies that provide sustainable and increased funding to increase educator salaries and benefits.	*In order to support early learning programs in operating their businesses at the true cost of care, we recommend advocating for state and federal policies and identifying sustainable state and federal funding streams that increase the per child subsidy rate or that dedicate funds to increasing educator salaries or benefits.* *In order to accomplish this level of advocacy, we*	***Lead Partners:*** *Judy Watts Center for Policy and Advocacy* *Agenda for Children* *Louisiana Policy Institute for Children* ***Key Partners:*** *LDOE*	***Deliverable:*** *State and federal compensation advocacy guide.* ***Timeline:*** *Develop policy agenda by Fall 2023.*

	recommend developing a comprehensive policy agenda specifically for increasing educator salaries and benefits.	*New Orleans City Council* *Mayor's Office* *Early Learning Programs*	
7. Increase awareness and education on the value of benefits to the sector.	*Anecdotal data suggest that many current educators in the sector do not fully understand or see the value of certain benefits, such as retirement accounts. We recommend creating resources or educational programming about benefits to support educators and directors in taking advantage of existing benefits and advocating for those that are of highest value to them.*	***Lead Partners:*** *For Providers by Providers* ***Key Partners:*** *Early Learning Programs* *Urban League* *Agenda for Children*	***Deliverable:*** *Educational resources of programming.* ***Timeline:*** *Launch educational resources or programming by Fall 2023.*

CONCLUSION

In order to prepare the Orleans Parish early childhood workforce to meet the demand for an increase of at least 600 and up to 1,600 new early childhood seats – which could necessitate between 500-800 new educators – the Task Force has outlined short-term strategies to meet the most pressing needs of the sector by or before Summer 2023 as well as long-term strategies to implement additional systemic changes or supports that will benefit the long-term health and sustainability of the sector.

In the short-term, we are focused on:

- Distributing over $3 million of secured funding to current educators to retain them and combat the high rate of attrition;
- Improving the public perception of the early care and education sector and developing strategies specific to various communities of interest to increase retention and recruitment yields;
- Clearly defining the various roles within the early childhood sector and creating a "one-stop-shop" for interested applicants to learn about and apply for early educator positions to reduce barriers for entering the sector; and
- Creating new entry points into the early childhood sector and credentialing opportunities for high school students and those not currently employed in the sector to expand the workforce.

In the long term, we are focused on:

- Better understanding the local benefits landscape so that we can secure the most desired benefits for educators as a way to retain and recruit educators;
- Removing barriers to continuing education and professional development and increasing mentorship opportunities for all roles within the sector to improve the quality and satisfaction of the sector; and
- Advocating for local, state, and federal policies that will provide sustainable and increased funding to support educator salaries and benefits in order to retain dedicated and qualified educators.

As has been noted throughout this document, we must rely on a strong coalition of partners to move this work forward, and we must both smartly leverage existing policy mechanisms and funding streams while advocating for new ones. To maintain accountability and to move forward the work outlined in this document, the Task Force recommends that NOEEN create a new working group, to be known as the Workforce Task Force, to monitor progress on outlined work and to share out at NOEEN Steering Committee meetings at least through the end of Spring 2024.