



Preparing Teachers to Work with Infants and Toddlers:

Evaluation of Los Angeles Education
Partnership's (LAEP's) Workforce Development
Program, Ready2Teach 2023-25



LOS ANGELES
EDUCATION
PARTNERSHIP

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LAEP Evaluation, Accountability, & Impact

Acknowledgements

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EAI Mission

LAEP's Evaluation, Accountability, and Impact (EAI) department's mission is to authentically partner with our colleagues, interest holders, and clients to design and implement culturally responsive and racially equitable evaluations that amplify stories of impact. Aligned with the lived experiences of the people we serve, our highly qualified and diverse team designs human-centered evaluations, shares data in innovative, accessible and actionable ways to support decision-making, and strengthens the evaluation capacity of interest holders.

Positionality Statements

As a bicultural and bilingual Latina evaluator raised in South Los Angeles, I bring a unique and community-informed perspective to my evaluation practice. My faith and my lived experiences have shaped a deep commitment to equity, cultural relevance, and inclusivity. My approach to evaluation is rooted in advocacy and social justice. I intentionally center the voices and experiences of marginalized populations, ensuring that evaluation processes and outcomes are meaningful, accessible, and actionable. This commitment guides my work in supporting programs that aim to strengthen families and build resilient, thriving communities. I am aware of the privilege I hold due to my higher education but at the same time I am grounded by my faith, family and community.

– Donna Escalante

As a cisgender, heterosexual woman of Mexican immigrant parents, I enjoy some privileges and overcome challenges connected to my heritage. On one hand, I struggle to notice and work against White supremacy culture to uplift quieter voices of less represented people. On the other hand, my advanced degree and long career in education evaluation gives me a special status that motivates me to act with transparency and work in service of equity for the communities I inhabit and serve.

– Rosa Valdés



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Addressing the need for teachers specializing in infant and toddler development, Ready2Teach is a program focused on increasing the number of highly qualified educators across Los Angeles County. The program offers a one-year paid apprenticeship and professional development leading to applying for a California Child Development Associate Teacher Permit and transitioning into a permanent teaching position. In addition to supporting apprentices, Ready2Teach builds a network of employer partners – owners of family child care homes or directors of early learning centers – who host and mentor apprentices. These partnerships aim not only to support apprentices’ growth but also to enhance the capacity of early childhood facilities to strengthen and sustain their operations.



METHODS

Integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, this evaluation report presents findings related to core program elements and how they were improved over the first two years of implementation, employer partner and apprentice experiences with the program, the program’s supports across nested systems of influence, and the impacts of federal policy changes in 2025.

KEY FINDINGS

In the area of **program improvements**, we found that between Year 1 and Year 2, Ready2Teach implemented strategic enhancements that increased flexibility, strengthened coaching and mentorship, and refined recruitment practices.

Related to the **employer partner experience**, employer partners reported high satisfaction with the program, particularly valuing the support of business consultants. These consultants played a key role in leadership development and business operations.

With respect to **apprentice progress**, key findings were that apprentices gained valuable hands-on experience and benefited from trusted mentors who helped deepen their understanding of infants and toddler development.

The program was implemented within **nested ecosystems of influence** that fostered strong learning community characterized by multi-generational participation and peer-to-peer support. Strong partnerships with community colleges and organizations were fostered to support the learning of Apprentice Ready2Teach staff created a robust ecosystem that supported apprentices’ academic and career growth.

Unity in a Time of Need

In response to highly disruptive immigration enforcement and other threats from federal policy shifts in our high-needs communities in early 2025, Ready2Teach prioritized creating safe spaces and retraining staff to protect children and families. Community colleges and employer partners stepped up to provide “Know Your Rights” resources and legal education to families. Anticipated federal budget cuts threatened critical programs such as Medi-Cal and SNAP, which many families and apprentices rely on. These disruptions not only destabilized local economies but also exacerbated labor shortages in sectors such as childcare. Despite these challenges, the Ready2Teach network continued to offer emotional, psychological, and legal support, reinforcing its role as a trusted anchor in a time of instability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Emerging from our findings, we offer recommendations related to the program and to the wider early learning system. Program recommendations include the following:

- 1. Ensure maximum direct instruction in class.** Approaches that rely on self-directed learning may not be as practical for busy, inexperienced students.
- 2. Strengthen mentorship and infant and toddler training.** Pairing apprentices with experienced teachers in infant-toddler settings is a useful practice that should be continued. Continue to expand the mentorship components with a clear focus on infant-toddler development.
- 3. Develop a uniform competency framework.** Create a checklist of core skills and competencies for apprentices and align competencies with state permit requirements and employer expectations.
- 4. Streamline program materials.** Develop a comprehensive manual or guide for apprentices and employer partners, including expectations, timelines, evaluation criteria, and support resources
- 5. Continue to enhance recruitment strategies.** Conduct targeted community walks in specific zip codes. Leverage word-of-mouth referrals from past participants. Partner with California Children’s Institute to recruit in-house apprentices.
- 6. Improve placement logistics.** Continue to prioritize geographical proximity in apprentice-employer matching to reduce travel burdens.

More broadly, related to the early learning workforce system, we offer the following recommendations:

- 1 Expand immigration protections.** Advocate for inclusion of family child care homes and independent centers in immigration protection policies. Collaborate with advocacy groups to raise awareness and push for legislative change.
- 2 Support universal competency standards.** Work with state agencies to adopt a universal competency framework for early childhood apprenticeships. Ensure alignment with teacher permit pathways and licensing requirements.
- 3 Seek expansion of funding for programs such Ready2Teach.** Build coalition to support programs that prepare early learning teachers through similar approaches as Ready2Teach. Partner with LACOE and other regional agencies to host recruitment expos.



INTRODUCTION

This report provides insights from the implementation of an infant and toddler care workforce development program, Ready2Teach Program in Los Angeles City. The program began in 2023 and is now in its third year. This evaluation focuses primarily on the second year, with some data from the first year presenting key findings in the following areas of inquiry:

- 1 What were core program improvement strategies?
- 2 What was the *employer partner* experience?
- 3 What was the *apprentice* experience?
- 4 How did the program serve participants within nested systems of influence?
- 5 In 2025, how did shifts in federal policy impact participants and how did the program respond?

A primary goal of this evaluation was to draw insights from program implementation in Years 1 and 2 and apply these lessons to improve Year 3. It prioritized deepening our understanding of the employer partner experience, adding to our learning about the apprentice experience in our first evaluation report (Garcia & Valdés, 2024). Our evaluation also sought to learn about the broader influence of the program beyond how it directly influenced its participants.

THE NEED FOR READY2TEACH

Despite growing demand for qualified early childhood educators, the ECE field faces a workforce pipeline breakdown, with too few new teachers to replace retiring professionals. This shortage is compounded by a lack of infant-toddler experience among new teachers, many of whom enter the field without adequate hands-on training in this crucial developmental stage (Schlieber et al., 2023).

New teachers need a structured approach to their professional development. Despite the numerous benefits of professional development among teachers of infants and toddlers¹, relatively few participate in professional development: Only 21% of center-based teachers who cared for infants and toddlers participated in coaching, consultation, or mentoring (Madill, et al., 2016).

Teachers must overcome numerous challenges of inequity. While teachers typically express a desire to participate in ongoing learning, they face barriers, especially as working adults, many caring for their own families. Teachers from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities face even more barriers. Teachers also face inequitable access to resources that have been shown to remove barriers to completing higher education and training. These resources include cohort models, flexible class schedules (e.g., evening and weekend classes), courses within their communities, academic counseling specific to early educators, and financial support for tuition, books, and other costs. Promising models like TEACH Early Childhood® scholarship programs and alternative models linked to college education include nearly all of these supports as part of their framework.

¹ For example, higher dosages of coaching for infant and toddler teachers have been linked to improved classroom quality (Moreno, Green, & Koehn, 2015). There is also a connection between teachers receiving a state level infant and toddler credential and increased classroom quality (Chen et al., 2017; Shivers, 2011).

RAPs are a promising but less practical approach. Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) have gained national attention as a professional development strategy that offers an alternative career pathway for entry into or advancement in the ECE field. RAPs support educators in the attainment of a nationally recognized credential or degree. The requirements of a RAP are more demanding for the apprentice and the employer. For example, every RAP must include a minimum of 2,000 hours or the equivalent of 12 months of employment, compensation that increases for skill gains or milestone achievements, and a portable nationally recognized credential.

THE READY2TEACH PROGRAM



The Ready2Teach Program was developed to grow and strengthen the early childhood education (ECE) workforce in Los Angeles County. Across the country, systemic challenges threaten this under-funded yet indispensable workforce. Problematic staffing practices, limited training opportunities, and insufficient support systems are some of the persistent barriers (Schlieber, 2022) that the Ready2Teach Program was envisioned to address. In 2022, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded a grant to the Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) to design and implement this important initiative.

Growing the ECE workforce. The primary goal of Ready2Teach is to improve the ECE workforce by increasing the number of highly qualified educators specialized in infant and toddler care across the county. The program offers a one-year paid apprenticeship and professional development leading to applying for a California Child Development Associate Teacher Permit and transitioning into a permanent teaching position. [Learn more about the program here.](#) Ready2Teach supports apprentices through:

- Classroom Preparation
- Teaching Residency
- College Coursework
- Professional Development
- Wrap-Around Support Services

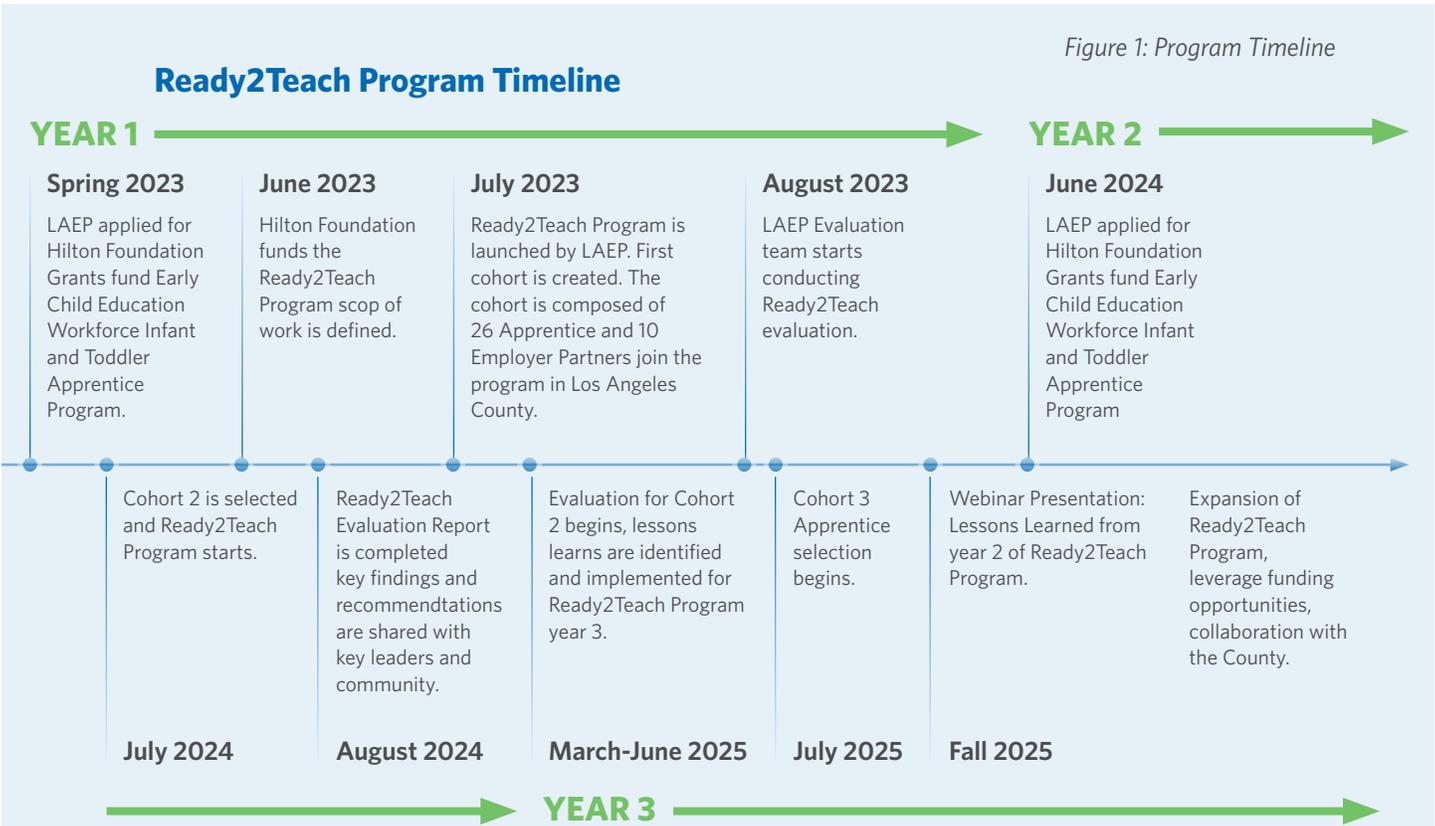
Teachers must overcome numerous challenges of inequity. In addition to supporting apprentices, Ready2Teach builds a network of employer partners – owners of family child care homes and directors of early learning centers – who host and mentor participants. These partnerships aim to enhance the capacity of early childhood facilities to sustain and grow their operations. Employer partners receive:

- Mentor Training
- Intern Support
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Business Coaching
- Stipends

Moving into its third year, Ready2Teach is preparing to work with the largest cohort of apprentices and network of employer partners. In doing so, program designers and implementers continue to evolve the program based on lessons learned in the first two years. The insights summarized here will inform program improvements and expansion efforts in the upcoming third year.

Program Timeline. Between spring 2023 and summer 2025, the program moved from envisioning, planning, and launch phases through implementation of Cohorts 1 and 2 and expansion of Cohort 3. Figure 1 highlights milestones in the life of Ready2Teach.

Figure 1: Program Timeline



EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Our evaluation was guided by the principles of Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE), ensuring diverse representation and honoring cultural differences in values and perceptions (Hood, S. et al., 2015).



DATA COLLECTION

A mixed-methods approach was used, integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection. After collaborating with the Ready2Teach team to develop questions that would be answered by this evaluation, the evaluation team identified appropriate methods by which data would be gathered to answer these questions. Table 1 summarizes our evaluation questions, participants, and methods used. We created surveys, comprised mostly of close-ended items, and administered them online through Alchemer. We developed interview and focus group protocols and gathered this qualitative data from Ready2Teach staff, apprentices, and employer partners.

Table 1. Key Evaluation Questions and Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Methods	Participants			Methods		
	LAEP Team	Apprentice	Employer Partner	Survey	Interview	Focus Group
Area 1: Improvement of R2T						
What program changes took place from Year 1 to Year 2 of R2T?	✓				✓	✓
What core elements of the program supported apprentice success?	✓				✓	✓
What targeted recruitment efforts took place to increase the number of Black participants in Year 3?	✓				✓	
Area 2: Provider Experience						
What was the experience of employer partners?			✓	✓	✓	✓
What were the core elements of the program that supported their knowledge, skill development, and development of their business?			✓	✓		✓
How satisfied were employer partners with the program and with their apprentice?			✓	✓		✓
What remaining needs did employer partners have regarding knowledge, skills, support services, and business development?			✓	✓		✓
Area 3: Nested Systems of Influence						
What impact did the program have on apprentice learning and confidence?		✓		✓		
What impacts did the program have beyond directly serving participants?		✓	✓	✓		✓
Area 4: Impact of Federal Policy						
What was the impact of new federal policies, like immigration enforcement on the program?			✓			✓

Table 2 summarizes the numbers of participants in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Data was gathered in spring 2025, except for pre-program data collected from apprentices in fall 2024 and Cohort 1 follow-up phone interviews conducted in fall 2025.

Table 2. Numbers of Participants in our Data Collection

	Surveys	Virtual Interviews	Phone Interviews	Focus Groups
Cohort 1 Apprentices	13		17	
Cohort 2 Apprentices	36			
Employer Partners	17			19
LAEP Ready2Teach Coaches		1		3

In addition to the data sources listed in Table 2, we accessed dashboards and documents that described the implementation of the program in Year 2.

DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed and systematically coded, leading to the emergence of key themes. These themes formed the basis for the evaluations core findings. To enhance accuracy and cross-reference insights, the AI transcription tool Otter.ai was also utilized. Survey data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel, where frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were conducted to identify patterns and relationships within the data. Data from surveys was also summarized as percentages.

LIMITATIONS

This evaluation utilized a convenience sample, consisting of participants from the Ready2Teach program who were willing and available to participate. Participants were selected based on availability, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect the broader sample of cohort participants.



FINDINGS

This section summarizes key insights from the experiences of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 participants, focusing on the support they valued most and the program's impact on their careers and personal lives.



The Ready2Teach program evolved into a more intentional, structured, and supportive framework tailored to the diverse needs of apprentices. Findings are organized into four key areas:

1



PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Between Year 1 and Year 2, Ready2Teach implemented strategic enhancements that increased flexibility, strengthened coaching and mentorship, and refined recruitment practices.

2



EMPLOYER PARTNER EXPERIENCE

Employer partners reported high satisfaction with the program, particularly valuing the support of business consultants. These consultants played a key role in leadership development and business operations.

3



APPRENTICE PROGRESS

Apprentices gained valuable hands-on experience and benefited from trusted mentors who helped deepen their understanding of infants and toddler development.

4



NESTED ECOSYSTEMS OF INFLUENCE

The program fostered a strong learning community characterized by multi-generational participation and peer-to-peer support. Strong partnerships with community colleges and organizations were fostered to support the learning of Apprentice Ready2Teach staff created a robust ecosystem that supported apprentices' academic and career growth.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Between Year 1 and Year 2, the Ready2Teach team made key improvements to the program that helped it to develop a more intentional, structured yet flexible, and supportive framework tailored closely to the needs of apprentices. Among the positive impacts of these new strategies was that apprentice retention increased due to a more thoughtful vetting process and stronger support systems. Pre-enrollment interviews helped ensure apprentices were ready for the program's fast-paced structure, improving overall program fit. Increasing the coaching team resulted in apprentices receiving more individualized guidance, such as one-on-one check-ins, classroom observations, and personalized feedback sessions, which enhanced their learning experience. Learning was scaffolded more effectively, with simplified and sequenced content tailored to the apprentices' backgrounds and experience levels. For example, early training sessions focused on foundational topics like the importance of play, classroom routines, and what best practices look like in action. Additionally, technology readiness was prioritized, with support provided for basic digital literacy skills, such as navigating email, accessing online coursework, and using virtual meeting platforms, especially important for Spanish-speaking apprentices and those new to college environments. These strategic changes contributed to a more responsive and successful program for Cohort 2.

Increased flexibility helped apprentices manage their multiple responsibilities.

A key strength of the apprenticeship program in Year 2 was its increased flexibility, which allowed it to better meet the diverse needs of apprentices. The program adapted its timeline to introduce foundational strategies earlier in the year, ensuring apprentices had the tools they needed from the start. Training content was adjusted based on feedback and observed challenges, such as shifting focus to basic classroom practices and the importance of play. Flexibility was also evident in how coaches supported apprentices—offering one-on-one sessions, adjusting meeting times to accommodate work schedules, and providing bilingual resources for Spanish-speaking participants. Additionally, the program responded to varying levels of digital literacy by offering hands-on support with email use, online platforms, and navigating college systems. These adjustments made the program more accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the real-world circumstances of its participants. In addition, flexibility from employer partners was essential in ensuring that apprentices could balance their academic, personal, and professional responsibilities. Many partners accommodated varying schedules, allowing apprentices to attend evening classes while gaining hands-on experience during the day. This flexibility not only helped apprentices succeed in the program but also built a strong foundation for their future careers in early childhood education. The survey administered to Cohort 1 revealed that 70% of respondents (9 out of 13 participants) were either currently employed in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field or actively pursuing a teaching permit. This indicates a strong alignment between the program’s objectives and the professional aspirations of its participants.

Giving them the strategies on how to work with children was something important that we needed to do at the beginning instead of later in the program because they really weren't understanding. Some of them, and most of them, it was their first time even working at a center.

- LAEP Ready2Teach Coach

Increased coaching and mentorship individualized the apprentice experience.

Another improvement was increasing coaching support for apprentices. The coaching team expanded from one to two coaches, allowing for more individualized guidance. This additional support helped apprentices navigate the processes of completing necessary college coursework and obtaining their teaching permits. Coaches were also able to help apprentices deepen their understanding of infant and toddler development through consistent modeling, hands-on experiences, and timely feedback to build knowledge and practical skills of the apprentices.

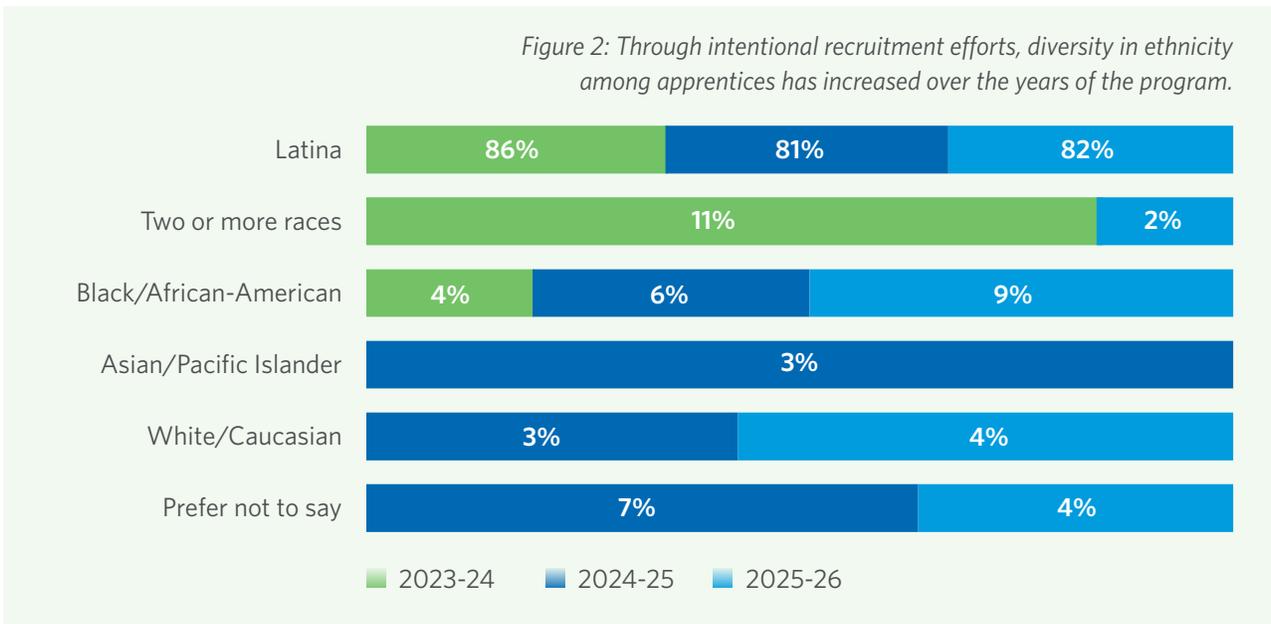
It's been a lot of word of mouth. So, the beauty of this program is we have different age groups, from grandparents to young people that just, you know, finished high school. As long as you love working with children, you will have a permit to work in this country. And if you have no child development units, you qualify.

- Ready2Teach Coach

Intensified recruitment strategies contributed to increasing the size and diversity of Cohort 2.

Recruitment for the apprenticeship program evolved to become more intentional and community driven. In Year 2, word-of-mouth emerged as a powerful tool, with current and former apprentices recommending family members, friends, and even employer partners. Cohort 1 included mothers and grandmothers, while Cohort 2 saw their children join the program, demonstrating strong generational engagement. The program also expanded its outreach by leveraging internal resources such as LAEP’s Early Head Start (EHS) department and promotion of the program through Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Flyers were distributed across LAEP departments and shared widely to reach potential candidates. Additionally, recruitment efforts focused on expanding zip code coverage to better match apprentices with employer partners in their local areas. A more rigorous participant vetting process was introduced, including interviews to ensure both apprentices and employer partners were a good fit for the program. These strategies contributed to a more diverse, committed, and well-supported apprentice cohort. Figure 2 shows how ethnicity among apprentices has increased over the years.

Figure 2: Through intentional recruitment efforts, diversity in ethnicity among apprentices has increased over the years of the program.



In addition to the program improvements described above, we also observed the improvements listed in Table 3. The source of this information were the focus groups with LAEP staff and document review.

Table 3. Program Improvements Between Years 1 and 2

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2
Training	Apprentices received general training.	Training was differentiated for apprentice needs.
Toolbox	Toolbox was under construction during program.	Apprentices benefitted from a ready toolbox.
Timeline	All apprentices followed the same learning timeline.	Learning timeline was adapted for apprentices who needed foundational skills like using email.
Coaching	One coach for all apprentices.	Two coaches for more customized support.
Geographic Match	Apprentices were assigned to early learning sites regardless of distance.	Apprentice was co-located in same geographic area as employer partner.
Support for Teaching Permit Application	Support was provided for apprentices to begin the application process.	Support continued through apprentices attaining their permits.
Core Competencies	The need was identified for a common set of competencies expected of apprentices.	Employer partners worked with a Competency Review tool.
Partnerships	Partnered with East Los Angeles College.	Partnerships grew to include organizations like Pomona Valley American Job Centers and Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo).

EMPLOYER PARTNER EXPERIENCE

Employer partners benefited greatly from the support of their business consultants. They shared with us that their business consultants (LAEP coaches who specialized in ECE business practices) were a vital source of their leadership development and that they especially appreciated their support to organize essential resources, including creating director binders, marketing strategies, and networking with other leaders. These strengthened practices led to more cohesive support systems and improved outcomes for employer partners but also for apprentices, teachers, and families. Employer partners expressed appreciation for practical tools offered by their consultants such as flyers, outreach materials, and business development resources. Continuous self-reflection emerged as a valuable strategy for employer partners to enhance their leadership skills and adapt to challenges. The Ready2Teach program reinforced the significance of maintaining a strong network of employer providers to promote sustainable growth and shared learning across the sector. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of specific topics in which business consultants provided training to employer partners. The data highlights the prominence of family support and involvement, staff development policies and opportunities, and business strategies, underscoring their critical roles in fostering strong partnerships. Other areas such as mentoring practices, and teacher recruitment and retention also play significant roles.

Figure 3: Employer partners worked with their Business Consultants mostly on **family support, staff development, and business strategies.**



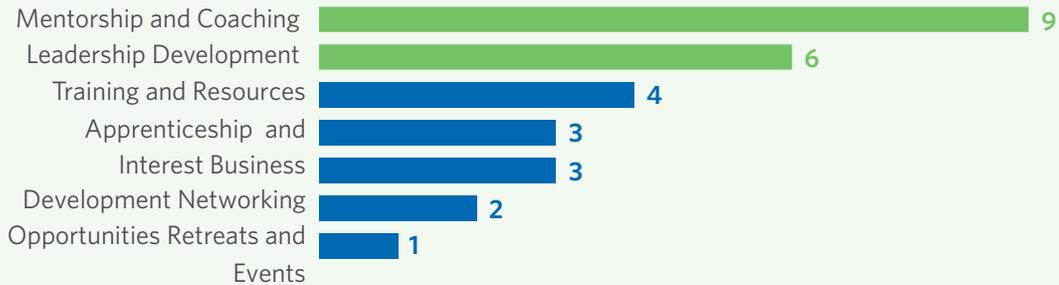
Ready2Teach has helped me develop my business and leadership in several meaningful ways. Through its structured support and professional development resources, I've gained valuable insights into effective classroom management, curriculum planning, and the business side of running a successful child care program. Ready2Teach also provided opportunities to network with other educators, exchange ideas, and learn from experienced mentors, which strengthened my leadership skills. By applying what I learned, I've become more confident in decision-making, more strategic in business planning, and more effective in guiding and supporting others in the field."

- Employer Partner, Center Owner

Employer partners shared with us, through their survey responses, that Ready2Teach helped them develop their businesses and leadership by providing access to trainings, resources, and strategies for leadership and operational improvement. Employer partners highlighted benefits such as guidance on business practices, opportunities to train new apprentices, and personalized coaching to strengthen leadership.

Additional support they received included networking opportunities, professional development retreats, and assistance with marketing efforts like creating business cards and websites. Figure 4 summarizes these findings. Overall, these resources helped employer partners build their confidence, improve decision-making, and grow both their business and leadership capabilities.

Figure 4: Employer partners shared through surveys that they appreciated **mentoring, coaching, and leadership development** activities most. (N=17)



In general, employer partners were highly satisfied with important aspects of their Ready2Teach experience.

Their survey results indicated that the great majority of employer partners were satisfied or very satisfied with the content shared by their business consultant, the availability of their consultant, and the support they received from the consultant. Figure 5 shows that most employer partners were satisfied with all areas of their Ready2Teach support. These findings highlight the program’s strong effectiveness in enhancing professional development and business management capabilities.

Figure 5: Most employer partners were **satisfied or very satisfied** with key areas of their Ready2Teach experience. (N=17)



Growth Retreat

In early June 2025, employer partners participated in a first-of-its-kind, 2-day Leadership and Wellness Retreat at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles. The weekend event began with a celebratory dinner and opportunities for employer partners to connect. The intended areas of learning were ...

- Leadership and Professional Growth
- Marketing and Business Growth
- Communication and Team Building
- Inspiration and Motivation
- Planning and Organization

With the theme of growing and nurturing a garden, sessions included a sound bath session, large group session titled, "Planting the Seed: Nourishing Ourselves to Lead with Intention," and breakout sessions titled, "Rooted in Rising: A Journey Through Art," "Leadership in Bloom: Nurturing Psychological Safety," "Cultivating Equity: A Journey of Growth in Early Learning Spaces," "Care as an act of Resistance," and "Replanting with Purpose: Reflecting to Grow Stronger." Leaders received books, resources, and a monetary stipend.



PROGRESS OF APPRENTICES

Cohort 1 alumni gained valuable experience from trusted mentors. Implemented in 2022-23, the inaugural cohort of Ready2Teach included 26 apprentices and 10 Employer Partners across Los Angeles County. Some apprentices were parents seeking to build meaningful careers in early childhood education while supporting their families and communities. Apprentices in Cohort 1 supported one another by caring for each other's children after work hours, enabling their peers to attend school and continue their education. "They take care of each other's children, they have created a network to share resources," commented an LAEP team member.

One year after they completed the program, we surveyed these former apprentices about the impact of their experience, including the most meaningful aspects of their new careers. Thirteen participants responded. Most of the participants from the cohort spoke English (n=9), and some spoke Spanish, bilingual (n=4). Cohort 1 participants shared that among the most useful aspects of the program for them had been 1) hands-on experience, 2) support from their coaches and navigator, and 3) college courses offered. Table 4 lists the program components they found most useful.

Table 4. Most Useful Program Components of Ready2Teach for Cohort 1 (N=13)

Program Component	Count	Percentage
Hands-on experience with children and families	11	24%
Coaching	10	22%
Guidance from Ready2Teach navigator	9	20%
College courses	9	20%
Mentorship from my site director	6	13%

Ready2Teach influenced Cohort 1 alumni in important areas of their lives. Apprentices shared meaningful insights about how Ready2Teach influenced their personal growth, career development, relationships, and future aspirations. Their responses revealed a strong sense of gratitude, community, and motivation to continue advancing in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field. Table 5 below summarizes insights shared by apprentices in their one-year follow-up surveys.

Table 5. Key Findings from Cohort 1 About the Impact of Ready2Teach (N=13)

Findings	Quotes
Personal Growth & Mindset (n=3): Participants gained confidence, discovered strengths, and developed a positive outlook.	<i>"It made me see the capabilities and skills I have in this area." "It allowed me to find a career that I find passion in."</i>
Career Development (n=3): Ready2Teach helped participants find direction in ECE and pursue professional goals.	<i>"We are in the process of obtaining our certificate..." "Being in ECE allows me to learn, teach..."</i>
Peer Support & Connection (n=2): Ongoing relationships with peers provide emotional and professional support.	<i>"We are always looking for better opportunities." "Just checking how mentally we are doing, how our children are doing."</i>
Family Impact (n=2): The program's influence extended to participants' families, inspiring others.	<i>"To my sisters and nieces, currently my daughter... she is very excited." "My family can say I am a teacher's helper..."</i>
Gratitude for Mentors (n=1): Specific individuals were acknowledged for their support.	<i>"I am very grateful for the help, especially from LAEP Ready2Teach Coaches..."</i>

Alumni Employment Status. Through phone interviews conducted in fall 2025, we reached out to 26 Cohort 1 alumni and learned that 12 of them (46% of the cohort) had secured employment in the ECE field, 5 (19% of the cohort) were employed outside of the field, and 9 did not respond to our requests. Table 6 summarizes these findings.

Table 6. Cohort 1 Alumni Employment Status (N=17)

Working in ECE	Working Outside of ECE	Average Time to Find Employment
12 (46% of Cohort 1)	5 (19% of Cohort 1)	3 months

The Ready2Teach program has had a lasting impact on Cohort 1 apprentices' lives, not only professionally but personally and within their communities. The program's influence extended beyond individuals, inspiring family members and fostering a supportive peer network. Continued support, especially around certification and training, remains a key need.

Wage Inequity in ECE

Wages within the early learning workforce have long been a serious concern, with a large gap in median hourly wages between child care workers (\$13.67) and their counterparts in elementary and middle schools (\$41.03). The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley published the following data in their California Profile.

- In 2022, the median wage for the ECE workforce was \$15.66, while the living wage for a single adult was \$19.97.
- 47% of early educator households participate in one or more public safety net programs.
- 11.8% of the ECE workforce live in poverty.

Cohort 2 apprentices were mostly English-Speaking, Latina women, and had earned high school degrees. In the second year of Ready2Teach, the largest groups of participants identified as female, between the ages of 18 and 40. More than half had completed high school and typically earned less than \$10,000 a year. Figures 6 to 11 illustrate these characteristics.

Figure 6: Most Cohort 2 apprentices identified as Latina. (N=36)

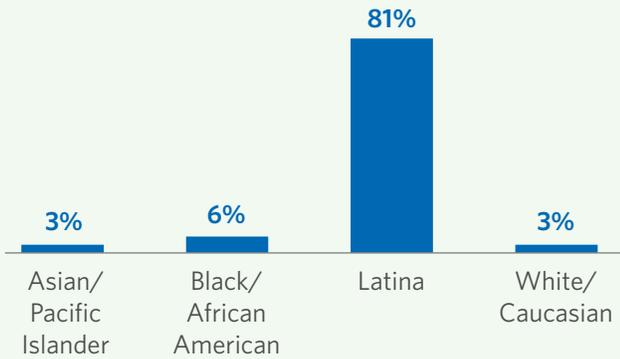


Figure 7: Most apprentices in Cohort 2 were women. (N=36)

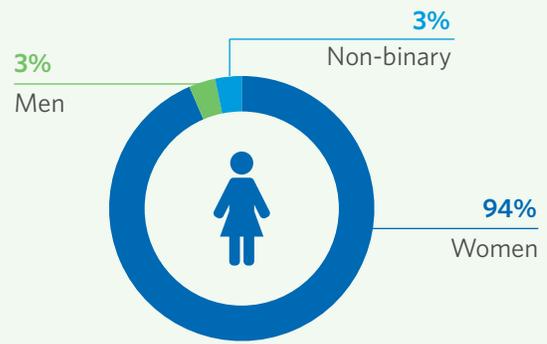


Figure 8: Most apprentices in Cohort 2 spoke English primarily. (N=36)

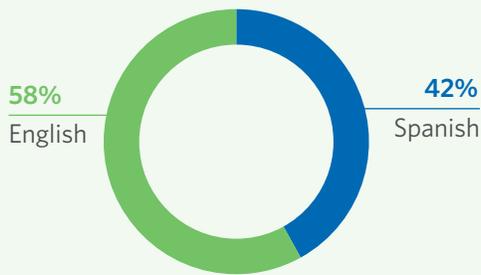


Figure 9: The largest age groups of apprentices were 31 to 40 and 18 to 25 years old. (N=36)

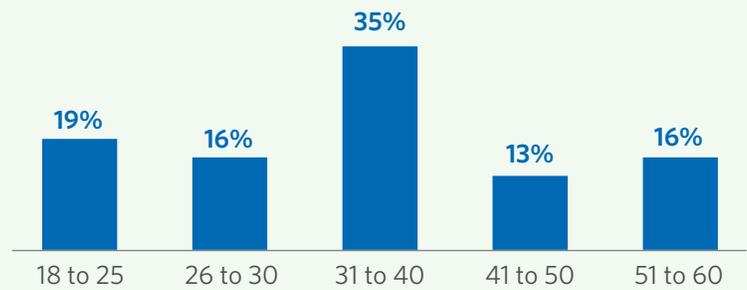


Figure 10: Most apprentices had completed high school as their highest education level. (N=36)

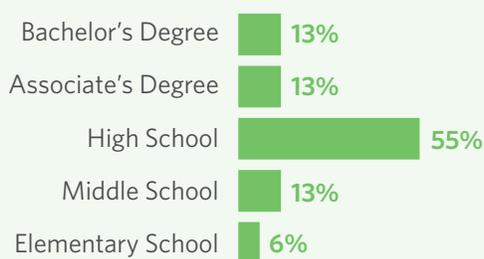
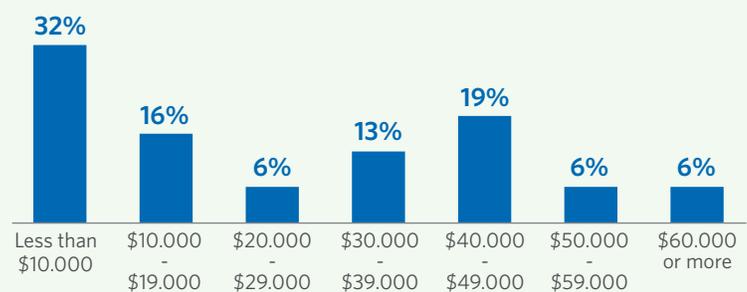


Figure 11: Most typically, apprentices earned less than \$10,000 annually at the start of the program. (N=36)



Apprentices in Cohort 2 of the Ready2Teach program consistently described their experience as supportive, empowering, and deeply connected to their personal and professional growth. From the outset, the program embraced a strength-based approach, aiming to reduce barriers and meet apprentices where they were. At the beginning of each cohort, apprentices were welcomed into a community of care, with immediate access to essential certifications like CPR and First Aid. The program’s flexibility allowed staff to respond to individual needs, demonstrating a commitment to removing obstacles and fostering success. Apprentices benefited from a layered support system that included coaches, employer partners, Ready2Teach LAEP coaches, and program leadership, all working collaboratively to provide personalized guidance.

Cohort 2 apprentices improved their knowledge of infant and toddler care concepts. Participants were surveyed at the beginning and at the end of the program about their familiarity with key concepts in infant and toddler development and care. For example, one item was, “How familiar are you with the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP)?” Respondents selected “Not at All Familiar,” “Somewhat Familiar,” or “Very Familiar.” Apprentices were also asked to complete a test of their knowledge of key concepts like Bronfenbrenner’s Theory of child development. The test included multiple choice items and scenario-based questions. To measure change in their familiarity with key concepts, we administered the same set of questions at the end of the program and compared the percentage of apprentices who responded on the pre-program versus the post-program survey that they were *somewhat* or *very familiar* with the concepts. Similarly, to measure growth in their knowledge of key concepts, we compared the percentage of apprentices who gave correct responses on the pre-program versus the post-program, with the same questions given on both administrations. (See Appendix for the pre-post tool that we used on Alchemer.)

Figures 12 and 13 show that the proportions of Cohort 2 apprentices who were familiar with or able to accurately answer knowledge questions about infant and toddler development and care rose from 37% to 88% and from 36% to 56% respectively. This represents an increase from Cohort 1 apprentices, among whom only 62% reported familiarity with the same concepts. In terms of their ability to answer knowledge items correctly, however, 67% of Cohort 1 participants were able to do so, compared to 56% of Cohort 2, representing a decrease between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2. Tables 7 and 8 detail the items and concepts and proportions of the two cohorts who answered positively.

Figure 12. From start to end of the program, **55% more** Cohort 2 apprentices were **familiar with key concepts** in infant and toddler care.

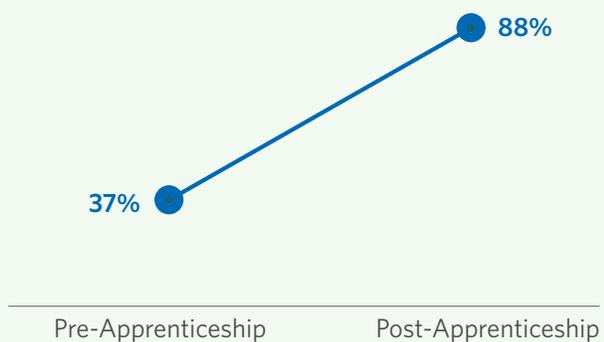
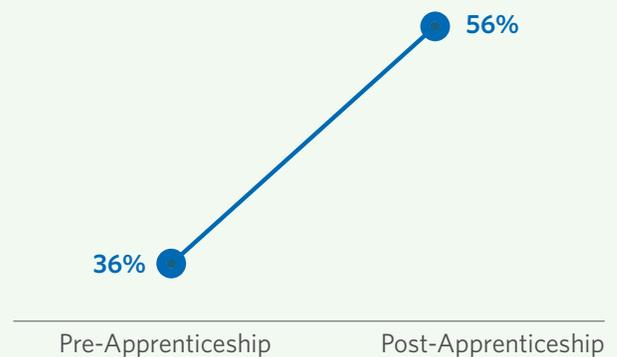


Figure 13. **20% more** Cohort 2 apprentices were able to answer **knowledge** questions correctly by the end of the program compared to the start.



⁷ Our 21CSLA evaluators were hired after the first conference and began to gather data systematically during the second conference.

The following tables list the concepts related to infant and toddler development and care that were included in the pre-post measures, along with the percentages of participants across Cohorts 1 and 2 who were reported that they were familiar with the concepts (Table 7) or answered the questions correctly (Table 8) at the end of the program. We found a consistent pattern with larger percentages of Cohort 2 participants than Cohort 1 participants indicating they were familiar with the concepts but fewer Cohort 2 participants demonstrating knowledge of the concepts. These findings indicate that **Cohort 2 may have had greater confidence in their knowledge but may not have benefited as much as Cohort 1 from their instruction.**

In fact, Cohort 2 students were exposed to half of the instructional time as their Cohort 1 counterparts, spending 1.5 hours with direct instruction in class, leaving the rest of the time for self-paced learning. Additionally, we observed that the instructor took a significant amount of time during class on discussion of non-instructional topics. Cohort 2 students may have needed the structure of the additional time spent in class on direct instruction.

Table 7. % of Apprentices Who Were Familiar with Key Infant & Toddler Concepts at the End of the Program

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Universal Design for Learning	67%	86%
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	73%	89%
Environment Rating Scale (ERS)	47%	78%
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)	40%	86%
Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)	73%	94%
Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)	67%	86%
Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)	87%	94%
Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP)	44%	94%
Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC)	67%	94%
Parent Assessment of Protective Factors (PAPF)	53%	76%

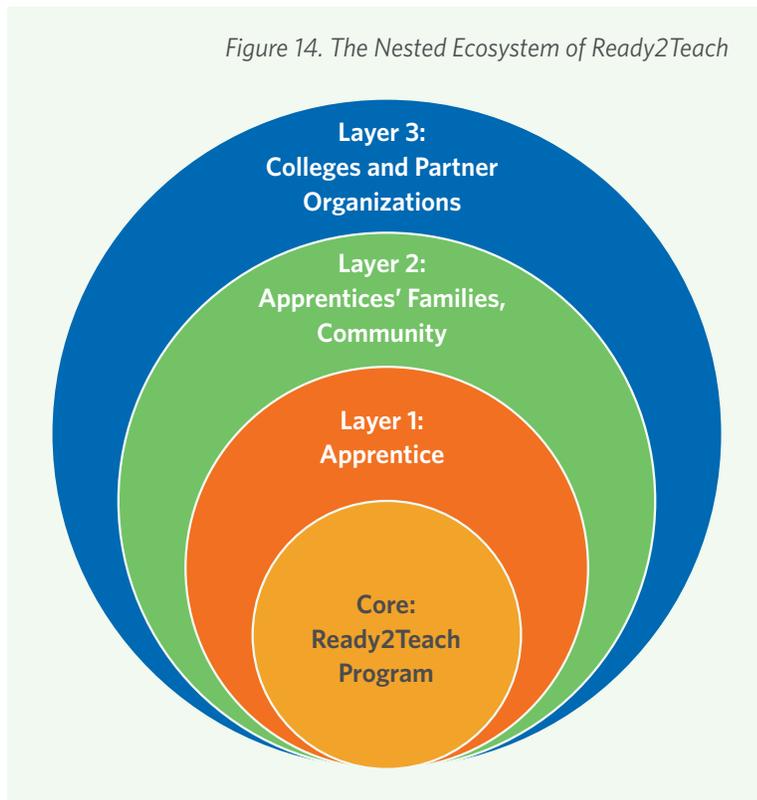
Table 8. % of Apprentices Who Answered Knowledge Items Correctly at the End of the Program

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Bronfenbrenner's theory	60%	56%
Appropriate materials for infants	67%	75%
Classroom ratios	100%	72%
Gross motor activity	80%	42%
Music in routine	47%	64%
PAPF	47%	31%

NESTED ECOSYSTEM OF INFLUENCE

Focus group discussions with apprentices, employer partners, teachers, and the Ready2Teach team revealed that **the program's influence extended well beyond its direct participants**. Ready2Teach positively impacted participants' families, local communities, and the broader educational ecosystem, including colleges and partner organizations. The program fostered leadership, collaboration, and professional growth that rippled across multiple layers of the early childhood education system. Figure 14 represents the Ready2Teach ecosystem: At the core are apprentices, employer partners, teachers, and the Ready2Teach team. Surrounding them are families, local communities, colleges, and partner organizations. The outermost layer reflects the broader early educational and organizational ecosystems. The partnership amongst the apprentice and the Colleges, and other organizations have supported the leadership professional growth of the apprentice.

Figure 14. The Nested Ecosystem of Ready2Teach



Layer 1: The program's influence extended beyond the apprentices to their circles, impacting multiple generations and "secondary program participants". Cohort

1 included apprentices who were parents committed to advancing their careers in early childhood education while sharing about their experience with their adult children or raising young children of their own. Throughout their year-long journey, apprentices relied on their networks of support – relatives, friends, neighbors, and even their adult children. These members of their communities were so encouraged by the success of their apprentices that they joined as apprentices in Cohort 2. In some cases, Cohort 2 apprentices were the children of Cohort 1 participants, demonstrating a powerful generational ripple effect. Another way we observed this multigenerational impact was in the use of the program to enhance participants' own parenting. As a Ready2Teach coach commented,

"[Apprentices] have created a support system to take care of their children, and they're so together, and that support system is so strong." The program's influence is now reaching two generations and "secondary program participants" in the sense that knowledge, resources, and other benefits extended beyond the apprentice, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for long-term change in early education.

Oh, this information I apply with my own kids, or I share these resources with my neighbor, or I share it with my cousin or with my brother or sister—any information of that sort that you've heard."

– Cohort 1 Apprentice

Layer 2: Apprentices were surrounded by a strong learning community who exchanged resources and support.

Apprentices, employer partners, and the Ready2Teach team built a vibrant and supportive learning community rooted in shared knowledge, lived experience, and mutual encouragement. In Year 2, the strength of that community was reflected in the cross-collaboration, sharing of resources and academic success of apprentices. Apprentices, employer partners, and teachers, regularly exchanged resources—professionally and personally—extending their impact beyond the program to families and neighborhoods. As the Ready2Teach coach shared, “Learning communities are really more for that... they get to know each other and they talk about what went well for them for the week, or that week, like, so they talk about successes. And so, people get to share, like personal stories during class.” To continue nurturing these relationships beyond the classroom and workplace, participants created an additional meet-up space—demonstrating their commitment to ongoing support, resource-sharing, and collective advancement. The learning community became a space for reflection, storytelling, and celebration of growth. Apprentices shared weekly successes and personal experiences, deepening their connections and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration.

[In] Cohort 2, we got a lot of friends and family members. So, these are relationships they've had before. We know that this has been a way for them to assist one another within the program. Like [Apprentice] has sisters that are part of her coaching team, we have this whole group of cousins so that has definitely helped them in supporting one another.”

- LAEP Ready2Teach Coach

Layer 3: Strong community college and early learning organization partnerships buttressed the program.

A recent report by the National Early Care and Education Workforce Center concludes that, “Workplace conditions are influenced by local policies, program-level decisions, and broader community resources. Because these elements are interdependent, no single entity has the authority or capacity to address them alone. Collaboration is a necessity to drive systems change,” (Scheffler, K. et al., 2025). The Ready2Teach team placed a strong emphasis on building meaningful collaborative partnerships with community colleges to ensure apprentices received high-quality academic instruction and support. These collaborations were crucial, as more colleges are now forming dedicated cohorts for aspiring early childhood educators and assisting them in obtaining necessary work permits (Calo, K. et al., 2022). Ready2Teach focused on having a class specifically talking about infants and toddlers. They obtained hands-on experience, and they also obtained a class that specifically talked about infants and toddlers. The college-level coursework contributed to meeting the requirements for their teaching permit. “So that has definitely been a great adaptation that we did for year two is changing that class and then they can go back later and do Child Development too,” a Ready2Teach coach shared. In Years 1 and 2, the program partnered solely with East Los Angeles College. In Year 3, the network will expand to include a partnership with Harbor City College. These expanded partnerships reflect Ready2Teach’s commitment to strengthening educational pathways for apprentice.



LAEP leads an Early Childhood Workforce Collaborative that brings together leaders of early learning apprenticeship programs from across Southern California to exchange ideas and build coalition. In 2024-25, members of the group discussed the challenges and bright spots of implementing their programs, exchanged resources like practicum placement sites, implementation manuals, and observation tools, and learned together about funding opportunities. This group holds great potential for bringing attention to the needs of the ECE workforce beyond Los Angeles County, benefitting Ready2Teach and other programs like it.

IMPACT OF FEDERAL POLICIES ON FAMILIES AND THE ECE WORKFORCE AND READY2TEACH'S RESPONSE



In 2025, Los Angeles County experienced a surge in immigration enforcement under the new presidential administration, with arrests resulting in widespread fear, economic disruption, and social instability across immigrant communities. Immigration raids have deeply harmed communities, instilling fear and uncertainty. Families reported being afraid to leave their homes, with some individuals taken away in unmarked vehicles without due process. Schools, hospitals, and churches—once considered safe spaces—are now perceived as vulnerable, leading to reduced public engagement and attendance (USC Dornsife, Equity Research Institute, 2025).

According to the USC Equity Research Institute, over a third of Los Angeles County's residents are immigrants (3.5 million), over a quarter (27%) are undocumented immigrants (948, 000). Among immigrant in Los Angeles County, Latinos (40%) are more likely to be undocumented more than other racial/ethnic groups. Among children in Los Angeles County ages 5 and under with parents living in their household, a fifth (123, 000) have at least one undocumented parent. Youth living with undocumented family members will be heavily impacted by ICE raids as more than half (55%) of U.S. Citizens with undocumented family members are 17 years old and younger (USC Equity Research Institute, 2025).

The research from USC aligns with data from the focus groups conducted with Ready2Teach participants. During these focus groups, employer partners and Ready2Teach staff shared that raids and detentions, including a parent being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), disrupted socialization activities, with many families avoiding gatherings and daycare attendance decline. These disruptions not only destabilize local economies but also exacerbate labor shortages in sectors such as childcare. A recent study by New America found that ICE arrests reduced the number of child care workforce across the country by about 39,000 child care workers and 77,000 working mothers since January 2025 (Herbst & Tekin, 2025).

In response, the program prioritized creating safe spaces and retraining staff to protect children and families. Community colleges and employer partners have stepped up to provide "Know Your Rights" resources and legal education to families. Anticipated federal budget cuts threaten critical programs such as Medi-Cal and SNAP, which many families and apprentices rely on. Despite these challenges, the Ready2Teach network continued to offer emotional, psychological, and legal support, reinforcing its role as a trusted anchor in a time of instability.

Well, the parents stop coming to the socializations, which were taking place in the parks, out of fear of ice possibly being there and taking them away."

- Ready2Teach LAEP Coach

We've been keeping close contact with the families, assisting them in any way that we can, letting them know of their rights."

- Ready2Teach LAEP Coach



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Ready2Teach program fostered a deeply connected and supportive environment where apprentices grew not only as educators but as individuals. Specifically, our evaluation captured the following findings:

1. Across their year-long program, apprentices became more engaged, confident, and trusting.
2. Strong relationships formed within their cohort, with their employer partners, and with their Ready2Teach team contributed greatly to their customized experiences.
3. Employer partners played a vital role, offering emotional and psychological support, which strengthened their overall support system.
4. Relationships among apprentices evolved into bonds stronger than traditional work connections, with apprentices offering one another professional and personal support. For example, they motivated one another to apply for their teaching permits - a critical step in the program.
5. Employer partners expressed high satisfaction with the program, especially with the support from their business consultants.
6. Business consultants contributed to early learning leaders' leadership development and operational improvements, which in turn strengthened apprentices' experience.
7. The program fostered a robust learning community with multi-generational participation and peer support. Apprentices often inspired family members to join future cohorts, creating a ripple effect of educational and professional growth.
8. Partnerships with community colleges and organizations reinforced a supportive ecosystem for apprentices' academic and career success.

These lessons learned from the first two years of Ready2Teach will inform and strengthen the design and implementation of Cohort 3 programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The early childhood education sector is undergoing a transformation, driven by demographic shifts, evolving workforce needs, and systemic gaps in Apprentice preparation. As the Ready2Teach program prepares to launch its third cohort, it is critical to acknowledge and address the persistent challenges that threaten the stability and growth of the educator pipeline. Additionally, geographic barriers—particularly mismatches between apprentices and employer partners—create logistical challenges that can hinder participation and retention. The absence of standardized expectations and competencies across program sites in LA County further complicates efforts to ensure consistent quality and support for apprentices. (Source: LAC Early Learning Collaborative, 2025). Finally, immigration vulnerabilities affecting family child care homes and independent centers pose a serious threat to the stability of the workforce, especially in communities where these providers play a vital role. Addressing these challenges is essential to building a resilient, inclusive, and well-supported early childhood education workforce. The program and policy recommendations listed in Table 9 are intended to address these needs and strengthen the Ready2Teach initiative.

Table 9. Recommendations to Strengthen Ready2Teach

Program Recommendations	1	Ensure maximum direct instruction in class. Approaches that rely on self-directed learning may not be as practical for busy, inexperienced students.
	2	Strengthen mentorship and infant and toddler training. Pairing apprentices with experienced teachers in infant-toddler settings is a useful practice that should be continued. Continue to expand the mentorship components with a clear focus on infant-toddler development.
	3	Develop a uniform competency framework. Create a checklist of core skills and competencies for apprentices, and align competencies with state permit requirements and employer expectations.
	4	Streamline program materials. Develop a comprehensive manual or guide for apprentices and employer partners, including expectations, timelines, evaluation criteria, and support resources
	5	Continue to enhance recruitment strategies. Conduct targeted community walks in specific zip codes. Leverage word-of-mouth referrals from past participants. Partner with California Children’s Institute to recruit in-house apprentices.
	6	Improve placement logistics. Continue to prioritize geographical proximity in apprentice-employer matching to reduce travel burdens.
Policy Recommendations	1	Expand immigration protections. Advocate for inclusion of family child care homes and independent centers in immigration protection policies. Collaborate with advocacy groups to raise awareness and push for legislative change.
	2	Support universal competency standards. Work with state agencies to adopt a universal competency framework for early childhood apprenticeships. Ensure alignment with teacher permit pathways and licensing requirements.
	3	Seek expansion of funding for programs such as Ready2Teach. Build coalition to support programs that prepare early learning teachers through similar approaches as Ready2Teach. Partner with LACOE and other regional agencies to host recruitment expos.

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APPENDIX

2025 R2T PRE- AND POST-PROGRAM TEACHER APPRENTICE SURVEY

First and Last Name* _____

Email address* _____

How familiar are you with the following tools, programs, or terms?*

	Not at all familiar	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar
Universal Design for Learning			
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)			
Environment Rating Scale (ERS)			
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)			
Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)			
Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)			
Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)			
Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP)			
Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC)			
Parent Assessment of Protective Factors (PAPF)			

Bronfenbrenner's theory of an ecological context of child development helps early childhood educators focus on the...*

- Child and family contexts
- Child and family within the educational context
- Educational context within society
- Child's biological, immediate socioeconomic, and social cultural context
- I don't know

In preparing a curriculum for infants under 10 months, the teacher should provide ...*

- Riding toys for outside play
- Musical swings for movement
- Multi-child buggies for walks
- Soft mats and blocks for rolling, climbing, and tumbling
- I don't know

An early childhood center has added an additional toddler component for 8 children. Which of the following adjustments must the center make to accommodate this change?*

- Hiring staff to ensure a ratio of one adult to four children in the toddler group
- Adding more large-group activities
- Removing activity centers from the classroom
- Decreasing the per-child fee because the toddler teaching staff does not require as much training and compensation
- I don't know

An infant room in a child-care center has five infants currently ranging in age from 8 to 10 weeks old. Which of the following activities would best promote gross-motor development for all of the children in this room?*

- Engaging each infant in tummy time and gentle stretches each day
- Including interesting visual objects at each infant's eye level throughout the classroom (e.g., colorful pictures, mobiles)
- Interacting with each infant often in various positions throughout the day (e.g., in high chair, on floor mat)
- Giving each infant toys that make noise and move
- I don't know

A group of early childhood teachers plan to integrate music into the daily routines of the 6- to 12-month-olds in their day-care program. An activity that would be most appropriate for this purpose would include playing music...*

- with fast and slow tempos that encourages the children to move their bodies in time to the beat.
- that promotes children's growing body awareness (e.g., "The Hokey Pokey", "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes").
- during transitions to encourage children's self-regulation (e.g., lullabies at naptime, goodbye song when leaving).
- and using puppets and props to tell a story to the children.
- I don't know

Which of the following Strengthening Families Protective Factors would you use to help a family find mental health counseling?*

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children
- I don't know