

# EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE

Professional Educators. Professional Compensation. Prepared Children.

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## **Early Educator Investment Collaborative Awards \$10.4 Million in Grants for Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs Across the U.S.**

*Six partnerships between institutions of higher education and states or tribal nations will bolster early educator preparation programs, break down systemic barriers to higher education for people of color, and increase financial assistance and compensation for students studying to be early educators.*

**WASHINGTON, DC, June 3, 2021** – Today the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) [announced \\$10.4 million in awards](#) to support partnerships of institutions of higher education (IHEs) and states or tribal nations in transforming their early educator preparation programs.

Through these grants, The Collaborative aims to elevate the early care and education (ECE) workforce, break down systemic barriers in higher education for early educator students of color, and promote professional compensation for a workforce frequently paid unjust wages.

The Collaborative includes eight major U.S. funders who have come together to help early educators achieve their potential and best prepare children for success in school and life.

“Innovative and collaborative partnerships between colleges, universities, and state and tribal nation partners are critical to ensure that the teacher preparation pathways designed at these institutions of higher education are effectively linked to state and tribal nation requirements for teacher preparation and compensation,” said Dr. Ola J. Friday, Director of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative. “Further, these institutions of higher education can help inform policymakers’ thinking about culturally responsive, competency-based, and community-designed equitable policies for the early care and education workforce.”

People of color, primarily women, make up nearly half of the ECE workforce and yet are not provided equal access to higher education, ongoing professional development, or professional compensation, especially in comparison to their peers in K-12 and despite the inherent complexity of their profession. They face a

patchwork of federal, state, and local programs that vary in purpose, funding, and quality. These structural insufficiencies affect the workforce overall and affect early childhood educators of color disproportionately. And this has a direct impact on the learning outcomes of our nation's children.

These grants support partnerships to catalyze transformative change in educator preparation and compensation. Grantees will strengthen programs that prepare ECE teachers through a competency-based bachelor's degree. They also link to state or tribal nation efforts to increase funding for ECE students and compensation for teachers post-graduation.

"We must support the professionalization of our ECE workforce," said Dr. Rebecca Gomez, Program Officer at the Heising-Simons Foundation and co-chair of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative. "We need to attract, retain, and financially support students who bring racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity to a field that educates and cares for our equally diverse young people."

The Collaborative prioritized institutions of higher education that are minority-serving institutions (MSIs), those that partner with two-year community colleges, and applicants that offered detailed and viable plans. The new grantees are as follows:

- **California State University, Sacramento:** To engage a coalition of CSU campuses, community colleges, state agencies, and provider partners to revise the current ECE lead teacher curriculum with an emphasis on supporting Dual Language Learners, develop an ECE program of study peer review process, develop and pilot an observation-based competency-assessment tool, and address workforce diversity, compensation, and related issues.
- **College of Menominee Nation:** To offer a continuum of educational pathways, create a culturally responsive induction program, expand the array of course delivery options, and incorporate supports such as tutoring, counseling, and mentoring to improve ECE program delivery.
- **Georgia State University:** To create career pathways to increase the quantity and quality of culturally and linguistically diverse, appropriately compensated ECE professionals and augment a professional development partnership model to leverage the expertise of experienced teachers, and train novice education professionals through shared goals, professional mentorship, and collaborative strategies.
- **North Seattle College:** To augment its associate and bachelor's degree ECE programs by offering certificates in Spanish, Arabic, and Somali, focusing on anti-bias education, piloting community-based cohorts for ECE providers across the state, and creating supported education pathways for the workforce, from entry level through graduate school.
- **University of Colorado Denver:** To facilitate a coalition of IHEs in Colorado that fosters systems reforms that address access to and quality of degrees, engages in research related to ECE workforce preparation, and influences policy change within and across multiple state agencies specific to teacher credentialing and licensure, credit for prior learning, and compensation.
- **University of Hawai'i at Mānoa:** To build the capacity of Hawai'i's ECE teacher preparation and career pathways, including accessible competency-based bachelor's and associate degree

programs linked to coordinated student support innovations and a plan for competitive compensation for lead teachers.

The Collaborative, created in 2017, includes the [Ballmer Group](#), [Bezos Family Foundation](#), [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [Buffett Early Childhood Fund](#), [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#), [Foundation for Child Development](#), [Heising-Simons Foundation](#), and [Stranahan Foundation](#). Its goal is to help all early educators achieve their full potential as professionals, and to ensure that each child is prepared for success in school and life.

“We hope that, through these grants and the innovations that emerge from them, we can provide models for other institutions of higher education, policymakers, and funders nationally,” said Dr. Sara Vecchiotti, Vice President of the Foundation for Child Development and co-chair of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative. “We urgently need a systems-wide shift in how we think about and implement early childhood educator preparation in this country. The futures of our children depend on it.”

### **Grantee Quotes**

- “Children have their first experience with formal education in early childhood programs. We are so excited to be part of a state-wide, intersegmental effort to support and grow the expertise and skill of these educators, particularly as it relates to working with Dual Language Learners - some 60% of the early childhood population.” - Dr. Pia Lindquist Wong, Associate Dean for Research and Engagement, Sacramento State University
- “This award is a game changer for our education students, for the Native children they’re going to serve, and our broader community on and off the reservation. Many of our education students are tribal members or descendants, and many have personally experienced cultural barriers and trauma. They have tremendous hope and potential, but are weighed heavily by economics, family responsibilities, the demands of school, and the need for mentoring. Being able to simultaneously invest in adapting our delivery system to address the challenges of low-income working/parenting students while building on student support systems is going to be a giant step forward for our program.” - Dr. Kelli Chelberg, College of Menominee Nation
- “This grant provides an important opportunity for Georgia State University and our partners to increase our contributions toward professionalization of the birth through five early care and education field through formal teacher preparation and professional development. Professionalization of the field positively impacts the quality of early learning experiences for children and families and strengthens our advocacy efforts for better wages for B-5 teachers, which are typically significantly lower than teachers of older children.” - Dr. Stacey French-Lee, Clinical Assistant Professor and Executive Director of Campus Child Development Programs, Georgia State University
- “We are thrilled at the opportunity to develop equitable education pathways for all members of the workforce, especially those that have been historically excluded. This grant allows us to increase supports for current students, while also learning more about the barriers that are keeping others out of teacher preparation pathways and how we can begin to address them. We know how

important it is to have diverse and inclusive leadership in early childhood, and to have early care and education professionals that represent their communities. Unfortunately, we also see racial, linguistic, and cultural disparities when we look at who is accessing higher education, who is graduating with degrees, and who fills leadership roles. With this funding, we aim to build a more inclusive education pathway from the entry level to graduate degrees.” - Dr. Samantha Dolan, Interim Associate Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, North Seattle College

- “In early childhood, state policy reform and higher education innovation rarely intersect. This grant provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring together multiple IHEs, including the entire community college system, to collectively focus on improving early childhood teachers’ access to meaningful, credit-bearing pathways. With a governor who is an early childhood champion, as well as a recent taxpayer-approved universal pre-kindergarten fund, Colorado has the momentum and the leadership to change both state policy *and* higher education in ways that support equity and that transform the context surrounding lead teacher qualifications, teacher development, and compensation in the state. This grant is not only a key lever for consequential change in Colorado, but also an important legacy of Dr. Rebecca Kantor, our late dean, who had the vision and passion to re-imagine both the ECE workforce and higher education.” - Dr. Kristie Kauerz, School of Education & Human Development, University of Colorado Denver
- “For decades, training and compensation for the early care and education workforce in Hawai‘i have been sorely neglected. This is especially evident among those serving infants through preschool. Well-prepared and well-compensated teachers will ensure that all children make significant and sustained gains in physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. By almost all measures, Hawai‘i lags behind the rest of the nation in providing access to high-quality ECE programs, particularly for children and families most in need. This funding opportunity is the accelerant we need to spark a fire of transformation to improve our state’s early childhood workforce system.” - Dr. Theresa Lock, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Education

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### **About Early Educator Investment Collaborative**

Our goal is to help all early educators achieve their full potential as professionals to ensure that each child is prepared for success in school and life. Our vision is a country where there is no opportunity gap among children, where every child makes lasting gains in cognitive, social, and emotional development through their early care and education experience. We are working to link early educator professional competencies with professional compensation and to transform the preparation of early education.

### **About California State University, Sacramento**

Sacramento State is the lead campus for Universities & Partners Learning, Innovating, Fostering Equity, Transforming California Early Childhood Education Degree, or UP-LIFT CA partnership. UP-LIFT CA brings together multiple California State University (CSU) and community college campuses with the CSU Chancellor’s Office, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, other state agencies, early childhood care, and education providers to prepare educators to work effectively with Dual Language Learners and their

families. The project will highlight the expertise of early childhood educators and further integrate this important sector of education into the state's overall public schooling system.

#### **About College of Menominee Nation**

The College of Menominee Nation (CMN) is an accredited baccalaureate-level tribal college founded by the Menominee Indian Tribe in 1993 and holding Congressional Land Grant status since 1994. Campus facilities are located on the rural Northeastern Wisconsin reservation of the Menominee People and in nearby metropolitan Green Bay. The College's 14 academic programs include professional studies and STEM majors, with B.S., B.A., and A.A.S. degrees offered in Education. Enrolled members or descendants of American Indian tribes constitute approximately 70% of the College's student enrollment and alumni numbers.

#### **About Georgia State University & Project SEED**

Increasing the Diversity, Quality, and Quantity of Our ECE Workforce, housed in Georgia State University's College of Education & Human Development, will provide pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse students to earn a four-year degree in birth through five education. This project will partner with Atlanta Public Schools, the Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta, Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Technical College System of Georgia, United Way of Greater Atlanta, and the YMCA of Metro Atlanta in its efforts to diversify the early childhood education workforce in Georgia, ensuring all children receive quality education from highly-skilled teachers who reflect the state's diverse population.

#### **About North Seattle College**

The Early Childhood Education department at North Seattle College has served the Seattle ECE workforce since the college opened in 1970. For 50 years, we have grown and evolved to meet the needs of a changing field locally and statewide. Both our curriculum and our program structure are intentionally designed to increase equity in the early learning field. We have an anti-bias program focus that is embedded into our coursework as well as explicitly taught in required courses at the associate and bachelor's degree level. Recent programming efforts include programs to increase the number of men of color in early childhood education, courses in four languages other than English, and a funded partnership with the math department to create supported pathways for our workforce students.

#### **About University of Colorado Denver**

As Colorado's only public urban research university, the University of Colorado Denver educates a diverse student body through quality academics, ambitious research and creative work, and civic engagement in the city we call home. Graduates gain the powerful combination of immersive classroom and real-world experiences that are in demand today, while the city benefits from well-educated, top talent and a new generation of knowledge that fuels the future of our region. Under the visionary leadership of one of the few early childhood deans in the country, we created and offer a robust portfolio of early childhood efforts that include teacher preparation, policy and systems reform, leadership, and pedagogy and practice.

**About University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

The College of Education is committed to preparing tomorrow's educators, researchers, trainers, counselors, and professionals at all levels. Our rich history and values are guided by a sense of purpose and sense of place, providing educational research, policy studies, curriculum development, professional development, allied health care, educational services, and teacher and educational leader preparation programs. We envision a Native Hawaiian place of learning and teaching sustained by a collaborative community of educators and professionals who contribute to a just, diverse, and democratic society and prioritize the educational well-being of the Native Hawaiian people and others across the Pacific.