

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Board of Early Education & Care – April Meeting

April 10, 2024

Agenda

Routine Business

- Approval of Minutes from March 13, 2024 Meeting – VOTE

Items for Discussion and Action

- **Executive Order 625:** Establishing an Inter-agency Task Force on Ensuring Affordable, High-Quality Child Care
- **Partner Panel**
- **EEC Workforce Development Updates**
 - EEC Learning Management System (LMS)
 - Supportive Pathways
 - Higher Education Opportunities
 - Certifications & Credentialing



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Executive Order 625: Establishing an Inter-agency Task Force on Ensuring Affordable, High-Quality Child Care



About the Inter-agency Task Force



The Task Force was established by Executive Order 625 to ensure that Massachusetts leads the nation in early education and child care access, affordability, equity, and quality.



The Task Force is comprised of the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Secretary of Economic Development, who shall serve as co-chairs. Additional members of the Task Force are designees of the Secretaries of Administration and Finance, Energy and Environmental Affairs, Health and Human Services, Housing and Livable Communities, Public Safety and Security, Technology Services and Security, Transportation, and Veterans Services.



In developing its recommendations, the Task Force will engage with industry and business leaders, organized labor, health services stakeholders, housing and planning experts, working parents and caregivers, and child care providers and experts.



In developing and refining its recommendations, the Task Force may coordinate cross-secretariat pilot programs.

Priorities of the Inter-agency Task Force

- 1 **Surveying practices of other states** in reducing costs, increasing capacity, and improving quality of child care providers and making recommendations for how such practices could be adopted in Massachusetts;
- 2 **Assessing how better coordination among state agencies could support families in accessing child care** that meets their needs, including through technology improvements;
- 3 **Identifying resources for building capacity and increasing affordability in the child care system** (through both center-based and family child care), including from the federal government, the philanthropic community, and employers, which may include exploring incentives for employers to assist employees with child care;
- 4 **Identifying strategies to recruit, train, upskill, and retain members of the child care workforce**, including by expanding apprenticeship initiatives, higher education programs, and training opportunities;
- 5 **Reviewing existing assets to identify potential locations** to establish center-based care, which shall include consulting with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance regarding their work identifying surplus and underutilized land for housing pursuant to executive Order No. 623.

Values to Guide the Task Force



Innovative

Are we welcoming out-of-the-box ideas to capitalize on fresh perspectives from all executive offices and stakeholders?

Child-Centered

Do the solutions advance academic and social-emotional development for our learners?

Equitable

Do the solutions address or exacerbate inequities?

Results-Oriented

Are the solutions practical and able to be piloted and implemented as early as next fiscal year?

Projected Milestones and Deliverables

Milestone	Time	Deliverable
Announcement (External)	January	Executive Order (completed)
Task Force Co-Chairs Meeting & Planning Session	February	Host meeting and plan full Task Force Kick Off meeting (completed)
Task Force Kick Off	March	Launch Task Force in community setting (completed)
Launch of 5 Working Groups	April	Adopt workplans for each
Catalogue Current Activities and Host Public Events	May-July	Summary reports for each
Task Force Meeting Review of Findings	August	Task Force Interim Report
Identification of Strategies	August - October	Summary of Considerations
Task Force Meeting Draft of Recommendation	November	Internal Document Draft of Recommendation to Governor
Year 1 Report Task Force Meeting	December	Announcement Event and Report Release

Next Steps for the Task Force

- 1 Establish **working groups** of Administration participants for each priority areas
- 2 Each working group to meet in the next 3 weeks to establish and begin its **workplan**
- 3 Each working group to **report on progress** at the April full Task Force meeting

Learn more about the task force by visiting: [Early Education and Child Care Task Force | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/early-education-and-child-care-task-force)



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Partner Panel

Partner Panel:

Holyoke Community College



Kimm Quinlan

Director of Early
Childhood Initiatives
Holyoke Community
College



Dawn DiStefano

President & CEO

Square One



Wendy Colon

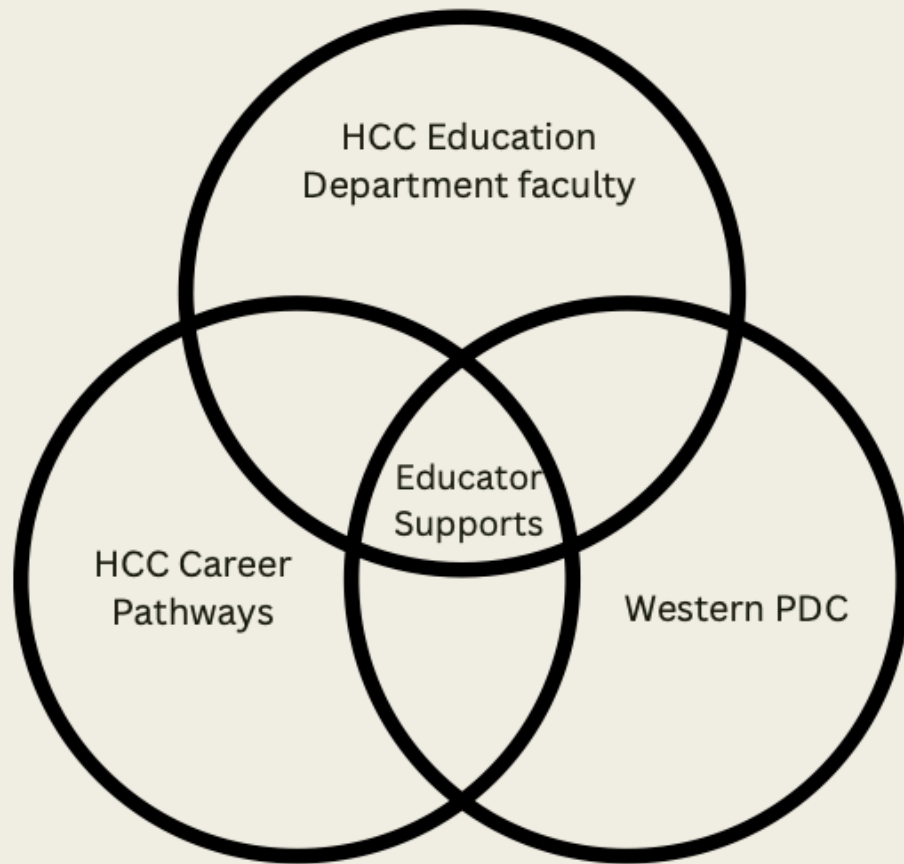
*Director of King St.
Preschool*
Square One



Irza Bigas Melendez

Classroom Coordinator
Itsy Bitsy Child Watch
Holyoke Community
College

HCC Collaborations



Highlights of Mentor Training

- Very relatable to mentors and the teachers; trainer formed relationships with all of us.
- Very receptive of our views and opinions as well as the teachers we were mentoring.
- Related to the younger staff. They felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and they felt heard.
- Our Mentor Trainer gave us a wide variety of materials and check-in times to help coach on certain topics including specific materials based on individual feedback and chosen topics from mentees.
- Our mentor taught us to narrow down the activities and helped the other director in implementing smart goals.
- Our mentees felt supported and became invested in learning.

Why We Need Mentoring

- ☐ We have seasoned teachers that may not be aware of how to support the *whole* child.
- ☐ New teachers who need more guidance on what kind of teacher they *want to become*.

Mentor Training

- ☐ How to get the buy in on new visions and techniques to use in the classrooms.

Story of an educator

"Life is hard, and sometimes we don't always have the resources we need to succeed ... I feel like I'm breaking the poverty cycle in my life. Just being here in college is **changing my life everyday.**"

- *Former Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Student-Parent, Alondra S.*

Images: Children engaging with new materials and sharing experiences with peers. Also shown is a Fine Arts exploration done in partnership with HCC's Taber Gallery and featured artist, Raishad Glover.





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EEC Workforce Development Updates

EEC Workforce Development Efforts

Skills of the workforce drive the quality of interactions and the teaching and learning in the classroom/ home

Objective: Build robust professional opportunities and career pathways



Strategic Initiatives

1. **EEC Learning Management System (LMS)** - EEC funded and delivered foundational and ongoing training through StrongStart LMS, PDCs, etc. Includes registration, tracking and verification of professional learning.
2. **Supportive Pathways** – Coordinating state investments to build a system of workforce training programs, including apprenticeships to help new educators start careers in the field and more experienced educators to advance.
3. **Higher Education Opportunities**– Reinvigoration and improving access to existing opportunities and scholarships for early educators.
4. **Certifications & Credentialing** – Professionalization of the field with state-endorsed qualifications and a clear career ladder for educators.



EEC Learning Management System (LMS)

StrongStart Learning Management System

StrongStart Learning Management System (LMS) is an online software service that allows EEC to deliver, track, and verify Professional Development



Self-paced eLearning Asynchronous Courses

- Allows educators to take courses in their own time.
- Educators can take courses in small increments (the system will save their place)
- Allows large numbers of educators to take courses
- Allows for courses in languages other than English



EEC-funded Instructor-led Courses

- Can be via live webinar or in-person or a hybrid of both
- Allows for interaction with instructors, facilitators, and peers
- Is limited by the capacity of the Instructor and the space

StrongStart can track and verify courses, interests and educator learning history.

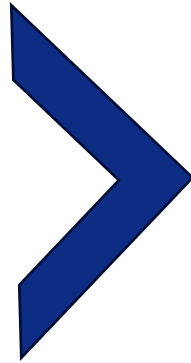


EEC Essentials is Being Updated

Federally mandated courses for all educators in EEC-licensed or funded programs

Current Package

- Self-paced package
- Available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese
- 12 Modules
- 1 package for all educators



Essentials 2.0

- Self-paced package
- **Delivered in** English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese
- **13 Modules**
- 2 packages
 - **Center-based and Family Child Care** – 13 Modules
 - **After School and Out-of-School Time** – 11 Modules (eliminates infant-focused courses)
- **Annual refresher**, rather than an annual repeat

Significant “read, click, next” with a heavy compliance focus

Re-design and content upgrade with added engagement, practice focused narration, and closed captioning for videos

More than 100,000 educators have completed the entire current package



Supportive Pathways

Focus on Supporting the Workforce Pipeline

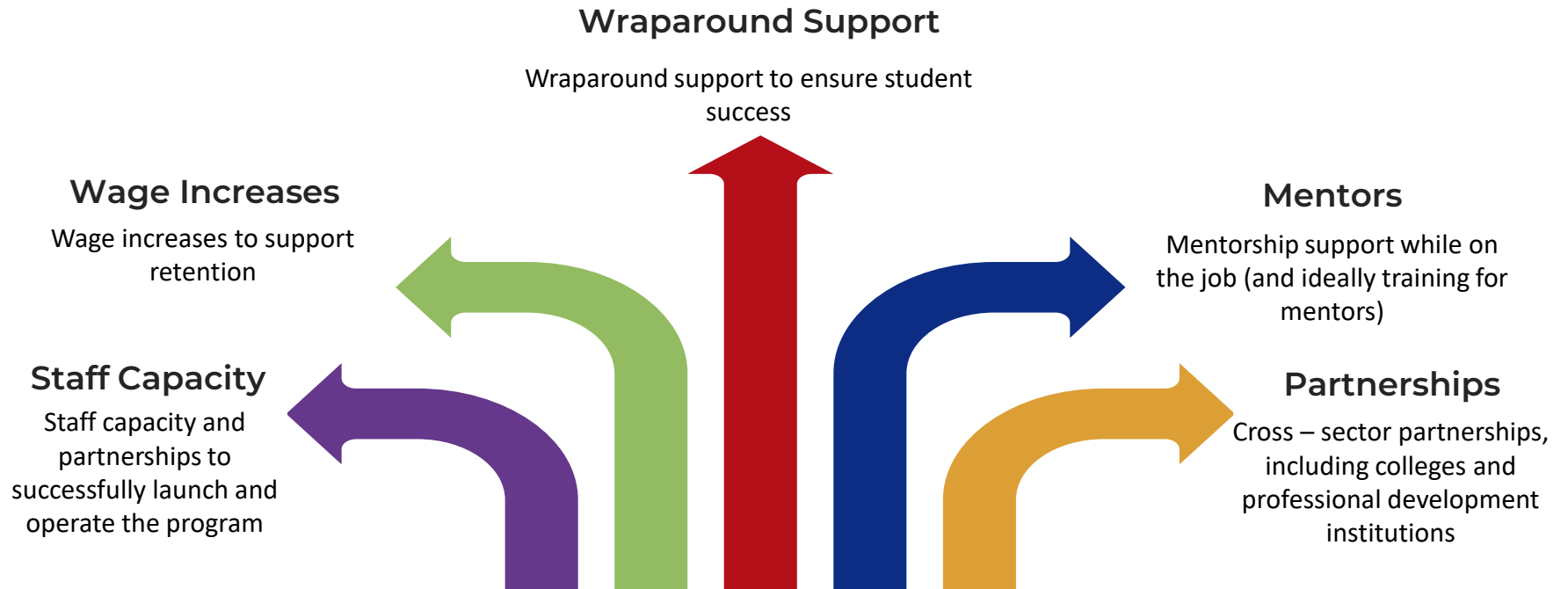
The **EEC Board Workforce Working Group** identified apprenticeships as a key strategy to recruit and support new educators to the field

3 Center-based Workforce Convenings



EEC hosted in partnership with Neighborhood Villages, a series of convenings to get feedback from those working on apprentice programs

1. Programs for **new teachers** (recruitment focused)
2. Programs for **incumbent teachers** (upskilling and retention focused)
3. Registered **Apprenticeships** (approved by Division of Apprenticeship Standards)



Apprenticeship Programs in MA

Apprenticeships provide a supported pathway into a profession or new role.

Across industries, apprenticeship programs share key features:



Employer engagement with apprentice



Structured **on-the-job** training (OJT) with a mentor



Related technical instruction (RTI) to build knowledge in the field



Wages that correspond with the apprentice's role



Completion earns the apprentice **industry credential**

Early education apprenticeship programs funded by EOLWD*

- Neighborhood Villages (125) - \$750,000
- YMCA of Greater Boston (45) – \$225,000
- For Kids Only Afterschool (25) - \$138,000
- Community Day Care Center of Lawrence (50) - \$250,000
- Family Services Central Mass (30) - \$150,000

*GRANTEE (# of apprentices) – funding amount

Future EEC Supported Workforce Investments

Goal: Expand and accelerate access to supported workforce programs to meet needs of diverse workforce through a regional strategy, designed around needs identified through stakeholder engagement

Funding to support:



Intermediary organizations to provide **regional infrastructure for workforce training programs** through administrative and coordination support



Design and implement **supported workforce programs**, including **registered apprenticeships** for GSA and FCC, aligned to credential



Flexible funding for center based programs and new FCC educators

Estimated investment up to \$10 M (funded by the Preschool Development Grant). Goal is to post an RFR in the Spring of 2024 for programming through the end of 2026.



Higher Education Opportunities



Improving Higher Education Opportunities

Career Pathways

Funding to 15 community colleges and Urban College of Boston to provide access to higher education coursework

- Courses towards EEC certifications
- Foundational Certificate (16 credits)
- Wrap around supports (Admissions & registration, advising, course scheduling, tutoring, campus resources)

ECE Scholarship

Funding, through DHE, to educators for associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees

- Associates degree completion
- Bachelor's & Master's degrees
- Academic supports, materials, books, supplies

Building Systemic Alignment and Collaboration

Building a system-wide process, with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the Massachusetts Association of Community colleges (MACC), to expand support for ECE educators learning opportunities and support knowledge and work experience

Career Pathways Grant

The Early Childhood Career Pathways Grant is a workforce development grant between EEC and the 15 public community colleges in Massachusetts and Urban College.

FY24 funding for career pathways \$9,490,250

Each college is awarded a grant to build the early childhood workforce through college funded courses. The colleges use this funding to provide academic services to educators, including coursework, textbooks, tutoring, mentoring, technology and other student support services.



EEC Funding



**15 public community
colleges & Urban
College**



ECE Educators
Coursework,
textbooks & more

Educators supported between 2019 and fall of 2023

Community Colleges: 13,034

Urban College: 1,513

Proposed Updates to the ECE Scholarship

Eligible Applicants



Working in an EEC licensed or funded early education and care program



Expanded Eligibility: include staff working in licensed residential programs licensed by EEC

Application Review Process



Double employment verification; notification begins in summer



Simplify Verification Process: Single employment verification with proof of employment; rolling notifications

Award Amounts



Tuition Only

UMass- \$500/credit
Private college/university- \$500/credit
State University- \$400/credit
Community College- \$250/credit



Recognize Full Costs: Funding to cover tuition, fees, and course materials

Eligible Majors



Early childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early childhood development and specific area of inquiry



Additional Majors: Adding majors that include educational pathways for Out-of-School Time educators and ECE educators in residential programs

Building Systemic Alignment and Collaboration

EEC is working with the Career Pathways grantees and Massachusetts Association for Community Colleges to build opportunities for credit for prior learning and building a foundational certificate for early childhood.

1

Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for prior learning provides an option to apply experiences or prior knowledge for credit for a course within a certificate or degree at an institution of higher education.

What experience can count for credit for prior learning?

- Participate in an EEC approved workforce development program
- Work as an educator and develop a portfolio
- Complete a Chapter 74 vocational program in early education

2

Foundational Certificate

Aligned Early Education Foundational Certificate will provide an entry point for aspiring educators to both higher education opportunities and advancement to the first level of the credential.



- Agreement and alignment among the colleges includes student learning outcomes and EEC competencies, credit value, course titles, & course sequence (total of 16 credits)
- Credit for prior learning activities may contribute to credit and certificate attainment



Certifications & Credentialling



Defining a Career Pathway & Credentialing System: Update

Immediate February – April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain use of minimum hiring requirements for stability and flexibility • Hire vendor to develop verification requirements for credential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize proposed pathways and credentials, building on existing work • Prioritize two levels of educator credentialing and directors 
Short Term June 2023 – March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Staged relaunch' of certification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open optional professional certification for professional validation and goal setting (<i>Now Director, Teacher and Lead Teacher</i>) • Deploying incremental development of supportive IT systems for enhancing certification and new credentialing processes • Finalizing plan for new educator registry and data migration strategy 
Long Term March 2024 – June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize the revised pathway and credentials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with stakeholders and partners • Regulatory revision to match new credential • Staged launch of new pathways and credentials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing levels that recognize skills of current field • Educator registry available to support credentialing processes <div data-bbox="1730 919 2265 1048">In progress!</div>

Next Steps for the Credential Pathway

Long Term
March 2024 –
June 2025

- Define professional **learning and verification requirements** for foundational levels (entry to level 2 and director) of the credential
 - Include transferability of certification to credential levels
- Build out accessible professional **learning and higher education opportunities** that support advancement on the credential
- Develop a comprehensive **map of professional pathways** including higher levels of expertise
 - Includes salary recommendations to support cost work
- Build **registry to support documentation** and verification of qualifications

Ongoing work to support the development of a credential pathway

Role of Educational Leadership

Strong educational leadership capacity is an essential component to support educator success in competency-based credential system



Revised credential expectations reflect an enhanced focus on the role of leadership in driving continuous quality improvement and sustaining quality practices in programs



Fundamental shift in the role of leadership in all program types



Educational leaders need intensive targeted supports for creating the enabling conditions for educator professional growth and quality improvement in the program



In Motion:

Foundational Early Childhood Leadership support through the PDCs and Academy

Early Childhood Support Organizations (ECSOs) intensive professional development model

Mentor training development

FCC Systems

Optional Certifications Connect to a Future Credential



Beginning summer 2023, EEC re-established the option for **certification** through the Teacher Qualification Unit.

Optional certification is open across the State for all **Director I, Director II, Lead Teachers and Teachers** that go beyond the minimum hiring requirements and meet the regulatory requirements.

Certifications earned prior to and during the credentialing implementation will be accounted for within the new structure and will contribute to the required credentialing levels and competencies.