

Developing The Early Childhood Education Workforce

INDIANA'S TRANSITION TO
TEACHING INITIATIVE

Made possible by Indiana's Preschool Development Grant
Powered by Early Learning Indiana



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A GROWING WORKFORCE SHORTAGE



Across Indiana and throughout the country, there is a meager and dwindling supply of qualified early childhood education (ECE) educators. This insufficient supply – projected to top 9,000 teachers statewide in the coming years, outpacing the national average — has its roots in inadequate compensation ranges that result in shallow talent pools and fragmented pipelines, suboptimal teacher preparation methods that are time consuming and relatively costly, and outmoded workforce structures that emphasize regulatory compliance over classroom effectiveness.

Magnifying this shortage are high turnover rates within the field. National estimates of annual turnover hover around 30%, and 16% of teachers report planning to leave the workforce within the next three years. Here in Indiana, while the supply has been steadily growing, it is not keeping pace with demand, and the turnover rate is more than double the growth rate. Without intervention, Indiana will be saddled with an even greater deficit in the early educator workforce by 2026. Diversity within the ECE workforce is also particularly troubling. Nationally, only 36% of the workforce is comprised of individuals of color, and in Indiana that number drops to 14%. Furthermore, of the nearly 30,000 ECE workers in Indiana, only 7% are men – consistent with the national average.

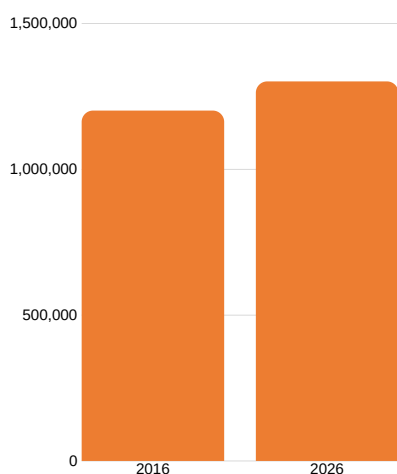
While ECE educators consistently fall into the lowest income percentiles of all workers in the country, for educators of color, economic distress is more pronounced partially because they are more likely to work as assistant teachers. African American workers earn, on average, \$0.78 less per hour than their white/Caucasian counterparts in similar center-based roles even after controlling for educational attainment.

PROJECTED JOB GROWTH



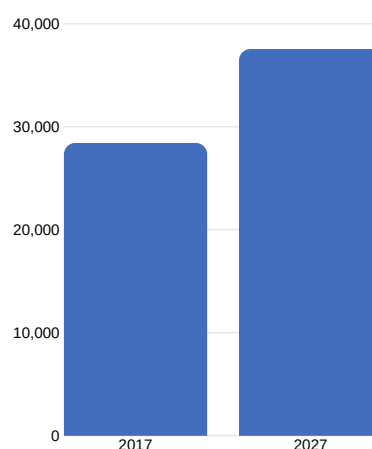
The need for child care and preschool teachers is expected to grow more rapidly in Indiana than nationally in the next decade.

U.S. Child Care Worker Jobs



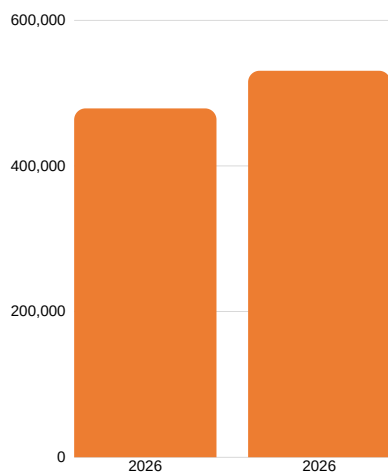
Increase of 6.9%

Indiana Child Care Worker Jobs



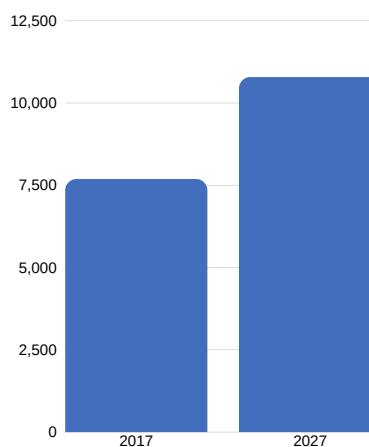
Increase of 32.1%

U.S. Preschool Teacher Jobs



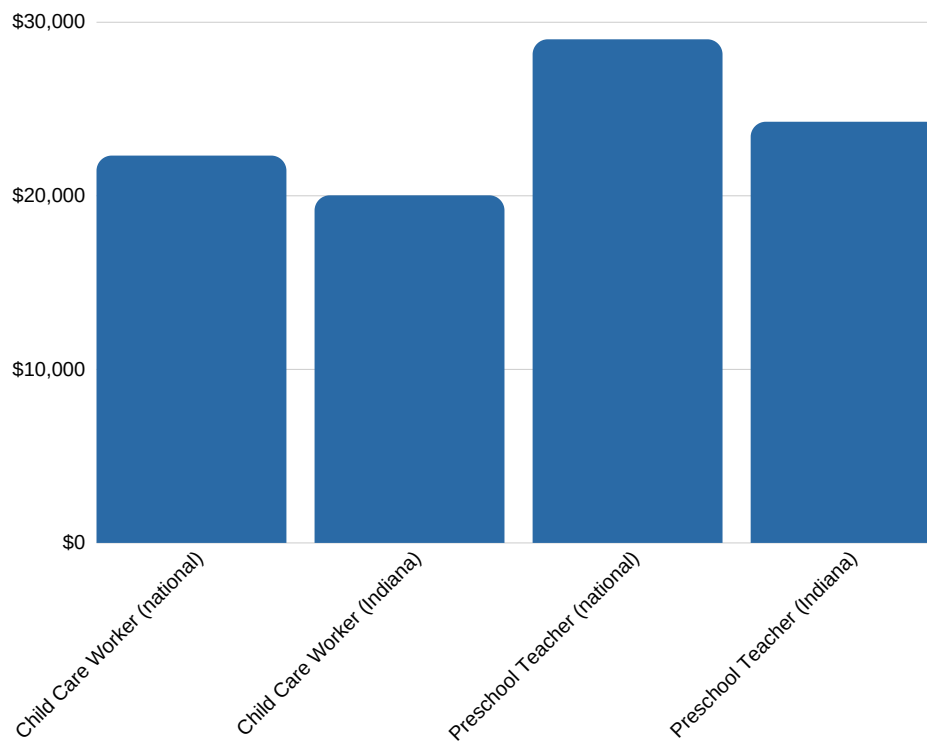
Increase of 10.8%

Indiana Preschool Teacher Jobs



Increase of 40.3%

MEDIAN ANNUAL SALARY





MAJOR BARRIERS TO ENTRY AND RETENTION

The struggle to find and keep talent within ECE is driven by a number of recruitment and retention challenges:

- **Industry perceptions.** High-demand roles with low wages and minimal benefits, coupled with a lack of understanding of the importance of the birth-to-five space, make recruitment particularly challenging.
- **Competitive jobs environment.** In a market where there are more jobs than there are people seeking them, employers are increasingly proactive in finding, stealing and securing talent.
- **Compensation and benefits.** Working in a historically low-paying field with limited to no benefits, ECE professionals are often unable to support themselves and their families.
- **High-demand environments.** Caring for the unique and diverse needs of children from birth to age five is an increasingly challenging and demanding role. And one with no room for error.
- **Turnover rates.** The low-wage, high-demand nature of early learning jobs is a driver for the industry's high turnover rates. Individuals who progress in educational attainment often leave in pursuit of better pay in K-12, while others simply just leave the field.
- **Attracting and retaining diverse educators.** Like many industries, early learning struggles to recruit and retain educators who represent the diversity of families served. The impact is that many children go without critical teacher role models they can relate to and learn from.

- **Professional development.** Growth and development opportunities are not inherently obvious to prospective and existing workers and are not widely acknowledged or promoted across the industry due to its siloed nature, leaving many – especially young career professionals – to look outside the field for advancement.
- **Limited budget for talent strategies.** With center leaders wearing many hats and operating under tight budgets, there's little time, expertise and money to put toward talent strategies.



THE IMPACT ON EARLY LEARNERS

While challenging to providers, recruitment and retention issues in early childhood education also have a negative impact on the children it serves. Young children, especially those within the birth-to-five age range, require consistency of caregivers, settings and experiences to have a strong foundation from which to grow and develop. That consistency is lost when children are repeatedly building new relationships with a revolving door of caregivers or adjusting to new

routines as they are moved from one care center to another as a result of staffing issues. Furthermore, the overall lack of male and ethnically diverse educators is a critical issue that impacts the development of young children, as significant national research points to markedly positive experiences and increased success when children are instructed by teachers who look like them.

EFFORTS UNDERWAY WITHIN THE FIELD TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

From finding new ways to attract and diversify talent to advancing policy, innovative efforts to solve workforce issues in early childhood education are emerging in Indiana and other states across the nation.

- Increased efforts to reshape early childhood education perceptions in consumers, current and prospective teachers, and policymakers through industry exposure
- Local, public-private partnerships to drive to more viable salaries, competitive benefit packages and incentive-driven career advancement
- Flexible and affordable work-based teacher training programs that create new pathways for educators to enter and advance within the field
- New methods of supporting and retaining professionals such as fast-track CDAs and 1:1 career planning and support
- Financial incentives such as tuition assistance (e.g. TEACH grants), sign-on bonuses, living allowance stipends, retention and degree attainment incentives, scholarships, and salary supplements to bolster recruitment efforts.
- Entry-level ECE career paths for high school students, volunteer opportunities and middle school exposure to build CTE pipelines
- Community-based partnerships, bilingual professional development programs, diverse hire incentives, and affinity groups to attract diverse talent
- Performance-based competency frameworks, supported by data-driven professional development for onboarding, coaching and improving retention
- Improved strategies for collecting more expansive and consistent turnover data

INDIANA'S PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT: TRANSITION TO TEACHING INITIATIVE



The Transition to Teaching initiative was supported by Indiana's Preschool Development Grant as part of a significant effort by the State to evaluate and fortify birth-to-five early childhood education programs. Recognizing the anticipated shortage in qualified ECE candidates places the accessibility of high-quality child care further at risk, Indiana sought to strengthen efforts to widen the funnel of talent from which it is selecting.

With ECE competing for talent against many other service industries like healthcare, retail and hospitality, as well as other stakeholders in the education field, Indiana partnered with Early Learning Indiana (ELI) to develop a comprehensive transition-to-teaching effort designed to market to and incentivize participation of “unusual” suspects in the ECE field. Primary target audiences included paraprofessionals working in K-12 schools and K-12 teachers seeking a sabbatical or change of pace, near or recent retirees, and other transition targets.

SEEKING INSPIRATION FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

As unemployment rates reach record lows, the U.S. continues to struggle through a historic hiring crisis. In a market where there are more jobs than there are people looking for them, employers are becoming increasingly strategic in their approach to recruit and retain talent. ELI took this opportunity to identify promising practices happening in other industries that could be implemented within early childhood education. Some of the industries included:

- Manufacturing: Addressing perceptions and the aging workforce
- Home Health: Building awareness for workforce shortages
- Aerospace: Attracting younger and diverse candidates
- Construction: Rebuilding the industry's image
- K-12 education: Modernizing talent strategies in light of workforce change

Throughout this research, ELI identified key recommendations transportable to early learning:

- Marketing the field
- Deepening candidate pools
- Building total rewards packages
- Emphasizing diversity and inclusion
- Implementing system-level strategies

See a full listing of these recommendations on the following pages.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Marketing the Field

- Conduct a market study to understand industry perceptions, audience motivators, job expectations and satisfaction indicators across target personas
- Invest in an industry-building campaign to combat myths and develop perceptions that emphasize the importance of the work among key personas
- Strengthen candidate messaging to market the industry as a career with growth and advancement potential, training opportunities, flexibility, and impact
- Leverage data, social channel targeting and skills-based hiring technology to reach prospective and passive candidates
- Break down artificial barriers in the hiring process by leveraging staffing applications, single application sites, job matching services, and tech-driven tools for discerning candidate dispositions and skills
- Build reach within new audiences through the use of high-impact creatives, videos, and easily shareable tools and assets

Deepening Candidate Pools

- Offer “career changer” incentives, such as flexible schedules and benefits, and emphasize intergenerational benefits to convince older workers to remain active in their communities by transitioning to early learning
- Establish strategic recruitment events, like community-based workshops and attractive professional development opportunities, to reach promising prospective candidates
- Seek out niche job boards, social groups and professional forums to recruit specific candidate types and engage them in differentiating ways
- Forge strategic workforce development partnerships with organizations that have goal alignment and capacity to help support goals
- Create or partner with high-impact alternative prep programs to build the pipeline with new candidates and career changers

Building Total Rewards Packages

- Find ways to demonstrate workplace evolution (e.g. use of technology, unique and flexible benefits or incentives, professional development offerings, and culture-building)
- Align benefit offerings to target audience motivators, like flexible schedules, tenure-based time off incentives, job shares, professional development, and employment supports
- Develop or expand growth and professional development offerings through strategic partnerships
- Consider leveraging community partners and funders to support recruitment, compensation and retention incentives, and to provide additional services and amenities

Emphasizing Diversity and Inclusion

- Involve diverse community leaders and experts in developing strategic programs focused on increasing underrepresented workforce populations
- Market employment supports such as financial assistance, scholarships, child care and transportation stipends
- Make sure marketing campaigns and recruitment materials feature and relate to diverse populations
- Develop strategic partnerships to build diverse candidate pipelines, leveraging their expertise and reach capabilities

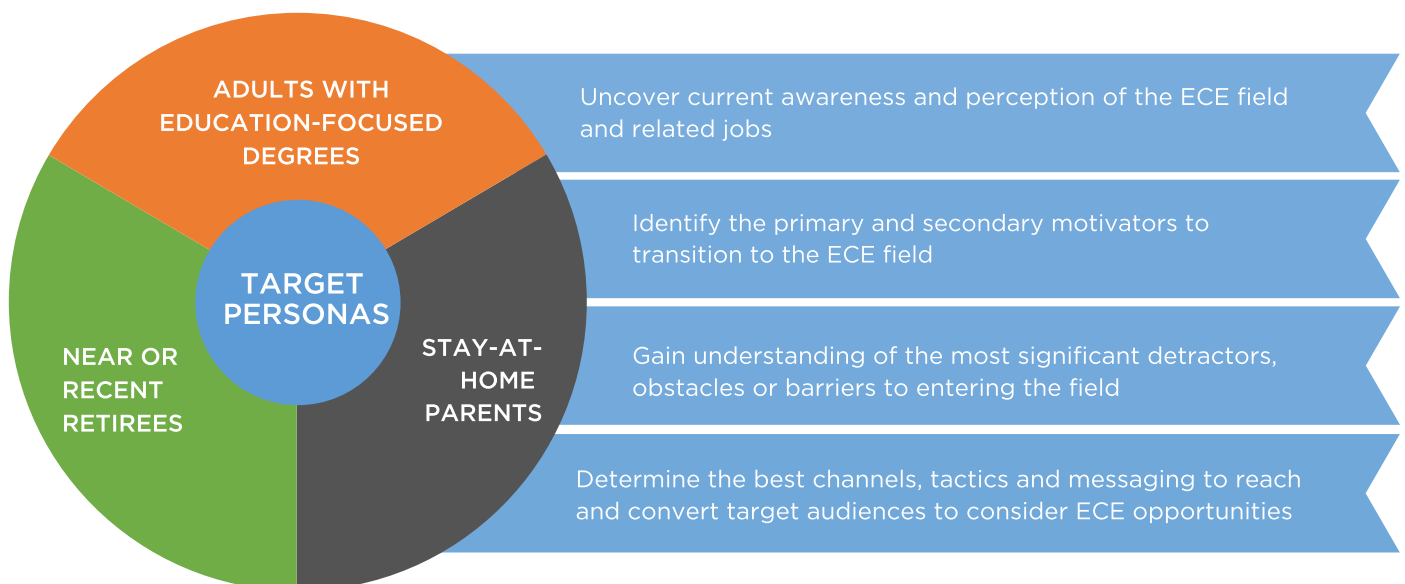
Implementing System-level Strategies

- Consider a national or state-level workforce development campaign that highlights the state of the industry and builds recognition for the field
- Influence policy efforts to address critical workforce issues like compensation, teacher preparation and training practices, and leadership development
- Support the development of alternative teacher preparation pathways that reduce cost, increase time to productivity, and drive quality
- Invest in technology-powered solutions to recruit, develop, and retain talent

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CAREERS

To build a stronger understanding of how to attract individuals to the early childhood field, ELI conducted a strategic market study to assess public and candidate perceptions of the industry. Looking beyond the early learning field, ELI and its partners were inspired to conduct this study and to gain its resulting data and insights based on similar efforts in the manufacturing industry, another sector aggressively trying to redefine itself to strengthen recruitment. Specifically, the study considered three target personas: 1) adults with education-focused degrees, 2) near or recent retirees, with a focus on those retired from teaching, social work, nursing and engineering, and 3) stay-at-home parents.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



For the study, ELI partnered with SMARI, a respected Indianapolis-based market research firm, and Trendy Minds, an Indianapolis agency that specializes in digital marketing and campaign design. With a mix of qualitative and quantitative research, the market study engaged 446 respondents representing a mix of the three target personas through online surveys and focus groups. SMARI intentionally recruited geographically, economically, racially and educationally diverse subjects of a wide range of ages, areas of study and family/marital statuses. The research results then informed the creative direction, calls to action and targeting strategy created by Trendy Minds and ELI staff.

RESEARCH TARGET PERSONAS



Adults with a career or future career in education



Adults nearing retirement or recent retirees



New parents who work from home or households with one parent who stays home or works from home

GENERAL AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS



The market study revealed a mix of conflicted and shared perspectives about careers in early childhood settings. Generally, each persona group asserted that early education is valuable, resulting in strong and clear benefits for children. However, their beliefs diverged on the topics of when, how and in what setting that education should take place. Two clear belief systems emerged early in the dialogue: one being that early childhood education starts with pre-K, no doubt a reflection and market-understanding drawback of Indiana's recent pre-K gains, and the other being a strong view that ECE provides the greatest benefit to children who live in homes with adults who must work or who are low-income.

Respondents agreed on many views related to how they viewed professionals, sharing a tremendous respect and admiration for those working in the field. Respondents broadly highlighted the patience, compassion and impact of early learning staff as commendable, but in many instances, that high level of esteem translated to a sense that these roles are not for everyone, but rather for only those most uniquely and rarely qualified.

An additional concern raised by respondents was an overwhelming sense that the early childhood system needs improvement, as they cited a lack of societal respect for the field, unfair compensation for workers doing an essential job, lack of equity in access across geographies and socioeconomic groups, lacking expectations for appropriate parental engagement — though there was disagreement if too much or too little was expected, and an unclear or inadequate definition of quality. Despite this view, respondents were very complimentary of Indiana's focus and efforts to improve the system overall.

AUDIENCE MOTIVATORS AND CONSIDERATIONS



Through the research, specific audiences emerged as the most promising among the target personas: adults with education-focused degrees, particularly those with early-grade experience, and recent retirees, especially those who seek a chance to remain active and those who previously worked in related fields such as healthcare, education and social work.

Those with the most positive responses to early childhood careers shared dispositional motivators including passion for education and/or children, personal experience and/or a desire to make a difference in others' lives, personal connections to young children (both personal and professional), and a sense of inspiration about the opportunity to build a foundation for learning, especially around reading or development. Running counter to those motivations, key barriers emerged as well, including low pay, a low level of respect and support for the field, and the challenges of engaging with parents, who were seen as either overly engaged or disengaged.

Target Persona	Most Promising Sub-group(s)	Key Messaging Opportunities	Specific Barriers and Considerations
 Adults with Ed-Focused and Related Degrees	Professionals working with children birth-12 in schools, community settings, healthcare, libraries and more, building on their motivation and understanding of shaping learning foundations early so as to combat later struggles	Highlight autonomy, lower ratios, more parental involvement, greater potential for impact	- Sharp awareness of low pay - Stronger understanding of lack of support, respect and resources
 Near or Recent Retirees	- Recent retirees from fields focused on making a difference in others' lives (healthcare, social work, faith-based, etc.) - Recent retirees with desire to remain active and have an impact	- Promote part-time, flexible roles to build the next generation - Tap into strong desire to stay engaged in the community and make a difference - Share very clear expectations, coupled with flexibility and support	- Desire for sufficient flexibility that doesn't require long-term, full-time commitments - Concerns about physical demands - Require support and sufficient respect for involvement, so teacher aide role may be ideal
 Stay-at-Home Parents	Stay-at-home parents whose children are at common ECE entry points or are entering K-12 journey	Market short-term/part-time opportunities that create dual benefit for Mom and child	- Strong investment in their own children's education and likely prefer that setting over others - Respect for the choices of stay at home Moms

KEY OPPORTUNITIES: MESSAGING, CHANNEL TARGETING AND INCENTIVES



From these findings, a number of key opportunities were discovered for Indiana to consider in future efforts. Important to note, because the market research was happening in parallel to the pilot campaign, the insights below were not able to be fully integrated.

- Recruitment marketing should assume an inspirational and fact-based tone, emphasizing the profound opportunity to make a difference in a child's life and leveraging compelling brain science data. Additional points of emphasis should be placed on:
 - The uniquely attractive benefits of this field compared to K-12, such as lower ratios, more teacher autonomy, greater potential for child growth and development,
 - There being an opportunity for everyone to contribute, to break down perceptions that ECE staff must be young, work full-time, or have a deep well of patience and passion, and
 - The deep support of and recognition for the value and work of teaching staff.
- Efforts should target individuals with demonstrated passion for children and an intrinsic motivation to make a difference. More specifically, tactics should be deployed to develop materials and incentives specifically aimed at the most promising sub-group audiences. Identifying high-impact channels and partnerships to reach these audiences is also recommended. For example, with momentum building for intergenerational solutions, partnerships with groups like AARP, Encore.org, and other community-based groups represent a tremendous opportunity to activate the retiree audience.
- For employers seeking to differentiate themselves with new candidates, they are encouraged to lean into addressing the barriers most cited by research respondents: low pay, lack of support and respect, and the need for structure and clear expectations. Marketing better pay options where they exist, partnering to craft differentiating benefit packages, highlighting how teachers are supported, recognized and provided flexibility in their work, and creating clear structures and expectations that make roles less intimidating for unusual suspects are all good practices to deploy.

EARLY MOMENTS MATTER MOST CAMPAIGN PILOT

With the findings of the focus groups and surveys in mind, ELI worked with Trendy Minds to design an industry-building recruitment campaign pilot called “Early Moments Matter Most” that would generate interest and attract unusual suspects to become teachers by illustrating the value of early childhood teachers and showcasing the long-lasting, profound impact that early education can make in an individual’s life.

“Early Moments Matter Most” highlighted the development of a child’s skills from birth onward. The campaign targeted the prospective early childhood educator with emotive imagery that captured the important moments during which an educator influences a child’s development and created positive associations with the ECE field. The campaign used a concise, straightforward voice and tone that showcased making a difference in a child’s life through teaching. It concluded with a call to action to learn more about ECE teaching opportunities.

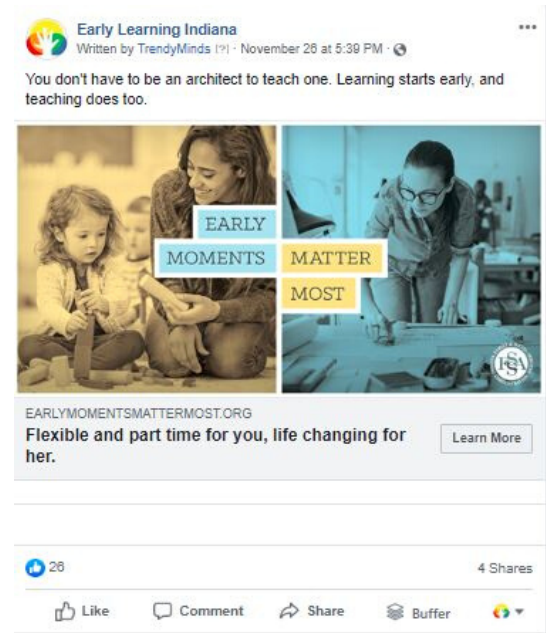
ELI deployed the “Early Moments Matter Most” campaign via social media statewide, focusing on attracting candidates for lead teacher and classroom support roles. The social campaign targeted the following audiences:

1. Current education professionals – K-12 teachers seeking sabbatical or a change of pace, K-12 paraprofessionals and near or recent retirees
2. Individuals seeking flexible schedules and/or part-time work – new parents or others requiring a flexible schedule, individuals seeking PT employment opportunities, near or recent retirees
3. Career changers – other industry professionals seeking a career change, near or recent retirees
4. Young professionals looking to start and build a career – recent college graduates, high school students enrolled in CTE programs

The campaign launched in early November with unbiased targeting of the identified audiences and was monitored through weekly meetings to assess performance and make adjustments. Midway through the campaign, it was recognized that ads targeted to the near or recent retiree audience were demonstrating higher performance. As a result, ELI redirected spend toward this audience and increased promotions across other similar audience channels to maximize budget. The social media campaign ran only six weeks, but as a result of the audience targeting and reinforcement in key markets, achieved 2.6 million impressions, 15,045 link clicks, 1,203 post reactions and 212 post shares.

Social media advertising drove potential candidates to a microsite designed to provide information about the value of working in early childhood education and, ultimately, to generate talent leads. The site details the many benefits of a career in ECE, such as flexibility, impact on the community, and opportunities for advancement, and describes specific roles within the field. Visitors to the site were invited to complete an email sign-up form to receive free Getting Started guide that contains additional information on career pathways, requirements and job opportunities. During the campaign, the email sign-up on the microsite was augmented to include a pop-up prompt, which resulted in increased conversions. Contact information collected was then shared with childcare resource and referral agencies to facilitate further engagement and recruitment with providers in their area.

The results of this pilot effort support it as viable means of attracting new talent to the ECE field. Through this campaign, ELI has identified a number of key opportunities to strengthen the model of targeted advertising and lead generation in order to grow the pipeline of potential candidates.



ATTRACTING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR TO EARLY LEARNING

Integral to efforts to widen the talent pool in early childhood education is the imperative to diversify its workforce to be more representative of the families it serves. Research from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning points to markedly positive experiences and Recognizing the need for a nuanced, community-driven approach to address issues of diversity, ELI sought to partner with an education organization to increase the representation of communities of color in the ECE field. Supported by funds from both Indiana's Preschool Development Grant and the Lilly Endowment, ELI forged a partnership with Educate ME Foundation Inc.

Educate ME (Educated Minorities Educating) is an Indiana nonprofit that seeks to increase the number of men and women of color in the field of education through recruiting, developing, retaining and empowering aspiring and current educators of color. Founded in 2015, Educate ME has already advanced its mission through a teacher cadet program focused on high school students, a university program to engage prospective teacher candidates, and a league match program with supportive school districts and charter school networks.



Through this partnership, Educate ME is conducting a national, cross-industry review of promising practices for engaging and recruiting communities of color that will include specific examples of effective marketing campaigns, community partnerships, and other incentives and tactics. It will also design and implement a pilot program to recruit, train, place and support up to 50 men of color in early childhood teaching roles within Central Indiana. Using marketing and recruitment best practices from across the country and involving community partners, organizations, schools and neighborhood networks, Educate ME will engage diverse male candidates from the following populations:

- African Americans and Latinos;
- high school junior or senior students;
- current college students;
- current education paraprofessionals, instructional assistants and substitute teachers;
- career changers interested in education; and
- retirees (former teachers or other professionals interested in positively impacting the young lives of children).



Educate ME Early Learning fellows will co-lead a classroom as a full-time teacher during the first year, and then will lead a classroom as a full-time teacher the second year. In both years, fellows will receive full pay and benefits. To support their ongoing training and acclimation to the field, fellows will be assigned a mentor teacher (within placement site) and program coordinator (through Educate ME) to coach, provide support, answer questions and help guide them through their experience.

The program coordinator will maintain regular contact with all fellows and assign mentor teachers to provide individualized assistance and coaching.

In addition to completing the application process, fellow candidates must complete ongoing training through Teacher Training Camps and participate in professional development opportunities over the course of the two-year commitment. In return, they will receive a sign-on bonus and living allowance stipend.

The pilot program, which launched in November 2019, will run through January 2021 with two participating cohorts. Key success measures of the program are to:

- Recruit, train and certify at least 50 men of color across two participant cohorts;
- Equip and support participants with critical knowledge, skills and strategies to be successful in their role as classroom teacher; and
- Retain 75% of recruited participants to complete the program, and 50% of those to stay in the field after completing the program.

Educate ME will produce ongoing quarterly reports of progress, findings and insights throughout the course of the pilot to be shared across the industry.

FUTURE-LOOKING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIANA



Based on the research and the pilot programs supported by the Transition to Teaching efforts, the following strategies are recommended:

- Leveraging the findings and recommendations of the market research and the Early Moments Matter Most pilot, launch a statewide industry-building campaign to raise public awareness around ECE and to support workforce development efforts.
- Support the campaign with digital and social tools, high-impact media elements, and high-profile partnerships. Provide ample supports for invested stakeholders, including providers, to extend reach and awareness.
- Consider introducing a state-sponsored, one-to-many applicant pool to deepen the pool of candidates, streamline inefficiencies and make it easier for programs to find talent. Such a solution could be positioned as a quality incentive for providers to be eligible to utilize.
- Explore opportunities to use state funds to support additional employment incentives for ECE workers. Consider engaging the business community to further support fund development.
- Develop a focused pilot with select providers to activate the near or recent retiree audience specifically around ECE. Consider engaging national partners to support.
- Expand alternative pathway offerings, namely apprenticeship programs, to speed time to productivity, drive quality and strengthen retention.
- Seed and support promising models for building diversity within Indiana's ECE workforce.