



Graduates & Employers Say AR-TEACH[®] Decreases Turnover, Boosts Pay & Skills

The Challenge in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The first five years of a child's life are marked by rapid brain development. High-quality ECCE helps lay the foundation for a child's future success. However, the cost of providing quality care exceeds what families can afford. Many talented ECCE teachers leave the field for better-paying jobs, which disrupts the stable, positive relationships that young children need to thrive. Teachers who remain often cannot access high-quality college preparation to improve their skills.

Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship® Program

Since 2019, the Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship® Program has paid for working ECCE teachers' higher education. The teacher's employer contributes a small percentage of tuition, provides paid time off for the teacher to study (with TEACH reimbursing them for substitute teacher pay), and grants the teacher a bonus or permanent pay increase upon completion of their educational goals. In exchange, teachers commit to a one-year contract with their sponsors and receive a pay increase or bonus upon completion of their education goals. The goal was to reduce turnover while increasing teacher pay, education and skills.

UAMS evaluated the program's impact, surveying 60 scholarship graduates (67% response rate) and 33 sponsoring employers (62% response), in addition to hosting focus groups with 11 graduates and nine employers. Graduates and their employers report encouraging evidence of AR TEACH reducing turnover, increasing compensation, and supporting program quality.



Decreased Turnover

85% of teachers were retained in the field post-graduation, with the vast majority (94%) reporting continued employment with their scholarship sponsor.

72% reported that AR TEACH encouraged them to stay with their sponsoring employer beyond the required contract period.

Employers reported retaining 76% of graduates, with 46% of employers retaining all graduates at the time of the survey.

A challenge remains: Among the 15% of teachers who exited ECCE, half moved to better-paying K-12 positions after their one-year commitment ended.



Improved Teaching Skills

Graduates and employers agreed the program boosted skills. Teachers rated their learning and application of knowledge based on the CLASS™ rubric. They reported substantial learning (rated 3.6/4) and strong application of program content (rated 4.3/5), with consistent outcomes for educators across positions and age groups served.

Most (90%) employers said graduates improved their early childhood-related knowledge, classroom practice and confidence. Employers also noted that graduates demonstrated new leadership skills (80%) and shared their learnings with co-workers (73%).



Degree Attainment

Seventy percent of scholarship recipients earned additional degrees. The rest earned ECCE-specific credentials, such as the Child Development Associate (CDA), which enhanced their professional qualifications.



Increased Pay & Promotions

The program led to professional and financial growth for graduates. Forty-one percent received promotions, most moving from assistant to lead teacher, and 74% received a raise.

For those who reported receiving a permanent salary increase, the average raise was \$9,547 per year.



Financial Feasibility

Most graduates (70%–76%) felt the amount they contributed to tuition and related expenses was “about right”. Very few reported the costs to be too high.

For employers, 85% said covering their share of tuition was easy, and 82% said TEACH reimbursement for substitute teachers was enough to offset some or all of the costs associated with paid release time.

However, 62% said providing paid release time was difficult.



High Program Satisfaction

The scholarship program was highly rated. Nearly all graduates and employers reported that the scholarship administrator, the Arkansas Early Childhood Association, provided high-quality support and would recommend the program.

Nearly all graduates reported ease with the scholarship application process and high-quality customer service for those who needed help.

Access the full evaluation reports on the UAMS website



Scholarship Administration



— ARKANSAS —
A Program of Arkansas Early Childhood Association

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