Results from the 2025 Evaluation of the Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship

Graduate Perceptions

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Contents

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the first evaluation of the Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (AR TEACH), focusing on the perspectives of graduates who received the scholarships. The study reveals that the scholarship program is an effective intervention for stabilizing the state's early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce. The program demonstrates measurable success in reducing staff turnover, increasing compensation, and boosting program quality. Results provide strong evidence that supporting Arkansas's early educators has great potential to support its youngest learners.

The Challenge in Early Childhood Education

The first five years of a child's life are the most important for brain development. During this time, high-quality early child care and education (ECCE) programs are crucial for a child's success, both in the short term and the long term. However, the ECCE workforce suffers from severe instability.

The early childhood educators who provide this critical care are often paid very low wages. Compensation levels are often so chronically low that talented teachers leave the field for better-paying jobs. This high staff turnover disrupts the stable, positive relationships that young children need to thrive. Those who remain often cannot access specialized college-level coursework that prepares teachers to interact with children more effectively. High-quality programs understand the need for a highly-educated, consistent workforce but are often unable — not unwilling — to offer the compensation and supports required to build one.

A Solution: The TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship

To help solve this problem, Arkansas implemented AR TEACH in 2019. Administered by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA), this program creates a unique three-way partnership between the scholar (the educator), their employer (the ECCE program), and AR TEACH.

Through this partnership, AR TEACH scholarships provide financial supplements for educators to attend accredited Arkansas colleges. Sponsoring employers contribute a small percentage of the cost and provide paid release time for the scholar to attend classes. Sponsors are contractually obligated to increase the scholar's wages or to pay a one-time bonus upon the scholar's successful

completion of their educational goals. Upon completion, scholars are contractually obligated to remain with their sponsoring employer for one year, directly addressing staff turnover.

By supporting both the educator's professional attainment and the employer's staff retention, AR TEACH stabilizes the ECCE workforce. This study focuses specifically on the experiences of the scholars who graduated from the AR TEACH and their observations of the program's impact.

Methods

This study uses a one-group posttest design and collected data using a convergent, mixed-methods methodology. A one-group design means the evaluation focuses on the experiences of those who graduated from TEACH without collecting information from a comparison group of individuals who did not graduate from TEACH Therefore, the research design does not allow us to demonstrate causation. Convergent mixed-methods studies collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously.

AR TEACH graduates were invited to participate in a survey and a series of focus groups. The final quantitative sample included 60 scholars who responded to the survey (a 67% participation rate). The resulting sample was representative of the full invited sample. Qualitative data were provided by 11 scholars, who participated in eight focus groups to provide in-depth feedback about their experiences.

Evaluation Results

The feedback from scholars was overwhelmingly positive and suggests that AR TEACH is a valuable program for strengthening the ECCE workforce.

AR TEACH Increases Educator Retention and Compensation

Among scholars who completed their studies, there was an overall 85% retention rate. Of those remaining in the field, 94% remained at the same facility, far exceeding expected retention levels. Further, only 6% of graduates report planning to leave the field within the next two years, which is about half the proportion in the broader workforce (McKelvey et al., 2022). About half of those who did exit the ECCE field transitioned to K–12 education, highlighting the need for improved cross-sector retention strategies.

Given that lack of compensation is frequently cited as one of the primary drivers of turnover in the ECCE field, it is notable that almost three out of four AR TEACH graduates reported receiving a raise post-graduation, with an average increase of $4.59 per hour (though disparities did exist across job categories).

Graduates Strongly Support AR TEACH

Scholars unanimously reported that they would recommend AR TEACH to friends and colleagues. Their satisfaction with the program's financial supports was overwhelmingly positive across all categories. Scholars also reported strong satisfaction with AECA's administration of the program. These indicators reflect strong participant trust and satisfaction, with minor challenges related to coordination between colleges and program staff when processing the scholarship and arranging release time.

Graduates Believe AR TEACH Improved Their Skills

Across positions and age groups served, graduates reported very high levels of perceived learning and practical skill application in their classrooms, as well as significant enhancement of quality interactions with children, behavior management, and engagement with families.

AR TEACH Boosts Morale and Professionalism

Scholars noted that their participation in AR TEACH reinforced and uplifted their sense of professional capability in a variety of dimensions. Improved morale and sense of self-efficacy were major themes in the qualitative data. Nearly half of graduates achieved promotions, and while just over half remained in their original roles, many scholars reported pursuing credentialing options that support quality improvement within existing positions.

Conclusions

The AR TEACH program was consistently associated with favorable participant-reported outcomes in educational advancement, career mobility, wage growth, and improved retention. Across surveys and focus groups, participants described the program as a valuable workforce development support and a contributor to quality improvement in ECCE.

These findings provide encouraging evidence that AR TEACH may play an important role in strengthening qualifications, improving compensation, and stabilizing the ECCE workforce.

Introduction

This study presents the findings of the first evaluation of the Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (AR TEACH). Here we report and analyze perspectives of AR TEACH scholarship graduates. Based on our findings, AR TEACH represents a significant benefit to the early childhood care and education workforce and, by extension, the young children of Arkansas.

Background

The first five years of life are a critical window of brain development, in which stable relationships with adults are essential for building a foundation in language, cognitive, and social skills (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000; Phillips et al., 2017). In Arkansas, these foundational relationships increasingly involve early childhood educators. Sixty-two percent of children under age 5 live in households where all parents are in the workforce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). The quality and stability of the care received in non-parental care are critical for building children's skills. Investing in the qualifications and stability of the ECCE workforce is, therefore, a favorable strategy for supporting child development and ensuring the long-term prosperity of Arkansas's communities.

Estimates of year-over-year turnover in ECCE within the past decade range 26%–47% (Bassok et al., 2021; Caven et al., 2021; Doromal et al., 2025; Thorpe et al., 2020; Vicente & Guerrero, 2024).[1] Before COVID, the ECCE workforce was already unstable and shrinking (Hur et al., 2022; McKelvey et al., 2022; McLean et al., 2020), but the pandemic accelerated this trend (ChildCare Aware, 2022; Hall et al., 2024; Salzwedel et al., 2020). Rural child care programs were significantly impacted (Salzwedel et al., 2020), creating greater strain in areas where working parents already struggled to find affordable child care, which has been defined as costing no more than 7% of a family's income (ChildCare Aware, 2022).

The situation in Arkansas is no different. Three-quarters (77%) of participants in a 2018 directors' workforce study reported at least one instructional vacancy in their program within the prior six

[1] The range represents differences in the specific kind of turnover being measured (e.g. facility-level turnover v. exiting the ECCE field), the population being studied (e.g., geographic location, funding streams, or age of children being served), and the timing of the measurement relative to COVID.

months (McKelvey et al., 2018). A 2022 workforce study found that almost half (48%) of teachers surveyed were planning to leave the field within two years or were not sure how much longer they planned to remain in early childhood (McKelvey et al., 2022).

Impact of Turnover

The children of Arkansas pay the greatest cost of turnover. Researchers have repeatedly demonstrated links between teacher turnover and negative outcomes for children (Braun et al., 2020; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Oh & Wolf, 2023; Shen et al., 2015; Tikkanen, 2021). Teacher turnover is associated with lower quality teacher-child interactions (Bassok, Markowitz et al., 2021). Because the time that children spend in ECCE programs is also the period of greatest brain development, turnover is associated with weakened development of children's language and social skills (Cassidy et al., 2011; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Hatfield et al., 2016; Whitebook et al., 1990).

For ECCE programs, turnover increases expenses related to recruiting, interviewing, and training qualified candidates. Because continuity of care is a requirement for performance in programs like Early Head Start and Head Start (EHS/HS), turnover directly reduces care quality in addition to diminishing desirable child development outcomes (McCormick et al., 2022).

Economic Security

Instability in ECCE programs has an enormous cost for families, businesses, and the state. Parents depend on child care to be productive members of the workforce. Currently, insufficient availability of affordable, quality ECCE is estimated to cost Arkansas $78 million in lost earnings, workplace productivity, and state revenue (Bishop, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that the Arkansas ECCE workforce faces severe economic instability due to market and funding constraints (McKelvey et al., 2017; McKelvey et al., 2018; McKelvey et al., 2022). Median industry wages are low for early childhood educators, falling just short of a "living wage" for a single adult household and far below what is needed for a household with a child (McLean et al., 2020). Arkansas workforce studies have shown that early childhood educators consistently face economic insecurity, including food insecurity, which impacts their ability and willingness to remain in the profession (McKelvey et al., 2017; McKelvey et al., 2022).

This is not simply an issue of programs that could increase compensation and benefits neglecting to do so. Financing in the ECCE sector is challenging because funding is often based on what

families can afford, rather than the actual cost of care (Dade & MacLean, 2023). A recent analysis suggests that only 25% of Arkansas families can afford infant care at current costs (Economic Policy Institute, 2025). Programs cannot raise tuition without jeopardizing their enrollment, and by extension, the continued operation of their business.

In short, the problem is that programs are unable to provide sufficient compensation for educators. Poor compensation is consistently predictive of staff turnover across all types of ECCE centers, without regard to location, with the highest turnover observed in private-pay centers serving children ages birth to 5 years (Caven et al., 2021).

Research demonstrates that field-specific, college-level education for early childhood educators can be part of the solution (Cassidy et al., 1995; Gardner-Neblett et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2019; Huss-Keeler et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2024).

College Education as a Promotive and Protective Factor

Given the persistent challenges of low pay and high turnover, investing in workforce education is a key strategy for addressing workforce instability. AR TEACH is built on evidence that formal education is both a promotive factor for quality and a protective factor for the workforce.

Many ECCE educators begin their careers with little to no field-specific experience, and their knowledge of pedagogical techniques may be limited only to what they may have experienced (Whitebook et al., 2009; Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). This can hamper their self-efficacy and long-term retention. College-level, field-specific training directly addresses this gap by equipping teachers with a deeper understanding of child development. This, in turn, enables them to be more effective with young children. Meta-analyses confirm that higher levels of college preparation have a statistically significant effect on improving teacher-child interactions and the quality of teaching (Egert et al., 2020; Manning et al., 2017).

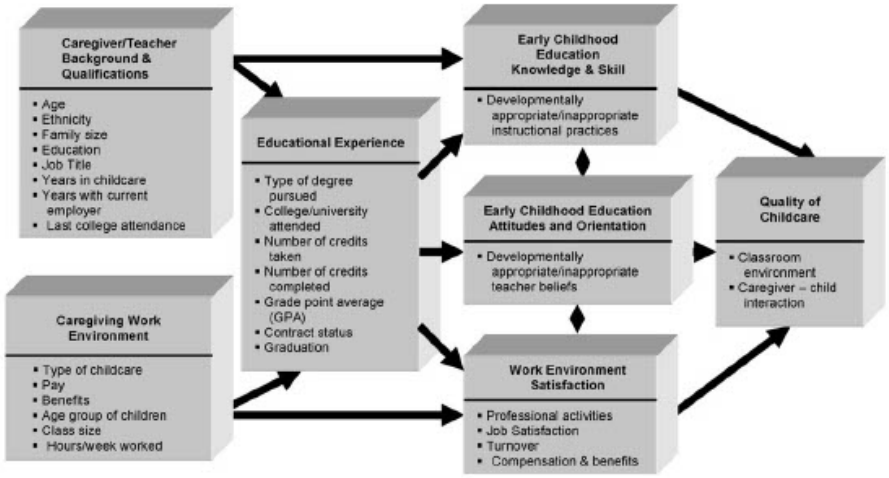
Just as importantly, higher education serves as a crucial protective factor for the educators themselves. The process of earning a degree builds an educator's confidence, professionalism, and job satisfaction (Konrad & Russell, 2021). This increased sense of self-efficacy serves as a crucial protective factor, making an educator who feels effective, respected, and competent far less likely to leave the field (Sandilos et al., 2018; Fukkink & Lont, 2007).

Education protects ECCE teachers against higher levels of stress, as teachers understand themselves to be better prepared to meet the needs of the children in their care. This sense of

professional well-being and self-efficacy, in turn, promotes better child-teacher interaction (Sandilos et al., 2018; Fukkink et al., 2007). Greater levels of professional attainment also positively correlate with improved language development (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1999) and broadly improved outcomes for children (Dreer, 2023).

This theory of change — that investing in the workforce creates a positive cascade — is visually represented in the logic model underpinning AR TEACH (Miller & Bogatova, 2009; Figure 1). As the model illustrates, inputs like "educational experience" (e.g., type of degree pursued, credits taken) directly influence intermediate outcomes such as “early childhood education knowledge and skill" and "work environment satisfaction." These factors, in turn, are the primary drivers for the ultimate goal: improving the "quality of child care.”

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Impact of Education on the Quality of Child Care
(Miller & Bogatova, 2009)



Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship

When educators forego specialized training or leave the ECCE field for better-paying jobs, the children of Arkansas pay the price. To help solve this problem, Arkansas intervened with two evidence-based programs to improve ECCE quality by reducing staff turnover. The first program was the Arkansas TEACH Early Childhood® scholarship (AR TEACH), implemented in 2019. The model was created in North Carolina in 1990 and has since been licensed and funded by more than 20 states. Longitudinal studies show the model helps create a better-equipped and better-paid workforce (Konrad & Russell, 2021; Miller & Bogatova, 2009).

AR WAGE$, the second program the state implemented in 2022, issued wage supports directly to early childhood educators. Amounts were based on the educator's level of education and were contingent on the educator's continued employment within the same program. AR WAGE$ was discontinued July 31, 2025, but AR TEACH continues to operate.

The AR TEACH scholarship addresses a tough choice that early childhood professionals often face. Getting a college degree can improve the teaching experience, but it is expensive, and the rate of return on the investment tends to be poor. While employers may want to encourage teachers to take college courses in tandem with work, they encounter significant administrative and financial barriers, including recruiting and paying qualified substitutes when coursework occurs during program hours, and being able to compensate the individual for their additional education once completed.

Through AR TEACH, qualifying teachers, referred to as "scholars," receive scholarships for college education. Their employers (licensed ECCE programs) sponsor these scholars by paying for a portion of the education expenses and by allowing them paid release time.

Table 1. Contractual Obligations of AR TEACH Scholars and Sponsors*

Scholars	Sponsors
Pay a small percentage of tuition and books	Pay a small percentage of the scholar's tuition, fees, and books and sponsor the scholar through completion of the scholar's stated educational goals
Contract to attend and pass at least 9 college credit hours during a one-year period	Agree to pay scholars for release time of up to $15 per hour, to be reimbursed by AR TEACH
Remain employed with their sponsor employer for at least one year after the contract is completed	Offer a one-time stipend or permanent wage increase upon a scholar's successful completion of their annual contract and service commitment

*Further details available in the AR TEACH Participant Handbook
https://arkansasearlychildhood.org/teach

The AR TEACH program strongly encourages sponsor programs to maintain a Better Beginnings[2] quality rating of Level 3 or higher, as the rating may be used to evaluate new or renewal applications or to resolve priority in the event of a waiting list.

Mutual commitments between teachers and their administrators are intended to ensure that higher education will be attainable for staff and that the hassle of turnover will be reduced for employers and the children who attend their programs.

Previous analyses of TEACH Early Childhood® programs in other states show that the model has delivered those outcomes. The TEACH National Center reports that 90% of graduates from 18 states continued to work in the ECCE field for three years after completing their degree (Konrad & Russell, 2021). The same study reported that participants increased their hourly earnings by $4.64 (from $12.98 to $17.62) on average when they graduated. Pennsylvania reported in its 2023–24 impact statement that the retention rate of participants was 95%, which is 25–35% higher than the national ECCE retention rate (Pennsylvania Child Care Association, 2024).

This report serves as the first evaluation of AR TEACH.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study focus on understanding the effectiveness of the AR TEACH program for cultivating workforce retention, staff compensation, and program quality in ECCE programs. Specifically, we aim to answer the following questions:

1. **Do AR TEACH graduates experience:**
    - **a.** Increased earnings?
    - **b.** Promotion to higher positions in their facility or in the field?
    - **c.** Achievement of new degrees?
    - **d.** Increased rates of retention?
2. **What are graduates' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?**

[2] Better Beginnings is the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. https://arbetterbeginnings.com/

Methods

This study uses a one-group posttest design and collected data using a convergent-mixed-methods methodology. In this context, a one-group design means the evaluation focuses on the experiences of those who graduated from TEACH without collecting information from a comparison group of individuals who did not graduate from TEACH Therefore, the research design does not allow us to demonstrate causation (McNeil, 1990; Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2018).

Convergent mixed-methods studies use data from both quantitative (i.e., survey) and qualitative (i.e., interviews) sources that are collected simultaneously (Creswell et al., 2009; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Survey data provides structured, quantifiable information about outcomes and perceptions across respondents. Focus groups provide depth and context for participants' experience in the program. Using this design enhances the validity of results by corroborating findings across both data sources.

Quantitative Methods

Sampling

AECA provided rosters of scholars and their contact information. To these rosters, the research team applied the appropriate filters to develop the invitation sample. Individuals who had completed AR TEACH with a college degree or ECCE credential as of December 31, 2024, were invited to participate in the study. Some of those invited had also been recipients of AR WAGE$ stipends.

The research team designed the survey using REDCap, a secure web application for building and managing online surveys (Harris et al., 2009, 2019). The AR TEACH graduate survey was open for three weeks, April 4, 2025–April 25, 2025. After removing two invalid emails, the final invitation sample included 93 graduates.

When the surveys were closed, the respondents included 60 AR TEACH graduates (a 67% response rate). Each participant received $25 for their time to complete the survey.

Sample Representativeness

To estimate the representativeness of the individuals who responded to our survey, we compared the characteristics of the individuals invited to participate who did not respond ("invited") with those who responded ("respondent") to the survey invitation using data available in the AECA database.

We compared the invited and the respondent samples on age, race and ethnicity, and geographic location. The analysis of AECA data suggests that respondents were representative of the group of all invited AR TEACH graduates.

Age. There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey (M = 36.88, SD = 14.12) and those who responded (M = 37.53, SD = 9.82) based on participant age (F (1,92) = .07, p > .05).

Race/Ethnicity. There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and those who responded based on race and ethnicity (*Cramer's V* = .15, p > .05).

Job Role. There were no differences in the proportion of individuals who were invited to take the survey and did not respond, and those who responded based on position at application to AR TEACH (*Cramer's V* = .35, p > .05).

Geographic Location. There were no differences in the proportion of individuals in urban/rural counties between those who were invited to take the survey and did not respond (urban n = 11, rural n = 22) and those who responded (urban n = 29, rural n = 31) (*Cramer's V* =.14, p > .05).

Survey Measures

This study used a variety of measures adapted from the following sources:

- A national ECCE workforce study (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2013)
- Child Care Services Association evaluation of the North Carolina AR TEACH program (Child Care Services Association, n.d.)
- Previous Arkansas workforce studies (McKelvey et al., 2018; McKelvey et al., 2022)
- Relevant academic literature (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003)

Demographics and Workplace Characteristics

The survey asked respondents for demographic information, such as race/ethnicity, education, experience, and the age group of children they primarily serve. It also collected information about their employer, which was combined with administrative data to determine workplace characteristics.

Compensation and Benefits

We asked respondents about their average weekly work hours, their pay, and the benefits offered by their employer (e.g., paid vacation, paid sick/personal days, or health insurance). Respondents entered their per-hour pay. To calculate annual pay, we multiplied per-hour pay by 2,080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year). For analysis and reporting purposes, we combined data from participants who stated they work full-time and those who work part-time.

Program Satisfaction and Impact on Staff Knowledge and Classroom Practice

The survey asked various questions to determine respondent satisfaction with AR TEACH, including whether they would recommend the program to a friend, what (if any) challenges they experienced applying for the program, whether they received good customer service from the program staff, if their portion of the financial responsibility made participation difficult, and if there were tax implications related to participation.

We also asked how much they had learned from college coursework about aspects of early education that are linked to the CLASS™ instructional quality assessments (Hamre et al., 2014; LaParo et al., 2012; Pianta et al., 2007), and to what extent they had been able to apply that knowledge in their classrooms.

Participants rated their learning on a scale of 1–4 (*I didn't learn anything new about this*, *I was reminded of things I had forgotten about this*, *I learned a few new things about this*, or *I learned many things about this*) with an option for *unsure*, which was marked as *missing* during the analysis.

For those who primarily work with infants, we included one question on being a responsive caregiver. For those who primarily work with toddlers or mixed ages, we asked two questions on providing emotional and behavioral supports, as well as providing engaged support for children's learning. For those who primarily work with children in preschool, we asked three questions on creating a warm environment, classroom organization, and providing instructional support or

connecting new concepts to children's experiences. We provided short descriptions of each concept to participants that merged the existing descriptions in CLASS™ of all the sub-competencies that make up each concept.

For example, the description of the responsive caregiver competency in the infant group was:

"How much did you learn in your courses about how to be a Responsive Caregiver to children? This includes things like: How to be a warm, attentive caregiver that responds to infants' individual needs, encourages their language development through back-and-forth exchanges, and helps them feel safe to explore the world around them. (Choose the option that fits best)."

Participants rated how much they were able to apply what they learned in their classroom on a scale of 1–5 (*nothing*, *very little*, *some*, *much*, *all/nearly all*) for each competency. Again, the number of competency questions varied by age of classroom, and an *unsure* option was offered but removed during analysis.

Workforce Retention

We asked a variety of questions to assess different aspects of retention.

First, we asked how long participants have worked in early childhood and how much longer they plan to stay in the field. This was measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*less than one year*) to 5 (*11 years or more*), with the second question including a not sure option.

We then asked participants how long they had been with their current employer and how much longer they planned to stay. Both were measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*less than one year*) to 5 (*11 years or more*), with the second question including a not sure option. For those who indicated two years or less, we asked what reasons would motivate their potential exit — impending retirement, seeking higher pay, or health-related reasons — using a Likert scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*).

We also inquired if participating in AR TEACH encouraged them to stay with their employer beyond the mandated contract period and if it has encouraged them to stay in their current early education field. Both questions were measured on a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Qualitative Methods

Sampling

Using the REDCap survey platform, the research team sent all 93 scholars, who had graduated through December 31, 2024, an email invitation to sign up for a focus group. Groups were offered on multiple days a week and at varied times to increase the likelihood of participation.

After registration, participants received an automated confirmation email with a Zoom link, along with email and text reminders, the day before and the day of their group. If a participant missed their original focus group, we provided an invitation to register for a new group.

Attendance was similar during both rounds of data collection. (Table 2)

Table 2. Focus Group Recruitment Summary

Round	Groups Offered	Groups Canceled*	Completed Groups	Participants
Round 1 (June 17 – July 11)	8	2	6	9
Round 2 (Sept 3 – Sept 17)	5	3	2	2
Overall (June 17 – Sept 17)	13	5	8	11
Note: groups were only canceled due to no registration or no-shows.				

Focus Group Measures and Procedures

Data Collection

We thematically linked the focus group protocol for AR TEACH participants to the theory of change and design of the program (Figure 1).[3] The research team developed all questions independently (not drawing from an existing measure).

[3] A copy of the interview guide can be found in a separate technical appendix and is available on request.

Seventy-five minutes were reserved for each focus group. Actual time spent in the groups ranged 20–75 minutes, depending on attendance, participant enthusiasm, and the level of detail provided. Interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed using Zoom. Each participant received $50 for their time.

One of two facilitators, neither involved in AR TEACH implementation, conducted the focus groups. Each facilitator had the flexibility to ask the questions from the guide in a slightly different way depending on their personal facilitation style, the participants' level of understanding, and the flow of conversation, but were to maintain the "spirit of the question" in any adaptations. Some questions were skipped if the groups ran too long.

Analysis

The research team used the interview guide as a starter template for coding. We used a form of rapid qualitative analysis (Ryan & Goulding, 2023; Vindrola-Padros, n.d.; Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020) in which each participant's responses were summarized by focus group question using a single-coding methodology.

The theme that was most prominent in the statement or that was unique from other statements determined the code in which it was organized and counted. Summary statements were then merged across groups and organized by similarity to identify common themes. A single, experienced qualitative researcher coded all groups.

Results

Quantitative Results

The following section summarizes the demographics of graduates, their education and experience, as well as characteristics of the programs for which they work. Full results can be found in the Appendix.

AR TEACH Graduate Characteristics

Race and Ethnicity of Graduates

The graduates in the sample reported a racial/ethnic breakdown of 74% White/Caucasian, 16% Black/African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino(a), 3% other, and 2% multiracial. (Appendix Table 1)

Roles and Employment Status of Graduates

At the time of the survey, 85% of respondents reported working in ECCE practice. Among these, the largest proportion was lead teachers (*n* = 24, 40%). Another 11.7% (*n* = 7) were assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, or teacher aides; and 23% (*n* = 14) served as directors or assistant directors of a center-based facility. Smaller numbers of respondents reported working as family child care providers or owners (*n* = 1, 2%), home visitors or home visiting coordinators (*n* = 1, 2%), or early childhood development specialists or disability coordinators (*n* = 1, 2%). A small proportion also reported serving as educational coaches, mentors, or curriculum coordinators (*n* = 3, 5%).

Nine (15%) respondents were no longer in ECCE practice. Individuals reported having left the field (*n* = 5, 8%) or that they were working in K–12 education (*n* = 4, 7%). (Appendix Table 2A)

We examined the employment status of graduates who were working in ECCE (*n* = 51). When asked how many hours they work per week in early childhood, just over half of AR TEACH graduates reported working 31–40 hours per week (*n* = 27, 54%), and another 34% (*n* = 17) worked 41–50 hours per week. A small number reported working more than 60 hours (*n* = 3, 6%) or between 51–60 hours (*n* = 1, 2%). Few worked part-time schedules, with 2% (*n* = 1) working 11–20 hours and another 2% (*n* = 1) working 21–30 hours. (Appendix Table 2B)

Finally, we asked graduates working in the ECCE field if they had a second paying job and to specify the seasons of additional employment. Most (*n* = 41, 82%) reported that they did not, though 14% (*n* = 7) had a second job year-round, 2% (*n* = 1) had a second job during the school year only, and 2% (*n* = 1) had a second job during the summer only. (Appendix Table 2C)

Educational Status of Graduates

At the time of the survey, 30% (*n* = 18) had completed some college, including having a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). Just over a quarter of respondents (*n* = 17, 28%) reported having an associate's degree, followed by 22% (*n* = 13) with a master's degree, and 20% (*n* = 12) with a bachelor's degree. (Appendix Table 3A)

Nearly half (*n* = 29, 48%) of graduates reported having a CDA. An additional 5% (*n* = 3) reported planning to complete a CDA. Of graduates with an associate's degree or higher, three-quarters (*n* = 18, 75%) said their degree was related to early education (e.g., early childhood education, child development, psychology, or social work). (Appendix Tables 3A–3C)

Program Characteristics

We asked AR TEACH graduates for information about the facility in which they work. Using publicly available data about programs from the Arkansas public child care search,[4] we examined the programs' urban or rural location classification based on the 2023 RUCA codes (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2024), School Readiness Assistance (SRA; voucher) participation, and program Better Beginnings rating, which was dichotomized at Level 4 or higher.[5]

Of those who shared their program information, just over half (*n* = 22, 52%) work in urban settings. Two-thirds (*n* = 34, 83%) work in programs that accept SRA vouchers. Finally, 34% (*n* = 14) worked in facilities with Better Beginnings Level of 4 or greater. (Appendix Tables 4A–4C)

Compensation and Benefits

Wages at Time of AR TEACH Application

The survey asked what the educator's hourly wage was before they applied for AR TEACH. Lead teachers reported an average of $14.18 per hour (*n* = 13; $29,494 annual). Hourly pay for assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, and teacher aides was $14.76 (*n* = 8; $30,701 annual); for directors and assistant directors $15.03 (*n* = 3; $31,262 annual); and for home visitors and home-based educators $15.96 (*n* = 1, $33,197).

Compensation before applying for AR TEACH was not available for 34 (57%) respondents. Of those, 20 selected "prefer not to answer," and 14 were unreported. (Appendix Table 5)

Benefits at Time of Survey

[4] https://ardhslicensing.my.site.com/elicensing/s/search-provider/find-providers?language=en_US&tab=CC

[5] School Readiness Assistance is the state of Arkansas's child care subsidy program funded through the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Arkansas Better Chance is state-funded pre-kindergarten programming.

The survey asked participants to report the benefits they currently receive. Insurance benefits were offered to 68% of respondents, though access varied by type. Health and dental insurance were offered to 60%, and disability and life insurance were offered to 46% each.

The most commonly reported benefit was access to some form of paid leave, with 84% of graduates indicating that their programs offered at least one type of paid time off. This included paid holidays (64%), paid time off for sickness (72%), and paid time off for vacation (56%). Some form of maternity leave was much less common, at 38%, and this was exclusively limited to unpaid maternity leave. None (0%) of scholars reported receiving paid maternity leave.

Respondents less commonly reported support for professional development (PD). Just over half (54%) said they were paid for training required by licensing, while only 20% said they received compensation for PD beyond those requirements.

Just over a third (34%) received some form of cost reduction from their program. This includes 26% who received free meals at work, and 18% whose program offered free or reduced child care fees for their own children (excluding the use of vouchers).

Programs offered retirement benefits to 40% of participants, and 34% said their programs offered periodic raises based on performance, education, or cost-of-living adjustments.

Notably, 8% of graduates reported receiving none of these job benefits.

The data above excludes respondents who reported leaving the field (n = 9) and individuals who did not respond to any of the listed benefits within the question set (n = 1). (Table 3; Appendix Table 6)

Table 3. Job Benefits Offered to AR TEACH Graduates

(*n* = 50)	
Insurance (offered at least one)	68%
Health insurance	60%
Dental insurance	60%
Disability and/or life insurance	46%
Holidays and leave (offered at least one)	84%
Paid vacation days/PTO	56%
Paid holidays	64%
Paid sick/personal days/PTO	72%
Maternity leave (offered at least one)	38%
Unpaid maternity leave	38%
Paid maternity leave	0%
Paid training (offered at least one)	54%
Paid for training hours required by licensing	54%
Paid or stipend for additional training beyond required hours	20%
Cost reductions (offered at least one)	34%
Free meals for staff	26%
Free/reduced child care fees (not including vouchers)	18%
Other	
Periodic increases in wages based on cost of living or performance/education	34%
Retirement or pension plan	40%
Offered no benefits	8%

Note: Results do not include participants who left the field or those who failed to endorse any answer option.

Program Satisfaction and Impact on Staff Knowledge and Skills

The following report section covers graduates' satisfaction with the AR TEACH program and perceptions of the financial responsibilities and requirements of the program. It also includes scholars' perceptions of their increase in knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge in the classroom.

Financial Feasibility

We asked scholars whether the portion of various education costs they personally covered felt *about right*, *too small*, or *too large* regarding tuition, books, travel, testing fees, and technology. In all categories except testing fees, the majority reported their share to be *about right*. Half of the respondents said testing fees did not apply to them (*n* = 30, 51%), and 39% said that their share of the fees was *about right* (*n* = 23, 39%). (Appendix Tables 7A–7E)

We then asked participants if the paid release time they got for classes and assignments was sufficient to keep up with their work. Three-quarters said it was either *more than enough* or *enough* (*n* = 44, 75%), and 17% said it was *not quite enough* or *not nearly enough* (*n* = 10). Nearly 10% of participants said they were not provided paid release time (*n* = 5, 9%). (Appendix Table 8)

We asked participants if they had to pay taxes on income related to their AR TEACH scholarship (IRS guidelines during the program were income more than $600 per year).[6] Just over half (*n* = 31, 53%) were not sure whether they owed taxes due to AR TEACH, 24% (*n* = 14) said they did owe taxes, while an equal number (24%, *n* = 14) said they did not. (Appendix Table 9A)

It is important to note that approximately half (*n* = 29, 48%) of the AR TEACH graduates were also participating in the AR WAGE$ program and received wage stipends that could have contributed to their tax liability. To investigate this possibility, we examined reported tax liability for AR TEACH graduates who were also recipients of AR WAGE$ with those who were not.

For AR TEACH graduates only (*n* = 31), 33.3% (*n* = 10) said they had no tax liability. For those in both programs (*n* = 4), 14% said they had no tax liability. With the difference of 20 percentage points for those in both programs, it is likely that co-participation in AR WAGE$ may have contributed to tax liability for graduates. (Appendix Tables 9B–9C)

[6] The semester travel stipend ($200) and annual bonuses ($350–$700) may have contributed to IRS reporting.

Following up, we asked participants who reported paying taxes on their AR TEACH scholarship (*n* = 14) whether this presented them with difficulties. The majority responded that they had no difficulties with paying taxes (57%). Of those who did report difficulties, 2 respondents (14.3%) reported that the paperwork was challenging, and 4 (29%) reported that it impacted their financial situation. The remaining respondent was unsure whether difficulties were encountered. (Appendix Table 9D)

General Satisfaction

To gauge scholars' experience of applying for the program, we asked if they had any of eight different potential issues during the application process. All but one scholar (*n* = 58, 98%) reported having no issues with the application process. The one who had difficulties said the questions on the application were difficult to answer or were confusing. (Appendix Table 10A)

Similarly, nearly all respondents who had contact with AR TEACH staff agreed they received good customer service, with 85% (*n* = 50) saying they *strongly agree* and 12% (*n* = 7) saying they *agree*. Only two participants said *strongly disagree* (3%), although these respondents also said that they would recommend AR TEACH to others. (Appendix Table 10B)

When asked if, given the chance to go back in time, would they apply for the program again, almost all (*n* = 56, 95%) selected *yes*, with none choosing *no*, and only 5% (*n* = 3) responding *not sure*. (Appendix Table 10C)

Regardless of any other reported difficulty in every other category, all respondents (*n* = 59) said they would recommend the program to a friend who was interested in applying. (Appendix Table 10D)

Impact on Staff Knowledge and Classroom Practice

To gauge the program's impact on knowledge and classroom practice, we asked AR TEACH graduates who were working in ECCE center-based programs (*n* = 30) as teachers (*n* = 24) or teacher assistants (*n* = 6) to rate their level of learning on a variety of topics related to teacher-child interaction behaviors assessed with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS; Hamre et al., 2014; LaParo et al., 2012; Pianta et al., 2007).

The items to which individuals responded were specific to the age group of the children in the classroom. For those who primarily worked with infants (*n* = 4), this included one question about

content related to responsive caregiving. Those who primarily worked with toddlers (*n* = 1, 3%) or mixed ages (*n* = 1, 3%) were asked two questions with examples that captured the scales related to providing 1) emotional and behavioral supports and 2) engaged support for children's learning. Those who primarily worked in preschool classrooms (*n* = 24, 80%) were asked three questions with examples that captured the content of CLASS scales, providing 1) emotional support, 2) classroom organization, and 3) providing instructional support. (Appendix Table 11A)

Participants rated their learning for each item on a scale of 1–4: *I didn't learn anything new about this*, *I was reminded of things I had forgotten about this*, *I learned a few new things about this*, *and I learned many things about this*. Because of the small samples, an average knowledge gain score was computed separately for each age group across all items measured.

The average knowledge gain across all age groups was 3.6 out of 4, which corresponds to learning between *a few* and *many* things. Further, there was no difference between lead teachers' and assistant teachers' ratings of overall learning (F (1, 27) = 0.01, p = .91, η^2 = .001). (Appendix Table 11B)

We also asked participants to rate how much they were able to apply what they learned in their classroom by rating their application on a scale of 1–5 (*nothing*, *very little*, *some*, *much*, and *all/nearly all*) for each instructional support construct measured. Like the rating of knowledge gained, the number of questions varied by primary ages served. Again, an average score was computed separately for each age group across all items measured. The average score across age groups was 4.3 out of 5, which corresponds to a response between being able to apply *much* and *all/nearly all* of the knowledge gained. Further, we identified no statistical differences between lead teachers' and assistant teachers' ratings of how much they were able to apply what they learned (F (1, 27) = 0.05, p = .83, η^2 = .002). (Appendix Table 11C)

Advancement and Aspirations

To evaluate how the AR TEACH program influenced graduates' progress in education, career, and compensation, we included comprehensive survey questions related to their educational attainment, job position, salary at the time of their initial AR TEACH application, and their current status in these areas. This dual-point comparison allowed us to measure growth over time and to understand how AR TEACH supports long-term professional development and economic mobility

in the early childhood education field. We also asked graduates about their future aspirations for gaining additional education.

Educational Progress and Future Aspirations

At application to the AR TEACH program, 42% of graduates had some college but no degree (*n* = 25, 42%), followed by 28% with a bachelor's degree (*n* = 17), 18% with high school/GED (*n* = 11), or 12% with an associate's degree (*n* = 7). (Appendix Table 12A, and level of educational attainment at the time of the survey in Appendix Table 3A)

We compared the education that graduates reported when they applied for AR TEACH with their highest level of education at the time of the survey. There were 18 individuals (30%) whose highest degree remained the same, indicating their AR TEACH scholarship supported ECCE-specific credentialing. Twelve of those individuals had some college, 2 had associate's degrees, and 4 had bachelor's degrees. The majority of AR TEACH participants (*n* = 42, 70%) reported earning additional degrees, which included:

- 11 who moved from a high school diploma/GED to some college (including a CDA; *n* = 6) or associate's degree (*n* = 5).
- 13 who moved from some college to an associate's degree (*n* = 10) or bachelor's degree (*n* = 3).
- 5 who moved from an associate's degree to a bachelor's degree.
- 13 who moved from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree.

(Appendix Table 12B)

When asked whether they had completed all the education they would like to complete, 65% (*n* = 39) responded *no.* Most said a bachelor's degree was their highest education goal (*n* = 14, 36%), followed by a doctorate (*n* = 10, 26%), a master's degree (*n* = 9, 23%), or an associate's degree (*n* = 2, 5%). The other category (*n* = 4, 10%) included a second master's or specialist degree (*n* = 1), teaching license (*n* = 2), and unsure (*n* = 1). (Appendix Table 12C)

Career Advancement

To determine whether participants demonstrated changes in position, we asked participants to report their position when they first applied to the AR TEACH program (Appendix Table 13A) and compared that to their reported positions at the time of the survey. (Appendix Table 2A)

At the time of application to the AR TEACH program, scholars were most commonly working as lead teachers (n = 23, 38%) and assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, or teacher aides (n = 23, 38%). Another 17% (n = 10) reported serving as directors or assistant directors of a center-based program. Smaller proportions worked in FCCHs (n = 1, 2%); were home visitors or coordinators (n = 2, 3%); or were educational coaches, mentors, or curriculum coordinators (n = 1, 2%).

Roughly half of the participants (*n* = 28, 55%) reported no change in their position. The majority were lead teachers (*n* = 11, 39%), followed by directors/assistant directors (*n* = 9, 32%), 5 (18%) were assistant teachers, and other positions included one FCCH owner, one home visitor/coordinator, and one curriculum coordinator.

The next largest group (*n* = 21, 41%) was comprised of educators with upward career trajectories since completing AR TEACH:

- 13 (62%) moved from assistant to lead teachers.
- 5 (24%) moved from lead or assistant teacher to director or assistant director.
- 1 (5%) moved from a lead teacher to an early childhood development specialist.
- 2 people (10%) moved into educational/curriculum coordinator roles from assistant teacher and home visitor roles.

Two individuals (4%) reported job changes that may suggest a downward trajectory, moving from lead teacher to assistant teacher positions.

In addition, 9 (15%) individuals reported no longer working in ECCE. Of those, 4 (44%) reported now working in K-12, while the remaining 5 (66%) graduates had left the field entirely. (Appendix Table 13B)

Earnings Growth

Among those AR TEACH graduates who are still in ECCE practice and who reported their current pay at the time of survey, we found the average current salary across all positions was $17.37 per hour (*n* = 27; $36,130 per year). Lead teachers reported an average pay of $18.53 per hour (*n* = 10; $38,542 per year), while assistant teachers/paraprofessionals/teacher aides reported $13.64 (*n* = 5; $28,371 per year). Directors and assistant directors earned $16.37 per hour on average (*n* = 9; $34,050 per year). Salaries of education coaches and curriculum coordinators were $21.50 per hour (*n* = 2; $44,720 per year), and the single early childhood development specialist reported

earning $25.00 per hour (*n* = 1, $52,000 per year). Twenty-four graduates (40%) chose not to disclose their income. (Appendix Table 14A)

We asked graduates about changes to their salaries. The majority reported having received a raise since completing the AR TEACH (*n* = 37, 74%). (Appendix Table 14B)

Those who reported salary growth were asked to provide their salary when they applied for a scholarship. The average wage increase across all positions was $4.59 per hour ($9,547 per year), but there was wide variation in the sample (minimum=$0.75, maximum=$16.00). It is important to note that this calculation includes only graduates who reported that they had received a salary increase and also provided information for their pre- and post-graduation income (*n* = 16).

While the samples are small, wage growth was associated with post-graduation career advancement. On average, those remaining in the same position (*n* = 8) reported an average hourly increase of $3.16 ($6,573 per year), while those whose positions demonstrated upward mobility (*n* = 8) reported a salary increase of $6.02 per hour ($12,522 per year). (Appendix Table 14C)

We calculated a weighted estimate of earnings growth across all AR TEACH graduate scholars remaining in ECCE. For respondents who chose not to provide information about their wages, estimates were made using the following assumptions:

- For individuals who reported no wage increase, we assigned a salary increase value of $0.
- Individuals who reported that they had received a salary increase but preferred not to provide income information were assigned one of two values:
    - Those who remained in the same position were assigned the average of those who reported their salary increase amounts and remained in the same position ($3.16 per hour).
    - Those who reported career growth were assigned the average salary increase of those who reported their salary increase amounts and reported career growth ($6.02 per hour).

Using these assumptions, the weighted estimate of salary growth for all AR TEACH graduates is $3.31 (*SD* = 3.58) per hour or $6,885 per year. (Appendix Table 14D)

Workforce Retention

Impact of AR TEACH on Retention

A majority of graduates (85%) remained in ECCE practice after graduation. Nearly all graduates who were still in ECCE practice (*n* = 48, 94%) reported staying at the same facility they were employed by at the time of application. (Appendix Table 15A)

We asked these respondents about their tenure with their current employer. More than half of the sample (*n* = 28, 55%) reported working in their program for 6 or more years (6–10 years, *n* = 18, 35%; and 11 or more years, *n* = 10, 20%). The next largest group of graduates reported working for their current employer for 3–5 years (*n* = 17, 33%). The remaining graduates reported less than 1 year (*n* = 2, 4%) or 1–2 years (*n* = 4, 8%) of tenure with their employer. (Appendix Table 15B)

These graduates were asked if participating in AR TEACH made them more likely to stay in the ECCE field. The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (*n* = 37, 74%). (Appendix Table 15C)

We also asked whether participating in AR TEACH had encouraged them to stay with their sponsoring employer. Nearly 3 out of 4 (72%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their retention with their sponsoring employer was positively impacted by their AR TEACH experience. (Appendix Table 15D)

Impact of AR TEACH on Turnover Intention

In ECCE settings, turnover intention describes an educator's conscious decision to leave their current role and seek employment elsewhere. Intent to leave is widely recognized as the strongest predictor of actual staff turnover, which significantly impacts program quality and child outcomes (Bassok, Markowitz et al., 2021; Cassidy et al., 2011; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Hatfield et al., 2016; Whitebook et al., 1990; Braun et al., 2020; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Oh & Wolf, 2023; Shen et al., 2015; Tikkanen, 2021).

When asked how much longer AR TEACH graduates plan to remain in the ECCE field, the largest proportion of scholars (*n* = 30, 59%) indicated they planned to stay for 11 years or longer. The next largest proportion of scholars (*n* = 15, 29%) were not sure. (Appendix Table 16A)

When asked how much longer participants plan to remain with their current employer, again, the largest proportion of scholars planned to remain 11 years or longer (*n* = 26, 51%) or were not sure how long they planned to remain (*n* = 15, 29%). (Appendix Table 16B)

We asked those who indicated they planned to leave their current employer within 2 years or less (*n* = 3, 6%) to rate the reasons for considering leaving. The most common reasons were wanting "a higher paying job" (67%) and "other personal reasons" (67%). (Appendix Table 16C)

Qualitative Results

Graduate Characteristics

The following section summarizes the demographics of the 11 AR TEACH graduates in our focus groups, including their positions and race/ethnicity.

Positions of Participants

Most participants were lead teachers (*n* = 5, 46%) or director/assistant directors of a center-based program (*n* = 4, 36%). One participant selected assistant teacher (9%), and 1 selected other (9%). Participants were evenly split between working with preschool-age children (*n* = 5, 46%) and not working directly with children (i.e., in an administrative or director role; *n* = 5, 46%), with 1 working with infants (9%).

Race and Ethnicity of Participants

Most identified as White/Caucasian (*n* = 9, 82%), with one each identifying as Black/African American (*n* = 1, 9%), Hispanic/Latino (*n* = 1, 9%), multiracial (*n* = 1, 9%), or prefer not to answer (*n* = 1, 9%).

Thematic Results

Growth and Learning

We asked focus group participants to share something surprising they have learned about themselves since they started the AR TEACH program. The major theme that emerged was that

they were surprised at their own strength, perseverance, and success in balancing the demands of work, school, and often parenting as well.

Motivation to Pursue More Education

We asked participants to share what motivated them to pursue more education, given the time, effort, and financial commitment involved.

Almost unanimously, participants mentioned they had wanted to pursue more education but did not know how to pay for it. One participant also mentioned she wanted a job where she could have the summers off with her children, and she knew getting her CDA would qualify her to work at a place with that schedule. Another mentioned wanting to be a role model for her children.

Practical Impact of AR TEACH

We asked participants how their AR TEACH coursework has benefited them, and what has changed about the way they approach teaching or how they work with children and families. Various benefits included:

- Developing mentorship or leadership skills.
- Giving them a path to more financial stability and knowledge.
- Offering the chance to learn conceptually in the college classroom at the same time as learning practically through working in an early education program.
- Building relationships with children and families.
- Higher-quality teaching practices and interactions with children.
- From a leadership role, increased empathy for teachers who handled the responsibilities of AR TEACH studies while working.

Specific skills they mentioned putting into practice were individualizing instruction and extending conversations with questions. They also reported increased application of knowledge about child development. One participant mentioned learning about developmental differences, delays, and disabilities, and sharing that knowledge with fellow teachers. Another stated she used to see early education as babysitting, but now she sees it as important kindergarten preparation.

Application Process

We asked participants if any part of the application process was difficult or burdensome and if there was anything they would recommend changing.

Nearly all participants were satisfied with the application process. One mentioned that she found the online application a little challenging. Two mentioned communication breakdowns between staff at their college and AR TEACH staff when processing the scholarship. Three others specifically mentioned staff being attentive and helpful.

Director Support

The majority of participants noted high levels of support from their directors. When difficulties were voiced (n=4), most were issues related to release time. One scholar reported that their program had its director turn over multiple times, which made getting paperwork processed difficult.

Turnover and Retention Ideas

We asked participants their opinion on what, other than pay increases, helps keep people in their positions or in the early education field, and what causes them to leave.

Four mentioned a need for support and mentorship, specifically in managing challenging behavior, family engagement, or general mentorship. Another three participants wanted supportive, collaborative work environments, and one mentioned job flexibility. One said it is more about whether people are in the right career or not. Finally, a participant said it is difficult to afford paid care for one's own school-age children when you must work throughout the summer.

Final Thoughts

When asked for any final thoughts, one scholar said that the program is really helpful and they hope it continues. Two participants reassured future AR TEACH scholars that, despite the difficulty, it is possible to get through school, and it is worth it in the end.

Discussion

The findings presented in this report reflect the first data gathered from AR TEACH graduate scholars. The study demonstrates positive impacts of AR TEACH on individual outcomes, with high levels of reported satisfaction. Data were gathered to answer the following research questions:

1. **Do AR TEACH graduates experience:**
    a. Increased earnings
    b. Promotion to higher positions in their facility or in the field
    c. Achievement of new degrees
    d. Increased rates of retention
2. **What are graduates' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?**

Research Question 1a: Do graduates experience increased earnings?

The data suggest that AR TEACH graduates experience increased wages, especially when accompanied by promotion.

A majority received permanent wage increases

Employers were contractually obligated to provide either a salary increase or a one-time bonus. Seventy-four percent (n = 37) reported a post-graduation salary increase, while 26% (*n* = 13) did not (i.e., were likely provided a one-time bonus).

For those who provided both pre-program and current pay and also reported that they had received a salary increase (*n* = 16, 43%), the average increase was $4.59 per hour ($9,547 per year).

Unsurprisingly, individuals who experienced upward mobility (*n* = 8) reported a higher average increase of $6.02 per hour ($12,522 annually), while those who remained in the same position (*n* = 8) saw an average wage increase of $3.16 per hour ($6,573 annually). These findings suggest a strong correlation between career progression and earnings growth, though the sample sizes were limited.

To estimate earnings growth for all participants in this study, we applied weighted assumptions. Those who did not report wage increases were assigned $0 salary change, while those who acknowledged increases but withheld salary figures were assigned average hourly gains based on career status: $3.16 per hour for same-position and $6.02 per hour for career advancement. Using this method, the weighted average salary growth was calculated at $3.31 per hour (SD = 3.58), or $6,885 annually.

Research Question 1b: Do graduates experience promotion to higher positions?

Our findings documented meaningful changes in professional roles among AR TEACH graduates.

Scholars experienced career advancement

Four in ten graduates (*n* = 21, 41%) experienced upward mobility following program completion. The majority of those (62%) advanced from assistant to lead teacher roles. Additionally, graduates reported a combined 24% moving into director or assistant director positions, while others transitioned into specialist or coordinator roles, indicating diversification of career pathways.

Just over half of participants (*n* = 28, 55%) remained in the same role post-graduation. This likely reflects credentialing options that support quality improvement within existing positions, which is evidenced by graduates reporting increased knowledge and skills related to their work. (See the section below, *Reported Impacts of Increased Education on Competencies and Practice*, for details.)

Research Question 1c: Do graduates experience achievement of new degrees or credentials?

The majority achieve degrees or credentials

In this evaluation, 70% of participants (*n* = 42) earned additional degrees during their time in the program. Among the 30% of participants (*n* = 18) who maintained the same level of education, many received ECCE-specific credentials, such as CDAs, which enhance their professional qualifications. While this demonstrates the program's effectiveness in supporting upward educational mobility, it is important to note that the invited sample included only those with completed AR TEACH contracts.

Despite having completed their AR TEACH educational goals, 65% of graduates reported that they were interested in pursuing further education. Of those, 36% aimed for a bachelor's degree, 26% for a doctorate, 23% for a master's, 5% for an associate's, and 10% selected "other" goals. These results suggest the program's effectiveness in helping scholars attain their education as well as opening pathways to further professional aspirations.

Research Question 1d: Do graduates experience increased rates of retention?

For this study, we explored retention both at the facility level and within the field. We also examined turnover intent, defined as the desire or plan to leave within two years.

There is excellent retention among AR TEACH graduates

There was a 15% turnover reported by AR TEACH graduates. It is important to note that nearly half of those who left ECCE became educators in the K-12 system, where pay for similarly educated teachers is higher. Some states have worked to prevent turnover in state-funded ECCE programs by introducing pay parity policies, which equalize compensation between staff in preschool and K-12 classrooms paid with state funding (Kilander et al., 2022).

Among graduates still working in ECCE, nearly all (n = 48, 94%) remained at the same facility where they were employed at the time of application, and 65% planned to stay with their current employer for at least three more years. When asked about the program's impact on their decision, 72% reported that AR TEACH encouraged them to stay with their sponsoring employer beyond the required contract period.

Evaluations of ECCE turnover outside of Arkansas in the past decade estimate annual turnover rates of 26%–47% (Bassok et al., 2021; Caven et al., 2021; Doromal et al., 2025; Thorpe et al., 2020; Vicente & Guerrero, 2024). Comparing this rate of retention to existing studies is difficult because reported rates of turnover in ECCE settings vary widely depending on how it is measured (facility-level turnover v. exit from the field), the specific population (location, funding stream, age of children served, etc.), and timing of measurement (pre-, post-, or during pandemic).

Given these estimated turnover rates, scholar-reported retention rates represent a stark reduction in expected facility-level turnover.

Turnover intent is low

Based on the data from the past two Arkansas workforce studies (McKelvey et al., 2017, 2022), the two-year turnover intent from the field rate among AR TEACH graduates (4%) is less than half that of the broader early education workforce (10% in 2017 and 11% in 2022).

Results on reducing exit from the field and turnover intent are positive but are based on a small number of participants. Additional results with future participants will provide more information on the program's impact in this specific aspect of turnover.

While AR TEACH shows promise in reducing turnover among scholars, system-wide issues surrounding compensation, benefits, and advancement opportunities remain critical factors influencing stability among the wider workforce. Addressing these systemic challenges is essential to sustaining the gains made through educational investment in programs like AR TEACH and ensuring long-term retention of qualified professionals.

Research Question 2: What are participants' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?

Satisfaction rates are 95% or more on all measures

Accessible and Streamlined Application Process

Nearly all (98%) graduates reported no issues during the application process, such as difficulty emailing or uploading required forms, the application being too long, or difficulty obtaining pay stubs or tax forms. Only one graduate reported a challenge that "questions on the application were difficult to answer or were confusing."

High-Quality Customer Service

Graduates reported receiving excellent support from AECA staff, with 97% of respondents who spoke to AECA staff saying they had a positive service experience.

Recommendation Rate 100%

Nearly all (95%) graduates indicated they would reapply if given the opportunity, and 100% would recommend the program to others. Focus groups also expressed high positive satisfaction. Participants did not have any complaints about the application process, and two participants specifically mentioned AECA staff being attentive and helpful. Two participants mentioned issues with communication breakdowns between staff at their college and AR TEACH staff regarding the processing of their scholarship, so AECA may explore avenues to prevent similar frustration in the future, if they have not already done so.

Graduates perceive cost-sharing favorably

AR TEACH graduates reported generally positive perceptions of their financial contributions toward program-related costs. Across tuition, books, travel, testing fees, and technology, the vast majority of graduates reported their share of costs as *about right*, with very few reporting costs as *too high*. These findings suggest that cost-sharing mechanisms are generally well-calibrated, though testing fees may warrant closer review. Although testing fees were not commonly applicable to the graduates' experiences, there was a moderate proportion ($n = 5$, 9%) who reported financial difficulty with that aspect of their education.

Paid release time is viewed to be adequate

Most (75%) scholars reported the paid release time they received as *enough* or *more than enough*. The remainder reported it was *not quite enough* or *not nearly enough* (17%) or that they were not provided paid release time (9%). Similarly, three focus group participants mentioned issues with getting the proper amount of release/study time.

These results demonstrate that most participants received adequate release time. However, nearly 1 in 10 scholars reported not receiving release time. Data collected from AR TEACH administrators also suggested that more than half of providers (62%) had difficulty providing release time (McKelvey et al., 2025). In examining whether there were associations between program funding and administrators reporting difficulties with covering paid release time, there was a trend-level association between those programs reporting private tuition as a funding source and those reporting difficulty with release time (χ^2 (26,1), $n = 2.82$, $p = .09$). Given these findings, this is an area where programs may need additional support.

Additional Program Impacts

To help us assess the program's effectiveness beyond simply obtaining new degrees and credentials, participants rated their learning outcomes and application of knowledge based on the CLASS rubric relevant to the age group they serve. Participants reported substantial learning and strong application of program content, with consistent outcomes regardless of teaching position and ages served.

Learning Outcomes and CLASS

The average score across all age groups was 3.6 out of 4, with 4 signifying *I learned many things about this*. This indicates strong perceived learning. No significant difference was found between lead teachers and assistant teachers in their learning ratings.

Application in the Classroom

The average score was 4.3 out of 5, with 5 indicating they were able to apply *all* or *nearly all* of what they learned. Again, no significant difference was found between lead and assistant teachers in their application ratings.

When asked how their new education changed their approach to teaching and how they work with children and families, focus group participants cited a variety of practical impacts, including preparation for leadership roles and enhanced teaching practices, including:

- More individualized approaches to children's needs.
- Improved classroom management.
- Higher-quality interactions with children.
- Greater awareness of learning differences and ability to individualize instruction.
- Stronger relationships with families.
- Greater ability to mentor peers and share resources.

Graduates also valued the dual benefit of conceptual learning in college and practical experience in early education settings.

These results suggest that AR TEACH graduates report a positive impact on the quality of care and education provided to children in their classrooms.

Strengths and Limitations

In this first study of AR TEACH, we sought to understand the experiences of scholars who have graduated with additional education. As with any study, there are both strengths and limitations to consider when interpreting the results.

The study employed a mixed-methods design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection (Creswell et al., 2009; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This delivers a comprehensive understanding of sponsor experiences and outcomes and enhances the validity of findings as they are corroborated across different data sources.

An additional strength of the study lies in the sampling. The study invited all AR TEACH graduates to provide data, and the response rate was high. Two out of three graduates (67%) participated in the survey, and there were no statistical differences between those who chose to participate and those who did not. This suggests findings are generally applicable to all AR TEACH graduates.

When interpreting findings, it is important to note that AR TEACH scholars who are still in the process of degree completion or those who did not successfully complete their educational goals were not included in our study sample. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to the program beyond those with successful degree or credential completion.

Additionally, AR TEACH graduates may have also participated in Arkansas' Step Up to WAGE$® incentive program (AR WAGE$), which provided direct wage supplements to educators beyond those provided by employers. Roughly half (48%) of respondents were also AR WAGE$ recipients, so reported outcomes may be affected by the overlap.

Similarly, the timing of data collection did not correspond with the AR TEACH scholars' degree or credential completion. There are 17 respondents who completed their degrees in 2024 and would have been contractually obligated to remain with their employer at the time of the survey. As this may bias the results, it will be important to conduct additional follow-up of the sample over time. Still, the overwhelmingly positive reports of plans to stay with their employer lend reliability to retention findings.

It is also important to note that nearly half (47%) of participants declined to report their income. The reason for the participants' lack of response is unclear, as we have successfully collected salary data in previous workforce studies (McKelvey et al., 2022). In the present study, participants were asked to type the exact figure in dollars and cents; perhaps this specificity led to participant

discomfort, or there were difficulties with the survey interface. However, a majority of participants did reply to questions reflecting whether they had received a salary increase.

Our estimates of earnings growth include 25% who reported no change in salary. Of those scholars who reported a salary increase, about half (43%) provided salary information sufficient to compute earnings growth. The estimated salary growth for those missing data was made using the assumption that individuals who reported that they had received a salary increase but did not provide information would be like those in the same career growth grouping. Still, it is important to note that these estimates are based on information from only 57% of the full sample and should be interpreted within the context of those limitations.

Participation in focus groups was lower than anticipated. The evaluation team collected data during two periods, the summer and early in the school year, to attract as many administrators as possible. While the sample was smaller than planned, the second round of focus groups produced little new information, and the themes observed within the second round were not distinct from those of the first. This consistency in themes is a sign that the sample was sufficient to capture the range of perspectives relevant to our research questions. Similarly, previous research suggests that over 80% of unique insights surface within the first two or three focus groups (Guest et al., 2006, 2017, 2020; Namey et al., 2016). Therefore, we are confident the data represents the broad experience of employers of AR TEACH graduates.

As with all research that involves asking direct questions, respondents' answers could be influenced by what feels socially acceptable. However, few results reported here involve sensitive topics where respondents might feel pressure to respond differently, so the risk should be like other studies that use self-report outcomes. Moreover, in the absence of in-depth, annually updated administrative data for every early childhood professional in the state (employer, title, pay, education, etc. for every year employed in early education), self-report remains an important data collection tool.

There are potential limitations to using a one-group, descriptive and retrospective design. Because this study depends on post-test or retrospectively reported experiences, it is possible that respondents will not remember certain details about the past perfectly. However, retrospective studies allow people to use the same frame of reference (their current understanding of their change over time) to rate differences, rather than two frames of reference from two separate points

in time, thereby avoiding potential *underestimation* of change due to response-shift bias (Chang & Todd, 2018; Dube et. al., 2004; Howard, 1980; Pratt et. al., 2000).

Finally, one-group designs are inherently unable to prove cause and effect. They can describe changes that participants report, and variation among different groups of participants, but they cannot prove causation (i.e., that changes happened because of the program, and not for other reasons). In many cases, conducting studies that can definitively prove causation, such as a randomized controlled trial, is impractical.

As such, research commonly relies on the best alternative methods available within these constraints. The results of the current study will be used to shape a future quasi-experimental study comparing those who participated in the program to a matched group of individuals who did not. High-quality quasi-experimental comparison studies can provide credible estimates of a program's impact.

Conclusions

The AR TEACH program was consistently associated with favorable participant-reported outcomes in educational advancement, career mobility, wage growth, and improved retention. Across surveys and focus groups, participants described the program as a valuable workforce development support and a contributor to quality improvement in ECCE.

Almost 3 out of 4 AR TEACH graduates reported receiving a post-graduation raise. Among those with comparable wage data, the average increase was $4.59 per hour, with the highest gains in leadership and specialized roles. These findings suggest the program contributes to improved compensation and professional recognition, though disparities persist across job categories.

Nearly half of graduates achieved promotions, most commonly from assistant teacher to lead teacher roles, with others advancing into director or specialist positions. Just over half remained in their original roles, which may reflect credentialing options that support quality improvement within existing roles. This is evidenced by graduates reporting significantly increased knowledge and skills related to their work.

A majority of graduates earned additional degrees during the program, with others gaining ECCE-specific credentials, such as the CDA. About one in three graduates expressed interest in pursuing further education. These outcomes reflect the program’s effectiveness in promoting upward educational mobility and long-term professional development.

Participants reported strong learning outcomes and high levels of classroom application. These outcomes were consistent across roles and age groups served. Focus group feedback also emphasized gains in leadership readiness, quality teacher-child interaction, classroom management, and family engagement.

Almost 3 out of 4 graduates said the program made them more likely to stay in ECCE and reported increased loyalty to their sponsoring employer. More than 9 in 10 remained at the same facility post-graduation, with nearly 7 in 10 planning to stay three or more years.

Turnover risk was primarily driven by pay and benefits, reinforcing the need for broader workforce supports. Additionally, 15% exited the ECCE field, with about half of those transitioning to K–12 education, highlighting the need for cross-sector retention strategies.

Additionally, nearly all participants reported strong satisfaction with the application process, affirmed high-quality customer service, would reapply, and would recommend the program to others.

These findings provide encouraging evidence that AR TEACH may play an important role in strengthening qualifications, improving compensation, and stabilizing the ECCE workforce.

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Appendix

Graduate Characteristics

Table 1. Race and Ethnicity of AR TEACH Graduates

Race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Black	9	15.0	15.5
	White	43	71.7	74.1
	Hispanic	3	5.0	5.2
	Other	2	3.3	3.4
	Multi-Racial	1	1.7	1.7
	Total	58	96.7	100.0
Missing	Unreported	2	3.3	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 2A. AR TEACH Graduate Position at Time of Survey

What Role/Position are you in Today?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Positions in ECCE Practice	51	85.0	85.0
Teacher/Lead Teacher	24	40.0	40.0
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	7	11.7	11.7
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	14	23.3	23.3
Family Child Care Provider/Owner	1	1.7	1.7
Home Visitor/Home-based Educator/Home Visiting Coordinator	1	1.7	1.7
Early Childhood Development Specialist/Disability Coordinator	1	1.7	1.7
Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	3	5.0	5.0
Positions No Longer in ECCE Practice	9	15.0	15.0
Working in K-12	4	6.7	6.7
Left the Field	5	8.3	8.3
Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 2B. AR TEACH Graduate Work Hours

How many hours on average do you work per week in your early childhood job?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	11-20 hours	1	2.0	2.0
	21-30 hours	1	2.0	2.0
	31-40 hours	27	52.9	54.0
	41-50 hours	17	33.3	34.0
	51-60 hours	1	2.0	2.0
	More than 60 hours	3	5.9	6.0
	Total	50	98.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	2.0	
Total		51	100.0	

Note: Results do not include participants who left ECCE practice[7].

Table 2C. AR TEACH Graduate Secondary Employment

In addition to your primary job in an early childhood field, do you have another paid job?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes, during the summer only	1	2.0	2.0
	Yes, during the school year only	1	2.0	2.0
	Yes, during the school year and summer	7	13.7	14.0
	No	41	80.4	82.0
	Total	50	98.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	2.0	
Total		51	100.0	

Note: Results do not include participants who left ECCE practice.

Table 3A. AR TEACH Graduate Respondents' Education: Highest Degree

When you GRADUATED from the AR TEACH program, what was your highest level of education?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Some college courses, but not a degree (Incl CDA)	18	30.0	30.0
Associate's degree	17	28.3	28.3
Bachelor's degree	12	20.0	20.0
Master's degree	13	21.7	21.7
Total	60	100.0	100.0

[7] Individuals reported that they left the field or were working in K-12.

Table 3B. AR TEACH Graduate Respondents' Education: CDA

Do you have a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	28	46.7	46.7
	Yes	29	48.3	48.3
	I plan to complete a CDA	3	5.0	5.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 3C. AR TEACH Graduate Respondents' Education: Degree Area

Is your degree related to early childhood education, child development, education, or human services (e.g., psychology, social work)?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No, my degree is in something else	6	25.0	25.0
	Yes, my degree is related to one of the above	18	75.0	75.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0

Note: Include participants with an Associate's Degree or Higher.

Program Characteristics

Table 4A. Program Geographic Locations

Geographic Location of Employer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Urban	22	44.0	52.4
	Rural	20	40.0	47.6
	Total	42	84.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	8	16.0	
Total		50	100.0	

Note: Results include participants working in ECCE center-based or FCCH.

Table 4B. Subsidy Acceptance of Facility Employers

Subsidy Acceptance of Employer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	7	14.0	17.1
	Yes	34	68.0	82.9
	Total	41	82.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	9	18.0	
Total		50	100.0	

Note: Results include participants working in ECCE center-based or FCCH.

Table 4C. Better Beginnings Ratings of Facility Employers

Better Beginnings Rating

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Higher Quality (Level 4 or Higher)	14	28.0	34.1
	Level 3 or Lower	27	54.0	65.9
	Total	41	82.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	9	18.0	
Total		50	100.0	

Note: Results include participants working in ECCE center-based or FCCH.

Compensation and Benefits

Table 5. Salary at Application of AR TEACH

What was your hourly wage in dollars and cents before receiving a raise (not including bonuses or supplements that are not directly related to your raise)

Position at AR TEACH Application	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Annual Salary
Teacher/Lead Teacher	13	14.18	2.62	$29,494.40
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	8	14.76	3.57	$30,700.80
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	4	15.03	3.02	$31,262.40
Home Visitor/Home-based Educator/Home Visiting Coordinator	1	15.96	.	$33,196.80
Total	26	14.56	2.86	$30,284.80

Note: Results do not include participants who chose not to disclose their income. *Computed as hourly wage by 40 hours/week and 52 weeks/year.

Table 6. Benefits at Time of Survey

Does your program offer any of the following benefits to staff? (Check all that apply)

	Frequency	Percent
Insurance (Offered at Least One)	34	68%
Health insurance	30	60%
Dental insurance	30	60%
Disability and/or life insurance	23	46%
Paid Leave (Offered at Least One)	42	84%
Sick Leave/PTO used for Sick	36	72%
Vacation/PTO used for Vacation	28	56%
Holidays	32	64%
Maternal Leave (Offered at Least One)	19	38%
Paid Maternity Leave	0	0%
Unpaid Maternity Leave	19	38%
Educational Supports (Offered at Least One)	27	54%
Required Trainings	27	54%
Training Beyond Required	10	20%
Cost reductions (offered at least one)	17	34%
Free meals for staff	13	26%
Free/reduced child care fees (not including vouchers)	9	18%
Other		
Periodic increases in wages: cost of living or performance/education	17	34%
Retirement or pension plan	20	40%
None of These	4	8%

Note: Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice and endorsed at least one answer option (n = 50)

Program Satisfaction and Impact on Staff Knowledge and Skills

Table 7A. AR TEACH Program-Related Costs: Tuition

Tuition

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	My share of the cost was too small	2	3.3	3.4
	My share of the cost was about right	45	75.0	76.3
	Not applicable	12	20.0	20.3
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 7B. AR TEACH Program-Related Costs: Books/Educational Materials

Books

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	My share of the cost was too small	1	1.7	1.7
	My share of the cost was about right	43	71.7	72.9
	My share of the cost was too large	1	1.7	1.7
	Not applicable	14	23.3	23.7
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 7C. AR TEACH Program-Related Costs: Travel

Travel

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	My share of the cost was too small	1	1.7	1.7
	My share of the cost was about right	42	70.0	71.2
	Not applicable	16	26.7	27.1
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 7D. AR TEACH Program-Related Costs: Testing

Testing (CDA assessment or Praxis test)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	My share of the cost was too small	1	1.7	1.7
	My share of the cost was about right	23	38.3	39.0
	My share of the cost was too large	5	8.3	8.5
	Not applicable	30	50.0	50.8
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 7E. AR TEACH Program-Related Costs: Computer or Other Tech Needs

Computer/other technology needs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	My share of the cost was too small	1	1.7	1.7
	My share of the cost was about right	41	68.3	69.5
	My share of the cost was too large	1	1.7	1.7
	Not applicable	16	26.7	27.1
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 8. Paid Release Time

The paid release time I got for classes and assignments was…

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	More Than Enough	13	21.7	22.0
	Enough	31	51.7	52.5
	Not Quite Enough	7	11.7	11.9
	Not Nearly Enough	3	5.0	5.1
	I was not provided with paid release time	5	8.3	8.5
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Financial Feasibility

Table 9A. Tax Liability on Stipend

Did you have to pay taxes on your AR TEACH stipend?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	14	23.3	23.7
	Not sure	31	51.7	52.5
	Yes	14	23.3	23.7
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 9B. Tax Liability for AR TEACH Graduates Not in the AR WAGE$ Program

Did you have to pay taxes on your AR TEACH stipend?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	10	32.3	33.3
	Not sure	14	45.2	46.7
	Yes	6	19.4	20.0
	Total	30	96.8	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	3.2	
Total		31	100.0	

Note: Includes graduates of AR TEACH who did not participate in AR WAGE$ (*n* = 31).

Table 9C. Tax Liability for AR TEACH Graduates Also in WAGE$ Program

Did you have to pay taxes on your AR TEACH stipend?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	4	13.8	13.8
	Not sure	17	58.6	58.6
	Yes	8	27.6	27.6
	Total	29	100.0	100.0

Note: Include participants in both the AR TEACH and WAGE$ program (*n* = 29).

Table 9D. Participant Difficulties With Taxes

Was having to pay taxes on your AR TEACH stipend difficult for you while you were in the program? (Check all that apply)

	N	Percent
No, it was not difficult	8	57.1
Yes, it was difficult for me to figure out the paperwork	2	14.3
Yes, it impacted my financial situation	4	28.6
Not Sure	1	7.1
Valid N (listwise)	14	

Notes. Includes participants who selected the answer option “yes” to having tax liability (*n* = 14)

General Satisfaction

Table 10A. Participant Difficulties With the Application Process

Did you have any of the following challenges when trying to apply for TEACH? (Check all that apply, OR if none of these apply, click none of these at the bottom of the list).

	N	Percent
Questions on the application more difficult to answer or confusing	1	1.7
Application was too long	0	0
Difficulty mailing in or uploading required forms	0	0
Lack of support with completing application	0	0
Information was not clear	0	0
Difficulty with completing the application due to technology	0	0
Difficulty obtaining my paystub or tax forms from my employer	0	0
Difficulty obtaining my payments or tax forms from WAGE$ staff	0	0
NONE OF THESE	58	98.3
Valid N (listwise)	59	

Notes. Includes participants who selected at least one answer option (*n* = 59)

Table 10B. Experience With AECA Customer Service

I received good customer service from the AR TEACH staff.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	3.3	3.4
	Agree	7	11.7	11.9
	Strongly Agree	50	83.3	84.7
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 10C. Satisfaction With Overall AR TEACH Experience

If you could go back in time, would you apply for AR TEACH again?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Sure	3	5.0	5.1
	Yes	56	93.3	94.9
	Total	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Table 10C Recommend AR TEACH to Friends

If you had a friend that was interested in AR TEACH, would you recommend they apply?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	59	98.3	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	1.7	
Total		60	100.0	

Impact on Staff Knowledge and Classroom Practice

Table 11A. Crosstabulation of Classroom Child Age by Position

Age group for primary room/class? BY Early Childhood Position

Count

		Early childhood position		
		Teacher/ Lead Teacher	Assistant Teacher/ Paraprofessional/ Teacher Aide	Total
Age group for primary room/class	Infants (0-18 months)	4	0	4
	Toddlers (19 - 35 months)	1	0	1
	Preschoolers (3 years - 5 years)	19	5	24
	Mixed ages (FBBH)	0	1	1
Total		24	6	30

Notes. Includes graduates in teaching roles (N=30).

Table 11B. Knowledge Gain for Instructional Interactions: Overall and by Position

Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analysis of Variance for Average Scores by Role

Role at time of survey	n	M	SD	F(1, 27)	p	η^2
Teacher/Lead Teacher	23	3.61	0.49	0.014	.908	.001
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	6	3.58	0.39	–	–	–
Overall Average	29	3.60	0.46	–	–	–

Note. Includes participants who rated their learning (*n* = 29). *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation. Items were rated: 1 “I didn’t learn anything new about this”, 2 “I was reminded of things I had forgotten about this”, 3 “I learned a few new things about this”, and 4 “I learned many things about this”. An average of items was created based across all items collected, which differed based on the ages of children served.

Table 11C. Application of Learning in the Classroom: Overall and by Position

Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analysis of Variance for Average Scores by Role

Role at time of survey	n	M	SD	F(1, 27)	p	η^2
Teacher/Lead Teacher	23	4.29	0.79	0.045	.834	.002
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	6	4.36	0.43	–	–	–
Overall Average	29	4.30	0.72	–	–	–

Note. Includes participants who rated how much they were able to apply what they learned in their classroom (*n* = 29). *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation. Items were rated: 1="Nothing", 2="Very Little", 3="Some", 4="Much", 5="All/Nearly All". An average of items was created based across all items collected, which differed based on the ages of children served.

Advancement and Aspirations

Education Changes and Future Aspirations

Table 12A. AR TEACH Graduate Education at Application

When you applied to the AR TEACH program, what was your highest level of education?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	High school diploma or GED	11	18.3	18.3
	Some college courses, but not a degree	25	41.7	41.7
	Associate's degree	7	11.7	11.7
	Bachelor's degree	17	28.3	28.3
	Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 12B. Degree Changes Since Receiving AR TEACH

Educational Attainment from Application to Time of Survey

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No Change in Highest Degree*	***18***	30.00	30.00
Some college courses, no degree (Incl CDA)	12	20.00	20.00
Associate's degree (Incl Tech degrees)	2	3.33	3.33
Bachelor's degree	4	6.67	6.67
Highest Degree Increase	***42***	70.00	70.00
HS/GED to Some College	6	10.00	10.00
HS/GED to Associate's Degree or Higher	5	8.33	8.33
Some College to Associate's Degree	10	16.67	16.67
Some College to Bachelor's Degree	3	5.00	5.00
Associates to Bachelor's Degree	5	8.33	8.33
Bachelor's to Master's Degree	13	21.67	21.67
Valid Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 12C. Educational Aspirations

What is the HIGHEST degree or credential that you PLAN TO COMPLETE in your career?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Associates degree	2	5.1	5.1
	Bachelors degree	14	35.9	35.9
	Masters degree	9	23.1	23.1
	Doctoral degree	10	25.6	25.6
	Other*	4	10.3	10.3
	Total	39	100.0	100.0

Notes: Respondents include those who reported the desire to complete additional education. *Other includes Master's/Specialist Degree (*n* = 1), Teaching License (*n* = 2), Unsure (*n* = 1).

Career Advancement

Table 13A. Participant Position at Time of Application to AR TEACH

When you first applied for the AR TEACH program, what position were you in?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Teacher/Lead Teacher	23	38.3	38.3
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	23	38.3	38.3
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	10	16.7	16.7
Family Child Care Provider/Owner	1	1.7	1.7
Home Visitor/Home Visiting Coordinator	2	3.3	3.3
Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	1	1.7	1.7
Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 13B. Career Advancement

Changes in Positions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Same Position	***28***	***54.9***	***54.9***
Teacher/Lead Teacher	11	39.3	39.3
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	5	17.9	17.9
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	9	32.1	32.1
Family Child Care Provider/Owner	1	3.6	3.6
Home Visitor/Home Visiting Coordinator	1	3.6	3.6
Educational Coach/Mentor	1	3.6	3.6
Upward Career Mobility	***21***	***41.2***	***41.2***
Teacher/Lead Teacher to Director/Assistant Director	4	19.0	19.0

Teacher/Lead Teacher to Early Childhood Development Specialist/Disability Coordinator	1	4.8	4.8
Assistant Teacher to Lead Teacher	13	61.9	61.9
Assistant Teacher to Director/Assistant Director	1	4.8	4.8
Assistant Teacher to Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	1	4.8	4.8
Home Visitor to Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	1	4.8	4.8
Downward Career Mobility	***2***	***3.9***	***3.9***
Lead Teacher to Assistant Teacher	2	100.0	100.0

Earnings Growth

Table 14A. Current Salary by Position

What is your CURRENT hourly salary?

Position	N	Hourly Wage	Std. Dev.	Annual Salary*
Teacher/Lead Teacher	10	$18.53	4.81	$38,542.40
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	5	$13.64	2.90	$28,371.20
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	9	$16.37	2.85	$34,049.60
Early Childhood Development Specialist/Disability Coordinator	1	$25.00	.	$52,000.00
Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	2	$21.50	3.54	$44,720.00
Average for All Positions	27	$17.37	4.40	$36,129.60

Note: Results do not include participants who left ECCE practice (*n* = 9) or individuals who declined to provide current salary information (*n* = 24). *Annual salary calculated as hourly wage at 40 hours per week and 52 weeks per year.

Table 14B. Reported Wage Growth After Graduation From AR TEACH

Have you received a pay raise since completing AR TEACH?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	No	13	25.5	26.0
	Yes	37	72.5	74.0
	Total	50	98.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	2.0	
Total		51	100.0	

Notes. Results do not include participants no longer working in ECCE (*n* = 9).

Table 14C. Earnings Growth Associated With Career Advancement

Changes in Positions and Earnings Growth

	N	Hourly Increase	Std. Dev.	Annual Increase*
Same Position	***8***	***$3.16***	***$4.49***	***$6,572.80***
Teacher/Lead Teacher	3	$5.68	$7.24	$11,814.40
Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide	2	$1.09	$0.47	$2,267.20
Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility	3	$2.02	$1.49	$4,201.60
Upward Career Mobility	***8***	***$6.02***	***$5.76***	***$12,521.60***
Teacher/Lead Teacher to Director/Assistant Director	3	$1.75	$0.67	$3,640.00
Teacher/Lead Teacher to Early Childhood Development Specialist/Disability Coordinator	1	$12.85	-	$26,728.00
Assistant Teacher to Lead Teacher	2	$8.50	$10.61	$17,680.00
Assistant Teacher to Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	1	$5.00	-	$10,400.00
Home Visitor to Educational Coach/Mentor/Curriculum Coordinator	1	$8.04	$2.15	$16,723.20

Notes. Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice and reported receiving a salary increase (*n* = 16).

Table 14D. Estimated Earnings Growth for All AR TEACH Graduates

Estimated Hourly Salary Change

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Hourly Increase	Std. Dev.	Annual Increase*
Weighted Salary Change	51	$0.00	$16.00	$3.31	$3.58	$6,884.80
Valid N (listwise)	51					

Notes. Includes individuals remaining in ECCE practice. The data presented are a weighted average for the full sample. Values for salary differences of those who did not provide data were estimated at $0 for scholars who reported no change in salary, $3.16 for respondents who reported being in the same position, and $6.02 for respondents who reported upward career mobility. *Annual salary increase calculated as hourly wage at 40 hours per week and 52 weeks per year.

Workforce Retention

Table 15A. AR TEACH Graduate Retention With Current Employer

Do you currently work for the same program as when you first applied for AR TEACH?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes, I work in the same facility/program as when I applied	48	94.1	94.1
No, I work in a different facility/program from when I applied	3	5.9	5.9
Total	51	100.0	100.0

Notes. Results do not include participants who no longer remain in ECCE practice.

Table 15B. AR TEACH Graduate Time With Current Employer

How long have you been with your current employer in an early childhood field?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than one year	2	3.9	3.9	3.9
	1-2 years	4	7.8	7.8	11.8
	3-5 years	17	33.3	33.3	45.1
	6-10 years	18	35.3	35.3	80.4
	11 years or more	10	19.6	19.6	100.0
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Notes. Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice.

Table 15C. Impact of AR TEACH on Retention in Early Childhood

Participating in AR TEACH has made me more likely to stay in my current early childhood sub-field. For example, to stay in early education/child care rather than move to elementary education, or to stay in home visiting rather than switch to a similar job ...

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	1	2.0	2.0
	Neutral	11	21.6	22.0
	Agree	14	27.5	28.0
	Strongly Agree	23	45.1	46.0
	Total	50	98.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	2.0	
Total		51	100.0	

Notes. Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice.

Table 15D. Impact of AR TEACH on Retention Within Employer/Facility

Participating in AR TEACH has encouraged me to stay with the employer who sponsored me beyond the mandated contract period AR TEACH requires.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.0	2.0
	Neutral	13	25.5	26.0
	Agree	12	23.5	24.0
	Strongly Agree	24	47.1	48.0
	Total	50	98.0	100.0
Missing	Unreported	1	2.0	
Total		51	100.0	

Notes. Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice.

Impact of AR TEACH on Turnover Intent

Table 16A. Turnover Intent From the Field

How much longer do you plan to work in an early childhood field?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1-2 years	2	3.9	3.9
	3-5 years	3	5.9	5.9
	6-10 years	1	2.0	2.0
	11 years or more	30	58.8	58.8
	Not Sure	15	29.4	29.4
	Total	51	100.0	100.0

Notes. Results include participants who remain in ECCE practice.

Table 16B. Turnover Intent From Current Employer

How much longer do you plan to work with your current employer?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than one year	1	2.0	2.0
	1-2 years	2	3.9	3.9
	3-5 years	4	7.8	7.8
	6-10 years	3	5.9	5.9
	11 years or more	26	51.0	51.0
	Not Sure	15	29.4	29.4
	Total	51	100.0	100.0

Note. Results do not include participants who left ECCE practice.

Table 16C. Motivation for Participants Leaving Their Current Employer in the Next Two Years

Factors motivating AR TEACH participants who plan to leave their job within the next 2 years.

"Important" or "Very Important" to their decision. (*n* = 3)	Frequency	Percent
Financial Reasons		
I want a higher paying job	2	66.7
I want better benefits	0	0
I have no opportunity for career advancement	1	33.3
I want to work in a program that will accept my child(ren)'s child care assistance voucher	0	0
Workplace environment/job characteristics		
The work is too stressful	0	0
I want a job that has more flexibility (ex. working different or fewer hours)	0	0
I wanted job closer to home or with less travel	0	0
Poor leadership/management in my program	1	33.3
I'm not given enough hours	0	0
Personal reasons		
I'm leaving for other personal reasons	2	66.7
I'm retiring	0	0
I'm leaving for health reasons	0	0
Other		
I am looking for a different job outside of early childhood	1	33.3

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