



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

Sponsor Perceptions

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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 employers who provided financial and administrative support to scholarship recipients. The study reveals 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 improving instructional competency and professionalism. The results offer compelling evidence that investing in the state's early educators is a strategic pathway to improving outcomes for 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 high-quality professional development. 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 scholar's professional attainment and the employer's ability to retain them, AR TEACH strengthens the entire ECCE workforce. This study focuses specifically on the experiences of these sponsoring employers 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 administrators in programs who employed AR TEACH graduates without collecting information from a comparison group of individuals who did not employ graduates. Therefore, the research design does not allow us to demonstrate causation. Convergent mixed-methods studies collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously.

The final quantitative sample included 33 administrators who responded to the survey (a 62% participation rate). The resulting sample was representative of the full invited sample. Additionally, nine administrators participated in seven focus groups to provide in-depth qualitative feedback about their experiences.

Evaluation Results

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

AR TEACH Helps Retain Teachers and Programs Increase Compensation

On average, sponsoring employers retained 76% of AR TEACH graduates. Nearly 9 out of 10 child care centers (86%) kept more than half of their staff who graduated with additional education in their program. Participation also led many programs to increase wages beyond their contractual obligations: 45% of programs increased wages for more than just the graduate, and 28% increased salaries for all staff (though disparities between educators in different settings did exist), which suggests the potential for increased retention beyond AR TEACH scholars.

Employers Strongly Support AR TEACH

Child care employers are very happy with AR TEACH. They found the administering organization, AECA, was easy to work with and praised the customer service they received. Support for AR TEACH is so strong that even though 62% of sponsors reported difficulty meeting the contractual obligation to provide paid release time, 97% said they would recommend the program to other centers, and 93% said they would continue to support participation of their staff.

AR TEACH Improves Quality of Instruction

The increase in professional attainment created strong positive programmatic changes. Overwhelmingly, administrators (90%) found that graduates showed demonstrable improvements in core knowledge and classroom skills. Significant improvement in quality interactions with children and behavior management was noted by administrators, clearly signifying the impact AR TEACH has on children.

AR TEACH Boosts Morale and Professionalism

Employers noted that the program made their staff feel valued and respected for their hard work and education. It boosted confidence and made scholars feel proud of their profession. Some mentioned AR TEACH graduates/scholars performing at a much higher level in their current positions. Others said graduates/scholars spoke positively about moving into leadership positions in their program or starting their own one day.

Conclusions

The AR TEACH program was associated with favorable employer-reported outcomes in retention, quality improvement, and program satisfaction, and incremental improvements in compensation.

The findings also identify opportunities to address logistical and financial barriers that may hinder program participation. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that early educators have equitable access to meaningful career advancement opportunities.

Overall, 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 the perspectives of employers of AR TEACH recipients. Based on our findings, AR TEACH represents a significant benefit to the early childhood 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, where stable relationships with adults are essential for building a foundation in language, cognitive, and social skills (National Research Council, 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 is 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 from 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 (i.e., 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 our 2018 directors' workforce study reported at least one vacancy in their program's instructional staff positions within the last six months (McKelvey et al., 2018). Our 2022 workforce study found that 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).

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.

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 performance requirement for programs like Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS), turnover directly affects program quality ratings 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). Thus, programs cannot raise tuition without jeopardizing their enrollment, and by extension, the continued operation of their business.

In short, 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 a solution (Gardner-Neblett, 2021; Grant et al., 2019; Huss-Keeler et al., 2013; Totenhagen et al., 2016; Buettner et al., 2016).

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.

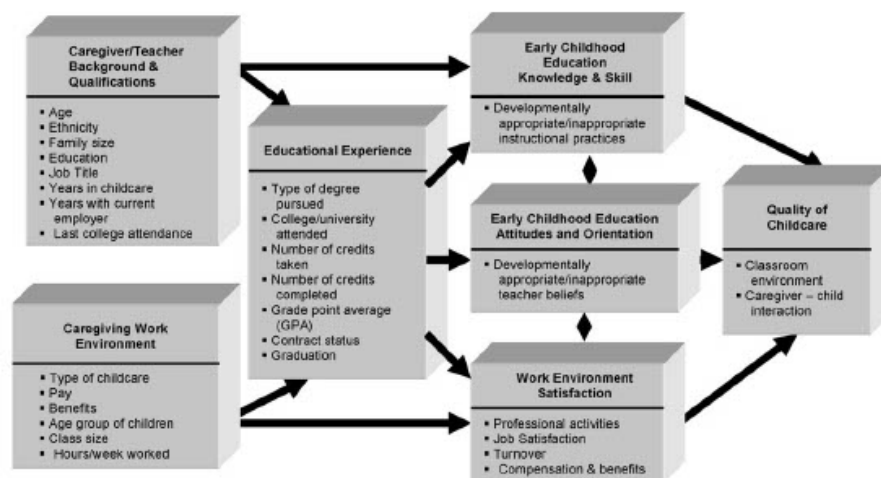
Many ECCE educators begin their careers with little to no field-specific experience, and their knowledge of pedagogical technique may be limited (Whitebook et al., 2009b; Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). This can hamper their self-efficacy and long-term retention. College-level, field-specific training directly 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 et al., 2007).

Ultimately, these improvements in classroom quality and workforce stability drive better outcomes for children. 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)



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 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/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 sponsoring ECCE programs to maintain a Better Beginnings² 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.

² Better Beginnings is the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System. <https://arbetterbeginnings.com/>

Mutual commitments between scholars 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 the current study focus on understanding the effectiveness of the AR TEACH program for supporting workforce retention, staff compensation, and program quality in ECCE programs. Specifically, we aim to answer the following questions:

- 1. Do sponsors see reduced turnover related to AR TEACH participation?**
- 2. Have sponsors changed staff compensation and discretionary benefits because of participation in AR TEACH?**
- 3. What are participants' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?**

It is important to note that, unlike workforce retention and changes to compensation specifically for AR TEACH graduates, program-wide changes in compensation and discretionary benefits are neither explicit goals nor contractual obligations of AR TEACH, nor are they directly tied to the theory of change. As a result, one should consider this outcome exploratory.

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 administrators in programs that employed AR TEACH graduates, without collecting information from a comparison group of employers who did not. Therefore, the research design does not allow us to demonstrate causation (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2018; McNeil, 1990).

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' experiences in the program. Using this design enhances the validity of results by corroborating findings across both data sources.

Quantitative Methods

Sampling

Survey participants were employers or supervisors of individuals who graduated from AR TEACH with a degree or certificate. AECA provided rosters of administrative contacts for AR TEACH graduates. Where multiple graduates reported to one individual, we issued one survey request per program administrative contact, who we asked to report at the aggregate level for all AR TEACH graduates in their program. This resulted in an invitation for 55 AR TEACH administrative contacts.

The research team designed the survey using REDCap, a secure web application for building and managing online surveys (Harris et al., 2009, 2019). Invitations were emailed to employers. The employer survey was open from May 15, 2025, through May 31, 2025. After removing 2 invalid emails, the final invitation sample was 53 administrative contacts.

At the close of the survey, the final employer count was 33, for a 62% response rate. Three administrators completed partial surveys, and those data are included in reporting when items were completed. Each employer respondent received \$25 for their time to complete the survey.

Sample Representativeness

To estimate the representativeness of the programs that responded to our survey, we compared the characteristics of the programs invited to participate who did (“response”) and did not (“non-response”) respond to the survey invitation.

To conduct this analysis, we merged the program data from AECA with publicly available data about programs from the Arkansas public child care search.³ Using these data, we compared the response and the non-response programs on their geographic location, School Readiness Assistance (SRA; voucher) and Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) participation, and Better Beginnings rating.⁴ The resulting sample of AR TEACH sponsors is representative of the full sample of those invited to participate in the survey.

The analysis suggests that there were no differences in responsiveness to the survey based on the following program characteristics:

Geographic Location. Approximately half of all invited programs were located in urban settings (53%). There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and did not respond and those who responded based on urban/rural geography ($\chi^2 = 0.26, p > .05$).

School Readiness Assistance Participation. The majority of programs participated in the Arkansas SRA program (also called voucher or subsidy program; 76%). There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and did not respond and those who responded based on whether the program accepts child care subsidies ($\chi^2 = 0.02, p > .05$),

ABC Participation. Approximately 45% of the programs were funded by ABC (45%). There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and did not respond and those who responded based on whether the program provides the ABC program ($\chi^2 = 1.67, p > .05$).

³ https://ardhslicensing.my.site.com/elicensing/s/search-provider/find-providers?language=en_US&tab=CC

⁴ 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.

Program Quality. Nearly one third of the programs invited to participate in the employer survey had Better Beginnings Level 4 ratings or higher (31%). There were no differences between those who were invited to take the survey and did not respond and those who responded based on whether the program participates in Better Beginnings at Level 4 or higher ($\chi^2 = 0.03, p > .05$).

Survey Measures

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

- 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)

Administrator and Program Characteristics

The survey asked participants for the following information:

- Demographic information (including race, education, and experience in early childhood)
- Positions (e.g., administrative staff in center-based programs, family child care homes, and/or home visiting supervisors), weekly hours worked, and additional employment (if any)
- Program accreditation, sources of funding, and enrollment
- Roles, experience level, and number of staff participating in AR TEACH.

Compensation, Benefits, and Changes to Administrative Practices

The survey asked administrators about the average hourly pay and benefits offered to their employees (e.g., paid vacation, paid sick/personal days, or health insurance).

We asked administrators whether they had made compensation changes to support individuals working in their programs as a result of AR TEACH participation, including changes in staff wages, benefits, paid release time for education or professional development (PD), and book or material stipends for individuals attending college.

Program Satisfaction and Impact on Staff Competency

The survey asked various questions to determine administrators' satisfaction with the AR TEACH program, such as whether they would recommend AR TEACH to another program, and whether they received good customer service from the AR TEACH administrative staff at AECA.

We also asked administrators if their portion of the financial responsibility and their experiences with other requirements of the program, such as paid leave time for staff to attend classes, made sponsorship difficult.

To gauge administrators' perceived impact of the program, we asked them to rate increases in staff competencies related to early childhood knowledge, quality of techniques and practice, and levels of confidence and enthusiasm for their work. Finally, we asked administrators about their programs' support of staff in applying new skills and knowledge in the classroom.

Workforce Retention

Lastly, the survey asked how long their program had sponsored AR TEACH scholarship recipients, how many scholars they had sponsored, their job roles, and the number of sponsored scholars who were still employed in their program.

Qualitative Methods

Sampling

All sponsors with AR TEACH graduates through January 22, 2025, ($n = 55$) received an email invitation through the survey platform REDCap (Harris et al., 2009, 2019) to sign up for a focus group. Groups were offered 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. Those who missed their original focus group received a follow-up 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) | 4 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| Round 2 (Sept 3 – Sept 17) | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Overall (June 17 – Sept 17) | 7 | 0 | 7 | 9 |

Focus Group Measures and Procedures

Data Collection

The research team developed an interview guide with nine questions for AR TEACH sponsor focus groups and to use as a starter template for coding. All questions were developed independently (not part of or based on an existing measure).⁵

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 was given 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

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

⁵ A copy of the interview guide can be found in a separate technical appendix and is available on request.

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 administrators, their education and experience, and characteristics of their programs. Full results can be found in the Appendix.

Administrator Characteristics

Administrator Roles and Employment

The vast majority ($n = 32$, 97%) of administrators who have supervised graduates of the AR TEACH program reported being in administrative roles in center-based facilities. One center-based administrator also reported supervising a home visiting program (3%). There was one owner of a Family Child Care Home (FCCH, 3%). (Appendix Table 1)

Race and Ethnicity of Administrators

Administrators in the sample reported a racial/ethnic breakdown of 64% White/Caucasian, 18% Black/African American, 14% multiracial, and 4% other. (Appendix Table 2)

Education and Experience of Administrators

Nearly 9 out of 10 (86%) administrators in the sample reported having a bachelor's degree or higher (Appendix Table 3A). The largest group of administrators reported having master's degrees ($n = 16$, 55%), followed by bachelor's degrees ($n = 8$, 28%) and associate's degrees ($n = 3$, 10%). One person reported some college but no degree, and one person reported a doctoral degree. Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials were held by 20% of the sample. (Appendix Table 3B)

The majority of administrators reported 11 or more years of experience ($n = 25$, 83%) in early childhood education. Of the remaining 5 administrators surveyed, 1 (3%) reported having been in

the field for 1–2 years, 2 (7%) said they had 3–5 years of experience, and 2 (7%) had 6–10 years of experience. (Appendix Table 3C)

Similarly, the majority of administrators reported being in a leadership position in their current program for 11 or more years ($n = 15$, 50%). The remaining administrators reported less than 1 year ($n = 1$, 3%), 1–2 years ($n = 4$, 13%), 3–5 years ($n = 5$, 17%), and 6–10 years ($n = 5$, 17%). (Appendix Table 3D)

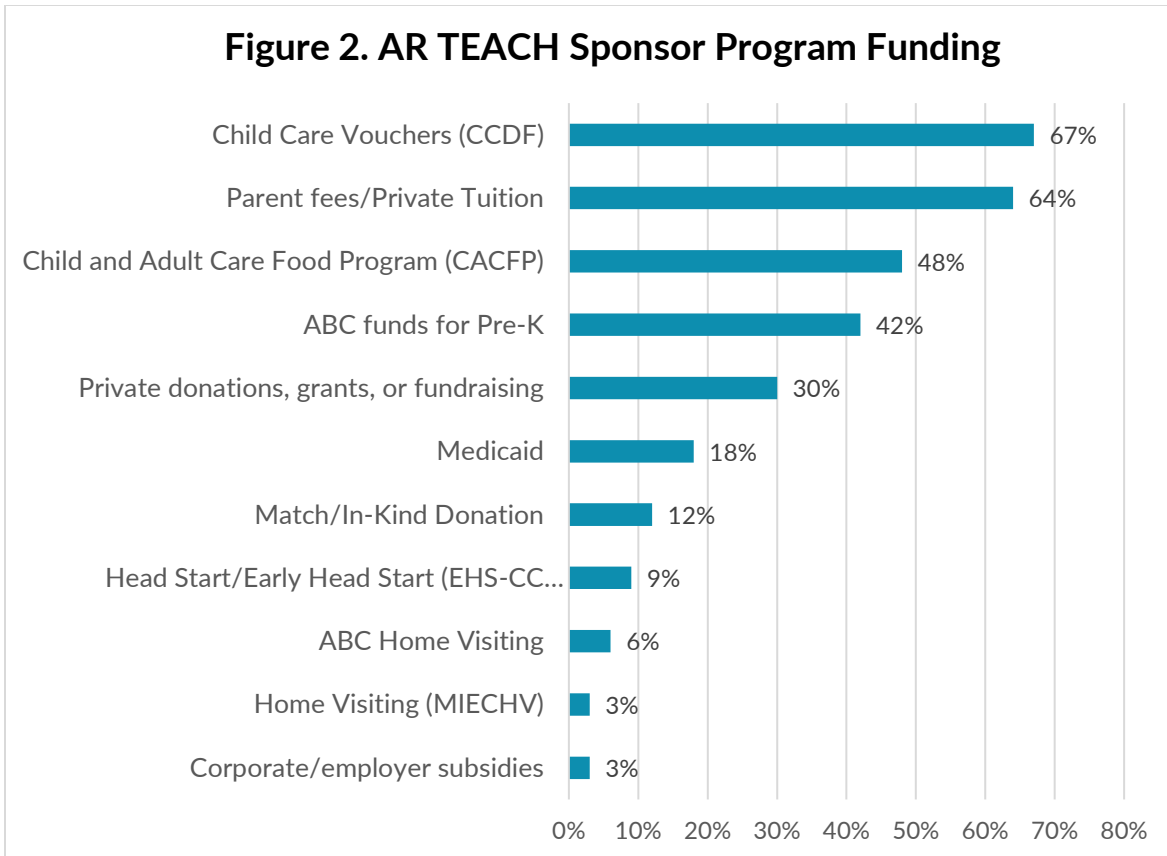
Finally, we asked administrators if they had a second paying job and to specify the seasons of additional employment. Most ($n = 25$, 83%) reported that they did not, but 5 (17%) reported having second jobs for the full year. (Appendix Table 3E)

Program Characteristics

When asked about program accreditations, nearly all ($n = 32$, 97%) reported participating in the Better Beginnings quality rating and improvement system. Some programs also reported national accreditations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; $n = 2$, 6%), the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC; $n = 1$, 3%), and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF; $n = 2$, 6%). (Appendix Table 4A)

The home visiting program administrator reported accreditation from Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY; $n = 1$, 3%). (Appendix Table 4B)

When asked about program funding, the largest percentage of administrators reported SRA vouchers (67%) and private tuition (64%) as sources of program revenue. Nearly half (49%) of programs reported Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funding. ABC funding was reported by 42% of programs. Less frequently, programs reported funding from private donations/grants (30%), Medicaid (18%), in-kind (12%), HS/EHS (9%), ABC home visiting (6%), Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV, 3%), and corporate/employer subsidies (3%). (Figure 2 and Appendix Table 4C)



We computed an indicator of program quality based on reported program accreditations and funding streams in which higher-quality programs were defined as having reported NAEYC, NAFCC, or CARF accreditations and/or funding from HS/EHS and ABC. Half of the programs were of higher quality ($n = 17, 52\%$) using that definition. (Appendix Table 4D)

Center-Based Enrollment

When asked about program enrollment, 26 center-based programs reported infant/toddler enrollment ($M = 45.6, SD = 29.4, \text{range} = 1\text{--}121$), 32 programs reported preschool enrollment ($M = 109.3, SD = 141.4, \text{range} = 12\text{--}750$), and 11 programs reported school-age enrollment ($M = 17, SD = 14.4, \text{range} = 1\text{--}50$). Serving children with SRA vouchers was reported by 19 programs, with total program enrollment of 30% ($SD = 25\%, \text{range} = 1\%\text{--}77\%$). CACFP enrollment was reported by 21 programs, 78% of total program enrollment ($SD = 29\%, \text{range} = 6\%\text{--}100\%$). (Appendix Table 5)

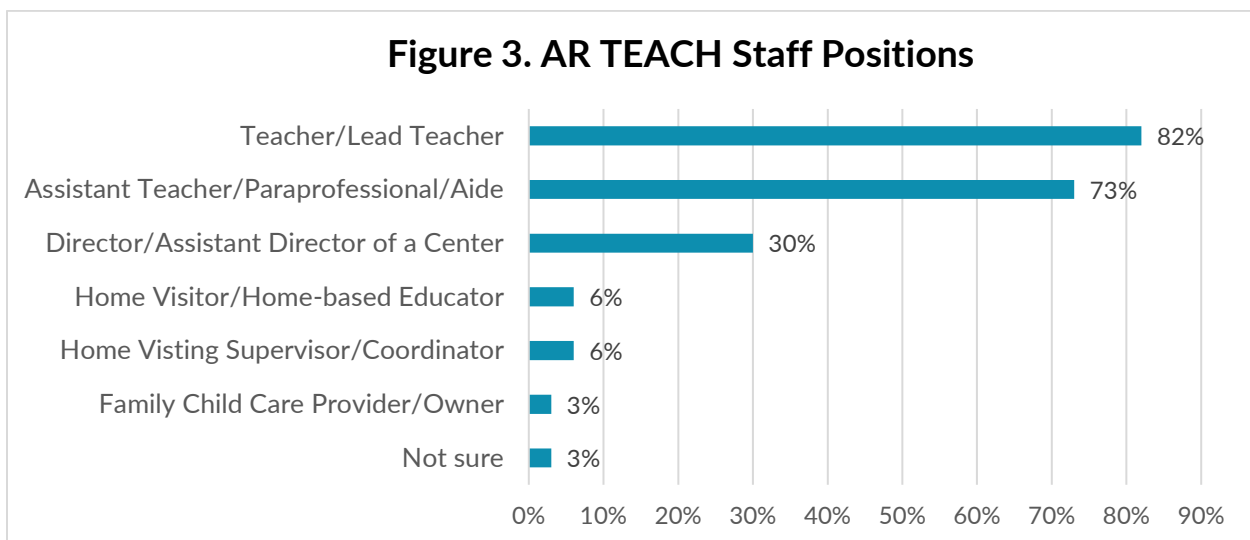
FCCH Enrollment

Program enrollment for the one FCCH program included 4 infant/toddler slots and 12 preschool slots. Voucher enrollment was 63%, and CACFP enrollment was 100%. (Appendix Table 6)

Positions of Scholars

Administrators reported that their program sponsored 1–25 AR TEACH scholars. The average number of scholars per program was 6.5 ($SD = 5.9$). (Appendix Table 7A)

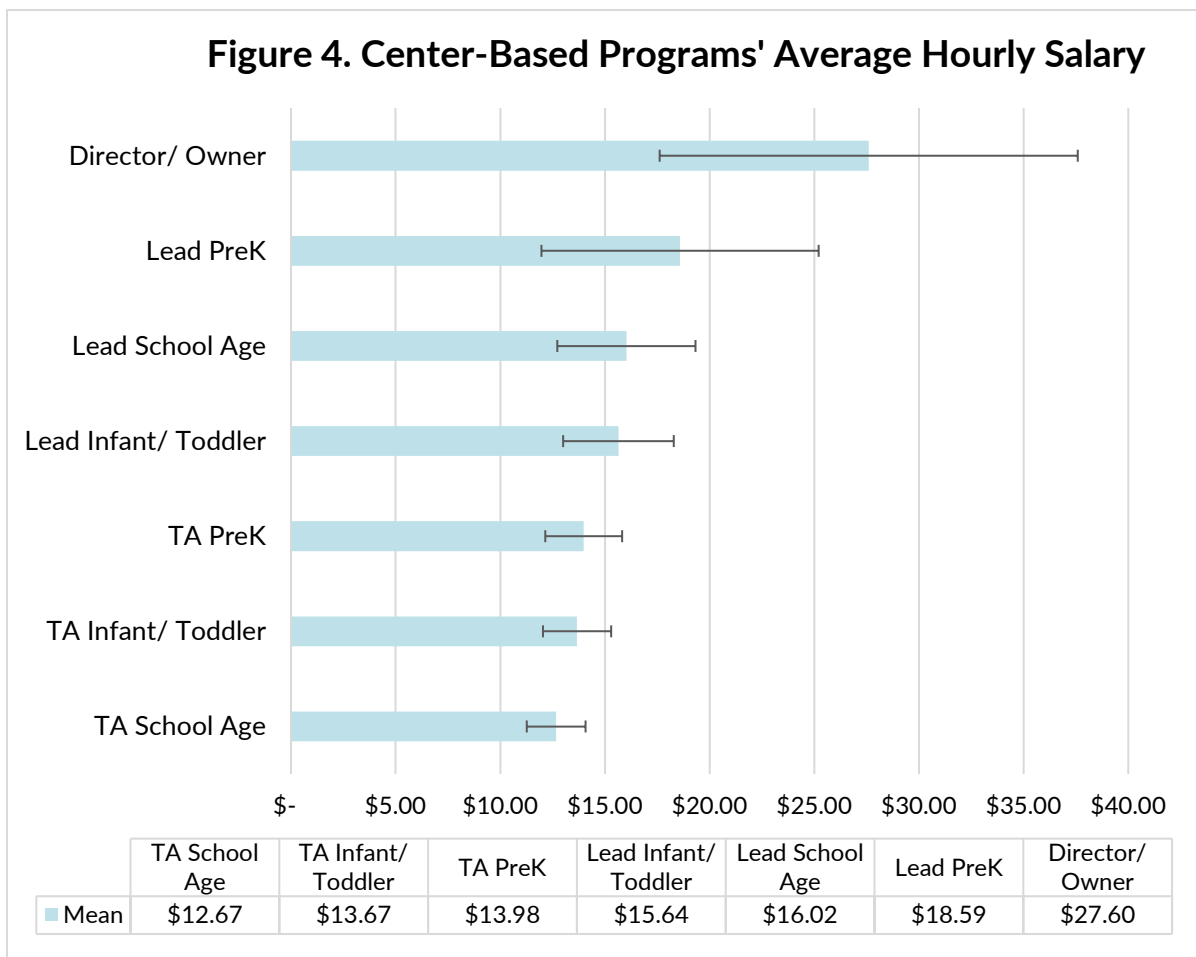
Administrators were asked to report on the positions of scholars. The majority of programs (82%) reported lead teacher participation, followed by assistant teachers (73%). Nearly one-third (30%) of programs also reported that the director or assistant director was a scholarship recipient. Two programs sponsored home visitors and home visiting coordinators/supervisors, and there was one FCCH scholar. Finally, one program reported being uncertain about participation. (Figure 3 and Appendix Table 7A)



When asked about the period of time their program has sponsored AR TEACH scholars, the largest portion of the sample reported 3–4 years ($n = 16, 49%$), followed by 5–6 years ($n = 7, 21%$), and less than 2 years ($n = 6, 18%$). Four programs were uncertain of the period of participation (12%). (Appendix Table 7B)

Compensation

Respondents reported the average per-hour pay for positions in their programs. This number was multiplied by 2,080 (40 hours a week x 52 weeks a year) for the estimated annual salary. The average annual salary of administrators was \$57,408. The highest salary reported for lead teachers was in preschool (\$38,667), followed by those in school-age (\$33,322) and infant/toddler (\$32,531) classrooms. A similar pattern was observed for assistant teachers, with those in preschool classrooms (\$29,078) earning more than those in infant/toddler (\$28,434) and school-age (\$26,354) classrooms. (Figure 4 and Appendix Table 8)



Benefits

We asked administrators about staff access to benefits provided by their program. We dichotomized responses to reflect whether a benefit was available to none or some (0) or all (1) staff. Administrators who endorsed at least one benefit were included in analyses ($n = 30$).

The most commonly reported benefit offered by programs was to pay staff for the time they spend in required PD activities (97%). Other PD benefits were less common. A little more than half (53%) of administrators reported that staff were paid for PD beyond the requirements of licensing or the program. Fewer programs reported supporting staff that were not in AR TEACH with similar supports; 30% reported supporting staff with books/materials needed for self-paid education, and 23% reported supporting staff with paid release time.

Most programs (77%) offer access to some form of paid leave. Respondents reported providing all staff with paid leave for holidays (73%), vacation (53%), or illness (70%). A substantial proportion (87%) of administrators reported that all staff are offered unpaid maternity leave, but paid maternity leave was offered the least often of all forms of leave (7%).

Less than half (43%) reported providing health insurance. Slightly more than half offered disability and/or life insurance (57%), dental insurance (53%), or retirement benefits (53%) to all staff.

Periodic wage increases were reported by nearly three-quarters (73%) of programs.

Administrators reported other benefits that financially help families, such as free on-site meals (40%) and free or reduced tuition for their own children, not including accepting vouchers for children of staff (57%). (Appendix Table 9)

Changes to Administrative Practices

While AR TEACH contractually targets compensation only for graduating scholars, it was reasonable to explore potential spillover effects. For instance, we hypothesized that raising pay for newly credentialed scholars could create internal wage compression, prompting administrators to adjust salaries for other valued staff to maintain equity and morale. Since many programs participate in Better Beginnings, they are assessed using the Program Administration Scale (PAS; Talan et.al, 2023). The PAS measures whether programs have a written, program-wide salary scale based on role, education, and experience, making the concept of equitable, all-staff compensation very familiar to providers in this study.

Given these factors, we explored whether the targeted AR TEACH investment also triggered these broader, program-wide adjustments. The survey asked administrators about changes to staff salaries. More than a third of administrators (38%) reported changing salaries for AR TEACH graduates but not for other staff (38%). More than a quarter (28%) reported changing salaries for other staff in their program as a result of AR TEACH, and 17% reported increasing salaries for AR

TEACH graduates and current scholars. Some (17%) reported not making changes to staff salaries or providing bonuses, even for graduates, despite this being a contractual obligation of sponsors. (Appendix Table 10A)

Where administrators reported changing salaries for other positions in their programs ($n = 8$), we asked about the roles of the staff with salary changes. Lead teachers in preschool rooms received increased compensation most commonly (63%), followed by lead teachers in infant/toddler rooms (50%). More than a third (38%) of administrators reported increases for directors/assistant directors and lead teachers in school-age rooms. Increases for assistant teachers were less common. (Appendix Table 10B)

We asked administrators about changes to staff leave, insurance, and retirement; and supports like those provided by AR TEACH, including stipends upon completing more education, stipends to cover books and educational materials, and release time to attend classes. It is important to note that, unlike changes in compensation, changes in discretionary benefits are not explicit goals of the national TEACH program, nor are they directly tied to the existing literature. As a result, one should consider these outcomes exploratory.

The majority of administrators reported not changing leave policies (87%), retirement (93%), insurance (93%), salary stipends for education (79%), or stipends for books/materials (77%). The largest new benefit to staff was salary stipends for education, provided for those participating in and completing AR TEACH and for all staff (14%). (Appendix Table 10C)

Most programs do not offer paid release time (73%). Some programs reported providing paid release time as a new (13%) and existing (13%) practice. (Appendix Table 10D)

Program Satisfaction

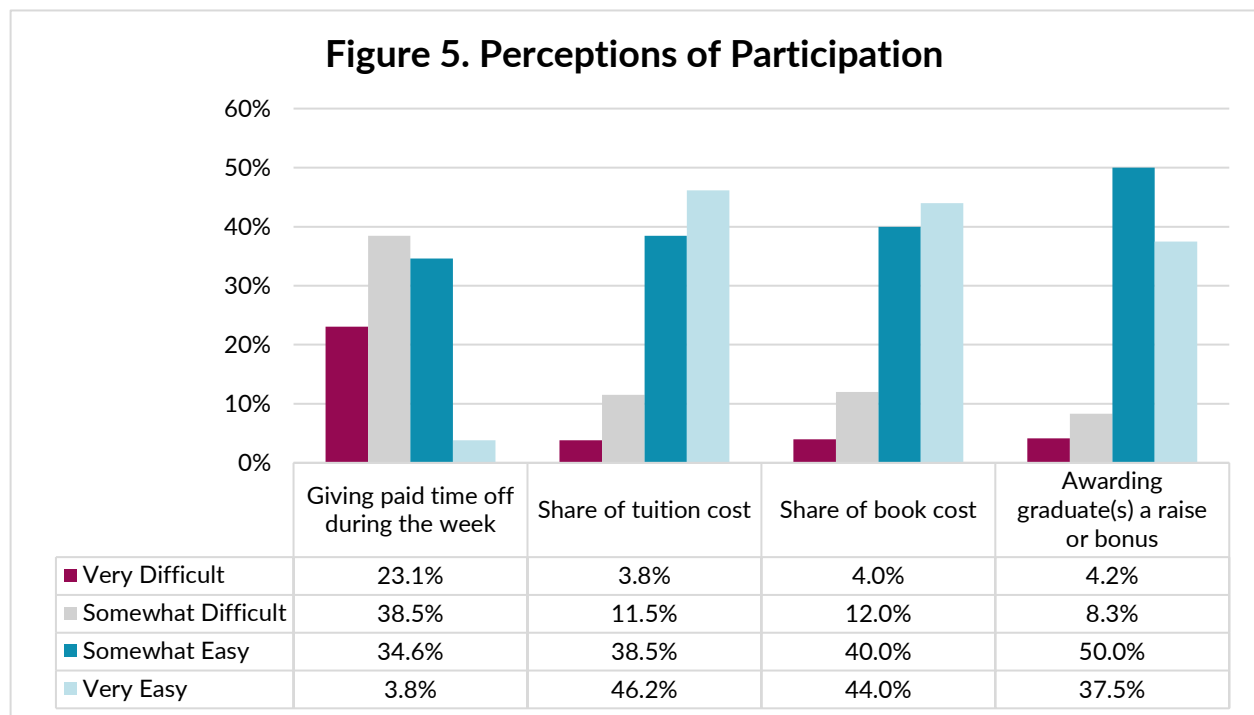
Financial Feasibility

Previous studies show that financial adaptability in Arkansas ECCE programs is sharply limited. (McKelvey & Fox, 2023; McKelvey & Fox, 2019; McKelvey et al., 2017). Cost modeling projections for center-based programs based on quality rating improvements were shown to be unsustainable at current rates of reimbursement, meaning that while programs may wish to improve their quality, operational costs often block the adoption of quality administrative practices related to

compensation, benefits, and PD support (McKelvey & Forsman, 2023). Sponsoring AR TEACH scholars requires these types of commitments from programs, so we asked about their difficulty.

Most administrators (82%) reported that the funding provided by AR TEACH was enough to offset some (63%) or all (19%) of the costs of substitutes. The remaining administrators reported that they did not receive funding for substitutes (15%) or that it did not offset costs (4%). (Appendix Table 11A)

Of those administrators who reported on the expenses of sponsorship, most reported that the financial requirements were not too much of a challenge, but that giving staff paid time off to attend classes during the week was more difficult. (Figure 5 and Appendix Tables 11B-11E)



We examined whether program funding sources (described in Appendix Table 4C) were associated with administrators reporting difficulties with covering paid release time. There was a trend-level association between the program reporting private tuition as a funding source and having difficulty with release time ($\chi^2(26.1), n = 2.82, p = .09$). There were no other differences in funding sources identified between groups. (Appendix Table 11F)

General Satisfaction

Reports of satisfaction with the AR TEACH program were nearly unanimously positive. Administrators who interacted with AECA agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided with

good customer service (96%). Similarly, nearly all respondents (97%) reported that they would recommend AR TEACH to other early childhood programs (one program was not sure). (Appendix Tables 12A and 12B)

We provided respondents with an opportunity to share why they would or would not recommend AR TEACH to other programs in their own words. These responses were coded into the following themes:

- General praise
- Staff retention
- Knowledge/experience boost
- Ease of sponsorship
- Morale boost
- Graduate departure
- Administrative burden

Respondents provided 25 statements that received 28 total codes (note that a single statement could be coded under multiple themes), with the most popular theme being *general praise* (54% of total codes), followed by *knowledge/experience boost* (21% of codes). (Table 3)

| Table 3. Open-Ended Responses for Why Administrators Would or Would Not Recommend AR TEACH to Other Programs | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Theme | Number of statements | Percentage of total codes | Examples |
| General praise | 15 | 54% | <p>I have seen the first-hand benefits of this program for my staff.</p> <p>TEACH is a wonderful program that has helped some of our staff attain higher education degrees when they were previously not possible due to costs.</p> <p>Anytime you can encourage your staff to better... you are winning. Why wouldn't a child care center want to do this?</p> |

Table 3. Open-Ended Responses for Why Administrators Would or Would Not Recommend AR TEACH to Other Programs

| Theme | Number of statements | Percentage of total codes | Examples |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Knowledge/ experience boost (implicit or explicit) | 6 | 21% | <p>Enabled my teachers to go back and get their education and gave me a quality pool of teachers, assistant teachers, and home-based education to hire.</p> <p>TEACH provides great opportunity for educators to receive the training and education they need to be more effective in the classroom and grow in confidence as a person who creates change. I am grateful for the opportunity for continued education that this program offers to members who would otherwise not be able to further their education.</p> <p>TEACH is a wonderful way to strengthen team members' knowledge and relationship building. I have witnessed growth with parent communication as well as engaging children in activities with a purpose. They are actually teaching, and not just standing watching children, and they are excited about what they are doing.</p> |
| Reduces turnover/helps recruitment (implicit or explicit) | 2 | 7% | <p>The scholarships are great opportunities for individuals who may not have the financial means to increase their education. Education is a valuable tool in improving the sustainability of staff and increasing the quality of services programs provide. I believe knowledge is power.</p> |
| Easy to participate as a sponsor | 2 | 7% | <p>TEACH is very easy to work with. The customer service is great and answer questions quickly.</p> <p>This is a great program in the support of early education and the support team is fantastic! All questions, issues or needed information is always responded to quickly and professionally.</p> |
| Morale boost | 1 | 4% | <p>As both a TEACH recipient, graduate, and employer, I believe TEACH has helped with retention, morale, experience, and overall ECE knowledge.</p> |

Table 3. Open-Ended Responses for Why Administrators Would or Would Not Recommend AR TEACH to Other Programs

| Theme | Number of statements | Percentage of total codes | Examples |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Graduates leave for better jobs | 1 | 4% | I am always for helping further educate ladies that are talented with young children. Sadly, they leave us once graduating to work in state-ran facilities like ABC for better pay. |
| Administrative burden | 1 | 4% | The request for verification of employment was burdensome. Once a year should be adequate. |

When asked if programs would support staff in the future, the majority (93%) reported they would, one program reported they would not (3%), and one was unsure (3%). (Appendix Table 12C)

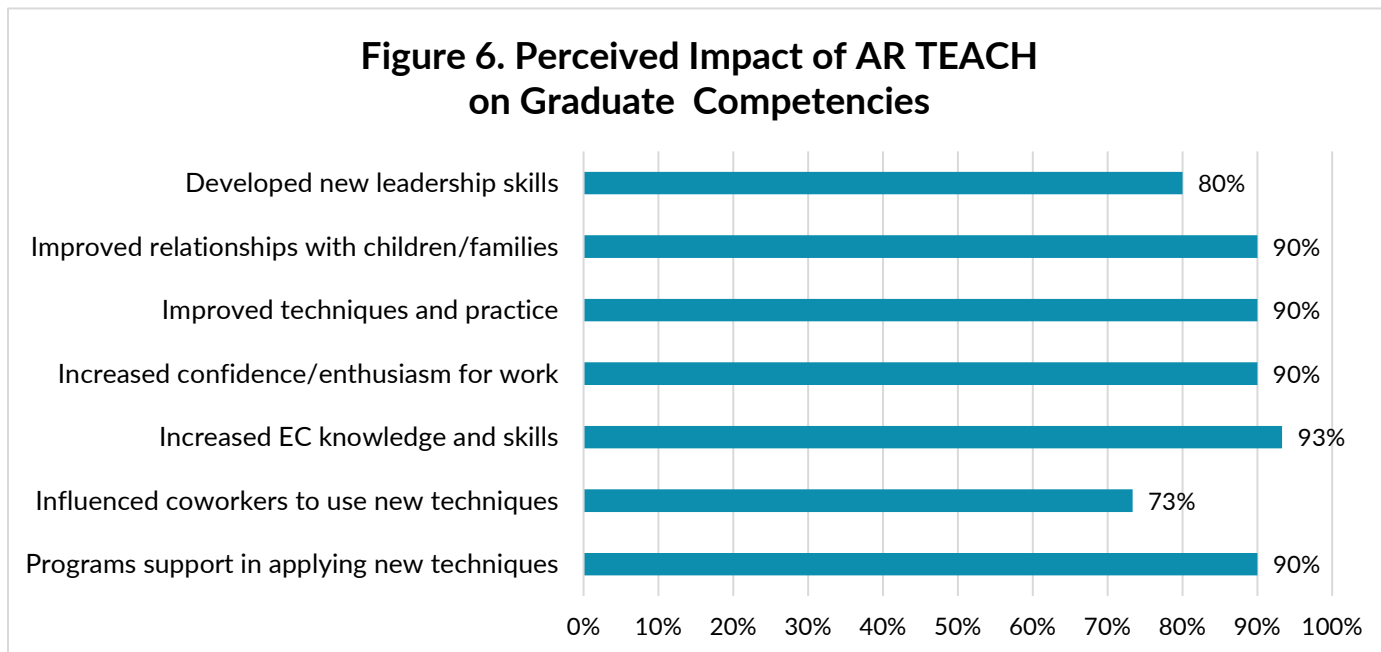
For administrators who reported they would be a sponsor in AR TEACH again, we asked them to select from a list of potential reasons. Selections were: 86% to support the PD of their staff to enhance program quality, 86% to improve staff understanding of child development to benefit the children and families, 79% to attract and retain qualified staff who value professional growth, and 75% to help build their staff confidence in the roles. (Appendix Table 12D)

We also provided a series of reasons why administrators may choose not to support staff again in the future. One respondent selected that they would not because the staff have graduated. The other respondent selected that “none” of the reasons provided were appropriate. The following reasons received no selection: 1) staff are leaving the program, 2) staff do not want to participate, 3) staff do not want to take courses, 4) the program cannot afford the cost associated with AR TEACH, and 5) the program cannot afford the cost associated with pay raises/bonuses when staff complete the program. (Appendix Table 12E)

Impact on Graduate Competency

To gauge administrators’ perceived impact of AR TEACH on graduates, we asked them to rate increases in staff competencies on a Likert scale of *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

Responses were then dichotomized to reflect whether administrators agreed or strongly agreed with the items. Most administrators (93%) reported positive changes in graduates' knowledge and skills. The remainder of competencies were endorsed at rates of 90% or higher, with two exceptions: 73% agreed that AR TEACH graduates influenced coworkers to use new techniques, and 80% agreed that it improved leadership skills. (Figure 6)



Additionally, we asked administrators whether their programs were supportive of staff applying new skills, techniques, and knowledge in the classroom, and 90% agreed or strongly agreed. (Appendix Table 13)

Graduate Retention

Administrators reported sponsoring a range of 1–25 scholars ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 5.9$). They also provided data on the number of scholars still employed by their program, which ranged 0–18 ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 4.2$). (Appendix Table 14A)

Sponsor programs retained 76% of staff ($SD = 31\%$). When examining the distribution of programs by retention, we found that 86% retained more than half of participating scholars. Overall, nearly half of the programs (46%) retained all participating scholars. Another 39% retained 50%–92% of their sponsored staff members. The remaining 14% retained fewer than half of the staff, within which two programs reported not retaining any scholars. (Appendix Table 14B)

Qualitative Results

Administrator Characteristics

The following section summarizes the demographics of the nine AR TEACH administrators in our seven focus groups, their race/ethnicity and education, followed by a summary of thematic results.

Race and Ethnicity of Administrators

Administrators were primarily identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 5$, 56%), followed by Black/African American ($n = 3$, 33%), and Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 1$, 11%).

Education of Administrators

Two-thirds reported having a master's degree ($n = 6$, 66.7%), and one-third reported having a bachelor's degree ($n = 3$, 33.3%). Only one reported having a CDA credential ($n = 1$, 11.1%).

Thematic Results

Graduate Stories

We asked administrators to pick one AR TEACH scholar they had sponsored and to give us a short summary of their story. All responses mentioned employees who were either performing at a much higher level in their current position or who earned promotions to higher positions.

Motivation to Sponsor

We asked administrators what made sponsoring an AR TEACH scholar feel like it was worth the expense and administrative effort. Responses included that it makes people better teachers, that there is a shortage of qualified teachers, and that it helps comply with funding requirements to have CDAs for certain positions in their program. One administrator said sponsoring the right staff member is worth it both for the scholar and because this is an investment in their program. Others encouraged staff to enroll in the program to improve the lives of themselves and their families.

Qualities of Ideal Graduates

We also asked what characteristics teachers need to show, either to make administrators comfortable sponsoring them or to be successful in the AR TEACH program. A teacher's pre-existing effort and attitude were defining factors for three administrators. Five responded that they would sponsor any one of their staff because more education would make them better teachers.

Staff Skill Improvement

We asked administrators to detail changes in scholars' skills and whether participation had an impact on program turnover. Administrators described increased confidence and quality interactions with children, increased behavior management skills, and increased awareness of how to help children with developmental delays. They also described scholars' aspirations to start their own program or to move into leadership within their current program.

One administrator said increased teacher knowledge and skills led to higher program assessment scores, enabling their program to move up in quality, from Better Beginnings Level 2 to Level 3.

Turnover Impact

Results were mixed regarding turnover impact. Two administrators mentioned not having any turnover among AR TEACH scholars. One mentioned losing one graduate. Another said it was difficult to compare rates of retention, having only been open for a few years. One added that none of her sponsored teachers had graduated yet, but since enrolling staff, there had been a marked reduction in turnover.

Three others mentioned repeatedly losing staff when they earned a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate because they receive much higher pay working in K-12. Two mentioned that local elementary school principals refer to AR TEACH as a recruitment pipeline. One specifically mentioned wishing there was a way to keep people longer than their one-year, post-contract commitment.

Retention Ideas

We asked administrators for their opinion on what things, other than pay increases, would help retain teachers. They provided the following suggestions:

- Employ a curriculum development specialist to reduce teacher administrative load
- Give teachers a lot of autonomy if high standards are being met
- Reduce teacher stress by hiring more staff than required to meet adult-child ratio regulations
- Show appreciation through small gifts or treats
- Provide support when a child uses challenging behaviors

Changes to Administrative Practices

We asked administrators to detail any changes made in administrative practices, such as adjusting compensation or providing financial support for staff not in AR TEACH to pursue additional education.

Five administrators reported making the following changes as a result of AR TEACH sponsorship:

- Increasing pay to \$13 an hour (\$2 more than the Arkansas minimum wage)
- Offering annual bonuses to teachers upon completion of a degree
- Giving top-performing staff extra paid time off (PTO) and a stipend for vacation
- Paying for Praxis exam study materials for those outside of AR TEACH
- Issuing small raises or stipends when extra funds are available

Others mentioned continuing practices they implemented before AR TEACH (like paying for CDA renewals or Praxis exams) or not making administrative practice changes due to either tight budgets or because they already provide generous benefit packages.

Barriers and Suggested Changes

We asked administrators if there were any barriers to sponsorship, particularly with the application and renewal process, and what suggestions they have for improving the program.

Seven administrators specifically mentioned the challenges around providing release time. Challenges included difficulty finding substitute workers and having to call people in on their off days or to provide direct care themselves to maintain ratio. One administrator needed to hire

several substitute workers per week, and the inconsistency in classrooms negatively impacted children's behavior and social-emotional growth.

To meet these challenges, administrators made changes to their AR TEACH sponsorship. For example, one limited the number of staff she would sponsor at one time, and another mentioned reducing the amount of release time given to staff.

Three administrators mentioned the application process was easy, though one said they wished that the application had page numbers to track when something is missing.

Discussion

The findings presented in this report reflect the first data gathered from AR TEACH sponsor employers. The study demonstrates positive impacts of AR TEACH on program outcomes, with high levels of satisfaction. Data were gathered to answer the following research questions, which are discussed individually below:

1. **Do sponsors see reduced turnover related to AR TEACH participation?**
2. **Have sponsors changed compensation because of participation in AR TEACH?**
3. **What are participants' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?**

Unlike improvements in workforce retention, changes to programmatic compensation practices are not explicit goals, nor are they directly tied to the theory of change of AR TEACH. Therefore, it is important to note that the outcomes we report are exploratory.

Research Question 1: Do providers see reduced turnover related to AR TEACH participation?

Administrators reported sponsoring 1–25 staff members in AR TEACH, with an average of 6.5 participants per program. In this study, sponsors retained 76% of scholars.

The majority of programs (86%) retained more than half of AR TEACH scholars. Almost half (46%) retained all of their staff, and 39% retained at least half of the AR TEACH staff. Only 14% retained fewer than half of their sponsored staff; 2 programs retained none.

While not a direct comparison, this facility-level retention is remarkable when contrasted with the findings reported in the last Arkansas ECCE director workforce survey, in which 77% of administrators reported turnover in at least one instructional staff position in the prior six months (McKelvey et al., 2018).

Administrators who participated in focus groups expanded upon these findings. Regarding graduating scholar retention, administrators mentioned not having any AR TEACH-related turnover, and one mentioned a marked reduction in turnover since she moved into administration and enrolled teachers in AR TEACH. However, a few administrators, particularly those operating within school district settings, had or anticipated steady turnover to K-12 positions when graduates completed their bachelor's degree and teacher certificate due to the \$50,000 starting salary for certified teachers.

Together, these findings suggest that participation in AR TEACH is associated with strong staff retention – an essential factor in maintaining program quality and continuity of care.

Research Question 2: Have providers changed staff compensation and discretionary benefits because of participation in AR TEACH?

Compensation in Early Childhood: The Context

The average annual salary for program administrators was reported at \$57,408, reflecting the higher compensation associated with leadership roles in ECCE settings compared to teaching roles. However, compensation for leadership in ECCE is still substantially lower than the average annual salary of \$89,180 for K-12 administrators (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Further, 17% of administrators reported maintaining additional year-round employment, highlighting systemic issues of wage inadequacy.

Wages for teaching staff remain significantly lower and vary by classroom assignment. Compensation figures reveal two key patterns that have long been demonstrated in the ECCE field (McKelvey et al., 2022):

Preschool Roles Pay More: Staff working in preschool classrooms consistently earn more than their counterparts in infant/toddler and school-age settings. While this may reflect differences in funding streams or credentialing requirements, it is important to note that brain development happens at the fastest rate during infancy (Gilmore et al., 2012; Knickmeyer et

al., 2008; Stephens et al., 2020). Infant/toddler classrooms need teachers who have specialized preparation for that age group. Several respondents mentioned difficulties retaining credentialed staff due to the higher base salary offered by public preschool programs, which ECCE programs are unable to match. Therefore, attracting and retaining highly educated staff will require higher compensation.

Overall Low Wages: Despite their critical role in child development, most Arkansas early educators and administrators earn less than needed to independently maintain households. In Arkansas, a family with two adults and two children typically needs \$70,500 to cover housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology, plus taxes and a 10% miscellaneous category (United for ALICE, 2025). This is far more than the average salaries reported for teachers in this study (\$28,434–\$38,667, depending on position).

Administrators in this study also reported benefits offered to staff, with notable variation in coverage.

- Only 43% of programs provide health insurance; dental (53%) and disability/life insurance (57%) are slightly more common.
- Only 53% of programs offer retirement benefits to all staff.
- Most programs provide some form of paid leave, including holidays (73%), vacation (53%), and sick leave (70%), but only 7% offer paid maternity leave.
- While nearly all programs (97%) compensate staff for time spent in required PD, only 55% pay staff for PD beyond minimum licensing or accreditation requirements.

These findings reinforce the urgency of policies that prioritize sustainable compensation. Ensuring fair wages and comprehensive benefits is essential to attract and retain a qualified early childhood workforce.

Wage Adjustments

While AR TEACH contractually targets compensation *only* for graduating scholars, it was reasonable to explore potential spillover effects. For instance, raising pay for newly credentialed scholars could create internal wage compression, prompting administrators to adjust salaries for other valued staff to maintain equity. Furthermore, since many programs participate in Better Beginnings, they are assessed using the Program Administration Scale (PAS; Talan et.al, 2022). PAS scores programs on having a written, program-wide salary scale based on role, education, and

experience, so this concept of equitable, all-staff compensation is already familiar. Given these factors, we explored whether the targeted AR TEACH investment also triggered these broader, program-wide adjustments.

Administrators were asked whether employing participants led to changes in staff compensation. Informant responses fell into three categories:

Provided Wage Increases for All Staff

Remarkably, 45% of programs reported increasing wages or providing stipends beyond their contractual obligations; 17% increased pay for both AR TEACH scholars and graduates; and 28% of programs increased salaries for positions other than staff in AR TEACH. Among programs that raised salaries for all staff, the most common roles affected were lead teachers in preschool (63%) and infant/toddler (50%) classrooms.

Provided Wage Increases for AR TEACH Graduates

The next largest group (38%) reported salary increases or stipends for AR TEACH graduates only, in alignment with contractual obligations.

Did Not Provide Wage Increases

Roughly one-sixth ($n = 4$, 17%) of administrators reported no changes to staff salaries or having provided stipends, even for AR TEACH graduates. A closer examination of this set of administrators revealed that 75% reported loss of AR TEACH graduates from their program. Given the timing of the survey, it is not possible to determine the sequence of events and whether graduates left programs, whether they were not provided a pay increase or stipend, or whether the sponsoring organization was not able to provide these additional funds to graduates because they were no longer employed by the program.

Benefits and Educational Supports

Sponsoring organizations are not contractually obligated to change benefits offered to any staff. However, we were interested to see if sponsoring some individuals led to administrative benefit changes.

Few administrators reported adding benefits or offering them to new groups, with 13% reporting changes to leave policies, 7% to retirement benefits, and 7% to insurance benefits. Some programs introduced the kinds of benefits to their wider staff that AR TEACH participants earn as part of the

program. For example, 13% reported implementing paid release time for higher education, and 3% introduced new book/educational material stipends.

Administrators who participated in focus groups provided additional context to their programmatic changes to compensation and benefits. They reported moving everyone to a base hourly pay of at least \$13; offering yearly bonuses to teachers when they get a new degree; giving top-performing staff extra paid time off and an additional stipend; paying for Praxis exam study materials for those outside of AR TEACH; and issuing small raises or stipends when extra funds were available.

These results suggest that a large proportion of sponsors made programmatic changes to compensation, increasing compensation for scholars and non-scholars. Further, while changes to broader benefit structures were minimal, the adoption of AR TEACH-inspired staff supports by some programs is notable. Both changes suggest a positive, broader influence of participation on program practices, especially in light of the state's implementation of the WAGE\$ program during the same period, as some staff were eligible for additional wage support, which was paid outside their employment.

Research Question 3: What are participants' perceptions of the program, what barriers exist, and what recommendations do they have for improvement?

High Satisfaction and Endorsement

Nearly all administrators (97%) said they would recommend AR TEACH to other early childhood programs, and nearly all (96%) who interacted with AECA staff said they had a positive service experience. When asked why they would recommend AR TEACH, sponsors described reduced staff turnover, improved recruitment of new staff, and positive changes in staff knowledge and behaviors.

Further evidence of satisfaction is that 93% of administrators said they would support staff participation in the future. Their reasons centered on workforce development and program quality goals:

- 86% want to support staff PD to enhance overall program quality.
- 86% believe that improving staff knowledge of child development benefits the children and families they serve.

- 79% see AR TEACH as a tool to attract and retain qualified staff who value professional growth.
- 75% aim to build staff confidence and competence in their roles.

These themes were echoed in focus groups, where sponsors shared that AR TEACH makes better teachers. Two mentioned having a shortage of qualified teachers, with one specifically mentioning funding guidelines that require staff to have CDAs in certain positions. These administrators talked about AR TEACH as an opportunity to increase staff education and move toward compliance.

Feedback from administrators who have sponsored AR TEACH graduates reflects overwhelmingly positive experiences with the program and a strong willingness to sponsor future participants. These findings highlight AR TEACH as a valuable tool for advancing the early childhood workforce, both at the individual level and in strengthening program quality and stability.

Increased Professional Capacity

Sponsors were asked to evaluate changes in scholar knowledge, skills, and leadership following program participation. They were also asked whether their programs supported staff in applying these new competencies in the classroom.

Administrators reported strong positive changes in the professional capacity of AR TEACH graduates:

- Over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that graduates demonstrated improvements in core knowledge and classroom skills.
- 80% observed growth in leadership abilities among graduates.
- 73% agreed that graduates positively influenced the practices of their coworkers.

Overwhelmingly, administrators (90%) indicated that graduates had their programs' full support in applying the knowledge and techniques gained through AR TEACH education.

These themes were echoed in focus groups, where all administrators shared that AR TEACH graduates were either performing at a much higher level in their current position or that they earned promotions to higher positions. Sponsors also mentioned significant changes in the professional accomplishments of graduates, with examples ranging from an increase in confidence and quality interactions with children, increased behavior management skills, to scholars'

aspirations to start their own program one day or move into leadership within their current program. One administrator said the increase in knowledge and skills led to higher-quality assessment scores, which increased the program's Better Beginnings level.

Taken together, these results suggest that AR TEACH not only enhances individual educator competency but also has the potential to elevate overall program quality and leadership development. Additionally, administrators' clear support for graduates implementing their new knowledge is critical for ensuring investments in workforce education also translate into improved outcomes for children and families.

Release Time

Paid release time is a key component of the AR TEACH program, enabling scholars to pursue education while maintaining an income. More than half (62%) of administrators found release time to be a difficult aspect of the program. To maintain required adult-child ratios while a scholar attended classes, administrators and teachers had to leave their normal duties or work during days they were scheduled to be off. The data indicate that this difficulty may have been due to a shortage of qualified substitutes rather than insufficient funding, as most administrators (82%) reported that AR TEACH funding was enough to offset some (63%) or all (19%) of the costs of substitutes. The remaining administrators reported that they did not receive funding for substitutes (15%) or that it did not offset costs (4%).

According to documentation from AECA, AR TEACH reimburses programs \$15 per hour for release time for substitutes, but programs may choose to use the funds to cover the scholar's release time or the wages of substitutes. Therefore, respondents may have used the funds to cover the release of their scholar and not a substitute, which may have resulted in the misinterpreting of the question posed.

Feasibility of Other Costs

Most administrators did not see other costs related to sponsorship as a barrier to participation. When asked about the difficulty covering other sponsorship-related expenses, administrators found covering their share of tuition costs, book costs, and awarding graduates a raise or bonus to be comparatively easier to do. Few administrators reported difficulty covering their share of tuition (15%), books (16%), or raises or stipends upon graduation (only 13%).

Interestingly, when asked about benefits for staff who did not participate in AR TEACH, administrators reported offering them similar supports: 32% offered to help pay for books or materials, and 24% offered paid release time to attend classes.

Results suggest that while most programs find the overall financial costs manageable, staffing for release time is a barrier that programs. This reflects broader staffing challenges in the early childhood sector, where thin profit margins and limited staff make it difficult to accommodate time away from the classroom.

Strengths and Limitations

In this first study of AR TEACH, we sought to understand the experiences of employers who sponsored a scholarship recipient. 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 sponsors to participate in the survey and over half participated (60%). Additionally, there were no statistical differences between those who chose to participate and those who did not.. This suggests findings are generally applicable to all employers who sponsored AR TEACH graduates.

It is important to note that while we designed the study to include programs employing graduates of AR TEACH, programs may have also employed active scholars. Additionally, nearly 80% of the sponsors in our sample employed staff who had received an Arkansas's Step Up to WAGE\$® salary supplement. Therefore, reported outcomes may be affected by the combination of both programs.

When interpreting the findings presented, particularly those related to administrators' reports of staff compensation, it is important to note that the funding of programs in the survey had wide variability. Providers in school settings likely benefit from additional in-kind programmatic funding and school-district pay scales for teachers in ABC, which can positively impact staff compensation. The presence of programs with this funding may skew data related to the ability of administrators to change staff compensation.

Similarly, the timing of the survey of administrators was not associated with the AR TEACH scholars' degree or credential completion. Therefore, staff retention estimates may be biased as they likely include individuals who are still contractually obligated to remain with their sponsoring employer. As a result, it will be important to conduct additional follow-up of the sample over time.

Participation in qualitative data collection was lower than anticipated. The evaluation team conducted data collection during two periods, the summer and early in the school year, to attract as many participants 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 generated is a sign that the sample was sufficient to capture the range of perspectives relevant to our research questions. Previous research affirms that over 80% of unique insights surface within the first two or three focus groups (Guest et al., 2006, 2020; Namey et al., 2016). Therefore, we are confident the data represent the broad experience of AR TEACH sponsors.

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 associated with favorable employer-reported outcomes in retention and quality improvement, and incremental improvements in compensation. The data also reveal spillover effects into broader staff benefits and supports.

However, wage disparities between educators in different settings and restricted access to benefits emphasize the ongoing need for comprehensive policy solutions that promote wage equity and professional recognition across all roles within the ECCE sector.

Administrators expressed strong support for AR TEACH's positive impact on scholar competencies. Moreover, the report indicates that participation in AR TEACH is associated with enhanced staff retention across most early childhood programs, an essential component in sustaining program quality and continuity of care. Indeed, in focus groups administrators shared stories of individuals who graduated and were either performing at a much higher level in their current position or who had earned promotions to higher positions.

While overall satisfaction with AR TEACH remains high, the findings also identify opportunities to address logistical and financial barriers that may hinder program participation. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that early educators have equitable access to meaningful career advancement opportunities.

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

Administrator Characteristics

Table 1. Administrator Roles and Employment

Positions: Type and Number

| Position | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Center Administrator | 32 | 97.0 | 97.0 |
| Family Child Care Home | 1 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Home Visiting Coordinator | 1 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Number of Positions Held | | | |
| 1 | 31 | 97.0 | 97.0 |
| 2 | 1 | 3.0 | 3.0 |

Table 2. AR TEACH Administrator Race and Ethnicity

Race

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Black | 5 | 15.2 | 17.9 |
| | White | 18 | 54.5 | 64.3 |
| | Other | 1 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| | Multi-Racial | 4 | 12.1 | 14.3 |
| | Total | 28 | 84.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unknown | 5 | 15.2 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 3A. AR TEACH Administrator Education

Respondents' Highest Level of Education

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Some college courses, but not a degree | 1 | 3.0 | 3.4 |
| | Associates degree | 3 | 9.1 | 10.3 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 8 | 24.2 | 27.6 |
| | Master's degree | 16 | 48.5 | 55.2 |
| | Doctoral degree | 1 | 3.0 | 3.4 |
| | Total | 29 | 87.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 4 | 12.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

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

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

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | No | 24 | 72.7 | 80.0 |
| | Yes | 6 | 18.2 | 20.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 3C. AR TEACH Administrator Time in Field

How long have you worked in the early childhood field?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | 1-2 years | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| | 3-5 years | 2 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| | 6-10 years | 2 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| | 11 years or more | 25 | 75.8 | 83.3 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 3D. AR TEACH Administrator Time With Employer

How long have you been in leadership with your current employer/program?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Less than one year | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| | 1-2 years | 4 | 12.1 | 13.3 |
| | 3-5 years | 5 | 15.2 | 16.7 |
| | 6-10 years | 5 | 15.2 | 16.7 |
| | 11 years or more | 15 | 45.5 | 50.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 3E. AR TEACH Administrator 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 school year and summer | 5 | 15.2 | 16.7 |
| | No | 25 | 75.8 | 83.3 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Program Characteristics

Table 4A. Program Accreditations

Does your program have any of the following accreditations? (Check all that apply)

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) | 2 | 6.1 |
| National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) | 1 | 3.0 |
| Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) | 2 | 6.1 |
| Better Beginnings | 32 | 97.0 |

Note: All participants endorsed at least one answer option (denominator n=33).

Table 4B. Home Visiting Programs

What is your home visiting model?

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid HIPPY | 1 | 3.0 | 100.0 |
| Missing Unreported | 32 | 97.0 | |
| Total | 259 | 100.0 | |

Table 4C. Program Funding Sources

The sources from which your program received funding in the last 12 months. (Check all that apply)

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Parent fees/Private Tuition | 21 | 63.6 |
| Head Start/Early Head Start funds (including EHS-Child Care Partnerships) | 3 | 9.1 |
| ABC funds for Pre-K | 14 | 42.4 |
| Child Care Vouchers (Child Care Development Fund, CCDF) | 22 | 66.7 |
| Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/free-reduced lunch | 16 | 48.5 |
| Private donations, grants (e.g., foundations, United Way), or fundraising | 10 | 30.3 |
| Corporate/employer subsidies | 1 | 3.0 |
| Match/In-Kind Donation | 4 | 12.1 |
| Medicaid | 6 | 18.2 |
| ABC funds for home visiting | 2 | 6.1 |
| Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) | 1 | 3.0 |

Note: All participants endorsed at least one answer option (denominator n=33).

Table 4D. Program Accreditations/Quality

Program Quality by Accreditations/Funding

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid No National Accreditations or Quality Funding | 16 | 48.5 | 48.5 |
| NAEYC, NAFCC, CARF, HS/EHS, or ABC | 17 | 51.5 | 51.5 |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Center-Based Child Enrollment

Table 5. Program Enrollment and Funding Proportion: Center-Based Programs

| Center-Based Program Enrollment and Funding Proportion | | | | | |
|--|----|---------|---------|--------|-----------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Infants/Toddlers | 26 | 1 | 121 | 46.58 | 29.41 |
| Preschool | 32 | 12 | 750 | 109.34 | 141.37 |
| School Age | 11 | 1 | 50 | 17.0 | 14.42 |
| All Ages | 32 | 12 | 850 | 153.03 | 155.94 |
| Percentage with SRA Voucher | 19 | 1% | 77% | 30.1% | 25.1% |
| Percentage with CACFP | 21 | 6% | 100% | 77.5% | 29.6% |

Family Child Care Home Enrollment

Table 6. Program Enrollment and Funding Proportion: Family Child Care Homes

| Family Child Care Home Program Enrollment and Funding Proportion | | | | | |
|--|---|---------|---------|-------|-----------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Infants/Toddlers | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | . |
| Preschool | 1 | 12 | 12 | 12 | . |
| School Age | 0 | . | . | . | . |
| All Ages | 1 | 16 | 16 | 16 | . |
| Percentage with SRA Voucher | 1 | 62.5% | 62.5% | 62.5% | . |
| Percentage with CACFP | 1 | 100% | 100% | 100% | . |

AR TEACH Program Enrollment

Table 7A. AR TEACH Program Enrollment

| Item | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--|----|-----|-----|------|-----------|
| How many AR TEACH participants has your program employed? | 28 | 1 | 25 | 6.5 | 5.91 |
| What kinds of positions have you supported in AR TEACH (Check all that apply)? | | | | | |
| Teacher/Lead Teacher | 33 | 0 | 1 | .82 | .39 |
| Assistant Teacher/ Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide | 33 | 0 | 1 | .73 | .45 |
| Director/Assistant Director of a Center-Based Facility | 33 | 0 | 1 | .30 | .47 |
| Family Child Care Provider/Owner | 33 | 0 | 1 | .03 | .17 |
| Home Visitor/Home-based Educator | 33 | 0 | 1 | .06 | .24 |
| Home Visiting Supervisor/Coordinator | 33 | 0 | 1 | .06 | .24 |
| I was a participant | 33 | 0 | 1 | .15 | .36 |

Table 7B. AR TEACH Program Enrollment

How long has your program sponsored AR TEACH participants?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | 0-2 years | 6 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| | 3-4 years | 16 | 48.5 | 48.5 |
| | 5-6 years | 7 | 21.2 | 21.2 |
| | Not Sure | 4 | 12.1 | 12.1 |
| | Total | 33 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Compensation

Table 8. Salaries by Position

Hourly Salary in Programs by Position

| Position | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|----|---------|---------|-------|-----------|
| Center-Based Positions | | | | | |
| Lead Teacher: Infants and Toddlers | 20 | 12.00 | 21.12 | 15.65 | 2.64 |
| Lead Teacher: PreK | 25 | 12.50 | 40.16 | 18.59 | 6.62 |
| Lead Teacher: School Age | 10 | 12.00 | 21.77 | 16.02 | 3.30 |
| Assistant Teacher: Infants and Toddlers | 18 | 11.50 | 16.50 | 13.67 | 1.63 |
| Assistant Teacher: PreK | 23 | 11.50 | 18.04 | 13.98 | 1.84 |
| Assistant Teacher: School Age | 7 | 11.00 | 15.00 | 12.67 | 1.40 |
| Director/Owner | 21 | 11.00 | 49.43 | 27.60 | 9.99 |
| Other Positions | | | | | |
| Assistant Teacher/Aide (FCCH) | 1 | 12.50 | 12.50 | 12.50 | . |

Benefits

Table 9. Benefits Offered to All Staff

| Does your program offer any of the following benefits to staff? (Check all that apply) | | |
|---|-----------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent |
| Insurance (Offered at Least One) | 18 | 60.0 |
| Health insurance | 13 | 43.3 |
| Dental insurance | 16 | 53.3 |
| Disability and/or life insurance | 17 | 56.7 |
| Paid Leave (Offered at Least One) | 23 | 76.7 |
| Sick Leave/PTO used for Sick | 21 | 70.0 |
| Vacation/PTO used for Vacation | 16 | 53.3 |
| Holidays | 22 | 73.3 |
| Maternal Leave (Offered at Least One) | 27 | 90.0 |
| Paid Maternity Leave | 2 | 6.7 |
| Unpaid Maternity Leave | 26 | 86.7 |
| Educational Supports (Offered at Least One) | 29 | 96.7 |
| Required Trainings | 29 | 96.7 |
| Training Beyond Required | 16 | 53.3 |
| Stipends for Books/Materials for Self-Paid Education | 9 | 30.0 |
| Paid Release Time to Attend PD/College Courses | 7 | 23.3 |
| Cost reductions (offered at least one) | 21 | 70.0 |
| Free meals for staff | 12 | 40.0 |
| Free/reduced child care fees (not including vouchers) | 17 | 56.7 |
| Other | | |
| Periodic increases in wages: cost of living or performance/education | 22 | 73.3 |
| Retirement or pension plan | 16 | 53.3 |

Note: All participants endorsed at least one answer option (denominator n=30).

Changes to Administrative Practices

Table 10A. Changes to Administrative Practices: Compensation

| Have you permanently changed staff pay/provided bonuses as a result of participating in AR TEACH? | | | | |
|--|--|-----------|---------|---------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
| Valid | No Changes | 5 | 15.2 | 17.2 |
| | Changes for Graduate Only | 11 | 33.3 | 37.9 |
| | Changes for Participants (Can Include Graduates) | 5 | 15.2 | 17.2 |
| | Changes for All Staff | 8 | 24.2 | 27.6 |
| | Total | 29 | 87.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Not Sure | 4 | 12.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 10B. Positions With Compensation Changes

Which positions have you changed wages/compensation (Check all that apply)?

| Position | N | Yes (%) |
|---|---|---------|
| Center-Based Positions | | |
| Lead Teacher: Infants and Toddlers | 8 | 50% |
| Lead Teacher: PreK | 8 | 63% |
| Lead Teacher: School Age | 8 | 38% |
| Assistant Teacher: Infants and Toddlers | 8 | 25% |
| Assistant Teacher: PreK | 8 | 25% |
| Assistant Teacher: School Age | 8 | 13% |
| Director/Owner | 8 | 38% |
| Other Positions | | |
| Home Visitors | 1 | 100% |

Note: Results exclude participants who failed to endorse any answer option.

Table 10C. Changes to Administrative Practices: Benefits

Potential Administrative Changes

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| Changes to Leave Policies | | | |
| No Changes | 26 | 78.8 | 86.7 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Graduate Only | 2 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| Changes for All Staff | 2 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| | Missing 3 | 9.1 | |
| Retirement Benefits | | | |
| No Changes | 28 | 84.8 | 93.3 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Graduate Only | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Participants (Including Graduates) | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| | Missing 3 | 9.1 | |
| Insurance Benefits | | | |
| No Changes | 28 | 84.8 | 93.3 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Graduate Only | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Participants (Including Graduates) | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| | Missing 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 10D. Changes to Administrative Practices: AR TEACH-Inspired Educational Supports

Educational Supports Similar to AR TEACH

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|
| <i>Offer Paid Release Time for Education</i> | | | |
| No | 22 | 66.7 | 73.3 |
| Yes, we did this before becoming a AR TEACH sponsor for the first time | 4 | 12.1 | 13.3 |
| Yes, this is a new practice | 4 | 12.1 | 13.3 |
| Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | 3 | 9.1 | |
| <i>Offer Stipends for Books and Other Materials for Education</i> | | | |
| No | 23 | 69.7 | 76.7 |
| Yes, we did this before becoming a AR TEACH sponsor for the first time | 6 | 18.2 | 20.0 |
| Yes, this is a new practice | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | 3 | 9.1 | |
| <i>Salary Stipends for Education</i> | | | |
| No Changes | 23 | 69.7 | 79.3 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Graduate Only | 1 | 3.0 | 3.4 |
| Changes for AR TEACH Participants (Including Graduates) | 1 | 3.0 | 3.4 |
| Changes for all staff | 4 | 12.1 | 13.8 |
| Total | 29 | 87.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | 4 | 12.1 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | |

Program Satisfaction and Impact on Staff Knowledge and Skills

Financial Feasibility

Table 11A. Reimbursement for AR TEACH Release of Personnel Costs

The reimbursement rate I received to help offset time for AR TEACH graduates to support substitutes was:

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | | | |
| We did not receive reimbursement for substitutes | 4 | 12.1 | 14.8 |
| Not enough to offset any cost | 1 | 3.0 | 3.7 |
| Enough to offset some costs | 17 | 51.5 | 63.0 |
| Enough to offset all costs | 5 | 15.2 | 18.5 |
| Total | 27 | 81.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | | | |
| Not sure | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | 6 | 18.2 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 11B. Perceptions of AR TEACH Sponsor Organization Obligations: Release Time

Giving participants paid time off during the week was:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Very difficult to do | 6 | 18.2 | 23.1 |
| | Somewhat difficult to do | 10 | 30.3 | 38.5 |
| | Somewhat easy to do | 9 | 27.3 | 34.6 |
| | Very easy to do | 1 | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| | Total | 26 | 78.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | We did not do this at all | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Not sure | 1 | 3.0 | |
| | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Total | 7 | 21.2 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | | |

Table 11C. Perceptions of AR TEACH Sponsor Organization Obligations: Tuition Share

Our program's share of tuition cost was:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Very difficult to do | 1 | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| | Somewhat difficult to do | 3 | 9.1 | 11.5 |
| | Somewhat easy to do | 10 | 30.3 | 38.5 |
| | Very easy to do | 12 | 36.4 | 46.2 |
| | Total | 26 | 78.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | We did not do this at all | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Not sure | 1 | 3.0 | |
| | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Total | 7 | 21.2 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | | |

Table 11D. Perceptions of AR TEACH Sponsor Organization Obligations: Book Share

Our program's share of book cost was:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Very difficult to do | 1 | 3.0 | 4.0 |
| | Somewhat difficult to do | 3 | 9.1 | 12.0 |
| | Somewhat easy to do | 10 | 30.3 | 40.0 |
| | Very easy to do | 11 | 33.3 | 44.0 |
| | Total | 25 | 75.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | We did not do this at all | 4 | 12.1 | |
| | Not sure | 1 | 3.0 | |
| | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Total | 8 | 24.2 | |
| Total | 33 | 100.0 | | |

Table 11E. Perceptions of AR TEACH Sponsor Organization Obligations: Salary/Bonus

Awarding graduate(s) a raise or bonus was:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Very difficult to do | 1 | 3.0 | 4.2 |
| | Somewhat difficult to do | 2 | 6.1 | 8.3 |
| | Somewhat easy to do | 12 | 36.4 | 50.0 |
| | Very easy to do | 9 | 27.3 | 37.5 |
| | Total | 24 | 72.7 | 100.0 |
| Missing | We did not do this at all | 2 | 6.1 | |
| | Not sure | 4 | 12.1 | |
| | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Total | 9 | 27.3 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 11F. Funding Sources Associated With Difficulty Providing Staff Release Time

Crosstabulation of Private Tuition with Difficulty in Providing Release Time

| | | Parent fees/Private Tuition | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Difficulty with Paid Release Time | No | N 5 | 5 | 10 |
| | Yes | N 3 | 13 | 16 |
| Total | | N 8 | 18 | 26 |

Notes. $\chi^2(1, N = 26) = 2.82, *p* = .093$. Adjusted residuals suggest a trend toward association, but the result is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

General Satisfaction

Table 12A. Satisfaction With Service

Did you receive good customer service from the AR TEACH staff?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| | Agree | 4 | 12.1 | 14.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 23 | 69.7 | 82.1 |
| | Total | 28 | 84.8 | 100.0 |
| Missing | N/A No interaction | 2 | 6.1 | |
| | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| | Total | 5 | 15.2 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 12B. Recommendation of AR TEACH

Would you recommend AR TEACH Early Childhood® scholarships to other early childhood programs?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | Yes | 29 | 87.9 | 96.7 |
| | Not sure | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 12C. Participation in AR TEACH in the Future

Would you consider sponsoring AR TEACH scholarships recipient(s) in the future?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid | 0 No | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| | 1 Yes | 28 | 84.8 | 93.3 |
| | 4 Not sure | 1 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| | Total | 30 | 90.9 | 100.0 |
| Missing | Unreported | 3 | 9.1 | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | |

Table 12D. Reasons Administators Would Participate in AR TEACH in the Future

Why would you sponsor AR TEACH recipients again in the future? (Check all that Apply)

| | N | Yes (%) |
|--|----|---------|
| To help attract and retain qualified staff who value professional growth | 28 | 79% |
| To support the professional development of my staff and enhance the quality of our programs care | 28 | 86% |
| Improving my staffs understanding of child development will benefit the children and families we serve | 28 | 86% |
| To build my staff's confidence in their roles | 28 | 75% |
| Sponsorship was suggested or required by our funding partners | 28 | 4% |
| Having more teachers with degrees will help our program achieve a higher Better Beginnings rating | 28 | 50% |
| None of These | 28 | 0% |
| Other* | 28 | 4% |

Notes. *To show my staff I believe in them and want them to better who they are. Education is important."

Table 12E. Reasons Administrators Would Not Participate/Were Unsure About AR TEACH in the Future

| Why would you not sponsor AR TEACH recipients again in the future? (Check all that Apply) | | |
|--|---|---------|
| | N | Yes (%) |
| Participating staff have/are graduating | 2 | 50% |
| Staff is leaving the program | 2 | 0% |
| Staff does not want to participate | 2 | 0% |
| Staff does not want to take courses | 2 | 0% |
| My program cannot afford the cost associated with AR TEACH) | 2 | 0% |
| My program cannot afford the cost associated with pay raises/bonuses when staff complete the program | 2 | 0% |
| Staff no longer need financial assistance | 2 | 0% |
| None of these | 2 | 50% |
| Other | 2 | 0% |

Impact on Staff Knowledge and Skills

Table 13. Administrator Reports of Staff Changes

Thinking about all of your AR TEACH graduate(s) on average. Since completing college courses, they have:

| | N | Agree/ Strongly Agree (%) |
|--|----|---------------------------------|
| Increased early childhood knowledge and skills | 30 | 93.3% |
| Improved the quality of techniques and practice | 30 | 90% |
| Increased confidence and enthusiasm for their work | 30 | 90% |
| Influenced coworkers to use new techniques | 30 | 73.3% |
| Improved relationships with children and their families | 30 | 90% |
| Developed new leadership skills | 30 | 80% |
| Our programs full support in applying new techniques in their work | 30 | 90% |

Participation and Retention of Participants

Table 14A. Staff Retention

| Staff Retention | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|----|-----|------|-------|-----------|
| How many AR TEACH participants has your program sponsored? | 28 | 1 | 25 | 6.50 | 5.91 |
| How many AR TEACH participants that you sponsored are STILL employed by your program? | 31 | 0 | 18 | 4.68 | 4.10 |
| Proportion of Staff Retained by the Program | 28 | 0% | 100% | 76.3% | 31.2% |
| Valid N (listwise) | 28 | | | | |

Table 14B. Staff Retention: Proportions

Staff Retained Proportions

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | All Staff Retained | 13 | 39.4 | 46.4 | 46.4 |
| | 50%-99% of Staff Retained | 11 | 33.3 | 39.3 | 85.7 |
| | 1-49% of Staff Retained | 2 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 92.9 |
| | No Staff Retained | 2 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 28 | 84.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | Unreported | 5 | 15.2 | | |
| Total | | 33 | 100.0 | | |

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