



Community Connections for Children

York County Early Learning
Investment Commission

ECE EDUCATOR AWARDS

- 2025 -





ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The York ECE Educator Awards Program is strengthening early childhood education by boosting teacher retention and advancing educator qualifications. Research shows that experienced and well-educated teachers lead to better outcomes for children. Now in its fourth year, the program - led by the York ELIC Committee and administered by Community Connections for Children - has awarded approximately \$2.3 million to more than 1,300 educators, positively impacting over 16,000 children across York County.

AWARD IMPACT

- Increase in Teacher Retention
 - 67% of the educators who received an award have been employed at the same ECE program for at least four years
 - 92% of the educators who received an award in 2025 were employed at an ECE program for at least two years
- Decrease in Staff Vacancies
 - The percentage of programs with vacancies decreased from 62% in 2022 to 43% in 2025.
- Increase in Percentage of Low-Income Children Impacted
 - The percentage of low income children served by educators receiving the award increased from 29% in 2022 to 38% in 2025.

BY THE NUMBERS

65 PROGRAMS

317 EDUCATORS

\$628,824

4,360 CHILDREN

BACKGROUND

York County is experiencing a critical shortage of early childhood education (ECE) programs, with most existing programs operating below capacity due to staffing challenges and low wages—averaging just \$12.20 per hour. This has led to classroom closures and reduced enrollment, impacting families and the local workforce. A recent survey found that 74% of respondents faced employment issues due to lack of child care, highlighting the sector's importance to economic stability and growth.

Child care is infrastructure. Without it, York County's families and businesses cannot thrive.

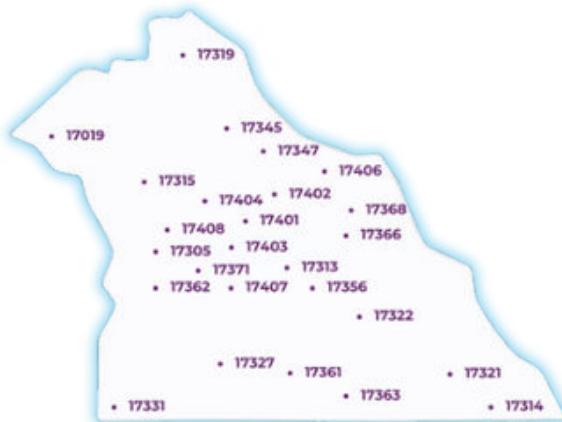


The childcare shortage has far-reaching consequences. Decades of research show that early childhood development is foundational for long-term success in school, work, and life. The Harvard Center for the Developing Child reports that 90% of brain development occurs by age five, with over a million neural connections forming every second in the early years. Stable, nurturing relationships with adults - especially early childhood educators - are critical to healthy brain development and protection from toxic stress.

To secure York County's economic future, investing in a strong early childhood workforce is essential. High-quality ECE not only supports children and families but also yields a significant return on investment - estimated between 7% and 13%. Strengthening this sector is one of the most cost-effective strategies for promoting upward mobility, reducing deficits, and building a skilled, educated workforce. Without immediate action, the region risks long-term consequences for its children, families, and economy.



The awards assist programs in establishing a stable, qualified workforce as they strive for higher levels of quality.



Municipalities Awarded

PROGRAMS IMPACTED

The 2025 ECE Educator Awards were granted to 65 early childhood education programs in York County. General program eligibility includes programs being designated at STAR 2, 3, or 4.



55 Center-Based Programs

5 Family In-Home Programs

4 Group In-Home Programs

1 Pre-K Counts Program

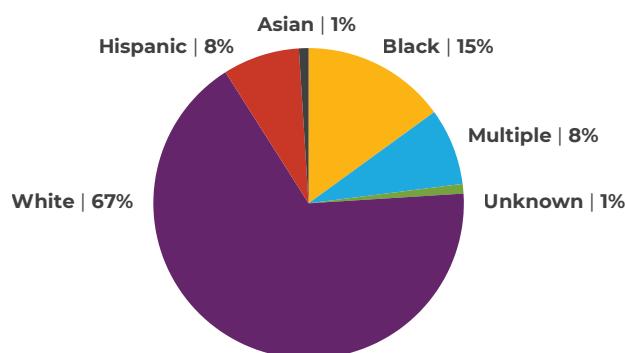
Program Type

Twenty-four programs are serving 237 more children in 2025 than they did in 2024.



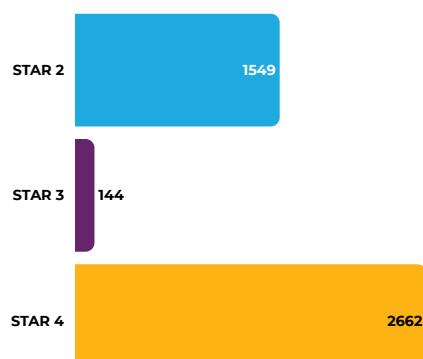
CHILDREN IMPACTED

Child Ethnicity



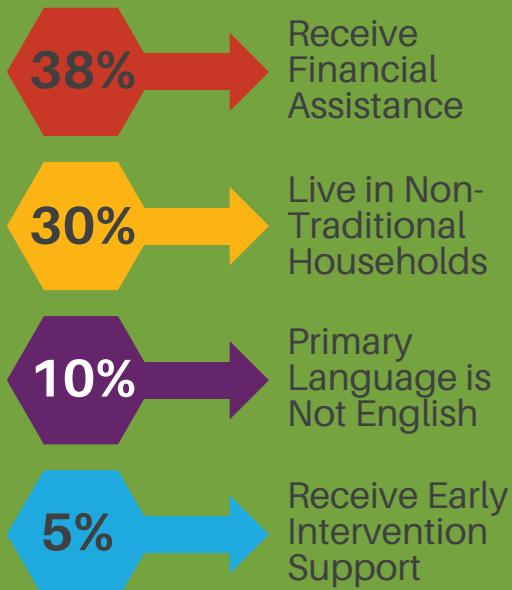
Child Age Groups

- **1,233** Infants and Toddlers
- **1,853** Preschoolers
- **1,274** Before and After School Care



Children by STAR Level

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES



The percentage of children in non-traditional households increased from 26% in 2022 to 30% in 2025.

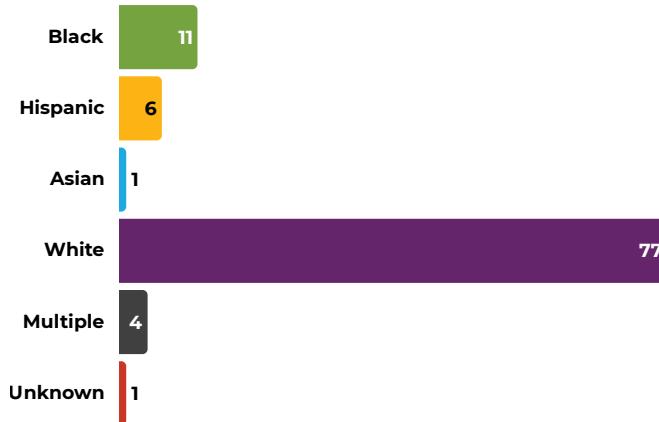
The percentage of children for whom English is not their primary language increased from 6% in 2022 to 10% in 2025.

EDUCATORS IMPACTED

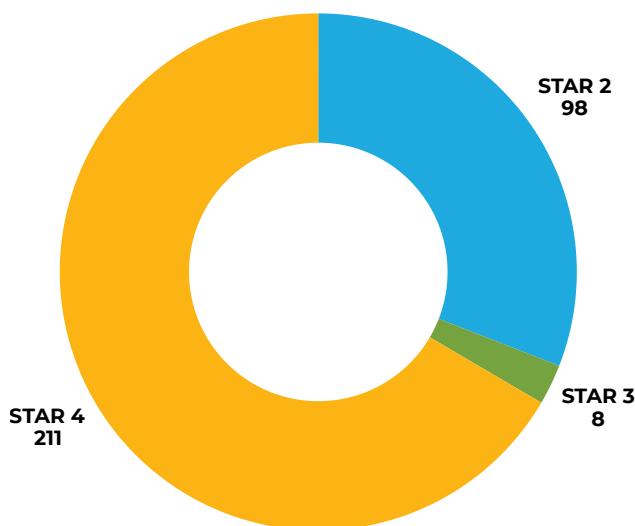
In 2025, York County programs receiving Educator Awards employed a total of 833 educators. Of these, 317 received an ECE Educator award based upon their education level, tenure, and the STAR level of the program they serve.



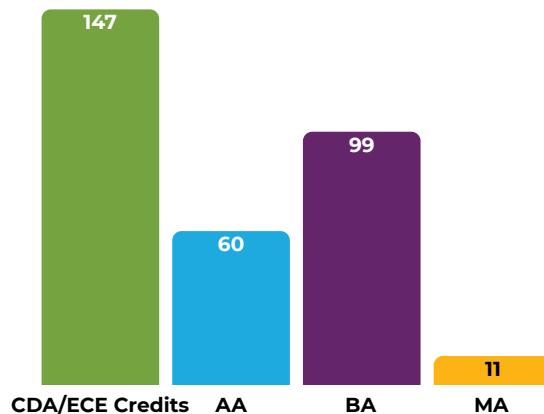
Educator Demographics (%)



Awarded Educators by STAR Level



Education Level of Awarded Educators



Additionally, in 2025, 163 award recipients were actively pursuing a degree program, while 40 recipients have successfully earned a degree since the 2024 Educator Awards.

The percentage of educators with a BA or MA degree increased from 30% in 2022 to 35% in 2025.



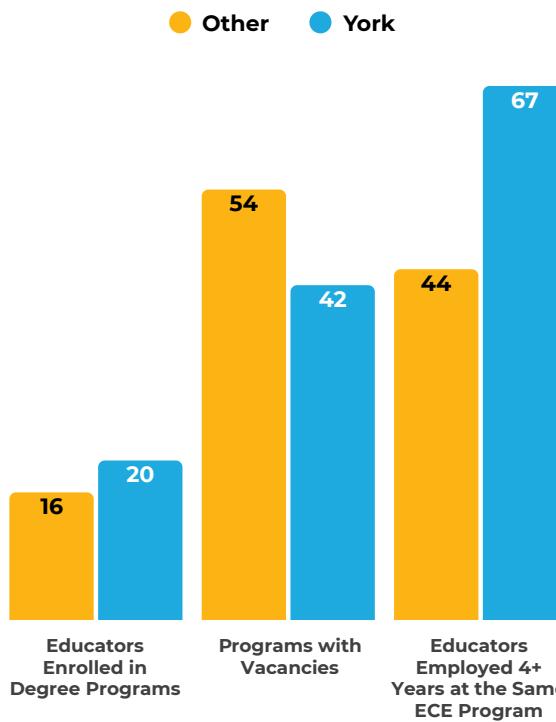
PROGRESS OF EDUCATOR AWARDS

Low wages remain a key driver of the childcare crisis, causing high turnover and fewer qualified teachers in early childhood education programs. Data suggests the ECE Educator Awards are improving quality and capacity in York County. While York County has taken bold, innovative steps to address the ECE crisis through the ECE Educator Awards Program, the challenge is far from solved.

York County recognizes its economic future depends on a strong early childhood workforce.

To measure impact, we controlled for provider type and STAR level, and compared a random sample of programs from neighboring counties. Over the past four years, the awards have increased retention rates, education levels, and reduced vacancies. However, the childcare sector remains under-resourced, with staffing, capacity, and quality continuing to influence community and economic outcomes.

York County Comparison (%)



York County has decreased staff vacancies by 20% since the Educator Awards Program's inception in 2022.



THANK YOU

On behalf of the York County Early Childhood Education programs, Community Connections for Children extends its heartfelt gratitude to our generous funders for their invaluable support of the York County ELIC ECE Educator Awards. Your contributions help us celebrate and recognize the dedication, passion, and excellence of educators who make a lasting impact on the lives of young children and their families. Together, we are strengthening early learning opportunities and building a brighter future for our community.

FUNDERS

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