



SEIU
EDUCATION &
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ELCC Impact Report JUNE - 2023



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2022 - 2023

I. Introduction

Educator-Led Communities of Care (ELCC) draws new and seasoned Family Child Care Educators (FCCEs) into collaborative spaces for peer learning and support. The program uplifts FCCEs as mentors, instructors, and facilitators, while addressing the stress, lack of respect, and isolation felt by many in the field. ELCC strengthens the FCCE system by creating networks at local, state, and national levels, bringing child care educators together to improve their working conditions, learning opportunities, and compensation. Through ELCC, FCCEs guide the decision-making process about the types of programming that suit the needs of their local cohort, while maintaining the integrity of a core national model. And as ELCC continues to build connections with other centers of power in the early education and care sector, FCCEs can engage in broader coordinated efforts to replace a broken system and reshape the essential child care sector with equity and accountability as built-in features, supported by a significant reallocation of shared resources. For example, ELCC in Massachusetts will connect networks to the Common Start Coalition, whose signature legislation calls for a number of public investments in early education and care that promote provider stability and high-quality care. Ultimately, ELCC's success will drive equity and opportunity for women, educators, communities of color, and economically challenged communities, by centering the leadership and voices of FCCEs in multiple early education, funding, nonprofit, and policy ecosystems.

This report summarizes the impact participation in ELCC had on the 2022-2023 peer leaders and cohort participants in Rhode Island and California, as well as members of the 2022 National Advisory Committee (NAC). Findings are based on data collected and analyzed by an external evaluator through a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods in English and Spanish.



II. Methodology

- Late impact survey¹ and group interview² of National Advisory Committee (NAC) members - December 2022, at the end of their year of service
- Early and late impact surveys of RI peer leaders³ and cohort participants⁴ - February and late May 2023, early and late in their 9-month experience that ran from September 2022-June 2023
- Late impact surveys of CA peer leaders⁵ and cohort participants⁶ - late May 2023, towards the end of their five-month experience that ran February-June 2023
- Two late impact group interviews of CA cohort participants⁷, facilitated by child care educators/CA advisory committee members, trained by the external evaluator - late May 2023, towards the end of their five-month experience that ran February-June 2023

III. Findings


Participant experience

Pilot ELCC participants across the different groups had very positive experiences. They spoke of the professionalism of the groups of which they were a part; the chance to be heard by, as well as listen to and learn from their peers; the valuable information and resources gained; increased confidence and motivation to continue and improve their work and businesses; passionate support for and encouragement of each other; and a desire to participate in further training and programs from ESF.

ELCC outcomes

Overall the pilot ELCC program met and exceeded all of its expected outcomes, based on the feedback received from ELCC participants⁸ through the evaluation processes. Quantitative data, as well as quotes, below outline this success:

 *"They take us very seriously."*
- Cohort Participant

 *"It makes us want to do more as part of this committee."*
- NAC Member

 *"We face the same challenges and inspire each other."* - NAC Member

 *"All comments are respected and information is added for growth."*
- Cohort Participant



"We were treated as educators and teachers, because we are teaching the children how to become responsible students, kids, teenagers and adults in the future." - Cohort Participant

RESPECT

100%

Of ELCC participants who gave feedback reported feeling respected as educators

99%

Of ELCC participants who gave feedback reported being valued as leaders

1 90% of NAC members responded to the survey.

2 80% of NAC members participated in the group interview.

3 100% of RI Peer Leaders responded to the Late Impact survey and 50% responded to the Early Impact survey.

4 50% of RI Cohort Participants responded to the Late Impact survey and 65% responded to the Early Impact survey.

5 25% of CA Peer Leaders responded to the Late Impact survey.

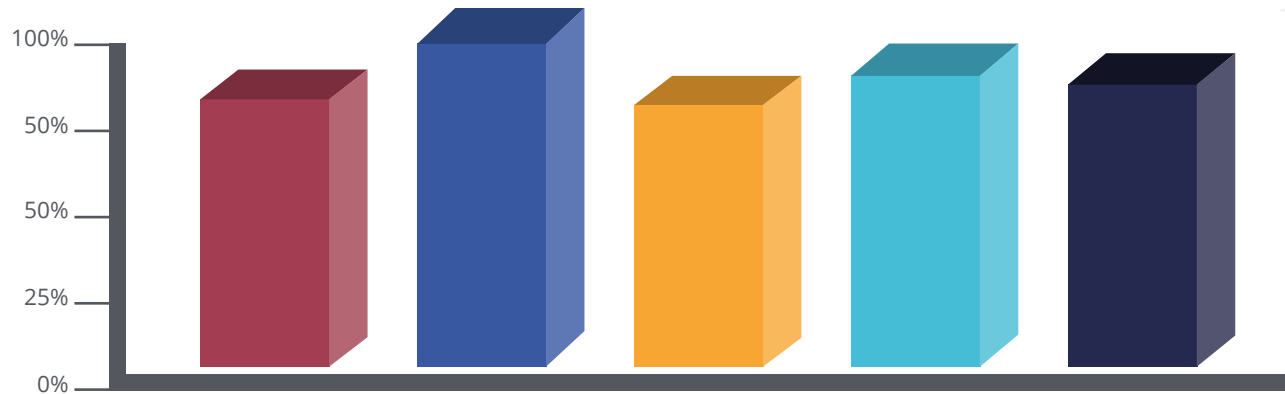
6 58% of CA Cohort Participants responded to the Late Impact survey.

7 12% of CA Cohort Participants participated in a group interview.

8 Participants here refers to NAC members, peer leaders, and cohort participants.

Connection & Support

83% of participants who gave feedback reported strong connection with and support from peers. Specifically, 100% of NAC members and peer leaders who gave feedback felt that ESF cultivated a positive culture of trust, collegiality, and support among their group. Among cohort participants who gave feedback, 79% had sought support from at least one peer or colleague over the last four months, 89% had at least 1 peer/colleague who they could go to for emotional support when they faced challenges at work or experienced a success, and 86% had at least 1 peer/colleague they could easily go to get the information they need.







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-  *"We providers are being valued and supported. We still have a lot of work to be done but I see a lot of light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you for letting me be part of this board." - NAC Member.*
-  *"I enjoyed the conversation between groups from other states. It's great to see where everyone is at and where they are going." - NAC Member*
-  *"I really like the good understanding and communication that exists between everyone." - NAC Member*
-  *"Part of learning and being part of this is networking together, because it can be very isolating in our position and profession. Even in our first cohort meeting, people were emotional, because they thought "Oh, I've only been experiencing this one thing by myself. But it turns out you are, too, and you are, too." Having that support system to say, "Hey, we're in it together. This is what the best practices are that could help you. Maybe you can try something new, and then build from that." I think that's very powerful." - Peer Leader*



Learning & Agency

100% of participants who gave feedback reported acquiring, and applying, greater skill and knowledge levels, and 100% reported feeling a greater sense of agency⁹ in their work.

"I love the course and materials they have given us as well as all the resources. I wish I had all this information when I first started. - Cohort Member"

"There's so many areas. I've been doing this so long, but all wrong. Learned something new in all areas." - Cohort Member"

"For me it was a great opportunity to participate and listen to other more experienced child care providers, to talk about issues that really matter to us like the creation of contracts, policies, and business accounting. These issues are essential and fundamental for us to be able to make our businesses grow, thank you!!! - Cohort Member"

"I have learned to respect myself much more as an educator and to value my work more." - Cohort Member"

"I've received so many important information from these classes, that my brain is flowing a mile a minute. I'm so empowered with knowledge from these classes that I encourage all the new providers getting started to sign up for the next one." - Cohort Member"

"I'm more organized, confident, motivated to put what I've learned into practice." - Cohort Participant"

"I've improved my contract and the way I do my interviews with new parents. Also to be more organized and know what to report on my taxes." - Cohort Member"

⁹ Agency was defined as feeling empowered in their professional identity as a family child care educator.

Collective Power

100% of NAC members who gave feedback felt ESF had authentically centered family child care educators as ELCC decision-makers and that they had directly influenced the design and evolution of ELCC as a union-allied, educator-led initiative. 100% of cohort participants who gave feedback said they understand the major issues related to compensation and working conditions for family child care educators and 99% wanted to be more involved in advocacy and organizing efforts to fight for improvements for all family child care educators.



"Our voices and concerns are heard."
- NAC Member



"I'm glad to have joined the union."
- Cohort Member"

100%

(of those who provided feedback)

- Felt ESF had authentically centered FCEs as ELCC decision-makers and that they had directly influenced the design and evolution of ELCC as a union-allied, educator-led initiative.
- Said they understand the major issues related to compensation and working conditions for FCEs



CALIFORNIA FOR ALL KIDS

Spotlight on:

California

The report below captures the story of ELCC's impact in California, based on the two group interviews with cohort participants.

Introduction

Guided by our shared values of equity and inclusion, CCPU Training Fund has used the state's initial investment to design a program that advances the The Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids by providing peer-led professional development that grows and retains the family child care workforce. The "Educator-Led Communities of Care" (ELCC) program is a rigorous five-month training series focused on the fundamentals of running a family child care business. ELCC are peer-led learning communities that reduce the isolation family child care educators experience, while providing training and wraparound support for providers to develop their businesses and grow as leaders. It is an opportunity for community and leadership building amongst child care providers in the state.

The vital difference in this professional development program is the peer-led structure. Peer-led learning communities reduce the isolation family child care educators experience, while providing training and wraparound support for providers to develop their businesses and grow



as leaders. In recently received feedback, a participant from ELCC explained, “The networking and curriculum are amazing - the way it’s taught, how personal it is. As an educator, I see the materials that we’re learning are explained to us in depth, so much so that we can later train others in them.” It is an opportunity for community and leadership building amongst family child care providers in the state. Family child care providers responded with great enthusiasm to the roll out of ELCC, and we received 1,400 applications for the program this year.

Through focus groups, we’ve found what family child care providers most value about this program is the peer-led approach. Participants also valued the connection they gained with others in their field, which made them feel less isolated. Lastly and importantly, the participants said the program gave them the tools they needed to establish and grow their businesses, leading to them feeling like they have what they need to stay in the workforce for the long term.



Methodology

To gain insights on the impact of the program on the first cohort of participants, we worked with a professional evaluator to conduct focus groups. This external evaluator was hired to assess impact and program satisfaction through the facilitation of focus group discussions. Two focus groups were conducted—one in English and one in Spanish. Participants were self-selected volunteers. Each focus group consisted of 8-10 individuals, representing both veteran providers and those new to the field. This session was conducted online, facilitated by a child care provider who was trained by a professional evaluator. The discussion was video-recorded and supplemented with note-taking. The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes.

Findings

The focus groups yielded rich insights from participants. By capturing the voices and experiences of the participants in this first cohort, we are already seeing the impact the program is having with providers. The three core emerging ELCC's impacts: 1.) The peer-led difference for professional development 2.) How the program combatted isolation for providers 3.) How the program leads contributes to sustainability for providers and their businesses.

1. Peer-led difference

ELCC is led by "peer leaders," providers with experience in the child care field who create a supportive environment for providers to sustain and grow their businesses. Peer Leaders play an essential role in the ELCC network by serving as facilitators, community-builders and leaders within their assigned cohort. Participants highlighted the value of having their peers leading professional development training. Family child care educators (FCCEs) are able to learn from each other's experiences, "share ideas, strategies, and lessons" and get an "additional set of eyes to help with [their] business." The people they are learning from are, as one educator put it, "on the ground in the same battle you're in. They are "someone who understands you and can speak to you on your level, in language that you can understand." As one focus group participant said, peer-led professional development helps FCCEs "bring a higher quality to [their] work with kids," and helps them learn, grow, teach each other, and navigate a very complex profession - together. As one FCCE shared, "This field is hard but not impossible - you work with love and caring and give others what they need."

On the difference peer-led trainers make, one participant said: "The providers give these classes with love. I feel the love, the appreciation, the tools they've given to each of us, and the time that they've given to us. They make me feel like I can do it. I can return to college and finish my

degree. I'm only missing a little. I see the other providers, how they're advancing. I think I can advance too. The energy they transmit - they're excited to tell us, 'If I can do it, you can do it. Here is my number, here are the tools.' It's more than help, it's a friendly hand they've given us. I feel grateful to have this magnificent group. You're all different but you all have valuable learning for us. Every class makes me stronger. These classes have to continue. Some of us have been doing this a very long time, and maybe this is a refresher, but it reminds us that maybe we've been focused on the wrong things. The tools that they've given us are the most important."

In addition to the content expertise, participants were also willing to be more vulnerable with the peer leaders in their cohort. One participant shared,



"My colleagues have told me, 'Whatever you need, here's my phone number.' It made me feel secure, at ease. Sometimes we're shy, worried we're going to ask a silly question. They [peer leaders] say, 'Don't worry, it's important. Every question has an answer.' I feel like I'm in my comfort zone."

2. Combating Isolation

Almost all the FCCEs shared that they now felt less isolation and more connection as a result of participating in ELCC. This has been particularly important following the pandemic and a period of fewer training resources in the state. ELCC set up WhatsApp groups to keep providers connected and those groups, in particular, have provided a way for FCCEs to feel connected to each other and trust that peer support is readily accessible to them.

Said one participant, "At the beginning of this business, I thought it was individual, so I didn't think I was isolated. I thought you had to learn by yourself how to do everything. I didn't know we could work together as a group with other providers, sharing and comparing. Now, being

in this group, I realize I am not by myself, not isolated. Now I feel part of something else, a solid group. As soon as the class finishes, I will sign up to join a group reunion.”

Another participant shared,



“I feel very supported, and I’ve been in this for 15 years. I didn’t know many other providers when I started. Now I know who to reach out to for what I need. I feel stronger. I found everything I need here.”

3. Sustainability

Many participants said that ELCC has given them what they need to stay in the field long-term. This includes tools and reminders, feelings of self-worth, a vision for the future, confidence others are advocating for their needs, emergency plans for if they need to close their business temporarily, encouragement, motivation, a recharge, and peer role models.

Said one provider,



“I want to continue at least another 10-15 years. More than anything, ELCC has given me the tools. It’s given me all the tools I need - who to call on the phone, where to go with my questions. I’m new at this, I take it step by step. They [ELCC members] tell me what I have to do, how to do it, and give me information.”

No matter how long FCCEs have been running their own family child care businesses, they have been able to learn new things, refresh and reinforce existing knowledge, and adjust their practices through participation in ELCC. With this knowledge they say they feel more professional, empowered, valued, and “more in control of [their] businesses.” FCCEs shared the many things they’ve done differently since joining ELCC - updating their policies and policy book, updating and revising their contracts

and discussing them with families, switching to a new accountant who specializes in child care to be able to file taxes correctly and claim the right deductions, creating a separate business bank account, opening a savings account to manage future risk and prepare for retirement, and providing better services.



“This job can be exhausting,” said another participant. “This program has recharged me. It’s given me tools to make my job less heavy, made me have less stress because I’m making fewer mistakes. It’s given me the push to see improvements. I understand how important what we’re doing is. It’s essential. The group has given me the motivation to continue in my job, because I can do it better. We support each other to continue and not retire, like many have. We want to be seen as providers, educators, not babysitters. That’s why we take these classes - to get better every day, to provide high quality service. And that we deserve vacation days, sick days, and retirement that we’ve earned. We’ve been through difficult times with the pandemic. Many of us have been on the battlefield.”

1400

Applications

102

Participants

Implications of the Findings

Before conducting the focus group, it was already clear that there was a demand for this program. We received over 1400 applications but were only able to accept 102 participants in the first cohort. And the program is resonating with this cohort. All participants in the focus groups stated that they would recommend ELCC to other FCCEs and many already have.

Said one participant:



"I've already recommended the classes to others (my colleagues, my mother). I spoke about them in general, that they refresh you on various themes. What's important is your contract. Nothing is more valuable than educating yourself, learning. I speak for all of my colleagues who aren't here today. Everyone is happy with the classes and wants them to continue."

Some participants expressed a desire to be able to participate in ELCC repeatedly, as a refresher experience. One participant said,



"It would be great to take it every year - always something to learn that's new. Renew and recharge every year. Maybe it will become a regular staple."

The positive reception of the program indicates there is much more to do and more ways the program can grow. For example, participants expressed interest in accreditation and certification for the program:



"Have college credits that translate into an actual credential. I wish it would weigh a little more into the career path we're on. I'm more focused on getting my four-year degree in child development."

Another participant shared,



"Provide other classes/training for accreditation for child care providers. If you can get accredited, your kids don't have to leave. They can stay in your home through pre-k. You won't have to lose your kids to the pre-k program. Would help child care providers be competitive."



Conclusion

It's clear that this first cohort has been a success with FCCEs and they want to see it continue and grow.

The program's peer-led approach, ability to connect providers and the resources provided are highly valued by providers. And the tools that the program offers are helping providers establish the foundation they need to create sustainable businesses that keep them in the field for the long term. With the state's continued investment, this program can expand to meet the demand and be a vital tool to help grow and retain the early child care and learning workforce in California for years to come.