



Early Learning Initiative



Workforce System

**Sarasota County
Preschool Teacher
Bonus Retention
Program
May 2022**

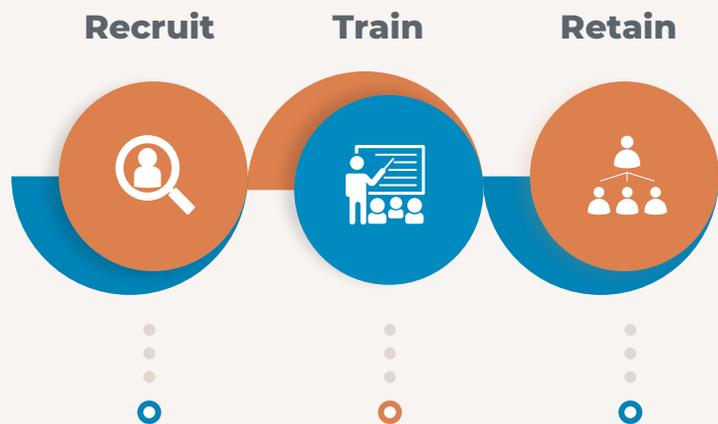
Background

In 2022, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation (CMBF) partnered with the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Sarasota County to improve the early childhood education workforce system. This project is part of CMBF's broader Early Learning Initiative, and includes strategies to recruit, train, and retain high quality teachers in the field.

The two organizations collaborated on a Florida Division of Early Learning grant, funded via the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The grant focuses on three primary objectives:

- Provide retention bonuses to current teachers.
- Develop a community-wide marketing campaign to increase visibility of the sector and to enhance workforce outreach efforts to recruit more early learning professionals.
- Offer career navigation by recruiting and assisting potential candidates and new hires through screening, foundational training, job placement, and ongoing professional development.

Early Learning Initiative Workforce System



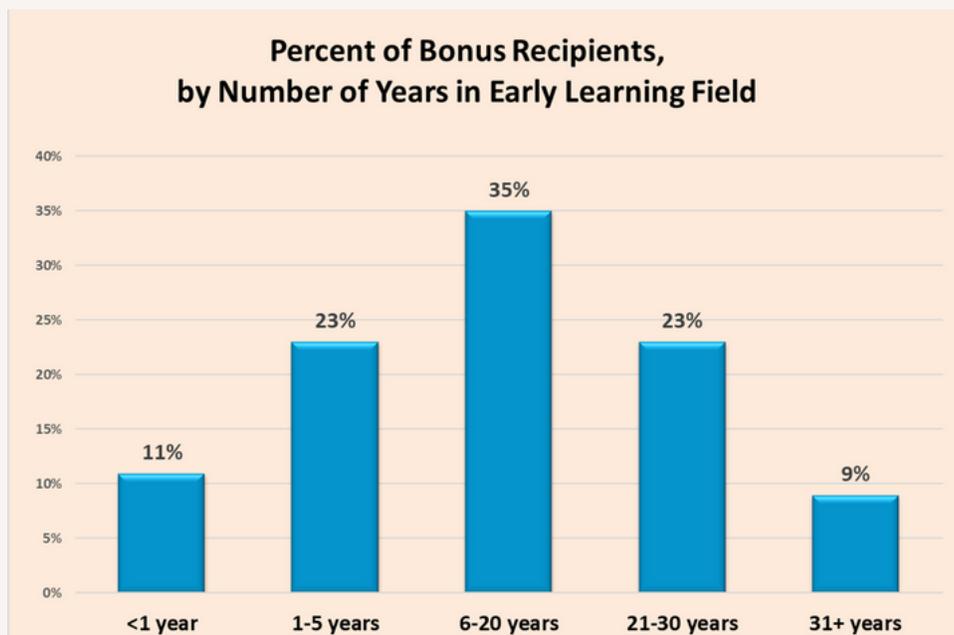
The ELC was awarded a \$500,000 state grant for this project, which will be enhanced and braided with additional CMBF investments. \$375,000 of this amount was earmarked for a preschool teacher bonus program that the ELC launched in April 2022. This first of two planned 2022 bonus distributions was implemented using an online application that included several survey questions. Teachers were eligible for bonuses based on their longevity in the field. Partner providers for the project included those preschools located in Sarasota County possessing an active School Readiness contract with the ELC, and that participate in the Look for the Stars quality rating system. Both teachers and directors were eligible for the funds, which were hand delivered at schools in May 2022. This report provides a summary of the Phase 1 Teacher Retention Bonus Program, including a synopsis of the survey questions included in the application form.

Bonus Structure

A total of \$474,300 in bonuses were distributed to 535 early education professionals from 73 different Sarasota County center sites using funds from both the state grant award and additional funding from CMBF. The chart below summarizes the recipients by the number of years they have worked in the field, and by the dollar amount of the bonus they received for the Phase 1 Bonus Program.

Longevity in Field	Percent of Bonus Recipients	Number of Bonus Recipients	Amount of Bonus	Total Amount Invested
<1 year	11%	58	\$300.00	\$17,400.00
1-5 years	23%	121	\$600.00	\$72,600.00
6-20 years	35%	189	\$900.00	\$170,100.00
21-30 years	23%	121	\$1,200.00	\$145,200.00
31+ years	9%	46	\$1,500.00	\$69,000.00
TOTAL		535		\$474,300.00

The percentage distribution by the recipients' longevity in the field is captured in the chart below. This shows a relatively normal curve with new hires and those with 31+ years of experience representing the smaller proportion of professionals working in the sector.



Recipient Demographics

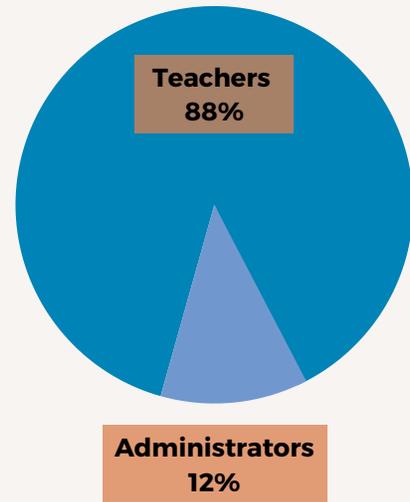
A total of 535 individuals received a bonus: 471 (or 88%) are classroom teachers or teacher assistants & aides; and 64 (or 12%) are administrators. To the right is a pie chart that shows this distribution.

Bonus applicants were also asked to report the highest level of education they have achieved, using a drop down of the following five options:

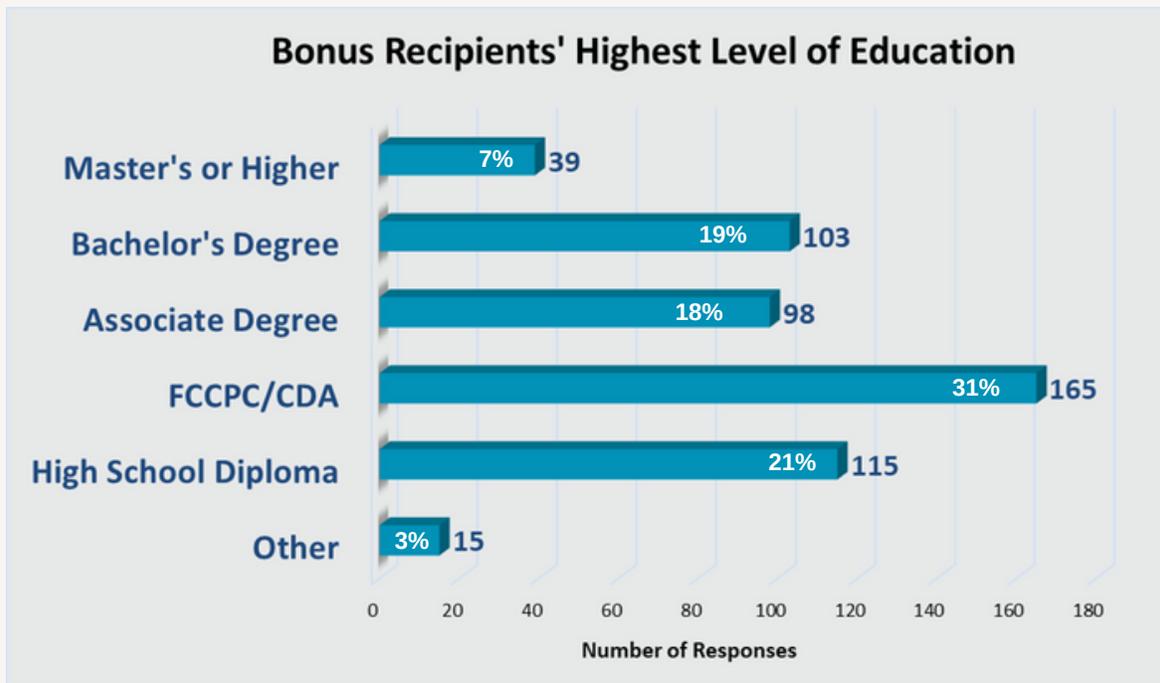
- High School Diploma
- FCCPC (formerly CDA)*
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree

(*Note that FCCPC is the Florida Child Care Professional Credential Certificate program approved by the Florida Department of Children and Families. And CDA is the national Child Development Associate Credential.)

Bonus Recipient's Role



Below is a bar chart depicting the distribution of responses by percent and number.



Impact of Bonus

Bonus recipients were asked: "How will this retention bonus impact you personally or professionally?" Their responses were qualitatively coded and the three most common categories of answers are summarized below.



Personal Finances

The most frequently mentioned planned use of the bonus money, by a large margin, was for the recipient's own **early childhood education expenses**, including tuition, books, laptops, etc. Respondents were eager to use this money to further their studies and training. The next most common answers include costs for transportation (mainly gas), housing, and debt (especially student loans). Food and medical bills were also mentioned by some.



Classroom Supplies

While the intent of the bonus program was to put money into the pockets of the teachers and directors, many of them were excited to use the funds to purchase additional classroom materials, lesson plans, supplies (such as pencils, crayons, glue sticks, STEM activities, etc.), and other teaching resources. They expressed great enthusiasm for being able to enhance their impact in this manner.



Motivation

Recipients expressed gratitude and said the bonus made them feel appreciated and recognized. They indicated that this increases their motivation and satisfaction with their job. The sample quotes below capture this sentiment expressed by many.

"A retention bonus reassures me that Early Childhood Professionals, such as myself, are valued by our communities for the vital role we play in the growth and development of our children. "

"Professionally, it makes a statement to everyone working in the field that they are valued and our work is recognized by decision makers."

Impact of Bonus

Bonus recipients were also asked: "Will this retention bonus impact your decision to remain in the early education field?" While almost half said 'No,' a review of their open-ended responses as to why shows a deep commitment to the field. The educators made it very clear that, even though they were immensely appreciative of the bonus, money is not what drives them; rather they are motivated by a love for the job regardless of whether they receive such rewards. The following quotes are representative of the many responses to this question:

- *"I love that there is a retention bonus that is being given, however, I love my job; it is my passion and I wouldn't leave it for the world."*
- *"I love this field, so I plan to stay no matter what. However, being rewarded with a retention bonus for remaining in the field during the hardest times of COVID is heartwarming knowing we are truly appreciated."*

Satisfying Aspects of Job

Bonus recipients were asked: "What are the two most satisfying things about your job as an Early Childhood Educator?" The most frequent responses related to one of the following four areas.

The Growth & Development of the Children

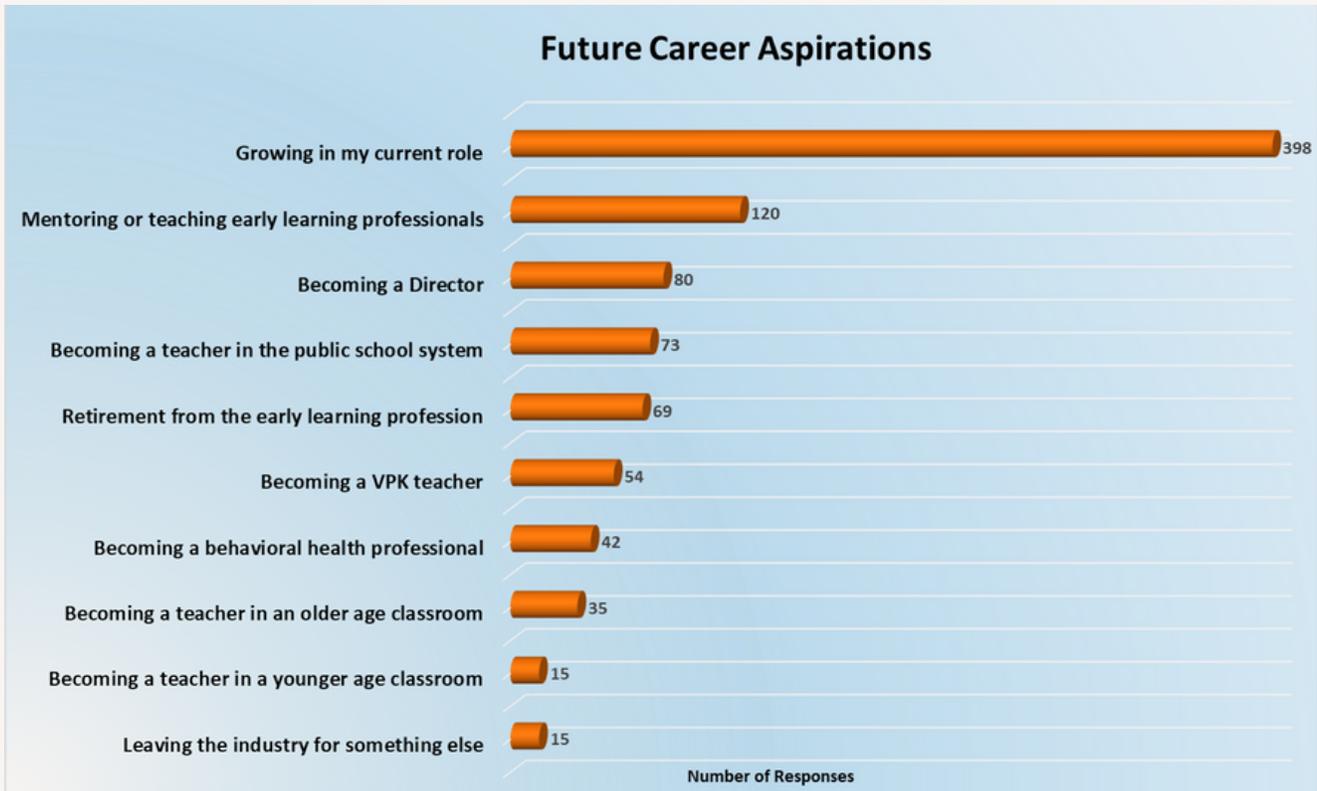
Learning from Colleagues & Students

Helping Parents & Families

Giving & Receiving Love

Future Career Aspirations

Survey respondents were asked, "What are your future career aspirations?" They were given ten response options and the ability to choose all that apply. Below is a chart that summarizes the frequency counts for this question.



Job Fulfillment

The final question related to how their current position contributes to their personal and professional fulfillment. Below are sample quotes.

- "I love the children and how unique they each are. I like to watch them become little people. It's a fun job to me even when it's hard."
- "It brings me a great joy to know that I am raising the future leaders."
- "To know that I am providing a loving, caring, safe and nurturing environment for the children in my care makes my heart full."
- "It is the most exhausting but rewarding job."
- "I feel personally fulfilled when I help a child achieve a milestone."
- "I love reminding myself that my toddlers are the future of the world and I get to help shape them into wonderful children! Who knows what they will become, the possibilities are endless! "