Harris County Early REACH:

Semi-Annual Data Memo 4

for Aims 2 and 3

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Early REACH Data Memo 4

INTRODUCTION

Early REACH aims to provide free, high-quality child care to families facing economic hardship and/or residing in child care deserts within Harris County. Through the United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH), Early REACH provides coaching and professional development to participating child care directors and teachers. Additionally, participating child care centers receive business coaching from Civitas, a consulting firm that offers individualized business coaching, group training, and resources to support financial stability and sustainability.

In order to consider the overall quality of care at each center and the quality-related contributions of Early REACH, an overall quality framework was conceptualized based on the early child care quality literature. Early childhood care and education quality consists of both structural characteristics (e.g., classroom ratios and staff education/training) and process characteristics (e.g., classroom interactions). Early REACH policies for child care centers are aligned with key indicators of structural quality, including but not limited to low teacher-child ratios in classrooms, small group sizes in classrooms, higher wages for teachers, and higher child care provider education levels. Process quality considers providers' relationship-based practices, experiences related to professional emotional well-being, program climate, and the quality of teacher-child interactions. A substantive body of research has found significant associations between early childhood education process quality indicators and child outcomes underscoring its importance (e.g., Soliday Hong et al., 2019). Structural characteristics are the foundational aspects of quality that influence process quality, which ultimately have effects on children's and families' experiences, well-being, and learning (Slot, 2018).

This is the fourth data memo that describes the ongoing evaluation of Harris County's Early REACH initiative. In this memo, the Brazelton Touchpoints Center's (BTC) evaluation for Early REACH explores associations between the use of child care slots and access to high-quality child care and early education. Specifically, the BTC evaluation assesses Aims 2 and 3 of Early REACH implementation:[1]

- **Aim 2: Supporting teacher recruitment and retention in early childhood centers**
- **Aim 3: Building and supporting center quality**

At the beginning of each section of this memo, the relevant research questions and associated data sources are highlighted. For definitions of common terms used in this data memo, please refer to the glossary (p. 174).

[1] For more information about the BTC evaluation, see the BTC evaluation plan updated in December 2025.

The BTC evaluation team collaborated with BakerRipley and UWGH to collect data from 27 center-based child care centers between August and December 2025.[2] This memo presents information on coaching implementation, professional development, administrative data, and outcomes for centers, directors, teachers, families, and children during this period. All information presented in this memo is preliminary and may not reflect final assessments or findings.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, Early REACH continues to demonstrate strong implementation and broad reach across Harris County. As of December 2025, Early REACH was serving 28 child care centers across Harris County, with 127 classrooms, 43 directors and/or owners, and 269 teachers participating in programming. Compliance with core standards established by Early REACH remained high, with 95% of classrooms meeting teacher–child ratio requirements. Additionally, centers consistently adhered to expectations for classroom environments and materials. The initiative has also strengthened the early childhood workforce by ensuring all centers meet a wage requirement of $15 per hour, with some centers paying all staff $15/hour, regardless of Early REACH status. Centers were also expanding access to career development supports for staff including training, coaching, and mentoring.

Program quality indicators suggested generally strong implementation across multiple domains. Recruitment and retention outcomes were positive; most centers were fully staffed, reported low difficulty with recruitment, and staff turnover rates were below the national average. Coaching remains a central driver of quality improvement, with 549 sessions delivered across 26 centers, emphasizing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)-informed practice, consultation, and observation.[3] Teachers reported high self-efficacy, strong relationships with coaches, and positive perceptions of curriculum and program climate. CLASS observations showed strong emotional and relational quality across age groups, and an emerging need for growth in instructional support. Families reported high satisfaction with their Early REACH centers and improved child care affordability, with reduced child care cost burden and increased economic stability.

Child outcomes were generally positive, with most children demonstrating typical social-emotional development while in Early REACH centers. Longitudinal data demonstrated movement for children's growth in their social-emotional skills. Preliminary findings suggest that many children who were previously assessed as needing additional support in this area were now demonstrating typical social-emotional skills.

Key recommendations for Early REACH programming include: 1) sustaining and expanding social-emotional and behavioral supports for children and teachers, 2) continuing the Early Intervention and Behavior Services role to ensure focused support for centers and families, 3)

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[2] The 28th center joined Early REACH in September 2025 when the third timepoint of survey data collection was underway.
[3] Two centers received classroom visits from another continuous quality improvement program (United Way of Greater Houston Bright Beginnings) and notes from these visits were shared with Early REACH coaches.

maintaining compliance monitoring in alignment with professional development and supportive technical assistance, 4) strengthening Service Improvement Plan (SIP) processes to drive continuous quality improvement, and 5) continuing public investment to support workforce stability and economic well-being, enhance classroom quality, and improve families' access to affordable child care.

EARLY REACH CURRENT HIGHLIGHTS

PROGRAM REACH AND IMPLEMENTATION

- As of December 2025, Early REACH has served 32 centers, with 28 centers currently with Early REACH across Harris County. These centers span a broad geographic area, expanding access to early care and education services.
- Between August and December 2025, the initiative served 43 directors, 269 teachers, and 127 classrooms across infant, toddler, and preschool settings, with 42% of classrooms serving toddlers, an important contribution given national shortages in high-quality infant and toddler care.
- Early REACH provides comprehensive supports, including enrollment assistance, professional certification and credentialing, compliance monitoring, curriculum improvement, developmental screenings, classroom quality monitoring, professional development, coaching, and administrative guidance. The comprehensive services of Early REACH together are what make the model such a powerful tool for change in Harris County.
- Program compliance remained strong, with teacher–child ratio requirements met in 95% of observed classroom visits and no significant concerns identified related to classroom environments or materials.

FINANCIAL AND WORKFORCE SUPPORTS

- Early REACH funding has contributed to increased and stabilized compensation across participating centers. All centers reported meeting the minimum wage requirement of $15 per hour, with some offering wages as high as $18 per hour.
- Approximately one-third (38%) of centers reported wage parity between Early REACH and non-Early REACH staff.
- Centers were also investing in workforce development through access to training, credentialing opportunities, structured supervision, and flexible scheduling to support continued education. These supports exceed both Texas and national averages and contribute to improved retention, stronger program climate, and higher-quality classroom practices.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS

- Through its partnership with Civitas, Early REACH provides business and operational supports, including individualized coaching, group training, and self-directed modules.
- Most centers (88%) reported satisfaction with these offerings and demonstrated *moderate* to *high* confidence in their operational practices.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- Early REACH centers have made notable progress in teacher recruitment and retention. By fall 2025, most centers (65%) reported being fully staffed, and improvements in staffing levels were generally sustained over time, particularly among more tenured centers.
- Most center directors reported low levels of difficulty in recruiting teachers, with 63% consistently reporting low difficulty and an additional 21% showing improvement over time.
- Turnover rates remained below national averages, with 74% of directors reporting turnover rates between 0 and 20%. When staff did leave, it was most often due to personal reasons (52%) or opportunities for career advancement (60%).

Coaching and Professional Development

- Coaching remains a central and effective component of Early REACH. Between August and December 2025, 549 coaching sessions were conducted, with a strong emphasis on consultation, observation, and CLASS-aligned strategies. Coaching content focused on teacher–child interactions (99%), Reggio Emilia implementation (30%), classroom environment (21%), and child behavior (13%).
- Teachers and directors reported high levels of trust and satisfaction with coaching supports, viewing coaches as collaborative partners who provide meaningful and individualized guidance.
- The introduction of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager addressed a critical need for supporting children with behavioral and developmental challenges, with early findings indicating strong demand for services, particularly related to speech and language development (61%).

Process Quality

- Teachers reported high levels of self-efficacy (*Range* = 77% - 95%), with increases observed over time.
- Most teachers (95%) expressed confidence in their ability to positively influence children's development and to support children with varying needs (86%).
- Most staff reported high levels of personal accomplishment (*Average* = 5.7 out of 7.0) and relatively low levels of emotional exhaustion (*Average* = 2.0 out of 7.0), indicating generally strong professional well-being.
- Teachers (*Range* = 73% - 90%) also reported positive perceptions of curriculum supports and felt well equipped to implement them effectively.
- Directors and teachers consistently reported strong relationship-based practices with families, including cultural responsiveness (*Director Average* = 5.6 out of 6.0; *Teacher Average* = 5.2 out of 6.0) and meaningful engagement (*Director Average* = 5.7 out of 6.0; *Teacher Average* = 5.1 out of 6.0).

- Program climate was described as positive (*Director Average* = 3.8 out of 4.0; *Teacher Average* = 3.7 out of 4.0), with strong staff relationships, high engagement, and supportive working environments.

Teacher–Child Interaction Quality (CLASS)

- Observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) indicated that Early REACH classrooms demonstrated strong emotional and relational interactions across age groups, while instructional interactions remained comparatively lower, consistent with national trends.
- Infant classrooms showed high-quality responsive caregiving (*Average* = 5.2 out of 7.0) and strong teacher sensitivity (*Average* = 6.6 out of 7.0).
- Toddler classrooms demonstrated solid emotional and behavioral support (*Average* = 5.7 out of 7.0), though variability in learning-focused interactions (*Average* = 2.8 out of 7.0) was observed, particularly among classrooms with newer teachers.
- Preschool classrooms showed strong emotional support (*Average* = 5.9 out of 7.0) and classroom organization (*Average* = 5.5 out of 7.0), while instructional support (*Average* = 2.3 out of 7.0) remained an area for continued growth. Preschool CLASS scores for *Emotional Support* and *Classroom Organization* were similar to national Head Start averages, though *Instructional Support* remained slightly lower.

Family Outcomes and Impact

- Early REACH serves a diverse and economically vulnerable population of families. Most families identified as African American (61%) or Hispanic (34%). The majority of parents (94%) had at least a high school education and were working or in school/training (81%). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of families experienced at least one risk factor for entering poverty and close to half reported food insecurity (48%) and difficulty paying bills (46%).
- The program has significantly improved child care affordability, with the proportion of families spending more than 40% of their income on child care decreasing from 29% to 6%. Most families (80%) now reported little to no financial burden related to child care, and the majority (88%) indicated that care met their scheduling needs.
- Families also reported high levels of satisfaction with Early REACH centers (*Average* = 9.2 out of 10.0), particularly in affordability, staff quality, and cultural responsiveness.

Children's Social-Emotional Outcomes

- Findings from the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) indicated that most children (*Range* = 82% - 89%) demonstrated typical social-emotional development, with relatively low proportions of children (*Range* = 11% - 24%) classified as having significant unmet emotional needs.
- Over time, there was evidence of positive movement, with more children transitioning out of higher risk of behavioral difficulties categories. However, approximately one-

quarter (24%) of preschool-aged children exhibited elevated behavioral concerns, highlighting an ongoing need for targeted supports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUSTAIN INVESTMENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Sustained investment in early childhood education by Harris County will be critical to maintaining and expanding the gains achieved through Early REACH. This will support access to high-quality care, strengthen the early childhood workforce, and promote economic stability for families and teachers. All of these factors will contribute to the overall economic well-being of Harris County and its residents in both the short- and the long-run.
- In addition, high-quality early childhood care has the potential to significantly increase positive child outcomes including progress in school and beyond (Mastergeorge & Bartlett, 2026) which will improve the quality of life and good citizenship of Harris County residents across generations.

COORDINATE MONITORING ACCOMPANIED BY ALIGNED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

- Early REACH should maintain its strong compliance monitoring system while pairing monitoring with focused technical assistance to support sustained implementation of program standards. Technical assistance should focus on key areas such as maintaining teacher credentialing, preserving required teacher-child ratios, and sustaining competitive wages.
- Continued support for the Service Improvement Plan process is also recommended, with an emphasis on strengthening collaborative decision-making and ensuring that action plans translate into meaningful and sustained program improvements through ongoing coaching and follow-up.

CONTINUE INDIVIDUALIZED COACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Given the diversity in director and teacher backgrounds, Early REACH should continue to provide ongoing differentiated and individualized supports. Coaching and professional development should be tailored to varying levels of experience and education to ensure that all directors and teachers receive relevant and effective support.
- Additionally, offering training, coaching, and resources in both Spanish and English should remain a priority to better align with the linguistic diversity of the workforce.

Hone a Sustainable Workforce Pipeline and Specialized Support to Maintain Ease of Recruitment and Retention, Including Hiring and Onboarding Practices

- Building a sustainable early childhood workforce pipeline should remain a priority. Expanding partnerships with local colleges, universities, and workforce development programs can create structured pathways into the field through internships and apprenticeships.
- Focused supports for toddler teachers, including specialized training and incentives, may help address persistent recruitment and retention challenges in these roles.
- Recruitment strategies should also extend to support-staff positions, with attention to compensation, advancement opportunities, and role stability.
- Centers would benefit from strengthened hiring and onboarding practices, including clear role expectations, structured mentorship, and early supports for new staff.
- Efforts to improve retention should prioritize competitive compensation and clear career pathways, while increased participation in Civitas coaching related to leadership and workplace culture may further strengthen staffing outcomes.

Expand Workforce Support and Financial Stability

- To further strengthen workforce stability, policies and program supports should expand benefits that promote financial security and well-being, such as health insurance and wellness initiatives.
- Continued investment in education and compensation for credential attainment can further support teacher retention and improve classroom quality.
- Centers should also be encouraged to fully engage in Civitas supports to strengthen operational and financial management. Civitas may enhance its impact by expanding resources related to staff recruitment and retention, community partnerships, and employee benefits, while also improving documentation and tracking of service delivery.

Continue Coaching and Offering Focused Supports on Instructional Interactions and Facilitated Learning

- Early REACH should continue refining its coaching model by maintaining strong alignment with CLASS data while expanding focus areas to include behavior management, language development, and inclusive practices.
- Coaching strategies should incorporate more intentional modeling of effective practices, as this approach has potential to support teacher learning and practice change.
- Additional attention should be given to strengthening instructional interactions, particularly in areas such as concept development, feedback, and language-rich engagement. Professional development should emphasize practical strategies that support higher-order thinking, conversation, and meaningful learning experiences.

- New teachers, in particular, would benefit from structured onboarding and targeted coaching to accelerate skill development and improve classroom quality.

Continue to Build Relationships Practices with Families and Expand Supports Related to Communication, Special Needs Accommodations, and Access to Resources

- Early REACH should continue to reinforce strong relationship-based practices with families while expanding supports related to communication, special needs accommodations, and access to resources.
- Centers may benefit from stronger connections to community-based services and more structured referral systems to address family needs such as housing, food security, and employment support.
- Focused supports may also be needed for centers serving families experiencing higher levels of stress.

Maintain and Enhance Investments in Children's Social-Emotional Development and Supports

- Early REACH should continue to prioritize social-emotional development as a central component of center quality by maintaining strong implementation of DECA-informed practices and ongoing progress monitoring.
- Given the proportion of preschool children demonstrating behavioral concerns and the challenges reported by teachers, continued investment in behavioral supports is warranted. Professional development and coaching should emphasize behavior management, self-regulation strategies, and trauma-informed practices, particularly for centers serving children with higher levels of need.
- The Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager role has demonstrated strong early promise and should be sustained and expanded to ensure consistent, coordinated support across centers.

Expand Family Access to Subsidized High-Quality Care

- Finally, planning for sustainability will be critical. Policymakers and program leaders should consider strategies to expand access to child care subsidies, support competitive compensation for teachers, and maintain access to coaching and professional development.
- Facilitating enrollment in community-based programs, particularly for infant and toddler care, and strengthening child care supports for families will help to bolster access to high-quality programming for families with young children.

EARLY REACH CURRENT FIELD IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPONENTS OF STRUCTURAL QUALITY

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Process Question: Who are the child care centers, classrooms, directors, and teachers receiving quality improvement services?
  - Early REACH Current Field Implementation
- Process Question: What are the demographic and professional characteristics of directors and teachers working with young children?
  - Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Early REACH Directors and Teachers

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Process Question: What are the baseline quality ratings for each child care center?
  - Early REACH Centers' Quality Credentials
- Process Question: What are the indicators of structural quality (e.g., teacher-child ratios)?
  - Compliance with Early REACH Policies
  - Early REACH Service Improvement Plans
- Impact Question: How have indicators of structural quality changed?
  - Compliance with Early REACH Policies
  - Early REACH Service Improvement Plans

Data Sources

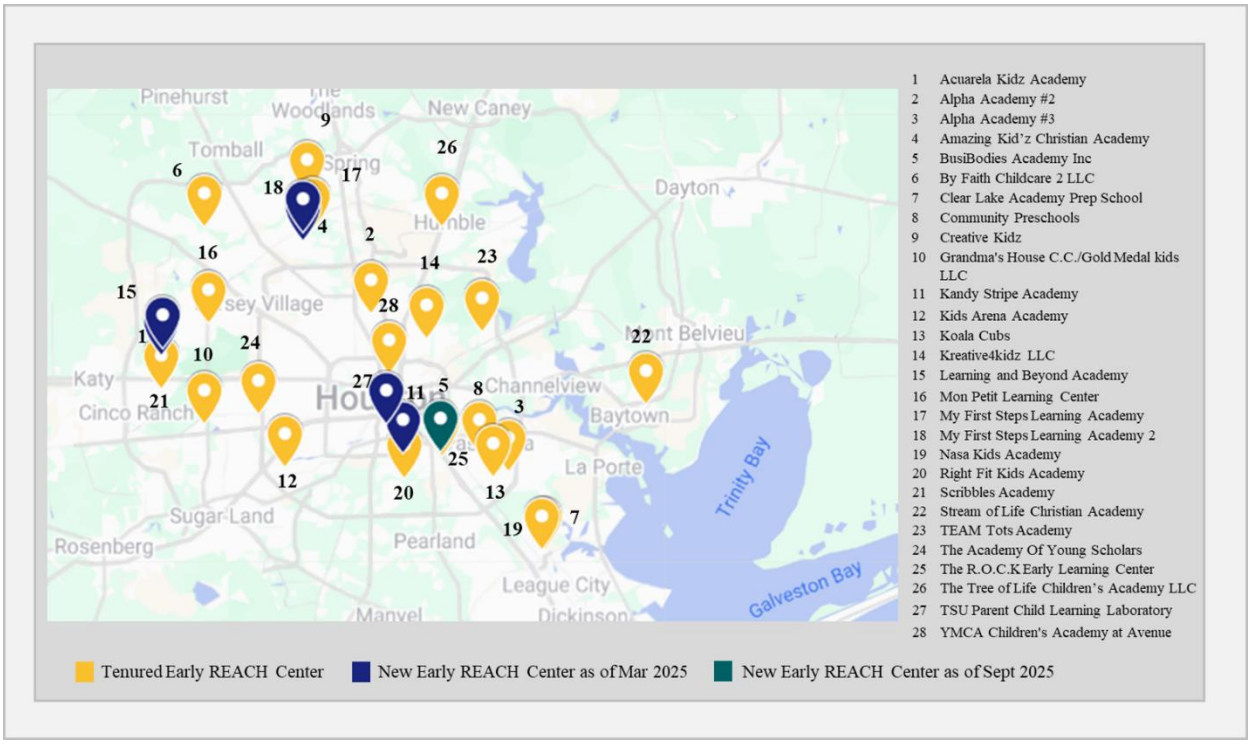
- Early REACH Compliance and Support Monitoring visit forms (August – December 2025)
- Director survey
  - Summer 2024 (June – November 2024)
  - Early 2025 (January – April 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Teacher survey
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)

Early REACH has established recommended program parameters that align with core components of structural quality, such as program accreditation and teacher education. These elements reflect key aspects of programming that have been shown to influence overall classroom quality and, ultimately, child outcomes. Harris County Early REACH has been

implemented in 32 child care centers spread across the greater Houston area from September 2024 through December 2025 (Figure 1). During this time, four centers exited Early REACH in early 2025 due to non-compliance. Seven new centers joined the initiative, including one as recently as September 2025. As a result, there were 28 active centers participating in Early REACH as of December 2025. Of these programs, 21 centers have been involved since the beginning of the initiative.

Early REACH participation is distributed across Harris County and reflects a broad cross-section of communities with significant need for expanded child care programming.

Figure 1. *Early REACH Current Field Implementation Across Harris County, December 2025*

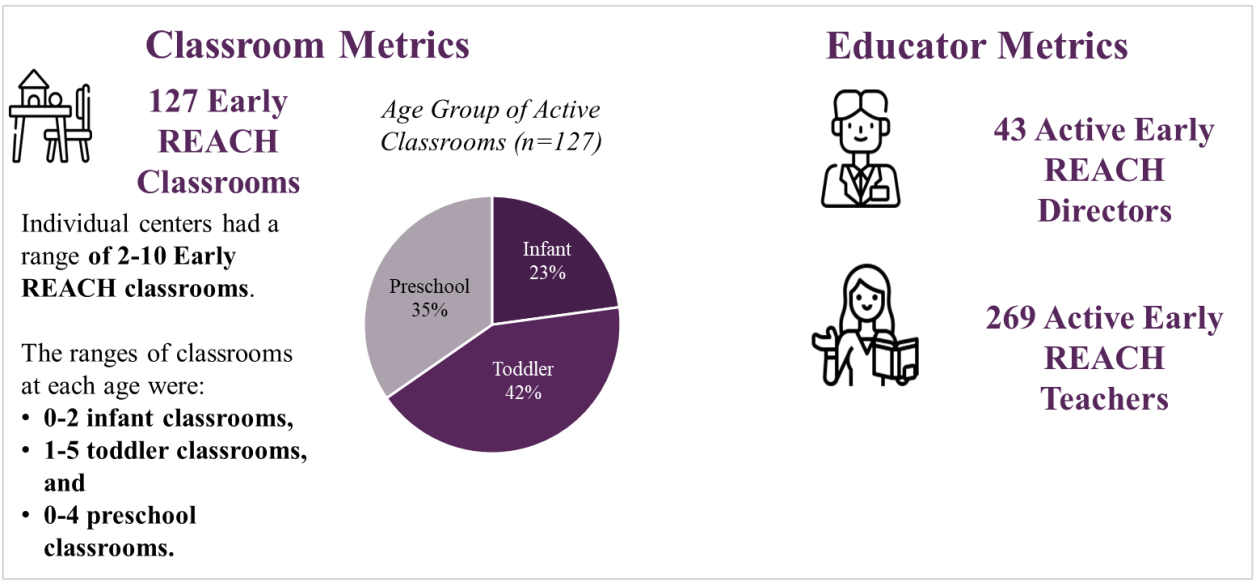


Early REACH directors and teachers receive Early REACH supports and are front-line providers of services to children and families enrolled in Early REACH centers. As of December 2025, there were 43 active Early REACH directors and/or owners and 269 active Early REACH teachers (Figure 2).

Between August and December 2025, there were 127 active Early REACH classrooms, with individual centers designating 2-10 classrooms as Early REACH. Close to half (42%) of Early REACH classrooms were toddler classrooms, almost a third (35%) were preschool classrooms, and about a quarter (23%) were infant classrooms. Early REACH's support for infant and toddler care has been particularly critical. Nationally, the limited supply of high-quality care for these age groups does not meet demand (Daughtery, 2025). This shortage contributes to women with

young children either leaving the workforce or delaying entry due to a lack of reliable child care options.

Figure 2. *Early REACH Current Field Implementation – Classrooms, Directors, and Teachers, December 2025*



Note: All metrics are as of December 2025. Data were derived from the United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) Compliance Support Monitor (CSM), including the December 2025 Early REACH Master Teacher Roster.

EARLY REACH CENTERS' QUALITY CREDENTIALS

External accreditation of early childhood programs enables an independent body to assess whether child care centers have the necessary supports in place to promote high-quality teacher–child interactions and provide a high standard of care. Accreditation processes serve as valuable tools for both center planning and continuous quality improvement, as they provide clear standards that guide centers in developing strategic growth plans.

Per the child care center eligibility requirements listed in the Early REACH Policy Manual, to participate in Early REACH, *a child care center must meet the following quality standards*:[4]

- *Be certified as a Texas Rising Star (TRS) 2, 3, or 4 rated center or meet Entry level Designation; or*
- *Be seeking or have accreditation from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); or*
- *If the center is not currently involved in a quality improvement program, they must demonstrate a commitment toward wanting to raise their standards.*

[4] https://earlyreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Early-REACH-Policy-Manual-v4-February-2026.pdf.

Data from director surveys were used to answer evaluation questions related to center-level accreditation. To examine current center credentials and change in credentials over time, analyses included survey responses from directors of 19 of the tenured centers that have been a part of Early REACH at all three timepoints of director survey data collection (summer 2024, early 2025, fall 2025). Additional analyses including five of the new centers that have joined Early REACH during the course of the evaluation are indicated, when applicable.

TEXAS RISING STAR

In Texas, Texas Rising Star (TRS) provides a system of accreditation and quality ratings for child care centers. TRS is led by the Texas Workforce Commission and sets basic standards for child care centers in Texas.[5] TRS certification indicates that a child care center delivers high-quality care that exceeds Texas' minimum child care regulation standards. After a multi-step evaluation process, eligible centers may receive an Entry Level certification or one of three progressive levels of quality certification including:

- Two-Star,
- Three-Star,
- Four-Star.

Centers are re-assessed every three years to ensure quality is maintained, and star levels may change as a result of this re-certification process. As of fall 2025, all 27 active Early REACH centers had a TRS certification of 3 or 4 or were in the process of re-applying (Figure 3).

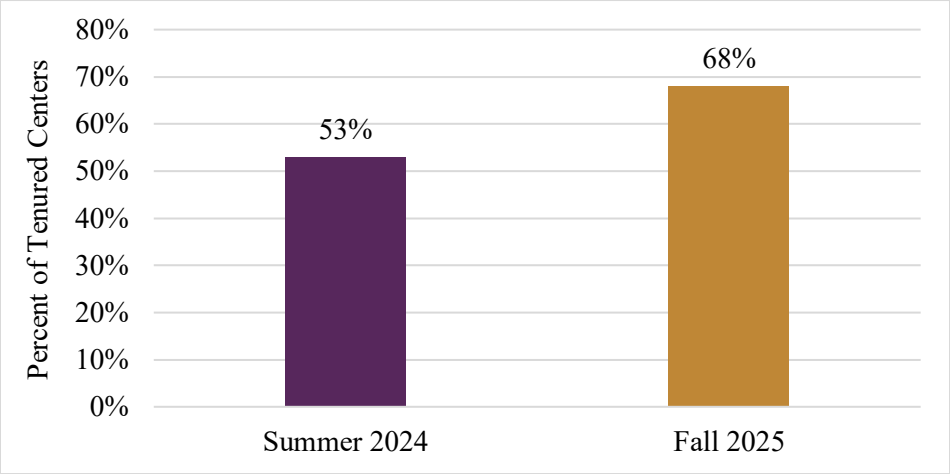
Figure 3. *Early REACH Centers with Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certification in Fall 2025 (n=27)*

Note: One center was in the process of applying for TRS re-certification.

[5] https://www.childcare.texas.gov/texas-rising-star/about-texas-rising-star

A closer look at 19 of the tenured centers that have been active in Early REACH since the beginning of the initiative revealed that 53% of centers had the highest possible 4-star TRS rating in summer 2024 (Figure 4). By fall 2025, the percentage of centers with a 4-star rating increased to 68%. Three centers with a 3-star rating in summer 2024 improved to a 4-star rating by fall 2025. The remaining six tenured centers have had a 3-star rating for the duration of the initiative.

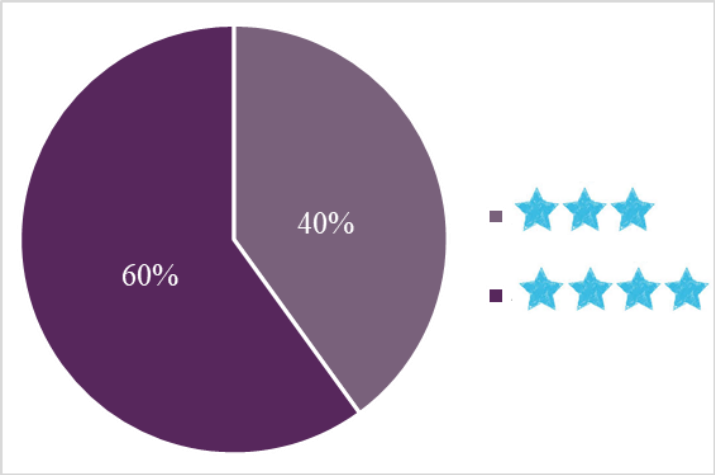
Figure 4. *Early REACH Tenured Centers with Texas Rising Star (TRS) 4-Star Certification in Summer 2024 and Fall 2025 (n=19)*



Note: It is assumed that the one center that is in the TRS re-certification process will retain the same star rating they had prior to re-certification.

Among five of the new Early REACH centers, 40% had a 3-star rating and 60% had a 4-star rating in fall 2025 (Figure 5). These findings indicate that all active centers, including all tenured and new centers, met the Early REACH eligibility criteria of a 3- or 4-star TRS rating.

Figure 5. *Early REACH New Centers with Texas Rising Star (TRS) 3- and 4-Star Certification, Fall 2025 (n=5)*



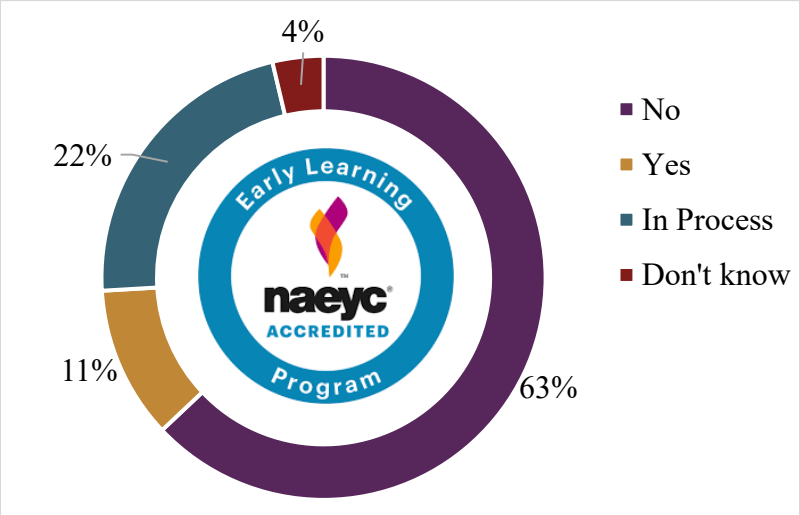
National Association for the Education of Young Children

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers accreditation that is widely recognized as "the national gold standard," a benchmark of high-quality programming among child care centers. NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous, multi-year, four-stage process that includes program self-study and self-assessment, ongoing quality improvement planning, portfolio development, staff training, and a site visit conducted by an external validator. Centers that achieve accreditation have met NAEYC's ten standards for high-quality early childhood education.[6] These centers demonstrate that they provide safe and healthy environments for children, employ well-trained teachers, utilize high-quality instructional materials, and implement curricula that are both developmentally appropriate and sufficiently challenging to support children's growth and learning. These standards are comparatively higher than those established by TRS.

Eleven percent (11%) of Early REACH centers were NAEYC accredited in fall 2025, with another 23% of centers in the process of applying for NAEYC accreditation (Figure 6). Notably, only about 3% of child care centers in the state of Texas have earned NAEYC accreditation (NAEYC, 2026). The percentage of Early REACH centers that are NAEYC accredited is more than double what is seen in child care centers across the state. This is a testament to Early REACH's commitment to high-quality programming.

[6] https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/value-naeyc-accredited-program

Figure 6. *Early REACH Centers with NAEYC Accreditation, Fall 2025 (n=27)*



Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Early REACH Directors and Teachers

The quality of early childhood education programming depends, in part, on staff's backgrounds, training, and professional preparation, as these factors are related to effective leadership and high-quality classroom practices (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015; Kirby et al., 2023; Manning et al., 2017). To effectively support children's physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development during this critical period of brain growth, directors and teachers must possess a broad range of knowledge and skills (Meloy & Schachner, 2019). Professional credentials, such as the Child Development Associate (CDA), or degrees in early childhood education play a key role in building this expertise and promoting the delivery of high-quality care (The Council for Professional Recognition, 2025). Additionally, professional development focused on specific curricula and developmentally appropriate practices has been shown to improve classroom quality in early care settings, which may, in turn, bolster children's learning and developmental outcomes (Brunsek et al., 2020; Campbell & Ramey, 1995).

The following section describes both demographic and professional characteristics of staff working with Early REACH families. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) evaluation team reviewed available compliance data to assess CDA credential progress among Early REACH lead teachers. However, due to limitations inherent in the field data, including fluctuations in teacher participation in Early REACH across centers and inconsistencies in the definition of "lead teacher," these data were determined to be unreliable for measuring CDA progress. To address these limitations, the BTC evaluation team is working in collaboration with UWGH to clarify CDA compliance data for the purposes of reporting. Accordingly, the data presented in

this section reflects self-reported education and credential attainment collected in the most recent director and teacher surveys.[7]

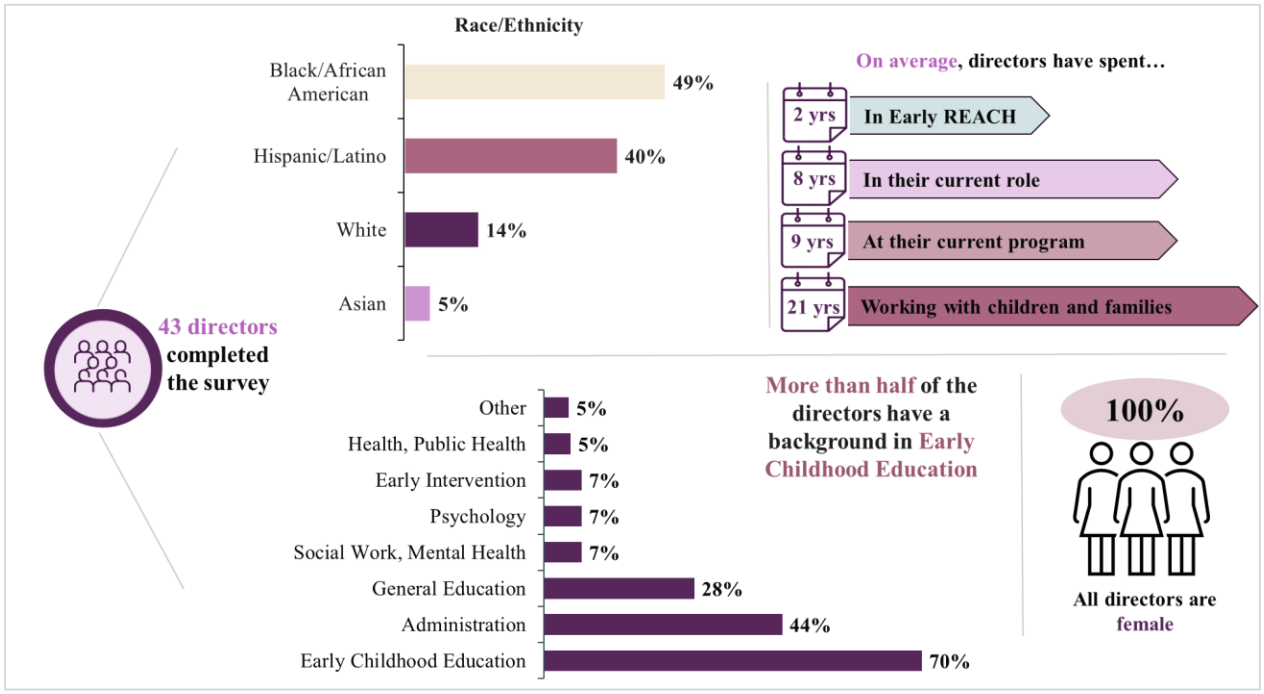
DIRECTORS' CHARACTERISTICS

Early REACH directors and/or owners (n = 43) provided information about their training and background, sex, and race/ethnicity (Figure 7).[8] Directors have worked with children and families for an average of 21 years (*Range* = 3 – 45 years). On average, directors have been at their current centers for nine years (*Range* = 6 months – 40 years) and in their current role for eight years (*Range* = 4 months – 30 years). Directors have been a part of Early REACH for an average of two years (*Range* = 5 months – 3.5 years). Center leadership demonstrates a wide range of experience with some directors having relatively limited experience and others bringing extensive experience to their work with children and their experience in leading centers. This range of experience suggests that directors participating in Early REACH have differing support needs. Recognizing this variation is particularly important for sustainability planning, as tailored supports may be necessary to ensure that directors are prepared to maintain center quality long-term.

Directors' background and training were primarily in content areas that support their roles as early childhood leaders including in Early Childhood Education (70%), Administration (44%), and Education (28%). All directors identified as female. Slightly less than half (49%) identified as Black, and 40% identified as Hispanic/Latina. Importantly, Early REACH directors represent a diverse group of leaders. This diversity contrasts with broader trends in early childhood education where leadership is often not reflective of the diverse populations of children and families served (Callanan, 2021).

[7] Directors and teachers from 27 of the 28 active centers completed Fall 2025 surveys. The 28th center joined Early REACH in September 2025, when survey distribution was already underway.
[8] There was variation in specific job title with 18 leadership staff identifying as the owner/director, 3 as executive director, 16 as director, 4 as assistant director, 1 as senior director, and one who did not specify.

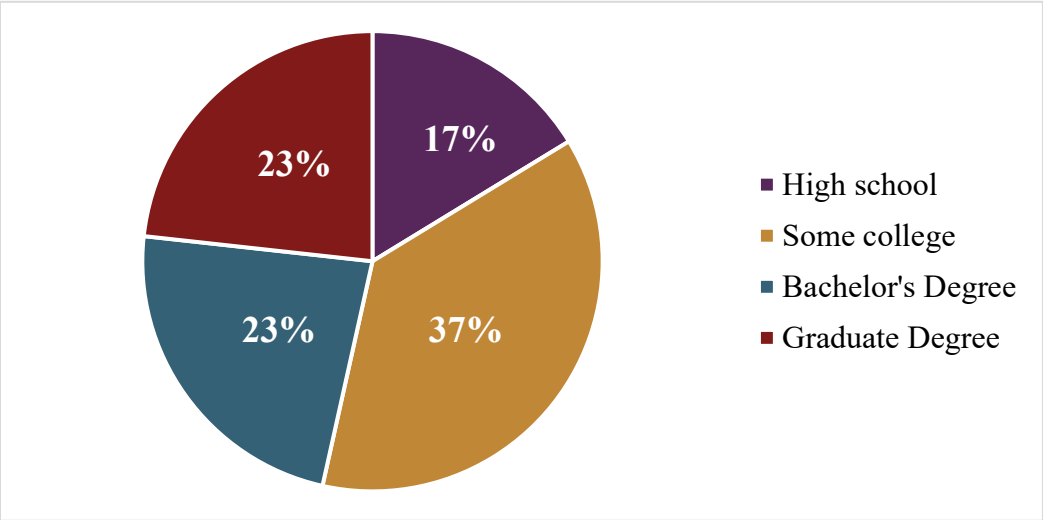
Figure 7. *Directors' Characteristics, Fall 2025 (n=43)*



Note: For questions about race/ethnicity and background/training, respondents could choose more than one answer, therefore the total percentage exceeds 100%. Other background/training responses (5%) include: Engineering (*n*=1), and Church Ministries (*n*=1).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025) reports that child care directors typically have a Bachelor's-level education. Early REACH directors' highest level of education varied widely, ranging from a high school diploma to a Ph.D./Ed.D. (Figure 8). Twenty-three percent (23%) of directors had an advanced graduate degree, 23% had a Bachelor's degree, 37% had some college education, and 17% of directors had a high school diploma. The wide range in educational attainment, coupled with the diversity in directors' backgrounds and experiences, further underscores the likelihood of varying support needs among directors. These findings highlight the importance of Early REACH offering customized supports such as intentional coaching and differentiated professional development to meet individual directors where they are. Tailoring supports in this way will help ensure that centers continue to thrive and sustain high-quality practices.

Figure 8. *Directors' Highest Level of Education, Fall 2025 (n=43)*



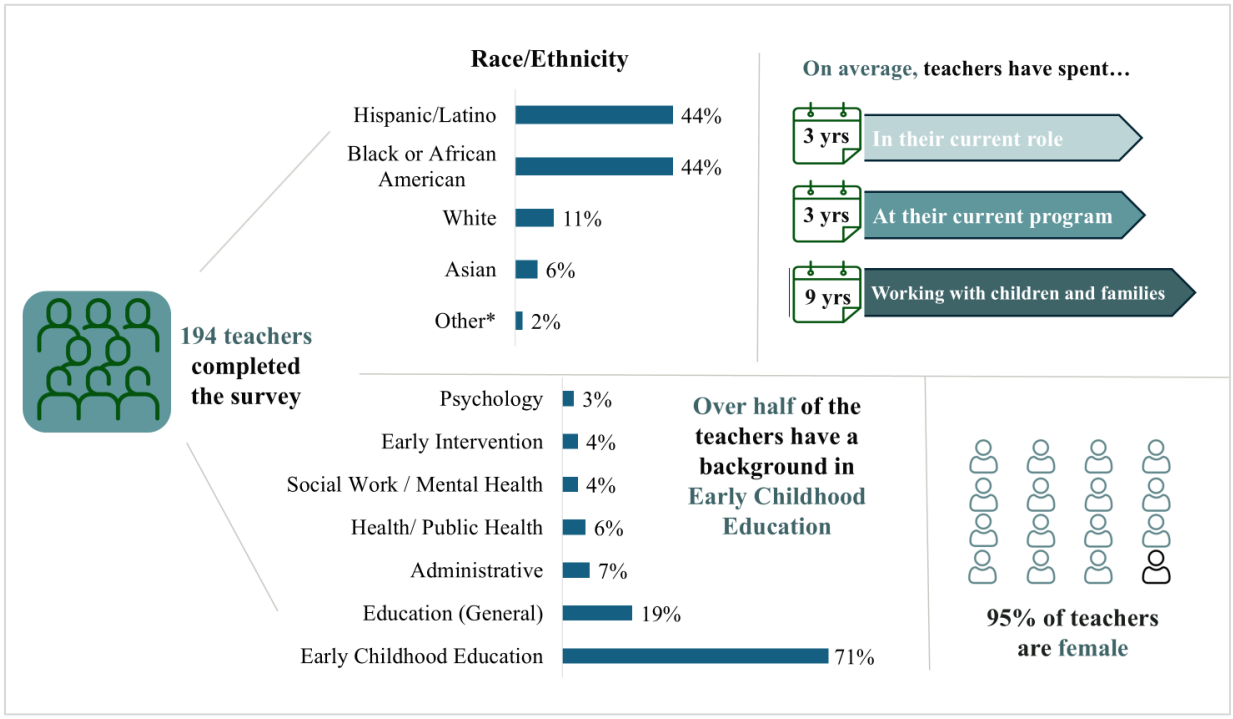
TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS

In fall 2025, Early REACH teachers (n = 194) provided information about their training and background, sex, and race/ethnicity (Figure 9).[9] Early REACH teachers have worked with children and families for an average of nine years (*Range* = 3 months – 44 years). On average, teachers have been employed at their current centers for three years (*Range* = 0 – 28 years) and have held their current role for three years (*Range* = 1 month – 30 years). Similar to directors, there was wide variation in experience among teachers, with some having extensive experience and some who are new to the profession. United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) continually collaborates with coaches to ensure that training and coaching meets teachers' needs and aligns with their varying levels of experience.

Most teachers (95%) identified as female. Slightly less than half of teachers (44%) identified as Black, and 44% identified as Hispanic/Latino. Teachers' backgrounds and training were primarily in Early Childhood Education (71%). Figure 9 below summarizes characteristics of Early REACH teachers.

[9] There was variation in specific job title with 120 identifying as lead teachers, 55 as assistant teachers, 5 as substitute teachers, and 14 as floating teachers. For the purposes of this memo, varying job titles are referred to as "teachers" throughout.

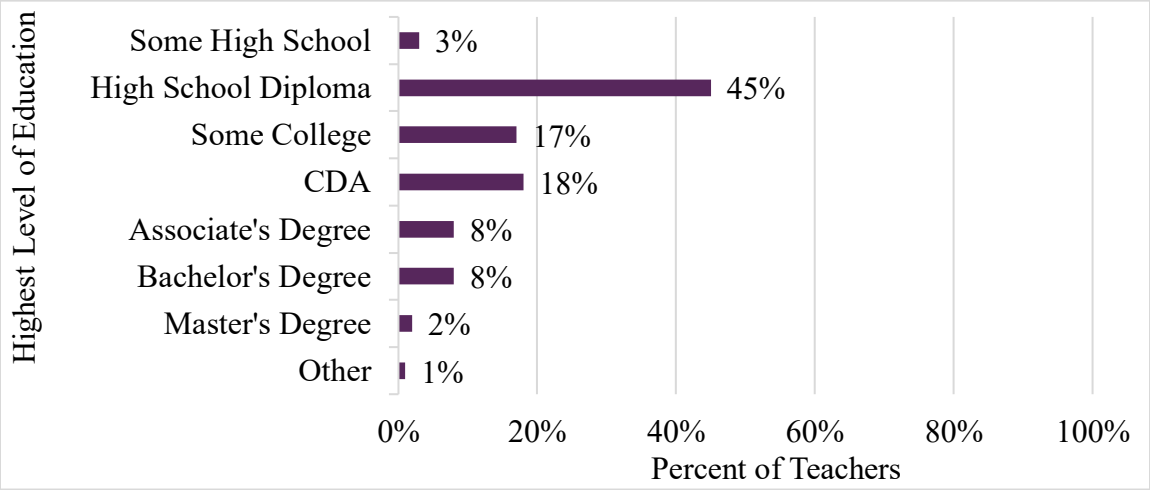
Figure 9. *Teachers' Characteristics, Fall 2025 (n=194)*



Note: For questions about race/ethnicity and background/training, respondents could choose more than one answer, therefore the total percentage exceeds 100%. Other race/ethnicity responses included: American Indian or Alaskan Native (*n*=1), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (*n*=1), and Middle Eastern or North African (*n*=2).

Of the 194 active Early REACH teachers who completed a teacher survey in fall 2025, most (97%) had a high school degree or higher (Figure 10). Eighteen percent (18%) reported that they had a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Notably, as of 2023, only 2% of child care teachers have been awarded a CDA in Texas (Children's Learning Institute, 2023). The percentage of Early REACH teachers with a CDA is well beyond those in the state of Texas, further highlighting the high-quality skills of Early REACH teachers.

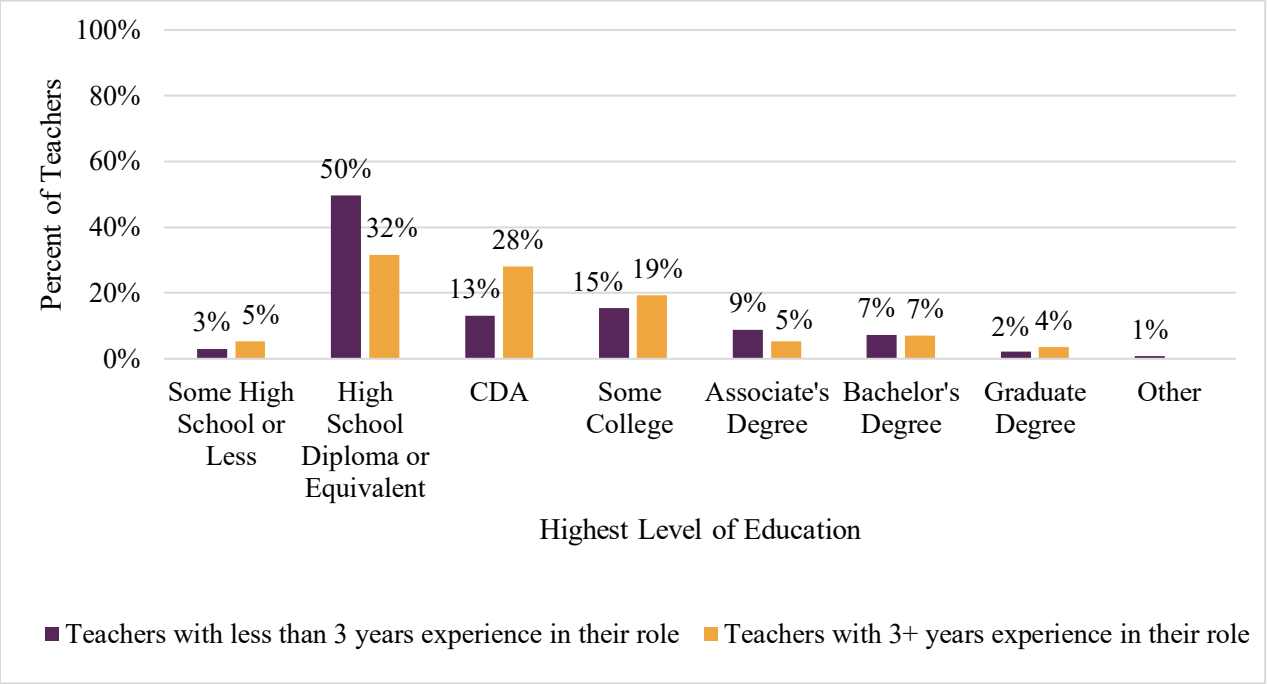
Figure 10. *Active Early REACH Teachers' Highest Level of Education, Fall 2025 (n=193)*



Note: The Other education response was Professor in Chemistry (*n*=1).

To further understand teachers' education, we examined the highest level of education for those who had been employed in their role for *longer* than the average three years of experience and for those with *less than* the average three years of experience (Figure 11). Teachers who were in their role for three or more years were less likely to have only a high school diploma (32%) compared to teachers who had been in their role for less than three years (50%). Additionally, teachers who were in their role for three years or more were more likely to have earned a CDA (28%) than teachers who had been in their role for less than three years (13%). These findings suggest that teachers' CDA status may be related to the length of time they have been employed as a teacher, as it takes time to complete CDA requirements and obtain their credential. There was little difference in teachers' higher education degree attainment (i.e., Associate's, Bachelor's, Graduate Degree) for those who had been in their role longer or for less than three years.

Figure 11. *Teachers' Highest Level of Education by Time in their Role, Fall 2025 (n=194)*



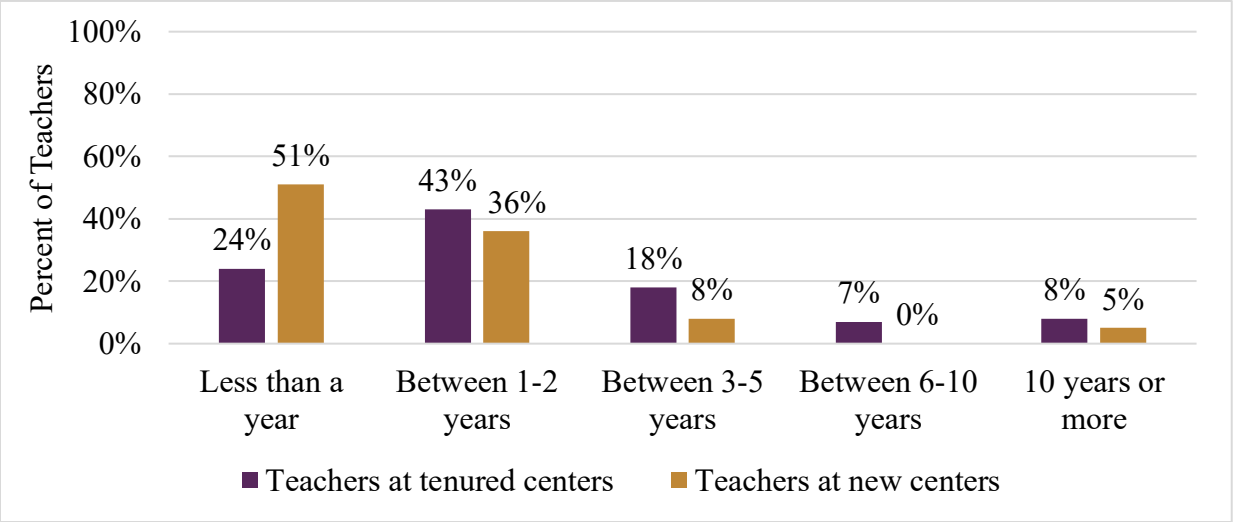
Note: The "Other" category encompasses teachers who have either a credential or degree greater than high school. One teacher was in this "Other" category; their response was professor in chemistry (*n*=1).

Demographic Differences of Teachers at New Vs. Tenured Centers

In spring 2025, six new centers joined Early REACH. Demographics of teachers at these centers were compared to the demographics of teachers at the 21 tenured centers who have been in Early REACH since the beginning of the initiative. This exploration serves to better understand the unique needs of each group.

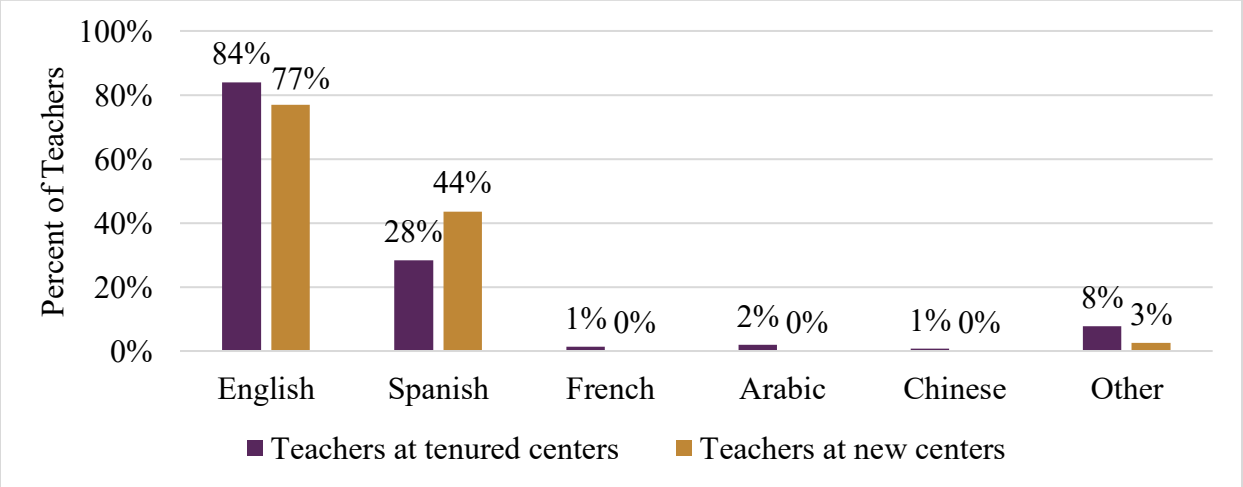
Teachers in new centers had less work experience when compared to those that were in tenured centers (Figure 12). About half (51%) of teachers in new centers had less than a year of experience in their current role. In comparison, about one quarter (24%) of teachers in tenured centers had less than a year of experience in their current role. Additionally, tenured centers had more teachers with three or more years of experience (33%) compared to 13% of teachers in new centers. This suggests that teachers at centers newer to Early REACH may have greater and distinct professional development needs compared to more established participants. As such, coaching and professional development efforts may need to continue to be more intentionally tailored to the specific contexts of individual centers to effectively build quality practices and support sustainability long-term.

Figure 12. *Comparison of Teachers' Years of Experience in Tenured vs. New Centers, Fall 2025 (n=39–155)*



Additionally, new centers had a larger percentage of teachers who speak Spanish (44%) compared to tenured centers (28%; Figure 13). As such, teachers at new centers may continue to need more professional development offerings, coaching, and resources to be offered in Spanish.

Figure 13. *Comparison of Language Spoken by Teachers in Tenured vs. New Centers, Fall 2025 (n=39-155)*



Note: Other language response for teachers in tenured centers included: Sinhala (*n*=2), Urdu (*n*=3), Farsi (*n*=1), and Tamil (*n*=1). Other language responses for teachers in new Centers included: Shona Zulu (*n*=1).

Compliance with Early REACH Policies

Early REACH policies for child care centers, which were set by Harris County, are aligned with key indicators of structural quality classroom practices, including, but not limited to, low

teacher-child ratios, small classroom group sizes, higher wages for teachers, higher levels of teacher education, and low levels of child absences. These standards exceed early care and education licensing standards and minimum wage standards for the state of Texas. Early REACH Compliance and Support Monitors (CSM) are responsible for regularly visiting centers and classrooms and documenting evidence of quality practices to help ensure Early REACH standards are being met. During visits, the CSM recorded teacher-child ratios, assessed classroom environments and equipment, inquired about staff salaries, and determined whether any children had extended absences. Extended absences were defined by Early REACH as children not attending for 10 consecutive days or missing 40 cumulative days in a year.

One individual served as the CSM for Early REACH during this reporting period. The CSM conducted onsite visits to centers on a regular basis. The CSM completed 42 center visits and assessed 156 classrooms across the 28 Early REACH centers from August to December 2025.[10] According to the CSM observations, classrooms met the Early REACH teacher-child ratio for each classroom's respective age group in 95% of visits. These findings are consistent with the percentage of classrooms meeting the teacher-child ratio for visits completed in the previous reporting period (January – July 2025).[11]

The CSM reported no issues with classroom layout and supplies. Additionally, the CSM's reporting indicates a decrease in the proportion of children with extended absences from the previous reporting period (12%) to now (7%).

The CSM also met with center directors during every visit. These meetings included discussions about important classroom and administrative indicators such as staff retention, compensation letters, staff certifications, background checks for new staff, attendance at Early REACH professional development offerings, and changes or issues related to center licensing. The CSM also noted center implementation of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Action Plans and Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) strategies, as part of their continuous quality improvement.

The CSM documented the strengths and challenges of centers at each visit. The CSM also highlighted centers that were engaging in community partnerships; multiple centers were recognized for their parent engagement initiatives, such as family fall festival activities.

The CSM also recorded Early REACH policy concerns that were observed during visits and discussed these concerns with directors (Table 1). The CSM documented no Early REACH policy concerns in 64% of center visits. Policy concerns were documented in 36% of visits and were related to center eligibility (14%), lead teacher requirements (14%), and Texas Child Care Regulations (12%). Conversations around eligibility were typically related to Texas Child Care

[10] See Table 41 in Appendix B for the number of CSM visits by center.
[11] The minimum teacher-to-child ratios for each age group are as follows: 1:4 for infants; 1:8 for toddlers aged 18 to 23 months; 1:9 for toddlers aged 2 to 3 years; 1:13 for preschoolers aged 3 to 4 years; and 1:15 for preschoolers older than 4 years. Early REACH teacher-child ratios are more rigorous than the standards set by Texas Health and Human Services to ensure high child care quality. These higher standards were set by the United Way of Greater Houston based on their experience working with high-quality child care systems.

Regulation concerns, with a few of the centers (*n*=4) receiving notice of a deficiency during a recent licensing monitoring inspection. Other eligibility conversations were related to pending Texas Rising Star re-certification. Concerns related to lead teacher requirements decreased from 28% in the previous reporting period to 14%. Currently, concerns regarding lead teacher requirements were mainly related to pending Child Development Associate (CDA) certifications.

Table 1. *Frequency of Documented Early REACH Policy Concerns During Center Visits, August to December 2025 (n=42)*

	Percentage of Documented Concerns
Center Eligibility for Early REACH	14%
Lead Teacher Requirements	14%
Texas Child Care Regulations	12%

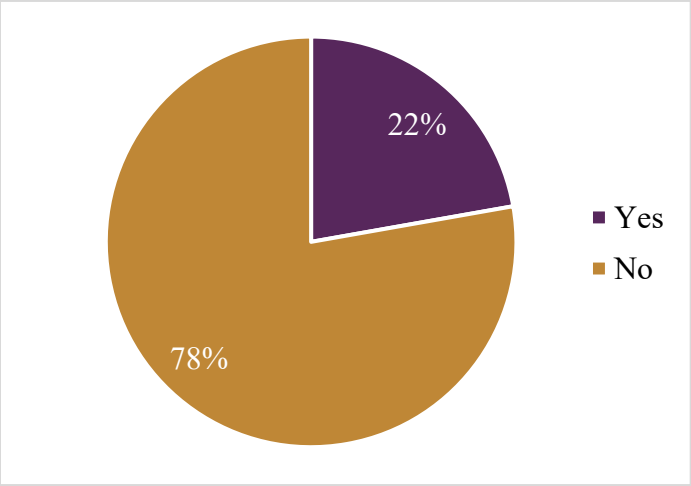
Note: Concerns related to teacher-child ratio and reporting policies were documented in 2% to 5% of classroom visits.

EARLY REACH SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

According to the Early REACH Policy Manual, *centers may be placed on a written service improvement plan with specific timelines and deliverables if Early REACH leadership, in its sole judgment, determines it is necessary. This may occur following a center's failure to comply with Early REACH program policies or meet the terms, conditions, or obligations outlined in the Early REACH Center Agreement. These improvement plans are designed to guide centers back on track and uphold the quality standards that are central to Early REACH's mission.*

Center directors were asked to indicate on the Fall 2025 director survey if their center had ever been on a Service Improvement Plan (SIP; Figure 14). Six directors (22% of survey respondents) reported that their center had, at any point, been on a SIP as of fall 2025.

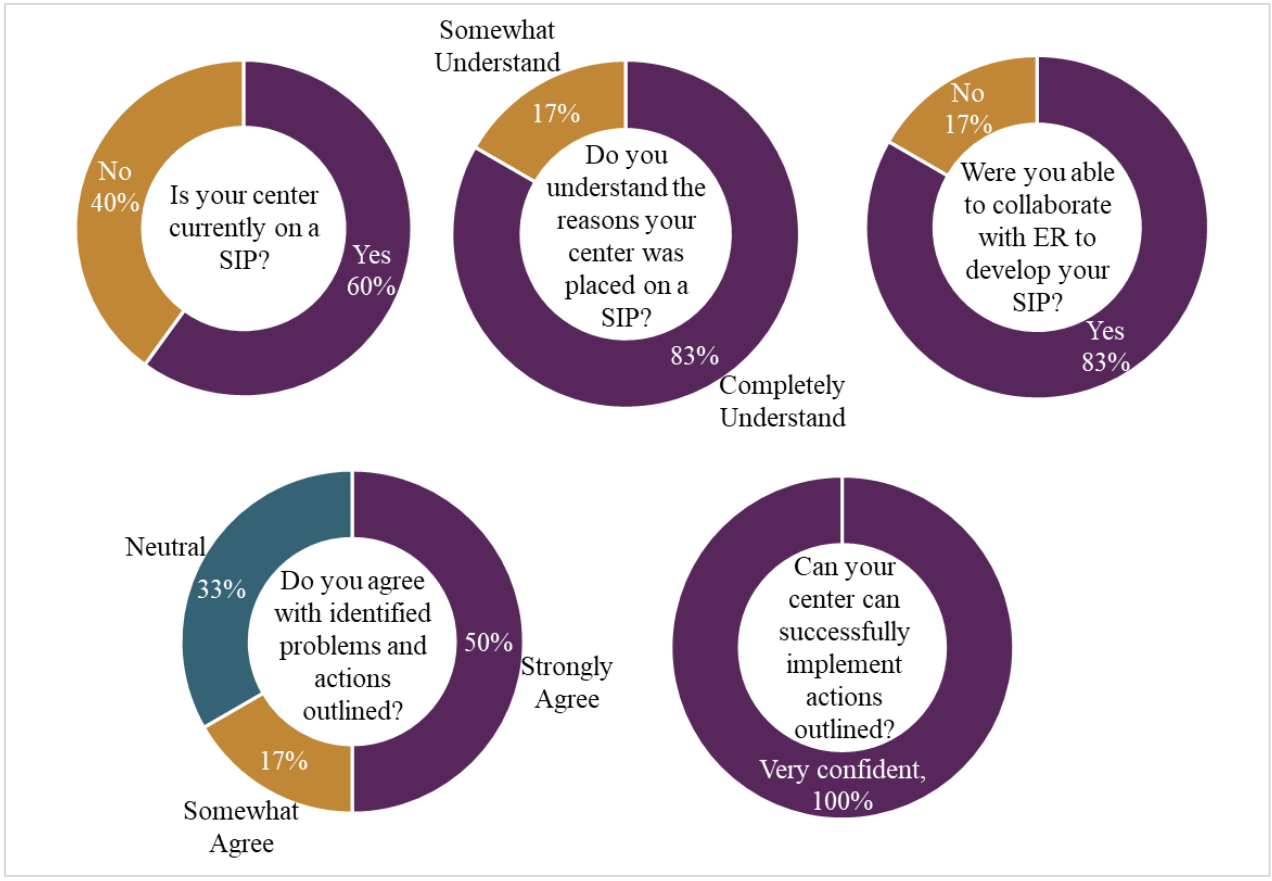
Figure 14. *Percentage of Current Centers Who Self-Identified as Ever Having Been on a Service Improvement Plan (SIP) as of Fall 2025 (n=27)*



Among center directors who reported having been placed on a SIP at some point, 60% indicated that their SIP was still current (Figure 15). The majority of directors (83%) with current or past SIPs reported that they *completely* understood why their center was placed on a SIP, while the remaining 17% indicated that they *somewhat* understood. Similarly, 83% reported that they were able to collaborate with Early REACH in developing their SIP, whereas 17% indicated that they were not able to do so.

In terms of agreement with the identified issues and corrective actions, half of directors (50%) *strongly* agreed, 17% *somewhat* agreed, and 33% were *neutral*. Despite these varying levels of agreement, all directors who reported having a current or prior SIP expressed high confidence in their ability to successfully implement the outlined corrective actions.

Figure 15. *Center Directors' Self-Reported Experience with Service Improvement Plans (n=5-6)*[12]



Note: Only directors who self-identified as having even been on a SIP were asked questions about their experience with a SIP. ER = Early REACH.

[12] Only 5 of 6 center directors responded to the first question about currently being on a SIP.

SUMMARY

As of December 2025, there were 28 active Early REACH centers, 21 of which have been part of Early REACH since the beginning of the initiative. The remaining centers joined Early REACH after the initial start-up and one new center joined Early REACH as recently as September 2025. Collectively, these centers span a broad geographic area across Harris County, expanding access to early care and education services throughout the area.

Early REACH has engaged a considerable number of staff - 43 directors and 269 Early REACH teachers as of December 2025. The initiative also supported 127 classrooms, representing infant, toddler, and preschool care with about 23% of classrooms serving infants and 42% of the classrooms serving toddlers. This is significant as national data indicates a severe shortage of high-quality infant and toddler care.

All active Early REACH centers (n=27) had a Texas Rising Star certification of 3 or 4. The percentage of centers with a 4-star rating increased from 53% in summer 2024 to 68% in fall 2025. Eleven percent (11%) of Early REACH centers were NAEYC accredited in fall 2025 and an additional 23% of centers were in the process of applying for NAEYC accreditation. Notably, only 3% of child care centers in Texas are NAEYC accredited, suggesting that Early REACH is promoting high-quality child care and education.

Both directors and teachers come to their roles with varying experience. On average, directors had 21 years of experience working with children and families and have been in their current roles for eight years. On average, teachers had nine years of experience working with children and families and three years in their current roles.

Twenty-six percent (26%) of Early REACH teachers had earned a CDA in fall 2025, compared to just 2% of early child care staff in Texas. This finding suggests that Early REACH has been successful in supporting teachers' educational attainment and promoting program quality. New centers had a larger percentage of teachers who speak Spanish compared to tenured centers. This highlights an increased need for supports in Spanish for these teachers.

Compliance with Early REACH policies remained high. Teacher-child ratio requirements were met in 95% of observed classrooms, and no issues were identified related to classroom environments or supplies. The proportion of classrooms with children experiencing extended absences declined over time, suggesting improvement in attendance stability. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of center visits revealed no policy concerns. Continuous quality improvement efforts, including implementation of CLASS Action Plans and DECA strategies, were observed across centers, alongside strengths in community partnerships and family engagement.

A small subset of centers required Service Improvement Plans (SIP). While most directors reported strong understanding of and collaboration on SIPs, levels of agreement with identified issues varied. Despite this, all directors expressed high confidence in their ability to implement corrective actions, indicating readiness to address identified challenges.

Overall, center compliance with structural quality benchmarks was very high and when centers were found deficient, they were placed on a SIP to bring them back into compliance with Early REACH standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue compliance monitoring coordinated with technical assistance

Early REACH should continue to maintain compliance monitoring practices, as a means of supporting high-quality practices. Specifically, focused technical assistance coordinated with monitoring should take place to support continued implementation of Early REACH standards, including facilitating program and teacher credentialing, upholding Early REACH ratios, and maintaining Early REACH teacher wages.

Enhance support for the Service Improvement Plan process

While SIP processes were generally well understood, increasing opportunities for deeper collaboration and shared decision-making may improve director alignment with identified issues and corrective actions. Ongoing coaching and follow-up during SIP implementation can help translate high levels of action plans and suggested programmatic strategies into sustained center improvements.

Facilitate investment in Harris County for early childhood education and professional development

Early REACH has been successful in engaging centers and teachers while elevating standards associated with high-quality care. Importantly, the initiative has expanded access to affordable, high-quality care for families and supported livable wages for the early childhood workforce, contributing to greater economic mobility for both groups. Continued investment by Harris County in early childhood education is needed to meet growing demand, continue the progress of Early REACH, and to facilitate equitable access to high-quality care that supports positive outcomes for children.

The wide range in educational attainment, coupled with the diversity in directors' backgrounds and experiences, further underscores the likelihood of varying support needs among center directors. This highlights the importance of Early REACH continuing to offer more customized supports such as intentional, individualized coaching and differentiated professional development to meet individual directors where they are. Tailoring supports in this way may help ensure that centers continue to thrive and sustain high-quality practices long-term.

It is important that UWGH continue to ensure that professional development and coaching is modified to align with varying levels of experience and education teachers may have, in order to meet individual teachers' needs.

Professional development offerings, coaching, and resources should continue to be offered in Spanish and English to support centers that more recently joined Early REACH and to align more consistently with the diversity of Early REACH teachers and directors.

FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Process Question: What are the staff salary levels and benefits? How do the salary levels and benefits fit with teachers' needs?
    - Operational Financial Support
- Process Question: What supports are the child care centers receiving related to financial and quality factors that are likely to impact the uptake and potential change in quality status?
    - Financial and Administrative Supports

Data Sources

- Director survey
    - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Teacher survey
    - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Civitas coaching logs (May 2024 – December 2025)

Introduction to Financial and Operational Supports

Strong financial and operational management is essential to sustaining high-quality child care centers (Talan & Kelton, 2021). A center's financial and operational management are the foundations that enable it to maintain strong, stable administration of all aspects of programming. Additionally, directors' confidence and skills in managing their center's finances can have a trickle-down effect on the structural and process quality of their center, impacting the overall program climate and the confidence and skill development of staff (Douglass, 2017).

Financial stability coupled with access to financial education and strategies for directors enables centers to implement practices that promote long-term business sustainability. Furthermore, when centers have fiscal stability, they are better able to support the financial well-being of staff. In turn, financially supported staff lend support to their center's quality and functioning. For example, higher teacher wages are associated with lower teacher turnover, enabling children to build secure, reliable relationships with teachers (Lazarte, 2024).

The first part of this section describes the operational financial support, specifically wages and benefits, that Early REACH centers provide to teachers, as reported by directors in the Fall 2025 director survey. Twenty-seven (27) of the 28 Early REACH centers had at least one center director who completed the survey. In the case where multiple directors and/or owners from the

same center completed the survey, the data from the individual who was more directly responsible for the center's finances were used for these analyses. This segment also incorporates information gathered from 192 teachers who completed the Fall 2025 teacher survey, capturing their perceptions of pay and benefits.

The second part of this section focuses on the operational support that Early REACH centers received from Civitas Strategies (hereafter Civitas). Civitas is a consulting firm that offers individualized business coaching, group training, and resources to support program operations and financial stability. Civitas works with one program-designated leader at each of the 28 centers. Information about Civitas' consulting services was collected through two sources of data: 1) Civitas-generated coaching activity logs and 2) Fall 2025 director surveys. Civitas provided the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) with descriptions of their services and a record of coaching activities from May 2024 to December 2025.[13] Additional data about centers' work with Civitas was collected through the director survey. Of the 28 directors that Civitas identified as their center contact, 23 completed the questions regarding Civitas supports.

All analyses presented in this section are descriptive. Statistical significance testing was not conducted due to the relatively small sample sizes.

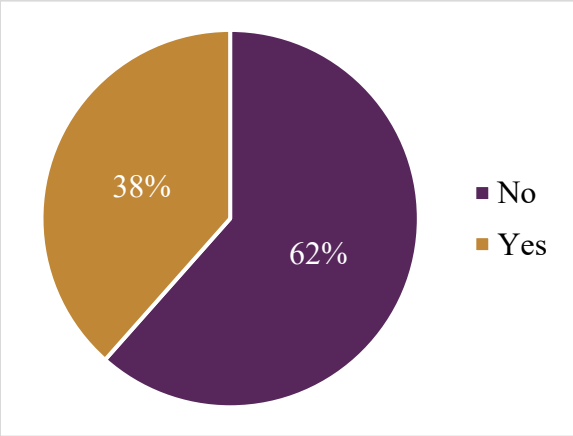
FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

One requirement of Early REACH is that lead teachers and assistant teachers working in Early REACH classrooms be paid at least $15 per hour. On the director survey, all respondents confirmed that they were complying with this Early REACH requirement.

With the support of Early REACH funding, some centers have been able to increase wages for all staff regardless of whether they are in an Early REACH classroom. About one third of directors (38%) indicated that they provide the same salary to both Early REACH and non-Early REACH teachers (Figure 16). Directors reported a broad salary range for non-Early REACH teachers, with hourly wages falling between $9 and $15. In contrast, the salary of Early REACH teachers was less variable, ranging between $15 and $18. This pattern underscores the role of Early REACH funding in both increasing and stabilizing teacher compensation.

[13] Civitas provided two separate data logs for May 2024-April 2025 and April 2025-December 2025. The April 2025-December 2025 coaching logs were more detailed. This coincides with when Early REACH leadership made Civitas coaching mandatory for all Early REACH centers in April 2025.

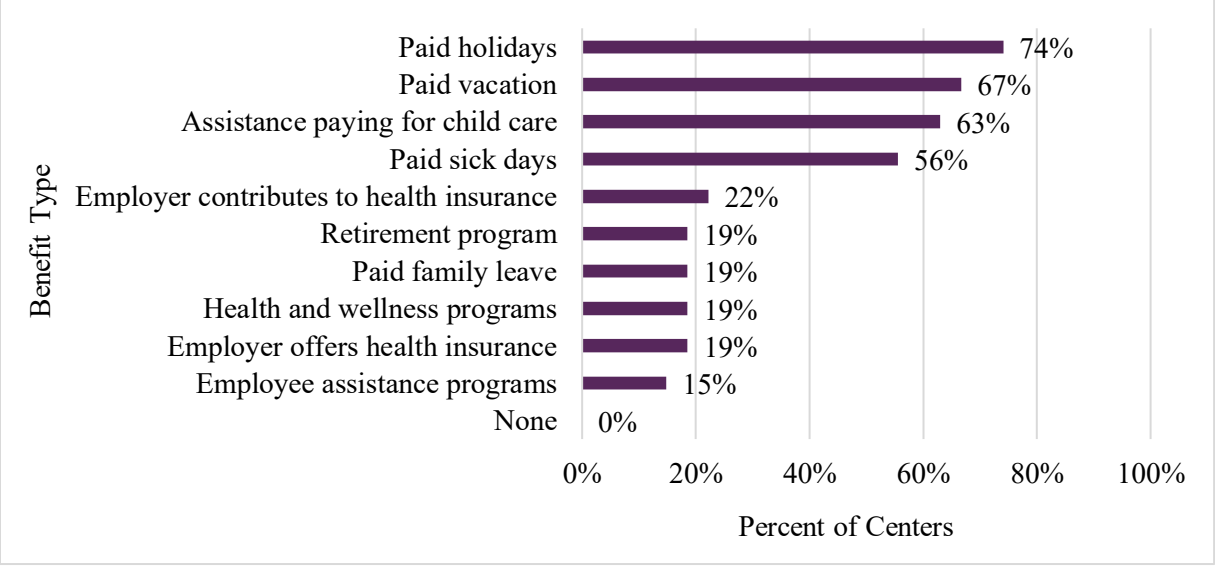
Figure 16. *Percent of Centers where Early REACH and Non-Early REACH Teachers Receive the Same Salary, Fall 2025 (n=26)*



Note: One director did not respond to this question.

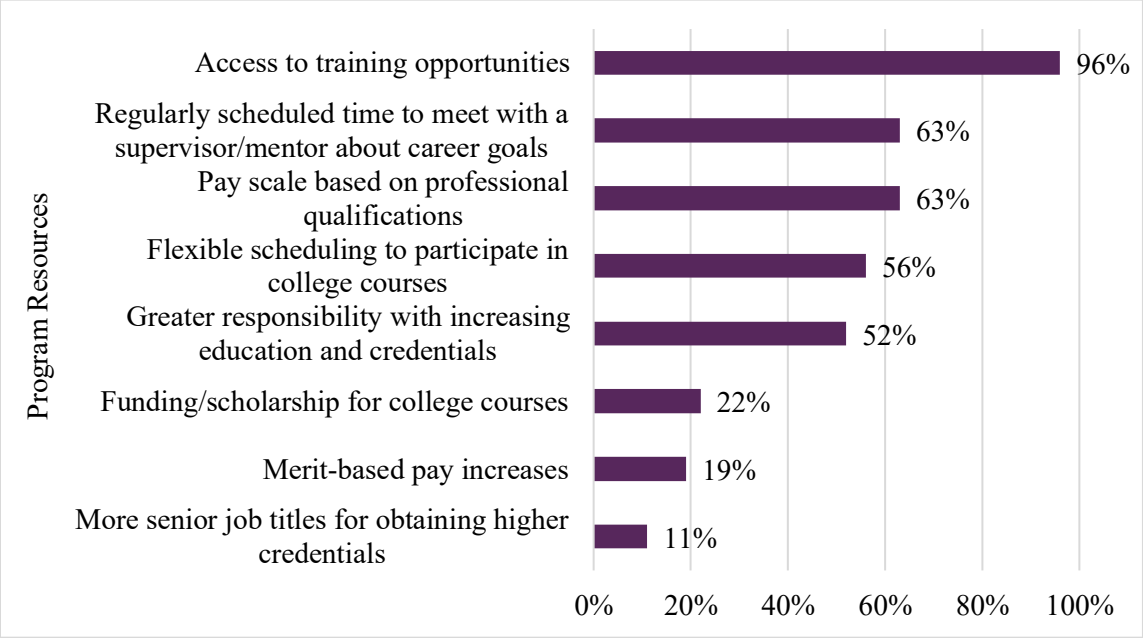
Early REACH centers offered various staff benefits, with the most common being paid holidays (74%), paid vacations (67%), child care assistance (63%), and paid sick days (56%; Figure 17). Research has found that staff benefits in early care and education help to reduce staff attrition and improve job satisfaction (Kelton, 2025). In a field where wages are often relatively low, providing benefits that support both financial stability and overall health and well-being is especially important. Some Early REACH centers offered health-related benefits, including offering (19%) or contributing to (22%) health insurance. However, this is less than the national average (52%) of centers that offer health insurance (Kelton, 2025). This gap highlights a key area for future policy and programmatic investment to better support the early education workforce and promote high-quality programming.

Figure 17. *Benefits Offered to Teachers, Fall 2025 (n=27)*



Early REACH centers provided various resources and supports to promote teachers' career development (Figure 18). The most common resource was access to training opportunities (96%). Other common resources included having regularly scheduled time to meet with a supervisor or mentor about progress towards career goals (63%), a pay scale based on professional qualifications (63%), and flexible scheduling to participate in college courses (56%). These opportunities exceed the national average, where only 55% of centers provide funding for professional development and 58% offer coaching or mentoring (Amadon et al., 2025). Similar to wages and benefits, staffing supports, such as contributions to staff education and compensation for educational attainment, represent important financial investments in the workforce. These supports can increase center quality, promote retention, strengthen program climate, and enhance overall job satisfaction. Ultimately, these investments can lead to improved outcomes for children (Kelton, 2025; Amadon et al., 2025).

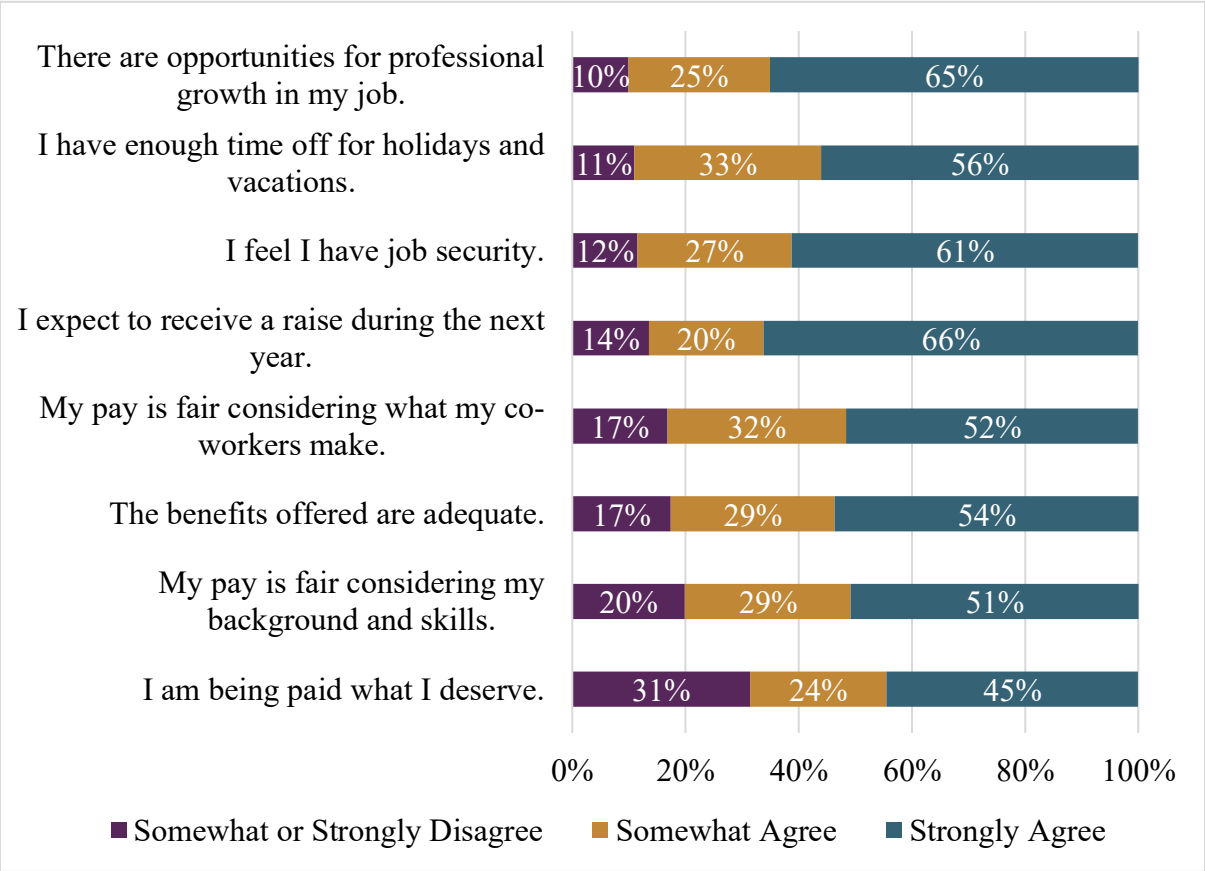
Figure 18. *Program Resources to Support Teachers' Career Development, Fall 2025 (n=27)*



Findings from the teacher survey indicated that most Early REACH teachers *somewhat or strongly* agreed that their center provides career development opportunities (90%), adequate time off (89%), and overall job security (88%; Figure 19). Additionally, a majority of teachers (84%) *somewhat or strongly* agreed that their pay is fair relative to their coworkers.

However, teachers expressed more mixed perceptions regarding overall compensation. Notably, 31% of teachers disagreed to some extent that they were paid what they deserve, despite the comparatively higher wages offered through Early REACH. This finding underscores the continued importance of increased compensation for the field, even within centers that have made gains in improving teacher pay.

Figure 19. *Teacher Perceptions of Benefits and Pay, Fall 2025 (n=190-192)*



Note: Somewhat and *Strongly Disagree* responses were combined.

Operational Supports

Early REACH contracted with Civitas to provide operational business support to all Early REACH child care centers. Civitas consulted with one individual at each of the 28 active Early REACH child care centers. Civitas offers individualized coaching, group training, online self-directed modules, and an interview generator app to owners and directors (see Table 2 for a description of services and Figure 20 for a timeline of offerings). In April 2025, using Civitas services became a mandatory requirement of participation in Early REACH. As such, all centers were required to complete an intake survey, attend an assessment call, participate in a services launch call, engage in individual coaching, and attend four sessions of group coaching.[14] Prior to April 2025, participation in Civitas programming was optional and only a subset (39%) of the centers had participated in individual and group coaching.

[14] As of March 2026, there has been no enforcement of the mandatory coaching requirement by BakerRipley.

Figure 20. *Timeline of Civitas Business Coaching Offerings*

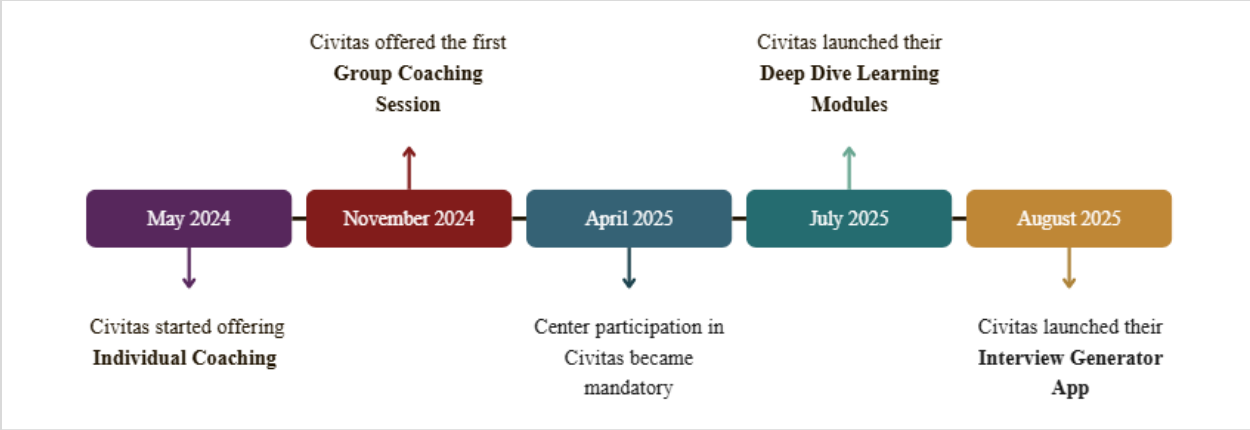


Table 2. *Civitas Business Coaching Offerings*

Offering	Description
Individual Coaching	Civitas administers intake business assessments to identify current goals, obstacles, and strengths. Based on these assessments, Civitas coaches work with centers to create an action plan during a launch call. For centers who had already worked with Civitas prior to mandatory coaching, Civitas conducted an advanced assessment to track progress towards centers' action plans. Individual coaching is provided in accordance with these centers' action plans.
Quarterly Group Trainings	Two-hour sessions that cover topics aimed at helping centers strengthen their financial and operational stability. Past topics have included: • *Retirement planning for child care businesses* • *Getting ready for the new year* • *Attracting the best talent and managing employee challenges* • *Mastering the process of annual business assessment* • *Creating partnership contracts with local business* • *Empowered for sustainability- smart choices for child care success*
Deep Dive Learning Modules	Self-directed modules that complement coaching sessions. These modules cover recruitment strategies, retirement planning and employee benefits, social media and online marketing, developing a positive work culture, and advanced tax mitigation strategies.
Interview Generator App	A tool to support child care center directors in developing interview questions that support teacher recruitment and the interview process.

Individual Coaching

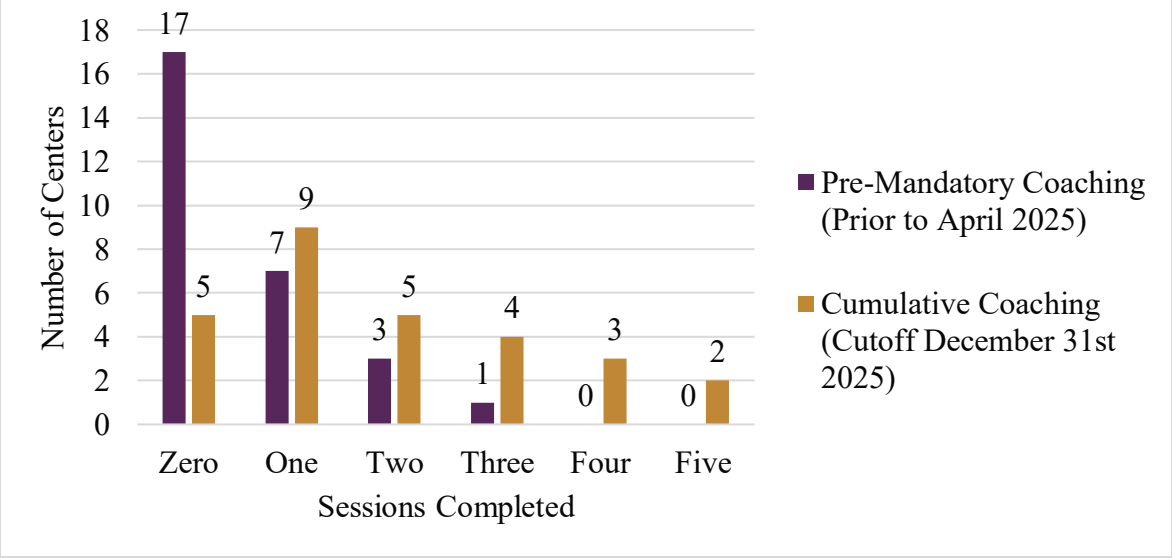
Civitas began offering optional coaching services to Early REACH center directors in May 2024. Prior to engaging in coaching, interested directors completed an intake form and participated in

an assessment call to identify their center's goals, challenges, and strengths. Based on this information, Civitas collaborated with centers to develop tailored action plans and provided individualized coaching.

In April 2025, participation in Civitas services became mandatory for all Early REACH centers. As of December 2025, Civitas had completed an advanced assessment with 18 center directors/owners following the completion of their intake process. Centers that had not completed an intake survey prior to the mandate (n = 8) subsequently completed the intake survey and have not yet completed an advanced assessment. The intake surveys, advanced assessments, and assessment calls were all designed to inform individualized coaching plans.

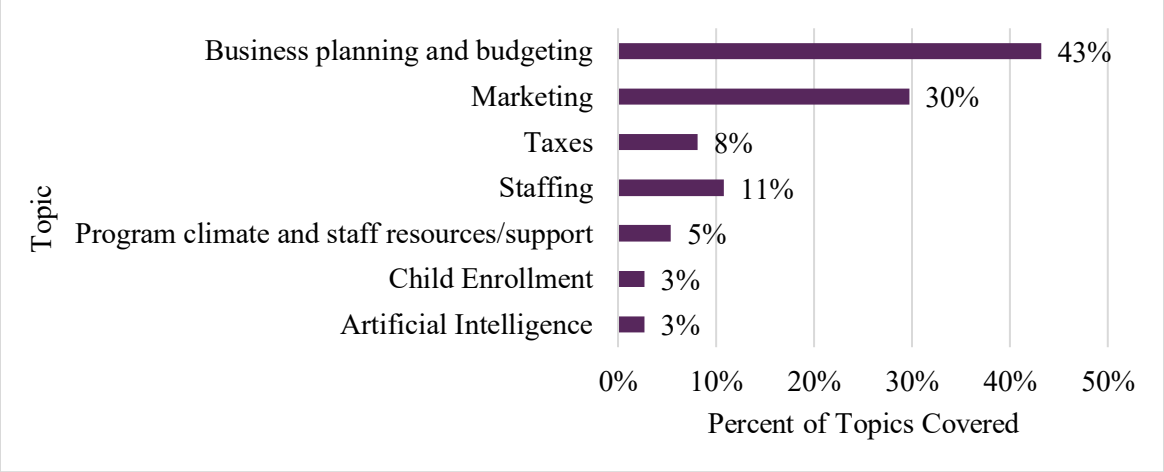
By December 2025, 27 of the 28 active centers had completed an intake form and 26 centers had participated in an assessment call. Additionally, 23 centers (82%) had engaged in at least one individual coaching session — a marked increase in participation as only 11 centers (39%) had participated in coaching prior to it becoming a mandatory center requirement. Figure 21 summarizes the number of coaching sessions centers participated in from May 2024 – March 2025 (before coaching was mandatory) and cumulatively (i.e., total amount of coaching - both pre-mandated and mandated).

Figure 21. *Number of Coaching Sessions Completed Before Requirement and Cumulatively (n=28)*



Between April 2025 (when Civitas coaching became mandatory) and December 2025, Civitas provided a total of 19 hours of individual coaching across centers. On average, centers received 50 minutes of coaching, with coaching sessions averaging 31 minutes in length. Each coaching session lasted between 25 and 131 minutes per session. The most common topic of coaching sessions was business planning and budgeting (43%; Figure 22). Of the sessions that covered business planning and budgeting, subtopics included revenue streams and growth (50%), mitigating risks (25%), financial planning (13%), annual budget planning (6%), and financial foundation (6%).

Figure 22. *Topics Covered During Mandatory Coaching Sessions (n=37)*

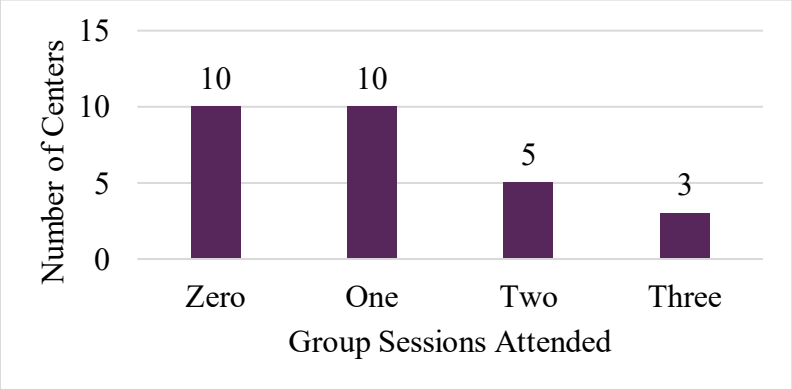


Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 as one session addressed multiple topics.

GROUP COACHING

As of December 2025, Civitas conducted six group training sessions. Half of these sessions occurred before centers were required to participate in Civitas offerings (November 2024, January 2025, and February 2025).[15] The remaining sessions occurred after Civitas services were made mandatory for all Early REACH centers (July 2025, September 2025, and November 2025). Directors from 18 centers attended at least one group session after the mandatory coaching requirement was in place. Figure 23 below summarizes the number of group sessions each center attended after Civitas coaching became mandatory.

Figure 23. *Centers' Group Coaching Completion Rates After the Mandatory Coaching Requirement (n=28)*



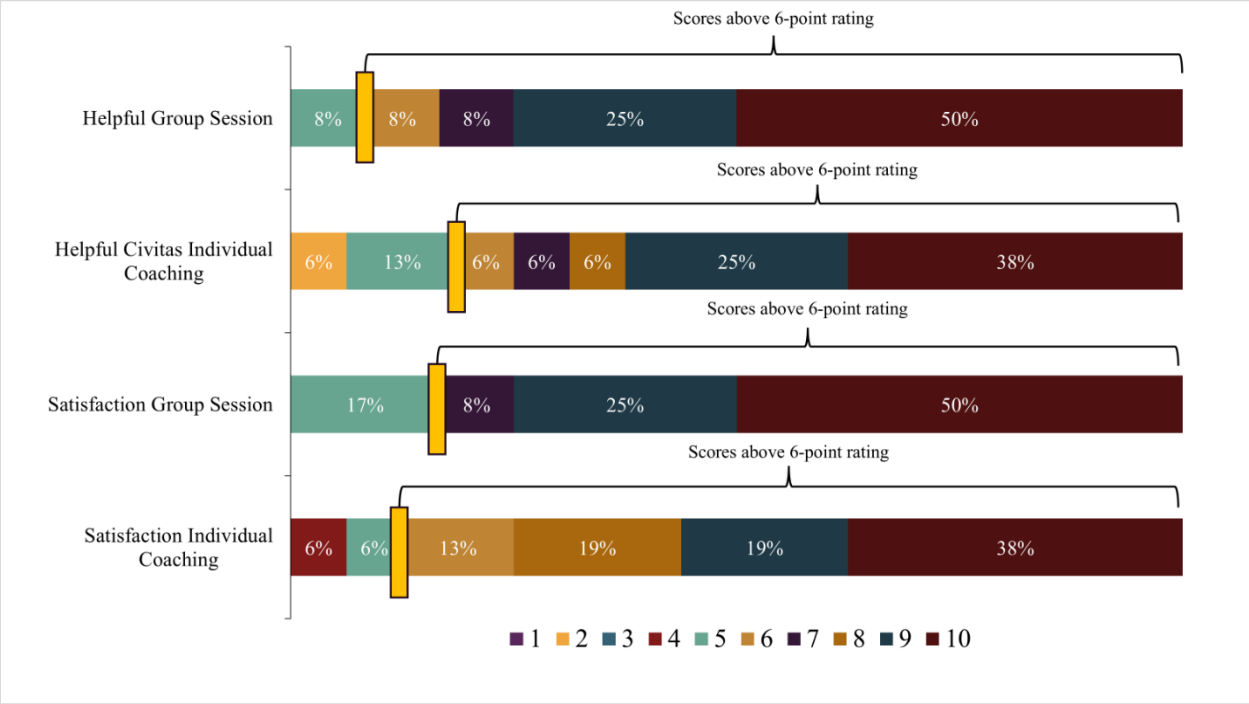
[15] At the time of reporting, Civitas has not provided information to BTC on attendance for group sessions that occurred prior to Civitas coaching being required.

DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF COACHING

In the Fall 2025 director survey, 23 of the 28 directors identified by Civitas as the primary contact completed questions about their experiences with Civitas coaching services. Sixteen (70%) of these directors reported receiving individual coaching, while seven indicated they had not. Among the 16 directors who reported participating in individual coaching, 12 (75%) also responded to questions about their experiences with group coaching. The remaining four directors indicated on the director survey that they had not attended group coaching sessions.

Most directors rated their satisfaction with Civitas' individual (88%) and group coaching (83%) a six or higher on a 10-point scale (Figure 24). Additionally, most directors found individual coaching (81%) and group sessions (92%) helpful, rating them six or higher on a 10-point scale (Figure 24).

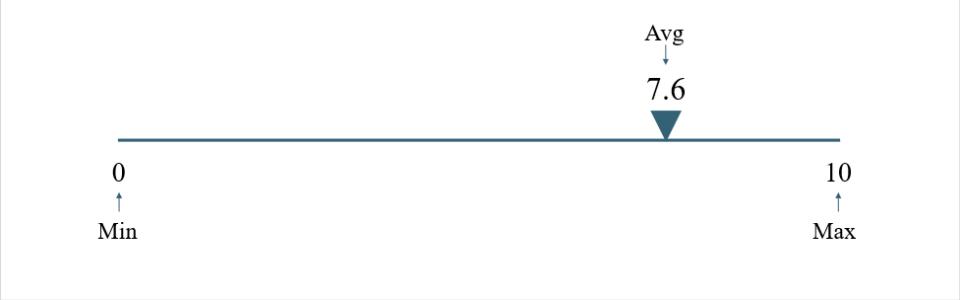
Figure 24. *Overall Perceived Helpfulness and Satisfaction of Civitas Offerings, Fall 2025 (n=12-16)*



Note: The yellow bar indicates the cutoff between scores above six.

When asked about the likelihood of recommending Civitas' consultation services to other child care centers, directors had mixed reactions (*Average*= 7.5, *Range* = 0 to 10). There was a wide range of responses, with about 20% of centers giving low recommendation ratings. However, most directors indicated they would recommend Civitas services. Overall, directors were *moderately likely* to recommend Civitas' consultation with an average rating of 7.6 out of 10 (Figure 25).

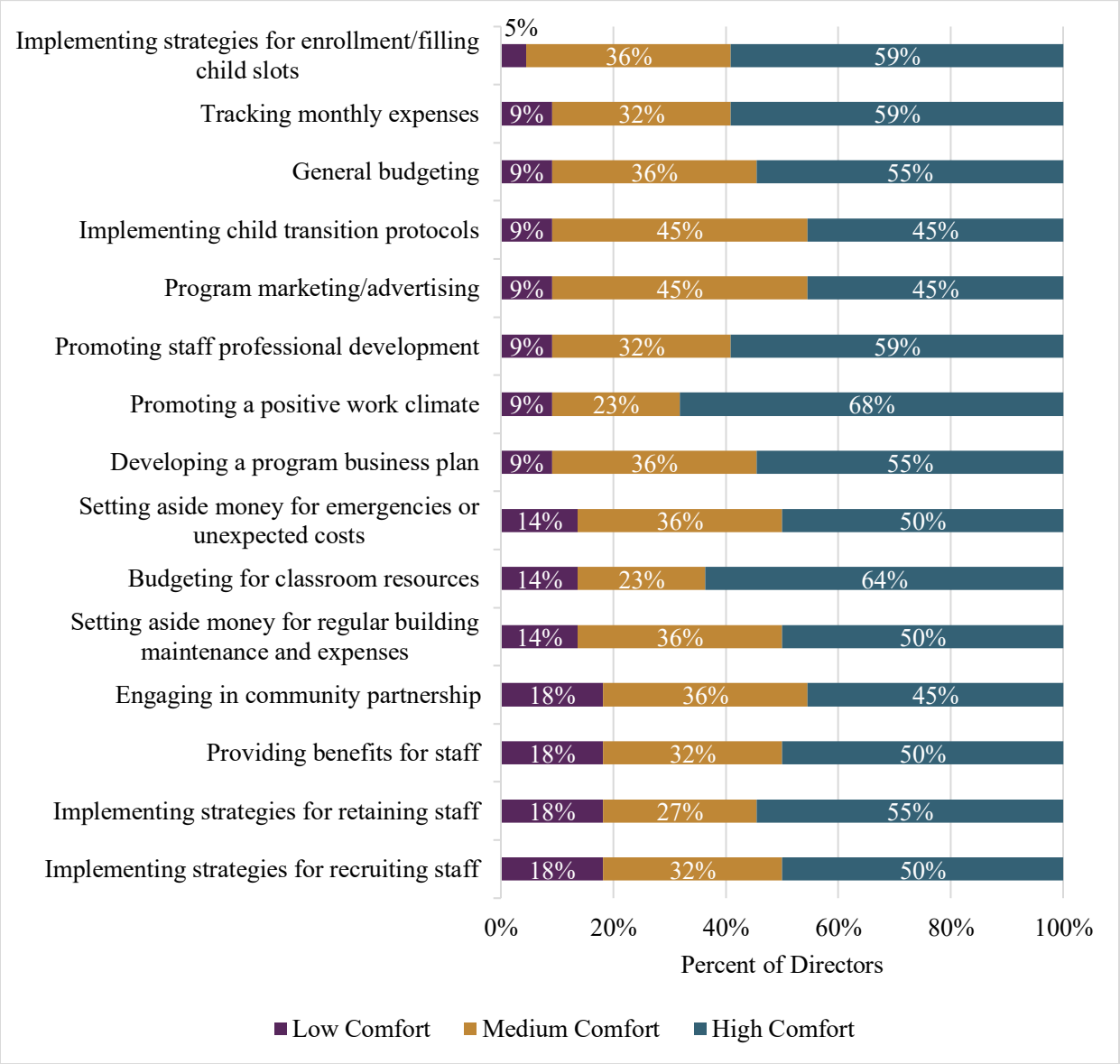
Figure 25. *Overall Recommendation of Civitas, Fall 2025 (n=16)*



Directors were also asked to share their comfort level (i.e., *medium* and *high comfort*) with specific operational practices (Figure 26). Of these practices, directors felt most comfortable filling child slots (95%), tracking monthly expenses (91%), completing general budgeting (91%), implementing child transition protocols (90%), engaging in program marketing (90%), promoting staff professional development (91%), promoting a positive work climate (91%), and developing a program business plan (91%).

Civitas may want to consider providing offerings and resources focused on staff recruitment and retention strategies, engagement in community partnerships, and providing staff benefits, as nearly a fifth of directors (18%) reported low levels of comfort in these areas.

Figure 26. *Directors' Level of Comfort with Business and Operations Practices, Fall 2025 (n=22)*



SUMMARY

Financial Supports

All Early REACH centers reported complying with the program requirement that lead and assistant teachers in Early REACH classrooms be paid at least $15 per hour. Some centers paid teachers up to $18 per hour, and approximately one-third of centers reported paying Early REACH and non-Early REACH teachers the same wage. This highlights the impact of Early REACH funding in both increasing and stabilizing teacher and center compensation.
The most common benefits that centers offered to teachers were paid holidays, paid vacations, child care assistance, and paid sick days. While some centers provided health insurance or contributed to health insurance (22%), these offerings were below the national average (52%), indicating an area for potential policy and programmatic improvement.

Directors most often reported supporting teachers' career development through access to training opportunities, regularly scheduled time to meet with a supervisor or mentor about progress towards career goals, a pay scale based on professional qualifications, and flexible scheduling to participate in college courses. These resources were offered at higher rates than the national average and represent important investments in the workforce that can improve teacher retention, strengthen program climate, and support higher-quality classrooms.

Teachers overall agreed that their centers provided career development opportunities, adequate time off, and overall job security. About one-third of teachers did not agree they were being paid what they deserve, underscoring the continued importance of competitive compensation, even within centers that have increased wages through Early REACH.

Operational Supports

Early REACH contracted with Civitas to provide business operation support to all Early REACH child care centers. These supports included individualized coaching, group training, online self-directed modules, and an interview generator app. In April 2025, using Civitas services was made mandatory for all Early REACH centers, which significantly increased the number of centers participating in Civitas coaching. From April to December 2025, Civitas provided coaching to center directors for an average of 50 minutes each. The topics most often covered in business coaching were business planning and budgeting.

Most programs reported being satisfied with Civitas offerings and found the coaching and training helpful. A majority of programs reported *medium* to *high* comfort across all business and operation practices. Some centers expressed lower levels of comfort in staff recruitment and retention strategies, engagement in community partnerships, and providing staff benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue operational financial supports

Policies and supports should continue to include time-off benefits and child care coverage for Early REACH staff. The importance of these benefits to retain staff should continue to be emphasized. Early REACH centers should consider expanding benefits as they are able in order to support teachers' financial stability and overall wellness. Providing health insurance and additional health and wellness programs can help reduce staff attrition and improve job satisfaction, particularly in a field where salaries are relatively low. Centers should also continue offering opportunities for staff education and providing compensation for educational achievements, as these supports can help retain teachers and contribute to higher-quality classrooms. With policy changes and supports, these goals for centers might be possible.

Maintain and expand financial and administrative supports

Centers should be encouraged to fully participate in Civitas offerings, including individual coaching, group training, and self-directed learning modules, to strengthen operational and financial management. Civitas should consider expanding coaching and resources that focus specifically on staff recruitment and retention strategies, engaging in community partnerships, and supporting staff benefits. Providing additional guidance in these areas can help center directors feel more confident in operational practices and support long-term center quality.

Review and enhance Civitas documentation

At present, Civitas's documentation for Early REACH includes incomplete records of participation. The BTC evaluation team is currently working with Civitas to access additional information and determine key dates associated with the delivery of given services over time.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Process Question: What are the means for recruiting teachers being implemented by each center?
  - Teacher Recruitment and Retention Supports
- Process Question: How many staff openings do centers have and how long does it take to fill positions? What are the challenges to finding and maintaining teachers?
  - Staff Openings
  - Recruitment Challenges
  - Retention Challenges
- Process Question: How many staff leave over the course of the initiative and what reasons are given for their departure?
  - Teacher Retention

Data Sources

- Director survey
  - Summer 2024 (June – November 2024)
  - Early 2025 (January – April 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Civitas coaching logs (June – December 2025)

Introduction to Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Teacher recruitment and retention are key components of quality care in early childhood education. Teacher recruitment encompasses the process of identifying, interviewing, selecting, and hiring qualified candidates to fill open positions at a center. Teacher retention is related to the length of time that teachers remain in their position at a center and includes the process of maintaining highly qualified staff after they have been hired. Centers with successful and effective practices in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff are likely to provide high-quality instruction; foster positive development in children; allow children to form stable, consistent, and secure relationships with caregivers; meet regulatory standards, such as child-to-staff ratios; and increase their returns on investments in staff professional development and mentorship (Vicente et al., 2025). In contrast, staffing shortages can negatively affect a center's capacity to provide care and restrict families' access to services, as centers must continue to meet strict staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements in accordance with licensing regulations (Sabataso, 2021).

High rates of teacher turnover in child care settings have negative implications for young children's learning experiences and for initiatives aimed at improving child care quality (Doromal et al., 2022). Despite the critical importance of teacher retention for maintaining stable, high-quality care, turnover remains a persistent challenge in early childhood education across the United States. On average, child care centers experience annual turnover rates of approximately 30%, with potentially 40% of new hires leaving before completing their first year (Vicente et al., 2025). This instability is driven primarily by low wages and disproportionately affects assistant teachers, nearly 40% of whom leave their positions within 1-3 years. Community-based centers are especially impacted by turnover compared to Head Start, resulting in significant disruptions to center quality and, ultimately, to child outcomes (Caven et al., 2021). According to the Learning Policy Institute, states such as Texas report some of the highest turnover rates in early childhood education, further underscoring the importance of this issue in Texas and the critical role of initiatives, such as Early REACH in supporting the field (Wojcikiewicz & Wei, 2024). It is important that directors understand the challenges related to teacher recruitment and retention and create systems, resources, and opportunities that support their long-term commitment to the field.

This section describes Early REACH directors' reports of staff recruitment and retention efforts, staff openings at their centers, teacher retention, and staff recruitment and retention challenges. When multiple center directors from the same center completed a survey, analyses included only the response from the individual whose role most closely aligned with overseeing day-to-day operations.

The first data source for the findings in this section consists of directors from 27 of the 28 active Early REACH centers who completed the Fall 2025 director survey.[16] Among these, 19 of the tenured centers—defined as those participating in Early REACH since the initiative's inception—had director survey data at all timepoints (summer 2024, early 2025, and fall 2025). In contrast, five newer centers that joined after March 2025 had data from only two survey timepoints (early 2025 and fall 2025).

All analyses are descriptive. Significance testing was not conducted due to the small sample size of active Early REACH centers.

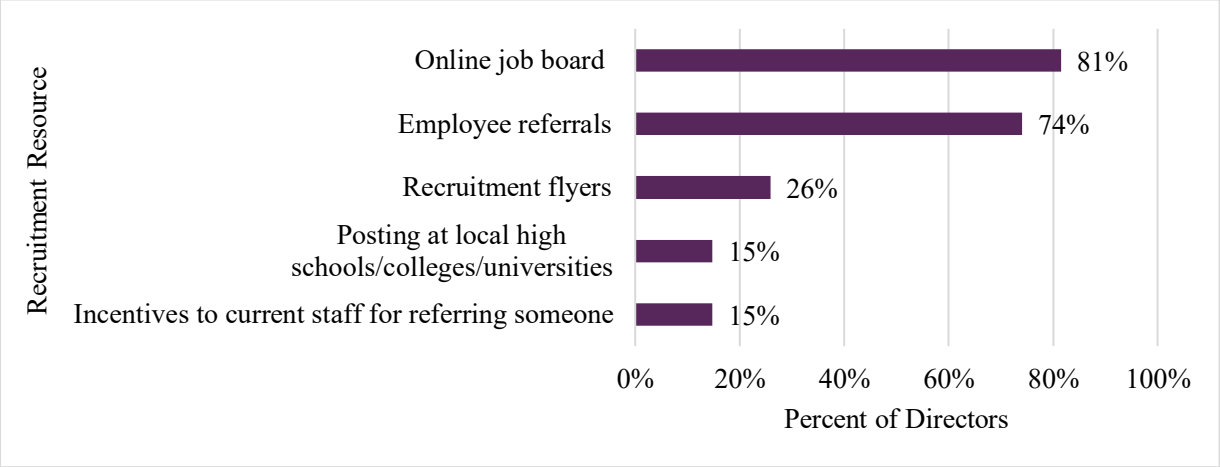
The second data source for findings in this section consists of coaching data from Civitas, which was also used to answer evaluation questions. Civitas coaches completed tracking logs in which they documented directors' participation in Civitas offerings. Directors' perceptions of their experiences with Civitas related to recruitment and retention were collected through the director survey (fall 2025) from 16 directors who were listed as Civitas' main center contacts.[17]

[16] The 28th center joined Early REACH in September 2025 when the third timepoint of director survey data collection was already underway.
[17] Additional data on Civitas from the organization itself can be found in the Financial and Operational Supports section.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Supports

Center directors used a variety of methods and resources to recruit teachers (Figure 27). Most directors indicated that they used online job boards (81%) and employee referrals (74%) to recruit teachers. Directors implemented strategies such as recruitment flyers (26%), postings at local schools, colleges and universities (15%), and referral incentives for current staff (15%) less frequently.

Figure 27. *Resources Directors Reported Using to Recruit Teachers, Fall 2025 (n=27)*



Civitas Recruitment and Retention Supports

Early REACH has provided directors with support to enhance teacher recruitment through Civitas.[18] In July 2025, Civitas created a "deep dive" learning module, which provides self-paced, interactive guidance to support teacher recruitment. In August 2025, Civitas launched an interview generator application that helps directors develop questions to be used in hiring interviews.

Additionally, Civitas provided individual coaching sessions for directors. Topics discussed during individual sessions varied depending on the expressed needs of each center or director. Civitas tracking logs from June to December 2025 indicate that Civitas coaches discussed staffing with directors from 3 of 28 centers (11%) during individual coaching sessions. Directors were also asked to report on their experience discussing staffing with Civitas coaches (Figures 28 and 29).

Directors at 75% of centers reported receiving guidance from Civitas on staff recruitment. Of those directors who received Civitas guidance, 50% said Civitas consultation on staff recruitment

[18] A description of Civitas coaching can be found in the Financial and Operational Supports section.

was a *great deal* or *very much* helpful. Another 25% of directors said Civitas consultation on staff recruitment was *somewhat* helpful.

Additionally, directors at 54% of centers reported receiving guidance from Civitas on staff retention. Of those directors who received Civitas guidance, 70% said Civitas consultation on staff retention was a *great deal* or *very much* helpful.

Figure 28. *Directors' Experiences with Civitas Coaches Related to Staff Recruitment, Fall 2025 (n=16)*

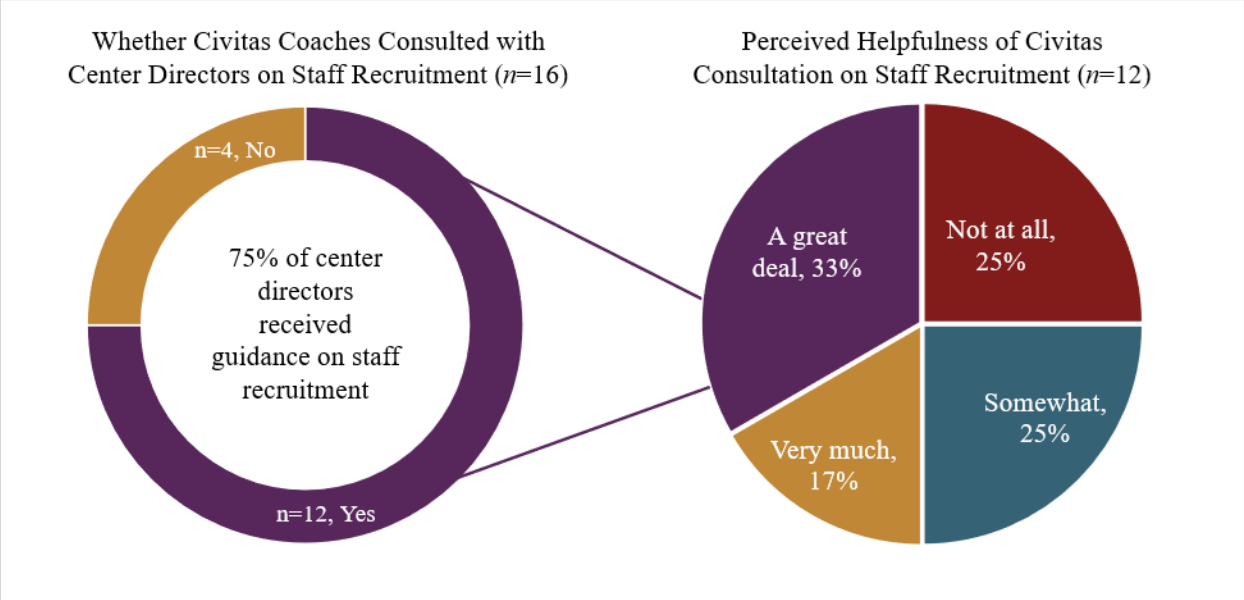
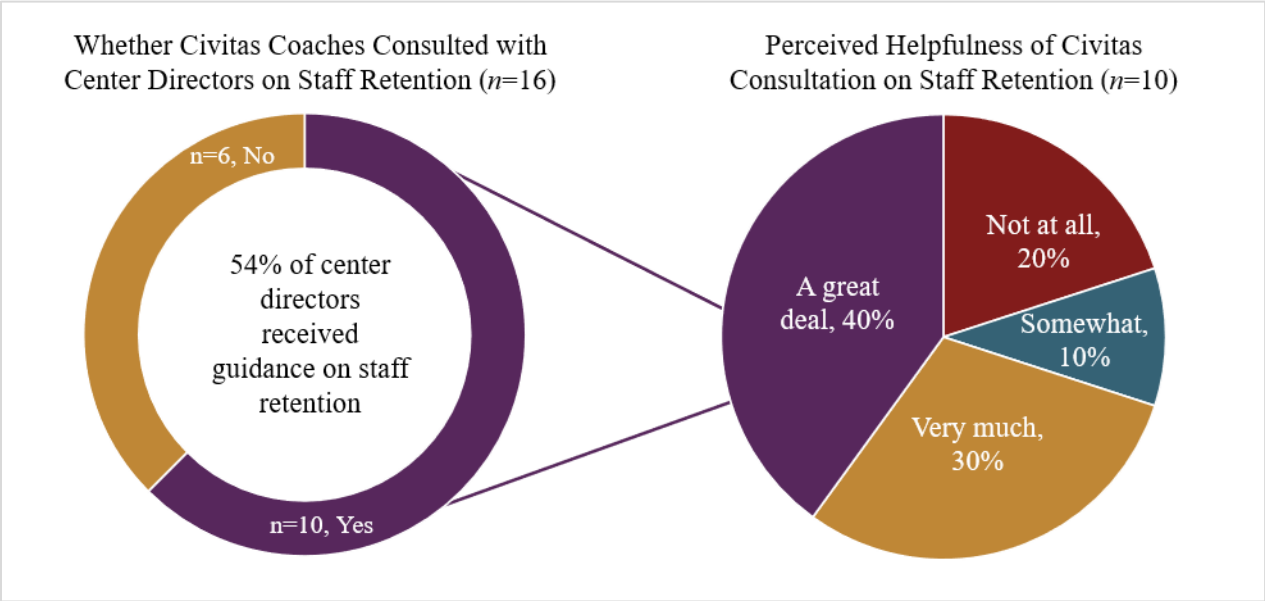


Figure 29. *Center Directors' Experiences with Civitas Coaches Related to Staff Retention, Fall 2025 (n=16)*



Staff Openings

Directors were asked how many staff openings were present for each age of care - infant, toddler, or preschool (Figure 30). In fall 2025, directors from the majority of active Early REACH centers (65%) reported that they were fully staffed across all positions. Directors from 67% of centers reported that they had a full staff of infant teachers, 70% reported having a full staff of toddler teachers, and 63% reported having a full staff of preschool teachers. Directors were unlikely to report having three or more openings overall across all teacher positions (8%). In a field where teacher retention is low and recruitment and hiring is challenging, the high staffing rates for Early REACH centers further demonstrate their commitment to program and operational quality.

National findings indicate that the early care and education (ECE) sector is facing a severe, ongoing staffing crisis, with roughly 61% of child care centers reporting challenges in hiring and retaining staff, including administrative assistants and support staff. The difficulty is driven by low wages, high burnout, and intense competition from other industries, a situation that has been significantly exacerbated—though not originally caused—by COVID-19 and post-COVID workforce shifts (McLean, et. al., 2024).

One notable finding which is common across the country as well as in Houston, is the higher prevalence of vacancies among support-staff positions, such as cooks, bus drivers, floaters, and administrative personnel. Although these roles typically offer lower wages than teaching positions, these individuals play a critical role in the overall functioning of child care centers.

High vacancy rates in these positions appear to be driven not only by lower salaries and limited benefits, but also by limited career pathways within this field.

As such, focused strategies and policies aimed at supporting the recruitment and retention of support-staff may represent a key area for further attention. Strategies such as increasing compensation or providing wage supplements, offering a wide range of benefits, and developing pathways for career advancement can help stabilize staffing overall and improve the functioning of child care centers.

Figure 30. *Directors' Reported Staff Openings by Position, Fall 2025 (n=25)*

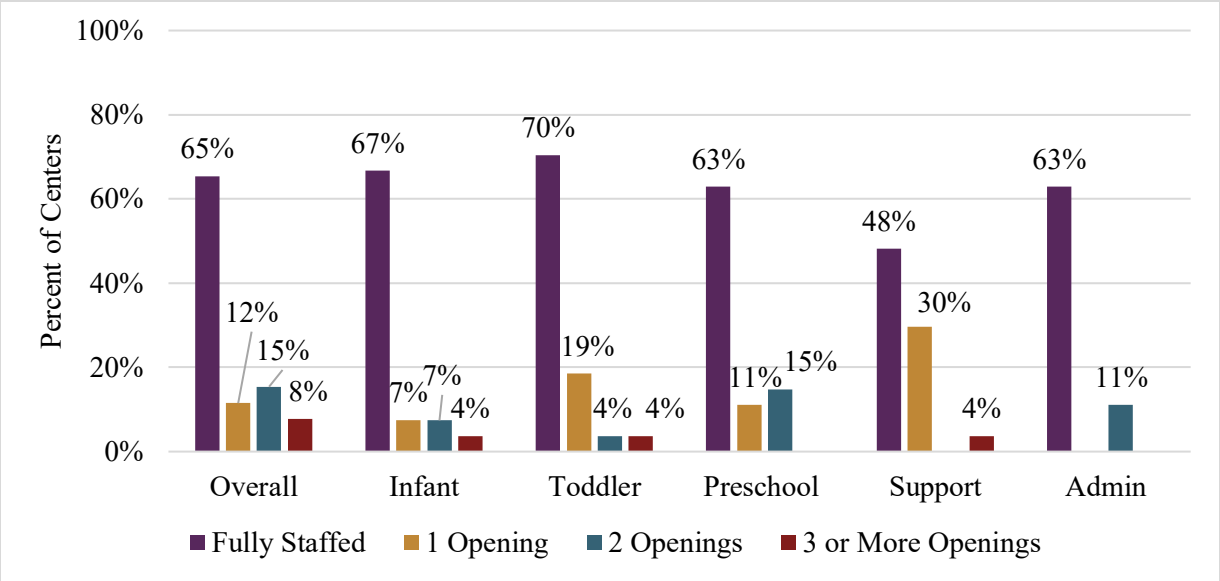
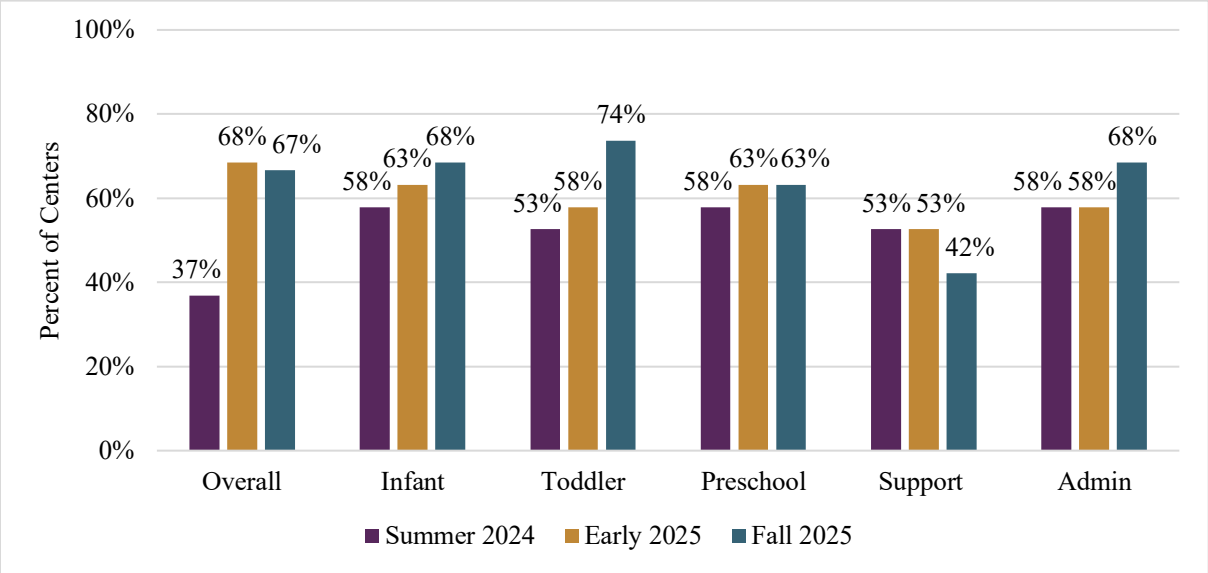


Figure 31 demonstrates the responses from directors of 19 tenured centers that were active Early REACH centers at all three survey collection timepoints. More centers reported being fully staffed overall in early 2025 and fall 2025 compared to summer 2024. The percentage of directors who reported being fully staffed with infant teachers and with toddler teachers increased steadily from summer 2024 to fall 2025. The percentage of directors who reported being fully staffed with preschool teachers increased from summer 2024 to early 2025 and remained the same from early 2025 through the fall of 2025. This pattern suggests that Early REACH contributed to supporting centers in recruiting and retaining staff. Centers that experienced gains in full staffing from summer 2024 to early 2025 were generally able to maintain or further build on these gains by fall 2025.

One exception to this trend is in the staffing of support-staff positions, which showed a decline in full staffing overtime. Because support-staff are typically not included in Early REACH programming, they may not experience the same level of benefits as teachers, potentially contributing to this pattern. National reports indicate that the recruitment of support-staff across organizations has been increasingly difficult post COVID-19. This further underscores the potential need to support the recruitment and maintenance of support-staff servicing child care centers.

Figure 31. *Percentage of Tenured Centers that Were Fully Staffed by Position Across Summer 2024, Early 2025, and Fall 2025 (n=19)*

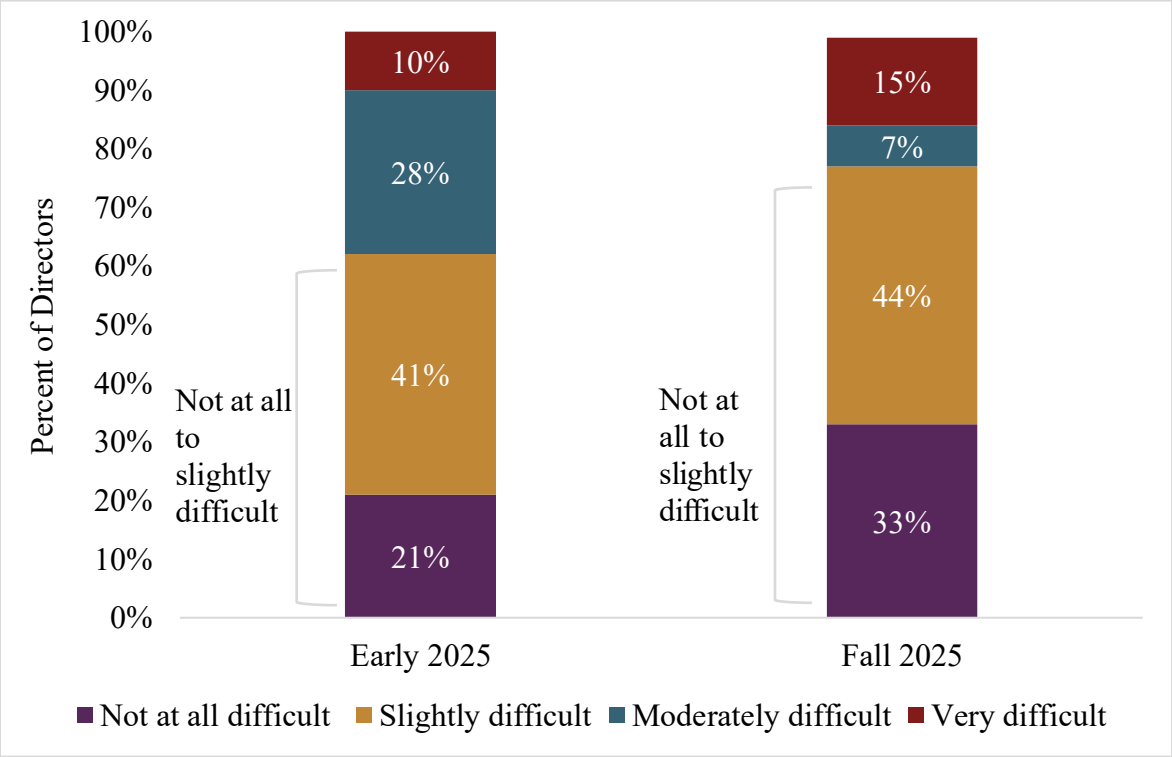


TEACHER RECRUITMENT

In early 2025 and fall 2025, directors were asked to report on how difficult it had been for them to recruit teachers (Figure 32).[19] Overall, in fall 2025, the majority of directors (77%) said that it was *not at all* or *slightly* difficult to recruit teachers, an increase from early 2025 (62%). Centers had fewer staff openings across all teacher positions and had less difficulty recruiting teachers from early 2025 to fall 2025. In general, directors reported that it typically takes about one month or less to fill a position. These findings further underscore the contributing role that Early REACH and its support have played in strengthening staffing within child care centers. This is particularly noteworthy given that the early child care sector has historically struggled to achieve full staffing levels. Staffing shortages directly affect a center's capacity to provide care and limit families' ability to access services, as strict staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements must be maintained in accordance with licensing regulations (Sabataso, 2021).

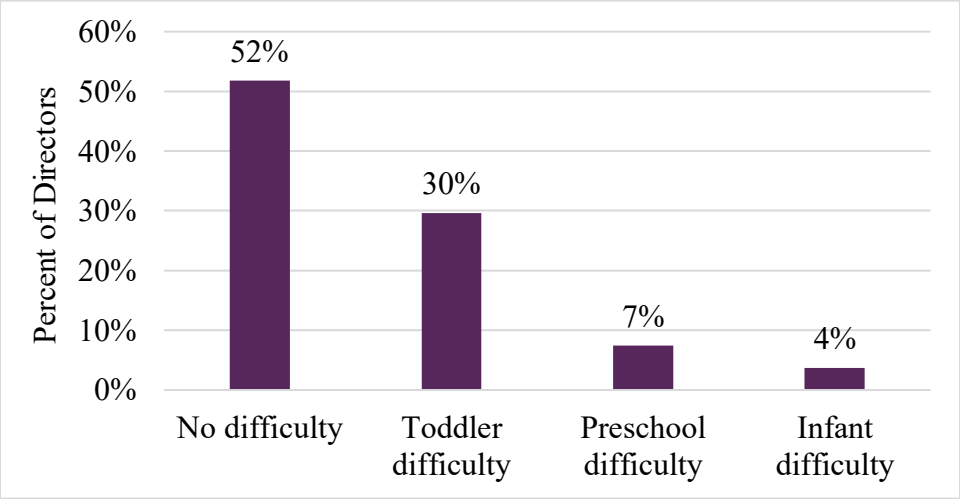
[19] This figure includes responses from directors of all 25 centers who completed a survey in early 2025 and fall 2025.

Figure 32. *Directors' Reported Teacher Recruitment Difficulty Across Early 2025 and Fall 2025 (n=25)*



In fall 2025, directors were asked how difficult it was to recruit teachers for each age group of care provided (Figure 33). About half (52%) of the directors reported that there were no positions that were particularly difficult to fill. Thirty percent (30%) reported that toddler staff positions were particularly difficult to fill, but only 7% and 4% indicated that it was difficult to fill preschool or infant positions, respectively. This is a trend that was also observed in early 2025. The toddler age period is often considered particularly challenging in the context of teaching, as children at this stage may have difficulty communicating effectively and may exhibit more frequent or complex behavioral challenges. As a result, teachers working with toddlers may require additional support. Focused professional development related to toddler development and behavior management can help to strengthen recruitment and retention for positions serving this age group.

Figure 33. *Directors' Reported Teacher Recruitment Difficulty at Each Age Grouping, Fall 2025 (n=27)*



To better understand the trajectory of recruitment challenges for individual Early REACH centers over time, we examined director reports of recruitment difficulty for 19 of the tenured centers across multiple survey timepoints. Recruitment challenges were classified into one of three categories:

- *Low difficulty* – directors reported that teacher recruitment was *not at all* or *slightly* difficult,
- *Moderate difficulty* – directors reported that teacher recruitment was *moderately* difficult,
- *High difficulty* – directors reported that teacher recruitment was *very* or *extremely* difficult.

After examining individual directors' reports across multiple survey timepoints, we then identified four distinct trajectories of recruitment difficulty:

- *Sustained low difficulty* – directors reported *low* difficulty recruiting teachers in summer 2024, early 2025, and fall 2025,
- *Sustained high difficulty* – directors reported *high* difficulty recruiting teachers in summer 2024, early 2025, and fall 2025,
- *Decreased difficulty* – directors reported *high* or *moderate* difficulty recruiting teachers in summer 2024 and reported *moderate* or *low* difficulty, respectively, in fall 2025,
- *Increased difficulty* – directors reported *low* or *moderate* difficulty recruiting teachers in summer 2024 and reported *moderate* or *high* difficulty, respectively, in fall 2025.

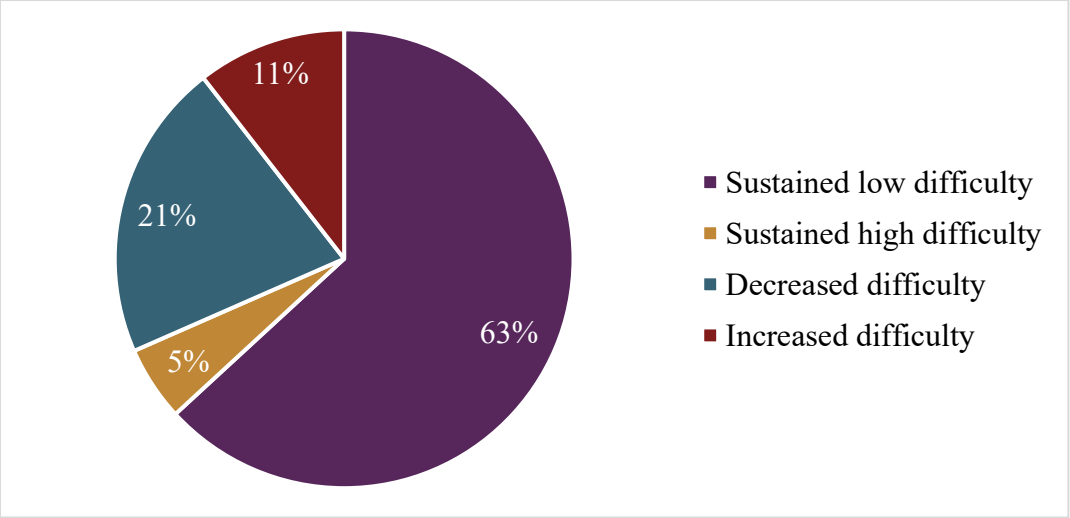
Sixty-three percent (63%) of tenured centers reported *low difficulty* recruiting teachers from summer 2024 through fall 2025, indicating consistently low recruitment challenges over time (Figure 34). In contrast, only one center (5%) reported persistently high difficulty across this time period.

Twenty-one percent (21%) of centers experienced a *decrease* in recruitment difficulty over time. Among these, three centers reported *moderate* difficulty in summer 2024 and *low* difficulty by

fall 2025, while one center improved from *high* difficulty in summer 2024 to *moderate* difficulty in fall 2025.

The remaining 11% of centers experienced *increased* recruitment difficulty, shifting from *low* difficulty in summer 2024 to *high* difficulty in fall 2025. These two centers, along with the one center that reported consistently *high* difficulty, were the only three tenured centers to report *high* difficulty recruiting teachers in fall 2025.

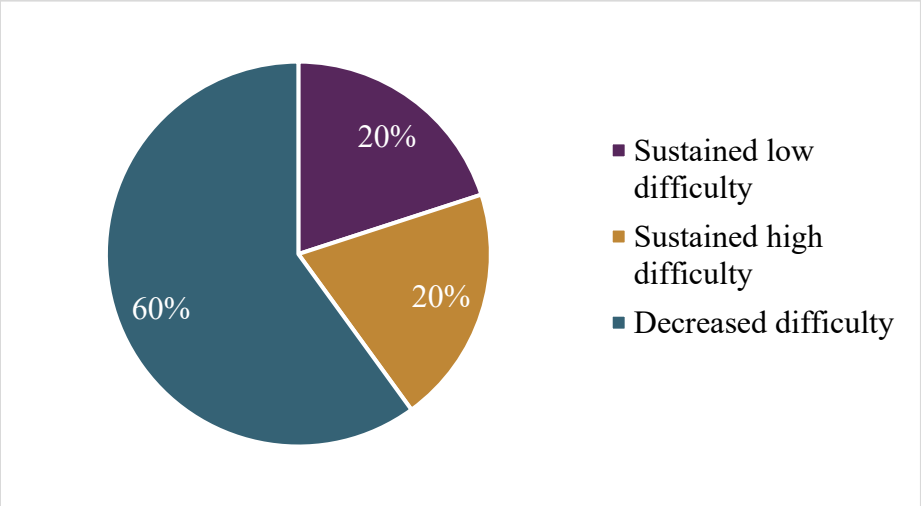
Figure 34. *Percentage of Tenured Centers Experiencing Each Distinct Trajectory of Teacher Recruitment Difficulty from Summer 2024 to Fall 2025 (n=19)*



Separate analyses with five of the new centers that joined Early REACH after March 2025 revealed that sixty percent (60%) of these new centers experienced *decreased* difficulty recruiting teachers over time, reporting *moderate* difficulty in early 2025 and *low* difficulty in fall 2025. Twenty percent (20%) of these new centers experienced *sustained low* difficulty between early 2025 and fall 2025. Twenty percent (20%) of these new centers experienced *sustained high* difficulty, reporting *high* difficulty recruiting teachers in early 2025 and fall 2025 (Figure 35). [20]

[20] New centers were not active Early REACH centers during summer 2024 and therefore do not have Summer 2024 director survey data.

Figure 35. *Percentage of New Centers Experiencing Each Distinct Trajectory of Teacher Recruitment Difficulty Between Early 2025 and Fall 2025 (n=5)*



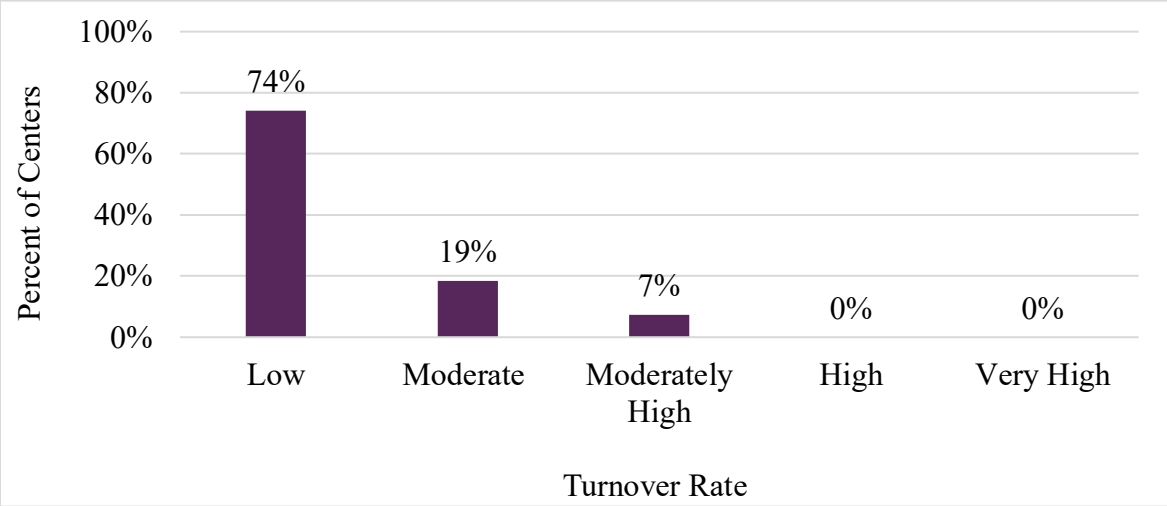
TEACHER RETENTION

To better understand teacher retention at the center level, directors were asked to indicate approximately what percentage of teachers had left their center during the program year (August 2024-fall 2025), indicating the staff turnover at their center. Turnover rates were categorized in the following way:

- *Low turnover* – 0-20% of teachers left the center during the program year,
- *Moderate turnover* – 21-40% of teachers left the center during the program year,
- *Moderately high turnover* – 41-60% of teachers left the center during the program year,
- *High turnover* – 61-80% of teachers left the center during the program year,
- *Very high turnover* – 81% or more teachers left the center during the program year.

In fall 2025, directors from 74% of centers indicated that they had a *low* turnover rate, with 0-20% of their teachers leaving the center since August 2024 (Figure 36). It is important to note that this reported turnover rate is lower than the national average turnover rate of 26%-40% annually (Caven et al., 2021). Nineteen percent (19%) of directors indicated that their center had *moderate* turnover (i.e., 21-40%), which is similar to the national average turnover rate. The remaining 7% of directors indicated their center had *moderately high* turnover, with 41-60% of their teachers leaving during the program year, which is higher than the national average. No directors reported that greater than 60% of their teachers left the center during the program year. These lower turnover rates are a testament to Early REACH's support and commitment to support the early childhood workforce.

Figure 36. *Directors' Reports on Teacher Turnover During the Most Recent Program Year, Fall 2025 (n=27)*

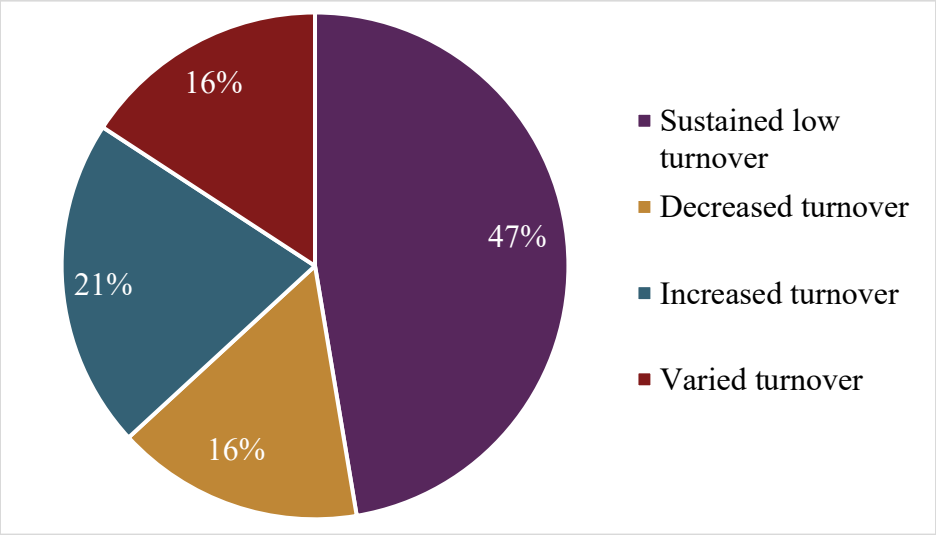


To better understand the trajectory of teacher turnover for individual Early REACH centers over time, we examined individual center directors' reports of turnover across all survey timepoints for 19 of the tenured centers. Five distinct trajectories of teacher turnover were identified including:

- *Sustained low turnover* – directors reported *low* turnover rate from summer 2024 through fall 2025,
- *Sustained high turnover* – directors reported *high* turnover rate from summer 2024 through fall 2025 (including *moderately high*, *high*, or *very high* turnover),
- *Decreased turnover* – directors reported a lower turnover rate in fall 2025 than summer 2024,
- *Increased turnover* – directors reported a higher turnover rate in fall 2025 than summer 2024,
- *Varied turnover* – directors reported the same level of turnover in fall 2025 and summer 2024, but a higher or lower turnover rate in early 2025.

Forty-seven percent (47%) of centers reported sustained *low* turnover (i.e., *low* turnover from summer 2024 through fall 2025 (Figure 37). No centers experienced *sustained high* turnover. Sixteen percent (16%) of directors reported *decreased* staff turnover from summer 2024 to fall 2025, and 21% reported *increased* staff turnover from summer 2024 to fall 2025. The remaining 16% of directors reported *varied* turnover across time. These centers had similar reports of turnover from summer 2024 to fall 2025 but either *increased* or *decreased* turnover in early 2025. It is too soon to definitively say more about the turnover trajectories of these centers at this time.

Figure 37. *Percentage of Tenured Centers Experiencing Each Distinct Trajectory of Teacher Turnover from Summer 2024 to Fall 2025 (n=19)*



RETENTION CHALLENGES

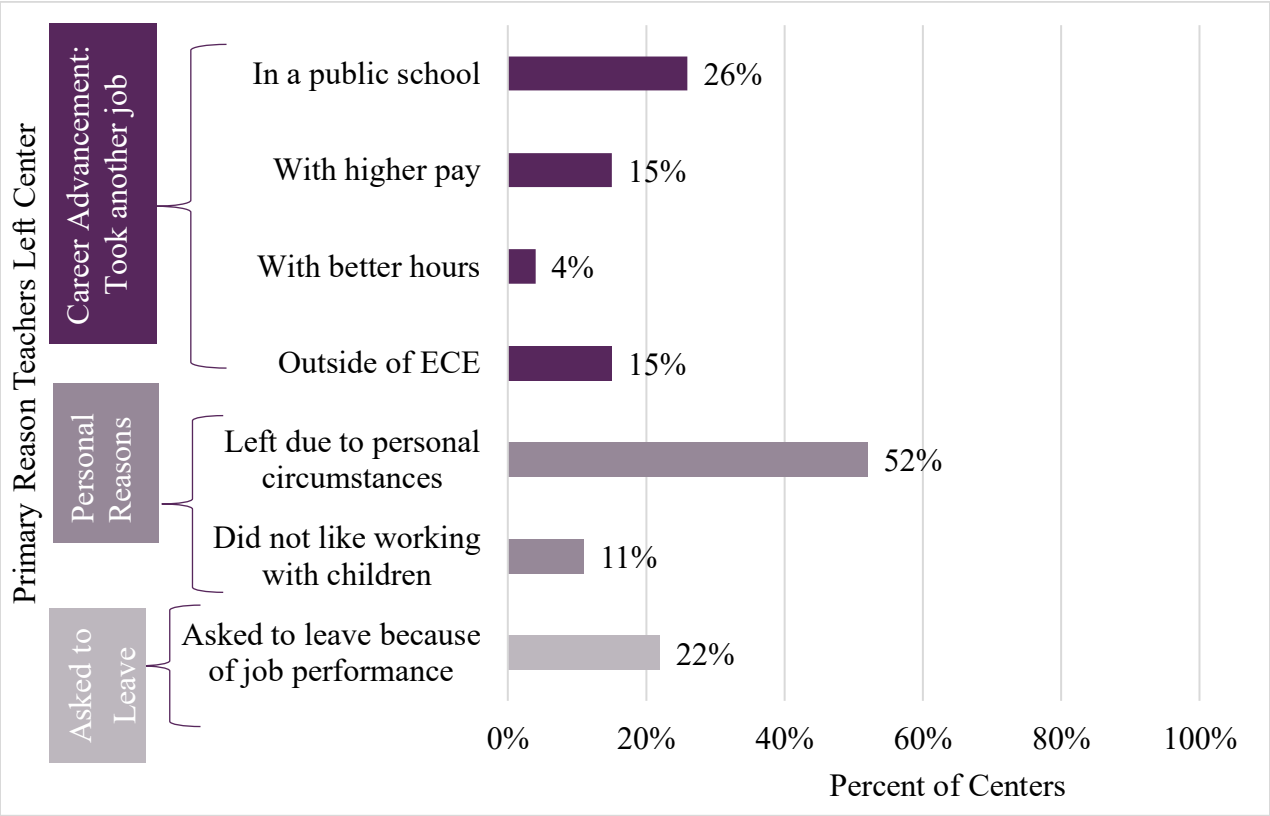
To understand more about the challenges that directors faced with teacher retention, directors were asked to select from a pre-specified list what teachers' primary reasons for leaving the center were. Reasons for leaving fell into three categories:

- **Career advancement reasons for leaving the center** – reasons related to accepting a different job with better working conditions or benefits,
- **Personal reasons for leaving the center** – reasons unrelated to the specific center, and
- **Job performance reasons.**

The most common career advancement reason teachers left their center was because they took a job in a public school (26%). Directors indicated that teachers also took another job with higher pay (15%), outside of early childhood education (15%), or with better hours (4%).

Fifty-two percent (52%) of directors reported that teachers primarily left their center because of personal circumstances (Figure 38). Close to a quarter of directors (22%) reported that teachers were asked to leave because of their job performance.

Figure 38. *Directors' Reports of the Primary Reason Teachers Leave their Center (n=27)*



Note: ECE = early childhood education.

SUMMARY

Early REACH evaluation findings indicated that participating child care centers were making progress in teacher recruitment and retention, though challenges remained in certain areas. Early REACH supports, including Civitas learning modules, interview tools, and coaching, have been provided to centers and were generally perceived as helpful, although only a small proportion of centers engaged in individualized coaching from Civitas on staffing topics.

By fall 2025, the majority of centers reported being fully staffed across teaching positions, with staffing levels improving over time, particularly among tenured centers. Centers that experienced gains in full staffing from summer 2024 to early 2025 were generally able to maintain or further build on these gains by fall 2025. Support-staff positions—including cooks, bus drivers, floaters, and administrative personnel—showed higher vacancy rates and declines in staffing over time. Additionally, toddler teacher positions were viewed as more difficult to fill, highlighting the potential need to provide focused resources for support-staff and teachers caring for toddlers.

Recruitment challenges have generally decreased, with most directors reporting it was *not at all* or *only slightly* difficult to recruit teachers. A majority of centers (63%) experienced consistently *low* difficulty recruiting staff, while an additional 21% saw improvements in their ability to recruit staff. Only a small proportion of centers faced persistent (5%) or increasing (11%) recruitment challenges. By fall 2025, very few centers reported *high* difficulty with recruitment, suggesting overall positive trends in staffing capacity among participating centers. However, a small subset of centers continue to face significant recruitment barriers.

Most centers reported *low* turnover, with fewer teachers leaving than the national average of 26–40% annually. Many centers maintained *low* turnover over time, though some experienced increases or fluctuations. Teachers most frequently left for personal reasons, while career advancement—such as moving to public school positions, seeking higher pay, or leaving early childhood education—also contributed to turnover.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to build community connections to create an early childhood education workforce pipeline

Policymakers and centers should expand partnerships with local colleges, universities, and workforce development programs. Structured pipelines, such as internships or apprenticeships, can support a consistent flow of qualified teaching candidates.

Establish supports for toddler teachers

Focused professional development in toddler early care practices and behavior management, coupled with additional supports or incentives, may improve recruitment and retention for toddler positions, which were perceived as harder to fill.

Address support staff shortages

Recruitment and retention efforts should extend beyond teaching roles to include support staff such as improving compensation and creating pathways for advancement. These can help to stabilize these essential positions.

Support hiring and onboarding practices

Continue to provide centers with enhanced hiring and on-boarding guidance to ensure clear role expectations, as well as mentorship and coaching for new hires which can help to reduce early turnover and ensure teachers have needed supports.

Continue monitoring staffing trends

Ongoing tracking of recruitment and turnover patterns will allow centers to identify emerging challenges and deploy supports where they are most needed.

Enhance retention through compensation and career growth

Policies and centers should continue to prioritize strategies that address wage gaps and career advancement opportunities in early childhood education, as these are critical for reducing teacher turnover. The increased staffing rates in participating centers highlight the importance of higher compensation, benefits, and enhanced career supports in recruiting and retaining early childhood education staff.

Increase engagement with Civitas coaching to support sustainability

Greater participation in Civitas coaching on staffing, leadership, and workplace culture can help directors implement effective recruitment and retention strategies. This may be an area of particular importance as Early REACH concludes current funding.

EARLY REACH COACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Process Question: What types of quality supports are provided to Harris County Early REACH centers? How have these supports provided changed?
  - Coaching and Consultation with Early REACH Centers
  - Early REACH Professional Development Activities and Support
  - Early Intervention and Behavioral Services Provided to Early REACH Centers
- Process Question: How was coaching, professional development, and technical assistance provided? How often? In what format? With what content?
  - Coaching and Consultation with Early REACH Centers
  - Early REACH Professional Development Activities and Support
  - Early Intervention and Behavioral Services Provided to Early REACH Centers
- Process Question: What are their relationships between directors and coaches and between teachers and coaches?
  - Relationships between Coaches and Directors and Teachers

Data Sources

- Coaching workbook
  - Summer – Fall 2024 (August – December 2024)
  - Winter – Summer 2025 (January – July 2025)
  - Summer – Fall 2025 (August – December 2025)
- Director survey
  - Summer 2024 (June – November 2024)
  - Early 2025 (January – April 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Teacher survey
  - Summer 2024 (June – November 2024)
  - Early 2025 (January – April 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Professional development survey
  - Post-Quarterly Training Feedback survey (August 2025 and November 2025)
- Early Intervention and Behavioral Services workbook
  - Fall 2025 (October – December 2025)

Introduction to Early REACH Coaching and Professional Development

Coaches are foundational to the Early REACH quality initiative as they provide on-going critical professional and personal support to directors and teachers. The skills coaches bring to their work are essential for the delivery of a successful coaching model and high-quality professional development that enhances classroom quality and teacher practice. To support the ongoing advancement of high-quality centers and staff, it is important to capture the nature of and the changes in coaching supports provided since Early REACH coaching began in August 2023.

Professional development (PD) for child care teachers is crucial for enhancing classroom quality, improving child outcomes, and reducing educator burnout. It keeps educators updated on evidence-based practices, fosters confidence, and supports diverse learning needs, elevating the profession and ensuring compliance with licensing standards (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). Regular professional development that is focused on quality teaching practices is a second instrumental component of the Early REACH quality initiative. Staff in all Early REACH centers have received regular quarterly professional development offerings typically during day-long sessions since the beginning of Early REACH implementation.

The Early REACH coaching team currently consists of two program managers and seven coaches.[21] One program manager has been with Early REACH from the beginning of the initiative in August 2023 and the other was hired by Early REACH in August 2025. In September 2025, Early REACH leadership hired an Early Intervention and Behavior Services (EIBS) manager to address the need for additional guidance and staff training related to working with children with challenging behaviors or special needs.

The team of Early REACH coaches also delivered formal professional development sessions for all center staff. In addition, professional development offerings by external trainers were part of the quarterly offerings during this time period.

The following sections describe coaches' consultation and coaching activities and centers' participation in additional coaching. A second section outlines professional development and the professional development supports provided by coaches for Early REACH directors and teachers. A third section includes information about the new Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager's activities and observations.

Coaching and Consultation with Early REACH Centers

Coaching is regularly provided to teachers at the classroom level. Coaching with teachers includes three broad activities: 1) observing teachers during classroom activities as a means of

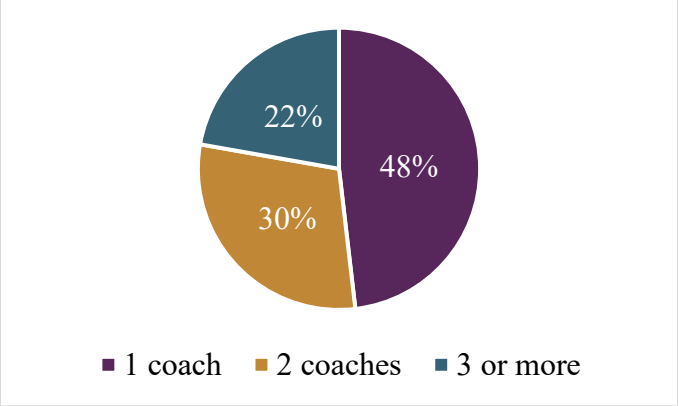
[21] One of the seven Early REACH coaches started classroom visits and consultations in January 2026 and is not included in this reporting period.

assessing teachers' skills and needs; 2) modeling activities for teachers as part of their continued professional and skill development; and 3) consultation time in which coaches meet with teachers to engage in conversation regarding observed classroom practices and challenges they are facing.

Director coaching is based largely on consultation that focuses on center leadership and the needs of staff. This coaching enhances center and classroom quality to better meet the needs of the families and children that the center serves. This first section describes coaches' consultation and coaching activities with directors and teachers, highlighting comparisons between coaching activities during August – December 2024 (2024-2025 academic year) and August – December 2025 (2025-2026 academic year).[22]

Directors were asked how long their centers have been receiving coaching and the number of Early REACH coaches from whom they received program supports. Directors reported meeting with Early REACH coach(es) for 1.5 years on average (*Range* = 0-3 years). Centers varied on the number of Early REACH coaches with whom they engaged with (Figure 39). Almost half of directors (48%) reported receiving coaching from a single coach, nearly one-third received coaching from two coaches (30%), and finally nearly a quarter engaged with three or more coaches (22%).

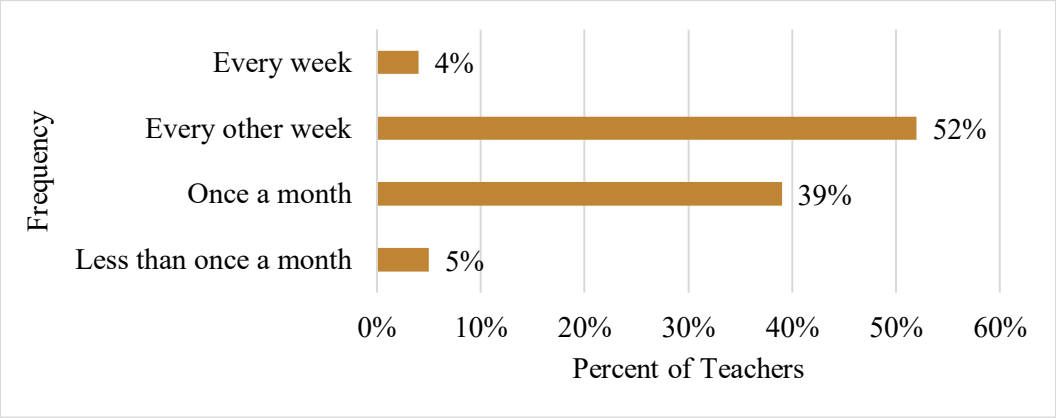
Figure 39. *Number of Coaches Providing Consultation to Each Center (n=27)*



Teachers were asked about the frequency of their consultation meetings with Early REACH coaches. Fifty-two percent (52%) of teachers reported meeting with their coach every other week. Over one-third of teachers met with their coaches once a month (39%; Figure 40).

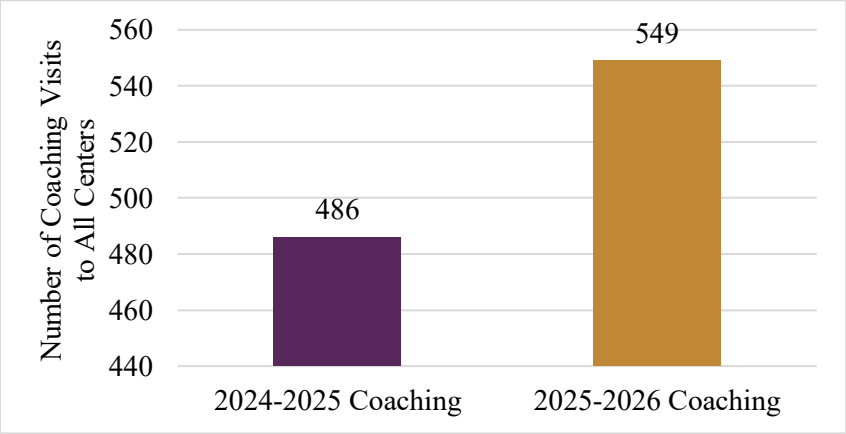
[22] The reporting period for the current memo is August – December 2025. Year comparisons in this section were only conducted for coaching workbook activities.

Figure 40. *Frequency of Teacher Consultations with Early REACH Coaches (n=148)*



Six Early REACH coaches provided consultation to teachers and directors across 549 coaching sessions between August and December 2025.[23] The number of Early REACH coaching sessions provided at each center varied based on the number of classrooms and center needs. These findings illustrate a notable increase in coaching sessions when compared to August – December 2024, during which five coaches conducted 486 coaching sessions (Figure 41).

Figure 41. *Number of Coaching Sessions Conducted between August-December 2024 and August-December 2025*



Between August – December 2025, coaches spent most of their time providing direct consultation to teachers and directors (*Range* = 0-1.5 hours) followed by observing teachers' classroom interactions and practices (*Range* = 0-1.5 hours). Consistent with the increase in coaching sessions, the total time spent in these activities between August and December 2025 exceeded the total time recorded during the same period in 2024 (see Table 3).

[23] Five coaches completed coach workbooks from August to December 2025. One coach hired in early fall 2025 received support from Early REACH program managers and BTC evaluators to complete coach workbooks from October to December 2025.

Table 3. *Total Number of Hours Spent in Coaching Activities between August-December 2024 and August-December 2025*

	August – December 2024 (*n*=486 sessions)	August – December 2025 (*n*=549 sessions)
Consultation	271 hours	340.5 hours
Observing	252.7 hours	307.2 hours
Modeling	24.2 hours	89.3 hours
Total	**547.8 hours**	**736.9 hours**

Note: Decimal points represent 1/10 of an hour (i.e., .5 represents 30 minutes).

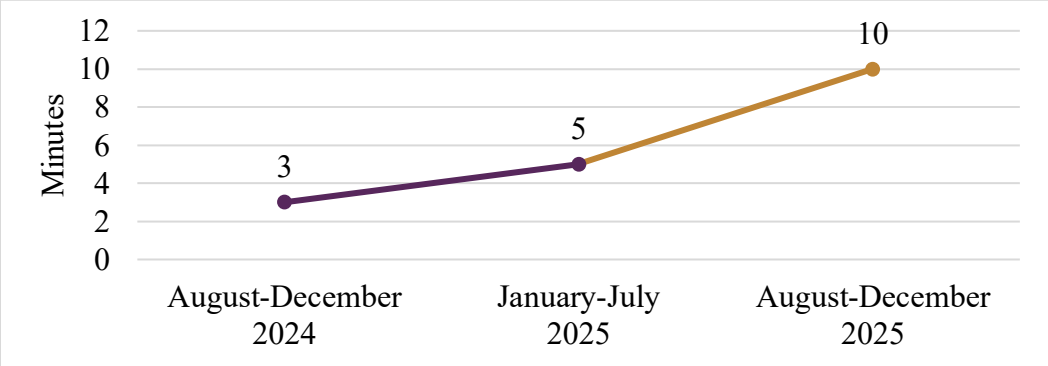
Coaches engaged in all three coaching activities during most coaching sessions with infant, toddler, and preschool teachers. However, not all activities occurred in all sessions. Almost every coaching session with infant, toddler, and preschool teachers involved consultation (99%). Coaching consultation activities with teachers during the months of August – December 2025 primarily consisted of delivering and reviewing CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) action plans, as a strategy to support classroom quality and continuous practice and improvement. Consultation is particularly important because it offers the opportunity for more real-time feedback and self-reflection to support practice change and enhancement. When coaches did not spend time in consultation (*n*=4 sessions), they spent time observing and modeling.

Since the beginning of the initiative, Early REACH has onboarded seven new centers into the program, bringing the total number of centers receiving coaching supports to 26.[24] The amount of time spent in consultation with teachers in newly onboarded centers was greater than the time spent in more tenured centers. This increased consultation time likely reflects coaches' focus on relationship building and their efforts to learn about new teachers and the children in their classrooms. As one teacher shared in a focus group, "*Personally, I like that she knows the kids more than average. She's in there enough to where she knows their personalities. So when we have our discussions, she's able to meet me where I'm at in the class.*"

From August to December 2025, the average amount of time spent on modeling varied widely across coaches (*Range* = 0.20 to 21.3 minutes). Notably, the average amount of time spent modeling between August and December 2025 increased threefold when compared to August – December 2024 (Figure 42). Modeling time doubled when compared to the time spent between January and July 2025. This is noteworthy, as increasing modeling was an identified area of focus for UWGH coaching over the last year.

[24] Two centers received classroom visits from another continuous quality improvement program (United Way of Greater Houston Bright Beginnings) and notes from these visits were shared with Early REACH coaches.

Figure 42. *Average Increase in Time Spent Modeling Across Time (in minutes)*[25]



These findings demonstrate an effective effort by coaches and program managers to increase modeling practices in the classroom. UWGH should continue to support increased modeling and set benchmarks for establishing modeling as a consistent component of their coaching model. As Early REACH begins to wind down, modeling may be more essential as means of reinforcing practice to support sustainability of quality practices.

Infant Classroom Visits and Coaching Sessions

Between August and December 2025, 44% of infant coaching sessions included modeling, an increase from 30% of infant coaching sessions between August and December 2024 (Table 4). The percentage of time coaches spent in observation during infant coaching sessions also increased from 55% between August and December 2024 to 61% between August and December 2025. Between August and December 2025, consultation occurred in all infant coaching sessions compared to 90% of infant coaching sessions between August and December 2024. These findings suggest that coaches increased the amount of time spent observing, modeling, and providing consultation during infant coaching sessions between August and December 2025 compared to August – December 2024.

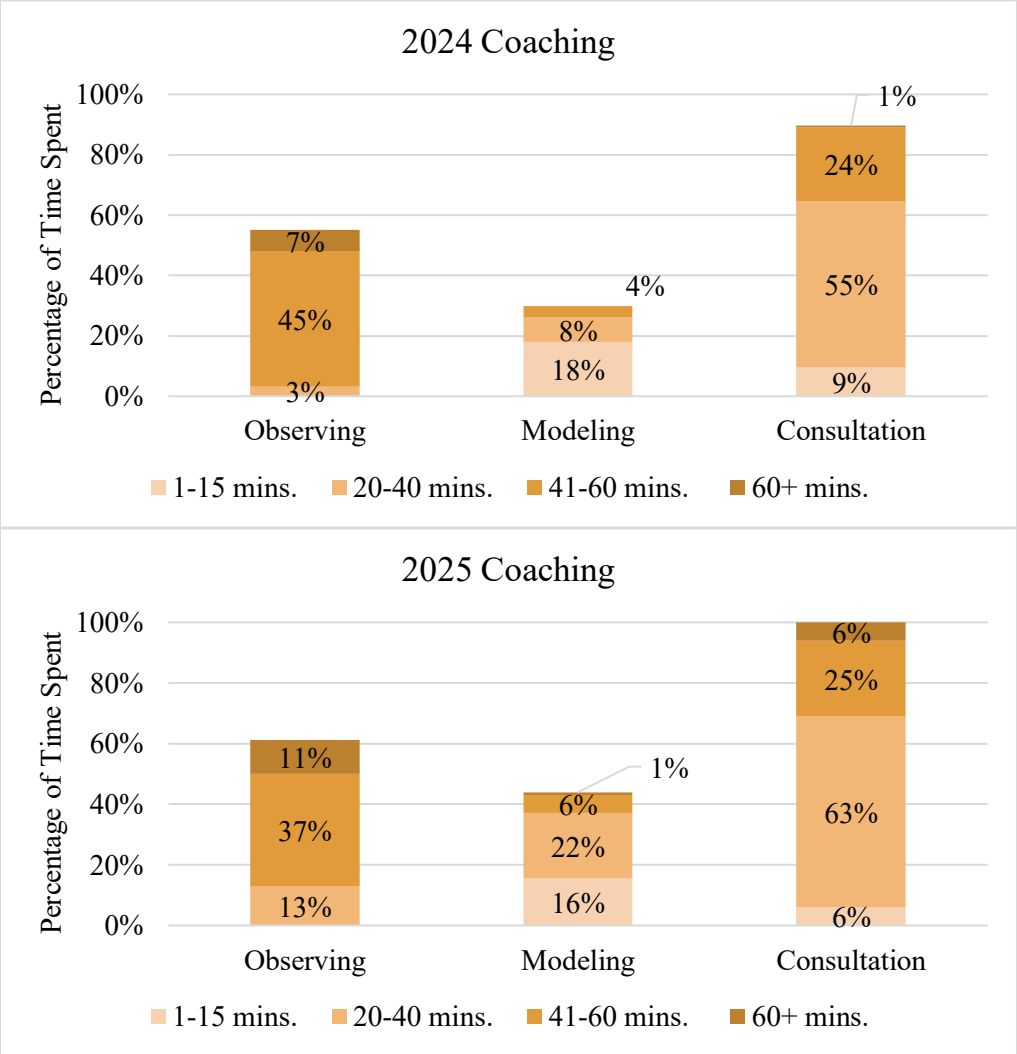
Table 4. *Percentage of Infant Classroom Visits in Which Each Coaching Activity Occurred between August-December 2024 (n=127 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=116 visits)*

	Percentage of Time Spent in Activities	
Coaching Activity	**2024-2025 Coaching**	**2025-2026 Coaching**
Modeling	30%	44%
Observing	55%	61%
Consulting	90%	100%

[25] Time spent modeling (*n*=5 minutes) between January-July 2025 was pulled from the September 2025 Early REACH memo for this comparison only.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of coaching sessions between August and December 2025 with infant classrooms involved 41 minutes or more of observation time. Almost all (94%) of the infant classroom coaching sessions included 20 minutes or more of consultation time. These findings vary compared to the time spent in observation (55%) and consultation (80%) between August and December 2024, showing that time spent in consultation with infant teachers was a main focus this year. Additionally, almost half (44%) of the infant coaching sessions between August and December 2025 included modeling activities, an increase from only 30% between August and December 2024 (Figure 43).

Figure 43. *Proportion of Time Spent in each Coaching Activity with Infant Classrooms between August-December 2024 (n=127 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=116 visits)*



Note: In some cases, specific activities did not occur in coaching sessions. As a result, percentages do not equal 100%.

Toddler Classroom Visits and Coaching Sessions

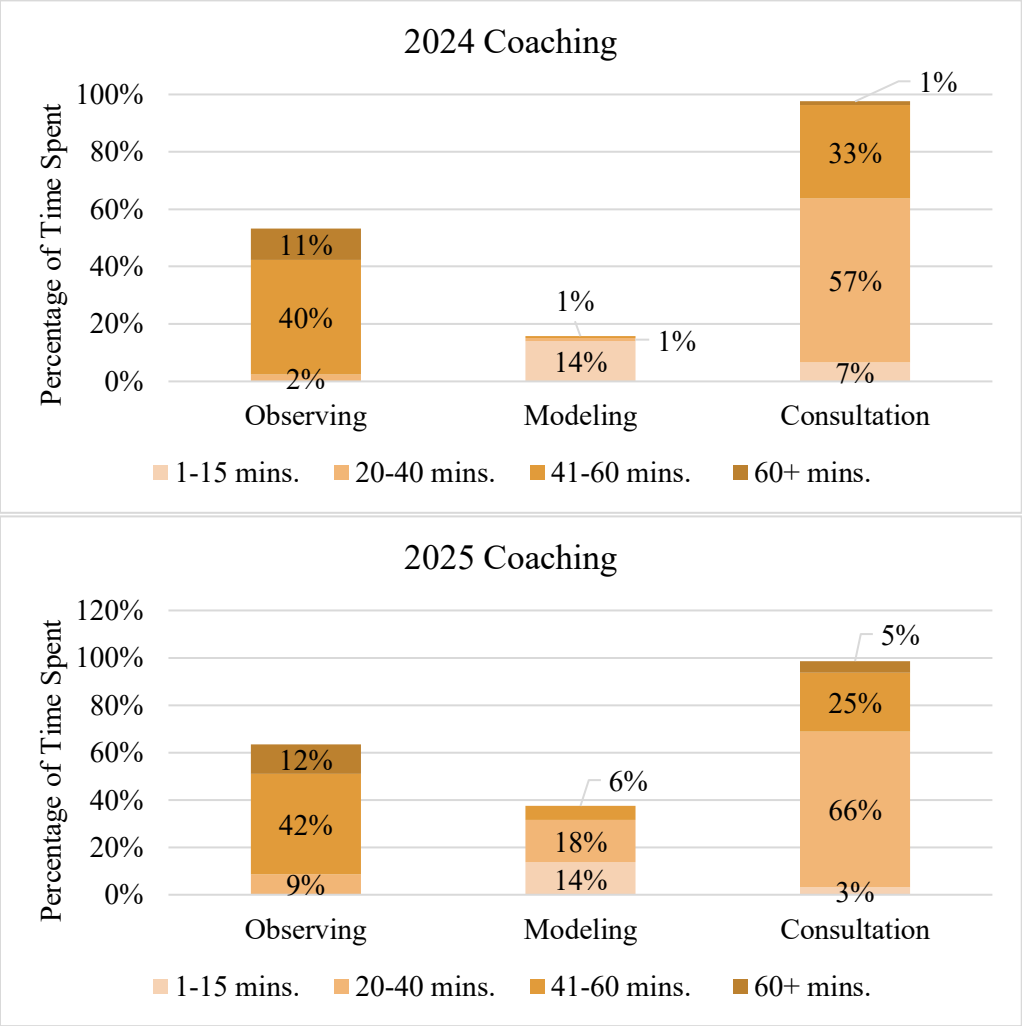
Between August and December 2025, 37% of toddler coaching sessions included modeling, an increase from 16% between August and December 2024 (Table 5). The percentage of time coaches spent observing during toddler coaching sessions also increased from 53% between August and December 2024 to 63% between August and December 2025. Between August – December 2024 and August – December 2025, the percentage of toddler coaching sessions in which consultation occurred was similar (98% vs. 99%, respectively). These findings suggest that coaches increased the amount of time spent observing and modeling in toddler coaching sessions between August and December 2025 compared to August – December 2024.

Table 5. *Percentage of Toddler Classroom Visits in Which Each Coaching Activity Occurred between August-December 2024 (n=165 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=219 visits)*

	Percentage of Time Spent in Activities	
Coaching Activity	**2024-2025 Coaching**	**2025-2026 Coaching**
Modeling	16%	37%
Observing	53%	63%
Consulting	98%	99%

Coaches observed toddler teachers most often between August and December 2025, with over half of the sessions (55%) including 40 minutes or more of observation time. Almost all (95%) toddler coaching sessions included 20 minutes or more of consultation. These findings are comparable to the time spent in observation (51%) and consultation (91%) between August and December 2024, showing a consistent coaching model being implemented with toddler classrooms. Additionally, over one-third (37%) of toddler coaching sessions included modeling, an increase from 28% between August and December 2024 (Figure 44).

Figure 44. *Proportion of Time Spent in each Coaching Activity with Toddler Classrooms between August-December 2024 (n=165 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=219 visits)*



Note: In some cases, specific activities did not occur in coaching sessions. As a result, percentages do not equal 100%.

PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM VISITS AND COACHING SESSIONS

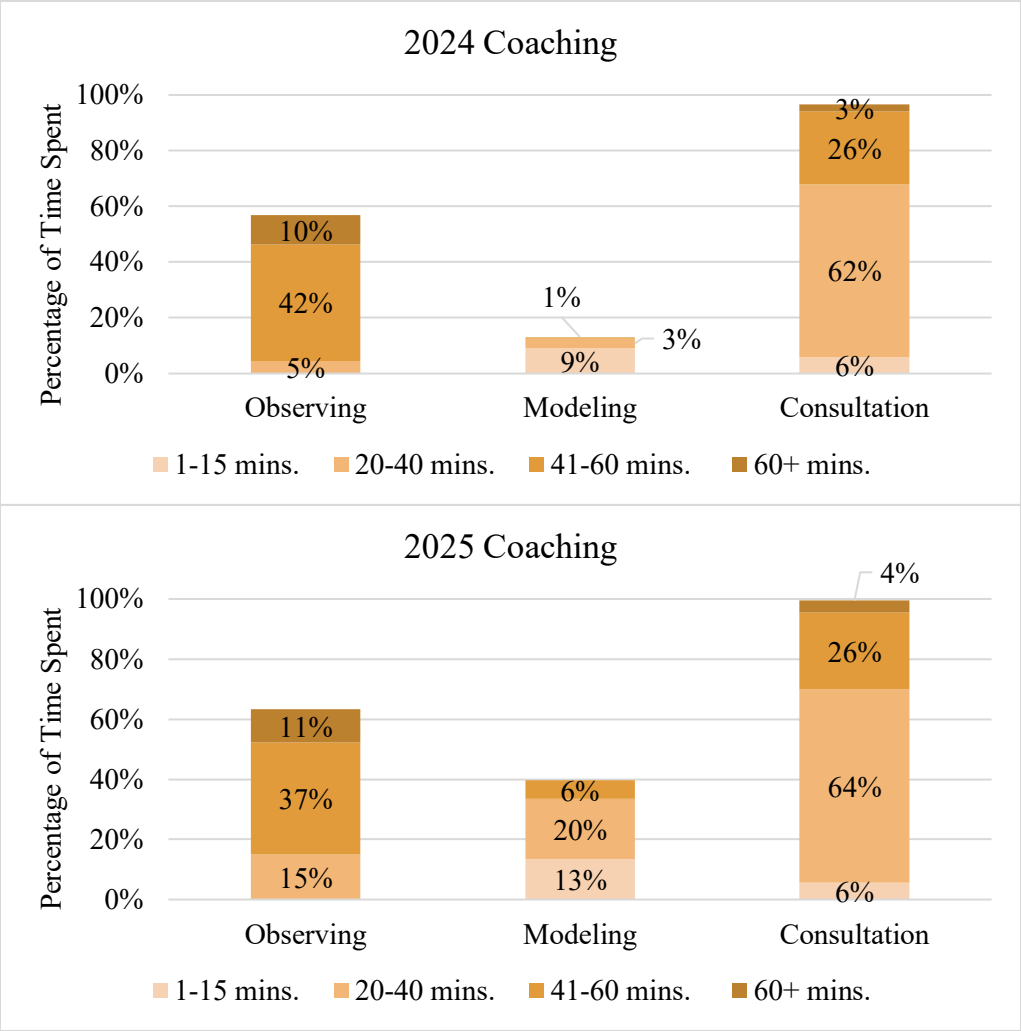
Between August and December 2025, 40% of preschool coaching sessions included modeling, an increase from 13% between August and December 2024 (Table 6). The percentage of time coaches spent observing during preschool coaching sessions also increased from 57% between August and December 2024 to 63% between August and December 2025. Between August – December 2024 and August – December 2025, the percentage of preschool coaching sessions in which consultation occurred was similar (97% vs. 99%, respectively). These findings suggest that coaches increased the amount of time spent observing and modeling during preschool coaching sessions between August and December 2025 compared to August – December 2024.

Table 6. *Percentage of Preschool Classroom Visits in Which Each Coaching Activity Occurred between August-December 2024 (n=153 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=179 visits)*

	Percentage of Time Spent in Activities	
Coaching Activity	**2024-2025 Coaching**	**2025-2026 Coaching**
Modeling	13%	40%
Observing	57%	63%
Consulting	97%	99%

Preschool coaching sessions between August and December 2025 frequently included both observation and consultation time, with a little less than half (48%) of the sessions including 41 minutes or more of observation time, and 94% of sessions including 20 minutes or more of consultation time. Similar to the toddler classrooms, these findings are comparable to the time spent in observation (52%) and consultation (91%) between August and December 2024, showing a consistent coaching model being used with preschool teachers. Additionally, 40% of preschool coaching sessions included modeling, a significant increase from only 13% between August and December 2024 (Figure 45).

Figure 45. *Total Amount of Time Spent in Coaching Activities with Preschool Classrooms between August-December 2024 (n=153 visits) and August-December 2025 (n=179 visits)*



Note: In some cases, specific activities did not occur in coaching sessions. As a result, percentages do not equal 100%.

Patterns of time spent in observation and consultation were similar across infant, toddler, and preschool age groups. Notably, time spent modeling increased across years for all infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. These findings highlight the effective work of the Early REACH coaches to address evaluation recommendations based on modeling needs. For example, in accordance with the UWGH action plan, coaches have increased the amount of time spent modeling specific Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) indicators that were identified as areas for growth during the visit.[26] Coaches have also ensured consultation time after observing classrooms to allow for more timely feedback and self-reflection with teachers.

[26] The CLASS tool is a classroom observation measure that supports high-quality teacher-child interactions in part through establishing foundational knowledge of quality interactions, which provides a unified language for understanding and discussing classroom interactions and skill building.

Early REACH coaches should continue to increase the amount of time spent modeling effective practices with all age groups to enhance overall classroom quality.

Topics Discussed with Directors and Teachers in Consultation Sessions

Topics discussed during consultation are connected to the recommendations, support, and professional development needs of staff. Coaches reported on topics frequently discussed with teachers and directors during consultation. The goal of Early REACH coaches is to spend 20 minutes or more in consultation with directors and teachers at the end of each visit.

Topics Discussed with Directors in Consultation Sessions

Coaches spent most of their time in consultation with directors discussing center updates (68%; Table 7). Coaches spent over half of their time in consultation with directors discussing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) topics (56%). Coaches also discussed classroom environment (18%) and had conversations about particular children and their behaviors that are difficult for staff (15%) and child behavior management (12%).

Table 7. *Frequency of Topics Discussed with Directors during Consultation between August-December 2025 (n=34 sessions)*

Topics	2025-2026 Coaching
Center updates	68%
CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)	56%
Classroom environment	18%
Conversation about a particular child	15%
Reggio Emilia strategies	12%
Curriculum development	12%
Child behavior management	12%
Family engagement/conversation about a particular family	9%
Targeted professional development	9%
Accreditation (Texas School Ready, Texas Rising Star, Centers of Excellence, etc.)	6%
DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment)	6%
Emotional support	6%

Note: The remaining topic discussed infrequently was Child Development Associate (CDA; <1%). Coaches could select more than one consultation topic. Therefore, percentages may exceed 100%.

Directors felt that consultation sessions with coaches were collaborative and a strength of their coaching model. In the words of one director,

> *I think one of the major highlights that I want to share for our coaches is they collaborate with us, meaning that even if they come up with an idea, because this is a collaboration it goes both ways… Everybody works together, because what works for one center might not work for us. And what works for another center might not work, and I really just want to applaud them for always just being open minded.*

Topics Discussed with Teachers in Consultation Sessions

Between August and December 2025, coaches spent most of their time in consultation with teachers discussing and applying strategies to address CLASS findings (99%), a foundational aspect of the Early REACH continuous quality improvement model (Table 8). During this same period, coaches also spent time discussing MyTeachstone assignments (40%), Reggio Emilia curriculum strategies (30%), Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) social-emotional outcomes and related strategies (21%), and enhancing classroom environments (21%).[27] In the sessions where Reggio Emilia strategies were discussed, documentation (63%) and the invitations to learn and play (22%) were the strategies that were discussed most frequently.

Table 8. *Frequency of Topics Discussed with Teachers during Consultation between August-December 2025 (n=510 sessions)*

Topics	2025-2026 Coaching
CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)	99%
MyTeachstone	40%
Reggio Emilia strategies	30%
DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment)	21%
Classroom environment	21%
Curriculum development	20%
Child behavior management	13%
Conversation about a particular child	8%
Emotional support	7%
Touchpoints	7%

Note: The remaining topics discussed infrequently were center updates (3%), CDA (Child Development Associate) (1%), family engagement (1%), targeted professional development (<1%), and Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) updates (<1%). Coaches could select more than one consultation topic. Therefore, percentages may exceed 100%.

[27] MyTeachstone provides professional development and data management services for educators to improve teacher-child interactions using the CLASS® (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) framework.

CLASS Consultation with Teachers and Directors

Coaches spent a significant amount of time discussing the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool with teachers and directors in consultation sessions (99% and 56% of sessions, respectively). The CLASS tool is a classroom observation measure that supports high-quality teacher-child interactions in part through establishing foundational knowledge of quality interactions, which provides a unified language for understanding and discussing classroom interactions and skill building.

CLASS Consultation with Infant Teachers

The CLASS-related topic most often discussed during coaching sessions with infant teachers was *Early Language Support* (80%), indicating a significant focus on enhancing infants' language development. *Facilitated Exploration* was an additional CLASS dimension discussed frequently, in 72% of sessions (Table 9). Notably, these are areas of need identified through CLASS observation assessment data (see the Process Quality section).

Table 9. *Percent of CLASS Time Discussing Specific Infant Items (n=116 sessions)*

Infant CLASS Dimension	Percentage
Early Language Support	80%
Facilitated Exploration	72%
Relational Climate	23%
Teacher Sensitivity	21%

Note: Coaches could select more than one CLASS dimension. Therefore, percentages may exceed 100%.

CLASS Consultation with Toddler Teachers

Quality of Feedback and *Language Modeling* were the most frequently discussed CLASS dimensions during coaching sessions with toddler teachers, with 45% and 44% of sessions, respectively, focusing on strategies to enhance quality interactions and toddlers' language skills (Table 10). *Facilitation of Learning and Development* was also discussed frequently, with over one-third (38%) of all toddler consultation sessions focusing on this dimension. Again, coaches spent a greater proportion of time discussing areas of need identified through CLASS assessment data, underscoring the effectiveness of the needs-based coaching model being employed (see the Process Quality section).

Table 10. *Percent of CLASS Time Discussing Specific Toddler Items (n=214 sessions)*

Toddler CLASS Dimension	Percentage
Quality of Feedback	45%
Language Modeling	44%
Facilitation of Learning and Development	38%
Regard for Child Perspectives	33%
Behavior Guidance	22%

Toddler CLASS Dimension	Percentage
Positive Climate	20%
Teacher Sensitivity	14%
Negative Climate	1%

Note: Coaches could select more than one CLASS dimension. Therefore, percentages may exceed 100%.

CLASS Consultation with Preschool Teachers

During consultation sessions with preschool teachers, *Quality of Feedback* and *Concept Development* were the most frequently discussed dimensions (50% and 46%, respectively). *Language Modeling* was also discussed frequently, with almost one-third (34%) of all preschool consultation sessions focusing on this dimension (Table 11). For preschoolers, coaches focused time on areas of need identified through CLASS assessment data, underscoring coaches' effectiveness in identifying classroom and teacher needs for skill and practice development (see the Process Quality section).

Table 11. *Percent of CLASS Time Discussing Specific Preschool Items (n=175 sessions)*

Preschool CLASS Dimension	Percentage
Quality of Feedback	50%
Concept Development	46%
Language Modeling	34%
Regard for Student Perspectives	29%
Behavior Management	23%
Positive Climate	19%
Teacher Sensitivity	12%
Instructional Learning Formats	12%
Productivity	8%
Negative Climate	1%

Note: Coaches could select more than one CLASS dimension. Therefore, percentages may exceed 100%.

In general, there was wide variability in the CLASS dimensions discussed between coaches and teachers. Importantly, coaches spent CLASS consultation time discussing topics that aligned with areas of need identified through CLASS Fall 2025 observations and the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) September 2025 memo. This suggests that Early REACH coaches are able to effectively identify areas of need for teachers through the observational components of coaching and apply these observations to their consultative time with teachers in their discussion of the CLASS.

Coach-Director and Coach-Teacher Relationships

The relationship between coaches, directors, and teachers is key to maximizing the effectiveness of coaching. To have a productive, professional relationship, coaches, directors, and teachers must trust one another and respect each other. This provides a strong foundation to share observations, model interactions, and engage in difficult conversations, if needed.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COACHES AND DIRECTORS

Directors reported *moderate* to *strong* relationships with Early REACH coaches, including medium-high levels of comfort with and accessibility to their coaches (Table 12).

Table 12. *Directors' Perceptions of Relationship with Early REACH Coaches (n=42)*

	Strongly to somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am comfortable talking with my coach about challenges I face.	5%	12%	12%	**71%**
I feel like I can get in touch with my coach if I needed them.	5%	14%	12%	**69%**
I have a good relationship with my coach.	5%	16%	10%	**69%**
I talk with my coach when I need help with particular children or families.	5%	14%	19%	**62%**

Across various areas of support, the vast majority of directors felt Early REACH coaches have helped them *very much* or *a great deal* (*Range* = 73-83%). Directors felt that coaches were most helpful by listening to their concerns and answering their questions (83%), working with them as a partner (80%), having a positive attitude towards parents (80%), and providing high-quality support (79%; Table 13).

Table 13. *Directors' Perceptions of Helpfulness of Coaches in Various Activities (n=40-42)*

My coach…	Not at all	A little/Somewhat	Very much/A great deal
Listens to my concerns and answers my questions.	--	17%	**83%**
Works as a partner with me to meet children's needs.	2%	17%	**80%**
Has a positive attitude about working together with parents.	5%	16%	**80%**
Provides high-quality support.	--	21%	**79%**
Effectively responds to my professional needs.	2%	19%	**79%**
Respects my knowledge and perspectives on children's issues.	--	21%	**79%**
Has helped me make changes to the classroom environment.	5%	20%	**78%**

My coach…	Not at all	A little/Somewhat	Very much/A great deal
Has deepened my knowledge of early childhood best practices.	8%	16%	**78%**
Given me strategies for responding and guiding children's behaviors.	5%	19%	**74%**
Has developed my skills as an educator.	7%	20%	**73%**

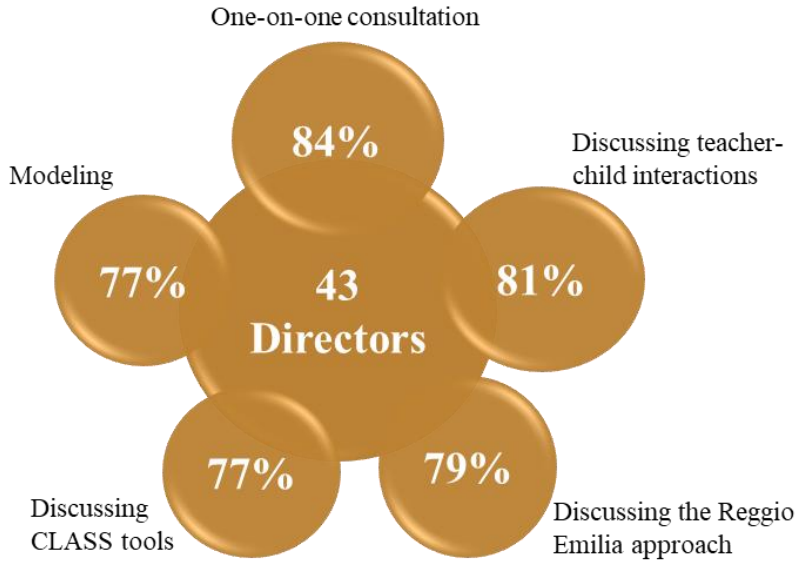
Note: Directors responded to questions about coaches' helpfulness on a six-point scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*A little*, 3=*Somewhat*, 4=*Very much*, 5=*A great deal,* 6=*Not applicable.* Directors that selected "*Not Applicable*" were excluded from these analyses to capture the full scope of coaches' helpfulness.

One director shared that coaches are particularly helpful in empowering staff:

> *So with Early REACH coaches coming in, talking to our staff, building relationships, teaching them, guiding them, giving them goals and prevailing with outcomes, they feel invested, there's investment, you know, and the teachers feel heard and someone is paying attention to them and giving them just that feeling of, I belong here, I know what I'm doing, because my coach tells me I'm doing well and I want to stay here, because the children love me, I'm loved by parents.*

Early REACH coaches also provided resources to directors that were perceived as *helpful* or *very helpful*. Directors (n = 43) felt the most helpful support and resources provided by coaches were one-on-one consultation (84%), discussing teacher-child interactions (81%), discussing the Reggio Emilia approach (79%), discussing CLASS tools (77%), and modeling (77%; Figure 46).

Figure 46. *Most Helpful Activities/Resources Provided by Coaches to Directors (n = 43)*



Note: The percentages reflect the number of directors who rated the activity as *very helpful* or *extremely helpful*. The other coaching activities reported as *very* or *extremely* helpful by directors were discussing individual children and behaviors (65%), dealing with challenging behaviors (63%), and working with parents (56%).

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COACHES AND TEACHERS

Teachers reported slightly stronger relationships with coaches than their director counterparts, likely due to the extended time spent with coaches both while observing/modeling in their classrooms and through the consultative process. Teachers experienced high comfort levels with and accessibility to their coaches; these findings are similar to those between directors and their coaches (Table 14). Continuity of work with a single coach and coaches' feedback were highlighted as strengths, as one teacher shared in a focus group:

> *I've been working with [my coach] since the program was implemented into our school. And she has been very helpful. As she comes and monitors and observes my classroom, she's been giving me more pointers as to how I can manage my class a little bit better -- because sometimes I have some behavior problems going on, so she's helping me implement some things in the classroom to keep the kids more engaged.*

Table 14. *Teachers' Perceptions of Relationships with Coaches (n=169-172)*

	Strongly or somewhat disagree	**Neutral**	**Somewhat agree**	**Strongly agree**
I am comfortable talking with my coach about challenges I face.	1%	11%	12%	**76%**
I feel like I can get in touch with my coach if I need them.	2%	10%	16%	**72%**
I have a good relationship with my coach.	2%	12%	15%	**72%**
I talk with my coach when I need help with particular children or families.	2%	10%	17%	**71%**

Teachers similarly expressed positive perceptions of the helpfulness of coaches in multiple areas (*Range* = 85-94%). Teachers felt that coaches listened to their concerns and answered their questions (94%), respected their knowledge on children's issues (93%), had a positive attitude towards parents (92%), and effectively responded to their professional needs (92%; Table 15).

Table 15. *Teachers' Perceptions of Helpfulness of Coaches in Various Activities (n = 166-168)*

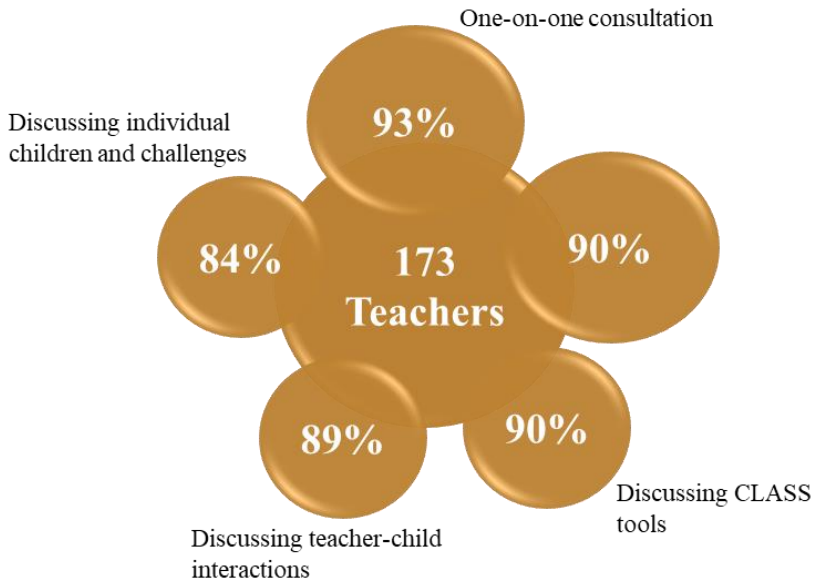
My coach…	**Not at all**	**A little/Somewhat**	**Very much/A great deal**
Listens to my concerns and answers my questions.	--	6%	**94%**
Respects my knowledge and perspectives on children's issues.	--	7%	**93%**

My coach…	Not at all	A little/Somewhat	Very much/A great deal
Has a positive attitude about working together with parents.	--	8%	**92%**
Effectively responds to my professional needs.	--	8%	**92%**
Has deepened my knowledge of early childhood best practices.	1%	7%	**92%**
Works as a partner with me to meet children's needs.	1%	8%	**91%**
Provides high-quality support.	1%	8%	**91%**
Given me strategies for responding and guiding children's behaviors.	1%	9%	**90%**
Has developed my skills as an educator.	1%	9%	**90%**
Has helped me make changes to the classroom environment.	1%	14%	**85%**

Note: Teachers responded to questions about coaches' helpfulness on a six-point scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*A little*, 3=*Somewhat*, 4=*Very much*, 5=*A great deal,* 6=*Not applicable.* Teachers that selected "*Not Applicable*" were excluded from these analyses to capture full scope of coaches' helpfulness.

Teachers reported one-on-one consultations (93%) as the most helpful resource provided by coaches, followed by discussions on modeling (90%) and provision of CLASS tools and resources (90%; Figure 47).

Figure 47. *Most Helpful Activities/Resources Provided by Coaches to Teachers (n = 169-173)*



Note: The percentages reflect the number of teachers who rated the activity as *very helpful* or *extremely helpful*. The other coaching activities reported as *very* or *extremely* helpful by teachers were discussing the Reggio Emilia approach (84%), dealing with challenging behaviors (80%), and working with parents (74%).

As coaches continue to work with centers, positive shifts in these working relationships are likely to continue to be observed. Early REACH coaches should continue implementing a consistent, standardized coaching model with directors and teachers to continue strengthening staff-coach relationships and maximize the effectiveness of coaching activities. Moving forward, an increased focus from coaches will be needed to support the sustainability of Early REACH practices and the continued growth of classroom skills. Formalized quality planning among coaches, directors, and teachers may facilitate this process.

CENTER PARTICIPATION IN OTHER COACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

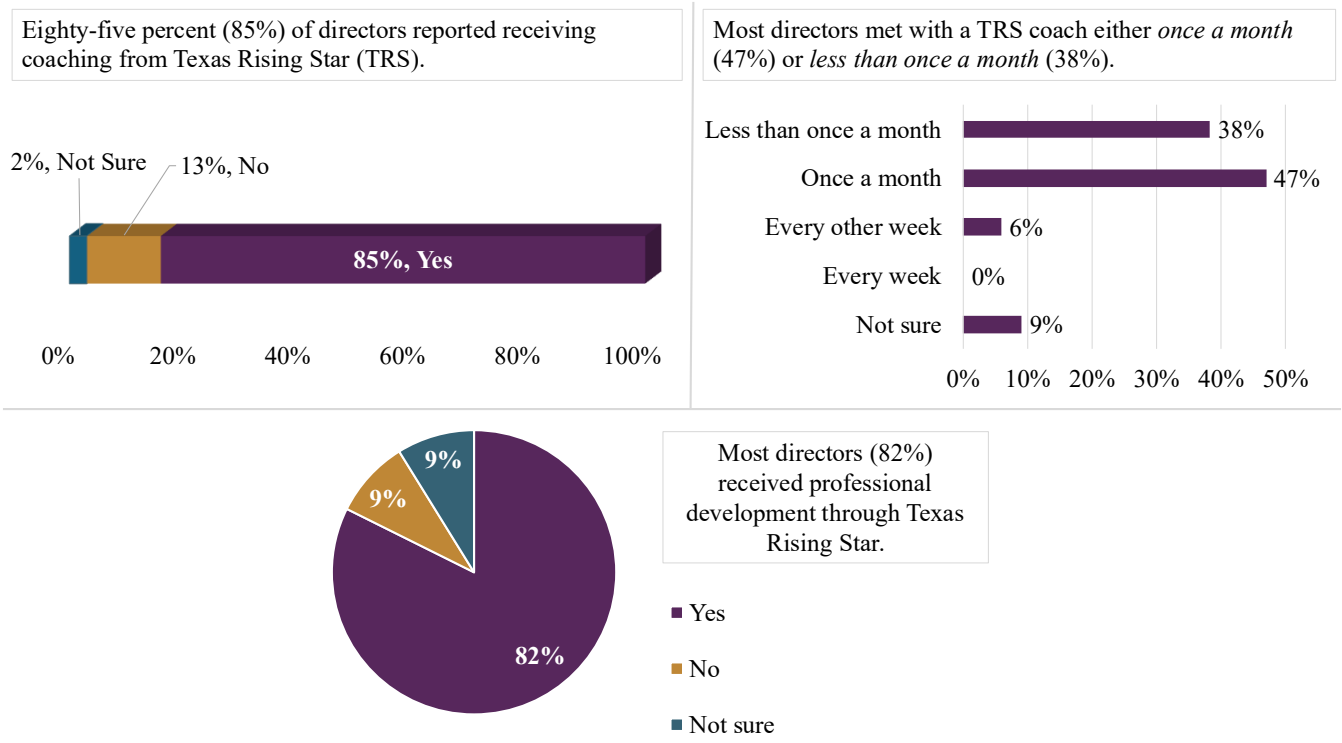
Participation in coaching and professional development offered by other continuous quality improvement (CQI) programs provides insight into the additional quality supports Early REACH centers receive, and how they align or differ from Early REACH. Understanding the time directors and teachers spend in activities with other CQI programs can help streamline standards and policies to ensure comprehensive support across multiple CQI programs. Directors (n=43) were asked about whether they participated in additional coaching and professional development beyond those provided by Early REACH.

TEXAS RISING STAR

Texas Rising Star (TRS) is a quality rating system for child care staff that exceeds the minimum licensing standards set by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. When comparing Texas Rising Star to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) quality standards, both systems evaluate classroom environments, staff qualifications, and family engagement, but NAEYC requires higher staff education levels and more intensive, holistic program assessment and outcomes.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of directors reported receiving coaching from Texas Rising Star (Figure 48). Of these 34 directors, most met with a TRS coach either *once a month* (47%) or *less than once a month* (38%). Additionally, most directors (82%) received professional development through TRS.

Figure 48. *Percentage and Frequency of Directors Receiving Coaching from Texas Rising Star (n=34-40)*

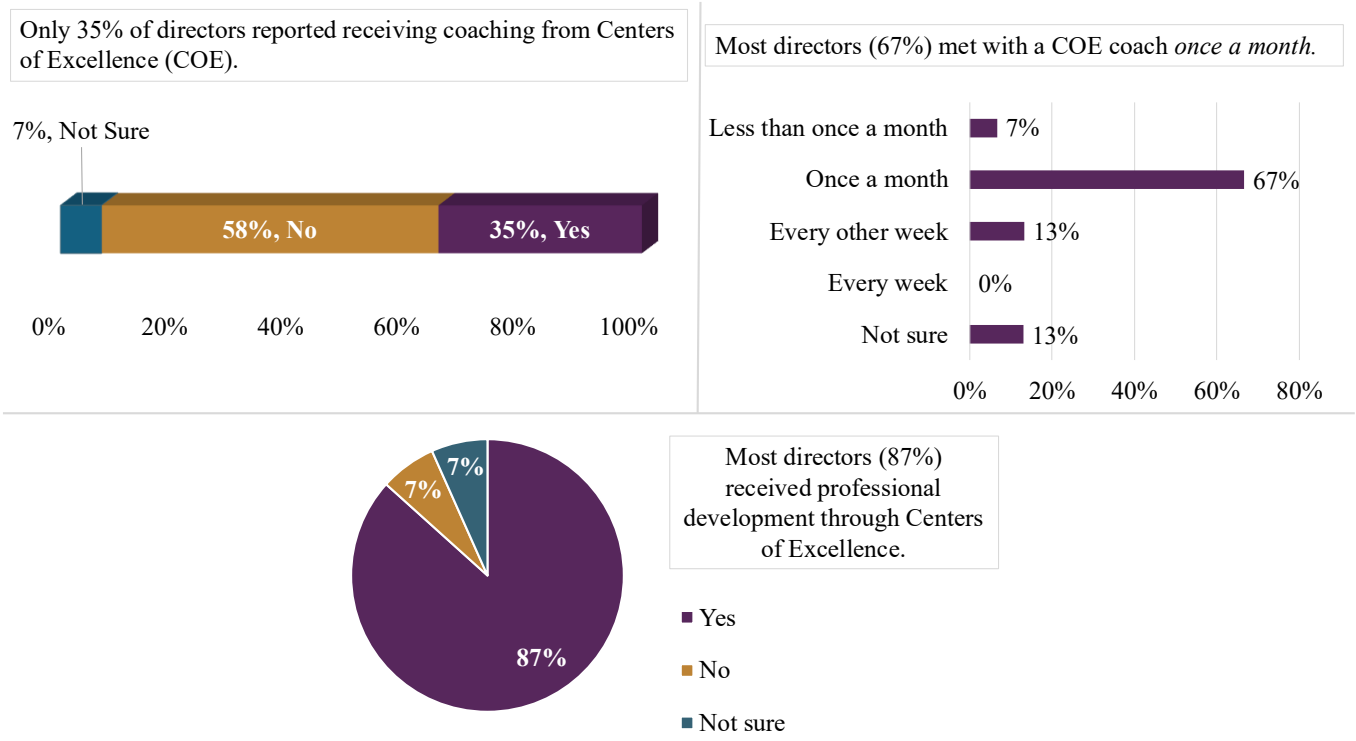


CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

The Houston-based Collaborative for Children offers the Centers of Excellence (COE) program. COE supports child care staff in delivering high-quality early childhood education and care that promotes school readiness. COE programs meet high standards in early education, safety, and business operations.

A smaller percentage (35%) of directors reported receiving coaching from Centers of Excellence. Of the 15 directors who met with a COE coach, most (67%) met with a coach *once a month*. In addition to coaching, most directors (87%) also received professional development through COE (Figure 49).

Figure 49. *Percentage of Directors Who Received Coaching and Professional Development from Centers of Excellence (n=15-43)*



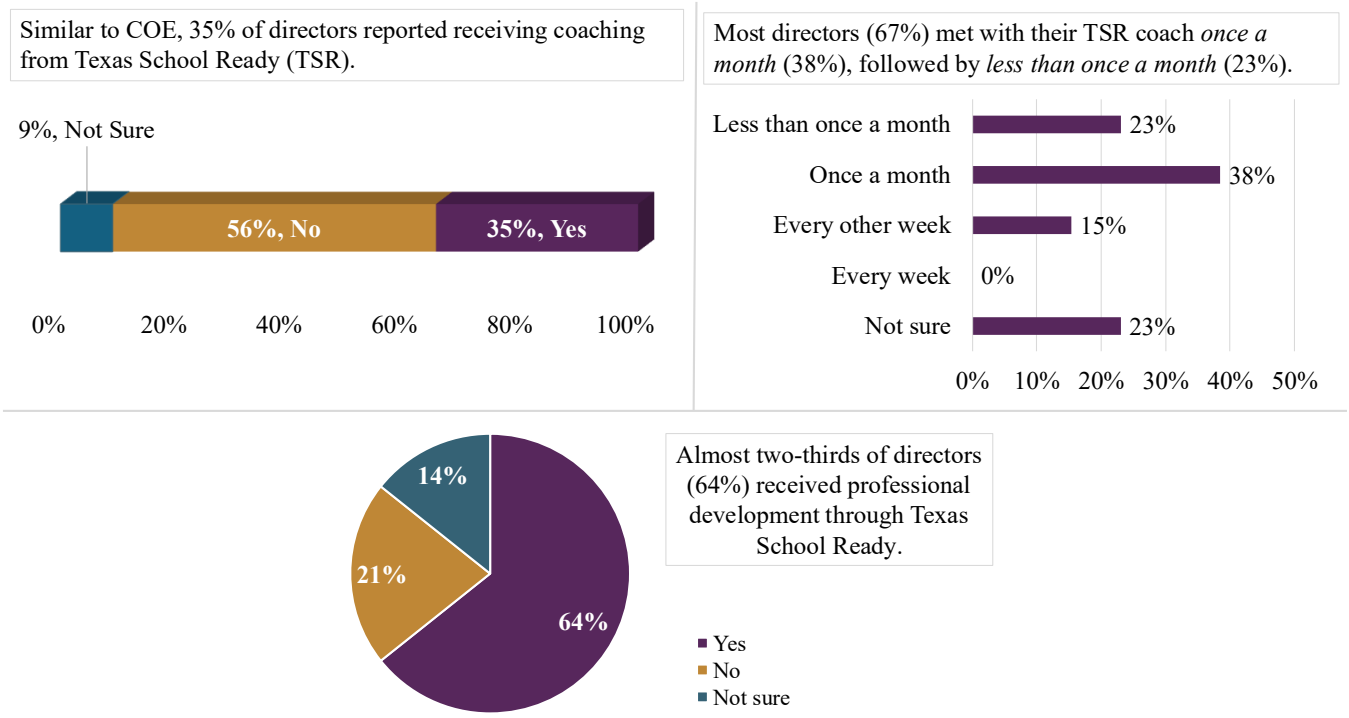
TEXAS SCHOOL READY

Texas School Ready (TSR) is a research-based professional development program for early childhood educators, offered through the Children's Learning Institute at UTHealth Houston. TSR is an enhanced professional development tool that aligns with state-level quality standards like Texas Rising Star.

About one third (35%) of directors received coaching from TSR. Of these directors, 38% met with a TSR coach *once a month* and 23% met with their TSR coach *less than once a month*.[28] Close to two thirds of directors (64%) also received professional development through TSR (Figure 50).

[28] Two directors did not respond to the question about the frequency of TSR coaching visits.

Figure 50. *Percentage of Directors Who Received Coaching and Professional Development from Texas School Ready (n=14-43)*

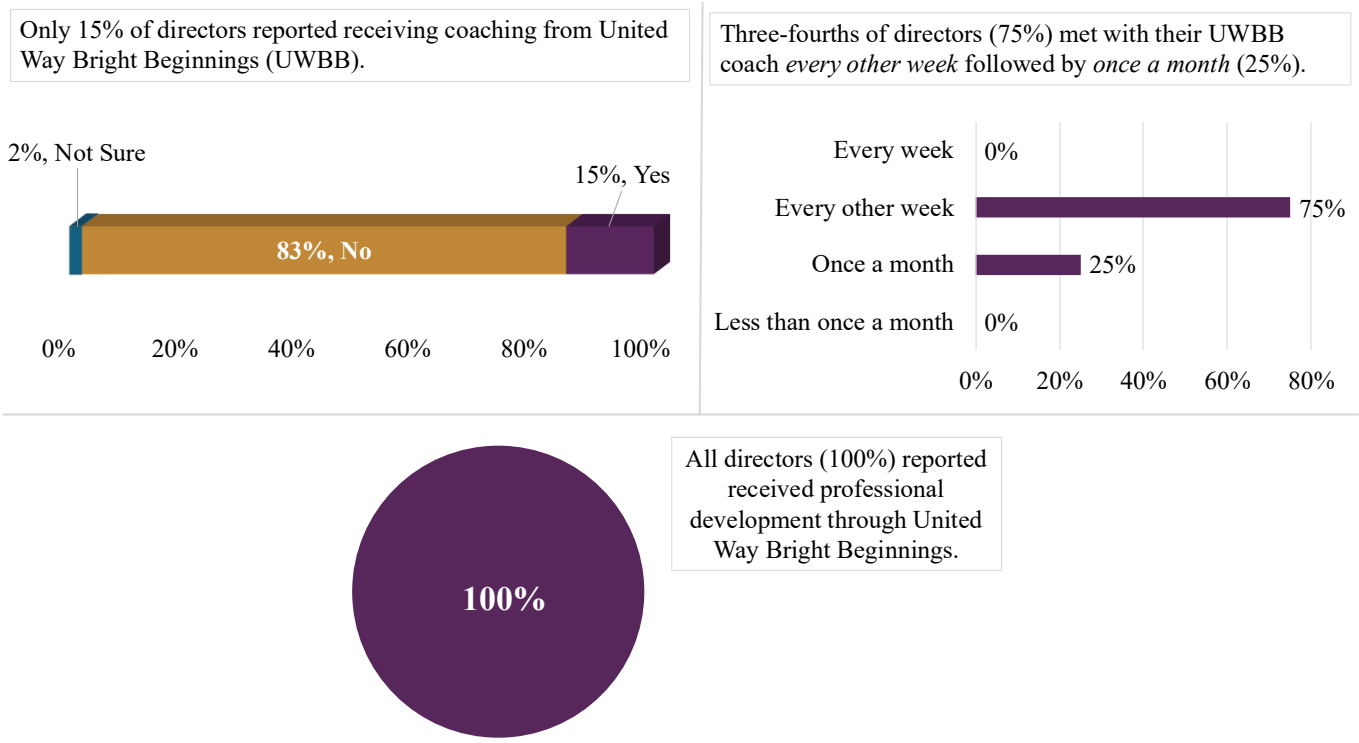


UNITED WAY BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

The United Way of Greater Houston Bright Beginnings (UWBB) program is an early education initiative partnering with ExxonMobil to prepare children from low-income families for school success. Bright Beginnings' standards are designed to align with or exceed high-quality benchmarks, similar to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards.

Fifteen percent (15%) of directors received coaching from UWBB. Of these directors, 75% met with a UWBB coach *every other week* and 25% met with their UWBB coach *once a month*. Bright Beginnings and Early REACH coaching were the only two quality interventions that coordinated their services to centers on the ground to reduce duplication and facilitate and complement coaching delivery services. Of the directors who received coaching from UWBB, all of them also received professional development as part of their participation (Figure 51).

Figure 51. *Percentage of Directors Who Received Coaching and Professional Development from United Way Bright Beginnings (n=42)*



Other Continuous Quality Improvement Programs

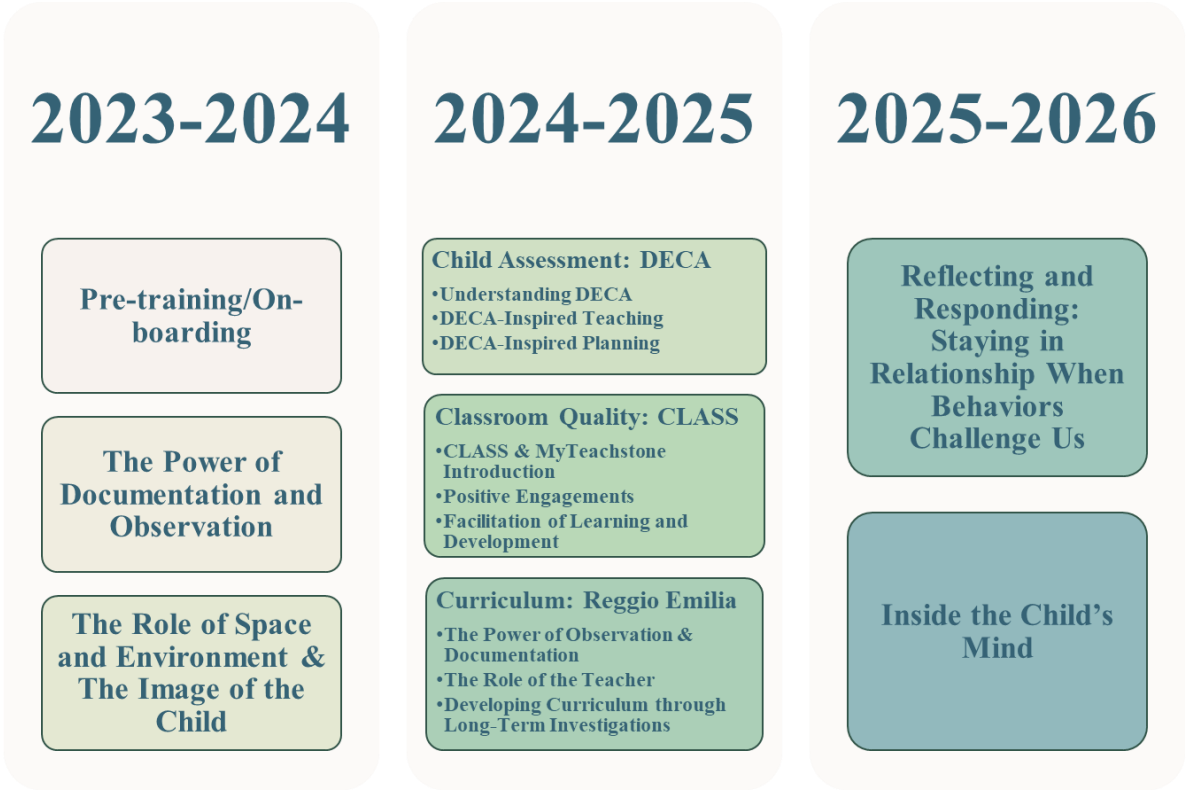
Three directors reported receiving coaching from other continuous quality improvement programs, including Cognia and Texas Leadership Academy. Of these directors, two met with a coach from these additional CQI programs *once a month*, while the third director reported meeting with this other coach *every other week*. Additionally, two directors indicated that they received professional development through yet another CQI program.

Early REACH Professional Development Activities and Support

From the start of Early REACH in fall 2023 through December 2025, center staff (directors, assistant directors, lead teachers, assistant teachers, floaters) have participated in eight quarterly professional development offerings (Figure 52).[29]

[29] See the BTC March 2025 and September 2025 data memos for more information about the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 professional development offerings.

Figure 52. Overview of *Early REACH Professional Development Offerings*



Note: DECA refers to the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment. CLASS refers to the Classroom Assessment Scoring System. MyTeachstone provides professional development and data management services for teachers to improve teacher-child interactions using the CLASS framework.

Early REACH Professional Development Offerings for the 2025-2026 Academic Year

Between August and December 2025, Early REACH center staff participated in two professional development offerings provided by the Brazelton Touchpoints Center's Professional Development team. The August 2025 session was *Reflecting and Responding: Staying in Relationship When Behaviors Challenge Us*, which focused on how to respond to children's challenging behaviors. The November 2025 session, *Inside the Child's Mind*, focused on understanding children's development from the perspective of the child. A brief description of each session is presented below (Table 16).

Table 16. *Descriptions of the August 2025 and November 2025 Professional Development Offerings*

Reflecting and Responding: Staying in Relationship When Behaviors Challenge Us	Are there some behaviors that really push your buttons? And feel like you have tried everything you know? Join us as we delve into the factors that shape our perceptions of children's behaviors and identify why some behaviors are more challenging to manage. Learn how a child's developmental process influences behavior changes and what to expect as each child's development unfolds. We will provide practical tools and strategies that complement your existing behavior management techniques, ensuring that your responses promote learning, growth, and relationship deepening opportunities.
Inside the Child's Mind	From birth, children bring their own unique contributions to their development. Children's temperaments, individual competencies, and cultures all influence the child's experience of themselves in their process of development and their experience of the people and the world around them. In this workshop series, we explore children's perspectives on their own developmental process from birth through preschool. Learn how you can enter into each child's world, understand what they are experiencing, and best support their unique developmental process.

August 2025 Quarterly Training – Reflecting and Responding: Staying in Relationship When Behaviors Challenge Us

The focus of the August 2025 Early REACH professional development quarterly training was centered on how to respond to children's challenging behaviors. The training was a 6-hour in-person training. Surveys were collected from 205 teachers, directors, and additional support-staff following the session (hereby referred to as center staff).

Center staff rated their overall satisfaction following the training session. Center staff were very satisfied with the training overall, rating it 9.1 out of 10, on average. The following sections describe center staff's perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the training, their plans for applying the training content, perceived challenges in applying the training content, and their suggestions for future training sessions.

Training Effectiveness and Impact

A majority of center staff expressed positive feedback regarding the training session. Most (84%) participants *strongly or mostly* agreed that the presenters deepened their knowledge on the topic, and an even higher proportion, 88%, *strongly or mostly* agreed that they learned something new that they intend to apply in their work. Center staff also viewed the training content favorably;

87% to 89% *strongly or mostly* agreed that the content and the materials/resources were relevant and useful for their work.

The facilitators were similarly well received, with 82% of center staff describing them as engaging and 86% noting that they were responsive to questions. Additionally, 85% of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that the content of the training was respectful of cultural experiences and backgrounds, suggesting that the session was both inclusive and thoughtfully delivered.

When asked for specific examples of how they intended to use the information from this training in their centers and classrooms, center staff shared the following ideas:

- *Communicating the importance of building relationships with the child and family.*
- *Asking families [about] their goals for the children now and upon enrollment.*
- *Help the children to self-regulate.*
- *I will practice de-escalation better.*
- *I will use it to redirect and readjust the atmosphere.*

Perceived Challenges in Applying the Training Content in the Classroom

When asked what they thought would be challenging about using what they learned in this training, most center staff (72%) stated they did not foresee any challenges with using what they learned.

A few center staff (4%) mentioned working with and communicating with parents as a potential challenge. One staff member shared the following challenge:

- *Parents working with their kids at home.*

Improvements for Future Training Sessions

Several center staff suggested that the training could be improved by addressing audio issues, particularly with the Spanish translation.

Although eighty-five percent (85%) of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that the training content was respectful of cultural experiences and backgrounds, four center staff shared concerns on the way race was discussed in the training. One center staff member suggested that, in the future, trainings could:

- *Discuss sensitive topics about the training before the training.*

Seventy-one percent (71%) of center staff expressed interest in receiving additional professional development related to the topic of this training session. Specifically, they identified several areas for expanding the current training, including:

- *Discussion [about challenging behaviors] with parents.*
- *More strategies for challenging behavior.*

NOVEMBER 2025 QUARTERLY TRAINING – INSIDE THE CHILD'S MIND

The focus of the November 2025 Early REACH professional development quarterly training was on understanding children's development from the perspective of the child. The training was a 6-hour in-person training. Surveys were collected from 184 teachers, directors, and additional support-staff (i.e., center staff) following the session.

Center staff rated their general satisfaction following the training session. Center staff were extremely satisfied with the training overall, rating it 9.4 out of 10, on average. The following sections describe center staff's perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the training, their plans for applying the training content, perceived challenges in applying the training content, and their suggestions for future training sessions.

TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

More than 80% of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed with each statement, indicating the training was extremely educational and engaging.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that the presenters deepened their knowledge on the topic, and 87% of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that they learned something new that they intend to apply in their work. Additionally, between 83% and 87% of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that the content and the materials/resources provided were relevant and useful for their work.

The facilitators were highly perceived as engaging (82%) and responsive to questions (88%). Eighty-nine percent (89%) of center staff *strongly or mostly* agreed that the content of the training was respectful of cultural experiences and backgrounds.

Center staff also rated the overall effectiveness of the session in meeting its training objectives (Table 17). Across all four objectives, 90% or more of center staff reported that the training was either *extremely* or *very* effective, indicating strong alignment between the session content and its intended goals.[30] Additionally, center staff reported high levels of self-efficacy in applying what they learned.[31] A large majority indicated that they felt both competent (94%) and confident (95%) in using the knowledge and skills gained from the training in their classrooms, suggesting strong readiness to translate learning into practice.

[30] Questions about how effective the session was at meeting each of the session's objectives were added to the professional development feedback survey for the November 2025 professional development session; therefore, this data is unavailable for the August 2025 training session. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center evaluation team will continue to ask these questions for each training session offered in 2026.

[31] Starting in November 2025, center staff were asked to indicate how competent and confident they feel about using what they learned in the training to their classroom. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center evaluation team will continue to ask these questions for each training session offered in 2026.

Table 17. *Early REACH November 2025 Professional Development Objectives*

Inside the Child's Mind **Objectives**	• Participants will explore perspective-taking to understand a child's experience vs. the caregiver's experience. • Participants will understand the role that disorganization and regression play in a child's development and behavior. • Participants will be able to identify the capacities that children have to form relationships with adults that are necessary for their development. • Participants will explore strategies that support children's ability to self-regulate while recognizing the importance of co-regulating from infancy to pre-school age children.

When asked for specific examples of how they intended to use the information from this training in their professional work, center staff shared the following:

- *Being mindful of why my children act the way they do.*
- *I will be more patient when the kids are having a hard time.*
- *I will learn and continue with positive reinforcement and encouraging the kids.*
- *Teaching different calming techniques.*
- *Regulate my own emotions first then help my students.*

Perceived Challenges in Applying the Training Content in the Classroom

Most center staff did not foresee any challenges in integrating the content of the training session into their classrooms. However, a small number of center staff (4%) mentioned consistency in applying what they learned to their classrooms as a potential challenge.

Center staff shared overwhelmingly positive reflections about the *Inside the Child's Mind* training. Some center staff suggested that the training could be improved by incorporating more interactive hands-on activities and visuals:

- *More interactive activities/teachings.*
- *This session was good, just keep incorporating more visual as well as hands-on and play roles would [be] good.*

Seventy-five percent (75%) of center staff expressed interest in further training related to this session's topic, including a particular focus on training related to infants. Center staff also provided several suggestions for expanding the training session:

- *Areas of toddlers regarding redirection and deregulating.*
- *Managing a classroom with children and special education children integrated.*

- *Actual classroom implementation with a person giving hands-on demonstrations.*

Center Staff's Satisfaction with Early REACH Professional Development Offerings From November 2023 to November 2025

In general, center staff have been very satisfied with all the Early REACH professional development trainings throughout the duration of the initiative. For each training session, center staff rated their satisfaction, with all average ratings being 9 or greater on a scale of 1 to 10. Center staff have consistently been able to provide tangible ideas for applying what they have learned in each session to their classroom.

The post-training surveys have been updated for the remaining 2026 professional development sessions to better understand center staff's confidence in applying their learning and how well each training objective was met.

Training facilitators have continuously refined the professional development offerings based on center staff's feedback, including areas where center staff have requested additional support. A recurring theme in participant feedback is a preference for hands-on and interactive trainings. Surveys collected from center directors and teachers in summer 2024, early 2025, and fall 2025 highlighted several priority areas for professional development (Table 18). Notably, supporting children with special needs and implementing effective behavioral guidance strategies remain key areas where center staff seek additional resources and training—trends that have persisted since summer 2024. In response to these needs, Early REACH leadership recently hired and onboarded an Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager to strengthen support for teachers, directors, and the families they serve.

Table 18. *Areas in Which Teachers and Directors Reported Needing Additional Support and Professional Development (n = 40 – 218)*

	Summer 2024		Early 2025		Fall 2025	
	Teachers (*n*=195-201)	**Directors (*n*=40)**	**Teachers (*n* = 210-218)**	**Directors (*n* = 47)**	**Teachers (*n*=183-192)**	**Directors (*n*=42-43)**
Working with children with special needs	**33%**	**53%**	**31%**	**51%**	**33%**	**44%**
Behavioral guidance	18%	10%	15%	38%	18%	40%
Classroom management	13%	15%	11%	28%	12%	24%
CLASS Quality Assessment Measure	13%	20%	11%	23%	10%	21%
Fostering children's language development	14%	20%	15%	17%	15%	21%
Fostering children's reasoning skills	12%	18%	13%	15%	16%	12%
Fostering children's early math and science skills	13%	18%	17%	15%	16%	23%
Fostering children's social emotional development	15%	18%	16%	15%	14%	22%
Conducting child assessments	12%	8%	12%	15%	10%	11%
Using child assessment data	13%	13%	11%	15%	10%	14%
Reggio Emilia+	22%	--	20%	--	15%	--

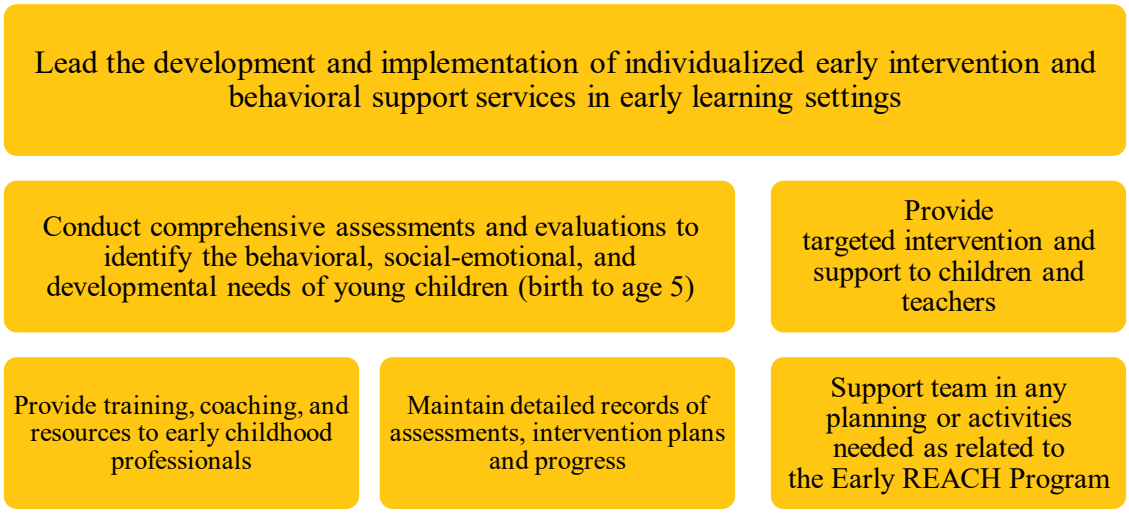
Note: The percentages indicate the number of directors and teachers who either responded "support needed" or "a lot of support needed." The Reggio Emilia option was included only in the teacher survey, not the director survey, as teachers implement the Reggio Emilia approach in their daily work.

Early Intervention and Behavioral Services Provided to Early REACH Centers

Evaluation findings from the March 2025 and September 2025 Early REACH data memos revealed an ongoing need for additional resources and professional development related to behavioral guidance and support for children with special needs. In an effort to address center and staff needs, Early REACH leadership hired an Early Intervention and Behavior Services (EIBS) manager to work in partnership with coaches, program managers, and compliance staff to

better support teachers, directors, and families.[32] The EIBS manager's work is important in supporting high-quality early childhood education by helping teachers to effectively respond to children's behavioral needs, reduce classroom disruptions, and foster inclusive, supportive learning environments for all children. The responsibilities of the EIBS manager are multifaceted and play a critical role in supporting the development of children in Early REACH, as well as promoting centers' quality (Figure 53).

Figure 53. *Responsibilities of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services Manager*



MEETINGS WITH CENTER STAFF AND FAMILIES

Between October and December 2025, the EIBS manager engaged in initial meetings with center staff and parents, as well as classroom observations. As this is a newly established role for the Early REACH initiative, it is essential to first establish relationships with teachers and families to support the ongoing development and early intervention of young children.

The EIBS manager conducted initial meetings with 13 staff, the majority being center directors (77%) followed by owners (15%) and assistant directors (8%). The purpose of all initial meetings (100%) with staff was to introduce the role of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager, explain the referral process, and gather information on potential referrals. No referrals were made during the initial staff meetings.

Initial meetings with parents (n=23) were conducted between October and December 2025. The purpose of parental meetings (100%) was to introduce them to the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager and to discuss the potential special services available to selected children and families. Families were identified at the suggestion of their child's teacher who

[32] The Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager was hired in September 2025 and started visiting Early REACH centers in late October 2025.

expressed some concerns over the child's development. All parents that met with the EIBS manager provided consent for their child to be observed and to participate in a follow-up meeting to report findings to the family, when appropriate.

During meetings, the EIBS manager asked parents to identify specific challenging behaviors or behavioral concerns they would like observed in their child. The most frequently reported concern was a speech and/or language delay (61%; Table 19). This finding aligns with research indicating that speech and language delays are among the most common developmental concerns in children between 2 and 5 years of age (Frelinger et al., 2023).

Table 19. *Behavioral Concerns and/or Challenges Discussed with Parents (n=23)*

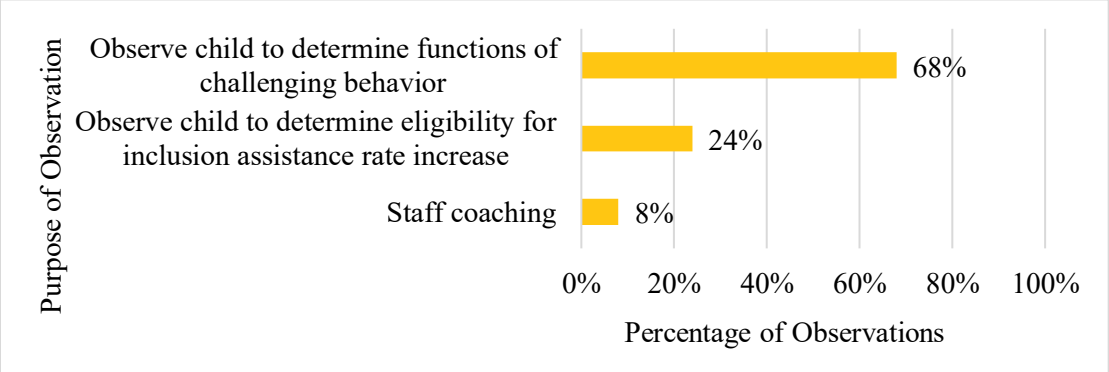
Behavioral Concern	Percentage of Parents Reporting the Behavioral Concern
Speech/language delay	61%
Autism	26%
Behavior	26%
Tantrums	17%
Aggression	13%
Hearing	9%
Throwing objects	9%

Note: Other challenging behaviors/behavioral concerns discussed with parents were hyperactivity (4%), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) tendencies (4%), and lack of socialization (4%). The percentage exceeds 100% because parents could discuss multiple topics with the EIBS manager.

Classroom Observations and Interventions

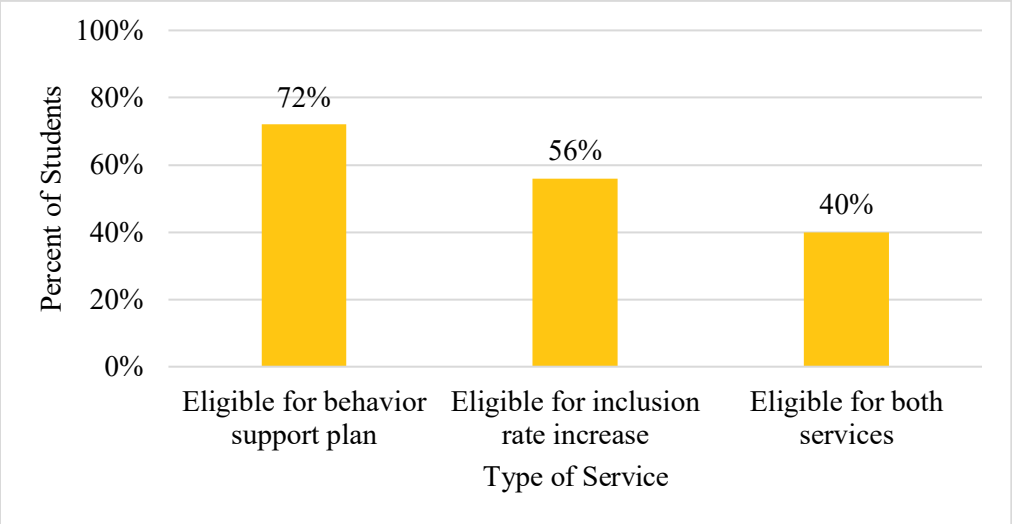
Upon receiving consent from parents, the EIBS manager conducted 25 child-focused classroom observations across eight Early REACH centers (9% of centers) between October and December 2025. The purpose of the observations varied between visits, with the majority focused on understanding a specific child's challenging behaviors (68%; Figure 54).

Figure 54. *Purpose of Classroom Observation (n=25)*



Eligibility for receipt of a behavior support plan and/or inclusion rate increase was determined by the EIBS manager after each classroom observation (Figure 55).[33] Almost all (96%) observed children were deemed eligible to receive services. Only one child was determined to be ineligible for services as their reported challenges were no longer apparent at the time of the observation. Notably, one referral was made to the University of Houston Clear Lake Connecting the Dots program, a parent-training program focused on increasing verbal behaviors and reducing challenging behaviors.

Figure 55. *Percentage of Students Eligible to Receive Services from EIBS Manager (n= 25 students)*



Note: The total percentage exceeds 100% because students could be eligible to receive multiple services.

The initial work of the EIBS manager indicated strong efforts to provide comprehensive support for children with special needs and challenging behaviors or developmental concerns. The very high percentage (96%) of observed children that were deemed eligible to receive services underscored the need for the EIBS role and the effectiveness of Early REACH centers in identifying children requiring developmental support. In the near future, the Early REACH coaching team will benefit from the guidance and training provided by the EIBS manager to advance their professional development and coaching strategies. Early REACH leadership should continue to streamline ways the coaches and EIBS manager can work together to maximize the effectiveness of these quality supports.

[33] A behavior support plan includes creating a targeted intervention plan to support the child with challenging behaviors. An inclusion increase rate approves the teacher to receive higher reimbursement to support children with disabilities or special needs.

SUMMARY

Coaching remains a central and effective component of the Early REACH quality improvement initiative, providing ongoing professional and relational support to both teachers and directors. Between August and December 2025, the coaching model expanded. A total of 549 coaching sessions were conducted, reflecting strengthened implementation and broader reach across 26 centers, including newly onboarded centers. Coaching activities consistently emphasized consultation and observation, with consultation occurring in nearly all sessions and serving as the primary mechanism for feedback, reflection, and goal setting.

Coaching content was highly aligned with identified classroom needs, particularly through the use of CLASS-informed strategies. Teachers and directors most frequently engaged in discussions related to CLASS domains, curriculum, classroom environment, and child behavior. This focused approach indicates that coaches are effectively identifying teacher needs as indicated through CLASS assessment data to guide professional development.

Relationships between coaches and directors and teachers were a key strength of the coaching model. Both teachers and directors reported high levels of trust, accessibility, and satisfaction with coaching supports. Coaches were widely viewed as collaborative partners who provide meaningful, individualized support, contributing to directors' and teachers' professional growth and sense of investment in their work.

Professional development work continued quarterly. Both Early REACH coaching staff and external professional development trainers presented on child experiences and relationship building, understanding and managing child behavior that is challenging to teachers, and sessions on the use and application of the DECA, understanding the CLASS observations, and implementing the Reggio Emilia curriculum. Professional development offerings were responsive to the needs of teachers and covered a wide range of topics important to quality classroom management.

Participation in additional coaching and professional development through other continuous quality improvement (CQI) programs (e.g., Texas Rising Star, Centers of Excellence) was common, highlighting the layered support systems available to centers. This underscores the importance of alignment and coordination across initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue coaching and planning for sustainability

Early REACH should continue to strengthen and refine its coaching model by building on current successes while addressing areas of variability and sustainability of practice. Early REACH should continue leveraging CLASS data to drive coaching and professional development content while also expanding supports in areas such as behavior management, language development, and inclusive practices. Integrating these focus areas more explicitly into professional development, coaching and modeling plans will further strengthen alignment between identified needs and coaching strategies.

Explore opportunities to align coaching and professional development across programs

As centers often participate in multiple continuous quality improvement (CQI) initiatives, Early REACH leadership should continue to explore opportunities to better align coaching efforts and professional development across CQI programs. Increased coordination as demonstrated through the collaboration of Early REACH and Bright Beginnings can bolster overall effectiveness and support sustainability of coaching.

Continue to maintain and expand the role of the EIBS manager

Finally, Early REACH should continue to integrate and expand the role of the EIBS manager. The high number of identified children deemed eligible for services underscores the skills of staff in identifying the developmental needs of children and the importance of the EIBS manager role. Clear protocols for collaboration between coaches and the EIBS manager should be developed to ensure coordinated support for children with behavioral and developmental needs. Additionally, ongoing training for coaches, teachers, and directors in early intervention and behavior support strategies will be critical for sustaining high-quality classroom environments.

CENTERS' PROCESS QUALITY

Evaluation Questions

This section of the memo addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Process Question: What are the indicators of process quality (e.g., teacher-child interactions, classroom practice) of centers?
  - Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Classroom Practice
  - Directors' and Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices with Families
- Impact Question: How have indicators of process quality changed?
  - Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Classroom Practice
- Process Question: What are the quality ratings of Early REACH centers? What are the current ratings by age group? What are the areas of strength and needed focus among centers?
  - Teacher-Child Interaction Quality

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Process Question: What is the climate of the centers engaged in Harris County Early REACH?
  - Program Climate
- Impact Question: Does participation in the Harris County Early REACH program influence directors' and teachers' perceptions of program climate and feelings of burnout?
  - Program Climate
  - Directors' and Teachers' Professional Emotional Wellbeing

Data Sources

- Director survey
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Teacher survey
  - Early 2025 (January – April 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)
- Independent classroom observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation tool (Fall 2025)

Introduction to Center Process Quality

Process quality considers directors' and teachers' professional efficacy and emotional well-being, the knowledge and skill that the teacher has with the curriculum, their relationship-based practices with families, and staff perception program climate. A second major factor in process

quality is the teacher's work in the classroom, including the quality of teacher-child interactions. A substantive body of research demonstrates significant associations between process quality indicators in early childhood education and child outcomes, underscoring the importance of process quality (e.g., Soliday Hong et al., 2019).

In this section, we first discuss what teachers bring to the work – a sense of efficacy and a positive balance of personal accomplishment as opposed to increased emotional exhaustion. Second, we assess how the curriculum serves as the basis for the work with children in the classroom and teacher's sense of comfort and competence with the curriculum. Third, we examine teachers' approach and competence in engaging with parents. Next, we assess staff's assessment of program climate, as it is an overall indicator of how teachers perceive the organization in which they work. Finally, we evaluate the impact of teacher child interaction through the use of the CLASS.

To assess process quality, the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) evaluation team partnered with United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH), BakerRipley, and Harris County Early REACH child care centers to administer surveys with center leadership (e.g., owners, directors, assistant directors) and teachers. The most recent director and teacher surveys were collected in fall 2025 (August – October 2025) and included respondents from 27 active Early REACH centers. In parallel with survey completion, UWGH partnered with ChildrenFlow, a local early childhood professional development organization, to conduct observations of teacher–child interactions in fall 2025, using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

The following section describes data collected in fall 2025, from 43 child care center leadership and 194 Early REACH teachers across 27 active Early REACH centers. Center leadership included owners/directors (42%), directors (42%), assistant directors (7%), and executive directors (7%). Teacher respondents included lead teachers (62%), assistant teachers (28%), floating teachers (7%), and substitute teachers (3%). For reporting purposes, center leadership and teachers are referred to as *"directors"* and *"teachers,"* respectively.

TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

Teacher self-efficacy reflects teachers' beliefs in their ability to effectively engage children and support their learning (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2009). Higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with greater instructional effort, persistence, and the use of effective teaching practices. As part of the Fall 2025 teacher survey, Early REACH teachers reported on self-efficacy related to their role and were asked to rate how confident they felt about their abilities across their various aspects of teaching and supporting children's learning (Table 20).[34]

The majority of Early REACH teachers described strong feelings of self-efficacy across various teaching and classroom practices. Generally, there were increases in the number of Early REACH teachers reporting strong feelings of self-efficacy in fall 2025, compared to early 2025.

[34] Teachers' self-efficacy was assessed using the Perceived Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (PTSE; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

In fall 2025, 95% of teachers *moderately* or *strongly* agreed that they can have a positive influence on the personal and cognitive development of children. This was an increase from early 2025 (91% of teachers). In fall 2025, the majority Early REACH teachers reported *moderately* strong confidence in their ability to reach difficult children (86%) and to successfully teach all content to even the most difficult children (77%).

Table 20. *Percentage of Early REACH Teachers Reporting Moderate or Strong Feelings of Self-Efficacy in their Role, Early 2025 (n=217-220) and Fall 2025 (n=190-192)*

Statement	**Percentage of Teachers Who *Moderately* or *Strongly* Agreed**	
	Early 2025	**Fall 2025**
I know that I can have a positive influence on the personal and cognitive development of children if I try really hard.	91%	95%
I am confident in my ability to be responsive to families' needs even if I am having a bad day.	90%	91%
I can develop creative ways to cope with administrative problems and continue to teach well.	89%	92%
I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.	89%	88%
I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well even if I get disrupted.	87%	90%
I can implement innovative classroom activities even if other staff worry about how successful the activities will be.	85%	85%
I am able to reach even the most difficult children when I try really hard.	83%	86%
I can motivate families to participate in innovative classroom activities.	83%	83%
I continue to become more capable of addressing families' needs over time.	83%	87%
I can successfully teach all content to even the most difficult children.	74%	77%

Note: Teacher self-efficacy was rated on a 6-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Moderately disagree*, 3=*Slightly disagree*, 4=*Slightly agree*, 5=*Moderately agree*, 6=*Strongly agree*). The percentage listed is an aggregate of *Moderately* and *Strongly Agree* responses.

Early REACH training sessions and coaching have contributed to Early REACH teachers' increased feelings of confidence in their ability to support children's learning and work with children who display more challenging behaviors. While there was an increase in teachers' confidence in this domain from early 2025 (74%) to fall 2025 (77%), there were still 23% of teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy in teaching students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. Working with children with challenging behaviors remains an area of concern for teachers; it is a situation for which continued support is needed.

Directors' and Teachers' Professional Emotional Well-Being

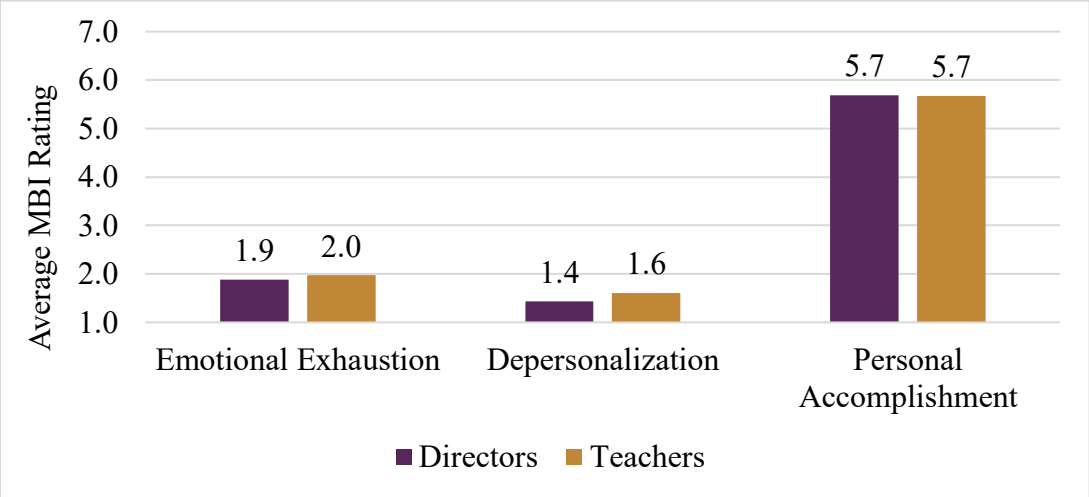
Diminished professional emotional well-being among directors and teachers is often associated with feelings of stress and being overwhelmed by the demands of their work (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022). Some professionals cope with their elevated stress by withdrawing from the emotional exchanges in the workplace. Low professional emotional well-being exemplified by stress, anxiety, and/or emotional withdrawal is one primary reason for the high turnover rates in early care and education. It also contributes to individuals leaving the field of early care and education. In contrast, early care professionals who find positive personal accomplishments in their daily work roles are often buffered from the emotional stresses of working in early education and care. Directors and teachers who experience a strong sense of accomplishment at work tend to stay in their jobs longer and also tend to make working in early childhood and education a long-term career goal.

In order to assess levels of professional burnout and emotional well-being, directors and teachers completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackon, 1986) in fall 2025. The MBI evaluates caregiver burnout across three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Emotional Exhaustion (EE) reflects feelings of being overextended, emotionally drained, and fatigued due to the demands of work. Depersonalization (DP) is characterized by negative, detached, or impersonal attitudes toward the individuals in one's care, often serving as a coping response to emotional exhaustion. In contrast, personal accomplishment (PA) reflects a self-evaluation of competence, efficacy, and work-related success.

Overall, most directors and teachers reported low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (i.e., *never* to *a few times a year or less*; Figure 56). The exceptions were three Early REACH centers (11%) in which directors reported, on average, higher emotional exhaustion (*Range* = 3.2 – 5.1). The same three directors also described, on average, higher depersonalization experiences (*Range* = 2.2 – 3.8). Two Early REACH centers (7%) had teachers with, on average, higher emotional exhaustion (*Range* = 3.3 – 4.2).

Early REACH directors and teachers reported high levels of personal accomplishment, on average. They reported experiences of personal accomplishment *once a week* to *a few times per week (*Figure 56). However, five Early REACH centers (19%) had directors who, on average, reported lower levels of personal accomplishment, with ratings ranging from *a few times a month* to *never (Range* = 1.0–4.3). These directors are at higher risk of limiting their success in leadership as well as increasing the risk of leaving their positions altogether.

Figure 56. *Directors' and Teachers' Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment, Fall 2025 (Director n = 34; Teacher n = 193)*



Note: Teachers responded on a 7-point scale (1=*Never*, 2=*Seldom*, 3=*Now and then*, 4=*Regular*, 5= *Often*, 6=*Very often,* and 7=*Always*).

Using established cutoffs from the MBI manual, based on national normative data, directors and teachers were categorized as having *low*, *moderate*, or *high* levels of Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (DP). For the EE and DP subscales, higher scores indicate more stress and exhaustion. In contrast, higher scores on Personal Accomplishment (PA) indicate greater professional well-being. Staff with high scores above the cut-off for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are at significant risk of leaving the center and possibly the early care field (Table 21). Staff with low scores on personal accomplishment are also at risk of leaving (Table 22).

Table 21. *National Cutoffs for the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization Subscales*

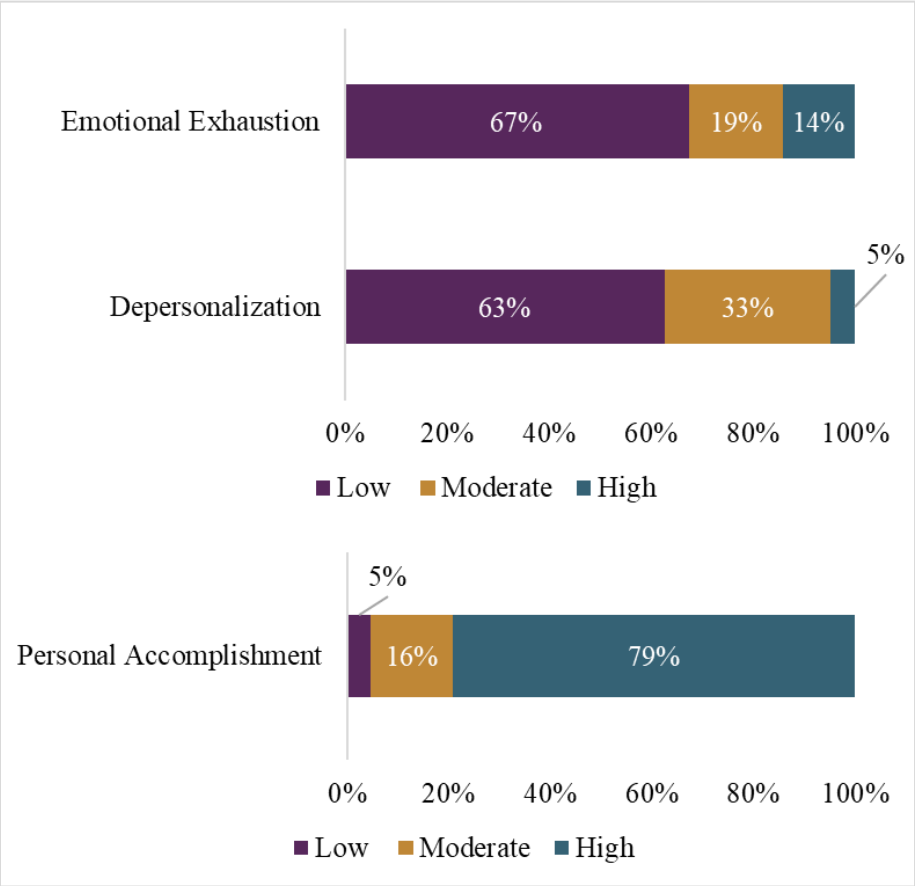
	Low	Moderate	High
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	≥27	17-26	≤16
Depersonalization (DP)	≥13	7-12	≤6

Table 22. *National Cutoffs for the Personal Accomplishment Subscale*

	Low	Moderate	High
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	≥39	32-38	≤31

Figures 57 and 58 illustrate the percentage of directors and teachers across *low*, *moderate*, and *high* levels of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Only 14% of directors reported *high* levels of EE and only 5% *high* levels of DP, indicating high risk for burnout. In addition, 79% of directors reported *high* levels of PA, indicating strong professional well-being.

Figure 57. *Percent of Directors with Low, Moderate, and High Levels of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA), Fall 2025 (n=43)*



Compared to directors, a smaller proportion of teachers reported *low* levels of EE (58%) and DP (59%). These findings suggest a potential need for additional support to strengthen teachers' professional well-being. However, like directors, 79% of teachers reported *high* levels of PA, an important protective factor associated with overall well-being and the prevention of burnout. One of the impacts of quality support for teachers is high and often improved personal accomplishment as they learn from coaching and professional development. Encouragement in seeking and obtaining credentialing (e.g., Child Development Associate) is another quality experience that has the potential to increase and maintain teachers' personal accomplishment.

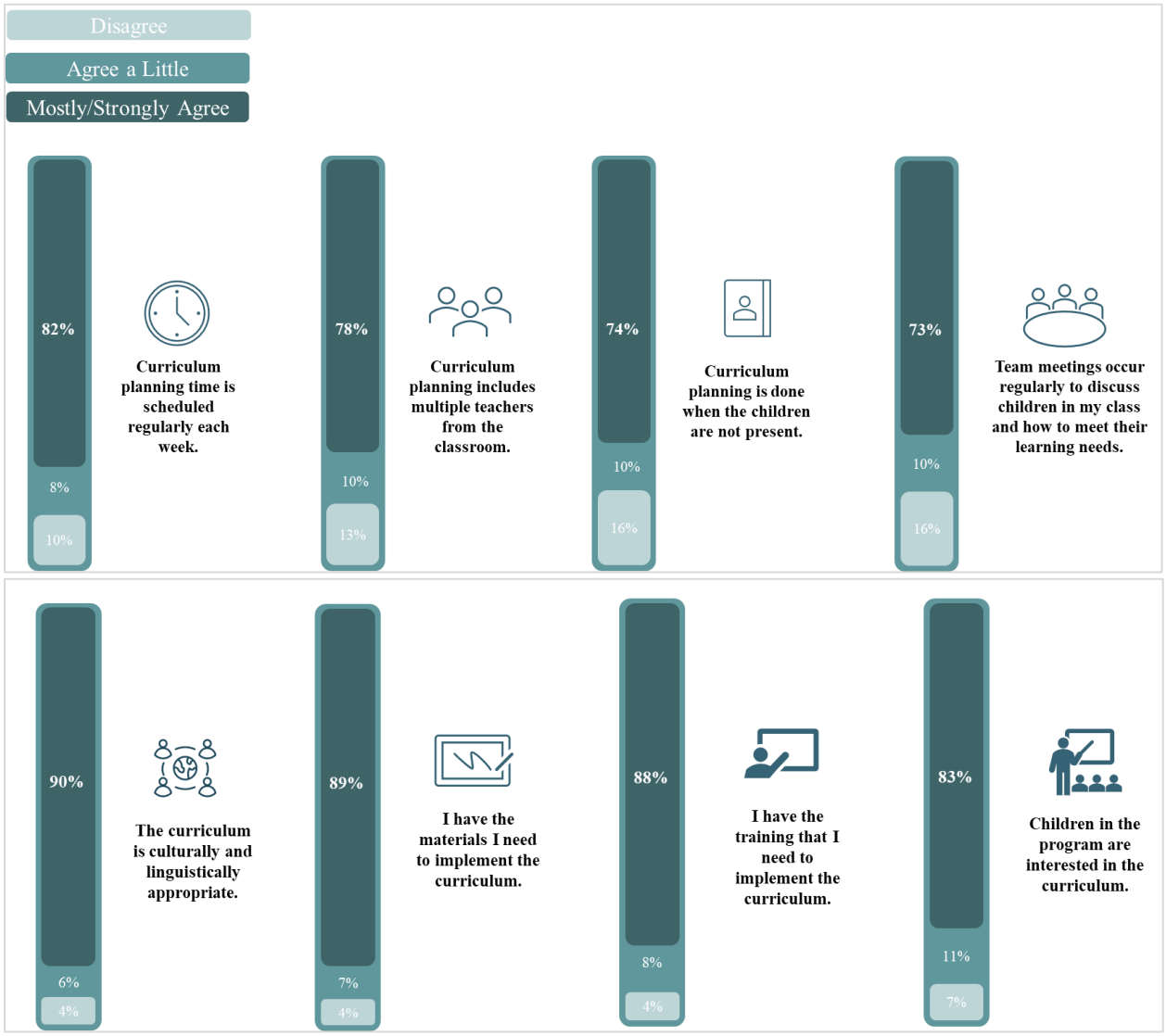
Figure 58. *Percent of Teachers with Low, Moderate, and High Levels of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA), Fall 2025 (n=193)*

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRICULUM

Early REACH coaching and professional development staff have collaborated extensively with teachers on curriculum planning and implementation across participating centers, regardless of the specific curriculum in use at each center. To inform this effort, Early REACH teachers were asked to report on their perceptions of the classroom curriculum they currently use, including the quality and relevance of content, its cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and the adequacy of planning time available to support effective implementation (Figure 59).

Overall, teachers reported positive perceptions of the curriculum used within their centers. They indicated that they received adequate supports to effectively plan and implement curriculum activities. The majority of teachers (*Range* = 73% - 90%) *mostly* or *strongly* agreed on their perceptions of the classroom curriculum. Specifically, 90% of Early REACH teachers *mostly* or *strongly* agreed that their curriculum is culturally and linguistically appropriate. Most teachers agreed that they had the materials to implement the curriculum (89%), that they had the training they needed to implement the curriculum (88%), and that they felt that children in their center were interested in the curriculum (83%).

Figure 59. *Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Curriculum, Fall 2025 (n=189-191)*



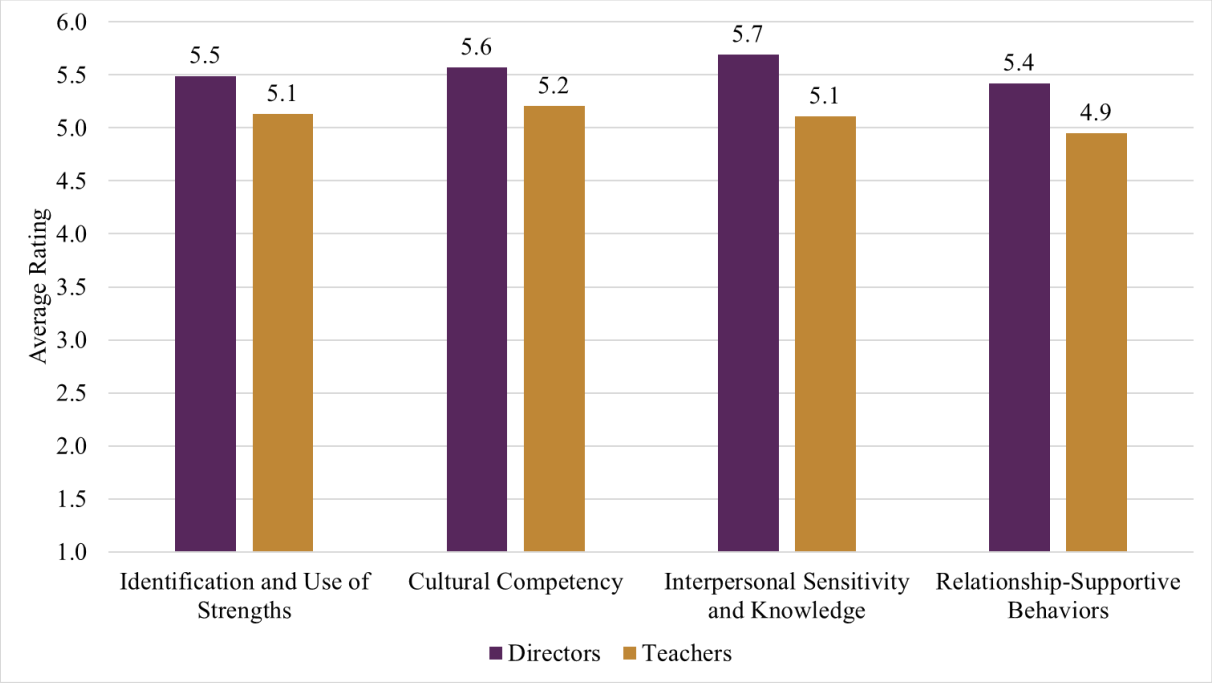
Note: Teachers responded on a 6-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Mostly disagree*, 3=*Disagree a little*, 4=*Agree a little*, 5=*Mostly agree*, 6=*Strongly agree*). The *Disagree* category displayed above consists of the *Strongly Disagree*, *Mostly Disagree*, and *Disagree a Little* responses.

Directors' and Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices with Families

Relationship-based practices between teachers, directors, and the families they serve play a critical role in shaping families' engagement in center services, their sense of self-efficacy and empowerment as caregivers, and the quality of families' relationships and social support networks. Directors and teachers consistently reported using practices that aligned with key relational domains, including identifying and building on family strengths (identification and use

of strengths), demonstrating responsiveness to families' cultural backgrounds and beliefs (cultural competency), exhibiting sensitivity to and understanding of family needs (interpersonal sensitivity and knowledge), and facilitating connections among parents and with community members (relationship-supportive behaviors).[35] Overall, findings indicate that Early REACH directors and teachers demonstrated a strong foundation of knowledge and readiness to engage families using a relational approach (Figure 60). While both directors and teachers demonstrated strong relationship-based practices with families with average practices near the top of the scale, overall, directors showed stronger relationship-based practices compared to teachers (*Director Range* = 5.4- 5.7; *Teacher Range* = 4.9-5.2).[36]

Figure 60. *Early REACH Directors' and Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices with Families, Fall 2025 (Director n = 43; Teacher n = 193)*



Note: Relationship-based practices were rated on a 6-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Mostly disagree*, 3=*Disagree a little*, 4=*Agree a little*, 5=*Mostly agree*, 6=*Strongly agree*) and average use of strengths-based practices was calculated.

Further analysis revealed that the length of time a center has participated in Early REACH was not significantly associated with directors' reported use of relationship-based practices with families.[37] This finding appears to reflect consistently high self-reported ratings (i.e., near the top of the scale), regardless of center tenure in Early REACH.

[35] Directors' and teachers' use of relationship-based practices was assessed using the Strengths-Based Practices Inventory (SBPI; Green et al., 2004).
[36] No statistical tests were conducted to test for differences between directors' and teachers' relationship-based practices.
[37] Linear regression analysis with the length of time in Early REACH as predictor was conducted across the SBPI subscales. None of the results were significant at $p < .05$.

Similarly, no significant differences were observed in teachers' reported use of relationship-based practices based on their position (lead teacher vs. non-lead teachers) or average years of experience in their role. That is, teachers reported comparable levels of relationship-based practices with families, regardless of their position and experience level. Taken together, these findings suggest that relationship-based practices are being implemented consistently across Early REACH centers, regardless of staff role or tenure.

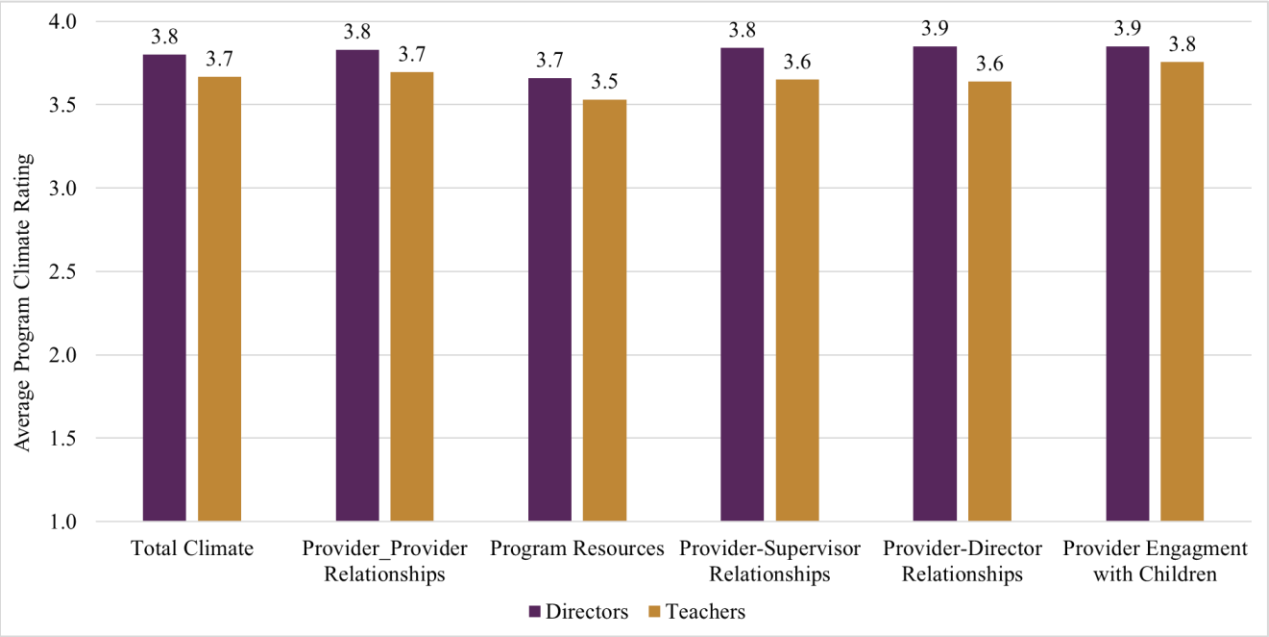
PROGRAM CLIMATE

A positive program climate is a critical component of high-quality early childhood education and care and is associated with improved workforce stability, reduced director and teacher burnout, and enhanced child outcomes (Better Kid Care, 2023). Program climate reflects the overall quality of interactions, organizational support, and working conditions within a center. It is characterized by strong, respectful relationships among directors, teachers, families, and children; access to adequate and supportive resources; and a collaborative, team-based approach to program implementation and family engagement. Both Early REACH directors and teachers reported on their perception of their program's climate (Figure 61).[38]

Overall, directors and teachers *strongly* agreed, on average, that their centers had a positive climate (*Director Average* = 3.8, *Teacher Average* = 3.7). Both directors and teachers felt that staff engagement with children was positive, and their relationships with supervisors and other teachers at the center were strong. Relative to other aspects of program climate, directors' and teachers' perception of having sufficient resources to do their job well was slightly lower (*Director Average* = 3.7, *Teacher Average* = 3.5).

[38] Program climate was assessed using the Staff Satisfaction Survey-Center Climate Scale (BTC, 2015). Total program climate includes subscales assessing Provider-Provider Relationships, Provider-Director Relationships, Provider-Supervisor Relationships, Program Resources, and Provider Engagement with Children.

Figure 61. *Early REACH Directors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Program Climate, Fall 2025 (Director n = 43; Teacher n = 193)*



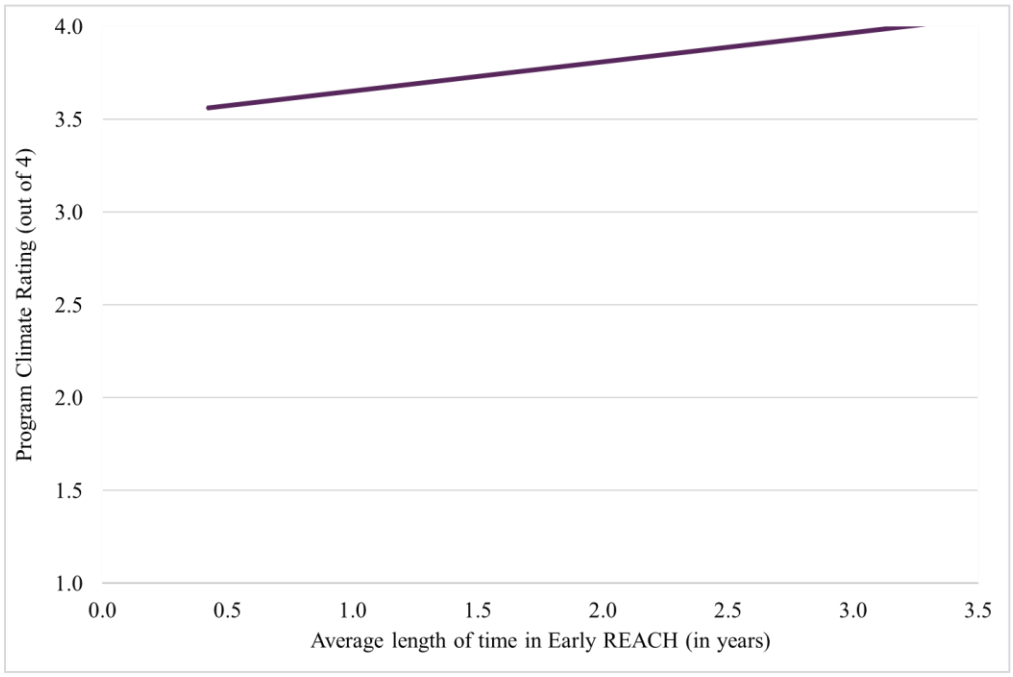
Note: Program climate was rated on a 4-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Somewhat disagree*, 3=*Somewhat agree*, 4=*Strongly agree*) and average perception of program climate was calculated. A high average score represents a more positive program climate.

Further analyses examined the relationship between the length of time a center has participated in Early REACH and directors' perceptions of program climate. Directors from centers who have been part of Early REACH for a longer period reported a more positive total program climate (Figure 62).[39] This pattern was also observed across key program climate subscales, including directors' perceptions of relationships with teachers and of having sufficient resources to do their job well.[40]

[39] Linear regression analysis, accounting for center-level clustering, indicated that time spent in Early REACH was a significant positive predictor of directors' report of positive total climate, $t(26) = 2.1$, $p = .046$.

[40] Linear regression analysis, accounting for center-level clustering, indicated that time spent in Early REACH is a significant positive predictor of directors' report of positive provider-provider relationship $t(26)=2.1$, $p=.051$; marginally significant positive predictor of directors' report of positive program resources $t(26)=2.0$, $p=.061$.

Figure 62. *Relationship Between Average Length of Time a Center Has Been a Part of Early REACH and Directors' Average Total Climate Ratings, Fall 2025 (n=43)*



Note: Program climate was rated on a 4-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Somewhat disagree*, 3=*Somewhat agree*, 4=*Strongly agree*) and average perception of program climate was calculated. Higher average scores represent, a more positive program climate.

Similarly, analyses examined the relationship between teachers' years of experience in their role and their perceptions of program climate. Results indicated no significant association between teachers' average years of experience and their perceptions of program climate. That is, teachers reported similar levels of perceived program climate regardless of their level of experience in their role.

TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION QUALITY

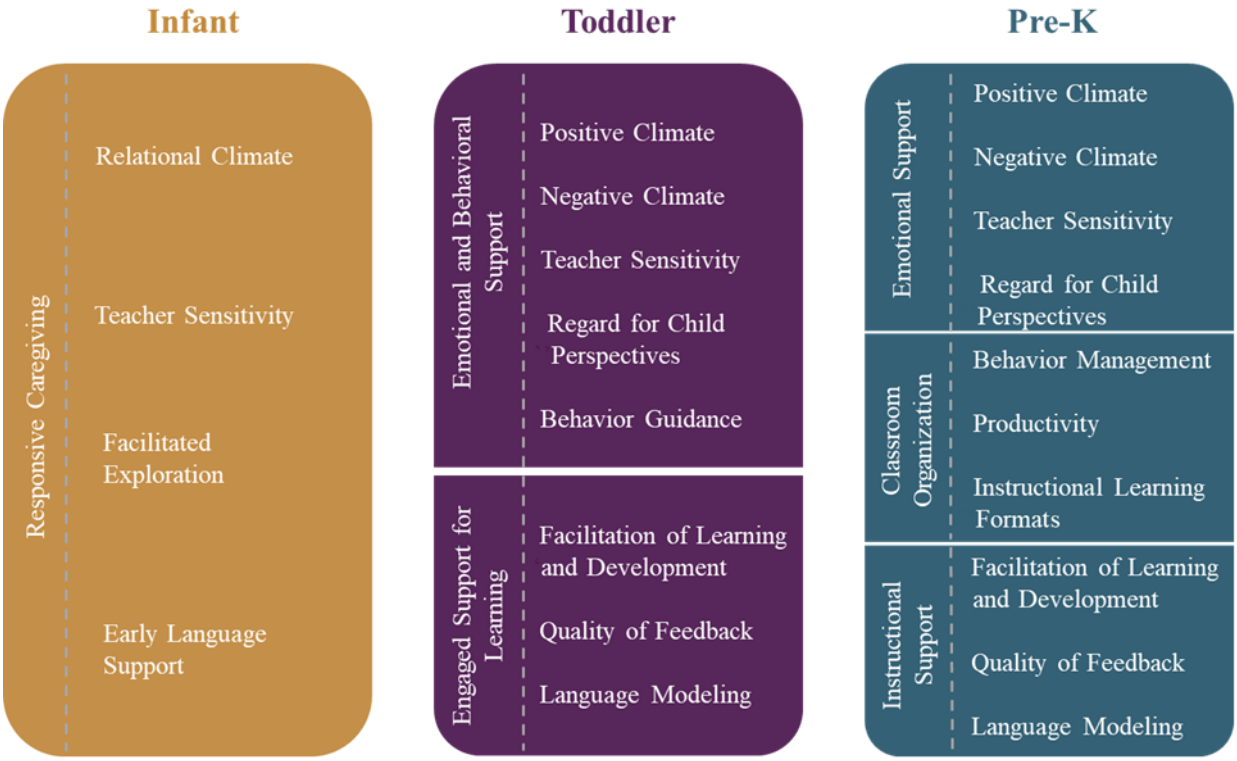
One way to explore process and practice quality is by assessing teacher–child interaction quality and teacher practice skill development using a standardized observation protocol. Early REACH leadership and coaches from UWGH are working to implement the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a widely used measure of classroom quality. The CLASS is an early care and education program observation instrument that is designed to identify dimensions of strengths and challenges in teachers' practices and to support their professional growth. The CLASS observation tool is available in different versions based on the ages of children within a classroom. While the CLASS provides valuable insight, it captures only one aspect of overall process quality.

CLASS observations were conducted in Early REACH classrooms by a team of outside observers from ChildrenFlow, a local early childhood professional development organization.

The following section describes the observed teacher-child interaction quality as measured by the CLASS for observations taking place in the fall of 2025 (October-November).

Each version of the CLASS is comprised of overarching quality domains that contain several dimensions. Dimensions define the different domains and capture more specific details about teachers' interactions with children (Figure 63).[41] Domains and dimensions are based on developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between children and adults are the primary way of supporting children's development and learning, and that effective, engaging interactions and environments are the foundation for all learning.

Figure 63. *Overview of CLASS and CLASS Domains and Dimensions*



Note: Domains are noted in vertical text and dimensions are noted in horizontal text within each domain.

Regardless of the age group, observers rate CLASS dimensions on a 7-point scale with higher ratings indicating higher quality interactions in that dimension. Table 23 provides the interpretation of the ranges within the scale.

Observations are conducted in 10- to 20-minute cycles with each classroom receiving three to four cycles. For the current evaluation, observation cycles typically lasted about 15 minutes.

[41] http://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/CLASS-System-Paper-FINAL.pdf?t=1495735615702

Average scores are then calculated across the different cycles to establish an overall average for each domain and dimension of each classroom observed.

Table 23. *Ranges of CLASS Quality and Descriptions*

Rating Category	Description
Low Quality (*Range* = 1.0 – 2.9)	These ratings are assigned when behaviors associated with items within a specific domain were exhibited in a low-quality way, were lacking, or were rarely seen during the observation period.
Mid Quality (*Range* = 3.0 – 4.9)	These ratings are assigned when interactions in a classroom associated with items that comprise a particular domain were somewhat present during the observation or were part of some children's experiences.
High-Mid Quality (*Range* = 5.0 – 5.9)	These ratings are assigned when interactions in a classroom associated with items that comprise a particular domain were typically present during the observation or were part of some children's experiences. Despite the ongoing presence of these interactions, they are not consistently observed or highly characteristic of the interaction.
High Quality (*Range* = 6.0 – 7.0)	These ratings are assigned when the classroom interactions were highly characteristic of a domain during the observation. High-range scores indicate interactions are meaningful, consistent, sustained, and reflective of everyone's experience in the classroom.

CLASS Data Collection Limitations and Considerations

A note regarding data collection procedures: Observation periods occurred at various times throughout the day. These included early morning cycles when only one staff member was present, as well as early and late afternoon cycles that coincided with meals and/or naptime in some classrooms. These periods were included as part of the CLASS observation data. Early morning periods often involve teachers focusing on classroom preparation and communicating with parents during drop-off. Similarly, periods surrounding meals and naptime frequently require teachers to use more directive language and instructional strategies to maintain health and safety standards.

While CLASS observations conducted for coaching purposes can provide valuable insights into teachers' strengths and areas for growth across various contexts and times of day, CLASS scores used for evaluative purposes should follow a more standardized observation protocol. Standardization ensures that observations occur during periods when opportunities for teacher–child interaction and instruction are maximized and when comparisons across classrooms can be made more reliably.

In general, it is recommended that CLASS evaluations take place during morning hours, when typical classroom interactions are most likely to occur, without the transitions of nap time and departure. These observation periods should ideally include cycles in which all classroom teachers are present, the majority of children have arrived, and a range of classroom activities is represented. Additionally, observation cycles should not be dominated by large group activities

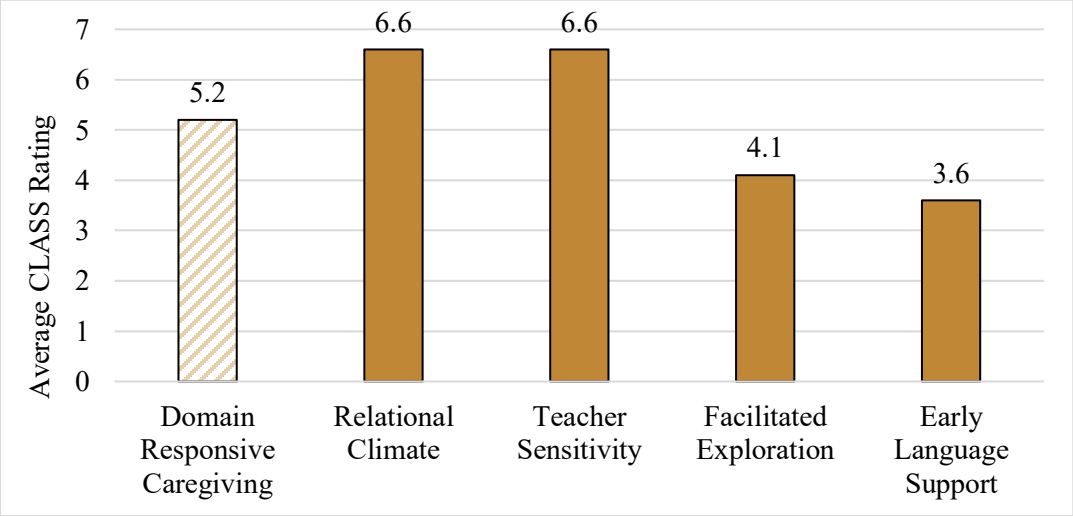
or transitions, as these typically represent only a small portion of the instructional time within a standard program day. Additionally, the use of multiple observers for each age level is also recommended as a way to minimize any variations in scoring across raters.

Further standardization of observation protocols is strongly recommended in order to more accurately assess and interpret the impact of Early REACH coaching and professional development on classroom quality.

INFANT CLASSROOM QUALITY

The infant observation measure includes one domain, *Responsive Caregiving*. This domain encompasses four dimensions: *Relational Climate*, *Teacher Sensitivity*, *Facilitated Exploration*, and *Early Language Support*. At the Fall 2025 observation timepoint, Early REACH infant classrooms demonstrated overall quality in the high–mid range, consistent with results from the previous observation period (Figure 64). Within this domain, *Relational Climate* and *Teacher Sensitivity* remained clear areas of strength, with classrooms averaging solidly within the high-quality range. In contrast, *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language Support* were within the mid-quality range, indicating areas where additional support and coaching may further strengthen classroom practice.

Figure 64. *Infant CLASS Averages across Domains and Dimensions, Fall 2025 (n=23)*



Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

Further examination of the variability in domain and dimension averages provides additional insight into the overall landscape of classroom quality and the areas of need within Early REACH infant classrooms. Table 24 presents the distribution of average scores for infant classroom quality. Overall, most infant classrooms demonstrated high-quality practices in the dimensions of *Relational Climate* and *Teacher Sensitivity*. In contrast, *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language* emerged as areas requiring additional attention. Both dimensions

demonstrated notable variability, with score ranges spanning all levels of quality across infant classrooms. This pattern suggests that while some infant classrooms are demonstrating strong practices, others continue to require targeted support in these areas. Continued coaching efforts should, therefore, prioritize strategies that support infant teachers in strengthening practices related to *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language Development* in order to help centers achieve higher and more consistent levels of quality.

Table 24. *Distributions of Infant CLASS Averages Within Quality Ranges, Fall 2025 (n = 23)*

Domain/Items	Low Quality (1.0 – 2.9)	Mid Quality (3.0 – 4.9)	High-Mid Quality (5.0 – 5.9)	High Quality (6.0 – 7.0)
Domain: Responsive Caregiving	**--**	**39%**	**48%**	**13%**
Relational Climate	--	--	13%	87%
Teacher Sensitivity	--	--	13%	87%
Facilitated Exploration	22%	48%	26%	4%
Early Language Support	30%	57%	4%	9%

Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

It is noteworthy that infant classrooms experienced some turnover in lead teachers. This resulted in several teachers with more limited experience with the CLASS framework and coaching at the time of the Fall 2025 observation period as compared to previous CLASS observation periods. According to documentation from external CLASS observers, approximately 30% of infant classrooms had new lead teachers during the Fall 2025 observation period. In these classrooms, neither the lead teacher nor the assistant teacher were listed on earlier CLASS observation records for any of the previous CLASS observation cycles.

These classrooms with new lead and assistant teachers consistently demonstrated lower CLASS scores in comparison to classrooms with more experienced teachers (Table 25). Independent *t*-tests indicated that the differences between new and tenured teachers were not statistically significant, which may be partly attributable to the small sample sizes. The observed differences in scores may have partially influenced the limited growth in quality observed within infant classrooms during the Fall 2025 observation period. While not statistically different, consistently lower CLASS scores for new infant teachers highlight the importance of sustained coaching over time. Additionally, these marked differences underscore the need for additional supports for new infant teachers in order to ensure the continuity and quality of programming.

Table 25. *Infant CLASS Averages, Overall and for Classrooms with New and Tenured Teachers, Fall 2025 (n = 7-16)*

Domain/Items	New Lead Teachers (*n*=7)	Tenured Lead Teachers (*n*=16)
Domain: Responsive Caregiving	**5.1**	**5.2**

Relational Climate	6.7	6.5
Teacher Sensitivity	6.5	6.6
Facilitated Exploration	3.9	4.2
Early Language Support	3.3	3.7

Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

Differences among infant classrooms by lead teacher consistency were particularly pronounced in the dimensions of *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language Support* (Table 26). Notably, a greater proportion of infant classrooms with newly assigned teachers demonstrated lower levels of quality within these dimensions. This pattern suggests that teacher experience with the CLASS framework and participation in coaching may be especially important for supporting practices related to *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language Support*.

Table 26. *Infant CLASS Frequencies for Facilitated Exploration and Early Language Supports for Classrooms with New and Tenured Lead Teachers, Fall 2025 (n = 7-16)*

	Facilitated Exploration		***Early Language Supports***	
	New Lead Teachers	**Tenured Lead Teachers**	**New Lead Teachers**	**Tenured Lead Teachers**
Low Quality (1.0-2.9)	42%	13%	58%	19%
Medium Quality (3.0-4.9)	29%	56%	14%	75%
Medium-High Quality (5.0-5.9)	29%	31%	14%	--
High Quality (6.0-7.0)	--	--	14%	6%

Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

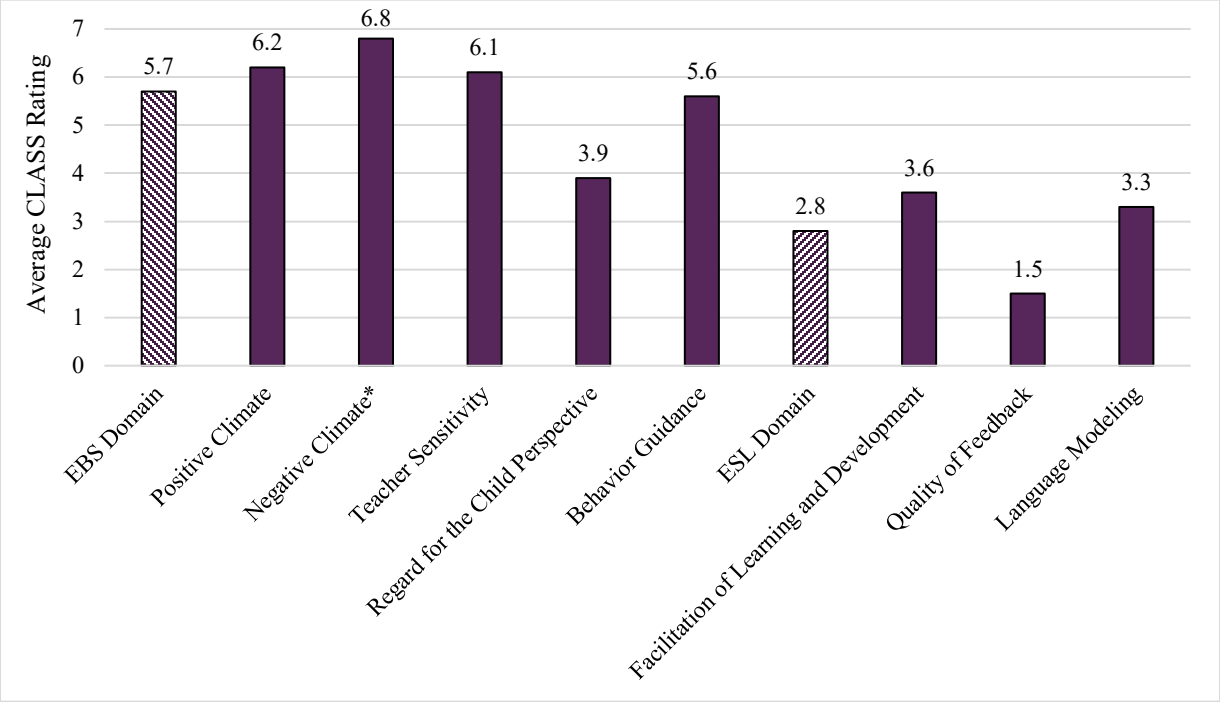
TODDLER CLASSROOM QUALITY

The toddler CLASS observation measure includes two domains: *Emotional and Behavioral Support* (*EBS*) and *Engaged Support for Learning* (*ESL*). The *Emotional and Behavioral Support* domain encompasses five dimensions: *Positive Climate*, *Negative Climate*, *Regard for Child Perspectives*, *Behavior Guidance*, and *Teacher Sensitivity*. The *Engaged Support for Learning* domain includes three dimensions: *Facilitation of Learning and Development*, *Quality of Feedback*, and *Language Modeling*.

The quality of Early REACH toddler classrooms varied by domain. Classrooms averaged 5.7 in the *EBS* domain, placing them in the high–mid range of quality and remaining consistent with prior observations. In contrast, the *ESL* domain remained lower, with an average slightly below the mid-quality range. This pattern is consistent with national trends, in which the *ESL* domain typically reflects lower levels of observed quality.

Within the *ESL* domain, both the *Facilitation of Learning and Development* and *Language Modeling* dimensions were within the mid-quality range. In contrast, *Quality of Feedback* scores remained in the low-quality range, suggesting a continued area of need for targeted coaching and professional development.

Figure 65. *Toddler CLASS Averages Across Domains and Dimensions, Fall 2025 (n=51)*



Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.
*Represents a reverse score, in which a high score indicates an absence of negative climate.

Similar to the infant classrooms, toddler classrooms experienced changes in teaching staff as documented on CLASS observation forms, resulting in varying levels of teacher exposure to the CLASS framework and coaching supports. Among toddler classrooms with CLASS scores in fall 2025, five classrooms had teachers who were not receiving coaching at the time of the observation. Of these five classrooms, four had newly assigned teachers. In addition, 11 toddler classrooms had new lead teachers with more limited coaching experience who had not previously appeared on documentation for earlier CLASS observations.

Toddler classrooms that were not receiving coaching, as well as toddler classrooms with newly placed lead teachers, tended to have lower CLASS scores than toddler classrooms that were receiving coaching or classrooms with consistent lead teachers. In order to further explore differences in CLASS scores for these groups, independent *t*-tests were run between 1) new lead teachers, 2) toddler classrooms that did not receive coaching, and 3) toddler classrooms with tenured lead teachers. Differences in scores approached significance for the *EBS* domain ($t = -1.68$, $p < .10$) and the dimensions of *Positive Climate* ($t = -1.88$, $p < .10$), *Behavioral Guidance* ($t = -1.53$, $p < .10$) and *Facilitation of Learning and Development*, ($t = -1.25$, $p < .10$; Table 27).

Differences likely did not reach full significance due to sample size. This pattern may partially account for the limited growth in overall quality observed among toddler classrooms. Similar to the findings for infant classrooms, these results underscore the importance of sustained coaching over time as a key mechanism for supporting new teachers and improvements in classroom quality.

The CLASS scores also highlight the continued need to strengthen practices within the *ESL* domain. Additionally, within the *EBS* domain, coaching that focuses on strengthening the dimension of *Regard for Child Perspectives* may further support improvements in classroom interactions.

Table 27. *Toddler CLASS Averages of Tenured Teachers, New Lead Teachers, and Classrooms that Did Not Receive Coaching, Fall 2025 (n = 20)*

Domains/Items	No Coaching (*n*=5)	New Lead Teacher and/or No Coaching (*n*=16)	Classrooms with Tenured Lead Teachers and Coaching (*n*=35)
Domain: Emotional and Behavioral Support	**5.2**	**5.5^**	**5.8^**
Positive Climate	5.6	5.8^	6.3^
Negative Climate[42]	6.7	6.7	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	5.5	5.9	6.2
Regard for the Child Perspective	3.5	3.7	4.1
Behavior Guidance	4.9	5.3^	5.8^
Domain: Engaged Support for Learning	**2.1**	**2.6**	**2.9**
Facilitation of Learning and Development	2.5	3.3^	3.8^
Quality of Feedback	1.4	1.5	1.5
Language Modeling	2.5	3.1	3.3

^Approaching significant difference at $p < .10$.
Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

Toddler classrooms with newly assigned teachers demonstrated lower levels of quality within the *ESL* domain than classrooms with consistent teachers. Nearly 70% of toddler classrooms with new teachers scored within the low-quality range, compared to 57% of toddler classrooms led by teachers with more consistent participation in Early REACH (Table 28). Nevertheless, the *ESL* domain remains an area of needed focus across toddler classrooms, indicating the importance of continued coaching and professional development aimed at strengthening interactions in this area.

[42] This item is reverse scored, such that a high score indicates an absence of negative climate.

Table 28. *Toddler CLASS Averages of Tenured Teachers and New Teachers Who Did Not Receive Coaching, Fall 2025 (n = 20)*

	New Teachers/No Coaching EBS Domain	Tenured Teachers EBS Domain	New Teachers/No Coaching ESL Domain	Tenured Teachers ESL Domain
Low Quality (1.0-2.9)	--	--	69%	57%
Medium Quality (3.0-4.9)	19%	9%	31%	43%
Medium-High Quality (5.0-5.9)	49%	46%	--	--
High Quality (6.0-7.0)	32%	43%	--	--

Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM QUALITY

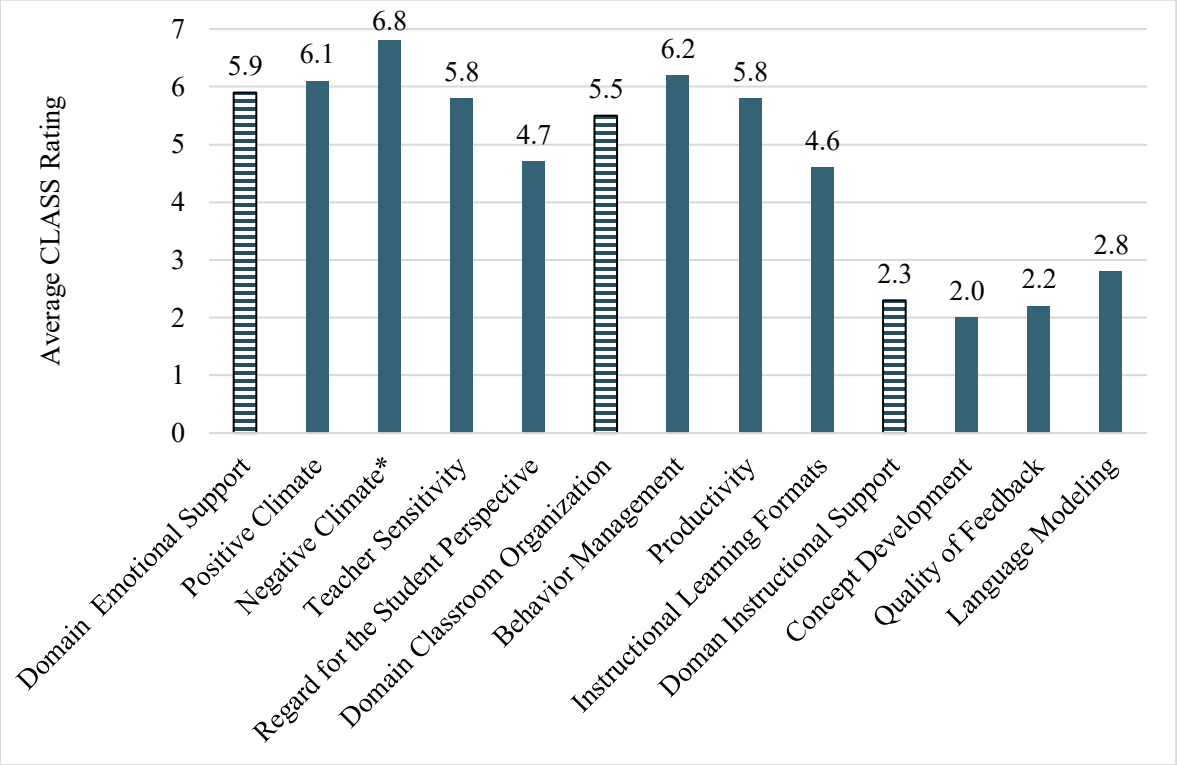
The CLASS preschool observation measure includes three domains: *Emotional Support* (*ES*), *Classroom Organization* (*CO*), and *Instructional Support* (*IS*). The *ES* domain includes the dimensions of *Positive Climate*, *Negative Climate*, *Teacher Sensitivity*, and *Regard for Student Perspectives*. The *CO* domain includes *Behavior Management*, *Productivity*, and *Instructional Learning Formats*. The *IS* domain includes *Concept Development*, *Quality of Feedback*, and *Language Modeling*.

Preschool classrooms achieved high–mid scores within both the *ES* and *CO* domains, with the *ES* domain averaging just below the high-quality range (Figure 66). Within the *ES* domain, *Positive Climate* and *Teacher Sensitivity* emerged as clear areas of strength. Additionally, scores for *Negative Climate* remained extremely low, indicating limited observed negativity within classroom interactions. Within the *CO* domain, *Behavior Management* and *Productivity* were also areas of strength, suggesting that classrooms generally demonstrated effective management of routines, transitions, and children's behavior. In contrast, the *IS* domain remained within the low-quality range, with all three dimensions in the *IS* domain continuing to be within the low-quality strata. Notably, preschool classroom averages for the *Language Modeling* dimension were just below the mid-quality range. This finding may indicate emerging progress in this area of instructional practice and could represent a foundational element for continued improvement in instructional interactions.

Similar to patterns observed nationally in CLASS data, the *IS* domain represents the most significant area for growth within Early REACH preschool classrooms. While these classrooms demonstrated strong emotional climates and effective organizational practices, instructional interactions that promote deeper thinking, extend children's language, and provide meaningful

feedback occurred less frequently. Strengthening these practices will be important for supporting children's continued developmental progress. These findings suggest that coaching and professional development should prioritize strategies that strengthen instructional interactions, particularly within the dimensions of *Concept Development*, *Quality of Feedback*, and *Language Modeling*. Emphasis on modeling open-ended questioning, expanding children's responses, and creating opportunities for higher-order thinking may help preschool teachers move toward higher levels of quality within this domain. Given the progress observed in *Language Modeling*, targeted coaching in this area may also serve as an entry point for building broader instructional practices across preschool classrooms.

Figure 66. *Preschool CLASS Averages for Domains and Dimensions, Fall 2025 (n = 32)*



Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.
*Represents a reverse score, in which a high score indicates an absence of negative climate.

Similar to the other classroom age groups, changes in teaching staff were also evident among preschool classrooms. Approximately 40% of preschool classrooms had new teachers who had not previously been documented in prior CLASS observations. Differences in CLASS scores were observed among these preschool classrooms. However, these differences were less pronounced than those observed in the infant and toddler classrooms. Independent *t*-tests indicated that the differences observed between preschool classrooms with new and tenured teachers were not statistically significant. Preschool classrooms with new teachers lowered the overall classroom quality averages nonetheless (Table 29).

Table 29. *Preschool CLASS Averages by Teacher Tenure (n=13-19)*

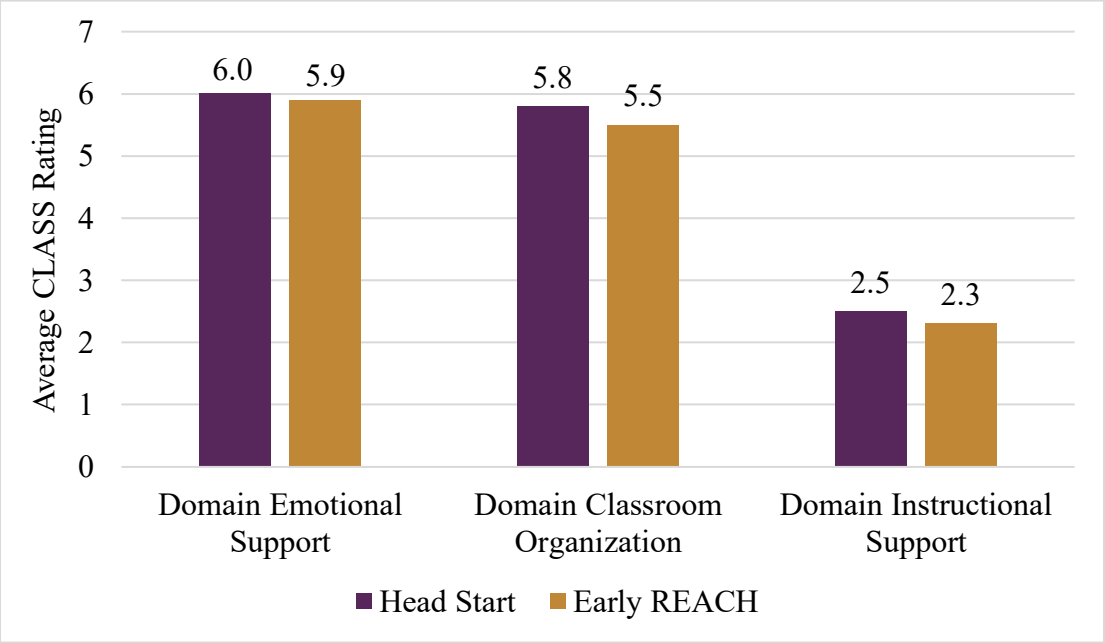
Domains/Items	Classrooms with New Lead Teachers (*n*=13)	Classrooms with Tenured Lead Teachers (*n*=19)
Domain: Emotional Support	**5.8**	**5.9**
Positive Climate	6.1	6.2
Negative Climate[43]	6.8	6.8
Teacher Sensitivity	5.7	5.9
Regard for the Student Perspective	4.6	4.8
Domain: Classroom Organization	**5.5**	**5.6**
Behavior Management	6.0	6.3
Productivity	5.6	5.9
Instructional Learning Formats	4.7	4.6
Domain: Instructional Support	**2.4**	**2.3**
Concept Development	2.1	2.0
Quality of Feedback	2.3	2.2
Language Modeling	2.8	2.8

Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.

Early REACH preschool classrooms' quality averages were largely aligned with national Head Start program averages in the domains of *ES* and *CO*. However, the quality of *IS* observed in Early REACH classrooms, on average, was slightly lower in comparison to the most recent average scores reported for Head Start (Figure 67). This pattern suggests that while preschool classrooms are demonstrating strong emotional climates and effective classroom management practices, additional emphasis on instructional interactions is needed.

[43] This item is reverse scored, such that a high score indicates an absence of negative climate.

Figure 67. *Early REACH Fall 2025 Preschool CLASS Averages (n=37) and National Head Start 2020 CLASS Averages*



Note: CLASS items were rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1-2 representing low quality, 3-5 midrange quality, and 6-7 high quality.
Source: *https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/data-ongoing-monitoring/article/national-overview-grantee-class-scores-2020*

SUMMARY

Early REACH teachers reported strong self-efficacy across teaching and classroom practices, with increases observed from early 2025 to fall 2025. By fall 2025, 95% of teachers agreed that they could positively influence children's personal and cognitive development, and 86% reported confidence in reaching even the most challenging children. While self-efficacy is generally high, 23% of teachers reported lower confidence in teaching students with challenging behaviors, indicating a potential area for needed support through coaching, professional development and in conjunction with the Early Intervention and Behavior Services (EIBS) manager.

Across centers, most directors and teachers reported *low* levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and *high* levels of personal accomplishment. Approximately 67% of directors and 58% of teachers reported *low* emotional exhaustion, while 79% of both groups reported *high* personal accomplishment. High personal accomplishment among the majority of staff represents a protective factor against burnout which in turn, influences turnover and exit from the field at large.

Teachers generally reported positive perceptions of their classroom curriculum and felt adequately supported in planning and implementation. These findings indicate that Early REACH coaching and professional development effectively support curriculum implementation across participating centers.

Directors and teachers consistently reported strong relationship-based engagement practices with families, including identifying family strengths, responding to cultural and linguistic needs, understanding family priorities, and facilitating connections to other parents and community resources. Directors generally reported slightly higher ratings than teachers. Relationship-based practices were consistent across center tenure, teacher role, and years of experience, suggesting uniform adoption of relational practices throughout Early REACH centers.

Both directors and teachers reported positive center climates, including high levels of staff engagement, strong interpersonal relationships, and overall supportive working environments. Perceptions of access to resources were slightly lower than other climate dimensions. Directors from centers with longer Early REACH participation reported more positive climate perceptions than those who entered Early REACH more recently. This finding suggests that after some longevity, Early REACH is likely to have a positive effect on program climate and its various constructs.

Teacher–child interaction quality in Early REACH classrooms was assessed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a standardized observation tool that evaluates the quality of teacher–child interactions across several developmental domains. Observations were conducted by external observers in fall 2025 across infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. Overall, Early REACH classrooms demonstrated strong emotional and relational interactions with children, while instructional and learning-focused interactions were comparatively lower, a pattern consistent with national CLASS trends.

Infant classrooms scored in the high–mid quality range overall within the *Responsive Caregiving* domain. Strong performance was observed in *Relational Climate* and *Teacher Sensitivity*, both consistently in the high-quality range. In contrast, *Facilitated Exploration* and *Early Language Support* scores were within the mid-quality range and showed greater variability across classrooms. Approximately 30% of infant classrooms had new lead teachers, and these classrooms tended to have lower scores in exploration and language interactions, highlighting the importance of sustained coaching and teacher experience.

Toddler classrooms demonstrated high–mid quality in *Emotional and Behavioral Support*, consistent with prior observations. However, *Engaged Support for Learning* remained lower, with averages just below the mid-quality threshold. Within this domain, *Quality of Feedback* was particularly low, while *Facilitation of Learning* and *Language Modeling* were in the mid-range. Teacher turnover and limited coaching exposure were associated with lower scores; nearly 70% of toddler classrooms with newly assigned teachers scored in the low-quality range for *Engaged Support for Learning*.

Preschool classrooms demonstrated high–mid quality in *Emotional Support* and *Classroom Organization*, with strong scores in the dimensions of *Positive Climate*, *Teacher Sensitivity*, *Behavior Management*, and *Productivity* and very low levels of *Negative Climate*. However, *Instructional Support* remained in the low-quality range across all dimensions, including *Concept Development*, *Quality of Feedback*, and *Language Modeling*. Although approximately 40% of preschool classrooms had new teachers, differences in scores between new and tenured teachers were less pronounced than in infant and toddler classrooms. Preschool CLASS scores for *Emotional Support* and *Classroom Organization* were similar to national Head Start averages, though *Instructional Support* remained slightly lower.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen support for teachers regarding challenging behaviors

While self-efficacy was high overall, a portion of teachers (23%) reported lower confidence in working with students with challenging behaviors. Continued targeted coaching, mentoring, and professional development sessions focused on strategies for managing classrooms and addressing challenging behaviors could further enhance teacher efficacy and promote confidence among teachers needing support in this area.

Address professional well-being and burnout

Although most staff reported high personal accomplishment, some teachers and directors demonstrated higher emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. Early REACH may consider implementing well-being initiatives, such as stress management workshops, peer support networks, and individualized strategies for workload management, to sustain workforce stability and low levels of burnout.

Continue curriculum supports

Teachers reported high satisfaction with curriculum materials, the cultural appropriateness of the curriculum, and training on the curriculum. Maintaining and reinforcing these supports will help ensure sustainability of curriculum implementation long-term.

Sustain and reinforce directors' and teachers' relationship-based practices

Relationship-based practices with families were consistently strong across directors and teachers. Ongoing coaching should continue to reinforce these practices and provide strategies for building family engagement, particularly in centers with new staff or higher staff turnover.

Enhance center resources

Both directors and teachers identified resource availability as slightly lower than other aspects of program climate. Centers may benefit from targeted inquiry and individualized availability of needed supports. Additionally, it is important to ensure staff have the materials, time, and tools needed to implement high-quality practices effectively long-term.

Strengthen instructional interactions through focused coaching

Coaching efforts should prioritize improving classroom interactions related to learning, particularly within the *Instructional Support* (preschool) and *Engaged Support for Learning* (toddler) domains and the *Early Language Support* and *Facilitated Exploration* dimensions (infant). Coaching should focus on strategies that promote concept development, meaningful feedback and interactions, and language development, helping teachers extend children's thinking, encourage conversation, and deepen learning during everyday activities and play.

Provide additional support for new teachers

Given the number of classrooms with newly assigned teachers, centers should consider structured onboarding and focused coaching for new staff. Early exposure to CLASS-aligned practices and mentoring from experienced teachers may help accelerate the development of high-quality teacher–child interactions.

Maintain and expand ongoing coaching opportunities

Findings suggest that classrooms with consistent coaching exposure demonstrate stronger interaction quality. Maintaining sustained, relationship-based coaching over time can support teachers in refining teaching practices and strengthening areas of need. Literature suggests planned modeling by coaches may be a particularly effective tool in promoting teacher learning and practice change.

Focus professional development on language and feedback strategies

Professional development should emphasize practical strategies for expanding children's language, asking open-ended questions, and providing responsive feedback that supports deeper thinking, engagement, and learning.

Use CLASS data to guide continuous quality improvement

Centers should continue to use CLASS observation data to identify strengths, monitor progress, and focus coaching and professional development efforts. Regular review of CLASS domains and dimensions, as well as current CLASS scores can help centers align improvement strategies with classroom needs.

Reinforce strengths in emotional and behavioral support

While instructional interactions require additional support, centers should continue to maintain and reinforce strong practices in *Emotional Support* and *Classroom Organization*, which provide the relational foundation for effective learning environments.

Standardize evaluation protocols for CLASS observations

Improved standardized protocols for evaluation should be employed to observe quality in a more uniform manner. Observation periods should take place during times when staffing and classroom attendance is typical and during periods in which a variety of activities are available to children and free play is apparent. It is also recommended that observers be diversified across age groupings and observation time points. Given the reliability standards of the CLASS, which allow for up to a one-point difference when determining inter-rater reliability, incorporating multiple observers may help mitigate potential scoring bias associated with relying on a single individual observer. Utilizing more than one observer, subsequently, can strengthen the reliability of data collection.

EARLY REACH FAMILIES' CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions. The subsections are listed under each question, which indicate where relevant findings are discussed.

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Process Question: Who are the families being served by Early REACH? What are the needs and risks of families?
    - Families' Characteristics
    - Families' Challenges, Risks, and Request for Resources
    - Parenting Practices

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Impact Question: How do parents perceive center quality? How does the center meet parent needs and engage parents effectively?
    - Families and their Early REACH Centers
    - Families' Perceptions of Center Quality
    - Parents' Perceptions of Teaching Practices
    - Parents' Perceptions of Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices
    - Families' Reasons for Leaving Early REACH

Data Sources

- Family survey
    - Fall 2024 (August – November 2024)
    - Spring 2025 (May – June 2025)
    - Fall 2025 (September – November 2025)

Introduction to Early REACH Families' Characteristics and Outcomes

One of the primary goals of Early REACH is to provide families and children with access to high-quality child care experiences. Research demonstrates that families and young children facing adversity, including economic hardship, benefit significantly from high-quality early childhood education settings (Zaslow et al., 2010). Early REACH centers function as a critical support for under-resourced families by promoting children's development, providing social and emotional support for parents, and supporting families' economic mobility (Masten & Gewirtz, 2006). Access to high-quality early childhood education plays an important role in family and child well-being, including fostering children's cognitive and social-emotional development (Flanagan & McPhee, 2009), promoting parent engagement in education (National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2018), enabling parents to work and stabilizing

family income (Costello et al., 2003), and connecting families to essential resources that support healthy development (Berlin et al., 2001).

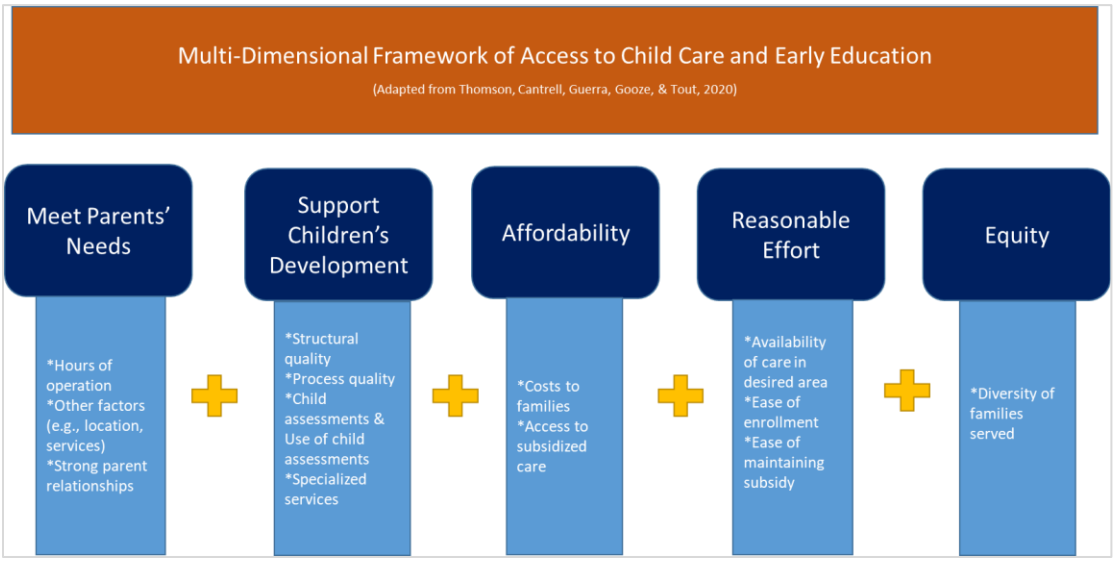
Families served by Early REACH are often exposed to multiple adversities. These challenges may affect their ability to obtain or maintain employment and can impact both economically vulnerable and otherwise stable families. Research highlights the strong co-occurrence between poverty and adversities such as mental health challenges, homelessness, and domestic violence. Poverty contributes to chronic stress, instability, and constrained environments, increasing the likelihood of compounding risks and contributing to negative outcomes across the lifespan (Redd et al., 2024).

In addition to access, family context plays a key role in shaping the extent to which children benefit from high-quality care. Families experiencing instability may face disruptions in child care arrangements, resulting in frequent transitions into and out of care settings (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). These disruptions can weaken teacher-child and teacher-parent relationships and limit children's consistent exposure to high-quality care.

Parent characteristics, particularly parenting self-efficacy, also influence the quality of family engagement and the continuity of children's learning experiences across settings. When parents feel confident in their ability to support their children's development, they are more likely to reinforce learning at home and engage with teachers (Bandura, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jones & Prinz, 2005). Through collaboration with teachers, parents help create alignment between home and school environments. This consistency is critical, as children are more likely to thrive when they experience stable, supportive interactions across both contexts (Sheridan et al., 2010; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

Consistent with the goal of facilitating access to high-quality care, the Early REACH evaluation examines how access to Early REACH child care slots is associated with family characteristics and their experiences with Early REACH centers. In this evaluation, access is conceptualized as the intersection of family needs and preferences, affordability, supply of care, center quality, and equity considerations (Thomson et al., 2020; Figure 68).

Figure 68. *Multidimensional Framework of Access to Child Care and Early Education*



The following sections describe information collected from 623 Early REACH families through a survey that was distributed from September – November 2025.[44] The primary caregiver was asked to complete the survey. Families from 27 out of 28 active Early REACH centers completed the most recent family survey.[45]

Families' demographic characteristics, risks for poverty, family adversities, and cumulative risk are presented below. Using a demographic cumulative risk scale is one way to evaluate program effectiveness by examining whether benefits vary for children across the economic risk spectrum. This approach involves calculating an aggregate risk score for each family and analyzing child outcomes in relation to that score to show the program's universal or differential effectiveness.

Families also reported on their prior child care arrangements, reasons for enrolling in Early REACH, and the financial and physical accessibility of their Early REACH child care arrangement. Parents were asked about their general emotional stability (emotional stress), their reactions to the demands of parenting (anxiety over parenting demands), and their confidence in their role as a parent (parental self-efficacy). Families also shared their experiences with Early REACH, including their satisfaction with their Early REACH center, perceptions of teachers' teaching and relationship-based practices, resources received from their center, and reasons for leaving Early REACH (if applicable). Comparisons by timepoint (fall 2024, spring 2025, and fall 2025) are presented for some outcomes, when appropriate.[46] These comparisons are descriptive and were not tested for statistical significance.

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[44] See Tables 44 and 45 in Appendix C for family survey return rates (current and exited families) by center.
[45] The 28th center joined Early REACH in September 2025, after the third timepoint of family survey data was already underway.
[46] 598 Early REACH families completed the Fall 2024 survey. 609 Early REACH families completed the Spring 2025 family survey.

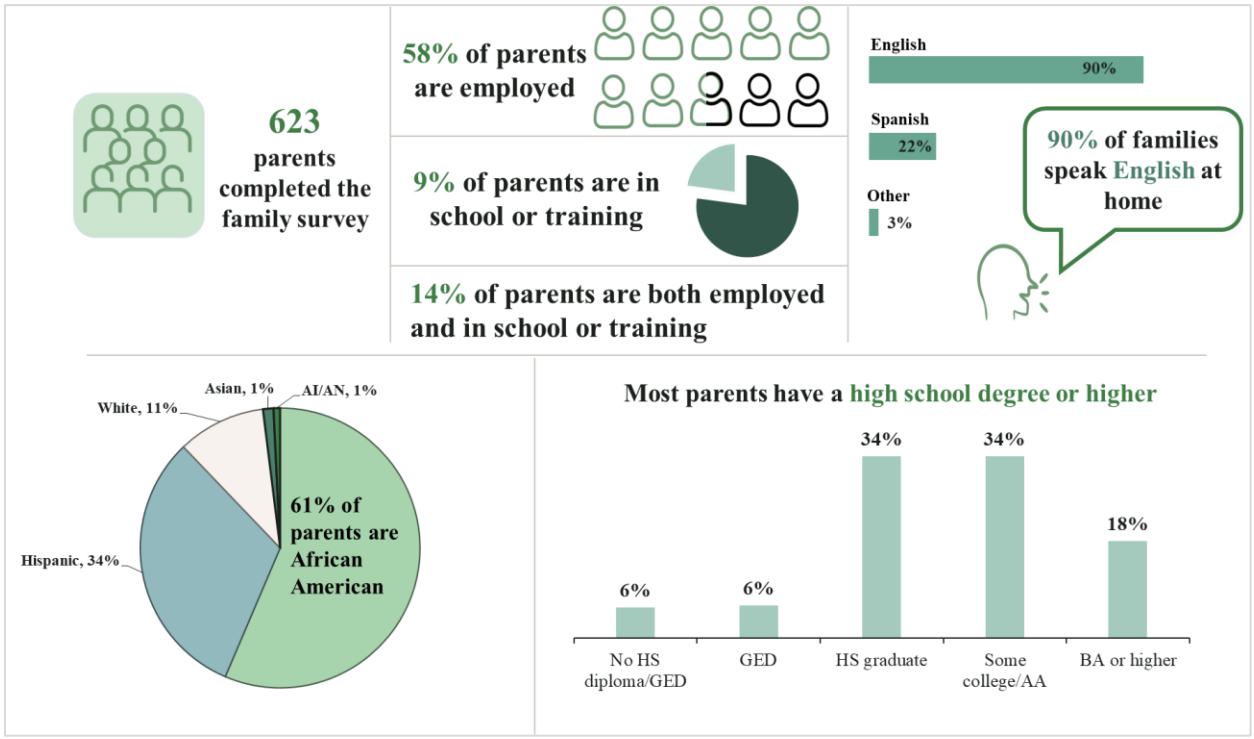
FAMILIES' CHARACTERISTICS

This section describes Early REACH families' characteristics, risks for poverty, asset limitations, adversities, challenges, and requests for resources. Knowing who Early REACH centers serve and the challenges they face can inform family engagement and strategies for supporting child and family well-being, during and after Early REACH implementation.

Out of the 623 parents who completed the family survey, slightly more than half (61%) identified as African American and about a third (34%) identified as Hispanic. Most families (90%) spoke English at home and about a quarter of families (22%) spoke Spanish at home. Most parents (94%) had at least a high school degree. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of parents were employed, 9% were in school or in training, and 14% were both employed and in school/training. The remaining 19% of parents were neither employed nor in school. Figure 69 summarizes characteristics of Early REACH families.

Data indicate that Early REACH is engaging a diverse range of families. Notably, many families had at least a high school degree and were employed, suggesting that the program is reaching families who do not qualify for subsidized services, yet still cannot afford high-quality forms of care. These families frequently do not qualify for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies, child care vouchers, or Head Start/Early Head Start, yet still face challenges affording high-quality, licensed center-based care. This pattern suggests that Early REACH may be addressing a critical gap in access to affordable, high-quality child care for this population of families.

Figure 69. *Characteristics of Families Enrolled in Early REACH, Fall 2025 (n=623)*



Note: Parents include guardians, grandparents, foster parents, and stepparents.
For race/ethnicity and primary languages spoken at home, respondents could choose more than one option, therefore the total percentage exceeds 100%. The other languages spoken at home include French (n = 4), Arabic (n = 3), Portuguese (n = 2), Yoruba (n = 2), Vietnamese (n = 1), American Sign Language (n = 1), Bambara (n = 1), Soninke (n = 1), Dari (n = 1), Garifuna (n = 1), Tigrigna (n = 1), and Ukrainian (n = 1).
Information about parents' employment and training statuses were collected through two separate questions, therefore some parents (14%) were both in school and employed.

Families' Challenges, Risks, and Request For Resources

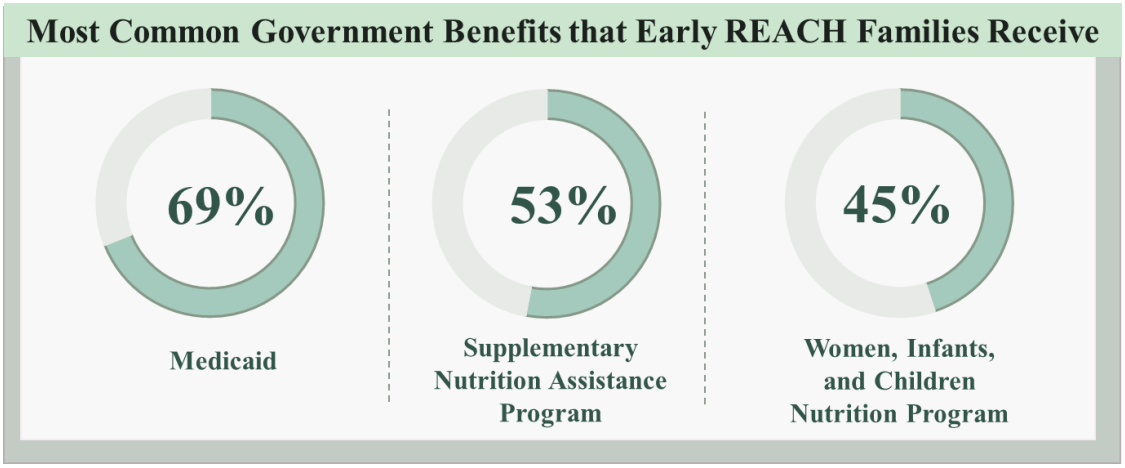
Families were asked to describe their poverty-related risks, challenges, and resource needs to inform the development of programming and supports for families. A summary is provided in the sections below.

Families' Asset Limitation and Risk for Poverty

Consistent with the above findings, Early REACH primarily serves families who are classified as "asset limited, income constrained, employed" (ALICE). These families have household incomes above the federal poverty level, but live paycheck-to-paycheck and possess limited financial

assets, leaving them economically vulnerable.[47] Figure 70 shows the most common government benefits that families received. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of families were receiving Medicaid, about half (53%) were participating in the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program, and 45% were participating in the Women, Infants, and Child Nutrition Program. All of these government benefits support families' and children's well-being and healthy development.

Figure 70. *Most Common Government Benefits Families Reported Receiving, Fall 2025 (n=623)*

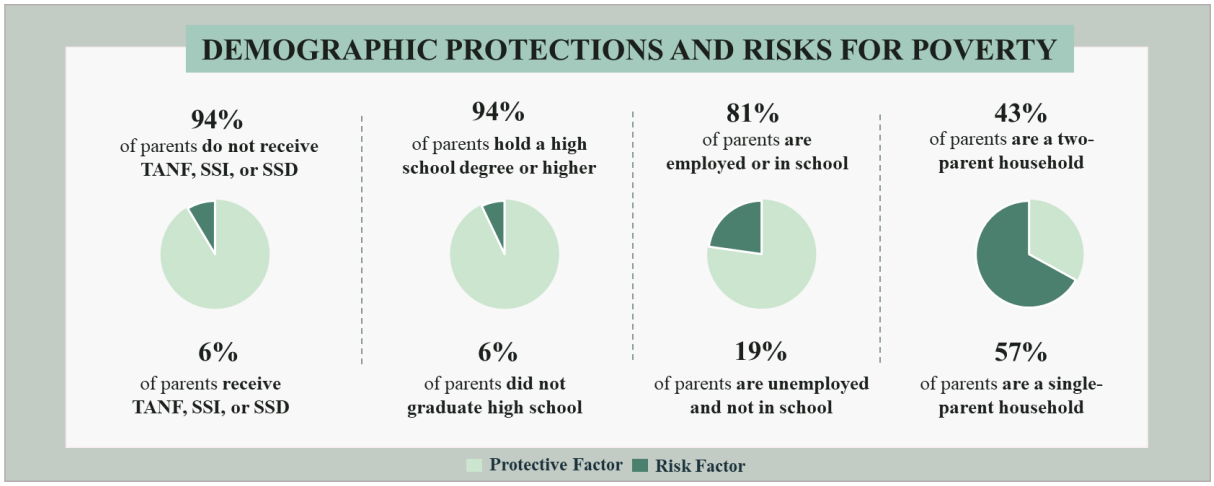


To better understand the family circumstances that may influence parenting, parents were asked to report on whether they experienced the following demographic risks for poverty: 1) family receives at least one of three types of government assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), supplemental security income (SSI), social security disability (SSD)), 2) parent does not have a high school diploma, 3) parent is unemployed and not in school/training, and/or 4) parent is single/unpartnered. Families who experience two or more demographic risks are more likely to experience poverty.

The most common demographic risks experienced were *parent was single/unpartnered* (57%) and *parent was unemployed and not in school* (19%; Figure 71).

[47] Out of the 623 families who completed the survey, only 41 (7%) were living at the poverty level, which was defined as receiving supplemental security income (SSI), social security disability (SSD), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and/or unemployment. To ensure comprehensive representation of Early REACH families, these 41 families were included in all analyses. The majority of families were classified as ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed).

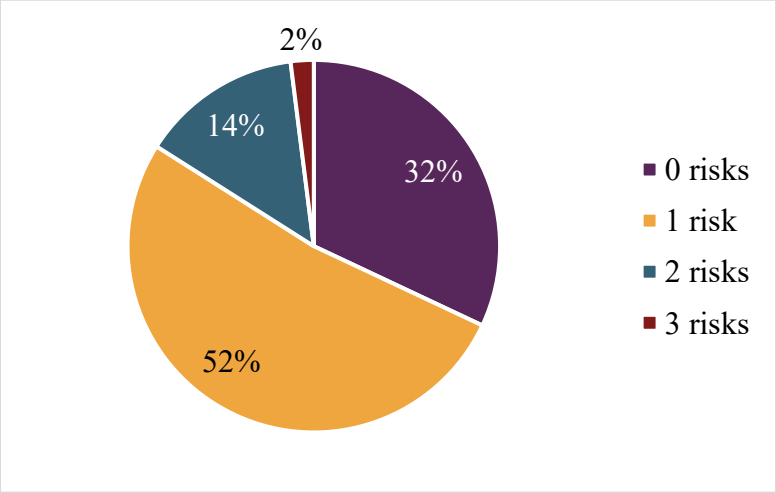
Figure 71. *Risks for Poverty Experienced by Families in Early REACH Centers, Fall 2025 (n=618 – 623)*



A cumulative risk indicator was created by summing all the demographic risk factors experienced by families. Cumulative risk captures the co-occurrence of multiple individual risk factors. Research suggests that cumulative risk is more strongly associated with family and child outcomes than individual risk factors, given that the effects of multiple risks accumulate and increase a family's stress level (Evans et al., 2013).

About a third of families (32%) did not experience any cumulative risk (Figure 72). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of Early REACH families experienced at least one risk. Of the families who experienced any risks, most experienced one risk (52%).

Figure 72. *Percent of Families Reporting Different Numbers of Risks*



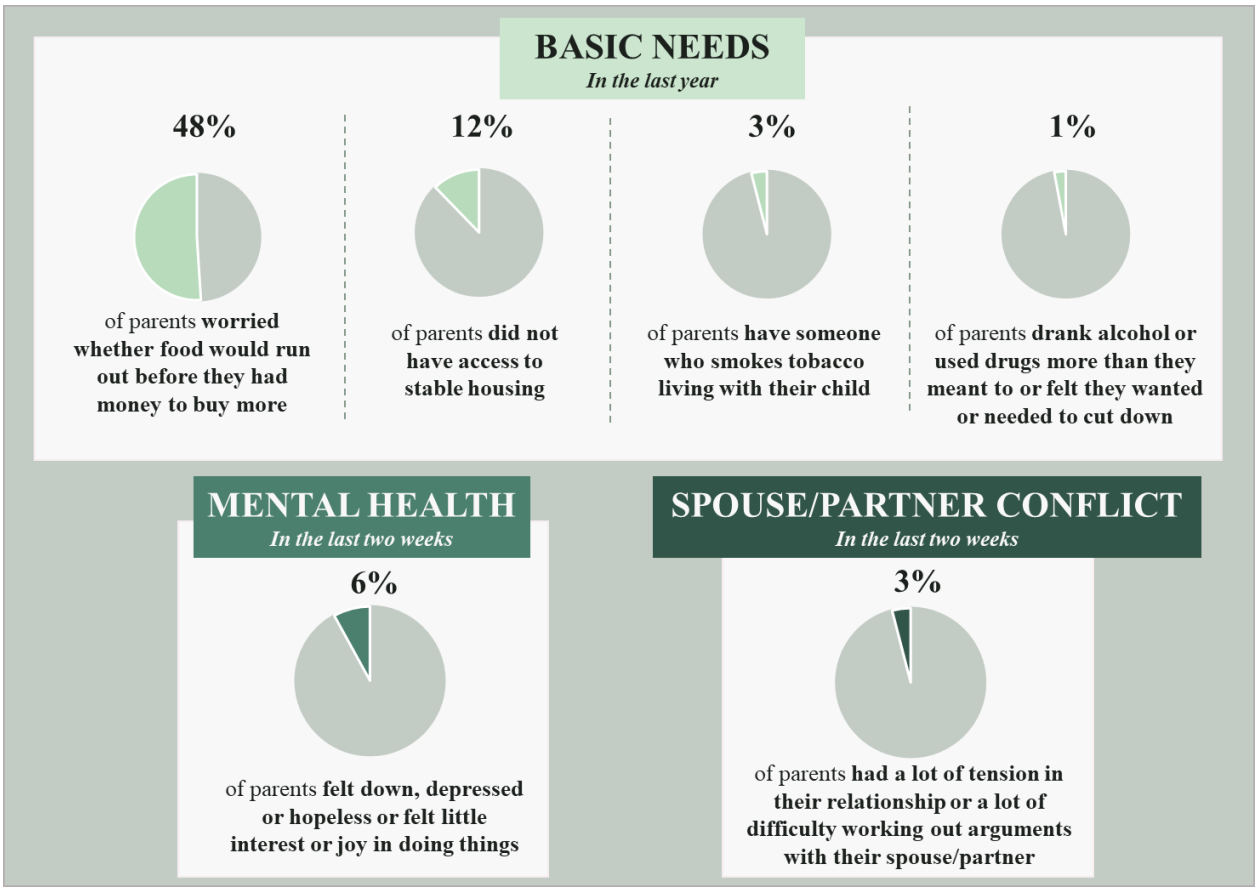
These findings further underscore the important role of Early REACH in supporting resource-limited families who may not qualify for child care subsidies but still find high-quality care

unaffordable. Notably, more than half of Early REACH households were single-parent households with young children, indicating a potentially greater need for reliable child care given the presence of only one caregiver in the home. National data demonstrates that single parent homes face higher financial burdens, frequently spending a greater portion of their income on care, and rely on child care to a greater extent in order to maintain employment (Wielk, 2022).

Family Challenges: Basic Needs, Family and Personal Needs, and Children's Needs

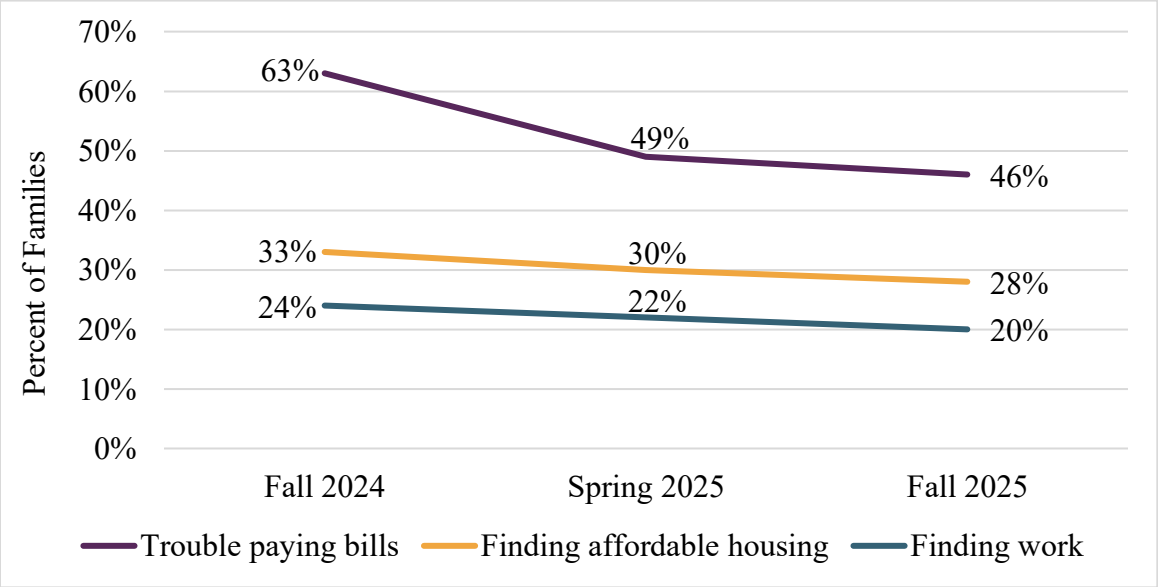
Early REACH families also reported on family adversities, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, tobacco use in the home, alcohol/drug use, parent depressive symptoms, and family violence. The most common adversity experienced was food insecurity (48%; Figure 73). Few parents indicated experiencing depressive symptoms, family violence, or tobacco, alcohol, or drug use.

Figure 73. *Adversities Experienced by Families in Early REACH Centers, Fall 2025 (n=610 – 617)*



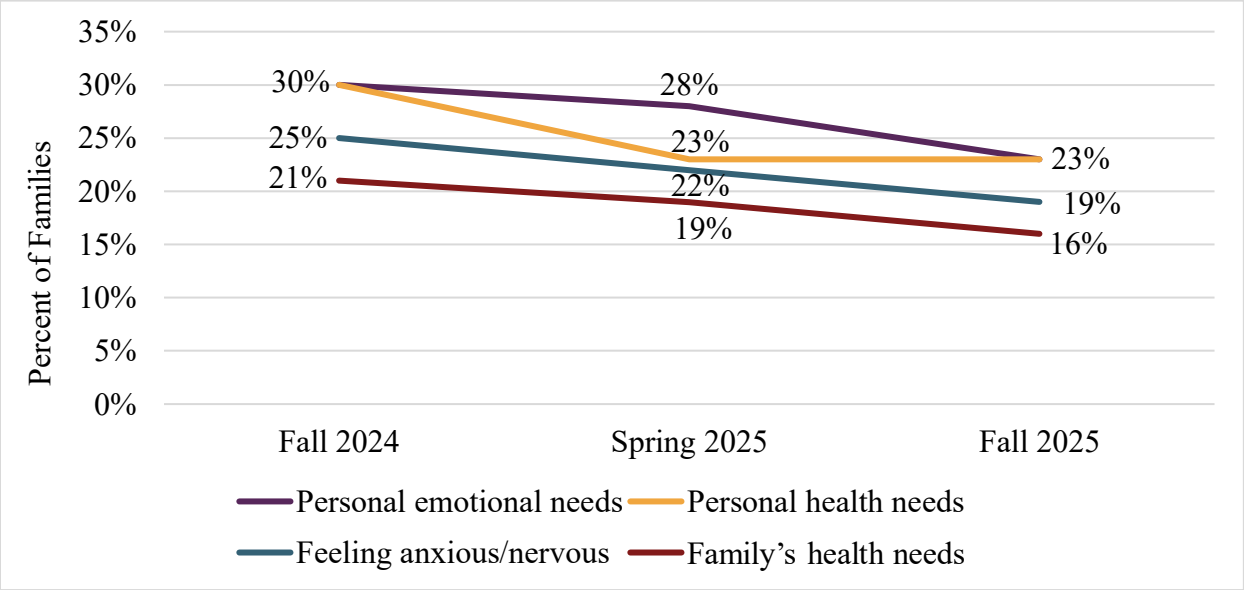
One of the aims of Early REACH is to improve the financial stability of families struggling to meet their basic needs by providing free child care. Within the area of basic needs, trouble paying bills was the most common challenge across all families (Figure 74). This continues to be the greatest challenge for families, as this trend has been observed since fall 2024. The percentage of families that reported trouble paying bills in fall 2025 (46%) decreased from 63% in fall 2024. Access to free child care may allow families to allocate financial resources to meet other necessities and empowers parents to seek employment. Finding affordable housing (28%) and work (20%) was also a challenge for about a quarter of families, a trend that has continued from fall 2024.

Figure 74. *Families' Challenges Related to Basic Needs, Fall 2024 (n=504), Spring 2025 (n=609), and Fall 2025(n=623)*



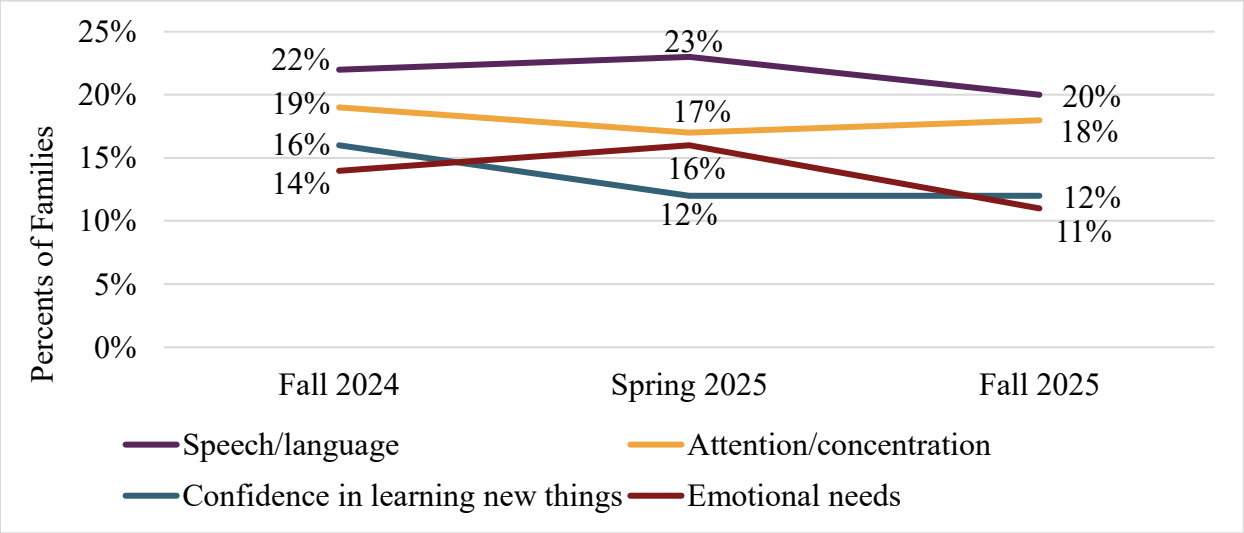
Regarding family and personal needs, about a quarter (23%) of families reported experiencing challenges with both personal emotional and health needs (Figure 75). In general, the percentage of families reporting challenges related to family and personal needs remained relatively similar across fall 2024, spring 2025, and fall 2025. Despite representing a small proportion of families, a decrease was observed in the share of families reporting challenges with personal needs.

Figure 75. *Families' Challenges Related to Family and Personal Needs, Fall 2024 (n=504), Spring 2025 (n=609), and Fall 2025 (n=623)*



About one quarter of parents (20%) reported challenges related to their children's speech/language, a trend that has continued from fall 2024 (22%; Figure 76). These concerns align with the needs teachers are seeing in their classroom and research identifying speech and language delays as one of the most common developmental issues in young children (Frelinger et al., 2023). There was a downward trend in parents' concern over their children learning new things and in their emotional needs. This may be attributable, in part, to greater access to high-quality care for children.

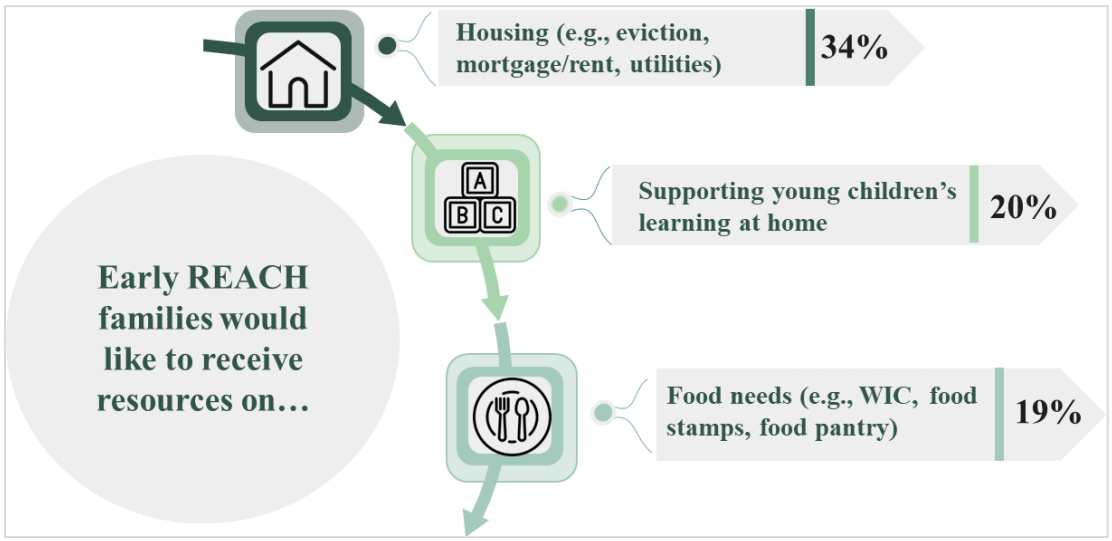
Figure 76. *Families' Report of Children's Needs, Fall 2024 (n=504), Spring 2025 (n=609), and Fall 2025 (n=623)*



FAMILIES' REQUESTS FOR RESOURCES

Families indicated resources that they believed would be helpful to them (Figure 77). Families reported that resources related to basic needs would be the most helpful. Specifically, 34% of families would like resources related to housing and 20% of families would like to receive resources for supporting children's learning at home. Nineteen percent (19%) of families would like resources related to food needs, such as information on food pantries.

Figure 77. *Resources Requested by Families, Fall 2025 (n=623)*



Note: Other resources that were not frequently selected include: resources on parenting (13%), resources on mental health (13%), resources on physical health (10%), resources for connecting with child's service providers and programs (10%), resources on family conflict (4%), and resources on drugs and/or alcohol (1%).

Resources Families Received From Their Child Care Centers

30% of Early REACH families received resources from their program

An important aspect of high-quality centers is providing resources that support families' well-being. Thirty percent (30%) of families reported receiving at least some resources from their Early REACH child care center, a 20 percentage-point increase from spring 2025 The most common resource received from Early REACH child care centers was related to food needs, with 18% of all families indicating they had received information about food support.

27% of families who wanted resources related to food needs received such resources from their center

Of the 116 families who indicated that resources related to food needs would be helpful for them, only 27% of them received such resources from their Early REACH center. However, it is not clear that families ever asked their child care centers for these resources. Families are likely to have indicated their interest on our survey, but not directly to child care center staff. Our next survey will clarify this issue by asking parents if they have ever asked their child care center for each type of resource to determine whether families see their centers as sources of information for these resources.

Together with their coaches, directors should consider additional ways of distributing information more universally, specifically related to food needs, as it was by far the most often requested resource. This may be a resource that can be distributed center-wide rather than upon request.

Early REACH leadership should continue to provide information on resources to directors to support families in meeting their basic needs. United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) continues to share information about their Integrated Client Journey (ICJ), a resource of social services for individuals experiencing financial instability, with directors at director's meetings. UWGH should also continue to encourage directors to share 2-1-1 resources with families. Additionally, it is important for center directors to continue supporting family well-being by conducting regular check-ins with families about their evolving challenges.

PARENTING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

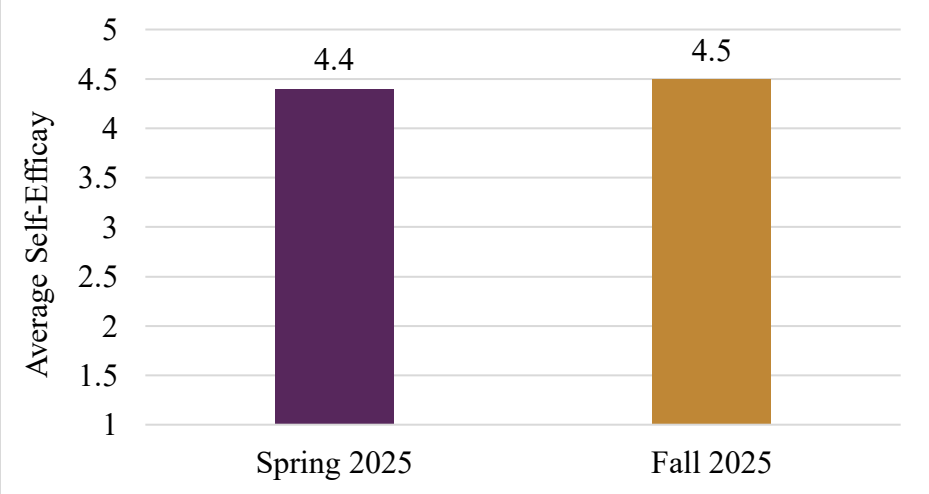
Parents were also asked about their experiences with parenting and the challenges they may face in raising young children. This included questions about their perceived parental self-efficacy and levels of parenting stress.

PARENTAL SELF-EFFICACY

Parents' beliefs about their capabilities and effectiveness in their parenting role, referred to as parental self-efficacy, have implications for both parent and child well-being. Parents with higher levels of parental self-efficacy are better able to manage emotional distress and cope with the demands of parenting. Consequently, their children are more likely to benefit from high-quality child care centers, as these parents feel confident in their ability to reinforce the skills their children acquire in the classroom.

In fall 2025, parents (n = 616) reported high self-efficacy, on average, (4.5 out of 5.0), a trend that continued from spring 2025 (Figure 78).[48] This suggests that parents in Early REACH centers feel confident about their ability to successfully parent their children. These parental self-efficacy ratings are higher than national samples of ALICE families who often experience significantly lower levels of self-efficacy compared to higher-income counterparts due to chronic economic stressors (United for ALICE, 2020).

Figure 78. *Parents' Average Self-Efficacy, Spring 2025 (n=608) and Fall 2025 (n=616)*



Note: Self-efficacy was rated on a 5-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Not sure*, 4=*Agree*, 5=*Strongly agree*) and average self-efficacy was calculated.

[48] Parental self-efficacy was assessed using the Parenting Self-Agency Measure (PSAM; Dumka, et al., 1996).

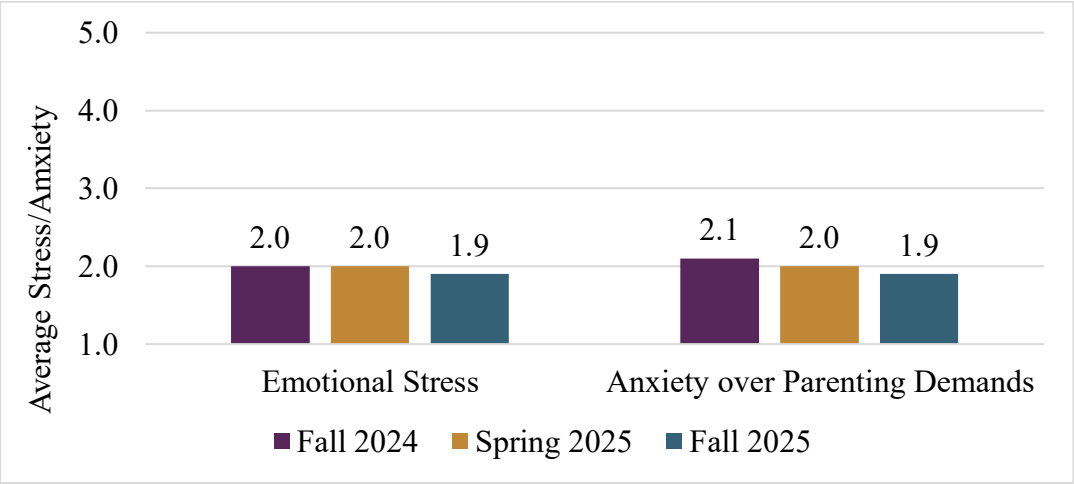
PARENTS' EMOTIONAL STRESS AND PARENTING DEMANDS

It is well established that parents' mental well-being shapes parenting practices and the quality of parent-child interactions. Parents' feelings of general anxiety and depression, as well as the stress related to the demands of parenting, have been linked to increased behavioral problems in children, which in turn can impact the classroom environment. Parents' mental well-being can also influence the extent to which positive caregiving practices, such as routines, responsiveness to children's needs, and stability, are aligned across the home and child care settings.

Parents reported on two aspects of their well-being: their *emotional stress* (i.e., the level of distress related to anxiety, depression, and/or isolation) and on their *parenting demands anxiety* (i.e., the level of anxiety resulting from the demands of parenting).[49]

On average, parents generally reported low *emotional stress* and *anxiety over parenting demands*, a trend that continued from fall 2024 (Figure 79). Parents in two out of 27 active Early REACH centers experienced higher levels of *emotional stress* (anxiety, depression, isolation) (*Average* ≥ 2.5) and parents in these same two centers had higher levels of *anxiety over parenting demands* (*Average* ≥ 2.5). Parents in these centers may benefit from additional support and resources from Early REACH centers to help manage stress and anxiety and promote overall mental well-being. Additionally, centers may require guidance on best practices for supporting families experiencing high levels of stress or hardship. To help all parents maintain lower levels of emotional strain related to parenting demands, directors should continue to offer and expand access to parenting resources and workshops focused on mental health and well-being.

Figure 79. *Parents' Average Emotional Stress and Anxiety over Parenting Demands, Fall 2024 (n=593-594), Spring 2025 (n=607–608), and Fall 2025 (n=616–617)*



Note: Emotional stress and *anxiety over parenting demands* were rated on a 5-point scale (1=*Strongly disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Not sure*, 4=*Agree*, 4=*Strongly agree*) and average *emotional stress* and *anxiety over parenting demands* were calculated.

[49] Parents' *emotional stress* and *anxiety over parenting demands* were assessed using the Parenting Stress Index (PSI-4; Abidin, 2012).

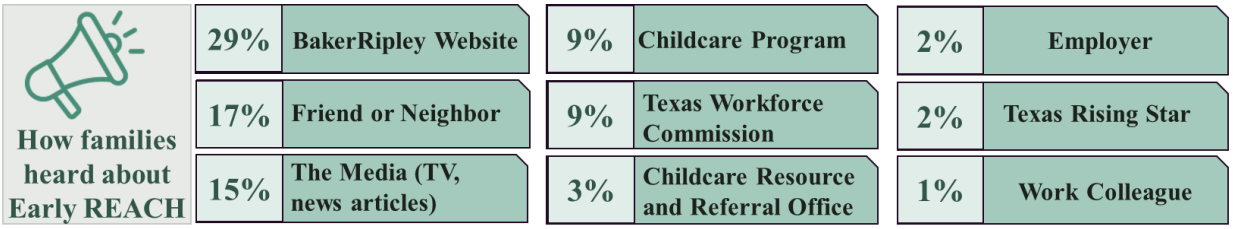
FAMILIES AND THEIR EARLY REACH CENTERS

To understand how families initially connected with Early REACH, respondents were asked to report on how they first heard about Early REACH. Findings are discussed in the sections below.

HOW FAMILIES HEARD ABOUT EARLY REACH

Families heard about the Early REACH program from a variety of sources (Figure 80), with the BakerRipley website (29%), from a friend or neighbor (17%), and media (e.g., television and news articles; 15%) being the most common sources.

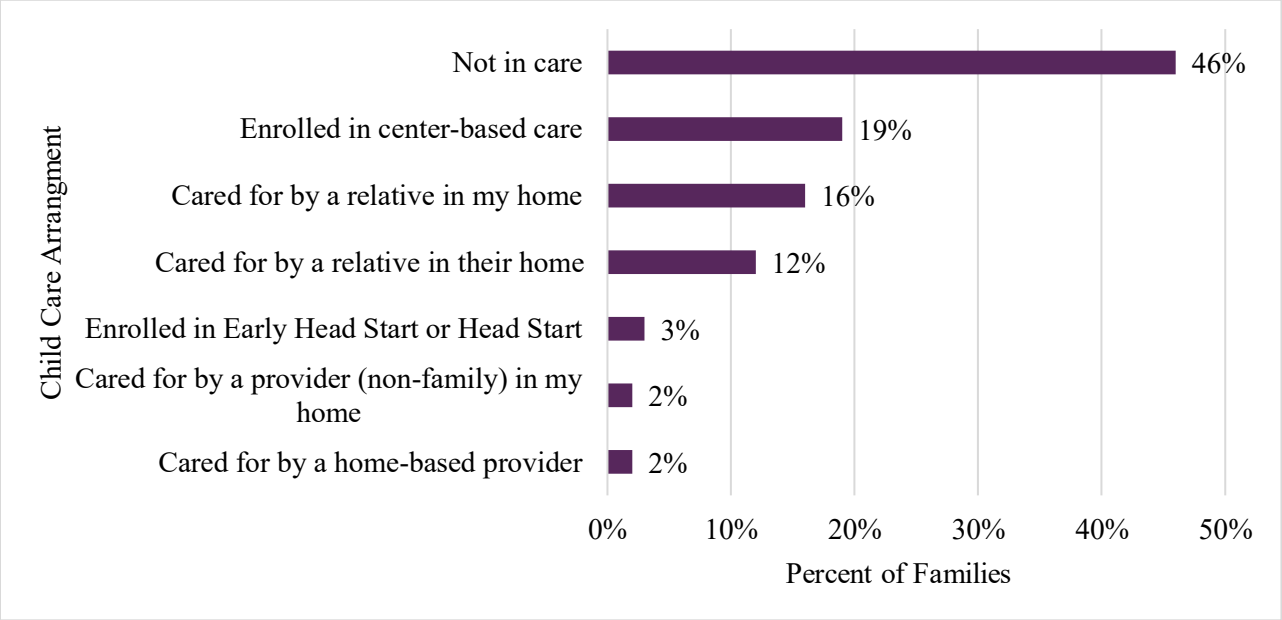
Figure 80. *Sources Through Which Families Heard About Early REACH, Fall 2025 (n=615)*



FAMILIES' PRIOR CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES

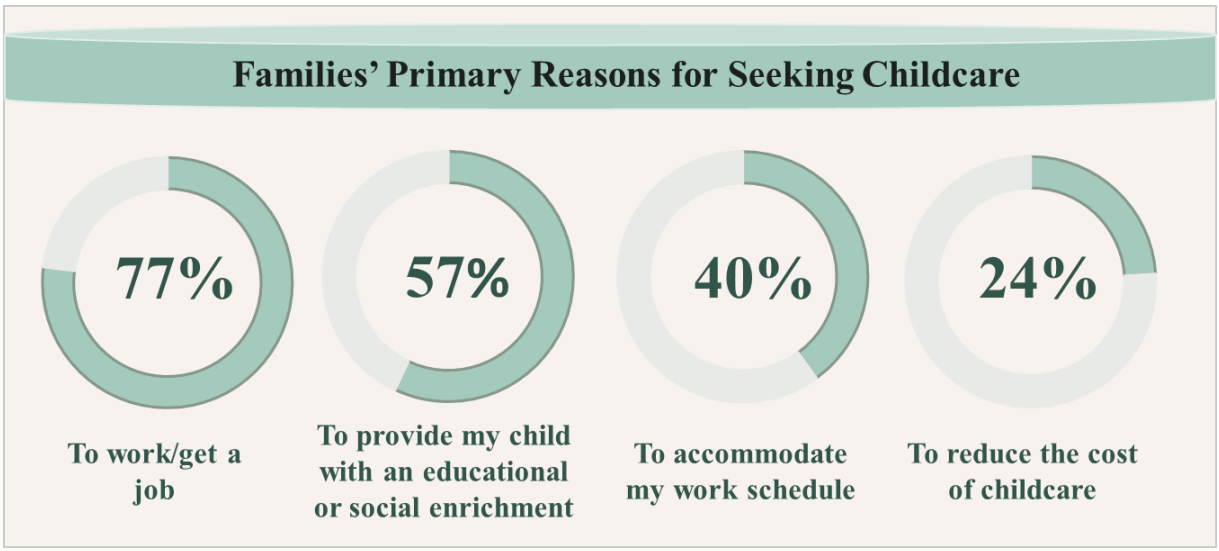
Families were asked several questions to better understand their prior child care experiences and their reasons for seeking child care. Before enrolling in Early REACH, almost half of children were not in care (46%) and 19% were enrolled in a different center (Figure 81). Twenty-eight percent (28%) of families had their children in relative care either in their own home or in the home of the relative.

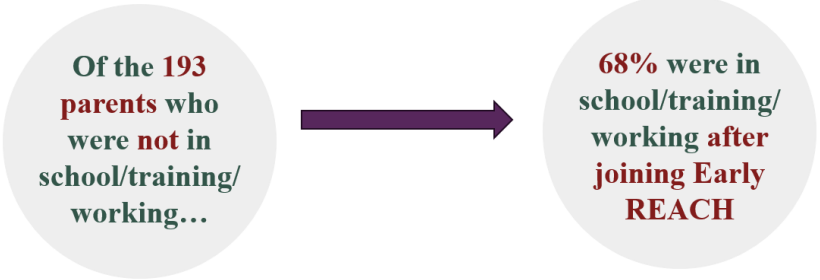
Figure 81. *Families' Prior Child Care Arrangement, Fall 2025 (n=604)*



Families' primary motivations for seeking child care were to obtain employment (77%), to provide their child with educational or social enrichment (57%), and to accommodate their work schedules (43%; Figure 82). In addition, about a quarter of families (24%) were also seeking to reduce the cost of child care.

Figure 82. *Families' Primary Reasons for Seeking Child Care, Fall 2025 (n=623)*





Families were also asked about their prior and current work or school arrangements. Before enrolling their children in Early REACH, 31% of parents (n = 193) reported not being employed or enrolled in school. However, after joining Early REACH, 130 of these parents (68%) reported working or being enrolled in school.[50] Of the 246 parents who reported looking for child care to obtain employment and were unemployed at the time of enrollment, 52% became employed after joining Early REACH. These findings suggest that Early REACH has offered a critical vehicle to support parents' ability to work or attend school/training.

Families' Current Child Care Experiences

There were notable changes in the proportion of family income spent on child care after enrolling in Early REACH (Table 30). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of families spent none of their family income on child care in their *current* child care arrangement compared to 21% of families who spent none of their income on child care in their *previous* child care arrangement. Thirty-six percent (36%) more families were saving money on child care as a result of Early REACH, suggesting an improvement in accessibility of high-quality child care from an affordability perspective.[51]

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2024), affordable child care is defined as costing no more than 7% of household income. Among the 323 families who had a child care arrangement prior to Early REACH, 69% were spending more than 11% of their household income on care, and notably, 29% were spending over 40% of their income.

Following participation in Early REACH, the proportion of families experiencing high child care costs decreased substantially. Approximately 25% of families reported spending more than 11% of their income on child care, and only 6% (18 families) reported spending over 40%.

These findings suggest that Early REACH has been effective in reducing the financial burden of child care for ALICE families, thereby helping to lower their risk of economic instability and potential poverty.

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[50] Only 191 of the 193 parents who were not employed or in school/training before joining Early REACH provided information about their current employment and in school/training status.
[51] See Figure 68 for a definition of how access to care is being defined for this evaluation.

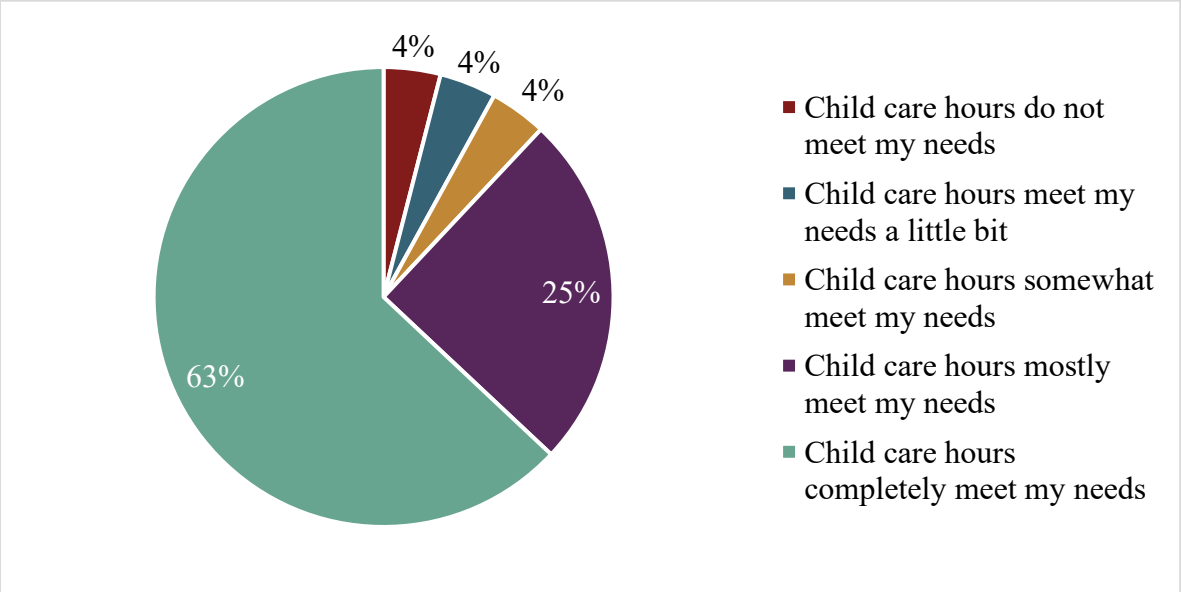
Table 30. *Proportion of Families' Annual Income Spent on Child Care Prior to Early REACH and While in Early REACH, Fall 2025 (n=322 – 323)*

	Prior to Early REACH	**In Early REACH**
Proportion of family income	*% of families*	*% of families*
None	21%	57%
1-10%	10%	23%
11-40%	40%	14%
41% or more	29%	6%

Physical proximity of child care for Early REACH families was also notable.[51] Over half (52%) of families travel 15 minutes or less from their home to their current Early REACH child care arrangement. An additional quarter of families (23%) report traveling between 15 and 25 minutes to their current child care arrangement from their home.

Another aspect of access to high-quality child care and early education is whether families feel the amount of child care they receive meets their needs.[51] Families were asked to indicate the extent to which the amount of child care they have access to per week meets their needs (Figure 83). The vast majority of families (88%) felt that the hours of child care they receive *mostly* or *completely* meet their needs, suggesting that Early REACH is supporting families' access to high-quality child care.

Figure 83. *Families' Perceptions of Extent to Which Amount of Child Care Meets Their Needs, Fall 2025 (n=609)*



FAMILIES' PERCEPTIONS OF CENTER QUALITY

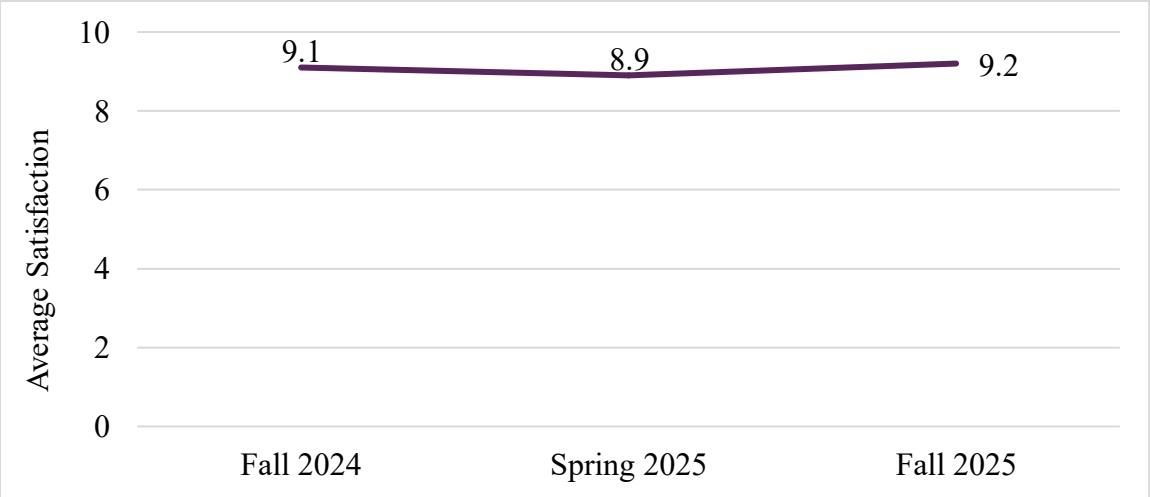
Families' perceptions of their child care center, including their satisfaction and perceptions of staff, are important predictors of their engagement with the center, their likelihood of remaining enrolled, and the quality of teacher-parent relationships. Together, these factors influence the extent to which children benefit from early childhood care and education.

FAMILIES' SATISFACTION WITH EARLY REACH CENTERS

Figure 84. *Average Family Satisfaction Rating (n=608)*

In fall 2025, families (n = 608) were asked about their overall satisfaction with their Early REACH center. Families were highly satisfied with their children's Early REACH centers, rating them 9.2 out of 10 overall (Figure 84). There was variability in families' satisfaction by center, with averages ranging between 8.5 and 10.0. The average satisfaction rating has consistently remained high since fall 2024 (Figure 85).

Figure 85. *Families' Average Satisfaction with their Center, Fall 2024 (n=594), Spring 2025 (n=602), and Fall 2025 (n=608)*



Families indicated how satisfied they were with various characteristics of their Early REACH center (Table 31).[52] Overall, families reported high levels of satisfaction across these

[52] Families indicated their satisfaction with their Early REACH center's characteristics on a 4-point scale (1=*Not at all satisfied*, 2=*Somewhat unsatisfied*, 3=*Somewhat satisfied*, 4=*Very satisfied*).

characteristics. In fall 2025, families were most satisfied with the affordability of centers (89%), the languages spoken by staff (86%), and their center's values (86%). Fewer, but still a majority of families, were *very satisfied* with accommodation for special needs (79%), staff communication with families (78%), and resources or supports for families (73%), a trend that has persisted since fall 2024. These areas represent a potential focus for Early REACH centers, particularly for professional development aimed at strengthening teacher–parent relationships and enhancing family engagement practices. UWGH should also continue to share free or low-cost community resources with center directors so that they may continue to respond to families' needs.

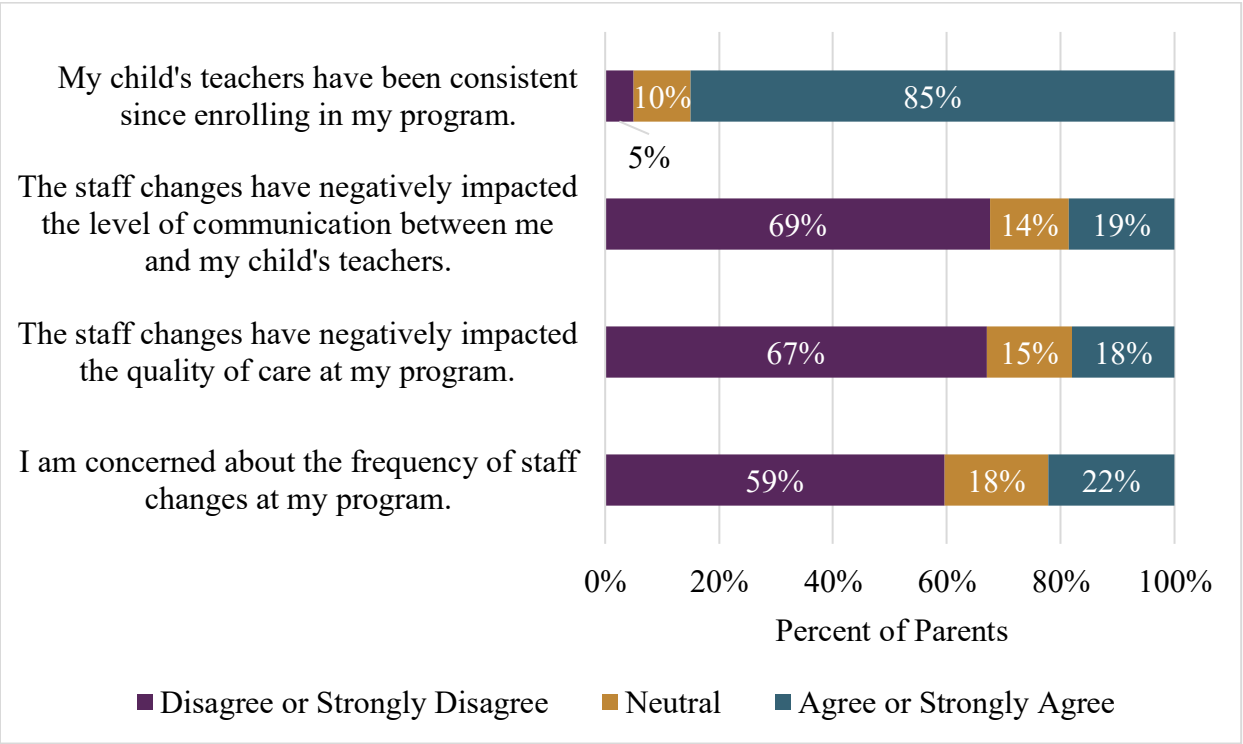
Table 31. *Percent of Families that were Very Satisfied with Early REACH Center Characteristics, Fall 2025 (n=605–616)*

	% of families that were *Very Satisfied*
Affordability of program	89%
Languages spoken by staff	86%
Center values	86%
Credentials/qualifications of center and staff	85%
Diversity of other families	85%
Staff relationships with children	84%
Hours of operation	83%
Physical space	83%
Developmentally appropriate activities and materials	83%
Staff diversity	83%
Health and safety of center	82%
Curriculum and learning environment	81%
Flexibility of center	80%
Accommodation for special needs	79%
Staff communication with families	78%
Center resources/supports for families	73%

Families' Perceptions of Staff Consistency

Parents were asked about their perceptions of the consistency of staff at their Early REACH child care center. Most parents (85%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their child's teachers have been consistent since they enrolled in their center (Figure 86). About two thirds of parents did not believe that the staff changes had negatively impacted the level of communication between them and their child's teachers (69%) or that staff changes had negatively impacted the quality of care at their center (67%). Fifty-nine percent (59%) of parents did not express concerns about the frequency of staff changes at their Early REACH center.

Figure 86. *Parents' Perceptions of the Consistency of Staff at their Early REACH Center, Fall 2025 (n=609-615)*

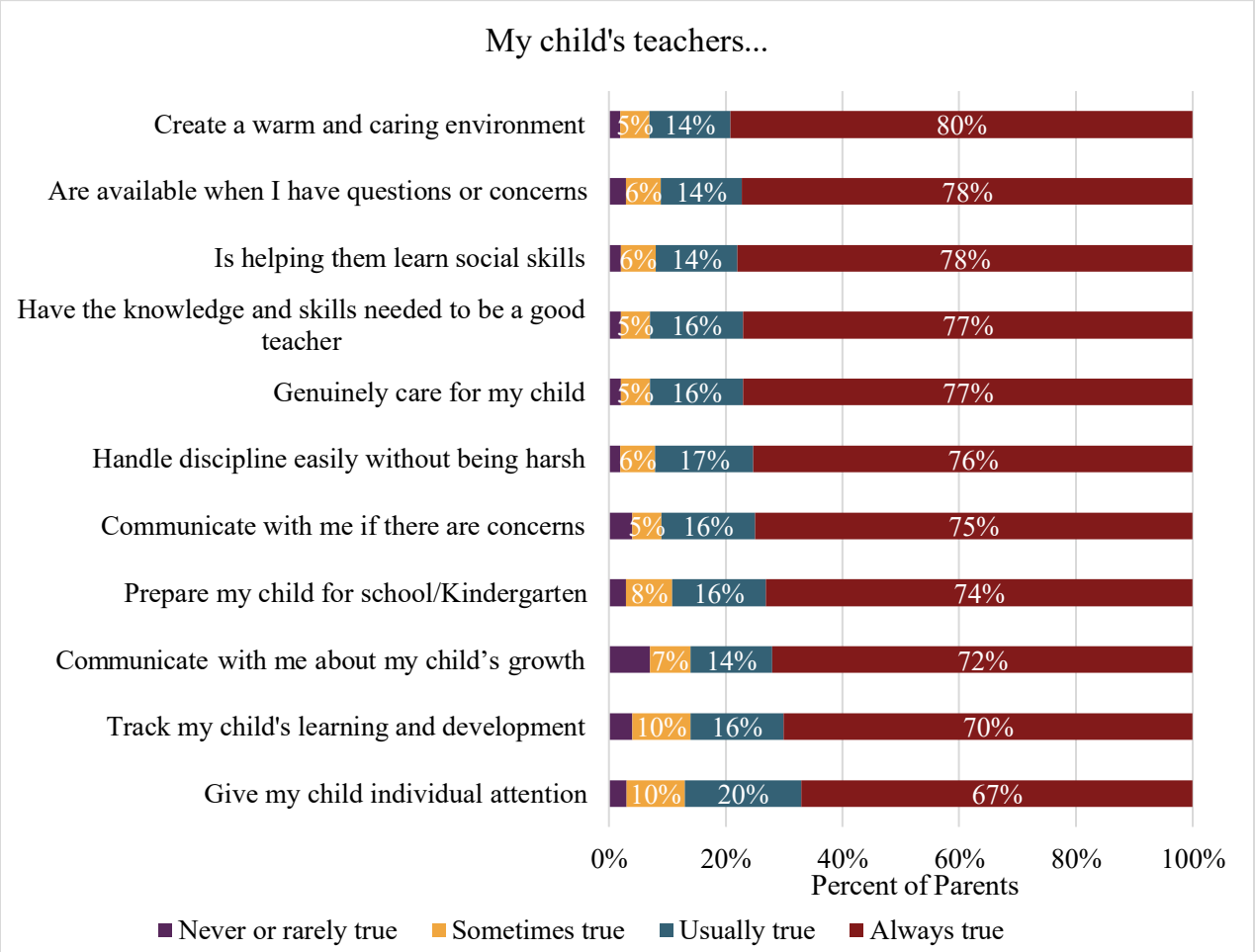


Parents' Perceptions of Teaching Practices

Families reported on teachers' use of high-quality family engagement and teaching practices in the classroom, such as teachers' communication skills, the creation of a warm and caring classroom environment, and the promotion of social-emotional development and school readiness.[53] Most parents felt that their child(ren)'s teachers created a warm and caring environment (80%), are available when parents have questions or concerns (78%), and help their children learn social skills (78%; Figure 87). Seventy-seven percent (77%) of parents also believed that their child(ren)'s teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to be a good teacher and genuinely care for their child(ren).

[53] Family experiences with teachers were assessed using the Head Start FACES, MN Household Child Care Survey (Elicker, 1997).

Figure 87. *Parents' Perceptions of High-Quality Teaching Practices, Fall 2025 (n=609-616)*



Parents' Perceptions of Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices

One of the most effective ways of engaging families in child care centers is by using a relationship-based family approach, a positive, collaborative process between the family receiving services and those supporting them (e.g., child care teachers). This process allows teachers and families to work together to identify solutions that draw on the family's strengths and assets.

The Strength Based Practices Inventory is a measure that asks parents about their perceptions of the extent to which their child's teachers use a relationship-based approach.[54] There are four related constructs that define the parent-teacher relationship: 1) how the teacher identifies and builds on family strengths and skills (identification and use of strengths); 2) the sensitivity and

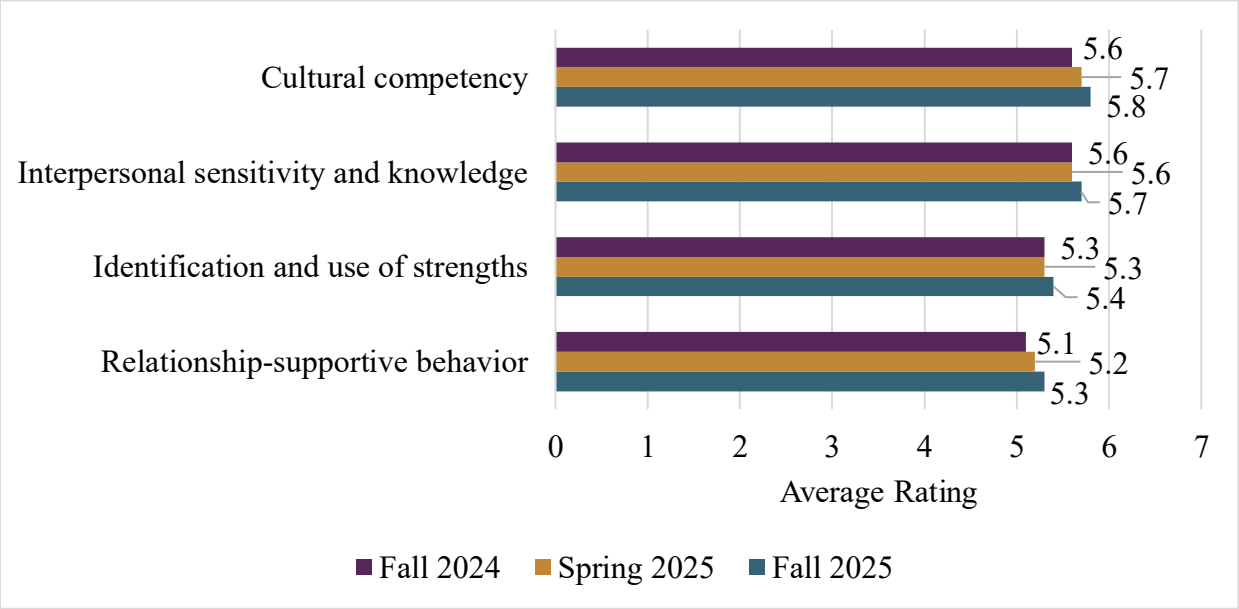
[54] Families' perceptions of teachers' use of relationship-based practices were assessed using the Strengths-Based Practices Inventory (SBPI; Green, McAllister, & Tarte, 2004).

responsiveness to families' cultural backgrounds and beliefs (cultural competency); 3) the knowledge and sensitivity to family needs (interpersonal sensitivity and knowledge); and 4) teachers' facilitation of parents' relationships with other parents and community members (relationship-supportive behavior).

Parents were asked how much they agree with statements regarding their child(ren)'s teacher on a scale of one to seven, with seven representing strong agreement. A high score represents family perceptions that teachers consistently employ strong relationship-based practices within a given construct.

In fall 2025, Early REACH parents felt that teachers demonstrated the most strength in being *sensitive and responsive to parents' cultural backgrounds and beliefs* (*Average* = 5.8) and being *knowledgeable and sensitive to family's needs* (*Average* = 5.7), a pattern that has been observed since fall 2024 (Figure 88). To continue promoting teachers' relationship-supportive behaviors, Early REACH should continue to offer professional development and coaching focused on family engagement strategies. Additionally, centers may want to continue to brainstorm ways to facilitate connections between parents and the wider community.

Figure 88. *Parents' Perceptions of Teachers' Relationship-Based Practices, Fall 2024 (n=593), Spring 2025 (n=608), and Fall 2025 (n=616-618)*



Note: Scores range from 1-7, with higher scores indicating greater agreement that teachers use more relationship-based practices.

Families' Reasons for Leaving Early REACH

Families who were no longer a part of Early REACH were asked why their child is no longer receiving Early REACH benefits (Table 32). Close to a fifth of families (17%) who completed the Fall 2025 family survey left Early REACH between May and November 2025. Most families (71%) indicated that their child(ren) aged out of the program and transitioned to kindergarten.

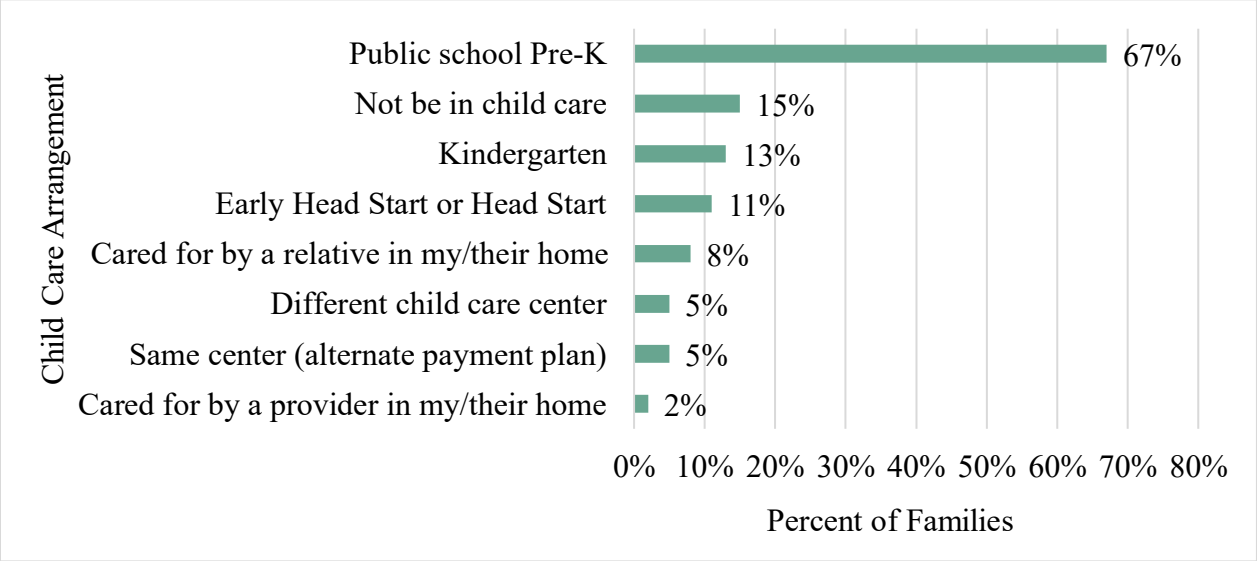
An additional 18% of families indicated that the reason was related to accessibility (i.e., *I moved and/or relocated* [8%]; *The care available was not near my home/work* [5%]; *The care available did not accommodate my work hours* [4%]; *I was unable to get child care for all of my children* [1%]). Importantly, very few families (7%) exited Early REACH due to dissatisfaction with the center or their child(ren)'s teachers.

Table 32. *Reasons Why Families Were No Longer Enrolled in Early REACH, Fall 2025 (n=105)*

	% of families
My child aged out of program and transitioned to kindergarten.	71%
I moved and/or relocated.	8%
The care available was not near my home/work.	5%
My life circumstances changed, and I no longer needed care.	5%
The care available did not accommodate my work hours.	4%
I was unhappy with the quality of the center my child was placed in.	4%
My child was withdrawn from the center because they were frequently absent.	3%
I was unhappy with the teachers in my child's classroom.	3%
I found other care for my child at a center that works better for my family.	2%
I was unable to get child care for all of my children.	1%

Two thirds of families (67%) who exited Early REACH between May and November 2025 planned to enroll their child in public school Pre-K, which aligned with the primary reason for their exit: their child aging out of the program (Figure 89). In fact, approximately half (54%) of families whose children aged out of Early REACH planned to enroll their child into public school Pre-K.

Figure 89. *Families' Child Care Arrangement After Exiting Early REACH, Fall 2025 (n=105)*



SUMMARY

Overall, Early REACH is serving a diverse population of families, with the majority identifying as African American (61%) or Hispanic (34%). Most parents reported having at least a high school education (94%) and currently working or in school/training (81%). The program is reaching many low resource families who often do not qualify for traditional subsidies but still face challenges affording high-quality child care. Most families were economically vulnerable, with 68% experiencing at least one risk factor for poverty and common reliance on public benefits such as Medicaid (69%), SNAP (53%), and WIC (45%). Single-parent households represent the most common demographic risk (57%).

Families reported multiple challenges, including food insecurity (48%), difficulty paying bills (46%), and ongoing concerns related to housing and employment stability. However, there were signs of improvement over time, including declines in financial strain (e.g., reduced difficulty paying bills from fall 2024 to fall 2025) and decreases in reported concerns about children's development in families participating in Early REACH.

Early REACH is contributing to improving access to affordable care and economic stability. A substantial reduction was observed in the proportion of families spending high shares of household income on child care, with only 6% now spending more than 40% of income compared to 29% prior to Early REACH enrollment. Most families now report no child care cost burden (57%), and 88% report that their current child care meets their scheduling needs. Additionally, over half of parents (68%) who were unemployed at enrollment subsequently became employed or entered school/training, suggesting important positive links between access to care and economic participation.

Families reported high satisfaction with Early REACH centers overall (*Average* = 9.2/10), with particularly strong ratings for affordability, staff qualifications, language accessibility, and center values. Lower satisfaction ratings were observed for special needs accommodations, staff communication, and family resources, which have remained consistent over time.

Family engagement and teacher relationships were also strong. Most families reported positive perceptions of teacher warmth, responsiveness, and instructional quality. Parents generally reported high self-efficacy and low emotional stress. However, parents from a small subset of centers showed elevated stress and parenting demand concerns, suggesting the need for targeted support.

Finally, families' perceptions of teachers' relationship-based practices were rated positively, particularly in the context of cultural responsiveness and sensitivity to family needs, though opportunities remain to continue to strengthen peer connections and broader community linkage supports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue support for affordable child care options for families

Early REACH and policymakers should continue strengthening its focus on making child care affordable by reducing the financial burden of child care and supporting parental employment. Continued investment in subsidies for working families who do not qualify for public assistance would markedly sustain this impact, particularly for ALICE households.

Expand resources for families

Given persistent challenges related to food insecurity, housing instability, and difficulty paying bills, Early REACH should continue to consider expanding resources available to families regarding these essential needs. In addition, policymakers should consider additional supports for centers in developing more systematic referral pathways, offering navigation supports for families, and strengthening partnerships with community-based organizations to facilitate family access to services.

Focus professional development to facilitate family support systems and working with families of children with special needs

To support families' experiences with their centers, focused professional development should continue to enhance staff communication, special needs accommodations, and family support systems. Additionally, with the support of policymakers, professional development should consider ways to effectively engage parents to strengthen home–center alignment, parent-to-parent connections, and community integration to further support family well-being.

Enhance resources for families with high levels of stress

Although overall family stress levels were low, the presence of a small subset of centers with families experiencing elevated stress suggests a continued need for focused coaching and supports for specific centers to continue to better ensure centers are well equipped to effectively respond to and support these families.

EARLY REACH CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORS

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation question:

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Process Question: What are children's social-emotional needs and how have these changed over time?

Data Sources

- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) data downloaded from the e-DECA system
  - Early 2024 (January – February 2024)
  - Spring 2024 (April – May 2024)
  - Fall 2024 (August – October 2024)
  - Early 2025 (January – February 2025)
  - Spring 2025 (April – May 2025)
  - Fall 2025 (August – October 2025)

INTRODUCTION TO EARLY REACH CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORS

Research studies on early care and education interventions have found an association between the quality of early care and education programs and children's positive developmental outcomes (NICHD ECCRN, 2002). Children in high-quality early care and education programs demonstrate positive social and emotional development (Thompson, 2002), strong language and literacy skills (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009), and greater academic success (Howes et al., 2008).

Furthermore, research indicates that social-emotional assessments in early childhood centers enhance teacher knowledge and skills, leading to reduced professional anxiety and improved behavioral management (Mondi et al., 2021; Humphries et al., 2018). These assessments offer real time insights into child development, allowing teachers to adopt proactive strategies, which reduces classroom conflict and increases job satisfaction, ultimately fostering higher teacher retention rates (Ho & Funk, 2018).

Early REACH centers use the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) to understand and assess stability and growth in children's social and emotional skills. The DECA is a nationally

standardized assessment tool that helps teachers understand how students are progressing with respect to social and emotional skills.

This section presents DECA data from 29 centers. Of these centers, 21 submitted DECA data directly to the United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) for all timepoints during which they participated in Early REACH. The remaining eight centers submitted DECA data to an outside source, the Collaborative for Children through its Centers of Excellence (COE) program. Only two assessment points were directly available to the UWGH. Attempts were made to incorporate earlier assessments submitted through the COE program for the eight centers into UWGH's e-DECA profiles; however, complete longitudinal profiles could not be established. The newest Early REACH center (that joined in September 2025) is not included in the sample, as the Fall 2025 DECA assessment was already underway when the center joined Early REACH. The following section reports the available social and emotional outcomes of children, as measured by the DECA, from the Early REACH centers participating at any point since early 2024. Findings in this section should not be interpreted as tracking all of the same children over time as the sample reflects different groups of children at each timepoint due to classroom transitions as well as entries or exits from Early REACH.

Overview of The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)

The primary purpose of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) is to measure the healthy social and emotional development of infants, toddlers, and preschool children by assessing their protective factors (LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1999). DECA also provides early childhood programs with a standardized developmental outcome measure related to children's social and emotional health and can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of program activities by tracking changes in children's social and emotional skills over time.

Specifically, the DECA assesses children's *protective factors* across three areas of social emotional development:

- *initiative*, a child's ability to use independent thought and action to meet their needs,
- *attachment/relationships*, a child's ability to promote and maintain mutual, positive connections with other children and significant adults, and
- *self-regulation*, children's ability to express emotions and manage behaviors in healthy ways.[55]

The preschool DECA form, completed by the child's teacher, includes an additional social emotional domain, *behavioral concerns,* which measures whether the child expresses behaviors that may be of concern. The *protective factors* domain gives an overall indication of the child's strengths related to social and emotional resilience. This scale is a reliable and valid overall indicator of children's social and emotional health for program evaluation.

[55] This domain is not included in the infant version of the DECA.

Tables 33 and 34 show the classification of scores for *protective factors* and *behavioral concerns*. *Protective factors* scores between 28-40 are considered an *area of need* and indicate that the child was rated as showing few of these strength-based behaviors and considered to be at-risk. *Protective factors* scores between 41-59 fall in the *typical* range and indicate that the child is showing a typical number of behaviors in this area related to resilience. *Protective factors* scores of 60 or above indicate that the child is exhibiting an unusual number of strength-based behaviors in that area.

Scores for the *behavioral concerns* scale are the opposite such that scores of 60 and above indicate an *area of need* while scores of 59 and below indicate a *typical* range. The DECA manual notes that the absence or low incidence of problem behaviors does not indicate a strength related to resilience and thus, scores less than 60 are characterized as *typical*.

Table 33. *Classification of Scores for DECA Protective Factors*

Area of Need (*Range* = 28 – 40)	Scores between 28-40 are considered an *area of need* and indicate that the child was rated as showing few of these strength-based behaviors and considered to be at-risk.
Typical (*Range* = 41– 59)	Scores between 41-59 are in the *typical* range and indicate that the child is showing a typical number of behaviors in this area related to resilience.
Area of Strength (*Range* = 60 and above)	Scores of 60 or above indicate that the child is exhibiting an unusual number of strength-based behaviors in that area.

Table 34. *Classification of Scores for DECA Behavioral Concerns*

Area of Need (*Range* = 60 and above)	Unlike the protective factor scales, scores of 60 and above on *behavioral concerns scale* indicate an a*rea of need.* Scores in this range may indicate that the child may need consultation or further assessment.
Typical (*Range* = 59 and below)	Scores of 59 and below are in the *typical* range. Lower *behavioral concerns* do not indicate a strength related to resilience, but rather common behaviors for this age group.

FALL 2025 DECA ASSESSMENT

Teachers from 27 active Early REACH centers completed DECA assessments during fall 2025.[56] Stability and growth in *protective factors* and *behavioral concerns* were examined across all age groups.

In fall 2025, Early REACH infants, toddlers, and preschoolers were, on average, in the *typical* range for their *protective factors***,** and the proportion of children in an *area of need* was low for all age groups (*Range* = 11% - 18%). Preschoolers' *behavioral concerns*, on average, were also in the *typical* range in fall 2025 (Table 35).

Approximately a quarter (24%) of preschoolers exhibited behavioral concerns, a finding that aligns with feedback from both directors and teachers who have emphasized the challenges of managing persistent behavioral difficulties in the classroom.[57]

These findings highlight a clear need for continued professional development and coaching in this area. As part of UWGH's action plan, e-DECA strategies, a resource which offers suggestions for behavior management based on DECA results, has been incorporated into behavioral plans developed by the Early Intervention and Behavior Services (EIBS) manager, who is now working closely with centers and families to provide focused support. This resource helps teachers and directors to identify and implement effective strategies to address behavioral challenges independently as well as in collaboration with coaches.[58]

Table 35. *Early REACH Children's Protective Factors and the Proportion in an Area of Need in Fall 2025 (n=82-229)*

	Protective Factors *Average (SD)*	**Proportion of children in an *area of need***
Infant (*n*=82)	56.3 (9.8)	11%
Toddler (*n*=307)	52.6 (7.2)	18%
Preschool (*n*=229)	53.1 (8.5)	17%
	Behavioral Concerns *Average (SD)*	**Proportion of children in an *area of need***
Preschool (*n*=229)	52.5 (6.9)	24%

Note: For *protective factors,* scores between 28-40 are considered an *area of need*, scores between 41-59 are in the *typical* range, and scores of 60 or above indicate an *area of strength*. For *behavioral concerns*, scores of 60 and above indicate an *area of need* while scores of 59 and below indicate a *typical* range.

[56] One center, which joined Early REACH in September 2025, did not complete a Fall 2025 DECA timepoint. The Winter 2026 timepoint is currently being collected at all centers, and will be reported on in the final report, as well as the spring 2026 timepoint.

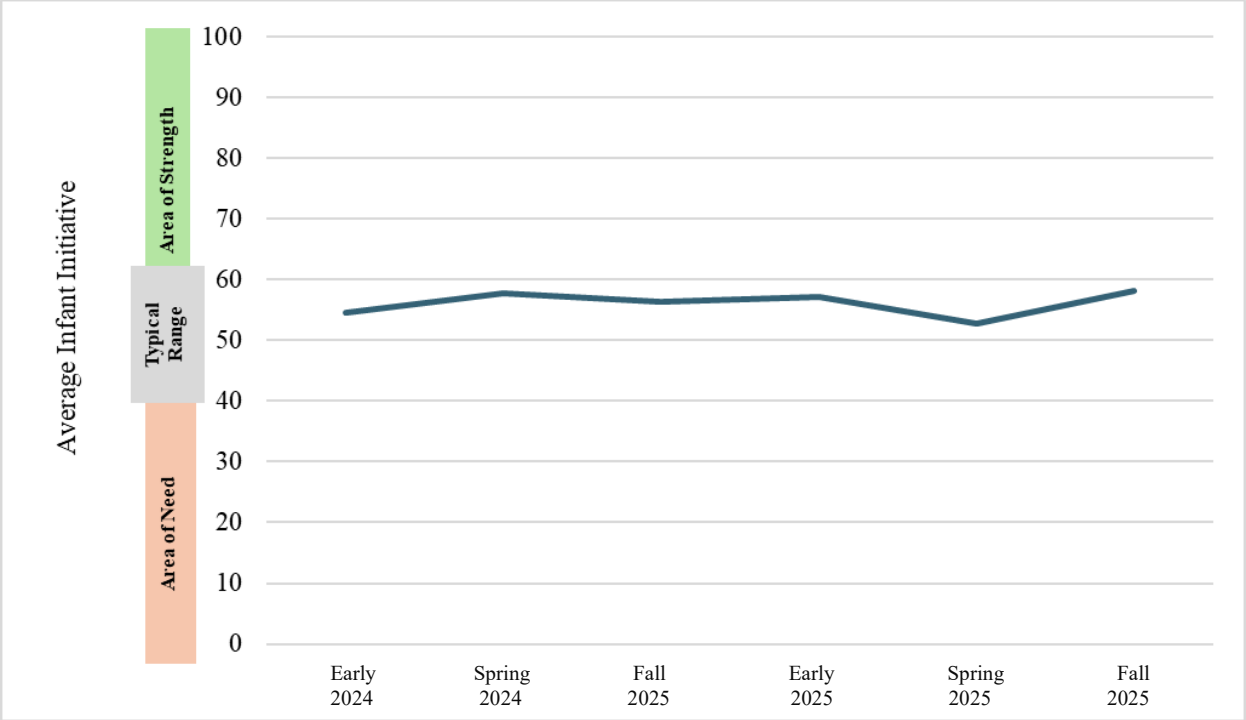
[57] See the Professional Development and Coaching Section of this memo for additional information about teacher needs and professional development related to challenging behavior management.

[58] Early REACH's Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager started center visits in October 2025. The Fall 2025 DECA behavioral concerns were assessed before the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager began to engage with centers and families.

INFANT DECA SUBSCALE ASSESSMENTS FROM EARLY 2024 TO FALL 2025

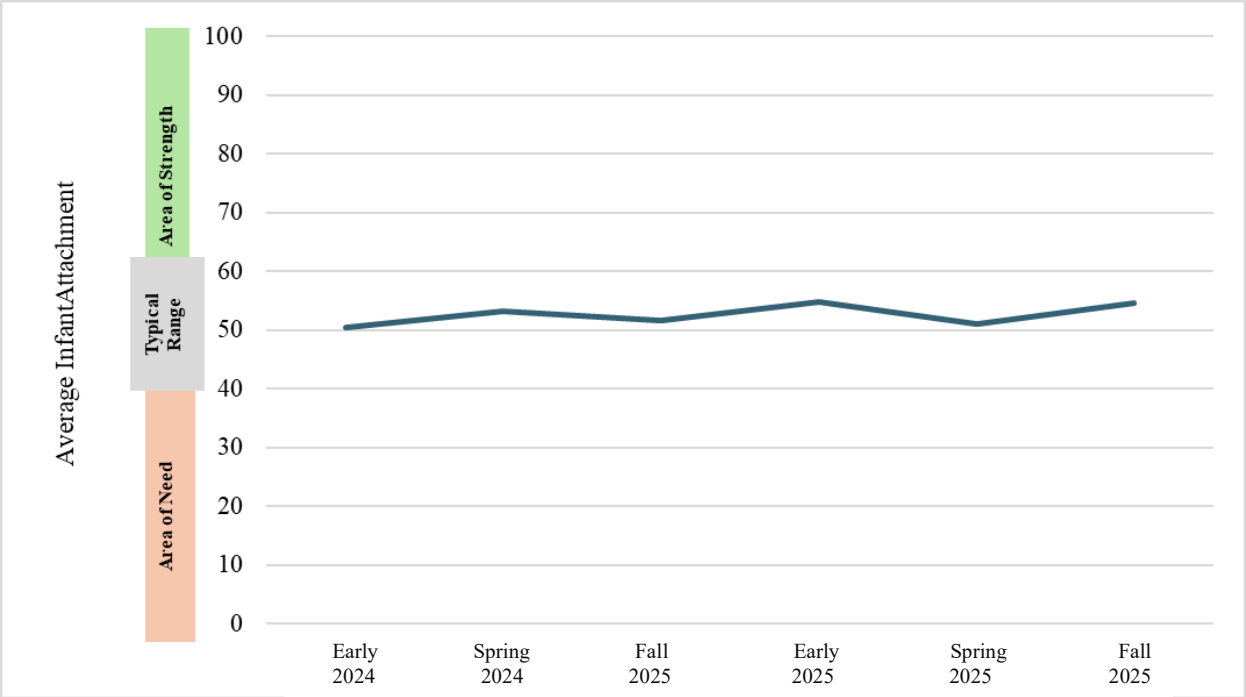
The infant DECA measure consists of two areas: *Initiative* and *Attachment*. Between early 2024 and fall 2025, both *initiative* and *attachment* averages have remained in the *typical* range for infants in Early REACH (Figures 90 and 91). From early 2024 to fall 2025, infants' average *initiative* was between 52.7 and 58.2. The average *attachment* for infants in Early REACH was between 50.3 and 54.8.[59]

Figure 90. *Early REACH Infants' Initiative Averages from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 67-89)*



[59] Statistical significance was not assessed for changes in DECA subscales across time points due to the small sample size of paired assessments.

Figure 91. *Early REACH Infants' Attachment Averages from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 67-89)*



Although there were minor fluctuations across time, these DECA subscale averages reflect diverse groups of infants at each timepoint, as they transitioned to toddler classrooms and entered or exited Early REACH. Therefore, these findings should not be interpreted as tracking growth in the same children over time. Rather, the upward trend in average *initiative* and *attachment* may reflect improvements at the classroom level, potentially associated with Early REACH teachers' ongoing coaching support related to classroom practices and participation in professional development on DECA that support social emotional development.

TODDLER DECA SUBSCALE ASSESSMENTS FROM EARLY 2024 TO FALL 2025

The toddler DECA measure consists of three areas: *Initiative*, *Attachment*, and *Self-regulation*. For toddlers in Early REACH, *initiative, attachment,* and *self-regulation* remained, on average, in the *typical* range from early 2024 to fall 2025 (Figures 92-94). Across early 2024 to fall 2025, toddlers' average *initiative* was between 48.1 and 53.6. The average *attachment* for toddlers in Early REACH was between 45.6 and 50.2. The average *self-regulation* for toddlers ranged between 48.9 and 53.2.[60]

[60] Statistical significance was not assessed for changes in DECA subscales across time points due to the small sample size of paired assessments.

Figure 92. *Early REACH Toddlers' Initiative from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n=181- 317)*

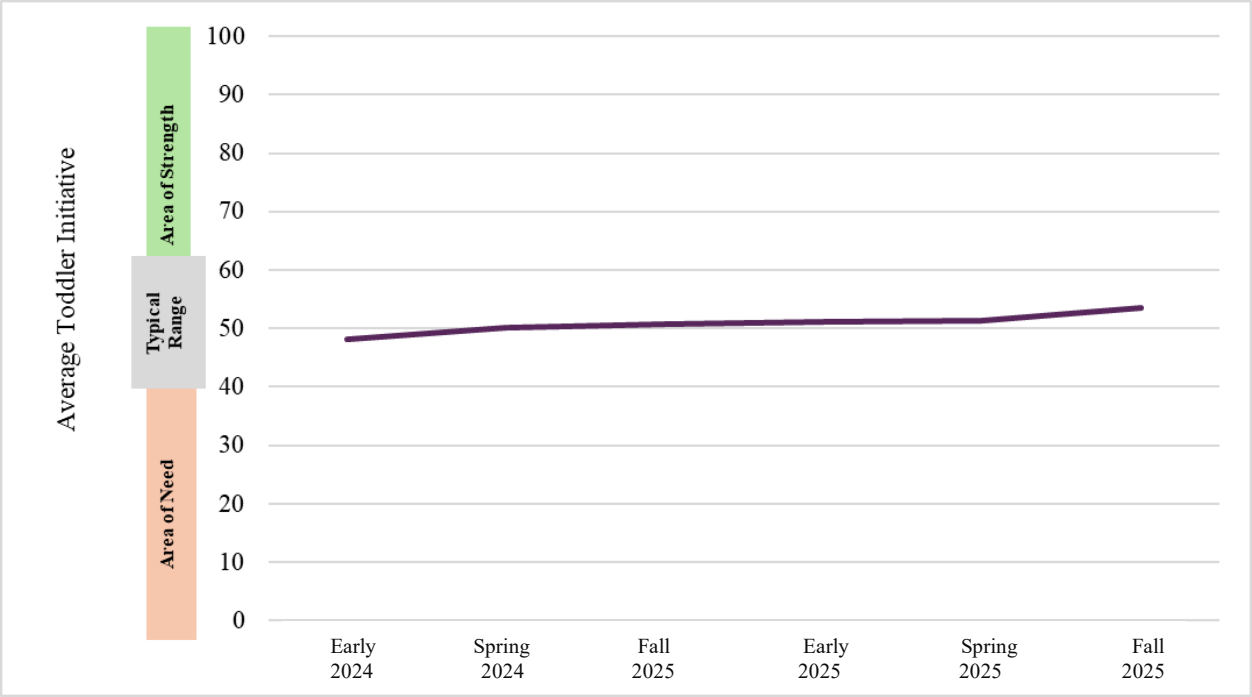


Figure 93. *Early REACH Toddlers' Attachment from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n=181- 317)*

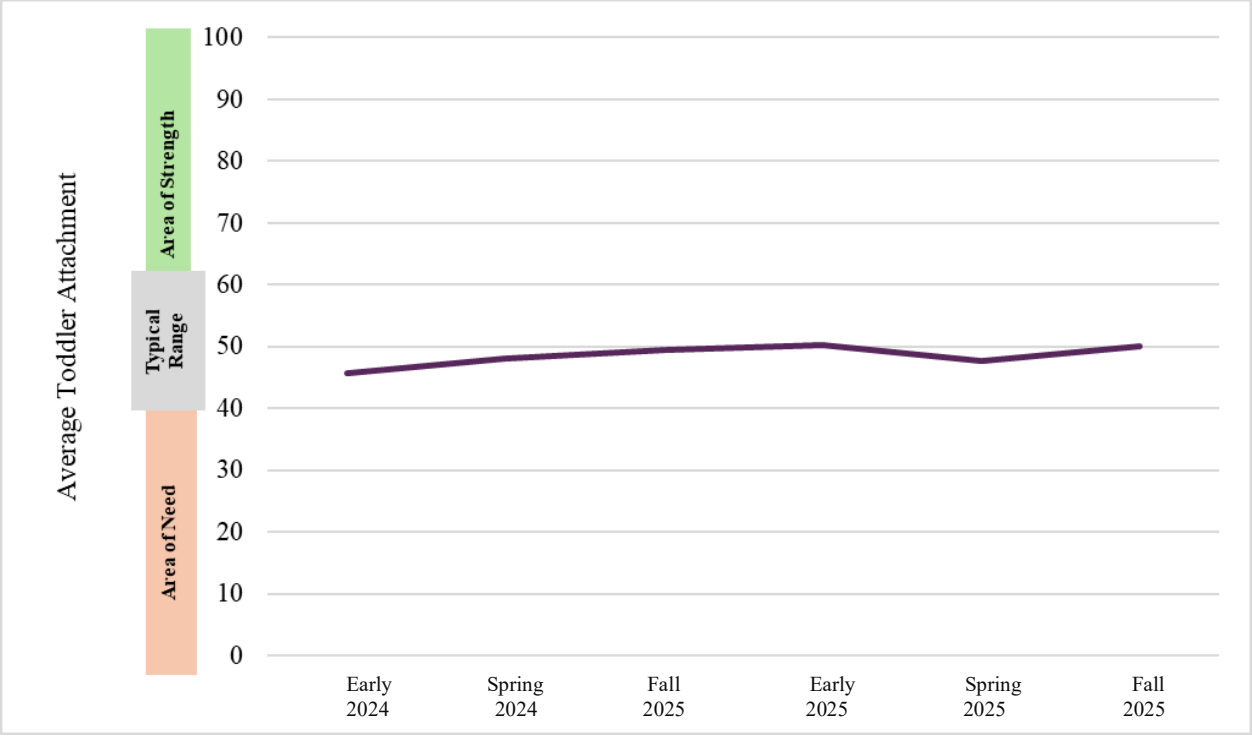
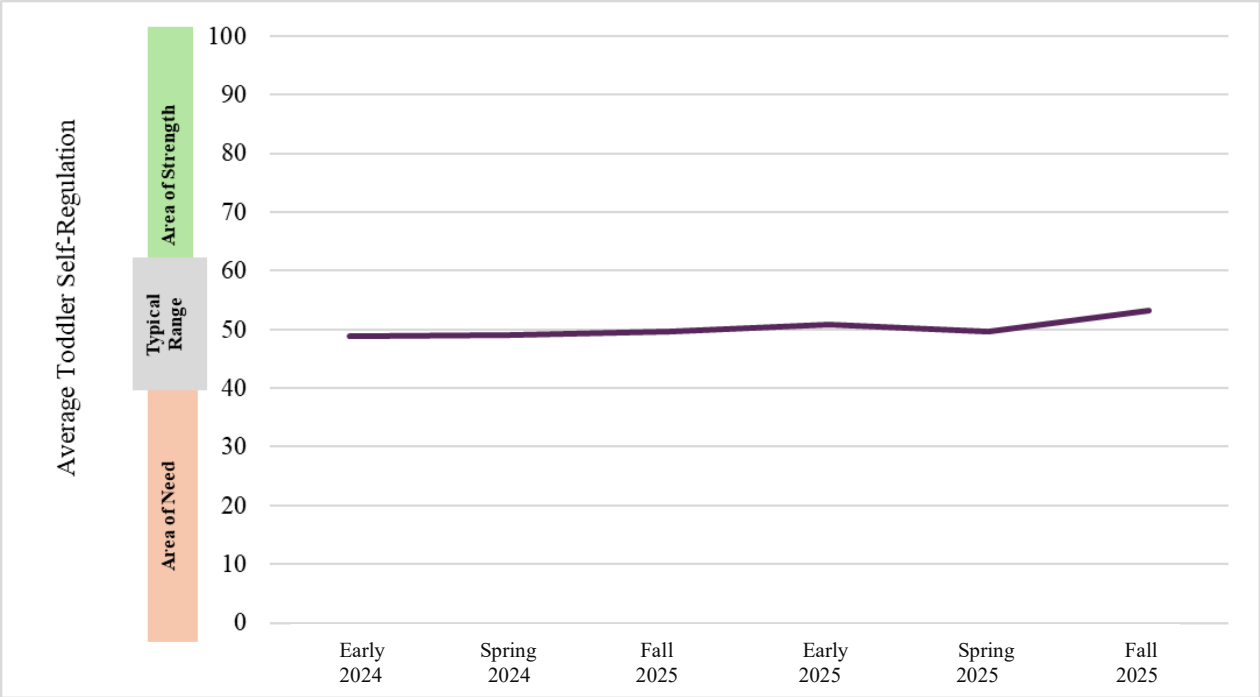


Figure 94. *Early REACH Toddlers' Self-Regulation from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n=181- 317)*



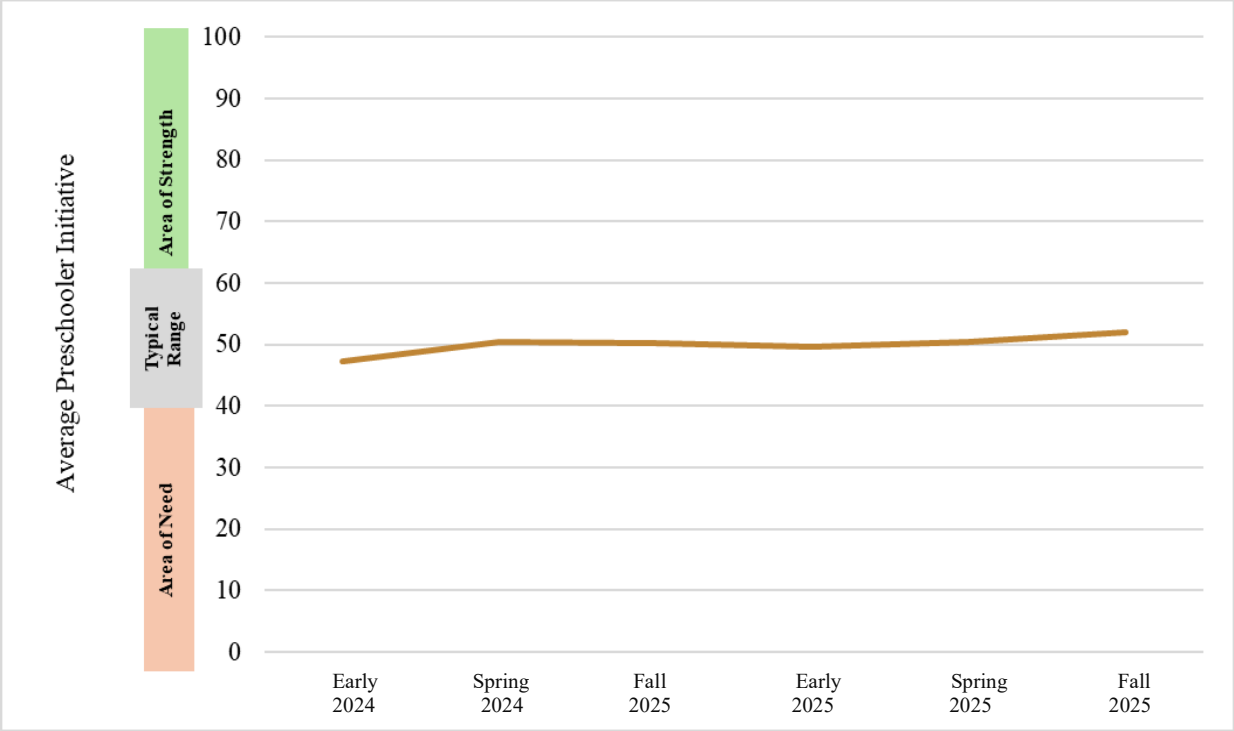
The DECA subscale averages for toddlers in Early REACH had less fluctuations between the start of the Early REACH initiative in early 2024 and fall 2025 compared to infants' subscale averages across the same period. There were minor fluctuations across time for toddlers, with the averages reflecting diverse groups of toddlers at each timepoint, as children transitioned to preschool classrooms and entered or exited Early REACH. Again, these findings should not be interpreted as tracking growth in the same children over time. Rather, the upward trend in average *initiative*, *attachment*, and *self-regulation* may reflect improvements at the classroom-level, potentially associated with Early REACH classroom and teacher participation in professional development.

PRESCHOOL DECA SUBSCALE ASSESSMENTS FROM EARLY 2024 TO FALL 2025

The preschool DECA assessment includes three areas that make up their *Protective Factors*: *Initiative, Attachment, and Self-Regulation*, as well as an additional domain, *Behavioral Concerns*. For preschoolers in Early REACH, *initiative, attachment,* and *self-regulation* remained, on average, in the *typical* range between early 2024 and fall 2025 (Figures 95-97). From early 2024 to fall 2025, the average *initiative* for preschoolers in Early REACH was

between 47.4 and 52.1. Preschoolers' average *attachment* ranged from 48.0 to 54.4 and their average *self-regulation* was between 48.3 and 51.8.[61]

Figure 95. *Early REACH Preschoolers' Initiative from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 135-357)*



[61] Statistical significance was not assessed for changes in DECA subscales across time points due to the small sample size of paired assessments.

Figure 96. *Early REACH Preschoolers' Attachment from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 135-357)*

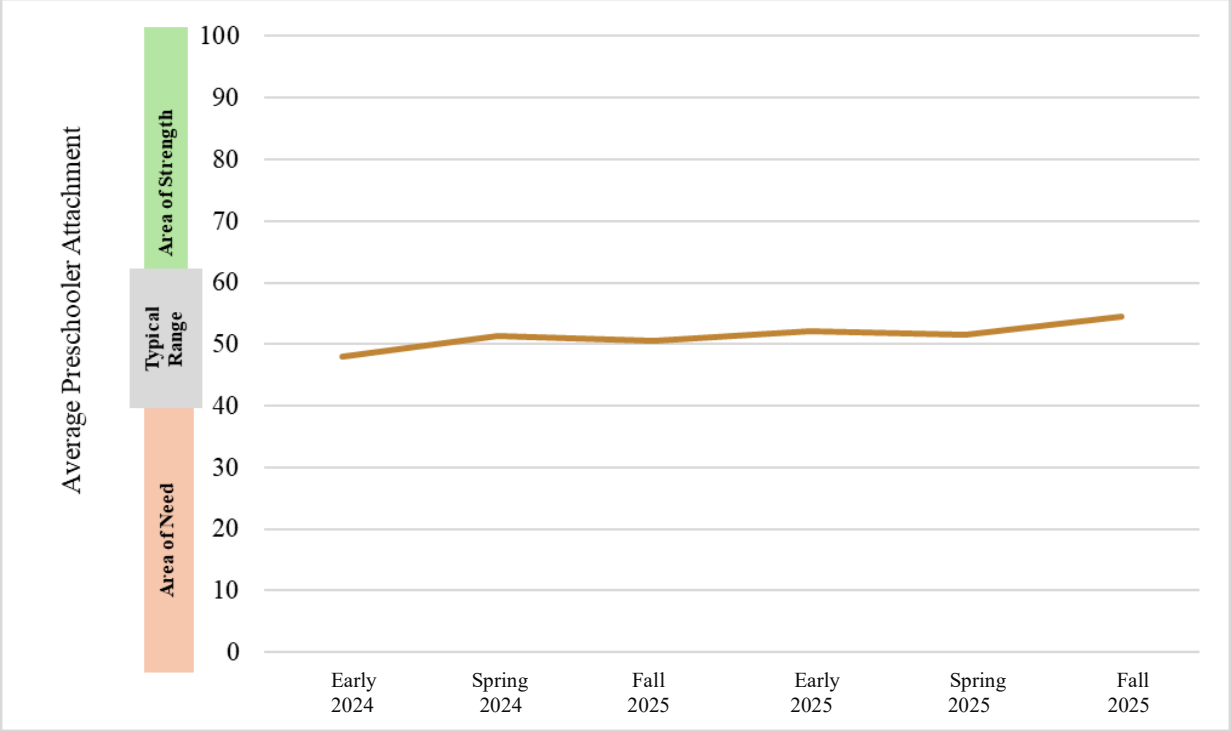
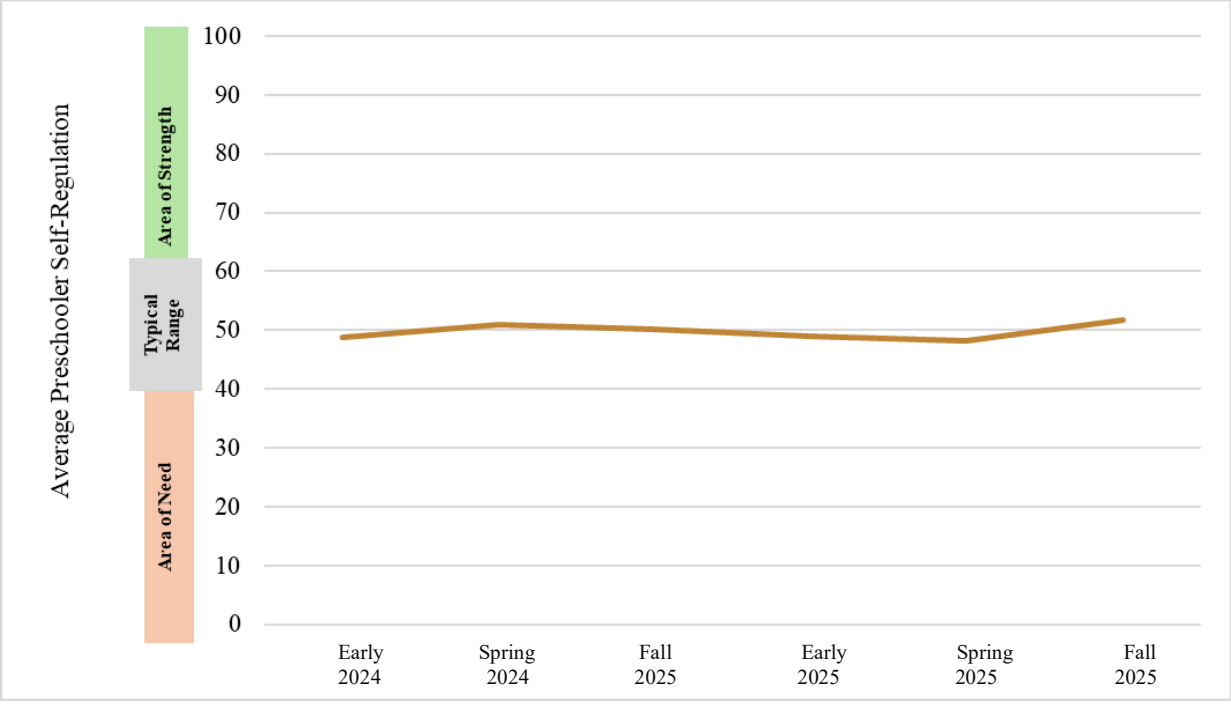
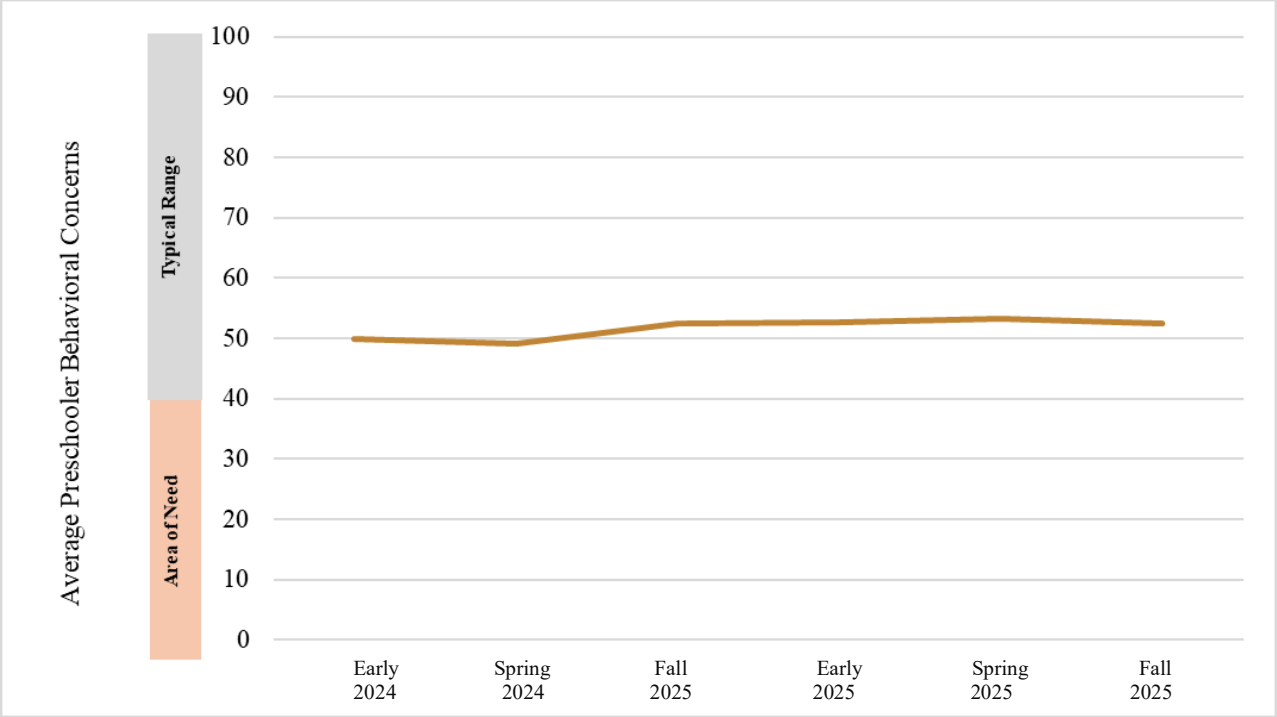


Figure 97. *Early REACH Preschoolers' Self-Regulation from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 135-357)*



The preschool-age DECA also assesses *behavioral concerns.* Since early 2025, Early REACH preschool children have presented in the *typical* range for *behavioral concerns* (Figure 98). From early 2024 to fall 2025, the average *behavioral concerns* for preschoolers in Early REACH was between 49.1 and 52.5.[62]

Figure 98. *Early REACH Preschoolers' Behavioral Concerns from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 (n= 135-357)*



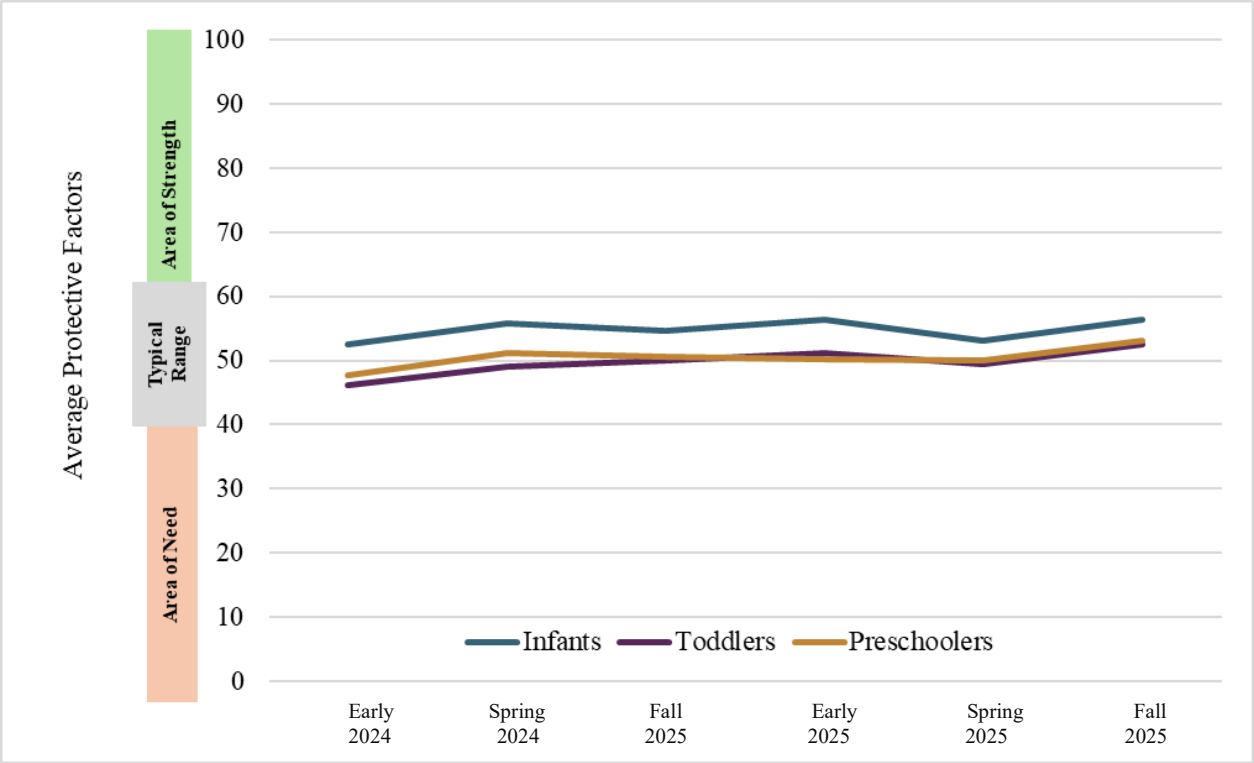
There were minor fluctuations across time in DECA subscale averages for preschoolers in Early REACH; the averages reflect diverse groups of preschoolers at each timepoint, as children transitioned to kindergarten and entered or exited Early REACH. Therefore, these findings should not be interpreted as tracking growth in the same children over time. Rather, the upward trend in average *initiative*, *attachment*, and *self-regulation* may reflect improvements at the classroom level, potentially associated with Early REACH. Although the *behavioral concerns* average remained within the *typical* range over time, Early REACH teachers continue to struggle with managing children's challenging behaviors.[63] With the hiring of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager, additional support and behavioral management practices are being implemented in classrooms.

[62] Statistical significance was not assessed for changes in DECA subscales across time points due to the small sample size of paired assessments.
[63] See the Professional Development and Coaching section for information from the teacher survey.

CHANGES IN CHILDREN'S AVERAGE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The subsections above highlighted the areas of social emotional development that make up the *protective factors* domain of the DECA at all age levels. The average *protective factors* of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in Early REACH consistently remained in the *typical* range from the first Early REACH DECA assessment (early 2024) to the most recent DECA assessment (fall 2025; Figure 99).

Figure 99. *Change in Average Protective Factors from Early 2024 to Fall 2025 for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers in Early REACH (n=67-357)*



We examined whether the proportion of children classified in the *typical, area of strength,* or *area of need* categorizations changed over time for children with at least two DECA assessments (*n*=902).[64] Children included in this paired analysis had an average of 3.9 assessments (*SD* = 1.5, *Range* = 2–6) completed during their time in Early REACH.

A McNemar's chi-square test indicated a significant change in the proportion of children classified in the *area of need* for *protective factors* between their first and most recent DECA

[64] It was not possible to compare children's raw scores across time as children aged given that the DECA is form-specific and age-normed. Therefore, we compared children's classification (i.e., *Area of Need, Typical Range, or Area of Strength*) on their first DECA assessment and their most recent DECA assessment. Each child's first and most recent assessment varied depending on when they entered and exited Early REACH.

assessments ($\chi^2(1) = 15.1$, $p < .001$), with a greater proportion of children moving out of the *area of need* categorization. Specifically, more children have moved from the *area of need* to the *typical range* or *area of strength* ($n = 132$) than moved from the *typical range* or *area of strength* into the *area of need* ($n = 76$). These findings indicate that there was an overall reduction in the number of children classified in the *area of need* over time while in Early REACH (Table 36). This is an important finding for an early childhood educational initiative, as reducing the number of children with significant developmental needs improves those children's current performance in early childhood care and their future performance in school.

Table 36. *Paired Comparison of Children's Area of Need Classification for Protective Factors at Their First and Most Recent DECA Assessment (n=902)*

First *Protective Factors* Classification	Most Recent *Protective Factors* Classification		**Total**
	Typical Range or Area of Strength	*Area of Need*	
Typical Range or Area of Strength	603	76	**679**
Area of Need	132	91	**223**
Total	**735**	**167**	**902**

SUMMARY

Overall, findings from the DECA assessments indicate that children in Early REACH are demonstrating generally typical social-emotional development. Across infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, average *protective factor* scores consistently were within the *typical* range, with relatively low proportions of children classified in the *area of need* group (11%–18%). Preschoolers' *behavioral concerns* also remained, on average, within the *typical* range, although approximately one-quarter (24%) exhibited elevated concerns, highlighting an ongoing area of need.

Across time, DECA subscale scores (*initiative, attachment,* and *self-regulation*) remained stable within the *typical* range for all age groups, with slight upward trends that reflect improvements in classroom-level practices supported by coaching and professional development. While these trends do not track the same children longitudinally, they suggest consistent program quality in supporting social-emotional development.

Importantly, longitudinal analyses of children with multiple assessments show statistically significant improvement. A greater number of children moved out of the *area of need* into the *typical or strength* ranges in comparison to the number of children who moved into the *area of need* group, indicating an overall reduction in developmental risk over time. This finding is of critical importance as early identification, individualized lesson plans through quality early care placement, and additional treatment, if needed, can alter children's developmental trajectories, empower families, and enhance long-term academic functioning (Abercrombie et al., 2022). Early identification in quality child care settings also contributes to the reduction of special education needs and increase in future economic productivity in the child as well as economic return to the community (Doyle et. al., 2009).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue prioritization of children's social-emotional development

Early REACH should continue to prioritize social-emotional development as a core component of program quality, maintaining strong implementation of DECA-informed practices and ongoing progress monitoring.

Focus professional development related to behavior management, self-regulation strategies, and trauma-informed practices

Given the proportion of preschoolers demonstrating behavioral concerns and the behavioral challenges expressed by teachers, continued investments in professional development and coaching focus on behavioral support are likely needed. Professional development focused on behavior management, self-regulation strategies, and trauma-informed practices may be particularly important for centers serving children with higher needs.

Continue integration and expansion of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager

The integration of the Early Intervention and Behavior Services manager is a promising strategy and should be sustained and expanded to ensure consistent support across centers and that the needs of families and children are met. Early identification, individualized lesson planning, and referrals when needed are critical activities that reduce both short- and long-term impacts on the children's developmental trajectories, performance in school, and beyond.

EARLY REACH IMPACTS AND CENTER SUSTAINABILITY

Evaluation Questions

This section addresses the following evaluation questions.

Aim 2: Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Early Childhood Centers

- Impact Question: How is participation in the Harris County Early REACH program related to changes in benefits and compensation across participating centers?

Aim 3: Building and Supporting Quality

- Impact Question: What strategies are effective in promoting both structural and/or process quality?
- Impact Question: How is professional development conducted with directors and teachers related to the promotion of quality?
- Impact Question: How is coaching related to changes in program quality, staff retention, center climate, satisfaction, and development of staff knowledge and skills?
- Impact Question: How did program participation in Harris County Early REACH relate to program flexibility and availability of care for parents?

Data Source

- Director qualitative interviews
    - Winter 2025/2026 (December 2025 – January 2026)

This winter, the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) evaluation team conducted qualitative interviews with directors of Early REACH centers to better understand the initiative's overall impact and to identify elements that may be sustained after the initiative concludes. Interviews also explored challenges that centers anticipate if changes to Early REACH programming support occur. Directors shared perspectives on the lasting benefits of the initiative, as well as concerns related to center sustainability**,** including staffing, enrollment, and access to affordable child care for families.

Overall Satisfaction and Sustainability

When asked what aspects of Early REACH they would continue, directors expressed overwhelmingly positive views about their experience with Early REACH. Many emphasized that Early REACH provided benefits not only to children, but also to families and center staff. One director summarized this sentiment:

> *All aspects of Early REACH, because I haven't had anything to complain about at all. It allowed the child to be in a child care setting instead of staying at home. It also allowed*

the parents to work, and it allowed us to participate in the trainings. I feel like everything around it was a really good program.

Lasting Impacts of Professional Development and Coaching

Multiple directors highlighted that the professional development, mentoring, and coaching offered through Early REACH would have long-term impacts on their centers. Directors consistently noted that teachers have developed skills and knowledge that will be sustained. As one director explained:

> *The mentoring that the teachers have received…they're going to have that whether we have Early REACH or not. They've benefited from that. Our center is not going to shut down because Early REACH doesn't have funding…the coaching and the mentoring is probably the biggest takeaway.*

Another director echoed this perspective, emphasizing that the changes in teaching practice will also be sustained:

> *Everything that the teachers are learning and applying is not just because we're in Early REACH. I think it's long term. They will keep applying it the way that they are being coached and taught.*

Directors also noted that training and coaching increased teachers' confidence and strengthened leadership skills within their centers:

> *Sustainable, I would probably say all of the training we've received. They made sure we understood everything and felt confident. Whether it's classroom practice or enrollment management—knowing how to recruit families, support them, and maintain quality standards—those are skills we will continue to use.*

Similarly, directors emphasized the importance of the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential supported through Early REACH:

> *The fact that the vast majority of our employees have their CDA now and learned a lot through that process—that's not going to fall off.*

Curriculum and Changes in Classroom Practice

Directors frequently cited the Reggio Emilia–inspired curriculum as a sustainable component of Early REACH. Several directors reported that this approach had significantly influenced classroom practices and would remain a core part of their educational philosophy. As one director explained:

> *Reggio Emilia—we would still follow through with the Reggio Emilia.*

Another director similarly stated:

> *Definitely the Reggio Emilia theory of learning. Obviously, that's not going anywhere.*

Directors described meaningful changes in classroom activities as teachers incorporated more open-ended and creative learning approaches:

> *[Teachers are] doing creative work. It's not cookie-cutter where everything looks the same. I love the different things we've learned through Early REACH about Reggio Emilia-inspired activities, and we will continue that even if Early REACH ends.*

One director summarized the lasting influence of Early REACH on their center:

> *Everything that Early REACH instilled and valued in us—you can't take that away. The trainings, the resources, the countless hours they invested in us—that's going to help us moving forward. Now we see child care in a whole different realm. It's embedded in our day-to-day practices. You can take Early REACH away, but you can't take Early REACH out of us.*

Sustainability Challenges: Coaching Supports

Although directors valued coaching highly, many indicated they would only be able to maintain it in a limited capacity without Early REACH supports. Some directors reported relying on other organizations that provide coaching, though typically at a smaller scale:

> *Our teachers will continue getting coaching through other organizations, but it may not be at every age level. We have one mentor who only sees Pre-K. We won't be able to have someone sitting in the classroom observing and giving feedback like we did with Early REACH.*

Sustainability Challenges: Teacher Compensation

While elements of high-quality teacher programming were seen as sustainable, maintaining higher teacher salaries introduced through Early REACH emerged as a major challenge. Increased funding allowed centers to raise teacher wages, but directors expressed serious concerns about whether these salary levels could be maintained long-term. One director reflected:

> *I really wish this program did not end. I want to keep my teachers at the salary they're at, even my CDA teachers. It hurts to know the program is ending and I don't know where that extra money will come from.*

Despite these concerns, directors expressed a strong commitment to maintaining competitive wages if possible:

> *Lowering [teachers'] pay is not really an option for us. We are fighting to find ways to keep moving forward and continue serving our community.*

However, directors acknowledged the financial constraints facing many centers:

> *The biggest thing for us will be their pay differential. Depending on whether other programs come along, we may or may not be able to sustain it.*

Some directors indicated that they might need to adjust classroom ratios to remain financially viable without additional funding supports:

> *Our ratios might have to go back up to the state minimum standards. That may be the only way we can keep one of those teachers at that pay rate.*

Directors also expressed concern about retaining highly trained staff if wages cannot be sustained. Some worried that staff who benefited from Early REACH compensation and incentives may seek employment elsewhere. As one director noted:

> *You want to keep everyone, but realistically you won't be able to keep everyone at that rate. Some of them may say, 'No, I don't want the new rate,' and leave.*

Another director explained that additional incentives introduced through Early REACH —such as training compensation and bonuses—may be difficult to uphold in the long term:

> *Teachers saw the bonuses and extra pay through training. At the end of the year when they look at their W-2, they may wonder why they made less once the program ends.*

Sustainability Challenges: Enrollment Uncertainty and Potential Financial Instability

Concerns about sustaining teacher wages were closely tied to uncertainty about enrollment as Early REACH evolves. Directors anticipate that many families who received free care through the program may be unable to afford tuition without Early REACH subsidies.

One director explained:

> *Enrollment is going to go down when Early REACH leaves. Parents who were getting free child care are not going to want to pay for child care.*

Another director emphasized the direct link between enrollment and staff salaries:

> *Teacher pay depends on enrollment. If we don't have the money, we can't pay it to the teachers.*

Directors also noted that expansion of public pre-kindergarten has reduced enrollment in community-based child care centers, particularly for preschool children. As one director explained:

> *Absent Early REACH, our enrollment is way down from prior years. I think that a lot of that is economic. The economics of just the child care industry. The public schools here, much like most of the country, have really entered the pre-K program where they're providing full day pre-K… Almost the vast majority of the people in the area qualify for*

the public pre-kindergarten. So if all the Early REACH kids go away in September, we're down to --55 children. Which, yeah, it'd be hard to keep the lights on.

The potential loss of enrollment presents a major financial challenge for many centers and may reduce the number of available child care slots. Directors warned that this could contribute to the reemergence of child care deserts in Harris County. As one director stated:

Losing those children would be hard financially. It's 28 kids—that makes a big difference.

To prepare for changes to Early REACH, many centers are actively attempting to recruit new families through marketing and outreach:

With Early REACH…we [will] lose a lot of funding. So I think it's just and we are doing steps like to try to buffer that. You know, we're doing a lot more advertising, marketing and stuff like that and giving different incentives so we can get more kids on board. So, you know, how it's going to impact us once the program ends, honestly, we won't know till we're ready to cross that bridge. Praying to God, you know, we have kids that have enrolled and buffer that because it is going to be, for us, a pretty big impact.

Sustainability Challenges: Concerns for Families' Ability to Access Affordable Care

Beyond financial challenges for centers, directors expressed deep concern for the families who benefited from Early REACH. Many worried that parents would struggle to find affordable child care without full Early REACH supports. One director reflected:

With Early REACH, parents could go to work knowing their children were getting a quality early education without paying all that money out of pocket. I wish we could continue that.

Another director emphasized the relationships built with families and the potential impact of losing those connections:

Our teachers have tracked [children's] growth, tracked their learning patterns, and if [families are] unable to afford our center, where are they going to go, how are -- who's going to make sure [children are] meeting their goals and their milestone growth? You know, I think that's going to be a challenge, because all of these relationships [with families are] so very long and we're going to miss our families who have come through.

Directors also highlighted challenges families may face accessing other subsidies. Although some families may qualify for child care assistance through Texas Workforce Solutions and other child care subsidy programs, long waitlists pose a significant barrier. As one director explained:

So a lot of our parents, even though they qualify for Early REACH, may not qualify for [Texas Workforce] subsidies. And the waiting list to get subsidies is over a year. We've asked them to start applying now in anticipation …they may not have care for three to six months and may have to give up their job, you know, until they can get on another subsidy program….It used to be, pre-COVID that somebody who needed subsidies

> *through Workforce Solutions might wait two to three months. And now it's 12 to 14 months….So it's really not practical. Someone can't go get a job until they've -- come off the wait list.*

Centers have encouraged families to apply early, but uncertainty remains about whether they will be able to receive sufficient supports to access needed child care:

> *I don't know how well the transition is going to happen for families on getting onto subsidy, but because we have the public-private partnership, most, I think there's probably only probably a handful of kids that will qualify to be 3 by September 1..I hope there's something eventually comes up for those families with younger little ones, that we don't have here anymore, but just right now, there is a desire or wish that something would come up for that we have a lot of families with little ones.*

SUMMARY

Directors reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with Early REACH and emphasized its significant contributions to center quality, workforce development, and family access to child care. The professional development, mentoring, and coaching provided through Early REACH were widely described as among its most valuable components, strengthening teachers' instructional practices and increasing leadership capacity within centers. Directors also highlighted lasting benefits from investments in staff credentialing, including Child Development Associate (CDA) certifications, and from the adoption of Reggio Emilia–inspired instructional approaches that promote creative, child-centered learning. Many directors emphasized that these improvements in teaching practice and center quality will continue beyond the life of Early REACH.

Despite these positive outcomes, directors expressed significant concern about the sustainability of key program elements without support from Early REACH. Maintaining higher teacher salaries introduced through Early REACH was identified as the most pressing challenge, particularly as centers anticipate potential enrollment declines if subsidies supporting families change. Directors also noted broader pressures affecting enrollment, including the expansion of public pre-kindergarten programs and the limited availability of alternative child care subsidy programs for families. Many expressed concern that families may struggle to access affordable child care due to long waitlists for subsidies, potentially affecting parents' ability to maintain employment. While directors remain committed to sustaining the quality improvements introduced through Early REACH, continued investment in workforce compensation, coaching supports, and child care affordability will be critical to preserving the program's gains for teachers and centers and access to care for families with young children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider transitional funding for Early REACH and explore critical options for additional, sustainable funding

Continued Early REACH services, even in a more limited way, would sustain the momentum and impact of the initiative. Policymakers and local early care leaders should explore strategies to support core elements of Early REACH to ensure the continued provision of high-quality early care and education, as well as access to affordable care in Harris County. Securing long-term funding sources, both within the county and beyond, should be considered to build on this important foundation.

Expand access to child care subsidies

Increasing access to child care subsidies, particularly for families with infants and toddlers, will help families maintain care arrangements and stabilize program enrollment in the long-term. Policymakers should consider expanding eligibility thresholds, reducing waitlists, and simplifying application processes to ensure that working families can access affordable child care in a timely manner.

Support sustainable compensation for teachers

The higher wages supported through Early REACH were widely viewed as critical to attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Policymakers and funders should explore strategies to support competitive compensation in the early childhood workforce, such as wage supplements, retention bonuses, or workforce stabilization grants.

Continue investment in professional development and coaching

Directors consistently identified coaching and mentoring as among the most valuable components of the program. Sustaining access to coaching, particularly for infant and toddler classrooms, even at a reduced level, could help centers maintain improvements in instructional quality. Partnerships with local organizations, shared coaching models, or regional technical assistance networks may help ensure these supports.

Support enrollment stability in community-based programs

Community-based child care centers play a critical role in serving infants and toddlers and supporting working families. Policymakers should consider strategies to stabilize enrollment and funding for these centers, particularly as public pre-kindergarten expands. Options could include mixed-delivery funding models, contracts for infant and toddler care slots, or targeted grants for community-based providers.

Continued supports for families to ensure access to care

Centers and policymakers should work collaboratively to ensure that families have clear and accessible information about accessing child care subsidies. Strategies may include targeted informational campaigns on available assistance, proactive communication regarding program timelines, application support for subsidies, and coordinated referrals to alternative child care options.

LIMITATIONS TO THE EVALUATION

Limitations to the findings presented in this data memo are discussed below.

DATA COLLECTION

Because the timing of surveys and interviews were aligned to meet the needs of the project as a whole, data collection timepoints were not always aligned (e.g., spring 2024, early 2025, and fall 2025) for this specific memo. Thus, slight differences in averages between timepoints may reflect the timing of data collection rather than real differences between datapoints. For example, director and teacher burnout, as well as program climate, can vary by the time of year, so caution with direct comparisons is warranted.

A second limitation of examining only the time period between August and December 2025 is that data from certain parties were not collected or not yet available at the time of the writing of this memo. For example, there was no plan to conduct a coach survey during this reporting period. Therefore, the current data memo does not include information on coaches' characteristics, knowledge, skills, or professional well-being. A second example is that accurate information on start and end dates of family enrollment and exit from Early REACH centers was not available from BakerRipley in time to include in this memo so assessment of the length of enrollment of families was not available for reporting. In addition, child attendance records were not accurate enough for evaluation purposes, so dosage of Early REACH participation was not able to be calculated.

SURVEY RETURN RATES

Although the vast majority of centers had excellent return rates, five centers had low teacher survey return rates (< 80%), three of which had less than a 50% return rate. Thus, the experiences and perspectives of teachers at these centers were underrepresented in the data. Teachers who refused to complete surveys may differ from those who did on important outcomes, including program climate and staff well-being. The lack of comprehensive data from all teachers in these centers makes it more difficult to make recommendations regarding professional development, resources, and support that these five centers may need. These low return rates also impact the ability to share specific information about the coaching and professional development needs for those five centers. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) evaluation team will continue to work with the United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) and BakerRipley to reach all staff at each center via reminder emails, texts, director support, flyers, calls, and check-ins to obtain improved return rates from these five centers.

Similarly, three centers had low family survey return rates (< 80%), with return rates varying widely among active families (50% – 95%) and inactive families (20% – 100%). Consequently, these families were underrepresented in the data, making it difficult to provide recommendations about how to best support them. Extended work with UWGH and BakerRipley to reach as many families as possible will continue. The use of emails, texts, notices through centers, and requests

for family survey completion to centers and directly to families will continue directly through BTC and also through collaboration with both BakerRipley's enrollment specialists and UWGH leadership and coaches.

DATA SOURCES

The BTC evaluation's team ability to access certain data, including administrative data and Civitas data, was limited during this reporting period (August – December 2025). The team is working closely with UWGH, BakerRipley, and Civitas to facilitate access to these data sources for the final report. At the time of this data memo, Civitas is actively working with BTC to provide additional data on their programming, including intake surveys, advanced assessments, and launch calls. There are also limitations and potential gaps in data collected before Civitas coaching became mandatory. For example, Civitas' notations of individual coaching sessions were not standardized, making it difficult to accurately summarize the topics covered during coaching. After coaching became mandatory, Civitas worked to standardize their coaching logs. In addition, at the time of this data memo, we had not received attendance records for group trainings conducted before the mandatory requirement; however, Civitas is actively compiling this information now.

Additionally, it was not possible to associate children with specific classrooms or teachers with specific classrooms using the BakerRipley database. This information is needed to determine whether observed teacher or child outcomes are associated with classroom-level experiences (e.g., classroom practices), individual teacher characteristics (e.g., education level), or center-level factors (e.g., teacher retention). As a result of these gaps, the BTC evaluation team has requested staff and student rosters from each center, which will allow the team to link children, teachers, and classrooms. For the remaining implementation of Early REACH, BTC will not only continue to work with BakerRipley to support and improve data accuracy, but also collect information independently as described through roster collection.

The quality of the CLASS observations has raised questions about the accuracy and reliability of data documentation and of observers, particularly for evaluative purposes. Observations were sometimes conducted during early morning hours, mealtimes, or transitions when not all staff and children were present, limiting opportunities to capture typical classroom interactions. There were also a number of inconsistencies in the documentation of classroom names and teachers present. Additionally, all infant and toddler classroom observations were completed by a single observer; however, the use of multiple observers is generally recommended to minimize variation in scoring and improve reliability. UWGH is engaged in ongoing discussion and action to strengthen the CLASS data that will be collected in spring 2026.

Data obtained from all partners are actively being improved to enhance overall quality and completeness. While current data from the Compliance and Support Monitor (CSM) includes some limitations and gaps, a forensic review is in place to address these limitations and gaps. Requests to obtain more comprehensive information from Civitas – including dates and types of services – are currently underway. BakerRipley is actively correcting their database when

possible. The United Way is also actively working to improve the CLASS data collection process.

ANALYSES

Most of the information in this memo is descriptive. Descriptive analysis of data is the process of using historical and current data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships. It consists of summarizing raw data using statistics (averages) and visualizations (charts, graphs) to make large datasets understandable and actionable for decision-making. Descriptive analyses are helpful in simplifying complex data, providing key performance indicators, and facilitating decision-making.

However, descriptive analysis of data is limited by its inability to determine causality, explain the reasons behind trends, or generalize findings beyond the specific dataset analyzed. Consequently, it is not yet possible to confirm potential impacts of Early REACH on director, teacher, and family outcomes. For example, caution is required in assessing any minor differences in averages between timepoints that may be due to changes in sample composition. This is particularly the case for information related to teacher and family outcomes, as teachers and families enter or exit Early REACH. Additionally, several analyses were limited to descriptive findings due to small sample sizes, which made it impossible to use statistical significance testing. Small sample sizes are most often due to the nature of the initiative itself as well as the limited reporting period allocated for this memo. The final report, which will include descriptions of the Early REACH initiative for its full period of funding, will reduce this occurrence significantly. In addition, small sample sizes have been minimized by assertive survey collection which has resulted in high rates of survey responses from director/owners, teachers, and families.

GLOSSARY OF COMMON EARLY REACH EVALUATION TERMINOLOGY

Term	Definition
Active Early REACH center	A center that is currently participating in Early REACH.
Active Early REACH family	A family that is currently enrolled in Early REACH.
"Asset limited, income constrained, employed" (ALICE)	Families in which at least one caregiver is employed but who have limited assets. These families are not living in poverty but instead live paycheck to paycheck.
Center leadership	A term used to refer to center owners, directors, executive consultants, and other center leaders.
Center-level analyses	Analyses that examine outcomes or patterns at the center-level rather than at the individual-level (e.g., directors; teachers). These analyses consist of aggregating data across participants within a center and provide an overview of how the center as a whole is doing on a given outcome.
Child Development Associate (CDA)	A nationally recognized credential for early childhood educators that demonstrates competency in supporting the learning and development of young children (birth to five years of age).
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	An early care and education program observation instrument that is designed to identify dimensions of strengths and challenges in teachers' classroom practices.
Compliance Support Monitor (CSM)	An individual responsible for regularly visiting centers and classrooms and documenting to help ensure Early REACH standards (e.g., teacher-child ratios; staff wages) are being met.

Term	Definition
Consistent lead teacher	A lead teacher that has previously appeared on earlier Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation records across any of the four CLASS observation timepoints.
Cumulative risk	A measure of total risk that a family experiences and reflects how multiple risk factors together impact families rather than considering the impact of each risk factor in isolation.
Descriptive analyses	Analytical methods (e.g., averages; percentages) used to summarize characteristics and patterns observed in the data. These methods cannot be used to draw conclusions about causality or differences between groups of individuals.
Early REACH status	Refers to whether a teacher is assigned to an Early REACH classroom. If a teacher is assigned to an Early REACH classroom, they are an Early REACH teacher. If a teacher is not assigned to an Early REACH classroom, they are designated as non-Early REACH.
Inactive Early REACH center	A center that has withdrawn or has been asked to withdraw from Early REACH.
Inactive Early REACH family	A family that is no longer enrolled in Early REACH.
Longitudinal data	When information is collected from the same group of individuals across time.
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	A national organization that accredits early childhood education programs through a rigorous, multi-year process based on ten standards of high-quality care and learning. It is widely recognized as the “gold standard” for early learning environments.

Term	Definition
New Early REACH center	A center that joined Early REACH after the initiative had started and was not in the original cohort of centers when the initiative began in June 2023. Most new centers joined at some point in early 2025 and one joined in September 2025.
New lead teacher	A lead teacher that has **not** appeared on earlier Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation records across any of the four CLASS observation timepoints in any role (i.e., lead teacher or listed in any other role).
Process quality	A measure of program quality that reflects what children and families experience on a daily basis. It consists of directors' and teachers' relationship-based practices, directors' and teachers' professional well-being, the overall program climate, and the quality of teacher-child interactions. These quality indicators shape children's early care experiences and families' experiences with their center.
Retention	The percentage of directors or teachers that stayed employed at their center.
Return rate	The percentage of surveys that were completed and returned.
Risk factor	A characteristic, behavior, or exposure (e.g., no high school diploma; unemployment) that increases the likelihood of a negative outcome.
Sample size	The total number of participants (e.g., teachers; directors; families) with usable data on a given outcome who are included in a particular analysis.
Significance testing	A statistical procedure used to determine whether an observed effect, difference, or

Term	Definition
	association is likely real or could have happened just by chance or at random.
Statistical significance	When an effect or difference did **not** happen by chance and likely reflects a real effect or difference. However, it does not indicate whether a difference is large or meaningful in practice.
Structural quality	The measurable quality features (e.g., staff retention; staff education) of early child care centers. These are foundational conditions that set the stage for high-quality early child care experiences.
Tenured Early REACH center	A center that has been a part of Early REACH since the beginning of the initiative in 2023.
Timepoint	A specific period of time (e.g., weeks; months) when data (e.g., surveys; interviews) were collected.
Trajectory	A pattern of stability or change in an outcome or behavior over time.

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APPENDIX A

COACHING VISITS SUMMARY: AUGUST – DECEMBER 2025

Early REACH coaches (n = 6) shared forms completed during visits with 26 Early REACH centers from August – December 2025; coaching visit forms were reviewed by the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) evaluation team and findings are presented below.[65]

Table 37. *Total Number of Coach Visits by Early REACH Center from August to December 2025 (n = 26 centers)*

Center	Number of Visits
Center 1	20
Center 2	18
Center 3	26
Center 4	47
Center 5	13
Center 6	12
Center 7	24
Center 8	19
Center 9	15
Center 10	31
Center 11	25
Center 12	36
Center 13	25
Center 14	27
Center 15	12
Center 16	19
Center 17	25
Center 18	6
Center 19	12
Center 20	17
Center 21	13
Center 22	15
Center 23	32
Center 24	18
Center 25	22

[65] Coaching visit forms were designed by Early REACH and collected from 26 Early REACH centers from August – December 2025. One center was enrolled in Early REACH in March 2025 and not included in the previous memo; coach workbooks from this center and all other active centers are included in the Coaching and Consultation with Early REACH Centers section.

Center	Number of Visits
Center 26	20
Total Visits	**549**

Note: Coaching visit forms were included for 26 out of 28 Early REACH centers. Two centers received classroom visits from another continuous quality improvement program (United Way of Greater Houston Bright Beginnings) and notes from these visits were shared with Early REACH coaches.

Table 38. *Number of Center Visits by Role (n = 26 centers; n = 549 visits)*

Role	Number of Visits
Infant Teachers	116
Toddler Teachers	219
Preschool/PreK Teachers	179
Directors	35
Total Visits	**549**

Table 39. *Type and Frequency of Topics Discussed during Coaching Visits with Early REACH Centers (n = 26 centers)*

Topic	Percentage of Visits
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	97%
MyTeachstone	38%
Reggio Emilia strategies	34%
Space and furnishings	21%
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)	20%
Curriculum development	19%
Space and furnishings	19%
Interactions	8%
Center updates	7%
Family engagement	2%
Child Development Associate (CDA) Renewal	1%
Targeted professional development	1%
Licensing	--
Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) updates	--

Coaches conducted 549 visits with 26 Early REACH centers from August – December 2025. Coaches visited toddler classrooms most frequently. A majority of visits (97%) included discussions of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and general CLASS practices and 38% of visits included discussions of MyTeachstone. Note that additional consultation topics were added to coach workbooks by BTC including, but not limited to, coach support related to

implementing Touchpoints and emotional support for directors and teachers. Coach workbooks were reviewed, and key information from them is summarized in the *Coaching and Consultation with Early REACH Centers* section of this memo.

Table 40. *Professional Development Offerings for Early REACH Teachers*

Date of Session	Name of Professional Development Session	Average Satisfaction Rating (out of 10)
August 2025	*Reflecting and Responding: Staying in Relationship When Behaviors Challenge Us*	9.1
November 2025	*Inside the Child's Mind*	9.4

APPENDIX B

Table 41. *Number of Early REACH Compliance Support Monitor (CSM) Classroom Visits by Center (n=28 centers)*

Early REACH Center	Number of Classrooms Observed
Center 1	5
Center 2	6
Center 3	5
Center 4	6
Center 5	0
Center 6	4
Center 7	3
Center 8	6
Center 9	8
Center 10	7
Center 11	6
Center 12	8
Center 13	9
Center 14	3
Center 15	14
Center 16	9
Center 17	6
Center 18	4
Center 19	6
Center 20	4
Center 21	3
Center 22	3
Center 23	2
Center 24	6
Center 25	7
Center 26	4
Center 27	6
Center 28	6
Total	**156**

APPENDIX C

Table 42. *Final Response Rates for the Early REACH Fall 2025 Director Survey (n=27 centers)*

Center	Completed Director Surveys	Number of Expected Director Surveys	Return Rate
Center 1	1	1	100%
Center 2	2	2	100%
Center 3	3	3	100%
Center 4	2	2	100%
Center 5	2	2	100%
Center 6	2	2	100%
Center 7	1	1	100%
Center 8	1	1	100%
Center 9	2	2	100%
Center 10	2	2	100%
Center 11	3	3	100%
Center 12	1	1	100%
Center 13	2	2	100%
Center 14	1	1	100%
Center 15	1	1	100%
Center 16	1	1	100%
Center 17	1	1	100%
Center 18	1	1	100%
Center 19	2	2	100%
Center 20	2	2	100%
Center 21	1	1	100%
Center 22	1	1	100%
Center 23	1	1	100%
Center 24	2	2	100%
Center 25	3	3	100%
Center 26	1	1	100%
Center 27	1	1	100%
Total	**43**	**43**	**100%**

Table 43. *Final Response Rates for the Early REACH Fall 2025 Teacher Survey (n=27 centers)*

Center	Completed Teacher Surveys	Number of Expected Teacher Surveys	Return Rate
Center 1	18	18	100%
Center 2	8	8	100%
Center 3	5	5	100%
Center 4	5	5	100%
Center 5	15	15	100%
Center 6	5	5	100%
Center 7	7	7	100%
Center 8	12	12	100%
Center 9	16	16	100%
Center 10	9	9	100%
Center 11	6	6	100%
Center 12	15	15	100%
Center 13	9	9	100%
Center 14	20	20	100%
Center 15	6	6	100%
Center 16	18	19	95%
Center 17	7	8	88%
Center 18	6	7	86%
Center 19	10	12	83%
Center 20	14	17	82%
Center 21	9	11	82%
Center 22	9	11	82%
Center 23	11	14	79%
Center 24	7	9	78%
Center 25	2	5	40%
Center 26	1	4	25%
Center 27	1	5	20%
Total	**251**	**278**	**90%**

Table 44. *Final Response Rates for the Early REACH Fall 2025 Family Survey from Currently Enrolled Families (n=28 centers)*

Center	Completed Family Surveys	Number of Expected Family Surveys	Return Rate
Center 1	21	22	95%
Center 2	20	21	95%
Center 3	33	35	94%
Center 4	15	16	94%
Center 5	14	15	93%
Center 6	14	15	93%
Center 7	28	30	93%
Center 8	13	14	93%
Center 9	13	14	93%
Center 10	13	14	93%
Center 11	25	27	93%
Center 12	11	12	92%
Center 13	22	24	92%
Center 14	19	21	90%
Center 15	8	9	89%
Center 16	44	50	88%
Center 17	22	25	88%
Center 18	13	15	87%
Center 19	25	29	86%
Center 20	24	28	86%
Center 21	17	20	85%
Center 22	36	43	84%
Center 23	23	28	82%
Center 24	8	10	80%
Center 25	4	5	80%
Center 26	15	19	79%
Center 27	10	13	77%
Center 28	1	2	50%
Total	**526**	**645**	**82%**

Table 45. *Final Response Rates for the Early REACH Fall 2025 Family Survey from Inactive Families[66] (n=25 centers)*

Center	Completed Family Surveys	Number of Expected Family Surveys	Return Rate
Center 1	1	1	100%
Center 2	6	6	100%
Center 3	9	10	90%
Center 4	8	10	80%
Center 5	8	10	80%
Center 6	8	11	73%
Center 7	4	6	67%
Center 8	2	3	67%
Center 9	2	3	67%
Center 10	7	11	64%
Center 11	8	13	62%
Center 12	3	5	60%
Center 13	3	5	60%
Center 14	2	4	50%
Center 15	2	4	50%
Center 16	1	2	50%
Center 17	4	8	50%
Center 18	12	26	46%
Center 19	4	9	44%
Center 20	3	7	43%
Center 21	7	20	35%
Center 22	1	3	33%
Center 23	2	7	29%
Center 24	1	4	25%
Center 25	1	5	20%
Total	**112**	**212**	**53%**

[62] Inactive families refer to those that completed the Spring 2025 family survey and exited their Early REACH center before the Fall 2025 family survey.