



**YORK COUNTY EARLY LEARNING  
INVESTMENT COMMISSION  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
2023 EDUCATOR AWARDS PROGRAM**



Community  
Connections  
for Children

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# Executive Summary



The purpose of the York ECE Educator Awards Program is to improve teacher retention and education levels to increase childcare capacity and improve the quality of care provided to children. Research indicates that the education level of the staff, as well as their tenure in the field, positively impacts the outcomes for children.

**In 2023, over \$523,000 was awarded to 293 educators at 57 programs throughout York County serving 3,549 children.**

## Teacher Retention Increased

**76%** of the educators who received an award in 2023, received one in 2022 at the same location.

## Teacher Education Level Increased

- **50** educators earned a CDA
- **71** educators enrolled in degree programs

## New Programs Received Awards

**Five** programs received awards in 2023 who were not eligible in 2022. Two programs became eligible after moving up to STAR 2, while three additional programs had staff eligible in 2023 who were not eligible in 2022.

## More Areas of York County Were Served

Providers in **24** zip codes received awards compared to 22 in 2022.

## Teaching Vacancies Declined for Programs Receiving Awards

- **22%** decrease in the number of programs who reported having vacancies
- **20%** decrease in the number of vacancies
- Average number of vacancies per program decreased by **15%** from 2022 to 2023
- On average, ECE programs are operating at 85% of their typical enrollment due to staff vacancies.

In the first two years of the York ELIC ECE Educator Awards, the following outcomes were achieved:

- **604** awards issued to educators
- **\$982,606** awarded
- Increase in the percentage of educators with an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's receiving the award

The award impacts working families who are able to have quality child care for their children, as well as increasing the capacity of early care and before and after school programs.

# Background



## ***Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission***

Founded in 2008, the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) provides an ongoing forum to educate and engage business leaders as knowledgeable, effective advocates and to improve sector investment in quality early learning.

The Commission is a network of business leaders dedicated to making the success of every child in Pennsylvania a top priority by working to improve tomorrow's economy through smart policy investments in today's young children.

York County's 2020 Economic Action Plan identified the lack of quality, reliable, and affordable childcare as a major barrier to attracting and retaining a stable workforce. In 2023, employers struggle to fill vacant positions in a highly competitive marketplace while childcare providers are closing or operating below capacity due to their inability to attract new staff as well as the constant challenge to retain existing staff. From March 2020 to August 2023, enrollment at local childcare facilities dropped by 1,800 children, a decrease of almost 22%.

The primary challenge is the low wages typical in the early childhood industry that makes it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff. The average childcare teacher earns \$12 per hour. Childcare providers have difficulty raising salaries because they know that there is a limit to how much families can afford to pay.

In 2021, the York County chapter of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) initiated a program to provide an earnings supplement to early childhood teachers, administrators, and staff. The program is modeled on a state program which was discontinued in 2019.

With a goal of increasing the capacity of high-quality childcare programs in the County, the ECE Awards provide financial incentives for teachers to remain in the childcare industry and to advance their education. In the second year of ECE Awards, 57 childcare programs participated and over \$523,000 was awarded to 293 educators. Over 76% of the educators who received awards in 2023 were employed at the same location and received an award in 2022.

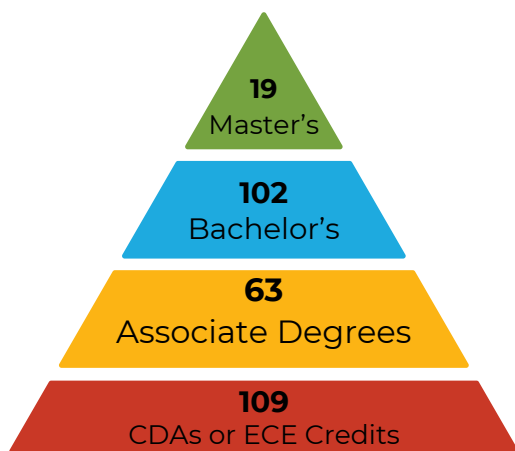
Community Connections for Children (CCC) administers the program at no cost. An oversight committee has been established to develop and manage the program. The committee includes Pete Brubaker, Tony Campisi, and Kevin Schreiber from ELIC along with representatives from CCC, the United Way of York County (UWYC), and the York County Community Foundation (YCCF), which serves as the fiscal agent for the ECE Educators Awards Program.

# 2023 ECE Educator Awards

The York County Early Childhood Educator Awards are a public/private initiative funded by individuals, businesses, organizations, private foundations, and the County of York.. Partnering with members of York County ELIC, business and community leaders recognized the critical importance of high-quality early childhood care and education, and its impact on York's current and future workforce.

## Education

Qualifying education levels include completing 9 or more ECE credits, holding a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, or achieving an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree in ECE or a related field.



Education Level of Awarded Teachers



**\$523,744**

Funds Awarded



**3,549**

Children Impacted



**293**

Educators Received  
an Award



**57**

Programs Supported



**57%**

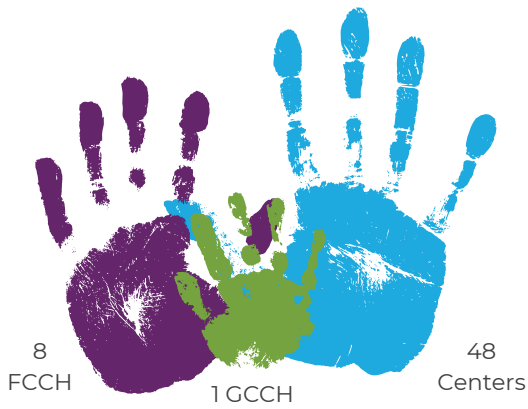
Nonprofit Organizations



# Programs Impacted

## Program Type

PA Keystone STAR 2, 3, and 4 programs are eligible to apply for awards. Applications were approved for 57 locations (shown below). Programs included childcare centers, Family Child Care Homes (FCCH), and Group Child Care Homes (GCCH).



## STAR Level

Awards were granted to early care and school age care programs participating in the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS Quality Rating Improvement System. Introduced in 2002 by the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), Keystone STARS is a quality rating system that focuses on improving and maintaining high levels of staff qualifications, education, family and community partnerships, and program operations, awarding 2, 3, or 4 STARS to programs meeting quality indicators. Programs receiving ECE Awards participate in STARS at the STAR Levels below.

25 ★★

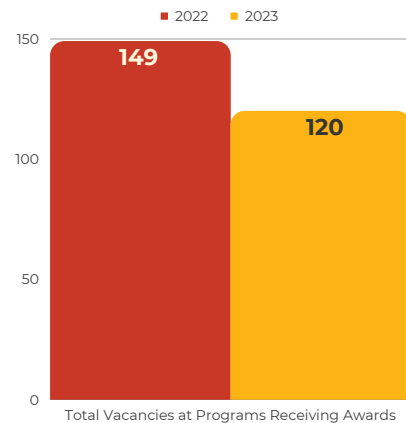
5 ★★★

27 ★★★★★

## Teacher Vacancies

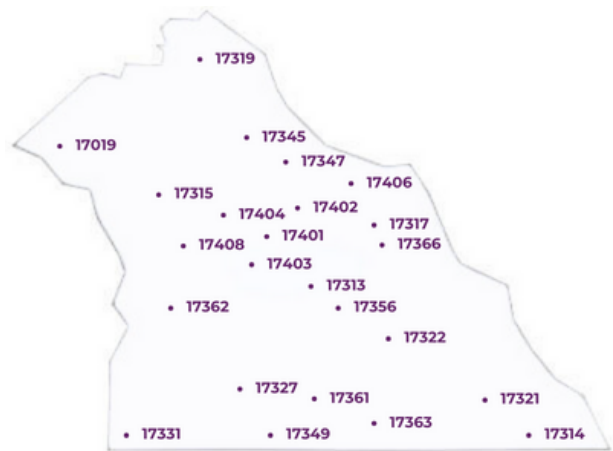
Teaching vacancies result in a lower capacity for children in childcare programs.

- 62% of the programs receiving awards in 2022 had vacancies
- 57% of the programs receiving awards in 2023 had vacancies



## Communities Served

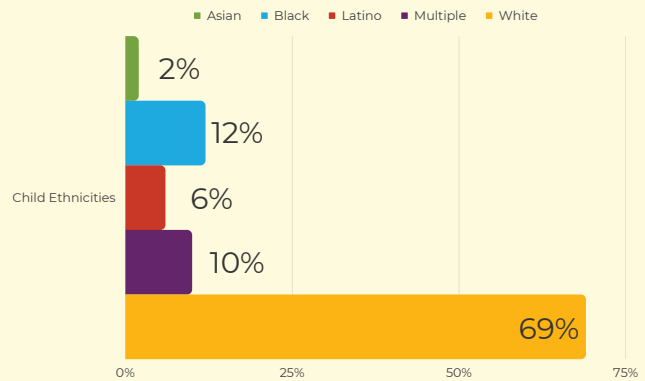
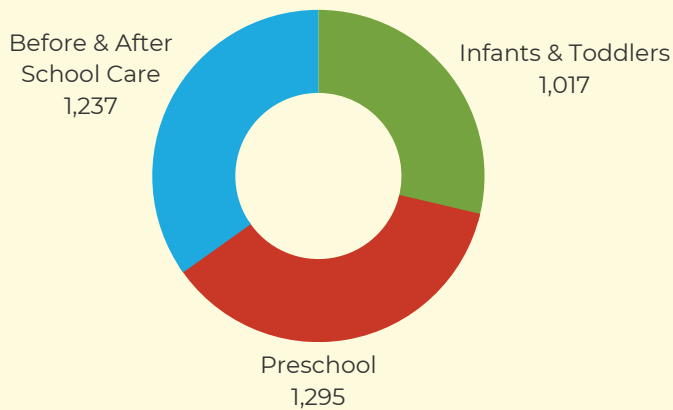
Educators and programs impacted by the York County ECE Awards spanned 24 zip codes from Etters to New Freedom and across the county.





# Children Impacted

Across York County, 3,549 children receive quality care at home-based family providers, groups, and centers receiving the York ELIC ECE Educator Awards. Children served include infants through preschoolers, as well as before and after school care - all across various ethnicities. The quality care provided enables families to remain in or return to the workforce. Research shows that employees whose children are in quality programs have fewer rates of absenteeism, increased productivity, and tenure.



## Special Circumstances

Every child is unique, and those impacted by the York County ELIC ECE Educator Awards are no different. Childcare programs provide quality care to a variety of child and family needs.

31%

Receive Financial Assistance

21%

Non-Traditional Households

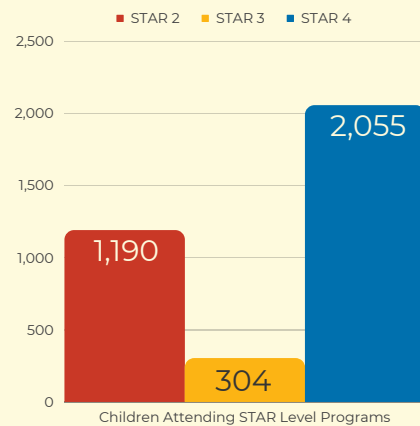
6%

Primary Language is Not English

5%

Receive Supportive Services

## Children Attending Programs Receiving Awards by STAR Level



Over **two-thirds** of impacted children attend STAR 3 or STAR 4 programs.





# Educators Impacted



**2 in 5 Educators Received an Award**

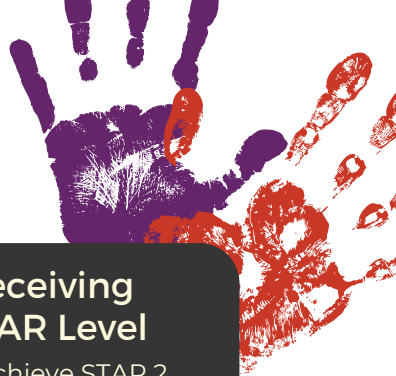
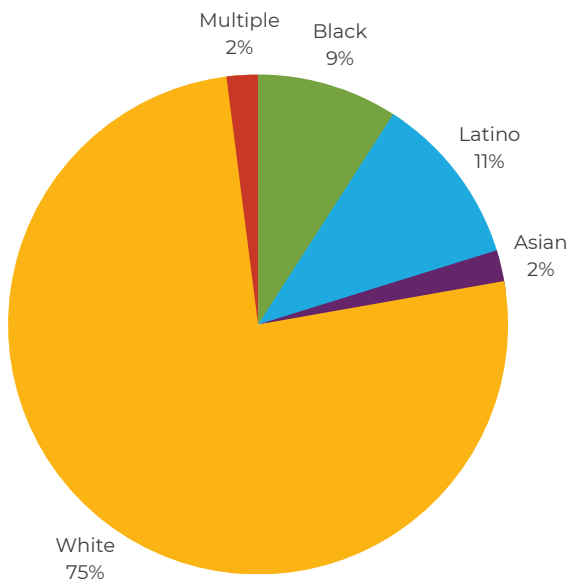
## Educator Eligibility

Of the 686 educators at programs who applied for awards, 293 educators received an award based on the eligibility criteria of education level and tenure.

Of those ineligible for an award,

- 73% weren't eligible due to only having a High School diploma or GED
- 21% hadn't been employed at least three months at their current program
- 6% didn't work at least 15 hours per week

## Educator Demographics



**Educators Receiving Awards by STAR Level**  
 Programs need to achieve STAR 2, 3, or 4 status to receive York County ELIC ECE Educator Awards. **62%** of the educators receiving an award are employed at STAR 4 programs.



*"The influence of a great teacher can never be erased."*  
 -Anonymous

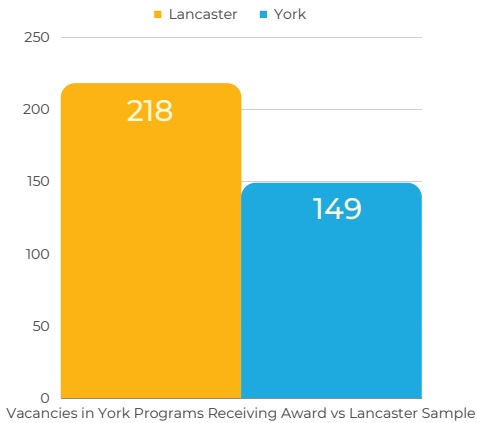
# Why Does It Matter?

Low wages are a driving factor in the childcare crisis. Pay inequities have led to high turnover and less-qualified teachers. While direct causation cannot be determined, correlation can link the impact of the York County ECE Awards to the status of quality childcare in York communities.

Controlling for Provider Type, STAR Level, and Non/For Profit status, we pulled a random sample of early care and school age care programs from neighboring Lancaster County to illustrate the results of the York ECE Educator Award Initiative.

**York County had 33% more programs move up one or more STAR levels than Lancaster County.**

## Teacher Vacancies

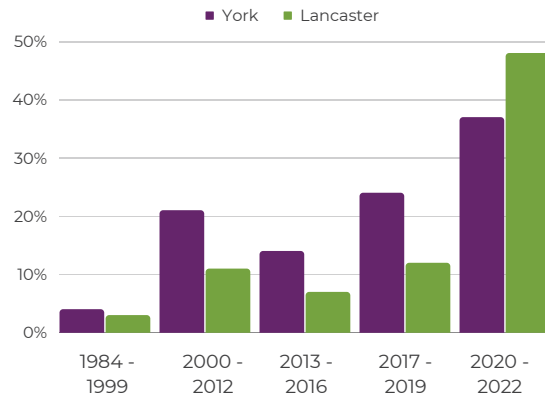


Empty classrooms equal fewer opportunities for families to access quality childcare. In 2023, York County reported **46%** fewer teaching vacancies than Lancaster.

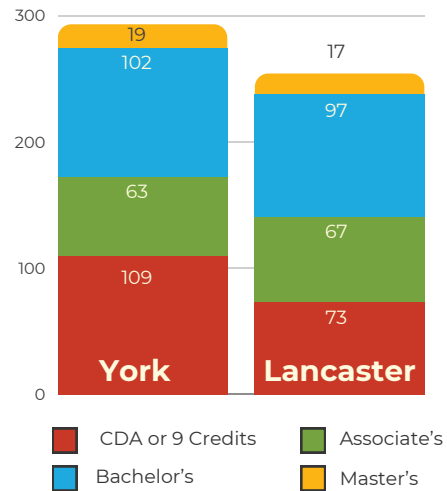
## Staff Tenure

Long-term staff can be vital to a childcare program.

## Hire Years for Staff based on Data from York Programs Receiving Award and the Lancaster Sample



## Education



Educated teachers are the foundation for quality early and school age care programs. Sample results show that similar programs in Lancaster County have fewer highly qualified staff in their classrooms.



# Thank You

On behalf of the York County Early Childhood Education programs, Community Connections for Children thanks the following funders for their generous donations to support the York County ELIC ECE Educator Awards.



## STAR 4 Contributors

\$25,000+ per year

Brougher Foundation

Meg & Pete Brubaker

Tony & Stef Campisi

The Arthur J. & Lee R. Glatfelter  
Foundation

Glatfelter Insurance Group

Heinz Endowments

M & T Bank

Powder Mill Foundation

Mark & Ruby Schmidt

Warehime Foundation

WellSpan

Women's Giving Circle

County of York ARPA Funds

York County Community Foundation



*"There is no better investment of  
time and money than in the life of a  
child. They are the future."*

-Anonymous

## STAR 3 Contributors

\$15,000 - \$24,999 per year

PA Automotive Association Foundation

Wendy & Jim Flinchbaugh

## STAR 2 Contributor

\$5,000 - \$14,999 per year

The Kinsley Foundation

## STAR 1 Contributor

Less than \$5,000 per year

Carolyn Steinhauser

*"I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside."*

-Whitney Houston



For more information about the York County Early Learning Investment Commission and the York County Early Childhood Educator Awards, please contact:

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