

APRENDE 2022-2025 Program Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

Background

Santa Fe Community College’s Early Childhood Center of Excellence (ECCOE) launched its APRENDE early childhood teacher apprenticeship program in response to a statewide need for qualified early childhood educators. Child care providers report that it is challenging to recruit and retain the qualified workforce they need to meet family demand, especially for infants and toddlers. APRENDE offers an innovative and accelerated pathway for students to earn early childhood credentials and classroom experience to help expand the pool of qualified early childhood professionals. Through an APRENDE pre-apprenticeship program, new entrants into the field work to earn a Child Development Certificate (CDC) to qualify them to enter a classroom as an early childhood assistant teacher. Through APRENDE’s state-registered apprenticeship program, those with prior experience in early childhood work to earn an associate degree to advance in the field.

APRENDE registered its apprenticeship with the State of New Mexico in August 2022, and its first cohort of pre-apprentices started in Fall 2022, allowing them to gain the qualifying hours of experience needed to begin apprenticeship placements in Spring 2023. This program was initially funded by the city of Santa Fe and a private foundation to stabilize and build the early childhood workforce in the Santa Fe area. This report summarizes evaluation of the program’s first three years, assessing progress towards its goals of providing a supported career pathway in early childhood education and increasing the supply of professionals with the requisite credentials to advance in the field. Below are highlighted findings from interviews, focus groups, and surveys with key groups of participants who served as informants to understand program effectiveness.

Outcomes

Pre-Apprentices	Apprentices
<p>63 have enrolled since Fall 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 36 completed NM Child Development Certificate (CDC) ○ 12 CDC earners exited after certification ○ 23 enrolled as employed APRENDE apprentices ○ 5 are enrolled and in progress towards completion 	<p>38 have enrolled since Spring 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 completed the apprenticeship and earned their associate degree ○ 9 earned their associate degree before completing apprenticeship hours ○ 3 pursued alternative licensure ○ 19 are enrolled and in progress towards completion

Key Findings

- APRENDE is designed to implement research-identified best practices for effectively building an early childhood workforce pipeline, including:
 - » Hands-on practical experience applying skills in real-world work settings, with job-embedded coaching from experienced mentors
 - » Flexible learning that allows students to earn income while in school
 - » Bilingual options for completing early childhood coursework in Spanish
 - » Responsive advisement, to support students across their academic, professional, and personal needs

- Participants have all been placed with sites and mentors who meet the requirements set by APRENDE and state registered apprenticeship standards.
- APRENDE equips students with real-world experience in implementing high-quality teaching practices, as they work towards successful demonstration of required competencies. Their placements in high-quality centers gives them experience that participants suggest is particularly valued by employers.
 - » “I think that’s one of the highest values of this apprenticeship program, is that we’re putting teachers in the field who are not just certified, but who are actually qualified to start practicing.” (SFCC faculty)
- Local employer partners spanning public schools, Head Start and Early Head Start, a higher education lab school, and private employers reported value-added benefits including:
 - » Extra employees in the classroom
 - » Connection to qualified potential new hires
 - » Increased supply of bilingual staff
 - » Opportunity to professionalize existing staff.

Lessons Learned

- Program implementation carries costs that are essential to success. These investments in the early childhood workforce support the larger community workforce as well.
- Employers are the key partners and buy-in is crucial.
- Mentorship must be high quality, and mentors need to be intentionally trained and supported.
- Students, who may be first-time or nontraditional, must be intentionally recruited into programs and provided with individualized supports as they work through academic training steps.

Over the course of this three-year evaluation, the APRENDE program has shown effectiveness in establishing an apprenticeship pipeline into the early childhood field, promising to impact the current shortage of qualified professionals in Santa Fe and the state of New Mexico. APRENDE is strengthening their partnerships with higher education institutions to extend pathways to early childhood BA degree attainment for students, which can qualify teachers for higher paying professional jobs. SFCC and APRENDE are deepening a partnership with Central New Mexico Community College and New Mexico Highlands that allows APRENDE students to continue coursework from CNM as transfer students or continue to a BA degree at NMHU.

“I think a lot of people in education have been talking about for many years, how do we grow our own? How do we try to support people in getting their degrees in a reasonable amount of time? I do believe that’s the future of education -- growing the skills and empowering our EAs to get their licenses and get into those roles as lead teachers.”

(APRENDE Mentor Teacher).