

# Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program

## Teacher Quality and Higher Education

Research shows that teachers' education, training and compensation levels are main determinants of early education program quality, which has a direct and positive effect on children's healthy development. The most effective preschool teachers have a Bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education or child development.<sup>1</sup>

## History of the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program

In the FY06 budget, the Massachusetts Legislature created the *Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship program* and allocated \$1 million in pilot funding. This scholarship program, administered by the Office of Student Financial Assistance at the Department of Higher Education (DHE) in cooperation with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), provides financial assistance to currently employed early childhood educators and providers working with children birth through school-age.<sup>2</sup> The initiative is intended to increase the numbers of early educators with degrees, and thus improve the quality of early education and care programs.

## Demand for ECE Scholarships

In the program's first year, more than 1,000 educators applied for funding and 614 scholarships were awarded. Due to strong demand, the state tripled program funding in FY07 and 743 awards were granted. Despite a difficult fiscal climate, \$3.2 million was allocated for the scholarship in FY10. Since its inception, \$15.2 million dollars in cumulative spending and more than 4,200 scholarships have been awarded through the ECE Scholarship program.

## Impact of ECE Scholarships

Recipients have used scholarship funds to attend 45 public and private colleges and universities across the Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup>

### Early Educators in Massachusetts:

- Number of early educators (including center-based teachers; Head Start; family providers; public school preschool): 10,823
- Avg. salary for a preschool teacher: \$32,120
- Turnover rate: 29%
- Early educators with a Bachelor's degree -
  - Center-based: 30%
  - Family child care: 18%
  - National average: 50%

Sources: Early Education for All. (2006). A Report on the Cost of Universal, High-Quality Early Education in Massachusetts; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). Mean annual wage for preschool teachers in Massachusetts; Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network. (2000). Massachusetts Child Care Center and School-Age Program Salary and Benefits Report; Marshall, N. L., Dennehy, J., Johnson-Staub, C., Robeson, W. (2005). Massachusetts Capacity Study Research Brief: Characteristics of the Current Early Education and Care Workforce Serving 3-5 Year-olds. Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College; Massachusetts Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Inc. (January, 2009) Data Report 2008.

College Name	Total ECE Scholarship Recipients Enrolled in FY10
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE	1
ANNA MARIA COLLEGE	11
BAY PATH COLLEGE	38
BECKER COLLEGE/WORCESTER	58
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	17
BRIDGEWATER STATE COLLEGE	49
BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE	19
BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE	32
CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE	60
CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE	8
COLLEGE OF OUR LADY OF ELMS	16
CURRY COLLEGE	1
DEAN COLLEGE	5
EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE	11
FISHER COLLEGE	21
FITCHBURG STATE COLLEGE	26
FRAMINGHAM STATE COLLEGE	6
GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE	9
HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	21
LASELL COLLEGE	1
LESLEY UNIVERSITY	37
MASSACHUSETTS BAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	30
MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS	5

College Name	Total ECE Scholarship Recipients Enrolled in FY10
MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE-BROCKTON	27
MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY- BEDFORD, MASS.	10
MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY- LOWELL, MASS.	15
MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE	11
NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	17
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY	2
NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE	11
QUINCY COLLEGE	11
QUINSIGAMOND COMMUNITY COLLEGE	40
REGIS COLLEGE	2
ROXBURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	12
SALEM STATE COLLEGE	50
SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE	40
SPRINGFLD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE	9
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-AMHERST	72
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-BOSTON	35
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-DARTMOUTH	4
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-LOWELL	6
URBAN COLLEGE OF BOSTON	88
WESTFIELD STATE COLLEGE	12
WHEELOCK COLLEGE	18
WORCESTER STATE COLLEGE	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1002</b>

## Scholarship Recipients

Scholarship recipients are currently employed in the early education and care field where the average salary for a preschool teacher is \$32,120 per year in Massachusetts – 43% less than the average kindergarten teacher's salary.<sup>4</sup> The average age of scholarship recipients is 39 and reflects a non-traditional college-going population of mid-career adults.

The racial and ethnic diversity of the field is reflected in the scholarship recipients. Among early educators receiving scholarships in 2009-10: 64% were White; 15% were Hispanic/Latino; 14% were African-American; 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander; 4% were multi-racial; 1% were Cape Verdean, and less than 1% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (15% not reporting). Compared to the racial makeup of the field overall (75% White; 11% Hispanic/Latino; 8% African-American), these data show high rates of participation in the scholarship program by Hispanic/Latino and African-American early educators.<sup>5</sup>

Scholarship recipients represent the Commonwealth's many early education and care settings including: group child care centers which includes center-based and Head Start (86%); family child care programs (7%); public school preschool programs (5%); and school-age child care programs (2%). In addition, they represent the various employment roles and positions that make up the field of early education and care: assistant teacher, lead teacher, program director, family child care provider, and others.

## Scholarship Criteria

Criteria set by the BHE require that applicants: (1) be employed for at least one year in an EEC-licensed or license-exempt early education and care program in Massachusetts and have demonstrated commitment to early childhood education; (2) be enrolled in an eligible undergraduate program in Early Childhood Education or a related field (i.e. elementary education, sociology, psychology, etc.) at a two- or four-year college or university in Massachusetts and not have a prior Bachelor's degree; (3) be willing to continue employment as an early educator in Massachusetts for at least six months for every semester of scholarship aid, not to exceed two years for an Associate's degree and four years for a Bachelor's degree; (4) be eligible under Title IV and not in default of a state or federal student loan or owe a refund on any state or federal grant; and (5) file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. In addition, recipients of the ECE Scholarship are expected to: remain employed in an early childhood education and care program in Massachusetts while completing the requirements for the degree program; maintain satisfactory academic progress in accordance with institutional policy on all college work; enroll in a minimum of three credits in a given academic semester; and complete the educational program within a reasonable timeframe.<sup>6</sup>

## Current Award Amounts

The amount of a recipient's scholarship award depends upon the number of credits s/he pursues and the type of institution of higher education s/he attends. Award amounts range from \$150 per credit for a maximum of \$1,350 per semester at a community college to \$400 per credit for a maximum of \$3,600 per semester at a public or private college or university. Scholarship awards fund tuition and fees and include some related expenses such as textbooks. Grants may be awarded for a maximum of three courses per semester during the fall, spring and summer semesters. The new application is available at: <http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=ecescholarship>.

## Moving Forward

Investments in early educators are paying off as scholarship recipients are currently distributed throughout each academic year: 28% freshmen; 26% sophomores; 29% juniors; 15% seniors; and 3% in their fifth undergraduate year. The majority of recipients (61%) are enrolled in 4-year Bachelor's degree programs.<sup>7</sup> The scholarship program is supporting many early educators in their pursuit of higher education degrees. However, many more would like to participate. To better serve scholarship applicants and meet rising demand, a scholarship workgroup has been formed comprised of staff from EEC, DHE, and additional members from the higher education community. Additional participants in the ECE Scholarship program would help to ensure a better educated workforce, ultimately helping to improve children's outcomes by achieving high-quality early education and care in the Commonwealth.

For more information, visit [www.earlyeducationforall.org](http://www.earlyeducationforall.org) or contact Chad d'Entremont at 617-330-7383 or [cdentremont@earlyeducationforall.org](mailto:cdentremont@earlyeducationforall.org).

<sup>1</sup> Kelley, P. & Camilli, G. (2007). The impact of teacher education on outcomes in center-based education programs: A meta-analysis. *NIEER Working Papers*; Campbell, F. A., et al. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1), p. 42-57, and Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., et al. (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Go To School*. Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Center Child Development Center. Retrieved October 29, 2008, from: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/CQO-es.pdf>; Bowman, B., Donovan, M. S., & Burns, M. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press; Barton, A. (2001). *Securing Our Future: Planning What We Want for Our Youngest Children, Future Trends, Volume VI*. Malden, MA: Early Learning Services, Massachusetts Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED453954); Whitebook, M. (2003). *Bachelor's Degrees Are Best: Higher Qualifications for Pre-Kindergarten Teachers Lead to Better Learning Environments for Children*. Washington D.C.: The Trust for Early Education. Retrieved October 29, 2008, from <http://www.trustforearlyed.org/docs/whitebookfinal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Department of Early Education and Care serves children from birth through age 14 (or up to age 16 if the child has a documented disability).

<sup>3</sup> Data on Early Childhood Educators Scholarship recipients by school, grade, county, race/ethnicity, provider-type, and position, as well as the amount of scholarships by school-type provided by the Department of Early Education and Care: <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/>

<sup>4</sup> Average kindergarten teacher salary is \$56,640. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey. Mean annual wage for preschool teachers in Massachusetts. The job description for the OES survey for the preschool teacher occupation is as follows: Instruct children (normally up to 5 years of age) in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth needed for primary school in preschool, day care center, or other child development facility. May be required to hold State certification. Exclude "Child Care Workers" (39-9011) and "Special Education Teachers" (25-2041 through 25-2043). Available: <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes252011.htm>

<sup>5</sup> The racial composition of the field is 11% Hispanic/Latino, 8% African-American, 75% White, 2% Asian, 3% multi-racial as reported by Marshall, N.L., et al. (2005). Preparing the Early Education and Care Workforce: The Capacity of Massachusetts' Institutions of Higher Education. Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College. Retrieved October 29, 2008, from: <http://www.wconline.org/proj/earlycare/capacityfullreport.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance. Available: [http://www.osfa.mass.edu/pdfs/guidelines/2006-2007\\_EarlyChildhood.pdf](http://www.osfa.mass.edu/pdfs/guidelines/2006-2007_EarlyChildhood.pdf); <https://secure.osfa.mass.edu/ecea/TermsAndConditions.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance. FY10 ECE Scholarship data summary. Provided by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

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