

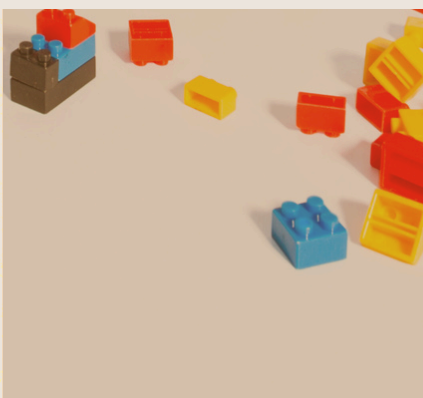


BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES

NC Apprenticeships in Early Childhood



2024 IMPACT REPORT



October 2024



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Building Bright Futures collaborates regularly with a network of government, education, workforce, and early childhood organizations to provide important connections and resources to its participants. This important work would not be possible without the help of our partners.

- Office of the Governor
- NC Division of Child Development and Early Education
- ApprenticeshipNC
- NC Community College System
- NC Department of Public Instruction
- NC Department of Commerce
- US Department of Labor
- National Governors Association
- Early Years (formerly Child Care Services Association)
- NC Partnership for Children/Smart Start
- Child Care Referral & Resource Programs
- National Intermediaries
- Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities
- Autism Society of North Carolina

ABOUT BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES

***Building Bright Futures** has changed the landscape of early childhood education apprenticeship in NC by recruiting almost **400 pre-apprentices and apprentices** in more than **65 counties**, increasing participation by over **85%**.*

The North Carolina Business Committee for Education's (NCBCE) **Building Bright Futures** (BBF) initiative supports **ECE pre-apprenticeship-to-apprenticeship** programs across North Carolina, with the goal of strengthening and increasing the number of early childhood educators in the state.

This supportive framework creates additional learning opportunities and reduces prohibitive costs for early childhood students and employers, resulting in higher quality opportunities for our workforce and families.

The Building Bright Futures pilot initiative runs from January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2024. Based on the success of this pilot, NCBCE will continue to support its participants and grow the program in its next phase. Additional DCDEE funding will provide support through September 2025.

Credentials & Degrees

Earn industry credentials, certificates, and degrees to support educational and career goals.

On-The-Job Learning

Work paid hours in a child care center with the support of a mentor.

Enrichment Events & Activities

Gain critical knowledge about the field to enhance skills and employability.

Networking Opportunities

Attend seminars, webinars, and workshops to share experiences and lessons learned.

Financial Support

Receive support for wages, materials, wraparound services, employment and educational costs, and more.



THE STATE OF CHILD CARE IN NC

*North Carolina has long been recognized as one of the top states for economic development, with businesses continuing to establish roots in the state. This brings more jobs and families to the area – and with that comes a need for high-quality child care. **Simply put, without child care, parents cannot work.***

In NC and across the country, **the child care industry struggles to recruit and retain early childhood educators**. It is a tight labor market and these programs - primarily small businesses relying on tuition revenue - report difficulty in paying wages that are competitive with other community employers. Child care programs are looking for individuals who have a passion for working with children *and* have the early childhood competencies important for a business based on promoting children’s healthy development.

Child care administrators would be motivated to stay in the field if they could:

- **Find qualified teachers** (67%);
- Receive **more respect** for the profession (57%); and
- Receive **better pay** (55%).

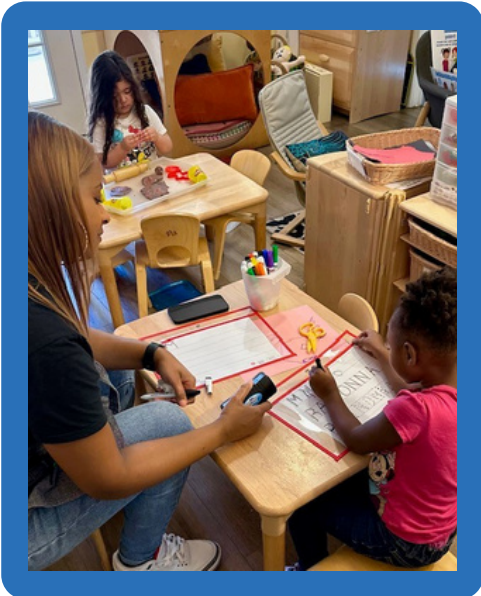
To help address these challenges and build up this vital workforce, NC DHHS’s Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) granted NCBCE \$3M over two years to pilot Building Bright Futures, a statewide initiative to support early childhood education (ECE) pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships through funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.

ECE apprentices receive post-secondary education, paid on-the-job training at a child care program, and mentorship. This supportive model creates positive outcomes for employers, staff, children, and families as apprentices gain essential skills and knowledge in the field.

Together with statewide and national partners, this pilot initiative has helped **increase the number of ECE apprentices in North Carolina by over 85%**, with further growth expected. As this report shows, BBF has made significant strides to support the “workforce behind the workforce,” providing child care programs - especially small businesses and those in historically underserved communities - with the means to elevate the profession and build a pipeline of high-quality educators that benefits all.

Data Source: Early Years 2023 Workforce Study

PROGRAM GOALS



- **Create a talent pipeline** for employers, increasing the child care workforce, starting in high school
- **Upskill** the current early childhood educator workforce and introduce new educators to the field
- **Reduce barriers and costs** for participating in apprenticeship

- **Elevate the profession** with opportunities for more education and professional development
- Provide exposure to **real world application** of educational theory, under the guidance of a mentor

Teachers earn less today than they did four years ago.

In 2023, the **median starting salary** for an early childhood teacher in NC was **\$14/hr**, and the **median hourly wage** for the **highest** paid teachers was **\$17/hr**.

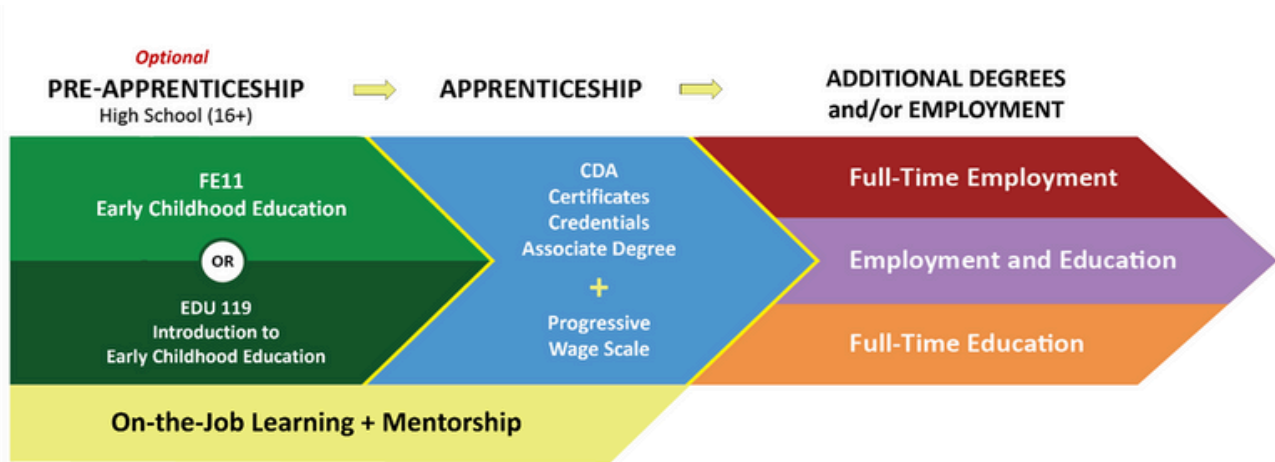
Data Source: Early Years 2023 Workforce Study



- Provide an **environment of stability** for employers and families by decreasing turnover
- Offer opportunities for **networking and sharing** of experiences and best practices

CAREER PATHWAYS IN ECE

Apprenticeship is for individuals at least 16 years old and provides paid on-the-job training at a child care center and mentorship as an apprentice earns credentials or a degree. Apprentices are paid on a progressive wage scale, where they are rewarded for skills and experience gained. Completion of apprenticeship may lead to additional degrees, full-time employment, or a combination of both.



Pre-Apprenticeship is an optional precursor to apprenticeship, designed to allow students to explore ECE as a potential career path. Pre-apprenticeship allows students to test out a career they are interested in by receiving related instruction, on-the-job training, and mentorship. It also serves as a way to jumpstart their progress toward earning credentials and following a career pathway, while providing an opportunity for employers to recruit and train potential educators.

CREDENTIALS

ECE pre-apprentices and apprentices work toward these industry-recognized credentials:

- NC Early Childhood Credential/Lead Teacher (NCECC)
- Child Development Associate (CDA)
- Certificates (Infant/Toddler, Preschool, etc.)
- Associate Degree* in ECE that articulates to a Bachelor's Degree in B-K
- US DOL Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Certificates

**Building Bright Futures supports up to the completion of an Associate Degree; however, apprenticeship programs can include additional education.*



BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a proven earn-and-learn model, designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of both employers and staff.

HOW APPRENTICES BENEFIT

Apprenticeships are a fit for anyone looking to jumpstart or advance a career in early childhood education.

Apprentices have access to a well-supported pathway for career and educational success that combines:

- Quality education leading to certifications and degrees;
- Paid hours in a child care center on a progressive wage scale; and
- Real world on-the-job learning under the guidance of a mentor.

HOW EMPLOYERS BENEFIT

Apprenticeships are an effective recruitment and retention tool for employers, tailored to meet current and future staffing needs, allowing them to:

- Expand education and training opportunities for staff;
- Build a pipeline of skilled employees (high school students, recent graduates, new hires, and incumbent workers); and
- Remain competitive in today's economy.

ECE apprenticeships result in high-quality educators who are well-versed in the critical development that occurs during the earliest years of a child's life. This positions children for academic success and allows small businesses, families, and the community to thrive.

HOW FAMILIES BENEFIT

Families rely on high-quality early educators who understand the needs of young children. Early educators play a pivotal role for families, as they:

- Enable parents and caregivers to go work to support their families;
- Provide children with a strong foundation for future learning, and;
- Serve as a source of support, collaboration, and guidance to ensure a child's success.

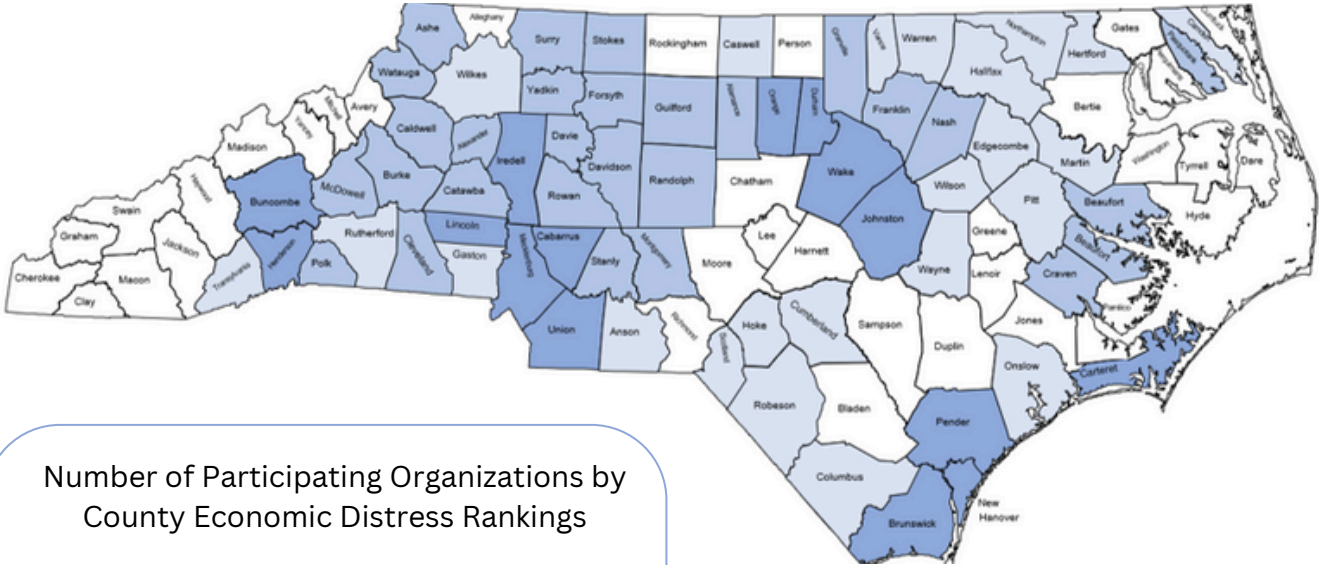
HOW COMMUNITIES BENEFIT

Quality child care allows parents to work, thereby supporting local businesses and the economy. This leads to a stronger community, which can include:

- Positive economic impact through job creation and sustainability;
- Healthy community connections and engagement, and;
- Improved educational outcomes for citizens.

BBF STATEWIDE IMPACT

Building Bright Futures supports child care programs and apprentices in rural, urban, and historically underserved communities, across all three economic tiers of the state.



Number of Participating Organizations by County Economic Distress Rankings

Lightest Blue	Tier 1 (Most Distressed) :	23
Medium Blue	Tier 2 :	25
Darkest Blue	Tier 3 (Least Distressed) :	18

BBF Data as of October 2024

- County Tiers are calculated using four factors:
- Average unemployment rate
 - Median household income
 - Percentage growth in population
 - Adjusted property tax base per capita

NC Department of Commerce County Distress Rankings 2024

EMPLOYERS

BBF supports **all types** of licensed child care programs, **the majority of which are small businesses**, including:

- Private Preschools
- Faith-Based Preschools
- Family Child Care Homes
- NC Pre-K
- Early Head Start
- Head Start



BBF NUMBERS

BBF participant data to date as of October 2024.
Visit our web site for the latest numbers.

400 Pre-Apprentices & Apprentices

279 Child Care Sites

189 Organizations

66 Counties Served

303 Mentors

58 Sponsors

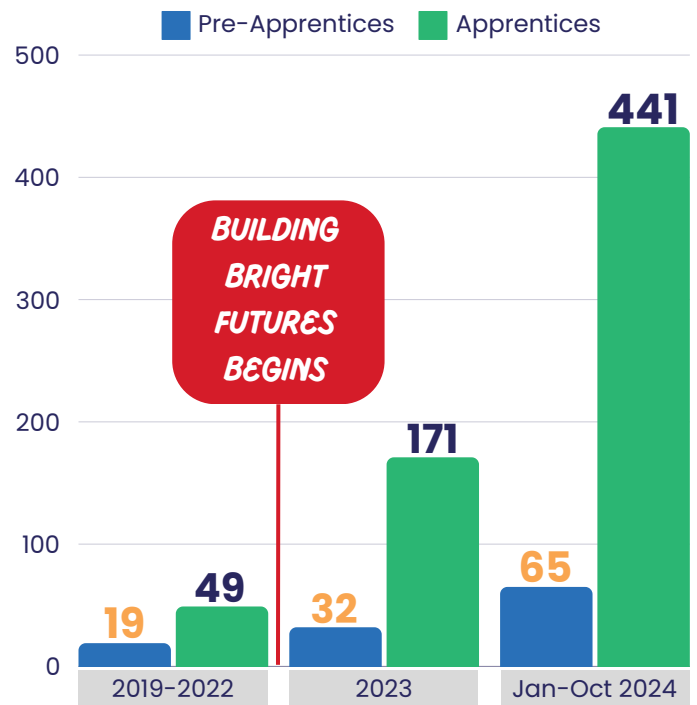
OUR GROWTH

In under two years, Building Bright Futures has made a tremendous impact on early childhood education apprenticeship in NC, growing this important workforce of high quality educators.

In 2023, BBF focused its efforts on creating a system that was efficient and effective, building valuable partner relationships, and helping employers and sponsors develop apprenticeship programs across the state.

In 2024, BBF continued to recruit programs and pre-apprentices and apprentices, create meaningful resources for participating employers, mentors, and students, and begin work on strategies to make it easier for small businesses to participate in ECE apprenticeship.

Total ECE Pre-Apprentices and Apprentices in North Carolina To Date*



*ECE Apprenticeship was introduced to North Carolina in 2019. Not all apprenticeship programs in NC are supported by BBF, as some have their own support and funding services.

A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Building Bright Futures has built a successful system for supporting pre-apprentices, apprentices, and child care employers, including program onboarding, data collection and analysis, feedback, reimbursement, accounting, and compliance.

To recruit and build awareness of the pilot program, marketing strategies have included: branding, the development of a program web site, monthly newsletters, mailing lists, virtual and in-person presentations, and social media.



EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Building Bright Futures provides critical support to employers as they build their business and their talent pipeline.

Wages

- % match of hours worked by apprentice

Professional Costs

- Curriculum
- Software
- Apprentice Workshops & Activities
- Technology

Onboarding Costs

- Background Checks
- Physicals
- Uniforms

Professional Development

- Training
- Conferences
- Professional Memberships

MENTOR SUPPORT



Building Bright Futures partners with the Early Years (formerly Child Care Services Association) to offer a **mentor support program** to all BBF mentors. Support includes a Community of Practice webinar series and additional mentoring resources. Mentors also receive **stipends** for their important work guiding our future early educators.

APPRENTICE SUPPORT

For apprentices, BBF provides support to ensure those interested in a career in early childhood education are positioned for academic and career success.

Educational Supplies

- Books & Materials
- Technology

Educational Fees

- College Fees
- *BBF does not cover tuition*

Mentorship

Enrichment

- Webinars & Conferences
- Field Trips

Transportation

Parent Fees



PRE-APPRENTICE SUPPORT

Building Bright Futures offers resources and brings awareness to the breadth of career opportunities available in the early childhood education field. High schoolers who complete a pre-apprenticeship can earn their Lead Teacher credential when they graduate high school and turn 18 years old.

Enrichment

- Webinars & Conferences
- Field Trips

Success Stipend

- Reward for completion

Mentorship

Tuition Waiver

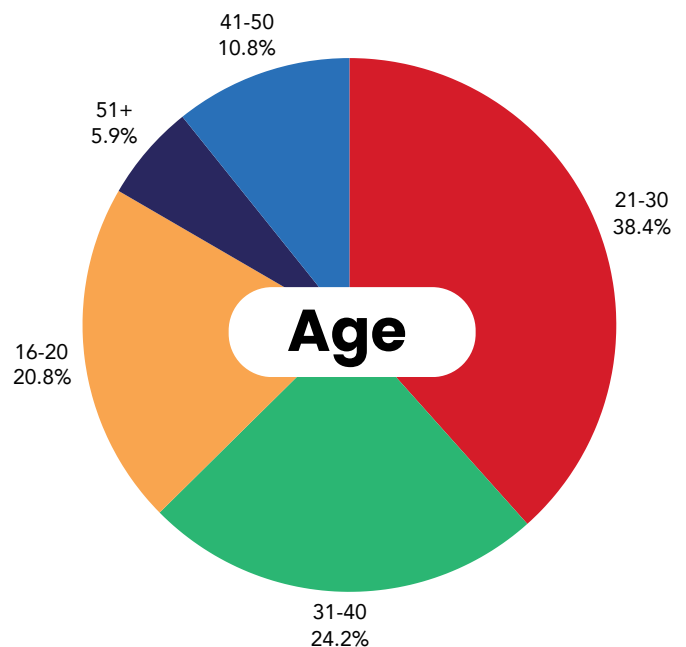
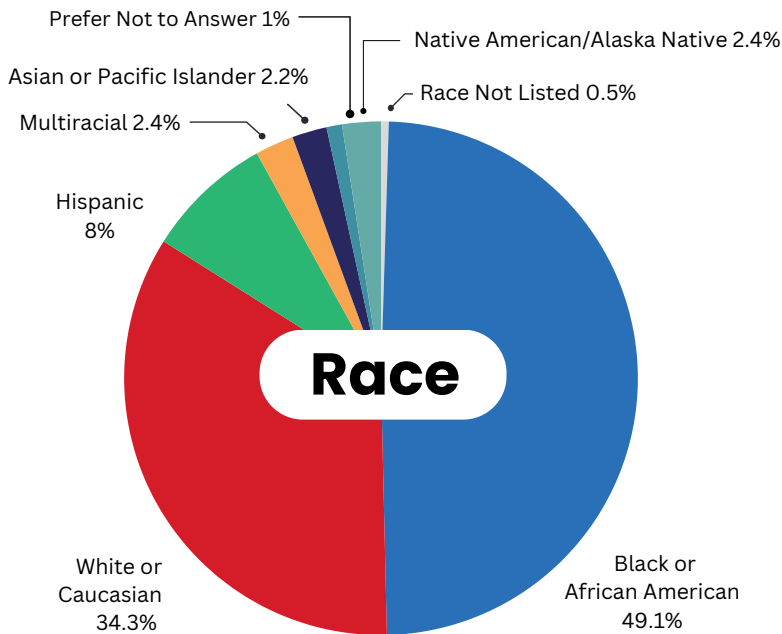
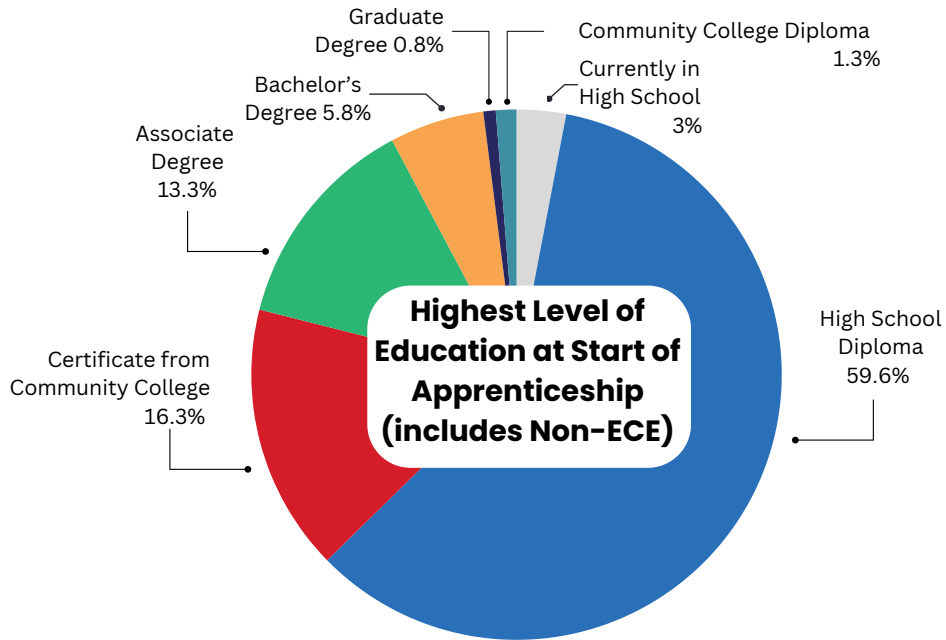
*In NC, pre-apprentices who register with an ECE apprenticeship within **120 days** of high school graduation are eligible to have tuition waived at any NC community college!*



BBF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data as of October 2024

APPRENTICES

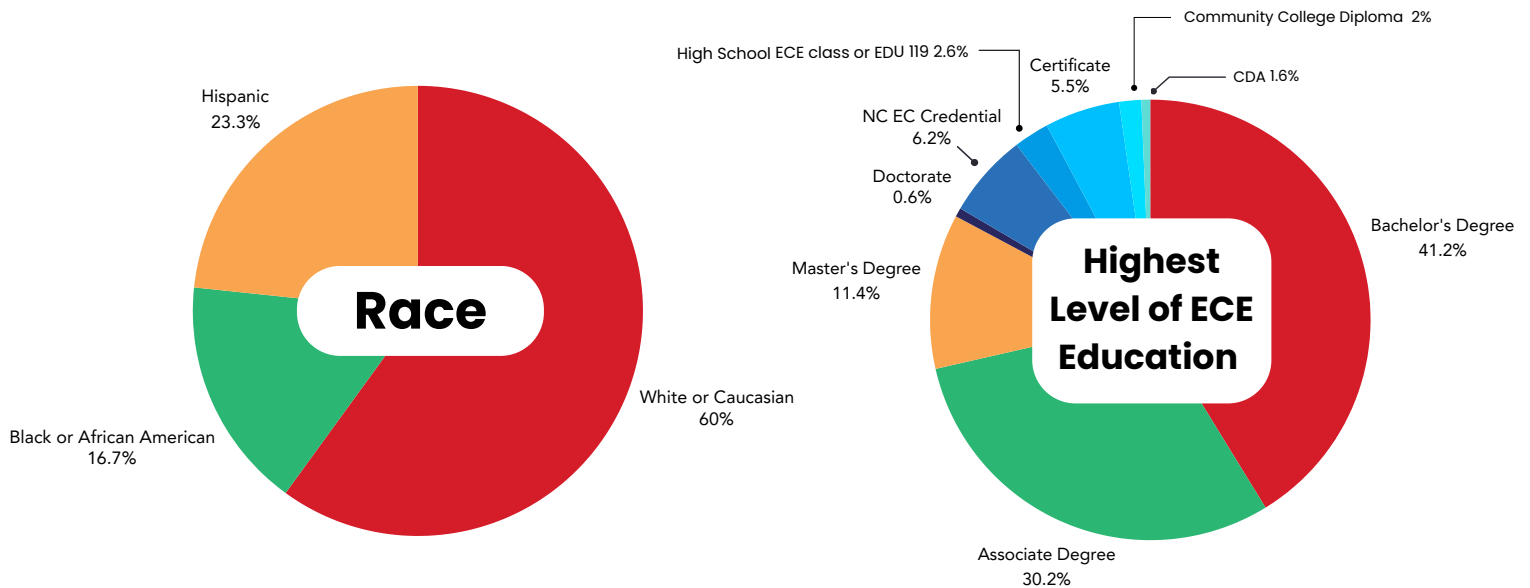


BBF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data as of October 2024

PRE-APPRENTICES

MENTORS



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

BBF participants include a variety of employers and sponsors, including:

- Public School Systems
- Community Colleges
- Smart Starts/NC Partnerships for Children
- CCR&Rs
- Regional ECE Organizations
- Workforce Groups
- Child Care Programs
- Mixed-Income Facilities
- Inclusive Environments
- Montessori Schools
- Bilingual Schools
- Medical Centers
- YMCA/YWCA

*“We need continued investments in the child care workforce to give parents the security they need and children the high-quality early learning that is critical for their success in school and life. Programs like **Building Bright Futures** leverage the state’s commitment to building a high-quality early care and learning network that helps families raise capable children and build a stronger North Carolina.”*

DHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley

TESTIMONIALS

*“North Carolina’s children, families, and businesses need more early childhood education and care options, and **Building Bright Futures** is an innovative solution to increase access. By supporting and encouraging students to enter the early childhood profession, we’ll help make sure more families and employers have the quality child care they need to thrive.”*

Governor Roy Cooper

“The support of Building Bright Futures has allowed us to give our budding educators the attention, access, and motivations they need to go to school and dive deeper into the profession with confidence. We believe programs that focus on removing barriers for apprentices and empowering our teacher-leaders to become mentors is growing our school culture and individual teachers in the best ways!”

Corrie Price, Director
EVOLVE EARLY LEARNING CENTER, ASHEVILLE

“The day I met with BBF to discuss its benefits for my staff, my eyes filled with tears as I thought about my daughter’s candidacy. The thought of college costs is something that has been a weight on my shoulders as she gets closer to high school graduation. I wasn’t sure how I was going to afford the tuition, fees, books, technology, and the cost of transportation. Upon listening about the BBF initiative, I was overjoyed at the possibility of this program blessing not only my daughter, but so many others like her. My daughter will be able to work in her chosen career while going to college with limited concerns of cost.”

Heather Fidler, Director and Parent of an Apprentice
PARTNERS IN LEARNING, SALISBURY

“The financial, educational, and professional support provided by BBF gave us a path to be able to support our educators to gain valuable training and to obtain credentials that not only support their professional growth but also improve the overall quality of our program.”

Megan McCurley, Executive Director
LATINO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERSHIP (LEAP), DURHAM

WHAT'S NEXT?

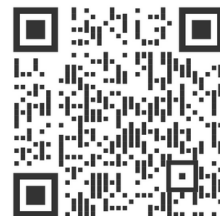
Building Bright Futures has laid the groundwork to continue support for its current participants, and to scale this program to reach new NC communities. These strategies include:

- Creating apprenticeship pathways for individuals with **Autism or mild intellectual disabilities**
- Launching a **statewide apprenticeship model and program** to more easily allow small businesses to participate, without the burden of significant administrative work
- Recruiting **youth apprentices** through NCBCE's NC Career Launch program
- Connecting with **partners** who can lead us to individuals **new to the field**, particularly those in rural and underserved areas

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Join the growing community of early childhood education apprenticeships that are shaping the future of the profession in NC!

- Ensure current apprentices are fully supported throughout the length of their apprenticeships
- Provide a supportive pathway for pre-apprentices to continue their educational and career goals into apprenticeship
- Build and scale the system
- Host or sponsor an event
- Provide expertise to participants
- Establish an apprenticeship program at your organization



Scan here to connect with us to talk about how you can support Building Bright Futures!



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January 2023–October 2024



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www.ncbce.org/building-bright-futures



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