

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

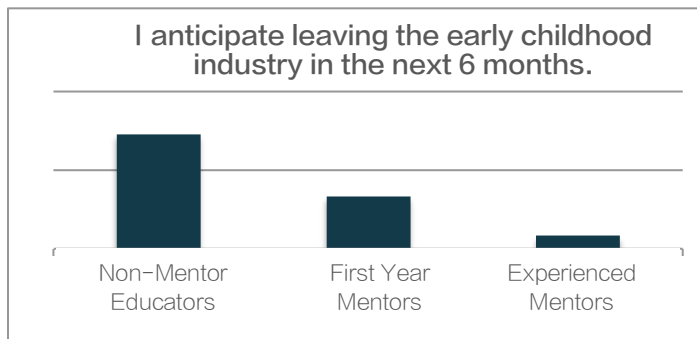
CENTRAL NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE, EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTOR NETWORK

This summary outlines findings from the 2018 program evaluation conducted for the Early Childhood Mentor Network (ECMN) at the Central New Mexico Community College. The program operates as a mechanism for workforce development, to train and support current early childhood educators in an effort to foster improved skills and abilities while simultaneously driving improved preparation of the next generation of early childhood educators.

The evaluation examined outcomes across four dimensions to support workforce development.

1. Improving workforce development for early childhood educators.
2. Improving college student preparation for the early childhood industry.
3. Improving early childhood program quality.
4. Maintaining the program operational effectiveness of the ECMN.

Findings reveal strong value both to mentors and to students in driving current skills as well as fostering relevant knowledge and abilities for growth. Mentors reported higher positive feedback in response to the value of student mentorship versus cooperating teachers. Mentors further reported gains in both perceived confidence and direct early childhood education skills as well as strong appreciation for the value of the professional community created by the ECMN. Participating mentors reported higher likelihood of remaining as educators (over cooperating teachers) that increased further for mentors who remained in the program.

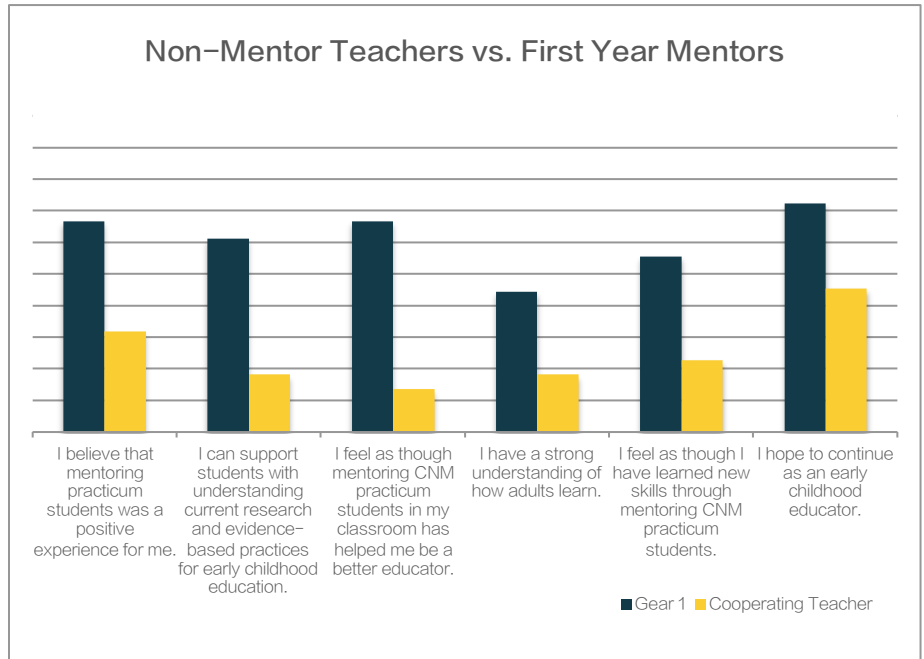


The ECMN was found to promote a positive experience for students pursuing a degree in early childhood education (matched with mentors) in terms of perceived skills as well as perceived support. Respondents spoke at length to the value of the preparation in entering the field with sufficient skills to support quality education. College students placed at sites with mentors reported greater perceived confidence (over those placed with non-mentor educators) in their classroom management abilities as well as greater understanding of specific early childhood education skills and techniques.

The ECMN was found to drive early childhood program quality as measured against skills and abilities of educators. Findings show increase in knowledge, skills, and abilities in classroom management, mentorship, and education techniques as compared against cooperating teachers

placed with practicum students. Further, directors spoke to the value of the program and skills gained (via their staff) both through the content as well as through the meetings (mentors attended) with the most positive feedback in response to: 1) that they would recommend that staff continue participate as mentors to practicum students, 2) that they would recommend to other directors that their staff participate as practicum mentors, and 3) that they see the ECMN as a workforce development pipeline.

These findings speak to the overall value and success of the ECMN as a strong program asset to current and future educators in skill development and – as a more intangible asset – in terms of professional community to support early childhood education. Respondents interviewed spoke heavily about the challenges of early childhood education, notably the lack of external respect for early childhood education and the burnout given the demanding work. The ECMN was found to be a buffering factor against these inherent industry pressures through three critical aspects.



1. The ECMN was found to promote stronger skills training and preparation to be an educator, which improved both training and preparation but also the perceived rigor of the field.
2. The ECMN and the community it supported fostered a strong sense of professionalism among educators and the early childhood community as a mechanism to deconstruct negative stereotypes and drive perceived confidence.
3. The ECMN community acted as a professional support mechanism and industry learning opportunity to further promote the rigor of early childhood education and also to elevate the industry.

Thus, the ECMN acts as a strong buffer against the critical elements that contribute to educator attrition. This then builds credibility among those in the industry (current and future educators) as well as externally from other elementary educators, parents, stakeholders, and sponsors

From these findings, the evaluation report recommends that there be a continued and sustained commitment to the ECMN – as it expands and scales across the state – as a viable and successful investment for workforce development of quality early childhood educators.