



# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2024 Annual Report

**miaeyc** Michigan Association for the  
Education of Young Children

An Affiliate of **naeyc**

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## Letter From the Executive Director: Celebrating 50 years of community impact

At its roots, working in early childhood education is about **building community** — creating a place of connection for young children, collaborating with other professionals in the field and supporting the workforce around us. No profession is more deeply entwined in all others. Not only do early childhood educators have a lasting impact on the minds of children at their most critical developmental age, but other professionals rely on early childhood care to help in their own career success.

In 2024, the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) celebrated **50 years** as an organization. Over these 50 years, our membership has continued to grow, making us the largest affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

I first joined the organization as a member while I was a student in college. The value of joining an organization of like-minded professionals supporting children was shared early on by my college instructors. As I progressed through my career in early childhood working as a center Director and eventually working for Michigan AEYC as the TEACH Director and now the Executive Director, I learned firsthand the importance of community, networking and collaboration.

That is exactly what our organization creates for early childhood education professionals — community connections and opportunities to network and collaborate while they are working every day laying a foundation in children's lives.

It's more important than ever that our professionals have the resources and support they need to succeed. We are in constant collaboration with partners, policymakers and our members to hear what they need and to use every dollar available.

While we celebrate the past 50 years, I'm excited for what's ahead. We'll continue to grow and advance the early childhood workforce and showcase our field's professionalism. We're working to develop the talent pipeline at the high school level to help young adults know what their options are in this field.

Michigan AEYC is uniquely positioned to impact generations to come. **Won't you [join us](#) in this journey?**

*Erica Willard*

Executive Director



# What Is the Michigan AEYC?

For over **50 years**, Michigan AEYC has been dedicated to ensuring early childhood educators get the support and resources they need to help young children thrive. Our mission sits as our guidepost through all our work — past and present.

**Our mission:** To promote high-quality early learning for all children birth through age 8 by connecting practice, policy and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate and work on behalf of young children.

Michigan AEYC is the largest affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an organization made up of nearly 60,000 members of the early childhood community. Collaborations such as this are key in our statewide efforts. It gives our members access to the resources of the organization, as well as networking and brainstorming opportunities with educators across the country. Michigan AEYC advocates for early childhood education at the state level, and also collaborates with NAEYC to influence lawmakers and policy at the national level.

Both our organization and NAEYC abide by a promise to our membership and operate under a specific framework to deliver on it.

## The Membership Promise: We Care for Our Members.

This framework has become known as the **CARES framework**, and it is centered on five principles (see below).

Our membership has come a long way from 50 years ago. It is our continued dedication to our mission and meaningful partnerships that will take us into the next 50.

## The role of philanthropy:

The philanthropic efforts of our partners allow us to grow and support both our members and the early childhood education field at large. Funding helps bridge the gaps, especially for students and members in underserved areas, ensuring they benefit from the same opportunities. It also enables us to provide equitable access to professional development, resources and advocacy training.

Every dollar invested with Michigan AEYC strengthens and empowers the early childhood workforce to meet the needs of Michigan’s youngest learners.



## Committed to Driving Measurable Impact

Targeted programs and initiatives that focus on **four key areas** (see below) are part of our organization's dedication to strengthening early childhood education.

These areas are the cornerstone of Michigan AEYC's work for Michigan's early childhood educators, children and their families.

### ADVOCACY

We advocate for policies prioritizing access to high-quality early childhood education, elevating the profession and driving systematic change.

### MEMBERSHIP

We build a robust and inclusive network of early childhood professionals who benefit from exclusive resources, community connections and growth opportunities.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We deliver comprehensive trainings, events and resources to support ongoing growth for early childhood educators.

### TEACH EARLY CHILDHOOD® MICHIGAN

We provide a scholarship program to strengthen Michigan's early childhood workforce by supporting early childhood educators' access to higher education and career advancement.

## Committed to Advocacy

One of Michigan AEYC's key initiatives is **advocacy**, and we accomplish it with a robust and active grassroots volunteer **Advocacy Committee**.

**The committee's mission: To lead efforts in voicing the importance of investing in equitable high-quality experiences for young children and elevating the early childhood profession.**

It's important that any committee represent the membership's diverse geographic areas and professional backgrounds. As such, this committee is made up of members from suburban, urban and rural Michigan counties who serve in a variety of roles, from teachers, child care providers and professors to lawyers, social workers, early childhood consultants and more. The Michigan AEYC Advocacy Committee partners and collaborates with NAEYC, external stakeholders and members to ensure it hears input from all sectors.

### The committee's key initiatives:

- **Monitoring legislation** and developing advocacy resources.
- **Providing tools** for individuals to participate in national, state and local events.
- **Hosting, co-hosting** and **sponsoring advocacy events** in the state.



## In 2024, Michigan AEYC advocacy efforts focused on the following events:

### Early Childhood Capitol Day 2024

Our organization co-hosted the **Second Annual Early Childhood Capitol Day** in March 2024 in Lansing in partnership with Think Babies Michigan and Mothering Justice. This event brought parents, early childhood professionals, advocates and community members together to elevate their voices and push for policy change through legislation. Key focuses of this legislation include supporting paid family and medical leave in Michigan, increasing funding for early childhood education and higher compensation for the early childhood workforce. Attendees heard directly from community leaders who impact Michigan families and young children and met with state representatives and senators. Over **250 individuals** attended the event this year.

### Week of the Young Child 2024

Gov. Whitmer officially declared **April 6-12, 2024**, as the **Week of the Young Child**. The event, which AEYC hosted in conjunction with NAEYC, was a celebration of early learning, young children, their teachers and their families.

Families, caregivers, community organizations and educators were encouraged to participate through fun-filled, themed days statewide. Many organizations, families and early childhood educators across the state planned activities and events to celebrate this year.

One such celebration took place at the Berkley School District's administrative offices in Oak Park on April 8. Students from the district's early childhood program, Berkley Building Blocks, paraded through the offices with musical instruments, wagons and smiles for the staff.

### Legislative Luncheon 2024

Michigan AEYC hosted the **Fall Legislative Luncheon** in **September 2024** in Lansing. This event presented attendees the opportunity to engage lawmakers in conversation about early care and education issues impacting communities and the state. It included a lunch, as well as trainings and informational sessions about legislation impacting Michigan's children and those who educate and care for them. Over **50 legislators** and **65 early childhood educators** participated this year.

“ Advocacy is an invaluable part of the legislative process. State lawmakers need the voices of early childhood advocates to obtain an accurate understanding of what is happening in our profession, and the challenges that we are currently facing. Events like the Michigan AEYC Legislative Luncheon and Early Childhood Capitol Day allow early childhood professionals an opportunity to grow their advocacy skills, build relationships with elected officials and share their expertise and their stories. Last year, these events supported hundreds of members in lifting their voices and impacting change. ”

— Kirsten Charnesky, Michigan AEYC Advocacy Committee Chairperson

## Committed to Our Membership

In the last 50 years, we have grown to over **4,100 members** strong, officially making us the largest NAEYC affiliate. Our members represent a diverse network of early childhood professionals.

This group of individuals uses its collective power to advance high-quality learning experiences for young children. Membership in our organization also creates a spirit of community, where early childhood educators can collaborate with other professionals and participate in professional development opportunities to support their work as part of the essential early childhood workforce.

**“There are so many parts of teaching that feel like we’re in silence, we’re not connected, and so I was searching for that space where I feel a part of something bigger than myself and where I could make those connections, and Michigan AEYC is the place that gave me that.”**

*— Casey Sterle, Michigan AEYC member*

**In 2024,**  
our members



### REPRESENTED ...

Varied perspectives and inclusive advocacy efforts and a diverse landscape spanning rural, suburban and urban areas across the state.



### FOCUSED ON ...

Community with more opportunities for members to gather and share resources. This was in direct response to requests from our members for more connection.



### CONTINUED GROWING ...

In their engagement and participation in professional development, advocacy and events.



## Committed to Professional Development

We empower Michigan's early childhood educators with innovative professional development, investing in the state's future. Continued financial support enables program growth, expanding access to exceptional early learning for all children. In 2024, over **3,000 individuals participated in these key initiatives.**

### Knowledge Center

One of Michigan AEYC's most vital resources is our Knowledge Center, an online resource hub where professionals can find training, meetings and events, as well as on-demand training and webinars. In 2024, **8,161 users** utilized the Knowledge Center.

### Annual Early Childhood Conference

Michigan's largest and most impactful early childhood event, the conference builds community, fosters professional growth and celebrates the critical role of early childhood educators.

Every year, the conference draws over **2,000 attendees**. The 2024 conference focused on the theme "Purposeful Play" and featured over **100 sessions, keynote speakers** and **networking opportunities**.

### Annual Infant Toddler Conference

The Michigan AEYC Infant Toddler conference gathers the latest research, best practices and innovative strategies for supporting infant and toddler development. This one-day conference draws nearly **300 early childhood educators** from across the state who are caring for our youngest Michiganders.

### Annual Administrator Institute

Each year, Michigan AEYC hosts a one-day institute to support seasoned as well as emerging leaders in early childhood programs. The 2024 Administrator Institute gathered over **100 early childhood professionals** in a variety of leadership roles for a full day of learning to grow their leadership skills and drive positive change within their programs.

## Committed to Professional Development cont.

These projects were supported by funding provided from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### High School Career Tech Ed Support

This program is an effort to introduce high school students to early childhood careers and foster a pipeline of skilled professionals. More than **140 schools** across the state currently have an early childhood education career tech ed program. These efforts will continue to support Gov. Whitmer's Sixty by 30 initiative to encourage more high school students to pursue postsecondary education.

### CDA Community College Cohorts

Our new program for 2024 offers another chance for individuals to enter the early childhood profession in a way that works for them. Michigan AEYC partnered with **15 community colleges** to provide Child Development Associate (CDA) training so students can earn college credits that apply toward an early childhood associate degree.

### Early Foundations Program

This program is a training initiative for existing or new staff who have not yet completed an early childhood credential or degree. In 2024, we had **141 individuals** complete the program.

### Director Network

The Director Network is a virtual cohort for center directors, assistant directors and owners. In 2024, we had **240 individuals** complete the program.

*"I think the most important part of this class was being able to talk to other teachers and caregivers about their experiences in the classroom, and being able to gain resources and ideas from the professor and all the other students in the class."*

*— Community College Cohort participant*

## Committed to TEACH Early Childhood® Michigan

TEACH Early Childhood® Michigan is licensed by the **TEACH National Center**, a division of **Early Years**. As a statewide scholarship program investing in early childhood educators, it is one of Michigan AEYC's major workforce development strategies, because when child care works, we all work. TEACH ensures parents can rely on high-quality early education and care to benefit Michigan children, families and the economy for years to come.

TEACH is designed to help early childhood educators in all licensed settings meet their professional development goals, while continuing their current employment in early childhood and school-age child care programs. It provides debt-free college education with comprehensive support for educators. Employer and employee dollars are partnered with public funds in Michigan to support the early childhood workforce.

### The Future of TEACH

Coming in 2025, TEACH will undergo some important updates to make it even more effective. The scholarship model for CDA training, associate degrees and bachelor's degrees will be revised. Scholarships will be awarded directly to the recipient's college or university of choice as a non-tuition award, which can be used for any expenses related to their enrollment, books or coursework. The scholarship can also be used in combination with other scholarships or financial aid, and any unused amount can be reimbursed to the student.



### Funding

Investing in TEACH is an investment in Michigan's families and economy. Continued funding is essential to meet the growing demand for scholarships and to ensure the program's long-term success. In 2024 alone, Michigan AEYC awarded nearly **2,000 TEACH scholarships**, which translates into educating more than **69,000 children** statewide. That's an investment in Michigan's future.

But it takes everyone collectively doing their part to get us there. In 2024, we received **\$7,279,344** from American Rescue Plan Act and Child Care and Development Block Grant funds from the **Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP)** for **TEACH Scholarship** and **workforce support initiatives**.

For fiscal year 2025, Michigan AEYC was awarded **\$8 million** in funding sources by MiLEAP to administer the TEACH Scholarship and additional workforce development initiatives including the **Early Foundations Program, Director Network, High School Career Tech Ed support, and CDA Community Cohort**. Additional support is crucial for not only sustaining the program's impact but expanding it as well. The need for well-educated and professional educators is more important than ever.

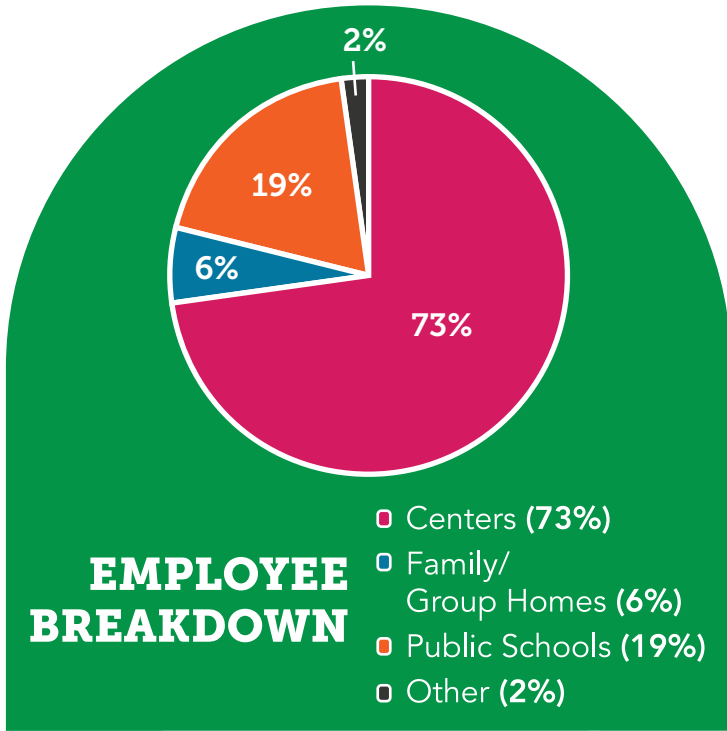
### Wage & Retention Impact

Another important achievement of TEACH is to address critical workforce challenges such as low wages and high turnover. According to Michigan AEYC's internal analysis, TEACH scholarship recipients see an average wage increase of **58%**, based on weighted national bachelor's degree averages. Additionally, programs with TEACH participants report a low turnover rate of **2.8%**.

This stability ensures children have access to consistent care, allowing parents to remain in the workforce and contribute to Michigan's economy.

# TEACH by the Numbers

Let's break it down to see how far-reaching TEACH's impact truly is.



**1,955**  
Total recipients in 2024

**14,269**  
Since program launch

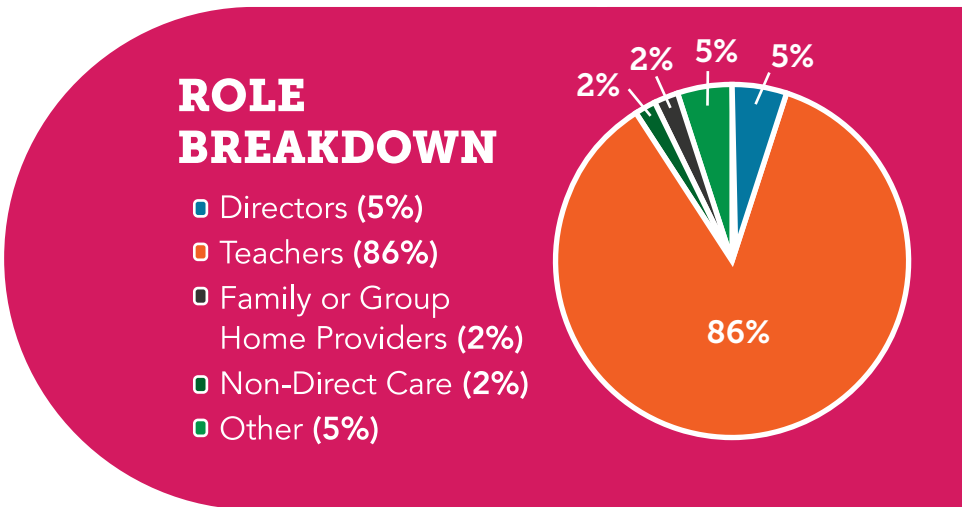
**3.62**  
Avg. associate degree GPA

**3.70**  
Avg. bachelor's degree GPA

**1,013**  
Total early childhood programs partnered

**30%** of recipients Hispanic and/or people of color

**48%** of recipients first-generation college students



**11,586**  
Total credit hours completed

# "The team at TEACH were on board and patient with me."

*Kaleigh Robinson utilized the TEACH Early Childhood@ Michigan Scholarship from fall 2016 through spring 2024.*

"In 2016 I was offered the TEACH scholarship through my employer for the opportunity to continue to my degree in child and family development at Western Michigan University.

I had just finished my associate in applied science at Kellogg Community College for early childhood education and my drive to continue in the field did not stop there!

During the mix of mom life, two babies (May 2017 and February 2024), guardianship for two kiddos, two stepchildren, three household moves and many new transitions, I was able to complete my degree in April 2024!

I have been with my employer since 2014 and have received multiple significant raises, bonuses and two promotions that led me to becoming our GSRP director.

My course completion through WMU was amazing, not only for job purposes but many life-related courses in general. The team at TEACH were on board and patient with me throughout my journey as well. I could not be more blessed to have completed this program and provided stability in my schedule and financing for my family over the last seven years!

*Thank you, TEACH! As a first-generation bachelor's degree recipient, if I can do it, so can you!"*



## Committed to the Future

As the former Director of TEACH with Michigan AEYC, I know just how important this piece of our work is, but it is only one prong of the wheel that makes us go round. The programs, resources and support we offer are for every early childhood educator, no matter where they are on their journey. So many of our staff and board members have worked or currently work with young children in the early childhood education field, so we understand how important it is to meet people where they're at and give them the tools to be successful for their unique circumstances.

There is a lot to celebrate over the last 50 years and especially in 2024. I hope you've seen just how far-reaching this work is. We might never truly be able to put hard data to the lasting impact early childhood education has on the growing minds of young children. But one thing is for sure: When we invest in our youngest learners, we are creating a place for them to flourish and realize their full potential.

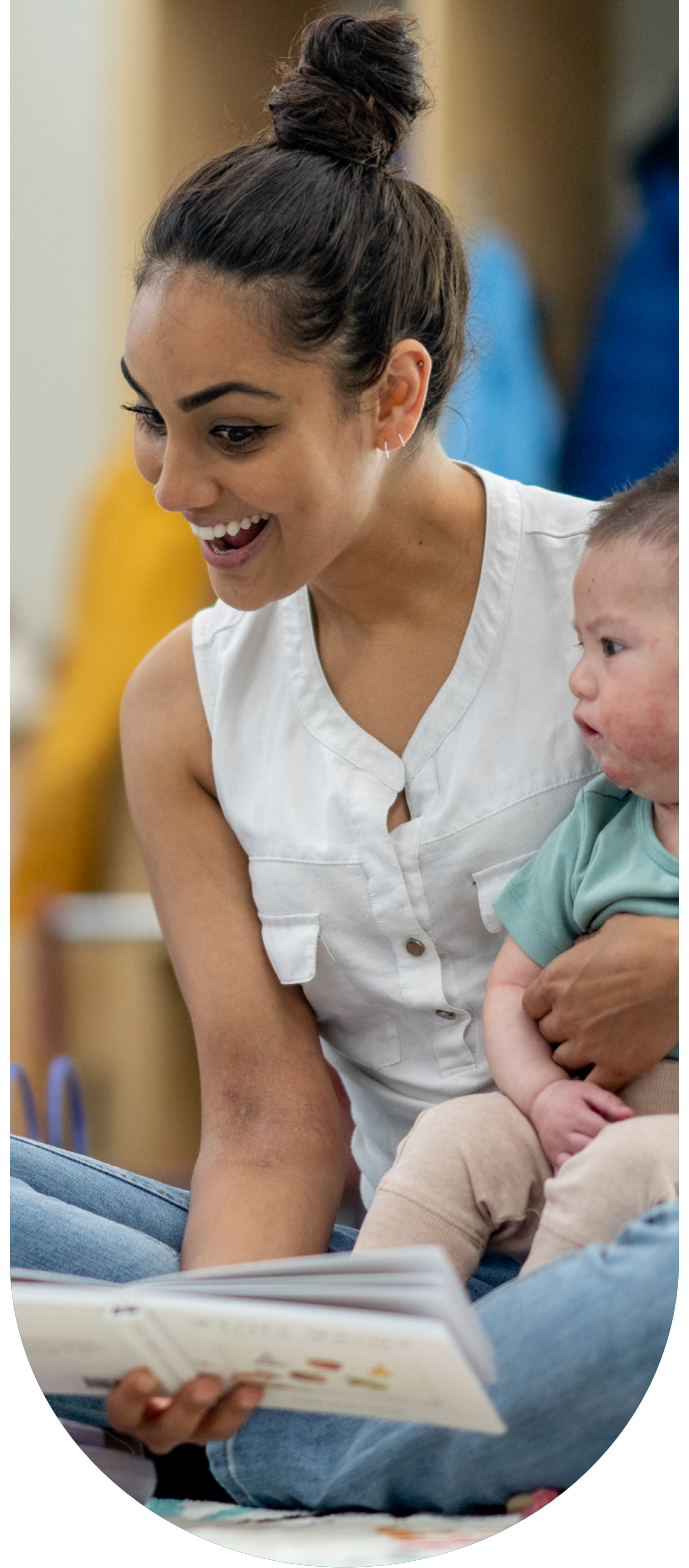
We look forward to continuing this work in 2025. Michigan AEYC will collaborate with our members, partners and other organizations to offer more opportunities to come together and share experiences and ideas. We also look forward to enriching Michigan's future by building the talent pipeline in high schools across the state and advocating for equitable compensation.

But we certainly cannot do this work alone. Your [continued support](#) will ensure we can build on our success from the past year and give Michigan's students, educators and families a bright future.

**Thank you for your partnership and support,**

*Erica Willard*

Executive Director



**miaeyc**

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