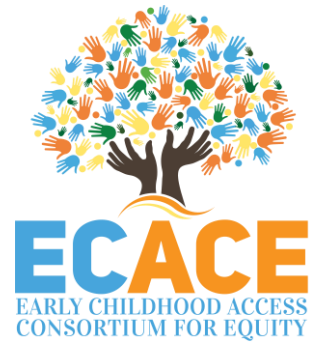


EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY



GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER

ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION *Chair Pranav G. Kothari • Executive Director Ginger Ostro*

ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD *Chair Lazaro Lopez • Executive Director Brian Durham*

April 16, 2024

TO: Governor JB Pritzker
Senate President Don Harmon
Senate Minority Leader John Curran
Speaker of the House Emanuel “Chris” Welch
House Minority Leader Tony McCombie
Secretary of the Senate Timothy Anderson
Clerk of the House John W. Hollman
Senate Higher Education Committee Chairperson Michael W Halpin
Senate Higher Education Committee Spokesperson Dan Fowler
House Higher Education Committee Chairperson Katie Stuart
House Higher Education Committee Spokesperson Dan Swanson
ECACE Advisory Committee

FROM: Ginger Ostro, Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education
Brian Durham, Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board

RE: ECACE Mid-Year Report (Public Act 102-0174)

On behalf of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE), we are pleased to submit a supplement to the ECACE Mid-Year report. The ECACE Act ([Public Act 102-0714](#)) created the Consortium, comprising 62 colleges and universities and charged with collaborating to advance equity, support the upskill of the incumbent early childhood workforce, and to create seamless and streamlined pathways to higher education in Illinois.

The Act requires the Consortium to report twice a year on enrollment of the early childhood workforce. Included in this report is information about changes in enrollment in early childhood programs at Consortium colleges and universities from AY 2020 to AY 2023.

Please feel free to contact Christi Chadwick, ECACE Project Director, IBHE (chadwick@ibhe.org) or Marcus Brown, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs and Student Services, ICCB (marcus.brown@illinois.gov) with questions, comments, or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Ginger Ostro, Executive Director

Brian Durham, Executive Director

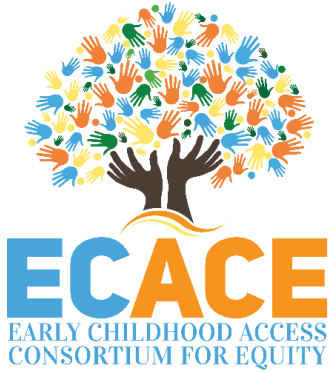


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Enrollment in ECACE Early Childhood Programs Over Time: Academic Year 2023



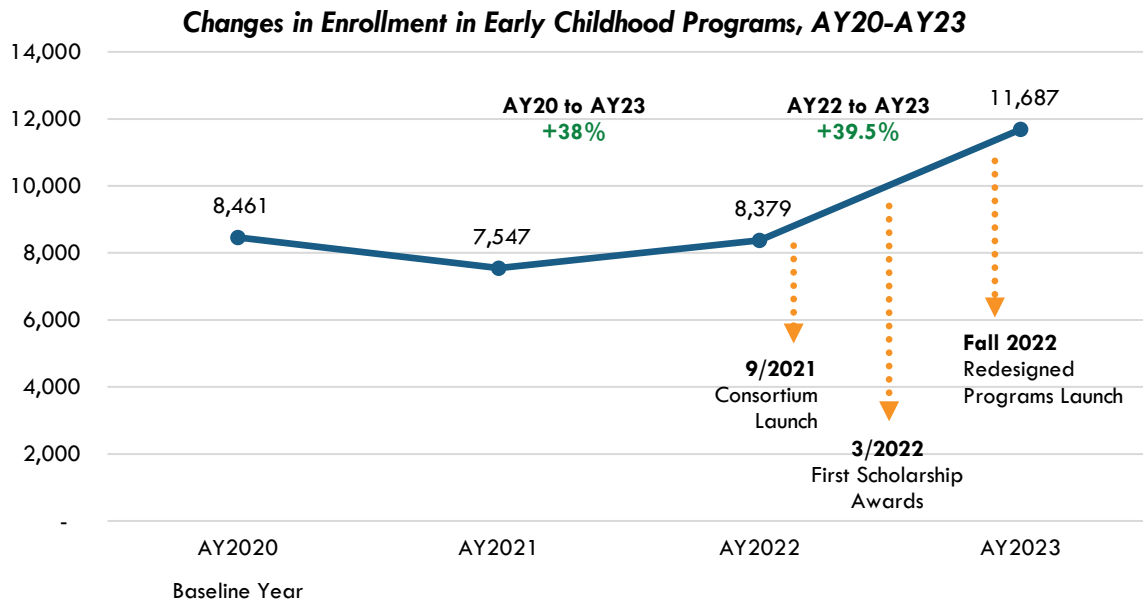
Enrollment in early childhood programs in Illinois ECACE colleges and universities increased 39.5% from AY22 to AY23, and rates of enrollment of Black/African American students and Hispanic/Latino students outpaced that of White students.

This ECACE report provides an initial look at enrollment in early childhood programs at Consortium colleges and universities from AY22 to AY23, the first full year of ECACE implementation. It also includes an enrollment comparison to AY20 and comparisons by race and age of students over time.

Academic Year 2022-23 was the first full year of implementation of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) implementation.¹ During this time, incumbent *early childhood workforce* members were provided with scholarships, mentors, and other services to support access and persistence towards a degree or credential. In addition, Consortium member institutions and regionally based navigators conducted intensive outreach to the early childhood community to engage employers and the workforce. Institutions provided programs designed to meet the needs of working adults and to support seamless transfer pathways for students. While data on enrollment of members of incumbent workforce are not yet available, we wanted to share the overall enrollment changes as part of the broader work of ECACE.

Enrollment In Early Childhood Programs, AY 2020-AY 2023

Enrollment data for the incumbent workforce in Consortium institutions are not yet available for AY22-23. However, data on enrollment for *all students* in Consortium early childhood programs are available, and abbreviated data are detailed below.



The Illinois Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Initiative is a groundbreaking effort by a Consortium of 62 Illinois public and private colleges and universities, five state agencies, sixteen community-based agencies and other stakeholders to meet the state's workforce needs in early childhood education and care settings (ECEC) through increased and equitable access to higher education credentials and degrees. ECACE is designed to support the needs of working adults – the incumbent ECEC workforce.

In AY23, 11,687 students were enrolled in early childhood programs at ECACE colleges and universities. This is a 39.5% increase (3,308 students) from the prior year (AY2022) and a 38% increase (3,226 students) from AY2020, which the Consortium established as a baseline year, for enrollment comparisons. Increases in enrollment are likely due, at least in part, to significant engagement efforts and supports (including financial supports) provided through ECACE to the incumbent workforce. During AY23, the state also saw a significant increase in ECACE scholarship awardees, a 420% increase from 412 students in AY22 to 2,137 in AY23, which mirrors this increase in enrollment.

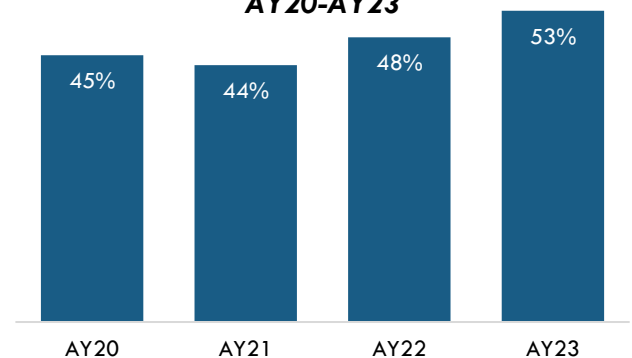
Rates of enrollment varied by race, and rates of enrollment for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students outpaced that of White students from AY22-AY23. Enrollment of African American/Black students increased 48% and Hispanic/Latino students by 38.9%, compared to an increase in enrollment of White students, which was 37.4%. These differences are even greater when comparing rates of enrollment from AY20 to AY23. These increased rates of enrollment for African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students may be due in part to ECACE’s focus on increasing access and enrollment of those working in child care settings.²

Changes in Enrollment in Early Childhood Program, by Race, AY20-AY23

Race/Ethnicity	Enrollment Change from AY22 to AY23		Enrollment Change from AY20 to AY23	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Asian	91	+40.1%	62	+24.2%
African American or Black	776	+48.0%	793	+49.6%
Hispanic or Latino	1,054	+38.9%	1,239	+49.0%
White	1,215	+37.4%	959	+27.4%
Other	172	+29.7%	173	+29.9%
Total	3,308	+39.5%	3,226	+38.1%

Additionally, as enrollment increased, so did the average age of students in early childhood programs. In AY22, 48% of early childhood students were 25 years of age or older. In AY23, 53% were 25 years of age or older. This is likely due to the influx of students in the incumbent workforce, who – as working adults – tend to be older than traditional students.³

Percent of Students Age 25 and Older, AY20-AY23



State agencies are encouraged to see such significant increases in enrollment in the first full year of ECACE implementation. These shifts are in part due to an intensive focus on incumbent student needs, shifts in program format and modalities, and significant financial and academic support. It is too early to report comprehensive persistence and completion data, particularly that includes incumbency status, as AY23 represents the first full year of implementation. We know that the incumbent early childhood staff are working adults, and it would be challenging to complete a degree in such a short period of time. Understanding enrollment status (full or part time) is an impact that is also still being determined. Though still early to see significant increases in students completing, given the patterns of enrollment, it is expected over time to see completion rates rise, particularly if the same level of student wrap around supports are in place. The annual report will be available in the summer and will address more fully data concerning enrollment, persistence, and completion of the incumbent workforce and traction towards meeting the goals set out by ECACE.

¹ AY21-22 is considered a “soft launch” year, as resources such as scholarships and institutional funding were not available until late in the academic year.
² The incumbent workforce working in licensed centers is approximately 44% persons of color. Whitehead, J. (2021) *Illinois Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Report*. Bloomington, IL INCCRRA.
³ Fifteen percent of undergraduate students were over 25 years of age, and 5% were over 35 years of age. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Integrate Postsecondary Education Data System *IPEDS*, Spring 2020, Fall Enrollment components. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 303.50. Fall 2019 data. [COE – Characteristics of Postsecondary Students \(ed.gov\)](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/digest/2021/303.50)