

Summary Document:

Vermont Higher Education Landscape Analysis

Higher Ed Pathways, Challenges, and Opportunities for Vermont's Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workforce

This report, **funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** and supported by the **Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC)**, provides the first comprehensive review of higher education pathways available to early childhood educators (ECEs) since 2017.

It's important because **policymakers** need a clear picture of how Vermont's public investments support **ECE workforce preparation**, an essential part of expanding access to **affordable, high-quality child care**.

This report serves **policy leaders, advocates, and funders** seeking to understand the landscape of Vermont's early childhood higher education system: how the current and future workforce enters higher education programs, how higher education programs prepare students, and how to sustain these programs.

Overview

The ECE higher education landscape has changed dramatically over the last decade. The state now offers a **range of entry points** to build credentials over time. More high school students are taking ECE courses for college credit, and **early childhood education remains among the highest-enrolled program areas** at the Community College of Vermont (CCV).

Transfer agreements and "2+2" pathways — two years of an associate degree followed by two years toward a bachelor's degree — help align credit-bearing courses with degree programs. **State investments in scholarships, apprenticeship programs, and student loan repayment assistance** for early childhood educators are crucial supports.

These innovations are critical to **recruiting and preparing Vermont's early childhood educators**. At the same time, higher ed institutions need continued support to sustain these programs and to communicate pathways clearly and consistently to students.

Themes and Takeaways

Vermont's higher education system offers **strong early childhood education pathways**, but complexity can make them difficult to navigate. Simplifying and promoting these routes will help students advance smoothly from **entry-level coursework to credentials and degrees**.

Transfer agreements and articulation pathways exist, but better communication and consistent implementation across institutions are needed so students, faculty, and advisors can better use them.

Low enrollment in some bachelor's and advanced degree programs is not a sign of declining interest but an **opportunity to innovate** through flexible delivery, shared resources, and stronger collaboration between institutions.

In short: Vermont has a robust **ECE higher education ecosystem**, and these themes point to clear opportunities for improving **accessibility, transparency, and program sustainability**.

Recommendations

- **Provide targeted support and long-term planning** to help higher education programs remain viable and responsive to student needs.
- **Ensure students have accurate, accessible, and transparent information** about all available pathways, from entry-level certificates to advanced degrees.
- **Build on Vermont's existing strengths** by continuing state investment in early childhood educator scholarships, loan repayment assistance, and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Use this report to inform legislative and policy decisions** that sustain a strong early childhood education workforce and the higher education infrastructure that prepares it.