



Center of Excellence
for Learning Sciences

2024 Annual Report

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR LEARNING SCIENCES

Think. Work. Solve.



Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences

Tennessee State University

Nashville, Tennessee

learningsciences@tnstate.edu

www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences

2024 Annual Report Issue 10

This annual report is published by the Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences at Tennessee State University for faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Nashville community.

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Tennessee State University Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences 2024 Annual Report

About the Center

Through the Academics–Research–Service model, the Center works together with academic institutions, community–based service organizations, and government agencies to promote learning and strengthen communities.

The partnerships between the Center and state organizations have a multidisciplinary mission that focuses primarily on the needs of Tennessee but is national in scope.

A few of the accomplishments of these partnerships include: (1) creating programs and projects which impact the quality of early childhood programs for Tennessee’s children, especially those within communities of highest need; (2) intensive training for those providing family support services; and (3) influence on public policy.

About Tennessee State University

Founded in 1912, Tennessee State University (TSU) fosters scholarly inquiry and research, lifelong learning, and a commitment to service.

Tennessee State University is an 1890 land–grant institution and Nashville’s only comprehensive public university, as well as Middle Tennessee’s first public Carnegie Doctoral/Research institution. The university has two convenient locations – a 450–acre main campus, with more than 65 buildings, located in a residential setting; and the Avon Williams Building located in the heart of downtown, near the center of the Nashville business and government district. TSU has demonstrated expertise as a robust educational and entrepreneurial research engine with a continuous positive impact on the economic tapestry of Nashville, the State of Tennessee, region and nation. The university offers unparalleled research, produces workforce–prepared talent, and provides educational and technical assistance services to industries, communities, and businesses worldwide.

About this Annual Report

This annual report covers the period from July 2023 to June 2024 unless otherwise indicated. The report represents progress of the programs housed within the Center and includes specific events and program data. It summarizes the specific projects and programs that the Center has engaged in over the past year, but as with any summary, it does not fully capture the range and depth of activities undertaken. To more fully explore the Center, its mission and programs, visit our website at www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences.

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Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences (COELS)

Here's what we've been up to in 2024

The Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences (COELS) at Tennessee State University aims to build the capacities to strengthen communities through education and research that addresses the needs and priorities of the educational community through academic and professional development programs, service programs, community partnerships, and training/technical assistance programs.

COELS is one of 26 centers established by action of the Tennessee General Assembly in 1984 to expand research and contribute to the overall economic and community development base of the state.

Program Highlights

In fiscal year 2024, the Center was awarded over \$17 million in funding, making it one of the highest funded departments at the University. As a non-instructional unit of the Division of Research and Sponsored Programs, our Center is committed to providing a creative, collaborative environment and the facilities to conduct significant research studies and manage programs that promote the physical, educational, and psychological well-being of all children and families.

Our commitment to fostering a vibrant learning community includes conducting training and hosting workshops, attending statewide conferences, and fostering online training platforms for educators and students to engage in meaningful professional development. This year our management staff completed a series on Transformational Leadership, led by Dr. Lesia Crumpton-Young. The SSCBT program SSCBT earned its second highest year in revenue with over \$84,000 in earnings. TECTA completed the first year of the new registered apprenticeship program in partnership with child care centers across the state. TECTA also hosted the Leadership Institute and Summer Research Institute training series for hundreds of child care professionals and administrators.

We are planning for more of these opportunities in 2025 and beyond with expanded community child care and support programs, new credential support initiatives, and more leadership development opportunities.



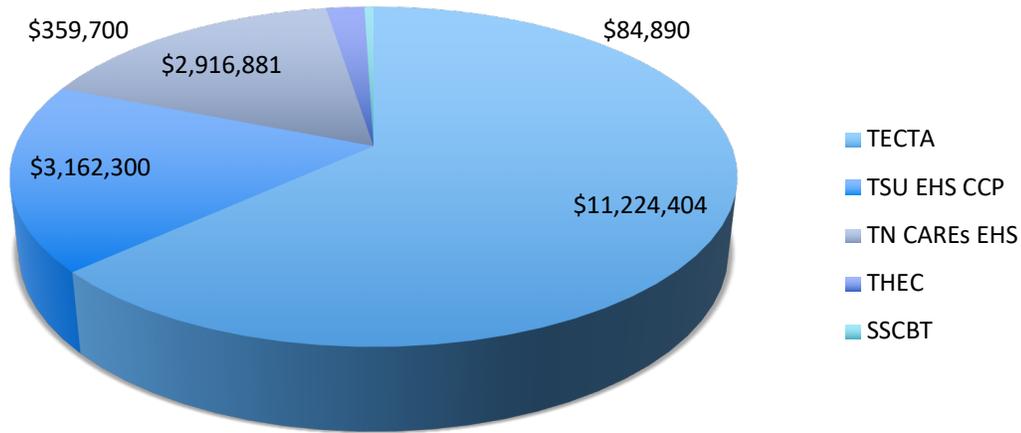
DR. KIMBERLY SMITH
Director, Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences



TECTA and SSCBT staff were exhibitors at the 2023 NAEYC Conference in Nashville, Tennessee in November.

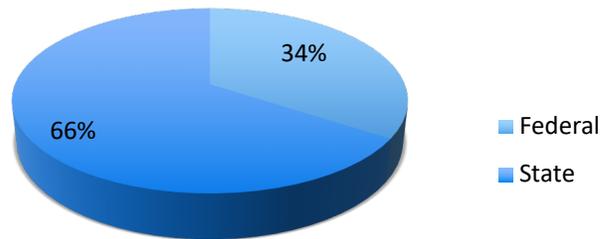
Total Funding by Program

The Center secured a total of **\$17,748,175** for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.



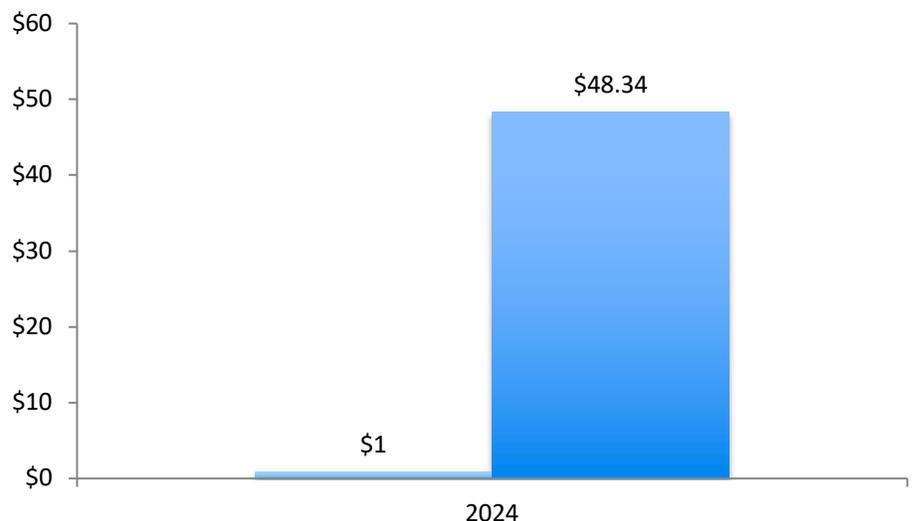
Total Percentage by Funding Source

Over one-third (34%) of the total funding came from federal sources. Seventy-one percent (66%) was secured from state-level departments.



THEC Appropriations and Return on Investment

As one of Tennessee’s 26 Centers of Excellence, the Center receives annual funding from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). For FY 2024, every dollar invested by THEC provided a return of \$48.34.



Academic and Professional Development Programs

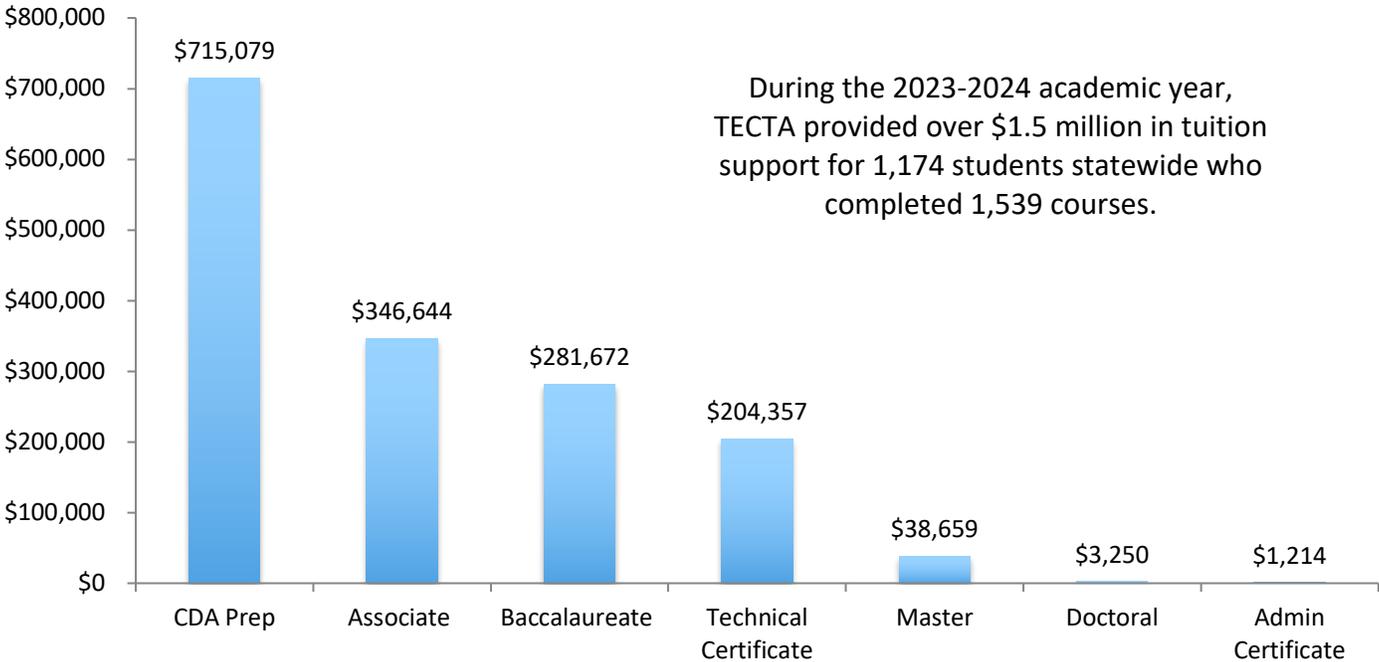
Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) Statewide Management Office

Since 1992, TECTA has provided high quality professional learning through free training and academic tuition support to thousands of Tennesseans in the early care and education workforce. The TECTA program maintains a diverse student/participant body, many of whom are working in minimum wage jobs. TECTA’s workforce support includes a basic 30-hour non-credit bearing orientation course and financial support for academic courses that articulate from the Associates to Baccalaureate level and beyond. childhood workforce. Overall, TECTA provides professional development opportunities and supports public policy and services, which improve the quality of care for Tennessee’s children.



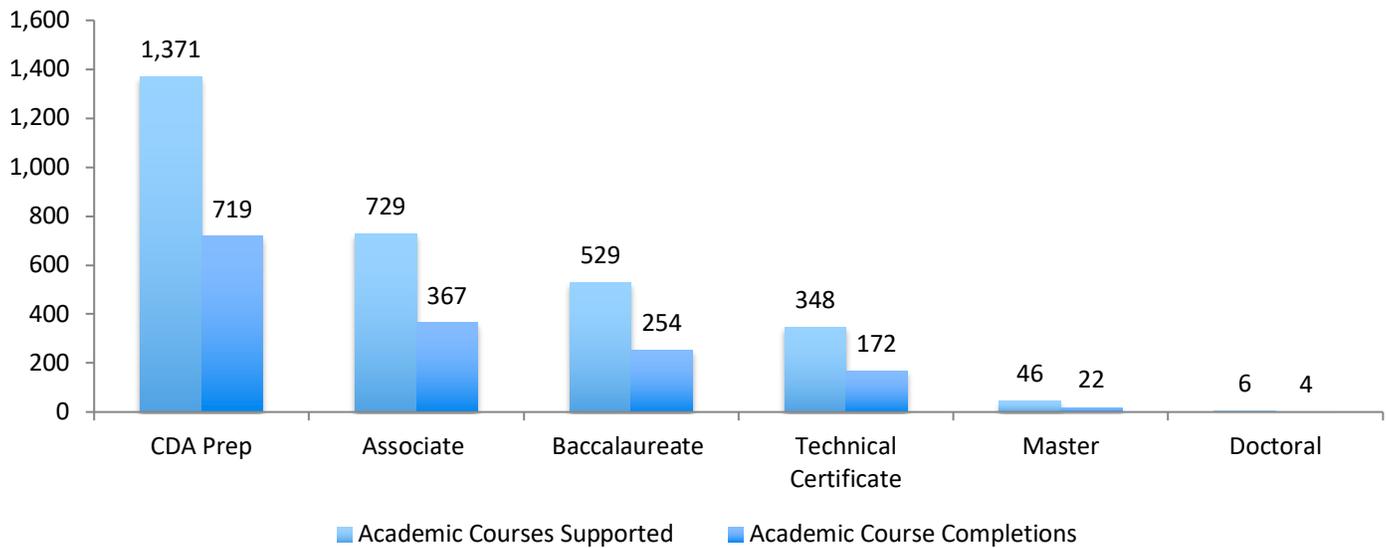
BELVA WEATHERSBY
Statewide Program Director, TECTA

TECTA Tuition Support for Higher Education FY October 2023 – September 2024



Academic Support by Education Level

FY October 2023 – September 2024



Professional Development Programs

Continuing Education

TECTA issued 118 Center-Based Orientation-equivalent certificates to eligible high school students for completing ECEC Careers I and II courses. The **high school equivalency program** ensures students qualify for TECTA tuition support when they enroll in college courses.

The **TECTA Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program (TECAP)** ended a successful pilot year with three apprentices in three host child care centers. The TECAP program includes tuition support for higher education courses and mandatory TECTA Orientation, Pyramid Model training, three Symposiums per year, and other online training sessions.

TECTA hosted the **16th Annual TECTA Summer Research Institute Webinar Series and Symposium** from May to July 2024. The series included six sessions and offered 8 hours of approved training on early literacy. Over 300 providers from 178 child care programs across the state attended.

Leadership Development

Three child care programs received **accreditation from National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)** with coaching and technical assistance from the TECTA Leadership Development Team. Accredited programs maintain a high level of quality among the staff, learning environments, and with parents and the community.

TECTA hosted the **Directors Pathway to Success (DP2S)** training series from July to September 2024. The online series included four sessions totaling six hours of approved training and included over 70 child care Directors and Assistant Directors.

The TECTA Leadership Development Team hosted the **2024 TECTA Leadership Institutes** throughout July and August of 2024. The free, in-person training and networking events provided four full-day sessions of learning for over 150 Directors, Assistant Directors, Owners, and other professionals.

Credential Programs

A **Child Development Associate® Credential (CDA)** assistance program is coordinated with TECTA sites to provide competency-based instruction, supervised field experiences, assessment fee scholarships, and advisement to early educators. With TECTA support, 137 credentials were awarded, 27 were renewed, and at the close of the year 246 more were in the process of being awarded and 18 were on track for renewal.

TECTA awards the **TECTA Infant/Toddler Credential** to candidates with special interest on caring for children 0-3 years old. In fiscal year 2024, two educators completed the Credential requirements. The Infant/Toddler Credential initiative will be moving to the statewide management office in the next year to expand the program's reach and increase the number of recipients.

Since 2008, the Center has awarded 255 **Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credentials (TECPAC)** to child care program administrators. These programs demonstrate specific competencies for effective leadership and management based on academic achievement, effective experience, program assessments, and a portfolio assessment. This program year ended with 10 Administrator Credentials awarded and one renewal.

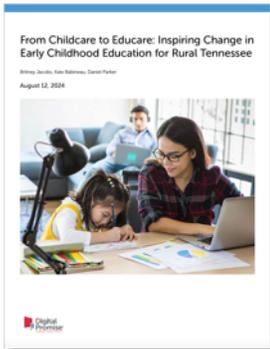
Research Projects

Over the past 30 years, the Center has conducted several major research projects including the nationally lauded Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio, or STAR Study, which was a four-year study to determine the extent class size affects students' learning in Kindergarten through third grade. The follow-up Lasting Benefits Study examined the sustained benefits of K-3 small classes on students from fourth through twelfth grade including academic achievement, school participation, and graduation rates. The Center has received two multi-million dollar National Science Foundation awards, both to study science achievement and teacher development in elementary schools.



DR. CELESTE BROWN
Associate Research Director,
Center of Excellence for
Learning Sciences

Discovering the Keys to Rural Learner Success



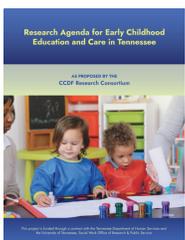
In recent years, the Center has partnered with Digital Promise to explore adult learners in rural and urban settings working in the child care field. Our first collaboration was a case study on ClearPath ECE participants and the benefits of microlearning. In 2023 the team submitted a proposal to Ascendium to research the skills training and wage-based incentive programs for increasing the social mobility of rural early childhood education professionals in Tennessee utilizing data from the TECTA program. The proposal was accepted and the research took place in the spring and summer of 2024. The results were published in a report titled, From Childcare to Educare: Inspiring Change in Early Childhood Education for Rural Tennessee.”

Presenting at COABE



COELS staff presented “‘W’ is for Wages: Equitable and Sustainable Pathways for Rural Early Childhood Education Workers” at the 2024 Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference on March 20, 2024 in Nashville. The group took part in a panel discussion alongside the researchers from Digital Promise on professional development pathways for rural early childhood educators, engaging with service providers from other states doing similar work.

A New Research Consortium



The Center has joined the Tennessee ECEC Research Consortium that includes representatives from all CCDF Quality Partners and led by a research team at UT SWORPS. This year the Consortium developed a research proposal titled “Research Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care in Tennessee.” This three-year project is the first-ever Consortium of this type in Tennessee and will include data and input from the TECTA, TCCOTS, and TNPAL programs among others.

Service Programs and Community Partnerships

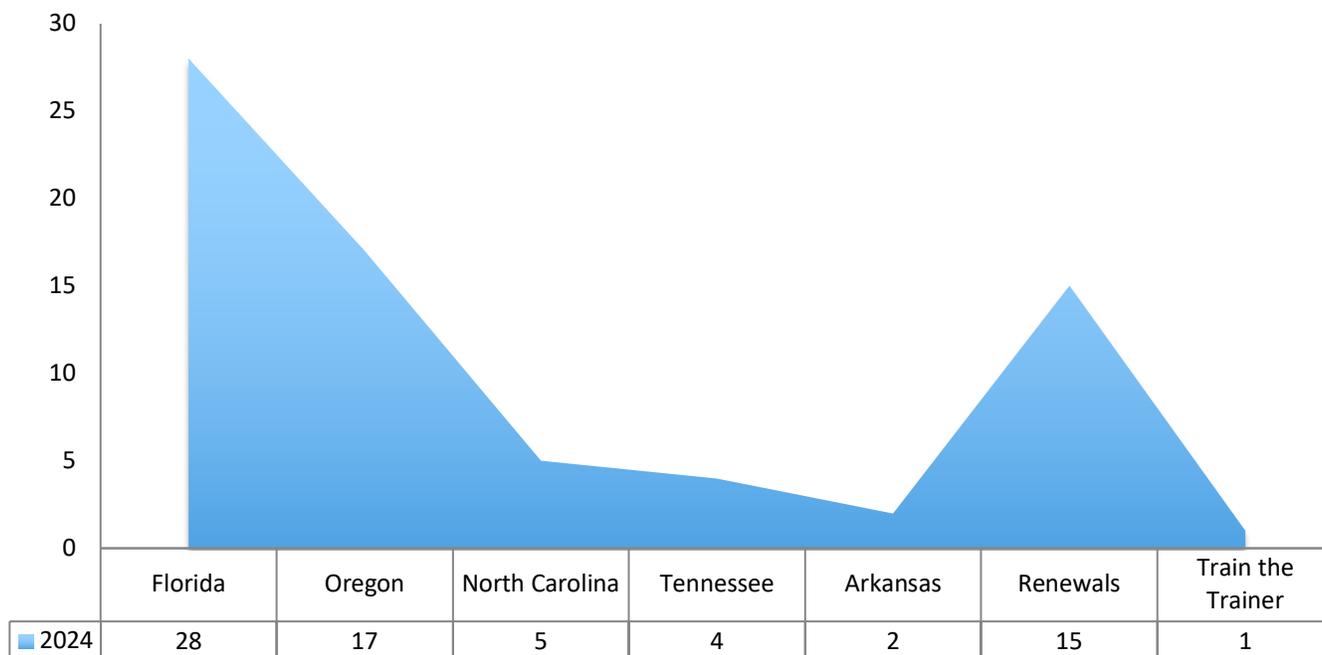
Social Services Competency Based Training (SSCBT) Program

SSCBT is a competency-based program designed to improve the knowledge and skills of human service workers in Head Start community action programs and social service agencies across the country. It is specifically designed as an intensive training for those with limited social work experience and is structured to align with the Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies for Staff Working with Families including 25 functional areas and 64 competency-based lessons. The program serves those providing family support services including case managers, home visitors, teachers, health services staff, and community workers. Undergraduate college credit is available through Tennessee State University and the Center awards the SSCBT Credential upon completion of the program wherein participants are required to renew every two years.



AMY LAIRD
Program Manager, SSCBT

**SSCBT Credentials Awarded by Type
FY July 2023 – June 2024**



Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Program

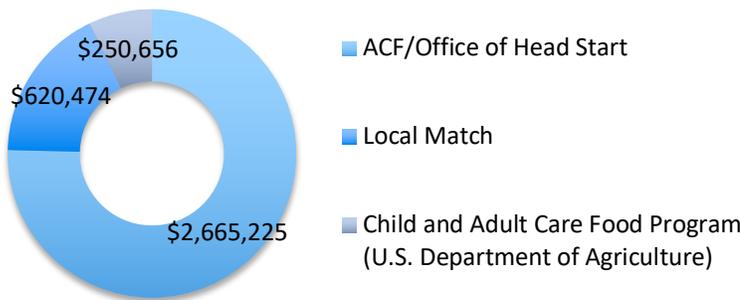
Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women. The Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start program has provided coordinated comprehensive, intensive, and continuous support services to enable families to attain self-sufficiency since 1995, when the University was one of 11 programs selected nationwide to establish Early Head Start centers. The program currently supports six child care centers across Henry, Gibson, Weakley, and Dickson counties in Tennessee while recognizing the integrity and unique needs of these families and children.



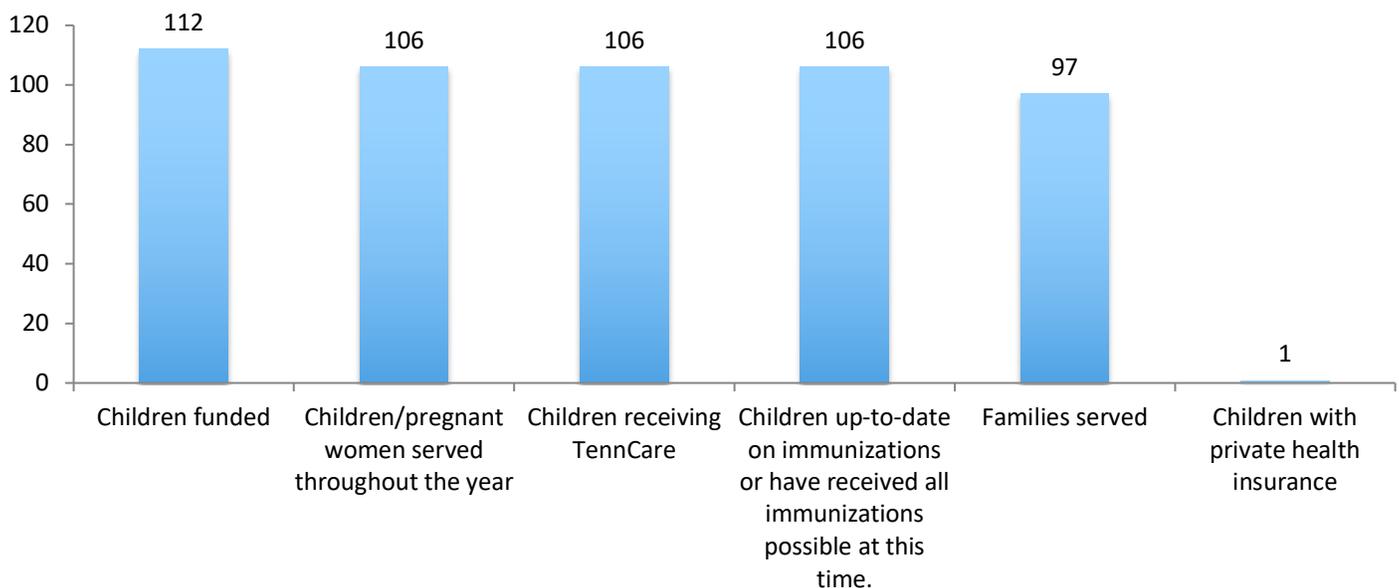
TAMARA BARNHILL
Program Director,
Tennessee State University
Early Head Start Programs

Total Program Funding by Source

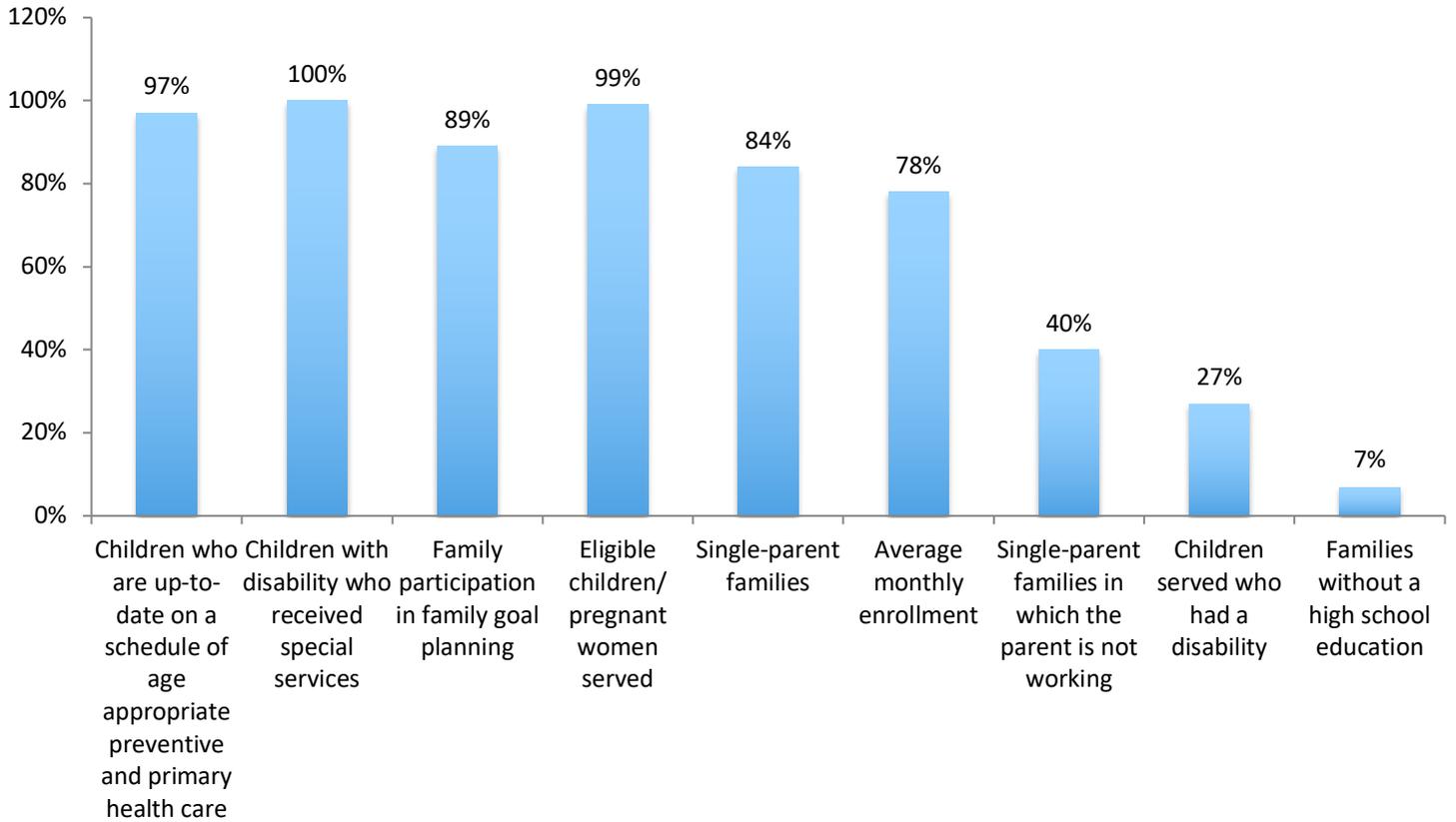
Funding for FY 2024 totaled \$3,536,355.



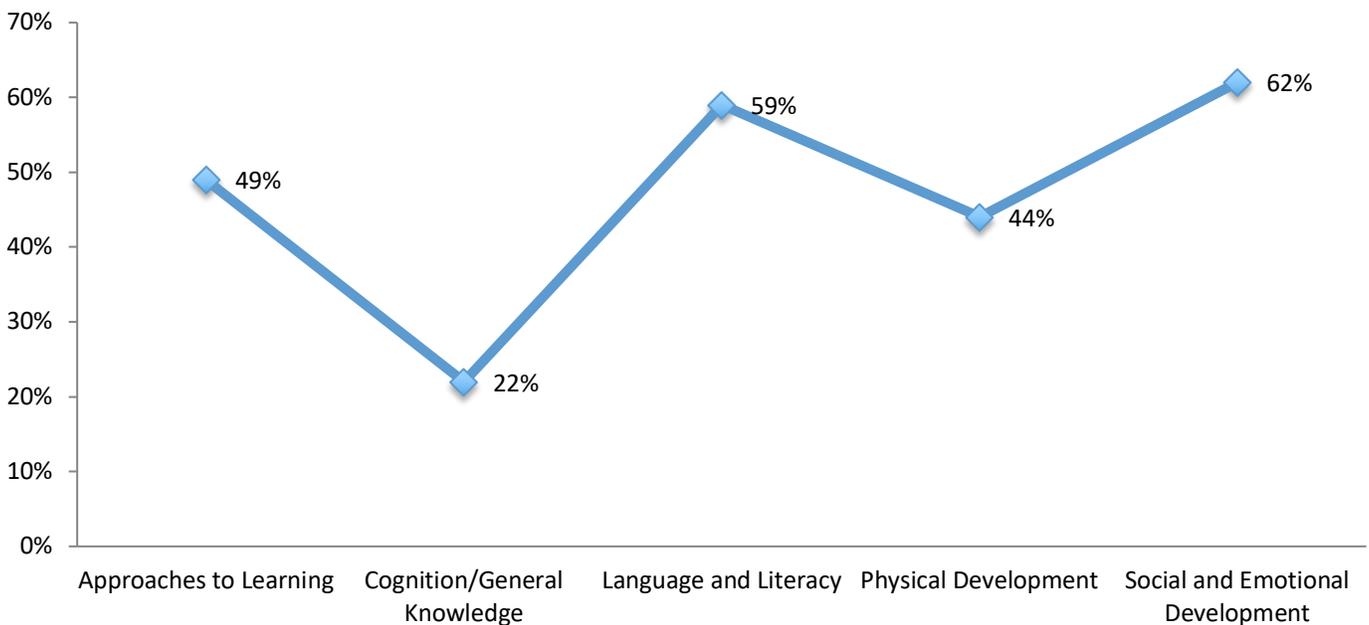
Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics FY 2024



Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics, continued FY 2024



2023-2024 School Readiness Improvement Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



Tennessee State University Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership

In FY 2014, Congress appropriated \$500 million to allow existing Early Head Start programs to partner with local child care centers and family child care providers serving infants and toddlers from low-income families. In 2015, The Center was one of the first of these programs in the nation to be awarded funding to partner Early Head Start programs with child care centers in the north Nashville community and later expanded to centers in Rutherford County. This project is funded by the Office of Head Start under the direction of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program’s goals encompass successful health, economic and educational outcomes and long-term academic success for children.



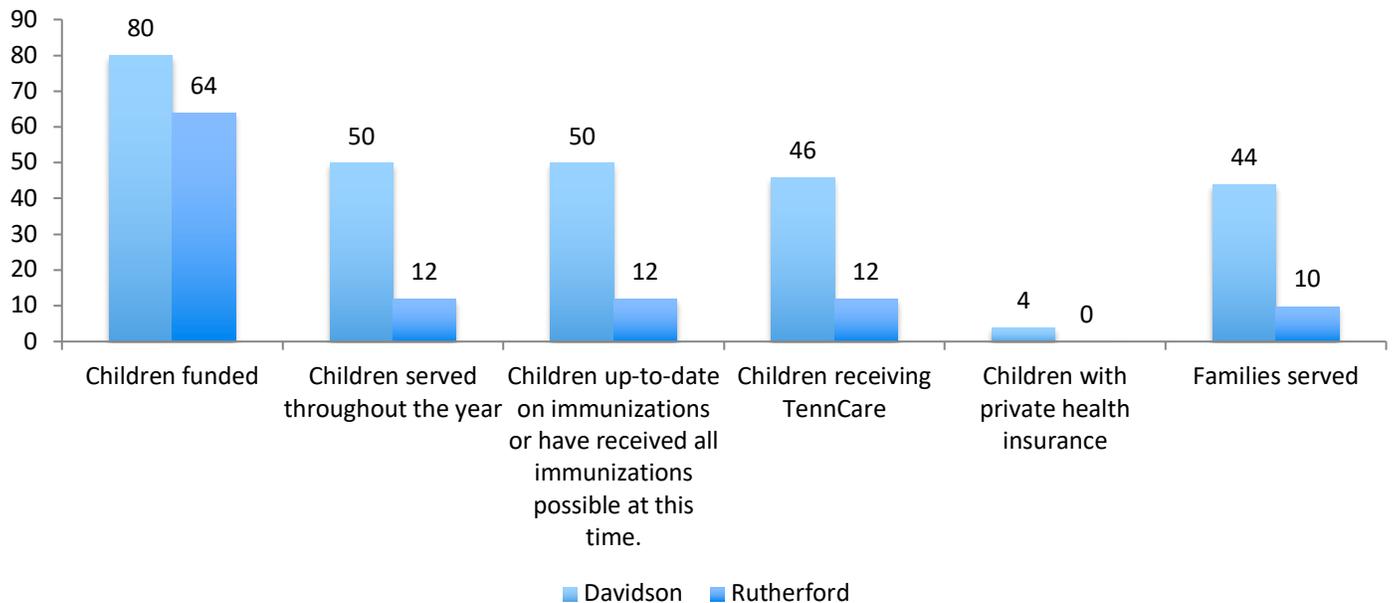
ALTIE JORDAN
Assistant Director, Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

Total Program Funding by Source

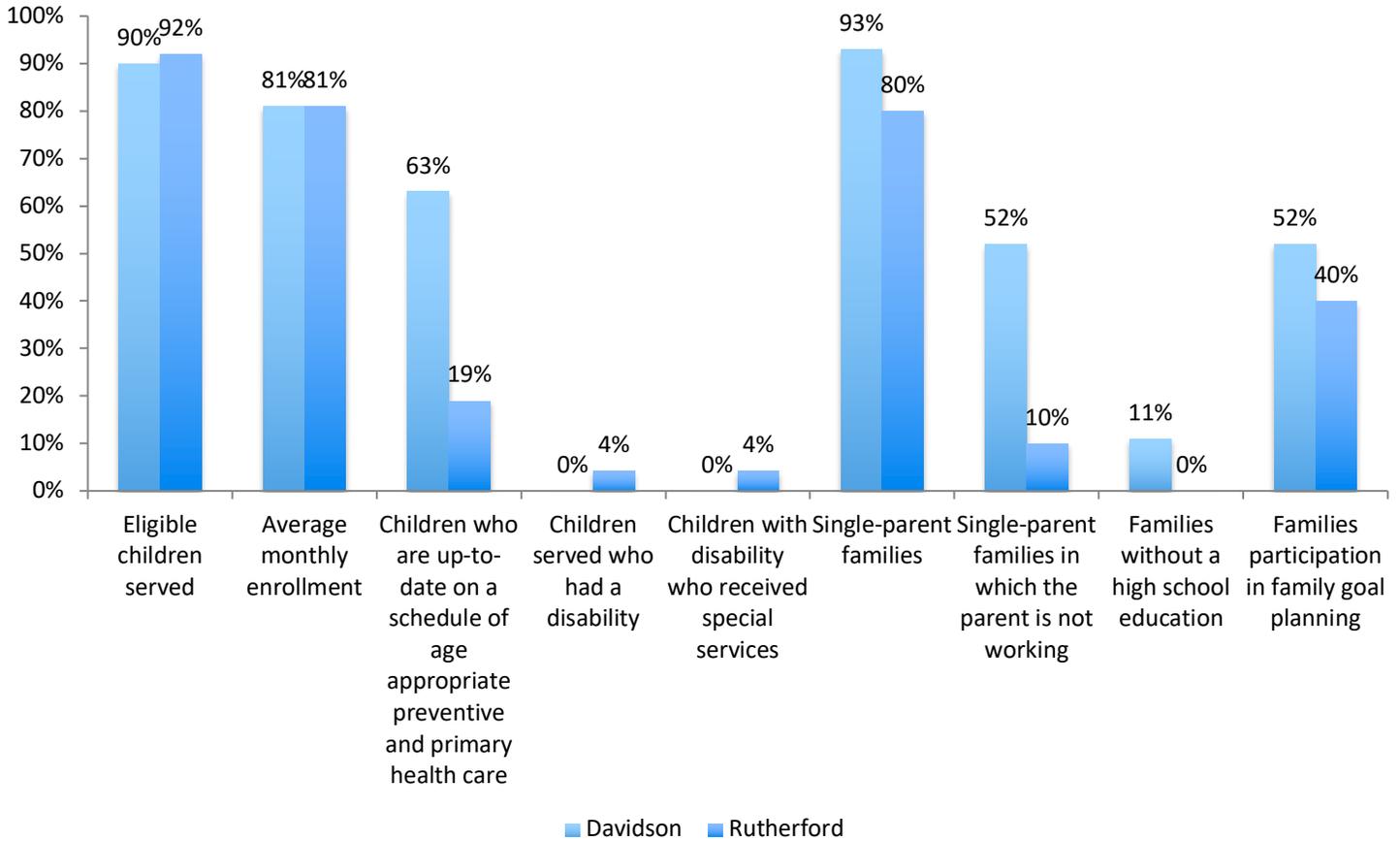
Funding for FY 2024 totaled \$3,929,678.



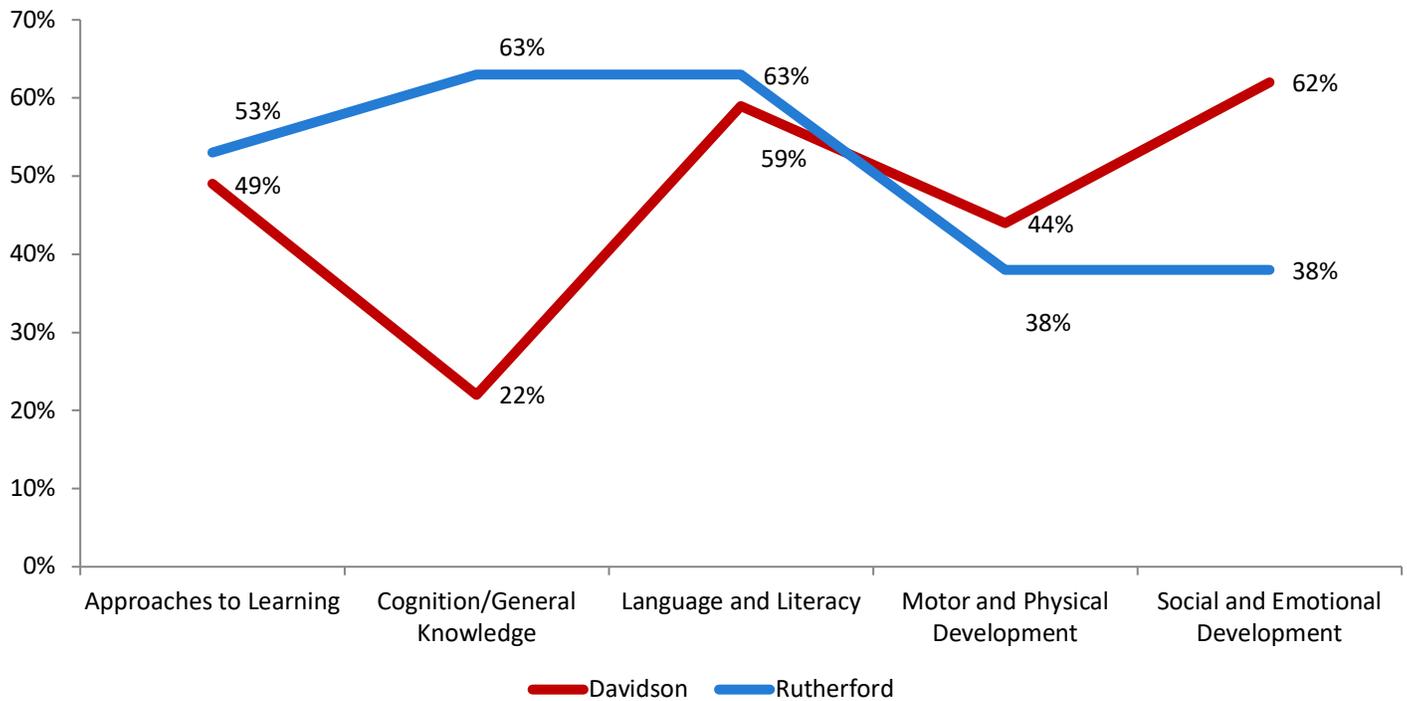
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics FY 2024



Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics, continued FY 2024



2023-2024 School Readiness Improvement Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



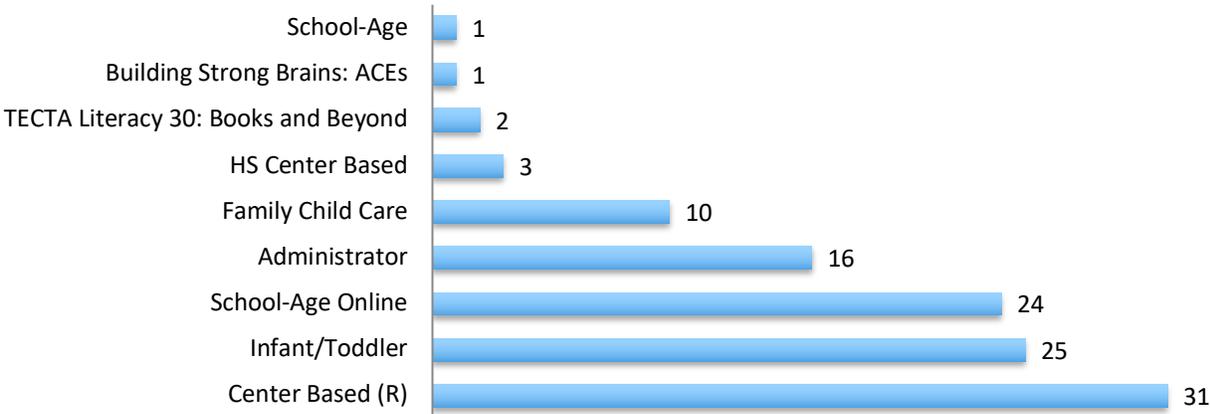
Training and Technical Assistance Programs

TECTA Orientation

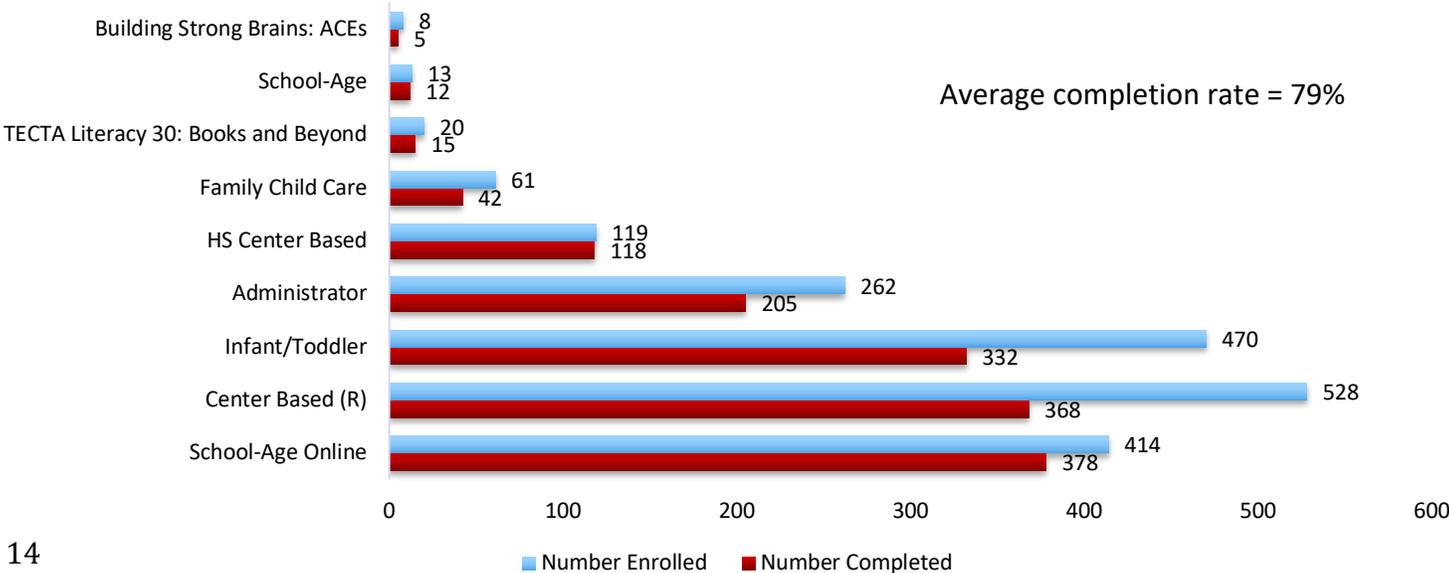
TECTA Orientation is a free 30-hour training program with a curriculum centered on five specializations: Center-Based, Infant/Toddler, Family Child Care, School-Age, and Administrator. TECTA Orientation teaches core knowledge and best practices through in-person and online modules

that incorporate professional core competencies based on state and national standards of quality. Completion of the Orientation program provides an academic pathway to Early Childhood Education coursework with tuition support at state colleges and universities.

Total TECTA Orientations Held Statewide by Type
FY October 2023 – September 2024

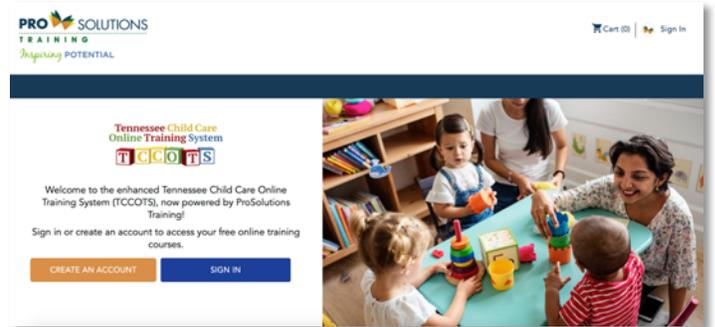


Total TECTA Orientation Completions Statewide by Type
FY October 2023 – September 2024



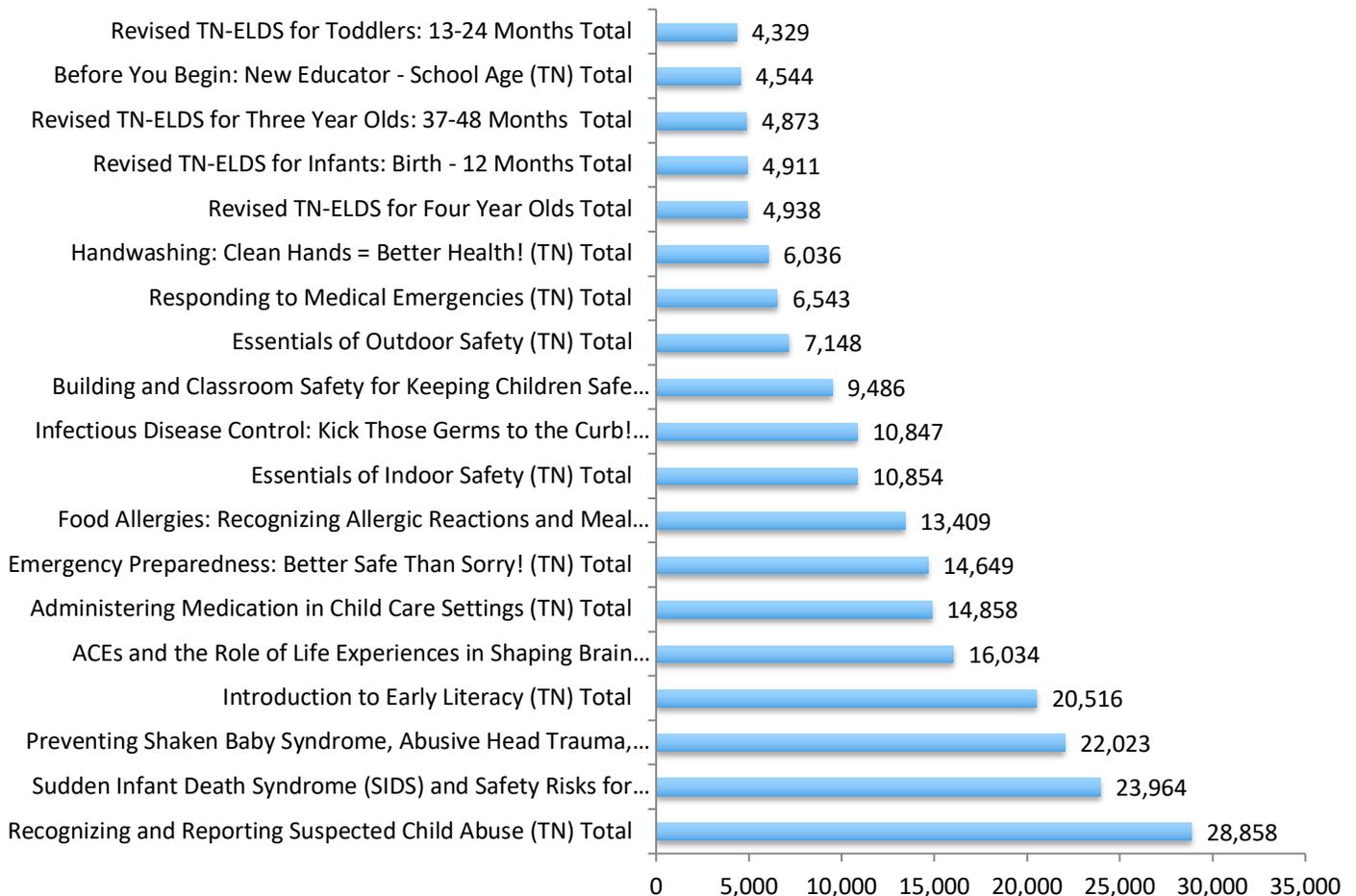
Tennessee Child Care Online Training System (TCCOTS)

The Tennessee Child Care Online Training System, or TCCOTS, is a learning portal designed by Early Childhood professionals that combines high-quality Early Childhood content with the convenience of an online training program. Under the contractual agreement with the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TN-DHS) and the Center/TECTA, TCCOTS is a service managed by ProSolutions that provides the TN-DHS licensed child care workforce with online professional development.



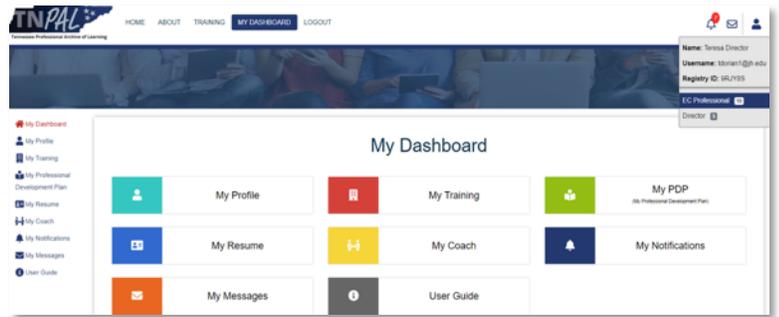
A total of 300,322 certificates were issued on the platform across 70 modules in both English and Spanish. Access to TCCOTS training is available at www.tccots.com.

TCCOTS Statewide Training Completions Completion Certificates Issued > 4,000 by Module in FY 2024

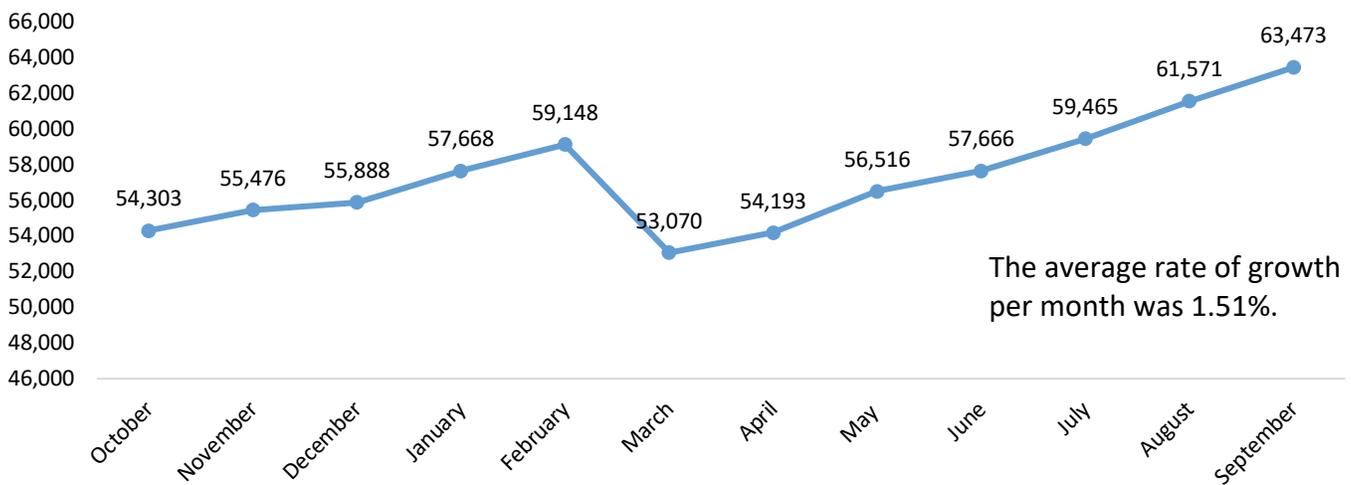


Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL)

The Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning is an online registry for early childhood educators working in licensed child care programs in Tennessee. Users can create individual profiles to document and support their training and professional development, list their professional accomplishments, upload certificates and credentials, develop a professional development plan and track their progress, and more. TNPAL is the central repository for the Tennessee early childhood workforce to align professional development plans with training activities in one platform.



Total Number of Educators and Directors using TNPAL FY October 2023 – September 2024



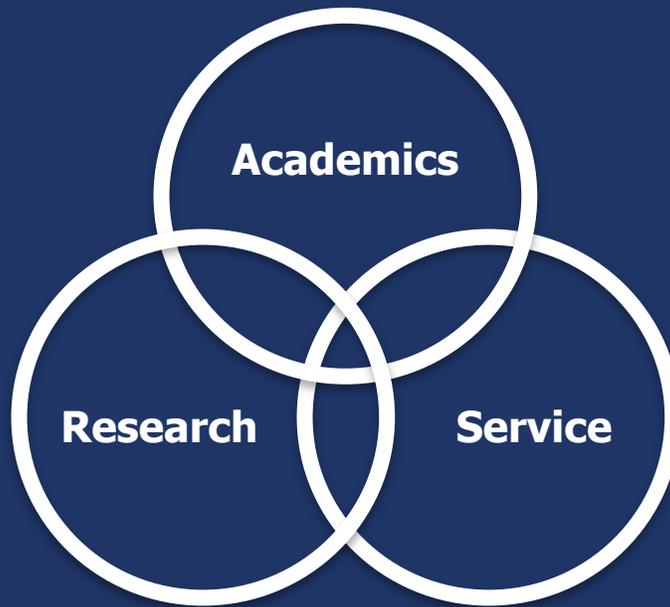
TNPAL Users by Type FY October 2023 – September 2024



- 63,473 Early Childhood Educators
- 2,717 Child Care Program Directors
- 2,581 Child Care Agencies
- 257 Coaches
- 153 DHS Licensing Consultants



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