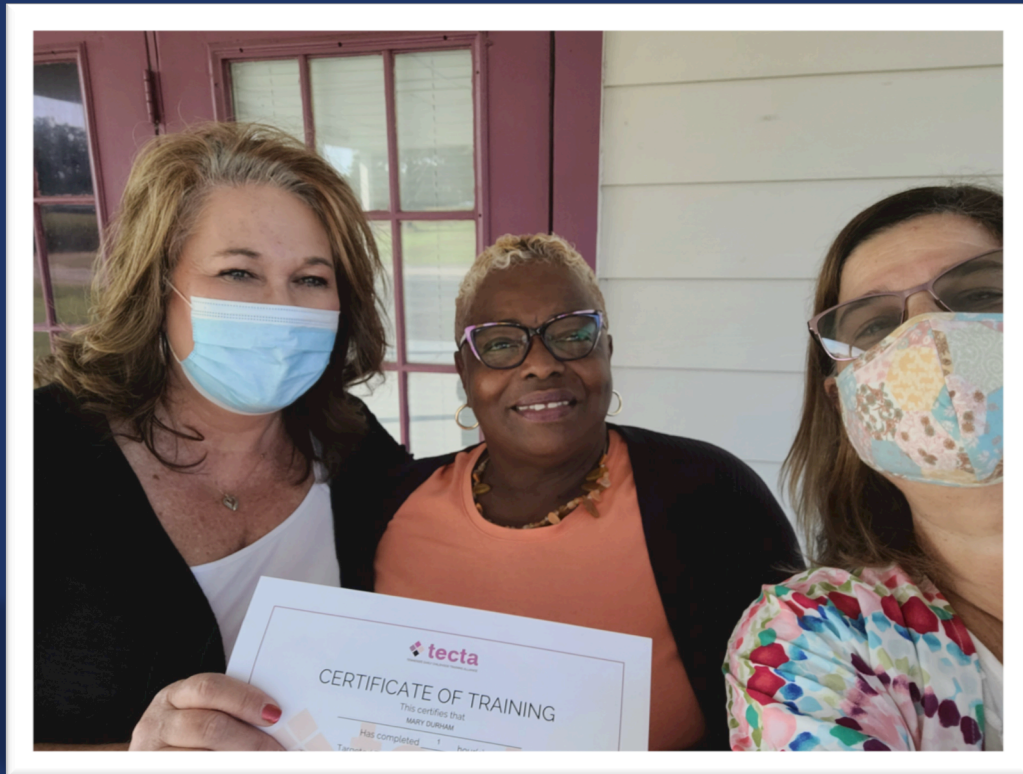


Excellence
is our Habit!



Center of Excellence
for Learning Sciences

2021 Annual Report



Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences

Tennessee State University

Nashville, Tennessee

learningsciences@tnstate.edu

615-277-1651

www.tnstate.edu/learningsciences

2021 Annual Report

Issue 7

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.

Comments, suggestions, and questions should be addressed to the Center at:

learningsciences@tnstate.edu
Tennessee State University
3500 John A Merritt Blvd.
Box 9500
Nashville, TN 37209
Phone: 615.277.1651
Fax: 615.277.1654

Administration

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

DR. FRANCES WILLIAMS
Associate Vice President, Research and Sponsored Programs, Chief Research Officer

Editor/Writer

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

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Tennessee State University

Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences

2021 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.

Tennessee State University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution committed to educate a non-racially identifiable student body. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons who need assistance with this material may contact the Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences, 615-277-1651.

About this Annual Report

This annual report covers the period from July 2020 to June 2021. The report represents a series of reports on the 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 2020 - 2021

The Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences at Tennessee State University aims to conduct 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.



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

Program Highlights

This was a novel year for the Center of Excellence. For the duration of the year, our staff shifted to working remotely with very limited time in the office due to the COVID-19 virus and the resultant quarantine procedures. Despite these challenges, the Center has remained deeply focused on our programs, and our efforts have resulted in \$19,454,961 in funding, a 20% increase from the previous fiscal year. This report focuses on the work of our teams, who continue to build capacities and strengthen communities through education.

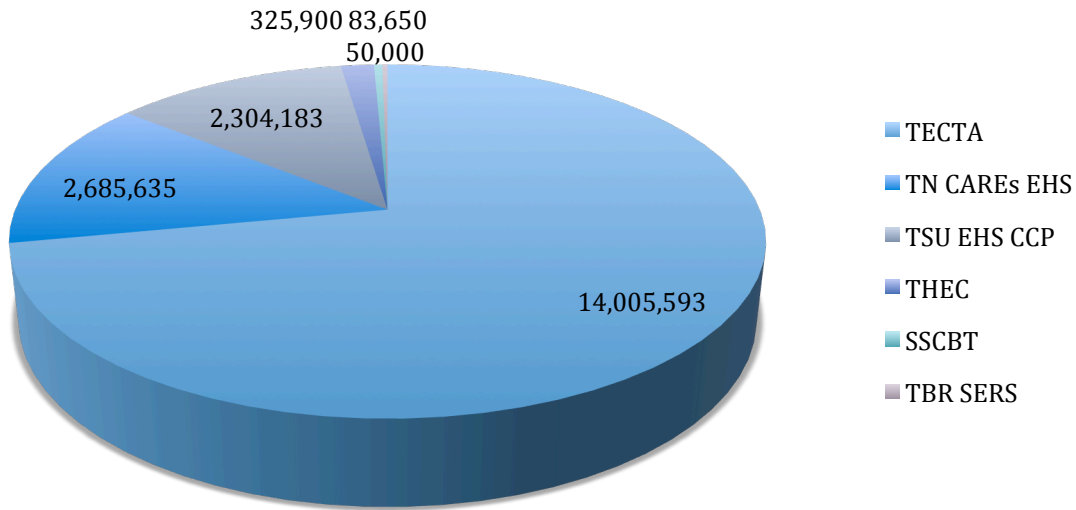
The TECTA program provided over \$4 million in tuition support for 961 students taking 2,115 courses. TECTA also assisted 218 students across the state in the pursuit of a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™. TECTA hosted several virtual training events this year. The TECTA Family Child Care Network held state conferences in August 2020 and May 2021. The first cohort of the Director's Pathway to Success training series began January 2021. The Summer Research Institute was hosted on June and the Leadership Institute was hosted in August of 2021.

The Center was awarded \$50,000 from the Tennessee Board of Regents to build an online learning community for educators for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The project, entitled ClearPath ECE, created an online microlearning platform to help Early Childhood Educators with college and career success.

The Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership program expanded to Rutherford County. The Center was awarded over \$1 million to expand its Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) program to Rutherford County. Beginning September 2020, 64 children and families were served through the expansion. This grant also included Quality Improvement funds to enhance classroom learning equipment and materials and to provide training for staff and families.

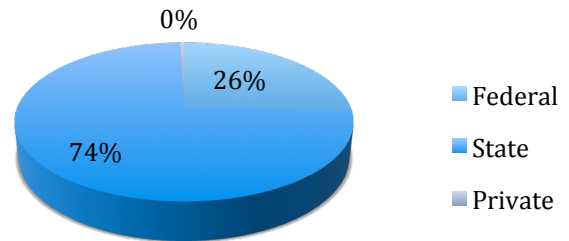
Total Funding by Program

The Center secured a total of **\$19,454,961** for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.



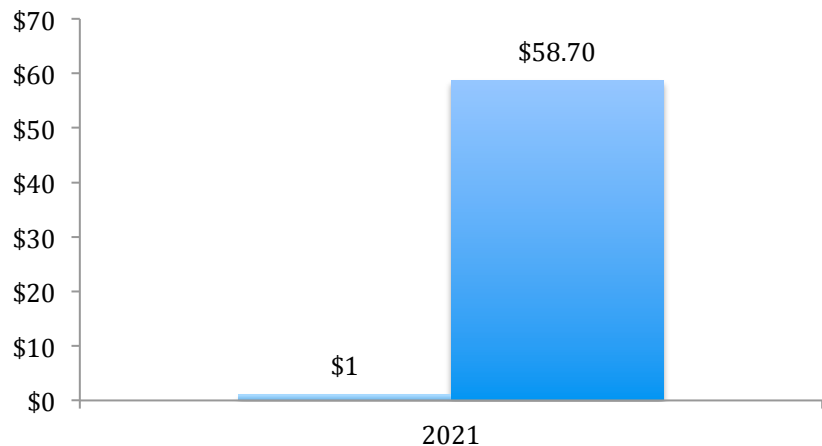
Total Percentage by Funding Source

About one quarter (26%) of the total funding came from federal agencies. Seventy-five percent (74%) was secured from state 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 2021, every dollar invested by THEC provided a return of \$58.70.



Academic and Professional Development Programs

Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) Statewide Management Office

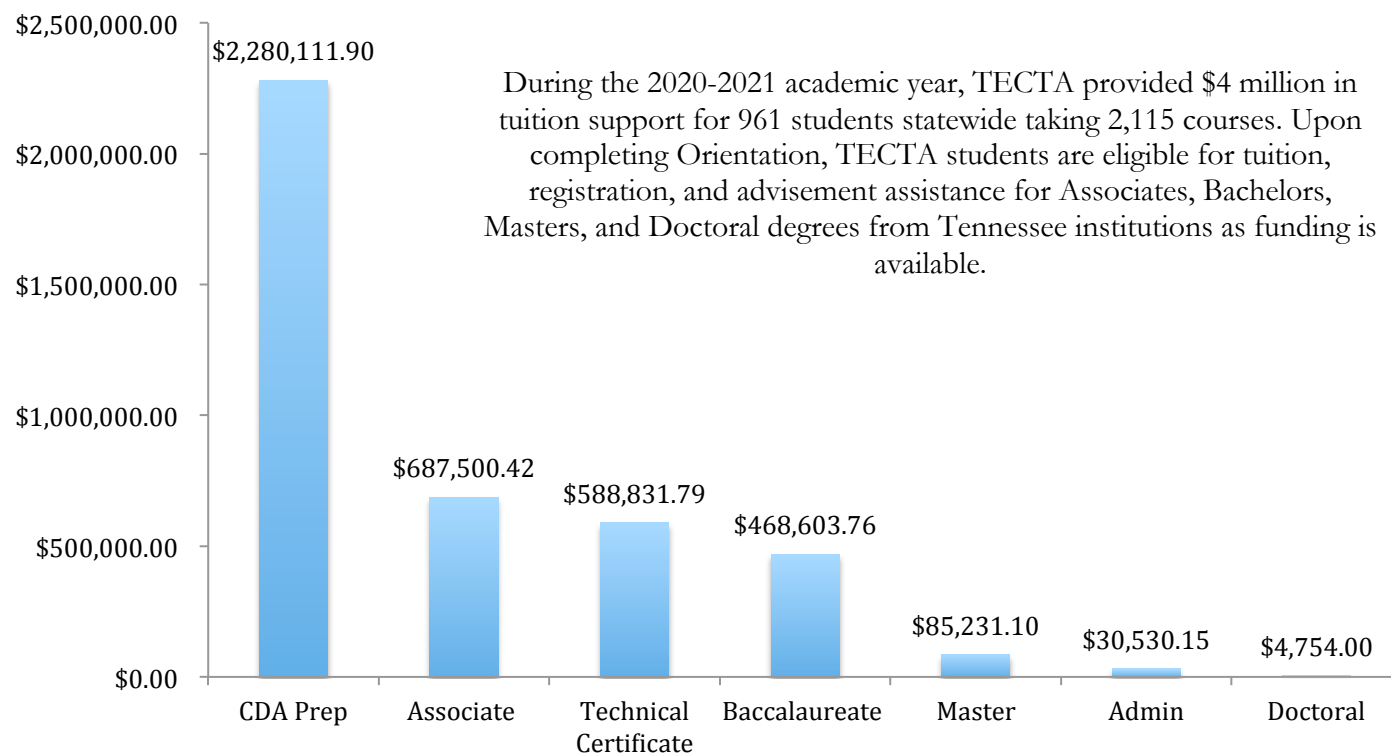
Since 1992, TECTA has provided high quality professional learning through free training and academic tuition support to thousands of Tennesseans in the early care and education workforce.

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.

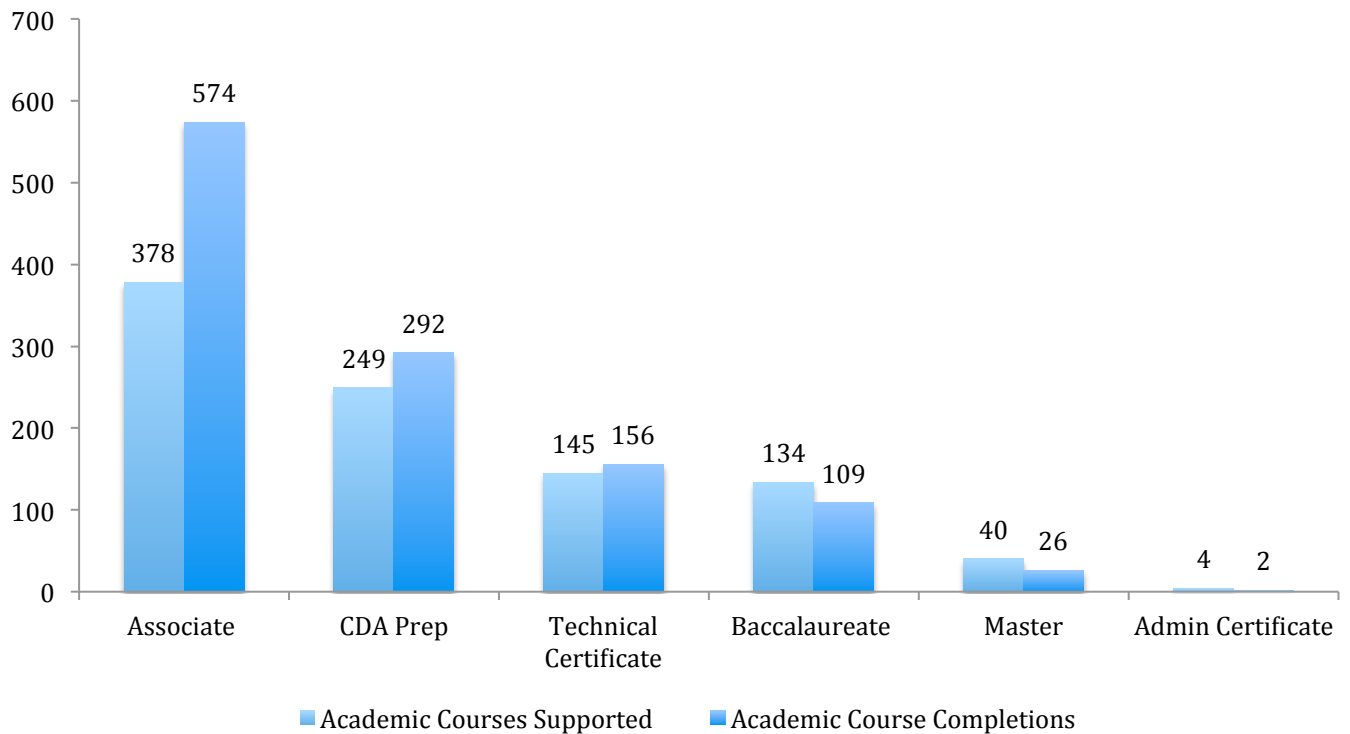
TECTA is funded by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and FY 2021 saw an increase from \$11.4 million to \$14 million in funding.

TECTA Tuition Support for Higher Education FY October 2020 – September 2021



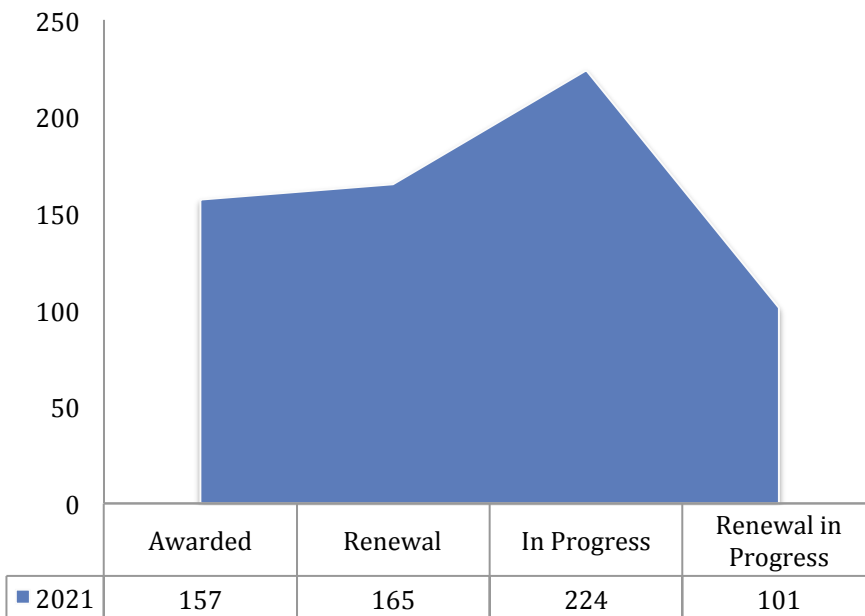
Academic Support by Education Level

FY October 2020 – September 2021



Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential Support

FY October 2020 – September 2021



The Council for Professional Recognition awards the Child Development Associate® Credential. A CDA assistance program is coordinated with the TECTA local offices to provide competency-based instruction, supervised field experiences, and advisement to caregivers.

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



The Center of Excellence utilized funding from the SERS grant program to pilot a series of microlearning courses and an online learning community to provide a useful platform for early childhood educators who are currently engaged in or interested in academic study towards certificates, CDA credentials, and/or degrees in early childhood education. Educators were invited to help develop college and career success competencies to both increase their degree completion rates and make them eligible for wage increases through the Child Care WAGE\$ Tennessee program.

This project was designed to accomplish three goals:

Goal #1 - Engage and empower the targeted student population in the 2020-2021 academic year by having students create their own academic/career success plan using the information and tools provided in the ClearPath ECE online community.

Goal #2 - Assess the professional planning proficiency of the targeted population in the early childhood education profession through self-assessment, reflection, and knowledge check questionnaires and surveys.

Goal #3 - Assess the ClearPath ECE pilot program to determine its continuation as a part of TECTA's professional development program based on its potential to produce greater academic and career retention and success and increased eligibility for the Child Care WAGE\$ Tennessee program for the target population and other TECTA-supported students.

A total of 22 potential participants attended the information sessions and 13 participants signed up to enroll in ClearPath ECE. The Center learned from focus group participants that the main barriers to continuing education include challenges with reliable Internet and taking online classes, family commitments to children and other relatives, and approaching college as an older,

received two multi-million dollar National Science Foundation awards, both to study science achievement and teacher development in elementary schools.

Dr. Celeste Brown and Paige Holmes co-piloted a Student Engagement, Retention and Success Grant (SERS) from the Tennessee Board of Regents. The project, ClearPath ECE, is an online learning community for child care professionals.



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

non-traditional student. Alternatively, the Center learned that for most participants, it was the support of their supervisors or their child care agency and the TECTA program that pushed them to complete their degrees or CDA credential. Going forward, the co-investigators will continue to research and develop a prospectus for a selection of comprehensive learning pathways, developed specifically for program administrators, infant/toddler educators, preschool and school-age (5-8 years old) educators, family child care programs, and educators who work with exceptional children, etc.

During the project, we attracted the attention of Digital Promise and fulfilled a data-sharing agreement for a year-long research project they conducted titled "Exploring the Role of Micro-credentials in Rural Postsecondary Advancement." The Center was selected along with four other projects underway across the nation. Through their research project, the Center participated in virtual community meetings and webinars, focus group interviews of project staff and students, and a case study of the project was published.

We believe this pilot project will raise the professional perception of early care and education, and show that competency-based microcredentials are verifiable proof that students are lifelong learners pursuing new knowledge in their profession.

Service Programs and Community Partnerships

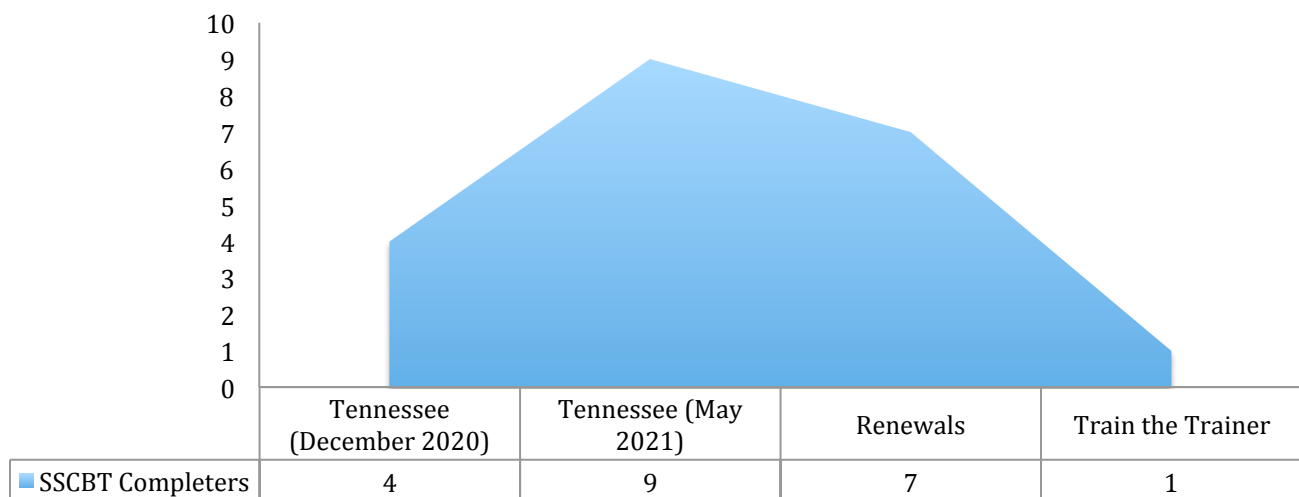
Social Services Competency Based Training (SSCBT) Program

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 2020 - 2021



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

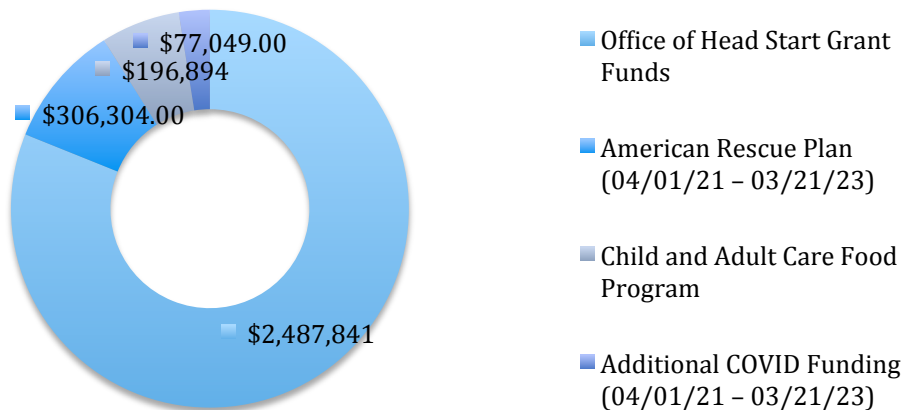
University was one of 11 programs selected nationwide to establish Early Head Start centers. The program currently supports six child care centers across Henry, Gibson, and Weakley counties in west Tennessee while recognizing the integrity and unique needs of these families and children.



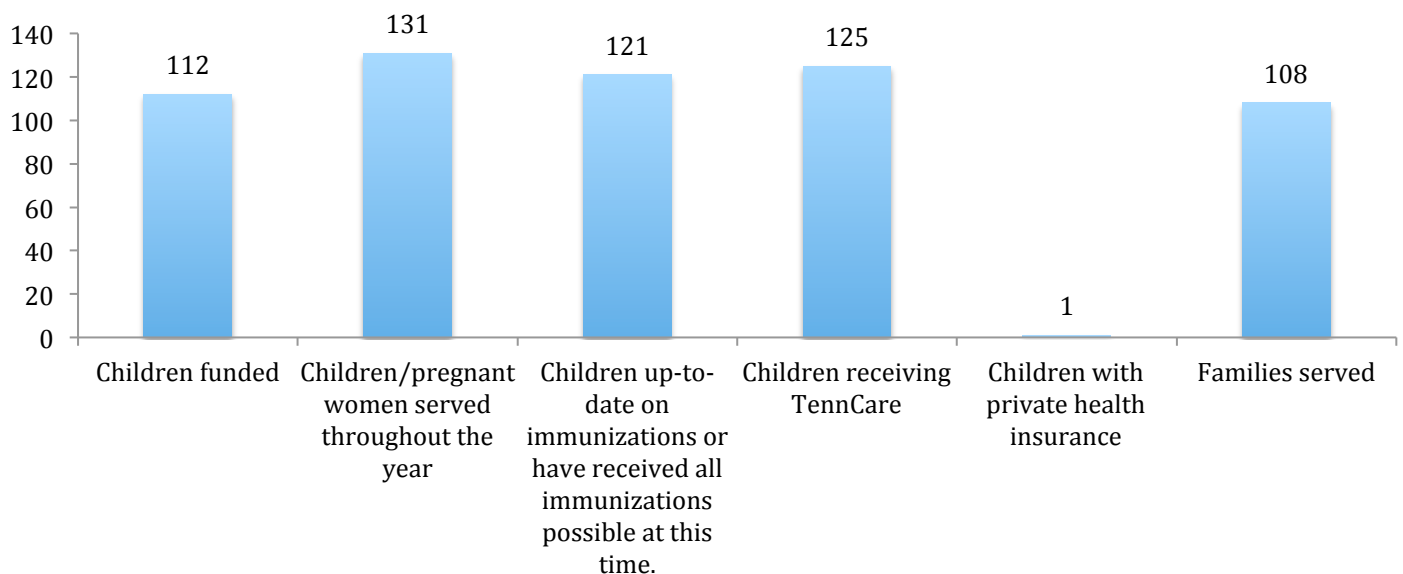
TAMARA BARNHILL
Program Director,
Tennessee State University
Early Head Start Programs

Total Program Funding by Source

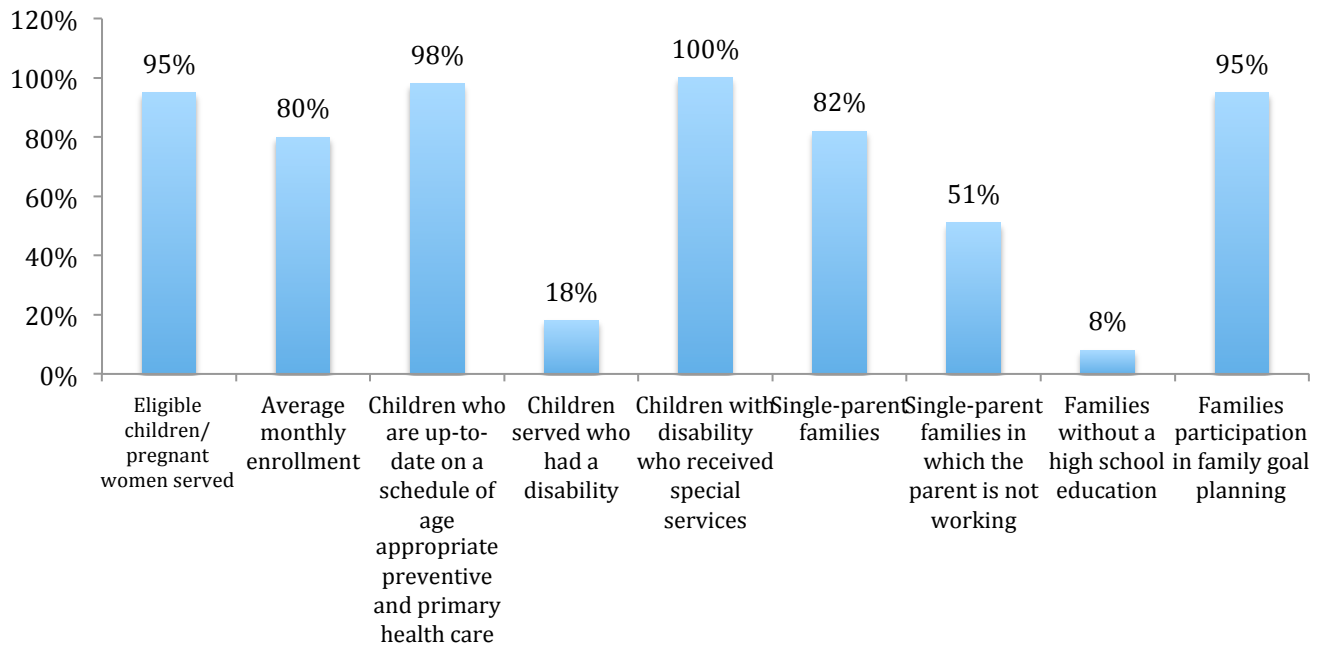
Funding for FY 2021 totaled \$2,685,635.



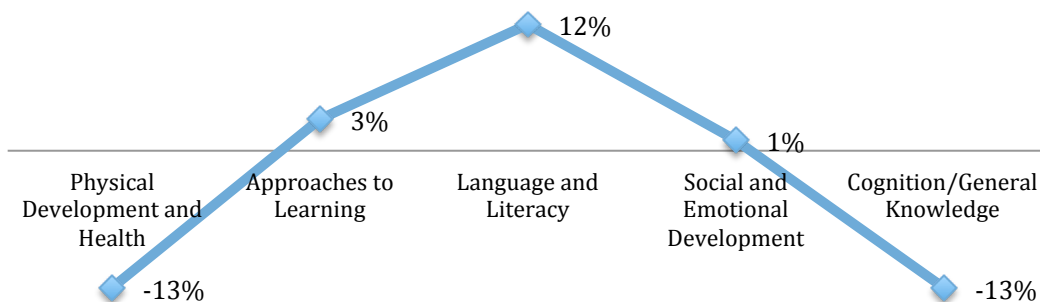
Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics FY 2021



Tennessee CAREs Early Head Start Statistics, continued FY 2021



2020-2021 School Readiness Improvement* Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



*Percentage of growth demonstrated by children based on data from three documented assessments conducted during the 2020-2021-program year. The decline in certain areas were due to the change in service delivery from in person to remote services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Drive-through Literacy Parade



Ms. Tiffany reading *Nobunny's Perfect* while showing her bunny via Zoom to her classroom.

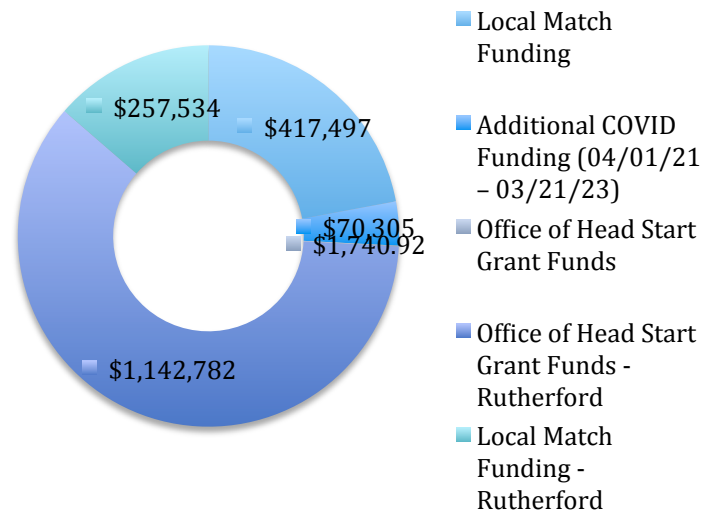
Tennessee State University Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership

In FY 2014, Congress appropriated \$500 million to allows 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, beginning with 275 grantees. 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

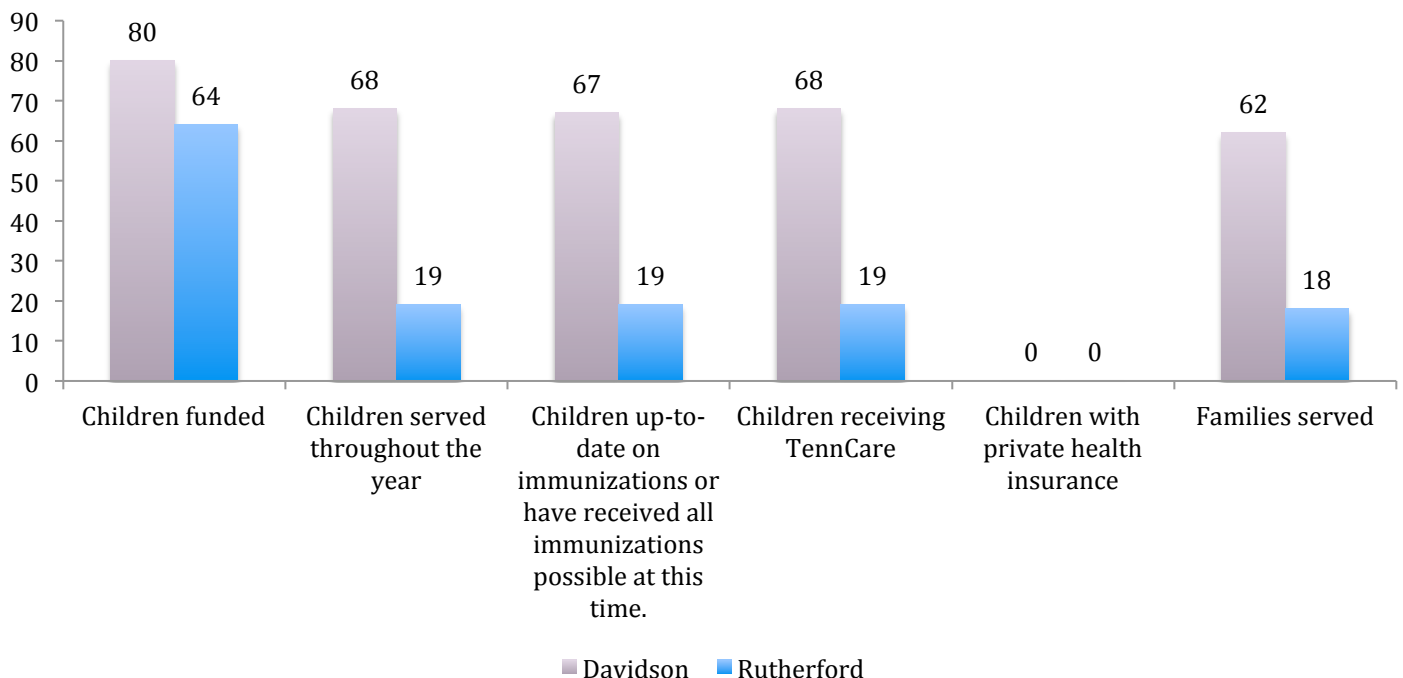
north Nashville community. This project is funded by the Office of Head Start under the direction of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program’s goals encompass successful health, economic and educational outcomes and long-term academic success for children.

Total Program Funding by Source

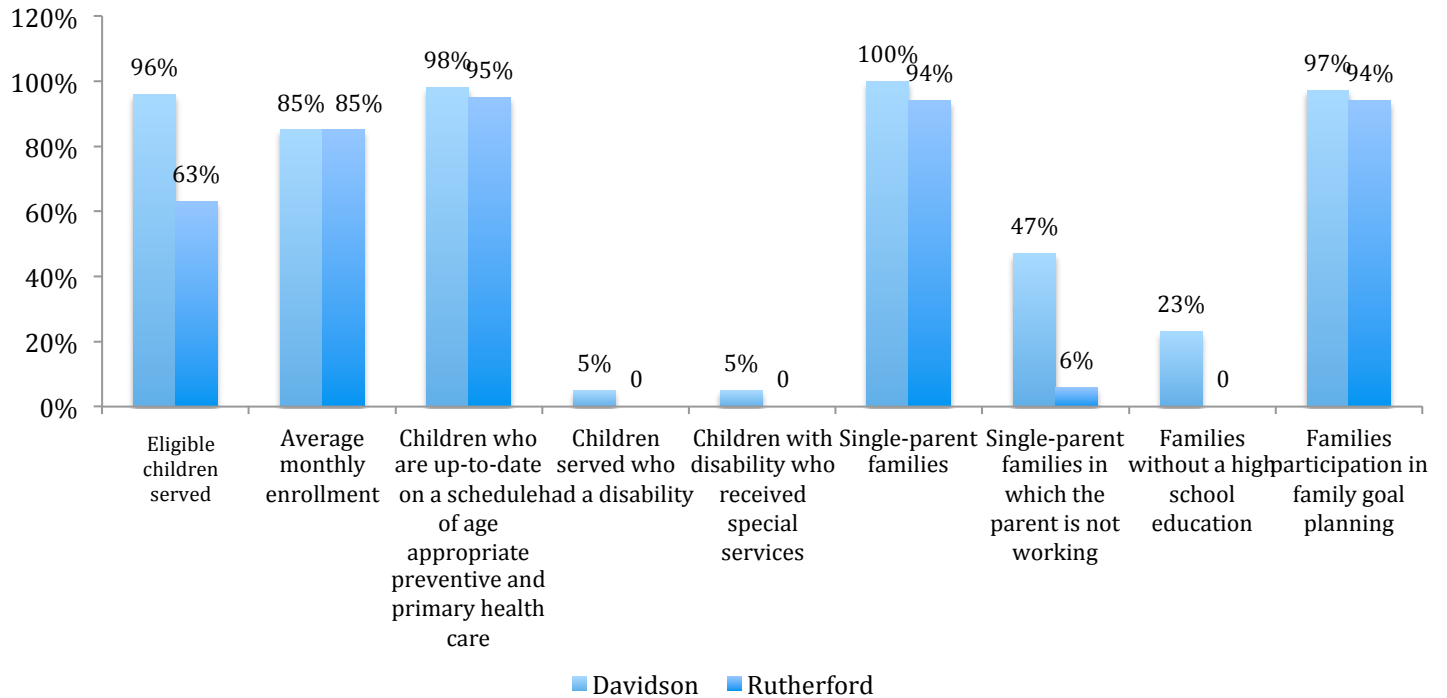
Funding for FY 2021 totaled \$2,304,183.



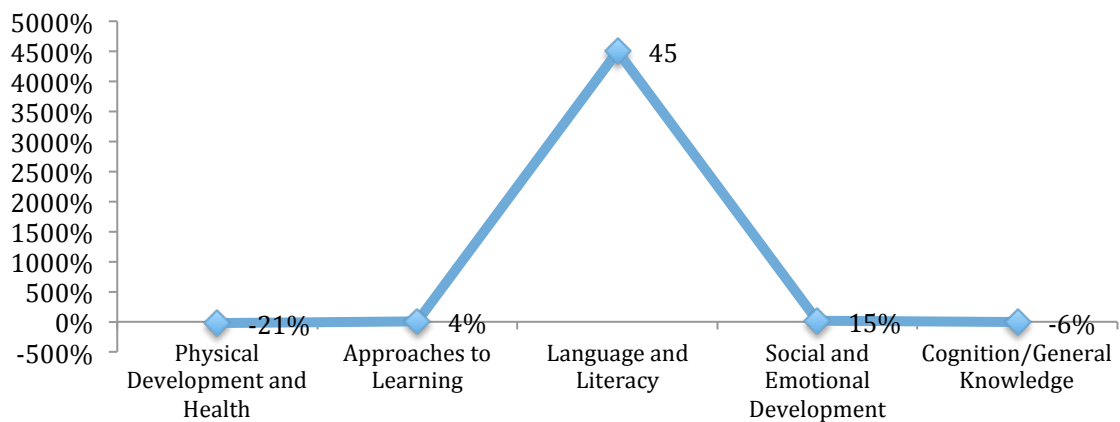
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics FY 2021



Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Statistics, continued FY 2021



2020-2021 School Readiness Improvement* Percentage of Growth during the Program Year



*Percentage of growth demonstrated by children based on data from three documented assessments conducted during the 2020-2021-program year. The decline in certain areas were due to the change in service delivery from in person to remote services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training and Technical Assistance Programs

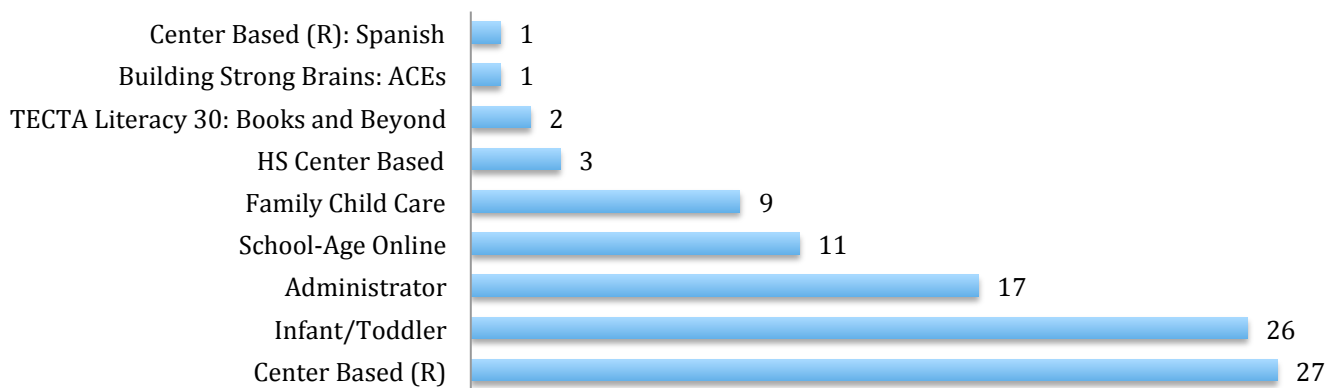
TECTA Orientation

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.

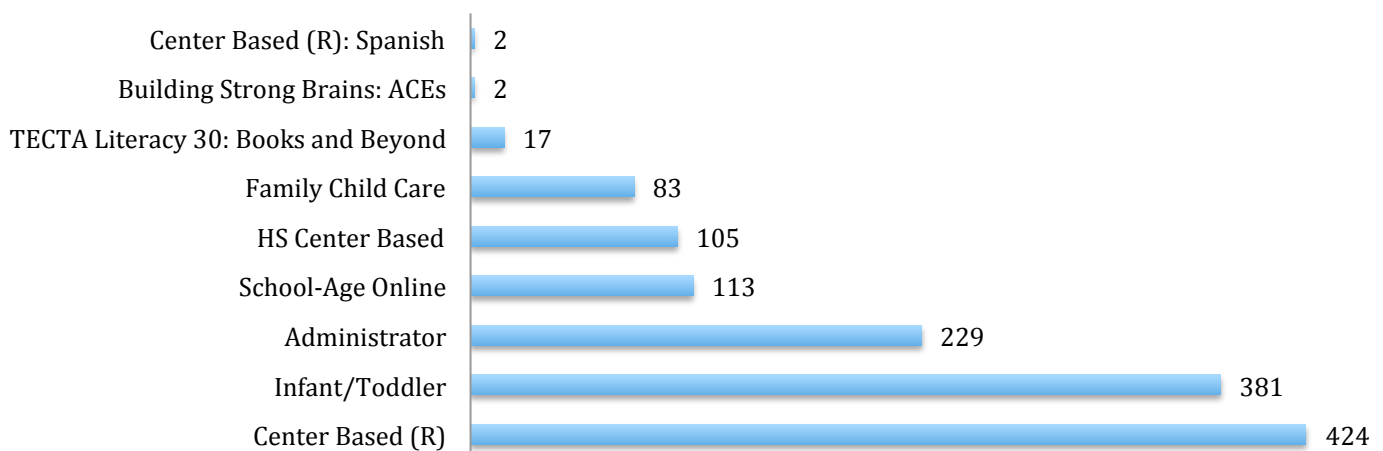
Total TECTA Orientations Held Statewide by Type

FY October 2020 – September 2021



Total TECTA Orientation Completions Statewide by Type

FY October 2020 – September 2021



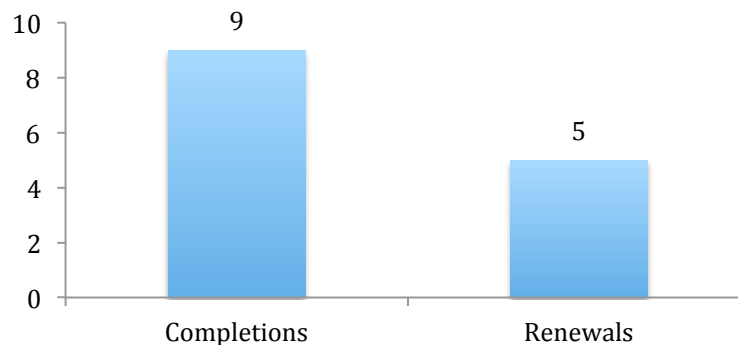
Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credential (TECPAC)

Since 2008 the Center has awarded over 230 Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credentials (TECPAC) to child care program directors. These Early Childhood program directors demonstrate specific competencies for effective leadership and management based on academic achievement, effective experience, program assessments, and a portfolio assessment. The Center awards the Administrator Credential upon completion of the Academy and assessments of the child care facilities.



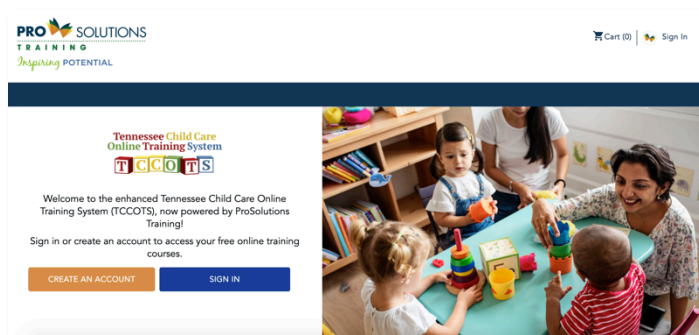
RHONDA LAIRD
TECPAC Program Manager

Total TECPAC Credentials Awarded Statewide by Type FY October 2020 – September 2021



Tennessee Child Care Online Training System (TCCOTS)

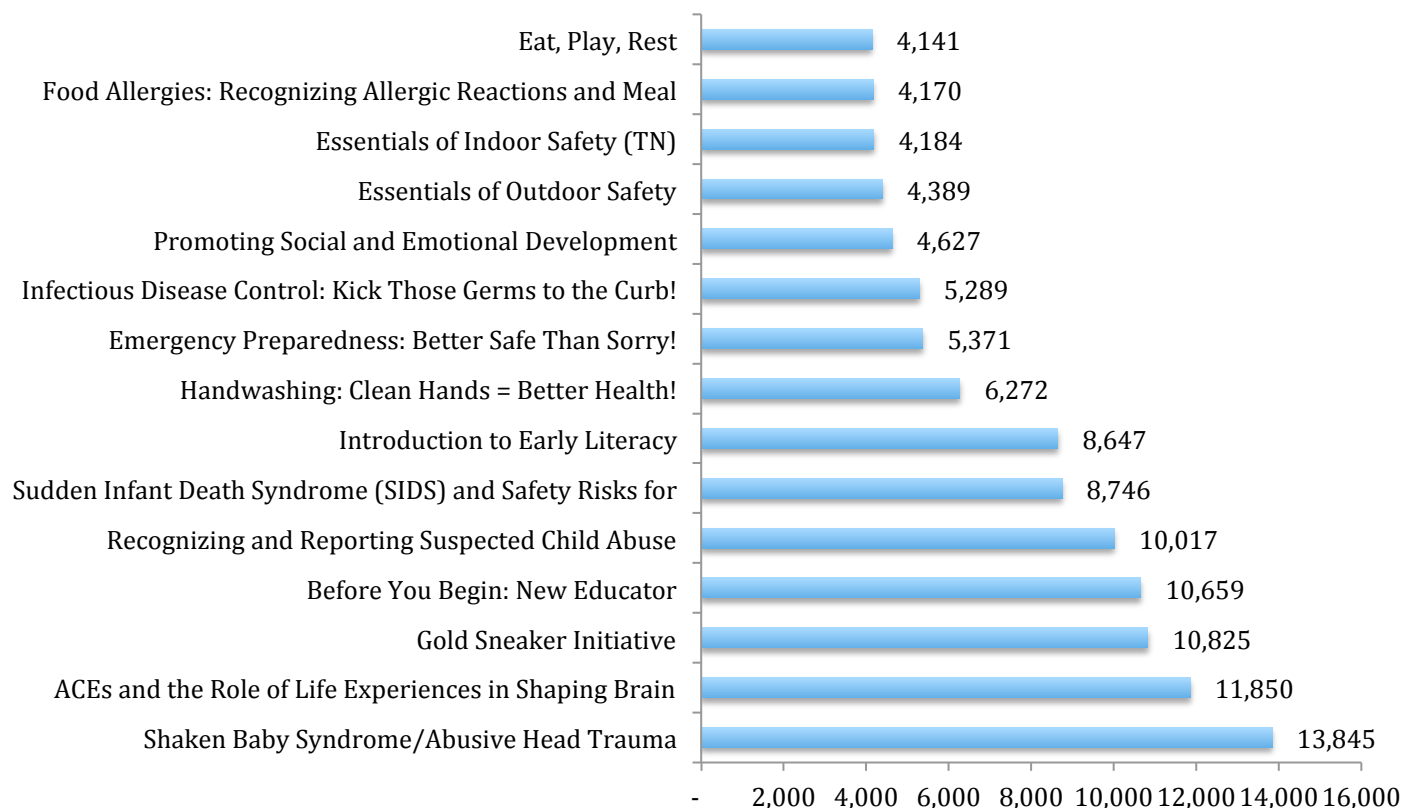
The Tennessee Child Care Online Training System, or TCCOTS, is a learning portal designed by Early Childhood professionals that combines high-quality Early Childhood content with the convenience of an online training program. Under the Contractual Agreement with the Tennessee Department of Human Services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



A total of 156,700 certificates were issued on the platform across 75 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 2021





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Nashville, TN 37209

Phone: 615.277.1651
Fax: 615.277.1654
learningsciences@tnstate.edu

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