

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling and hugging three young children. The children are of diverse backgrounds: a girl with long blonde hair, a girl with dark curly hair wearing a yellow shirt, and a boy with brown hair wearing a light blue shirt. They are in a classroom setting with shelves of books and alphabet/number charts in the background.

# Early Educator Apprenticeships in Public High Schools: Year 1 Report of an ECEPTS Youth Apprenticeship

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| April 2025  
*Elli Simon*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Care and Education (ECE) apprenticeships have been an increasingly utilized approach to addressing the ever-growing shortage of early educators across the United States. In Oakland, California, the Oakland Unified School District launched the Oaktown Leaders Youth Apprenticeship (OTL) program in fall 2023 to recruit and train the next generation of ECE workers. Sponsored by Early Care & Education Pathways to Success, OTL is designed to introduce high school students to careers in ECE, while growing the school district's future workforce from within its own community. This report evaluates the program's first year, highlighting its design, implementation, success factors, and lessons learned.

OTL offers high school juniors and seniors a blend of classroom learning and paid work experience over the course of two years, which leads apprentices to earning a CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit upon graduation. Related Instruction includes four courses from a local community college, allowing apprentices to earn both high school and college credit. Apprentices also complete 300 hours of paid On-the-Job Training through supervised summer job placements at community-based, child-serving programs.

In its first year of implementation, OTL had an 80% completion rate with 95% of participants reporting positive experiences with their summer work placements. The program successfully engaged a diverse cohort, with 68% of apprentices speaking a second language and 96% identifying as Black, Latino, or Asian.

The main factors that contributed to OTL's success include:

- The values and goals among the project partners and stakeholders were closely aligned.
- There was an established network of systems, services, and relationships within the school district that supported OTL and streamlined implementation.
- Dedicated Success Coordinators ensured student success by providing personalized support, from transportation to academic assistance.
- There was trust and participation amongst partners, which led to effective collaboration.

The program revisions that will be made based on lessons learned include:

- Condensing the program to work with two high schools instead of six, with the possibility of expanding in future years;
- Hiring an apprenticeship coordinator for the community college, to manage program needs; and
- Building additional time into the program to provide apprentices with more support.

OTL demonstrates that youth apprenticeships can effectively engage high school students while providing them with equitable, accessible pathways into ECE careers. Incorporating program revisions based on first-year lessons, OTL is poised for long-term success and scalability.



# INTRODUCTION





As apprenticeships for the Early Care and Education (ECE) industry continue to gain ground across the country, youth apprenticeships remain to be a largely untapped opportunity to recruit and train the next generation of ECE workers. In Oakland, California, a new and innovative youth apprenticeship program is aiming to do just that within its public school system.

This report was written as the Oaktown Leaders Youth Apprenticeship (OTL) wrapped up its first year of operation. While still in its infancy, the program has already demonstrated that its unique approach is effective in significant ways. The report tracks the program's initial development and implementation, in order to understand what factors encouraged program success and what lessons can be learned from the challenges that were encountered. It is hoped that in doing so, policymakers and apprenticeship administrators will be better informed about the opportunities that youth apprenticeships present, and best practices can be identified to help other youth apprenticeship programs be set up for success.

The report is informed by mixed methods, including reviewing program documents, analyzing survey data from first-year participants, and conducting interviews with those from Oakland Unified School District who were most involved in administering OTL.

## **DEFINING YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP**

Every US Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeship is required to include two primary components: Related Instruction (RI) and On-the-Job Training (OJT). RI is classroom learning that provides theoretical knowledge. OJT is paid work experience that allows participants to gain practical experience and professional skills. As well, it is required that OJT include supervision and guidance, and that the apprenticeship must lead to an industry-recognized credential.

Youth apprenticeship programs largely follow this model, but offer accommodations to meet the needs of high school students. For instance, it is often not feasible for youth apprentices to meet the DOL requirement of at least 2,000 hours of OJT while also attending high school. So, many youth apprenticeships require minimal OJT hours and are registered as pre-apprenticeship programs.

OTL was designed to give high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to explore education-focused and community-serving professions, while earning college credit and valuable work experience. The RI component included four dual-credit courses (i.e., 12 college credits) focused on child development and early childhood education. The OJT component consisted of at least 300 hours of paid summer work experience at child-centered placement sites, and paired apprentices with mentors to supervise and guide them.

Upon completion of OTL, students earn a CA Associate Teacher Permit, an industry-recognized credential that qualifies them for employment as assistant teachers in community-based ECE programs or paraeducators at OUSD after passing a professional exam. As well, they become eligible to enroll in ECE Apprenticeships through which to earn AA and BA degrees and more advanced Child Development Permits (e.g., Master Teacher, Site Supervisor).

## **OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT'S INTEREST IN YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP**

The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) is made up of 80 schools that serve 34,000 students, from preschool through high school. OUSD has a diverse student population in terms of race, ethnicity, class and spoken languages. The student body is 47% Hispanic/Latino, 20% Black, 11% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 11% White and 7% multi-ethnic. English language learners make up 32% of the student body and 49% of students speak a language other than English at home. Eighty-two percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (OUSD Department of Research, 2023).

However, the teachers who work for OUSD do not necessarily reflect this diversity. For instance, while 47% of OUSD students identify as Latino, only 19% of teachers identify the same way. Research has consistently shown that students benefit from having teachers who look like them or who share similar backgrounds and life experiences. Such increased representation can improve academic performance and have positive social and emotional effects on young people (Blazar, 2021).

In 2014, the Recruitment and Retention Office at OUSD began considering a youth apprenticeship program to train teachers, given that one of the most effective ways to recruit teachers who reflect the student body is to hire former students themselves. Not only would this help with meeting the Recruitment and Retention Office's goals of increasing teacher diversity and enabling the community to be more self-sufficient, it would also open professional pathways to students who might not otherwise realize they had an interest in or capability to be educators.

Many people discover they want to be teachers or work with children only after they have exposure to the work, and realize they enjoy it and are good at it. Without such opportunities, the possibility of teaching might never cross their minds. On the reverse side, young people sometimes decide they want to be teachers without having any experience in the classroom. It is only after they put themselves through college to earn teaching credentials that they discover it is not a good fit for them.



OTL sought to solve both of these dilemmas by giving young people a taste of a career in education without expending the time or cost typically involved in traditional teacher preparation pathways. Furthermore, recognizing the possibility that after completing the program an apprentice might decide that they do not want to be a teacher after all, the apprenticeship courses were carefully selected to be applicable and transferable to a liberal arts college education. As such, the apprenticeship was designed to support students in pursuing a variety of careers, including but not limited to education.

The initial idea arose from conversations initiated by parents, community members and community-based organizations who saw a need for a professional pathway for OUSD students to become teachers. They realized there was an acute workforce shortage at OUSD, especially amongst diverse and multilingual staff, and a large portion of students who were underemployed after graduating. Understanding that there could be a marriage between needs and assets from these two challenges, the concept for OTL was born.

The Recruitment and Retention team knew that the barriers to becoming a teacher are particularly difficult for first-generation college students, students from low-income families, recent immigrants, those for whom English is not their first language, and communities of color (Dukakis et al., 2007). An apprenticeship program that aimed to address those barriers and support students to overcome widespread systemic challenges could be very effective in increasing representation and diversity within the teacher workforce.

OUSD administrators listened to community members' concerns and recognized the many important benefits that a high school-based teacher apprenticeship program could provide. Given that several administrators were OUSD graduates themselves, they understood firsthand how a "grow your own" approach to building OUSD's workforce would be advantageous to OUSD as well as the wider Oakland community.

The district solidified its commitment to a grow your own program in its 2021-2024 strategic plan, laying out this vision as part of an initiative to grow a diverse and stable staff: "We envision building and maintaining accessible pathways into teaching and leading Oakland schools, grounded in the core belief that the future educators of Oakland Unified are the children and young adults in our communities" (Oakland Unified School District, 2023). In 2021, after the strategic plan was approved, the work to build OTL began in earnest.

<sup>1</sup>Grow your own programs aim to support individuals from the local community to become teachers. See more: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/grow-your-own-teacher-programs-what-are-they-and-what-can-and-cant-they-accomplish/>

## COMPOSITION AND IMPACT OF THE OTL PARTNERSHIP

### Oakland Unified School District

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The core planning and implementation team within OUSD consisted of the Director of Recruitment and Retention, who provided strategic direction for OTL, and two staff members from the Recruitment and Retention Department's Diversity and Inclusion team, who served as OTL's primary leaders and Success Coordinators. While the Director played a pivotal role in creating and designing the apprenticeship, the Success Coordinators played equally influential roles in implementing it. These three individuals are referred to in this report as the OTL team.

Aside from this team, the Linked Learning Office played a substantial role in facilitating OTL's implementation. Linked Learning is a high school instructional model that allows students to connect what they are learning to real-world scenarios and potential careers. Rather than having to choose between college preparation or technical training, Linked Learning allows students to pursue both options at once.



## Berkeley City College

Berkeley City College (BCC) was invited to be the apprenticeship's RI partner because the OTL Director felt confident about the College's track record and shared values. She felt this way because of her longstanding relationship and partnership with the College to offer OUSD students dual enrollment opportunities (i.e., high school students taking college courses to earn both high school and college credit). The OTL Director had also served on BCC's Teacher Preparation Advisory Committee for several years. For all of these reasons, the OTL Director believed that BCC would be able to help OTL attain its goals of providing more equitable career options to the young people attending Oakland public high schools.

Two staff members at BCC turned out to be instrumental in helping to establish OTL. The first was the Coordinator of the Teacher Preparation Program at BCC, who had extensive experience developing youth apprenticeship programs with specific high schools in Oakland. Given her experience, she was invited to join the OTL partnership, and became a vital resource to OTL during its early development and throughout implementation. She helped with the initial design of the program by identifying coursework that would be both useful and accessible to students, as well as transferrable to a four-year degree so that the credits earned could be used in the future, even if students ultimately decided not to pursue careers in education.

One of the BCC Deans was also instrumental because of the role she played in gaining BCC institutional support for the project. This is something that is often a "make-or-break" element in creating successful youth apprenticeship programs because special accommodations are often needed for apprentices who are non-traditional students, and strong institutional support from the College can make it significantly easier to provide such accommodations. Accommodations that the College was able to make included waiving course prerequisites, carefully selecting instructors who could meet apprentices' needs, and navigating bureaucratic systems in order to fund students' tuition and fees.

## Early Care & Education Pathways to Success

Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) is a Registered Apprenticeship sponsor and national industry intermediary, providing both management and intensive technical assistance in designing, implementing and sustaining ECE Registered Apprenticeships. The OUSD Director was introduced to the Executive Director of ECEPTS while seeking more information and guidance on launching a youth apprenticeship program. After several discussions, the OTL team invited ECEPTS into the OTL partnership, recognizing the significant experience and unique expertise that ECEPTS could provide.

ECEPTS was eager to learn about the OTL concept, as it aligned closely with their mission of creating equitable pathways into the ECE industry. Although there are models of youth apprenticeship across the country focused on a wide variety of industries (e.g., advanced manufacturing, finance), such programs are rarely focused on people-centered occupations such as education, or situated in urban and highly diverse school districts like OUSD. ECEPTS saw OTL as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that youth apprenticeship could be successful in a wider array of occupations and with students from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

One significant influence that ECEPTS had on the program design was proposing that OUSD focus the apprenticeship on early childhood education rather than K-12. By doing so, apprentices would learn about child development and the fundamentals of teaching, thereby providing a broad foundation that would be relevant to teaching in early education as well as elementary education. The OTL team agreed that this approach would be a wise strategy as it would expand career options for students while enabling both the ECE workforce and the K-12 workforce to adopt a grow-your-own model.





## Partners' Involvement in Securing Program Funding

Equally important to the role of the OTL partnership in terms of program development, was the role the partners played when it came to funding. The youth apprenticeship was initially funded through grants received in partnership with ECEPTS and/or BCC. Grants were received from private foundations, county- and state-funded initiatives, and national apprenticeship organizations. OTL also benefited from in-kind support from ECEPTS and BCC for grant writing, budgeting, grant management and accessing internal resources through the Community College system to offset particular program costs (e.g., textbooks, embedded tutors). Finally, funding was secured through COVID Relief Funds and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). Because each funding source had specific requirements, timelines and parameters, braiding multiple funding sources was key to covering the costs of the OTL program supports and services and establishing its initial sustainability.





# DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION





## OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT

### Framing an ECE Apprenticeship for High School Students

The OTL team had to be intentional and thoughtful about how to frame this apprenticeship in order to make it appealing and developmentally appropriate for young people. Whereas adult apprenticeships are catered towards those who have chosen a certain career path in which they either wish to enter or advance, high school students typically do not know what field they want to work in after graduation (which is developmentally appropriate). Therefore, the OTL team did not frame this program strictly as an early childhood or teacher apprenticeship, but as a way for young people who are interested in serving their community and working with children and families to explore their career options. This opened the door for more students to apply, even if they were unsure if they wanted to be teachers in the future.

### Eligibility Requirements and Desired Characteristics

Careful thought was also put into who would be eligible to participate in OTL. The OTL team decided it was important to include students with a range of interests, academic abilities and backgrounds in order to make it inclusive. To do this, the eligibility requirements were made intentionally broad. Applicants needed to be:

- A rising junior at an OUSD high school
- On track to graduate on time
- Interested in exploring career pathways serving children and families

There were also desired characteristics that the OTL team prioritized but did not require, to help fulfill the vision of staffing OUSD schools with teachers who come from similar backgrounds as their students. These characteristics included:

- Students who spoke a second language or were English language learners
- Students who desired to live and work in Oakland after graduating
- Students who identified as Black or Brown

All of the apprentices who were accepted into the program met each of the eligibility requirements, and most of them matched the desired characteristics as well. In terms of languages spoken, 46% of apprentices identified as English language learners and 68% of apprentices spoke a second language. Of those who spoke a second language, 63% spoke Spanish, 16% spoke Chinese, and 21% spoke another language. In terms of race and ethnic backgrounds, 46% of apprentices identified as Hispanic or Latino, 25% identified as Black and 25% identified as Asian.

## Outreach

A series of short classroom presentations were conducted in the Spring of 2023 to garner interest and spread information about the details and benefits of the apprenticeship program. The Success Coordinators facilitated these presentations and conducted multiple sessions in all of the district's high schools in order to reach every rising junior. The presentations mainly focused on the features of the program such as what classes they would take, what financial incentives and supports were available, and what kinds of work opportunities apprentices would be eligible for upon graduation. They also explained the vision behind OTL and presented research on why the grow your own model was important for OUSD.

While other outreach strategies were used to attract students' interest in the program (e.g., flyers, social media posts), the OTL team confirmed that in-person presentations were the most effective in raising awareness about the program because it involved direct contact with the students. One factor that made the classroom presentations effective was that, because of the Success Coordinators' positions in the Recruitment and Retention Office, many students already knew them and had previously heard them speak on the benefits of a career in education at OUSD. This familiarity led students to being more open to the idea of the apprenticeship, not only because the Success Coordinators were familiar faces, but also because they would be staffing the apprenticeship.

On a similar note, the Success Coordinators had well-established relationships with the teachers whose classrooms they were visiting. Rather than having to spend significant effort convincing teachers to make time for these presentations and explaining the value of the program, the Success Coordinators were welcomed into classrooms and teachers were happy to help promote the apprenticeship because of the familiarity and trust they already had with each other.

One struggle the Success Coordinators faced in conducting the presentations were time limitations. Because they were presented in the spring and had to be completed before the school year ended, it was a challenge when unexpected scheduling conflicts arose. They agreed that they would start outreach earlier in the year in the future, so that they would have plenty of time to reach all rising juniors.

## Recruitment

Following each classroom presentation, flyers were distributed to students with a QR code that linked to an online interest form. The forms collected basic contact and demographic information, and questioned students about their interests and plans for the future to verify that they met the apprenticeship eligibility requirements and desired characteristics. Site-based support staff (e.g., career pathways coaches and work-based learning liaisons) were made available to help any students who needed assistance in completing the online forms. Success Coordinators ensured that such staff were familiar with the apprenticeship and the interest form.

The Success Coordinators reviewed the submitted interest forms and scheduled phone interviews to speak with eligible applicants individually. During these calls, Success Coordinators reiterated the program requirements and the supports that would be available to apprentices to ensure their success. They talked with students to find out more about why they were interested in the apprenticeship and what kinds of support they might need to be successful. The interviews were fairly informal, but allowed Success Coordinators to get to know applicants better and ensure they had a good understanding of the program. Beyond the phone interviews, Success Coordinators called students individually throughout the summer to keep them updated and prevent students' interest from waning during summer break.



Success Coordinators also held several information sessions for the families of students who expressed interest in the program. Having worked as high school teachers and school leaders in the past, the Success Coordinators understood how important family engagement would be to students' program success and academic progress. The presentations were held outside of regular work hours so that working parents were able to attend, and they presented families with details about the apprenticeship and how it could benefit their children. It also let families get to know the Success Coordinators, ask questions, and understand what kind of family support their children might need to succeed in the program.



## Selection and Enrollment

A scoring system was used to determine which applicants would be invited to participate in the apprenticeship. Applicants who expressed a strong interest in becoming teachers got first priority, followed by anyone who stated they wanted to work with children and families in another fashion. Those who said they were interested in careers outside of working with children and families were not invited to participate. Applicants who met the desired characteristics of apprentices were also prioritized, especially those who were Black, Brown and/or spoke a second language. Information from the interest forms and the phone interviews was used to score each application.

In total, 69 students applied for the apprenticeship and 50 students were invited to participate. Ultimately, 29 students from six high schools accepted the invitation and enrolled in the program.

Enrollment began in the fall of 2023, when students started back at school. During the weeks between when classes started at OUSD and when classes started at Berkeley City College (BCC), apprentices met as a group with the Success Coordinators to get oriented. Orientation included team-building activities, setting up computers, enrolling at BCC, and completing registration forms required by the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards.

A key factor in making the college enrollment process smooth and efficient was the robust Dual Enrollment program staff and their extensive experience registering students in community college classes and enabling them to simultaneously receive high school and college credit. About half of the apprentices had already taken courses within the local community college district, which meant they did not need to reapply to BCC. Success Coordinators assisted all other apprentices to apply to BCC. Once all apprentices were enrolled, the Dual Enrollment team registered the cohort for the college classes through batch enrollment, saving substantial time and effort for the apprentices and the Success Coordinators.

Completing the required paperwork and administrative requirements for program enrollment was challenging for many students. They often did not know the information that was required, such as social security numbers, account passwords or how to fill out a W-9 form. They also needed to return permission slips from their parents that were only available in English. As a result, the Success Coordinators had to walk apprentices through the process one by one, and send countless reminders through phone calls and text messages.

It took several months to complete the enrollment process, and some apprentices did not return their permission slips until the end of the year. Success Coordinators decided that to alleviate this problem in the future, they will distribute all required paperwork to students at the start of the school year and keep parents informed about any outstanding items. They will also explain to apprentices that they may not be paid without completing the enrollment paperwork, which they hope will provide the necessary incentive for students to prioritize returning the various forms.

## RELATED INSTRUCTION

The Related Instruction (RI) for OTL consisted of one three-credit college course per semester, which came to a total of four courses over two years. Classes met at a central OUSD site to make the experience more convenient and less intimidating for the apprentices, as many of them had never been on a college campus before. Classes met weekly for two hours at the end of the school day. Most apprentices were able to take public transportation from their school to the site, and Success Coordinators gave rides to and from classes for any apprentices who were unable to take public transit.

Most costs involved with the courses were absorbed by the program (e.g., books, computers and transportation). Tuition was covered by the Career and College Access Pathways Grant Program (California Department of Education, 2025). Moreover, apprentices received stipends upon successful completion of each course. The stipend was \$300 for the first course, with an increase of \$200 for each additional course. The OTL team explained that stipends were one of the most important supports in the program because nearly all the apprentices had afterschool jobs and probably could not have afforded to give those up in order to participate in an unpaid program. Furthermore, apprentices attended the college courses after a full day of high school classes, so the stipend helped to demonstrate that their time was valued and that the extra effort was worth it.

The courses offered in the first year were Child Growth and Development and Children's Literature. Courses planned for the second year were Introduction to Education and Sociology of the Family. The first two courses fulfilled the academic requirements to earn a CA Child Development Assistant Permit. The third and fourth courses fulfilled the additional requirements to earn a CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit. In addition to satisfying the Permit requirements, the OTL team worked closely with BCC to ensure that the courses were transferable and degree-applicable. In this way, credits earned would be valuable whether apprentices went on to pursue degrees in ECE, education or some other career pathway.

Significant thought was put into who taught the courses because the OTL team wanted to ensure that the instructors would be skilled in working with youth and capable of supporting students with varying academic abilities. They also sought instructors who reflected the diversity of the student cohort. Course instructors met regularly with the Success Coordinators to review student progress. They conferred on adapting teaching methods to be more geared to high school students, and how to best support students who were struggling academically. Such ongoing communication also allowed them to understand and handle challenges as they arose and before they became highly problematic.

In addition to the course instructors, the embedded teacher played an important role in supporting student success with the RI. The embedded teacher was a full-time OUSD high school teacher and attended all classes with the apprentices. She kept track of attendance and reached out to apprentices who were absent and their families, if necessary. She tracked apprentices' grades each semester and followed up if any students were falling behind. She met with apprentices individually during the first semester, and made sure they had all of the course materials. She supported them in learning how to track assignments, prioritize tasks and manage time. Especially in the first semester, the embedded teacher supported apprentices' capacity to navigate the expectations of college classes.





In providing individualized support to every apprentice, the Success Coordinators were critical to ensuring participant success with all elements of the program. They tried to proactively remove potential barriers and assisted apprentices in overcoming any obstacles they faced around program access or participation. Their support came in many forms, including but not limited to:

- Driving students to or from class when public transportation was unavailable
- Bringing snacks to ensure students were fed and ready to learn
- Sitting in on each class to stay abreast of course content and assignments
- Supporting students to complete assignments and submit necessary paperwork, forms, etc.
- Having weekly check-ins with every student during their lunch or free time, to track their progress and identify needs for support
- Identifying serious issues that students were experiencing (e.g., social-emotional, home life, food insecurity) and making referrals when necessary to secure needed supports and services
- Tracking apprentices' overall RI and OJT progress, meeting with anyone who was struggling to find out why they were falling behind, and making a plan to bring them up to speed
- Providing technology support, including helping students obtain equipment or software, teaching them how to use new resources, and troubleshooting if technology-related issues arose

There was also an embedded tutor who was a college student at BCC and had recently completed the course that the apprentices were taking. It was intended that apprentices could meet with the tutor outside of class to get extra instruction on the course material and assignments. But due to logistical complications, the tutor had to hold the meetings virtually at a set time twice a week. Although apprentices were encouraged to utilize the tutoring sessions, very few ended up participating. Part of that was due to the virtual setup, which did not feel as natural to apprentices as meeting in person. The other hindrance was that apprentices did not have an established relationship with the tutor, which made it harder for them to feel comfortable in asking for help. To address this, the Success Coordinators instead hosted tutoring support sessions at each of the high schools during lunch or breaks in the school day, which were well attended throughout the year.

## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

To earn a CA Child Development Associate Teacher Permit, apprentices need to complete 150 hours of On-the-Job Training (OJT) working with children from birth to eight years old. More specifically, the requirement is 50 days of training for at least three hours per day. To fulfill this requirement within OTL, apprentices completed summer job placements.

The job placements provided financial stipends that amount to at least \$1,000 for the first summer and \$1,500 for the second. The stipends were primarily paid for by an Oakland tax that funds “real-world work and learning opportunities” for high school students (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.). Similar to the RI course stipends, these stipends were crucial in supporting apprentices to participate in the program, particularly those who did not have the financial ability to undertake an unpaid job placement over the summer. A final benefit to the stipend was that it encouraged apprentices to continue working in ECE during the summer between junior and senior year, instead of opting for other kinds of work opportunities that would be competitive in pay.

Success Coordinators worked closely with OUSD’s Exploring College, Career, and Community Options Department (ECCCO) to place apprentices at job sites. Apprentices were surveyed about their top choices for placement and then matched with an organization either within OUSD or in the community. These sites were in ECE centers or other organizations that work with children, such as museums, arts organizations, hospitals, tutoring agencies, and after school programs. The fact that these were ECCCO sites made the process of placing apprentices and executing the job placements much simpler, since there were established working relationships between the organizations and OUSD, and the people who worked at the sites already knew how to engage and supervise teenage workers.

Apprentices had a site supervisor at their job site who tracked their attendance and activities. At ECE sites, apprentices job-shadowed an experienced teacher in an early childhood classroom. The duties of apprentices at other sites varied based on the setting. Some offered one-on-one literacy tutoring to young children, while others led hikes for small groups of children in nature camps. Apprentices also had a mentor, either on- or off-site, who checked in with them weekly to discuss what they were learning and evaluate them on a periodic basis.

In addition to the summer work experience, apprentices had an opportunity to participate in a summer seminar through ECCCO that focused on soft skills development, such as writing emails and building resumes. The seminars were led by each school’s ECCCO advisor but only some advisors chose to offer the training, so not all apprentices had the opportunity to participate.



# ANALYSIS





## OUTCOMES

Of the 25 apprentices who enrolled in the program, 24 completed the first semester and 20 completed the second semester. The apprentice who dropped out after the first semester did so due to family circumstances that had nothing to do with the apprenticeship. All of the 20 apprentices who successfully completed the year-long program received their California Child Development Assistant Permits, including nine graduating seniors.

Program feedback from apprentices was consistently positive. On a survey following the first semester, 85% of apprentices reported that they felt “great” or “good” about continuing in the program the following year. On a second survey after their summer work experiences, 95% of apprentices said they “loved” or “liked” the work experience, and over 90% said the work experience helped them think about their future plans.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the success of OTL. These include the fact that the values and goals among the project partners and stakeholders were truly aligned; there was an established network of systems, services and relationships at OUSD that supported OTL; the Success Coordinators played pivotal roles in ensuring program efficacy; and collaboration amongst partners was smooth and effective.

### Shared Values and Goals among OTL Partners and Stakeholders

Having shared values and goals among OTL partners and stakeholders was critical to successfully launching the apprenticeship and keeping it on a smooth path throughout implementation. OUSD partnered with an apprenticeship sponsor and a college partner whose values and goals aligned perfectly with their own. The sponsor (ECEPTS) and the college (BCC) shared OUSD’s commitment to putting equity and access at the center of the program design, and stood behind OUSD’s goal of recruiting their next generation of teachers from the Oakland community. The partners’ aligned values allowed them to contribute to the program design in ways that improved the likelihood of achieving OUSD’s goals. Additionally, any disagreements between the partners about the design or implementation of the program were more easily resolved because their shared common goals served as a guiding star.

The fact that Oakland community members asked for this program and that OUSD staff at all levels – up to the superintendent - agreed that it was necessary and important, was a huge benefit to the program. Many potential obstacles were avoided because no one had to be convinced of the program’s value. And because OTL had the backing of top-level OUSD leadership from the start, an intentional and concerted effort was made to ensure the program had the resources it needed to be successful.

### Established Network of Systems, Services and Relationships at OUSD

OTL benefitted substantially from the internal departments at OUSD that supported the apprenticeship. The Dual Enrollment and ECCCO programs were heavily relied on as blueprints for integrating college coursework and summer job placement into a high school program. The assistance that staff at these programs provided was invaluable in that OTL Success Coordinators were able to stay focused on supporting the apprentices rather than getting bogged down in resolving the myriad details that come with enrolling a group of 25 high school students in college courses and work-based training.

The wraparound services available from OUSD also helped the apprenticeship program to run smoothly. As a school district with a community schools model,<sup>2</sup> OUSD schools are able to support students with challenges related to mental health, physical health, social-emotional well-being and personal life. When such issues arose for apprentices, Success Coordinators were able to refer them to OUSD’s wraparound services to get the support they needed.

Finally, the program benefitted significantly from the pre-existing relationships between the OTL team and the OTL partners. The OTL team had worked closely with the BCC coordinator for nearly a decade to build a high school to educator pathway with BCC. There were also strong pre-existing relationships between the OTL team and the key staff at the Dual Enrollment and ECCCO offices, who worked on the apprenticeship.

In an environment where there are multiple pressing projects to juggle, these relationships played an important role in prioritizing OTL and putting the necessary time and resources into it. Additionally, partners were able to collaborate and communicate with each other more effectively because they had good working relationships and trust that had been built over many years.

<sup>2</sup>A community school is a “whole-child” approach to public education that includes integrated community support services and family engagement, among other features. See more: <https://www.nea.org/student-success/great-public-schools/community-schools/what-are-they>

## Effectiveness and Impact of Success Coordinators

OTL Success Coordinators were able to deliver on a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities that were essential to keeping apprentices on a path to program success. Based on a commitment to creating a no-fail environment for the apprentices, they were able to be nimble and flexible so that when one approach did not work, they tried something else until they found an acceptable solution.

Several factors contributed to the effectiveness of the Success Coordinators. According to the Director of Recruitment and Retention, the Success Coordinators' commitment to the vision and goals of OTL, OUSD students and the Oakland community was central to how successful they were in their roles. She explained that it took an extraordinary amount of time and effort to "chase down students and get them across the finish line." Success Coordinators were motivated to put in that extra effort because of their deep level of investment in the students and the apprenticeship program.

Furthermore, Success Coordinators' professional backgrounds equipped them with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in their roles. Their prior years of experience working with young people and teaching and leading in high schools allowed them to understand the kinds of support high school students would need to overcome the challenges involved in completing college coursework and work-based training. Equally important, they knew how to connect with high school students on a personal level and earn their trust as reliable adults who were there to help them.

This ability to connect with apprentices played a key role in supporting apprentices to complete the program. The Director of Recruitment and Retention described the Success Coordinators as "people who young people want to look up to, who love them." Research confirms how powerful it is for young people to know that a trusted adult believes in them, particularly for young people of color, young people going through traumatic situations and young people with limited access to resources (Meltzer et al., 2018). The fact that Success Coordinators, as well as the RI instructors, were able to build a sense of trust with apprentices, while demonstrating that they would not give up on them, was perhaps the most essential factor that led to apprentices' overall success.



## Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing among Partners

Both ECEPTS and BCC staff offered invaluable knowledge and guidance to the OTL team in building and launching a new apprenticeship program. Collaboration was done through ongoing meetings that were held every two weeks with each partner separately and as a joint session, from the start of the planning process through the first year of implementation. This allowed partners to discuss future plans, potential issues and unresolved questions, while proactively addressing problems as they arose. In addition, prior to the launch of OTL, the OTL team participated in an ECEPTS Institute, an intensive training designed to build the capacity of organizations to create and sustain apprenticeship programs.

BCC was able to provide vital assistance in designing and implementing the program's RI. Without the BCC Coordinator's expertise in both youth apprenticeships and college-level teacher training, the program would have faced significant additional challenges to designing and implementing the RI component and ensuring that the college credits are transferrable to other institutions of higher education.

ECEPTS played a crucial role in walking the OTL team through the intricate details of building an apprenticeship (e.g., requirements, opportunities, potential difficulties). ECEPTS also helped the OTL team identify and secure program funding. And while the apprenticeship was originally set to focus on training K-12 teachers, ECEPTS encouraged them to shift the focus to ECE, both because successful ECE apprenticeship models already existed and K-12 models did not, and because providing a foundation in early childhood education would be beneficial no matter what age group apprentices might eventually teach.



## LESSONS LEARNED

Many lessons were learned from OTL's launch and first year of implementation, both for OUSD and for others seeking to expand and scale youth apprenticeship programs. Below are the lessons that will most alter the design and implementation of the OTL program going forward.

### Scaling Down the Number of School Sites

While OUSD administrators had high hopes for making OTL accessible to every high school student in the district, it turned out to be more logistically difficult than they could handle. The two Success Coordinators simply could not travel to six different sites frequently enough to ensure every apprentice was able to get to and from class and have weekly check-in meetings. While they made it work for the first year by putting in extra hours and effort, they quickly realized this would not be sustainable in the long term.

For the apprenticeship's second year, administrators plan to instead focus on two high schools with cohorts of 20 apprentices from each school. This means that more apprentices will participate in total, but they will stay on site with other students from their high school, rather than all coming together to meet at an external site. Each high school will have its own instructor, embedded teacher and tutor that will meet with apprentices at their schools.

This change will alleviate several logistical and program challenges, while improving the program design in the following ways:

- Having embedded teachers be from the same school as the apprentices will improve the teachers' feeling of program ownership, and leverage the existing familiarity between embedded teachers and apprentices.
- Tutoring can be offered during apprentices' free periods, which enables them to meet in person at school, rather than virtually.
- Related Instruction can be incorporated into the school day, instead of after school, which will ease the apprentices' load and make the apprenticeship more accessible to students who could not otherwise participate due to work or afterschool obligations.
- Success Coordinators will face less logistical challenges. The work of traveling to six different sites to meet with apprentices and arrange OJT placements with six liaisons will be significantly reduced, while the need to ensure apprentices can get to and from class each week will be eliminated completely.

### **Adding an Apprenticeship Coordinator at the Community College**

While the BCC Coordinator played a significant role in the development and implementation of OTL's first year, it was clear that she had a lot of competing responsibilities that sometimes made it difficult to collaborate efficiently with the College. She was responsible for managing multiple apprenticeships in addition to OTL, alongside her teaching duties at BCC, and the workload seemed unsustainable in the long term. To address this problem, BCC planned to hire someone solely dedicated to building apprenticeship partnerships and managing apprenticeship programs in future years.

### **Building in Additional Time to Ensure Apprentices' Program Success**

Although Success Coordinators had planned to provide one-on-one support to each apprentice, they underestimated just how much support would be needed. For example, given their young age and limited job experience, many of the apprentices required help with tasks that adults generally complete with ease. They needed help completing W-9 forms, recalling login information or social security numbers, getting fingerprinted and obtaining the official ID required to apply for teacher permits. While these are valuable lessons, the significant amount of time required from Success Coordinators needs to be accounted for in the future so that the apprentices' program progress is not unnecessarily delayed.

### **Making Intentional Efforts to Recruit Male Apprentices**

While significant effort was made into recruiting apprentices who represented the OUSD student body, one aspect that was overlooked was gender. No male students enrolled in the program for the first year. While this kind of gender imbalance is not uncommon in the ECE and K-12 workforce, OUSD hoped to use OTL as an opportunity to shift this dynamic. Extra outreach will be made in future years to male students, and they have already seen improvement in their second-year recruitment, which includes eight male applicants.



# CONCLUSION





OUSD had significant success in launching its first youth apprenticeship program. Fortunately, many of the factors that encouraged its success are largely replicable and available to high schools and districts across California and beyond.

- OUSD, in collaboration with its sponsor, ECEPTS, was able to identify and secure funding to offset the cost of the program. Similar funding initiatives are available at the state and federal level to help cover the costs of youth apprenticeship programs, mostly within broader efforts to support alternative career pathways and work-based learning opportunities for high school students.
- Just as OUSD had many building blocks in place upon which to build an apprenticeship program (e.g., Dual Enrollment and ECCCO), similar resources and programs are available in many high schools and districts and could be leveraged to support and enhance a youth apprenticeship initiative.
- Many school districts already offer educator pathways to students. Given the strengths and benefits of the apprenticeship model, such pathway programs could be transformed into apprenticeships, thereby increasing the chance of student success. This could make such opportunities more accessible to a more diverse group of participants, and help to ensure that students graduate high school with the ability to get a job, go on to college, or both.

Programs like OTL offer a win-win opportunity to build a pipeline of diverse and well-trained teachers, while providing more equitable postsecondary opportunities for high school students (Messing-Mathie, 2021). The lessons learned from the first year of OTL's implementation suggest that ECE apprenticeship programs in public high schools are not only effective strategies to train the next generation of skilled and culturally-competent teachers, but they are also replicable and viable programs that can thrive, given the necessary resources and systemic commitments.



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