



# Innovative Michigan Model Builds Workforce of Educators and Youth Development Staff

## Addressing Michigan’s Teacher Shortage with a Grow-Your-Own Initiative

Michigan is facing an alarming shortage of qualified educators and youth workers across the educational spectrum, including early childhood education and care programs, K–12 schools, and afterschool and summer learning programs.<sup>1</sup> This shortage is particularly acute as educators deal with continuing staffing challenges while schools emerge from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Rural areas and areas with large populations of low-income families cite the most pressing needs because shortages lead to inequities in access to quality education and care.<sup>2</sup> In



response to this challenge, in 2020 Michigan embarked on a new Career and Technical Education and Training pathway: Future Proud Michigan Educator LAUNCH. This is a Grow-Your-Own initiative with students completing credentials at their high schools or at regional career and technical education (CTE) centers, leading to higher education or immediate employment. Subject matter experts from the Region 8 Comprehensive Center (R8CC) played a critical role in bringing together diverse partners and planning this initiative.

## Coordinating Diverse Stakeholders to Plan and Launch Redesigned Pathways

Creating this program required a series of important steps, from setting the groundwork for implementation at the state level to building support among educators and creating an educational pathway for students while in high school. These milestones seemed daunting in 2020, as the state launched the initiative during the pandemic. One of Michigan’s first steps was to enlist the help of the R8CC to develop resources, facilitate discussion, and support officials through the lengthy design and implementation process. Later, the R8CC focused support around understanding implementation successes and areas for improvement and communicating with internal and external stakeholders. The timeline below summarizes key steps this group took over the course of the project.

### Timeline of Key Accomplishments

2019–2020 →	2020–2021 →	2021–2022 →	2022–2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created cross-office working group</li> <li>Held first meeting with advisory group</li> <li>Developed recommendations report based on listening sessions with key stakeholders</li> <li>Selected credentials for pathways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalized a statement of purpose and implementation framework</li> <li>Solidified partnerships</li> <li>Launched redesigned pathways in schools across the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held listening sessions with educators and students to identify areas for additional support</li> <li>Identified metrics to understand initial successes and areas for improvement</li> <li>Updated implementation framework based on lessons learned in initial implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepared for transition of early childhood services division to new Michigan Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MILEAP) agency</li> <li>Provided guidance to institutions of higher education to offer credits for credentials</li> <li>Initiated focus on greater alignment with other educator preparation programs</li> </ul>

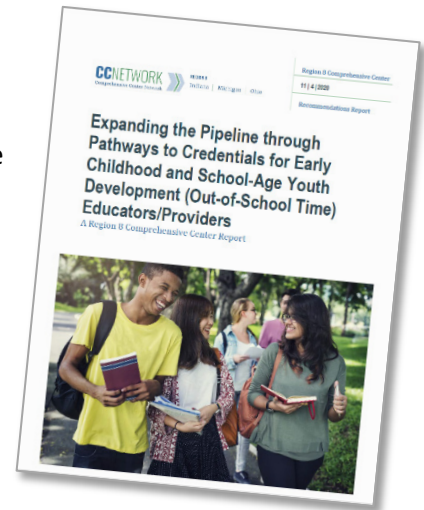
<sup>1</sup> Sorenson, P. (2022, January.) *Confronting Michigan’s early childhood workforce crisis*. Michigan League for Public Policy.  
<sup>2</sup> Ryznar, T., Tucker-Bradway, N., Hodgman, S., Dange, A., & Faria, A.-M. (2021.) *Limited choices and long drives: Living in rural Michigan with young children*. American Institute for Research.



In the first year, the R8CC helped to convene diverse partners from four different offices in two divisions in the Michigan Department of Education, ranging from CTE to early childhood services. Project leaders also organized an advisory group spanning early childhood organizations, afterschool organizations, Tribal entities, and other community partners. Subject matter experts focused on developing relationships and understanding among the partners, engaging team members and advisory group members in listening sessions to understand their unique assets.

R8CC staff documented initial learnings in a comprehensive recommendations report that would help inform decisions about implementation. In a significant achievement from this early work, stakeholders selected the Child Development Associate credential and Michigan Youth Development Associate Credential as targets for high school students interested in careers in early education and youth programming.

Launching the pathways in fall 2021, state leaders encountered several challenges but developed the collective expertise to address them. Many educators knew little about the pathways and had to build their content knowledge, something R8CC staff learned by listening to educators and students. Based on this input, R8CC staff helped to clarify implementation frameworks and continued to support partnerships with an eye toward educator support and, ultimately, sustainability.



In the fall of 2023, Michigan’s governor moved the early childhood services division to a new preschool through postsecondary and workforce agency: Michigan Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). R8CC staff supported the project team in strengthening communication and transitioning to a new governance structure to continue the work seamlessly as a partnership with the new agency. The R8CC also facilitated a series of working meetings focused on increasing coherence across the state’s high school educator preparation programs, with the goal of developing guidance for school administrators on alignment of programs.

## Signs of the Program’s Impact on Student Interest in Becoming Michigan Teachers

The state has achieved important outcomes with R8CC assistance. Early in the project, the team met several major goals, such as increasing team knowledge of evidence-based considerations of expanded pathways and a clear understanding of team roles and responsibilities. As members noted:

*We have developed open honest working relationships that allow for a great deal of growth. Each time we get together the energy to keep this going strengthens.*

*Everyone on our team serves a unique role that is valued by the other members. It is the best team of people I have worked with in my career.*

Later, key outcomes included an increased capacity of the state to support districts in implementing the initiative, monitor and improve the pathway, build stakeholder capacity to partner with the state, and sustain the initiative beyond R8CC involvement. As additional evidence of strong communication with stakeholders, the state formalized partnerships with sponsors of these credentials—the Michigan Afterschool Partnership and the Council for Professional Recognition—and further clarified relationships with professional organizations such as the Michigan Educational Careers Association and the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children.



Today, the initiative has expanded from 50 programs to nearly 100 programs across the state. Nearly 90% of Michigan’s intermediate school districts are implementing the initiative, with more than 1,650 CTE students entering the state’s professional development registry. Several Michigan colleges have granted credits for early childhood credentials completed in high school and two additional colleges have stepped up to grant credits for the youth development credential. As one team member noted, “There’s now a buzz about this project, with other states showing interest [in implementing similar programs].”

## Next Steps for the Project

Now in Year 4 of the initiative, the team’s focus is ensuring its sustainability by improving internal and external communications and documenting governance. The state office project lead described the success of the cross-office partnership this way:

*Because of this project and Region 8 CC, a great multi-office collaborative working relationship has formed around credentialing for the first time. More important is that it bridges across early childhood and K–12 and unifies into one system of support.*

### **Program Spotlight: Students Graduate with a Pathway to Become a Teacher**

In spring 2023, 10 students from one program in Michigan earned a credential with a path to entry-level employment and education careers. Beginning as juniors, all of these students had worked 3 full days a week in the state-licensed preschool program that operated right out of their CTE center. They had also completed internships in the state-funded preschool program, early kindergarten, or other preschools to meet their work-based learning requirements.

At the time of graduation, seven of the students who earned credentials planned to go on to either 2-or 4-year colleges in Michigan to become teachers, with many of those colleges awarding credit for their credentials. Four of these students planned to continue working in preschool or school settings while earning their degrees, including as lead teachers.

While the other three students were undecided about college, they all planned to work in preschools, and one was already employed as a lead teacher at the time of graduation—a demonstration of the program’s success in preparing students for education careers.

To learn more about the work, watch the U.S. Department of Education’s [Best Practices Clearinghouse Focus on the Field video](#) about the Future Proud Michigan Educator LAUNCH initiative.



## About Us

The Region 8 Comprehensive Center (R8CC) is one of 19 Regional Comprehensive Centers in the Comprehensive Center Network that provides high-quality, intensive capacity-building technical assistance to clients from state, regional, and local educational agencies and schools in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. R8CC staff serve clients by helping to identify, implement, and sustain effective evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions that support improved educator and student outcomes. Through these capacity-building services, R8CC staff help agency staff improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of instruction. Because the R8CC is a federally funded Comprehensive Center, all our work with education agencies is conducted free of any charge for services or related travel.

For more information, visit our website at [www.region8cc.org](http://www.region8cc.org).

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