

Recruitment and Retention of Personnel Serving Young Children with Disabilities: Leadership and Advancement Opportunities



For more, visit <https://ectacenter.org/topics/personnel/recruitment.asp>

Leadership plays a crucial role in improving teaching and learning practices.



Early childhood professional leadership is the capacity of teachers and other early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) professionals to influence their colleagues, administrators, and other members of the early childhood community, either as individuals or as a group. By taking on leadership roles, EI/ECSE professionals enhance their leadership skills, build competence, and earn respect from their colleagues. It is essential to give EI/ECSE professionals opportunities for leadership and advancement. These include paid release time or other compensation for the extra work outside of the classroom/program.

Recent research literature on early childhood education leadership by Kirby et al. reveals that a combination of two types of early childhood teacher leadership can significantly improve the overall quality of an early childhood program. The first type enhances instructional quality in a program, such as peer coaching or mentor teachers. The second type of leadership promotes collaborative learning among teaching staff, such as leading a community of practice or other group professional development.

Examples of successful programs include:



California's [Early Childhood Mentor Program](#) provides mentors in leadership and guidance for early childhood education (ECE) students or new/early career professionals throughout California.



Illinois' [Early Intervention Training Program \(EITP\) Leadership Fellowship](#) supports leaders to grow in their capacity to meet the needs of the EI workforce and families. The fellowship provides professional development opportunities to:

- increase emotional intelligence and strengthen leadership skills;
- increase capacity to leverage strengths and opportunities to achieve goals;
- strengthen relationships to sustain quality EI work; and
- establish social networks to connect with after the fellowship is completed.



Pennsylvania's [Office of Child Development and Early Learning \(OCDEL\) Policy Fellowship](#) enhances career pathways for early learning providers and professionals. The fellowship includes placement sites, monthly cohort meetings, and an online learning community.



Virginia's [Aspiring Special Education Leaders Academy](#) helps school divisions and state-operated programs with succession planning and prepares potential leaders for future administrative positions in special education.

The ECTA Center is a program of the FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, funded through cooperative agreement number H326P220002 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the Department of Education's position or policy.

Project Officer: Julia Martin Eile



Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education