



ACCESS: THE NEED FOR MORE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS IN VERMONT

**A Supplement to
Stalled at the Start:
Vermont's Child Care Challenge**

January 2020

Produced by Let's Grow Kids

About Let's Grow Kids

Let's Grow Kids is leading a movement for affordable access to high-quality child care for all Vermont families who need it by 2025. With its network of 30,000 supporters, LGK is strengthening today's early care and education system to create immediate impact for families with children birth to five while simultaneously mobilizing Vermonters from all walks of life to call for policy change and public investment in child care to build a better Vermont for generations to come.

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Executive Summary

Every other year since 2016, Let's Grow Kids, with advisement from a number of partners, has released *Stalled at the Start: Vermont's Child Care Challenge*, a report analyzing the supply of and demand for regulated child care in Vermont. In the most recent 2020 edition of the report, Let's Grow Kids included information on the number of slots that would need to be created in order for the supply of regulated child care in Vermont to meet the demand for regulated child care. However, child care slots can't be created in isolation; they require early childhood educators and other support staff to make them a reality.

This report takes *Stalled at the Start's* analysis of the number of slots that would need to be created in order to meet demand and expands on it to determine the number of early childhood educators that would be needed in order to make those slots a reality at the statewide and regional levels. Statewide findings point to the need for 2,090 additional teachers, associate teachers, licensed family child care early educators, registered family child care early educators, and family child care early education assistants, not including additional support staff such as program directors, early intervention specialists, substitutes, etc., that would be needed to operationalize needed child care slots.

While this report provides important information on how Vermont needs to increase its early childhood education workforce, the critical topic that this report does not address is the fact that the field of early childhood education has been historically undervalued both in Vermont and across the country.

Of all college graduates, early childhood educators earn the **least**, nationwide.¹ In Vermont, the median annual wage for a child care worker is \$29,430.² Comparatively, the median annual wage for a kindergarten teacher in Vermont is \$59,560.³ There is little incentive for an early childhood educator to remain in the early care and education field when they can earn \$30,000 more per year working in a public school. While short-term opportunities to support current early childhood educators and recruit and retain new early childhood educators are discussed in the conclusion and recommendation section of this report, without increased, long-term investments in our state's early care and education system, Vermont will continue to face a child care crisis, as there can be no child care and early education programming without our early childhood educators.

Vermont has worked hard to address similar crises in our health care fields. If Vermont is to address our early childhood education workforce challenges, it will take similar, long-term, dedicated investment in order to better support our current workforce, eliminate barriers to the education and training necessary to become an early childhood educator, and to raise wages and benefits for our early childhood education workforce.

Introduction

The 2020 edition of *Stalled at the Start: An Analysis of the Supply of and Demand for Child Care in Vermont* includes new information on the number of additional child care slots (a slot is a space for a child) that would need to be created in order to meet demand for child care in our state. However, new slots cannot be created without early childhood educators to staff them.

Early childhood educators make our early care and learning system possible—they are the ones who ensure that children enrolled in early care and education programs receive safe, developmentally-appropriate, play-based, nurturing early care and education opportunities.

Using the findings from the *Stalled at the Start* report regarding the estimated number of new slots that need to be created in Vermont in order to meet demand, Let's Grow Kids conducted additional analysis to estimate the number of early childhood educators that would be needed in order to realize the estimated additional supply of child care slots.

Background on Vermont's Early Care and Education System

Stalled at the Start provides an analysis of the supply of and demand for regulated child care in Vermont for children birth through 5 who are likely to need some form of child care. The term “regulated child care” means that the program is licensed with the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division (CDD). The licensing process requires programs to meet certain health and safety regulations and programming guidelines (such as developmentally appropriate play time and activities that promote healthy development). The licensing process also requires the state to inspect programs to make sure they provide a safe and age-appropriate space and meet other regulations and guidelines for child care and early education.

Child Care Age Groups

Using data from the Vermont Department for Children and Families, *Stalled at the Start* determined the capacity of these programs to provide child care for three age groups—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

- **Infants**—children between 6 weeks and 23 months. To best meet their rapidly developing needs, caring for infants requires a low child-to-staff ratio.
- **Toddlers**—children aged 24 through 35 months. Like infants, toddlers also require a significant amount of physical care and support, and need a low staff-to-child ratio.
- **Preschoolers**—3- and 4-year-olds. Preschoolers require less one-on-one attention than infants or toddlers, so preschool-age child care may have a higher staff-to-child ratio than infant or toddler classes.⁴

Types of Regulated Child Care

Regulated programs that serve children birth through 5 include registered family child care homes, licensed family child care homes, and center-based child care and preschool programs:⁵

- **Registered Family Child Care Homes (Registered FCCHs):** Also known as family providers or home-based providers, registered family child care homes provide early care and education programs in the provider’s own home. These home-based providers have gone through a licensing process with CDD to certify that they meet specific regulations that promote children’s health, safety, and development in order to care for a small group of children. Registered child care homes are the most common type of regulated, home-based child care in Vermont.
- **Licensed Family Child Care Homes (Licensed FCCHs):** As with registered child care homes, licensed child care homes offer a regulated home-based option for child care. The difference between registered child care homes and licensed child care homes is that licensed child care homes typically care for more than six children, with the support of an assistant. Like registered child care homes, licensed child care homes have received a license from CDD to certify that they meet specific regulations that promote children’s health, safety, and development. Since licensed family child care homes care for more children than registered family child care homes, they must meet additional regulations.
- **Licensed Center-Based Child Care and Preschool Programs:** Licensed child care centers and preschool programs care for children in a dedicated space that is typically not located in a home. These programs are also regulated by the state and have staff who have specific training or formal education in early childhood care and education. Licensed child care centers offer many different types of programs, and may focus on a particular age group, such as preschool.

As shown in Table 1, there are a total of 715 regulated child care programs in Vermont that offer full-day, full-year child care for infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers.

Table 1. Number of Regulated Child Care Programs in Vermont Offering Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care for Infants, Toddlers, and/or Preschoolers

County	Center-Based Child Care and Preschool Programs	Licensed Family Child Care Homes	Registered Family Child Care Homes	Total
Addison	14	1	30	45
Bennington	20	2	26	48
Caledonia	14	1	35	50
Chittenden	73	3	69	145
Essex	0	0	4	4
Franklin	10	0	71	81
Grand Isle	3	0	4	7
Lamoille	11	1	22	34
Orange	9	1	16	26
Orleans	5	2	40	47
Rutland	18	4	42	64
Washington	19	3	51	73
Windham	20	2	12	34
Windsor	24	0	33	57
Total	240	20	455	715

Early Childhood Education Professionals

It's important to note that there are many different types of early childhood education professionals and support staff who work in Vermont's regulated child care programs. This analysis focuses on those early childhood educators who regularly and independently lead a group of young children including teachers, associate teachers, licensed family child care providers, and registered family child care providers.

Center-Based Child Care & Preschool Programs

- **Teacher:** According to Vermont child care regulations, a Teacher “means a staff member, who is responsible for a group of children, provides direct education and child care services, develops and implements curriculum, and may supervise trainees.”⁶ Teachers must hold advanced training in early childhood education that meets or exceeds *any* of the following requirements:
 - A teaching license through the Vermont Agency of Education with endorsement in a field related to early childhood; or
 - 12 months of experience working with young children combined with a bachelor's degree with a major or concentration specifically relevant to early childhood; or
 - A bachelor's degree with extensive coursework in early childhood or school age education.⁷
- **Teacher Associate:** Similar to teachers, according to Vermont child care regulations, a Teacher Associate “means a staff member, who is responsible for a group of children, provides direct education and child care services, develops and implements curriculum, and may supervise trainees.”⁸ Teacher Associates must have at least one year's experience working with groups of children grade 3 or younger and meet or exceed *any* of the following education and training requirements:
 - An associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field; or
 - A high school diploma or GED and have successfully completed college coursework and additional training through the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship program; or
 - Have completed the Community College of Vermont's Child Care Certificate program; or
 - Have successfully completed at least 21 college credits related to early childhood education core knowledge areas and have completed at least 2 professional observations.⁹

Family Child Care Homes (Registered FCCHs)

- **Registered Family Child Care Providers:** Registered FCCHs are operated by an individual early childhood educator, referred to by the state as a Family Child Care Provider (FCCP), who has at least a high school diploma or GED and one year of experience working with groups of children grade 3 or younger and within 12 months of initial licensure, has additional education and training such as:
 - Completion of Vermont's Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals training;
 - A Child Development Associate credential from the National Council for Professional Recognition;

- Completion of the Community College of Vermont's Child Care Certificate program;
- At least 12 college credits related to early childhood education core knowledge areas and a professional observation; or
- Completion of a Level 1 Portfolio Assessment through Northern Lights at the Community College of Vermont (Vermont's early childhood professional development hub).¹⁰

Registered FCCPs may also hire an assistant, aide, or one or several substitutes or other support staff.

Licensed Family Child Care Homes (Licensed FCCHs)

- **Licensed Family Child Care Providers:** Licensed Family Child Care Homes are operated by an individual early childhood educator who has at least a high school diploma or GED and one year of experience working with groups of children grade 3 or younger and has additional education and training that meets or exceeds the following requirements:
 - A Vermont Early Childhood Career Ladder Level Two or Three Certificate; or
 - A current Child Development Associate credential from the National Council for Professional Recognition; or
 - A Child Care Certificate from Community College of Vermont; or
 - A Certificate of Completion from the Vermont Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Program; or
 - Completion of 12 college credits related to early childhood education core knowledge areas and a professional observation; or
 - Completion of a Level 2 Portfolio Assessment through Northern Lights at the Community College of Vermont (Vermont's early childhood professional development hub).¹¹
- **Family Child Care Assistant:** One of the reasons licensed FCCHs are allowed to care for more children at any given time than a registered family child care home is because they have an assistant working with them. This report includes an analysis of the number of Family Child Care Assistants that would be needed in order to support the necessary number of Licensed Family Child Care educators. Assistants must hold either a high school diploma or GED and have completed some early childhood specific coursework or certificate program within 12 months of their employment.¹²

Additional roles in the early childhood care and education field include, but are not limited to, program directors, business managers, teacher assistants, aides, trainees, cooks or nutrition counselors, family support workers, early interventionists, bus drivers, and substitutes. For more information on these additional roles, please review Let's Grow Kids' report, *Who's Who and What's What in Vermont's Early Care & Learning System*.¹³

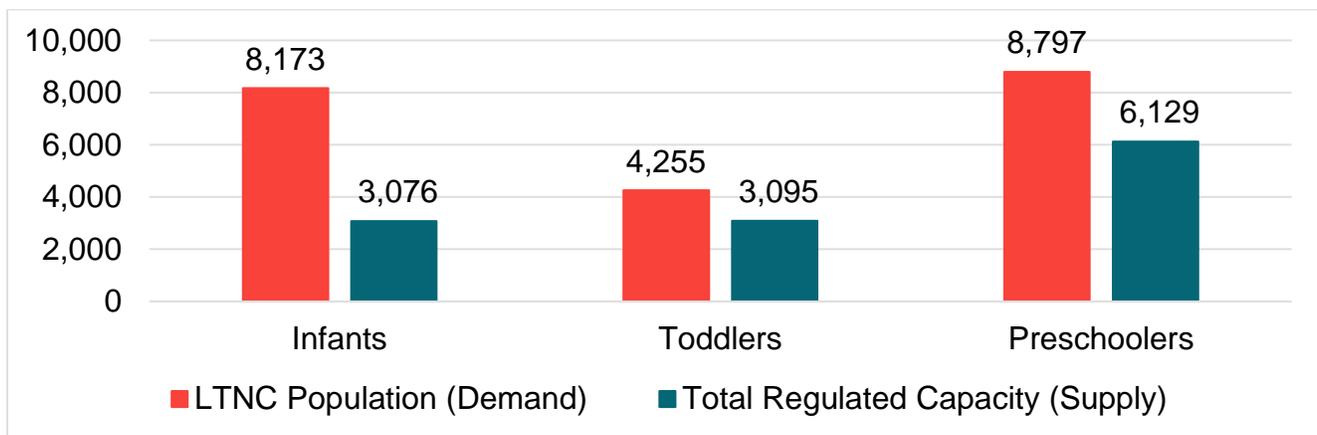
Analysis of Additional Capacity Needed to Meet Demand

Recognizing that not every family in Vermont uses or wants to use regulated child care, *Stalled at the Start* uses a proxy for demand: children likely to need care (LTNC).

The LTNC population was identified using the population estimates for each age group using data from the Vermont Department of Health and information from the U.S. Census Bureau on the percent of Vermont children 5 and under with all available parents in the labor force.^{14, 15} Information on the demand for regulated child care for each age group was then compared to the data from the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division on the capacity of child care programs (the supply).

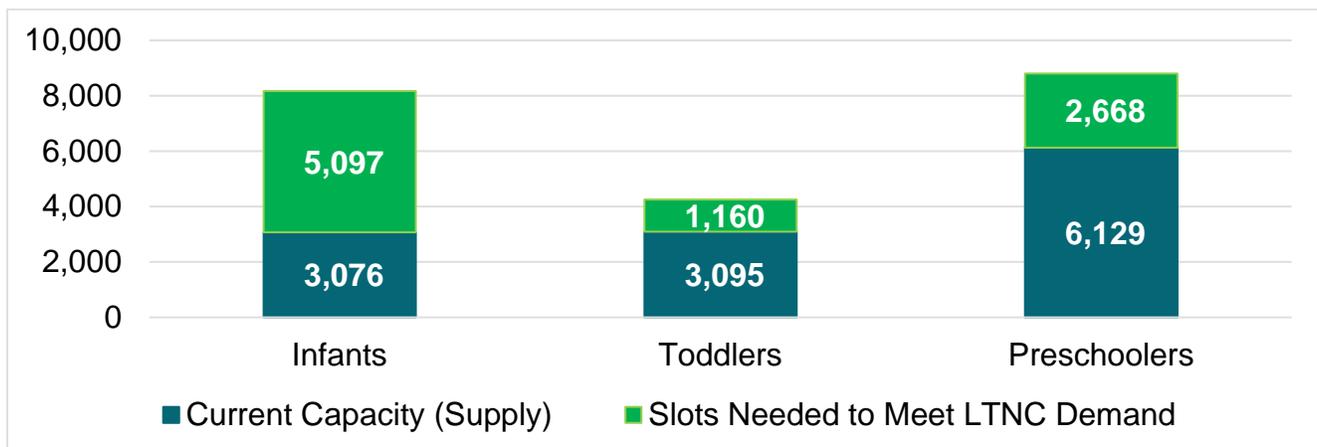
Overall, *Stalled at the Start* found that Vermont lacks a sufficient supply of child care to meet demand, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. LTNC Population (Demand) Compared to the Capacity of Regulated Programs (Supply), 2020¹⁶



In order to meet demand, it would require the system to add approximately 8,925 slots, more than half of which would be needed for infants, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Capacity (Supply) Needed to Meet Demand



The need for additional capacity was also analyzed at the county level. Using county-specific information from the U.S. Census Bureau on the percent of children 5 and under with all available parents in the labor force, county-specific LTNC populations were determined and compared to county-specific supply information. This analysis found that all but one county needs additional capacity added for all three age-groups, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2. Additional Slots Needed to Meet Demand

Location	Total Infant Slots Needed to Meet LTNC Demand	Total Toddler Slots Needed to Meet LTNC Demand	Total Preschool Slots Needed to Meet LTNC Demand	Total
Addison	312	117	89	519
Bennington	331	71	153	554
Caledonia	200	0	63	238
Chittenden	1,042	81	135	1,259
Essex	64	31	89	183
Franklin	647	242	542	1,431
Grand Isle	53	16	22	91
Lamoille	221	31	144	396
Orange	288	93	213	595
Orleans	234	72	207	513
Rutland	467	150	304	922
Washington	531	159	417	1,107
Windham	377	52	225	655
Windsor	336	72	73	480
Vermont	5,097	1,160	2,668	8,925

It's important to note that *Stalled at the Start* makes an assumption in its methodology that only one child is served by one full-time child care slot. Based on actual usage information, we know that some families use a number of different child care arrangements to make ends meet, including part-time child care in a family child care home or center-based child care or preschool program.¹⁷ However, given that *Stalled at the Start's* methodology has been determined to be the best proxy for understanding the supply of and demand for child care for young children in Vermont, this whitepaper continues to utilize that methodology in order to determine the number of additional early childhood educators that would be needed in order to meet demand.

Estimating the Need for Early Childhood Educators

Using this analysis of the number of slots needed in order to meet the demand for child care at the state and county level, Let's Grow Kids estimated the need for early childhood educators based on the current distribution of childcare programs types in Vermont and by county. Because each program type (registered family child care homes, licensed family child care homes, and center-based child care and preschool programs), has different staff to child ratio requirements, the mix of programs impacts the number of staff needed. It is important to note that this analysis is not proposing an ideal distribution or suggesting a likely usage pattern in a system with sufficient supply.

Once the distribution of slots was determined by program type for each county, the mandatory minimum ratio of staff to children was determined in order to identify the number of early childhood educators that would be needed in order to operationalize the additional slots. The analysis assumes that the additional early childhood educators needed in Vermont's early care and education system are those that regularly, independently lead infant, toddler, and/or preschool child care room without restriction. As noted in the Background on Vermont's Early Care & Education System section of this report, these include center-based child care and preschool program teachers and associate teachers, licensed family child care providers in addition to support from a family child care assistant to provide increased capacity, and registered family child care homes

Findings of the Let's Grow Kid's analysis were then compared to the findings of a report by the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division on Vermont's current early childhood education workforce.¹⁸ Unlike the *Stalled at the Start* analysis, the workforce report from the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division used Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) Districts as their base level of analysis instead of Vermont counties. Given this, Let's Grow Kids first analyzed early childhood educator needs at the county level, and then redistributed county-level findings into their approximate AHS district designations. This allowed Let's Grow Kids to compare current early childhood educator workforce numbers against the estimated need for additional early childhood educators at the regional level.

Statewide Findings

Statewide, Let's Grow Kids' analysis found that approximately 2,090 additional early childhood educators are needed across all child care settings in order to meet demand for regulated child care in Vermont. That's a 78% increase in the total number of early childhood educators.

The number of early childhood educators needed varies across program types, with the largest number of early childhood educators needed in center-based child care and preschool programs, but the highest percent increase in registered family child care homes.

Table 3. Current Early Childhood Education Workforce Compared to Estimated Additional Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand for Regulated Child Care in Vermont

Workforce Category	Center-Based Teachers + Teacher Associates	Licensed FCCHs	Registered FCCHs	FCCH Assistants	Total
Current Early Childhood Education Workforce	1,981	23	547	132	2,683
Additional Early Childhood Educators Needed	1,149	34	874	33	2,090
Percent Increase Needed	58%	148%	160%	25%	78%

Regional Findings

As noted earlier in this report, early childhood educator needs were first analyzed at the county level and then converted to AHS districts in order to compare current workforce information to the findings of this analysis. Just as early childhood educator workforce needs varied greatly by program setting at the statewide level, workforce needs also vary greatly at the AHS district level.

As shown in Table 3, the region with the greatest estimated need for more early childhood educators as compared to the current workforce is the St. Albans AHS district area (Franklin and Grande Isle Counties), and the area with the smallest need is the Burlington AHS district area (Chittenden County).

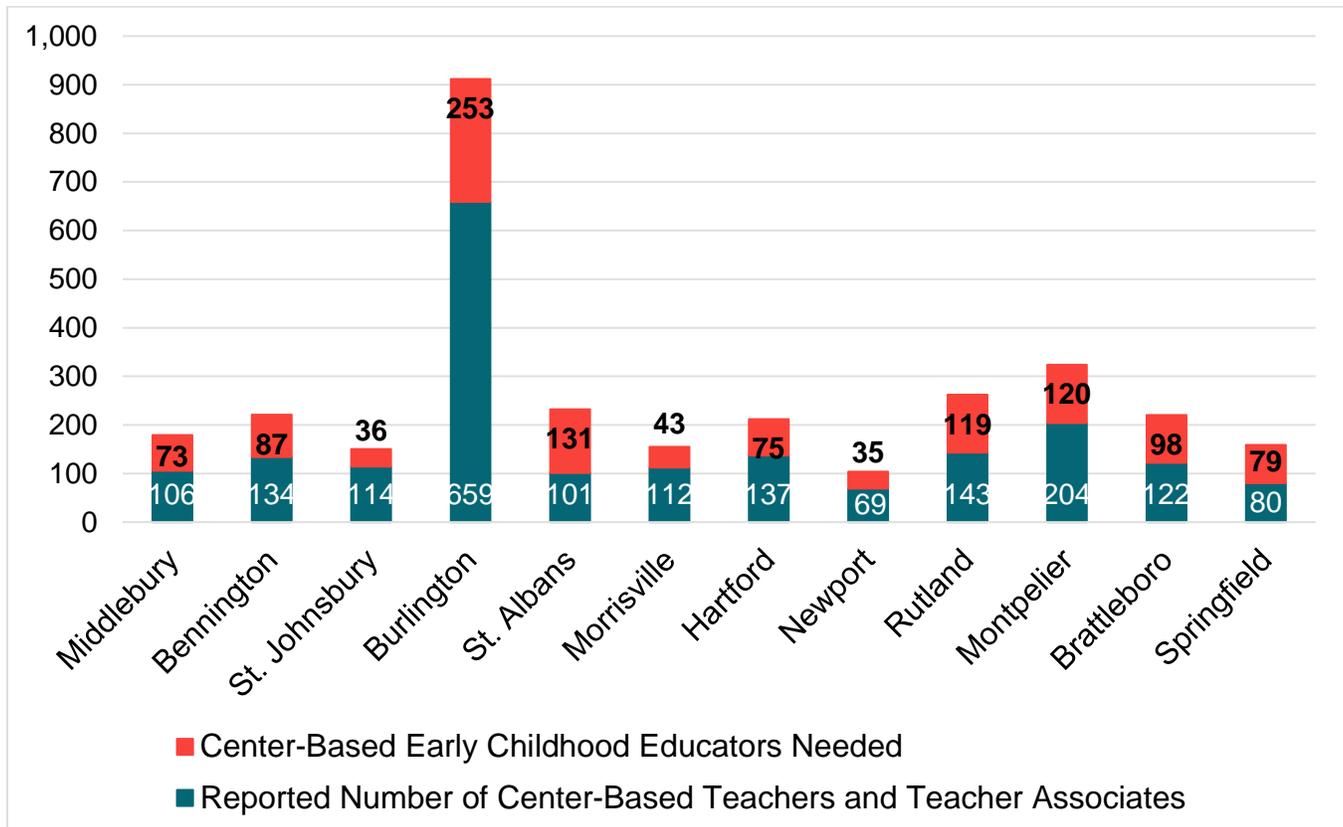
Table 4. Percent Increase Over Current Number of Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand

AHS District	Percent Increase in Early Childhood Education Workforce Needed to Meet Demand
Middlebury	83.27%
Bennington	70.42%
St. Johnsbury	47.88%
Burlington	40.31%
St. Albans	147.78%
Morrisville	49.44%
Hartford	69.21%
Newport	89.20%
Rutland	88.67%
Montpelier	71.54%
Brattleboro	85.71%
Springfield	106.22%

These overall percent increases can also be viewed as raw numbers by type of program setting and AHS district, as shown in Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of center-based teacher and teacher associate positions needed across AHS districts. While, numerically, the Burlington AHS district needs the largest number of early childhood educators, when viewing the findings according to percent increase over the existing workforce, St. Albans needs a 130% increase in its center-based early childhood educators, the most statewide, followed by Windsor (99%), and Rutland (83%).

Figure 3. Reported Number of Center-Based Early Childhood Educators and Number of Additional Center-Based Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand by AHS District



Figures 4 and 5 show the increases needed in licensed family child care home early childhood educators. As noted previous in this report, any increase in licensed family child care home early childhood educators must be accompanied by an increase in family child care assistants, as assistants allow licensed family child care homes to provide increased capacity over registered family child care homes (in addition to meeting increased regulations and other requirements).

While Montpelier needs the highest increase in the number of licensed FCCH early childhood educators, proportionally, Newport and Hartford are tied for needing the largest percent increase in their licensed family child care home early childhood educator workforce (400% increase each), followed by Washington, Windham, and Lamoille (200% increase each).

When focusing just on family child care assistants, Montpelier has the largest numerical and proportional (60%) increase. Proportionally, Montpelier is followed by Hartford (44% increase), and Newport (40% increase).

Figure 4. Reported Number of Licensed Family Child Care Early Childhood Educators vs Number of Additional Licensed Family Child Care Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand by AHS District

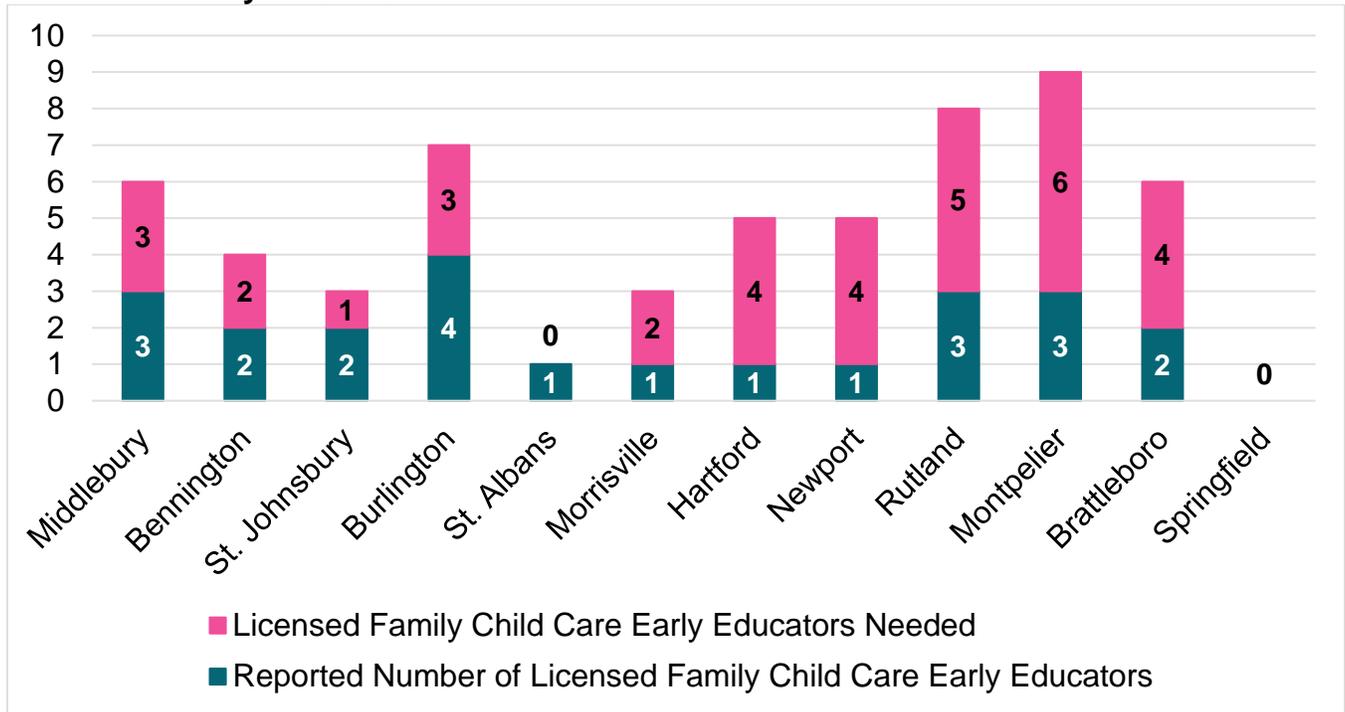
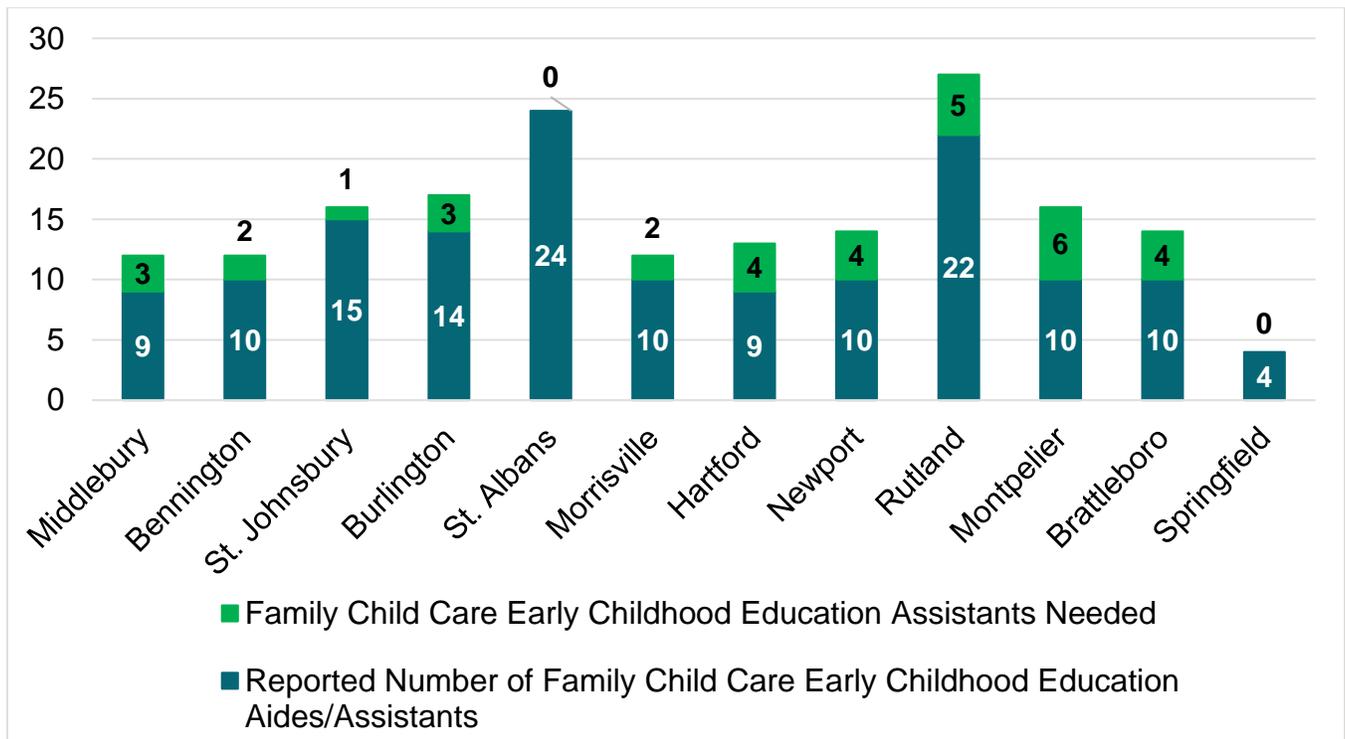
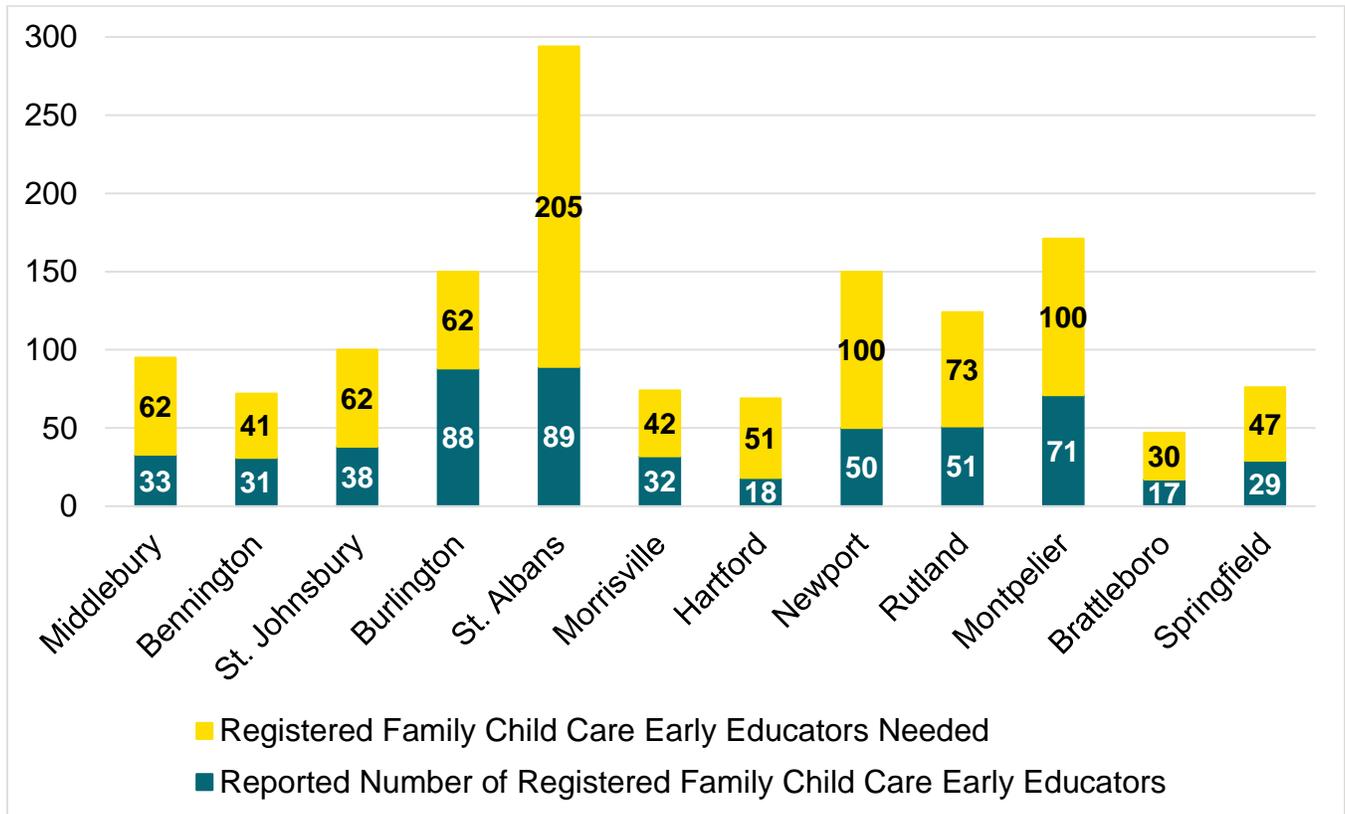


Figure 5. Reported Number of Family Child Care Early Childhood Education Assistants vs Number of Additional Licensed FCCH Early Childhood Education Assistants Needed to Meet Demand by AHS District



Finally, for registered family child care home early childhood educators, St. Albans shows the largest, numerical increase, but, proportionally, Hartford has highest percent increase need over its existing workforce (283% increase), followed by Newport (199% increase), and Middlebury (188% increase).

Figure 6. Reported Number of Registered FCCH Early Childhood Educators vs Number of Additional Registered FCCH Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand by AHS District



Conclusion and Recommendations

As the analysis demonstrates, Vermont has a critical need for early childhood educators in all areas of the state and across all program settings in order to meet the current demand for child care. This challenge also offers our state the opportunity to strategically address this workforce challenge in the short-term by supporting members of our current early childhood education workforce in advancing their credentials to fill some of these roles and by recruiting and retaining new early childhood educators.

To begin to address this wage gap, support our current early childhood educators, and recruit and retain new early childhood educators to meet our need for an additional 2,090 direct-supervision early childhood educators, Vermont should make immediate, critical investments in the following areas:

- Increase funding for early childhood educator scholarship programs to address current waitlists and expand program options to include those seeking bachelor's degrees in early childhood education;
- Launch a student loan repayment assistance program for early childhood educators;
- Create a temporary wage support program for early educators;
- Make immediate investments in Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program to increase payment rates to child care programs; and
- Establish a pilot program to partner with businesses, communities, and early childhood educators to expand the capacity of existing child care programs and support the development of new programs in key areas throughout the state.

While it is imperative to take these immediate steps, Vermont must also continue to work towards long-term solutions to ensure our early childhood educators are valued and well-compensated through increased, sustained investments in our early care and education system.

Methodology

Stalled at the Start Analysis of Slots Needed to Meet Demand

Stalled at the Start developed an analysis of the number of slots needed in order to meet the demand for child care at the state and county level using data related to the supply of and demand for regulated child care in Vermont for children birth through five. The analysis utilized three primary data sets:

- Data on Vermont's population by year of age and county of residence from the Vermont Department of Health;¹⁹
- Data on the number of children 5 and under in Vermont with all available parents in the labor force at the state and county levels from the U.S. Census Bureau;²⁰ and
- Data on the reported desired capacity of regulated child care programs in Vermont from the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division.²¹

The population data and data from the U.S. Census Bureau were used to estimate a proxy for demand: children likely to need care. Once the LTNC population was determined for each of the three age-groups of interest—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers—this information was then compared to the reported desired capacity of child care programs serving infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers at the statewide and county levels in order to identify the gap between current capacity and demand. It's important to note that this analysis only focused on programs providing full-year, full-day child care. Programs only offering part-day or less than 48 weeks per year of child care were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in the identification of the number of slots that would need to be added to Vermont's early care and education system in order to meet demand for regulated child care. For more information on the methodology used in *Stalled at the Start*, please refer to the report.²²

Determining the Number of Early Childhood Educators Needed to Meet Demand

The first step in the process to determine the number of early childhood educators needed to staff the estimated number of slots needed to meet demand was to approximate the distribution of slots across program types, as different programs have different staff to child ratio requirements.

Using the dataset provided by the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division related to the supply of regulated child care, Let's Grow Kids identified the proportional distribution of current slots by program type and by county.

Using the assumption that new slots would be added to the system based on current utilization patterns, Let's Grow Kids then proportionally distributed the slots needed to meet demand by program type and county based on the proportional distribution of current slots.

Let's Grow Kids then referred to the Vermont regulations for Center-Based Child Care and Preschool Programs and Family Child Care Homes in order to determine the number of early childhood educators that would be needed in order to meet minimum staffing ratios for the number of slots needed.

Ratios used for calculations:

- Center-based child care and preschool programs
 - Infants: 1 teacher or teacher associate caring for 4 infants
 - Toddlers: 1 teacher or teacher associate caring for 5 toddlers
 - Preschoolers: 1 teacher or teacher associate caring for 10 preschoolers
- Registered family child care homes:
 - 1 registered family child care provider caring for 2 infants, 2 toddlers, and 2 preschoolers
- Licensed family child care homes:
 - 1 licensed family child care provider and 1 family child care assistant caring for 4 infants, 4 toddlers, and 2 preschoolers.

Let's Grow Kids determined that the new early childhood educators would need to be those that, in line with regulations, could supervise a group of infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers. For center-based child care and preschool programs, this means that early childhood educators needed could be teachers or teacher associates; for registered family child care homes, this would be a family child care provider; and for licensed family child care homes, this would be a licensed family child care provider with the addition of a family child care assistant, as an assistant is needed in order for the licensed family child care provider to offer increased capacity over a registered family child care provider.

The analysis resulted in non-whole-numbers. The results were adjusted using Excel's "ROUNDUP" function to adjust the results to provide whole numbers, which equate to whole early childhood educators. While this adjustment then overstates the need, it was determined to be the best option to account for whole individuals.

In order to align findings with data on the existing early childhood education workforce, which is only available by AHS district, county-level findings were adjusted as best as possible to align with AHS district areas as shown in Table 5. As noted, Essex County findings were split evenly between the Newport and St. Johnsbury AHD districts.

Table 5. Vermont County to AHS District Conversion

AHS District	County
Middlebury	Addison
Bennington	Bennington
St. Johnsbury	Caledonia + S. Essex
Burlington	Chittenden
St. Albans	Franklin + Grand Isle
Morrisville	Lamoille
Hartford	Orange
Newport	Orleans + N. Essex
Rutland	Rutland
Montpelier	Washington
Brattleboro	Windham
Springfield	Windsor

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