

Executive Summary of the Rapides Early Childhood Network (RECN) ECE Scholarship Program

2024-2025

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Childcare Scholarship Program delivers measurable and transformative benefits to families, employers in the broader central Louisiana region. Survey data and economic analysis demonstrate that the program is not merely a childcare subsidy—it is a workforce development and stabilization strategy that strengthens the regional labor force, increases household earnings, and supports children's early learning and development.

Family & Workforce Impact

November 2025 survey of ECE scholarship recipients (+/- 210 families) results show that the childcare scholarship directly enables parents to work, maintain employment, and pursue career advancement:

- **54%** of parents were able to **re-enter the workforce** because of the program.
- **76%** reported that the program improved their **career opportunities**.
- **40%** were able to **return to school or continue education**, leading to higher future earnings.
- Nearly **30%** no longer had to work two jobs to pay for childcare.

Without the scholarship, the majority of parent recipients would face severe consequences:

- **75%** said they would be **unable to work** without ECE funds.
- **50%** reported their child would have to stay home rather than attend childcare.
- **35%** would be forced to **withdraw from school or job training**.

These findings confirm that childcare is the deciding factor between employment and unemployment for hundreds of families.

Quality of Life & Child Outcomes

Parents overwhelmingly described the program as **life-changing**, citing:

- Relief from living paycheck-to-paycheck
- Ability to pay rent, utilities, groceries, and transportation
- Greater family stability and reduced stress
- Children thriving in safe, educational environments

Open-ended testimonies included here emphasized that the program prevented homelessness, job loss, and educational disruption. Children are experiencing structured learning, social development, and safe daily care while their parents' work.

Economic Impact

The scholarship program has strong, measurable economic returns:

- **\$5,967,500 in annual wages** are generated by scholarship-enabled employment.
- As parents complete college and technical credentials, total direct wages rise to **\$6,287,050 annually**.
- Using accepted regional multipliers for Central Louisiana (1.4–1.6), the **total annual economic impact** ranges from **\$8.80 million to \$10.06 million**, with a midpoint estimate of **\$9.43 million**.
- Local tax revenue generated from this activity is estimated between **\$314,000 and \$503,000 annually**, depending on taxable spending.

This means every dollar invested in childcare returns multiple dollars in local economic activity—supporting employers, childcare centers, parents, and the tax base.

Conclusion

The data clearly show that the ECE childcare scholarship:

- Keeps parents working full-time
- Prevents families from falling into financial crisis
- Enables adults to pursue education that lifts long-term earnings
- Provides young children with safe, high-quality learning environments
- Generates millions in local economic activity each year

The program strengthens families, stabilizes the workforce, and produces measurable economic value for central Louisiana. It is not simply a support for individual families—it is an economic development strategy that benefits the entire community.

Respectfully,

Dr. Randall Dupont
Professor
College of Business
LSU Alexandria

Emily Weeks, Chair
Rapides Early Childhood
Network (RECN)

Rotary Club of Alexandria, LA
Patrick Moore, Chair
Early Childhood Education Initiative