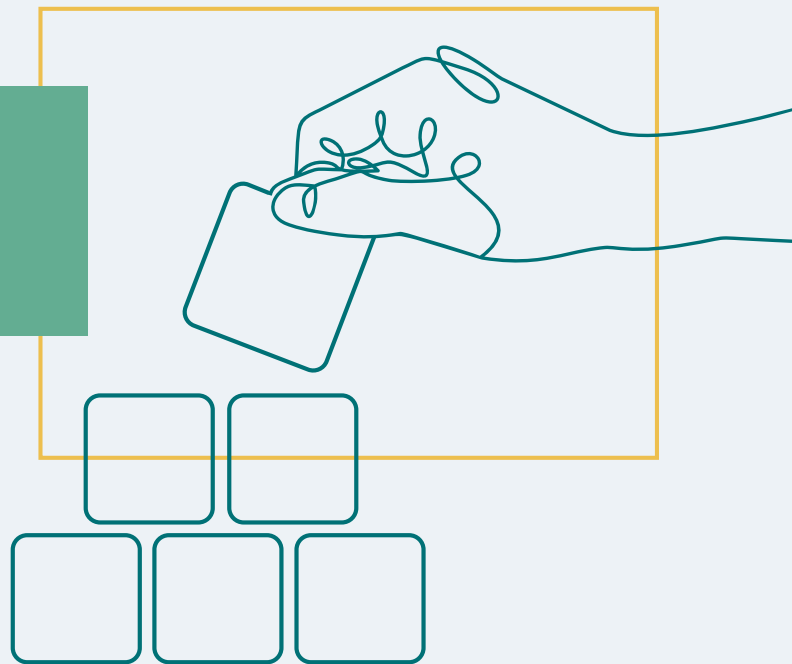


# THE MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:

CLOSING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP GAP IN MARYLAND

EVALUATION BRIEF



DECEMBER 2023



MARYLAND  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

*Shriver Center/Division of Professional Studies*

## BACKGROUND

Maryland's national reputation as an early childhood education (ECE) innovator and leader is the result of work by dedicated leaders, both within ECE programs and at the regional and state levels. Yet Maryland is on the precipice of a major shift as long-term leaders in the state look to retire or leave the ECE field. In a 2021 survey of Maryland ECE leaders, over 25 percent anticipated leaving the field within five years—and these were the leaders who felt most confident in their leadership competencies. At the same time, leadership needs are particularly critical in the upcoming years as Maryland engages in multiple ECE initiatives, along with its ambitious pathway for education through the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* (“The Blueprint”). This legislation, passed in 2021, included comprehensive changes to Maryland's public school system, with Pillar 1 emphasizing ECE's foundational role.<sup>1</sup>

The projected exodus of long-time leaders in the ECE space suggests an anticipated loss of expertise, leadership skills, and institutional knowledge—emphasizing the importance of cultivating a new generation of leaders.<sup>2</sup> ECE is a dynamic system and its leaders need adaptive leadership skills and competencies to handle challenges that are complex and nuanced. Further, implementing The Blueprint successfully will require more leaders across the state. Yet the type of deep and sustained training in leadership development necessary to build these skills has been lacking.<sup>3</sup>

To meet this challenge, the Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) was created in 2018, with its initial cohort (“Fellows”) starting in 2019. Demand for the program continues, as evidenced by the selection of its fifth cohort in fall 2023. As MECLP moves from a start-up to an established program, several audiences will benefit from learning about MECLP's mission and the experiences and outcomes of the Fellows who participate.

An evaluation of the first three years (31 Fellows across 3 cohorts)<sup>4</sup> was commissioned to understand what MECLP has achieved, areas to consider adjusting as part of a continuous quality improvement approach, and lessons learned.<sup>5</sup> This brief focuses on findings that can be of use to audiences interested in the outcomes of MECLP, as well as those seeking to learn from MECLP's pedagogical approach to designing effective models for the ECE workforce and/or leadership development. Findings related to continuous improvement were shared separately with the MECLP Advisory Committee to support programmatic changes.<sup>6</sup> For more information on the questions that guided the evaluation, see **Appendix A**.

# WHAT IS MECLP?

To explain the context underpinning the evaluation findings, this section provides a high-level overview of MECLP. More comprehensive information is available on the [MECLP webpage](#).

MECLP is housed in the Shriver Center at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). The vision guiding MECLP’s work is that, “A broad and diverse network of early childhood professionals become transformative leaders in the field effecting state-level change in systems, policies, legislation and programs.”<sup>7</sup> This expansive view of leadership recognizes leadership not as a position, but rather as a set of competencies and actions that produce results at multiple levels of the ECE system. MECLP’s Theory of Change<sup>8</sup>, explained below in **Figure 1**, describes the process and intended outcomes of MECLP.

THEORY OF CHANGE				
Updated October 2023				
What is the challenge MECLP seeks to address?	Who is MECLP’s key audience?	What strategies are needed to create effective ECE leadership development?	What are the measurable outcomes of MECLP’s work?	What are MECLP’s goals for long-term impact?
Maryland needs a pathway for prepared, experienced and diverse early care and education leaders to address disparities and improve outcomes for all children.	<p>Professionals in ECE-related fields who seek to influence positive change and improved outcomes for Maryland’s young children and their families.</p> <p>Individuals with racial, linguistic, gender, geographic and affiliation diversity in a variety of roles who have a bachelor’s degree or higher and are at a mid-career point.</p>	<p>Build capacity and leadership skills through a post-baccalaureate certificate program that includes graduate-level courses.</p> <p>Support MECLP participants as they continue along their leadership pathways with a vibrant community of practice, ongoing learning opportunities, robust leadership coaching services with certified coaches, and opportunities to practice and enhance skills.</p>	<p>Success in identifying, recruiting, and retaining a diverse, talented and highly motivated cohort.</p> <p>Gains in fellows’ understanding of leadership competencies.</p> <p>Positive evaluations of program quality by cohort fellows.</p> <p>Career advancement among cohort members.</p> <p>Supervisors recognize growth among fellows.</p> <p>Cohort fellows form positive relationships and expanded professional networks.</p> <p>Evidence of applied learning in fellows’ writing, presentations and evaluative materials.</p>	<p>MECLP and cohort fellows influence improved outcomes for Maryland children, families and communities, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.</p> <p>Cross-sector ECE leadership will effect change in state and local systems, policies, legislation and practice.</p> <p>Increased diversity among ECE leaders in Maryland.</p> <p>Creation of and support for a network of ECE leaders across Maryland.</p> <p>Cohort fellows are recognized as ECE professionals and leaders who are building local capacity.</p> <p>Growth of personal leadership for ECE professionals across Maryland.</p>

Figure 1. MECLP Theory of Change

The program was designed to grow competencies associated with transformative leadership (through its coursework, Capstone project, and Community of Practice), and to build relationships among Fellows to foster ongoing community (through its cohort structure and Community of Practice). MECLP focuses on the following competencies:

MECLP COMPETENCY	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION
Vision	Highly capable of developing a theory of change, action steps, and an outcomes measurement plan
Personal Leadership Skills & Values	Sees self as a leader and is confident in enacting change, even if it is difficult
People Management/ Leadership	Feels well-equipped to grow their organization’s capacity through supporting staff professional development, forming meaningful partnerships, and fostering a positive workplace climate
Organizational Capacity	Can effectively identify and use data to measure progress and “course-correct” to improve implementation
Creativity/Innovation	Consistently questions the status quo and conventional approaches and seeks innovative and creative solutions to problems
Public Policy Knowledge	Can analyze policy implications, options, and innovations and advocate for change at the program, local, state, and/or federal level

Competencies are built through knowledge and application opportunities embedded in the program model, described below by component.

**COURSEWORK (REQUIRED)**

All MECLP Fellows take a 12-month, three-credit graduate course, *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education* at UMBC.<sup>9</sup> The course was designed in partnership with UMass Boston’s Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, an expert in training for ECE leadership. MECLP plans to create a pathway to a six-credit graduate endorsement in Early Childhood Leadership from UMBC.<sup>10</sup>

**CAPSTONE PROJECT (REQUIRED)**

The Capstone project provides a hands-on experience in applying leadership competencies. Fellows select a problem of practice to identify and achieve a desired result through the Capstone project. Fellows draw on what they learn about leadership and change to create a logic model, develop action steps and recommendations, identify the type of leadership needed to make it happen, and how success will be measured. Fellows have approached a wide range of issues in their Capstone, including accreditation, professional learning modules, collaboration, and partnerships through family engagement or with different programs (e.g., public schools and Head Start).

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

Leadership does not happen in isolation. Recognizing this, MECLP offers Community of Practice (COP) activities that build content knowledge, encourage perspective-taking, promote cross-sharing of information, and offer supports for the Capstone project. COP activities foster cross-pollination of ideas, professional network-building, and other opportunities that expand Fellows' capacities. Activities include:

- **Mentoring**, in which Fellows can wrestle with problems of practice and Capstone work with an assigned mentor with deep ECE leadership experience. MECLP is currently transforming its mentoring program into a robust coaching program that will utilize UMBC-certified coaches;<sup>11</sup>
- **Leadership in Action conversations** that connect Fellows with content experts and colleagues;
- **Webinar series** to build further content expertise while also offering opportunities for Fellows to organize and present their own webinars;
- **An annual Leadership Institute** to connect with others while learning about recent research; and
- **Field experiences**, in which Fellows visit early learning environments to spark ideas for their own programs or roles.

Fellows could participate in as many of the Community of Practice activities as they chose.<sup>12</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation of the first three cohorts found that MECLP Fellows gain competencies and engage in actions that demonstrate growth in adaptive leadership, indicating MECLP is successfully building ECE leadership across the state.<sup>13</sup> Further, the MECLP model demonstrates best practices in adult learning principles with a results-based accountability focus. In summary, MECLP:

1

Meets Maryland's need for **change agents** who exercise adaptive leadership

2

Fosters an ECE community that engages in **cross-systems collaboration**

3

Embraces Maryland's **diversity strengths** and promotes equity

4

Demonstrates **effective pedagogy** for ECE workforce-focused initiatives.

Together, these findings indicate that MECLP is a sound investment to enhance ECE leadership in Maryland, while also serving as a model for other programs interested in designing ECE workforce programs.

# MECLP MEETS MARYLAND'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

## MECLP is Reaching the Next Generation of ECE Leadership

MECLP is producing a well-prepared network of leaders to continue the work of those who have been in the field for a long period of time and are planning to retire or leave the field in the upcoming years—addressing concerns about a leadership gap in the state. The make-up of Fellows in the first three MECLP cohorts reflects MECLP’s intentional recruitment approach to seek out and retain individuals with significant ECE experience who also plan to be in the field for a while (i.e., “mid-career”).<sup>14</sup>

As seen in **Figure 2**, half of respondents to a 2021 leadership survey were in an age bracket that suggested retirement in the near future. In contrast, 80 percent of MECLP Fellows were under age 50, indicating that they were farther away from retirement age, while also bringing sizable experience with them (42 percent had 11-20 years of ECE experience, and another 42 percent had over 21 years).

Because leadership is important at all levels of the ECE system, the composition of Fellows’ roles reflect various program-level and system-level roles. As seen in **Figure 3**, the majority of participants entered MECLP working at the program level—as a provider or owner of a child care program, a program administrator, or teacher. These individuals exercise leadership in their programs and can engage in systems work through advocacy or participation in ECE professional organizations. The remainder of the Fellows (48 percent) worked in systems-level roles (such as coaches working with multiple programs), at regional levels (e.g., Judy Center<sup>15</sup> coordinator, county-level ECE director), or as state-level administrators. MECLP aims to foster cross-system collaboration, and recruits across a broad range of settings, programs, and age ranges served.

MECLP’s recruitment approach brings together those who will take the helm of ECE leadership in the upcoming years. It is promising that the Fellows come with a variety of ECE perspectives to support collaboration and learning that embraces the complexity of the ECE system.



Figure 2. Age composition – 2021 leadership survey respondents (yellow) and MECLP fellows (teal).

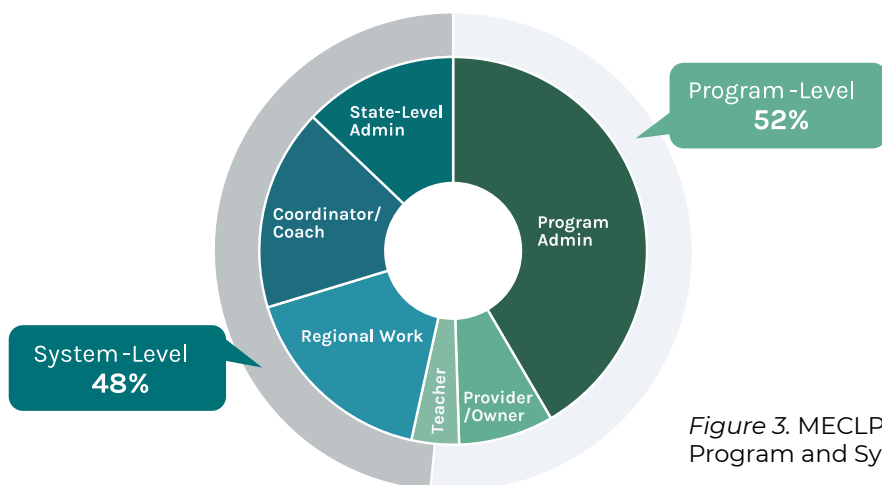


Figure 3. MECLP Fellows Bring Program and Systems Lenses

## MECLP Develops Change Agents Ready to Handle Dynamic Contexts

MECLP equips Fellows to face challenges that require adaptive thinking and a focus on how to achieve desired results. MECLP Fellows reported gains in leadership knowledge, entrepreneurial mindset, and confidence in their leadership capabilities after completing the coursework.<sup>16</sup>

On average, Fellows showed statistically significant growth in each MECLP competency area, with average gains ranging from 1.4 points (“I can effectively identify and use data to measure progress and “course-correct” to improve implementation.”) to 2.6 points out of 10 (“I am highly capable of developing a theory of change, action steps, and an outcomes measurement plan.”), as seen in **Figure 4**. These skills are critical to reaching the vision outlined in The Blueprint, and MECLP is producing leaders who can contribute to this work.

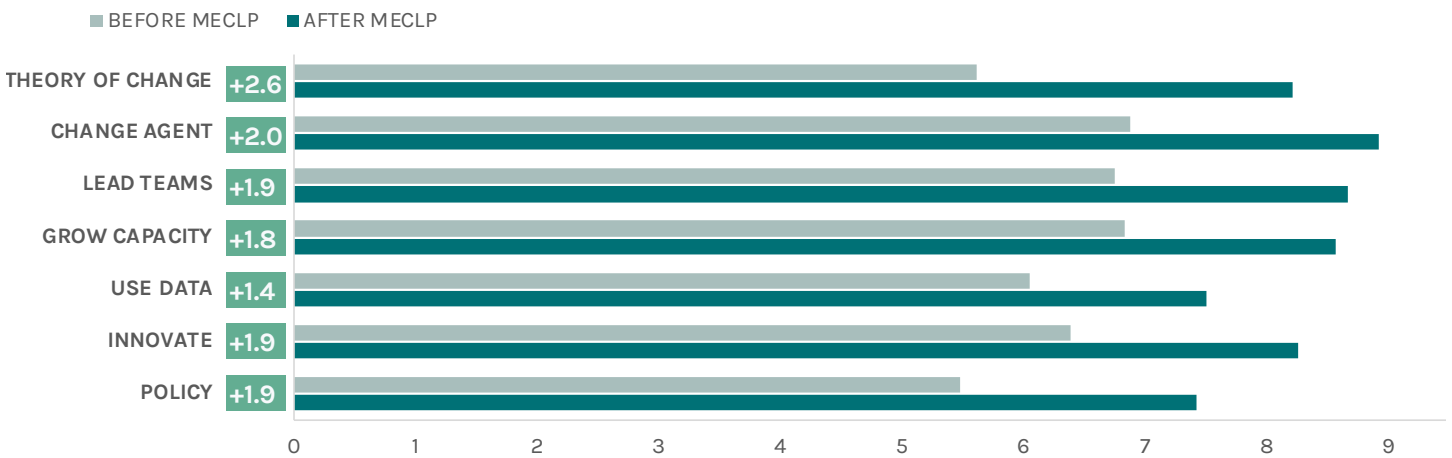


Figure 4. Changes in Self-Reported Competencies. Boxes indicate average of individual change.

Another promising finding is that MECLP appears to level the field in terms of Fellows’ perceived competency levels. While all Fellows demonstrated growth, the Fellows who rated themselves lower on leadership competency entering MECLP showed larger gains than those who entered feeling strong in a competency (see **Figure 5**). Additionally, the Fellows entered MECLP with a wide range of self-reported ratings, but by the end of MECLP, they were more closely aligned, indicating a leveling of the field. Additional analyses were conducted to understand whether participants had different gains by level (program or system), race/ethnicity, or level of education (BA or MA). Promisingly, few differences were found, suggesting that MECLP is benefiting all who participate.<sup>17</sup>

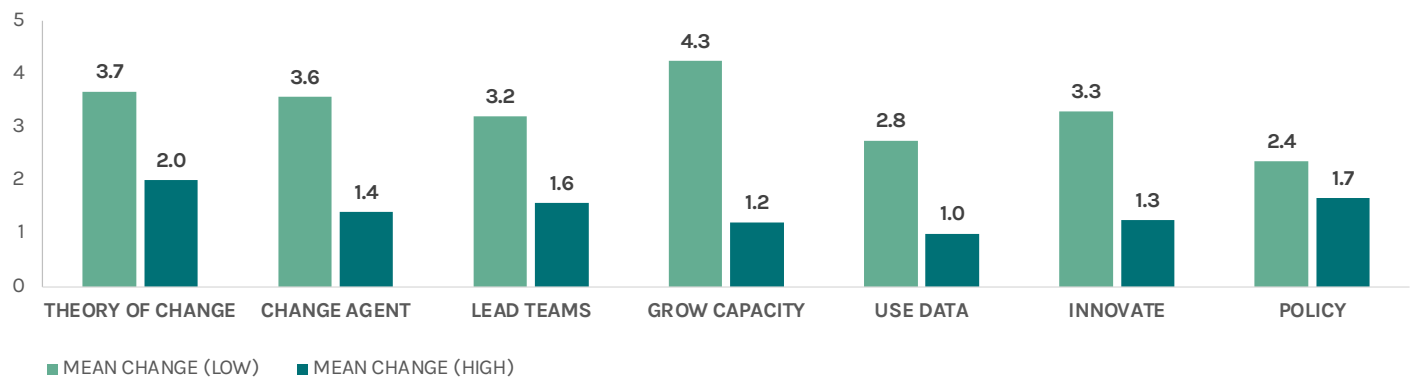


Figure 5. Growth Ratings, Contrasted by Entry Point Perception of Competency<sup>18</sup>

Most importantly, Fellows use what they learn. As one Fellow summarized, “MECLP allowed me to take what I felt so strongly about and turn it into action.” Survey responses show agreement with an increased perception of being a change agent, particularly related to program quality (71 percent), workforce (58 percent), and availability and access (58 percent). Fellows are enacting change at the individual, program/local, and state levels, as described below.

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## INDIVIDUAL

The Fellows talked about how participation in MECLP built their self-confidence (disrupting “imposter syndrome”), changed their way of thinking, and prompted them to seek continued growth and ways to be an ECE leader in many ways (e.g., sharing knowledge, making sure others use appropriate terminology). For instance, one Fellow shared:

“MECLP provided me with more confidence and belief that my professional experiences can provide a voice for change. It has convinced me that it is worth it to continue to advocate for the ECE field. I believe it has given me more confidence to pursue higher level positions.”

## PROGRAM/LOCAL

For those working in programs, changes in leadership with staff resulted and many discussed mentoring and training others in MECLP competencies and tools. Several Fellows described using the tools they learned from MECLP when presenting at county-level meetings or conferences, and participating on local boards. For instance:

*I have also become co-chair of the [Local Early Childhood Advisory Council<sup>19</sup>— name redacted]. Since sharing my Theory of Change with others I have also been invited to community meetings regarding our county’s Collective Impact Initiative.*”

## STATE/NATIONAL

Some Fellows moved into state-level program administrator roles during or after MECLP, citing the confidence they gained through MECLP participation as an important factor in pursuing the opportunity. In addition to these roles, others talked about additional ways they sought to influence ECE at the state or national level. Examples include:

- Being interviewed for a podcast;
- Meeting with former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on behalf of a Maryland early childhood professional organization;
- Presenting at conferences (state Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), TEACH conference, Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) conference);
- Becoming president of the Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children;
- Participating in advocacy at the state level;
- Leading the MSCCA’s work to change legislation regarding the ECE field; and
- Speaking at a Democratic Women’s Caucus hearing on the state of child care and its impact on women and families.

Further, many Fellows presented in or facilitated MECLP webinars for ECE audiences across Maryland.



Fellows frequently described how MECLP instilled confidence that prompted such opportunities. For instance, one Fellow shared that:

“[MECLP] gave me the confidence to begin to apply for jobs at the state level where I could begin to enact change on a greater level. I went from leading one Judy Center to now heading the entire Judy Center Program for MSDE as the program manager and heading up one of the most important aspects of Pillar I in The Blueprint.”

Overall, Fellows described how MECLP had positive effects on a personal and professional level, including how it helped them “find their voice,” engage in difficult conversations, seek new job opportunities, and engage in new ways of thinking. Several fellows shared how they integrated MECLP knowledge into their professional environments, benefiting their larger organization.

## MECLP BUILDS COMMUNITY AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERS

The cohort model paired with Community of Practice activities and coursework fostered connections between Fellows who came from various roles, organizations, and settings across ECE’s siloed system. A common theme across survey respondents was the benefits they received from being part of a community in which they could share, learn, and network with their peers. Community of Practice activities such as mentoring and webinars were identified as important opportunities for peer engagement, access to experts, and relevant learning for their work. Coursework and the Capstone project were also frequently identified as valuable elements of the program.

MECLP built connections that supported Fellows individually (through its resources, peer support, peer coaching, and collaboration) while forging stronger connections between various parts of the ECE system as a whole. As demonstrated in **Figure 6**, MECLP Fellows felt that the program provided multiple professional network benefits.

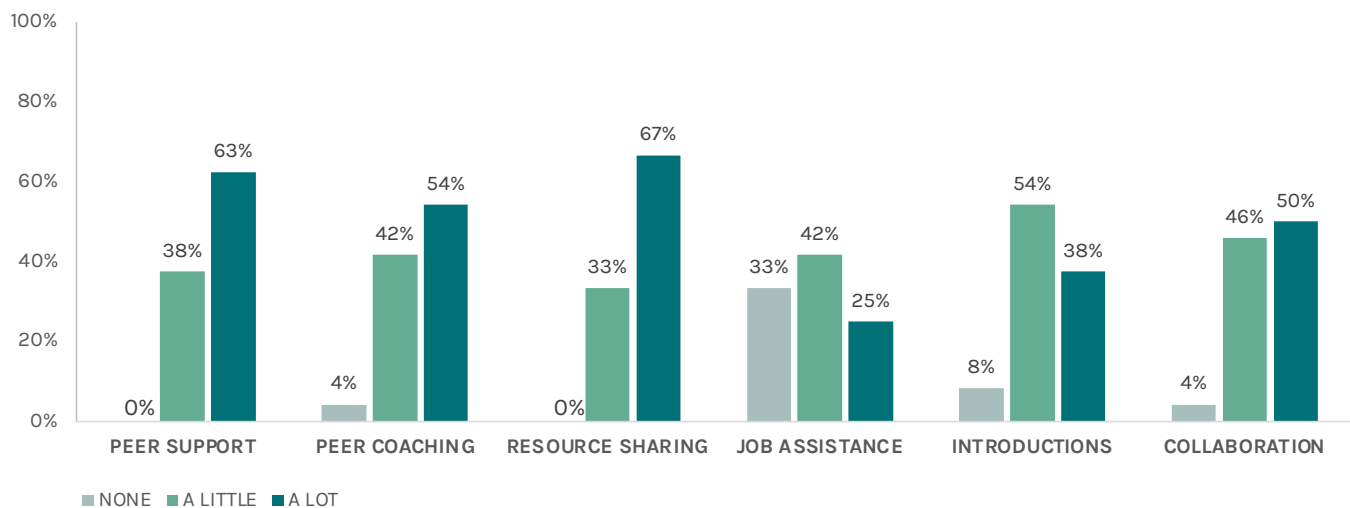


Figure 6. MECLP and Professional Network Supports

## CROSS-SECTOR WORK AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS

There is evidence that MECLP is supporting Maryland’s emerging leaders in addressing the historical siloes in ECE. For instance, one Fellow’s Capstone project centered around engaging Judy Centers and Head Start in reciprocal partnerships and collaborative work. She and another Fellow in a state-level position have since applied the Capstone findings to their current work to bridge gaps between these programs.

“MECLP has helped me develop the leadership skills to facilitate Birth to 5 supports beyond the public school system. We are more intentional in reaching out to our community preschools/daycares. I feel I am an advocate for all Birth to 5 programs, not just the public school system.”

Many fellows talked about “paying it forward” by helping others find their voice, serving as a resource or mentor to colleagues, and using new leadership skills to empower their teams. Fellows are also distributing their knowledge to the wider community. For example, in 2021 a webinar series connected a group of Fellows with Maryland non-profit organizations that planned to offer or were currently offering programs that related to Capstone projects.<sup>20</sup>

MECLP’s influence is not contained to the individual Fellows; rather, Fellows become a conduit for spreading leadership growth across Maryland.

## MECLP EMBRACES MARYLAND’S DIVERSITY AND PROMOTES EQUITY

MECLP took an intentional approach to strengthen ECE leadership by recruiting diverse cohorts that represented the full breadth of Maryland’s ECE workforce: racially/ethnically, linguistically, geographically, by setting, and by populations served. By bringing in voices historically excluded from leadership in the state, MECLP aimed to create pathways for a richer set of expertise and experience to inform ECE discussion, advocacy, and policymaking. The program was also designed to foster an equity lens in Fellows’ work. The importance of these goals was reinforced by a 2021 survey of Maryland ECE leaders. In terms of diversity, respondents were mostly White women nearing retirement age, similar to national trends.<sup>21</sup> While equity was considered very important, survey responses indicate it was put into practice at low levels. MECLP’s recruitment strategy and program design aimed to address both these issues.

The recruitment approach was successful, with the majority of MECLP Fellows identifying as BI-POC (58 percent). This is a hopeful contrast to the 2021 Maryland survey in which only 36 percent of respondents identified as BIPOC. MECLP Fellows’ racial and ethnic composition is better aligned with Maryland state demographics (which is 50 percent BIPOC).<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, MECLP connected with multilingual speakers, with a quarter of Fellows in Cohorts I and II and 14 percent of Cohort III identifying as multilingual.<sup>23</sup> As described in the prior section, the Fellows brought perspectives from a wide range of settings (e.g., private child care, public schools, Judy Centers) and roles (e.g., provider, coach, program administrator, state-level administrator,

educator), though there was less representation of those working with infants and toddlers, children receiving special education/early intervention services, and emerging multilinguals. Several Fellows identified the diversity of MECLP cohorts as beneficial and important to their leadership growth.<sup>24</sup>

Fellows, on average, felt MECLP equipped them to center equity practices, such as evaluating policies and data through an equity lens, within their organization and with Maryland's ECE system, as seen in **Figure 7**.

Fellows described putting equity knowledge into action. For example, one Fellow presented on leadership with an equity lens at the 9th Annual Maryland Early Childhood Conference to support equity in the classroom, equity in programs, and implicit bias and the importance of understanding individual biases.<sup>25</sup>

Another Fellow shared that:

“My voice matters more now than it did before [MECLP]. I have increased mentoring staff and influenced changes to procedures that increase equity awareness.”

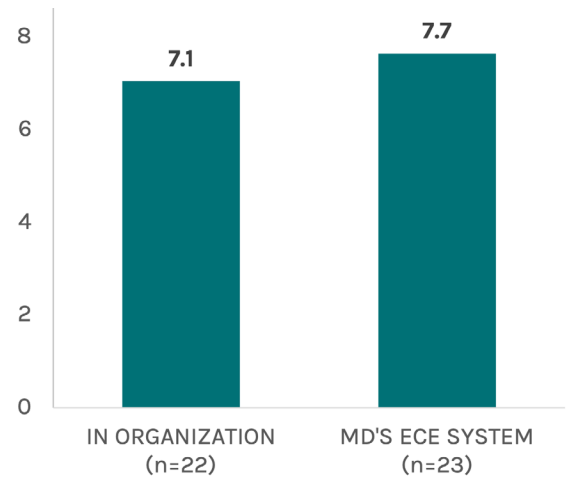


Figure 7. MECLP Preparation for Equity Practices (n=23). 0=not at all, 10=very well.

ECE leadership that reflects the diversity of Maryland's ECE workforce, children, and families is important, as is training ECE leaders on equity approaches. MECLP is making gains in these areas.

## MECLP DEMONSTRATES EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING INITIATIVES

MECLP designed a more comprehensive and in-depth approach in response to concerns that most of Maryland's ECE workforce development experiences were through one-time workshops. MECLP's approach recognizes that, like the young children the workforce serves, adults too benefit from experiential learning and learning from peers. Fellows experienced:

- **Meaningful content:** Coursework, Community of Practice webinars, and the Annual Leadership Institute provided Fellows with theoretical frameworks, research, and other information to cultivate their knowledge of leadership practices.
- **Experiential learning:** Fellows engaged in meaningful practice to apply what they learned from coursework or other content-focused opportunities. The Capstone project allowed for deep study of a problem of practice and ways to address it using the tools learned in MECLP. Fellows had access to a personal mentor to tackle challenges and find opportunities. Community of Practice activities also provided outlets for gaining feedback to inform the Capstone project.

- **Relationship building and networking:** A cohort approach fostered close ties between Fellows. Given ECE's siloed approach, these cross-sector, cross-geographical bonds will be important in fostering collaboration across Maryland's ECE system. Fellows also benefited individually from having access to "sounding boards," resource sharing among peers, and potential career opportunities.

Feedback from Fellows indicates that this approach was viewed as useful and translated into action. The multi-pronged approach was identified as a strength of MECLP's model, as one Fellow described:

*All of the components were valuable. The Capstone project helped with understanding the change process ... [MECLP] also provided opportunities to network with other early childhood professionals and build lasting relationships.*

Another Fellow shared:

*The readings of the course were powerful and gave strength to continue my advocacy for my field, particularly in childcare. When I noticed that even in the first Cohort, I was the only childcare director, it gave me the push to advocate with more passion. I saw how the system needs to change.*

Fellows consistently identified benefits of MECLP activities in terms of usefulness to their work, peer engagement, and access to experts. This Fellow highlighted the unique contribution of MECLP:

*I believe it is important to stay the course as you continue to seek to build early childhood leaders. MECLP provides resources and opportunities for many that would not be available if this program did not exist.*

MECLP exemplifies pedagogy that is valued by participants and produces tangible outcomes. The available evidence on how to support leadership development is sparse, and MECLP provides a model to help fill that gap.<sup>26</sup> MECLP's structure can also be of use to any initiative or program that engages the ECE workforce-in-training.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR MECLP?

MECLP continues to evolve as part of its continuous improvement process. MECLP is expanding its coursework to implement a two-tier approach that builds the credentials and leadership competencies of its Fellows. Tier I will lead to a six-credit graduate-level *Endorsement in Early Childhood Leadership* at UMBC. In this tier, Fellows will complete the existing 12-month course, *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education*, that Fellows in Cohorts I, II, III experienced, and participate in a one-semester course, *Public Policy and Advocacy in Early Childhood Education*. In Tier II, Fellows will receive a 12-credit *Certificate in Early Childhood Leadership* from UMBC after completing six additional graduate credits. Additionally, MECLP is shifting from a mentoring approach to enhanced coaching in order to provide more intensive supports to fellows. MECLP aims to graduate more than 100 Fellows from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the next five years.

# CONCLUSION

MECLP implements an effective leadership development model that is producing change agents who will drive ECE's future in Maryland through an equity lens. It is also leading the way in effective pedagogy to support the ECE workforce through content, application, and relationship building.

With the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, with its emphasis on ECE in Pillar 1, and multiple ECE initiatives across the state on the horizon, MECLP is developing cross-sector leaders who are key to implementation—the directors and coordinators of child care programs, inclusive of family child care and Head Start programs, and Judy Centers, those in supervisory roles at non-profit organizations and local school systems, and individuals in policymaking roles at local and state governmental agencies. MECLP is positioning itself as the state's ECE leadership hub to increase the number of highly qualified early education leaders, address the needs of the field, and bring new, diverse, and previously disenfranchised people into ECE leadership.

## APPENDIX A

### EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation team at Policy Equity Group used the desired results of MECLP as a guide in designing the evaluation questions and approach, as seen below.

INPUTS	Who becomes a MECLP fellow?	MECLP successfully <b>identifies, recruits, and retains</b> a diverse set of fellows with strong leadership potential.
ACTIVITIES	What do fellows experience?	<b>Program design and implementation</b> incorporate best practices and the needs of fellows.
OUTPUTS	What do fellows leave with?	Fellows develop the <b>competencies and social capital</b> necessary to engage in effective leadership practices.
OUTCOMES	What actions do fellows take?	Fellows demonstrate applied learning through <b>changes in behavior and career growth</b> .
IMPACT	What changes as a result?	The leadership contributions made by fellows result in <b>improved outcomes</b> at the child, family, community, and system levels.

# ENDNOTES

1. [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#)
2. [Filling the Early Childhood Leadership Gap in Maryland: Meeting the Challenges and Opportunities Ahead.](#)
3. Leadership Report (2021)—Finding 4
4. The timing of the first three cohorts coincided with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, likely influencing lower cohort numbers during these years (Cohort I: 10; Cohort II: 9; Cohort III: 12). Cohort IV (2022-23) had 17 participants and Cohort V (2023-24) enrolled 17 Fellows.
5. To improve the MECLP experience for future cohorts and articulate the impacts of MECLP participation, MECLP contracted with the Policy Equity Group (PEG) to conduct an evaluation of the program. The evaluation, which began in 2022, documents and analyzes inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the first three MECLP cohorts.
6. The evaluation team provided the MECLP Advisory Committee with findings to use for continuous improvement purposes for future cohorts, including modifications to the delivery of MECLP. For instance, the Advisory Committee was interested in understanding why Fellows did or did not attend Community of Practice activities and the evaluation team reviewed survey data to determine that lack of time was often the largest barrier, despite interest.
7. [Vision Statement—Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program—UMBC.](#)
8. [MECLP—Theory of Change.](#)
9. Note: Participants (Fellows) must hold a bachelor's degree and a minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA to enroll in the course. Tuition is covered, though Fellows pay for course texts and materials.
10. [MECLP—FAQ.](#)
11. Survey findings reflect the experiences of cohort members who received mentoring during the MECLP experience, as the transition to a coaching model had not yet happened for the first three cohorts.
12. Survey findings indicate that barriers to COP activities were primarily due to lack of time to participate, not a lack of interest.
13. Findings are based on a review of program data, a survey of Fellows (Cohorts I, II, & III), and data from coursework.
14. Finding was based on age ranges provided by Fellows in the survey, length of time they reported being in the ECE field, data from biographies, and open-ended survey responses in which participants shared their long-term career plans.
15. Judith P. Hoyer Center Early Learning Hubs (“Judy Centers”) provide services to families of young children age birth through kindergarten as a multigenerational approach to supporting school readiness (e.g., adult education, case management, family engagement activities, child screenings). They are housed at Title I schools in every county in Maryland. More information is available [here](#).
16. Data come from UMass Boston Institute for Early Education Leadership and Innovation, which led the coursework. Fellows were asked to rank their skill level from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much) on 16 items. Three composite scores were created from the items.
17. One difference was for the data competency (“I can effectively identify and use data to measure progress and “course-correct” to improve implementation.”). Before and after ratings differed for BIPOC and non-BIPOC participants, with non-BIPOC participants rating themselves higher on average.
18. Fellows were categorized as “low” if they reported a score of 5 or below at entry. If they scored themselves above 5, they were categorized in the “high” category. Highest possible self-report score was 10.
19. Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils establish benchmarks of school readiness, conduct local needs assessments of ECE programs, develop action plans (e.g., enrollment, quality of programs), coordinate local early childhood initiatives, and report progress or challenges to the Governor’s State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. For more information, go to: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/councilsworkgroups/local-early-childhood-advisory-councils-lecacs>.
20. To learn more, go to MECLP’s [Community of Practice page](#).
21. Connors-Tadros, L. & DiCrecchio, N. (2019). *The views of state early childhood education agency staff on their work and their vision for young children: Informing a legacy for young children by 2030*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Early Education Research, Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
22. [Maryland 2020 Census.](#)
23. Data from MECLP program files.
24. MECLP Leadership Survey (2022)—Data from Cohorts I, II, III.
25. [MECLP Fellows in the News – Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program - UMBC.](#)
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