

Building Futures

High quality
early education
for ALL children





Early Connections. Lifelong Results.

Early Connections Learning Centers (Early Connections) was **founded in 1897** to care for young children from working families. Since first opening our doors, we have served six generations of working families in Colorado Springs at multiple year-round centers.

A commitment to quality is the foundation of our organization. We are proud to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an accreditation held by **less than 10%** of child care centers in the United States.

A Two-Generation, Whole-Child Approach: Serving Children and their Families

A child's success is largely dependent upon family success. Therefore, **we take a two-generation approach to serving children and families to address the needs of the entire family together.**

Early Connections partners with families because we believe they are their child's first and best teacher. We provide education, training and additional parent support services not found in other organizations. Early Connections enables parents to work or continue their education, helping them to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, and to be productive members of our community.

The mission of Early Connections is to provide high-quality, comprehensive early care and education for ALL children.

Serving Families with Safe and Nurturing Early Childhood Education for Well Over a Century

Healthy development in the early years provides the building blocks for educational achievement, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong health, strong communities, and successful parenting of the next generation. As a community, it is one of the most impactful investments we can make.

A growing community of young families, coupled with a strong population of well-established professionals and a thriving community of active duty and retired military, makes Colorado Springs attractive for businesses, individuals, and families.

Quality child care is a **basic need** for these families to be able to work and continue their education. Yet a shortage of high quality, affordable options in El Paso County makes securing child care a daunting task for these families, often forcing child care decisions to be based on availability and affordability, rather than on **quality, safety and consistency**.

"Thriving adults don't just happen. They are the outcome of the development of young children."
-I.H.

Children at Early Connections Receive:

- A high quality education that supports critical developmental domains through literacy-focused and play-based learning.
- 80% of their weekday calories from our nutritious meals.
- A network of support and continued education for their families.
- Annual hearing and eye exams, daily health oversight and medical referrals. Two full time Behavioral Health Specialists and a Family Advocate to support their social and emotional development both in the classroom and at home.





"To state the obvious, early education is vital for the future of our children, our families, our community and our economy. Indeed, it is difficult to identify an endeavor that will have more of an impactful and lasting influence on our future."

*-Marvin Strait, CPA
Campaign Honorary Co-Chair*

"Knowing that my children are safe and cared for has made it possible for me to be there—mentally and physically—for my patients and our community during this incredibly stressful and uncertain time. Early Connections is there for those of us that have no choice but to continue to go to work every day during COVID-19."

-Leah, CNA and Early Connections Parent



"The teachers at Early Connections are amazing, with their passion and dedication clear in everything they do. I will be forever grateful for all of the benefits and support these programs have given my children. I want to say, thank you!"

-Tanya, Early Connections Parent

Why Invest in Early Education?



90% of a child's brain develops by age 5, **before** a child enters kindergarten.

Every **\$1** invested in early education yields up to a **\$13** return in increased schooling, career achievement, and reduced costs in welfare, health and criminal justice expenditures.



With a high quality early education, at-risk children are **75%** more likely to stay in school; **60%** less likely to become a teen parent; **50%** less likely to require special education; **40%** more likely to attend college.

Infant care in El Paso County burdens single parents at a cost of up to **48.8%** of their annual income, an annual tuition cost of **44% more** than in-state tuition at a public college.



Over **8,000** children in our community (El Paso County) are living in poverty. By age five, these children will have heard **30 million** fewer words than their wealthier peers.

When families do not have child care, parents' productivity falls, resulting in costs to families, employers and, ultimately, taxpayers.

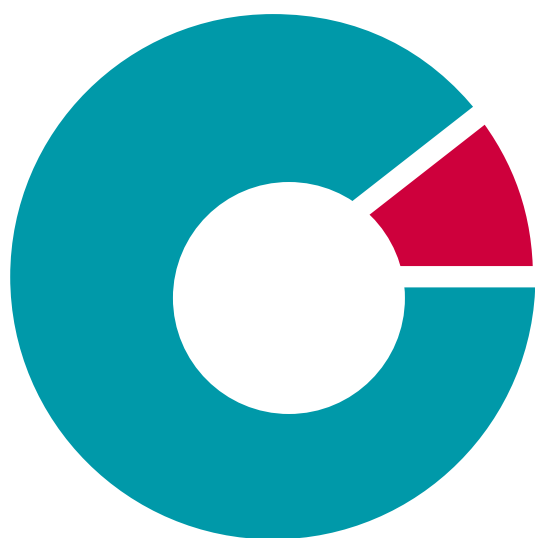
Nationally, an annual economic cost of **\$57 billion** in lost earnings, productivity and revenue.





Make an Impact that Lasts a Lifetime

Early Connections' doors remained open during the COVID-19 crisis, a lifeline for children of working families. Child care is the frontline of our community's economy and the need for high quality child care is greater now than ever. COVID-19 has undermined the already fragile industry and while Early Connections remains strong, over 63% of child care providers are estimated not to survive the economic crisis. Almost two-thirds (64.3%) of families were forced to change child care plans due to the pandemic, and 33% of families did not have the care they needed. As a leader in the field of early education with a strong foundation of community support, we must act. Support for Building Futures will expand services and create additional capacity to provide high quality early education to children across Colorado. Optimizing the early years of children's lives is the most impactful investment a community can make for its future. Join us, as together we create a community of support ensuring all children receive the critical foundation of early learning that lasts a lifetime.



Total Campaign Goal:
\$9,500,000

- Antlers Place, \$8,000,000
- Historic Day Nursery, \$1,500,000

Campaign Goals for *Building Futures*

Historic Day Nursery Preservation – Built by Alice Bemis Taylor for Early Connections in 1922, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The aesthetic effect of the architecture of the Day Nursery is impressive, but the building was also functionally designed with the health and well-being of children in mind. Although regular maintenance has been performed, after almost 100 years of daily use its windows and doors are in desperate need of preservation work. Functionality is critical to the daily operation of the building and the health, safety and well-being of children and staff.

Antlers Place Rebuild– Built in 1953 by Junior League of Colorado Springs on land donated by the city, the program at Antlers Place eventually merged with Early Connections. While we have been fortunate to be able to continue to provide necessary services, the current building is inefficient, non-ADA compliant and no longer meets the needs of our growing downtown community.

Named for Mrs. Taylor at the request of El Pomar Foundation, the new Alice Bemis Taylor Center for Early Childhood Education will expand equitable access to high quality early education, in order to address the needs of children in Colorado. A vibrant and essential element of downtown Colorado Springs, the 18,000 square foot building itself will be a learning tool, designed to encourage children to explore the world around them.

The new center will also function as the first regional professional development center for early educators across southern Colorado. Attracting and retaining excellent educators is one of the most important drivers of a well-functioning education system—a system that must prepare a diverse population of students with complex needs to participate in today’s knowledge-driven environment. Educators from across the state will attend trainings in person or via distance learning technology to develop and to learn the latest research and best practices.

Campaign Cabinet

Chuck Murphy
Honorary Co-Chair

Marvin Strait
Honorary Co-Chair

Diane Bell

Mike Bell

Mimi Cavanaugh

Susan Edmondson

Gary Feffer

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Kim Roberson

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