



BACKGROUND

The **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** program at **Henderson County High School (HCHS)** in Henderson, Kentucky began in 1970 and has expanded dramatically in the past 10 years to address the complex social and economic issues that individuals, families and communities currently face. By the time students graduate, they have the opportunity to earn multiple certifications and up to nine college credits, and have gained a year of internship experience in a preschool classroom, truly preparing them for their next step be it postsecondary education or the workplace.

About Early Childhood Education at Henderson County High School	
Number of Students Served	227
Minority Students	24%
Low-income Students	67%
Students with Disabilities	17%

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

A key component to the ECE program of study is the delivery of state-required and nationally-recognized credentials. These credentials are vital in a child care career and are a stepping stone for students who plan to pursue the ECE pathway post-graduation. ECE offers up to **five certifications** including Orientation for Early Care and Education Professional, the Commonwealth for Child Care Credential and the Child Development Associate (CDA) national credential. Educator Emily Johnston was the first Family Consumer Science teacher in Kentucky to obtain the Early Care and Education Trainer’s Credential so that she could teach and award the certification to her students without having to hire additional staff.

Due to a strong partnership with Henderson Community College, students receive articulated credit upon completion of the third course in the program of study, which is equivalent to the first course in the college sequence. And, students who earn the CDA credential receive **nine college credits** at any institution in the Kentucky Community Technical College System in the field of ECE.

“It’s important to keep up-to-date with advances in the field. Spend quality time researching new developments in our field and truly understanding the ECE pathway. Seek out additional training and attend your state conference to learn about new updates and network with potential partners.”

Emily Johnston, Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher, ECE Coordinator, HCHS

As part of their third (articulated) course – Child Development Services II – students are also expected to complete **180 hours** of work-based learning. All students must also complete a capstone project that has three main components: a research paper, a product or activity, and an oral presentation – all associated with a single career-related theme or topic. The format is designed to be motivating, foster involvement of people from business or community and encourage integration of academic and CTE ideas.



MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The ECE program has built an incredible array of highly engaged partners at the local and state levels. Employers like the Little Stars Child Care, Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center and Riverview School provide work-based learning opportunities in the community. From its inception, the Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center was designed to incorporate the ECE program at Henderson County High School, where students take a nine-week training course and work in the preschool classroom to gain daily, hands-on experience.

Little Colonels Daycare, located at HCHS, offers students in grades 9-11 hands-on experience one day per week. This gives students the opportunity to learn how children develop from ages 0-3 and gain workplace readiness skills to prepare them for their senior year, off-site work-based learning requirement.

Additionally, HCHS has a strong relationship with the University of Kentucky Quality Enhancement Initiative, which provides higher educational opportunities for students post-graduation and funding for the Commonwealth Child Care Credential (CCCC) and the CDA for students who stay in the ECE field.

“As a recipient of a federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, Kentucky is redesigning the career ladder for early childhood professionals. The Governor’s Office of Early Childhood is looking to the ECE program as a model for high school students.”

Bridget Murray
Professor/Program Coordinator,
Henderson Community College

STUDENT SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

So what does all this mean? A multitude of hands-on experiences, a rigorous academic course of study, and a regularly updated curriculum leads to a 100 percent graduation rate and a 96 percent placement rate in college or the workplace.

