



Early Childhood Higher Education Program FAQs 2025-2027

What is the purpose of the program?

The program aims to elevate the quality and professionalism of Jewish Early Childhood Education (JECE) in the Bay Area by supporting educators in earning a master's degree in Early Childhood Education through the American Jewish University (AJU). The program is offered fully online.

This initiative seeks to empower educators with advanced skills in ECE and Jewish education and ensure they receive appropriate compensation that reflects their qualifications, thereby enhancing the status of JECE as a field.

Educators with academic degrees will be better equipped to excel in their roles, contributing to enriched classroom learning, Israel and Jewish education, and deeper family engagement. These improvements are expected to increase enrollment and strengthen preschools within their host institutions and across the broader Bay Area community.

About the MA Program at AJU:

- The **Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education** is a graduate degree program designed for those who already possess an undergraduate degree. This program is intended for working professionals to complete over 2 years.
- The program is offered fully online.
- There are two classes per week for two years over five (5) semesters. Students will have a semester of coursework over a condensed 8-week summer session.
- In the MA program, students will be required to join one weekly online discussion with the professor and your cohort.
- As part of the AJU curriculum, students will also be assigned a mentor to guide them and to provide support throughout the program.

- This program is fully approved and accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Senior College and University Commission.
- Please read more details about the program [here](#).
- When ready to apply, there is a special link for EarlyJ participants. Here is the link: [EarlyJ Application](#)

What funding does the program provide?

The program will cover 90% of the tuition for the MA degree, generously funded by EarlyJ and AJU. Participants will be responsible for the remaining 10% of tuition and the cost of books.

What is the tuition for the program?

The full tuition for one year is \$29,400, totaling \$58,800 for the entire program. Participants will contribute \$2,940 per year, amounting to \$5,880 for the full program and the cost of books.

Who is eligible?

- All early childhood educators who work in Jewish preschools in the Bay Area.
- Educators should possess an undergraduate degree.
- **Acceptance into the master's degree at AJU is required to qualify for this opportunity.**
- Educators will apply to this program with a letter of support from their directors or Executive Director.

How many educators will participate in the program?

10 educators will participate in the third cohort of the program.

How does the preschool choose a potential candidate?

- The preschool may choose educators who express interest in pursuing an advanced degree.
- The preschool may identify educators they wish to invest in as potential future leaders within their preschool.
- The preschool may select educators who demonstrate a strong commitment to the preschool, a willingness to remain in the program for its full two-year duration, and an intention to continue working at the preschool after graduation.
- Preschools are welcome to enroll more than one educator in the program.

Compensation Stipend:

Upon successful completion of the program, educators will receive a significant salary increase to reflect their new professional status. EarlyJ will subsidize this salary adjustment for 3 years post-graduation, at a cascading decrease. Participating preschools will absorb the increased compensation in future years, recognizing the added value that degreed professionals bring to their preschools. The preschools will be responsible for the full salary increase starting in year 6 and continuing thereafter, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the investment in professional development.

- This salary stipend will begin in Fall of 2027, after the completion of the program.
- **The stipend is \$12,000** per year for each graduate of the program.
- Educators at participating preschools who already hold an MA in ECE will also receive a salary increase, aligned with the same schedule, provided they are employed at the preschool at the time the increase is implemented. Educators will need to show proof that they hold the required degree.

The funding structure for the stipend is as follows:

- **Year 3 (first year of the stipend):** EarlyJ will pay 100% of the stipend.
- **Year 4 (second year of the stipend):** EarlyJ will pay 60%, and the preschool will provide the remaining 40%.
- **Year 5 (third year of the stipend):** EarlyJ will pay 40%, and the preschool will provide the remaining 60%.
- **Year 6 and beyond:** The preschool will assume 100% of the stipend funding for the educator's salary increase.

PLEASE NOTE: Payroll taxes are not included in the stipend amount. Each school will be responsible for the payroll taxes for the participant(s).

Compensation stipend: breakdown of funding responsibilities

Year 1 (2025-2026): MA program	EarlyJ and AJU fund 90% of each educator's tuition	n/a
Year 2 (2026-2027): MA program	EarlyJ and AJU fund 90% of each educator's tuition	n/a
Year 3 (2027-2028): Post-grad	EarlyJ contributes 100% of the salary increase \$12,000	Site contributes 0% of the salary increase \$0
Year 4 (2028-2029): Post-grad	EarlyJ contributes 60% of the salary increase \$7,200	Site contributes 40% of the salary increase \$4,800
Year 5 (2029-2030): Post-grad	EarlyJ contributes 40% of the salary increase \$4,800	Site contributes 60% of the salary increase \$7,200
Year 6 (2030-2031): Post-grad	EarlyJ contributes 0% of the salary increase \$0	Site contributes 100% of the salary increase \$12,000

When is the program application due?

The application deadline for the program is **March 3, 2025**. Interviews will take place after that date.

When ready to apply, there is a special link for EarlyJ participants. Here is the link:

[EarlyJ Application](#)

When applying, please indicate that you are from the Bay Area Jewish preschools.

What is the start date of the 2025-2026 Academic year?

The predicted Fall 2025 date is August 25, 2025. All classes will be held on Mondays from 4:30–6:30 PM via Zoom.

What is Community of Practice (COP)?

In addition to enrolling in the program, participants will be **required** to participate in the COP local group during their enrollment. This group offers educators opportunities for connection, mentoring, and support, with an emphasis on sharing best practices and fostering new insights to advance professional practices.

The COP will address topics central to Bay Area Jewish life. Sessions will build upon one another and align with the program's curriculum, enabling educators to apply this knowledge directly to their work. The COP will convene 6 times throughout the academic year on Wednesday afternoons for a total of 12 virtual meetings via Zoom, complemented by 4 in-person *Yom Iyun* (days of learning) throughout the whole program. A full schedule for the COP will be available before the academic year starts.

Topics for our CoP discussions may include:

- An introduction to the wide range of Jewish educational and engagement opportunities available locally
- Jewish holidays
- Jewish life
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- LGBTQI+ topics
- Outdoor education
- Culture of belonging concepts
- Mindfulness
- Family engagement strategies
- Program evaluation

Is a 2-year commitment required for students and preschools to be part of the program?

- **Yes**, students are required to commit to completing the 2-year degree program and actively participating in the CoP group during that time.
- Students must fulfill the requirements of the AJU degree program and graduate to remain eligible for the stipend.
- If a student withdraws from the program before completion, EarlyJ will request reimbursement for any fees associated with the degree.
- The preschool or host organization must also commit to fulfilling the stipend requirements once the student has earned their degree.

What is the post-graduation work commitment?

- Graduates are expected to work in a Jewish preschool for a minimum of 3 years after completing the program.
- Graduates may teach in any JECE institution of their choosing. If the graduate moves to a JECE preschool other than the preschool that initially designated them for participation in the program, the new preschool must agree to the program's terms in order to receive stipend funds.

Interested in learning more?

Join us for an information session to get all of the details about the program.

When: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Where: Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85624547917>

Meeting ID: 856 2454 7917

Can we meet in person to learn more about the program?

Yes. You can schedule an in-person visit at your site with Zehava Dahan, EarlyJ's program facilitator. To arrange a meeting, please email Zehava at: zdahan@earlyJ.org.