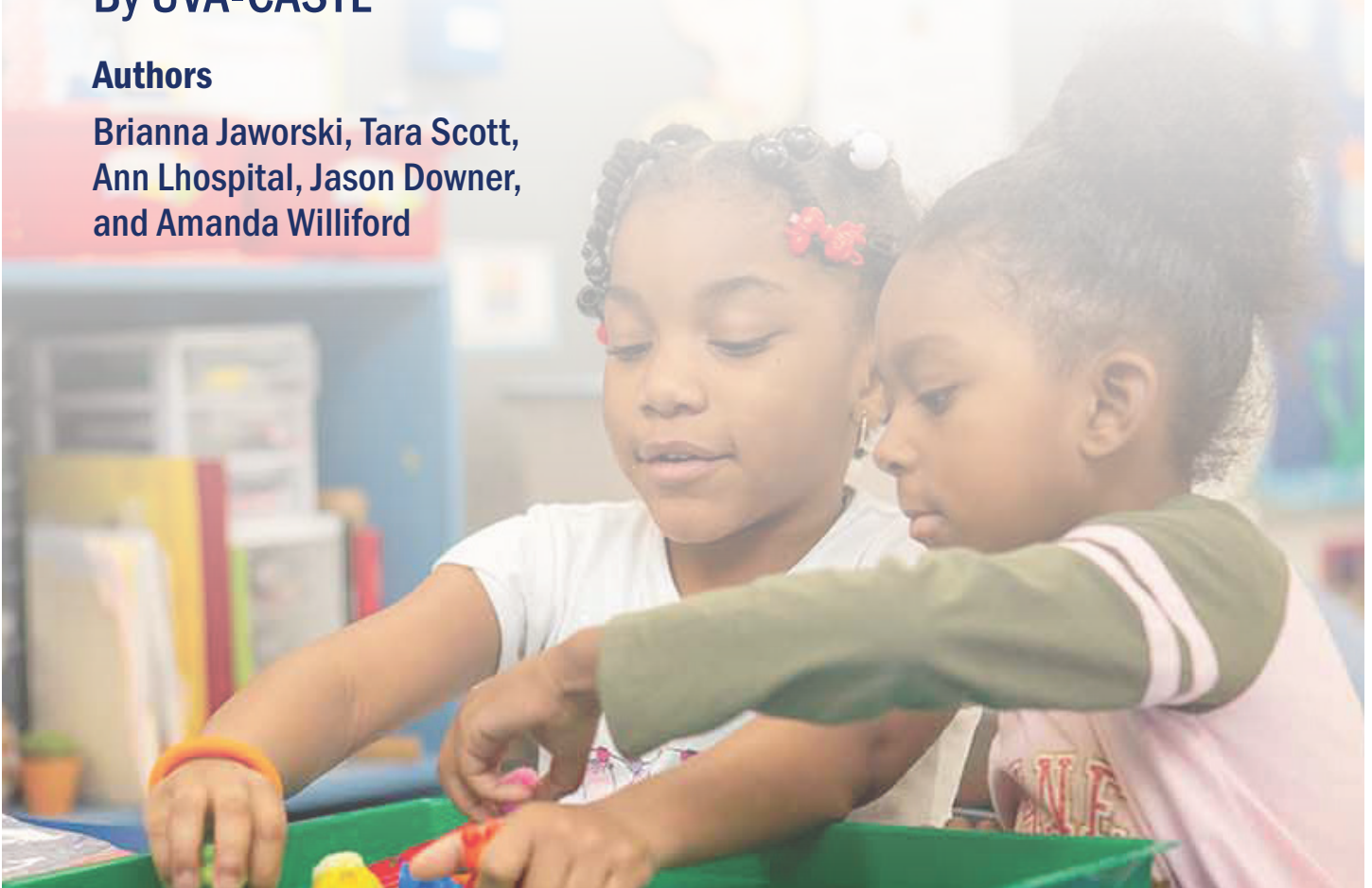


# **AEII Executive Summary**

**By UVA-CASTL**

## **Authors**

**Brianna Jaworski, Tara Scott,  
Ann Lhospital, Jason Downer,  
and Amanda Williford**



## **Acknowledgments**

This Brief was excerpted from the CASTL-AEII Final Report (June 30, 2023) available [here](#). It was prepared by the [University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning \(CASTL\)](#) for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) with funding provided through appropriations from the Virginia General Assembly. The opinions expressed in the report are those of the AEII-CASTL team and do not represent views of the funding agencies. Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Amanda Williford at [williford@virginia.edu](mailto:williford@virginia.edu).

**CASTL-AEII Coaching provides early childhood education (ECE) teachers individualized coaching to strengthen teacher-child interactions and support equitable, social-emotional teaching practices.**

## Executive Summary

[The Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction \(AEII\)](#) team at the [University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning \(CASTL\)](#)

worked in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to provide virtual coaching to teachers in Virginia's publicly-funded birth-to-five early childhood programs. This coaching aimed to promote equitable, high quality teacher-child interactions to support learning and development for all children.

### CASTL-AEII Objectives in 2022-23

In collaboration with the VDOE, CASTL-AEII supported the implementation of the Unified Virginia Quality Birth-to-Five System (VQB5) Practice Year 2 in 2022-23 by providing virtual coaching. CASTL-AEII's main objectives were to:

- **Provide individualized coaching for select birth-to-five teachers** in school-based preschool classrooms (Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Title 1 PreK classrooms) and publicly-funded early childhood programs (child care centers, family day homes) participating in the Unified Virginia Quality Birth-to-Five System's (VQB5) Practice Year 2 or referred by [CASTL-Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation \(ECMHC\)](#).
- **Coordinate with other Quality Improvement Partners to support the implementation of VQB5,**

including Virginia's 9 Ready Regions, Virginia Quality (VQ), Infant Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN), and Training and Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC) through planning and delivering aligned services and resources for birth-to-five teachers.

[Coaching] keeps me focused on a goal, it also helps me see my teaching from another point of view.

– ECE Teacher

### CASTL-AEII Coaching

CASTL-AEII provides professional development (PD) resources and supports to teachers across a variety of program settings (i.e., family day homes, childcare centers, and schools) serving different early childhood age groups (i.e., infant, toddler, mixed-age, and PreK classrooms). The CASTL-AEII Coaching model was developed in 2019-2020 to mitigate children's heightened social-emotional needs and inequities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. CASTL-AEII Coaching aims to improve teacher-child interactions, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System tool (CLASS®), and support children's social skills, self-regulation skills, and overall learning. In 2022-23, CASTL-AEII's resources and supports focused on providing individualized, video-based virtual coaching for teachers.

### Collaboration and Recruitment Efforts

In line with the VDOE's focus on unifying measurement and improvement systems across the Commonwealth, CASTL-AEII increased collaboration across initiatives and agencies in Practice Year 2. CASTL-AEII worked closely with representatives from the VDOE, Virginia's 9 Ready Regions, ITSN, regional T/TAC providers, Virginia Quality, and other quality improvement partners to align supports to the field and maximize collective impacts. The positive relationships built with key players in

quality improvement enabled CASTL-AEII to provide virtual, individualized coaching to the programs and teachers who needed it most.

### Key Takeaways from 2022-23

CASTL-AEII expanded its reach to all publicly-funded, birth-to-five classrooms, which resulted in fielding 189 referrals and providing 146 teachers with virtual coaching focused on improving teacher-child interactions and equitable social-emotional instruction.

“The videos of myself and how I interact or teach... has been the biggest feedback for myself.”  
 – ECE Teacher

#### Key takeaways from data on coaching include:

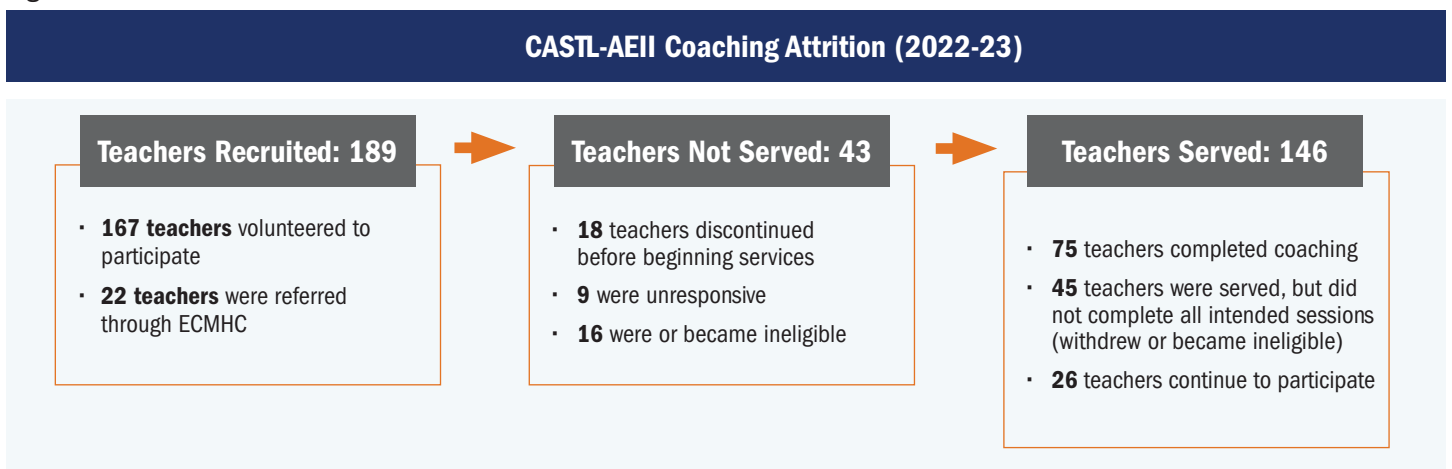
- **CASTL-AEII Coaching is an accessible service** that is of interest to early childhood education (ECE) teachers, and those who participated indicated satisfaction with the services.
- **Collaborations with Quality Improvement Partners (e.g., the VDOE, Virginia’s Ready Regions) bolstered recruitment** (189 teachers in 2022-23 compared to 71 teachers in 2021-22), but priority ECE sites were often more challenging to reach than non-priority sites.

Figure 1



- **Modifications to the CASTL-AEII Coaching model resulted in increased teacher engagement** with the services, with almost double the number of teachers completing the coaching process compared to 2021-22.
- **ECE teachers were still experiencing lingering effects including illness, burnout, and staff shortages**, although the COVID-19 pandemic was no longer the primary barrier to coaching participation. These impacts continued to pose challenges to teacher engagement.

Figure 2



I am more confident in helping to calm down the children who are displaying those big emotions.

– ECE Teacher

## Looking Ahead to 2023-24

CASTL-AEII will collaborate with the VDOE to support ECE leaders and educators in the first year of required participation in VQB5, which is intended to strengthen teacher-child interactions and ensure high-quality ECE experiences for all children across various program types in the 2023-24 school year.

### To this end, CASTL-AEII will:

- **Provide coaching services to highest needs classrooms** (evidenced by CLASS® scores) to improve learning experiences for birth-to-five children through CASTL-AEII Coaching. CASTL-AEII will use data collected in 2022-23 to refine service models to maximize efficiency and outcomes.
- **Pilot an in-person service format** with select classrooms within Ready Region Southeastern.
- **Pilot virtual leader consultation services** with select programs that focus on how to provide teachers with effective feedback using CLASS® data.
- **Build and sustain existing partnerships and work to enhance collaboration** with birth-to-five initiatives and partners across Virginia, including Virginia's Ready Regions, ITSN, T/TAC, and CASTL-ECMHC.
- **Collect and analyze ongoing implementation data** from CASTL-AEII coaching to track referrals, teacher engagement, and outcome data to monitor growth and impact. ♦

## Summary of Appropriations language

During the period of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, CASTL shall provide the following services and supports as outlined in the state legislative appropriation (HB30) as stated below:

Out of this appropriation, \$700,000 the first year and \$700,000 the second year from the general fund is provided through the Department of Education to the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to ensure that teachers in select publicly-funded early childhood programs, including Virginia Preschool Initiative classrooms, receive appropriate individualized professional development training from professional development specialists to support quality teacher-child interactions and effective implementation of high-quality curriculum. Funding and professional development assistance shall be prioritized for classrooms that have demonstrated need based on the Unified Measurement and Improvement System, known as VQB5, established pursuant to § 22.1-289.05, Code of Virginia, which is based on observing teachers with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation tool and use of standards-aligned curriculum. The University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, assisted on an as needed basis by the Department of Education, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and Elevate Early Education shall hire and train specialists to provide such individualized professional development. The University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning and the Training and Technical Assistance Centers funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) through the Department of Education shall coordinate to ensure alignment of professional development and supports for teachers of children with special needs.