

Black Hawk College offers dozens of career programs including an Early Childhood Education Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree and two certificates.

The Early Childhood Education Program uses hands-on learning in addition to lectures to help students develop their skills in the classroom. Students can choose between in-person, online or hybrid classes, depending on their availability.

For many students, flexibility is a big part of the reason they are successful. There are both traditional and nontraditional students that benefit from the flexibility at Black Hawk College.

Meet Della Welge

Della Welge is in the Early Childhood Education Program and says without the flexibility, she would not have been able to go back to school.



“Being a business owner, plus a mom of two, it is super hard to be able to go to college and go to the actual physical classes,” she said.

Welge owns APK Too, a licensed daycare in Colona. She opened in 2019 and that’s when she decided to return to Black Hawk College to help grow her business.

Her biggest goal in getting more education was to find more effective ways to help the

children in her daycare. She says the field is always changing and wants to be a lifelong learner to help the children and her staff.

Importance of online options

She says the ability to take online classes is the only reason she was able to enroll at Black Hawk College and still be able to work.

“It is hard to be able to go to class Monday through Friday at these certain times because then I would not have any income,” Welge said.

“It is just more convenient and I still get to meet with my professors. It is not like I am just on my own but I know I can email her or Zoom if I need to ask anything,” she said.

One-on-one interaction is a big part of why people come to Black Hawk College. Instructors and staff are always looking to help students in whatever way they can.

“Since these students come to BHC with varied career experiences, it’s important that our program is flexible to meet their needs,” Jodi Becker, Early Childhood Education program coordinator, said.

“Many are working full time during the day and need the flexibility that online courses provide. We aim to meet a variety of learning styles and provide some courses in person or synchronously online,” Becker she said.

Guiding students to success

Audrie Aden serves as a support specialist in the program to help students through the program by connecting them to resources and providing virtual bi-weekly workshops to help with their academic goals as well as being a support system for the ECE student. She says students have said it is a huge help that the college offers free laptops and help with school supplies as well.

Welge is approaching her graduation date and says that her time spent at Black Hawk College will be something she is always grateful for. She also wants other prospective students to know that it is okay to take the leap of faith and go back to college.

“No matter how old you are, no matter what your life struggles are, if you want to go back to college, then go back. It is so worth it in the long run,” she said.

Scholarship available

Black Hawk College is participating in a new scholarship from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship Program was created to address the shortage of qualified early childhood professionals in the state of Illinois.

Students who work or have worked in early childhood education and are seeking additional credentials and/or a degree in early childhood education may be eligible for the scholarship.

The scholarship will cover the applicant's total cost of attendance for an academic year after another financial aid is received. Recipients of the scholarship are expected to continue or return to teaching or direct services in the early childhood care and education field in Illinois after they complete their program of study.

Learn more about the [Early Childhood Education Program](#), ECACE Scholarship and other funding available.

Got questions? Contact Audrie Aden, early childhood education support specialist, at 309-796-5178 or adena@bhc.edu.

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