



What can you do with your
Erikson degree?

erikson institute
graduate school in child development



Erikson Institute graduates work wherever you find children and families.

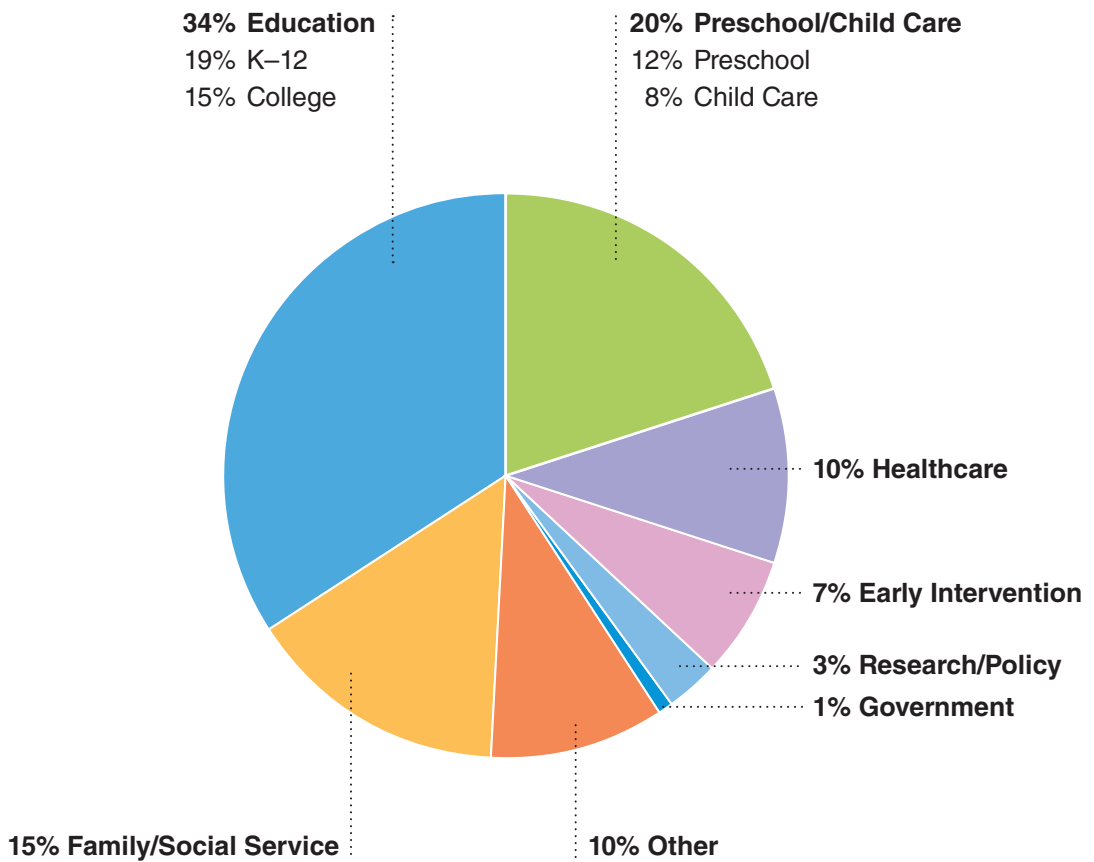
Our students come to us with a range of different life experiences and interests. And as graduates, they pursue career paths that reflect the diversity of their backgrounds as well as the preparation they receive.

From social workers to child development professionals, classroom teachers to child life specialists, Erikson graduates find a professional niche, making an impact on the lives of children and families nationwide.

In the following pages, you'll find the stories of some of our alumni who have gone on to work in settings and roles that represent the wealth of opportunities available to those with an Erikson degree.

Where our alumni work

Distribution of alumni by professions serving children and families*



*Based on our most recent triennial survey of alumni.

In the nation's third largest city, her social work skills have a far-reaching impact.

As a social worker, Fabiola Perez improves the lives of young children and families in communities across Chicago. Through her education at Erikson, she found that the job was exactly what she wanted.

Perez knew she wanted to work with children and explore the social justice perspective of social work, and Erikson's program proved to be a good fit.

Erikson helped Perez find a job in a child care center's infant room to gain hands-on experience with children. She learned about different social work settings through internships at a domestic violence shelter and an elementary school, while Erikson seminars taken in tandem with her internships helped her process and learn from her experiences in the field. She also discovered a passion for being in a school setting, and today, her job takes her into 60 preschools working in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools system.

"My time at Erikson was the most enjoyable academic experience of my life, but it was also the hardest," she says. "The faculty, while supportive, definitely challenged us. But it was worth it, as it helped lead me to where I want to be."

A portrait of Fabiola Perez, a young woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a denim vest. She is smiling and has her arms crossed. The background is a dark chalkboard with some faint writing. To the right, there is a shelf with a book titled "The Froebel Gifts 2000" and some wooden blocks.

Fabiola Perez

DEGREE

M.S. in Child Development and
Master of Social Work

OCCUPATION

School social worker, Community Partnership
Program of the Chicago Public Schools

ON ERIKSON

“With my degrees, I was able to start my
career with the knowledge I needed
to immediately help the teachers and
students I work with.”



Leon Denton

DEGREE

M.Ed. in Early Childhood Development

OCCUPATION

Director of Children and Youth Services,
Salvation Army of Metropolitan Chicago

ON ERIKSON

“I knew that I wanted to go to one of the
best graduate schools for early childhood.
Everyone said, ‘Erikson.’”

After three decades, his leadership continues to improve the lives of children and families.

Leon Denton entered the early childhood field thanks to his daughter. Each day, he took her to a Head Start program and built such a strong rapport with the other children that the director offered him a part-time job.

From there, he became a teacher and an Erikson student. At Erikson, Denton got the encouragement he needed to become a thoughtful advocate for Chicago's children and families. Professors pushed him to become an administrator so he could make a difference in the lives of even more children. They also helped connect him with a job at the Salvation Army.

Nearly 30 years later, Denton remains at the Salvation Army, overseeing a staff of 80 across many child care sites. Under his leadership, the Salvation Army has launched innovative programs, including the first Head Start program in the Chicago Park District, a Head Start program for homeless families, and an on-site Head Start program at the only school in Chicago serving young mothers and pregnant students.

“Even after all these years, I still feel such a reward when I see children’s smiles and work with them and their families,” Denton says. “Even better is to receive a call years later from a former client inviting me to her college graduation or telling me about making the honor roll.”

She finds new ways to connect with children with special needs and help them learn.

Even after earning her master's degree and working in education, Sue Stolzer felt like she hadn't done all she could. Seeking a challenge and new knowledge, she entered Erikson's doctoral program to earn a degree in child development.

"Erikson took a different approach to child development," she says. "A lot of what I had been taught at other institutions was very rigid. Erikson's professors said, 'That's not really what development is about.'"

Rather than focusing on strict pedagogy, Erikson's faculty guided Stolzer to understand how to help children learn in a more comprehensive way. Stolzer now works as an early childhood special education teacher in a blended classroom at Westbrook School for Young Learners in Mount Prospect, Illinois, where half of her class has special needs. She co-teaches with a speech and language pathologist and two classroom assistants.

"At Erikson, I learned it's not about having a separate curriculum for children with special needs," Stolzer says. "Sure, there are strategies and techniques that will work better, but I don't think of them as separate. It's about seeing them on the same continuum with all kids."



Sue Stolzer

DEGREE

Ph.D. in Child Development

OCCUPATION

Early childhood special education teacher,
Westbrook School for Young Learners,
Mount Prospect, Illinois

ON ERIKSON

“Erikson was the only place I felt would
introduce me to new ideas.”

A portrait of Sandy Carrillo, a woman with brown hair, smiling and wearing a red and blue patterned scarf and a denim jacket. She is holding a colorful children's book titled "Angel's Kite" which features illustrations of a tree, a bird, and a rabbit. The book cover also includes the text "LA ESTRELLA DE ANGEL".

Sandy Carrillo

DEGREE

M.S. in Early Childhood Education

OCCUPATION

Resource teacher for English language learners, Kennedy Elementary School, Burbank, Illinois

ON ERIKSON

“Erikson enables you to explore in depth every idea of early childhood. You can't find that anywhere else.”

Personal experience inspires her to help children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Sandy Carrillo always wanted to help kids, particularly children of immigrants. At Erikson, she found the lifelong connections and resources she needed to do so.

“Many early childhood professionals helped me and my family, and I wanted to be in a position to do that for others,” Carrillo says.

Before attending graduate school, she held several roles in a Head Start program, but she wanted to fine-tune her knowledge base. At Erikson, she was immersed in deep conversations with her classmates and professors about educational philosophies, practices, and tools. With that knowledge, she became a resource teacher for English language learners in Burbank, Illinois, where she also plays a leadership role in research and policy decisions affecting students learning to speak English.

“Erikson helped me find the next step in my career and supported my exploration of the best ways to serve diverse children, first as a student and now as a professional,” Carrillo says. “If I have a question or concern, I know that I can always reach out to the Erikson community.”

An understanding of child development theory helps her shape public policy.

While serving at-risk children and families through the Ounce of Prevention Fund, Anita Harvey-Dixon saw high-quality, intentional early childhood education and modeled her own practice on her observations. She realized, however, that something was missing: She didn't understand the theory behind the practice.

With her supervisor's support, she entered Erikson's child development program to deepen her knowledge. "The experience was amazing. I learned so much through Erikson's relationship-based education," she says.

While attending Erikson, Harvey-Dixon served as site administrator for Educare Chicago, a division of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Currently, as part of Educare Learning Network's implementation staff, she travels across the United States to help ensure children and families have access to quality early learning. She also advocates for better early childhood policy at the school, state, and federal levels.

In 2014, Harvey-Dixon was selected as a member of the Early Childhood Leadership Academy, a signature project within Erikson Institute. The goal of the academy is to engage with leaders across many disciplines to raise awareness of how policy impacts the lives of children and families while advocating for positive change.

"I see policy work as an opportunity to create change and leave a lasting legacy," she says. "I believe that all children deserve a great beginning, and policy work is one way I can help make that happen."



Anita Harvey-Dixon

DEGREE

M.S. in Child Development

OCCUPATION

Educare Implementation Adviser, Ounce of Prevention Fund

ON ERIKSON

“Erikson provided me with the knowledge of child development theory and practice that I rely on every day.”



Shira Miller

DEGREE

M.S. in Child Development,
Child Life Specialization

OCCUPATION

Child life specialist in radiology and nuclear
medicine, Rush University Medical Center,
Chicago

ON ERIKSON

“Erikson helped me turn my desire to work
with children and families in healthcare
settings into a career.”

In a hospital setting, she found the perfect home for her skills.

Shira Miller loves her job helping children cope with complex emotions when they or their loved ones are in the hospital. But after college, she couldn't picture where she would land.

With a dual passion for science and working with children, she searched for a graduate program that would help launch her career, and Erikson's child life program was the perfect fit.

"What drew me to Erikson was that it looks at students' experiences, passions, and ambitions and helps them reach their goals instead of trying to fit all students into the same mold," Miller says. "Plus, the emphasis on hands-on clinical experience helped me better my practice."

Miller is now a child life specialist in radiology and nuclear medicine at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, where she helps children prepare for procedures and deal with feelings and fears through conversation, play, and other expressive therapies appropriate for their developmental stage. She also teaches families the skills to help navigate whatever healthcare situations they face.

"I empower children and their families by increasing their understanding and decreasing their anxiety," Miller says.

Whether in a clinical or administrative role, she channels her passion.

A desire to understand how children develop brought Ruchira Gulati Hantman from India to the United States—and Erikson helped her discover that knowledge.

“I was especially interested in the early years, when communications are not yet verbal and children are mostly formed in relation to their primary caregivers,” she says. “I wanted to understand how it all starts so I could effectively help children and families move through a process of change for the better.”

Erikson’s focus on development, relation-based work, and reflective supervision prepared Hantman for a career working with families. Until 2014, she served as a program supervisor for the Early Childhood Project at Erikson, a partnership with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, overseeing developmental screeners and coordinators while offering clinical supervision and consultations on cases in the child welfare system. Today, she is a staff clinician for Erikson’s Center for Children and Families and provides therapy to families and children up to age 8.

“It’s very humbling and rewarding to be invited into vulnerable parts of people’s lives and help them in their growth and overcoming human struggles,” Hantman says. “I’ve also enjoyed being an administrator contributing to an early childhood program using best practices I learned at Erikson.”



Ruchira Gulati Hantman

DEGREES

M.A. in Clinical Psychology, M.S. in Child Development, and Master of Social Work

OCCUPATION

Clinician, Erikson's Center for Children and Families

ON ERIKSON

"I came to Erikson on my instinct. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made."

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a purple and blue plaid shirt and a dark tie, is looking down at a tablet. A woman with blonde hair is leaning in from the left, also looking at the tablet. They appear to be in a classroom or office setting.

Brian Puerling

DEGREE

M.S. in Early Childhood Education

OCCUPATION

Director of Technology Education,
Catherine Cook School, Chicago

ON ERIKSON

“At Erikson, I became a better thinker and writer and sharpened my ability to ask the big and small questions.”

In a rapidly developing area of early childhood practice, he's a leader.

Many Friday and Saturday nights during college, Brian Puerling could be found at a local bookstore reading his way through the education section.

“I knew that there was a lot more to know, but I didn't know what it was,” Puerling says. “After doing my research, I could tell that an Erikson master's degree was unique and would help me really dig deeply into theories, ideas, and practice.”

At Erikson, reflective practice and exposure to different perspectives were central to his education. He loved the ongoing conversations between students and faculty, which helped him apply the information he was learning to his own practice.

Puerling is now a leader at the intersection of children and technology. At Chicago's Catherine Cook School, he helps teachers determine when and how to use technology to help children learn. He's also a book author, guest blogger, and international consultant and presenter on children and technology.

“No one has all the answers, but together, we can become much more intentional about the choices we are making for our classrooms and programs,” Puerling says. “If you see yourself as a learner and open your mind to different perspectives, you will find the information you need to support your practice and the children and families we serve.”

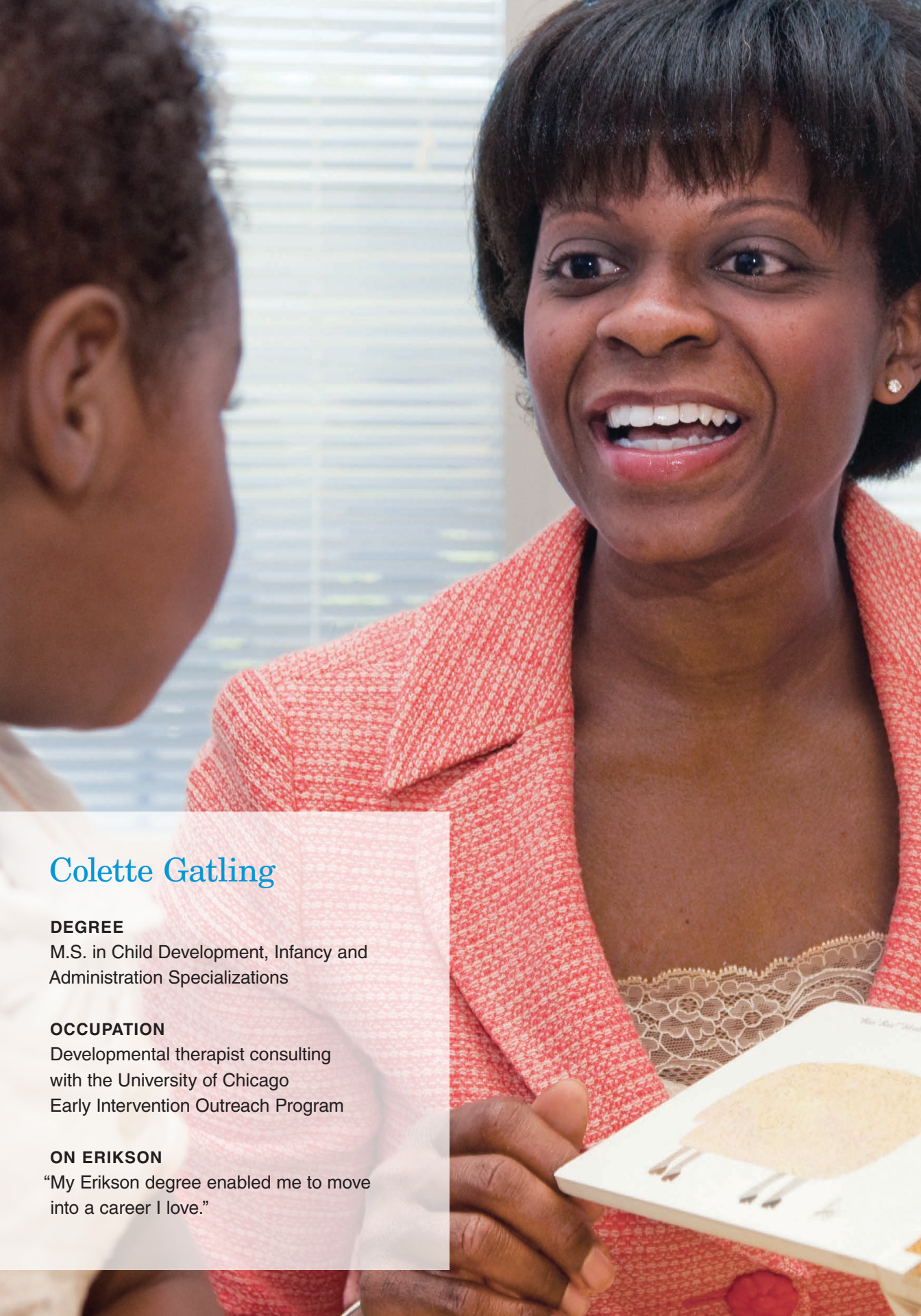
As a developmental therapist, she seeks to make a ‘global difference.’

Working at a nursery for families in crisis and later at a women’s treatment center, Colette Gatling could see how the first few years of a child’s life are pivotal to development. But until she came to Erikson, she did not completely understand why.

“Erikson gets all the pieces right,” Gatling says. “The curriculum doesn’t focus on just one aspect of child development. Instead, it focuses on the whole child and all the variables that contribute to health, from culture and language to parent-child relationships. This was important, since I want to make a global difference rather than concentrate on a particular aspect of the child.”

As a developmental therapist in the University of Chicago Early Intervention Outreach Program, Gatling works with children and families from various backgrounds and a range of specialists, including physicians, physical and speech therapists, and social workers. “I see little successes every day as parents learn what their children need to flourish and children create the strong, trusting bonds they need with their parents. I truly believe that these everyday successes early in life will help lessen larger societal issues such as poverty, abuse, and crime.”

Only a few years after graduation, Gatling has already helped the next generation of child development professionals by hosting Erikson interns at her practice.



Colette Gatling

DEGREE

M.S. in Child Development, Infancy and Administration Specializations

OCCUPATION

Developmental therapist consulting with the University of Chicago Early Intervention Outreach Program

ON ERIKSON

“My Erikson degree enabled me to move into a career I love.”



Janvier Jones

DEGREE

M.S. in Early Childhood Education
leading to initial teacher licensure and
Bilingual/ESL Graduate Certificate

OCCUPATION

Child development faculty member,
Harold Washington College, Chicago

ON ERIKSON

“The Erikson faculty are supportive but
have high expectations for their students.
That helped me understand the kind of
teacher I wanted to be.”

She prepares adults for careers in child development.

Janvier Jones brings the lessons she learned at Erikson into her own classroom—but without the echo of infants and young children learning and exploring. Instead, Jones' classroom is filled with the discussions of adults pursuing careers in child development and early care.

A tenured faculty member at Harold Washington College in Chicago, Jones annually teaches about 300 students the fundamentals of child development and care.

“At Erikson, we talked a lot about parallel process, where teachers model what they want students to do,” she says. “That meant the Erikson faculty couldn't talk about creating a safe and nurturing environment for children without doing it themselves in our graduate program. I use that model in my own classroom by creating an environment that is supportive and open to all styles of learning.”

Jones enriches her classes with music, poetry, and artwork related to child development and challenges herself to continually and critically reflect on how she interacts with her adult students.

“It's a skill Erikson faculty emphasized,” says Jones. “I always ask, ‘How do the students in my class learn and how can I empower them to be effective, lifelong learners?’ I hope my students do the same in their own careers with children.”

Prepared for a range of careers, our alumni tell us they are deeply satisfied with the Erikson experience.

Hearing from our graduates helps us understand what sets the Erikson educational experience apart. Our alumni tell us that they leave with the knowledge, experience, and confidence to excel in a variety of careers that touch the lives of children and families. Importantly, our graduates let us know that Erikson prepares them for more than a job, that the time spent here is an important personal investment that positively impacts the quality of their work.

97% of graduates say the preparation they received at Erikson improved their work with children, and **95%** say it improved their work with parents and families.

Most graduates, **94%**, also tell us that their Erikson degree enhances their professional credibility, while **74%** feel their experience at Erikson prepared them to assume leadership roles.

And significantly, an overwhelming proportion, **93%**, feel that attending Erikson was worth the financial and personal investment.

About Erikson Institute

Erikson Institute is the premier independent institution of higher education committed to ensuring that all children have equitable opportunities to realize their potential.

Recognized for our groundbreaking work in the field of early childhood, we uniquely prepare child development, education, and social work leaders to improve the lives of young children and their families. Our impact and influence is further amplified through our innovative academic programs, applied research, knowledge creation and distribution, direct services, and field-wide advocacy.

Because nothing matters more than a child's early years, Erikson Institute educates, inspires, and provides leadership to serve the needs of children and families so that all can achieve optimal educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being.

For more information about career resources, contact

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careerservices@erikson.edu
www.erikson.edu/careers

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