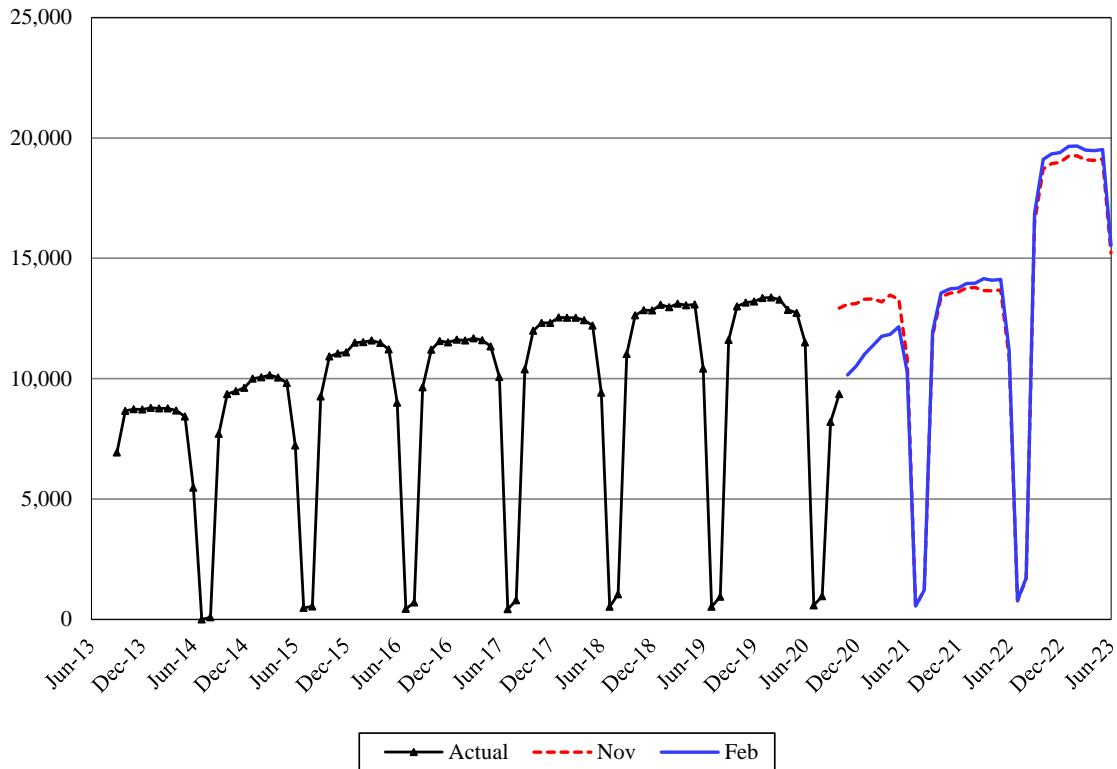


**Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program  
(Academic Year Enrollment)**



The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides comprehensive nutrition, health, education, and family support services to eligible children between the ages of three and five years old who are not eligible for Kindergarten to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system. ECEAP enrollment is forecast as total annual enrollment calculated as a ten-month average to more accurately reflect that the majority of enrollment occurs during the standard school year. Per statute, children who participate in Head Start are not eligible for ECEAP and, as a result, are not included in the forecast.

**Forecast Comparisons (Fiscal Year Averages)**

Fiscal Year	Nov-20 Forecast	Feb-21 Forecast	Nov to Feb Difference	Percent Difference
2021	12,633	10,825	-1,808	-14.3%
2022	13,355	13,626	271	2.0%
2023	18,661	19,054	393	2.1%

The February 2021 forecast is 1,808 cases or 14.3 percent lower than the November 2020 forecast for FY 2021 and, on average, 332 cases or 2.1 percent higher for the 2021-23 Biennium.

### Tracking the Current Forecast

	Nov-20 Forecast	Actual	Variance	Percent Variance
Oct-20	12,930	9,365	-3,565	-27.6%

Actuals have been tracking 3,565 cases or 27.6 percent below the November 2020 forecast. Over the final months of the 2020-2021 school year, the ECEAP caseload did not show a consistent pattern of change; however, enrollment for September and October of 2020 was on average 28.6% lower than it was for the same months in 2019. This decline is likely due in large part to closures and lower occupancy limits at public school facilities.

ECEAP eligibility is primarily based on a child’s age and family income. Children otherwise ineligible may also participate under rules adopted by DCYF, provided that the number of such children is no more than 25 percent of enrollment in the program. During the 2019-2020 school year, the program served an average of about 496 such kids per month during the school year. These children are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement caseload children and are not counted in the ECEAP forecast.

While ECEAP is scheduled to become an entitlement program during the 2022-23 school year, at this time the level of enrollment is driven primarily by the number of slots available through legislative appropriations. During the 2019 session, the legislature increased the total number of slots by 509 and 662 for FY 2020 and 2021, respectively. As ECEAP is scheduled to become an entitlement caseload in July 2022, there is a noticeable increase in the forecast at that point.

### Fiscal Year Caseload Change

	Academic Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
<i>Actual</i>	2013-2014	8,196		
	2014-2015	9,356	1,160	14.2%
	2015-2016	10,965	1,610	17.2%
	2016-2017	11,294	329	3.0%
	2017-2018	11,989	695	6.2%
	2019-2019	12,660	671	5.6%
	2019-2020	12,955	295	2.3%
<i>Forecast</i>	2020-2021	10,825	-2,130	-16.4%
	2021-2022	13,626	2,801	25.9%
	2022-2023	19,054	5,428	39.8%

The February 2021 forecast for the 2022-2023 school year is higher than the November 2020 forecast as it is expected that the current economic disruption will increase the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds who are below the income threshold for ECEAP eligibility.

#### *Risks to the Forecast*

Risks to this forecast are high. ECEAP participation was not as affected as some other caseloads by COVID-19 related impacts; however, program participation declined at the start

of the 2020-2021 school year and the pace of recovery will be influenced by the rate progress achieved in the reopening of schools.

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