



PROCARE SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY:

Early Education Business Consultants Uses Procure to Help Child Care Centers Eliminate Their Biggest Time Vampires

When Virginia Marsh was offered the chance to join forces with Lauren Small at Early Education Business Consultants, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I love the mission of Early Education Business Consultants. I loved that we can help early education and child care centers take advantage of software to streamline operations and gain back time to focus on what they love – interactions with children," she explains as Director of Operations for Early Education Business Consultants.

By making Procure part of its services, Early Education Business Consultants is empowering early education programs to do just that.

The Unique Business of Running Early Education Centers

With experience working in multiple industries and serving as a former center director, Virginia understands firsthand that the business of child care is unique.

With little business experience, directors and operators are sometimes blindsided and often lack the time to address business fundamentals.

“Early childhood is such a heart industry. And the people running these programs put in long hours and wear many hats, everything from being a nurse and marketer to an accountant and plumber,” says Virginia.

Even though directors and operators need to understand every aspect of running a business, few do because most come from an education background. Early Education Business Consultants helps remedy that by offering a mini MBA on core business practices.

Helping Early Education Programs Run Like a Business

Since Lauren Small launched Early Education Business Consultants in 2014, the company has helped improve early childhood education across entire communities—creating better outcomes for children. In fact, her award-winning training program has positively impacted over 200 child care businesses in Hampton Roads, Virginia and over 5,000 children ages zero-five years annually. The result is an increase in child enrollment and a decrease in employee turnover.

Through a mix of training and consulting, the organization helps child care centers, preschools and family child care businesses create a stable business model. It also focuses on “training the trainer” to empower communities with a framework to manage their own early childhood business programs.

Knowing most centers are independently run with small budgets, Early Education Business Consultants calls upon grants and help from community partners to provide its business program at no cost. Early Education Business Consultant also offers technology deployment, enablement and support through this business program, its shared services hub and other consulting services. These services feature a handful of software solutions – including Procure – that Early Education Business Consultants can activate on behalf of the centers they work with.



COVID-19 Exacerbates Challenges

In addition to key activities like marketing and bookkeeping, directors and owners need to keep their finger on the pulse of the latest developments in the industry. That's a tall order for people who are often pulled in many directions.

As Virginia underscores, this resulted in many centers failing to take advantage of the first round of government relief associated with COVID-19. Centers also struggled to adjust. They went from seeing families every day and being able to hand papers to parents to not seeing families at all. Many centers didn't have the ability to communicate via text or send out email notifications.

"All of a sudden, everyday basics became major challenges: How to safely check children in and out, communicate with families and collect payments from families," she says.

Seeing Opportunities for Smoother Operations

Unlike so many others in this industry, Virginia's background is in business and her time working in a center gave her insight into how they could run more smoothly by utilizing software. In fact, she deployed Procure at the center where she worked after using low-end child care management software that didn't meet the center's needs.



We found that you get what you pay for. **Procure is both cost-effective and it is an all-in-one solution that grows with us.**

This deployment became the gateway for Virginia to work more closely with Lauren at Early Education Business Consultants.

"I participated in Lauren's program and it inspired foundational business changes in our center," she says. "I shared our successes using Procure with Lauren and she invited me to present to other owners and directors as part of her organization's Leadership Academy."

When an opportunity arose for Virginia to join Lauren's company, she was thrilled at the opportunity to help early education centers develop strong business practices and implement technology.

Empowering Centers with Data

"I push software and technology as far as I can. When I work with a center, my main goal is to convert as many manual processes to Procure as possible," explains Virginia.

Through their consulting services, Early Education Business Consultants has seen firsthand how Procure can support organizations regardless of size or needs. While supporting multiple centers for a growing investment company, the organization quickly learned to rely on the enterprise version of Procure.

"Procure helped simplify corporate reporting and made it easy to navigate quickly between center databases. As the hub for the Hampton Roads Shared Services Alliance, we are able to offer time and cost saving services to the members. Procure enables our team to remotely provide administrative services, track and report business metrics as well as identify gaps in revenue," she continues.

Virginia appreciates a number of Procure features.

"Just about any information can be tracked in Procure and accessed from anywhere. For an all-in-one approach, the expense ledger is user friendly and helpful for budgeting and analysis," she says.

Other favorite features include the built-in checks and balances that make it easy to spot issues in reports. A variety of reports make it simple to track business metrics.

Virginia also likes that Procure's framework is based on accounting principles. "If you maintain clean data practices, you can be confident making data-driven decisions with the data that comes out," she continues.



"Center directors and owners have enough to think about. If everyday processes are built in Procure and the features are used as intended, to-do lists and reminder notes can be eliminated. With Procure, it's practically set it and forget it," Virginia says.

Putting Procure to Work for Centers

Virginia helps centers take advantage of the power of Procure by zeroing in on repetitive processes.

“Instead of asking someone else to take on more, let the software do the thinking. Software can take care of many routine tasks,” she advises.

She shares the example of centers moving from spreadsheets to Procure to update their weekly rosters.

“This alone shaves 10-30 minutes off their week. When we can identify a few routine activities like that and help a center shift the burden to Procure, we can easily save them hours every week,” she continues.

Virginia is also committed to helping centers use Procure to enable data-driven decision-making.

“Early in COVID, centers were reactionary – such as laying off staff, reducing enrollment or taking out big loans without a strategy for repayment – and they regretted their decisions,” Virginia says. “Rather than make gut-based decisions, centers can be guided by data with Procure.”

Along those lines, she helps centers run financial forecasting and scenarios.

“We train owners and directors to organize data and run scenarios so they can predict enrollment, expenses and revenue. This enables them to make the best possible decisions and identify financial challenges in advance,” she explains. Procure is able to produce reports that assist with these projections.

Starting Small for Big Results

According to Virginia, it’s finding the first task or process to automate that gives directors and owners the confidence to grow their use of Procure.

“Procure doesn’t need to be implemented all at once. We typically start with something small, train the center and soon they want to take advantage of more,” she says.

The owner of one center that Early Education Business Consultants serves used to write a weekly list of the families who owed tuition. As payments came in, she crossed names off the list and transferred open billings to a new list. Preparing payroll was another manual process that involved turning sign-in sheets into numbers for the payroll processor.

“This owner was frazzled and overwhelmed, spending hours every week on tasks like these. With Procare, we saved her six hours per week out the gate,” explains Virginia.

Then COVID hit, so Early Education Business Consultants helped the owner take advantage of additional Procare features such as online registration, billing, collecting tuition and the clock-in/clock-out feature.

“The owner said she easily saved another five hours per week, but it felt like 10 hours. The amount of personal time she regained and her stress reduction has been invaluable. And she’s not even using Procare to its full potential,” continues Virginia.

Taking Advantage of a Unique Opportunity

As Virginia sees it, early education centers are facing a unique opportunity to take their businesses to the next level. She points out that many centers have lower attendance right now and, at the same time, many organizations and government agencies are offering support.

“The industry is behind early education centers surviving and thriving. With fewer families and children to process, centers have the time and resources to rethink how they operate and to implement software that can streamline their businesses,” she says.

To that end, she points to the ability for Procare to enable touchless check-in and mobile payments, among others. “Procare enables many core activities to be handled outside the center which communicates a commitment to social distancing protocols and eliminates the need for staff to perform these transactions. At a time when everyone is feeling overworked, let software take care of as much as possible. You can hand off so much to software and it never complains,” she concludes.



Visit **www.procaresoftware.com** to learn how you can leverage Procare to manage every aspect of your child care business, enrich classroom and parent interactions, and automate the payment process.
