

# Ravenswood Early Learning Transforms Family Access to Early Childhood Education with Avela Explore



## 01 Executive Summary

Ravenswood Early Learning Center is an organization serving families living within the Ravenswood City School District and committed to providing high-quality, accessible early childhood education (ECE) for all children ages 0-5 in the communities of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

In 2024, Ravenswood faced a persistent problem: families seeking early childhood education couldn't find available spots, while local providers had open seats they couldn't fill. The disconnect wasn't due to a lack of resources – it was due to a fragmented and difficult-to-navigate system for parents to discover early care providers.

With a common commitment to early learning equity, Ravenswood partnered with Avela to implement Avela Explore, an online, family-centric program finder to make it easier for parents to find the right program for their children. The result has been a transformative improvement in how families find and secure care – bringing clarity, trust, and access to a system that previously fell short.

## 02

## The Challenge

In the Ravenswood community, as in much of California and the nation, finding early child care programs was an arduous task for parents. Despite a broad network of 38 early childhood providers, enrollment lagged. Parents' exposure to the available programs was often limited to unfulfilling online searches, stumbling across promotional flyers around the neighborhood, and word-of-mouth, making the landscape of available programs seem scarce.

To complicate matters further, the variety of early childhood programs is enormous. From licensing ages, to caregiver language preferences, to subsidies accepted, and more, these details matter greatly to parents – and were difficult for the existing infrastructure to easily portray. This left the onus on parents to extensively research to find the right program for their child, and often led parents to give up their search altogether.

This created a profound paradox: families couldn't find care, while providers couldn't fill their open seats. In a community only eight square miles wide, the fact that parents were unaware of available programs spoke volumes about the systemic barriers to access.

**As Executive Director Karen Pace explains it, “If [the process to find childhood care] doesn't work for parents, it doesn't work at all.”**

The impact of an outdated and difficult process was profound: over 50% of students entering transitional kindergarten (TK) in Ravenswood had zero prior early childhood experience. That's a missed opportunity for children, families, and the community. Research consistently shows that investments in early childhood education yield a 7:1 ROI. The earlier children are enrolled in enriching environments, the greater the benefit to their long-term development and academic success.

Ravenswood stakeholders knew there must be a better way to connect parents with providers.

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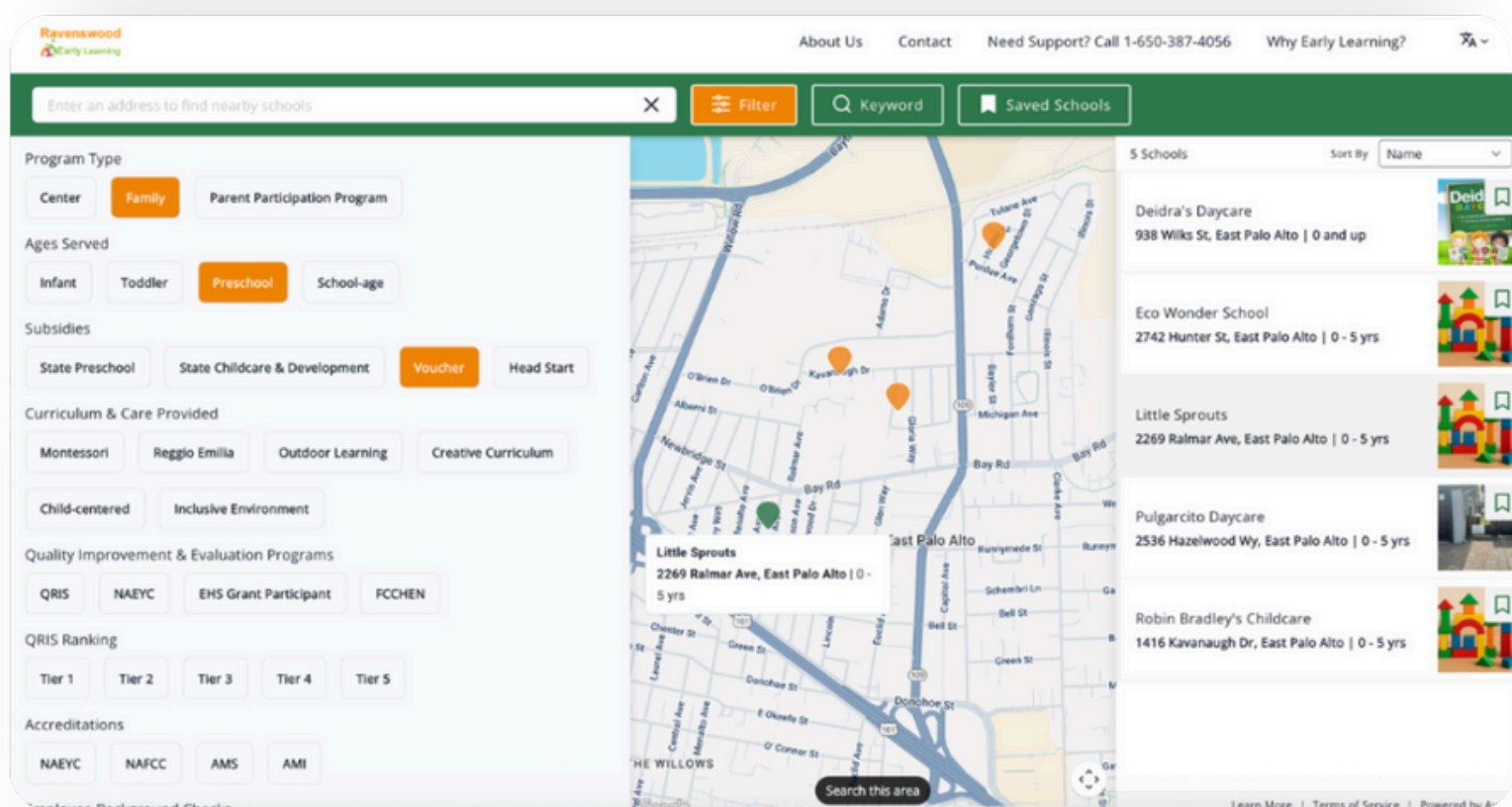
## The Solution

Determined to find a way to get all of the factors that parents care so deeply about into an easily navigable system, Ravenswood partnered with Avela to implement Avela Explore, a tool purpose-built to help families discover and evaluate education options in a seamless, intuitive way.

More than just a school finder, Avela Explore was designed with use cases like Ravenswood's in mind, incorporating deep input from providers, families, and district leaders.

Avela Explore makes it significantly easier for parents to recognize the breadth of early childhood care programs in the area and find the right fit for their children – all from their mobile device or desktop. With the ability to filter school results by details that matter to them, parents gain a much better understanding of the programs that match what they're looking for in a single, easy-to-navigate interface.

"Avela's highly user-centric interface has been a game changer for families looking for specific care programs for their children" says Pace. "We now have parents coming to us saying 'Wow, the early childhood care landscape is much bigger than I thought.'"



*Ravenswood's program finder through Avela Explore*



The cornerstone of their success was Ravenswood's trust and partnership with local programs. Ravenswood's commitment to not route children away from care providers to the school district's Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programming played a critical role in bringing providers on board and collecting detailed program information that mattered to families. This local, community-based approach ensured provider participation and accuracy of listings.

Avela Explore didn't just improve access for families. It made the entire early childhood ecosystem more transparent. County and neighboring communities officials visiting the Ravenswood's Provider finder called it "unbelievable." Compared to legacy systems, Avela Explore was leaps ahead in user experience — down to the intuitiveness of zooming in on a map.

## 04 The Result

Since implementing Avela Explore, the Ravenswood community has experienced a shift in access, awareness, and equity.

Families, once limited to guesswork and internet searches, can now see the full landscape of available programs — many for the first time. Providers, especially home-based ones often invisible in state databases, are getting inquiries and enrollments they never had before. Avela Explore became a safe, accessible entry point for parents — especially important for those navigating language barriers or complex funding qualifications.



In addition, enrollment across early childhood programs is rising. Providers report greater interest and visibility, at a time when many worry about declining enrollment due to TK expansion, declining birth rates, and young families moving out of the area due to insurmountable cost of living challenges. Most importantly, children are getting into care earlier, maximizing the benefits of early education and intervention.

For policymakers and community leaders who had long felt frustrated by the gap between available care and family access, Ravenswood's implementation of Avela Explore offers a model built on trust, technology, and a deep understanding of what families need.

## About Avela

Avela is an education technology company that offers a suite of application and enrollment solutions for education providers including PreK-12 schools, districts, and charter management organizations. The tools empower administrators to drive enrollment, streamline operations, and promote equity using research-proven approaches, while transforming the way families interact with educational institutions.

Learn more at [Avela.org](https://Avela.org)

