

Supporting and Strengthening the ECE Workforce

October 2022



Creating challenges

- ✓ Permanent, widespread closure of child care programs and classrooms
- ✓ Staffing crisis exacerbating a lack of supply
- ✓ Increased calls for looser regulatory environments & lowered standards
- ✓ Widening of the gap between birth through five and K-3 spaces

The Impact of the Pandemic (July 2021)

- Four out of every five respondents from child care centers said that they had a staffing shortage, and 15 percent reported a “major shortage” of 6-15 fewer workers than needed.
- 78 percent of respondents identified low wages as the main obstacle to recruitment of educators, and 81 percent said that insufficient pay is the main reason educators leave the field.
- More than one in every three respondents said they were considering leaving or shutting down their child care programs this year; this percentage increases for minority-owned programs, more than half of whom are considering permanent closure.
- In the context of programs facing staffing challenges and parents facing ongoing pandemic uncertainty, programs that are open are operating at an average enrollment rate of 71% of their licensed capacity, with 48% of enrolled children attending on an average day.

The Impact of the Pandemic Has Been Challenging for ECE Higher Education programs

- Almost two-thirds of ECE degree programs have experienced decreases in student enrollment.
- Over one-third of programs have seen a decrease in ECE candidates graduating.
- 30% of programs have experienced budget cuts.
- 18% of programs have experienced faculty and staff cuts.
- 20% of faculty reported experiencing food/housing/employment insecurity
- 25% of ECE faculty indicated they plan to retire or switch careers in the next three years
- 13% of programs indicated they are worried that their program is in danger of closing over the next 12-18 months.
- 2% of programs have closed during the pandemic.

Creating opportunities

- ✓ Billions of dollars invested in child care relief with potential for hundreds of billions of dollars in substantial, sustainable funding
- ✓ Recognition of the underlying vulnerabilities in ECE and the need to move away from the status quo
- ✓ Innovative responses from higher education faculty and PD specialists
- ✓ Renewed understanding of child care as essential
- ✓ Increased (temporary) compensation for some educators
- ✓ Increased appreciation for value of family child care settings

- 46 percent of respondents—and 54 percent of minority-owned programs—would have closed during the pandemic without federal assistance.
- 63 percent of educators working in child care programs saw an increase in compensation from relief funds, and 53 percent of family child care programs anticipate using funds to pay off debt incurred during the pandemic.

Some Silver Linings for ECE Higher Ed

Being primarily online increased access for many students to pursue their studies

Increased recognition of the humanity in teaching and learning

Virtual office hours increased interactions with students

All course content is now able to be adapted to online*

While the quick shift to online was jarring and challenging, most faculty reported feeling supported in the transition

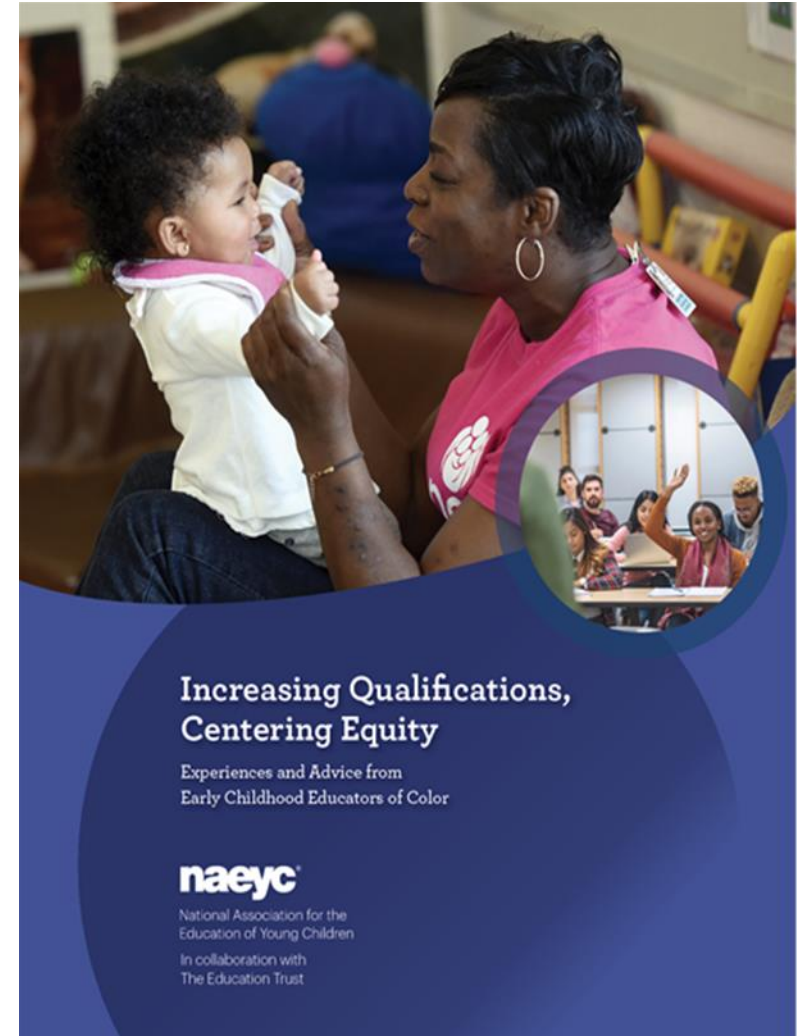
Identified varied and meaningful videos of young children to supplement field experiences

Where We Are Going: Audacious Vision

- Each and every child is supported by ECEs with recognized early childhood degrees and credentials;
- Early childhood educators at all levels of the profession are valued, respected, and well-compensated;
- Educators with lead responsibilities across settings and age bands have bachelor's degree in early childhood education at a minimum;
- ECEs have equitable access to affordable, high-quality professional preparation and development; and
- ECEs at all levels are well compensated from public funding

Implementation Commitments

- We **will not advocate for policies that disproportionately and negatively impact educators from communities of color.**
- We will not advocate for new regulations or requirements for early childhood educators without advocating to establish and implement **realistic timelines** that recognize the challenges faced by the existing workforce, across all settings.
- We will not advocate for new regulations or requirements for early childhood educators without advocating for implementation plans and timelines that recognize the **particular challenges that family child care and other community-based providers face**, so as not to contribute to or worsen their widespread decline.



Early childhood educators...

- Care for and promote the learning, development and well-being of children **birth through age eight**
- Meet the **guidelines of the profession**
- Are defined by their **mastery of knowledge, skills and competencies, as defined by the profession**
- Practice in **all** early childhood education settings, including **family child care**



An ECE Profession Centered on the Professional Standards and Competencies

ECE Employer Hiring and Evaluation Requirements

ECE Teacher Licensing Requirements

State Program Approval for ECE Professional Preparation Programs

ECE Professional Preparation Program Curriculum

National Accreditation

State Professional Development Systems

State Early Childhood Educator Competencies

One License: 3 Credential Designations

Birth through Age 8 License

ECE I Designation

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Scope of Practice: Serve in a support role in birth-age 8 settings. Cannot serve as lead teacher or teacher of record.

Education Requirement: Completion of (at least) 120 clock hours of an ECE preparation program

ECE II Designation

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Scope of Practice: Serve as the lead educator or teacher of record in birth through age five settings. Serve in a support role in K-3 settings.*

Education Requirement: ECE Associate Degree

ECE III Designation

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Scope of Practice: Serve as lead educator or teacher of record in birth through age 8 settings

Education Requirement: ECE Baccalaureate Degree or ECE Initial Master's Degree

*In alignment with the *Unifying Framework* recommendations, for states that already require an individual to have a bachelor's degree to serve as the lead educator/teacher of record in public PreK settings this scope of practice will be adjusted to reflect that the ECE II designation allows the individual to serve as lead educator/teacher of record in birth through age five settings, with the exception of public PreK settings.

Owners / Employers

- Provide salaries and competitive benefits packages that are comparable to the public K-12 education sector for similarly qualified employees
- Implement hiring, promotion, supervision and evaluation practices that ensure educators can effectively meet their responsibility to provide high-quality learning and care
- Provide working conditions that promote the well-being of employees and support their implementation of the Professional Standards and Competencies.
- *This means employers **need public funding** to allow for recruiting and retaining staff with the credentials outlined in the P2P recommendations, to increase the presence of diverse ECEs in administrative roles, provide access to professional development, fund substitute pools, and more.*

Self Employed Professionals

- There are lots of instances (family child care and small centers) where an early childhood educator serves as both the employer and the educator.
- Family child care and self-employed early childhood educators need and benefit from additional supports such as peer learning networks.
- Innovations and other revised and realigned structures and specializations will also be necessary to support educators working in family child care who are working non-traditional hours to support working families and serving children in mixed age groups, including those older than 8, often during out-of-school time hours.

Right Sizing Roles

- As the profession takes on more responsibility, the federal and state roles will evolve to focus on regulating practice and targeting **investments to ensure quality of life, safety, and accountability**.
- P2P does not intend for the recommendations in the *Unifying Framework* to be layered on top of existing state systems or the federal system; rather, this vision includes the unwinding, reorientation, and realignment of some existing systems, freeing up funding and focus that can be redirected toward the thing that makes the biggest difference in driving access and quality: the workforce.

Professional Compensation

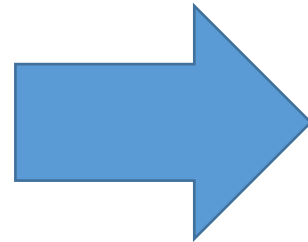
- **Recommendation 1:** **Comparable** for early childhood educators with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities, regardless of the setting of their job.
- **Recommendation 2:** Include the provision of an **adequate benefits** package.
- **Recommendation 3:** **Increase commensurate** with increased preparation and increased competency.
- **Recommendation 4:** Not differentiated on the basis of the ages of children served. Start with **public school salary scales but don't end here.**

The *Unifying Framework* centers ECE higher education programs as the primary pipeline for the ECE workforce. Supporting and assuring ECE professional preparation program quality is essential to the health of the ECE Profession.

Supports and Accountability for ECE Professional Preparation Programs

Necessary Supports and Infrastructure for ECE Professional Preparation Programs

- For Faculty
- For Programs
- For Students
- Investment from Higher Ed Leadership



As public funding increases and as access to core infrastructure and supports for ECE Higher Ed Programs increases, programs must meet three expectations

Earn accreditation or recognition from an early childhood professional preparation accreditation or recognition

Ensure that graduates can successfully demonstrate proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*

Advance seamless articulation strategies

Faculty

Faculty:student ratios

Qualifications

Compensation

Diversity

Access to PD

Program

Data and Technology Systems

Field Experience Quality

Supports for
Accreditation/Continuous
Improvement Efforts

Students

Wraparound supports,
cohorts, mentoring/advising,
first-gen supports, ELL
supports

Flexible program delivery
models

Intentional efforts to recruit
diverse students

For ECE Higher Education Programs, Solving Compensation will result in.....

Increasing the number of current early childhood educators who can afford to pursue postsecondary education

Attracting more prospective early childhood educators to programs b/c they see early childhood education as a viable career

Taking ECE higher education program off the chopping block of programs that higher education leaders eliminate

Increasing the stature and respect for ECE higher education programs and their graduates

**NAEYC's higher education accreditation system
advances quality in ECE professional
preparation programs.**

Alignment to the recommendations in the *Unifying Framework*

Accountability and Quality Assurance Lever

Applies a Framework for Continuous Improvement in ECE Professional Preparation Programs

The Whole Program is Considered in Accreditation

The 2021 Higher Education Accreditation Standards

Standard A:
Program
Identity,
Candidates,
Organization
and Resources

Standard B:
Faculty
Characteristics
and Quality,
Professional
Responsibilities
and Professional
Development

Standard C:
Program Design
and Evaluation

Standard D:
Developing
Candidate
Proficiency in
the *Professional
Standards and
Competencies*

Standard E:
Assuring
Candidate
Proficiency in
the *Professional
Standards and
Competencies*

Standard F:
Field
Experience
Quality

What is the Unifying Framework Driving Toward?

Creating a birth-age 8 ECE Workforce

- Breaking down the division of K-3 and 0-5 (implications for governance, licensing, professional preparation, etc.)

All components of the ECE System are centered on

- The *Professional Standards and Competencies* – No more 50+ sets of state standards
- The early childhood educator (as defined by the UF) and the ECE designations

Every early childhood educator is licensed to practice

- Every early childhood educator has professional preparation prior to practicing
- A birth-age 8 license – No more 50+ sets of state requirements for credentialing and licensing
- Reworking/simplifying career lattices

Fair and equitable compensation for all early childhood educators

- K-12 compensation is the floor for ECE compensation
- Compensation (salary and benefits) is based on ECE designations, not based on age groups being served or settings in which individuals practice

Higher education is well-supported

- More cohesiveness in the curriculum within and across degree levels
- More infrastructure and supports for program quality and for students
- Consistency in the quality of ECE professional preparation programs

Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession

Power to the Profession is a national collaboration to define the early childhood education profession, birth through age 8, across states and settings, by establishing a framework for career pathways, preparation, competencies, responsibilities, and compensation. The *Unifying Framework*—this document—is the result of this multi-year, profession-led effort. It is based on the recommendations from the series of eight Power to the Profession Decision Cycles; references the full Decision Cycle documents as sources; and demonstrates how they all come together to advance a unified, diverse, equitable, and effective early childhood education profession.

■ MARCH 2020 ■

Disponible en Español visitando [PowerToTheProfession.org](https://www.powertotheprofession.org)

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

Effective early childhood educators are critical for realizing the early childhood profession's vision that each and every young child, birth through age 8, have equitable access to high-quality learning and care environments. As such, there is a core body of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively promote the development, learning, and well-being of all young children.

[Disponible en Español: NAEYC.org/competencias](https://www.naeyc.org/competencias)

A Position Statement Held on Behalf of the Early Childhood Education Profession
Adopted by the NAEYC National Governing Board November 2019

Guidelines for Quality Early Childhood Education Professional Preparation Programs

NAEYC's Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation Standards



Struggles, Successes, and Silver Linings: The Impact of the Pandemic on ECE Postsecondary Programs

September 2021

In early spring 2020, college campuses across the country had to quickly shift all of their in-person classes online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For programs preparing graduates for clinical professions, such as early childhood education (ECE), this was particularly challenging given that field experiences are central to the curriculum. The quick pivot required faculty to find creative ways to supplement classroom observations and field experiences and to implement and expand necessary supports for students.

In an effort to better understand the ECE higher education landscape during the initial period of the pandemic, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conducted a survey with respondents from 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Between April 16 and May 6, 2020, the survey was sent to over 300 programs in NAEYC's higher education accreditation system and to over 250 NAEYC nationally recognized programs. In all, 263 faculty members from 232 institutions responded.

According to that survey, the vast majority of respondents (92 percent) indicated that their institutions had shifted classes from in-person to online for the spring semester. Additionally, **56%** of respondents reported they had to make significant modifications to ECE course content for online learning, while **40%** were able to move online with few to no modifications. Increases in student attrition coupled with a decline in the number of students graduating created difficulties for program faculty and staff. Last, but certainly not least, respondents found it

difficult to maintain their own as well as their students' emotional health, especially when navigating the challenges associated with online learning.

As of September 2021, we are approximately 18 months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout, NAEYC has carefully monitored, assessed, and reported on the pandemic's impact on the ECE field. As part of this work, from April 9 to May 3, 2021, NAEYC conducted a follow-up survey asking ECE faculty and ECE higher education administrators about the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their institutions, their early childhood education programs, their students, and themselves. The findings from this survey, as reflected in the broader early childhood field, reveal significant devastation and challenges as well as silver linings and many positive lessons learned. This brief provides a snapshot of the ECE higher education landscape heading into a third academic year in which programs, faculty, and students will feel the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ <https://www.naeyc.org/pandemic-surveys>

You can find updated statements and recommendations on [NAEYC's COVID-19 resources page](#) and can always reach out via email to highered@NAEYC.org with questions and to share your stories.

Preparing a Profession Perspectives of Higher Education Leaders on the Future of the Early Childhood Education Workforce



Fall 2021

Q&A