

# Strategic Direction

National Association for the Education of Young Children



**Guiding Our Work  
Through 2026**

---

## Vision Statement

Each and every child thrives and learns in a society dedicated to ensuring all children reach their full potential.

---

## Mission Statement

NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

---

## Core Values

NAEYC's core values reflect our belief that all children have the right to equitable learning opportunities, and that all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. Our values uphold NAEYC's approach as an employer, professional membership association, partner, and field leader. They are based on the principles of child development and learning and are further defined through NAEYC's core position statements: Code of Ethical Conduct; Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators; Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education; Developmentally Appropriate Practice; and Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards. We are propelled by our commitment to upend our own structural and organizational inequities, and to ensure our actions are grounded in our values. Our core values are:

› **Excellence and Innovation**

We take risks, imagine new ways of working, and challenge existing assumptions, while remaining fiscally responsible and accountable to our mission and members.

› **Transparency**

We act with openness and clarity.

› **Reflection**

We consider multiple sources of evidence and diverse perspectives to review past performance, note progress and successes, and engage in continuous quality improvement.

› **Equity and Opportunity**

We advocate for and establish policies, practices, and systems that promote full and inclusive participation. We confront biases that create barriers and limit the potential of children, families, and early childhood professionals.

› **Collaborative Relationships**

We share leadership and responsibility in our work with others. We commit time and effort to ensure diverse participation and more effective outcomes. We act with integrity, respect, and trust.

› **Care and Commitment**

We are dedicated to the well-being, belonging and connectedness of our staff, volunteers and members.



# Strategic Priorities



**High Quality Early  
Childhood Education**



**The Profession**



**Professional Membership,  
Leadership, and Innovation**



**Organizational  
Excellence**

## High Quality Early Childhood Education



### Goal

Each and every child birth through age 8 has equitable access to developmentally appropriate high-quality early childhood education.

### Desired Results

- › Developmentally appropriate practice is culturally and linguistically affirmative, indispensable and applied in all early childhood education settings from birth through third grade.
- › Early Learning Program Accreditation is the defining measure of program quality, cost effective, provides a seamless user experience and is equitably accessible to all young learners.
- › The true cost of quality early childhood education is reflected through increased public financing structured for stability that limits the burden to families and recognizes all program settings.
- › State and federal policies reflect comprehensive approaches to providing equitable access to high-quality early learning, with particular focus on children living in poverty, multilingual children, children of color, and children with disabilities.

## The Profession



### Goal

Early childhood educators are effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated across all states and settings in alignment with the *Unifying Framework*.

### Desired Results

- › Educators across states and settings experience visible, measurable, and meaningful progress towards competitive professional salaries and comprehensive benefits aligned to skills and competencies.
- › An aligned professional field of practice is adopted across the United States, moving towards full implementation of The Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession.
- › Early childhood educators are equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to fully support the development and learning of young children.
- › Higher Education Programs preparing early childhood educators at the associate, bachelor and master's degree levels are NAEYC Accredited.
- › Early childhood educators, particularly those from traditionally marginalized communities, have full and complete access to aligned postsecondary credentials and degrees.



## Professional Membership, Leadership, and Innovation



### Goal

NAEYC is a diverse and influential professional membership association for early childhood educators.

### Desired Results

- › Membership comprises the full diversity of early childhood educators whose voices and experiences are at the center of every level of the organization.
- › Clear and equitable pathways exist for all members to assume governance and leadership roles throughout NAEYC and its affiliates.
- › Serve as a catalyst and consensus builder for complex and controversial issues.
- › Events and resources are relevant, adaptive, and seen as necessary to advance practice, policy, and research.
- › NAEYC, its affiliates and interest forums integrate inclusive practices where early childhood educators experience belonging and community.

## Organizational Excellence



### Goal

NAEYC reflects excellence in all aspects of organizational health and vitality.

### Desired Results

- › Governing Board and staff are accountable for the diversity, effectiveness, fiscal health, and sustainability of the organization.
- › Recruitment, hiring and retention practices including staff engagement and wellness are paramount and reflect our organizational values.
- › Sound fiscal and legal business practices are foundational tools to advance NAEYC's mission and impact.
- › Customers have positive experiences and their needs are met because of attentive customer support, user-friendly technology systems, and effective product delivery.
- › Employees are empowered to make decisions, have strong relationships with each other, commit to a culture of performance, strive for work-life balance and are recognized for the contributions they are making to NAEYC's mission.

Learn More at  
[NAEYC.org](https://naeyc.org)

**naeyc**<sup>®</sup>

National Association for the  
Education of Young Children

