

America for Early Ed

An Agenda for the States

States and local communities have made many innovative advancements in early childhood education throughout the past decades. Led by Republicans and Democrats, states are powerful drivers in the pursuit of access to high-quality early learning for today's children in order to strengthen tomorrow's workforce. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommends that states and communities take the following actions, remaining responsive to the strengths and needs of all their children, families, and educators, in order to continue to lead the way forward.

Promote Excellence and Equity

Delivering on the promise of early childhood education will require that our policies and practices catch up with the significant body of research and science about the individual and collective benefits that accrue when children have access to high-quality early learning settings with supported, skilled, and knowledgeable teachers. To that end, NAEYC recommends that states

- Embed and integrate NAEYC accreditation for early learning and higher education programs in state policies and quality rating and improvement systems focused on ensuring that children have access to high-quality early childhood education.
- Establish policies to promote children's social and emotional and behavioral health, with the goal of eliminating the use of suspension and expulsion in early childhood education.
- Ensure that all quality improvement and assessment strategies are developmentally appropriate and designed to address the needs and strengths of all children and families, including children with special needs and children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Support and incentivize high-quality programs to blend funding streams.
- Strengthen and align state professional development and preparation systems to ensure that they include quality assurance mechanisms, support workforce diversity, provide equitable access, and address compensation parity.

Implement CCDBG with Intention—and Funding

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization was passed with strong bipartisan support by Congress in 2014. As states implement the updated law, NAEYC recommends that they

- Authorize and appropriate additional and sufficient state funding, with support from federal funding, to implement the requirements for health, safety, and quality without cutting the number of children and families served or cutting services to those who receive them
- Make progress toward the recommended level for reimbursement rates for providers, set at the 75th percentile of current market rates
- Tier reimbursement rates to financially reward the highest quality programs while providing additional support to lower quality programs so they can improve
- Use quality set-aside funds to support training and professional development, alongside methods such as wage supplements and tax credits, to keep educators in the field once they have received additional training and education
- Be intentional about linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach and application processes, particularly for marginalized families, families of color, and those who are multiple language learners

Help “Every Student Succeed” by Investing in Early Learning

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed with strong bipartisan support by Congress in 2015. As states and districts implement the new law, NAEYC recommends that they

- Actively and intentionally reach out to and engage diverse groups of early childhood educators as stakeholders in developing and implementing state and district plans
- Use funds to improve and expand early childhood programs
- Create professional development plans and joint training opportunities that include early childhood educators and administrators
- Consider including chronic absenteeism, which is a measure of how much school a student misses for any reason, as an indicator of school quality
- Use young child assessments for developmentally appropriate purposes only—namely, to inform and improve educators’ practices

