



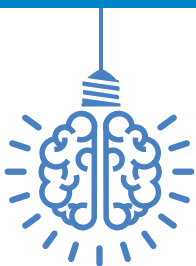
America for Early Ed

A Federal Agenda to Deliver on the Promise
of High-Quality Early Childhood Education
for Our Children, Families, and Economy

Why Early Childhood Education?

What do many neuroscientists, economists, psychologists, generals, faith leaders, parents, Republican and Democratic governors, teachers, principals, researchers, state and federal legislators, and business leaders all have in common?

They share a belief that investing in high-quality early childhood education and early childhood educators will make America brighter, stronger, and more competitive. Why? Because decades of research show that early investment produces positive outcomes for our children, our families, and the economic future of our country.



The first years of a child's life are the period of the most rapid brain development and lay the foundation for all future learning.²



High-quality early childhood programs deliver a return on investment that outpaces average stock market gains.³



Children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional, and language and literacy development are built on a foundation of children's positive interactions with adults, peers, and their environment.⁴



High-quality early childhood education depends on high-quality early childhood educators who ensure that children, supported by families, have the early experiences they need for a strong foundation.⁵

We know that making early childhood education high quality boosts the well-being of children and that making it affordable helps parents get and keep a job. Americans—of all political, geographic, and demographic backgrounds—know this too. They understand how important it is for families to be able to choose high-quality early childhood education that best meets their needs. They recognize early childhood educators as professionals who have complex and demanding jobs and responsibilities. They understand the evidence-based connection between having high-quality educators and having high-quality education, and they know investing in early childhood education helps our country compete and win in the global environment.¹

From our nation's inception, we have held a collective belief that all children, regardless of their circumstances, should have a fair shot at freedom and economic opportunity that comes with our democracy. But in reality, when kids start behind, they often stay behind—limiting their potential and their contributions to our country. Access to affordable, high-quality early learning boosts their chances to live up to that potential and become valuable contributors to society.

To fully extend America's promise of a world-class education to the next generation, learning must start well before the first day of kindergarten for all children. Our nation can and must do better to create opportunities that help all children and families succeed.

Why NAEYC?

For more than 90 years, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has been the trusted voice of high-quality early learning in the United States and around the globe. As the foremost professional association for the early childhood field, NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, 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.

Research and Evidence Based

The policies, standards, and practices we develop and advocate for are based on research and evidence in child development. This ever-growing body of work forms the foundation for NAEYC's accreditation standards, which serve as the industry standard of quality for early learning programs. The accreditation standards and their implementation support developmentally appropriate practices and foster rich learning environments and experiences. These, in turn, have been shown to have a positive impact on children's brain development, early literacy skills, social relationships, and learning foundations.

In addition to our early learning program standards, NAEYC leads the field in developing and implementing professional preparation standards. These have been adopted by states and institutions of higher education across the country so that practitioners and students who commit to careers in the early childhood profession develop into educators with the requisite skills and knowledge.

NAEYC, committed to elevating the voices of the early childhood profession, is also engaged in a national, state, and local collaboration to establish a shared framework of career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation that unifies the entire profession. We aim to ensure that our nation's 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. That's when we will deliver on the promise of early learning.

Nearly **90%** of voters say early childhood educators are important members of their communities, on par with firefighters and nurses.

NAEYC Fast Facts

More than **60,000** members

More than **150,000** followers on social media

More than **400** institutions of higher education house programs that are accredited or recognized by NAEYC

More than **7,100** early childhood programs accredited by NAEYC across the fifty states

NAEYC Strategic Priorities

Goal: Children birth through age 8 have equitable access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality early learning.

Goal: The early childhood education profession exemplifies excellence and is recognized as vital and performing a critical role in society.

83% of voters would support a public investment in early childhood education that is used to increase educators' wages.



Recommendations for the 115th Congress

As the 115th Congress makes critical choices about our nation's future, NAEYC offers the following recommendations to help today's children get ready to compete in tomorrow's workforce.

Providing Federal Funding that Supports Families in Need

An underfunded child care system means that the vast majority of children (84%) do not receive the support for which they are eligible. Congress can help correct this disparity, addressing the foundations of child care while also acknowledging that children live in families and communities with many strengths and needs, by

- Ensuring all eligible low- and moderate-income families are able to choose and afford quality child care by investing in Head Start and Early Head Start and by substantially increasing funding for the Child Care and

Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which was reauthorized by Congress in 2014 with strong bipartisan support

- Protecting vital non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs from further cuts and ending sequestration
- Ensuring that any sequestration relief is equally balanced between non-defense and defense programs, as strong investments in both NDD and defense are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure

Building a Stronger Early Education Workforce

Skilled, supported, and knowledgeable early childhood educators provide high-quality early childhood programs. An average wage of \$10.40/hour undermines that quality and diminishes the benefits to children, families, and our economy. Congress can help build a stronger early childhood education profession by

- Ensure continued access to year-round Pell grants, so early childhood educators who are working while in school can access financial aid throughout the entire year
- Waiving the lifetime limit on access to Pell Grants for early childhood educators, who provide an important national service in a low-wage, high-need field
- Ensuring that early childhood educators working outside elementary school settings are eligible for school loan forgiveness and cancellation programs
- Maintaining the Higher Education Act's Title II Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants and including early childhood educators in educator preparation initiatives on a consistent basis
- Supporting increases in payment rates for early childhood educators serving families receiving child care assistance, so that states can reach the federally recommended benchmark of paying at the 75th percentile of current market rates and move toward payments based on the cost of high-quality child care



Supporting Smart Tax Incentives that Help Families and Drive Quality

The annual cost of center-based child care for one infant exceeds the annual cost of tuition plus fees at a four-year public college. Congress should use opportunities in tax reform to

- Help more lower- and middle-income families afford child care by strengthening the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to
 - » Make it fully refundable
 - » Increase allowable expense limits to cover a greater proportion of families' child care costs
 - » Increase the sliding scale so that it provides more assistance to middle-class families
 - » Change the payment's structure so families receive the credit as they pay the cost of care
- Improve the quality of child care by establishing new tax credits—based on innovations in Louisiana and Nebraska—that reward educators who improve their teaching practices by increasing their qualifications and credentials





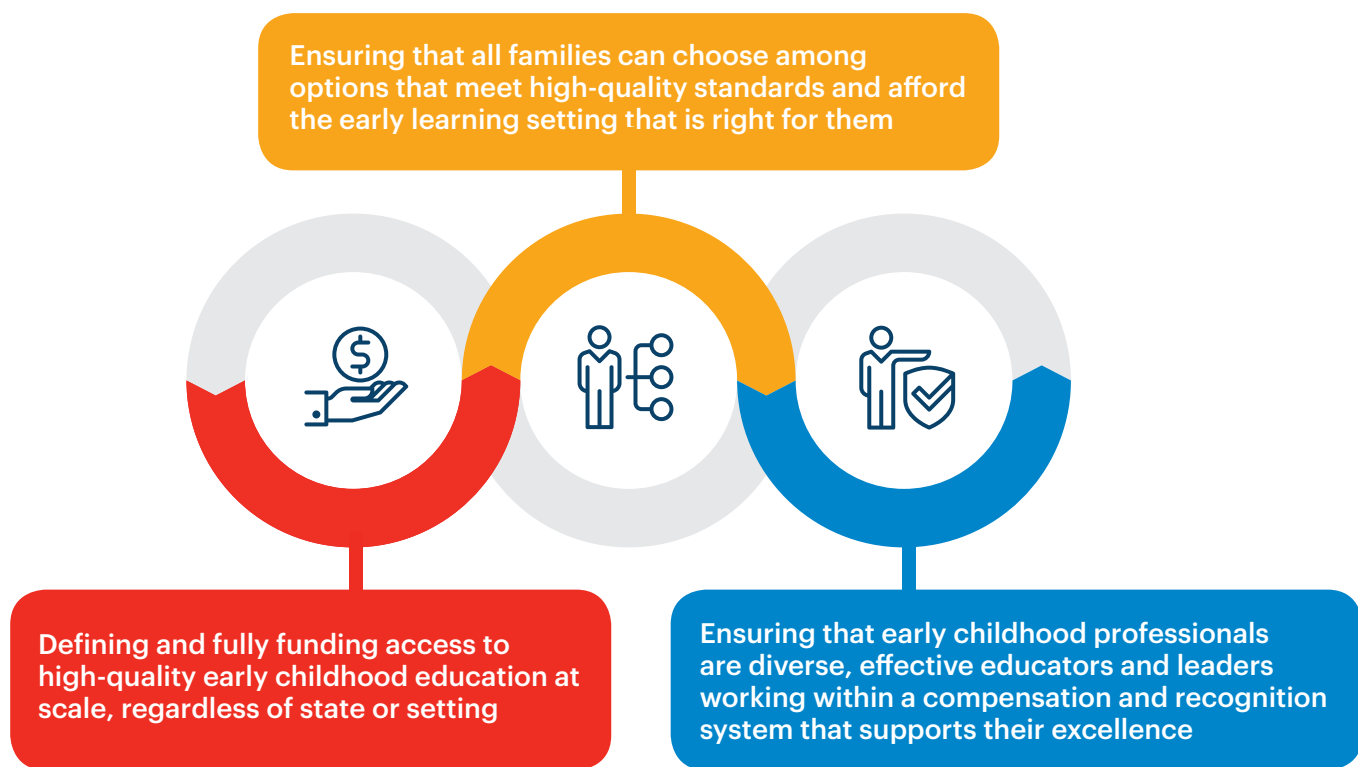
In 1944, a conservative coalition in Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the GI Bill. Hailed as a stunning success, the GI Bill provided a generation of service members with upward mobility and economic opportunity, transforming our country in the process.

To transform our future, we can—and we must—make investments like this again, prioritizing the professionals who, with complex and demanding jobs and responsibilities, are caring for and educating the next generation.

A Call to Action for the Future of Early Learning

If the 115th Congress were to adopt the recommendations NAEYC has outlined, hundreds of thousands of children, families, and educators in this country would benefit, as well as their workplaces, schools, and the economy of both today and tomorrow. These actions represent critically important steps—yet they remain steps.

In order to fully deliver on the promise of high-quality early learning for all children, our country must prioritize and implement a bold family and values vision that is rooted in the early years by



Early Childhood Educators: Vital and Valued

Because we know that our nation's greatest successes are born of investments in our nation's people, this effort would focus on lifting up early childhood educators by

- Providing scholarships for educators to support their access to accredited higher education programs for associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees in early childhood education
- Stipulating a commitment to stay in early learning for a requisite number of years upon usage of the scholarship
- Embedding a phased-in, profession-determined baseline threshold of knowledge, skills, and competencies for early childhood educators that is aligned with compensation, in all federal and state funding streams



Early Childhood Education: Success at Scale

To achieve the outcomes at scale that would result from fully delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning, NAEYC's vision begins with fully funding the foundational early childhood programs, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, and Early Head Start.

We then envision the establishment and financing of federal-state partnerships that encourage innovations by offering “cost-of-quality” grants that:

- Are provided to any and all states who can demonstrate that their early learning and professional development systems are set up for success
- Fund activities that are aligned with an agreed-upon set of criteria that drive quality and strengthen state-led systems-building efforts

- Are distributed as “scholarships” to any early childhood setting that is delivering or making progress towards delivering quality for children and families
- Support full-day, full-year care that meets the needs of working families and supports children's learning

NAEYC will continue to work with policy makers, families, educators, business leaders, economists, scientists, and researchers to bring us closer to fulfilling our mission of delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning for our children, our families, and our country.

¹ Public opinion poll, conducted August 6–12, 2015, by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS) on behalf of NAEYC. Details available at www.naeyc.org/profession.

² Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture>

³ The Heckman Equation. <http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program-one-page>

⁴ Kontos, S., & A. Wilcox-Herzog. 1997. “Teachers’ Interactions with Children: Why Are They So Important?” *Young Children* 52 (2): 4–12; Hamre, B.K., B.E. Hatfield, R.C. Pianta, & F.M. Jamil. 2013. “Evidence for General and Domain-Specific Elements of Teacher–Child Interactions: Associations with Preschool Children’s Development.” *Child Development*, DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12184

⁵ Institute of Medicine (IOM) & National Research Council (NRC). 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.