

# Power to the Profession

## *Decision Cycles 345+6:* Pathways, Preparation, and Compensation

American Federation  
of State, County and  
Municipal Employees

American Federation of  
Teachers

Associate Degree Early  
Childhood Teacher  
Educators

Child Care Aware of  
America

Council for Professional  
Recognition

Division for Early  
Childhood of the Council  
for Exceptional Children

Early Care and Education  
Consortium

National Association for  
Family Child Care

National Association for  
the Education of Young  
Children

National Association of  
Early Childhood Teacher  
Educators

National Association  
of Elementary School  
Principals

National Education  
Association

National Head Start  
Association

Service Employees  
International Union

ZERO TO THREE

JULY 2019

**Power to the Profession** is a national collaboration to define the early childhood profession by establishing a Unifying Framework for career pathways, knowledge, competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation.

The following recommendations represent key components of this Unifying Framework. The first three recommendations are part of the P2P *Decision Cycle 345*, which focuses on differentiating pathways and preparation. The fourth comprises *Decision Cycle 6*, which focuses on compensation.

*Decision Cycles 1 and 2* can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

To share your thoughts on Power to the Profession, please go to [www.powertotheprofession.org](http://www.powertotheprofession.org) or email [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org).

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## The Unifying Framework of the Early Childhood Education Profession: First Edition



*These are America's children.*



*The first years of their lives are the period of the most rapid brain development.*



*Children, their families, and society benefit from early childhood education in ways that are immediate and long-lasting.*



*But the extent of the benefits they reap depends on the depth of the quality of their experiences and education.*



*And the depth of that quality depends on the knowledge and skills of the early childhood educators providing it.*

These children are all the children in our country—more than 40 million of them, birth through age 8, rich in their racial, geographic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

One of the best things our country can do to support and improve outcomes for these children and their families is to make significant, substantial, and sustained investments in high-quality early childhood education.

Because positive relationships are at the core of quality, investing specifically in early childhood *educators* is the best thing we can do to improve early childhood *education*.

**This is why Power to the Profession is focused on equitably advancing an effective, diverse, and well-compensated early childhood education profession across states and settings.**

## INTRODUCTION

Skilled, supported, and knowledgeable early childhood educators provide high-quality early childhood programs. By underpreparing and undercompensating educators, the United States is undermining that quality and diminishing the short- and long-term benefits to children, families, and the economy. We are also harming educators themselves—primarily women, often from communities of color, whose poverty-level wages keep the burden of the cost of care to families from being even higher than it is now.

Deep-seated issues of inequity and inequality have shaped our profession, as they have shaped our world. These biases are individual and institutional; explicit and implicit; based on race, class, gender, sex, ability, language, religion, and other identities. Rooted in social, political, economic, and educational structures, these biases are a part of what has prevented the field from successfully advancing as a profession able to effectively improve outcomes for children and families.

Our children live in an increasingly diverse world, and they both need and benefit from a workforce that reflects and embodies that world. As such, when our current systems cause harm to educators, they can also harm children and their families. The inverse is also true: When our systems help educators, we help children and their families.

The theory behind the Power to the Profession (P2P) initiative is this: In order to receive the significant and sustained public investments that would allow all children to benefit from high-quality early childhood education, early childhood educators and stakeholders must agree on some clear, foundational elements of the diverse, effective, equitable, and well-compensated profession we all want. This foundation is built on the concept that children and families will benefit from having:

- ➔ a distinct early childhood education profession (*Decision Cycle 1*)
- ➔ with specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies (*Decision Cycle 2*),
- ➔ which are acquired through a primary pathway of professional preparation and deployed with varying depth and breadth, across all states and settings (*Decision Cycle 345*),
- ➔ leading to educators whose compensation reflects the value of their highly skilled work (*Decision Cycle 6*),
- ➔ with accountability structures, resources, and supports in place to build and sustain the profession so that it reflects the diversity of the young children it serves and reduces the impact of structural barriers such as institutional racism, sexism, classism, elitism, and bias (*Decision Cycles 7 and 8*).

The goal of P2P in *this cluster of Decision Cycles (345+6)* is to establish the first-ever, first-edition Unifying Framework of the early childhood education profession that defines professional preparation, responsibilities, scope of practice, specialization, and compensation, in order to drive public policy, additional and equitable distribution of funding, and systems change across all early learning settings and sectors.<sup>1</sup>

Oriented toward creating an implementable framework for early childhood educators, P2P is obligated—by our responsibilities to the current and future profession—to find the balance between the audacious and the attainable. As such, these Decision Cycles were constructed by keeping in mind the vision of where we, as early childhood educators, want to go, rooted in an understanding of where we are.

### Where We Are Going: Audacious Vision

Our vision is that each and every child, beginning at birth, has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood education, delivered by an effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce. To achieve this vision, which is grounded in the National Academy of Medicine’s (NAM) *Transforming the Workforce* report, we need to build toward a future structure for the early childhood education profession in which:<sup>2</sup>

- ➔ Each and every child, birth through age 8, across all settings, is supported by early childhood educators who have recognized early childhood degrees and credentials;
- ➔ Early childhood educators at all levels of the profession are valued, respected, and well-compensated for the important roles they play;
- ➔ Educators with lead responsibilities across settings and age bands are prepared at the Early Childhood Educator III level (earning a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education), at a minimum;
- ➔ Anyone who wants to become an early childhood educator, at any level, has equitable access to affordable, high-quality professional preparation and development that supports them in developing the agreed-upon set of knowledge, skills, and competencies;<sup>3</sup> and
- ➔ Early childhood educators at all levels are well compensated in accordance with the complex and demanding work they perform, as part of a system that recognizes the cost of quality and finances early childhood education as the public good that it is.

In order for this aspirational and equity-focused vision to come to life, the financing of high-quality early childhood education will have to change and grow. Local, state, and federal governments will each have to embrace significant and sustainable increases in investment, recognizing the individual and societal benefits that accrue when children and families have access to high-quality early learning settings with supported, skilled, and knowledgeable teachers.

In addition to increasing the consistency, reliability, and overall amount of funding, we must also attend to how and where that funding is spent. Increasing investments in an inequitable system may raise the tide, but it will still leave some boats underwater. Therefore, alongside our work to increase investments, we must also dismantle institutional and structural barriers that exist everywhere, from federal funding formulas to institutions of higher education, in order to avoid deepening existing divisions and inequities even as we work to eliminate them.

### Where We Are Now: Difficult Realities

Despite increased attention to and investment in early childhood education, it remains a fundamentally fragmented, floundering, and inequitable system that has been dramatically underfunded. This has led to generations of children who have not received the kind of high-quality early learning opportunities that science says they need, while creating a scarcity environment that leads to unsolved challenges and impossible trade-offs. For example,

### Lose-Lose Scenario

Parents can’t pay more. Educators can’t make less.

EARLY CHILD EDUCATORS	FAMILIES
<p>NEARLY <b>1/2</b> depend on public assistance</p>	 <p>PAY more for child care than for mortgages in 35 states</p>

early childhood educators, on average, earn so little that nearly half of the child care workforce is dependent on public benefits.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, in 35 states, families pay more for full-time child care than they do for their mortgage payments.<sup>5</sup>

**Misunderstood and undervalued.** Often misunderstood as little more than “babysitting,” child care has historically been viewed as a private good to be financed out of the pockets of parents. However, a significant body of more recent research and science has made it abundantly clear that quality early childhood education, provided in a mixed-delivery system, is a public good, accruing both short- and long-term individual and collective benefits. Significant government investment is necessary to close the gap in financing, which is currently responsible for the no-win situation in which parents cannot pay more and educators cannot make less.

**Many labels and roles, but no alignment with preparation, responsibilities, and compensation.**

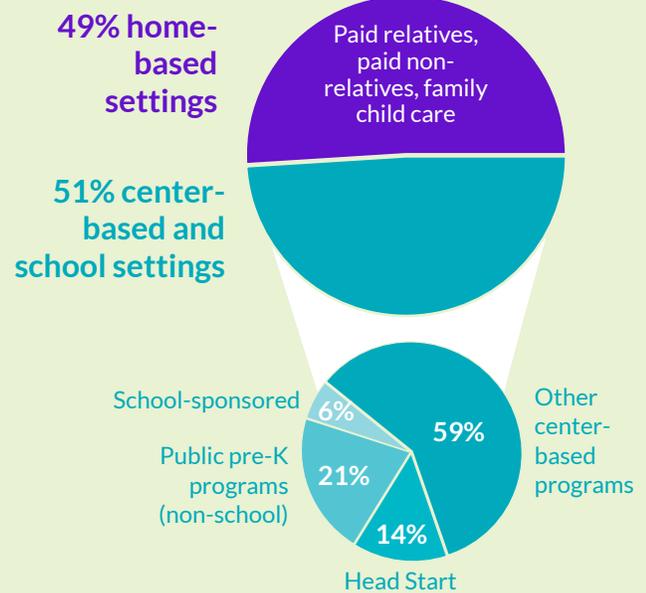
As a result of our collective failure to adequately invest in high-quality child care and early learning, the early childhood education workforce is disjointed and inadequately prepared to meet the needs of young children at the most critical stage of their development. As a workforce, we have many labels, designations, and roles that vary within and across states, sectors, and settings, including *provider, teacher, assistant, aide, lead teacher, child care worker, day care worker, educator, caregiver, pre-K teacher, elementary school teacher, primary teacher, and preschool teacher*. These terms, used without clarity or coherence, carry no meaning for their respective (and differing) preparation, responsibilities, expectations, and compensation levels.

**Preparation requirements have been raised, but only for some.**

Over the past two decades, driven in part by increasing understanding of the science of early brain development, federal and state early childhood systems have, in fact, raised the levels of professional preparation required—in certain programs, for certain people. State-funded preschool and pre-K, for example, now enrolling more than 1.5 million children through 60 programs in 43 states and the District of Columbia, have helped lead the way in requiring lead teachers to hold a bachelor’s degree.<sup>6</sup> Of states with public pre-K programs, 23 require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree for lead pre-K teachers across all settings and programs, while an additional 14 states require a bachelor’s for pre-K teachers, but only for certain types of programs or settings, such as public schools.<sup>7</sup> A majority of those programs also require specialized training in pre-K.

For Head Start, however, Congress set a requirement in 2007 that 50% of its workforce of center-based lead teachers had to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher in early childhood education or a related field (at that time, 44% met such a requirement; it is now at 73%). Yet states have varied significantly in their success: More than 90% of Head Start teachers in West Virginia and the District of Columbia hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, while only 36% of teachers in New Mexico claim the same.

**2 Million Educators Are Serving Children Birth through Age 5**



Early childhood educators working in grades K–3 also are required to earn a bachelor’s degree, though not necessarily in early childhood education, as well as licensure or certification. The disparities are significant here; with the developmental science of early learning from birth through age 8, we believe that educators working in grades K-3 need to be prepared and competent in early childhood education to be effective.

*Half of the roles in early childhood education have no minimum educational qualification requirements built into child care licensing at all.*

Of the approximately 2 million early childhood educators serving children birth through age 5 in the United States, approximately 1 million are working in a home-based setting, which includes paid relatives and non-relatives. Of the remaining 1 million, 6% are employed in school-sponsored programs; 14% work in Head Start-funded programs; and 21% are employed in publicly funded pre-K programs that were not school sponsored. Fifty-nine percent of non-home based early childhood educators are working in the “other” center-based programs—and 70% of jobs serving infants and toddlers are in those settings.<sup>8</sup>

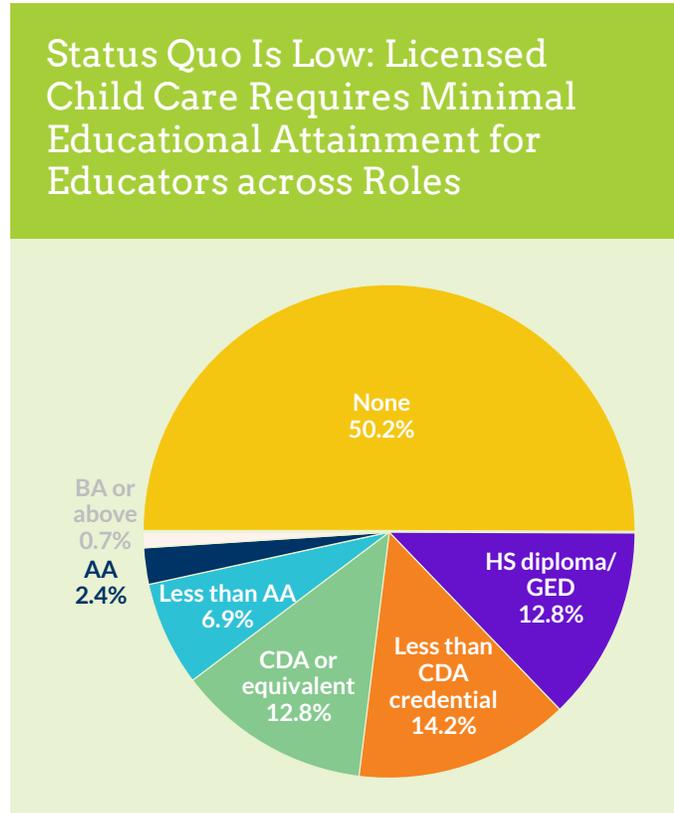
These family-based and “other” settings are where the jobs are—and they are primarily where the children are. While 16% of 3-year-olds and 44% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in a public preschool setting, such as Head

Start or a state-funded preschool program, the majority of children receive their pre-K experiences in other settings, including private child care and family child care settings. Meanwhile, 48% of infants under age 1 and 54% of toddlers between ages 1 and 2 receive some non-parental care, with 10% and 21% in center-based settings, respectively. Excluding license-exempt care, many of the remaining family child care settings are primarily subject to child care licensing requirements, where educational qualifications are generally minimal.<sup>9</sup>

For example, in six current early childhood educator roles across 50 states, state policymakers have approximately 300 opportunities to set minimum qualification requirements in child care state licensing, according to the Center for the Study on Child Care Employment.<sup>10</sup> But in only two instances, or 0.7%, is the minimum requirement set at a bachelor’s degree or above—and those are for center directors only. Half of the roles in early childhood education, across states, have no minimum educational qualification requirements in child care licensing at all.

Even in the absence of these baseline requirements, however, educators are forging ahead. As the Center for the Study on Child Care Employment describes:

*Although qualification requirements remain low, many teachers working in school- and center-based early care and education programs have earned bachelor’s degrees, and most of these educators have completed some early childhood development-related college coursework. Similarly, more than one-*



*third of early educators in home-based settings have earned at least an associate degree. But due to the lack of uniformity in minimum educational requirements and funding across programs and settings, in any state, the qualifications children can expect their teachers to meet are dependent on the type of programs that are available and affordable given their family's circumstances, rather than their developmental and educational needs.<sup>11</sup>*

### Getting from Here to There: A Pathway to a Unifying Framework

**All children, all ages, all settings.** The goal at the heart of the P2P is ensuring that, regardless of setting, each and every child, birth through age 8, experiences the benefit of having a well-educated, well-compensated, and socially and culturally diverse pool of early childhood educators. As such, the policies and structures we collectively recommend are designed to bring us toward that goal.

In this first edition of the Unifying Framework, we are mobilizing the early childhood field to establish the common language to immediately move forward with a unified agenda that paves the way for a visionary future. This goal is in keeping with the National Academy of Medicine's charge to establish pathways and multiyear timelines. Future iterations of the framework will build on this foundation, evolving as the field evolves.

**Building a bridge.** The implementation of the framework will build a bridge from the present to the future. It will include recommendations for policies that both honor and include the existing workforce, recognizing their dedication and experience and ensuring they are not summarily pushed out. These policies will include "grandfathering" policies that reflect the needs of children and families; respond to the voices of the field; reflect the realities of each state and community; be based in accurate workforce data; and be anchored in the expertise of educators who have already been through the process of increased educational requirements and who understand what it takes to be successful. Other critical bridge-building policies include offering flexible approaches to demonstrate competence. All policies for which we advocate will be structured to ensure that new education and qualification requirements are phased in over time, accompanied by additional public investments and extensive supports that fully address the serious challenges the workforce faces in accessing degrees and credentials, including Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees.

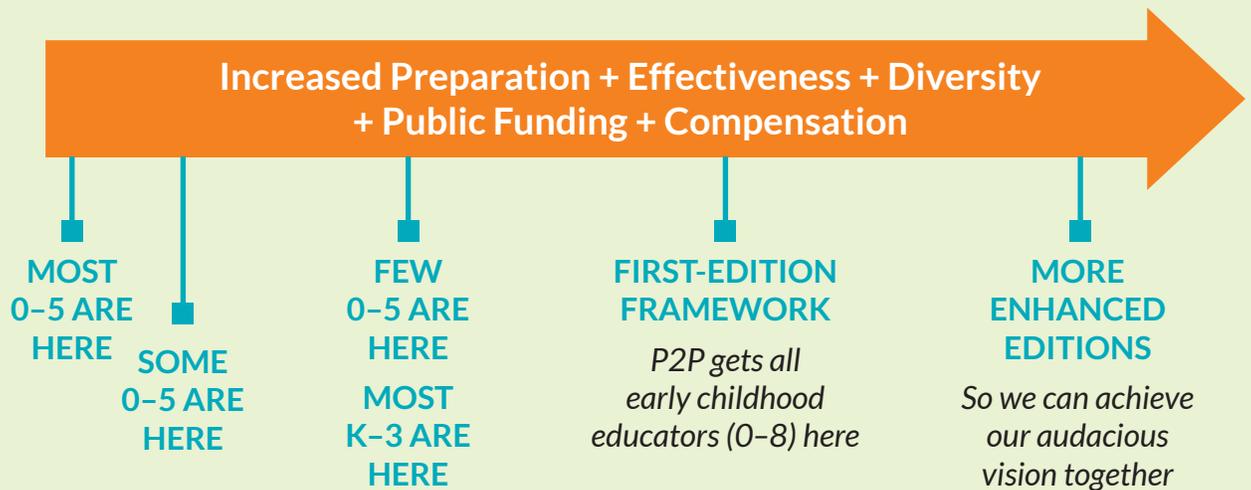
The following recommendations represent key components of this Unifying Framework. The first three are part of the P2P *Decision Cycle 345*, which focuses on differentiating pathways and preparation. The fourth comprises *Decision Cycle 6*, which focuses on compensation.

## Getting from Here to There: The Unifying Pathway

In this first edition of the Unifying Framework, we are mobilizing the early childhood field to establish the common language to immediately move forward with a unified agenda for all that paves the way for a visionary future.

This goal is in keeping with the National Academy of Medicine’s charge to establish pathways and multiyear timelines. Future iterations of the framework will build on this foundation, evolving as the field evolves.

The reality is that current public policies and financing systems that impact the practice of early childhood educators are far from the unifying pathway recommended by P2P.



### As we turn toward implementation, we pledge the following:

- ➔ We will *not* advocate for increased educational requirements without advocating for funding to provide requisite supports and attendant compensation.
- ➔ We will *not* advocate for new regulations without advocating for funding and time to implement the regulations.
- ➔ We will *not* advocate for policies that disproportionately and negatively impact educators from communities of color.
- ➔ We will advocate for policies that mitigate unintended consequences and create meaningful pathways for advancement.
- ➔ We will advocate to establish and implement timelines that recognize the challenges faced by the existing workforce to realistically meet new regulations and requirements.

In addition, we will rely on the tenets of implementation science to guide us and the power of the collective to stand firm together, speaking with a unified voice to policymakers on behalf of children, families, and early childhood educators.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. MEANINGFUL DIFFERENTIATION

**Where We Are Now:** An Incoherent and Inconsistent System that Fails to Recognize Differences in Preparation, Skills, and Experience

The current workforce is not, on the whole, being sufficiently prepared, supported, or compensated to implement consistent and effective practice for young children birth through age 8. This reality makes it difficult to identify those who are effective in their practice; in our current structure, regardless of the depth and breadth of their preparation, early childhood educators often acquire similar levels of responsibility, earning similar compensation.

**Even when advancing, same responsibilities, same wages.** While most states have career lattices or ladders that drive a subset of the current workforce, their complexity can drive others away; ladders with multiple rungs, as many states have, are often too difficult for policymakers to understand and, most important, for educators to navigate. Further, even if individuals do manage to progress up the ladders, they often find themselves earning the same wages, with the same work responsibilities, as they had on the lower rungs. Finally, the levels on the career lattices often do not align with staff qualification requirements for public school teacher licensure for early grades,

paraprofessional licensure for early grades, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, public pre-K programs, or child care program licensure requirements.

*The levels on the career lattices often do not align with staff qualification requirements for public school teacher licensure for early grades, paraprofessional licensure for early grades, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, public pre-K programs, or child care program licensure requirements.*

**Inequitable and stratified.** Unaligned and inconsistent leveling and differentiation open doors for additional inequality and increased stratification. Data indicate that educators of color are clustered primarily in the lower-wage jobs, such as aides and assistants, within this already low-wage field. Indeed, “the concentration of ethnic and linguistic diversity among lower-paid ranks of the [early childhood education and care] profession creates racial stratification

across professional roles,” with real implications for compensation.<sup>12</sup> One recent local study found, for example, that Latina and Asian/Pacific staff were more likely to hold lower-paid assistant teacher positions, while white non-Hispanic staff were more likely to be teachers.<sup>13</sup> Nationally, on average, African American female educators working full time in settings that serve children ages 0–5 make 84 cents for every \$1 earned by their white counterparts. White teachers working full-time with this same age group make an average of \$13.86 per hour. This 16% gap means an African American teacher would make \$366 less per month and \$4,395 less per year, on average.<sup>14</sup>

**Task Force Recommendation:** Create One Early Childhood Education Profession with Three Distinct and Meaningful Designations

Research clearly demonstrates that supporting the learning and development of young children requires complex, demanding, and valuable work that is performed by many individuals in many occupations.

### Inequality at work

African American women educating children ages 0–5 earn an average of **\$4,395 less per year than their white counterparts.**

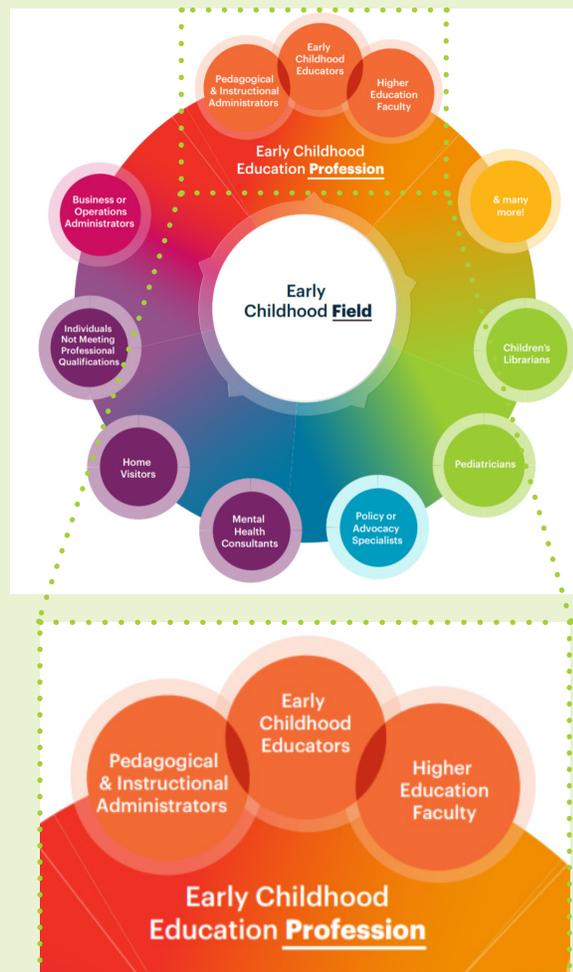
As determined in *Decision Cycle 1*, the early childhood education profession (made up of early childhood educators) is a distinct profession in the early childhood field.

Within this first edition of the unified early childhood education profession framework, and with a focus on the “educator” circle, we recommend a structure in which the cacophony of labels and roles is reduced to three distinct and meaningful designations: **Early Childhood Educator I (ECE I)**, **Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II)**, and **Early Childhood Educator III (ECE III)**.

**Unique roles and specific responsibilities.** Each designation, with names chosen in part because they can be incorporated and localized to support all settings, staffing, and supervisory structures, will have a unique role and be prepared for specific responsibilities. Establishing three different roles while keeping them together in the same professional structure will increase inclusivity and reduce stratification, helping to ensure that all individuals on an early childhood education team are explicitly valued, have a common identity, and are prepared to be effective in their specific practice. These professionals will be prepared to work together in various configurations as part of a teaching team that provides support for individuals designed to help guide and inform practice. Each preparation program will be responsible for preparing candidates who know, understand, and can implement the professional standards and competencies as defined by the profession.

**Detailed and leveled competencies.** For the early childhood education profession to advance, it is critical to establish agreed-upon standards and competencies that encompass the required knowledge and skills for individuals within the profession—in other words, to establish what early childhood educators must know and be able to do. As such, P2P *Decision Cycle 2* launched *The Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* (which has been progressing simultaneously to the rest of the Decision Cycle work, and which, as of June 2019, is currently being finalized). Overall, the competencies address developmentally appropriate practice across all the domains of learning, and they build on early childhood education’s critical understanding that cognitive development is based in social-emotional learning. The competencies

## Creating a Profession from a Much Larger Field



*See Appendix A for a more detailed version of this graphic.*

*Establishing three different roles while keeping them together in the same professional structure will help to ensure that all individuals are explicitly valued, have a common identity, and are prepared to be effective in their specific practice.*

also attend to the unique opportunity and obligation that early childhood educators have to advance equity, with a strong focus on our nation's growing population of young dual language learners.

Because we have established three levels of early childhood educators within the profession, it is also critical to clearly establish the depth and breadth of the competencies required at these different levels. The leveling of the competencies so that they are aligned with the ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III scopes of practice aims to provide clarity—for families, educators, professional preparation providers, and policymakers—about what skills, knowledge, and expertise any given early childhood educator should possess and be able to demonstrate in any given role, and what kinds of outcomes they can therefore be held accountable for achieving.

**Fair compensation.** We also recognize that wages should increase with a person's career, reflecting growth and ongoing professional learning over time. These increases should also offer meaningful career choices, including allowing individuals to continue using their talents to work directly with children and families over the entire course of their career, without requiring significant personal and financial sacrifices. As such, this structure also will help ensure that compensation and responsibilities will increase as individuals increase the depth and scope of their expertise, regardless of the setting of their job (more on compensation in Recommendation 4).

## 2. COHERENT, QUALITY PREPARATION PROGRAMS

### Where We Are Now: A Hodge-Podge of Preparation Programs of Uneven Quality

Many fields and professions have hundreds or even thousands of institutions and programs preparing individuals to serve. The early childhood education field has more than 3,000 such early childhood and related fields degree programs in the higher education context alone, which vary in name, quality, and depth of content.<sup>15</sup> These programs include:

- ➔ Approximately 1,300 associate, 1,069 bachelor’s, 612 master’s, and 84 doctoral degree programs;
- ➔ More than 50 different types of associate and bachelor’s degree programs;
- ➔ 243 associate degree programs (approximately 18% of the total) that are accredited by the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs, along with 11 bachelor’s and 2 master’s degree programs (the latter two granted since the commission’s expansion in 2017); and
- ➔ 337 (approximately 20% of the total) educator preparation programs that are recognized by NAEYC as part of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) system and that focus primarily on preparing educators for public elementary schools.

**Little alignment within or across states or colleges.** Most of these programs do not articulate within and across states. In more alarming cases, degree programs and degree tracks do not articulate within the same institutional systems. In addition, current workforce policies often include related degrees, such as elementary education, and many of our accredited degrees are child/family studies, which likewise vary in content and quality.

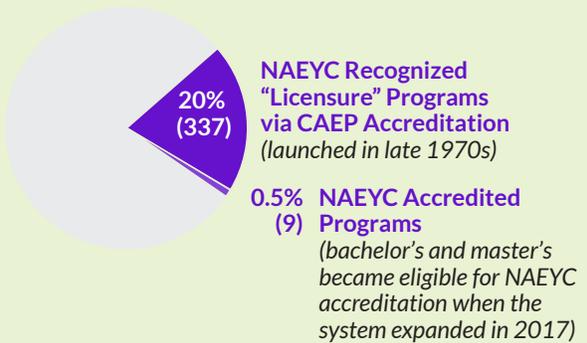
*There are huge variations in preparation program content and quality, with uneven connections to actual jobs.*

A wide range of training programs, with a wide range of quality, lead to varying state and national credentials. Some of these training

programs are credit-bearing; most are not. Some trainings, often required by the state for program licensing or quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS), articulate into nothing that an educator can build upon. Some lead to state credentials and/or recognition within a career lattice, yet, unlike the CDA, they are rarely aligned, stackable, available in different languages, or portable across sectors, settings,

### Moving Toward a Unifying Framework for Degree Quality and Accountability

#### Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree Programs 1,681 programs (1,069 bachelor’s, 612 master’s)



#### Associate Degree Programs 1,300 programs



#### Doctoral Degree Programs 84 doctoral degree programs (typically research-focused programs that are typically not designed for initial educator role)



higher education, or states. In 2018, the Council for Professional Recognition launched the CDA® Gold Standard Training Certification program to recognize high-quality training programs; through the first cohort alone, 17 training organizations and colleges have earned this recognition.

**Uneven and unaligned preparation, little accountability.** This chaotic environment, which leads to degreed or credentialed professionals who may not be effective in planning and implementing intentional, developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children birth through age 8, directly results in inequitable access for young children to competent educators who are accountable for effective practice.

This environment also makes it challenging to measure the effectiveness of preparation programs, since they are preparing graduates for a multitude of unclear roles and practice expectations. For example, a graduate of a bachelor’s degree in an early childhood education program that leads to a state pre-K–grade 3 license is unlikely to be effective in an infant-toddler classroom because their preparation did not focus on infant-toddler content. Conversely, a graduate of an associate degree program in early childhood education with a sole focus on birth through age 5 development is unlikely to be effective in a grade 2 classroom because his/her preparation did not focus on K–3 content. Few early childhood degree programs, because of credit hour limits, lack of access to field sites, and other institutional and state policies, are currently able to offer in-depth birth through age 8 content and field experiences.

*The system’s chaos disproportionately harms candidates without power and privilege.*

**Inequitable impacts.** The lack of coherence and transparency in how educators are being prepared and what precisely they are being prepared for is also an issue of equity. The current reality further marginalizes those who do not have the power and privilege to easily access and navigate the complex and chaotic web of credentials or degrees. It has significant cost implications for educators who may spend money they are unable to recoup with increased compensation. It disproportionately burdens educators who, much like the families with whom they work, are driven by circumstances to make educational choices based more on affordability and accessibility than quality.

**Community colleges are a comparative bright spot.** Within this context, many community colleges have led the way in addressing some of higher education’s most explicit challenges,<sup>16</sup> including equitable access, “non-traditional” student populations, degree attainment, and affordability, as well as the burden of student loans, a challenge that extends far beyond the confines of early childhood educator preparation programs.

While far from perfect, experts note that “some community colleges are doing a much better job of preparing students for future success than they’ve gotten credit for ... as an affordable starting point on the road toward a college degree.”<sup>17</sup> Students, particularly low-income and first-generation students—who make up a significant part of the early childhood education profession—are taking notice. Indeed, 52% of first-generation students and 44% of low-income students attend a public two-year institution as their first college after high school.<sup>18</sup>

Enrollment, of course, is only a starting point; the real measures of success come in degree attainment. While states continue to experience challenges in supporting degree attainment—particularly for non-traditional students—and in closing degree-attainment gaps among white, black, and Latino adults, community colleges in particular have made significant strides. For example, the gap between black and white adults attaining degrees at the associate degree level is 1.0 percentage point, while between Latino and white students it is 3.4 percentage points.<sup>19</sup> Compare this gap to the

discrepancy in attainment at the bachelor’s degree level, where 14% of black adults and 11% of Latinos have a bachelor’s degree compared to 24% of white adults.<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing the critical contributions that community colleges can make, and the greater degree of affordability and accessibility that they offer, as well as the crushing burden of debt many students are holding, a growing number of states are offering some version of tuition-free or debt-free access. These efforts are intended to alleviate the high

*Both associate and bachelor’s degrees preparation programs matter and must be used and valued for what they do well.*

cost of higher education for students, which currently averages \$10,800 per year for room and board at a four-year public university and results in 68% of bachelor’s degree recipients graduating with student loan debt—at an average of \$30,100 per borrower.<sup>21</sup> Debt is particularly challenging for low-income students; for example, more than 8 in 10 Pell Grant recipients who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 2016 had student debt, and their average debt was \$4,500 more than their higher-income peers.<sup>22</sup> In this context, tuition-

free and/or debt-free access to community colleges is a policy opportunity for the early childhood field, particularly given the value that an associate degree can and does have in the context of our profession.

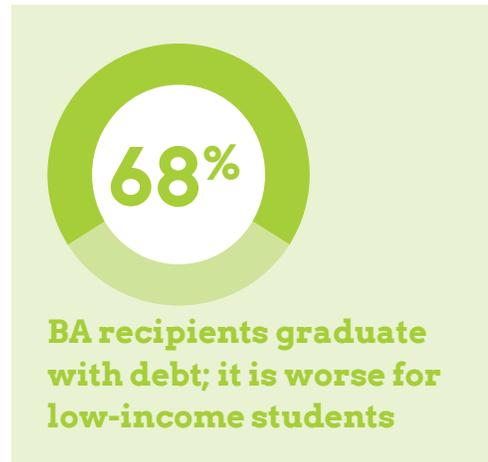
Yet we agree with partner organizations such as Education Trust—whose leaders have expressed concerns that “black and brown students will essentially be pushed toward a community college degree due to systemic inequalities in this country.”<sup>23</sup> As such, we are committed to ensuring that we are able to capitalize on the benefits and supports provided by community colleges conferring associate degrees and credit-based certificate programs that successfully meet the needs of their often non-traditional student population. At the same time, we deeply embrace the value and importance of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education for the opportunities it offers to gain deeper content knowledge across multiple disciplines, integrate disciplinary content and early childhood knowledge, access more field experiences, and gain supervisory skills. The Task Force is committed to prioritizing an equity-oriented approach that increases access and attainment at the bachelor’s degree level as well.

In this first edition of the unified early childhood education profession framework, both associate and bachelor’s degrees preparation programs matter and must be used and valued for what they do well. *Decision Cycles 7 and 8* will expand on recommendations to support the strengths of these programs more deeply and on efforts to bring much-needed coherence to what is now mostly uncoordinated chaos.

**Task Force Recommendation:** Establish the Primary Set of Preparation Programs

The Task Force recommends that the following programs be endorsed and supported as the primary pathways for preparing early childhood educators across the three designations (ECE I, II, and III as detailed in Appendix B). All require completion of an organized early childhood education program of study that is grounded in the science of early learning from birth to age 8, but with different requirements.

It is critical that these programs receive the necessary support to ensure they have the capacity to support equitable access and success. There must be adequate preparation programs that address competencies needed to educate infants, toddlers, and dual language learners, in particular. These



programs must also be designed to support articulation across preparation programs and to create multiple opportunities for current and future practitioners to demonstrate their knowledge and competencies.

- ➔ *Early Childhood Education Professional Training Programs:* Professional training programs normally require less than one year to complete. Completers may meet the educational requirements for industry-recognized national credentials and other portable credentials. These programs are a minimum 120 clock hours.
- ➔ *Early Childhood Education Associate Degree Programs:* Associate degree programs normally require at least two years but less than four years of *full-time* equivalent college work. An associate degree is at least 60 credit hours of college-level course work.
- ➔ *Early Childhood Education Bachelor's Degree Programs:* Bachelor's degree programs normally require at least four years but no more than five years of *full-time* equivalent college work. A bachelor's degree is at least 120 credit hours of college-level coursework.
- ➔ *Early Childhood Education Master's Degree Programs (initial preparation):* Master's degree programs normally require at least one, but not more than two, *full-time* academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Initial-level master's degree programs are designed for individuals with non-early childhood education bachelor's degrees. At this point, the Task Force is not defining preparation expectations for more advanced practice roles.

*These programs must also be designed to support articulation across preparation programs and to create multiple opportunities for current and future practitioners to demonstrate their knowledge and competencies.*

**Other innovative models and pathways.** The Task Force recognizes that there are multiple and flexible approaches in professional preparation programs, and it seeks to encourage effective innovations that are, in particular, designed to reach non-traditional students, eliminate the existing barriers to higher education, and maintain a commitment to quality. Examples of these approaches may include competency-based programs, use of prior learning assessments for awarding credit, a system that recognizes competencies acquired through degree attainment in another country, apprenticeships, cohort models, work-based supervised practicum/clinical experiences, and intensive degree programs with shorter duration.<sup>24</sup>

Some of these approaches will need to be specifically adapted, enhanced, and targeted toward those working in family child care settings and/or small centers, as the expectations for practice remain the same across settings, but with differences in the supports required. Working long hours, frequently isolated, and often speaking a language that is not English and is reflective of their community, these educators confront many of the same barriers to accessing professional development and higher education access as center-based educators, yet with additional intensity and fewer resources upon which they can draw. Educators working in family child care need approaches that are flexible—provide coursework in languages other than English, integrate math into early childhood education content, and take into account the challenges of accessing broadband in rural areas. These approaches will be critical to ensuring that educators working in family child care settings and small centers have equitable opportunities to advance in their profession.

Other qualifying professional preparation programs, particularly non-degree-awarding programs or programs in freestanding institutions, will also be incorporated, as needed, when this Unifying Framework is implemented. To be considered comparable to the primary set of professional

preparation programs listed previously, additional programs will be held accountable for meeting the profession’s guidelines, governance, and accountability standards, upon being determined and agreed upon through the P2P Decision Cycle process. This accountability will include demonstrating alignment to the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#) as programs prepare early childhood educators.<sup>25</sup> In addition, *Decision Cycles 7 and 8* will explore these accountability structures and provisions more deeply, including the possibility of accreditation reciprocity.

**Aligned preparation and designations.** The current early childhood education field is bifurcated across multiple dimensions, including role, setting, state, funding stream, and age band. The proposed primary set of preparation programs, aligned to the designations and responsibilities of the early childhood profession, creates a structure that moves to eliminate the bifurcation across some of the dimensions (e.g., setting) but not all (e.g., age band), as outlined in Appendix B. The overall

fragmentation, however, is dramatically lessened and, where it continues to exist, is made increasingly intentional and responsive to existing strengths, research, and requirements.

*We especially encourage approaches and innovations that are designed to reach non-traditional students and eliminate existing barriers to higher education.*

We know, for example, that the science of early learning is as complex for children birth through age 3 as it is for children in preschool as it is for children in kindergarten through grade 3. However, programs already exist that prepare educators—differently—to work with children in these different age groups. The CDA credential or associate degree programs across states are most likely to consistently require course content for infants and toddlers, as well as for preschoolers, but the programs seldom focus their content on

children in kindergarten or higher grades. Bachelor’s degrees that do not lead to a license have early childhood education content similar to an associate degree program. On the other hand, bachelor’s and graduate degree programs that lead to a license display the reverse pattern; while less likely to require depth in infant and toddler-related course content, they consistently require a focus on older children.

In addition, expectations, assessment, content knowledge, and accountability requirements are different for educators working in public kindergarten through grade 3 settings, thereby demanding the acquisition of additional skills and expertise. The current public teaching profession has determined that these skills, by the nature of their depth and breadth, are typically best learned in the context of a high-quality bachelor’s degree program, with certification and/or licensure. Cities and states that have led the way in instituting and expanding public pre-K programs have likewise (and, the Task Force believes, rightly) determined that early childhood educators working in those settings should be held to the same bachelor’s degree standard as educators in K–3. The Task Force also believes that greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring that the degrees earned by those working in and across pre-K–grade 3 settings meet the early childhood education profession’s guidelines, governance, and accountability standards.

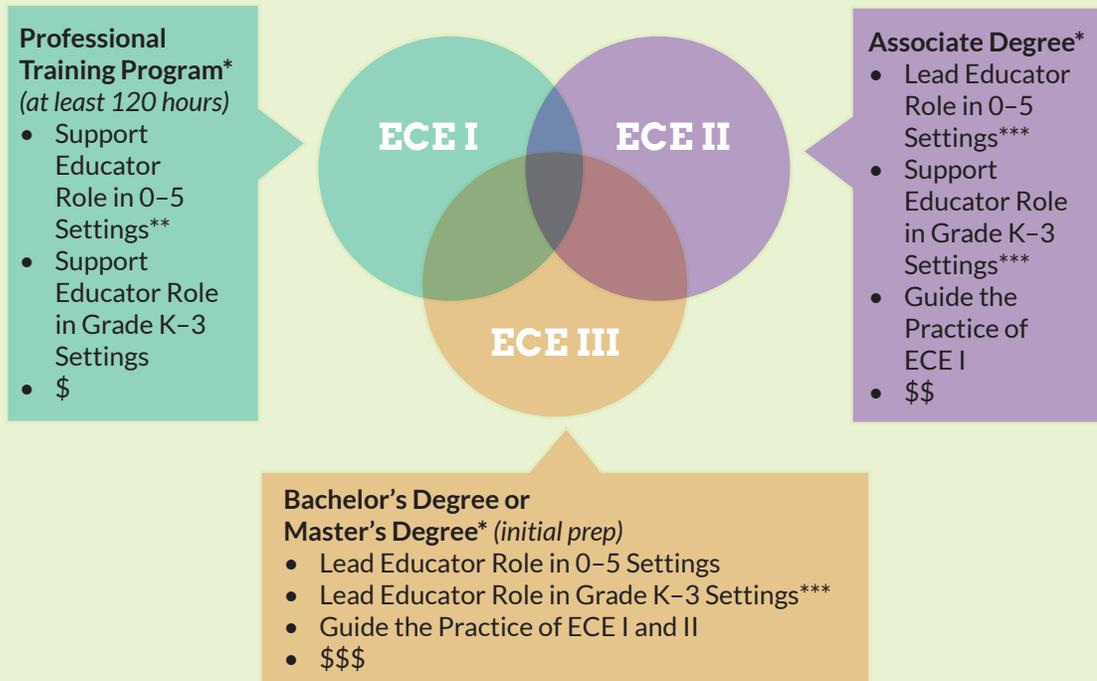
**The Task Force recommends that this first-edition Unifying Framework builds toward a future structure for the early childhood education profession in which public financing and policies ensure that educators with lead responsibilities across all settings and age bands are prepared and compensated at the ECE III level (earning a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education), at a minimum.** Leading the way, state- and district-funded preschool programs provided in mixed delivery settings—which are explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system—should both require educators with lead responsibilities to be ECE III graduates and provide supports to educators across settings to meet these requirements.<sup>26</sup> In preschool settings that do not draw on state- and district-

funded preschool funds, and because of the strong birth through age 5 content focus in associate degree programs, the first edition of this framework will not immediately require the same standard. Thus, an ECE II graduate in those cases can hold lead responsibilities, with staffing models that provide frequent access to ECE IIIs for guidance and with important support from ECE I completers as well.

In addition, this framework recognizes the meaningful, valuable, and necessary places in our profession for educators who have acquired their competencies through such opportunities as a CDA credential, a high-quality associate degree, or non-early childhood education degrees and trainings, as well as for those who have gained deep knowledge and expertise through experience. As such, we elevate our implementation commitments, noting that we will not advocate for increased educational requirements without advocating for funding to provide requisite supports, including policies such as comprehensive scholarships and loan forgiveness, as well as attendant compensation. We will not advocate for policies that disproportionately and negatively impact educators from communities of color. We will advocate for policies that mitigate unintended consequences and support existing, meaningful pathways for advancement. In addition, we will advocate to establish and implement timelines that recognize the challenges faced by the existing workforce to realistically meet new regulations and requirements.

Children and families benefit from the richness of a well-prepared, supported, and compensated profession that includes educators diverse in all ways—race, class, culture, gender, language, educational background, family structure, and more. In addition, because positive relationships are at the core of quality, and young children do not distinguish between the roles of the adults who interact with them in a classroom or family child care setting, this structure holds all early childhood educators, regardless of designation or role, accountable for supporting child development and learning and for meeting the guidelines established by a unified early childhood education profession.

## Comparable Compensation for Comparable Preparation, Competence, and Responsibilities



\*Organized program of study in early childhood education, aligned at the appropriate depth and breadth of the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#). ECE I completers may meet the educational requirements for industry-recognized national credentials like the Child Development Associate® (CDA) national credential and other portable credentials.

\*\*Additional and innovative guidance, support, and supervisory models will need to be explored, developed, and evaluated, particularly in support of early childhood educators working in family-based child care home settings. Roles will continue to shift as public financing significantly increases to support all families with children in all settings and sectors.

\*\*\*Progression, not regression. In state- and district-funded programs, where state-funded is defined by NIEER, provided in mixed-delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system, ECE II graduates can serve in the support educator role. ECE III graduates must serve in the lead educator role.

\$ Compensation (including benefits) increases with greater responsibility and deeper preparation. Compensation is aligned with comparable roles in public K–12 settings. The deep need for increased investment (for compensation and more) cannot come on the backs of parents or educators. Additional state investment is necessary, but not sufficient. Increased federal support is essential.

[Appendix B](#) has a much more detailed version of our recommendations.

### 3. STRUCTURED SPECIALIZATIONS

**Where We Are Now:** Specializations that Reinforce Fragmentation without Agreed-upon Competencies

The current variation in preparation and credentials allows for individuals to create specializations and professional niches without understanding the full birth through age 8 developmental continuum that is core to the identity, responsibilities, and practice of the early childhood education profession.

For example, individuals prepared to meet the competencies of infant-toddler credentials or K-3 licensure credentials often do not have knowledge of the full birth through age 8 developmental continuum. Given that child development during this early childhood period is not linear, these credential holders may not be able to support the development of all young children and particularly those who are in a development phase that the educators have not been prepared to support.

Without knowing about the past and future (the precursors to children’s current development and learning and the likely trajectory they will follow in later years), early childhood educators cannot design effective learning opportunities that meet the needs of all young children in their care.

**Task Force Recommendation:** Generalize First, Then Specialize

The Task Force recommends that every early childhood educator must have a general early childhood education foundation as articulated in the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#). Depending on the mission or conceptual framework of the professional preparation program, a concentration may be part of the generalist foundation.

*Early childhood educators need to understand the full birth through age 8 developmental continuum at the depth and breadth appropriate for their role.*

In addition to the generalist foundation, early childhood educators also should be encouraged to specialize as a means of deepening their knowledge and practice and creating a professional niche. Specializations must complement and add onto the generalist foundation.

Professional preparation programs are encouraged to collaborate with professional organizations to create high-quality, accelerated pathways to specializations, such as blended programs.

Once the profession establishes the generalist foundation and as it becomes reflected in key state and federal policies, the profession can mobilize to create and/or promote specializations. Specializations should help those in the early childhood education profession deepen their knowledge and practice and create a professional niche.

**Specializations should be responsive and forward thinking.** Professional organizations, not state or federal agencies, should be responsible for developing, administering, and issuing specializations. Only individuals serving within the early childhood education profession, in any one of the designations outlined by that profession, should be eligible for specialization. Demand from families, communities, employers, and programs, as well as local context, will influence how these add-on specializations are organized and prioritized.

Some examples of specializations may include, but will not be limited to, infant to toddler; pre-K through grade 3; dual language learner; mixed-age group; early childhood special education; instructional leadership, which could include supervisory skills; administrative and business leadership; and specializations in content areas such as early math, language and literacy, or STEAM.

## 4. COMPARABLE COMPENSATION (Decision Cycle 6)

### Why Focus on Compensation?

We care about compensation because we care about the well-being of children and educators, about the supply of care, and about the quality of early childhood education. Research confirms that better-paid teachers provide better-quality care and that educator shortages are driven by lack of compensation.<sup>27</sup> No educator should earn a wage insufficient for sustaining a family, yet early childhood educators make an average of \$10.60 per hour, less than dog walkers, bus drivers, social workers, grade 5 teachers, and librarians, to name just a few. In fact, those who graduate from college with a degree in early childhood education have the lowest projected earnings of all college graduates.<sup>28</sup>

Parents say they want to pay educators more. Directors say they want to pay educators more. Superintendents, economists, business leaders, and scientists all say they want to pay educators more. Yet our system is so desperately underfinanced that the ability to *actually* pay educators more is limited. As the National

*Early childhood education is an essential part of the nation's infrastructure, just as important as highways, clean drinking water, and other public goods.*

Academy of Medicine's (NAM) *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education* report lays out, our financing system is utterly insufficient to ensure high-quality early childhood education with a diverse, competent, effective, well-compensated, and professionally supported workforce.

NAM estimates that the full financing of high-quality early childhood education, including a well-compensated workforce, would cost \$140 billion per year (this would amount to .75% of

the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>29</sup> As a frame of reference, the federal government spends approximately one-sixth of that needed investment on early childhood education—or around \$25 billion per year.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, early childhood education *contributes* \$163 billion to the nation's economy, amounting to 1.1% of GDP.<sup>31</sup> In other words: A significant and substantial investment in early childhood education is well worth the cost.

That's because it's an investment in our nation's essential infrastructure, as important as other public goods such as highways and clean drinking water. It's also an investment in people, the most valuable resource our country has and the cornerstone of quality in early childhood education.

Investing in people is not cheap—but failing to invest in them comes with its own costs, including low-quality care, health and safety violations, disruptions in continuity, and excessive turnover, all of which harms children, families, and businesses. Moving forward, we need increased investments in early childhood education, directed primarily to the workforce, as the best means of prioritizing quality and increasing the supply of it.

### Same Job and Credentials, But Different Pay with a Bachelor's Degree

Head Start teacher

\$31,489

Public school pre-K teacher

\$44,521

Public school K-12 teacher

\$56,383

## Where We Are Now: Undervalued, Underfunded, and Inequitable

Though compensation is too low for the average early childhood educator to live on, the sum of it is too high for the average early childhood setting to afford; personnel costs account for the bulk of spending in many early childhood programs.

**Revenues vs. costs.** It is a deep-seated challenge for programs to ensure that revenues, whether from parent fees, federal child care subsidies, another form of scholarship, or a combination of all three, are sufficient to cover costs. For early childhood programs that accept federal child care subsidies, in particular, the budgetary challenges can be insurmountable, though the same principle applies to programs that operate exclusively with parent fees. At best, programs that serve families with a subsidy will receive a payment rate from the state equal to 75% of the current market rate (as recommended by the federal government). Yet prior to the increased federal funding in the FY2018 budget year,<sup>32</sup> only two states (South Dakota and West Virginia) met that benchmark for all categories of care, with the other 48 states and the District of Columbia paying providers an average of \$667 per month for 4-year-olds, or approximately \$3.42 per hour.<sup>33</sup> This average includes a range of \$339 and \$406 per month on the low end, in Mississippi and Missouri, respectively, to \$1,147 in Fairfax County, Virginia, and \$1,065 in Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>34</sup>

## \$3.42 an hour

A child care program accepts a 4-year-old from a family paying with a child care subsidy. In 48 states and DC, the program can expect to receive \$3.42 per hour to care for that child.

Even at the high end of market rate payments, which, in Fairfax County, Virginia, would equal \$5.88 per hour, it is easy to understand how challenging it is for programs to compensate staff at a rate that approaches the value they provide. The math simply does not work—and so compensation (including benefits) remains low.

**Widespread decline of licensed and regulated family child care.** Low compensation affects all early childhood educators. But it is a particular challenge for family child care providers, many of whom are running small businesses in which they pay themselves last. The inability to balance the books is one of the factors that has led to steep drops in licensed and regulated family child care, reported in states from California (30% decrease from 2008–2017) to Wisconsin (61% decrease from 2007–2016) to Vermont (26.6% percent from December 2015 through June 2018). While family child care providers report multiple reasons for the widespread closures, including inadequate compensation, many of the challenges come down to the fact that insufficient resources have been provided to help them keep pace with and respond to the changes that have been made in the regulatory environment to promote health, safety, and quality.

**Educational requirements increase, compensation remains low, and the impact is disproportionately felt by women of color.** The poor compensation felt across the workforce is disproportionately experienced by women of color, even as they join their colleagues in responding to the call for higher levels of preparation by investing time and money to pursue degrees. In Head Start, for example, data show that teacher education levels have increased in recent years, with 77% of the national teacher workforce having earned a bachelor's degree. Restricted funding has, however, limited the ability of the Head Start sector to reward these higher education levels with higher salaries. In fact, despite the higher qualifications, Head Start teachers in many states make less today than they did in 2007 before the bachelor's requirement went into effect. While Head

Start teachers with a bachelor’s degree do tend to earn more than those without a bachelor’s, even with a degree the average Head Start teacher earns only \$31,489 per year.<sup>35</sup> This bind—of requiring higher qualifications without higher compensation—has meant that a body of teachers, half of whom are people of color and one quarter of whom are Latino, are meeting higher quality standards, completing degrees, and still earning low wages.<sup>36</sup>

**Low compensation reduces parent and educator choice.** Because compensation has remained stubbornly low, even as educational requirements have increased, differential access to program funding has too often meant that teachers with higher credentials are drawn to settings supported by public funding streams outside of child care subsidies. Indeed, there is a \$6.70 per hour difference in the median wage between employment in a public school-sponsored preschool program compared to a private community-based setting for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher—a gap of \$13,936 per year.<sup>37</sup> Educators can make even more moving into K–3 settings, where K–3 teachers earn a median wage of \$56,900.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively, even if they remain in non-public school settings, if they work in a center, they are essentially forced to leave the classroom and become an administrator. If they work in family child care, often as a self-employed small business owner, they have very limited options to increase compensation, as families typically cannot afford to pay higher rates commensurate with their increased educational attainment—if they have the time, resources, and support to pursue and acquire the degrees in the first place. In any case, there are negative impacts on children and families by (a) reducing the level of quality available to families outside of publicly funded state pre-K settings and/or (b) giving talented teachers who can best serve children and families by working directly with them no choice but to make significant personal and financial sacrifices to do so.

**Task Force Recommendation:** Establish Comparable Compensation (including Benefits) for Comparable Qualifications, Experience, and Responsibilities

The benefits of high-quality early childhood education are shared between and among children, families, communities, states, and the national economy. The NAM *Transforming the Workforce* report, along with market research from Task Force members, indicates that the costs of early childhood education should be shared as well. Despite the need for some shared financial responsibility, the federal government plays an outsized role in the financing of early childhood education—and it must play a much greater one still.

*The deep need for increased investment cannot come on the backs of parents or educators. Additional state investment is necessary, but not sufficient. Increased federal support is essential.*

The deep need for increased investment cannot come on the backs of parents, nor of educators. While states must increase their own investments, the federal role can and must help ensure equity and equality across states, creating a groundswell of sustained public investment that is sufficient to support the following vision-oriented goals and recommendations.

**Recommendation 1:** Compensation will be comparable for early childhood educators with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities, regardless of the setting of their job.

Varied settings in early childhood education are a current reality, and we anticipate that they will be part of our future. Yet these differences in settings (and often funding streams) do not necessarily dictate differences in the nature of the work being done. As such, and as a matter of equity, early childhood educators with similar experience and qualifications should be comparably compensated regardless of whether they work in a community-based center, elementary school, or family-based child care home.<sup>39</sup>

*Recommendation 2: Compensation will include the provision of an adequate benefits package.*

Early childhood educators who are satisfied with their jobs and whose individual and family members' health is protected are more likely to convey positive feelings toward children, more able to give utmost attention to teaching and caring for children, and more likely to remain in their position for longer periods of time. Benefit packages for full-time staff may be negotiated to meet individual staff members' needs, but they should include paid leave (annual, sick, and/or personal), medical insurance, and retirement. In addition, they may provide educational benefits, subsidized child care, or other options unique to the situation. Benefits for part-time staff should be provided on a pro-rated basis.

*Recommendation 3: Compensation will increase commensurate with increased preparation and increased competency.*

The simplified structure of ECE I, II, and III establishes the foundation for a stable wage growth trajectory that parallels professional advancement.<sup>40</sup> In this framework, entry-level early childhood educators will have multiple opportunities to grow in their careers over the long term, working directly with children, if that is where their talents are maximized.

*Recommendation 4: Compensation will not be differentiated on the basis of the ages of children served.*

Historically, the younger the child, the lesser the value placed on the service provided to them. In addition, the wage penalty for early educators working with infants and toddlers disproportionately affects African American teachers—52% of whom work with infants and toddlers, compared to 43% of all center-based early educators.<sup>41</sup> Yet children are most vulnerable in their early years, and the impact of their early experiences on later development and learning is the most profound. Focusing on these earliest years is also a fundamental question of equity. Focusing only on comparable compensation for those working in pre-K settings with 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds will deepen the disproportionality demonstrated by the data. Compensation earned by individuals working with the youngest children must be prioritized to reflect the importance of their work and the added value to society of their success. Thus, the standards, accountability, and levels within the early childhood profession must be established to intentionally include these educators and reflect their current status and starting points.

*There should be no wage penalty for early educators working with infants and toddlers or in home-based programs.*

### **What Is the Standard for Comparability?**

Everyone working within the early childhood education field, regardless of their level of education or training, should earn no less than the amount needed to cover basic living standards, including food, housing, and health care. The Task Force believes there is an urgent need to increase the floor of compensation for everyone in the field to at least a basic self-sufficiency standard, providing a foundation upon which to build a framework of increasing compensation as qualifications, experience, and responsibilities increase.

A self-sufficiency standard is critical because it recognizes the fact that teachers are currently compensated so poorly that a majority are eligible for public benefits. The process for increasing workforce compensation must address what happens to educators when they lose eligibility for

subsidies as compensation is raised but remains inadequate to cover the high costs of living and housing; hence the self-sufficiency standard.

We also believe that early childhood education, rooted as it is in science and research, is not a minimum wage job, and a self-sufficiency standard must be accounted for as the floor, not the ceiling. As such, in this first edition of the professional framework, we are not recommending a comparability

*Early childhood education, rooted as it is in science and research, is not a minimum-wage job. A self-sufficiency standard must be seen as the floor, not the ceiling.*

standard that is tied to a self-sufficiency standard. The movement to raise the minimum wage is an important opportunity for some educators in some states, and it can provide an impetus for states to make needed investments to increase subsidy payment rates to early childhood settings in response. However, as we advance as an early childhood profession that is compensated based on the complex knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to reap the individual and societal rewards of high-quality learning, we must guard against being permanently linked with a minimum wage.

Therefore, while we support raising the floor so that the entire field earns family-sustaining wages, the Task Force recommends that the early childhood education profession look to public school salary scales as

the minimum benchmark for comparable compensation, assuming comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities.

We also recognize that while removing disparity within the early childhood profession birth through age 8 is an important step forward, it is also an insufficient long-term goal. Significant numbers of K-12 educators, for example, are compensated so poorly that they also need a second job.

For this reason, we are also recommending that, while using public school salary scales as a minimum level of compensation, early childhood educator salary schedules and benefits should ultimately be determined following a review of salary schedules for members of other professions who care for children in the same age range and who have similar functional responsibilities.

The military used this approach successfully in the late 1980s when the Military Child Care Act required pay at “a competitive rate, equivalent to the pay of other employees with similar training, seniority, and experience.”<sup>42</sup>

This review of salary schedules should consider salaries and benefits provided to individuals with similar preparation and responsibilities from an internal perspective, where appropriate. For example, a community service organization would compare the salaries and benefits of its early childhood teaching staff to its social workers with equivalent preparation and responsibility. The compensation of a program administrator in an organization such as a hospital, industry, or educational institution would be compared to the compensation package of heads of other programs or departments of similar size within that institution. In addition, an external, or community, review should look at professionals with similar responsibilities, such as nurses, social workers, and counselors.

### When Comparing Pay, Look at Everyone Working with Young Children

Pediatricians

\$205,610

School psychologists

\$67,880

Children’s librarians

\$35,000

School bus drivers

\$33,253

It is also important to look at average salaries for individuals working with the same age group, as opposed to those working within the same scope of responsibility. Though salaries are, on the whole, generally less for those working with young children across professions, this wide range of average salaries includes everyone from pediatricians (\$205,610) and children’s librarians (\$35,000), to school psychologists (\$67,880) and school bus drivers (\$33,253). As broader comparability to more equitably paid professions is our long-term goal, holding these multiple comparabilities in mind and measuring our own progress against them can be a helpful gauge for where we are and where we want to go.

**Conclusion: Fair Compensation Is Affordable—and Worth It**

The National Academy of Medicine’s *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education* report notes that “efforts to date have been inadequate to increase the compensation of early childhood education professionals.”<sup>43</sup> The Task Force agrees, but we do not fault those efforts. We applaud the achievements, while directing our critiques toward the context and environment that have made full and fair compensation so difficult. We reject the argument that our country does not have the money to fund full and fair compensation. We do.

This means, first, recognizing that paying the costs of high-quality early childhood education is a revenue-generating investment over time, resulting in a broad range of benefits that accrue to individuals and society at large. A substantial research base confirms that when children participate in high-quality early childhood education, they are:

- ➔ more likely to experience improved cognitive and social outcomes;
- ➔ less likely to require remedial education;
- ➔ more likely to graduate from high school;
- ➔ less likely to commit crimes;
- ➔ less likely to be neglected or abused;
- ➔ less likely to be unemployed;
- ➔ less likely to require public assistance;
- ➔ less likely to become teen parents; and
- ➔ generally healthier and able to be more productive contributors to their local, state, and national economies.

*Smart investments in high-quality early childhood education clearly stimulate the economy and improve lives. And the investments should focus on what matters most: people.*

As such, well-conceived and enacted investments in high-quality early childhood education clearly stimulate the economy and should be funded like other well-conceived and well-enacted investments, from tax cuts to a job stimulus, that do the same.

Second, improving quality and equity in early childhood education requires that we prioritize investments in early childhood educators. We must choose, with the money and the means available now and in the future, to invest directly

in the education and compensation of the professionals serving children and families rather than in the structures and supports set up around them. This, in turn, will require us to invest in existing opportunities to fund compensation while establishing new opportunities, by leveraging early

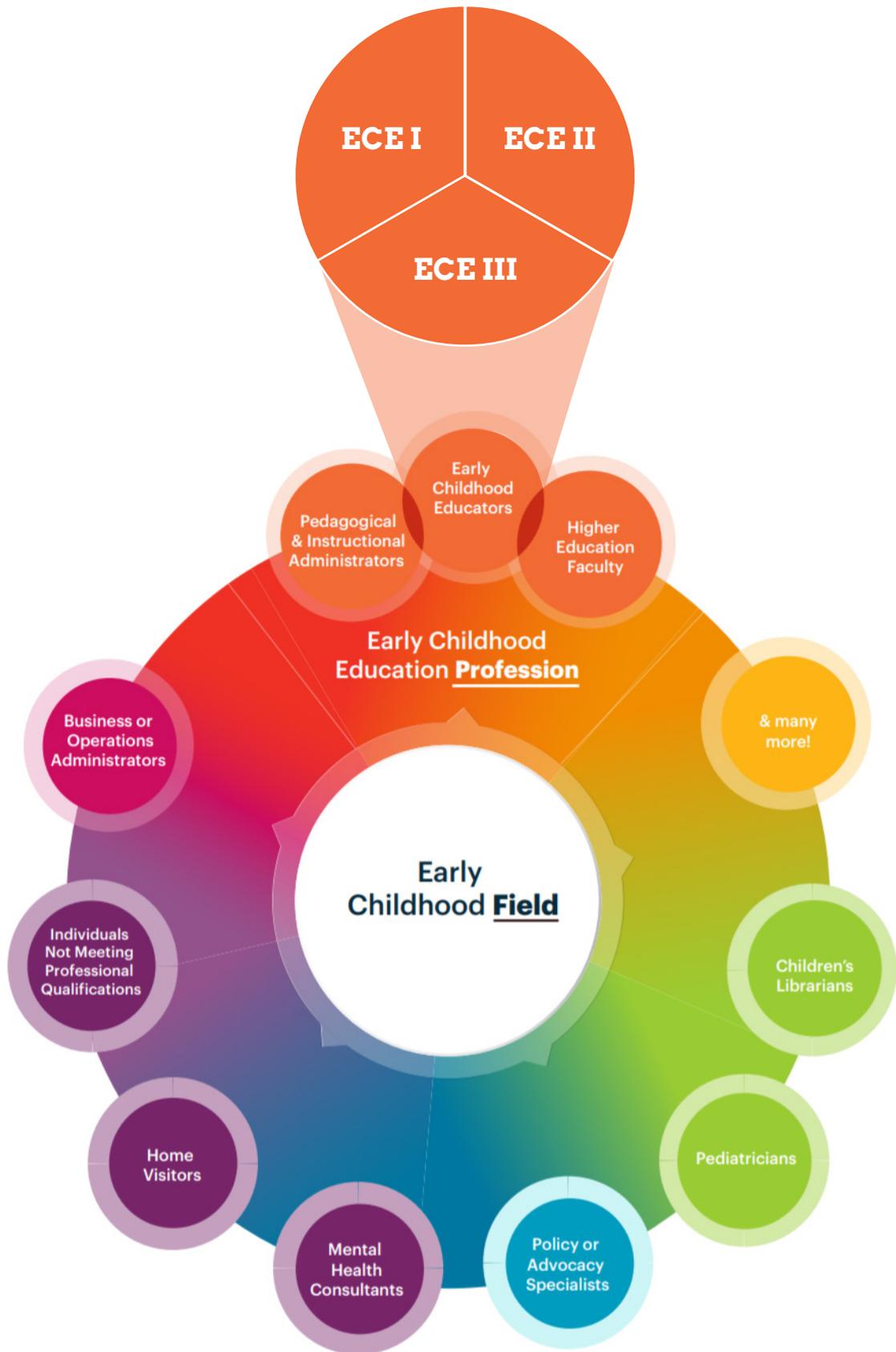
education financing systems and structures designed to deliver high-quality early learning in states and cities across the country.

One of the barriers to increased compensation through public investment has always been the lack of an answer to the questions: *compensation for whom? for doing what?* P2P, by establishing clarity about who early childhood educators are and what they will be accountable for, gives all of us and our allies a fighting chance at getting the significant and sustained public investments we need, directed toward the education and compensation of early childhood educators. They are at the heart of P2P and the best way to significantly and sustainably improve outcomes for children and families.

### **Task Force Members**

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- ➔ Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children  
*Peggy Kemp, Executive Director*
- ➔ Early Care and Education Consortium  
*Celia Sims, President*
- ➔ National Association for Family Child Care  
*Bill Hudson, Chief Executive Officer*
- ➔ National Association for the Education of Young Children  
*Rhian Evans Allvin, Chief Executive Officer*
- ➔ National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators  
*Kelly Baker, President*
- ➔ National Association of Elementary School Principals  
*Earl Franks, Executive Director*
- ➔ National Education Association  
*Shyrelle Eubanks, Senior Policy Analyst*
- ➔ National Head Start Association  
*Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director*
- ➔ Service Employees International Union  
*Kursten Holabird, Campaign Support Coordinator*
- ➔ ZERO TO THREE  
*Matthew Melmed, Executive Director*

## APPENDIX A Creating a Profession from a Much Larger Field



## APPENDIX B

### Unifying Framework for Preparation, Competence, Responsibilities, and Compensation

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
PREPARATION	Professional Training Program in Early Childhood Education	Associate Degree Program in Early Childhood Education	Bachelor's Degree Program in Early Childhood Education  Master's Degree Program in Early Childhood Education (initial prep)
TIME AND DURATION	These programs are a minimum 120 clock hours.	Associate degree programs normally require at least two years but less than four years of <i>full-time</i> equivalent college work. An associate degree is at least 60 credit hours of college-level course work.	Bachelor's degree programs normally require at least four years but no more than five years of <i>full-time</i> equivalent college work. A bachelor's degree is at least 120 credit hours of college-level coursework.
AWARD ISSUED BY PROGRAM AT COMPLETION	<i>Certificate or credential</i> issued by professional training programs, industry-recognized credentialing organizations, OR institutions of higher education <sup>44</sup>	<i>Degree</i> issued by institutions of higher education	<i>Degree</i> issued by institutions of higher education
DESIGNATION	Completers qualify to receive the ECE I designation.	Completers qualify to receive the ECE II designation.	Completers qualify to receive the ECE III designation.

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE <sup>45</sup>	<p>Completers are <i>introduced</i> to all professional standards and competency areas.</p> <p>Completers can apply their <i>introductory knowledge and understanding</i> of all the professional standards and competency areas.</p> <p>Along with the pedagogical knowledge and skills identified in the competency areas, completers have <i>high school-level knowledge</i> in core content areas of math, science, English, social studies/history, physical education, visual arts, and performing arts.</p>	<p>Graduates know and understand the <i>essential aspects</i> of all professional standards and competency areas <i>with a strong focus on young children in birth through age 5</i> settings.</p> <p>Graduates can apply their <i>essential knowledge and understanding</i> of all the professional standards and competency areas <i>with a strong focus on young children in birth through age 5</i> settings.</p> <p>Along with the pedagogical knowledge and skills identified in the competency areas, graduates have <i>introductory college-level knowledge</i> of content areas (linguistics, literature, the arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) through dedicated general education courses.</p>	<p>Graduates know and understand the <i>essential aspects</i> of all professional standards and competency areas <i>with a strong focus on young children in birth through grade 3</i> settings.</p> <p>Graduates can apply their <i>essential knowledge and understanding</i> of all the professional standards and competency areas, including age-appropriate content pedagogy, <i>with a strong focus on young children in birth through grade 3</i> settings.</p> <p>Along with the pedagogical knowledge and skills identified in the competency areas, graduates have <i>essential college-level knowledge</i> of content areas (linguistics, literature, the arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) through dedicated general education courses.</p>

	<b>ECE I</b>	<b>ECE II</b>	<b>ECE III</b>
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<p>0–8: Completers can <i>help develop</i> and sustain high-quality development and learning environments.</p> <p>Completers can serve as <i>effective members</i> of early childhood education teaching teams.</p>	<p>0–5 Settings:* Graduates can be <i>responsible for developing and sustaining</i> high-quality development and learning environments <i>with staffing models that provide frequent access to ECE IIIs for guidance.</i></p> <p>K–Grade 3:* Graduates can <i>help develop and sustain</i> high-quality development and learning environments.</p> <p>Graduates can serve as <i>effective members</i> of ECE teaching teams and can <i>guide the practice of ECE I.</i></p> <p>*In state- and district-funded preschool programs, where state-funded is defined by NIEER; and where the programs are provided in mixed-delivery settings; and where those programs are explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system, ECE II graduates can serve in the support educator role. ECE III graduates must serve in the lead educator role.</p>	<p>Birth–Grade 3:* Graduates can be <i>responsible for developing and sustaining</i> high-quality development and learning environments.</p> <p>Graduates can serve as <i>effective members</i> of ECE teaching teams and can <i>guide the practice of ECE I and II.</i></p> <p>*In state- and district-funded preschool programs (as defined by NIEER), provided in mixed-delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system, ECE III graduates must serve in the lead educator role.</p>

	<b>ECE I</b>	<b>ECE II</b>	<b>ECE III</b>
<b>COMPENSATION</b>	<p>Compensation, including benefits, will be comparable for all ECE I professionals regardless of their job setting.</p> <p>The early childhood education profession should look to public school salary scales as the minimum benchmark for comparable compensation, assuming comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Compensation, including benefits, will be comparable for all ECE II professionals regardless of their job setting. Compensation will be at a higher level than ECE I.</p> <p>The early childhood education profession should look to public school salary scales as the minimum benchmark for comparable compensation, assuming comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Compensation, including benefits, will be comparable for all ECE III professionals regardless of their job setting. Compensation will be at a higher level than ECE II.</p> <p>The early childhood education profession should look to public school salary scales as the minimum benchmark for comparable compensation, assuming comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities.</p>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 In response to overwhelming feedback from the field regarding the need to turn our focus toward compensation, *Decision Cycle 6: Compensation* is included and elevated in this second draft of *Decision Cycle 345*.
- 2 [\*Decision Cycle 1: Professional Identity and Boundary\*](#)
- 3 [\*Decision Cycle 2: Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators\*](#)
- 4 Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>.
- 5 Child Care Aware of America. Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2017.
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- 8 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. 2017. "Comparison of Personnel Systems for K-12 and Early Childhood Teachers: Qualifications and Compensation."
- 9 Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>.
- 10 The six roles identified are home-based assistants/aides, center-based assistants/aides, group home-based, home-based, center teachers, and center directors.
- 11 Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>.
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- 14 Ullrich, R., Hamm, K., & Herzfeldt-Kamprath, R. (2016). *Underpaid and Unequal: Racial Wage Disparities in the Early Childhood Workforce*. Center for American Progress, 2016. <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/01073800/NSECE-report2.pdf>.
- 15 <https://degreefinder.naeyc.org/>
- 16 We are referring here to community colleges that award associate degrees and credit-based certificate programs.
- 17 Carey, K. "Revised Data Shows Community Colleges Have Been Underappreciated." *New York Times*. October 31, 2017.
- 18 Redford, J., & Hoyer, K.M. (2017). *First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students: A Comparison of High School and Postsecondary Experiences*. U.S. Department of Education: NCES 2018. September 2017.
- 19 Nichols, A.H., & J Schak, J.O. (2017). Degree Attainment for Black Adults: National and State Trends and Degree Attainment for Latino Adults: National and State Trends. Washington DC: The Education Trust.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Cheng, D., & Gonzalez, V. (2018). *Student Debt and the Class of 2017*. Washington, DC: The Project on Student Debt, Institute for College Access and Success.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Smith, A. "States Struggle to Close Degree-Attainment Gaps." *Inside Higher Ed*. June 14, 2018.
- 24 There are many options and opportunities to support "non-traditional student populations" that are currently being explored and evaluated by researchers, faculty, and others. Examples of reports and articles on these opportunities include: Ippolito, A. *Pathways to Align Career and Educational Choices for Adult Learners*. Achieving the Dream, March 2018; Education Design Lab. "Twelve Promising Non-Traditional College Pathways to Attainment." April 2016.
- 25 Note that as the Professional Standards and Competencies are currently being reviewed by the field, the alignment will occur after they have been vetted and adopted.
- 26 The Task Force is using the National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) definition of "state-funded preschool programs."
- 27 Kashen, Julie, Halley Potter and Andrew Stettner. "Quality Jobs, Quality Child Care." The Century Foundation. June 2016.

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- 29 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>.
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- 31 Brandon, R.N., Stutman, T.J., & Maroto, M. (2010). "The Economic Value of Early Care and Education in the US," in Weiss, E. & Brandon, R. *Economic Analysis: The Early Childhood Sector*. Washington, DC: Partnership for America's Economic Success.
- 32 Since the increased federal investment in FY2018, more states are increasing their payment rates to reach 75% of market rate, at least for some providers. This progress is a true testament to the need for this funding, as well as the power and impact of increased investments.
- 33 The hourly rate was based on a reversal of National Women's Law Center subsidy data, using the same assumptions of 9 hours per day, 5 days per week, and 4.33 weeks per month, or 195 hours per month.
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- 37 U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce Low Compensation Undermines Quality*. June 2016.
- 38 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Occupational Outlook Handbook, Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/kindergarten-and-elementary-school-teachers.htm>.
- 39 Early childhood educators in home-based family child care are typically not salaried employees but self-employed with income based on fees for service. This fact reflects the urgency of developing and ensuring financing models that build equitable compensation of early childhood educators into funding streams that support all families' access to mixed-delivery settings.
- 40 Note that geographical variations could theoretically result in a ECE II educator in certain areas earning a higher salary than a ECE III educator in a different geographic range.
- 41 Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
- 42 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24984>.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Completers may meet the educational requirements for industry-recognized national credentials like the Child Development Associate® (CDA) national credential and other portable credentials.
- 45 "Introductory" connotes a foundational level of preparation; a person prepared at the introductory level will know and understand the basic aspects of each professional preparation standard, as agreed upon in the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. This level of preparation will provide the foundation necessary for effective practice as well as the groundwork for mastery of more complex practices. "Essential," by comparison, connotes a step that builds on the introductory knowledge and understanding to establish a deeper knowledge and understanding of each standard's theories and practices.

# Power to the Profession

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