

The Urgent Need to Advance as a Unified Profession

This section of the study guide should help you reflect on some of the foundational questions of Power to the Profession, such as: What is this initiative about? Why are we approaching it in this way? What problems are we trying to solve?

Source documents

- [Unifying, Defining, and Owning the Profession](#), Jacqueline Jones, PhD, President/CEO, The Foundation for Child Development
- [You Can't Have Professionals Without a Profession](#), Laura Bornfreund and Stacie Goffin

Summary statements

1. Birth through age 8, particularly birth through age 3, is a critical developmental period that lays the foundation needed for lifelong learning. Intentional experiences and responsive relationships during this period benefit all children and have the potential to close the achievement gap.
2. Most young children under five years old receive child care from someone other than a parent. Families need high-quality and accessible early learning programs to seek and maintain employment.
3. Well-prepared, effective, diverse, compensated and supported early childhood educators are essential components of quality early learning programs for children. Yet, the early childhood education profession, as it exists today, is poorly prepared, compensated, and supported. The early childhood education professional crisis negatively impacts the young children and families it serves.
4. Increased public investment in the profession requires a clear answer to policymaker questions about earnings and career pathways. There must be clarity about who early educators are, who early educators want to be, and what early educators will be accountable for because of public investment.
5. Therefore, early childhood educators must develop and advocate for a unifying framework of the early childhood education profession. Early childhood educators are experts in their own practice, and they, not elected officials or policymakers, need to be the ones in the driver's seat to shape and define their profession.

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Review (Points to note)

- Think about a state. Note the staff qualifications and compensation variation across:
 - Child care facility licensing regulations
 - Public funded PreK programs
 - Head Start Performance Standards
 - Early Head Start Performance Standards
 - Credentialing or licensure for public school teaching staff
 - National accreditation
 - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)
- Note the perceptions of early childhood educators in these articles. The comment sections also offers some additional insights to the attitudes towards early childhood education held by some members of the public.
 - [D.C. Child Care Workers Push Back Against New College Degree Requirements](#)
 - [Child Care Providers Want Degrees. We Have to Figure Out How to Pay for Them](#)

Reflect (questions to consider)

- Does the lack of a unified definition of the early childhood education profession support or hinder our case for increased public funding? Why or why not?
- Consider different professions and professional identities (nursing, architecture, social work, etc.). Discuss differences and similarities in how they are named, qualified, educated, and paid within and across states and work settings.
- In what ways is the poorly funded and fragmented early childhood education system a social and racial justice issue?

Respond (join and inform the movement)

- [Sign-up](#) to inform unifying decisions and receive updates. Invite others to sign-up.
- Organize a Power to the Profession discussion (or series of discussions) with your work colleagues (i.e. an informal lunch discussion, designate time during a staff meeting, etc.)
- [Co-host](#) a Power to the Profession convening in your community. This can include focus sessions, panels, keynote addresses, and workshops at local, state, and national meetings/conferences.
- [Share](#) your burning questions and reflections.
- Let's chat during our [virtual office hours](#).