

MAKING CONNECTIONS

NAEYC: The Organization You Can't Live Without

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IT IS STUNNING HOW MANY EARLY CHILDHOOD professionals I come across who can remember their first NAEYC Annual Conference or the first time

Young Children arrived in the mail or the mentors and friends they have accumulated through NAEYC membership throughout their professional careers. Or, in general, the number of early childhood professionals who simply say with deep conviction, “I love NAEYC.”

In this column, the third of five discussing NAEYC’s new Strategic Direction, the focus is on the Association’s ability to stay relevant and fresh and be the organization that each of you want to be a part of. To do that, we—NAEYC, the Affiliates, and the interest forums—need to collectively up our game. With at least two million early childhood educators in the United States, why are only 65,000 choosing NAEYC as their professional association? Further, our current membership is older, better educated, and disproportionately more white than the overall early childhood education field. What will it take for NAEYC, its Affiliates, and its interest forums to reflect the age, educational background, and ethnic diversity of the field?

Attracting and retaining early childhood educators requires imaginative risk taking. Here are some of the steps we are taking:

- Completing the National Dialogue with the intent of creating a new Affiliate structure in which all Affiliate groups offer enormous value to members. This potentially will include new dues categories and a streamlined dues structure.
- Reinvigorating the interest forum model so all NAEYC interest forums are dynamic, relevant

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:
ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Goal: *NAEYC is a highly valued, credible, and visible organization.*

Desired Results:

- Early childhood educators seek NAEYC as their desired professional association.
- Young and diverse early childhood educators are drawn to the value NAEYC presents in its membership benefits.
- Overall membership engagement and satisfaction increases across geography and demographics.
- Members access and purchase NAEYC products, resources, and professional development solutions at an increased rate across emerging platforms.

online communities connecting professionals to their peers and colleagues who care about the same topics across the United States and the globe.

- Extending NAEYC's print content to various digital platforms so multiple audiences can consume it in their preferred format.
- Scaling professional development products so there is a deep and broad menu of educational content that is priced affordably and easy to access, regardless of consumers' geographic locations.
- Refreshing the design of our publication, marketing, and collateral materials to reflect a current and vibrant organization.
- Developing new, exclusive member benefits and opportunities (e.g., discounted rates, online professional development) that members only can access as part of their NAEYC membership.
- Launching, in collaboration with Affiliates, a targeted member recruitment and retention campaign.
- Tracking data and setting benchmarks related to the experiences and needs of a diverse membership.
- Selecting vibrant locations and meaningful content for NAEYC conferences, meetings, and events.
- Finally, NAEYC is committed to working with our members and Affiliates to increase the power of our national, state, and local advocacy effectiveness. To ensure that all children birth through age 8 have equitable access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality early learning, and that the early childhood profession exemplifies excellence and is recognized as vital and performing a critical role

in society (as articulated in the strategic priority), we have to build a vast team of early childhood educators trained in the most effective advocacy techniques, who are engaged, motivated, articulate, and unrelenting. Then members will know that their voices matter and that they are giving back to the profession they care about so deeply.

- We have set a bold goal for the Association and its members. We would like to double NAEYC membership in the next five years. While that is a high bar, it is achievable. The number-one reason members say they joined NAEYC is because another member suggested it. If next week each current member recruits just one new member, we will have already reached that goal. Who will you ask to join?