Achieving Recognized Professional Status
Can’t Happen Without You

NAEYC Public Policy Forum

Stacie G. Goffin
Goffin Strategy Group, LLC

February 26, 2017
Why Have This Conversation Now?

Because:

- The Context For Early Childhood Educators’ Practice Has Shifted.

- External Expectations For Its Work And What It Should Accomplish Have Been Re-Conceptualized.

- A Widening Gap Exists Between These Expectations And Field’s Capacity to Deliver.
As A Result –

Field’s Work And Its Trajectory Are Being Redefined

In terms of:

- Purpose.
- Who establishes outcomes expected of ECE.
- What the public expects from the field.
- What teaching and learning looks like in ECE.
- What it means to be a child in an early learning setting.
The Result?

- Confusion re ECE’s Purpose.
- Increased Programmatic And Systemic Fragmentation.
- Uneven Performance.
- Weakened Internal Leadership Capacity.
The Time Has Come -
ECE Should

- **Assume Responsibility** for the competent practice of its practitioners.
- **Hold Itself Accountable** for contributing to children’s learning and development.
- **Formally Organize as a Profession** to realize consistency in practice across sites and program types.
- **Develop Field-Wide Leadership & Shun Reliance** on public policy for defining the field’s purpose and structure.
Why It Matters

By **Not** Answering Its Field-Defining Questions, ECE:

- Allowing children to spend their days in programs of uneven quality and effectiveness.
- Denying itself the chance to become recognized for specialized expertise.
- Creating a leadership void for others to fill.
- Making it harder to create coordinated system of policies and financing.
This Declaration Is a Leadership Manifesto.

- Moves Beyond Efforts To Repair, Cushion OR Incrementally Improve What Isn’t Working.
- Argues For Deep System Change To Unify ECE As A Field Of Practice.
- Redirects ECE’s Developmental Trajectory.
“A vocation is not a profession just because those in it choose to call it one. It must be recognized as such.”

(John Goodlad, 1990)
Think About It …..

“Professionalizing ECE” Is Shorthand For Ongoing (Uneven) Continuous Improvement Efforts.

But These Efforts Lack A Clear And Shared Destination.
Our Shared Destination Should Be ECE As A Recognized Profession

THEN A Shared Baseline Will Exist For Continuous Improvement – i.e. Professional Development - That Lifts Us All As A Field Of Practice.
BTW: What’s A Profession?

Typical Meaning of “Professional”

- Paid vs. Amateur
- Respectful
- Nicely Dressed
- Completes a Job With Skill And Competence
- Reliable
- Well Trained

Goffin Strategy Group
The Adjective “Professional” Is Often Confused With “Profession” as a Noun.

Professions Are Differently Structured Than Non-Professional Occupations – Because They Have A Different Intent.

Professions Are Systems – A Purpose-Driven Coherent System Of Preparation, Practice, And Accountability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Occupations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Professions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Market- or employer-driven</td>
<td>- Have a purpose-driven, unifying systemic structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Service for hire – consumers/employers can hire anyone they want</td>
<td>- Embrace a “noble,” public-serving purpose embedded in a Code of Ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “And other duties as assigned”</td>
<td>- Have defined roles &amp; scopes of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individually (vs. collectively) oriented</td>
<td>- Have professionally controlled preparation and practice expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sometimes externally regulated or monitored</td>
<td>- Have singular designations e.g., MD, RN, AuD, DDS, OD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Certificates, degrees, apprenticeship associated with increased occupational skill and market viability</td>
<td>- Require professional (vs. academic) degrees, typically from professional schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Foster clinical judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Require licensure to ensure specialized knowledge and practice skills present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have field-wide leadership informing decisions affecting profession’s future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Goffin Strategy Group
ECE’s Missing System

Becoming A Recognized Professional Field Of Practice Requires Answers to Questions About ECE’s:

- **Unifying Purpose** – What defines and bounds us as a field of practice? At its core, what is it that ECE provides that distinguishes our work?
- **Responsibility** – For what will ECE hold itself accountable?
- **Scopes of Practice**.
- **Uniform preparation standards**.
It’s Up To Us
–Individually and Collectively–

To Step Forward and Be Accountable As A Field Of Practice

To Take Responsibility for Preparing Competent Practitioners So ECE Delivers On Its Promise.
Three Pillars of Professions

It Begins With A Shared and Unifying Purpose

- Roles, Scopes of Practice, & Competencies
- Formal Preparation/Professional Degrees
- Self-Governance

© Goffin Strategy Group
The Time Has Come To Reclaim ECE As A Field Of Practice – To Reset ECE’s Developmental Trajectory

To Come Together And Decide The Future We Want For ECE As A Field Of Practice
ECE’s Integrity As A Field Of Practice Is At Stake

We Need to Unify Around the Imperative to Change - From the Inside Out.
I’m Frequently Asked

What should be our starting place for structuring ECE as a profession?
My Answer To That Question

- Conversations With Intent Needed To Prepare Us For Decision Making And Action.
  - Become more self- and collectively aware.
  - Develop options for realizing ECE as a professional field of practice.
Conversations with Intent

- Develop readiness to engage and change.

- Open ourselves to new possibilities.

- Develop skills for engaging in decision-making and action. [Goffin, 2015]
This Is Not The Answer Most People Expect – Or Want

But We Can’t Know All the Answers – Or The Endings – At The Start

“There’s nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it’s going to be a butterfly.” [R. Buckminster Fuller]
What Will Be Required Of Us

**Courage**
- Risking The Present – As We Know It – For An Uncertain Future. [Heifetz, 1994; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015]

**Imagination and Resolve**
- Shifting Our Focus From Problem Solving To Co-Creating An Alternative Future
- Living With Uncertainty

**Tenacity and Perseverance**
- Taking The Long View ….Keeping Our Eye On The Prize – Channeling Our Shared Passions For Giving Every Child The Chance To Reach Their Potential.
Change Is Not An Option

ECE Will Continue To Change
Our Options
“I finally feel I can accept the things I’m too lazy to change.”

The New Yorker, February 23, 2009
OR
We’re ready to begin the next phase of keeping things exactly the way they are.

“We’re ready to begin the next phase of keeping things exactly the way they are.”
“The thing is, you have to really want to change.”

The New Yorker, May 26, 2014.
CAUTION
DEFINING MOMENT AHEAD
By Coming Together,

*We* Can Transform ECE
As A Field Of Practice.
Remember

• New thinking and major choices will be required of us to become a recognized profession. We need as a field to imagine differently and be prepared to make crucial choices.

• We Are Beginning A Developmental Journey – It Will Be Messy, Involve Losses, Be Filled With Uncertainty and Exhilaration — Be Punctuated With Lows and Highs.

AND Remember

• This is First and Foremost About Children And Our Passion For Their Futures.
Want more info, go to

www.goffinstrategygroup.com
Want To Stay In The Conversation

ECE Pioneers For The New Era

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13505444

OR Go to LinkedIn and Input ECE Pioneers For A New Era