

It's Time to Close the Leadership Gap in Early Childhood Education

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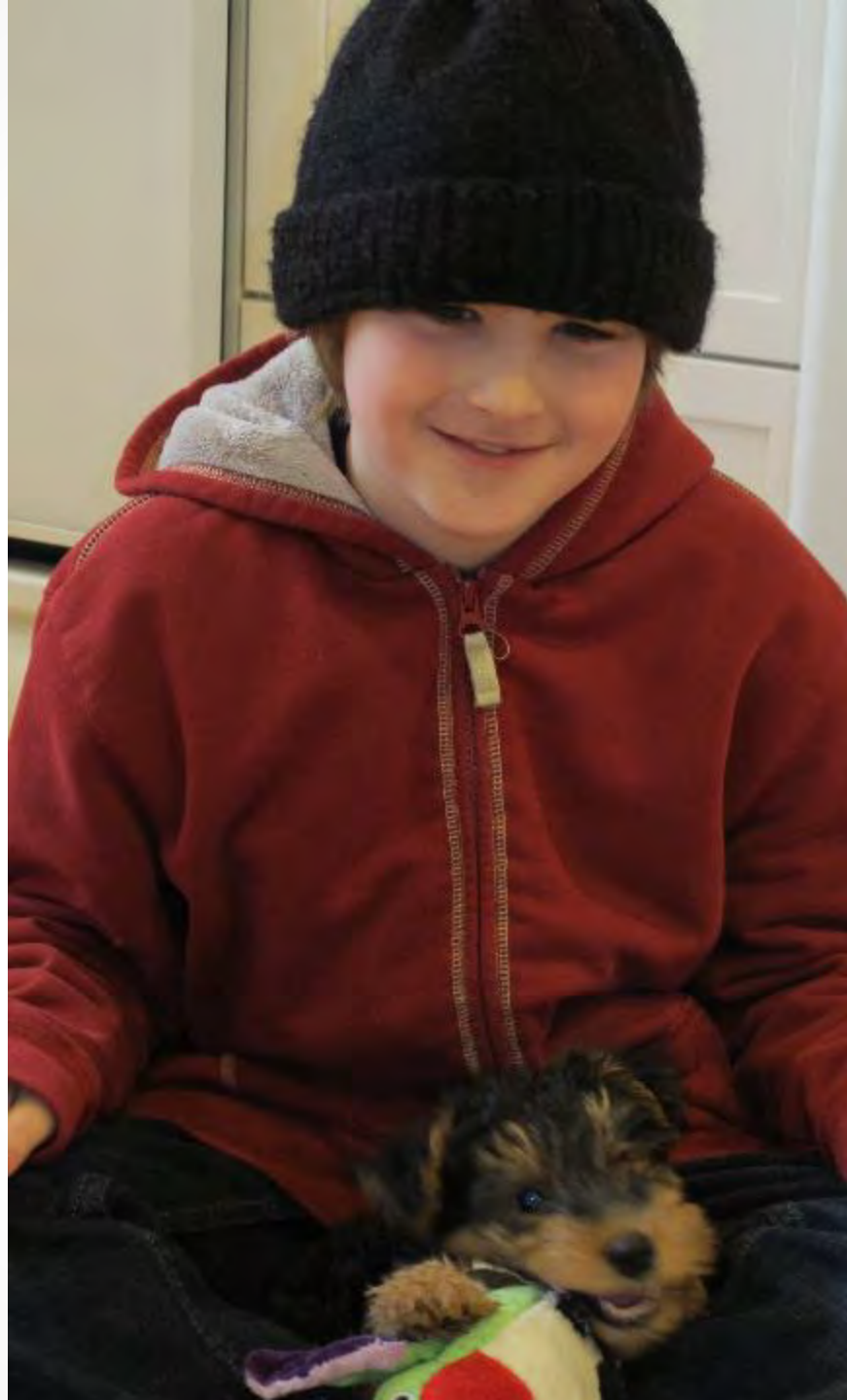
Professional Learning Institute,
June 12, 2018

Agenda for our Time Together

- Introductions (10 minutes): Stacie
- It's Up to Us to Address the Leadership Development Gap—And Here's How (40 minutes): Anne
 - Presentation and Small Group Conversations
- What Do We Want For ECE's Future? (55 minutes): Stacie
 - Presentation (20 minutes) and Small Group Conversations (30 minutes + 5)
- Closing Comments (15 minutes): All

Learning Outcomes

1. Expand understanding of ECE's leadership gap to include educator leadership in the context of ECE as a field of practice
2. Learn new strategies to cultivate/promote the crucial contribution of early childhood educators' voices to professionalizing ECE as a field of practice
3. Develop skills for Conversations with Intent that increase confidence in your ability to voice your own perspectives about thorny issues



Investigating the Gap



Early Educators in the News



Our Perceptions and Mindsets



A Shift: The Power and Possibilities of Early Educator Leadership

Traditional Leadership Approach

Early educators as:

- Passive adopters of change
- Objects of change

Relational, Entrepreneurial Leadership Approach

Early educators as:

- Co-creators and designers
- Leaders of change



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LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

“At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people’s powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders”

- Peter Senge, 2006



Fixing the Leadership Development Problem



Entrepreneurial Leadership

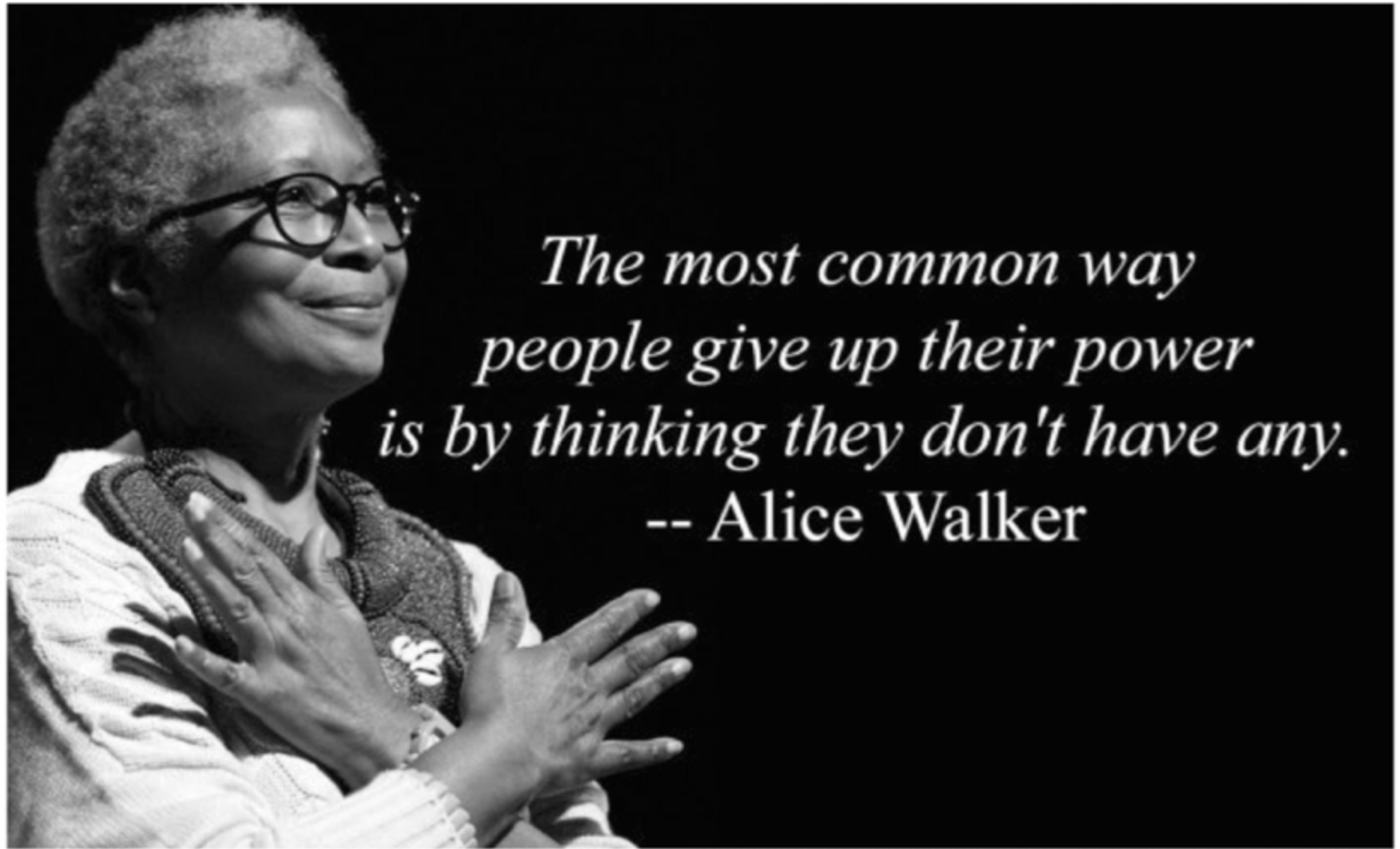
- The relentless pursuit of a better ways to do things
- Seeks out new, better, more adaptive, transformative solutions to complex problems
- From within our field



Entrepreneurial Leadership Mindsets

- Bold, empowered
- Radical collaboration
- Beginner's mindset





*The most common way
people give up their power
is by thinking they don't have any.*

-- Alice Walker

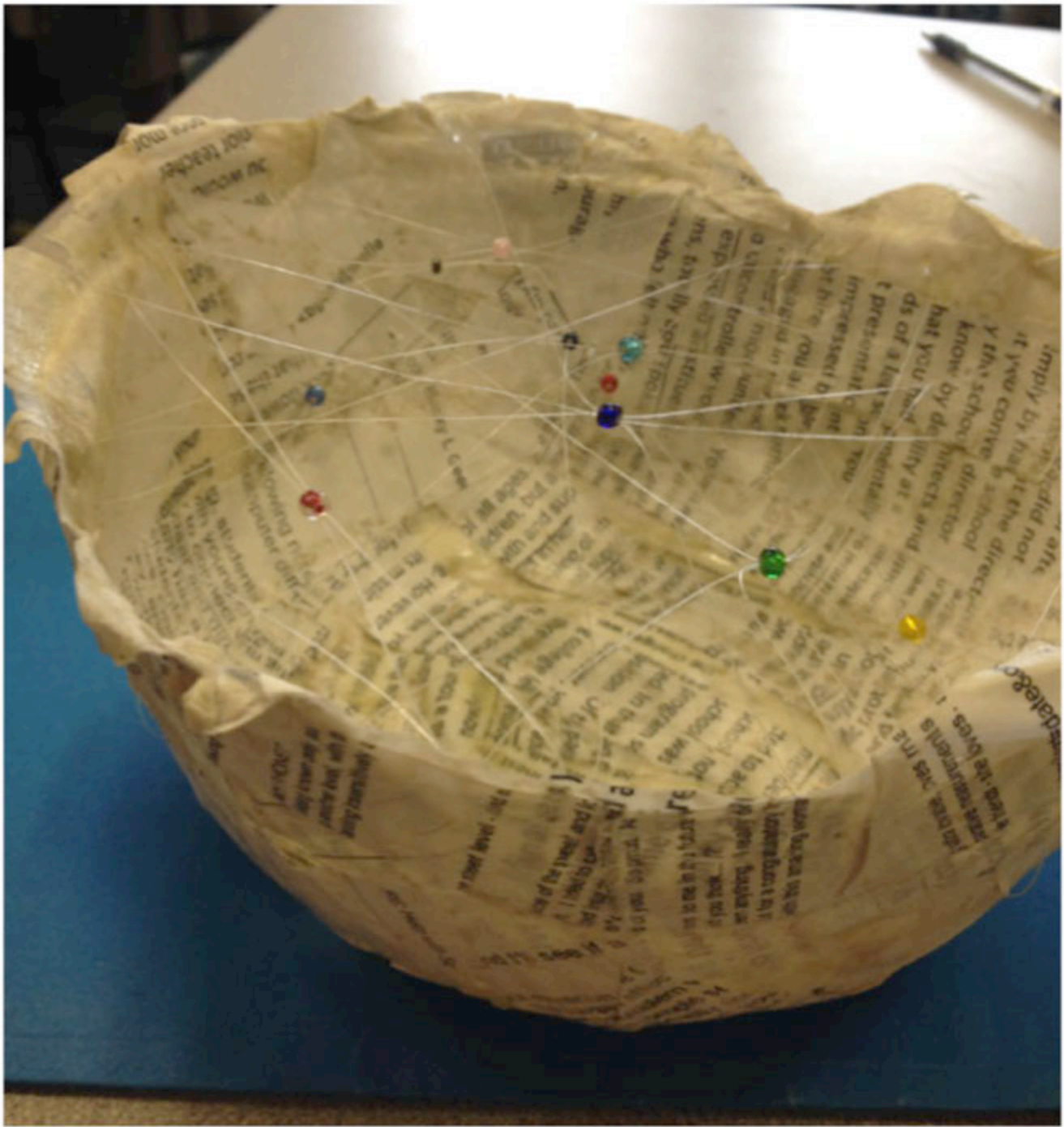
Entrepreneurial Leadership Mindsets

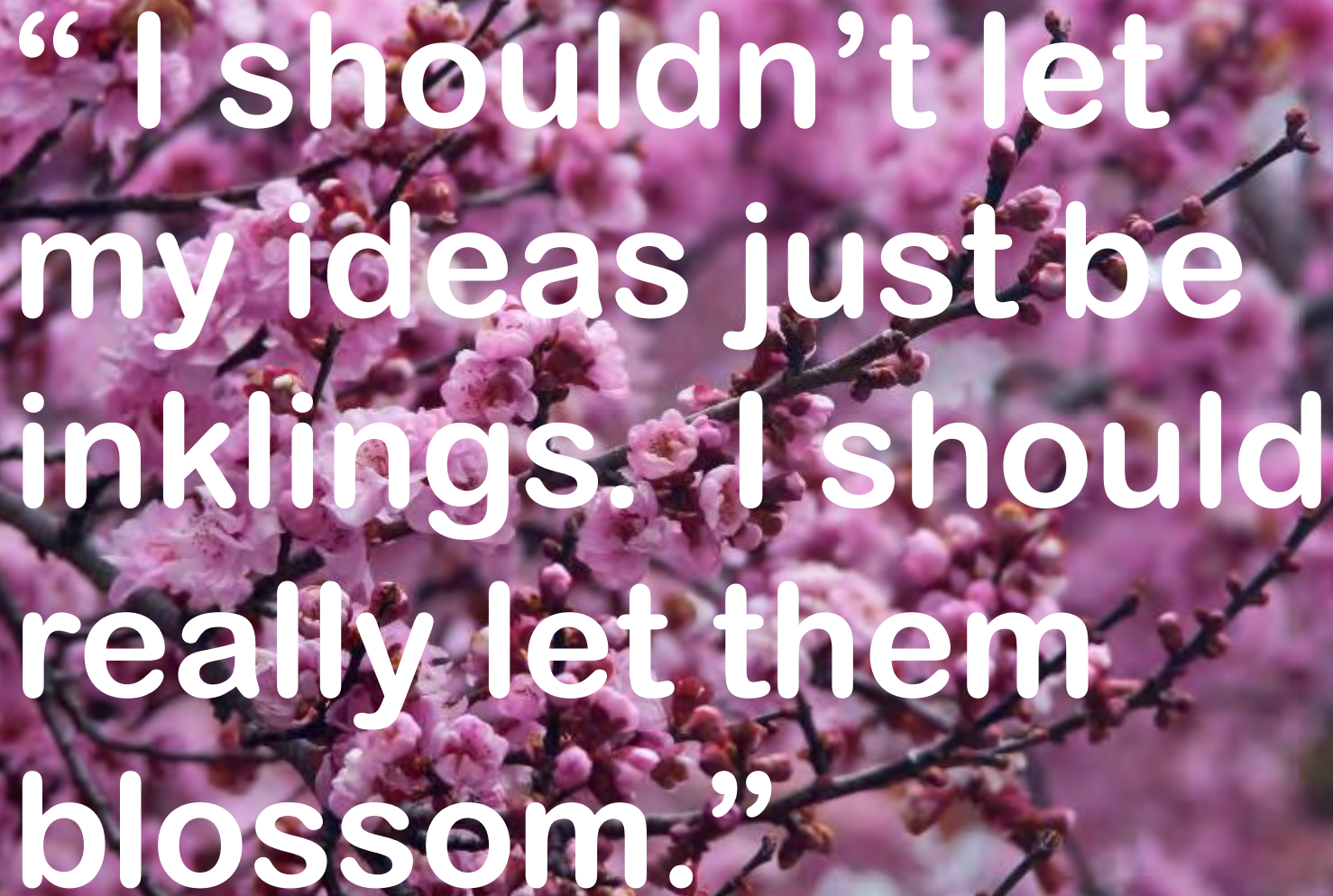
- Bold, empowered
- Radical collaboration
- Beginner's mindset

Shifting Mindsets

“As leaders, we need to follow that inner voice and not block it out with doubt, skepticism, and becoming bogged down in what is believed to be possible. I truly believe that we need to be more like NASA engineers and ask *how* we do something, not *if it's possible.*”

- Leadership Program Alum





“ I shouldn’t let
my ideas just be
inklings. I should
really let them
blossom.”

What if we were ten times bolder?
What would we do differently?



Creating the future we want for ECE as a field of practice requires us to start being ten times bolder.

We need to join together to determine the kind of system design we want for ECE

Do we want to **reform** the systems we have so they function more effectively or do we want to **re-form** them to become a recognized, competent profession?



- Terminology Matters For This Conversation

I. *Systems*

II. *Professional* as an Adjective

III. *Professionalizing* as a Verb

IV. *Profession* as a Noun

I. Systems

A **system** is a set of things—people, cells, molecules, or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time.

[Donella Meadows, 2008]

Defining “system” matters because our relationships with one another and those we want to serve is enabled and/or confined by the system(s) in which we live.

II. Typical Meanings For “Professional” as an Adjective

- Paid vs. Amateur
- Nicely Dressed
- Reliable, Dependable, Respectful
- Good At What One Does
- Prepared For What One Does
- Presence Of Deep Knowledge Or Expertise

III. **Professionalizing** as a Verb

- Incremental Actions Taken to Create Closer Approximation to the Characteristics That Define Professions (a noun) So They Function as a Coherent System.

IV. **Profession** as a Noun

- Professions are interconnected systems of preparation, practice, and accountability bound together by a shared “noble purpose” and self-governance.

“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]

Hold On Tight.

- This Means ECE Is Not Yet A Profession Even Though We Routinely Call It Such.
- Recognized Professions Are Systems That Meet Required Criteria.
 - ECE Hasn't Yet Chosen To Meet These Criteria.

We Have 3 Choices —

1. To continue with the status quo
2. To reform [**Professionalize**]

OR

3. To *re-form* ECE as a field of practice so it becomes a recognized **Profession**?

But Really Only Two Because the Status Quo
No Longer is Acceptable

ECE is going to continue to change.

In question is who will lead the change.
And if us, what's the change we to be?

- Market Or Employer Driven
- Service For Hire – Employers & Consumers Can Hire Whomever They Want
- ... And “Other Duties As Assigned”
- Individually Focused vs. Collectively Oriented
- Sometimes Externally Regulated Or Monitored
- Certificates, Degrees, Apprenticeships Increase Occupational Skill And Marketability

Occupations

**ECE Presently Is
Structured As An
Occupation**

Four Pillars Of Professions

A Unified, Cohesive System of Public Accountability

**A Shared “Noble”
Purpose**

**Roles, Scopes of
Practice, &
Practice
Competencies**

**Formal Preparation
Prior To Entry Into
The Profession**

**Self-Governance Tied
to Profession’s
“Noble Purpose,”
Standards of Practice,
& Accountability**

Interconnections Among Professions'
Four Pillars Form A System Whose
Behaviors Predictably Result In
Competent, Accountable Professionals
(noun).

— Regardless Of Program Setting,
Financing, or Geographic Location.

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Starting The Journey: Conversations With Intent

Conversations With Intent Prepare Us For Collective Decision Making And Action.

“Conversations With Intent” are NOT Just Talk!

They Are Intentionally Designed Conversations That Activate Action To Advance ECE As A Recognized Profession.

Conversations With Intent

1. Help Us Become More Self- And Collectively Aware.
2. Discover Options Not Yet Apparent For Making Choices About ECE's Future as a Field of Practice.
3. Pave The Way For Collectively Determining the Future We Want for ECE as a Field of Practice.
4. Inform Collective Action Re ECE's Future As A Field Of Practice.

Your Turn



Directions — First

Spend a few minutes reflecting on Question #1. Then initiate a round robin by:

- Introducing yourself — name, role, and city/state —and sharing your response.
- Each response should be 2-3 sentences.
- Then move on to the next person who repeats the same 2 steps.

Directions - Second

- ❑ Postpone discussing Question #1 until after all table participants have shared their response.
- ❑ Start your discussion by seeking clarification and asking for more information to deepen your understanding of someone's viewpoint.
- ❑ Continue exploring each other's ideas.
- ❑ Avoid advocating for your own point of view.
- ❑ Pace yourself.

Here We Go: Small Group Conversations

Question #1: Identify the single most important change you think ECE must undertake to optimize children's early learning and development, regardless of program name, setting or financing?
It's 2030, so the issue of compensation has been addressed.
Explore your answers with those at your table

Question #2: In light of your responses, should ECE stay focused on improving its occupational stature [**professionalizing**] OR does it need to redirect its developmental trajectory in the direction of becoming a recognized professional field of practice [**profession as a noun**]?

Question #3: Have you heard a point of view you weren't expecting? One that caught you off guard? What new questions do you have?



Winding Up the Session

Discussion:

1. What happens when a safe space is created for sharing or voicing differing perspectives and/or opposing perspectives?
2. What happens when we surface these differing ideas?
3. Why does this matter?
4. How might you create this space for this kind of conversation where you work?

Final reflection question:

- What will you continue thinking about as a result of this session?

