

Professionalizing Early Childhood Education –

Your Role in the Next Era

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What to Expect

- Introduction & Overview
- Interactive Presentation
- Q&A

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POLL QUESTION #1

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- Early Childhood Education is a fragmented field of practice –reform efforts have attended primarily to field's fragmented financing, delivery system and policies vs. fragmentation of its **core function**.
- Other than working with children – or on their behalf – few commonalities bind it in terms of shared knowledge, preparation, qualifications, commitments, & aspirations.
- Rarely are individual/ECE roles thought of as part of something larger than ourselves, programs, or separate sectors.

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PLUS

ECE Is In The Midst Of Significant Change.

What's Changed?

- The Context For Early Educators' Practice.
- External Expectations For Its Work And What It Should Accomplish.
- Widening Gap Between Public Expectations And Field's Capacity To Deliver.

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What's Changed for ECE?

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.

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The Result?

- Confusion re ECE's Purpose.
- Increased Programmatic And Systemic Fragmentation.
- Uneven Performance.
- Weakened Internal Leadership Capacity.

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Why It Matters

- ECE's Future Will Vary Depending On Whether:
 - It becomes unified as a field of practice (or remains a mix of disconnected programs and services).
 - It assumes responsibility for practitioner competence (or retains this as an individual option).
 - It structures itself so the field's knowledge base can be uniformly applied (or relies on a handful of strong programs to demonstrate quality).
 - The field seizes opportunity to reorganize itself and define its future (or remains passive as field of practice).

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The Time Has Come -

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ECE Should

- **Assume Responsibility** For The Competent Practice Of Practitioners And Positive Results For 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.

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Why It Matters

- By Not Answering Its Field-Defining Questions, ECE:
 - Allowing children to spend their days in programs of uneven quality and effectiveness.
 - Making it harder to create a coordinated system.
 - Denying itself the chance to become recognized for specialized expertise.
 - Creating a leadership void for others to fill.

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The Time Has Come –

We Should Reform – And Re-form – ECE To Become A Recognized Professional Field Of Practice.

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- This Declaration Is a **Leadership Manifesto**.
- It moves Beyond Efforts To Repair, Cushion OR Incrementally Improve What Isn't Working.
- It argues For Deep System Change To *Unify ECE As A Field Of Practice*.
- It Redirects ECE's Developmental Trajectory.

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- "We Must Grow Into Our Future Possibilities." [Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p.11]
- We Need To Exercise Leadership Individually And Collectively.
 - Leadership Is An Action Verb.
 - This Will Be A Developmental Journey.

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POLL QUESTION #2

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"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).

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BTW: What's A Profession?

Typical Meaning of "Professional"

- Paid vs. amateur
- Respectful
- Dresses Nicely
- Completes a job with skill and competence
- Provides reliable, competent service
- "Just plain good"

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Getting to Shared Understanding of Terms

- We often confuse the adjective "professional" with "profession" as a noun.
- Professions are differently structured than non-professional occupations.
- Professions are systems of preparation, practice, and accountability.

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Occupation	Profession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market- or employer-driven ▪ Service for hire – consumers/employers can hire anyone they want ▪ "And other duties as assigned" ▪ Individually (vs. collectively) oriented ▪ Sometimes externally regulated or monitored ▪ Certificates, degrees, apprenticeship associated with increased occupational skill and market viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field-unifying systemic structures ▪ Defined boundaries & scope of practice ▪ Occupationally controlled preparation, certification, and practice expectations ▪ Those being served can rely on professional exercise of clinical judgment ▪ Unique knowledge & skills serve a "noble" purpose ▪ Licensure required to ensure specialized knowledge and practice skills present ▪ Credentials required for entry & career mobility ▪ Field-wide leadership exists

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THE TIME HAS COME TIME

For ECE To Be A Coherent System Of Preparation, Practice, And Responsibility

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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 We can Deliver On the Field's Promise.

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ECE's Missing System

- Becoming A Recognized Professional Field Of Practice Requires Us To Answer Questions About ECE's:
 - Unifying Purpose.
 - Responsibility – For what will ECE hold itself accountable?
 - Scopes of Practice.
 - Uniform preparation standards.

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- A Professional Structure Addresses ECE's Fractured Status and Uneven Competence.
- This Is Because They:
 - **Are A Field-Unifying Strategy** – They define a profession's purpose, its expertise, and who is served.
 - **Create A System** – Are accountable for practitioner preparation, practice, and predictable contributions to children's learning and development.
 - **Are Self-Governing** As A Field Of Practice.
 - ◊ Assume responsibility for competent practice and its outcomes.
 - ◊ Are recognized by private and public entities as professional fields of practice.
 - **Have Institutional Capacity** to Exercise Field-Wide Leadership
 - ◊ Lead for profession's continuous learning and development.
 - ◊ Advocate for conditions that make competent practice possible and access to it available.

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POLL QUESTION #3

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Three Pillars of Professions

It Begins With A Shared and Unifying Purpose

Roles, Scopes of Practice, & Competencies

Higher Education

Self- Governance

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POLL QUESTION #4

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The Time Has Come To Reclaim ECE
As A Field Of Practice

To Come Together And Decide The Future
We Want For ECE As A Field Of Practice

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ECE's Integrity As A Field Of Practice Is At Stake

**We Need to Unify Around the Imperative to Change -
From the Inside Out.**

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WHETHER TO CHANGE IS NOT AN OPTION.

ECE WILL CONTINUE TO CHANGE.

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Big Questions To Consider

- What major choices will be required to move ECE forward as a profession? Are we prepared as a field of practice to make them?
- What principles or values should guide formation of ECE as a professional field of practice?
- What options are available for ECE's organization as a professional field of practice?
- What should be the starting place(s) for structuring ECE as a profession?
- What else do we need to know to move forward? Who else should we be learning from? [Goffin, 2015]

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What Will Be Required

- **Imagination and Resolve**
 - Shifting Our Focus From Problem Solving To Co-Creating An Alternative Future
 - Dealing With Uncertainty
- **Courage**
 - Risking The Present – As We Know It – For An Uncertain Future. [Heifetz, 1994; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015]
- **Tenacity and Perseverance**
 - Taking The Long ViewKeeping Our Eye On The Prize – Our Passion For Giving Every Child The Chance To Reach Their Potential.

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The First Next Step Conversations with Intent

- Conversations With Intent Needed To Prepare Us For Decision Making And Action.
 - Create a conversational canvas for planning our alternative future,
 - Develop options for realizing ECE as a professional field of practice, and
 - Lay groundwork for what lies ahead. [Goffin, 2015]

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Conversations with Intent

- Conversations With Intent Allow Us To
 - Become more self- and collectively aware.
 - Develop readiness to engage and change.
 - Open ourselves to new possibilities.
 - Develop skills for engaging in decision-making and action. [Goffin, 2015]

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Unless Someone Like You Cares A Whole, Awful Lot.
Nothing Is Going To Be Better,
It's Not.
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By Coming Together,
We Can Transform ECE As A Field Of Practice!

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