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## Who, What, and When: General Questions about Power to the Profession

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### **Is this about young children and their families OR the early childhood education profession?**

Both. To care about the children and families in our country is to care about the professionals who support, care for, and educate them. Since the first years of a child's life are the period of the most rapid brain development, skilled, knowledgeable, and well-compensated early childhood educators are needed to help support young children in the context of their families, communities, and cultures.

### **Is the current early childhood education (ECE) profession able to meet the needs of young children, families, or businesses?**

Not really. Starved of needed investments, the system includes significant variation in the quality of the care and education that young children and families receive. Families, on their own, simply cannot bear the cost of the quality care and education that their young children need. Businesses are losing workers who struggle to access and afford child care, and early learning programs are struggling to hire and retain competent and qualified educators due to low pay.

### **Is Power to the Profession (P2P) addressing the issues of access, affordability, and compensation?**

Yes. Major increases in public investment are necessary to address all of these issues together. But this type of significant, sustained investment won't happen simply because early childhood educators "deserve" it. That's where Power to the Profession comes in! Fifteen organizations (making up the national [Task Force](#)), dozens of stakeholder groups, and the field at large have come together to establish unifying guidelines, standards, and expectations for the ECE profession

because these are necessary to get the kinds of increased federal and state investments that can solve the puzzle of access, affordability, and compensation.

## **Can we just stay the way we are and get the public funding we need to be effective?**

No. While we have had some important successes in increasing investments, our field lacks the clarity we need to get the kind of transformative investments we require. Policymakers and taxpayers will require clarity, coherence, and accountability from the field in exchange for significant and sustained investments. We must unify and come to some general agreement and definition on the core preparation, competencies, responsibilities, and compensation needed to meet the needs of young children and families.

## **What does P2P mean by “defining a profession”? Aren’t we already professionals?**

It’s complicated. Many of you are indeed “professionals” in your practice—but you’re operating without the supports and structures of a real “profession.” Established professions — such as nurses, architects, speech-language pathologists, and accountants — are built on a shared purpose, common identity, and agreement on the unique responsibilities and ethical standards for their work. From this foundation, they establish and update skills and competencies, build career pathways, strengthen preparation programs, and determine compensation. P2P is working to bring this type of professional unity to the ECE profession for educators serving children birth through age 8. See [Decision Cycle 1](#) for more detail.

## **How is Power to the Profession defining the profession?**

Power to the Profession is the process of coming to consensus on a set of recommendations that work together to create a framework for a unified and effective early childhood education profession. This framework is the result of a three-year process of working through a series of “decision cycles” that considered each of the related elements needed to build a profession. This process is child-focused and committed to elevating educators’ voices from a range of diverse perspectives, including race, language, culture, geography, setting, education level, and more.

## **Who needs to meet P2P recommendations for the defined profession? Are they for anyone working directly with young children (birth-8) and families?**

Anyone working with young children, birth through age 8, has the potential to be considered an “early childhood educator” if he or she is working in a regulated early childhood education program. This includes those working in public and private centers, schools, and homes.

## **What’s the difference between a “field” and a “profession”?**

The early childhood education profession, as defined here, is only one part of a much wider early childhood field. This field includes many individuals, including mental health consultants, social workers, child psychologists, pediatricians and others, whose work intersects with early childhood education, but who may be prepared within an allied profession. As they will not be prepared or held accountable for the competencies and responsibilities of the early childhood education profession, they are not considered part of the profession itself, though they remain part of our valued field.

## **What if someone doesn’t want to be part of the profession?**

Our explicit and stated goal is that those working directly with young children, now and in the future, will have the resources and supports they need to meet the requirements for being an “early childhood educator,” as well as the resulting and increased compensation. However, even if they have equitable access to all of those supports and compensation increases, some individuals who work directly with young children, particularly in settings outside of public schools, may choose to care for young children without meeting the guidelines of the early childhood education profession. They will remain part of the early childhood education field, but they are not the primary focus of our recommendations for the early childhood education profession within that field. See [Decision Cycle 1](#) for more details.

## **Are these recommendations for home visitors?**

It depends on the home visitation model. Some home visiting programs may choose to require home visitors to meet the professional requirements for the early childhood education profession. Remember that the early childhood education profession, as defined here, is only one part of a much wider early childhood field. This wider field includes home visitors and many more. See [Decision Cycle 1](#) for more details.

## **Are these recommendations for all higher education faculty and others preparing early childhood educators?**

Somewhat. It is anticipated that individuals will have to be prepared as early childhood educators before assuming leadership responsibilities in preparing others. Therefore, the decisions made now to define early childhood educators will influence how individuals in preparation roles are positioned in the context of the early childhood education profession. At this point, the Task Force is not explicit about which subset of this group must meet these recommendations and the additional recommendations that are specific to this group. The Professional Governance Body will address this question in the future. See [Decision Cycles 1](#), and [7 and 8](#) for more details.

## **Are these recommendations for all program directors and principals? Are these recommendations for all coaches, mentors and technical assistant providers?**

Somewhat. It is anticipated that individuals in instructional and pedagogical leadership roles must be prepared as early childhood educators before assuming leadership responsibilities in early childhood programs. Therefore, decisions made now to define early childhood educators will influence how individuals in these leadership roles are positioned in the context of the early childhood education profession. In some contexts, these individuals may be referred to as center directors, assistant directors, principals, education managers, supervisors, mentors, or training and technical assistant providers. At this point, the Task Force is not explicit about the additional

recommendations that are specific to this group. The Professional Governance Body will address this question in the future. See [Decision Cycles 1](#), and [7 and 8](#) for more details.

### **Do current members of the field have to meet these recommendations right now?**

No. These recommendations do not take effect immediately. Significant policy changes and resources will need to be provided. Implementation timelines, “grandfathering” policies, public funding for compensation, and other conditions will need to be in place as these recommendations are implemented. This will also include policies that recognize the experience of current early childhood educators. See the [Implementation Commitments](#) made by the Task Force, as well as [Decision Cycles 7 and 8](#), which include recommendations for necessary resources, supports, and accountability.

### **These workforce challenges have been around for a long time. What makes this time different?**

The “child care” cost and quality crisis has gained significant attention and many outside the early childhood field are stepping in and stepping up – families, businesses, elected officials, philanthropic organizations, faith leaders, military officials, health professionals, and more. We can’t afford to miss this opportunity to unite and advance as the competent and effective profession that young children and families need. If we don’t define this profession, others will do it for us.

## Diversity and Equity

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### **Is the P2P initiative elevating and addressing issues of diversity and equity? How is this evident?**

Yes. The decision-makers, decision-drivers, decision-making process, and the decisions themselves are all developed to help ensure that P2P does not reinforce existing inequities and inequalities – and in fact, the full set of Decision Cycles serves to reduce and ultimately eliminate them. P2P is continuously assessed and refined to ensure that this commitment remains evident.

### **Diversity and Equity in Decision-Makers**

The 15 Task Force organizations responsible for using data from the field to make decisions are national organizations that represent individuals working directly with young children. This helps to disrupt current power dynamics by widening the opportunities for on-the-ground educators to make more decisions about the policies that influence their practice. Engagement opportunities and data collection mechanisms are continuously enhanced to ensure that the expertise and experiences of educators – particularly racially, ethnically, geographically, and linguistically diverse educators – is used to shape the Task Force's decisions.

### **Diversity and Equity in Decision-Drivers**

The field drives the decisions made by the Task Force. This disrupts current power dynamics and provides opportunities for current educators and stakeholder organizations to inform the decisions. The perspectives of those most impacted by the decisions and/or those historically marginalized in policy development (for example, educators of color working in home-based and center-based settings) are being intentionally elevated in multiple ways: focus groups, surveys, conference calls and webinars, informal conversations, conference sessions, response letters, and focused meetings.

## Diversity and Equity in the Decision-Making Process

The process is providing multiple opportunities for transparent and consultative decision-making. Engagement opportunities (and the timeline) are continuously expanded to provide additional authentic and equitable engagement opportunities. Over time, resources have been developed for the field to both lead and participate in these engagement opportunities. Contact [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org) for engagement resources and support.

## Diversity and Equity in the Decisions

Creating a more coherent, transparent, and accessible profession is in itself an equity decision. The eight decision cycles collectively are driven by the goal of ensuring that all young children have equitable access to effective, diverse, and comparably compensated early childhood educators. The decision cycles recognize and reduce the impact of structural barriers such as institutional racism, sexism, classism, elitism, and bias. Here are a few decisions made with an equity lens:

- Effective, diverse, and competent early educators are needed for all children 0-8 regardless of settings, sector, or the privilege of their families and community ([DC 1](#))
- Required professional competencies ensure effectiveness with all children ([DC 2](#))
- Core professional pathway is transparent, funded, and elevates multiple credentials and degrees that articulate across levels ([DC 345](#))
- Implementation timelines must honor and integrate existing educators ([DC345](#))
- The ECE profession has an inclusive ECE I, II, III structure that honors the labor of all ([DC345](#))
- Compensation is comparable across 0-8 settings and sectors, creating parity for those serving the youngest children ([DC 6](#))
- Compensation includes benefits ([DC 6](#))
- Public investments are required to alleviate the burden on educators and families ([DC 6](#))
- Accountability is shared and distributed across the entire professional system ([DC 78](#))
- Targeted resources and supports are provided to ensure that we can meet educators where they are, so they can meet the recommendations ([DC 78](#))

**The recommendations increase the expectations for early childhood educators. I am concerned that some educators, particularly those from communities of color, from rural communities, and those who speak a language other than English, will have a**



## **difficult time meeting these recommendations. Do these recommendations have different expectations for educators from different communities?**

No. The P2P Task Force believes that all individuals have the capacity to meet increased preparation and practice expectations, in spite of the continued existence of institutional barriers such as racism, sexism, classism, elitism, and bias, *provided* (a) they have equitable access to the resources they need to be successful and (b) decision-makers make efforts to mitigate and remove those structural and systemic barriers. At the same time, the Task Force has included pathways and supports to ensure that all educators who want to be a part of the early childhood education profession have a valued and meaningful place in it.

## **How has P2P been engaging early childhood educators?**

Because we have a diverse field, we have used a variety of opportunities to engage early childhood educators including: surveys, focus groups, information sessions, keynote presentations, webinars, blog posts, informational interviews, and formal letters and statements. To date, Power to the Profession has engaged over 10,000 early childhood educators across 46 states. Nearly 6,000 individuals have completed online surveys, 32 partner organizations have shared written comments, and 145 focus groups have engaged more than 3,000 individuals. Intentional outreach and engagement with educators from communities of color, educators who speak Spanish, and educators living in rural communities has resulted in 21 focus and discussion groups reaching more than 440 individuals across 12 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

## **My community is not adequately informed about and engaged in this work. Can I help? Is there a role for me?**

Yes. We can provide the resources and tools you need to lead a P2P conversation and/or focus group in your community. The range of resources and tools will be customized based on what you need. Please contact us at [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org) for more.

## Professional Pathways and Preparation Programs

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### **Will professional preparation programs need to align to new standards and competencies?**

Yes. All programs will need to align their coursework, assessments, and program of studies with the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#), a revised version of the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation. In [Decision Cycle 2](#), the Task Force named these revised standards as the foundation for the shared standards for the early childhood education profession, serving children birth through 8. The revision of these standards and competencies are being leveled to align with the three early childhood educator designations. The field is in the middle of an iterative process of feedback and revision; and the final version of recommendations in this area will be released in conjunction with and at the same time as the full Unifying Framework.

### **Which preparation programs will need to meet these standards? What is the minimum preparation or degree required to be an early childhood educator?**

P2P aims to reduce the complexity and inconsistency that currently exists in our field by recommending three distinct designations, all united within one profession. These three designations—Early Childhood Educator I, Early Childhood Educator II, and Early Childhood Educator III—will be prepared to play unique roles and hold specific responsibilities. ECE I will be prepared with a minimum of 120 clock hours in a professional training program, ECE II will be prepared at the associate degree level, and ECE III will be prepared at the bachelor's or initial master's degree level. All these preparation programs will be aligned with the [Professional Standards and Competencies](#). See [Decision Cycle 345+6](#) for more detail.

These three designations are pathways to enter into the profession as well as a way to advance within the profession and P2P is committed to ensuring the necessary pathways, structures, and

supports are present so that anyone who wants to access a degree and be prepared at any level has the resources to do so. P2P is also committed to ensuring that preparation programs have the resources and support they need to support early childhood educators in meeting the expectations of the profession. See [Decision Cycle 7 and 8](#) for more detail on the supports and resources recommended by P2P.

## **Can other professional preparation programs be added to the recommended programs?**

Yes. Other qualifying professional preparation programs, particularly non-degree programs or programs in freestanding institutions, will also be incorporated, as needed, when this Unifying Framework is implemented. The Professional Governance Body outlined in [Decision Cycle 7 and 8](#) will be responsible for determining which preparation programs meet the standards of the profession.

## **Are these recommendations suggesting that the depth of associate and bachelor's degree preparation are the same?**

No. Each preparation program has its own set of expectations, although there are intentional overlaps. Both matter and must be used and valued for what they do well. See the draft [Standards and Competencies](#) for an articulation of the different levels of preparation at the ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III levels.

## **Are these recommendations suggesting that early childhood educators leading classrooms with infants and toddlers should not be prepared by bachelor's degree programs?**

No. ECE IIIs should have the knowledge and competence needed to lead classrooms with infants and toddlers. ECE IIs should also have the competence needed to lead classrooms with infants and toddlers; and they should have frequent access to ECE IIIs for guidance, including in areas of brain and language development, curriculum development, and evaluation and assessment, when doing

so. ECE IIs and ECE IIIs should earn compensation at least comparable to staff in public schools with similar qualifications and responsibilities.

**Are these recommendations aligned with the Institute of Medicine's recommendation related to pathways and timelines for a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8?**

Yes. P2P recommendations provide a more unified pathway or bridge to the bachelor's degree requirement for lead educators (as well as other recommendations) in the Institute's *Transforming the Workforce* report. In addition, P2P adds compensation recommendations and defines a multi-level early childhood education profession to equitably advance all educators' roles, not only the lead educator's.

## Compensation

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**Will families, educators, and program owners have to pay for all of this? Where is the funding for increased compensation coming from?**

No. Because significant and sustained public investment directed toward the compensation and preparation of early childhood educators is the best way to improve outcomes for children and their families, increased compensation must come from public investments. The costs cannot be borne by families or early childhood educators. Funding will have to come from state and federal governments; specific policy recommendations, sequences, and levers to achieve increased investments targeted towards the workforce will be part of the future implementation efforts and will build upon the unified framework and advocacy commitments created through the Power to the Profession process.

## **Is compensation being addressed alongside increased preparation? What are the compensation recommendations for ECE Is, ECEIIs, and ECE IIIs?**

Yes. The Task Force recommends that compensation for early childhood educators increase as their level of preparation, competencies, and responsibilities increase. As a starting place, ECE Is, ECE IIs, and ECE IIIs should be compensated based on public school salary scales as the minimum benchmark.

## **Is the compensation recommendation limiting the early childhood education profession to current public school salaries when we know that those educators are also inadequately compensated?**

No. The alignment with public school salaries is a starting place for this first edition of a unified and supported early childhood profession -- the floor, not the ceiling. Salaries and benefits should ultimately be comparable to *members of other professions who care for children in the same age range and who have similar functional responsibilities*. In all cases, early childhood educators should earn family-sustaining wages.

## **Does compensation include benefits?**

Yes. Compensation includes an adequate benefits package, which should include paid leave (annual, sick, and/or personal), medical insurance, and retirement.

## **Does compensation differ based on place of employment, ages of children served, or setting?**

No. Early childhood educators with similar experience and qualifications should be comparably compensated regardless of the ages of children they serve or whether they work in a community-based center, elementary school, or home-based program.

## **Do recommendations support increasing the minimum wage as a strategy for increasing compensation for ECE Is, ECE IIs, and ECE IIIs?**

In some ways. The recommendations support the goal of ensuring a family-sustaining wage for all educators. In states and cities that are raising the minimum wage, that effort will benefit some current early childhood educators, and place pressure on states to raise payment rates for educators and programs serving families who receive child care subsidies. However, the complex knowledge, skills, and competencies required for this profession demand that ECE Is, ECE IIs, and ECE IIIs should be compensated based on public school salary scales as the minimum benchmark.

## **I have no interest in meeting the standards and guidelines for ECE I, ECE II, or ECE III. I just want to do my own thing. Are these recommendations for compensation developed with me in mind?**

Yes and no. Yes, all workers should have a livable, family-sustaining wage. However, all P2P recommendations, including qualifications and compensation, apply to individuals who meet the standards and guidelines of the profession. We strongly encourage you to consider becoming a part of the early childhood education profession. These recommendations advocate for the resources you'll need to do so.

## Resources, Supports and Infrastructure

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### **Are there recommendations for targeted resources and supports to help existing and aspiring early childhood educators, including existing “home providers,” meet the ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III expectations?**

Yes. [Decision Cycles 7 and 8](#) describe the supports, resources, quality assurances, and infrastructure that must be in place to ensure early childhood educators can meet the requirements. The Task Force will not promote or advocate for increased educational requirements and responsibilities without advocating for funding for supports, infrastructure, and compensation.

### **What about expectations and support for the broader early childhood system?**

Yes. All members of the profession will be supported by a broader system that includes preparation programs, employers, professional organizations, and state and federal governments and agencies. [Decision Cycles 7 and 8](#) describe the expectations, supports, and accountability for the broader early childhood system: educators, preparation programs, employers, professional governance body, and state and federal governments.

### **What is the role of the early childhood education profession in leading this work?**

In other professions, the members of the profession take the lead in determining the roles in the profession, the standards and competencies for each role, the preparation required to meet the standards of the profession, the accountability systems and infrastructure supports to be sure the members of the profession are effective. In addition, members of the profession work with others such as preparation programs, employers, and government agencies to meet the shared purposes of the profession. Professions establish a professional governance body (PGB) to guide this work. This is what we are proposing for the early childhood education profession — an initial PGB with individual early childhood educators, public members, and organizational representatives comprising a significant portion of the leadership. See [Decision Cycles 7+8](#) for more detail.

## Accountability Expectations

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### **Are early childhood educators being held accountable for something? For what?**

Yes. In the early childhood education profession of the future, early childhood educators at all levels must meet the guidelines established by the profession and be accountable for their daily practice with all children. These guidelines include: complete a preparation program designated by the profession, get (and maintain) an individual license to practice, and fulfill professional responsibilities.

This accountability — and its connection to resources — is important because we understand that we can only expect the significant, sustained increases in public financing needed to move the profession forward if we are willing to be accountable for their effective use. At the same time, we also understand that we can only be held accountable if we have necessary and sufficient supports, resources, and infrastructure.

See Appendix B of [Decision Cycle 345+6](#) for the responsibilities for ECE Is, ECE IIs, ECE IIIs, as well as the draft [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#), and [Decision Cycles 7+8](#) for more detail on recommendations on accountability for early childhood educators.

### **Are there recommendations for addressing accountability for the core set of professional preparation programs?**

Yes. The primary set of professional preparation programs identified in [Decision Cycles 345+6](#) will be held accountable for preparing competent early childhood educators. Guidelines for accountability include: align to the [Professional Standards and Competencies](#), earn accreditation or recognition, and prepare students for professional licensure. See [Decision Cycles 7+8](#) for more detail on recommendations on accountability for early childhood educators.



## **Will recommendations include accountability for employers, professional organizations, and government agencies?**

Yes. They all play direct or indirect roles in creating conditions for early childhood educators to be effective. Employers will be held accountable for providing professional working conditions and autonomy, professional compensation, professional development, and related supports. Professional organizations will be held accountable for setting professional standards and guidelines, designating accreditation bodies, setting parameters for assessments, and issuing and approving specializations. State governments will be accountable for managing licensure, funding qualified preparation programs, increasing funding for early childhood educators, and streamlining and consolidating regulatory structures. The federal government will be accountable for increasing investments in early childhood educators and aligning legislation, regulations, and funding to Power to the Profession recommendations. See [Decision Cycles 7+8](#) for more detail.

## **Policy, Advocacy, and Implementation**

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### **I am eager to move a policy and financing agenda forward. Will the field receive more information about how to make sure these recommendations align with regulations and policies impacting the workforce?**

Yes. Before we move forward with advocating for the policy changes and public investments we need, the profession must first create and agree to recommendations based on what we know from our own experiences and research. As this internal field discussion comes to an end, attention will begin to shift more fully to a more coordinated and comprehensive policy agenda.

## **Should I be preparing now for this public policy lift?**

Yes. Regardless of your role, you can start by learning more about the political and regulatory landscape at the local, state, and/or federal level. [Start to map out](#) who does what from a public policy and financing perspective. You can also build relationships with other state leaders and advocates inside and outside the field. Please contact us at [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org) if you would like further information.

## **My state or local government is developing and revising workforce policies right now. Are there ways I can connect the dots between P2P and what's happening on my end?**

Yes. Start by sharing more information about P2P. Identify and work with partners to move together. States should have some autonomy to respond to their context, but they should act in a way that leverages and unifies the field nationally. Contact us at [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org) to share more about current opportunities and we can help.

## **There are many initiatives at the national and state levels. They all seem to be focused on the same goal — to advance the early childhood education profession. Is this a good thing?**

Yes. There is no single state or national initiative that can lead or drive the comprehensive changes needed to ensure that the early childhood education profession is prepared, diverse, effective, and fairly compensated. However, these individual initiatives have the potential to be more impactful and sustainable if they intentionally intersect and unify the field. That's where we hope P2P can play a useful and unique role.

**Implementing these recommendations will require a major policy and advocacy lift for the field. Should the field be confident in our ability to move such a robust public policy and financing agenda?**

Yes. The growth of this field over the past 30 years demonstrates the power of our collective strength. We are also inspired by other professions that have led such transformative change, such as nurses and pharmacists. We also have supporters outside the immediate field – families, businesses, elected officials, philanthropic organizations, faith leaders, military officials, health professionals, and more. And we have states that are ready to advance this work. We can't afford to miss this opportunity to unite and advance the profession. Don't forget: if we don't define our profession, others will do it for us.

**I still have questions, and I would like to know more. Can I have a more focused conversation?**

Of course! Thank you for your deep investment in this work. Your voice and your feedback matter to us. The only way we can live up to our commitment to advancing a diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated early childhood education profession is by listening to, elevating, and intentionally responding to the concerns of those directly impacted. Your feedback is a gift. Please contact us at [p2p@naeyc.org](mailto:p2p@naeyc.org) for a focused conversation.