

**Annual Report of the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council****January 2021 – December 2021**

**Mission:** The NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council acts as an advisory body to support the continuing transformation of the NAEYC Affiliate structure into a high-performing, inclusive organization.

**Purpose:** To advise the NAEYC Governing Board and national staff about all issues related to Affiliates and members, and to identify and develop strong, inclusive leadership.

[2020 Affiliate Advisory Council Annual Report](#)

**Current Affiliate Advisory Council Members:** Tara Hurdle *Chair* (TN) Kelly Ramsey, *Past Chair*, (OK), Dr. Raquel Munarriz Diaz, *Chair Elect* (FL), Dr. Mike Abel (MO), Michelle Barnea (NJ), Dr. Eric Bucher (AZ), Zaina Cahill (PA), Dr. Melanie Felton (IA), Gina Forbes (ME), Dr. Helene Harte (OH), Rebecca Lamar (PA), Dr. Margarita Marichal (PR), Dr. Jodi Nerren (TX), Victoria Roanhorse (NM), Dr. Ashley Simpson (CO), Crystal Sanford-Brown, *NAEYC Governing Board Vice President and Liaison to the Council*. **NAEYC Staff:** Gwen Simmons

**Affiliate Advisory Council Member Terms Ending May 2021:** Dr. Chris Amirault (OK), Dr. Brian Kingrey (IA), Robyn Lopez Melton (OR).

**NAEYC Governing Board Committee Work:** Members of the Affiliate Advisory Council were honored to be appointed to serve on four committees. Affiliate Relations: Kelly Ramsey, Strategy and Innovation:

Eric Bucher, Policy and Professional Advancement: Michelle Barnea, and Nominations: Raquel Munarriz Diaz.

**Introduction:** The Affiliate Advisory Council was created in 2015 as a nimble and efficient advisory body to replace the former Affiliate Council at the time NAEYC adopted a new affiliate structure. The Council's 16-person structure was designed to ensure that NAEYC Governing Board members and national staff have an advisory group they can access to better understand the needs, challenges, and success stories of the Affiliate Network, and to learn from affiliate experience.

The Affiliate Advisory Council is staffed by and works very closely with the Affiliate Relations Department at NAEYC. Since its inception, the Affiliate Advisory Council has continued to focus on NAEYC's strategic direction, and especially our commitment to HPIO, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

### **2021: The Ongoing Impact of the Pandemic**

The pandemic exacerbated [challenges for early childhood professionals](#) and highlighted racial and social inequities across the child care landscape. Despite the stress and challenges, early childhood educators continued to show up for young learners and parents. Bi-partisan support for child care remained steadily high, and elected officials paid more attention to the critical role of early care and education providers as they considered resources and supports to help Americans emerge from the pandemic thriving.

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan was signed into law, investing [\\$39 billion](#) in emergency child care relief and family supports that were critically needed to stabilize the early care and education field. This historic investment was made possible thanks to the 52 NAEYC Affiliates across the nation, NAEYC members, and community champions who made their voices heard for children, families, and the early childhood profession.

Even with the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, the Council committed to staying connected, developing strong collaborative relationships, and working to advance equity and justice. The Council held virtual Council and workgroup meetings to accomplish their goals this year. Additionally, resources and content for the Council Retreat in March 2021 and onboarding of newly appointed Council members in July 2021 were transitioned to online platforms. This dedication to staying connected virtually supported the Council to create a digital space in which to share ideas and perspectives, collaborate, and move forward initiatives and projects seamlessly.

### **The Work of the Council**

Within the Council, priorities were identified to move the work of the council forward in more targeted ways. Council members worked together in smaller subgroups to propel a variety of different workplans, in addition to committee and Governing Board work discussed throughout this report. Workgroups included the Survey Data workgroup which focused on councilmembers' skills and availability in supporting Affiliate Relations; the Mentorship workgroup which focused on supporting mentor relationships between seasoned and new members of the Council; and the Affiliate Dialogue pilot workgroup (*see below for update on the Council's Affiliate Dialogue work*).

In addition, Council members co-facilitated Affiliate Leadership webinars and wrote opinion-editorials (“op-eds”) for the monthly Affiliate Connections newsletter (*see Appendix B*).

### **2021 Council Application Process**

The Council appointed three outstanding, qualified individuals from a pool of 34 applicants. The Nominations Committee was chaired by Dr. Jodi Nerren and Michelle Barnea with support from Dr. Brian Kingrey. The Nominations Committee reviewed all eligible applications and rated each candidate’s responses on a five-point scale similar to the NAEYC Governing Board’s scale. This year, a virtual interview was added to the process to get to know candidate strengths and how they would contribute to the Council’s priorities of supporting NAEYC Affiliates and advancing equity.

A diverse candidate slate was considered including age, gender, race, and ethnicity demographics along with geographic location. New Council members include Victoria Roanhorse (NM), Gina Forbes (ME), and Becca Lamar (PA).

The Council recognized the service of Dr. Chris Amirault, Dr. Brian Kingrey, and Robyn Lopez Melton, whose terms ended in June 2021 and wish them well in their future endeavors.

In Summer 2022, Dr. Raquel Munarriz Diaz was elected Chair-Elect.

In addition, Michelle Barnea and Melanie Felton facilitated Orientation for New Members focused on providing information around recent Council initiatives and Affiliate Dialogue sessions. One of the strengths of the Council is a collaborative mentorship process which pairs new members with seasoned members to support a smooth transition and foster connections.

### **Affiliate Dialogues: A Story of Affiliate Reflection and Growth**

In Summer 2020, a relationship began forming between MaineAEYC and the Affiliate Advisory Council which resulted in the creation of the Council’s Affiliate Dialogue pilot. As reported in the Council’s 2020 Annual Report, the Maine Affiliate’s then Board President, Heather Marden, had been inspired by a session led by the Affiliate Advisory Council at the national conference. MaineAEYC was inspired to look inward, assess current culture, and shift that culture toward a connection-oriented, inclusive one, all while striving to center equity work within the organization.

Now, a little over a year later, where has the work of the Affiliate Dialogue pilot taken MaineAEYC? The foundation of support that the Affiliate Dialogue pilot helped to create has led to two rounds of board elections with a new process for candidates. Each candidate was asked how they center the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in their lives and what experiences they have had to inform that work. A deepening of relationships in a variety of communities in Maine has led to a more diverse board of directors. Though, their Board also commits to expand relationships and leadership opportunities for people from marginalized communities. A huge shift in board culture from what was once called “sterile” by a MaineAEYC board member to a warmer, more human-centered one has persisted as board meetings are structured to create time and space for connection and “courageous conversation” as well as other business.

The other ongoing successes of this work has shown up in the recent state conference where there was an increase in workshops and presentations that centered topics around DEIB work. Some examples

include *Supporting LGBTQ+ Families in Early Childhood Settings*, *Using Picture Books to Talk About Race in Predominantly White Settings*, *Using Picture Books about Transgender Children in the Early Childhood Setting*, *Creating a Trauma Sensitive Classroom* and more. Staff have reported experiencing more capacity for open and honest conversations about equity in their daily work and both staff and the board of directors are looking ahead to the next strategic planning sessions where they aim to weave in systems of accountability for the ongoing work of diversifying leadership and membership as well as continuing to create a culture and systems that support leaders, staff and members alike. They have identified ongoing needs around creating translated materials and utilizing more access to interpretation services, deepening, and expanding relationships in a variety of diverse communities within Maine and creating retreats and/or opportunities for the board and staff to continue to do their own internal work in relationship with each other. Current staff and the board are thinking about ways to assure continued commitment to equity and to strive for not only inclusion, but for the kind of transformative work that continues to build a foundation of justice for all from the ground up.

While these are just first steps in many ways, the Affiliate Dialogue pilot has served to support MaineAEYC’s journey of expanding their capacity in staff and board leadership toward becoming a more equitable organization. Time, resources, and ongoing commitment will be needed to continue this work in meaningful ways.

### Honoring the Past and Reimagining the Future: Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging



The Affiliate Advisory Council reviewed the work accomplished with MaineAEYC and created an Affiliate Dialogue work group to plan how the Council might extend these opportunities to other Affiliates. The Affiliate Dialogue work group created resources and an informational graphic to help illustrate how Affiliates can strengthen their organizational commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and creating cultures of belonging (DEIB). Work group meetings were held in breakout rooms during council meetings as well as stand-alone planning sessions.

A graphic was designed to describe the existing process and then to be shared to invite others to reach out. After reviewing the initial graphic and considering the messiness and unfinished nature of the process, the results of the DEIB survey and focus groups were presented to the Council. The work group shared choices for representative graphics and sought feedback. This internal planning and deliberation emphasized the strengths that multiple perspectives can

bring to DEIB work and followed an iterative reflection and action process that deepens knowledge.

**Recommendations to the NAEYC Governing Board**

The Council recognizes NAEYC's engagement of stakeholders – including the Affiliates – in their strategic direction planning process in 2014/2015. The ongoing impact of the pandemic, compounded internally by staffing challenges and leadership transition, has created barriers to the traditional opportunities that NAEYC has utilized in the past to gather input from stakeholders.

As such, the Council feels that it is imperative that NAEYC be innovative in the ways in which it engages its membership base in decision-making opportunities. Valuing the input of NAEYC members and Affiliates fosters opportunities for belonging for all that it serves. By including these voices, NAEYC can ensure the effective implementation of the strategic plan and other NAEYC initiatives throughout the Affiliate network.

With this in mind, the Council recommends the following priorities for membership input in organizational planning within the next 12 months:

1. The Council recommends that the board consistently and intentionally include members' and Affiliates' diverse voices in the ongoing process of strategic planning and subsequent revisions. Implementing procedures guarantees a standing role for Affiliates, underscoring the inherent partnership between NAEYC and Affiliates
2. The Council recommends that the board engage in additional follow-up to the Equity Survey, beyond the resources, professional development and accountability generously funded by the Dodge Family Foundation. Specifically, the Board should seek out strategies to expand on the original intent of the Equity Survey. At its inception, the Equity Survey was intended to seek input from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities of NAEYC. By design, the survey primarily explored binary Black-White issues, rather than centering the needs of all BIPOC member communities. As such, the Council believes that it is imperative that all BIPOC membership voices be elevated, ensuring that their needs and contributions are centered by the Association.
3. The Council recognizes and applauds the Board for replacing confusing language around high-performing, inclusive organization (HPIO) with current diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) terminology. The Council now urges the Board to intentionally implement tactics to ensure DEIB, through a lens of working toward justice for underrepresented and minoritized members, setting precedent through leadership and systems of accountability.

Affiliates and members are critical contributors to the vibrancy of NAEYC. Affiliates, and further, individual members, must be centered as active, contributing participants of NAEYC. The Council recommends that the Board include members' and affiliates' diverse voices through focus groups, surveys, affiliate leadership calls, and the like, to seek feedback and provide equitable opportunities for growth on how the Association can best support those that it serves.

In closing, the Affiliate Advisory Council appreciates the opportunity to share these recommendations and extends its resources, connections, and expertise to partner with the NAEYC Governing Board to continue this important work.

### **Appendix A - 2021 - Year in Review**

**January**--Michelle Barnea and Dr. Jodi Nerren appointed to serve as co-chairs for the Nominating Committee, with Dr. Brian Kingrey serving as an advisor

Council began implementing changes to the Affiliate Advisory Council application process

**March**--Council met virtually for a 2-day retreat, March 12-13, 2021

Met with NAEYC President, Ann McClain Terrell, for a discussion on the Council's 2020 recommendations to the Governing Board

Met with NAEYC HR Senior Director, Kimberly Eddings, to gain an overview of the internal DEIB work occurring within NAEYC

Council began discussing methods to establish norms for their continued DEIB work, and ensuring that this is at the center of the Council's nominations/ elections process

Met with Maine AEYC Past President, Heather Marden, to discuss the Affiliate Dialogue between Maine and the Council to support Maine AEYC as they pursued greater DEIB shifts within their organization

**April**--Council voted to (pandemic and budget permitting) meet in-person at PLI in June 2022 (Cleveland, OH) Council created workgroups to focus on mentoring, new member orientation, nominations, surveys, and affiliate dialogues.

**May**--Council voted to elect Dr. Raquel Munarriz Diaz as chair elect for the upcoming year (June 2021-May 2022) Council offered perspective to NAEYC staff on covering the cost of a Leadership Day event in

**June 2022 at PLI** Approved slate as presented by the Nominations Committee Council. Continued workgroup activities. Council conducted Exit Interviews for outgoing members- Dr. Chris Amirault (OK), Dr. Brian Kingrey (IA), Robyn Lopez Melton (OR)

**June**--Welcomed 3 new council members- Gina Forbes (ME), Rebecca Lamar (PA), Victoria Roanhorse (NM)

**July**--Council mentors met with new members and conducted New Member Orientation.

**September**--Council began implementing the "Time for Connections" section of meetings, intended to strengthen connections and deepen the council's culture through an intentional exchange of ideas and perspectives. Council continued workgroup activities, with the support of new council members

**October**--Along with NAEYC Executive Director, Rhian Evans Allvin, and Black Caucus Interest Forum Facilitators, Maurice Sykes, and Jerlean Daniels (former NAEYC Governing Board Member), Margarita Marichal and Gwen Simmons reviewed and discussed the member survey results from the NAEYC Equity Member Survey with the Council.

**November**--NAEYC Equity Member Survey results were shared during the Leadership webinar followed by discussion with the workgroup, including Council members, with affiliates.

**Appendix B - Affiliate Connections articles authored by Council members****¿Cuál es mi raza?: La raza humana What is my “race”? : The human race, Margarita Marichal (PR) (April 2021)**

Race happens to be a recent invention and is not a product of scientific research and discovery. Smedley (1999) argued that race was institutionalized beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a worldview. This view focused on the physical and status differences between groups of people. From this view, an ideology was developed that linked the sociopolitical status and physical traits of the people and created a new form of social identity. Race emerged as a mechanism of social differentiation.

Societal members easily adopted the “race” categorization. How can we explain this fact? Categorization is the most basic cognitive process; it is how we order elements according to similarities. It also facilitates the organization of information for retrieval and storage (Bornstein & Arterberry, 2010). We teach children, early on, to categorize information as part of their learning process and to categorize individuals according to social groups. Infants have demonstrated that they categorized their social groups by language spoken. However, infants exposed to individuals who speak diverse languages may be less likely to use language as a boundary for social groups (Liberman, Woodward, & Kinzler, 2017). Liberman et al. (2017) argued that variations in the social environments of infants broaden their understanding of their social world. This means that early exposure to a diverse environment limits the transmission of bias and of social categorizations.

Categorization is the opposite of inclusion. Inclusion is defined as the idea that everyone should be able to enjoy the same experiences, activities, use the same facilities, including people with disadvantages (Cambridge Dictionary). If we are to promote organizations that support equity, diversity, and inclusion we must be willing to relearn that all humans belong to the same category. All humans are genetically coded in the same way. The Human Genome Project evidenced that we are all members of the *Homo sapiens* specie without distinctions of skin color, facial traits, language, or national origin (National Human Genome Research Institute, 2020).

History reminds us of all the mistakes we have made as we have invented social terms and norms to manipulate, enslave, and control each other. Nevertheless, we do not have to repeat the same mistakes. Now we know that the social categorization “race” is one of those mistakes. I invite all members to be considered as part of my race: The human race.

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### **Embracing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Listening to Powerful Voices Through Stories, Dr. Melanie Felton (IA) (May 2021)**

As an early childhood teacher educator, I have promoted “anti-bias education” (Olsen, Derman-Sparks & Goins, 2020) for decades. Yet honestly, I was teaching from “head knowledge” because as a white teacher, my “heart knowledge” related to lived experiences of Black and Brown children was limited. When systemic racism reared its ugly head once again with the death of George Floyd, my heart was broken yet I was an outsider struggling to gain a real sense of the lives of Black and Brown people, so I began serious self-reflection.

I recalled a keynote by Dr. Gail C. Christopher at the NAEYC 2019 Fall Conference where she emphasized the “power of story” noting “use of narrative can help raise questions in those to hold that there is a hierarchy of human value” (Christopher, 2019). This hierarchy of valuing some people over others due to race is evident in the U.S., so stories of how this harmful view affects people’s daily lives must be heard.

When I joined the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council in June 2020 I became immersed in the work supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Working with such a diverse group of leaders from around the country and reading *Affiliate Connection* articles reflecting on our progress (Cahill, 2020; Barnea, 2021) and confronting views of race and racism (Marichal, 2021; Simpson, 2021) helped me grow and strengthened my commitment.

In Fall 2020, during a study of *White Fragility: Why it’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (DiAngelo, 2021), I learned more but did I “feel” in my heart and my soul what living with racism is like in this country? I attended a Fall 2020 Nebraska Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NeAECTE) Symposium and heard Dr. Kerry-Ann Escayg, co-author of *Don’t Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms* (Iheoma et al., 2020) challenge us to become more informed and more proactive as we educate our future teachers. I learned more but had I fully connected with “heart knowledge” to truly comprehend those lived experiences?

A turning point came when I participated in a webinar “*Racial Socialization as Resistance to Racism*” (Lloyd, April 28, 2021) discussing racial socialization, watching videos of “The Doll Test” and “Dear Child: The Talk” and listening as Black mothers described their lived experiences and that of their children. While I have openly acknowledged my white privilege, it was at **this** moment that I realized that I as a white parent I had **never** needed to have “the talk” to prepare my children or grandchildren about what they needed to know about “living white.” My heart ached and I deeply “felt” in my heart and soul the differences in our life experiences beyond what I ever “knew”.

In a discussion group the next day, I listened as Black and biracial women shared their stories and discussed what white people need to do to address racial socialization and systemic racism. As I shared my “heart” realization that as a white parent my life was inexplicably different than theirs, they encouraged me to keep moving forward in my desire to grow personally and impact others.

That night, I updated a presentation for my college students on “Multiculturalism,” as titled in our text. We examined the *NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement*, discussed racial socialization, watched “The Doll Test” and “Dear Child: The Talk” and reviewed a recent



controversy in a nearby school district about the book *Something Happened in My Town* (Celano, et al., 2020).

While I have always challenged my students by building awareness and promoting anti-bias education, we **must** push the boundaries even further, engage in uncomfortable conversations and include families who can share the “power of story. We must advocate strongly for diversity, equity and inclusion in education and intentionally work to address systemic racism with our future educators and in our communities.

We must seek out “powerful stories” to inform our “minds, but more importantly to connect with “feeling” the inequity and injustice in these lived experiences so a sense of urgency for change will propel us forward. Addressing HPIO (High Performing Inclusive Organizations) has been a priority at all levels throughout NAEYC, but going beyond organizational “inclusiveness”, It is critically important that early childhood education leaders, seek the “heart knowledge” of systemic racism by actively listening to powerful stories of individuals in our communities and our country. When we deeply listen, we will be ready to press on to make a difference to reach the vision of what our country and the world should be.

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