

Moving Forward as a Profession

Chapter 17 The Work: Promoting Equity and Justice in Early Childhood
Jen Neitzel

Chapter 18 Agency and Power in Young Children's Lives: Five Ways to Advocate for Social Justice as an Early Childhood Educator
Jennifer Keys Adair and Shubhi Sachdeva

Chapter 19 Creating Anti-Racist Early Childhood Spaces
Rosemarie Allen, Dorothy L. Shapland, Jen Neitzel, and Iheoma U. Iruka

Chapter 20 Early Childhood Teacher Educators' Critical Role: Preparing Culturally Efficacious Early Childhood Teachers
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Throughout this text, we have presented individual reflections and discussed teacher responsibilities in an effort to provide more context for NAEYC's "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education" position statement. To achieve social justice and equity within the early childhood education system, we need also to engage with the administrators and higher education faculty who reinforce and support the work of teachers and teacher candidates. Furthermore, we need to discuss next steps for what equity and social justice means for our profession as a whole.

Administrators of center-based programs, schools, and home-based family child care play a key role in supporting the early childhood educator. To advance equity, early childhood educators need work settings that also embrace equitable goals for all children as well as the early childhood professional. The administrator's role is more than supervising curriculum, managing budgets, and evaluating teachers; it is also the role of an advocate who rejects deficit perspectives and promotes the acceptance and integration of all cultural and linguistic groups. To provide teachers with continuous support and opportunities for sustained transformative

change, administrators must provide teachers with effective professional development, time, and space for critical reflection.

Likewise, faculty members in teacher preparation programs also play a significant role in promoting social justice and equity for their teacher candidates and the communities they serve. This requires courageous conversations about the structural inequities that affect their efforts, the education of teacher candidates, and young children of color. Excellence in teaching requires a continuous interplay of theory, research, and practice. Early childhood teacher candidates develop cultural competence through coursework and supervised field experiences that provide multiple opportunities to use developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments for all young children. These experiences, however, must be purposeful and selected to expose students to a variety of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic settings within early childhood education. Finally, teacher candidates should have opportunities to build a strong identification and involvement with the early childhood profession to equitably serve young children and their families.

In this part, we have collected essays in the form of chapters which pull together all of these perspectives with an eye to the future. These chapters ask us to really challenge our assumptions about what is excellence and what the field must do to ensure that all children reach their potential. By doing nothing, we are complicit in inequitable access and learning opportunities. In order to reach the North Star or our vision of the goal of early childhood education, these authors ask us to recognize the historical harm and trauma that have been visited upon various groups and to use our political will to address the root causes while also recognizing the humanity and capacity in all children, families, and communities.

The authors in this section call to action the ways that early childhood professionals and system leaders can better equip themselves to be thoughtful and active in ensuring children have equitable learning experiences regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, nativity status, and ability level. Spending time to gap-gaze on all the disparities and inequities inherent in US systems, including early childhood, will not help children to meet their potential without active behaviors from adults. The authors seek to identify ways that early childhood professionals, including system leaders, can engage in creating and implementing a social justice agenda for early childhood education.

Reflection Questions

As you read the chapters in Part 3, we encourage you to reflect on the following questions:

1. What steps can you take to shift the culture of your school to one that reflects the values and principles of NAEYC's position statement on advancing equity?
2. What are other examples of how educators should make culture and language the center of educational experiences instead of a generic "developmentally appropriate" practice?
3. In what ways do your curriculum, course readings, and assignments need to be adjusted to reflect your teacher candidates' cultural and linguistic resources?
4. What is second-generation work and how much have you engaged in it?
5. What do you see as the barrier to engaging in second-generation work?
6. What do you see as the systems that perpetuate inequities?
7. What role do you play as gatekeeper, if any, in potentially perpetuating or dismantling inequities?
8. What is the one thing you can do today to address marginalized communities' historical trauma?