

# NASBE

National Association of  
State Boards of Education

## **NASBE Comments on Power to the Profession Decision Cycles 3, 4, and 5**

Early childhood education (ECE) educators have long been living on minimum wages, and their critical role in children’s development has been little appreciated. Yet they are charged with educating the nation’s youngest children in the prime years for absorbing knowledge and skills they need to succeed in K-12 schools, careers, and life. Power to the Profession, the national campaign of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), shed light on this dilemma. Launched in 2016, the campaign created a window for educators, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to press for policies and practices that will deliver the compensation, support, and respect that the ECE workforce deserves.

NASBE was honored to be one of the stakeholders supporting this NAEYC-led initiative. NASBE is committed to supporting the ECE system and its workforce. It has been sharing the progress made through the Power to the Profession campaign with state board of education members, who play [key roles](#) in workforce credentialing, preparation, requirements, and providing supports. State policymakers often look to Power to the Profession resources for guidelines and strategies.

As Power to the Profession enters its decision [cycles 3, 4, and 5](#), NASBE would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts and reactions on how best to ensure a fruitful future course for this effort.

1. **Degree requirements.** Those in the ECE field have tended to avoid a conversation about degree requirements when they discuss the need to raise the bar on workforce quality. In this context, a document from the Power to the Profession Task Force sets an associate’s degree as a minimum requirement for birth to pre-K educators and a bachelor’s as a minimum requirement for K-3 educators. Such a stance reinforces the inequities and stratification bedeviling the birth to age 8 workforce and demonstrates an unhelpful institutional bias. It contradicts the findings of recent neuroscience research and undercuts the message ECE advocates have been delivering: that the most critical learning years require highly skilled, high-quality teachers. Instead of focusing a debate on associate versus bachelor’s degrees, it will be more meaningful to decide what competencies the workforce ought to master and use in classrooms in order to deliver the best education to children regardless of ECE setting.
2. **Decision-making process.** Despite being a stakeholder organization in Power to the Profession, NASBE has been invited to participate neither in the Task Force’s decision making nor “listen-in” opportunities. Given that NASBE is devoted to informing its members and

constituents and encouraging them to use their public platform to support professionalizing the ECE workforce, it would be helpful to open up decision making to more stakeholders at the state level. State stakeholders should be providing inputs in the middle of the conversation rather than commenting on decisions after they have been made. They should also understand how consensus will be reached when conflicts and disagreements arise within the Task Force.

3. **Who does Power to the Profession represent?** When it launched, Power to the Profession was unprecedented in bringing ECE educators into the conversation and giving them a voice. It is not clear that the workforce was as well represented in the current decision cycles and the work of the Task Force. Certainly, the workforce is stretched thin. In a given setting, an ECE educator may function as director, teacher, coordinator, curriculum developer, janitor, and cook. Such an educator likely will have a difficult time joining an association, participating in a Task Force, or commenting on decision cycle documents, which in any case are not the most readable. If Power to the Profession fails to include an effective number of educators that are actually teaching children, will the goal of elevating the profession ever be achieved?
4. **Core questions are unanswered.** Left unanswered in decision cycles 3, 4, and 5 were important questions such as how to ensure the quality of preparation programs, what resources and supports the workforce needs, how to provide effective career pathways to higher education attainment, and how to increase compensation. Silence on these matters creates uncertainties and anxiety for ECE educators, as they are afraid they will be pushed out of the profession as the bar is raised. These difficult questions may require more time and energy to address. But it is imperative that Power to the Profession keep these hard questions front and center and not shy away from a break with social norms. Settling for the status quo will not reassure the profession.

NASBE applauds NAEYC for leading this important, difficult work. On any vital matter, there will inevitably be controversies and differences in expectations. NASBE values the relationship with NAEYC and sees NAEYC as one of the most important partners in advancing ECE. We therefore urge the Power to the Profession Task Force to slow the pace of its decision cycles to accommodate a period of thoughtful comment and reflection. NASBE is confident that Power to the Profession can guide everyone who cares about advancing early childhood education through systemic change and progress over the next few decades.

Power to the Profession encourages feedback through [a survey](#) on decision cycles 3, 4, and 5. This survey will be open through April 30. NASBE encourages all stakeholders to make their voices heard.

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