

How can we move forward without looking backward?

P2P Decision Cycles 1 through 5 do not acknowledge that racism, classism and sexism have contributed to our current reality

We write to demand that the Task Force heed our counsel that we do not believe has been heard throughout the process of defining professional designations, competencies and qualifications. The predictable result is a set of recommendations in Decision Cycles 1 through 5 steeped in white privilege and once again ignoring the pivotal role of people of color in the early childhood education profession, thus marginalizing us as individuals and professionals.

We write as professional equals who represent the highest standards in the profession and we advocate on behalf of those early childhood educators of color who, because of racism and classism, have labored in the lowest echelons of the profession and have not been valued for their potential nor fully empowered as professionals.

We write because we see the Task Force squandering the opportunity to right this wrong by failing to acknowledge a set of fundamental truths, and by accepting the sorry state of the present as the only possibility for the future.

We write with no interest in rewriting the recommendations point by point, but with the demand that our current reality as outlined below, and the promise of opportunity for ALL early childhood professionals guide the revision process:

Equity for professionals walks hand-in-hand with equity for children. High-quality early childhood education has great potential for closing the opportunity/achievement gap among children of color from low-income families and communities. That will only be achieved when all children have equal access to qualified, competent, culturally sensitive, professional early childhood educators. The current recommendations leave in place a system of inequitable professional opportunity for early educators of color and, by extension, inequitable access to quality teachers among children of color. We believe that reducing the achievement gap should be included in the list of items for which early childhood professionals are willing to be held accountable.

Our profession can no longer operate at the expense of women of color. Nearly 50% of the early childhood education workforce is comprised of low-income women of color who have helped raise other people's children at the expense of their own. The Task Force must acknowledge that their position at the bottom of the field has been created by racism, classism and the convenience of running an industry on the backs of a

population with few professional alternatives. We do not expect the Task Force to solve systemic racism; we do expect the Task Force to acknowledge it and lead with a vision for how the profession can solve inequities in opportunity that create deep inequities within its ranks.

Stop being paternalistic at best and racist at worst. The Task Force implies that the only way to retain a diverse workforce is not to encourage or require higher competencies and qualifications. Early educators of color have the same, if not stronger, aspirations as others in the field to be the best possible mentors for children. What stands in their way are the physical, financial and cultural barriers to professional development that can and should be solved. Assuming that educators of color will not seize the opportunity of professional development is insulting. As they stand today, the Task Force's recommendations constitute a pat on the head and a participation medal for those on the bottom. A more appropriate set of recommendations would be to offer an equitable structure for moving diverse talent to the top—because that is what *all* of our children need. The bar must be raised. Teachers of 3 and 4 year olds, in center-based settings, should hold a bachelor's degree similar to their counterparts in public school settings.

The drivers of social justice must be defined and embedded in the P2P framework. A profession is only as valuable as its outcomes and, in this case, the outcomes are only possible if the economic, linguistic, ethnic equity and social justice drivers are defined, detailed and embedded throughout the Power to the Profession framework to ensure that all roles in the workforce serve diverse children and families.

Finally, we write to establish a meaningful channel for dialogue with the Task Force. A culturally diverse representation of early childhood professionals is critically important as the field defines itself, sets professional aspirations and standards, and creates the opportunities needed to do their jobs and be rewarded for their true value. We believe that the draft recommendations from Decision Cycles 1 through 5 should be reconsidered and reworked with attention to the issues and concerns raised above. If you are truly ready to listen, we are ready to help you shape a pathway to a more just, equitable and effective early childhood education profession. April 10, 2018, from the P2P PEOPLE OF COLOR CAUCUS, NAEYC Interest Forums:

Asian Interest Forum

Black Caucus Interest Forum

Diversity and Equity Education for Adults Interest Forum

Latino Interest Forum

Tribal and Indigenous Early Childhood Network