

What lies ahead for our field?

OUR LEADERSHIP CHOICES



1

1

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2

2

Our Objectives

1. Explaining why the ECE field needs to engage with adaptive work.
2. Understanding the importance of thinking simultaneously about the field's present **and** our aspirations for its future when taking actions to impact the present or near-term.
3. Nurturing collective thinking about advancing ECE as a field of practice.

3

3

Nurturing Collective Thinking

- 1. Polling questions
- 2. Prepare to share your thoughts!
 - On reflective questions
 - On any issue

4

Polling Question #1

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Polling Question #2

6



Now, let's take a moment to assess the field's readiness to develop ECE as a respected, well compensated field of practice.

7



To assess our readiness to move forward, we need to:

1. Assess where we were BEFORE the pandemic
2. Acknowledge the present
3. Consider how past choices affect the field's present and future
4. Look toward how present decisions may influence the field's future
5. Recognize that this moment can be an opportunity

8

ECE's Central Field-Defining Question

12 years later, this central field-defining question remains unanswered

— and it shows!

This is why we felt compelled to do a second edition of *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices for Early Childhood Educators — 12 Years Later*

9

***ECE's 3 Defining Issues & Questions—
Still In Search of Answers***

1. **Purpose:** What is the *defining* intent of ECE as a field of practice?
2. **Identity:** What is the *distinguishing character, spirit, moral fiber* of ECE as a field of practice?
3. **Responsibility:** What are the obligations/duties and accountabilities that define ECE as a field of practice?

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Polling Question #3

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***We still need
shared agreement
about
the core reason for
our field's existence
as a field of
practice.***

- FOR EXAMPLE:
- PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS?
 - CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAP?
 - HELP CHILDREN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL?
 - ADVANCE THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE ECONOMY?

12

12

We still need shared agreement about what distinguishes ECE from other practices.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD?
- SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR FAMILIES?
- PREPARE CHILDREN FOR FUTURE SUCCESS?

13

13

We still need shared agreement about the field's obligations and accountabilities as a field of practice.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- ENSURE CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND WELL CARED FOR?
- KINDERGARTEN READINESS?
- SUCCESSFUL TEST SCORES IN THIRD GRADE?
- ENSURE THAT CHILDREN THRIVE?

14

14

Answers to these 3 field-defining issues and questions matter now more than ever ...

Not answering these questions over the past decades has had consequences that have made today's challenges even more pronounced.

Waiting another 12 years to resolve field-defining questions doesn't benefit children, families, or the ECE workforce.

15

15

Reflective Question #1

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What else has *NOT* changed since Ready or Not (2007)?

- Field's commitment to children and families
- Pride and passion about working with children

- Focus on fixing ECE's problems
- Making defining choices and decisions without agreement on the field's purpose, identity, and accountability

17

17

Keep in Mind

- Even though forever more there will be a marker for Before and for After the pandemic, the field's issues and questions are not bound by this marker — they transcend it.
- Issues and defining characteristics of the field transcend this new "before" and forthcoming "after."

18

18

*Reflective
Question #2*

19

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**What Will It Take?
Simultaneous attention
to the field's present & future by:**

- **Exercising Adaptive Leadership**
 - Moving from "fix-it" approaches
 - Linking choices to the future we want for ECE as a field of practice
- **Building on our Assets**
 - Elevating and trusting educators
 - Developing field-wide competence
 - Prioritizing our commitment to children and families
 - Repositioning the role of external forces such as policymakers
- **Acting courageously to**
 - Restructure the field's structural hierarchies
 - Internalize a shared code of ethics

20

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**Our
Opportunity:
Leadership
choices lie
ahead for
our field**



21

21

***It's Time to Shift How We Think
About the Field's Future Choices***

Mind shifts are needed to:

- Tackle choices that await us
- Advance the ECE field beyond its present and past
- Recognize the need for **ADAPTIVE WORK**

22

Adaptive Work

- Closes the gap between the field's aspirations and its behaviors
- Acknowledges that no existing or singular "right" answer is available address the field's adaptive challenges
- Learns from differing views and mobilize those who "own the work"

23

Examples of Still More Adaptive Questions ECE Needs to Tackle

- Do we want to continue segregating child care, Head Start and Pre-K from each another without acknowledging their commonalities and distinctions?
- Do we all agree that ECE should be defined as Birth to Age 8 field of practice vs. Birth to the Start of kindergarten?
- Is it okay for child care to once again be configured primarily as a workforce support system?

24

This Is a Call to ECE's Future

Our choices in the present
will steer ECE's future
as a field of practice

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25

This Is a Call to ECE's Future

- Being asked of us:
 - Clearly stating who we are as a field of practice and what we do
 - Developing field-wide competence in the evidence-based practices we've articulated
 - Developing field-wide capacity to provide a dependable level of program quality across settings
 - Creating a social contract with the public built upon the field's agreed upon accountability for its practice results and ethical obligations
 - Moving forward together to create cohesion as a field of practice

26

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Polling Question #4

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To Seize Our Opportunity:

Remember our assets

- Passion
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Perseverance

28

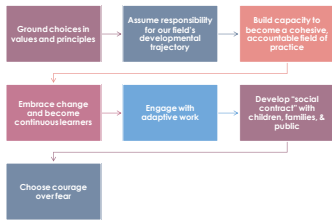
***An Opportunity to Steer ECE's Future As A Field of Practice
— Will We Seize It?***

If we choose, we have what it takes to re-set ECE's trajectory for the future!

- Passion
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Perseverance

29

Where We Recommend Starting



30

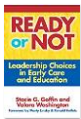
We Are Hopeful That

the field will recognize that adaptive work represents an opportunity to redirect ECE's developmental trajectory toward a future that

- better reflects our passions for children and their families,
- elevates ECE as a respected field of practice whose admiration has been earned because of the collective competence of its early childhood educators and results reaped by children, families, and society overall.

31

Please join with us in redirecting ECE's developmental trajectory as a field of practice



32

Thank you for learning with us today!



33