



ASSOCIATION FOR
**Early
Learning
Leaders**

**National
Accreditation
Commission**
FOR EARLY CARE AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Dear School Faculty,

We would like to invite you to be a part of an important and timely conversation that is near and dear to our hearts. This conversation is not new. This conversation is necessary. This conversation relates directly to you!

Words Matter. For many years, our profession inherited labels that were created and used in the earliest history of our field. The media and the public constantly push out terms such as babysitter and daycare worker. How often have you heard your career referred to as not “real”? As though it is something that you do as a hobby or in your spare time. These questions can bring about feelings of frustration or unworthiness. While the understanding and regard for early education is slowly evolving and elevating, the perception of the most important people, our amazing faculty, has been very slow to follow.

Each day, you invest lovingly and generously in the care, development, and education of the children in your classroom. You show up prepared to provide the best educational experiences for our youngest learners, meeting their many needs, all while completing a variety of tasks required by licensing and other regulatory agencies. We believe it is time that early education professionals receive their well-deserved time in the spotlight, accompanied by the appropriate perspective, understanding, and acknowledgment of the vital work we do for children and our community.

For decades, the early education field has fought against the stigmas created by using the word “daycare”. Despite the abundance of research that has been conducted to support the validity and importance of the work we do, the battle continues for us to be seen as more than “daycare workers” in “daycare centers”.

Here are just a few reasons why the words we use matter to both early educators and those who rely on them to provide children with the very best starts in learning and in life:

1. **Research Supported Need for Early Education:** Research overwhelmingly tells us that establishing educational foundations in our youngest learners plays a crucial role in shaping a child’s development and future success.
2. **Educational Emphasis:** The term “daycare” may imply a focus solely on supervision and custodial care rather than education. Using terms like “early childhood education” and “early learning” emphasizes the educational component of the services provided, highlighting the critical importance of learning and development for young children.
3. **Professional Recognition:** Professionals in the field of early childhood education prefer terms that reflect the educational nature of their work. Using these references helps acknowledge and affirm the critical role they play in a child’s development.

4. **Stigma:** The term “daycare” carries a stigma that downplays the significance of the work done by educators in these settings. This often inhibits our ability to attract quality talent to fill vacancies in early education classrooms.

How do we change the narrative? Internally, we must consistently infuse each role and each person in early education with significance and professionalism and change the way we see and value ourselves and the important work we do. Externally, when we encounter “daycare” references, we must respectfully and consistently share the story of what we do, why we do it, and why it matters. We have seen some changes from “daycare” to “child care,” which is certainly an improvement, but it still doesn’t tell the whole story of who you are, what amazing educators you are, and the impact you have on young children.

Many of you chose this career path and had no idea what you said yes to! You had no idea how the field of early education would forever change your life. You are a facilitator of play, a gateway to the magic and joy of learning, and a designer of the secure foundation for the children of our communities. This is so much more than a job; it is a vocation and a calling that has life-changing implications! The simple truth is we do not care for days. We proudly and passionately steward the very first educational and life foundations of the world’s most valuable resource--children. We are early educators.

After sharing these important truths and perspectives with you, our hope is that you also believe that words really DO matter. We encourage you to be ready when opportunities to share your “story” become available. Be more intentional in the words that you use and those that you encourage others to use as well. Begin a conversation with the students that you teach, reminding them that they come to school each day.

Know that just as we are sharing this document with you, we will also be sharing one with parents and members of the community. We are asking that each person do their best to help shift the narrative and take the time to help others understand – we are early educators!

We appreciate your support and thoughtful reflection surrounding such an important topic and look forward to partnering with you to share this campaign.

“Alone we can do so little; together, we can do so much!” – Helen Keller

Working together,