



Dear School Family,

We would like to invite you to be part of an important and timely conversation that is near and dear to the heart of every member of our team. This conversation is not new. This conversation is not always easy. However, this conversation is necessary.

Words matter. For many years, the incredible people who invest so lovingly and generously into the care and development of your children have battled to be recognized and valued for the vital role they play in growing healthy, happy, and successful learners. They have inherited labels that were used in the earliest history of our field, like babysitters and daycare workers. They have heard people refer to them as not being “real” teachers and have endured questions like, “When will you start a ‘real’ career”. They have been part of the evolution and elevation of our early learning practices, but the evolution and elevation of the respect and regard from their educational peers and the community at large has been slow to follow. And yet, they have not wavered in their commitment to providing the best learning experiences for the young children in their care.

Without intention or awareness, words and labels are regularly used that demean and degrade. Their efforts are often minimized or overlooked, and the critical investments they make every day, as they lay the foundations for success in learning and life, are not being celebrated and applauded as they should be. We believe that we can all do better by these dedicated professionals. It is our sincere hope and desire that you agree and join us as we shift the perspective, understanding, and acknowledgment of our proud early educators.

For decades, the early education industry has fought against so many stigmas that have been created by the persistent referencing of our schools as “daycares”. Despite the abundance of research that has been conducted to further support the validity and importance of the work that we do, we still battle to be seen as more than “daycare workers” in “daycare centers”.

Here are just a few reasons why the words we use matter to early educators and those who rely on them to provide exceptional learning experiences for young children:

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 their critical role 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 early educators do, why they do it, and why it matters. We have seen some changes from "daycare" to "child care," and that is certainly an improvement, but it still doesn't tell the whole story of who these amazing educators are and what they do for children.

Many of the incredible people who have chosen this career path had no idea that when they said yes to that first job opportunity in early education, their lives would be forever changed. As you experience the joy and awe of introducing young children to the magic and wonder of learning and watching them grow and evolve, you realize that this is so much more than a job. It is a vocation and calling that has life-changing implications. The simple truth is this. 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 your takeaway will be that words really DO matter. We ask each of you to be more intentional with the words you use and embrace a change in the vernacular. A simple retooling of vocabulary with words like early learning center, preschool, early education, and early educators when speaking about our school and the early learning industry in its entirety makes a tremendous difference.

We appreciate your thoughtful reflection and consideration and look forward to partnering with you to affirm and appreciate our amazing team. Please feel free to share your thoughts and questions with our leadership team. We are hopeful that this is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue.

Working together,