



ASSOCIATION FOR
**Early
Learning
Leaders**

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

Dear Members of Our Extended School Family,

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 not always easy. However, this conversation is very necessary!

As a business partner in the early education field, you supply our school with specialized goods and services that support our efforts to provide the highest early education programs. Your contribution is an important part of the tapestry of our organization. This conversation has a direct impact on the recipients of the service(s) that you provide.

Words Matter. For many years the early care and education profession inherited labels that were created and used in the earliest history of our field. Terms such as babysitter and daycare worker are the primary labels used by the media and the public at large to describe our colleagues. Faculty members of the programs that you serve are often told they are not “real” teachers and have endured questions like, “When are you going to start a ‘real’ career?” These types of comments and questions create frustration and unworthiness for a group of people who have chosen to invest their time, talent, education, experience, and career into the field of early education. While our field is evolving and elevating, and we are thankful for that, the perception of and regard for our amazing faculty members has been much slower to progress.

For decades the early education community has fought against the stigmas that have attached themselves to our field because of outdated or incorrect terminology and lack of understanding of what we do and why it matters. Despite the abundance of research that has been conducted to 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 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 the educators in these programs and the important work they do.

For your part, please review the collateral you share with the public, your website, and your company's social media activity. If you are not already doing so, please refer to the programs you work with as early care and education facilities or early learning centers. Removing the term "daycare" will only take a few minutes to execute, and the impact of one small gesture will help us educate and inform and bring well-deserved respect and affirmation to the incredible people who serve our world's most vulnerable learners!

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 our amazing educators are and the impact they have on young children.

Many of our faculty members chose this career path and had no idea what they said yes to! They did not know that this industry would have such a profound impact on them. 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 our most valuable resource. Children. We are early educators.

After sharing these important truths and perspectives with you, our hope is that your takeaway is that words really DO matter. We ask that you take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to you to change the narrative. Be more intentional in the words that you use and those that you encourage others to use as well. A simple retooling of vocabulary with words like early learning center, preschool, early education, and early educators when speaking about the programs that you service and our field as a whole will make a tremendous difference.

We appreciate your support and thoughtful reflection and look forward to partnering with you to share this campaign with our circles of influence. We are hopeful that this is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue.

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

Working together,