



## Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children

### Vision for Excellence: Public Policy Agenda 2010

In partnership with its parent organization, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), **Illinois AEYC holds a Vision of Excellence for children** in the State of Illinois and is committed to developing a system of early childhood care and education with appropriate regulatory, governance, finance, and accountability mechanisms so that –

**All Children** have access to a safe and accessible, high quality early childhood education that includes a developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, and comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition, and social/emotional well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity.

**All Early Childhood Professionals** are supported as professionals with a career ladder, ongoing professional development opportunities, and compensation that attracts and retains high quality educators.

**All Families** are informed and have access to early childhood education programs that are affordable and of high quality; and actively participate in their children's education as respected reciprocal partners.

**All Communities, States and the Nation** work together to ensure accountable systems of high-quality early childhood education for all children. **(NAEYC 2007)**

To achieve these goals at the state and local levels, Illinois AEYC members also believe that policy and funding decisions must be guided by principles of **Excellence, Accountability, Equity, Access, and Diversity**. To that end, the organization has adopted the following as its **2010 Public Policy Agenda**.

**Illinois AEYC and its members support the following initiatives and programs that promote:**

#### **Excellence**

Illinois must continue to fund, develop, and implement an early care and education system necessary to support quality through best practice in programs serving children birth through age eight.

**Illinois AEYC** supports the development and implementation of an inclusive professional development system, career lattice, and scholarship program.

**Illinois AEYC** seeks to further the advancement of program growth by promoting and supporting accreditation standards; seeks to further the advancement of professional growth by promoting and supporting the **Gateways Scholarship Program** that helps early childhood professionals afford tuition costs; and supports efforts to encourage articulation of coursework from two year to four year institutions of higher education.

**Illinois AEYC** supports the **Quality Counts: a Quality Rating System (QRS)** with **tiered reimbursement rates** to pay higher rates to programs that demonstrate higher levels of quality programming.

**Illinois AEYC** supports **Great START** as a Strategy to Attract and Retain Teachers by providing incremental wage supplements based upon the levels of educational attainment in the career lattice.

## Accountability

**Illinois AEYC** supports clearly engaged standards for program quality and personnel, with input from early childhood professionals, families, and communities. This should include ongoing planning and evaluation processes **to ensure positive educational, health, and social/emotional outcomes for children.**

In recognition of our responsibilities to children and families, **Illinois AEYC** strives to safeguard the legal and ethical dissemination of data.

## Equity

**Illinois AEYC** strongly supports opportunities for all children, regardless of family status, income, ability, age, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, or race to attend high quality programs, with an emphasis on **targeting funding to ensure that those families with the fewest resources are served.**

**Illinois AEYC** supports revision to the Illinois Child Care Co-Pay Schedule to **ensure that low-income families have access and can afford high-quality care and education for their children.**

**Illinois AEYC** supports a sufficient **child care budget to ensure service levels can continue for low income working families.**

**Illinois AEYC** supports increased **child care rates**, with **parity** for all programs, whether home-based or center-based.

**Illinois AEYC** supports annual Cost of Living Adjustments (**COLA**) that allow early childhood providers to earn a living wage based upon the realities of economic inflation.

## Access

**Illinois AEYC** seeks to eliminate barriers for all children to attend high-quality care and education programs of their families' choice.

**Illinois AEYC** supports an Illinois Preschool Educational Program (*ie. **Preschool for All-Illinois***) **utilizing existing resources, facilitating collaboration among early childhood programs**, and providing any support needed for all programs to offer quality programming for Illinois' children.

**Illinois AEYC** supports and promotes the health, wellness, and food security for children and families.

## Diversity

**Illinois AEYC** supports flexibility in the ways programs are provided and services are tailored to best meet the needs of children and families. It is important that programs are responsive and supportive; and that they recognize and respect the whole child and family, their cultural backgrounds, family choices, and the community's culture.

**Illinois AEYC** supports expanding mental health services and health care resources for young children.

**Illinois AEYC** works to ensure that children birth through age 8 have access to intervention and services for special needs and disabilities.