



Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children's Vision for Excellence: Public Policy Agenda 2015:

In partnership with The Code of Ethics as put forth by 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**.

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

Excellence

Illinois must continue to find, 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 assistance 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 additional compensation for programs that demonstrate higher levels of quality outlined through the ExceleRate Illinois Quality Rating and Improvement System.

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 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 participate in high quality programs, with an emphasis on targeting funding to ensure that those families with the fewest resources are served.

Illinois AEYC supports a sufficient child care budget to ensure service levels can continue for low income working families in Illinois, with affordable co-pays that allows families to access high-quality care and education for their children.

Illinois AEYC supports maintaining adequate child care rates, with parity for all programs 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.

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.

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, and the community's culture.

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

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