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History of NAEYC

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Historical Overview

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has become the nation's premier organization for early childhood professionals—setting research-based standards and providing resources to improve early childhood program quality, enhance the professional development and working conditions of program staff, and to help families learn about and understand the need for high quality early childhood education. Through position statements, work with other organizations, and its national voluntary accreditation system, NAEYC has been the leader in promoting excellence in early childhood education for all young children from birth through age 8.

NAEYC's roots extend to the 1920s when professional researchers and educators began organizing nursery schools for young children. Concerned about the quality of the proliferating programs, Patty Smith Hill identified a multidisciplinary group of 25 individuals, among them Arnold Gesell, Lois Meek (Stolz), and Abigail Eliot, to consider the need for a new association. A public conference was held in Washington, DC in 1926. By 1929, the group was organized as the National Association for Nursery Education (NANE) and had published its first book—*Minimum Essentials for Nursery Education*.

In the 1930s and 1940s, NANE members, although few in number, were actively involved in the development and implementation of Works Progress Administration (WPA) nursery schools and child care programs established by the Lanham Act during World War II. A small group of dedicated volunteers kept the association going with biennial conferences, a quarterly bulletin, and various publications. In the mid 1950s an important strategic decision was made. Existing state, local, and regional organizations for nursery education could affiliate with NANE if all of their members joined the national association. Within a few years, membership increased five-fold, to more than 5,000 members. In 1964, NANE was reorganized as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Also that year, the federal Head Start program was launched, focusing public attention on preschool education.

NAEYC entered a period of rapid growth, reaching 31,000 members by its 50th anniversary in 1976. In the early 1980s, concern about the quality of early childhood services available to the burgeoning numbers of families seeking child care and preschool programs for their young children led NAEYC to begin planning a national voluntary accreditation system for early childhood programs. Between 1985 and 1990, the five years of NAEYC's accreditation system, membership doubled—from 45,000 to more than 90,000 members.

NAEYC at 75: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future

provides a detailed history of NAEYC from 1926 to 2001.

You may also want to consider the companion video, [*NAEYC: For Our Future*](#).



Also in the 1980s, NAEYC began issuing a number of influential position statements, addressing various topics in early childhood education and professional preparation. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* began publication in 1986. Annual conferences continued to be a hallmark of NAEYC, growing to be among the largest educational meetings in the nation.

NAEYC's work in developing position statements and setting standards for different aspects of early childhood education continued throughout the 1990s. The National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development focuses attention on improving the quality of preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers of young children by providing a place to learn from researchers about new developments and evaluations of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and teacher education.

Membership has continued to grow to reach 100,000 members. In the late 1990s, emphasis was placed on building the visibility and effectiveness of the Association's public policy and advocacy efforts.

By its 75th anniversary in 2001, the association was engaged in a project to reinvent its accreditation system (scheduled to be fully implemented in 2006). Funding provided by a variety of contributors has been instrumental to the success of this effort. In addition, a comprehensive restructuring of its affiliate groups (most of which successfully re-affiliated in 2004) had also been launched. Interest Forums were established as a membership benefit in 2001 to encourage communities of learning on issues related to the NAEYC mission. Funding provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation enabled NAEYC to establish the *Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families* project to prevent child abuse and promote children's healthy social development by helping teachers better communicate with families on difficult issues.

In 2003, NAEYC created a Global Alliance to foster communications and build understanding among organizations around the world with missions similar to its own. The Association also adopted standards for professional preparation associate degree programs in early childhood education and launched plans to develop an accreditation system for these institutions. This effort has been generously supported by a number of contributors. Support from the Knight Foundation, beginning in 2003, allowed the establishment of a project to work with selected communities on school readiness issues and to develop prototypes for enhanced distance learning opportunities.

The results of earlier efforts to build the Association's policy presence are clearly visible in 2004. Nearly 11,000 individuals subscribe to NAEYC's federal and state public policy email updates. Affiliates and members receive training, technical assistance and resources to help them improve the capacity of their efforts to promote good public policies and investments in affordable, high quality early childhood education programs. NAEYC is recognized as a leading voice in Congress and in state capitols on what is needed to help improve early childhood programs and services for all young children and their families, ranging from child care and Head Start, to early elementary grade reading programs and appropriate assessment.

Publications and conferences—core services for the Association since its earliest days—have continued to grown in visibility and importance. Early childhood educators look to NAEYC for journals, books, and other resources that combine a solid research base

and information and features that make them highly accessible and useful for practitioners, teacher educators, and policy makers. NAEYC Conferences continue to be the meetings that just can't be missed, serving a critical convening function for the early childhood profession and providing a valuable professional development opportunity.

Approaching its 80th anniversary, NAEYC is proud of its traditions, but also looks to the future. The Association is committed to becoming an ever more high performing inclusive organization that invites all individuals, families, communities and organizations to work together to improve the lives of all young children.

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Timeline

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1926 to 1965

1926

- National Committee on Nursery Schools (later NAEYC) holds first national conference in Washington, DC



1929

- Now known as the National Association for Nursery Education, the organization's first publication is *Minimum Essentials for Nursery School Education*.

1933

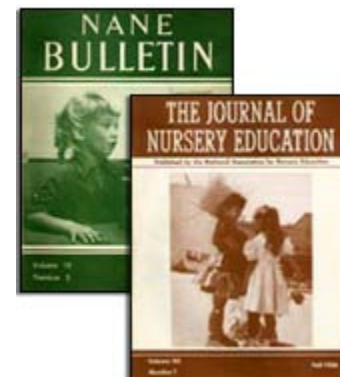
- NANE members urge expansion of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) preschool program across the country.

1942

- NANE is a member of the National Commission for Young Children, a non-governmental information clearinghouse

1945

- NANE issues the first volume of the *Bulletin of the National Association for Nursery Education*



1956

- The Bulletin* is renamed *The Journal of Nursery Education*.
- Structure of state, local and regional affiliates is created.

1958

- A headquarters office is established in Chicago with the Elizabeth McCormick Fund providing a desk and typewriter in return for \$40 monthly rent.

1964

- NANE becomes the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- The Journal* is renamed *Young Children*.
- Federal Economic Opportunity Act includes plans for Head Start as a demonstration program.
- Cornelia (Nell) Goldsmith hired as Executive Secretary.

1965

- Membership grows to over 5,000.
- Office is established in Washington, DC. At the next Executive Committee, the auditor predicted that the furniture would be "out in the streets" because of the Association's dire financial straits. Goldsmith replies, "Sir, the furniture will be here six months from now and so will we" (quoted in NAEYC at 75, p. 82, from Witherspoon, 1976).

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1966 to 1990

1966

- NAEYC Annual Conferences begin.
- Guide to Discipline* is published.

1967

- NAEYC membership grows to over 10,000.

1969

- NAEYC purchases its own building at 1834 Connecticut Avenue in Washington, DC.

1971

- First celebration of NAEYC's Week of the Young Child.
- Child Development Associate (CDA) Consortium created in the US Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare to develop the CDA credential. NAEYC staff is instrumental in the credential's development.
- Marilyn Smith appointed as executive director and J. D. Andrews becomes chief operations officer of NAEYC.



1975

- NAEYC membership grows to over 25,000.

1976

- NAEYC celebrates its 50th Anniversary.

1981

- Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines for 4- and 5-Year Programs are approved. The Guidelines development is supported by contributions of the family of Rose Alschuler, founding member and first secretary/treasurer of NANE/NAEYC.

1984

- First color edition of *Young Children* is published with expanded size
- Position statements are published on nomenclature, salaries, benefits and status of the early childhood profession; and family day care regulation.
- Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Programs in Associate Degree Granting Institutions are approved.



1985

- National Academy of Early Childhood Programs and the accreditation program is established.
- NAEYC establishes the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition to administer the national CDA credential. The Council becomes a separate organization in 1989.

1986

- First issue of Early Childhood Research Quarterly (ECRQ) is published.
- NAEYC Membership grows to over 50,000.
- Position statements are adopted on liability insurance crisis; developmentally appropriate practice for children; and guidelines for developing legislation creating or expanding programs for young children.

1987

- Position statements are adopted on quality, compensation and affordability in early childhood programs; licensing and other forms of regulation; and standardized testing.

1988

- NAEYC adopts anti-discrimination policy.

1989

- NAEYC adopts a Code of Ethical Conduct.
- The Anti-Bias Curriculum is published.

1990

- Opening of the NAEYC Annual Conference is held on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.
- Position statements are adopted on guidelines for appropriate curriculum content and assessment in programs serving children ages 3 to 8 (with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education); media violence in the lives of children; school readiness; and guidelines for compensation of early childhood professionals.

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1991 to present

1991

- NAEYC membership grows to over 75,000.

1992

- First National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development held in Los Angeles.
- Code of ethical conduct is revised.

1993

- NAEYC moves to 1509 16th Street, N.W. Washington D.C.
- Position statements are adopted on violence in the lives of children and a conceptual framework for early childhood professional development.

1995

- Position statements are adopted on responding to linguistic and cultural diversity: recommendations for effective early childhood education, and position statement on quality, compensation, and affordability revised.

1996

- NAEYC is among the national organizations that support the *Stand for Children* demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial. Over 300,000 people join in the event.
- Position statements are adopted on technology and young children and the prevention of child abuse in early childhood programs and the responsibilities of early childhood professionals to prevent child abuse.



1997

- NAEYC membership grows to over 100,000.
- Position statements on developmentally appropriate practice and licensing and public regulation of early childhood programs are revised.
- Revised edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* is published.

1998

- Executive team of Marilyn M. Smith and J. D. Andrews announce plans to leave NAEYC.
- Code of Ethical Conduct is revised.
- Position statement on learning to read and write is approved, developed jointly with the International Reading Association.
- Learning to Read and Write* is published.

1999

- Mark R. Ginsberg named executive director and Barbara Willer becomes deputy executive director

- Position statements are adopted on developing and implementing effective public policies to promote early childhood and school-age care program accreditation.

2000

- NAEYC Commission to Reinvent Accreditation is established to develop recommendations for the next era of NAEYC Accreditation.
- Implementation of new organizational structure begins with the adoption of roles and functions for NAEYC and its Affiliate Groups.

2001

- NAEYC celebrates its 75th Anniversary.
- First Interest Forums recognized.
- First meeting of the Affiliate Council is held.
- Standards for early childhood professional preparation initial licensure programs are approved.
- NAEYC public policy program is established as a compilation of policy statements derived from existing position statements and other public NAEYC documents to guide the Association's policy and advocacy activities.

2002

- New design and YC logo debut for *Young Children*, and *Beyond the Journal*, a web-based supplement to each print edition premieres.
- NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria established.
- Standards for early childhood professional preparation advanced degree programs are approved.
- Position statement on early childhood mathematics is adopted, developed jointly with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; position statement on early learning standards is approved, developed jointly with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.
- Framework for advancing NAEYC as a high performing inclusive organization is adopted.
- Funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation enables NAEYC to launch Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families initiative, based on the recognition early childhood educators, because of their active role in family life, are uniquely positioned to play a key role in the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect and the promotion of children's healthy social and emotional development.



2003

- Standards for early childhood professional preparation associate degree programs are approved, and plan to develop accreditation system for associate degree granting institutions is approved.
- Position statement on curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation is adopted, developed jointly with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.
- Policies and guiding principles to establish a leadership development program are approved.

- Formation of NAEYC Global Alliance is approved.
- Funding from the Knight Foundation enables NAEYC to work with selected communities concerned with school readiness while developing prototypes for enhanced distance learning opportunities.

2004

- Supplement for Early Childhood Educators to the Code of Ethical Conduct is adopted, developed jointly with the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE), and American Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ACCESS).
- System to accredit early childhood associate degree programs is launched, with colleges from six states participating in the first cohort.

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Links from Contributors in Historical Overview:

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