

**Candidate for Vice President  
NYAEYC Governing Board**

***Elizabeth Starks***

***Jamestown Community College***

***Director, North County Extension Center & Career Advantage Program***

As a third-generation Early Childhood Educator, I have learned to love young children, to love education and to love learning by being immersed in the field from a young age. I have experience in everything from infant rooms all the way up through higher education. This knowledge and experience has become the foundation for my leadership.

I am the Director of SUNY Jamestown Community College's Adult Education program and the Director of JCC's North County Extension Center. As an assistant professor and the coordinator of Early Childhood Education at JCC, I was committed to ensuring there are lifelong learning opportunities in our community. As an administrator, I am able to create pathways and eliminate barriers for adults.

An advocate for attainable child care, I founded the Chautauqua Lake Child Center (a private non-profit providing high quality care and education for children 6 weeks to 12 years) in 2006. My experience includes grant writing, budget oversight, project management, data reporting, and resource development. I have experience supervising a staff while supporting their professional development and directing multiple sites while working collaboratively with community partners.

In addition, I serve as a consultant, keynote speaker, trainer, and professional development provider across the state of New York. In addition, I serve the community as a leader, a public servant and a voice for children and families. I have the daily opportunity to grow and learn, in order to better serve my community and the children and families in NYS and across the country.

**Like all nonprofits NYAEYC benefits from the expertise of its volunteer leaders and board members, please briefly describe the specific strengths and skills you believe you would bring to this position including, if any, previous board experience.**

I have served on our local Chautauqua County Chapter of NYAEYC in a leadership position for 15 years. I have also served on the NYAEYC board for over 10 years, as Chapter representative, a regional representative. I have also been a contributing member of the Policy and Leadership committees.

I have been a part of many initiatives at the county level. I serve on our Education Coalition where we focus on bringing together educators and industry to meet community need. I am also on the workforce readiness and development workgroup of the Partnership for Economic Growth. From bringing people together to build consensus to leveraging partnerships for a

common goal to finding innovative solutions and funding opportunities, my experience within the county will prove to be an asset for NYAEYC.

I also serve on multiple statewide boards and advocacy organizations including being a proud contributing member of the Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force. I will be able to leverage the connections I have made with state agencies, organizations, and elected officials as Vice President. I will also make new relationships to accurately assess the problems we are facing and work toward a multifaceted solution. I know that my strengths lend themselves to the leadership required for this role and I want to use them to support the professionals working with young children and families across NYS.

**What opportunities do you believe there are for New York to better serve children and families, and ensure early childhood educators are well prepared and supported? Please describe what action you would like to see NYAEYC take to help realize these opportunities?**

Education will always be where my heart is. Often vacillating between Higher Education, ECE and advocacy/policy, I work within and have a passion for all three. Ultimately, being the voice for children, students and families is at the top of my list. Over my career, I have been able to improve the welfare of hundreds of children by providing them a loving, secure relationship with highly trained caregivers. I have also seen the great discrepancy between opportunities available for children from before birth. Change is needed for all children, families and educators.

I would like to see NYAEYC bring the voices of the children, families & educators forward to make changes at the state level. I would like to be a part of re-building AEYC engagement at the local level in order to become a stronger collective at the state level. ECE Educators need to feel valued, appreciated, supported and empowered. Families need to know they have a voice and they have choices for their children. Our collective work across the state can make this happen.

Every child has basic rights (i.e. the right to receive a healthy, safe childhood with rich experiences) and deserves high quality early learning experiences. In NYS, there is not enough high quality education and care. It is a problem including both access and affordability and it is a social justice issue. Policy changes are needed and by working to make changes to the policy, NYAEYC can make a difference in the lives of every child.

**NYAEYC is committed to working, with our state and national partners, to ensure a diverse, equitable and inclusive early childhood education system. Please describe how you see NYAEYC best contributing to this vision.**

Throughout my career in education, I have sought opportunities to help underserved communities and develop an understanding of the nuances within the early childhood field. My local & state-wide advocacy work has led to a passion for and an increased knowledge of policy. My educational leadership doctoral work at Duquesne University, focused on equity and justice,

is addressing the improvement of early childhood education policy and making opportunities more equitable. NYAEYC can impact policy in order to increase the equitability of access and affordability for high quality ECE.

There is much research demonstrating the effectiveness of high quality Early Childhood Education (ECE). However, a gap exists in carrying out this advocacy and being able to bring about equity and social justice for the youngest people in NYS. Inequity exists in the access to ECE for all children and also in the navigation of the system. I see NYAEYC analyzing current ECE policy in NYS in order to shape policy and allow for amplification of family and provider voices in the creation (or revision) of Early Childhood policies to increase the equity in the ECE infrastructure.

I also envision NYAEYC continuing to lead this important work with the members and other educators and leaders across the state. By allowing opportunities for the board and the field to participate in difficult conversations, to grow alongside one another and to learn from each other we will be able to ensure a diverse, equitable and inclusive early childhood education system. I wholeheartedly seek the opportunity to be a part of the NYAEYC leadership team that is going to move the field and NYS forward in this crucial work.