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New York Association for the
Education of Young Children

NYAEYC Candidate for Recording Secretary

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1. Please describe briefly your work on behalf of young children, families and early childhood education professionals.

I am an initiative-taking and progress focused professional with a long-standing background in the early childhood industry. I am a capable and consistent analytical person skilled at prioritizing and managing projects with proficiency. I excel in leading and training early childhood professionals, data analysis, grant management, program evaluation, assessments, mentoring, coaching, and project management. I have taught early childhood professionals at all levels on state and federal early childhood policy, developmentally appropriate best practices, health and safety, and curriculum development and implementation. I have provided program evaluation, professional development training, and technical assistance to childcare programs. I intentionally advocate for the field of early childhood education and for diverse children and families.

I have contributed collaboration, leadership, coaching, reflective supervision, and critical thinking toward team efforts, business improvements, and when supporting early childhood professionals. I have worked closely with children, families, community stakeholders, elected officials, private childcare centers, public schools, and Head Start programs. I am knowledgeable and in tune with new developments in the early education field, regulatory and contract compliance, and national childcare policy and initiatives. I have experience working with the Pyramid Model, Child Care Development Fund, North Carolina Infant/Toddler Trauma-Informed Care Project, Head Start, Reach Out and Read, Parents as Teachers, and presenting data and programmatic updates to community stakeholders, Board of Directors, and grant funders. I am a trained Professional Development Specialist for the Child Development Associate credential.

My position as the Director of Early Childhood Education for the Iredell County Partnership for Young Children provided me with the opportunity to administer, supervise, and implement the state-funded Pre-K program within Iredell County. I collaborated with school leaders, teachers, state officials, and community stakeholders to ensure that accessible high-quality Pre-K education was offered throughout the county for all ages and income-eligible children. Our agency contracted with public school systems and private childcare programs to host North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten programs. Part of my role was to ensure that each of the twenty classrooms-maintained contract compliance, followed state and

federal licensing requirements and laws, employed licensed teachers, and implemented an evidence-based curriculum and coordinated assessment tool. I analyzed data to determine needed interventions, examined student growth and monitored kindergarten readiness skills as part of a statewide pilot project. I effectively managed an annual budget exceeding three million dollars, which included state, CCDF, and private funding. I assisted with grant writing and collaborated with community agencies to advocate and support high quality early care and education.

2. 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.

I excel at building relationships and intentional communication approaches, both of which are fundamental when working to achieve common goals. I have contributed collaboration, leadership, coaching, reflective supervision, and critical thinking toward team efforts, business improvements, and when supporting early childhood professionals. I am knowledgeable and in tune with new developments in the early education field. I have proven to be effective and cooperative with strong motivation talents. I enjoy collective brainstorming sessions which allow me to coordinate activities to achieve a common goal. I continue to fuel my passion for early childhood education serving children and families within my community, supporting teachers and early childhood professionals, and advocating for young children and early childhood professionals. I believe that my work history and graduate coursework has helped to position me as an Early Childhood Subject matter expert and I have been invited to work with many different organizations including the local libraries, the community college, local Head Start program, and was elected to the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professionals where I worked with community leaders across the state and beyond to develop a model salary schedule for early childhood professionals. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, I was able to utilize the relationships that I had established within the community to rally together and help our childcare centers with cleaning and disinfectant supplies, food, and other necessities that were no longer plentiful common everyday items. I am a strong public speaker, and I articulate my thoughts well. I am intentional and purposeful when giving technical assistance and I maintain my integrity and professional demeanor. I can talk to anyone and get them to engage in conversations pertaining to the early childhood field and the future of our youngest citizens.

3. If elected, please describe any specific goals or objectives you would like to achieve.

I believe that we need to better advocate for the early childhood profession. Advocacy for the early childhood profession is crucial. Our dedicated teachers are weary and struggling with burnout. Administrators are overwhelmed and families are frustrated. Childcare programs are stuck in what seems to be a never-ending cycle of teacher turnover, a severe shortage of qualified candidates, escalating prices for materials, and the whirlwind or soon to be whirlwind of lost pandemic funding. We cannot simply sit back and wait any longer for someone else to fix this problem. It is imperative that we invest in our workforce. I also believe that our early childhood professionals need professional coaching. Coaching builds employee morale and increases employee engagement and motivation and helps to create

a community within an organization. Different professions and organizations around the country are investing in their workforce by offering professional coaching for employees.

Subject matter expert coaches work with individuals to increase self-awareness, encourage reflection, enhance emotional intelligence, improve communication and interpersonal skills, and work to develop specific SMART goals. Investing in the workforce and coaching early childhood professionals will help to redefine their passion for child development and early learning. By focusing on their individual strengths and areas for improvement to develop goals, coaching will also offer the opportunity to reflect on their educational philosophy and provide access to resources. Coaching offers early childhood professionals the opportunity to grow, both within their position and towards their future aspirations.

Navigating our post-pandemic world is difficult and the challenges are substantial. We continue to see record low enrollment in early childhood programs at colleges and universities while some have already been completely dissolved. Despite stagnant wages and limited benefits including health insurance and paid time off, we continue to add tasks that increase the accountability and responsibility of the already overloaded plates of our early childhood professionals. Change is possible. We cannot simply sit back and wait any longer for someone else to fix this problem. It is imperative that we invest in our workforce and work collaboratively to designate early childhood education as a critical and respectable profession worthy of acknowledgement and acceptable compensation.

4. 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.

NY needs to invest in our Early Childhood Professionals! I would love to expand coaching sessions for early childhood teachers and program directors. Redefine their passion, focus their approaches in the classroom and program, and reflect on their educational philosophy. The early childhood field is on the verge of collapse. Programs are struggling. Administrators are overwhelmed. Teachers are burnt out. Families are frustrated. We are failing the children. Childcare programs across the state and the nation are stuck in what seems to be a never-ending cycle of teacher turnover, severe shortage of qualified candidates, escalating prices for everything, and the whirlwind or soon to be whirlwind of lost pandemic funding.

Truth be told, our industry has been on the downward spiral for many years well before the pandemic started. Early childhood programs at colleges and universities had record-low enrollment and many were simply being discontinued. Pay for early childhood teachers has not changed much over the past three decades in comparison to the cost of living and most early childhood teachers do not have health insurance or adequate paid time off. Many work a part-time job to offset their low wage, and some qualify for state benefits such as food stamps. Yet, we continue to add tasks, accountability, and responsibility to the already overloaded plates of early childhood professionals. Coaching sessions and mentorship programs can help teachers reflect on their educational philosophy, identify their strengths and identify areas for improvement. We need to intentionally connect ECE professionals

with training classes and professional development opportunities that will be purposeful to them.

5. 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.

Every individual has an influence on the diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) that is developed within an organization. While leadership can help set the foundation for the culture of an agency, I believe that each and every individual has to be accountable and invested in creating and sustaining a respectable and safe workplace where experiences, ethnicities, traditions, beliefs, and perspectives are not only accepted but truly valued. As employees embrace an organization's mission and vision, I believe that a little intentionality will go a long way, and individuals can connect and learn from one another's strengths, weaknesses, triumphs, and challenges.

I have had the honor and privilege of attending different trainings and presentations specifically focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in recent years yet what I find most inspiring is simply time spent with young preschool children. Young children best define diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for me. Informal and young children as they explore and discover the world around them without the weight of prejudice, bias, discrimination, or rejection. These authentic "snap shots" show children interacting with one another, sharing ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Their genuine interactions and exchanges set the bar for what diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging needs to be. I am a realist. Those same children, in those same classrooms, have their share of struggles, challenges, and do not always represent the DEIB utopia but I have seen it. I have heard it. I have felt it. When children are in a safe and nurturing environment and have the support and guidance of intentional and knowledgeable teachers, the culture and community of the classroom can be a magnificent prototype.