

Millions Have Been Lost

Submitted by Sherry Carlson, Conversation Facilitator

At the 2018 VTAEYC conference, attendees had the opportunity to consider the prospect of childhood education becoming a more cohesive and recognized profession. Marica Cox Mitchell, NAEYC's Deputy Executive Director for Early Learning Systems, presented a keynote to all conference participants, followed by a more in-depth workshop for a smaller group. During these presentations, Cox Mitchell made several points that resonated with attendees:

- The most important quality ingredient is the education and preparation of the staff.
- When our profession is in crisis children are in crisis.
- Millions of dollars planned for investment in early education have been pulled back and spent differently because the early education field did not pull together and make a cohesive unified ask.

Workshop participants added their voices to the conversation. Some key takeaways included:

- A hope that becoming a recognized professional field of practice could bring about more accessible preparation programs. Several expressed a desire to begin or finish degrees but described their struggle to find and afford coursework.
- The desire of several participants to work with infants and toddlers, but encountering misunderstanding about the preparation and expertise needed for this work, resulting in these jobs being too low-paying for them to accept.
- A positive reaction to the work of NAEYC's *Power to the Profession Task Force* as they develop a model for advancing the early care and education profession. One participant commented, "Finally, something that is tangible that we can work to agree on."
- Some agreement that those in the early care and education workforce lead the work of advancing the profession, which presents a challenge, as historically, "everyone is in our business" and the "push comes down from the top."

This conversation and the one with Starting Points Network leaders in September are the first of many conversations—in-person and via webinar—that will be happening between now and May 2019. The goal is to engage 1000 members of Vermont's early care and education workforce. Join the conversation!

To hear more from Marica Cox Mitchell or learn about *Power to the Profession*, click [here](#).

Presentation by Marica Cox Mitchell

<https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/ece-compensationnecessities-clarity-accountability-path-forward-marcia-cox-mitchell/>

Power to the Profession on NAEYC's website

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/initiatives/profession>