Early Years
Leadership
Diversity
Initiative

Diversify
Early Childhood
Leadership.

It's time to remove the barriers holding us back.

Who we are and what we believe:

We are the Early Years Leadership Diversity Initiative and we seek to catalyze conversations and actions about leadership development and leadership diversity in the early care and education (ECE) sector. Our goal is to advance leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences as a way to improve equitable access to quality early learning. So, we embarked on a year-long process to listen to early childhood professionals and amplify what many of us know: we need to pay attention to the lack of diverse leadership in the ECE sector and change it.

"

It matters that we have leaders from the community that are going to change and make things better for that community. When we think about [certain] communities, they don't want another person coming in with a savior mentality. There's nothing to be saved...it's just the equity gap. Not an achievement gap, an ability gap. It's an equity gap. So how do we close that gap? We have to close it with people who are from there.
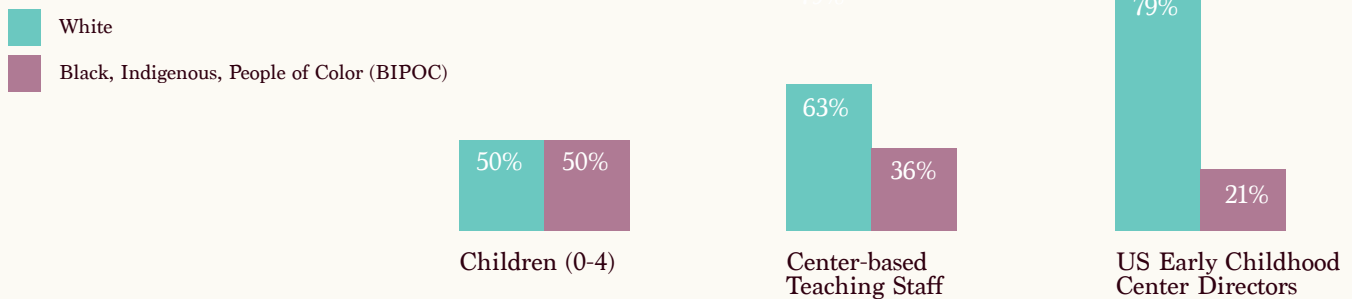
— ECE State Nonprofit Leader *"*

We in the ECE sector have a bold vision to create a more equitable future for and with the children we care for, teach, and support. Leadership unlocks human potential to help create and sustain positive impact. The skills and capabilities of leaders are critical, particularly for a sector undergoing substantial change. In 1997, Lynne Kagan, a long-time ECE leader at Columbia University, wrote, "the quality of any field or organization is determined on the quality of its leaders" (Kagen & Bowman, 1997). Data from the Leadership Matters report show that school leaders have the second most critical impact on student outcomes after classroom instruction (NAESP/NASSP, 2013).

Yet, the current leadership in our sector is not reflective

of the population of children who learn from us and the families who trust us to support them. 50% of young children in the US under age 5 are children of color (Austin et al., 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2019; NCES, 2018). While the ECE workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, the leadership remains predominantly white women. For example, the graph below, from the 2016 Early Childhood Workforce Index, illustrates that nearly 80% of US childcare center directors are white women. From a 2018 report from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, "women of color occupy a disproportionate share of the lowest paying jobs in the field and are underrepresented in leadership roles." In early childhood centers across the US, only 21% of their leaders were Black, Indigenous or People of Color (Whitebook, et al., 2018). ■

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

■ White

■ Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

	Children (0-4)	Center-based Teaching Staff	US Early Childhood Center Directors
White	50%	63%	79%
BIPOC	50%	36%	21%

Sources: 2016 Early Childhood Workforce Index, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley; Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count; Closing the Leadership Gap 2018 Status Report, McCormick Center.

Realizing this vision will require skilled leaders with lived experiences reflective of educators, families and children who, too, know what it is like not to see themselves leading in spaces of power. Who, too, know what it feels like to be marginalized. Leaders with shared lived experiences are uniquely able to create meaningful solutions based on their knowledge (Douglass, 2020).

Today, while there is quiet talk about and mild references to the need for greater leadership diversity, there is very little sector-level discussion or active calls-to-action for improvement in this area. In 2019, we started to dig into this conundrum. Our initiative conducted research with ECE professionals around the US to learn their attitudes and beliefs about leadership and leadership diversity. We found that while there is a passionate group of professionals who want to lead and have meaningful impact in this sector, many of them face considerable barriers to leadership advancement -- particularly those with deep, lived experiences of surviving and enduring racism, classism, ableism, xenophobia, and exclusion.

82% of respondents endorsed the importance of **advancing and elevating leaders from socially and economically marginalized** backgrounds.

71% indicated that there were **too few leaders having diverse identities and backgrounds** in the ECE sector.

It is time to name the lack of leadership diversity and the barriers to advancement as critical problems facing the ECE sector, preventing us from achieving a vision that is critical to the flourishing of our society. Only together will we unlock the potential within our workforce, innovate creative solutions, address the many challenges we face, and accelerate progress for and with our entire sector. ■

Methodology: This is how we learned what we learned.

Our research is meant to provide insights on the topics of leadership development and leadership diversity in the ECE sector. We invite you to build upon this work with further research, conversations and actions. To help with that process, we offer our methodology and how we got here.

We started with three big questions. 1) How important are leadership and leadership diversity to those in the sector? 2) What do the career paths look like for someone pursuing a leadership career? 3) What is currently promoting or obstructing the development of diverse future leaders?

We chose a two-pronged approach for our study: a survey and interviews.* Our survey of 36 questions primarily used a 1 - 5 "strongly disagree to strongly agree" scale. These questions captured the roles of ECE practitioners, from their first position to their current position, the barriers and experiences they faced, and some of their underlying beliefs about leading and influencing.

In order to find eligible and willing participants, we used targeted and snowball sampling, choosing 400 individuals from our team's professional networks and asking them to forward the survey to their networks.** Ultimately, from late July through late September 2020, we gathered 635 total responses, and after removing incomplete surveys, ended with 457 responses used for our analysis.

We also developed a companion interview to dig deeper into specific areas. This was a semi-structured protocol with five key questions on pathways, barriers, leadership diversity, leadership characteristics and personal leadership goals. Survey participants indicated interest in this 30 - 45 minute interview at the end of the survey. Between October and December 2020, we interviewed 24 ECE professionals by phone, and received three written responses for a total of 27 interviews. The quotes used in this report come from those interviews.

No research is without its limits and we want to be upfront about the potential biases that may have impacted our work. The most obvious one is a self-selection bias. Our participants were more likely to be interested in the topics of leadership and diversity in the ECE sector because of the initial target group for the survey and the wording used in our social media advertisements. Secondly, we want to acknowledge the unknowable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the adjustment to virtual communication, and lack of clarity on the future that may have impacted respondents' answers to certain questions. ■

* Our study was reviewed by both the Harvard Committee for Use of Human Subjects (CUHS/IRB) and an external IRB (IntegReview) in June 2020, amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.
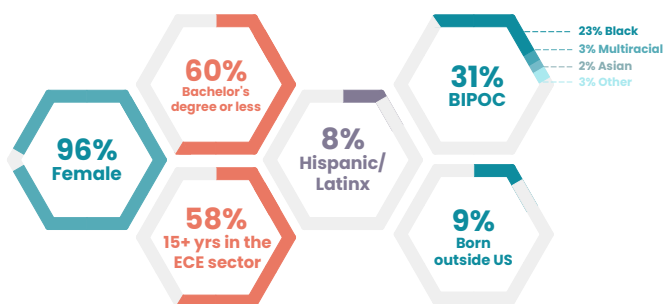
**We also placed ads on social media platforms.

> *I want to continue doing this work in any way that I can contribute to advancing this field, so that more people have an opportunity. More people who love this work, more people who understand how important it is, have an opportunity to succeed and lead....So that other people...can see leaders who look like them and say, you know, I could do that too, so that they could be leaders....I want to create those pathways so that they can see [leadership] as a possibility.*
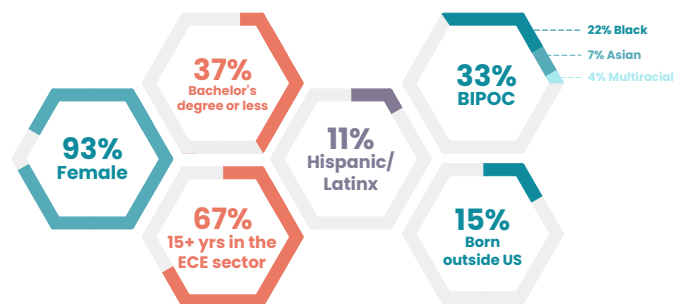>
> — ECE Teacher Leader and Community Advocate

DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey Respondents

96% Female
60% Bachelor's degree or less
58% 15+ yrs in the ECE sector
8% Hispanic/Latinx
31% BIPOC
  23% Black
  3% Multiracial
  2% Asian
  3% Other
9% Born outside US

Interview Respondents

93% Female
37% Bachelor's degree or less
67% 15+ yrs in the ECE sector
11% Hispanic/Latinx
33% BIPOC
  22% Black
  7% Asian
  4% Multiracial
15% Born outside US

* Please note these graphics are approximate representations of the percentages.

What we learned

1

We found a vibrant group of current ECE professionals who are eager to lead and have impact in this sector. They represent an exciting opportunity for the future of ECE.

"I would like to be part of something bigger than myself.

— Early Learning Resource Teacher"

In this study, we wanted to understand if ECE professionals perceived themselves in the identity of "leader" and how that impacted their views of leadership.

63% of respondents indicated that they **wanted to be leaders (responded "a lot" or "a great deal").**

57% of them identified themselves already to be leaders **in some capacity.**

This level of interest in leadership, particularly in the midst of a pandemic, is an exciting sign of energy and vitality among professionals in this sector. We deliberately chose not to define terms such as "leader" or "leadership," so as to let respondents decide for themselves what they believed these words to mean.

We also asked respondents about their desire to influence change in the ECE sector as another way to gauge their interest in pursuing leadership opportunities. About 60% of our respondents indicated they have a personal desire to influence change.

"I hope to give educators a voice, as an educator myself...a way to have a seat at the table around those decisions that are being made...without their input."

— Doctoral Candidate"

Having the desire to influence and executing on that desire are not always the same, but we hypothesized that desire to influence is a necessary condition for pursuing a leadership pathway. Not everyone wants to lead, and some are not clear about what leadership entails or whether they want the commitment and responsibility they perceive goes with leadership. About one-third of our survey respondents were "moderate" in their desire to lead, and less than 10% are ready to leave the ECE sector.

2

Despite a pool of eager aspiring leaders, there is a strong perception that the sector lacks qualified candidates for leadership roles and is inadequately preparing individuals for leadership.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly told us that there is a problem in the sector with the availability of "prepared" leaders, in terms of need, supply and the difficulty in finding them.* We wanted to understand how much this perception was widely believed to be so.

90% told us that they believe there is a gap between the need for leaders in the ECE sector and those who are prepared for leadership responsibilities.

33% believe there are effective and accessible approaches to developing leaders in the sector.

These findings raise many more questions: is this perception based on fact, in which case there is a "talent supply" problem? Are there plenty of individuals who want to be leaders but are truly not adequately trained (suggesting a leadership development problem)? Are the qualifications for leadership roles not clearly defined, which limits the candidate pool (suggesting a hiring process problem)? Are candidates available but unaware of open positions or are being turned down for other reasons?

Other studies have indicated that the ECE sector lacks leadership capacity and that its leadership development opportunities are "scarce and scattered" (New Venture Fund & Arabella Advisors, 2018; Goffin & Gager, 2021; Goffin & Regenstein, 2020). This was confirmed in our study; a majority of respondents agree that the sector has insufficient approaches for developing leaders.

Many leadership development opportunities are realistically only available to ECE professionals who have the means and time to invest, whether that involves professional development outside of work hours, additional educational attainment or getting involved with professional organizations.

If it is true that there are not enough qualified candidates for leadership positions, despite a sizable group of individuals who aspire to be leaders, then this suggests that the approach to developing leaders in ECE needs considerable work. Respondents ranked work experiences and opportunities, along with compensation, to be the most important elements in developing leadership skills.

Top contributors to leadership development
(% reporting high contribution)

84% on-the-job experience

82% increasing compensation for increasing qualifications

78% professional development opportunities within the workplace

75% inclusive work environments

75% mentorship and sponsorship

Higher education degrees and/or **licensing and formal leadership training programs** were ranked lower in importance, although still endorsed by **66%** and **65%**, respectively.

*We chose not to define terms like "prepared" and "qualified," so respondents were interpreting these in a variety of ways.

3

The pathways to leadership roles in this sector are often unclear, highly individualized and difficult to replicate, which introduces potential inequities into the advancement process.

> "...maybe there'd be more leaders in the sector if there was a clearer pathway for people."
>
> —*Childcare Center Director/Owner*

Careers are personal journeys, reflecting unique personalities and values, and filled with a wide variety of opportunities and challenges that require choices and decisions along the way. When occupational sectors define and communicate career paths, we all have a far more equitable opportunity to progress along those pathways. We can make better-informed decisions about our future when skills, education and experience requirements for advancement are spelled out. Defined career pathways contribute to more equitable opportunities.

40% of our survey respondents expressed that there are not clearly defined pathways to roles of influence and leadership.

In the ECE sector, there is a traditional teaching career path (here termed the "child-facing" track), in which individuals enter the sector as assistants, aides or teachers. For professionals who love the daily and direct interaction with children, this path can provide additional opportunities for growth and development. Some may aspire to be "teacher-leaders," where they can remain in the classroom while influencing their peers, the program/school and community as a teacher. **90% of our respondents began their career on the child-facing track, serving as teachers, aides, assistants and nannies. 50% are still on the child-facing path in their current roles.**

For those interested in taking on more responsibility, they can expand their educational credentials, scope of influence, decision-making authority and usually increase compensation with roles that are on the "system-level" career track. There are many other roles at the local, regional, state or national level (e.g., coach, center director, nonprofit program or executive director, policy/program analyst, etc.) that provide opportunities for broader influence and impact, and offer another way to progress in the ECE sector. **40% of respondents "leaped" from the child-facing track where they started to their current positions on the "system-level" track.**

Some professionals come to this sector as a second career and often have a different experience navigating their career path, in some cases because they bring skills from other sectors that are transferable, particularly into system-level positions. Respondents described their advancement to leadership roles as individualized and fortuitous rather than planned.

Most of our interview respondents did not have a career plan. They knew they wanted to work with children and thought teaching was the career path. Several described the lack of leadership development opportunities, and instead were fortunate to have others (mentors, advisors) counsel them on advancement and point them to future roles.

4

Rising leaders from racially and ethnically diverse, marginalized backgrounds face significant systemic barriers as they seek advancement, despite an overwhelming acknowledgement about the importance of leadership diversity in this sector.

We first wanted to understand how ECE professionals felt about leadership diversity in the sector. This is not a phrase we have seen used in the ECE literature, and most of the discussion about diversity and equity in the sector has been focused predominantly on the workforce without specifically mentioning the leaders. Our study found very strong agreement in the criticality of leadership diversity and that the sector currently lacks representative leadership.

82% of our respondents endorse that it is important to advance leaders from marginalized communities.
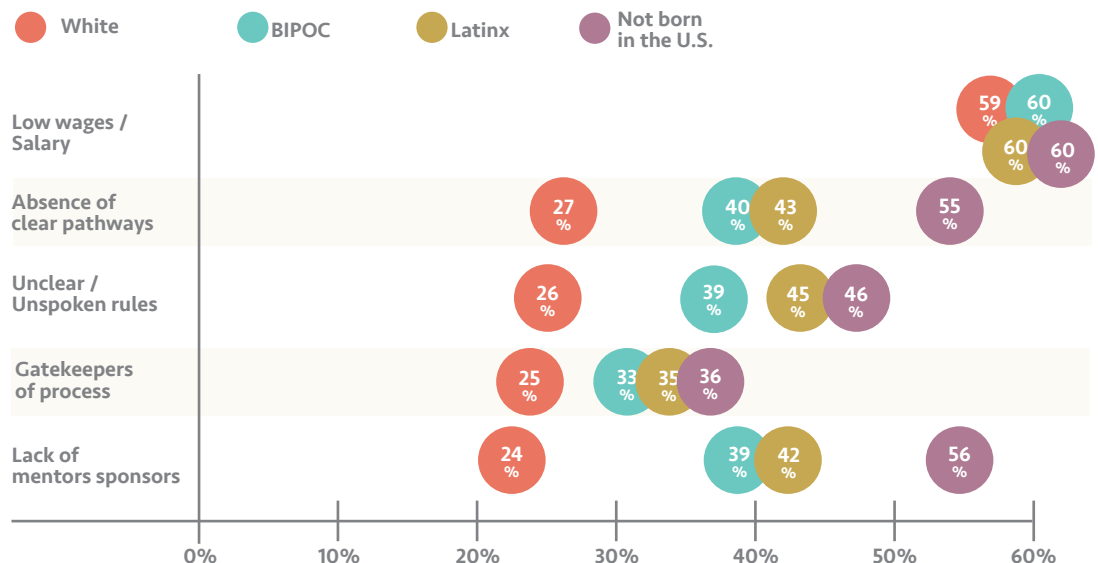
71% believe that the sector currently has too few leaders with diverse identities.

We then asked about the most common barriers facing individuals as they progressed in their careers. Unsurprisingly, 60% of our respondents identified low wages/salary as a barrier to advancement. This has been a long-standing challenge for the sector, causing individuals to make career decisions that may be less fulfilling or desirable (e.g., leave the classroom for higher-paying roles, leave childcare centers for public school options, leaving ECE altogether, etc.).

Overall, about ⅓ of our respondents faced some type of career barriers. Individuals from marginalized communities experience these barriers at much higher rates than their white counterparts (see graph below). Of special note is that we found very high rates of ECE experience and education with survey respondents who identify as Black, which indicates that even the most educated and experienced Black leaders continue to face barriers at higher rates than their non-Black colleagues.

White Leaders Face Significantly Fewer Barriers to Advancement
(% reporting specified barrier)

● White   ● BIPOC   ● Latinx   ● Not born in the U.S.

Barrier	White	BIPOC	Latinx	Not born in the U.S.
Low wages / Salary	59%	60%	60%	60%
Absence of clear pathways	27%	40%	43%	55%
Unclear / Unspoken rules	26%	39%	45%	46%
Gatekeepers of process	25%	33%	35%	36%
Lack of mentors sponsors	24%	39%	42%	56%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%

Barriers to diverse leadership

Unclear/unspoken rules — These prevent the clarity of knowing how to navigate through situations and processes, and of accessing hidden nuggets of knowledge, such as the importance of building relationships with certain people, translating roles and responsibilities of a leader, and other guardrails.

Lack of mentors/sponsors — They can be informal connectors or part of more formal coaching or mentoring engagements. Formal programs can help mentees who are not confident pursuing mentors. Many leaders do not know how to engage in mentoring relationships or how to take the next step of becoming sponsors.

"There's no coaching that goes along with figuring out what to do next. How do I...get ahead? How do I become a better teacher? How do I...move into a leadership position? That just doesn't exist in the sector right now."
— Consultant and Trainer

Gatekeepers of process — these individuals are a two-sided coin: they have the power to boost the careers of some while hindering the growth of others.

"I'm not allowed to talk to anybody at the [state agency] unless I get approval from my supervisor, so I can't even email my supervisor's supervisor without telling her....They call this..."protocol." You have to follow 'protocol.' I've tried pitching different ideas, but [there are] always reasons why we can't do them.... blocked by middle management because of what their goals are, or what they want to do and what they don't want to do."
— Instructional Coach

"

..I think most of us are quite comfortable with people that are similar to us...it's natural. But it's important to acknowledge and not deny it, and really work against the natural proclivity to hire people that might be of the same economic standing or might be of the same ethnic standing or sexual orientation or religion...often we're not exposed to those other communities. So...we have to work to fight against those inclinations to stay within our tribes and expand those.

—State ECE Leader

"

5

Individuals who have been able to advance into leadership roles used a variety of resources to overcome barriers, often engaging on their own time and at their own expense.

Given the lack of system-level leadership development approaches across the sector, leaders found their own approaches to building skills and advancing in their careers. These resources are not available equitably to everyone.

External resources for advancing careers

Education —Interview participants described their degree attainment (at any level) as synonymous with advancement, opening up new opportunities that were not available without the additional credentials.

Professional networks — Leaders described the opportunities for building critical skills provided by professional organizations as a way to design their own leadership development process.

Mentors & sponsors — Many of our leaders had the benefit of experiencing positive, productive relationships with established leaders in the ECE sector, who coached, championed, shared, opened doors, and encouraged these rising leaders. They instilled confidence, enabling these professionals to progress in ways they often did not believe they could.

"I do think there's value in someone with more experience being able to be that touchstone for someone with less experience. You've got someone in your corner."
— *Nonprofit Project Director*

We heard about another critical set of resources that enabled many of our respondents to reach roles of greater scope and influence: their own tenacity, intellectual curiosity and passion for working with young children.

Personal attributes to work through barriers

Passion for children and the work of ECE — The children were always front and center for our interview respondents. They gave these leaders purpose and energy to persist and to dig down deep for their personal resilience.

Self-motivation — Leaders described a dedication to their goals and their desire to keep moving forward as important to their advancement.

Lifelong learning — Individuals wanted to keep learning and growing, understanding more about this sector, their practice and their potential impact on children.

"If I did not have some of the characteristics that are innate to me — my desire or work ethic or my ability to set a goal and move towards it — maybe I never would have made that leap."
— *Doctoral Candidate*

"

It's going to come down to trust....They look at it on paper...so we have four Black women, we've got a Latino woman and we have a man. And they're like, 'oh good...we're a diverse organization.' But it's deeper than that. And people of color can see right through it....So, if you really want to create these opportunities, then there has to be an authentic desire to do it. It can't be phony. It can't be a token... board member or token administrator.

—State Nonprofit Leader

"

Ideas for moving forward

Our research was exploratory, designed to capture beliefs and attitudes about a topic that needs to receive more attention in the ECE sector: representative leadership. During some initial sharing of our research, we heard an urgency in moving to action. Our goal has been to find or start conversations, connect with individuals and organizations that are excited about this work, illuminate programs and spark new ideas that are committed to this mission, and highlight gaps that still need to be addressed, both in the short- and long-term.

We invite leaders — those who aspire and are rising in their impact and influence, as well as those who currently have power and authority — to reflect on these questions raised by our research.

Key Questions for Rising Leaders:

1 **Thinking about *where you currently have influence,* how can you expand your impact in this role or responsibility?** What are the barriers you face, if any, in achieving the impact you seek? What step can you take towards seizing responsibility and impacting others at an individual or system-wide level?

2 **Thinking about *the barriers you face, your career journey, and future goals,* whose mentorship could you seek and nurture to help overcome the career obstacles you might be facing?** Whose career trajectory and accomplishments do you admire or wish to emulate? Who is willing to help you learn?

3 **Thinking about *your professional network,* how can you expand your current network to learn from established leaders?** Are there conferences, events, lectures, organizations, or individuals you can seek out to foster your professional curiosity and leadership ambitions?

Key Questions for Current Leaders:

1 **Thinking about *your career path,* what types of "gates" or pivotal decision points have you encountered along the way?** How did you navigate those gates? What resources or insights helped foster your career trajectory? How can you share this experience with rising leaders?

2 **Thinking about *your professional environment,* what are the unspoken rules you abide by, and how do you learn about them?** What impact do they have on your ability to advance? How can you share this knowledge with colleagues who are interested in leadership to empower and actively foster their career development?

3 **Thinking about leadership diversity in *your place of work,* what hiring initiatives have been or could be adopted to facilitate the discovery of untapped talent?** What is preventing your immediate professional setting from developing potential talent, and in particular, developing diverse talent?

We heard from participants, colleagues and other ECE leaders about imperatives for changing leadership diversity within organizations, centers, schools and communities.

Additional Questions for Organizational and System-level Leaders:

1 **Have you committed to leadership diversity in your organization?** What will it take to advance more leaders of color and individuals from other marginalized communities into roles of influence, authority and power?

2 **Are your talent management practices enabling the hiring, development and advancement of individuals from marginalized backgrounds?** This includes practices for current leaders (succession planning, hiring, professional development on addressing biases, creating an inclusive and supportive environment and how to be an effective mentor), as well as for rising leaders (professional development on and off the job to build skills for advancement, clear pathways, equitable qualifications, how to engage with mentors). What are you doing to inspire current leaders to develop their successors, mentor future leaders and to hire individuals from marginalized communities?

3 **How are you engaged with defining and illuminating clear pathways to leadership for the ECE sector?** How are you ensuring that leadership capabilities and career pathways are integrated into accessible, affordable and equitable educational opportunities?

...Whoever it is that's hiring or bringing people into an organization are the gatekeepers, and we have to acknowledge possible implicit bias that we might have or...have in those roles... of power that can really decide the shape and look of the organization and the success of the organization.

—State ECE Leader

The Wrap Up

Summary Points

The barriers to advancement suggest that there is a lot of untapped talent in this sector. Much of that talent is key to unlocking the potential in the ECE workforce. Several of the current leaders in our study believe that "it is difficult to find qualified leadership candidates for positions." Many think that "the field currently has a leadership gap between need and individuals prepared for leadership." There is indeed a gap. A clear gap in communication, access, and connection between current leaders and emerging leadership.

There are many who are interested in being a leader and having an impact in the sector but do not have the platform or pathway access to do so. The rise to leadership and the parallel growth in the scope of influence occurs on both tracks: child-facing and system-level. Established leaders in each track can help encourage aspiring and emerging leaders to rise through the ranks, finding opportunities to influence change.

Systemic barriers to advancement shape individuals' career trajectories, pathways, and leadership scope potential. Intentionally prioritizing diversity in leadership involves opening gates for those who experience barriers at higher rates. Established leaders: that's where you can make a difference. ECE career barriers are experienced at higher rates by minority and marginalized professionals -- signaling a direct need for intervention when it comes to leveling the playing field in ECE leadership (e.g., hiring, mentorship, inviting to the table).

There are many ways to move forward with some of these ideas: some are near-term and can tap into already existing or easily expanded state, local or community-level programs focused on these opportunities (e.g., mentoring programs, state-wide ECE leadership programs, etc.); some will require more planning and buy-in (e.g., defining career pathways and leadership competencies, etc.).

At the very least, we need to act. We close this report with one imperative:

Collectively, let's turn up the volume on leadership diversity in ECE. Let's get this issue out in the open. This dialogue does not need to keep happening in hushed side conversations after breakout sessions at conferences. This needs to be the keynote plenary session. Let's make this happen. Our children's futures depend on it.

Acknowledgments and Thank Yous

Thank you to all of the participants of our survey and to those who were interviewed; we are grateful for your honesty and your perspective. Thank you to the **ECE leaders**, **friends and colleagues** who listened to our research presentation; we appreciate your gracious insights and feedback. Thank you to **Zina Noel**, who was an invaluable member of the original team, conceptualizing this research, and creating the survey and initial qualitative interview protocol before beginning a PhD program at Northwestern University. Thank you to **Dr. Meredith Rosenthal** and the **Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI)** for enabling this project to be part of Meredith Callanan's fellowship program. Thank you to the many **Harvard ALI 2019 Fellows and Partners** who provided support and encouragement throughout this journey, as peer mentors, friends and champions. Thank you to members of the **Harvard EdLD community** (especially cohort 9) and to other **Harvard faculty members** for their candid perspective and feedback as this project was being conceptualized. Thank you to everyone involved with the **Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP)** for your commitment to leadership development and leadership diversity, and for fostering a powerful opportunity for leaders to grow and impact change. Thank you to our thoughtful creative collaborators from Brand Justice, who gave us the confidence to be bold: **Dr. Yasmene Mumby,** who helped write this report, and **Frank Liu,** who designed it.

Who We Are

The Early Years Leadership Diversity Initiative seeks to catalyze conversations and actions about leadership development and leadership diversity in the early care and education (ECE) field, with the goal to advance leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences as a way to improve equitable access to quality early learning. This initiative is fiscally sponsored under the Maryland Philanthropy Network, a 501c3 member organization whose mission is to maximize the impact of giving on community life through a growing network of diverse, informed and effective philanthropists. The Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI) is the academic sponsor for this work, as part of Meredith Callanan's Senior Fellowship (2020-2021) (https://advancedleadership.harvard.edu/). For more information about this work and to continue this conversation, please contact Meredith Callanan at meredith@eyldinitiative.org.

Team

Raleta Summers Dawkins, PhD, qualitative researcher

Raleta brings experience in early care and education as a Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 3rd-grade teacher as well as an adjunct professor, and as a mom. Her interests are supporting pre-kindergarten educators and mathematics pedagogy. She earned her B.S. and M.A. at North Carolina A&T University and her PhD at Old Dominion University.

Joseph Felkers, communications manager

Joseph uses his talents for branding, marketing and graphic design to promote child welfare and abuse prevention. His interests lie in language policy, neurodivergence equity, and contemporary poetry. He is currently earning his A.B. from Harvard College.

Dina Kapengut, PhD, quantitative researcher

Dina joined the EYLDI team as a developmental psychologist and psychoeducational clinician. She is passionate about addressing the equity gap and understanding environmental influences on development. She earned her B.A. from Brandeis University and her PhD from Teachers College at Columbia University.

Anndrew Reinfeld, program manager

Anndrew is a school-based counselor focused on childhood and adolescent counseling. He works to bring therapeutic play, storytelling, and gamification to promote positive outcomes with his students. He earned his B.S. from the Pennsylvania State University, and his EdM and CAGS from Harvard University.

Lorraine Wang, data & analysis manager

Lorraine came to the team as a social emotional learning researcher. She is particularly interested in leadership advancement for individuals from Asian communities. She earned her B.S. from University of Wisconsin- Madison and her EdM from Harvard University.

Meredith Callanan, director

Meredith began this project with experience in corporate, nonprofit, and philanthropic leadership, as well as her personal experience as a mom. She is interested in leadership development and advancement, especially for underrepresented populations. She earned her B.A. from Bates College and her MBA from Northwestern University.

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Let's continue the conversation. Please contact:

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