



Professional confidence

Research in education, science, and public policy demonstrates that early educators hold immense professional responsibility for the healthy development of children and also for productive contributions to society as a whole.

"Early childhood professionals provide one of the most important services to society; they must understand and cultivate their role as professionals doing critical work." NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)

Building capability

The importance of the early educator points out the need to build professional capability. The core concept applies to all: early education programs need adults knowledgeable in current child development, research, and best practices.

"The knowledge and skills required of an effective preschool teacher have increased as science has revealed more about the capabilities of young children, how they learn best, and the importance of early learning for later school success." W. Steven Barnett (2004), *Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualification*

Continuous inquiry = Professional confidence

Although continuing professional development opportunities are important, such as college classes or state approved trainings, they are not the only path to professional exploration and gain. Professional inquiry can also be obtained through reading, reflecting, and continued dialogue with other early learning professionals. By reading articles, publications, and books, professionals can gain knowledge and can immediately apply what is discovered into their professional work.

All early educators can benefit from continuous inquiry. This on-going process of discovery helps them do their jobs well. When things go right, they feel good about what they learned and accomplished, and that develops professional confidence.

Having professional confidence connects many things: joy, success, reward, and the desire to learn more. Most importantly, it creates a professional spirit for the early educator to embrace.

Five actions to build professional confidence

1. Acknowledge your value as a professional: What are you proud of? What are your strengths? What feedback do you get about your work?
2. Build expertise and skill: Make a list of topics that will help you attain new skills as well as build on existing skills in working with children and families. What do you want to know more about? What do you struggle with? What are you curious about?
3. Acquire information and current research in child development and learning: Find at least three resources you can use. Locate a professional early childhood organization that can offer information and resources, such as NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org).
4. Reflect and communicate with other early learning professionals: List three professional peers you can communicate with. What might you share? How and where can you share ideas? Consider joining an early learning study group, blog, or professional organization.
5. Continue your professional inquiry: Describe your most important professional goals and how you plan to achieve them. Consider writing your professional plans.

[Access a free professional planning tool here.](#)