

A NEW ERA FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

The Landscape: Federal, state and community agencies across the nation are working on an aspirational and ambitious agenda for dramatic pre-K expansion. The enterprise is aimed at promoting early learning as a pathway to equalize opportunity for all—a major difference from the existing, decades-old model of child care. For these unprecedented policy initiatives to drive substantially improved learning outcomes for all children, we need a new commitment to building and sustaining capacity in the adult early childhood workforce. The success of these initiatives rests on their quality, and quality itself rests on the educators on the ground. They are playing a transformational role in raising and educating the next generation and are a linchpin for our most vulnerable young children.

The Dilemma

The Paradox of the Early Educator

The daily work of early educators makes a difference in the lives of young children—children who need strong and supportive bonds with adults and who depend upon the cognitively stimulating learning opportunities these adults provide—and therefore has an impact on the economic and social vitality of today's society. Yet early educators' investment in children dramatically outpaces our investment in their professional lives, their training, and their wages; carrying out their mission to improve young children's lives means undertaking the daily physical, emotional, and mental labor required of early childhood education—managing challenging behaviors, responding to unpredictable reactions, while maintaining a focus on learning. To realize the potential of early education, the educators themselves must be compensated and supported professionally. Professional support for early educators is the focus of this series of briefs.

The Solution

Cultivating a Rigorous and Regulated (R²) Learning Environment

As a nation, we must create the conditions that enable early educators to accomplish their mission—they need to be able to effectively address classroom pressure points, maintain a sense of emotional calm, and provide children with stimulating learning opportunities. With effective strategies, the early educator not only creates and experiences this R² learning environment—one where learning and strong relationships are palpable—she is also more likely to engage in conversations with peers about practice, to experience a sense of competence in her work, and to remain in the profession, thereby enhancing her own well-being.

R² A Series of Briefs for Early Education Leaders

Lead Early Educators for Success is a series of briefs written for leaders dedicated to children's early learning and development. The series provides the principles behind, and the strategies for, supporting early educators in ways that cultivate R² learning environments. Each brief revisits assumptions that guide current policies and practices, outlines common pitfalls, and provides actionable suggestions relevant to each topic (e.g., program design, human and financial resource strategies, support for implementation, etc.).

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3 The R² Educator

4 Professional Development for R² Learning Environments

5 Connected Coaching for R² Learning Environments

6 Using Data for R² Accountability and Improvement

7 Implementing R² Structures

8 Implementing R² Processes

9 R² in Action: The Approach

10 R² in Action: Early Data

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