



## DEFENDING THE EARLY YEARS POSITION STATEMENT: POLICY PRIORITIES

Defending the Early Years was founded to work for a just, equitable, and quality early childhood education for every young child. We share our collective knowledge about child development and advocate for child-centered, active play experiences as evidence-based best practices to accomplish this goal. As we continue to promote strategies for protecting childhood, we are expanding our focus to include federal, state, and local policies. We recognize that policies aligned with our priorities are necessary to help us meet our goals. Below are seven policy priorities we have identified as central to our work. Over the next year, we will explore these priorities in more depth through position statements and working groups. We welcome your feedback and support as we finalize our priority agenda.

### Policy Priorities for a Just, Equitable, and Quality Early Childhood Education for All

- 1. Access to quality early childhood education programs for all:** To ensure justice in early childhood education, we begin with access. Every child must have access to quality early childhood programs regardless of where they live or their parent's income level. Online preschools are not a substitute for access to quality early childhood education.
- 2. Affordable quality early childhood education programs for all:** Access alone will not ensure justice. Quality early childhood education programs must be affordable for all children, including 100% subsidized for low-income, working, and middle-class families.
- 3. Child-centered, active, play-based early childhood programs for all:** Equitable early childhood education means all children receive an early education that is supported by research and child development theory, comparable to the early education provided to children from wealthy families.
- 4. Trauma-informed early childhood programs for all:** Equitable early childhood education means ensuring all programs have the resources and personnel needed to support all children.
- 5. Anti-racist early childhood programs for all:** Early childhood programs must embrace anti-racist curricula, policies, and practices to ensure equitable opportunities for all children.
- 6. Authentic assessments in all early childhood programs:** Quality early childhood education programs should only use authentic assessments to support teaching and learning. Developmentally inappropriate standards, high-stakes standardized testing, and test-based accountability do not ensure quality and do not belong in early childhood education.
- 7. Invest in early childhood teacher education:** To ensure we have quality early childhood education programs, we must invest in early childhood teachers' education, professional development, and appropriate compensation.

What other priorities would you like to see DEY address? Send your feedback to [denisha@dey.org](mailto:denisha@dey.org).