

NAEYC Interest Forums

- Asian
- At-Risk and Special Needs
 - Black Caucus
- CEASE/Violence in the Lives of Children
- Children of Incarcerated Parents (CHIPS)
- Children's Global Issues
- Community Collaboration
 - Diversity and Equity
- Early Childhood Education/Licensing Dialogue
- Ethics in Early Childhood Education
- Faculty in Associate Degree Early Childhood Preparation Programs
 - Family Child Care
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- Health and Safety in Child Care
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 - Kindergarten
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 - Men in Education Network
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 - Play, Policy, and Practice
 - Primary Grades
- Research, Practice, and Policy in Early Care and Education
 - Student
 - Technology and Young Children
 - Tribal and Indigenous
- Early Childhood Network (TIECN)
 - Worthy Wage

Student Interest Forum

facilitator William H. Strader, former department chair of early childhood education at Hesser College in New Hampshire, wrote this column. Look for the NAEYC Student Interest Forum on Facebook.

This column is available in an online archive at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

Turning College Students into Leaders in Early Childhood Education

Getting Involved outside the College Classroom

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

are very busy people. They take required general education and early childhood curriculum courses, and they complete prepracticum and field experiences in a variety of early childhood settings. There has been an increase in the number of students who work during the day and go to school in the evening, as well as those who take online courses. With such busy lives, early childhood education students might ask, "What is the Early Childhood Club? What do you do in the club? Why should I be involved?"

Throughout their college careers, students can be actively involved on campus and in the greater community surrounding the college or university setting. An early childhood club provides excellent opportunities for leadership development, building of organizational skills, collegiality, and esprit de corps. Nakiesha, a student at Hesser college, says, "I was involved with three clubs in high school and wanted to see what this college club did. I liked the idea of doing something with the college's child care center—fixing up their playground, helping to organize their Fun Winter Fair."

Students help define and live the mission of the club by designing and implementing activities on and off campus that promote the club, the early childhood education program, and the college. Early childhood college clubs have organized a range of events:

- Mitchell College's Early Childhood Education Club organized Hat and Mitten Collections for area shelters and community outreach programs in New London, Connecticut.

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- The Early Childhood Club of Hesser College supports the Family Readiness Group of the deployed New Hampshire National Guard by providing activities for children during family meetings.
- The Fitchburg State College Education Club holds bake sales to raise money for new puzzles and art supplies for the college's child development center.
- The Early Childhood Organization of Southeast Missouri State University celebrated Week of the Young Child by hosting a foot-painting booth at Messy Morning, an event filled with fun, hands-on sensory activities for children.

When the early childhood club works with and supports local young children, the college community—and the greater community—come to see the club as a positive, contributing force.

School officials and deans also take notice of early childhood education clubs on campus. To support the New Hampshire National Guard troops overseas, the Early Childhood Club of Hesser College—Manchester created a 12-foot long Memorial Day banner. It was to be signed by all early childhood education majors and the director of campus activities.

When the vice president of academic affairs and the president of the college heard about this outreach effort, the banner project expanded. Faculty, staff, and administrators from the school signed it and added personal notes. This response recognized students' good deeds and expanded on the work made possible by strong club leadership.

NAEYC advocates six core standards for early childhood professional preparation programs and the professionals who work with young children (NAEYC 2009). The sixth standard is "Becoming a Professional" (see www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/ProfPrepStandards09.pdf). Although students are still taking courses and learning, their professional experiences can begin while in school. For example, students can present at professional conferences.

The Mitchell College Early Childhood Education Club was invited to participate in and present at the Connecticut Young Educator's Society conference. The club officers presented to high school students from across the state information about the leadership, activities, and efforts of an active early childhood education club. As a result of this successful conference presentation, the president of Mitchell College invited the early



Courtesy SUNY Canton Early Childhood Student Club

childhood club's executive board to present to members of the Connecticut High School Counselor Association during a campus visit.

Conclusion

An early childhood education club offers participants several informal and professional growth opportunities. Loretta, from Fitchburg State College, discovered "a flyer on the early childhood club bulletin board about joining the club. The club was already doing a bake sale for the Books Across America Program!" When participat-

ing in these clubs, students have the chance to

- get to know other students in the early childhood education major
- find out about early education courses and professors
- help with local environmental preservation
- attend workshops on some of the curriculum courses
- run a clothing drive for an area shelter
- visit early childhood programs in the community
- take a field trip to a children's museum
- win student membership scholarships to the state AEYC and NAEYC conferences
- hear guest speakers, such as professors in early childhood education-related disciplines, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nutritionists, community members, directors of early childhood programs, principals, superintendents, and AEYC leaders.

Part 2, "Supporting the Next Generation of Early Childhood Educators: Connecting with Today's Students," will appear in the May 2011 issue of *Young Children*.

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Active Early Childhood Clubs and Organizations: A Current Sampling

The colleges and universities listed below reflect a sample of early childhood clubs and organizations across the United States.

Butler Early Childhood Professionals at Butler Community College (Wichita, KS)—On Facebook, Butler Early Childhood Professionals

Early Childhood Education Club at Mott Community College (Flint, MI)—www.mcc.edu/clubs/early_child_ed/earlychild-ed_index.shtml

Early Childhood Club at State University of New York (SUNY Canton)—www.canton.edu/student_activities/clubs/early_childhood

Teacher Education Club at The College of Davidson and Davie Counties (Lexington, NC)—www.davidsonccc.edu/studentlife/earlychildhood.htm

Student Association of Human Services and Early Childhood at Oregon State University (Corvallis)—www.hhs.oregonstate.edu/students/SAHSEC