

Written Statement
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Tonia Durden
NAEYC President-Elect Board Application

What are the characteristics of an effective leader? Is it a strategic and innovator thinker? Someone with compassion and ability to build upon the strengths and talents of others? Is an effective leader one that leans into change, adversity, optimism and the promise that the best is yet to come? I am a leader who has and is typically called to lead. I lead not by title, but through my reputation of being an enthusiastic advocate for children, families and professionals. As a mother of three brilliant young children ages two, four and six I am deeply invested in the success and advancement of early childhood education. Therefore, whether I am leading a group of educational professionals or parents within the local PTA, I use my diverse range of early childhood experiences to enhance and expand the program, initiative or organization towards meaningful and impactful outcomes.

In my 22 years in early childhood and 17 years as a NAEYC member, I have been an early childhood teacher, math instructional coach, teacher educator, researcher, Birth-5 program coordinator and Early Childhood Extension Specialist. In these roles I have had direct engagement with children, families, communities and the individuals who serve and teach young children. My career focus has been exploring ways we can be more equitable, inclusive, culturally responsive, quality centric and engaging to young children and families. I lead with excitement, boldness and a spirit of excellence. I want to be one of your leaders as the next NAEYC President Elect. Onward and Upward my NAEYC colleagues!