

Affiliate Advisory Council ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The current Affiliate Advisory Council was formed in 2016 as a result of the National Dialogue [2010 – 2016] and as part of the recommendations to revisit the affiliate structure, revise the NAEYC mission, and to increase and strengthen member voice to the NAEYC Governing board. These actions transformed the original 62-member Affiliate Council into a 16-member Affiliate Advisory Council open to any member in good-standing with proven affiliate experience and knowledge. The Council continues to be instrumental in modeling and promoting diverse leadership pathways throughout NAEYC.

The Affiliate Advisory Council is composed of diverse volunteer member leaders who devote their time and expertise to NAEYC and the Affiliate Network in support of advancing equity throughout the Association. In 2024, the Council has prioritized identifying a range of DEIBJ organizational assessment tools and implementing a series of consultations for Affiliates requesting support.

- › The Council is committed to ensuring diverse leadership pathways are accessible throughout the Association.
- › The Council leads by example through their nominations process and through their commitment to build a culture that creates a sense of belonging and respect
- › The Council engages and celebrates multiple perspectives and lived experiences which contribute to the Council's mission and purpose.

The NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council



Top Row, left to right: Brigitte Willis, Lucero Irizarry, Kelly Ramsey, Jamie Cho, Jana Boddy, Lara Kyriakou

Bottom Row, left to right: Crystal Abbe, Victoria Long-Coleman, Nancy Yee, Helene Harte, Erin Ellis, Zaina Cahill

Not pictured: Gina Forbes, Amy McGinn, Natalie Williams, Bella Frueh

Annual Report of the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council January 2024- December 2024

The NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council is pleased to provide its annual report for consideration by the NAEYC Governing Board and staff.

**The NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council utilizes DEIBJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice) throughout this report when discussing efforts related to these concepts, rather than DEIB. The Council believes that Justice is an integral component to the evolution of these initiatives, related to the mission and purpose of our work.*

Mission: The NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council acts as an advisory body to support the continuing transformation of the NAEYC Affiliate structure into a high-performing, inclusive organization.

Purpose: To advise the NAEYC Governing Board and national staff about all issues related to Affiliates and members, and to identify and develop strong, inclusive leadership.

[Link to 2023 Annual Report](#)

Affiliate Advisory Council Members: Zaina Cahill (PA - Past-Chair), Dr. Helene Harte (OH - Chair), Gina Forbes (ME - Chair-Elect), Crystal Abbe (IA), Jana Boddy (MD), Dr. Jamie Cho (WA), Erin Ellis (CO), Bella Frueh (RI), Lucero Irizarry (CA), Dr. Victoria Long-Coleman (GA), Lara Kyriakou (NY), Amy McGinn (IA), Brigitte Willis (GA), Nancy Yee (MA), Kelly Ramsey (OK - NAEYC Governing Board Vice President and Liaison).

Affiliate Advisory Council Member Terms Ended May 2024: Raquel Munarriz Diaz (FL), Rebecca Lamar (PA), Victoria Roanhorse (NM).

Council Members Unable to Complete Terms: John Cregg (NV) - term slated to end 2027, Nefertiti Hunter-Holbeck (VA) - term slated to end 2026. Jana Boddy (MD) and Bella Frueh (OH) are the alternates fulfilling their terms. Natalie Williams (FL) – term slated to end 2025. No alternate required.

NAEYC Governing Board Committee Work

The NAEYC Governing Board revised policies in April 2024, changing their committee structure. Previously, the Affiliate Advisory Council appointed Council members with the interest, available time, and willingness to contribute to serve on four specific Governing Board committees:

Nominations, Affiliate Relations, Policy and Professional Advancement, and Member Engagement. Under the revised committee structure, committee members must be NAEYC Governing Board members. Each committee may utilize advisory group(s) to support a delegated function upon approval of the Board. The committee shall define the purpose, membership and duration of such advisory groups. Kelly Ramsey, NAEYC Governing Board Vice-President and past Affiliate Advisory Council Chair is actively pursuing ways in which the Council can serve on specific committee advisory groups. Council representation this past year

included Victoria Roanhorse (Nominations), Dr. Raquel Munarriz Diaz (Affiliate Relations) Natalie Williams (Policy and Professional Advancement), and Gina Forbes (Strategy & Innovation).

The Work of the Council (Work Groups)

- Annual Conference Session- creates a presentation related to the Council's work to share in a professional development session during Annual Conference.
- Annual Report- documents the Council's work with the NAEYC Governing Board, the Affiliate Network, and NAEYC staff throughout the year.
- Mentorship/ Exit Interviews- pairs current and incoming Council members to support the onboarding process and creates and catalogs resources to support mentorship. Conducts interviews with outgoing members of the Council to elicit their perspectives of the Council's work, processes, successes, and challenges. Interview notes are used as a springboard for potential improvements in the Council's charge, goals, and culture.
- Nominations- responsible for recruiting, vetting, interviewing, and recommending a slate of candidates who align with NAEYC's vision, mission, purpose, and goals, while also upholding the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIBJ). The committee is composed of at-large Affiliate board members, past or former NAEYC Governing Board members, and current or former Council members. The committee's primary objective is to fill outgoing and open Council member positions. The slate of candidates presented by the Nomination Committee is subject to approval by the full Council.
- DEIBJ Assessment Tools- works to identify effective organizational assessment tools focused on DEIBJ. The Committee has been working to compile resources to support the DEIBJ journeys of Affiliates. A spreadsheet of resources and opportunities for engagement in the Hello community is scheduled for January 2026.
- Affiliate Consultation- The Affiliate Consultations group meets monthly. Bimonthly, our internal group of Affiliate Advisory Council members meet to plan and reflect and organize our roles and responsibilities within our shared leadership model. During alternate months, our work group meets with Affiliate leaders. Rather than Council members serving as experts, the group serves as a community of practice where shared learning happens together. Affiliate participants share what they are doing, what is working, challenges that may arise, and their goals. They share resources, experiences and upcoming events. Participants problem-solve issues and challenges related to embedding DEIBJ into the Affiliate culture including policies, practices, and programming. The sessions evolve to meet the needs of those participating and we look forward to continuing this work and inviting new participants in.

Membership Refresh Conversations with NAEYC Staff

As a follow-up to the Council's consultation in regard to changes in the organization's membership structure that they had supported in previous years, Council members engaged in conversations about NAEYC's Membership Refresh initiative throughout 2024. In each round of review for the Membership Refresh, the Council engaged with both NAEYC staff and Affiliates to provide input and perspective on the impact of this initiative on stakeholders. Additionally,

Council members participated in NAEYC surveys, seeking feedback on this plan for members. NAEYC Staff, including Mark Day and Treva Bustow, joined council meetings in February and April, and Council members joined and/or viewed leadership webinars on the topic in February, March, September, and October. Additional focus on this occurred during the Affiliate Leadership Day at the Annual Conference in Anaheim (discussed in more detail below). Through these feedback sessions, the Council offered perspectives and suggestions related to recruitment strategies, effective outreach, welcoming diverse members while retaining the organization's most loyal membership base, and more.

April Retreat

The Council convened a virtual retreat in April 2024. Past Council members joined to share about the top contributions and skills they feel they brought to the council's work and how they prioritized council responsibilities with other facets of their lives, during their tenure. Council members reflected on their own contributions, and skills, and their ability to balance their Council work with those of their everyday personal and professional lives, creating goal-oriented vision statements to integrate their own values with the strengths they bring to the Council. Finally, Mark Day and Treva Bustow met with the Council to seek feedback on member recruitment and retention (as discussed above).

DEIBJ Grant

In September Council members partnered with Affiliate Relations to review applications for DEIBJ grants awarded to Affiliates who needed funding to support internal DEIBJ work specific to policies, procedures, and decision-making. Despite the short timeline to apply, twelve Affiliates submitted proposals, and four- Wisconsin, Southwest Ohio, Colorado, and Nevada- were awarded grants, totaling \$15,000. Funds will be used to support board diversification efforts and internal audit protocols. Affiliates' commitment to DEIBJ work is evident and requires further support and resources.

2024 Council Nominations Process

2024 brought new challenges for the Nominations Committee, including a tighter timeline and an increased number of applicants to consider. Between January 8 and March 1, 2024, the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council opened its annual nominations process. In the Nomination Committee's efforts to attract the broadest pool of talent, the committee received 37 applications from 23 states, including first-time nominations from North Dakota, Mississippi, Missouri, and Utah. This represented a 118% increase from the 17 applicants in 2023.

In alignment with the Council's focus on addressing DEIBJ gaps, the committee saw an increase in male applicants, from none in 2023 to three in 2024. This growth in applications may be attributed to an inaugural "Meet & Greet" session for prospective applicants to learn more about the Council and its functions, and intentional outreach through various NAEYC networks to engage diverse audiences, including non-binary and third-gender applicants.

Following the nominations review process, ten candidates advanced to a virtual group interview, followed by individual interviews with members of the Nominations Committee and Council

leadership. As a result, the Nomination Committee recommended—and the Council approved—3 new members: John Cregg (NevAEYC), and Affiliate Council members Erin Ellis (COAEYC) and Nancy Yee (MAAEYC). In addition, the Nominations committee approved alternates, Bella Frueh (OhioAEYC), Jana Boddy (NJAEYC). Looking ahead to 2025, the committee remains committed to making the application process as inclusive and accessible as possible, including exploring alternatives to written applications and addressing other barriers that may impact candidates' consideration for Council inclusion.

Affiliate Leadership Days at PLI in June and at Annual Conference in November

In June of 2024, 34 Affiliate staff/board members attended Affiliate Leadership Day at PLI. The keynote speaker was Nora Ellertsen who facilitated an Affiliate panel discussion on fundraising. Affiliate directors from Connecticut, Ohio, Maine, and South Dakota shared the evolution of their funding and staffing, the challenges they still face, and what they wish they had known earlier in the process of funding. In November 2025, 109 Affiliate staff/board members attended Affiliate Leadership Day at Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA.

Gwen Simmons launched the expanded conversation process between NAEYC and Affiliates by engaging participants in an activity to share their hopes and potential outcomes for this next phase of dialogue. The remainder of the day included discussions about belonging with Michelle Kang and Tonia Durden, spotlights on OCAEYC and CAAEYC, and break-out sessions focused on membership refresh, public policy, NAEYC's Code of Ethics, and Travis Davis was introduced as the new Director of Affiliate Relations.



Council Session at Annual Conference

Top row, left to right: Victoria Long-Coleman, Helene Harte, Brigitte Willis, Nancy Yee, Lara Kyriakou, Lucero Irizarry

Bottom row, left to right: Crystal Abbe, Erin Ellis, Zaina Cahill

The Affiliate Advisory Council prepared and presented a session titled *Leading with Intent: Intentionally Aligning Policies and Practices with DEIBJ*. The presentation focused upon ways to assess and enhance strategies and skill sets when implementing diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice practices. Research was presented from the *Leading with Intent 2023*

report and *Awareness to Action*, a guide from Board Source, two research-based resources for nonprofit boards.

During the session, participants worked in small groups, participating in conversations facilitated by Affiliate Advisory Council members. Participants discussed ways in which DEIBJ principles can be reviewed and applied based upon their specific nonprofit/work contexts and individual community strengths and challenges. Attendees provided feedback, some saying that while the session was informative, they would also benefit from information about how the DEIBJ practices can be individualized for the Early Childhood workforce, to capture and honor the voices of early educators, coaches, and administrators based on each program's context. The Affiliate Advisory Council will consider this feedback in anticipation of a presentation for the 2025 NAEYC Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Recommendations to NAEYC Staff and Governing Board

We recognize and want to call attention to the fact that we are at a unique moment of time as an Association. A moment in time filled with tremendous opportunities for NAEYC, for Affiliates, and for members. NAEYC demonstrated an increased level of investment in Affiliates by adding a new staff position within Affiliate Relations. Affiliate leadership was deeply engaged in the Membership Refresh resulting in a new membership model and in the implementation of a Revenue Guarantee agreement that was accepted by all 50 Affiliates, and the next, deep conversation with Affiliates was launched. The Council is prepared to participate in the expanded conversation and encourage a process that honors differences, assumes positive intent, and leads with respect. We urge NAEYC Staff and the Governing Board to take advantage of this moment in time as we strive towards our shared commitment to advancing equity throughout our Association and the early childhood field.

The Council's charge is to advise NAEYC Staff and the Governing Board on all things related to Affiliates and members. This year, the Council recommends the following priorities as NAEYC engages in organizational planning to benefit NAEYC members and Affiliates, in addition to the Council.

1. In its 2023 Annual Report, the Council recommended that the Board seek grant funding to support Affiliates' efforts toward DEIBJ assessment of policies and practices. In September of this year, 12 Affiliates applied for available grant funding through Affiliate Relations, despite a tight turnaround for submission. Based on this demonstrated need, as well as the Council's Affiliate Consultation workgroup's ongoing efforts, **the Council recommends that additional funding opportunities to support DEIBJ work at the Affiliate level be sought out, provided, and prioritized.**
2. In April 2024, the Governing Board revised policies, resulting in a change to their committee structure. Under the revised committee structure, all committee members must also be NAEYC Governing Board members. Affiliate Advisory Council members are no longer eligible to serve on specific committees as they have in the past. The Council recognizes that Kelly Ramsey, NAEYC Governing Board Vice-President and

past Affiliate Advisory Council Chair, is currently pursuing ways in which the Council can actively serve on specific committee advisory groups.

With the intention of strengthening our mutual relationship, in its 2023 Annual Report, the Council requested ongoing communication with the Governing Board to help align Council work with NAEYC's Strategic Direction, and to lift the voices of NAEYC Affiliates and members. At this time, however, these requests have not been met in a formal capacity and, now that Council members no longer hold seats on Governing Board committees, the gap in communication between the Board and the Council, and the ways in which this trickles down into Affiliates and Membership, seems more prevalent.

Therefore, the Council would like to re-request the following:

- a. An initial response from NAEYC Staff and/or the Board as it relates to these, and future, recommendations**
 - b. Quarterly follow-up on progress and planning toward implementing the Council's Annual Report recommendations**
3. Affiliates operate within vastly different capacity levels relative to financial sustainability, staff size, and member outreach, among others. Greater partnership, support, and transparency between NAEYC and Affiliates would both benefit NAEYC members in more direct ways and serve to build stronger opportunities for more relational and less transactional interactions between NAEYC, Affiliates, and members. This could be seen through:
 - a. **Elevating and increasing the awareness of NAEYC resources that are currently available to Affiliates.** NAEYC Staff currently provide resources and technical assistance through Affiliate Relations, Membership and Marketing, ELP and Higher Education Accreditation, Market Solutions, and Public Policy. Recent examples include a facilitated succession planning cohort, strategic planning, governance, a grant writing series, Affiliate anniversary logos, and Week of the Young Child social media resources. We recommend enhancing these supports where most needed to support and mentor Affiliate leadership.
 - b. **NAEYC Staff and/or Governing Board attendance at Affiliate conferences and events.** We recognize that a new request for NAEYC staff participation was piloted last year with the intent to explore opportunities for all Affiliates to have access to NAEYC Staff and potentially Governing Board members. Our recommendation is focused on ensuring equitable participation, especially with consideration of smaller, or under-resourced Affiliates that may not be able to plan a year in advance.
 - c. **NAEYC Staff and/or Governing Board continued and enhanced support of supporting state-level initiatives in partnership with Affiliates** (philanthropic, public policy, and government contract activities, for example)
 - d. **NAEYC Staff and/or Governing Board supporting more varied and robust feedback loops for Affiliates and/or members that centers equitable and relational communication and consultation.** One example is the new approach to address the financial impact on Affiliate revenue in the region in

which Annual Conference takes place. NAEYC Staff worked closely with CAAEYC and OCAEYC this past November which included advance planning meetings with Affiliate leadership and coordination of conference submissions, events, and sessions. NAEYC also piloted a revenue share model that was well-received. We recognize that the expanded dialogue will provide the platform to explore new and continued efforts focused on creating similar avenues for partnership.

Appendix A - Year in Review

January- March:

In the first quarter of 2024, the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council focused on the annual nominations process, which saw a significant increase in applicants and greater diversity among candidates. Council members participated in Membership Refresh conversations with NAEYC staff, contributing to the development of inclusive recruitment strategies and effective outreach methods. Additionally, members engaged in NAEYC Governing Board committee work, provided insights on DEIBJ integration during Affiliate Consultation sessions, and laid the groundwork for upcoming initiatives aimed at strengthening the Affiliate network.

April- June:

During the second quarter, the Council held a virtual retreat in April, allowing members to reflect on their contributions, align their values with Council goals, and provide input on membership recruitment strategies. June marked the Affiliate Leadership Day at PLI, where leaders explored fundraising strategies and shared best practices for sustaining Affiliate operations. Membership Refresh discussions and Affiliate Consultation sessions continued, focusing on supporting Affiliates in embedding DEIBJ principles into their culture and programming.

July- September:

In the third quarter, the Council collaborated with Affiliate Relations to evaluate DEIBJ grant applications, awarding \$15,000 to four Affiliates for initiatives supporting board diversification and internal audits. Affiliate Consultation sessions facilitated ongoing shared learning and problem-solving, while the Council contributed to Membership Refresh efforts by offering feedback on retaining diverse and loyal members. These activities reinforced the Council's commitment to advancing equity and inclusion across the Affiliate network.

October- December:

The final quarter featured the Council's impactful contributions during the NAEYC Annual Conference in Anaheim. Highlights included the Affiliate Leadership Day and a session on Leading with Intent, which explored practical applications of DEIBJ practices for Affiliates. Membership Refresh discussions culminated with focused webinars and leadership events, while the Council finalized its Annual Report, documenting progress and priorities. Affiliate Consultation sessions remained central to fostering collaboration and continuous improvement within the Affiliate network.

Appendix B - Affiliate Connections Articles authored by Council Members
March 2024: Are You a Real Teacher? - Victoria Long-Coleman, Ph.D. (GA)

While participating in a training series facilitated by Debra Sullivan, author of *Cultivating the Genius of Black Children*, the fourth session of the series was on teacher efficiency. During the breakout room of this session, a participant commented that the information she learned about bias in the session and her influence on young minds caused her to question her skills. She taught early childhood children whose race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status was like hers. She wondered if she could effectively instruct children from “protected” categories or groups whose aspects of their lives or ancestry are inherent. This teacher reflected on whether she could prepare these children to navigate society’s potential response to them. The question she asked herself was, “am I a real teacher? [Read the full article.](#)

May 2024: Fluid Leadership - Zaina Cahill (PA)

As my time as Chair of the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council ends, I have been reflecting on the Council’s fluid work. So many facets of the Council ebb and flow like the tide- the needs of Affiliates, volunteers’ ability to balance commitment to the work with their personal and professional lives, the focus of the work, and more.

As such, the Council has cultivated an ecosystem of fluidity. When one member of the Council ebbs, others flow to meet the needs of those that we serve. When one element of the Council’s work ebbs, other Council members flow into the projects that present more pressing needs.

As I think about the impact that I was able to make in my year leading this effort, a theme of acknowledgement and support of the ever-changing energy present in all people and systems, and how this applies to Council work, has emerged to describe the mark that I hope I have made. By acknowledging the fluid nature of individuals, the Council, and the circles of influence around it, I have:

- worked to identify strategies to recenter and recommit to the work when the tide of energy ebbs
- support a system of mentorship to bolster both new and tenured members as they adjust to the ever-transforming work of this group, and
- engage in a continuous effort to “call in” Council members, along with others in their circle of impact, to both sit in the discomfort of change, as well as to take action.

Had I entered my time as Chair with a solidified plan of action, however, none of these would be true. Instead, I entered my time with ideas, of course, but also an openness to listen, observe, and collaborate to uncover and better understand the work to be done. I set a goal of fluidity; a goal of seeking out murkiness and sifting through it regularly, to support the ever-changing needs of many moving parts. I hope that my fluid leadership made an impact, as, for me, it has been transformational in my life in and beyond the Council. I am thankful for the opportunity to share leadership of this group and cannot wait to see how its work unfolds in new iterations.