

Dear NAEYC Member--

Interest Forums consistently rank as one of your favorite benefits—they provide an excellent means for networking, making lifelong connections with colleagues, and developing as professionals and leaders on shared topics of interest. Formed around interests and affinities (such as math education or the issues facing Latinx educators), Interest Forums are self-organizing groups that educate others and advocate for their perspectives within the association. Interest Forums provide vital energy to the NAEYC community, contributing content and expertise, providing top-notch sessions and events at conferences, drawing attention to topics and issues of concern, and serving as a central part of the NAEYC's ambitious membership recruitment and retention strategy. In addition, Interest Forums are essential partners and sounding boards for NAEYC's broader policy and advocacy agenda and for content development and dissemination.

Although there have always been various policies and procedures for how Interest Forums and Interest Forum facilitators function within NAEYC, we are now establishing written guidelines gathered into one place for Interest Forums and facilitators. By establishing consistent guidelines for Interest Forum activity, we seek to bring transparency and openness to the Interest Forum program. These guidelines open up participation in Interest Forums by making clear the process for founding and joining a forum, and becoming a facilitator. We invite you to explore the forums and the topics by visiting our [Communities](#) pages on NAEYC.org and then joining and participating in those that interest you ([learn how to join here](#)).

These guidelines describe both the expansive possibilities of the Interest Forums and the sometimes necessary restrictions on forum activity. Many of the responsibilities and restrictions have to do with NAEYC's nonprofit status, which requires forum members and leaders to abide by certain rules in order to preserve and protect the association's tax exempt status.

Sincerely,

Rhian Evans Allvin

CEO

Key Points of the Guidelines

- The vision is to increase access to forum activities to each and every member through the use of technology, especially Hello.
- NAEYC provides partnership and support for forums
 - Providing an online space for discussion and collaboration among forum members, in line with best practice guidelines for online communities (rolling out Summer-Fall 2019)
 - Provide a suite of technical support services for facilitators.
 - Provide support to interest forum activities at the annual meeting, including running a separate application and acceptance track for sessions presented by Interest Forums, logistical support for business meetings, and hosting a forum leader's meeting at annual
 - Posting forum information on Interest Forums' NAEYC.org web pages, as needed, throughout the year
 - Providing funds to support Interest Forum activities throughout the year.
- Interest Forums engage in a wide range of activities over the course of a year:
 - At annual conference forums present sessions, host special events and host an annual business meeting to discuss current topics of interest and conduct forum business
 - Forums also host virtual book clubs, webinar series, and contribute to NAEYC position statements and policy work, among other activities
- Interest Forums advocate for their issues within the association; when facing external audiences they exist under NAEYC's legal umbrella and so must coordinate efforts with NAEYC staff
- Forum Member Responsibilities
 - Interest Forum members share in our field's commitment to supporting equity across a variety of dimensions related to race, class, culture, gender, sex, ability, language, religion, and other identities.
 - All forum members are encouraged to post on Hello at least six times a year on topics relevant to their Interest Forum.
 - Forum members propose sessions for Annual Conference that relate to the Interest Forum's work.
 - Forum members are encouraged to apply to serve as peer reviewers for the content of NAEYC annual meetings, journals, and books to represent their interest areas and develop and share their expertise.
 - As they are able, forum members should actively engage in forum activities and grow into leadership within their forums.
 - Forum members create community within the association and should see themselves as ambassadors for the community that NAEYC membership provides to early childhood professionals.

Interest Forum Roles

Facilitators are the leaders of forums. Most forums have at least two, although groups of four to six facilitators are ideal. Facilitators advocate for their issue areas and organize the activities of the forum.

Interest Forum members are NAEYC members who have elected to join the forum. In practice, we generally refer to a forum's members as those who are active; many forums have hundreds of members who lurk, receiving messages and following social media posts but doing nothing more.

Interest Forum staff consist of those with primary responsibility for the program (at present a director and the community manager) plus other NAEYC headquarter staff as needed.

Community engagement manager is a role at NAEYC headquarters for a staff member tasked with nurturing the online community and promoting and advancing the work the Interest Forum facilitators.

To access the full guidelines, watch a webinar on interest forums and the guidelines, and give feedback, please visit:

<http://www.naeyc.org/communities/forum-guidelines-launch>