

Contributing to the Profession

Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe how the field of early childhood education has made progress achieving two of the eight criteria of professional status.
2. Identify the advocacy tools that early childhood advocates should have at their disposal.
3. Discuss opportunities that program administrators have to contribute to the field's future.

Grace's Experience

Grace had found that working with children came naturally, and she considered herself to be a gifted teacher after only a short time in the classroom. She thought she would spend her entire career working directly with children. She is now somewhat surprised how much she is enjoying the new responsibilities that come with being a program director. She is gaining confidence that she can work effectively with all families, even when faced with difficult conversations; and her skills as a supervisor, coach, and mentor are increasing as well. She is now comfortable as a leader in her own center and is considering volunteering to fill a leadership role in the local early childhood professional organization. That would give her opportunities to refine her leadership skills while contributing to the quality of care provided for children throughout her community.

Early childhood administrators are leaders. They contribute to the profession by making the public aware of the field's emerging professionalism, including its reliance on a code of ethics; engaging in informed advocacy; becoming involved in research to increase what we know about how children learn, grow, and develop; and coaching and mentoring novices, experienced practitioners, and emerging leaders.

NAEYC Administrator Competencies addressed in this chapter:

Management Knowledge and Skills

1. Personal and Professional Self-Awareness

- The ability to evaluate ethical and moral dilemmas based on a professional code of ethics

8. Leadership and Advocacy

- Knowledge of the legislative process, social issues, and public policy affecting young children and their families
- The ability to advocate on behalf of young children, their families and the profession

Early Childhood Knowledge and Skills

1. Historical and Philosophical Foundations

- Knowledge of research methodologies

10. Professionalism

- Knowledge of different professional organizations, resources, and issues impacting the welfare of early childhood practitioners
- Ability to make professional judgments based on the NAEYC "Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment"
- Ability to work as part of a professional team and supervise support staff or volunteers

PROMOTING PROFESSIONALIZATION¹

One of the most influential voices in the field of early care and education, NAEYC, has been instrumental in shaping the professionalism of the field in the mid-1980s. Her work extends to influence how early childhood educators think about their work and the contribution they make to society. These are some of the attributes that are commonly used to distinguish professionals from other workers and to determine whether an occupation is, or is moving toward becoming, a **profession**:

1. Professionals *possess specialized knowledge*. They acquire this knowledge and skill in its application by following a course of *prolonged training*.
2. Professions have rigorous *requirements for entry* into professional training, and training is delivered in *accredited* institutions.
3. Members of a profession have agreed-upon *standards of practice* that guide their efforts to meet their professional obligations.
4. A profession has a commitment to meet a *significant social need*.
5. Professionals are *altruistic* and *service oriented* rather than motivated by opportunities for personal gain. Their primary goal is to meet clients' needs.
6. Professionals provide an *indispensable service* and are recognized as the only group in society that can perform its function.
7. A profession is characterized by *autonomy*—it has control over entry into the field, oversees the quality of the services offered by its members, and regulates itself.
8. A profession has a *code of ethics* that spells out its obligations to society (Feeney, 1995; Katz, 1995; Feeney, 2012).

We will focus on two particular dimensions of professionalism in which the field has made the most progress. The first is the acquisition of *specialized knowledge* attained through *prolonged training* (number 1 in the list above), and the second is reliance on a *code of ethics* (number 8). We will also acknowledge some of the areas where progress has been slow, or where early childhood educators' approach to working with young children and their families means they will never compromise the field's traditions to satisfy all criteria that set professions apart from other occupations.

Moving Toward Professionalism: Professional Preparation and Reliance on the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

Professional Preparation: Many states' licensing regulations continue to require child care teachers, caregivers, and directors to have only a high school diploma or GED; the CDA Credential, which is generally considered to be equivalent to 9 to 12 credit hours of professional education, is the most frequently required form of specialized training that an individual needs to be qualified to become a center director (Child Care Aware® of America, 2013). Publically funded programs, however, have raised the bar for entry into the field. The Improving Head Start Act of 2007 required 50% of all center-based teachers to hold at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related

¹Versions of this discussion have been published in "The New Face of Early Childhood Education: Who Are We? Where Are We Going?" by N. K. Freeman and S. Feeney, 2006, *Young Children*, 61(5), pp. 10–16, and also in "Professionalism and Ethics in Early Care and Education," by N. K. Freeman and S. Feeney, 2009, *Continuing Issues in Early Childhood Education* (3rd ed., pp. 196–211), by S. Feeney, A. Galper, and C. Seefeldt (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

field by 2013 (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2007). States' QRIS systems and publically funded 4K programs have followed suit. Most require teachers to have specialized training to prepare them to teach young children, requiring them to hold at least a bachelor's degree or to be making progress toward attaining that degree (Barnett, Carolan, Squires, Brown, & Horowitz, 2015).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Program Accreditation Standards also, over time, raise educational requirements across the board. They stipulate that by 2020, 75% of the teachers in accredited programs must have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or a related field. NAEYC Accreditation also requires directors to hold at least a bachelor's degree and requires them to have specialized coursework in administration, leadership, management, and child development and learning, or a plan to meet these requirements within 5 years (NAEYC, 2014).

The effects of these policy changes are being felt by the entire field of early care and education, raising expectations for educational attainment in nonprofit and for-profit programs operated under a wide variety of auspices. These developments point to progress that the field has made in one criterion of professionalism: requiring early childhood practitioners to have specialized knowledge gained by following a course of prolonged training.

Reliance on the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: Reliance on a code of professional ethics is a second criterion of professionalism in which early childhood educators have made significant strides. The *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* (NAEYC, 2011a) includes statements of the profession's core values and guides practitioners in their efforts to meet their responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, and society. It articulates ideals (how we aspire to behave) and principles (standards of conduct describing what we must and must not do). A Statement of Commitment accompanies the Code. It is not a part of the Code but attests to members' resolve to abide by the Code as they work with young children and their families.

NAEYC first adopted its *Code of Ethical Conduct* in 1989 (Feeney & Kipnis, 1989), revised it in 1992, 1997, and 2005, and reaffirmed and updated it in 2011. The field has also taken steps to enhance practitioners' reliance on the Code and to make this reliance more apparent to those outside the profession.

One way that NAEYC has promoted the visibility and encouraged reliance on the Code is by making it an important criterion in NAEYC Accreditation Standards that apply both to programs serving young children and to postsecondary programs preparing teachers for every rung along the professional ladder—beginning with the CDA and extending through associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree levels (NAEYC, 2011c; NAEYC, 2012). These standards ensure that all practitioners in accredited programs are knowledgeable about the Code, and all who graduate from accredited postsecondary programs have demonstrated that they know it and know how to apply it in their work. It is noteworthy, however, that the NAEYC Code is not enforced. That is because NAEYC is a membership organization and is open to all, regardless of their professional preparation or the role they play in the field.

Two Supplements extend the reach of the Code beyond those working directly with young children and their families. The first Supplement addresses program administrators (NAEYC, 2011b). It provides guidance as you face situations with ethical dimensions unique to the director's roles and responsibilities, such as how to prioritize applicants when filling a much-sought-after opening in the infant room, how to proceed when you must terminate a teacher because decreased enrollment is forcing you to downsize, and how to manage relationships with families in a way that lets you keep the needs of children paramount in your decision making. This Supplement is found as Appendix 3 in this text.

The second Supplement guides adult educators (NAEYC, 2004a). It extends the original Code to meet the needs of those providing training and education, whether in credit-granting institutions such as colleges or universities or in informal professional development activities. As a program director, you are likely to provide professional development designed to meet the particular needs of your staff. This Supplement reminds you, for example, to remain true to the approved training plan and helps you have the courage to deny credit to the caregiver who slept through the training activity instead of participating and learning from it.

Several efforts have helped to make the Code widely accessible. The original Code is now reprinted in many textbooks; the Code and both Supplements are posted on the NAEYC website, the original Code in both English and Spanish; and the Code is available from NAEYC in both English and Spanish as inexpensive brochures. NAEYC also offers an attractive laminated poster of the *Statement of Commitment*. Programs that display this poster attest to their pledge to abide by the field's ethical standards.

In addition to making the Code widely available, NAEYC has made efforts to support practitioners' efforts to apply the Code to their work. NAEYC has published two books focusing on professional ethics: The first book, *Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator* (Feeney, Freeman, & Pizzolongo, 2012), provides a comprehensive introduction to the Code. It includes discussions of the role of morality and ethics in early childhood education, makes a distinction between early childhood educators' responsibilities and the dilemmas they are likely to face, and offers guidance in addressing ethical situations involving early childhood educators' responsibilities to young children, families, colleagues, and the community. This book is often a required text in 2-year and 4-year institutions' early childhood programs. The second book, *Teaching the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: A Resource Guide* (Feeney, Freeman, & Moravcik, 2016), includes advice for instructors planning to teach about the Code and its application and describes many activities for teaching the Code, including reproducible masters that can help you prepare for effective trainings.

NAEYC's journal, *Young Children*, includes a regular column that might help you include discussions of ethics in your regular staff meetings. "Focus on Ethics" alternates descriptions of commonly occurring dilemmas with an analysis and resolution of a previously published dilemma. All past columns are posted on the NAEYC website and can be used as the basis for staff development on professional ethics. This column is based on NAEYC members' submissions. You might decide to submit a dilemma that your center has been grappling with to be considered for publication and analysis. Specifics about how to become involved are included with each article.

You can help make the families you serve and others outside the profession aware of the field's reliance on the *Code of Ethical Conduct*. Ways to accomplish this goal are to include the Code (or a link to its location on the NAEYC website) in your program's family handbook and to put families on notice that they can expect your behavior, and that of all members of your staff, to reflect the program's commitment to these ethical principles. You can also prominently display the *Statement of Commitment* poster attesting to your program's reliance on the Code. You are likely to think of other ways to make the Code more visible in your particular setting.

Other Criteria of Professionalism: Early childhood education's rich and unique history illustrates why it is appropriate for early childhood education to satisfy some criteria of professionalism but not others. For example, the field would not want to abandon its commitment to its career ladder, which welcomes employees who work with young children while they pursue their associate degree, often with the support of the popular T.E.A.C.H.[®] scholarships.

 The NAEYC has posted several video clips of Stephanie Feeney, one of the Code's original authors and a leader in the field's work on professional ethics. Watch this video to see her provide an overview of the Code in this discussion with Peter Pizzolongo, a member of NAEYC's staff.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=28&v=-R-gh3Z9BPY>

Application Activity

Rely on the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* (Appendix 2) and the *Supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators* (Appendix 3) to resolve one of the following dilemmas. Analyze each dilemma by identifying to whom you have responsibilities. Find guidance in the *NAEYC Code and Supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators* (note item number[s]), brainstorm possible resolutions, then decide what the “good director” should do in each of these situations.

An enrollment issue: The mother of the next child on your list for admission has told you that she has had her child in 5 different

preschools in the past 6 months. She tells you very emotional stories about what she found wrong with each of them.

A personnel issue: Your enrollment is down. You must close a classroom and let a teacher go. Do you choose to terminate the last person hired, who is an excellent teacher, or the long-time employee, who has never done a very good job?

A family issue: A parent who has been rude and abusive to staff withdraws her child but then wants to come back to the center.

Other criteria of professionalism remain beyond our reach. For example, we would like to achieve greater professional autonomy, but the fact remains that regulations and standards that determine who is eligible and qualified to teach and care for young children are not likely to have been developed by early childhood educators. Efforts to include experts in early childhood education in the groups that create these regulations are the focus of advocacy efforts in some states.

For these reasons, it is now generally agreed that early childhood education is an “emerging” profession (Feeney, 2012). It is neither like the “paradigm professions” of law and medicine, nor are early childhood educators unskilled workers, such as day laborers or short-order cooks, who enter the workplace with little prior training or specialized knowledge, and whose employers are likely to consider them to be interchangeable. Consider where early childhood education falls on the professional continuum illustrated in Figure 13.1.

As the field moves toward increased professionalism, it is important that program administrators, as leaders in the field, are active in organizations that support their efforts to remain informed and engaged professionals. Review the list of professional organizations found in Appendix 4. We recommend that you join one or more that you find to be of particular interest and that you select one to become active in at the local, state, or national level. Doing so can enhance your knowledge and expertise and connect you with the larger community of early childhood professionals.



13.1

Check Your Understanding

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

Where does early care and education lie on the professionalism continuum?

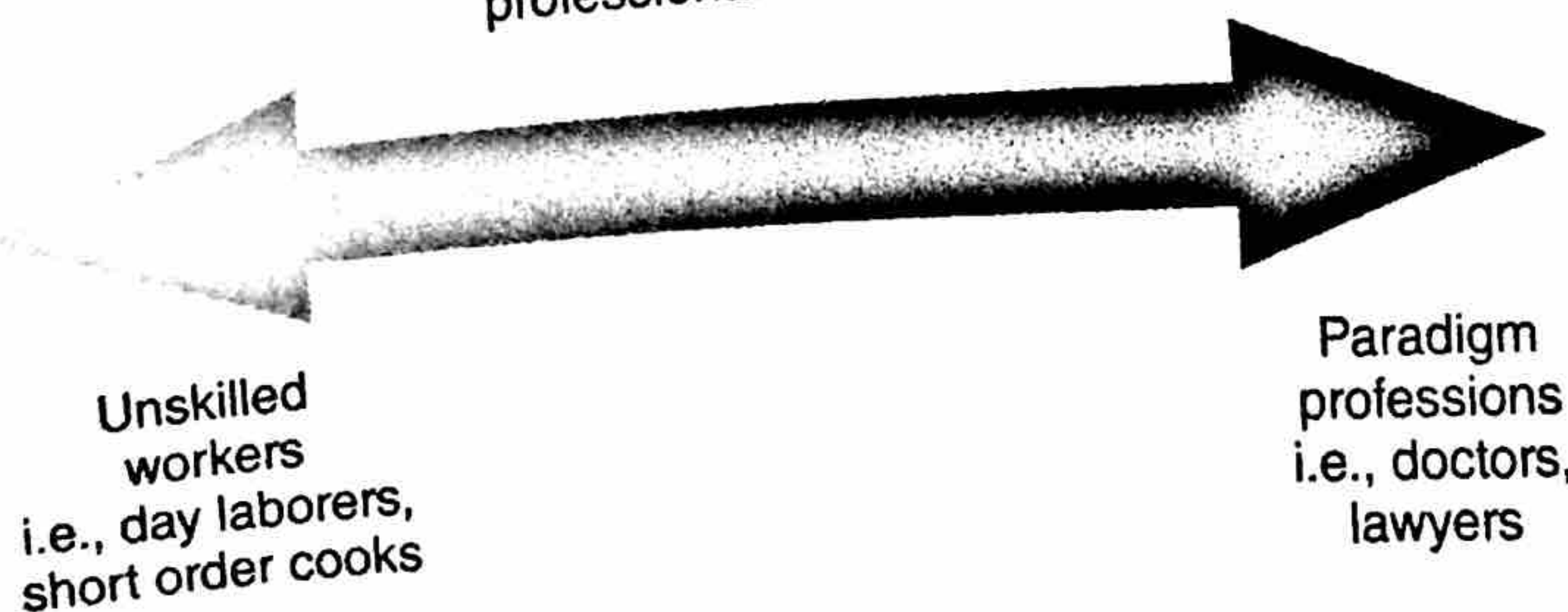


Figure 13.1
A Professional Continuum

Application Activity

Our discussion focuses on efforts to increase the professionalism of the field by setting higher expectations for professional preparation and by making our reliance on our *Code of Ethical Conduct* explicit, and we discuss the issues created by the field's lack of autonomy. Select one of the

other five criteria of professionalism. Decide where the field of early care and education falls on the professionalism continuum that puts doctors and lawyers at one end and unskilled workers at the other. Provide a rationale for your conclusion.

ENGAGING IN INFORMED ADVOCACY

Advocacy is speaking out for and taking action in support of causes that protect and support vulnerable populations. Early childhood educators have a long history of advocacy on behalf of young children, their families, and the field of early care and education (Feeney, 2012). Our commitment to advocacy is established by the *Statement of Commitment* that accompanies the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* and is reiterated in several of the Code's Ideals, including those that urge early childhood educators to advocate for children who have special needs and to promote environments that are physically and emotionally healthy and support young children's learning, growth, and development (NAEYC, 2011a).

Advocacy can involve everything from working on behalf of a particular child or family to speaking out at the national level. Your personality, your passion, your available time and energy, and your stage of professional development are all likely to influence the kinds of advocacy that are right for you. When you are a novice in the field, advocacy on behalf of a particular child or family will probably be the best fit for your interests and abilities. As you become more experienced, and particularly when you move into an administrative role, it will be time to reevaluate your strengths and interests in light of the responsibilities you have accepted by becoming a leader in the field. It may be time for you to assume a leadership role in your local community, and perhaps on an even larger stage. Consider the following list to identify the kinds of advocacy activities that are right for you:

- **Individual advocacy** involves professionals in working on behalf of children or families. You engage in this form of advocacy when you help a particular child or family gain access to needed services. An example of this kind of personal advocacy is pursuing speech therapy for the child whose poor articulation is making it difficult for him to have positive interactions with his peers. Your individual advocacy efforts may also involve sharing your views with individuals or groups to raise their awareness about an issue. This kind of advocacy can be either spontaneous or planned (Robinson & Stark, 2002). Distributing information about the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood to the families of the children in your program and encouraging them to limit the number of commercial messages to which their children are exposed are examples of individual advocacy. You are also engaged in individual advocacy when you write a letter to the editor or submit a guest editorial to your local paper.
- **Collective advocacy** involves professionals working together on behalf of a group of people, for example, young children, families who need child care, or caregivers who are not earning a working wage or receiving appropriate benefits.

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As an early childhood advocate, you are probably focused on securing a “greater societal commitment to improving programs for young children and more support for early childhood educators” (Jacobson & Simpson, 2007, p. 92) and in speaking up “because all is not right for children in our country and the world” (Feeney, 2012, p. 71). Two kinds of collective advocacy target decision makers far removed from the daily lives of young children and their families:

- **Public policy advocacy** may involve you in efforts to influence public policies and practices to make them more responsive to the needs of children and families. Public policy advocates challenge those who develop laws, regulations, and policies to support young children, their families, and the caregivers with whom they spend their days (Robinson & Stark, 2002). When a professional organization such as your state NAEYC affiliate communicates its position on an issue related to children and families to the state legislature, the organization’s spokespersons are engaged in collective public policy advocacy.
- **Private-sector advocacy** is designed to influence business leaders’ practices and policies. Some private-sector advocates work to make the workplace more family friendly, while others focus on eliminating violence in toys and children’s media, or work to ensure that toys are made from safe, nontoxic materials. Successful private-sector advocacy efforts have increased the number of corporations that offer employees flexible schedules, job sharing, telecommuting, and part-time employment. They also have increased the number of corporations that offer on-site employer-supported child care and have led to the removal of unsafe toys from store shelves.

We hope that you will continue the field’s tradition of advocacy by seizing opportunities to speak out for those who are most vulnerable and unable to speak out for themselves.

Application Activity

Identify an issue facing your center, your community, or your state. Identify who might help you resolve this issue. Should the target of your advocacy be local policy makers, state-level legislators,

or corporate leaders? Identify strategies likely to be most effective to bring attention and eventually action to remedy the problem or resolve the issue.

Becoming an Effective Advocate

Becoming an effective advocate is an important part of becoming a mature professional. However, many early childhood educators who enjoy their work with children find it difficult to speak with authority to adults, particularly to public-sector or business policy makers. That may be because working directly with children requires a different skill set than speaking out in a public arena. Nevertheless, we know that if we are to attract the public support needed to create a robust, high-quality, and sustainable system of early care and education, we must be effective advocates.

One strategy that helps ensure success is to create coalitions of support and to network with other individuals or groups who share your cause (Ellison & Barbour, 1992; Levine, 1992). That may mean linking with providers of special services such as speech

Effective Advocates Are:

- **Goal oriented:** They know what they want to accomplish and identify the strategies they will use to accomplish their goals.
- **Informed:** They identify the decision makers and know the legislative or decision-making timeline so that they contact the right individuals and make good use of their time.
- **Organized:** They present compelling facts and figures accurately and concisely, keeping their audience in mind.
- **Solution oriented:** They help their audience understand the problems and challenges facing children and families and, importantly, provide realistic solutions.
- **Strategic:** They take into account the current political and business climates and are realistic about budgeting constraints. They reach beyond the early childhood care and education community to create coalitions from many stakeholder groups, including the family members of the children they serve who are in influential positions.
- **Flexible:** They are poised to move their issue forward when opportunities present themselves, know how to wait for that strategic moment, and use a variety of advocacy approaches to appeal to multiple audiences when the time is right.

Figure 13.2

Characteristics of Effective Advocates

Sources: Based on Blank, 1997; Robinson & Stark, 2002; Teles & Schmitt, 2011.

or occupational therapists, or working with support groups for mothers such as *Mom's Rising*, a grassroots effort designed to support family-friendly policies and practices. Review Figure 13.2, **Characteristics of Effective Advocates**. It may inspire you to take action about an issue related to children, families, and child care personnel.

An Advocate's Toolbox

Effective advocates are good communicators. They know what they want to achieve. They express the facts clearly, directly, and accurately, and are explicit about their goals (Jacobson & Simpson, 2007). Advocates sometimes need to be ready to act on short notice, such as when the legislature is preparing to vote on an issue affecting children and families. In other instances, advocates have time to set goals for what they want to accomplish in the future and can build coalitions around specific issues. In these instances, when time is not of the essence, they may become involved with political action campaigns and can take their time to identify candidates receptive to helping advance issues in support of children and families.

Effective advocates have many tools at their disposal. Every advocacy effort must be tailored to meet a particular audience's need for information about the problem you have identified and the role they could play to help you reach the solution you propose. Consider how each of these advocacy tools might contribute to the success of your own efforts to advocate on behalf of children, families, and those who care for them.

Position statements are expressions of professional organizations' official stance on issues related to their mission. NAEYC, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA), and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) have developed position statements addressing controversial or critical issues related to early childhood education practice, policy, and professional development. Sometimes two or more professional organizations develop position statements together. For example, *Early Childhood Mathematics: Promoting Good Beginnings* (NAEYC and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2010) is a joint position statement of NAEYC and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). In other instances, allied organizations embrace each other's position statements, as SECA did when they endorsed the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*.

Position statements include extensive reviews of the literature and are a valuable foundation upon which to base your advocacy efforts. They can be extremely helpful as you prepare to testify on behalf of legislation or to meet with policy makers in other settings, but are not usually appropriate to share with legislators or other decision makers because they are too in-depth and detailed for their purposes.

White papers are reports developed by organizations to describe a problem and propose a solution. These advocacy documents often include many facts and figures that can be used to support the solution you propose.

A **briefing paper or issue brief** typically describes one problem, describes the policy you propose, and gives an example of how the policy you propose is working in another locale. Legislators are particularly interested in policies in neighboring states, so provide close-to-home examples whenever possible (Robinson & Stark, 2002).

Talking points are short and to the point. They include "sound bites" telling why you support or oppose a particular policy or decision" (Robinson & Stark, 2002, p. 82). Advocates find talking points very useful then they meet with policy makers or talk to the media.

Key facts handouts are an advocacy tool intended for the public, policy makers, and the media. They are short (one- or two-page) to-the-point summaries of the basic facts surrounding your issue and clearly state the steps that you recommend policy makers take based on these facts. Any statistics you reference must be accurate and up to date (Robinson & Stark, 2002). See Figure 13.3 for an example of a **Key Facts Handout** that advocates for changes to South Carolina's child care regulations.

3 to 4 years	Up to 9:1/18	12:1/Not regulated	11:1/22	15:1/25	15:1/30	14:1/14
4 to 5 years	Up to 10:1/20	17:1/Not regulated	15:1/30	20:1/25	18:1/36	16:1/20
5 to 6 years	Up to 10:1/20	20:1/Not regulated	18:1/36	25:1/25	20:1/40	20:1/20

*In some cases, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends lower ratios and group sizes.

Figure 13.3
Key Facts Handout (Continued)

This Key Facts Handout briefly highlights research that supports low ratios and class size, provides information about neighboring states' child care regulations, and makes specific recommendations for South Carolina policy makers to consider.

Concrete examples are compelling and often effective ways to demonstrate the importance of the policy or initiative you are recommending. If you are advocating for quality programs for 4-year-olds, for example, you will want to give policy makers a glimpse into a classroom with many authentic hands-on experiences, and you will need to identify what children learn when they build with blocks or dress up in the dramatic play center. You can do this by inviting policy makers to your center or by taking the center to them with photos, short videos, and real-life success stories (Jacobson & Simpson, 2007). Or your advocacy efforts might focus on efforts to make quality care more accessible and affordable. In that case, you could give policy makers the opportunity to hear from a family struggling to gain access to quality care for their young children.

Action alerts mobilize advocates to take immediate action. They are typically emailed to supporters and urge them to contact their legislators immediately to ask them to support children and families when they cast their votes on specific legislation. You can expect action alerts to include the phone numbers and email addresses of targeted legislators and specific facts advocates can use in their message (Robinson & Stark, 2002).

 Watch this video to hear a father describe the challenges his military family, who was new to the community, faced when trying to find quality child care for their young child.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRbfZr6Ty1k>



Watch this Week of the Young Child video to see how one state effectively highlighted the benefits of quality early childhood programming. Videos like these can be emailed to policy makers or used by television stations as public service announcements.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNy0nYtrtvU>



Watch this video to see how one community has engaged its local TV station in their efforts to share information about the Week of the Young Child and the contributions of quality early childhood programming.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2ECFiAsqKc>

for programs focused on children's issue, but the competition for these monies is intense. We recommend that you rely on advocacy materials created by national organizations that support your own local- or state-level advocacy efforts, whether you are concerned with expanding infant/toddler or 4K programs, or increasing services to young children with special needs and their families. Some organizations active in leading advocacy efforts are listed at the end of this chapter. You may know of other advocacy groups that address issues faced in your own community.

NAEYC sponsors an annual Week of the Young Child in mid-April. This might be an ideal advocacy opportunity when used as a platform for informing the public and elected officials about issues related to young children and their families; to spotlight a local champion for children; or to grow grassroots advocacy efforts by involving students, programs, and providers in high-profile activities (Advocates in Action, 2009). By coordinating advocacy efforts in your community, city, or state, you can increase the chances for presenting a unified message that is likely to have a greater impact than would be a single, isolated effort. The NAEYC website has many suggestions for how you might take Week of the Young Child activities out into your community.

Important Reminders!

We hope we have inspired you to become an effective advocate for young children and families on the local, state, or national level. It is important to remember, however, that some agencies or organizations prohibit their employees from taking a public stand on controversial issues. Before you or members of your staff speak out publically, you need to be certain that you are following your employer's policies related to advocacy activities. You may not be permitted to participate in rallies or other demonstrations during work hours, and may be prohibited from identifying yourself as a public employee in a letter to the editor or a guest editorial in your local paper. It is best to find out about any restrictions that might limit how you can speak out before your community is engaged in heated public debate. That way, you can be assured that center personnel will appreciate that the limits you set are not intended to silence their weighing in on a particular issue but are, instead, designed to adhere to the agency's established policies.

You also need to be aware of limitations that apply to 501(c)(3) affiliates of NAEYC and other nonprofit organizations, and to your program if it has this nonprofit designation. It is not permissible, for example, for nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations to recognize elected officials who are candidates for reelection with an award during an election year. That means that it would not be possible for your local NAEYC affiliate to honor your local state senator as a *Champion for Children* after she has announced her candidacy for reelection (NAEYC, 2004b).

If the kinds of advocacy efforts described earlier are not permitted by your employer, we encourage you to share information with your friends and family. Maybe you will inspire them to advocate on behalf of children and families.

A Better Way

Grace has become comfortable as a supervisor, mentor, and coach to the teachers in her center, and she is beginning to see herself as a leader in the local early childhood community. She was not willing, however, to talk to the newspaper reporter who recently asked her to comment on proposed changes to the state's child care regulations. She does not consider herself an expert on that issue and did not want to make a misstatement she would later regret.

After studying the guidelines describing tools of effective advocates, Grace decided that she needed to become better informed about how the proposed reduction in child-staff ratios for licensed centers could improve child outcomes. She attended

public hearings on the issue and networked with the directors of other high-quality programs in her community. After checking with her board of directors to be certain public advocacy would not violate any established policies, she studied relevant position statements and prepared a key facts handout to summarize the points she wanted to make. She called back the reporter and agreed to be interviewed on the topic. She knew she had done the right thing when the parents of the children in her program thanked her for speaking out publicly on behalf of quality.

13.2

Check Your Understanding
Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

INVESTING IN THE PROFESSION'S FUTURE

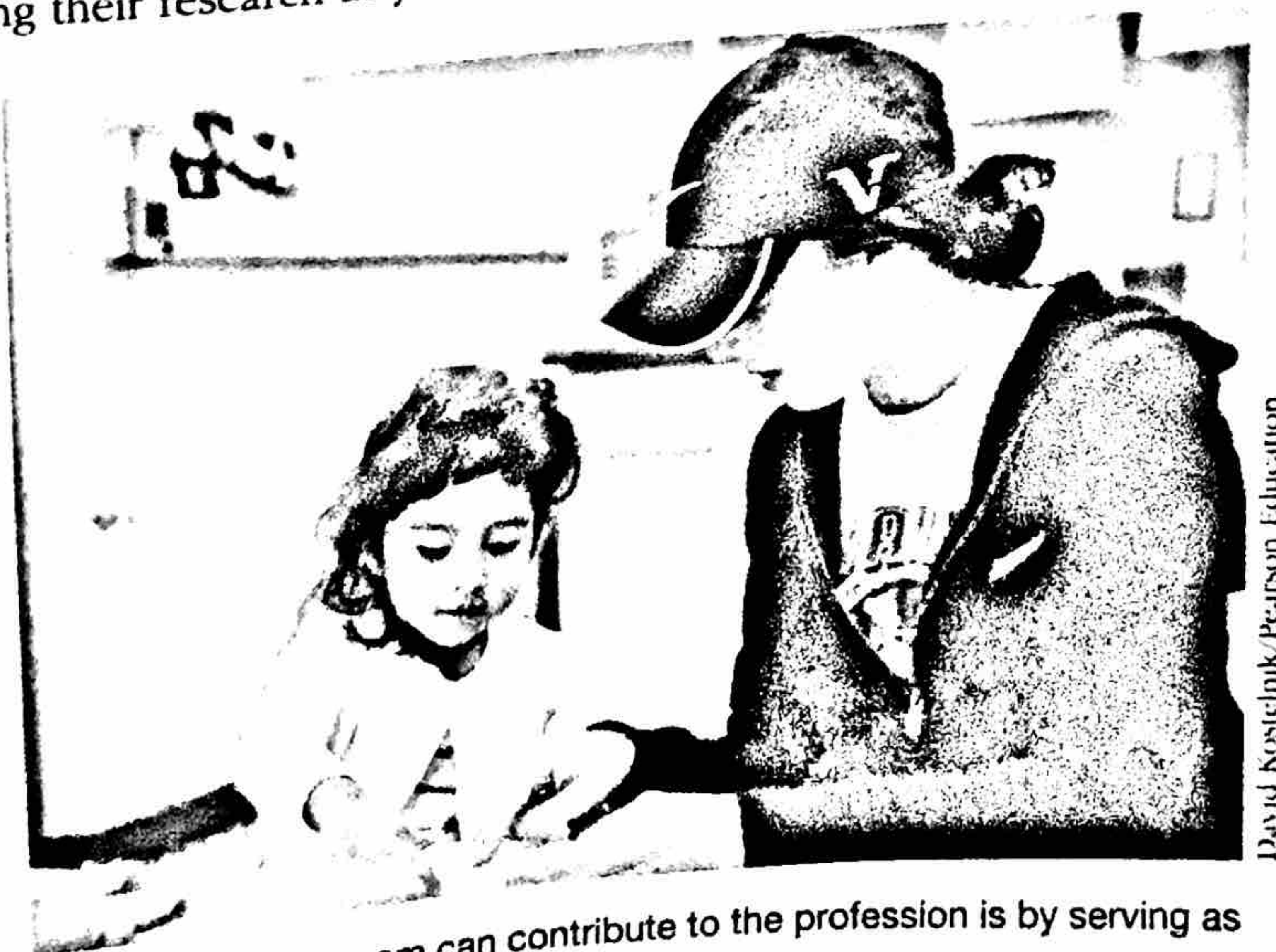
Supporting Developing Professionals

When you help others find their place in the profession of early care and education, you are engaging in a particular form of leadership. Some of the ways program administrators can help others find their place in the profession are by:

- being a resource for those who want to know more about career options for those who specialize in early childhood education.
- welcoming students enrolled in internships or other courses that require them to observe or interact with young children or families.
- mentoring and coaching novices to enhance their skills and knowledge of young children and early childhood education.
- encouraging emerging leaders to enhance their professional knowledge by enrolling in postsecondary degree programs; pursuing advanced professional development opportunities; and participating in professional organizations, including attending and presenting at local, regional, and national conferences.

Supporting Research

Another way you can contribute to the future of the field is by inviting researchers with projects investigating topics related to children, families, teaching, or learning to consider conducting their research at your center. You will first want to be certain any research



David Kostelnik/Pearson Education

One way your program can contribute to the profession is by serving as a practicum site for beginning students.

involving the children or teachers at your center is in compliance with NAEYC's *Code of Ethical Conduct*. That means no research that could jeopardize children's well-being would be permitted; and that potential participants in the study, both teachers and children's families, are informed in advance and have the opportunity, but are not required, to participate.

Then you will want to ask researchers if their project has been approved by the appropriate institutional review board (IRB). This review requires researchers to have a plan to gain participants' consent and to have procedures in place to protect the privacy of participating children and adults. Once you are convinced those requirements have been met, we advise you, whenever possible, to grant research requests and invite researchers involved in expanding the field's knowledge base into your program.

Teachers as Researchers

It is important to appreciate that research can be conducted not only by scholars such as university-based researchers, but also by teachers in their own classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Teachers involved in this kind of **action research** (which is sometimes called *teacher research*) explore practical questions within their own world of work "to better understand teaching and learning and to improve practice in specific and concrete ways" (Stremmel, 2007, p. 4). Teacher research supports reflective teaching, and has the potential to become an everyday event that informs practice (Paley, 1981; Murphy, Bryant, & Ingram, 2014).

When teachers become researchers in their own classrooms they move away from the view that they transmit knowledge to children and toward the view that they construct knowledge and understandings with the children they teach (Moran, 2007; Murphy, Bryant, & Ingram, 2014). Action research can also take teachers to the cutting edge of best practices and can give them opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, university researchers, and preservice teacher preparation programs (Charlesworth & DeBoer, 2000; Cooney, Buchanan, & Parkinson, 2001; Moran, 2007).

Program administrators who are committed to action research often support their teachers' inquiry by making it part of the program's culture. They can help to build beginners' confidence by giving novices opportunities to conduct research projects with a mentor or a partner. When two or more teachers work together, they bring broader perspectives to their inquiry, and the analysis of their findings may be more insightful (Dietze et al., 2014). Directors can also encourage teachers to create study groups where they work together to "intentionally and systematically research and answer their own questions" (Murphy, Bryant, & Ingram, 2014, p. 29). When teachers embark on teacher research, directors often find that it has become a very powerful and effective form of professional development that makes room for in-depth, intellectual conversations during which teachers ask and answer their own questions (Murphy, Bryant, & Ingram, 2014, p. 29).



13.3

Check Your Understanding

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

SUMMARY

When you become a program administrator, you are taking the first step toward becoming a leader in the field. You will have increased opportunities to contribute to efforts to enhance the quality of programming for young children. We hope you are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities to come.

- *Describe how the field of early childhood education has made progress achieving two of the eight criteria of professional status.*

Professionals possess *specialized knowledge*, have *rigorous requirements for entry*, and have *agreed-upon standards of practice*. Practitioners *meet a significant societal need*, are *altruistic and service oriented*, *provide an indispensable service*, and are *recognized as the only group in society that can perform its function*. Professions have *autonomy* and have a *code of ethics* that spells out its obligations to society. The field clearly meets the code of ethics criterion. NAEYC's *Code of Ethical Conduct* was first adopted in 1989 and has been revised regularly since that time. And publically funded programs have, in recent years, raised the bar for entry into the field. As a result, more are coming into early childhood education with specialized training that prepares them to teach young children.

- *Identify the advocacy tools that early childhood advocates should have at their disposal.* Early childhood educators engage in both individual and collective forms of advocacy, which may address either those who shape public policy or decision makers in the private sector. They rely on position statements and white papers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues, issue briefs, talking points, key fact handouts, and concrete examples to take their message to their audience; and action alerts to mobilize fellow advocates to take action.
- *Discuss opportunities program administrators have to contribute to the field's future.* Program administrators have opportunities to develop future leaders by being a resource to those considering a career in early childhood, by welcoming students into their centers to complete assignments, by mentoring and coaching novices, and by encouraging emerging leaders to enhance their knowledge and skills. They can also make their program available to qualified researchers and support their teachers' implementation of action research to promote reflective practice and to inform their teaching.

Chapter Quiz 13

Now that you have studied the material in this chapter, see how well you understand it by taking this Chapter Quiz.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Websites for Professional Ethics Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

- Follow the Position Statement link to the *Code of Ethical Conduct* and its Supplements:
 - NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct* (2011)
 - *El Código de Conducta Ética y Declaración de Compromiso* (2011)
 - *Supplement for Adult Educators* (2004)
 - *Supplement for Program Administrators* (2011)

Websites for Advocacy Resources

Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood

This nonprofit is dedicated to... families' and caregiv-

Moms Rising

This grassroots advocacy organization strives to raise the public's awareness and build support for issues related to children and families. Its goal is to build more family-friendly communities.

NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit

This comprehensive resource addresses many facets of effective advocacy. It includes helpful information about the legislative process and effective strategies for creating relationships with legislators.

ZERO TO THREE

The mission of this nonprofit organization is to promote the health and development of infants and toddlers through training of professionals, policy makers, and families.

Parts of Teacher Research