



NH CHILD

New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District

Towards Equity and Justice:
Reimagining a Strong, Holistic, and Integrated
Early Care and Education System in 2020





The Time is Now

Our children, particularly from marginalized communities, can no longer wait while our early care and education systems buckle under the pressures of low funding, limited access and lack of affordability for families. The time is now to reimagine a just and equitable comprehensive early care and education system with integrated fiscal and policy priorities among the city, state, and federal resources. For far too long, early childhood systems have been underfunded and fragmented, resulting in gross inequity and disparities in outcomes. Low teacher wages, uneven accessibility and affordability, and unrealistic expectations for quality given funding levels, all contribute to an unjust and inequitable system. **The additional stresses of COVID-19 have illuminated the fissures and acted as a catalyst for a system explosion.** Based on national estimates, **we know that too many programs in our city, already on tight budgets, may not reopen without additional investment in workforce, facilities and materials.** The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) surveyed providers from March 12–16, 2020. More than 6,000 providers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia (33% center-based child care and 53% family child care) responded to the survey. Only 11% of programs are confident they could survive closure of an indeterminate length without support. The Center on American Progress (CAP) estimates that Connecticut could lose almost 48% of early care and education programs (over 46,000) without a significant investment. Prior to the pandemic, Connecticut did not have enough childcare for every family who needed care. After the pandemic, CAP estimates that this care gap will almost double. Yet, returning to a pre-COVID-19 system means to return to an unhealthy system that was not working for families, providers, or our community.

New Haven Children’s Ideal Learning District (NH ChILD) believes that the time is now to meet the needs of the city’s young children and their families. Our families need and deserve an equitable and inclusive early care and education system that supports all young children, birth to age 8 in the city of New Haven. Both COVID-19 and the current amplification of the 400 year old epidemic of racism have exposed our country’s structural inequities that lead to disparate outcomes for children, their families, and our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated America’s history of systemic racism. New Haven’s Black and Brown communities have been disproportionately exposed to the virus, often while working jobs considered essential yet undercompensated. Across our city, Black and Brown families experienced the most devastating impact of COVID-19 with disproportionate levels of illness, death, and unemployment. In the midst of the health crisis, recent examples of unchecked police brutality resulting in the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have exposed our country’s deepest and most

persistent historic wound. In a ground swell of anger and frustration, our city, like our country, is rallying and protesting in a call for racial, social, and economic justice. The time is now to carve out a broad path towards equity and justice that centers systemic and structural change, including reimagining an early care and education system that offers high-quality experiences and supports to all young children, birth to age 8 in the city of New Haven.

Immediate COVID-19 Needs

1. Shared services to ensure universal access:
 - b. To ensure clean supplies
 - i. Provide washing machines and dishwashers where appropriate to approximately 40 early care and education centers and 66 family childcare homes.
 - ii. Provide disinfecting services and supplies
 - c. To end food insecurity: food services program
 - d. To purchase PPE in bulk and distribute to programs
2. Given the need for reduced group sizes, there should be funding to support reduced class sizes of 14, and, post COVID-19, to ensure that programs are funded at rates of quality. Pay programs for quality at the classroom and programs level rather than per child.
3. Given the differential racial impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and the racialized experiences of our families and providers:
 - a. Support the trauma/mental health needs of children and families due to COVID-19 pandemic as well as racial violence
 - b. Provide state-funded anti-bias and anti-racist training for all early educators and administrators
4. Protection of essential child care workers through careful public health policy and adequate PPE and cleaning equipment as child care reopens

What is the NH ChILD Approach?

NH ChILD works to build on the strength of the existing early childhood community in New Haven — including dedicated leadership from the New Haven Early Childhood Council, the City of New Haven, and New Haven Public Schools — to ensure that all children have the opportunity to access nurturing, high-quality early experiences. It is a comprehensive approach towards equity and justice in New Haven’s early care and education. It builds upon proven instructional practices and beliefs shared across the national and local early care and childhood community. NH ChILD incorporates the principles of Ideal Learning, as defined by the Trust for Learning’s Ideal Learning Roundtable¹, as the foundational approach to quality. Beginning at birth, Ideal Learning puts the child at the center of the design and supports children in all aspects of their development, deepening and accelerating academic learning through direct experiences with their community. It also transforms home and day care settings and classrooms into exciting places where children learn by exploring the wonder of the world around them.

The vision and mission of NH ChILD aligns with our early childhood community partners: to reimagine the system in New Haven so that every young child in the city has affordable access to high-quality early care and education. Grounded in approaches that lead to equity, NH ChILD believes that early care and education systems require two pathways: Access and Quality. Our approach hinges on adequate funding and advocacy that dismantles systems that predictably restrict access for marginalized communities. Our new system must reflect the value and importance of all young children and the (mostly) women who care for them.



¹ The Trust for Learning convenes and supports the Ideal Learning Roundtable (ILR) as part of its mission to expand ideal learning approaches to serve all children. At the time, the ILR consisted of the following approaches: Reggio Emilio, Friends Center for Children, Bank Street College of Education, and Montessori.

Action

A just, equitable, and reliable high-quality early care and education system helps to support children, families, and communities by combating child and family poverty, stimulating the economy, promoting women's equality, and reducing the racial opportunity gap. NH ChILD works to ensure that all of New Haven's 15,000 children from birth to age 8 have the opportunity to access nurturing, high-quality early experiences.

We commit to making sure that high-quality early care and education in New Haven is:

- Available
- Affordable for every family
- Easy to locate and enroll
- Meets the needs of families
- Staffed with educators who represent the communities that they serve and are highly qualified

NH ChILD's plans are ambitious. We understand that early care and education systems are complex yet we know that the needs are urgent. Our children can no longer wait. The time for justice is now.

A photograph of two young children walking away from the camera in a field of tall, yellow-green grass. The child on the left is wearing a blue denim jacket, blue jeans, and a brown hat. The child on the right is wearing a dark jacket with white polka dots, light-colored pants, and colorful boots. They are holding hands.

We need action at the municipal, state, and federal levels to fund an equitable early childhood system fully that serves every child — every child will get what they need to thrive.

We believe that full implementation will require collaboration among government, philanthropy, and community. Ask yourself: given your role, responsibility, and networks of influence, what you can contribute to our work? **If you would like to be involved, please reach out to Dr. Wendy Simmons, Executive Director at wsimmons@nhchild.org.**

Access

Infrastructure

Before COVID-19, New Haven required approximately 2,000 infant/toddler slots and 500 preschool slots. New Haven needs to address the inequities embedded in current service delivery models. To do this we must:

- Make early care and education a priority for our City, particularly within the City's Office of Economic and Community Development.
- Ensure that there is an adequate supply of early care and education in every neighborhood such that every family who needs care can find it close to home. Develop more early care and education programs in low opportunity neighborhoods.

Funding Models

Early care and education requires an influx of funding to support high-quality opportunities for all children regardless of setting. Inadequate funding causes low teacher wages, uneven accessibility and affordability, and unrealistic expectations for quality. Early care and education cannot continue to barely subsist on the status quo of high parent fees and limited access to quality programs. To change this, we must:

- Provide public funding at the level of high-quality program cost which includes to increase early childhood professionals' wages to be commensurate with other educators with the same level of education and number of hours worked.
- Develop sustainable funding models so that families do not pay more than the federal suggestion of 7% of their gross income.
- Reduce or remove parent fees for all families earning below 100 percent of the state median income.

Early Childhood Resource Network

Finding childcare and other family services can be a complicated and inefficient process for families to navigate. We need one location to support families in locating programs and other services.

- A registry of babies at birth to create a system to contact all New Haven children from birth to five will allow the city to plan and distribute/offer formal and informal services needed for health growth and development.
- An online program enrollment system for all young children in public, private and community programs from birth to age 5.
- Create a single enrollment process for preschool children who participate in programs of the NH public school system to prevent re-enrollment in Kindergarten and multiple transitions.

Quality

Family Engagement

When families have a sound understanding of child development, they are more informed parents, better consumers of high-quality early care and education, as well as stronger advocates for their children's needs. With input for families and communities, we will:

- Ensure that as a City, we meet families' basic needs.
- Support families to be able to prioritize neighborhood schools and programs during the enrollment process if it is their first or second choice.
- Create transition plans in partnership with community-based programs, families and the New Haven Public School system for each and every child enrolled in preschool or infant toddler programs who is a resident of the city of New Haven.
- Similar to youth employment programs, create summer learning activities for children under five to ensure quality opportunities during the summer months to prevent summer learning slide.
- Co-create with families and programs, city-wide strategies to improve attendance in formal early learning programs which include addressing child and family focused opportunities.

Professional Learning

To saturate our city with Ideal Learning, professional learning opportunities should promote shared learning, shared resources, relationship building, as well as skills, knowledge and abilities of the New Haven workforce. To do this, programs will need:

- Time and funding to participate and implement the knowledge and skills gained through professional learning experiences that are grounded in principles of equity, inclusion, and Ideal Learning.
- Professional learning developed for college credit or at a minimum continuing education to ensure review of curriculum and faculty.
- Professional learning should be provided at no or low cost to early childhood professionals working in communities with high numbers of children and or families below state median income.

Workforce Development: Degree Granting and Career Ladder

The early care and education industry is threatened by providers' low level of compensation. Poor staff compensation results in high staff turnover, low quality, and difficulty encouraging young people to enter the field. We will:

- Advocate for salaries for early care and education providers that are commensurate with their level of education and number of hours worked.
- Provide opportunities, funding, and support for New Haven based early childhood staff, targeting Black and Latino mid-career, to access college courses for providers to meet the state's 2029 Bachelor Degree requirement.
- Develop a high school pipeline that supports young people into a viable, life sustaining, early care and education profession.

envision a city where
all children have access
to high-quality
early childhood care



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