



## Advancing Quality Early Learning in Ohio: Communications & Advocacy Training





# Groundwork Ohio's Mission

Groundwork Ohio is a committed, nonpartisan public-policy research and advocacy organization formed in 2004 that champions high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies from the prenatal period to age five, that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families and communities.



# What We Do

We advance quality early childhood systems in Ohio by engaging, educating and mobilizing diverse stakeholders and strategic partners to promote data-driven and evidence-based early childhood policies.



# Introduce Yourself

**Name**

**Role**

**Have you ever participated in advocacy?**

# Learning Objectives

- Define advocacy
- Understand opportunities to advocate for the early childhood education workforce
- Explore the messages and tools that promote investing in and supporting the workforce
- Practice effective advocacy
- Commit to staying engaged

# Advocacy Defined

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.





# Opportunities to Advocate

# Opportunities to Advocate

## Legislative

*Creates laws*

- Ohio House of Representatives
- Ohio Senate

## Executive

*Carries out laws*

- Governor
- Executive Agencies (i.e. Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, etc.)

## Judicial

*Interprets & enforces laws*

- Supreme Court of Ohio
- Local courts





**Questions?**

# **PRACTICING EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY**

Telling a Compelling Story About the Early Childhood  
Education Workforce



# The Secret Ingredients

- A clearly articulated **issue or challenge** (but not crisis!)
- Compelling **evidence** to support your proposed **solution**
- A **personal connection** to the issue
- Targeted **messaging**

# UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Advancing the Early Childhood Education Workforce

# Who are Ohio's early childhood education professionals?



**72,941**  
professionals  
worked in Ohio  
child care  
programs  
in 2019.<sup>i</sup>



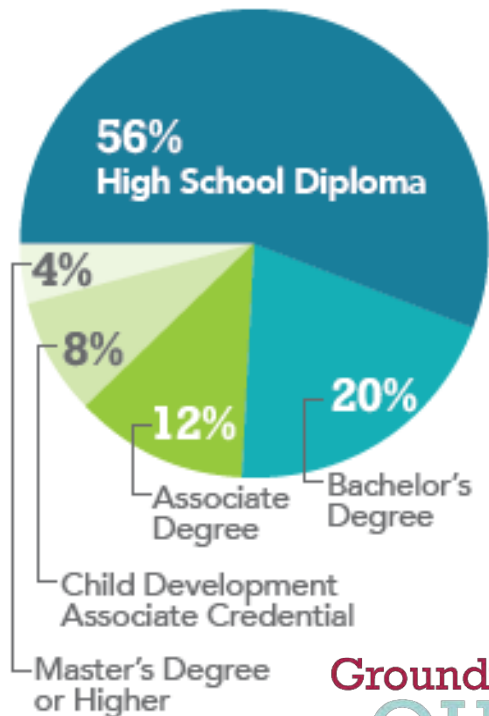
**Gender:**  
**95%** of  
child care  
professionals  
are female.<sup>ii</sup>



**Age:**  
**37** is the  
median age  
of early  
childhood  
education  
professionals  
in Ohio.<sup>vi</sup>



**Education:**





# Who are Ohio's early childhood education professionals?

## Race:<sup>iii</sup>

White/Caucasian: 64%

Black/African American: 28%

Hispanic: 4%

Multi-Racial: 3%

Asian: 1%

Alaska Native/  
American Indian: <1%

Hawaiian/Pacific  
Islander: <1%

**This is despite Black Ohioans only making up 13.1% of the state's population.**

The early childhood education professionals in child care settings are disproportionately women of color<sup>iv</sup> The proportion of Black early childhood education professionals has increased substantially over the last fifteen years—in 2005, Black educators made up about 9% of the child care workforce and in 2013, about 17.5% of the workforce.<sup>v</sup>

# What does an early childhood education professional do?

## Teachers

- *Engaging with children & fostering physical, emotional, social, motor, language & cognitive development*
- *Planning & implementing lesson plans based on curriculum*
- *Promoting the health, safety & development of children*
- *Observing & assessing children's learning & development*
- *Feeding, changing, etc. based on child's age*
- *Engaging with parents to help support children's early learning & development inside & outside the classroom*
- *Ensure classroom complies with all licensing, Step Up to Quality, & other regulations*
- *Complete 20 hours of Ohio Approved specialized training every two years*
- *Other duties as assigned*



**The “*other duties as assigned*” portion of an early childhood education professional’s job description is key.**

**Because early childhood education professionals in child care settings are often trusted partners for families, they play the role of advocate, case worker, mediator, and much more, both inside the classroom and out.**



# Current Challenges of the Profession

*... underpaid & undervalued*



**Poor staff  
compensation**



**Challenges finding  
degreed and  
credentialed staff**



**High  
turnover rates**



# Turnover & Burnout



**1 in 4**

early childhood education  
professionals leave their job  
each year.

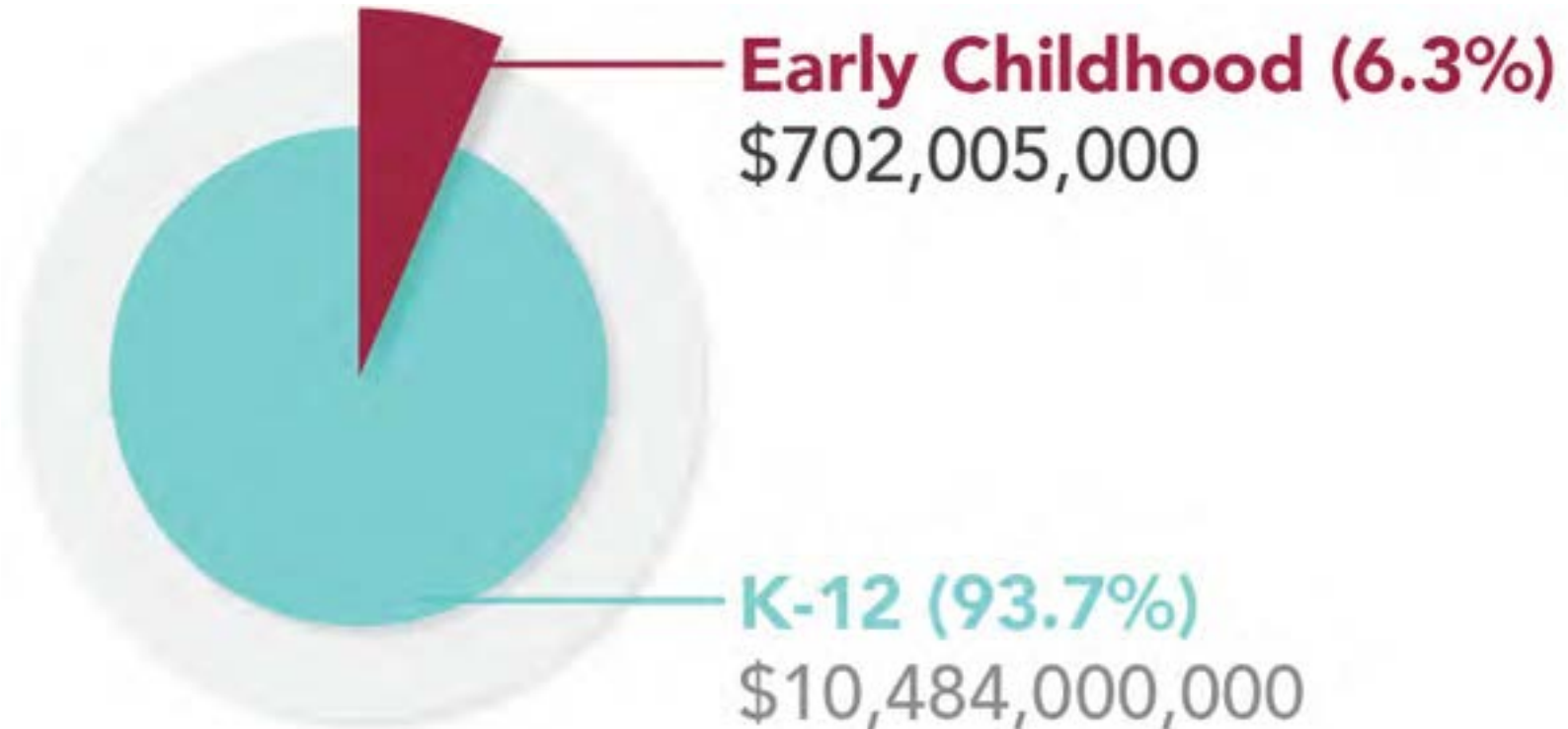
*Note: The data were obtained through a data request from the Ohio Professional Registry (OPR) and reflects FY 2019.*



# Retaining Highly Qualified Early Childhood Educators

A combination of low compensation, high-stress, and lack of recognition for their important work all contribute to a high rate of burnout and turnover for early childhood education professionals in child care settings.

# Ohio's Investment in the Early Childhood System



# MAKING THE CASE

FOR INVESTING IN EXPANDING  
CHILD CARE

# Early Childhood Education Professionals are Critical to Improving Outcomes for Children

**Brains are built,  
NOT BORN.**



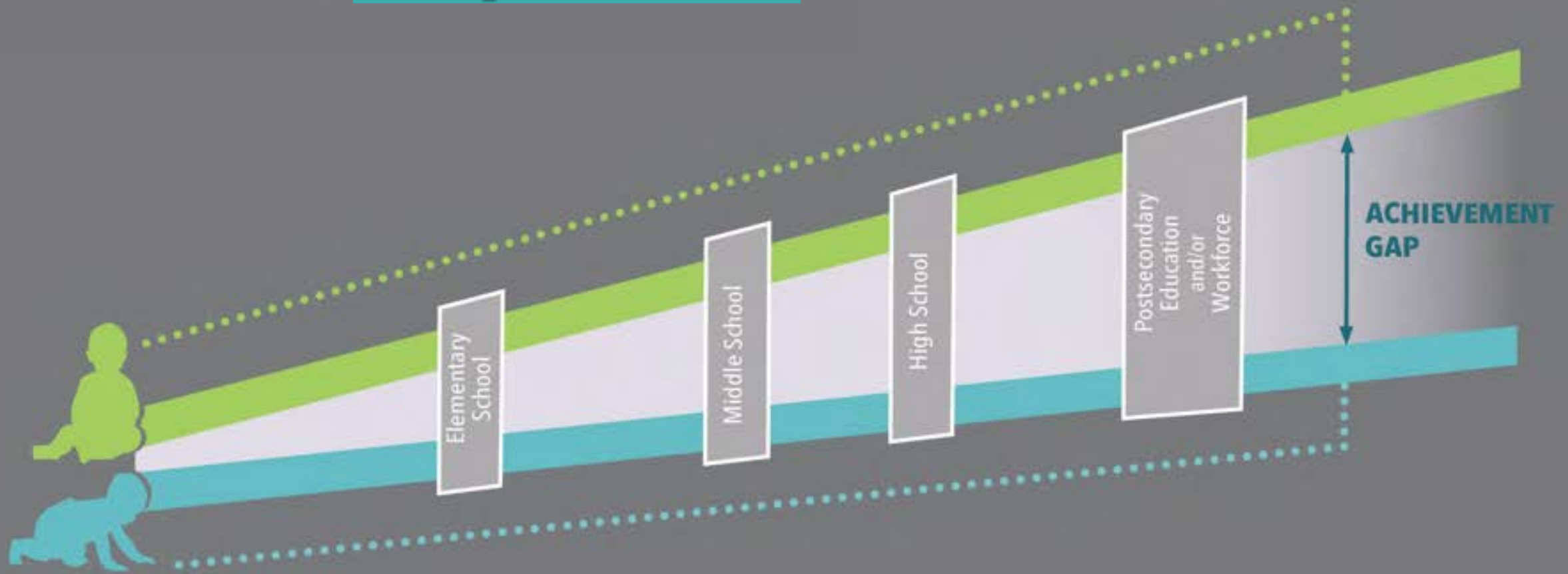
**90% of brain  
development  
happens  
between 0-5  
years old.**

**Without quality care in  
the early years, brain  
architecture doesn't form  
as expected and gaps  
emerge.**





# Children who start behind, stay behind.



# Focus on Proven Interventions

**When investments are made in quality early education, children are**



## **MORE LIKELY TO**

- Be kindergarten ready.
- Graduate high school.
- Have higher earnings and better health.

## **LESS LIKELY TO**

- Be held back a grade.
- Be reliant on public assistance.
- Engage in criminal behavior.

# Ohio's Most Pressing Challenge



AND KIDS WHO START BEHIND, OFTEN STAY BEHIND.

ONLY  
**41%**  
come to  
kindergarten  
**READY TO  
LEARN.**

So it's no surprise  
that only  
**43%** of  
**OHIO'S  
WORKFORCE**  
has a degree  
or credential  
**for available jobs.**

YET  
**65%** of  
JOBS IN 2020  
required  
**MORE THAN**  
a high school  
diploma.

# Adding a Personal Connection

Why are YOU advocating for quality early learning?

- To help the families you serve?
- To improve outcomes for your own kids?
- To more effectively provide quality early learning?

# Begin to Advocate

DETERMINE YOUR ASK, SUPPORT YOUR CASE, LEARN MORE  
ABOUT YOUR LEGISLATORS, PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING



# How do I address policymakers?

- Member of U.S. House of Representatives → Congressman/woman
- Member of U.S. Senate → Senator
- Member of Ohio House of Representatives → Representative
- Member of Ohio Senate → Senator
- Statewide Officeholders → Governor, Secretary of State, etc.
- Addressing a Letter → The Honorable [First + Last Name]

# Practicing Effective Advocacy

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



- How much does my audience already know about this issue? Are they experts in the field or hearing this information for the first time?
- Does my intended audience support, remain neutral to, or oppose this cause?
- What influence does my audience have? Does this person hold political power? Voting power? Social influence?

# PROVIDING CLEAR ASKS

TO IMPROVE QUALITY EARLY LEARNING FOR KIDS

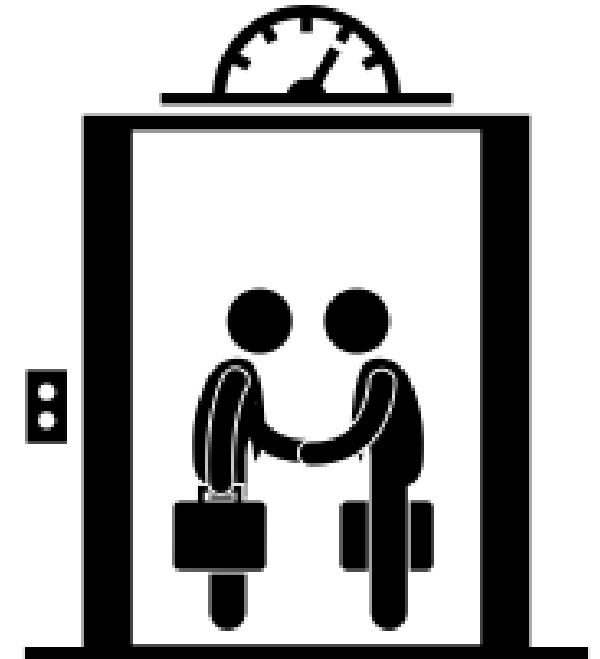
# Opportunities to Advocate

## DETERMINING YOUR ASK


- Dependent upon time of year, current legislation
- Whenever possible...
  - Clear
  - Specific
  - Measurable

# Outlining Your Elevator Pitch

- The issue you would like addressed
- Why it's worth making a priority
- Your personal story or connection





A photograph of two women, one Black and one white, both smiling and shaking hands. They are in a professional setting, possibly a meeting or a formal agreement.

Meet with  
Policymakers

A photograph of a classroom with several young children sitting on the floor, engaged in an activity. A teacher or adult is also present, interacting with them. The room has colorful lockers or cubbies in the background.

Host a Site Visit with  
Your Legislator

A close-up photograph of hands typing on a white computer keyboard. The background is blurred, focusing on the action of writing.

Write a Letter  
to Your  
Legislator

A photograph of hands holding a newspaper. The masthead of the newspaper is visible, reading "THE DAILY". The scene suggests a person reading or preparing to write in a local publication.

Write an  
Op-Ed in  
Your Local  
Newspaper

A photograph of hands holding a smartphone, with the screen displaying a social media interface. The background shows a desk with a cup and some papers.

Elevate Your  
Voice on Social  
Media

# Engage on social media

*Time Commitment: 5 minutes*

- Quick and easy way to make elevate awareness about early learning issues and connect directly with policymakers
- Can link to more in-depth resources

# Social Media Tips

- Be careful when being critical of policymakers
- Twitter is the most effective tool, followed by Facebook
- Tag your policymakers in posts
- Use images or resources in post when applicable
- When appropriate, add hashtags to increase visibility

# Writing a letter to your legislators

*Time Commitment: 30-minutes to 1-hour*

- Quick and easy way to make a clear, succinct case for support and policy or budget ask
- Can send same letter to multiple legislators

The Honorable [Name]

Ohio House of Representatives  
77 S. High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear [Representative Name or Senator Name],

My name is [first and last name], and I am [title and organization affiliation]. As your constituent, I am reaching out to you to urge you to support Ohio children, families, and communities by expanding access to affordable, quality child care. More specifically, I ask that you consider expanding eligibility for Ohio's publicly funded child care program in the state's biennial budget so that more working families and children have access to high-quality, affordable child care. **Expanding eligibility for the publicly funded child care subsidy to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level would bring relief to many working families and serve thousands more Ohio children.**

In 4-6 sentences, share why this issue is important to you. You can include your perspective as a provider, child advocate, community leader, etc. If needed, you can also use 1-2 of the following talking points:

- If we want families to work, they must know that their child is in a safe, nurturing environment. Unfortunately, many Ohio families are being denied the chance to succeed at work and become self-sufficient because they cannot afford quality child care or it's just not available.
- Public investments in high-quality early interventions for children deliver a high return on investment. In fact, providing high-quality early childhood education for Ohio's most at-risk children during the most critical period of their development delivers upwards of 13% ROI per year.
- Kids who start behind often stay behind – first in school, then on the job and in life. Ohio is facing a workforce crisis because kids are not ready for school. In fact, only 41% of Ohio children come to kindergarten ready to learn.
- Child care is essential to keeping our families, businesses, and communities running. As we move into the recovery period of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to quality, affordable child care is necessary to our short- and long-term recovery.
- Investments in quality early learning are a top priority for Ohio voters. More than 3 out of 4 voters support substantial additional investments in quality early learning for Ohio's children.

Now is the time for us to double down on our commitment to Ohio's youngest and most vulnerable children, as well as the families who support them. The Ohio General Assembly has the opportunity to keep Ohioans working, help families break out of poverty, and ensure more Ohio children have access to high-quality early learning by expanding access to quality and affordable child care.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue.

Respectfully,

[Your name]  
[Your title]

# Writing an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

*Time Commitment: 2-4 hours*

- Spread awareness about early learning to a broader audience
- Link early learning to current events and issues
- Op-Ed columns are longer, whereas letters to the editor are usually less than 300 words



# Meeting with your legislator

*Time Commitment: 1-2 hours*

- Spend time face to face sharing insights and resources with your legislator
- Provides opportunity for discussion and feedback
- 1-2 hours prep time, 30-minute meeting



# Meeting Follow Up

## *Immediate Action*

- Write down what you learned
- Share information and pictures from your meeting on social media
- Send a thank you note (be sure to answer any outstanding questions and reiterate any commitments that were made)

# Practicing Effective Advocacy

## *Final Notes*

- Meeting with a staffer can be just as effective
- Introduce yourself
- Listen
- Admit what you don't know (but promise to follow up with answers)
- Make a clear ask
- Thank the legislator/staffer

# Hosting a site visit with your legislator

*Time Commitment: 3-5 hours*

- Demonstrate firsthand what quality early learning looks like
- Provides opportunity for discussion and feedback
- 3-5 hours prep time, 1-hour meeting

# QUESTIONS?

# WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?

Unmute yourself or type in the chat box



# Join Us in Making Ohio the Best Place to be a Young Child

There are many ways to join our advocacy efforts...

- Register for our weekly newsletter
- Join our *Ready, Set, Soar Ohio* prenatal-to-three coalition
- Access and share our resources
- Register for events & watch previous recordings
- Partner with us

# THANK YOU!

To learn more, visit  
[www.GroundworkOhio.org](http://www.GroundworkOhio.org)



@GroundworkOhio