



Ready Or Not—Leadership Choices

Stacie Goffin and Valora Washington, authors of the book *Ready or Not —Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education*, ask candid and pertinent questions for those of us in the field of early care and education.

We challenge you to ponder how would you respond to these questions, if asked?

PURPOSE

1. What is the early care and education field’s defining intent?
2. Does the field’s intent vary by setting or by auspice (e.g., centers and schools, regulated family child care, license-exempt family, friend and neighbor care)?
3. What chronological span describes the ages of children served (e.g., birth to start of kindergarten, birth to age eight, pre-kindergarten through grade three)?

IDENTITY

1. What is the field’s distinctive contribution and competence as a collective entity?
2. Is early care and education a single/unified field of endeavor or a field comprised of sub-fields (such as health care, for example)?

RESPONSIBILITY

1. To what extent are we, as a field, willing to hold ourselves accountable to one another? Are we willing to be held publicly accountable for the results in return for the autonomy to provide programs based on the field’s knowledge and expertise?

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Leadership Commission Members

- Toni Cacace-Beshears, VA
- Judy Carnahan-Webb, TX
- Susan Carrigan, OK
- Cindy Ramagos, LA

Speaking On Behalf of Young Children: What Can I Do?

This list is modeled on a multicultural education activity from *Roots and Wings* (York, 1992). Check which actions you are willing to take (now or at a later date) in support of children and their families. You *ARE* an advocate!

- 1. Write an article in your school, center or classroom newsletter for families on issues or ways to speak and act for children.
- 2. Attend a workshop on how to be an effective advocate.
- 3. Read a book or article on how to be an advocate for young children.
- 4. Visit a website for resources on advocacy and read current information about issues that are important for young children, families or the profession.
- 5. Join a local advocacy listserv and become a *Champion for Children*.
- 6. Call or e-mail your legislators or other policy makers about current issues on "Call In Days" or whenever issues come up.
- 7. Tell a neighbor or family member about issues that are important for young children and families.
- 8. Register to vote and find out which candidates will work on behalf of young children and families.
- 9. Make sure that you know who your elected representatives are at all levels.
- 10. Make appointments and meet your legislators and local policy makers to share your specific concerns.
- 11. Write to introduce yourself to one or more of your elected representatives and offer to be a resource or contact person for information about children, families and the profession.
- 12. Join the public policy committee for your local or state SECA affiliate.
- 13. Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper in support of issues relating to young children, families and the profession.
- 14. Organize an advocacy committee at your school or center.
- 15. Plan a family night, workshop or parent education meeting on current issues and the needs of young children.
- 16. Respectfully ask families to share their views on issues and encourage them to share with others.
- 17. Testify on behalf of young children and families or the profession at your state legislature or at a local hearing. Attend a hearing with someone you know who is speaking and be there to support them.
- 18. Create a task force of community businesses, volunteer groups, schools, and families to address an issue that affects young children and families.
- 19. Conduct an advocacy workshop at a local, state, or national conference.
- 20. Add your own suggestion: _____

The Leader's Path

If you are serious about changing the work climate from fear to respect, here is a guide:

1. Write down one characteristic of yourself that you would like to change,
2. Consider your own history—from birth order to work values—to better yourself.
3. Try to spot influences that might have contributed to the characteristic you would like to change.
4. Record at least one insight and resolution from this exercise.

Now you are ready!

If you over accommodate people:

- Pick a new idea or opinion, commit yourself to expressing it and do it.
- Confront someone who is not performing well. Explain the task, lay out how and to what standard you need it done, review the status if it is lagging, give a deadline and enforce it.
- Make time to listen to your inner voice and learn what you think.
- Propose an initiative or two to motivate your team.
- Resist caving in the next time you tangle with somebody.
- Share an idea, plan or problem solve with a colleague to develop trust.

If you tend to dominate others:

- Take at least fifteen minutes a day (***their*** least busy 15 minutes) to walk around the work place and check in with people. Find out about their lives as well as their work.
- The next time you tangle with someone, focus on your own behavior and stifle whatever you normally do that fuels conflict.
- Build individual relationships. Say, "I care about you, How can I help?"

—Adapted from *Grown-Up Leadership*, Leigh Bailey and Maureen Bailey, Nova Vista Publishing

Resource Recommendation

Nine Shift: Work, Life and Education in the 21st Century
William A. Draves and Julie Coates



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***Promoting Quality Care and
Education for Young Children and
Their Families***

[http://
southernearlychildhood.org](http://southernearlychildhood.org)

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*
- *Increasing public understanding and support for policies and programs which ensure developmentally based services to young children and their families.*
- *Focusing on Southern issues concerning children and families*

Board Café

Toni Cacace-Beshears, the SECA Board Representative from Virginia, has discovered some websites that will be useful to Affiliate Boards. They offer many topics that will generate discussion at retreats and other information pertinent to the job of conducting meetings and helping members to fulfill their committee and position functions.

Board Café, an electronic newsletter for board members of non-profit organizations, is a resource to assist you with great ideas for board development. "Short enough to read over a cup of coffee, the newsletter offers a menu of ideas, information, opinion, news and resources to help board members give and get the most out of board service." Check out the website at: <http://www.compasspoint.org>.

If you are looking for ideas on management, leadership, or retreats, the following site is also helpful: <http://www.npgoodpractice.org>.

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge— That myth is more potent than history—
I believe that dreams are more powerful than facts—That hope always triumphs over experience —
That laughter is the only cure for grief—
And I believe that love is stronger than death. ***Robert Fulghum, Maybe (Maybe Not)***