



## Diversity and Representative Leadership

We know that our Association membership is very diverse across the Southern region and we welcome many professionals from diverse backgrounds to our ranks. Here's a look at the **SECA members** from the states that have the triple membership structure (State, SECA & NAEYC). *These figures are based on self-reporting and represent approximately 50% of members in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Members could select more than one option, so totals will not equal 100%.*

### Race/Ethnicity

- 12.78% are African American
- 1.14 % are American Indian/ Alaska Native
- 1.51% are Asian American/ Pacific Islander
- 9.84% are Hispanic
- 76.07% are Nonhispanic Caucasian

### Professional Roles

- 38.43% are Teachers
- 4.7% are Family Child Care Providers
- 40.89% are Program Directors/ School Administrators
- 17.63% are Education Coordinators/Trainers

tors/Trainers

- 12.78% are College Educators
- 1.49% are Government Administrators/Regulators
- 3.95% are Resource and Referral Specialists
- 7.01% are Students
- 2.17% are Retired Professionals
- 14.32% classified themselves as Other

### Who We Serve

- 50.22% work with Infants & Toddlers
- 58.21% work with Preschool/ Pre-K
- 27.42% work with Kindergartners
- 20.34% work with Primary/ School-age
- 4.48% work with Middle/ Secondary
- 15.76% work with College Students
- 22.17 work with Families
- 17.36% work with Other Adults

As you look at your leadership group, does your Board composition reflect your membership? These statistics give us a basis for beginning the challenging work of ensuring diversity within our leadership.

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# Membership Diversity: How Do We Compare?

You've seen the statistics on the first page that highlight the diversity within SECA's membership ranks. The South has been challenged to ensure that our organizations are available to everyone and SECA has shown that commitment from its inception. Let's take a look at how our membership percentages compare with the national membership statistics as provided by NAEYC.

## Race & Ethnicity

- ◆ SECA has more African/ American members than national. 12.78% to 8.52%
- ◆ SECA has more American Indian/Alaska Native members than national. 1.14% to 0.79%
- ◆ SECA has more Hispanic members than national. 9.84% to 6.04%
- ◆ National has more Asian/ American members than SECA. 8.4% to 1.51%

- ◆ SECA and national are almost equal in the percentage of Caucasian members. 76.07% to 77.93%.

## Professional Roles

- ◆ SECA has slightly more teachers than national. 38.43% to 35.08%
- ◆ National has more family child care providers than SECA. 5.09% to 4.7%
- ◆ SECA has more program directors/school administrators than national. 40.89% to 35.57%
- ◆ National has more education coordinators/trainers than SECA. 19.47% to 17.63%
- ◆ National has more college educators than SECA. 19.25% to 12.78%
- ◆ SECA and national are almost equal in regard to government administrators. 1.49% to 1.98%

- ◆ National has more resource and referral specialists. 5.09% to 3.95%
- ◆ SECA has more students. 7.01% to 6.19%
- ◆ National has more retired members. 5.74% to 2.17%

Remember, these statistics reflect only the members who live in the nine SECA states that are dually affiliated with NAEYC and are taken from the demographic reports available on the NAEYC website. *The other four states in the SECA region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) who affiliate only with SECA would add substantially to this diversity profile.*

**What can these statistics tell us about how we can begin to intentionally build diversity within our leadership so that our governing bodies reflect the diversity of our membership?**

# Diversity and Your Strategic Plan: Is It There?

Developing diversity within the leadership ranks of your association should be an integral part of all activities but, without intentional planning and implementation, it probably won't happen.

All associations should have a strategic plan that outlines their goals and objectives over a certain period. These questions should be answered in that plan:

- ⇒ What focus and priorities do we wish to have during the timeframe outlined in the plan?
- ⇒ What resources (financial, personnel, etc.) will be available to implement those priorities?
- ⇒ What type of value will be offered by the Association for membership?
- ⇒ How will we measure our success?

Take a hard look at your current leadership and determine if your governance structure reflects differences in race, gender, age, etc.

If there's work to be done, is there a statement or specific language in your strategic plan that discusses the initiatives that will be implemented to enhance and support diversity in leadership and membership? If not, it's time to put it there!

# No One Said This Would Be Easy!

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We have the statistics and we know that, in most cases, our governance structures are not representative of the diversity in our membership. If we're going to develop a governance structure that reflects that diversity, how do we do it?

As a leader in your organization, ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ What is holding us back?
- ◆ Do we have a strategy in place to identify and nurture emerging leaders?
- ◆ Does our governance structure allow for the mentoring and development of future board members?
- ◆ Is the open invitation there or are we sending a message that's not conducive to inclusion and welcome?
- ◆ Why do we need to become diverse? What benefits can we derive?
- ◆ Will we be a stronger organization if we are more inclusive and diverse?

According to the article, [Beyond Political Correctness: Building a Diverse Board](#), there are three strategies to utilize to begin the process.

## COMMUNICATE

This process should start with a frank and open board discussion. There may be some sensitive topics that surface such as whether the current board environment welcomes diversity. Moving forward will never happen unless the tough issues are faced.

Begin with a discussion of what diversity and inclusion means. Too often, diversity is focused solely on racial/ethnic diversity. In the field of early childhood, it may mean:

- Representation on the board that reflects different professional roles (teacher, director, out-of-school time personnel, resource and referral staff, etc.)
- Gender or age diversity (men, students, young professionals, etc.)
- Racial/ethnic diversity that is reflective of the make-up of the membership
- Representation of specific facets of the field (early identification, disability services, foster care, home visiting, etc.)

Once the board has decided whether to move forward with a diversity strategy, the next thing is to do it!

## ACT

We're all quite adept at talking but acting is sometimes another matter. We can all agree that something needs to be done but, unless a plan is developed and the board agrees to put the time and effort necessary into making it happen, it's unlikely that you'll see results.

**The first step is to create a focus within your strategic plan** (or just develop a strategic plan!) that:

- ⇒ Outlines what you plan to do.
- ⇒ Who will be responsible for implementing specific items in

the plan.

- ⇒ What deadlines will be set.
- ⇒ How you will evaluate the steps you've taken to determine if they were effective.

**A second step is to create a pipeline of candidates.** Who within your association could develop the leadership skills to move into those board positions? How can you involve them initially... projects, committees, special events, etc.? Who will serve as a mentor to ensure that they are successful in their first attempts at leadership? Does the pipeline lead from the local to the state? Are the initial board responsibilities ones that allow for successful completion and increasing responsibility?

In this process, be sure that you avoid **tokenism**. Promoting diversity just for diversity is not a good strategy. Diversity and inclusion mean bringing leaders to the table to represent the different facets of your membership who have the requisite skills to contribute to the mission of the organization.

## MONITOR & MEASURE

Track your retention rates for board members. If they are leaving after short periods of service, what's the cause? Administer board self-assessments to determine how you're doing. Survey your members to see if they perceive your governance structure to be diverse and inclusive.  
*Resource: Beyond Political Correctness: Building a Diverse Board, www.bridgespan.org*

## From the Archives



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*Promoting Quality Care and Education for  
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*SECA is a "Voice for Southern Children"*

*This newsletter is written and produced  
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[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

Past issues of *The Leadership Letter* are archived on the SECA website. These issues may be of special interest as you consider the topic of Board recruitment and service.

[\*The Leadership Letter, March 2015: The Legal Side of Board Service\*](#)

[\*The Leadership Letter, May 2014: The Top 10 Communication Skills\*](#)

[\*The Leadership Letter, November 2013: Three Resources for Organizational Evaluation\*](#)

[\*The Leadership Letter, November 2012: Ethical Conduct: Responsible Behavior in Early Childhood Education\*](#)

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## Recruiting New Leaders

It's hard work but probably one of the most productive and vital tasks you've undertaken for your organization. Promoting and achieving diversity and inclusion within your governing body will reap a multitude of benefits.

As you recruit potential members for your board, these are four questions to be asked:

**"Can you fulfill our board's fiduciary and legal oversight responsibilities?"**

Obviously, as a recruiter, you have to know what those responsibilities are. Is your organization providing enough board training and resources to make you feel comfortable in articulating what responsibilities are inherent in board service? Can you define these for potential members?

**"How have you already demonstrated a passion for organizations like ours?"**

Do you understand the mission of our organization and how do you feel that you can contribute to that mission? Why do you feel a personal commitment to our mission?

**"Do you fundamentally have the time to serve on our board?"**

We all have busy lives. Be sure that you can give a prospective board member a clearly defined sense of what obligation of time will be required.

**"Are you able to meet the board fundraising requirement? (If the board has one)"**

Not all boards require members to do fundraising and this question is applicable only if those are the expectations of your board.

Source: [\*Recruiting and Vetting Nonprofit Board Members\*](#), [www.bridgespan.org](http://www.bridgespan.org)

Get to know the candidate and make a decision about suitability to serve on the board. Their responses to the four questions and your assessment of whether that person will fit into the culture of the board will determine whether you move forward with a nomination.

Once they are nominated and accepted/elected, it's all about giving them the tools necessary to serve successfully. Make sure you have a thorough orientation and mentoring program in place.