



azaeyc

Arizona Association for the
Education of Young Children

2023 ANNUAL REPORT: Championing the Child Care Workforce



MISSION

AzAEYC promotes quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

www.azaeyc.org



@AzAEYC

AzAEYC is an organization *of, by, and for* the early care and education profession.

Child care providers are the workforce that helps all other Arizonans get to work. They contribute to vibrant communities and a strong economy. At Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children (AzAEYC), we envision a state where **every child and family has equitable access to quality child care** and **every early care and education (ECE) professional is well-supported and fairly compensated** for their important, skilled work. In our 2023 Annual Report, we share our progress towards that vision.

Becoming a member of AzAEYC means receiving the wealth of benefits of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) membership *and* also being an active part of the collective movement to advocate for the child care field. We are proud to be **an organization of, by, and for the ECE profession.**

On behalf of the Governing Board and staff, we thank our members, partners, and funders who have made this year's progress possible. AzAEYC looks forward to continuing to collectively build a better, more equitable Arizona for young learners and the child care workforce.

With gratitude,



Kamaie Clark, M.Ed.
Governing Board President
AzAEYC



Dr. Eric Bucher
Chief Executive Officer
AzAEYC



(Above photo) More than 100 participants from Arizona attended the NAEYC Annual Conference in Nashville, TN in 2023. Participants included AzAEYC CEO Dr. Eric Bucher and board members Kamaie Clark, Camille Lachar-Lofaro, Albert Murietta, and Diane Salazar.

AzAEYC ANNUAL REPORT

The AzAEYC Annual Report highlights our organizational impact and accomplishments for the ECE profession between January and December 2023. AzAEYC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit early childhood membership association and State Affiliate of NAEYC. In 2023, AzAEYC celebrated its 15th year as a tax exempt non-profit, with historical roots in the state of Arizona since 1989.

2023 Fast Facts

\$477,863
operating budget

650+
AzAEYC members

3
regional chapters

3,939
child care professionals
reached through
programs

2023 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Cultivate **leadership and innovation** through projects that advance equity for the workforce, profession, and systems of early learning.
- Reflect **excellence** in all aspects of organizational health and vitality.
- Ensure **equitable access** to quality child care for children birth through age 8.
- Advocate for the **early childhood profession** and secure public funding towards worthy wages and benefits.
- Be a **highly-valued, credible, visible** membership organization and systems partner.

SERVICE AREAS

AzAEYC serves the counties of Apache, Coconino, Gila, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma in collaboration with our regional Northern, Valley of the Sun, and Yuma chapters.



Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, and Santa Cruz are served by our sister affiliate, Southern Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children (SAZAEYC).



OUR MEMBERSHIP

This year, we supported **650 AzAEYC/NAEYC members** across the state, a 23% increase from 2022. Our members included early childhood educators, child care providers, and champions.

AzAEYC works to advance a **diverse, dynamic early childhood profession** and elevate the voices and stories of early childhood educators.



Wherever you are in your early childhood career and educational journey, there's an AzAEYC/NAEYC membership for YOU.

Entry Level - \$30/year

Designed for students and new professionals. Access to online content, digital resources, insurance, and member-only event discounts.

Standard Level - \$69/year

Subscription to award-winning periodicals, complimentary e-book, event/conference discounts, cost savings, digital content + more.

Family Level - \$35/year

Designed for members outside of the early learning profession such as parents and community advocates. Access to online content and digital resources.

Premium Level - \$150/year

Unparalleled access to NAEYC's robust suite of member benefits including periodicals, complimentary print books + e-book, online learning, digital content, and VIP events.

azaeyc.org/join

OPERATIONS & FINANCIALS

Transparency in Our Operations: Our board-approved 2023 operating budget was \$477,863. About 1/3 of our expenses were pass-through funds for collaborative partnerships and funds to directly support ECE professionals.

Compensation: We commit to paying our staff a worthy wage of at least \$25 per hour, compensate staff for all hours worked including paid professional development time, and do not allow unpaid labor. We also continue to seek public investments that will ensure that all ECE professionals earn competitive salaries and benefits commensurate with the skilled, important work they do.



AzAEYC earned the 2024 Gold Seal of Transparency through [Candid/GuideStar](#), a non-profit reporting database.

Gold
Transparency
2024

Candid.

AzAEYC Staff



Dr. Eric Bucher
Chief Executive
Officer



Julie Capistran
Administrative
Assistant



Jo Chavez, M.B.A.
Communications &
Media Specialist



Linda Pauley, M.Ed.
Business
Administrator

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Our signature "Stories from the Field" initiative lifts up the experiences and voices of early childhood educators and showcases the importance and impact of ECE in local communities.

In 2023, we published **7 blog posts and video clips** featuring Arizona early childhood educators. The majority of these stories elevated the voices of Black, Latine, and Indigenous educators and those who have experienced marginalization.

Meet Shara Jones

Featured in April of 2023, Shara Jones is an early childhood director who has been working in the ECE field for more than 18 years. At the program Shara leads, children have the opportunity to engage in learning through an intergenerational approach on a hospice campus that supports adults with mild to moderate dementia.

Shara explained, "Early childhood education is important because it helps children feel safe and loved and promotes health. It's the foundation of who they become as adults."



WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Each year during the annual [NAEYC Week of the Young Child®](#) (WOYC), AzAEYC amplifies the essential contributions of the child care workforce and celebrates young children, families, and communities.

This year, we highlighted stories that represented **children's rights** to joy, quality early learning, and equity and **teachers' rights** to fair compensation for the complex work they do—among many other rights. We collaborated again this year with First Things First, SAZAEYC, and other community partners to celebrate.

More than **25 proclamations were signed** by local, state, and tribal elected officials including the Governor. The proclamations highlighted WOYC and the rights of children, families, and educators to equitable early childhood education and urged public investments to improve access to quality child care.

azaeyc.org/woyc



EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIPS

Annually, we award the "Honor the Past & Reimagine the Future" [Early Childhood Scholarship](#) to Arizona college students studying ECE with an interest in equitable early learning experiences, public policy, and advocacy efforts on behalf of young children and families. In Fall of 2023, AzAEYC awarded two \$1,250 scholarships.

Meet our 2023 Scholarship Recipients



Bianey Garcia (*left photo*), candidate for a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education at Northern Arizona University

"There are fees that aren't covered and all these little costs that you don't realize when you've been out of college for many years. So being able to know those fees are covered, I don't have to worry about paying for them out of pocket."

- Rachelle Skvarek



Rachelle Skvarek (*right photo*), candidate for a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Administration at the University of Arizona Global Campus

Help make a difference by contributing to the annual AzAEYC scholarship!

Your donation of any size will help early childhood students meet their personal and educational goals. Donations to AzAEYC are tax deductible. EIN: 61-1448603.

donate.azaeyc.org



AZTOOLKIT

Child care providers deserve support and bandwidth for their business and administrative tasks — in order to be able to spend more time providing quality experiences for children, families, and their staff.

AZToolkit is a one-stop web platform that helps child care providers meet the daily demands of the business side of child care through resources needed to successfully save time, maximize funding, and share resources. AZToolkit includes more than 1,800 tools and resources for finances, human resources, recruitment and retention, staff training, and more—all in one place.

3.2K
subscribers

AZToolkit had nearly **3,200 subscribers** in 2023 (*a 10% increase from 2022*). Child care directors, teachers, and quality improvement coaches access AZToolkit's resources to **save time, maximize funds, and improve quality.**

11K
page views

AZToolkit webpages were viewed **11,000 times** in 2023 with the most popular pages being "Becoming an HR Expert", "Forms, Policies & Templates", and "Financial Management".



EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCACY

AzAEYC is the leading advocacy voice for children, families, and the child care workforce in Arizona. We provide training and technical assistance to develop the advocacy skills of educators and parents and strengthen their voices as champions for children. We also facilitate meetings with state and federal elected officials to secure public investments in child care.

30

legislator
meetings

Held **30 meetings with U.S. Congressional Representatives and state legislators** and **9 child care site tours** in 2023 to advocate for sustained public investments in ECE.

370

participants

Provided **advocacy training and support for more than 370 participants** in 2023. Sessions focused on how to connect with lawmakers and strategies for increasing public awareness around the importance of child care.

30

pieces of
children's
artwork

Delivered **30 pieces of children's framed artwork** to state legislators and elected officials to make children and child care issues more visible in the community as part of the "Preschool Artwork at the Capitol" initiative.

CHAMPIONING CHILD CARE IN THE COMMUNITY



Preschool Art at the Capitol

In this signature initiative, we frame children's beautiful artwork from local child care providers and deliver them during meetings with elected officials to highlight the essential work of ECE providers.

First started in 2021 as part of the annual ECE day at the state legislature, we have worked with **20 Arizona child care programs** to deliver **90 pieces of young children's artwork** to state lawmakers, congressional representatives, and even the Governor's office.

azaeyc.org/artatthecapitol

Making Child Care More Visible in the Media

AzAEYC continued to champion the child care workforce through news segments and other media outlets. In 2023, AzAEYC was featured or quoted in **4 news stories**, coordinated **5 media events**, and published **1 peer-reviewed article** on ECE advocacy.

As federal relief funds ended in Fall 2023 and with the lack of state investments in child care, AzAEYC shared the facts about the benefits of access to quality early learning and the urgency and lifted up the stories and experiences of the child care workforce.



Photo: Valley of the Sun YMCA
7/26/2023

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We provide professional development for the child care workforce and ECE professionals. Topics include leadership, building stronger business practices through AZToolkit, and diversity and inclusion.

Throughout 2023, AzAEYC facilitated training cohorts around the NAEYC *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (DAP) book using the [Project ECHO®](#) virtual model which is designed to increase equitable access to quality professional development and build knowledge by leveraging the strengths of local communities. Staff at the participating child care sites received up to 18 hours of professional development, AzAEYC/NAEYC memberships, educator books, early learning materials, and stipends for paid professional learning time.

206
participants
completed

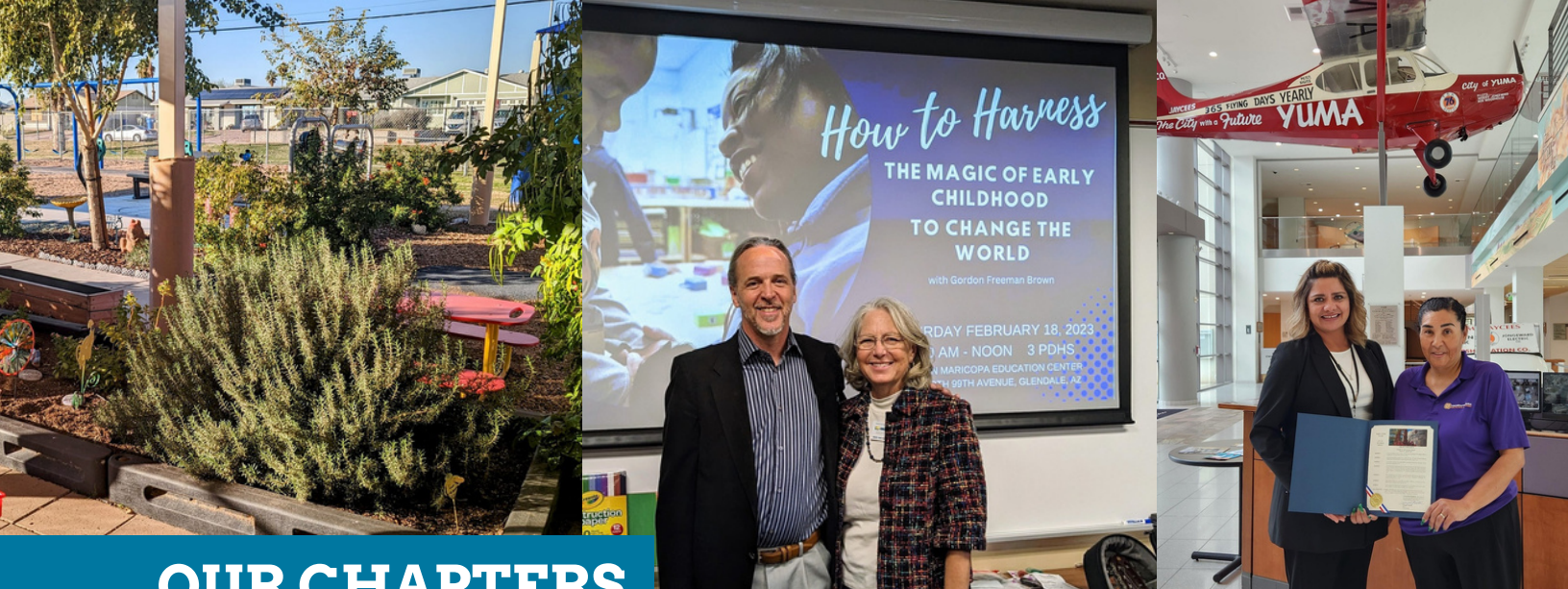
Facilitated 5 virtual training series of 7 sessions each for a total of 206 completed participants in the 2022-2023 DAP training.

Provided more than 3,250 hours of training, technical assistance, and coaching throughout the Project.

3.2K
hours

\$41K
materials

Purchased more than \$41,000 of developmentally appropriate materials for participants to enhance the quality of early learning experiences for children.



OUR CHAPTERS

AzAEYC has three chapters in our service region that engage child care providers and the community through local, grassroots activities.

Valley of the Sun Chapter of AzAEYC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was incorporated in 1974. Valley of the Sun supports the ECE profession through two signature projects:

- **Light That Fire** professional development sessions for new early childhood educators and Career & Technical Education (CTE) students focused on building leadership skills and professional connections.
- **Flip This Playground** which installs outdoor libraries, unique gardens, music centers, and outdoor learning spaces at Title I preschools and within communities for families in low-income households.

The **Northern Chapter of AzAEYC** serves Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties. In 2023, Northern provided [NAEYC memberships](#) to students in ECE degree programs and supported child care providers through [NAEYC early learning accreditation](#).

The **Yuma Chapter of AzAEYC** serves La Paz and Yuma counties. In 2023, Yuma planned and delivered early learning activities for children and their families during the [Week of the Young Child](#) celebration and met with with elected officials in the region to increase awareness of the importance of quality child care.

2023 GOVERNING BOARD

Our [Governing Board](#) is comprised of ECE professionals that represent the diversity and strengths of the Arizona child care field. Governing Board members are community volunteers who are elected by our membership.



Kamaie Clark, M.Ed.,
President



Mona Qafisheh, M.Ed., C.P.M.,
Past President



Camille Lachar-Lofaro, M.A.,
Treasurer



Penni Case, M.Ed.,
Secretary



Albert Murrieta, M.S.W., M.Ed.,
*Vice President of Professional
Development*



Diane Salazar, M.Ed.,
Vice President of Membership



Dr. Victoria Damjanovic,
Vice President of Advocacy



Sonia Soto, B.A.,
Member-at-Large



Susan Randolph,
Member-at-Large (Teacher)



Lauren Hardy,
Member-at-Large (Student)



Lizzy Valdez,
Member-at-Large (Appointed)



Jorge Sánchez,
Member-at-Large (Appointed)



Beth Frost,
Northern Chapter Chair



Gordon Freeman Brown,
Valley of the Sun Chapter Chair



Patricia Miranda, M.Ed.,
Yuma Chapter Chair



Dr. Eric Bucher,
Ex-officio Member



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An Affiliate of **naeyc**[®]

Artwork: 3-year-old child's representation of a cactus in the desert using watercolor and Sharpie, from a preschool classroom in Prescott, AZ

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To learn more or partner: info@azaeyc.org

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All photos in our Annual Report feature real Arizona early childhood educators, parents, and children. Photos are from AzAEYC unless otherwise credited.