



WeVision EarlyEd

Making the Ideal Real

About WeVision EarlyEd

- › WeVision EarlyEd is an exciting new initiative that will serve as a catalyst to move toward a reimagined child care system for the District of Columbia and other communities.
- › WeVision EarlyEd supports families, early childhood education professionals and other advocates working to generate equitable and practical solutions that improve the quality and effectiveness of the child care system.
- › This ideal child care system, as defined by parents, educators and administrators:
 - › Helps all young children achieve their full potential
 - › Is viewed as a public good and supported with increased federal and local funding
 - › Provides equitable access to a range of options that meet the unique needs of young children and families
 - › Recruits, retains and fairly pays competent early childhood professionals
 - › Provides consistent and predictable quality

What WeVision EarlyEd Provides

This initiative has three connected components designed to help make the ideal child care system real.

- › **Data from families, educators and administrators.** This data highlights the pain points they experience in navigating the current system and how similar their journeys are, regardless of role. Most important, it describes their ideal system – one that ensures they can focus more on child growth and development and one that creates the conditions young children need to thrive.
- › **Core shifts.** WeVision EarlyEd also is intended to shift the outdated thinking – often based on racial, gender and class biases – that holds current problems with the child care system in place. Without these critical shifts, transformation and systems change cannot happen. WeVision EarlyEd identifies five critical mindset shifts needed to make the ideal system real. We must rethink:
 - › **When learning begins** in order to recognize the crucial importance of children’s early development.
 - › **Who needs child care**, making quality options available to all families.
 - › **What child care costs and who pays for it**, so that programs are affordable for families and educators can make a living wage.
 - › **Quality** by setting baseline standards for all early childhood education programs.
 - › **Governance and decision-making** to take advantage of the expertise of families, educators and administrators.
- › **Ideal solutions that can be tested now.** Rather than simply identifying problems, WeVision EarlyEd will serve as an “evergreen” **Ideal Solutions Lab** that builds and tests innovative solutions generated by the parents, educators and administrators involved in the initiative. The Bainum Family Foundation is committing an initial \$6 million to fund this testing. Two solutions have been selected to be tested first. WeVision EarlyEd will share progress and learnings for each.
 - › **Quality-centered workplace** – Early childhood education professionals do complex work that is emotionally, physically and intellectually demanding. Compared to K-12 educators, educators in the child care system are poorly paid, work longer days without seasonal breaks, and have less time for planning, professional development and personal care. These professionals must be supported to do their jobs well. Their competence and well-being are the most important ingredients for quality but often the least funded. Solutions to be tested

may include flexible scheduling, additional professional development days, larger teaching teams, expanded staff roles to reduce administrative burden and support educator effectiveness, and weekly planning time for educators and teaching teams.

- » **Early childhood education microsities** – Small, isolated child care businesses are too frail – financially and operationally – to offer consistent quality and services. They also place a heavy cost and administrative burden on program owners/administrators and staff. WeVision EarlyEd will focus on exploring new business models that increase the accessibility, sustainability and quality of smaller programs. Models could include leveraging cohabited and low-rent real estate spaces like public schools, hospitals or apartment buildings and co-creating new franchise models.

Why This Matters

- › The first five years of life, and especially the first three, have a critical impact on children’s short- and long-term outcomes. These years are the basis of all development and learning that benefit everyone – children, families and society. Children need enriching environments and experiences that help them develop cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally.
- › The current early child care system across America is broken and does not work well for anyone. It does not adequately meet the needs of those who touch it, including children, families, educators and administrators.
- › Early childhood educators – who are primarily Black and brown women – receive low pay, combined with minimal benefits and paid time off. This leads to high turnover rates, which negatively impacts the quality of care, disrupts program operations and is detrimental to both child development and the well-being of educators.
- › Under traditional child care business models, program owners/administrators are forced to wear multiple hats, acting as business managers, grant managers, finance officers, facilities managers, social workers and much more at the same time, which is not healthy or sustainable.

Why We’re Starting in D.C.

Washington, D.C. has long recognized the value of supporting young children and families, as evidenced by passage and funding of several ground-breaking pieces of legislation. A movement of diverse early childhood advocates and the support of local policymakers have established a precedent for improving the child care system, and by many measures, D.C. is a national leader. But major challenges remain, especially related to services for infants and toddlers. WeVision EarlyEd will build on and complement D.C.’s strong foundation to continue making the ideal system real locally, while serving as a model for the country.

Support for WeVision EarlyEd

The Bainum Family Foundation, based in the Washington, D.C., area, has supported the well-being of children and families for more than five decades in multiple locations across the country. Over the past seven years, the foundation has invested more than \$40 million in early childhood education in D.C., and with our partners in the lead, we’ve made some important advances. But we heard from partners that the community needs more sustainable and comprehensive solutions, and we responded by seeding the launch of this new initiative. WeVision EarlyEd is a way to elevate the voices of community experts and pave the way for new and bold ideas that will challenge the inequities and shortcomings of the current child care system.



Website

Visit us at www.wevisionearlyed.org to learn more, download our full report and sign up to follow and inform this important work.

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