I Make a Difference for Young Children

Toolkit for Higher Education Faculty

Ask me how.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®
NATIONAL CENTER
IMD Toolkit Overview

Every child deserves a high quality early care and education experience. Quality depends on the professional knowledge, skills, and practice of teachers. Early childhood teachers work in various types of settings with children from birth to five years of age and have varied educational backgrounds. These early care and education settings include child care centers, family child care homes, and public schools. These settings may offer Head Start, child care or pre-kindergarten services. Young children who attend high quality early childhood programs with well-prepared teachers are more likely to become productive and engaged citizens.1

Every day knowledgeable and well-prepared early childhood teachers are making a difference in the lifelong futures of our young children. And yet, as early education in our country is discussed at the federal, state and local levels, it is evident that the only people not involved in these discussions are those members of the workforce who are working on the ground with children.

The I Make a Difference for Young Children (IMD) toolkit was designed by the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center to build the capacity of early educators to educate their community leaders and elected officials, peers, parents, friends, neighbors and family about the importance of early learning and development and the impact an educated workforce makes.

The IMD Toolkit provides a set of tools and resources to support higher education faculty in using IMD materials as part of an early childhood college course, as support materials and/or to inform discussions, activities and assignments.

The IMD tools listed on the following page are available online at no charge and may be accessed from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center’s web section for the IMD Campaign at http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/imd.html.

1 The Critical Role of the Early Childhood Workforce in the Preparation of our Young Children
IMD Toolkit Contents

• **The Critical Role of the Early Childhood Workforce in the Preparation of our Young Children** – This statement is about what we believe about the critical role of the early childhood workforce in the preparation of our young children; what they need to know and be able to do; and how we as a nation can support their efforts. This statement grew out of conversations during the 2012 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) America convening.

• **10 Ways I Make a Difference for Young Children (poster)** – This resource is a poster that can be created on 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper. We suggest using a heavier card stock, however copy paper is suitable.

• **10 maneras en las que yo hago una diferencia para los niños jóvenes (poster)** – This resource is a Spanish language version of the poster that can be created on 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper. We suggest using a heavier card stock, however copy paper is suitable.

• **10 Ways I Make a Difference for Young Children (notecards)** – This resource includes “talking points” that can be used as a card for teachers to refer to when talking to parents, neighbors, friends or community and state leaders. They can also be mailed to candidates and public policy leaders with short notes attached from teachers. To create more, use the 4-up template to print and cut on card stock.

• **9 Ways to Support Teachers in Making a Difference for Young Children** – This resource lists ways in which early childhood center directors and other allies of early educators can support teachers in making a difference for young children.

• **18 Ways to Educate & Engage Your Community & State Leaders** – This resource includes ideas for educating and engaging community and state leaders.

• **Key Resources for Educating & Engaging your Community & State Leaders** – This resource includes links to resources and some research to support activities toward educating and engaging community and state leaders.

• **Sticker or Button EPS File** – The EPS file can be used to produce as many stickers or buttons as you like. If you would like to print your own stickers, the Avery brand stickers – item 22807 – can be found at Staples or most big box office supplies stores. It can also be sent to a vendor to make buttons. Imprint.com is a source used previously to purchase both IMD buttons and colorful wristbands.

• **Sample Letters to Community & State Leaders** – This resource includes a sample letter to share information and a sample letter to request support for funding.

• **Facebook Link** – The IMD Fb page can be shared and used by students and faculty. Join the conversation and add your Like to www.facebook.com/imdforyoungchildren.

• **Facebook Banner** – This image can be downloaded to any Facebook page as the page banner by following the instructions below.

To edit your Facebook cover photo with the IMD image:
1. Go to your timeline on Facebook.
2. Hover over your cover photo.
3. Click “Change Cover” at the bottom-right of your cover photo.
4. Pick one of the options from the pop-up menu (ex: upload a new photo, reposition your current cover photo, or delete your cover).
5. Upload the IMD banner.
6. Save your changes.
IMD Strategies for College Classrooms

Discussion Questions

• What are three to five ways you make a difference for young children?
• What are two myths you have heard about early childhood education or the work you do?
• What can you say to the parents of the children in your program about how you make a difference?
• What does it mean to you to be an early educator?
• What does society tell you about the value of your work? What makes you say this? Is there evidence to support your view?
• What does the research say about the importance of early educators?
• What gets in the way of you explaining to people in the community how you make a difference?
• Why is it important to be an informed advocate for early childhood education?
• Why is your work important – to you, to children, to families, to society at large?

Activities & Assignments

• Choose one of the 10 Ways I Make a Difference and discuss ways early educators do make a difference for young children, families and society.
• Create an activity to educate the families in your program about how you make a difference for their children.
• Design an activity to do with children, families, colleagues or the community at large using the IMD materials.
• Select one of the Key Resources for Educating & Engaging Your Community & State Leaders and be prepared to discuss it with the class.
• Research an early childhood issue impacting the community or state and create a letter to your legislator in support of or against an issue. Use the sample letter to provide an example for your classmates.
• Use one of the 18 Ways to Educate & Engage your Community & State Leaders and design a plan for how you are going to implement the activity.

Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

• Create an information booth in the class on how teachers make a difference and have students from other classes evaluate it for content and visual appeal. Modify the booth based on feedback and then display at a community event or fair or at an early childhood education conference.
• Make presentations to the class about the importance of an educated workforce using IMD tools to support key points or provide talking points for group discussion.
• Role-play conversations with families, colleagues, and legislative and policy leaders using IMD tools to make the case for additional or maintained resources for early educators/programs.
• Submit activity plans for using IMD tools with identified audiences.
I Make a Difference for Young Children

Appendix
The Critical Role of the Early Childhood Workforce in the Preparation of our Young Children

Every child deserves a high quality early care and education experience. Quality depends on the professional knowledge, skills, and practice of teachers. Early childhood teachers work in various types of settings with children from birth to five years of age and have varied educational backgrounds. These early care and education settings include child care centers, family child care homes, and Head Start and pre-kindergarten classrooms. Young children who attend high quality early childhood programs with well-prepared teachers are more likely to become productive and engaged citizens.

1. Why are knowledgeable and well-prepared early childhood teachers important?
Early childhood teachers must be knowledgeable and well prepared to have long-lasting positive effects on educational achievement, economic productivity, social responsibility, and a significant return on investment. Early childhood programs with knowledgeable and well-prepared teachers lead to—

- Better educational outcomes, including enhanced school readiness and academic performance from elementary school through college, and reduced need for remedial education and special services.
- Less criminal activity and substance abuse.
- Higher earnings in adulthood.
- Strong returns on our investments. For every dollar spent on high quality early care and education, taxpayers save between $6-$12 because of the reduced need for academic, welfare, and criminal justice services.

2. What should early childhood teachers know and be able to do?
We must ensure that our nation's children and their families have access to early childhood teachers who have the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well. Teachers in high quality early childhood programs—

- Promote children's development and learning so they can work and play well with others.
- Have sound knowledge of content areas and are able to provide children experiences that help them learn and be ready for school.
- Have the core knowledge and skills to use effective teaching and assessment strategies.
- Engage in supportive and stimulating interactions with children to push their thinking and motivation to learn.
- Build positive relationships with children, families and communities.
- Engage in ongoing education and training to gain new skills and knowledge.

3. What can we as a nation do to ensure every young child has a teacher that supports her/his development and learning?
Investments in early care and education must ensure that—

- All young children have access to early childhood teachers who know and use effective teaching practices.
- All early childhood programs adhere to high quality program standards including standards for teacher qualifications and practice.
- All early childhood programs provide supports for teachers in their efforts to enhance children's development and learning.
- All early childhood teachers have access to affordable and effective education and training, including higher education and research-informed training.
- All early childhood teachers are fairly compensated.

This document was produced out of the 2012 CGI-America early childhood education sub-group in Chicago.
10 Ways I Make a Difference for Young Children

As an educated early childhood teacher, I make a difference by …

1. Delivering high-quality early care and education to ensure all children are ready for school and life.

2. Helping all children to gain the early language and literacy skills to prepare them for reading.

3. Modeling respectful, nurturing relationships to help all children learn to work and play well with others.

4. Promoting cognitive development by posing questions and providing developmentally appropriate materials and activities that stimulate children’s interest in pondering ideas, posing theories, formulating thoughts, growing skills to support persistence and attentiveness to solving a problem and experimenting with materials.

5. Providing rich learning environments that promote children wanting to learn new things every day.


7. Creating skill development opportunities that support children’s physical health and growth, including large and fine motor development and eye-hand coordination, healthy nutrition and children’s awareness of personal health and fitness.

8. Partnering with all families around their children’s development.

9. Allowing parents to work and supporting families’ contributions to our economy.

10. Continuing my education to ensure I know the latest research and have the resources needed to be an effective teacher.
Como profesora con educación en trabajo de primera infancia, yo puedo hacer una diferencia en las siguientes maneras:

1. Entregar alta calidad de atención temprana y de educación para asegurar que todos los niños estén listos para la escuela y la vida.

2. Ayudar a todos los niños para adquirir las primeras habilidades de lenguaje y alfabetización para prepararlos para la lectura.

3. Demostrar relaciones que son respetuosas y que nutren para ayudar a todos los niños a aprender como trabajar y jugar bien con otros.

4. Promover el desarrollo cognitivo planteando preguntas y proporcionando materiales apropiados para el nivel de desarrollo y actividades que estimulan el interés de niños en áreas tales como: formular teorías, ideas, y pensamientos, cultivar persistencia y la atención prestada a la solución de problemas, y experimentar con materiales educativos.

5. Proporcionar ambientes ricos de aprendizaje en los cuales los niños tienen interés en aprender cosas nuevas cada día.

6. Apoyar la comprensión por parte de los niños de los conceptos claves de matemáticas.

7. Crear oportunidades de desarrollo de habilidades que apoyan el crecimiento y el estado físico de niños, incluso desarrollo motor grueso y fino, coordinación ojo-mano, nutrición sana y conocimiento por parte de los niños de salud personal y de buen estado físico.

8. Asociarse con las familias en el desarrollo de sus niños.

9. Permitir a los padres que trabajen y apoyar sus contribuciones a nuestra economía.

10. Continuar mi educación para garantizar que tengo conocimiento de las últimas investigaciones y contar con los recursos necesarios para ser una maestra eficaz.
10 Ways I Make a Difference for Young Children

As an educated early childhood teacher, I make a difference by …

1. Delivering high-quality early care and education to ensure all children are ready for school and life.
2. Helping all children to gain the early language and literacy skills to prepare them for reading.
3. Modeling respectful, nurturing relationships to help all children learn to work and play well with others.
4. Promoting cognitive development by posing questions and providing developmentally appropriate materials and activities that stimulate children's interest in pondering ideas, posing theories, formulating thoughts, growing skills to support persistence and attentiveness to solving a problem and experimenting with materials.
5. Providing rich learning environments that promote children wanting to learn new things every day.
7. Creating skill development opportunities that support children's physical health and growth, including large and fine motor development and eye-hand coordination, healthy nutrition and children's awareness of personal health and fitness.
8. Partnering with all families around their children's development.
9. Allowing parents to work and supporting families' contributions to our economy.
10. Continuing my education to ensure I know the latest research and have the resources needed to be an effective teacher.
9 Ways to Support Teachers in Making a Difference for Young Children

I support early childhood teachers by…

1. Advocating for better compensation and recognition of the early childhood workforce.
2. Continuing my education to ensure I know the latest research and have the resources needed to be an effective professional development or technical assistance practitioner.
3. Counseling teachers about how to access continuing professional development and financial resources to successfully attain their educational goals.
4. Educating the public about the important role teachers have in ensuring children’s success in school and life.
5. Guiding teachers in creating rich learning environments that promote children’s ability and desire to learn new things every day.
6. Modeling respectful, nurturing relationships to support teachers, administrators and family child care providers.
7. Providing effective strategies to increase and maintain the provision of high quality early care and education classrooms or programs.
8. Providing technical assistance and consultation to support teachers’ efforts to ensure children are developing the language, literacy, cognitive, math, social and emotional skills they need to be successful.
9. Sharing information and tools to increase teachers’ ability to support the learning needs of the children they care for and their own professional development needs.

© Child Care Services Association, 2012
18 Ways to Educate & Engage your Community & State Leaders

Educate and engage your local early care and education workforce.

- Distribute the I Make a Difference tools to the workforce to increase their awareness about the importance of their work and role in supporting a healthy, productive community.
- Email the downloadable I Make a Difference poster to your professional network and request they download materials and share with their families, staff, suppliers, funders and supporters.
- Share key issues, relevant research and data about the field, the services it provides and the importance of an educated workforce in ready to print/post newsletter articles and tip sheets, in emails and in trainings to help early educators convey messages and/or make the case for support.
- Assist early educators in sharing their message by providing training about strategies they can use to reach a community and/or state leader.
- Offer sample letters and email messages that early educators can tailor for their use.
- Provide contact information for community and state leaders.
- Set up a time when early educators can gather together to meet with key leaders.
- Encourage teachers and other early childhood professionals to post the I Make a Difference banner on their Facebook pages.

Educate and engage your community and state leaders.

- Write letters and emails to share key issues, relevant research and data about the field, the services it provides and the importance of an educated workforce.
- Host a breakfast and/or lunch and learning events to educate leaders about the importance of the work, what services exist in their communities/district, the research demonstrating the impact and what they can do to make a difference for young children.
- Invite leaders to community forums to listen to and talk with early educators and experts about the social and economic impact of the industry on children, families, the teaching workforce, schools, higher education, businesses, communities and states.
- Offer opportunities to tour early care and education programs of varying quality to help leaders experience a firsthand view of the difference an educated workforce makes.
- Organize job shadow opportunities to provide a frontline perspective of the work of an early childhood professional to leaders who make the policies and funders who do/could support the work.

Educate and engage your general community.

- Distribute I Make a Difference materials to share information about the key issues, relevant research and data about the field, the services it provides and the importance of an educated workforce.
- Create I Make a Difference tip sheets tailored to your community to help neighbors, employers, places of faith, civic groups, schools, institutions of higher education, funders, and community leaders learn how to engage in activities that make a difference for young children.
- Raise community awareness by using the tailored tools to share information with your community via local newspapers and radio and television stations.
- Encourage community members to contact their local and state leaders to share campaign materials to pass on key messages.
- Build a virtual buzz by using social media strategies including posting the “I Make a Difference for Young Children” banner on your organization’s website and Facebook page.
“The essence of quality in early childhood services is embodied in the expertise and skills of the staff and in their capacity to build positive relationships with young children. The striking shortage of well-trained personnel in the field today indicates that substantial investments in training, recruiting, compensating, and retaining a high quality workforce must be a top priority.”

—The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do
Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University
http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/science_of_early_childhood_development/

Economic Impact & Return on Investment

Starting Smart & Finishing Strong
Institute for a Competitive Workforce, US Chamber of Commerce
https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/publications/edu/Starting_Smart_Finishing_Strong_Brief.pdf

Investing in Our Children for Great Returns
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOt-dkB98UY&feature=related

Economic Return on Early Childhood Investment
James Heckman, Nobel Prize winner and noted scholar YouTube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2oFtY7tZA

Women's Funding Network

Research Papers on T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®


This study examined the effect of community college coursework on the beliefs and on the classroom practices of teachers in child care centers. Thirty-four teachers participated; 19 were teachers who had received scholarships to attend community college programs in child development and in early childhood education, and 15 were comparison teachers. At the time of pretesting, all participants had high school diplomas and some in-service training. At posttest, the scholarship teachers had completed at least 12–20 credit hours of community college coursework. Results revealed that the classrooms of the program participants had made significant gains on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) or the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scales (ITERS) and the Teacher Belief Scale between the pre-and posttest and were also more developmentally appropriate, as measured by the ECERS or the ITERS, than the comparison teachers at the time of posttest. The findings are discussed in relation to professional development in the early childhood field.

http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/outreach/wccrp/pdfs/teach.pdf

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® WISCONSIN program was in its fourth year of operation at the time of this evaluation. The findings in this report indicate that the program shows great promise in meeting its goals of improving the educational qualifications, wages and retention of child care workers. With about 250,000 children in Wisconsin child care settings, and with a body of research indicating that the educational qualifications of the child care workforce may be the key ingredient for the quality of those settings, the focus of this program has strong implications for Wisconsin's child care programs and for public policy decisions. Findings include: (1) T.E.A.C.H. recipients completed a substantial number of college credits in early childhood education and child development. The majority of T.E.A.C.H. recipients had taken no credit courses in the year prior to their receipt of a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. Based on these data, this evaluation concludes that a significant portion of the 12,928 graded credits taken by T.E.A.C.H. recipients would not have been earned without the T.E.A.C.H. program. (2) The wages of T.E.A.C.H. recipients have risen substantially. The evaluation determined that T.E.A.C.H. recipients working in centers received wage increases averaging 7.1% per year. (3) Staff turnover in T.E.A.C.H. is one-third the rate in the profession. The evaluation determined that T.E.A.C.H. recipients had an average annual turnover rate of 12%, less than one-third the 40% annual turnover rate for Wisconsin child care teachers in general. Over the entire four-year period 1999-2002, only 18 percent of T.E.A.C.H. recipients left their jobs, and the majority of those (57%) stayed in the child care field.

Looking Beyond Government: The Transfer of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Model across States
The Urban Institute
http://www.urban.org/publications/310926.html

Researchers at the Urban Institute published a paper citing the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project as a model of successful public policy diffusion in the areas of diffusing a policy idea to a state; replicating the policy model; achieving broad funding; and taking the program statewide.
I make a Difference for young children. Ask me how.
T.E.A.C.H. I Make a Difference for Young Children Campaign
Sample Letter/E-mail to Community or State Leader
Adapted from Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit created by Ounce of Prevention

**Letter to share information**

Dear _______________,

I am writing to you as a constituent and early educator in your District to share my belief about why an educated teacher makes a difference for our children, community and state.

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that children who participate in high-quality early learning programs have better language, math, and social skills than their peers who missed this opportunity. They are also more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to become involved in crime, and more likely to become positive, productive citizens as adults. In programs where teacher are highly educated the return on investment is even stronger.

The birth-to-five years are the most important of a child’s development. Economists, business leaders, and researchers agree that high-quality early care and education services are the smartest public investment we can make. Early childhood programs provide the best and most cost-effective way to give at-risk children the chance to succeed in school, graduate from high school, attend college and become more productive adults. As an educated early childhood teacher, I am proud of the difference I am making.

Thank you for taking this time to learn about the importance of providing high quality early care and education to our District’s young children and their families. I would be happy to provide you more information if you would like to learn more. And I invite you to come and visit me in my classroom. I’d like to show you how I make a difference for young children.

Sincerely,

_______________ (name)
_______________ (city or county name)

---

**Letter to request support for funding**

Dear _______________,

I am writing as an early educator. I make a difference for young children in my classroom every day.

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that children who participate in high-quality early learning programs have better language, math, and social skills than their peers who missed this opportunity. They are also more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to become involved in crime, and more likely to become positive, productive citizens as adults. In programs where teacher are highly educated the return on investment is even stronger.

The birth-to-five years are the most important of a child’s development. Economists, business leaders, and researchers agree that high-quality early care and education services are the smartest public investment we can make. Early childhood programs provide the best and most cost-effective way to give at-risk children the chance to succeed in school, graduate from high school, attend college and become more productive adults. As an educated early childhood teacher, I am proud of the difference I am making.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships help early educators who work with young children to advance their education and gain the skills needed to help children be ready for school. The early childhood workforce does not have the education it needs to make the difference for young children. And they are paid such low wages that going to college would be impossible without help. Please support ensuring all children enter school ready to succeed by providing access to early childhood college coursework that leads to credentials and degrees for those who teach them.

Sincerely,

_______________ (name)
_______________ (city or county name)
www.facebook.com/imdforyoungchildren

Facebook banner:

I make a **Difference**

for **young children.**

Ask me how.