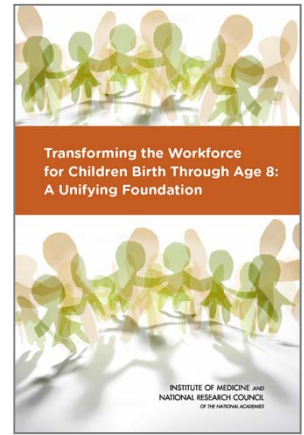


# Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation



*Children are already learning at birth. Development and learning in the early years are rapid and cumulative – and are the foundation for lifelong progress.*

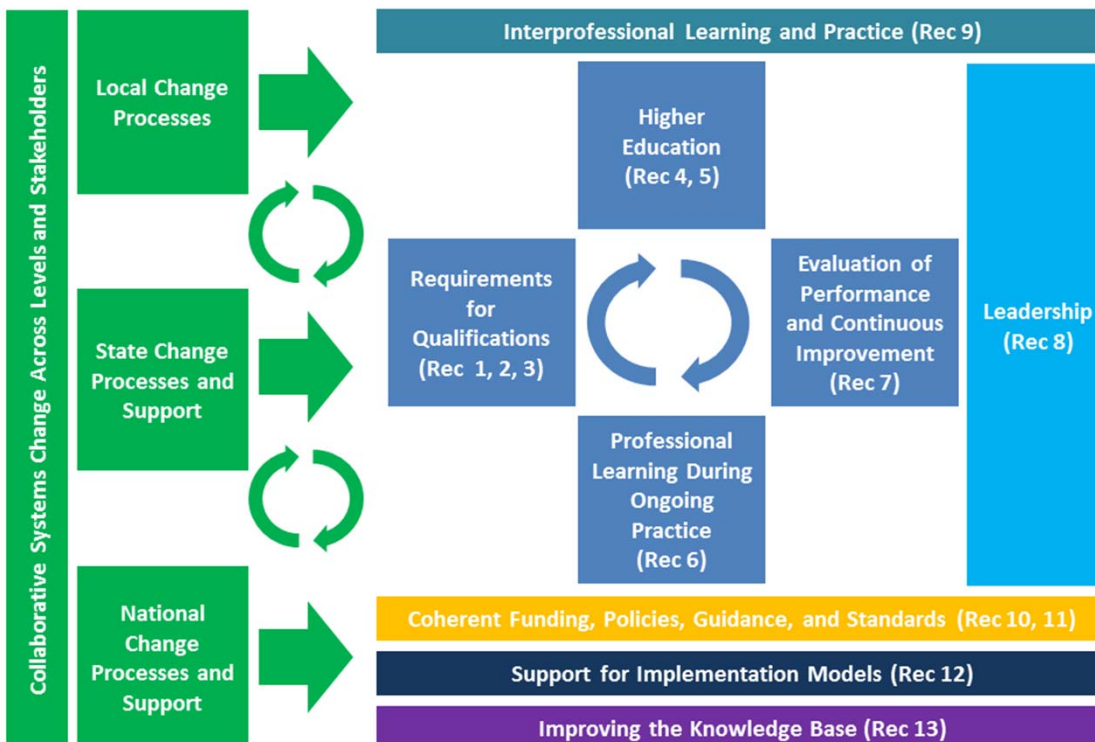
*Just when consistent, continuous support is so important, the systems and services that children encounter – and the systems that support the adults who work with them – are fragmented.*

*Practices and policies have often not kept pace with what is known about the sophisticated knowledge and competencies required to provide high-quality care and education for children from infancy through early elementary school.*

## A Blueprint for Action

A blueprint for action to strengthen the care and education workforce is based on the unifying foundation of the science of child development and early learning and principles for supporting high quality professional practice.

At the core of this blueprint are interrelated recommendations to **improve professional learning systems** in the areas of qualification requirements, higher education, professional learning during ongoing practice, and continuous quality improvement.



These need to be **framed and supported** by informed leadership; interprofessional learning and practice so that different kinds of practitioners work together well within and across sectors; coherent funding, policies, guidance, and standards; models of successful implementation that are tailored to local circumstances; and ongoing knowledge generation.

### UNIFYING FOUNDATION:

- Essential features of child development and early learning
- Principles to support quality professional practice

Success will require **coordinated actions by multiple stakeholders**, often working in different systems and sectors and at different levels.

## **Summary Areas of Recommendation**

### **Qualification Requirements for Professional Practice**

*Recommendation 1:* Strengthen competency-based qualification requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

*Recommendation 2:* Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multiyear timelines for transitioning to a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8.

*Recommendation 3:* Strengthen practice-based qualification requirements for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8.

### **Higher Education and Ongoing Professional Learning**

*Recommendation 4:* Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development.

*Recommendation 5:* Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

*Recommendation 6:* Support the consistent quality and coherence of professional learning supports during ongoing practice for professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

### **Evaluation and Assessment of Professional Practice**

*Recommendation 7:* Develop a new paradigm for evaluation and assessment of professional practice for those who work with children from birth through age 8.

### **The Critical Role of Leadership**

*Recommendation 8:* Ensure that policies and standards for care and education leaders encompass the foundational knowledge and competencies needed to support high-quality practices for child development and early learning.

### **Interprofessional Practice**

*Recommendation 9:* Strengthen collaboration and communication among professionals and systems within the care and education sector and with closely related sectors, especially health and social services.

### **Support for Implementation**

*Recommendation 10:* Support workforce development with coherent funding, oversight, and policies.

*Recommendation 11:* Collaboratively develop and periodically update coherent guidance that is foundational across roles and settings for care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

*Recommendation 12:* Support comprehensive state- and local-level efforts to transform the professional workforce for children from birth through age 8.

### **Improvement of the Knowledge Base**

*Recommendation 13:* Build a better knowledge base to inform workforce development and professional learning services and systems.

**Report, report brief, and other report materials are available for free download at [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu).**

**See Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.**