

Shera Scott – Candidate for CAAEYC Board Secretary

Leadership Experience

In the fall of 2018 I was given the task of training a staff of over 150 employees on a new application-based assessment tool for a program that served over 1000 families. This was a tool that was new to me and I was responsible for researching, designing and implementing the training. I started with a schedule in which I would personally visit 45 preschool teachers and walk them through the process. As I discovered the individual needs of the teachers, I began designing trainings based on these specific needs. In the end, every employee was trained, and the implementation of the application had lasting positive effects. I chose this as my leadership accomplishment I am most proud of not because of what I accomplished on paper, but what I accomplished as a person and how I grew. There were times when I was inspired, but also times when I was challenged both professionally and personally. I learned to walk through these times and to always enter each situation with an open mind and the best hope for a positive outcome that I could. I loved each moment of the experience and maybe loved the hardest ones the best.

Diversity and Inclusion Experience

I've had many different types of professional experiences with diversity and inclusion. When I was working as a classroom teacher, I worked at a Title 1 school and for a program that was aimed at meeting the needs of the youngest at-risk students in our school district. These students brought with them a wide range of life experiences as well as daily needs. I believe that no matter what a family or student's cultural background may be, it is not the single definition of diversity. Diversity is represented in many different forms, it is complex and multilayered.

A few years ago, I stepped out of the classroom and began working in a different capacity, but for the same school district and department. While my district and department stayed the same, the needs of the children and families that I work with changed. But do challenges still exist? Absolutely. The students and families are just as diverse and have just as many challenges. So how do I support diversity? I work daily to support all families and children, just as I always have. I don't look at what is surface level as my definition of diversity, I simply look at the need and strive to meet it.

Working in a classroom with young children for several years, I saw inclusion become more commonplace. For several years my general education classroom was paired with an on-site preschool/kindergarten autism program. During those years, I learned quite a lot about working with children with this type of special need. But, it would be my experience in the last year that has opened my eyes even more to the needs of adults when discussing inclusion. I've learned this lesson from one of my staff members. When I first met him, he was working daily in our program. He was able to carry out his job duties with very few accommodations. It wasn't until this current school year, that it became necessary to redesign his daily tasks. Students returned to our program in a completely different capacity. They would be with us the entire school day, while they attended their classes online and completed all work electronically. My staff aided them in managing technology issues, looking up assignments and overseeing their classroom work. It was very important to me to not only find him work to do,

but to find meaningful work. He became a priority right from the start and I worked to find him a unique task, suited to his strengths. One of his greatest strengths was developing activity plans for some of our youngest students. So, for the last six months he has submitted hundreds of ideas that have been added to our program and have enriched the curriculum that was already in place. In the end, it was important to me to make sure he was part of my team of over 70 employees. The goal was for him to not stand apart, but to stand together and contribute in the most meaningful way possible. The same goal I have for all my employees.

In conclusion, meeting the needs of a diverse community is a walk I take every day. Being inclusive is part of a normal day filled with extraordinary people.

Contributions to CAAEYC

I believe I bring the following abilities and skills to the CAAEYC Board. I am organized, and task oriented but am flexible enough to accept the diversity of skills and methods that others offer. I have 27 years of experience with the organization in a variety of leadership roles and am familiar with the policies and procedures as well as the culture of AEYC. I have the necessary technology and communication skills to carry out my assigned tasks and to continue to bring the mission, values and goals of the organization to the highest level of quality possible.

Vision for CAAEYC

I would like to see CAAEYC move forward to meet the ever-evolving needs of our membership. To serve our membership and the early childhood community, we must understand who they are and what they need. In the last year I believe we have overcome significant challenges and have learned that there are many ways to accomplish a goal. As technology continues to make communication easier and more widespread, we should be using it to reach our membership. Whether it be social media platforms or virtual events, technology can aide us in being an even more inclusive and diverse organization. I believe building relationships is also key to the growth of CAAEYC. Members need to feel as though they have a relationship with not only the organization but it's leadership. If we can accomplish this, we will have their support for years to come.