

Terri Allison
Candidate Statement
Board Officer Position: President-Elect
Term: 2025-2027

My vision for CAAEYC is to continue the work toward sustainability. There are many new opportunities in Early Care and Education with increased State and Federal funding, Universal T-K and other initiatives. CAAEYC can play a pivotal role in these initiatives through advocacy, training, and participation in collaborative efforts.

Currently, I am working as an Early Education Consultant. I have contracts with Storyteller Children's Center, SBC Department of Social Services, UCSB, Santa Barbara Foundation, St Vincent's Children Center and Community. My work includes Reflective Practice with teachers and administrators, classroom support, coaching, project management and training. Before starting my consultant business, I was the Executive Director of Storyteller Children's Center, a childcare center for homeless and at-risk preschoolers' ages 18 months to five years. During my tenure there, I oversaw the operation of two sites; supervised, trained and lead personnel who included teachers, development staff, program officers and administrative staff. I managed a \$1.7 million budget that included grant writing, management and fundraising. Beyond the provision of early care and education for the children, Storyteller is committed to providing the children and families it serves with the foundational tools for success through a relationship and strength-based program, working collaboratively with community resources to comprehensively address child and family needs in a culturally and linguistically appropriate environment.

Although all of my work in ECE has influenced my growth as an educator, my experience working at Storyteller and my post-graduate work in Infant-Parent Mental Health has given me unique skills. Storyteller serves the community's most vulnerable children and families. Most have been homeless at some point, lived in shelters or with multiple families in one small apartment. Their parents often suffer from risk factors such as poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence and/or medical conditions. Due to the high rate of developmental delays and trauma experienced by the children and families, we developed a collaborative, comprehensive intervention program with the goal of improving the health, social-emotional and behavioral well-being of homeless, low-income children and children at-risk for child welfare and foster care involvement. This mental health consultation model, with a focus on reflective practice, was created to address the dire needs of the families for whom we served. My work in trauma informed care, in collaboration with community partners, allowed us to look holistically at each family and create a program in which parents, teachers, therapists and specialists worked together to understand, rather than manage, behavior and challenges.

The diversity of my experience has allowed me to work with many different families with cultural, economic, educational and linguistic differences. Through my work with families, I have come to understand and respect the unique cultural diversity of each family, in addition to their most apparent characteristics. A fundamental principle of my work is to acknowledge and examine underlying assumptions as a part of working together. My on-going work with reflective practice allows me to explore and process my own biases to lessen their impact on my work. Sensitivity to others and their direct experience, a key in building open and honest relationships, is a priority and one that I continue to hone and improve.

I am excited for this opportunity to continue to be a part of leadership for CAAEYC. I have spent more than 35 years working as an educator in many different settings. I have worked extensively with children of all ages, primarily with toddlers and preschoolers. I have had administrative and programmatic opportunities to work with family childcare, Head Start and State Preschool, bilingual and bicultural classrooms in varied settings. I am familiar with grant writing, fundraising and budgets. Most importantly, though, I have been focused on relationship building and collaboration to create programs that improve outcomes for children and families. I think that experience will help build innovative collaborations as CAAEYC navigates the opportunities and challenges of new relationships with the national office, chapters and members.