

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

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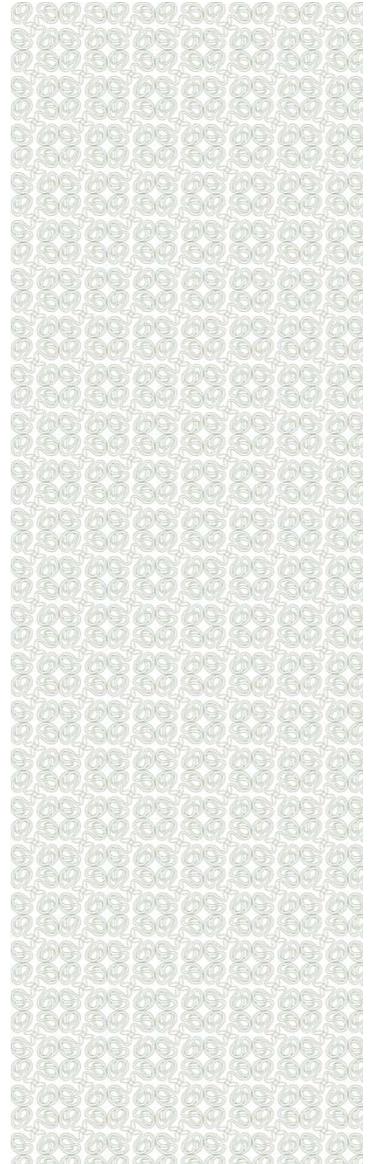
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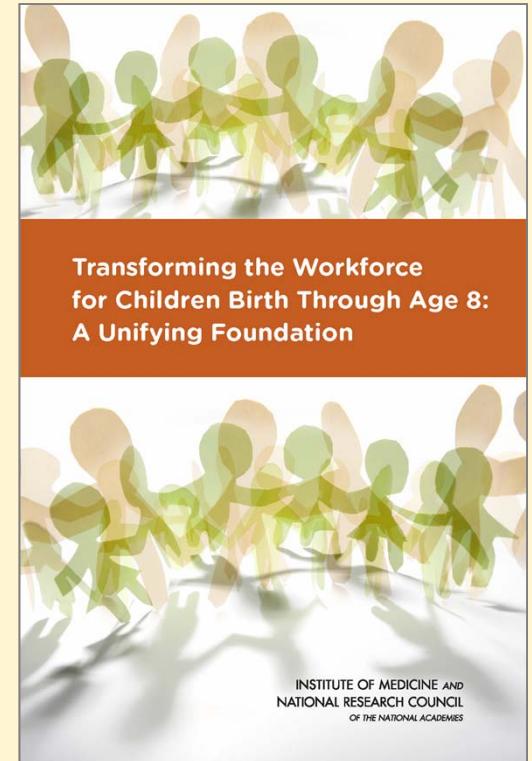
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Abbreviated Statement of Task

How can the science of children's health, learning, and development inform how the workforce supports children from birth through age 8?



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Study Sponsors

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Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families

Department of Health and Human Services, Health
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Study Process and Approach



Information Gathering Sources

Document review

Public sessions

Site visits and interviews

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Key Messages

Children are already learning at birth.

Development and learning in the early years is rapid and cumulative – and is the foundation for lifelong progress.

Adults who provide for the care and education of children birth through age 8 bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning.

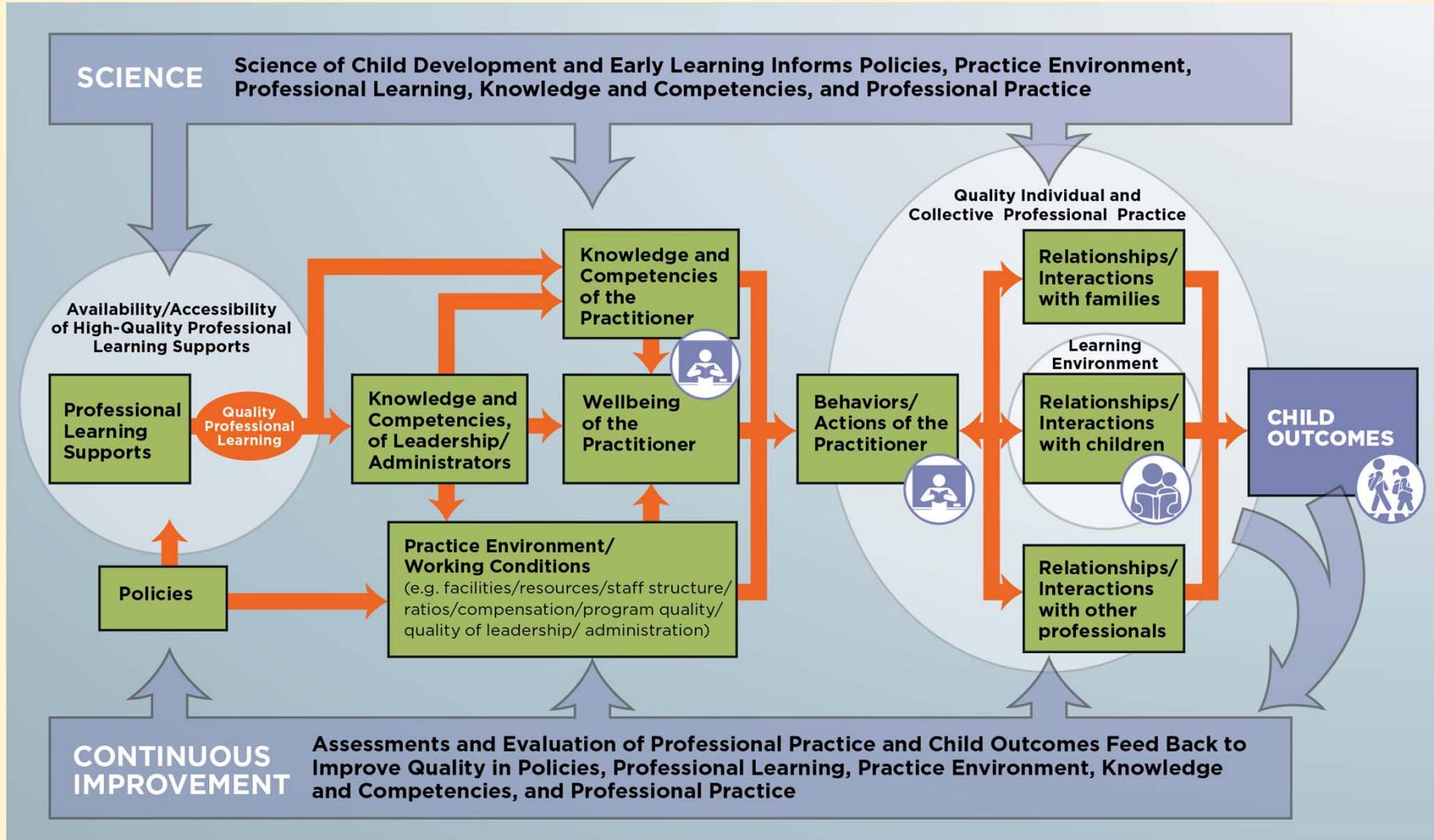
Just when consistent, continuous support is so important, the systems and services that children encounter – and the systems that support the adults who work with them – are fragmented.

Key Messages

Practices and policies have often not kept pace with what we know about the sophisticated knowledge and competencies required to provide high-quality care and education for children birth through age 8.

High-quality practice requires more than individual mastery of competencies.

Many Factors Contribute to Quality Practice



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Overview of Recommendations: A Blueprint for Action

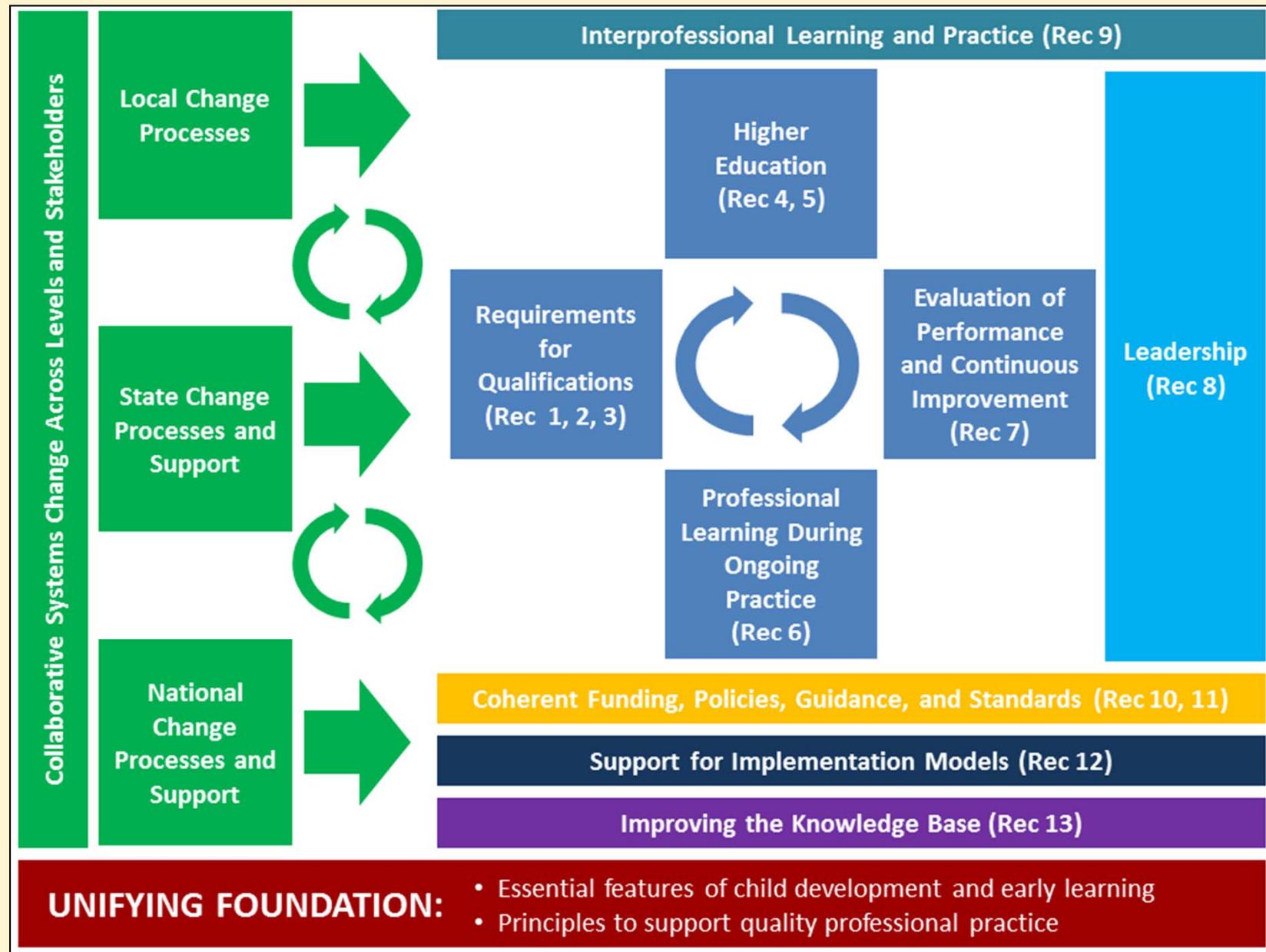
Vision:

A care and education workforce for children birth through age 8 that is unified by a foundation of the science of child development and early learning, shared knowledge and competencies, and principles to support quality professional practice at the individual, setting, systems, and policy levels.

As a result:

All children experience high-quality and continuity in support for their development and early learning.

Overview of Recommendations: A Blueprint for Action



A Unifying Foundation: Essential Features of Child Development

- Children are already learning actively at birth, and the early foundations of learning inform and influence future development and learning continuously as they age.
- A continuous, dynamic interaction among experiences (whether nurturing or adverse), gene expression, and brain development underlies the capacity for development and learning.
- Young children's development and early learning encompass cognitive development; the acquisition of subject matter knowledge and skills; the development of general learning competencies; socioemotional development; and health and physical well-being.

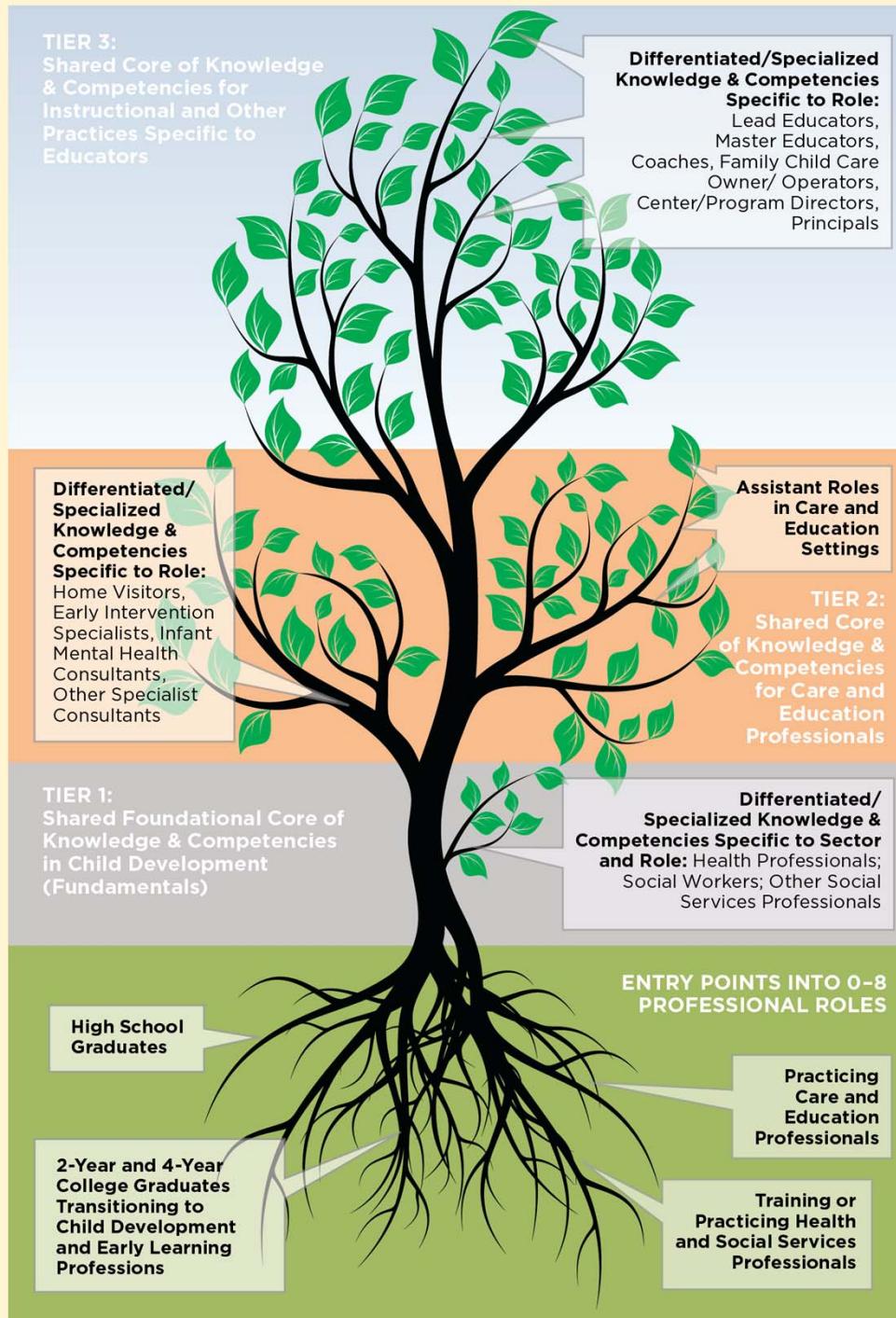
Each of these is crucial to early learning, and each has specific developmental paths. They also are overlapping and mutually influential.

- Stress and adversity experienced by children can undermine learning and impair socioemotional and physical well-being.



A Unifying Foundation: Essential Features of Child Development

- Secure and responsive relationships with adults, coupled with high-quality, positive learning interactions and environments, are foundational for the healthy development of young children. Conversely, adults who are underinformed, underprepared, or subject to chronic stress themselves may contribute to children's experiences of adversity and stress and undermine their development and learning.



A Unifying Foundation: Principles to Support Quality Practice

- Professionals need foundational and specific competencies.
- Professionals need to be able to support diverse populations.
- Professional learning systems need to develop and sustain professional competencies.
- Practice environments need to enable high-quality practice.
- Systems and policies need to align with the aims of high-quality practice.
- Professional practice, systems, and polices need to be adaptive.



Qualification Requirements

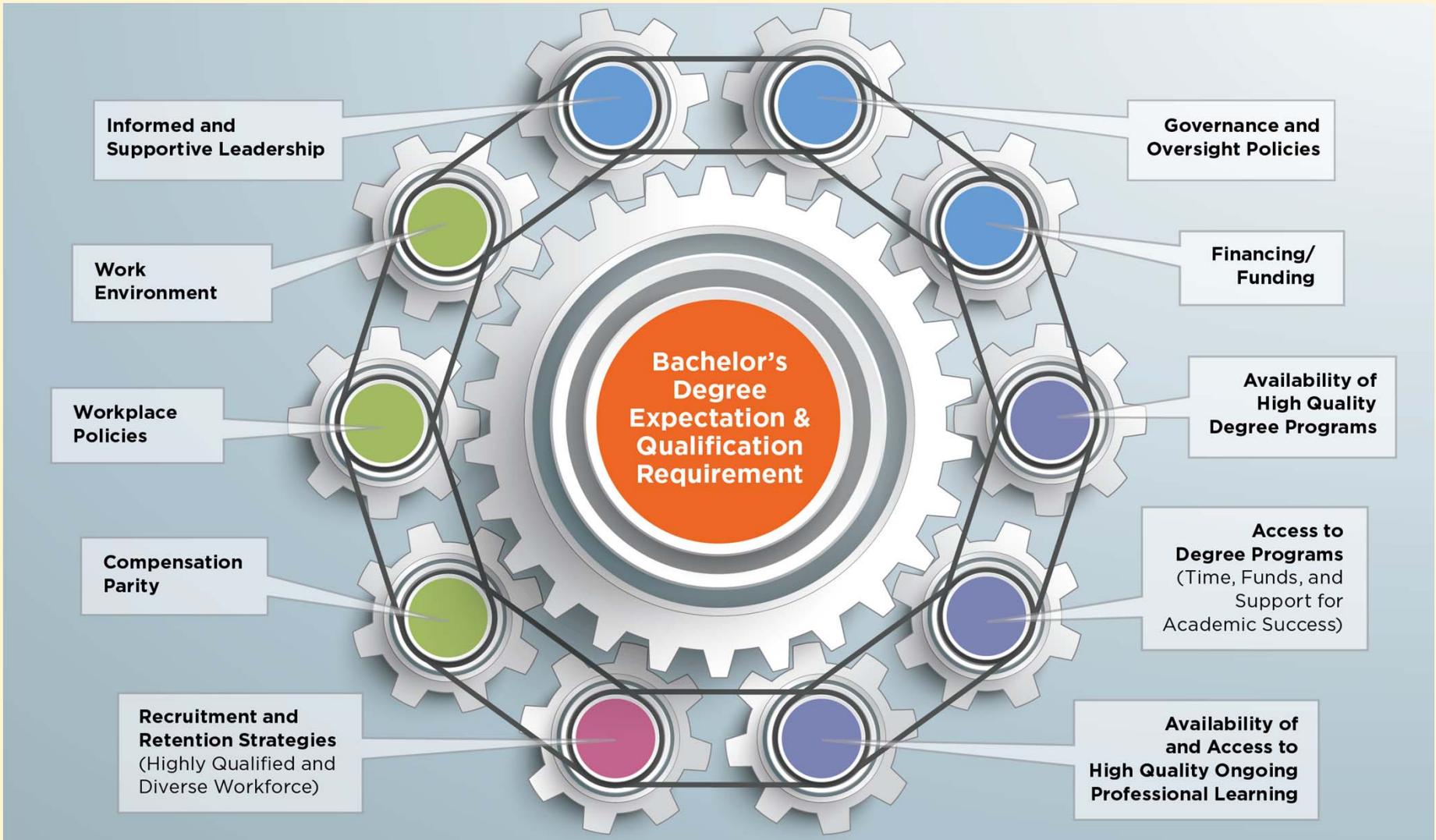
Strengthen competency-based qualification requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

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.

Simply instituting policies requiring a minimum bachelor's degree is not sufficient:

- Implement carefully over time
 - multiyear, phased, multicomponent, and coordinated strategy,
 - tailored to local circumstances
 - coordinated for changes at the individual, institutional, and policy levels
- Implement in the context of efforts to address other interrelated factors
 - Thus, this recommendation is closely interconnected with those that follow.

A degree requirement that doesn't stand alone



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The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; please see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.

Higher Education

Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals through requirements for coursework and field-based learning, partnerships with local practice communities, and cross-institutional relationships.

- coursework in development, subject matter content, and instructional and other practices to foster development and early learning;
- field experiences;
- methods to document demonstrated mastery of practice
- programs differentiated by age range, subject matter, or specialized professional roles should also ensure adequate knowledge of development and learning across the birth through age 8 continuum so that care and education professionals will be prepared to support consistency for children

Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development through a core of requirements in preparation for professional roles working with children from birth through age 8 in education, social services, and health/allied health professions.

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The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; please see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.

Ongoing Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement

Support consistent quality, coherence, and availability of professional learning supports during ongoing practice for professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

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

Review of current systems and policies as well as research and development to better:

- assess children's progress in all domains and link children's progress to professional practice
- assess a broad range of professional knowledge and competencies,
- account for setting-level and community-level factors
- incorporate assessment in a continuous system of supports to inform and improve professional practice

Leadership

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.

For **early care and education leaders**, strengthen instructional leadership as a core competency.

For **principals**, better integrate early learning principles and best practices throughout the principal development pipeline.

Interprofessional Practice

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

Strategies and mechanisms to facilitate:

- sharing and interpretation of information
- connections among services for children and families
- professional learning communities that span roles and sectors

Particular emphasis on strengthening linkages and consultation that support children's mental health.

Health, mental health, and social services sectors should improve their professional learning systems to better incorporate fundamental knowledge in child development and the competencies needed to work with young children and collaborate with care and education professionals.

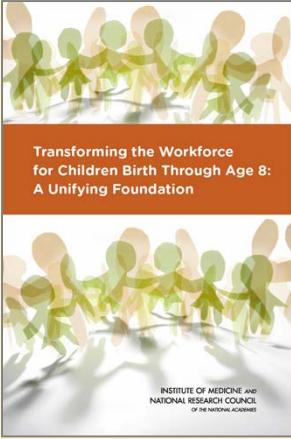
Support for Implementation

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

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

To model this, jointly fund local or state coalitions to undertake 10-year model initiatives:

- a collective effort to review, assess, and improve professional learning and workforce development for the care and education workforce for children from birth through age 8
- document and share actions undertaken and lessons learned
- regular knowledge exchange so that other localities can learn from the models iteratively and in real time



Call to Action

This report calls for a commitment to the pathways that will lead us to the systems and policies that we *need* (rather than making do within the systems and policies that we *have*).

This is not fast, easy, or cheap. It will require a strategic, progressive trajectory to transform the professional landscape, accompanied by significant commitment, mobilization of resources, and innovations in financing.

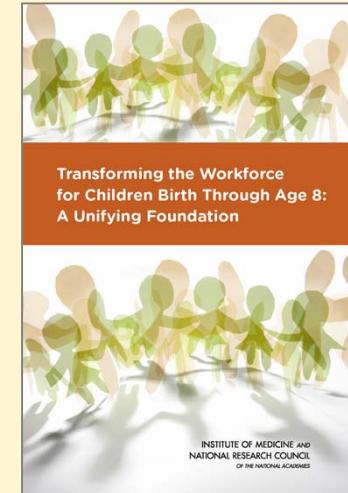
But the status quo will perpetuate today's fragmented approach, resulting in less than adequate support for children's development and learning.



Final Thoughts

The committee anticipates these actions will transform the workforce:

- Elevate the perception of the professionals who work with children from birth through age 8:
 - Recognize their complex and important role and the intellectually, physically, and emotionally challenging nature of their work.
 - Recognize the deep, extensive, and ongoing professional learning and other support that is required for them to be successful.
- Improve the quality of professional practice, the quality of the practice environment, and the status and well-being of the workforce.
- Retain highly effective practitioners and bolster the recruitment of a robust and viable pipeline of new professionals.
- **As a result:** Get things right from the very beginning for all children, laying the foundation for their lifelong progress.



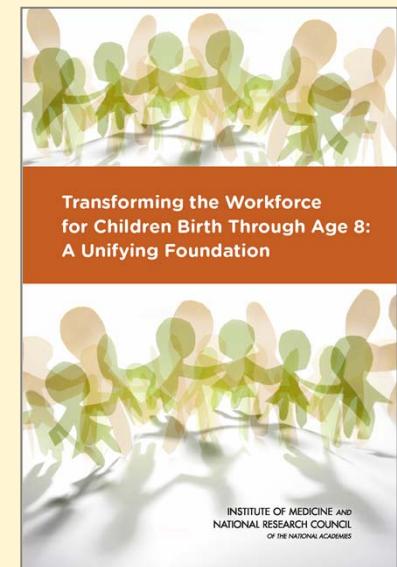
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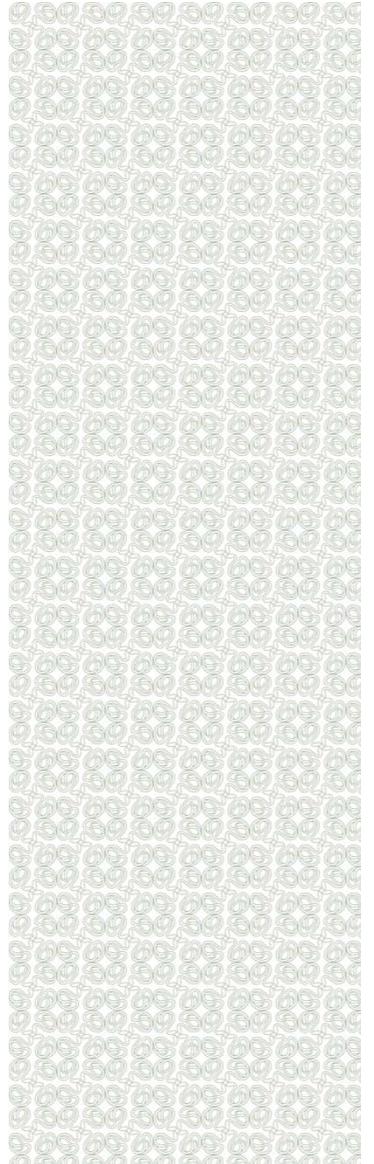
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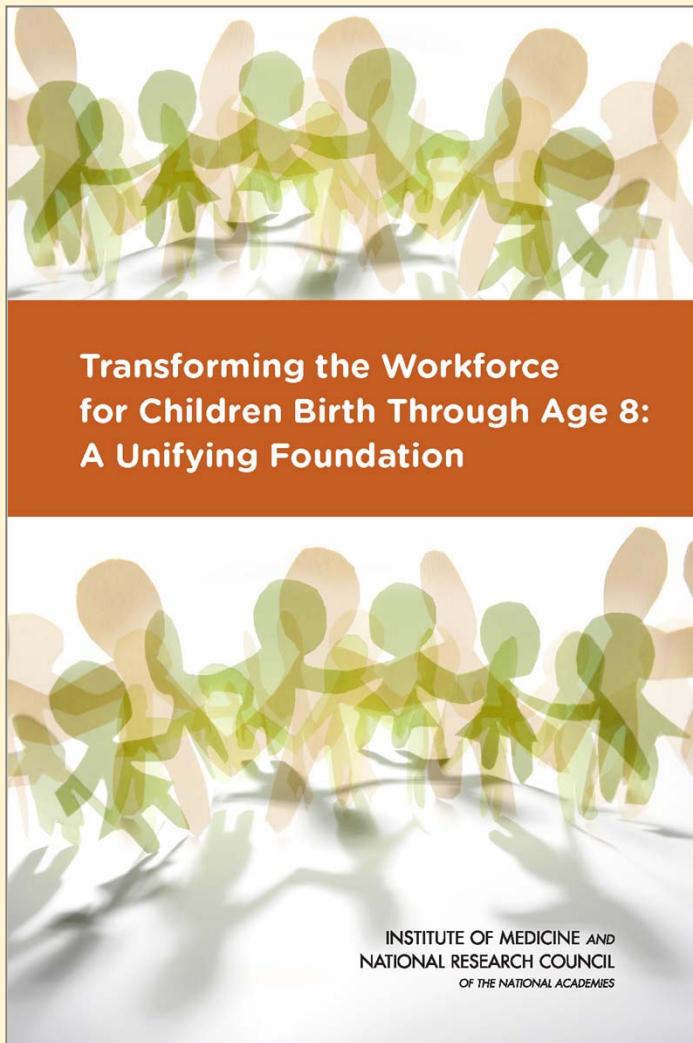


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Thank you!



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Related Ongoing Studies**

Committee on Supporting the Parents
of Young Children

Committee on Fostering School
Success for English Learners: Toward
New Directions in Policy, Practice, and
Research

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