

MnAEYC Leadership Journey Series...to Join or Not to Join?

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MnAEYC's [Leadership Journey Series](#) is a new and exciting professional development opportunity that began in May 2016. When the first call for participants came out, we read through the information and then did what one with no spare time always does – say to ourselves, “This seems like a great opportunity, but between identifying, hiring and training new staff, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the center, and supervising my existing staff, where will the time to leave the center twice a month come from?” Then one moves on. After a few days you read the information again. What if the description was true? What if MnAEYC had really designed a training to bring directors together to understand the systems and processes of the field, and to work on higher-level leadership skill development? That could be the most beneficial training opportunity in years. So we took the risk, made the commitment, and decided to join the advanced cohort, *Realizing Potential*.

We are so happy we did!

This series gave us the opportunity to get together with an experienced group of directors to discuss the issues we face every day. We were able to discuss things formally through trainings, and more informally in networking groups called Communities of Practice (COPs). We are all aware that there has been a shift in the way the country and the state view early care and education. This new era of consciousness in the community is recognizing the importance of the early childhood age. The concern for the quantity of care available has shifted to a genuine concern for the *quality* of child care provided, which includes new respect for the caregiver role.

Directors have been in the lead in creating and maintaining settings for quality care, and have a relevant understanding of the complex issues that early care and education needs to address. Now is the time for us to work together to influence the development of a system for early care and education.

The Leadership Journey Series was the perfect chance to grow both personally and professionally. Many directors of early childhood programs are doing amazing things, but so often we find ourselves feeling isolated. As a result of the Leadership Journey Series, directors from programs of different sizes, settings and philosophical backgrounds have been able to come together to voice concerns and work cohesively to not only understand one another, but to share our wisdom and develop stronger individual programs. MnAEYC has provided us with an opportunity to discuss concerns, ideas and dreams, and has provided us with a MnAEYC-MnSACA Early Childhood Specialist to help frame these discussions. The opportunity to come together with wonderful, qualified directors has been highly beneficial for all involved, as well as those we direct and serve.

We would encourage any director who is interested in participating in a series designed to influence and enhance our programs to sign up for the next Leadership Journey Series cohort. Two levels of training are available – one for new directors and emerging leaders, and one for experienced directors and leaders. Though time is often a constraint for many of us, the time spent with this cohort is well spent and meaningful.

Registration is still open! Spots are limited and are available on a first come-first serve basis. Don't miss out on this wonderful professional development opportunity. [Learn more](#) about the Leadership Journey Series and [register today!](#)