



Florida Association for the
Education of Young Children

2020-2021 FLAEYC Executive Board Elections

The 2020-2021 FLAEYC Executive Board Election is scheduled to be held **October 12-November 11, 2020**. Accordingly, we have provided information to help members elect the candidates of their choice. This packet includes:

- Election Overview
- Candidate Listing
- Candidate Profiles

The actual ballot will be made available to the FLAEYC membership on October 11. **Members can cast their ballot online through our membership portal (you must be logged in) or by downloading the PDF and mailing to our office.**

If you chose to provide a write-in candidate, space is provided on the ballot for this purpose. Please remember that write-in candidates must meet all qualifications, be a member and be willing to serve.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chris Duggan, Executive Director, at cduggan@flaeyc.org.

Candidates for FLAEYC Board Service

Board Secretary (select one)

The Secretary ensures the safety and accuracy of all board records, meeting calendar and board related communications. Assumes responsibility of board chair in absence of president or past president/president-elect as well as ensures timely notice of meetings of the board and/or a committee.

- Norma Schwartz

SECA Representative (select one)

The SECA representative is a specifically elected and held office. The SECA representative will attend all SECA board meetings as the Florida representative. The SECA representative will act as the liaison between the FLAEYC board and the SECA board, and will serve both entities.

- Dana Rolle
- Jayne Hafer
- Victoria Damjanovic

At-Large Board Member (select five)

These members represent the diverse composition of the FLAEYC membership. These positions serve to ensure that FLAEYC is a high performance, inclusive organization that reflects the concerns, issues and will of the membership.

- Brooke Tucker
- Claudia Orrett
- Erin Smeltzer
- Linda Chambers
- Mimi Jefferson
- Natalie Williams
- Natasha Smith
- Priscilla Ramos
- Sonia Meier
- Stephanie DeScalzo
- Tanya Hall
- Vicki Mackey



Name: Norma Schwartz, MS

Position Applying for: Board Secretary

Occupation: Education Consultant

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

The critical issues I see facing the field of early childhood education are: Ensuring all families have access to high early childhood quality education in all parts of the State of Florida; Addressing racial inequity practices in all areas of our field from classroom practices and beyond to including leadership within our system; The critical need to empower our workforce and the importance of the work we do and the respect our field deserves.

2. What is FLAIEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAIEYC's role in addressing these issues is to bring everyone together as a united body that will create the conditions through education, support, and presence as a catalyst to improve and change the issues we are facing in the field. FLAIEYC's role is also to engage others to join our causes and pursuit of a unified network to improve the lives of all of Florida's children.

3. Provide specific examples of how your experiences related to governance and leadership prepared you to be an effective leader of FLAIEYC at this time.

My experiences in the field of Early Ed span from being a Head Start teacher for several years, co-founding a tech startup, and working on various congressionally mandated Early Ed studies. As a very active FLAIEYC member, I have proudly attended NAEYC's Public Policy Forum in Washington DC twice both as a participant and a presenter on a panel as part of the state public policy FLAIEYC team (self-funded). I have also served as voice in NAEYC's Power to the Profession initiative see video: <https://youtu.be/wr9P-nh-fxU>. This past year I collaborated with FLAIEYC members across the state to form the new Statewide Advocacy Chapter in order to create the space for advocacy in our industry. I have been able to collaborate on various workgroups/task-forces as a result of my current role on the Board (finance; conference; and recently our virtual COVID forum series this past Spring.)

4. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

As an active participant of the board and organization as a whole I look forward in maintaining detailed records of our meetings, and organizational correspondence, along with the commitment of becoming the resource go to person for our governing by-laws to ensure we are always in compliance when conducting our meetings/business. I also want to ensure that our board is recognized for not only the business conducted on behalf of their service to

FLAEYC but on other equally important milestones such as birthdays, graduations, and other life events that are as equally important as we work together on our shared mission at FLAEYC.



Name: Dana Rolle, EdD

Position applying for: FLAEYC SECA Representative

Occupation: Preschool Center Manager

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Critical issues that are facing early childhood education at this time are high levels of employment turnover among early childhood teachers, as well as the quality of Professional Development trainings that can enhance teachers' ability to maintain a safe learning environment for all children.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC provides ongoing conferences and trainings that are available to early childhood educators. I believe that these trainings and conferences provide strategies in assisting educators in their classroom environment.

3. Provide specific examples of how your experiences related to governance and leadership prepared you to be an effective leader of FLAEYC at this time.

My past and current jobs in early childhood included working in leadership roles such as; Preschool Director, Early Childhood Master Teacher Specialist, and Early Childhood Adjunct Professor. These roles have prepared me to be an effective leader in the early childhood field. The skills and experience that I will bring to the Board 20 plus years of early childhood experience, excellent customer service skills, team player, leadership skills, and a positive attitude.



Name: Jayne Hafer, MEd

Position Applying for: FLAEYC SECA Representative

Occupation: Preschool Director/Teacher (retired 9/30/20)

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Low wages for early childhood teachers and directors, more funding needed for education, more recognition for profession and professionalism. Quality care for all children. Need to teach teachers and directors to become advocates.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

Commitment to improve professional development by being an organization to serve early childhood teachers and directors. This is a vehicle that reaches out to benefit all children and families through providing tools and training for professional development for training, leadership and advocacy.

3. Provide specific examples of how your experiences related to governance and leadership prepared you to be an effective leader of FLAEYC at this time.

I have taught many workshops in Broward County for the ELC of Broward, went to Costa Rica with ACEI to teach a workshop on leadership, was President, Vice President of Broward AEYC, currently on the board of Toastmasters and of our church women's fellowship serving as President. I believe all children can learn and by being on the FAU school advisory board and as former President of Kappa Delta Pi at FAU I led students to go to KDP conventions and to volunteer in Palm Beach County. By formerly serving on FLAEYC board as an at large member, I had an amazing experience of serving Florida through great mentors.



Name: Victoria Damjanovic, PhD

Position Applying for: FLAEYC SECA Representative

Occupation: Director and Affiliated Faculty

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Equity and access is the first thing that comes to mind. There is a lack of high-quality programs that all children should have access to. All children need programs that support their development and growth while supporting their families. There is also a lack of equity for the workforce of early childhood educators. Teachers, that are essential to every quality program, are paid wages that are at the poverty level. This leads to high attrition and a depletion of continuity in early childhood programs.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC's strategic plan revolves around creating opportunities for equity and access. They do this by working with policy makers and making sure they are part of the conversation. They disseminate information to members to assure they know what is going on at the state level, as well as provide opportunities for education and professional development. FLAEYC advocates for children, families, and the early childhood workforce through outreach such as conferences, webinars, specialized chapters, and regional chapters.

3. Provide specific examples of how your experiences related to governance and leadership prepared you to be an effective leader of FLAEYC at this time.

I have served as a State Advisory Council Member, FLAEYC Member at Large Board Member, Co-Chair in creating the Director's Chapter, Co-creator of the ELC of Hillsborough Counties Director's Network, and PCL Board Member. Through these various positions I have had many leadership opportunities that work with policy, programming, and supporting schools and teachers. I have also contracted with multiple schools in the state of Florida to help assist them in improving their own programs.



Name: Brooke Tucker, MEd

Position applying for: At-Large Board member

Occupation: Preschool Administration

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Given the current state of our nation, the primary issue facing the field of early childhood education is navigating the pandemic. I start with this issue because the consequences of action - or inaction - during this time can drastically change the landscape of our field and impact the issues that were present prior to the pandemic. Many early childhood centers in Florida are facing decreased enrollment or closures which will have a ripple effect, economically, throughout our community.

Another critical issue facing the field of early childhood education is adequate compensation for early childhood professionals with a tie to a clear professional pathway and career ladder. Many early childhood professionals lack access to higher education. And those that do have access to higher education often leave the classroom because compensation is not adequate. The first three to five years of a child's life are critical periods for brain development. This means that having teachers in early childhood classrooms that have a deep understanding of brain development and how to translate that into effective pedagogy is essential.

2. What is FLAIEYC's role in addressing these issues?

As an association that has promoted and supported quality care for all children, FLAIEYC has a responsibility to advocate for the early childhood field and help reduce or eliminate permanent school closures during the pandemic. The pandemic has also created an opportunity to bring our field into the national spotlight. Although the reason for the spotlight arriving is far less than ideal, we have an opportunity to highlight how essential this field is, not just during a pandemic but at all times. FLAIEYC is in a position to showcase the importance of the early childhood field while pointing to issues that have long plagued the field with the goal of helping policymakers create policies that are beneficial long-term.

FLAIEYC also has a responsibility to support the establishment of a system that provides access to higher education which results in adequate compensation and leads to more degreed teachers staying in the classroom. FLAIEYC is also able to continue to educate policymakers and the general public about the importance of early childhood education. By helping to rewrite the narrative that early childhood professionals are mere babysitters or that no real learning happens in preschool, FLAIEYC can help turn the tides on an archaic idea that has held the field back for years. By highlighting the importance of our work, FLAIEYC can help secure funding that is necessary to promote high-quality learning throughout the state.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

Throughout my ten years of experience in early childhood education, I have realized that executing ideas is a strength of mine. I know that, if elected, this will serve me well in my position as part of my role as an At-Large Board Member is to monitor the execution of strategic plans and policy decisions. I also have ties to different communities throughout Florida and know that this will be a benefit as I present the organization's image to the community and solicit its support in achieving FLAEYC's goals.



Name: Claudia Orrett, PhD

Position applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Business Owner

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

If you asked me this question, prior to the Pandemic, my answer would be the lack of resources available for children with a learning disability or some type of special need. Our Preschool teachers are not equipped to handle 18 atypical children and then a child who possibly is in the Spectrum. This is very challenging for Centers who lack the resources to be able to be accommodating. If you asked me this question today, how do we teach children our new normal. Wearing mask all day is not something that you can asked a Toddler to do and expect results; how do we teach our children without the worry that we are going to transmit any germs. Through our accreditation's, we practice washing hands, meal preparations, etc. now it is so much that childcare's have to overcome in order to focus on teaching, or simply allowing children to play.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC's has to continue to be in the forefront of raising awareness; teaching; promoting; and ensuring that Early Childhood Programs have the support that they need to be able to perform there day to day functions. Teachers need to be comfortable teaching our children without adding more responsibility. It is difficult, to teach, offer a safe, loving environment while ensuring a virus or pandemic is not being transmitted. Children get sick, they touch everything; Early Childhood programs are now having to add other protocols in addition to the existing ones. FLAEYC's role is to continue to use their platform to set policy and ensure the field continues to grow.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I am interested in the Board Member at large. I had the opportunity to be part of many Boards which I take my role very seriously. Highlighting my Professional Experience, I had the opportunity to build my schools from the ground up. Committed to high quality in all of my previous and current programs. I am very involved in Community issues; raising awareness; fundraising; volunteering.



Name: Erin Smeltzer, PhD

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Executive Director

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

The market cannot sustain itself, causing low wages for employees and, at times, low quality early learning experiences for children.

2. What is FLAAYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAAYC can advocate for policy changes while supporting the workforce with the resources necessary to thrive among the current challenges they are facing.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I have been a preschool teacher, program director, state program manager, and now support all the early learning coalitions in the State. I know this work from so many perspectives that it feels natural to work with teams in developing collaborative solutions that address the challenges faced by all stakeholders. Through these experiences, I have learned the benefits of leading *and* following and feel confident I can bring the empathy that is necessary to lead many different stakeholders. Ultimately, FLAAYC is stronger when it has alignment with early learning stakeholders. My participation could help strengthen the network that advocates alongside FLAAYC and extend resources and supports when they are needed from other partners.



Name: Linda Chambers

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Director

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Currently, I am alarmed by the number of closures due to the Covid pandemic. Overall, I am concerned that children usually come last in politics on every level and the lack of equity in childcare.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

Advocacy and awareness.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I have been involved in conference planning for national conferences, as well as regional events. I enjoy brainstorming with colleagues, and I am very solution-oriented.



Name: Mimi Jefferson, MS

Position applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Education Consultant

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Access to high quality early childhood services for ALL children by increasing funding /resources availability. More funding will position programs with paying better wages, offer benefits, provide developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum; thereby attracting quality talent. Further, increased funding will provide more access to materials for instruction, technology and robust, meaningful professional development opportunities. In the wake of COVID-19, I have given thought to those programs,

primarily private childcare programs, who have either gone out of business or could not support the families that they serve due to limited access to resources.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC serves as the advocate for such initiatives by listening to the communities, discussing ways to support through partnership with stakeholders, businesses, and Regional, Federal, State and Local leadership.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

The skills and experiences that I would bring to At-Large Member can be seen through my 22-year career and community work regarding the need to provide high quality early childhood education opportunities for all children. I have served in a variety of Leadership capacities always recognizing that my core element is advocacy. I have served on a variety of committees, as well as facilitated and implemented T/TA opportunities for professionals who serve within the ECE field. Notably, I have worked very closely with Regional and State Associations with the implementation of Annual Conferences that are focused on issues concerning children ages 0-5.



Name: Natalie Williams, MEd

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Director of Education

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Virtual learning, representation in the classroom environment, teacher professional development to advance and grow, child advocacy of children with varying abilities, expulsion of brown and black boys in the field

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

Advocacy is what FLAEYC does best! Supporting the issues that the members and most importantly the community is facing at any given time. Through online networking opportunities, trainings, zoom calls and town hall meetings, but most importantly FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues require consistent advocacy with legislation and playing an

active role in policy making decisions and educating the early childhood education community on the importance of joining their efforts.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I am a community leader, an advocate, an active member who shows up, serves on committees, stays connected with a "boots on the ground" approach to networking and rallying our constituent



Name: Natasha Smith, PhD

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Preschool Director/ Adjunct Instructor

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

A need for greater understanding of infant/early childhood/family mental health and its effect on a child's development and learning process.

2. What is FLAEEYC's role in addressing these issues?

Advocacy, research, and training

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I am solution-oriented and enjoy working collaboratively toward solving problems and creating innovative solutions. I have a strong work ethic that drives me to see every job through to completion; and most importantly, I am passionate about the field of early childhood education.



Name: Priscilla Ramos

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Program Assessment Specialist

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Our current issue is keeping our preschools open due to Covid, our VPK rules of non-virtual instruction, which is challenging if schools close due to Covid 19, our state classroom teacher child ratios, getting our preschool teachers who are also essential workers the respect and the benefits they deserve, which is critical now when many don't know if they will have employment in the upcoming future. Ensuring our early childhood teachers that their certifications can be validated as a formal certification allowing them more venues for employment. Ensuring proper training and support for teachers to feel well prepared to manage an inclusive classroom.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC has been actively advocating on all the above issues from virtual CoP's to webinars.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I'm mostly interested in being a member at large due to prior experience in this with my current partnerships. I am also bilingual and I can advocate for our spanish speaking early childhood professionals and families.



Name: Sonia Meier

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Child Care Division Director

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Critical issues surrounding the profession of early childhood education has been heightened during the pandemic - understanding that early childhood care and education are not only critical to later school success of children, but also critical to the rebuilding of our economy. It is vital at this time to advocate for increased funding to help quality programs survive and thrive during these unprecedented times.

2. What is FLAAYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAAYC has used these times as an opportunity to reach a wide range of early childhood professionals and seen as a strong support to the providers across the state. I see this as a time to make a bigger impact throughout the state and be the voice for all providers. I see FLAAYC being the coordinator of bringing all child care agencies to the table to address the concerns in collaboration.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

I have been a member for over twelve years, including serving as an At-Large Board Member for the past two years. I have also served in several capacities in the local affiliates in Pinellas, but mostly Hillsborough County. I have served as the Pre-Registration Chair for the past 12 years for the annual state conference. I currently supervise ten early childhood programs in Pinellas and Hillsborough County serving children ages 2 months to 5 years of age. I work with a wide variety of partners and funders, from VPK, School Readiness, and Head Start/Early Head Start. I have chaired many different events at my agency from luncheons to full day conferences. My attention to organization and details is a strong asset that I would love to continue to share with FLAAYC in a broader role.



Name: Stephanie DeScalzo

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Behavior coach/Early Childhood Coach

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Valuing the importance of high quality early childhood education. Developmentally Appropriate Practices being implemented nationwide, Continued and Increased funding for so that all families have access to high quality early childhood education. Professional Development of teachers, and pay.

2. What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues is shining a light on these issues through advocacy in local communities, state and federal levels. Being a resource within the state of Florida for professional development, and being up to date with legislature happening and giving opportunities for professionals to advocate for issues.

3. Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

As a recent graduate, I will have more time to attend regularly scheduled board meetings, participate in committee work. I will continue to become informed about FLAEYC policies and programs. I will be able to participate in fundraising activities and special events, I continue to keep myself informed in advocacy practices.



Name: Tanya Hall, MBA

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Early Childhood Management

1. What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Critical issues that I currently see facing the field of early childhood education include continuity of care through reducing staff turnover. This often contributed to pay, support and training. In addition, currently COVID-19 is at the forefront of challenges and critical issues that the field of early childhood education is facing. How do we

provide quality education and learning both face to face and through virtual platform? How do we ensure that children do not fall behind but continue to thrive in the middle of a pandemic?

2.What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues is in providing a platform of professionals with various backgrounds, education and experience to ask these questions and create a plan to deliver solutions through support, coaching and training.

3.Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

Key skills that I would bring to this position are a passion for early childhood education, experience and ease communication and speaking, over a decade of effective leadership, knowledge of state standards, risk management and strategic planning.



Name: Vicki Mackey

Position Applying for: At-Large Board Member

Occupation: Director of student and family ministries

1.What are critical issues that you see facing the field of early childhood education?

Poverty. Training of new teachers. Pay rates. Ratios.

2.What is FLAEYC's role in addressing these issues?

Advocacy, and help in training.

3.Specific to the Board position that you are interested in, please address the skills and experiences you would bring to this position.

As a seasoned teacher, I love to help teachers in the classroom who are new. I love to help them set up their classrooms and give them pointers to what they don't learn out of a textbook.