



MARGIE CARTER • LUZ MARIA CASIO • DEB CURTIS

The Visionary Director

A Handbook for
Dreaming, Organizing, and
Improvising in Your Center

THIRD EDITION

THE VISIONARY DIRECTOR

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THE VISIONARY DIRECTOR



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and Improvising in Your Center

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Margie Carter, Luz Maria Casio, and Deb Curtis

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From Luz

Para: Karina Rojas, la hija que nunca tuve. Quién ha sido mi amiga crítica para convertirme en la directora que soy hoy, por creer y confiar en mis ideas; Karina ha sido mi socia en todos los cambios y abogacía, el motor que inspira a otros a seguir la visión que tenemos para nuestra comunidad latina.

To: Karina Rojas, the daughter I never had. Who has been my critical friend to become the director I am today to believe and trust my ideas; Karina has been my partner in all changes and advocacy, the engine who inspires others to follow the vision we have for our Latino community.

From Margie and Deb

To: Rukia Monique Rogers,
Imagine a program led by a Black woman with a lively mind and spirit. Imagine a school developing children with strong identities to become leaders to help birth a world where empathy and kindness are the norm, where hate and racism are never welcome, where environmental destruction is replaced by a deep acknowledgment that our lives are intertwined with the natural world, where science, art, music, dance, and medical cures enable everyone to live fully nourished.

This is the energy that Rukia brings to her work as the founder and director of the Highlander School in Atlanta, Georgia. She is the epitome of the visionary leader this book reflects.

We cannot neglect our interior fire without damaging ourselves in the process. A certain vitality smolders inside us irrespective of whether it has an outlet or not. *When it remains unlit, the body fills with dense smoke.* I think we all live with the hope that we can put off our creative imperatives until a later time and not be any the worse for it. But refusing to give room to the fire, our bodies fill with an acrid smoke, as if we had covered the flame and starved it of oxygen. The interior of the body becomes numbed and choked with particulate matter. The toxic components of the smoke are resentment, blame, complaint, self-justification, and martyrdom.

The longer we neglect the fire, the more we are overcome by the smoke.

—David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused*

I say—

Where is your fire?

You got to find it and pass it on
You got to find it and pass it on
from you to me from me to her from her
to him from the son to the father from the
brother to the sister from the daughter to
the mother from the mother to the child.

Where is your fire? I say where is your fire?

—Sonia Sanchez, “Catch the Fire”

CONTENTS

Foreword to the Third Edition by Lisa Lee	<i>xix</i>
Foreword to the Second Edition by Paula Jorde Bloom	<i>xxv</i>
Acknowledgments	<i>xxvii</i>

INTRODUCTION / INTRODUCCIÓN

A New Book for a New Time / Un nuevo libro para un nuevo tiempo	2
The Time Is Now / El momento es ahora	8
Disrupting the TTWWADI Syndrome / Interrumpir el Síndrome de TTWWADI	12
Leading by Example / Liderar con el ejemplo	14
Using This Book / Usando este libro	16

CHAPTER 1 GUIDING YOUR PROGRAM WITH A VISION 23

Searching Your Heart for What's Important	24
Considera la democracia cultural / Consider Cultural Democracy	25
Imagining How It Could Be	27
Fortifying Yourself with a Vision	28
Ser auténtico / Being Authentic	29

	Getting Honest about Daily Realities	33
	Indicadores de un programa de alta calidad / Indicators of a High-Quality Program	34
	Rethinking What Children Deserve	38
	Aléjate de lo superficial / Move Away from the Superficial	39
	Distinguishing a Mission from a Vision	40
	Tu visión es tu brújula / Your Vision Is Your Compass	41
	Cultivating a Vision	45
	Going beyond Managing to Leading	45
	Looking for Models	46
PRINCIPLE	Create a Process for Developing Your Vision	48
<i>Strategy</i>	Regularly share memories of favorite childhood experiences	49
	Represent childhood memories with found objects or art materials	51
	Use children's books to unearth childhood memories	52
	Considera otros recursos culturalmente relevantes / Consider Other Culturally Relevant Resources	52
	Use children's books regularly in staff meetings	52
	Get to know families' dreams	56
	Traer entendimientos a las esperanzas y sueños / Bringing Understanding to Hopes and Dreams	57
	Reinvent the idea of quilting bees	59
	Seek the children's ideas	59
	Put images and words together	60
	Develop a vision statement together	61
	Represent pieces of your vision with blocks	65
<hr/>		
	Practice Assessing Yourself as a Visionary Leader	65
	Reflexiones sobre mi jornada / Reflections on My Journey	68

CHAPTER 2 A FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR WORK 75

Looking for Tips and Techniques 76

Learning about Balance 79

Desarrolla tu capacidad creativa / Develop Your Creative Capacity 81

Taking Bright Ideas from the Business World 82

Invierte en tus empleados / Invest in Your Employees 83

Sé innovador con herramientas / Be Innovative with Tools 85

Considering a Leadership Framework 86

Flexibilidad para ser tú mismo / Flexibility to Be Yourself 87

The Roles of Managing and Supervising 88

Cambiando mi pensamiento sobre la responsabilidad / Shifting My Thinking about Accountability 89

Servir como traductor / Serving as a Translator 90

The Roles of Coaching and Pedagogical Guidance 90

Mantener el equilibrio en las relaciones / Maintaining Balance in Relationships 91

The Roles of Building and Supporting Community 93

Manos de mano que nos tomamos de la mano / We are Holding Hands 93

Consider How Different Directors Respond 94

The Scenario 95

Rhonda's Approach 95

Donovan's Approach 95

Maria's Approach 96

Analyzing the Three Approaches 96

Using the Leadership Framework 98

Building and Supporting Community 98

Coaching and Pedagogical Guidance 99

Managing and Overseeing 100

Practice Using the Leadership Framework 101

Scenario 1: New Director Dilemma 101

Scenario 2: Messing with Michael 102

Practice Assessing Yourself 103

Reflexiones sobre mi jornada / Reflections on My Journey 104

CHAPTER 3 YOUR ROLE IN BUILDING AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY 109

¿Qué significa comunidad? / What Does Community Mean? 112

Creating an Environment That Nurtures Community 112

PRINCIPLE Make the Center Feel Like a Home 114

Strategy Create an identity with your history and values in your environment 115

Use natural shapes and soft lighting 116

Explore resources for ideas to adapt, not copy 116

PRINCIPLE Give the Program the Feel of a Real Neighborhood 118

Asegúrate de que somos inclusivos / Make Sure We Are Inclusive 118

Strategy Use home-base rooms and make time for children to roam 119

Set up larger programs as villages 119

Design space to resemble a neighborhood 120

Use the beginning and end of the day 120

PRINCIPLE Involve Parents and Staff in Considering the Space 121

Uso de reuniones para conexiones más profundas / Using Meetings for Deeper Connections 122

Strategy Assess how a space makes you feel 121

Explore the environment as a child might 123

Create “a place where I belong” 124

Create the skeleton of a grant proposal or the inspiration for a work party 126

Planning Your Community-Building Curriculum 127

PRINCIPLE Use Time Together to Strengthen Relationships 127

¿Cuál será tu legado? / What Will Your Legacy Be? 128

Strategy View staff meetings as circle time 128

Experiencias culturales con el juego / Cultural Experiences with Play 129

Plan meetings to ensure inclusion and counter bias 130

Learn about listening 132

Create agreements for working together 133

Develop facilitation skills 134

Use a fuss box 135

	Make tear-water tea	135
	Become storytellers	136
	Create visual stories of your life together	137
	Refocus parent newsletters	137
PRINCIPLE	Grow Community-Building Curriculum from the Lives around You	138
	Construyendo una comunidad amada / Building a Beloved Community	139
<i>Strategy</i>	Rethink daily routines	138
	Grow curriculum from family life	140
	Grow curriculum from teacher passions	141
	Preguntas para reflexión y conexión / Questions for Reflection and Connection	142
	Include support staff in making contributions to children's experiences	143
	Find curriculum in your wider community	143
	Connect people to one another	145
	A celebration of Juneteenth	148
	Working with Differences and Conflict	149
	Proporcionar apoyo, herramientas y panorama general / Providing Support, Tools, and a Big Picture	150
PRINCIPLE	Acknowledge and Respect Differences	151
<i>Strategy</i>	Create a representation of a community	152
	Explore different values	153
	Hacer que todos sesienten seguros de pertenecer / Making Everyone Safe to Belong	154
	Name your assumptions	156
	Yo no pienso con acento / I Don't Think with an Accent	156
PRINCIPLE	Explore and Mediate Conflicts	158
<i>Strategy</i>	Explore different communication styles	159
	Design a conflict-resolution process	161
	Lo hacemos a nuestra manera / We Do It Our Own Way	161
	Acknowledge, ask, adapt	163
	Cultivating a "Growth Mindset," New Roles, Dispositions, and Skills	164
	Practice Assessing Yourself	165
	Reflexiones sobre mi jornada / Reflections on My Journey	166

CHAPTER 4 YOUR ROLE OF COACHING AND PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE 171

Cada uno enseña a uno / Each One Teach One 173

Considering the Competing Forces Impacting Work with Children 174

Coaching/Pedagogical Guidance versus Managing Staff 176

Usando el marco de liderazgo / Using the Leadership Framework 177

Adult Learners and the Learning Environment 181

The Golden Rule Revisited: Treat Adults as You Want Them to Treat Children 183

PRINCIPLE Give Thoughtful Attention to the Environment 184

Strategy Plan a nurturing environment for the adults 184

Provide time and resources 186

PRINCIPLE View Teachers as Competent Thinkers and Learners 187

Strategy Reflect on a teacher 188

Expand your focus for coaching 188

Compare your view with their view 189

Cambiar hábitos de pensamiento / Changing Habits of Thought 191

PRINCIPLE Emphasize Dispositions as Much as Skills and Knowledge 191

Strategy Identify how dispositions look in practice 193

Discover with dots 195

PRINCIPLE Know Your Adult Learners 195

Strategy Play True Confessions in Four Corners 196

Do you ask or do you tell? 199

PRINCIPLE Provide Choices for Different Needs and Interests 202

Strategy Think of something you have learned as an adult 203

Uncover and cultivate passions 204

PRINCIPLE Promote Collaboration and Pedagogical Guidance 205

Strategy Practice active listening, informally and formally 206

Set up a peer-coaching system 206

	Conectando ahora, viendo posibilidades para el futuro / Connecting Now, Seeing Possibilities for the Future	207
	<i>Build collaborative relationships</i>	207
PRINCIPLE	Engage in Ongoing Study of Antibias Education	208
<i>Strategy</i>	Create research questions to study children's identity development	209
	Study children's books for inclusion and inspiration	209
	Learn from Nana	210
	Create a safe place for everyone to express themselves	211
	Negotiate teachable moments	212
	What if I say something wrong?	215
PRINCIPLE	Cultivate Observation as a Skill and an Art	216
	Observar para reflexionar, no evaluar / Observe to Reflect, not Assess	216
<i>Strategy</i>	Learn to observe in many ways	217
	Become a community of observers	218
PRINCIPLE	Create a Culture of Curiosity, Research, and Storytelling	218
<i>Strategy</i>	Help teachers reflect on themselves as observers	219
	Cultivate deep listening	220
	Use a Thinking Lens® for reflection	221
	Launch a research project	222
PRINCIPLE	Approach Coaching with Inquiry	225
<i>Strategy</i>	Develop questions to guide your own observations	226
	Practice responding to Cassandra	227
	Use questions to promote inquiry	228
	Practice with stories	229
	Adopting the Mindset of a Coach/Pedagogical Guide	234
	Desarrolla la creatividad con la práctica / Develop Creativity with Practice	234
	Practice Assessing Your Approach	235
	Reflexiones sobre mi jornada / Reflections on My Journey	236

CHAPTER 5 YOUR ROLE OF MANAGING AND SUPERVISING 245

Managing to Make Your Vision a Reality 246

Cultivating the Organizational Culture You Want 247

Experimentando nuestros valores y cultura organizacional / Experiencing Our Values and Organizational Culture 250

Prepárate para cada momento / Get Ready for Each Moment 251

Formulating Long-Range Goals to Support Your Vision 252

PRINCIPLE Create a Continuous Cycle of Evaluating and Planning 252

Planificación que inspira / Planning That Inspires 253

Strategy Conduct regular program evaluations 254

Develop a clear understanding of the planning process 255

Take time to plan the planning process 257

PRINCIPLE Refuse to Adopt a Scarcity Mentality 258

Nunca digas que no tenemos el dinero / Never Say We Don't Have the Money 258

Strategy Move your budget toward the full cost of care 262

Invest in your staff 263

Be generous with your nickels and dimes 265

Involve others in expanding your nickels and dimes 265

Adopt a business mindset when big funds are needed 266

Creating the Experience of Community with Your Systems 267

PRINCIPLE Use Relationships and Continuity of Care to Guide Your Decisions 267

Strategy Design rooms that work for infants and toddlers 268

Expand the age group for preschool rooms 269

Have teachers loop with the children 270

PRINCIPLE Involve Staff and Families in Active Exploration of Standards 270

Strategy Form task groups 271

Create meaningful games to enliven discussions of standards 272

PRINCIPLE Seek to Counter Inequities of Power and Privilege 275

La equidad es de lo que se trata / Equity Is What We Are About 276

Strategy Seek feedback from all stakeholders in your community 277

Expand your approach to communication 278

Make diversity and ant bias work part of your orientations	279
Formulate personnel policies and systems to encourage diversity among staff	279

Designing Systems to Provide Time for Reflection and Problem Solving 281

Múltiples sistemas de reflexión y aprendizaje / Multiple Systems for Reflection and Learning 280

PRINCIPLE	Use Child Assessment Systems That Enlist Teachers' Excitement	283
<i>Strategy</i>	Design forms that encourage curiosity and delight	283
	Use Learning Stories as an approach to assessment	284
	Provide time for collaborative discussion among teachers	285
PRINCIPLE	Involve Staff in All Phases of Evaluating Their Job Performance	286
	Evalúa para ser auténtico / Evaluate to Be Authentic	287
<i>Strategy</i>	Supplement checklists with observational narratives	288
	Plan the cycle of supervision and evaluation	288
	Experiment with different forms	289
	Acknowledge the power differential in the evaluation process	289
PRINCIPLE	Plan Professional Development to Reflect Your Vision of a Learning Community	291
<i>Strategy</i>	Develop individualized learning plans	292
	Expand your approach to program-wide training	292
	Provide many ways for achieving training goals	294
	Acknowledge and celebrate progress toward your professional learning goals	295
PRINCIPLE	View Time as a Building Block	295
<i>Strategy</i>	Use colored dots for analyzing how time is spent in your program	297
	Reclaim time on behalf of your vision	298
PRINCIPLE	Design Meetings around Community Building and Staff Development	299
<i>Strategy</i>	Devote staff meetings to enhancing teacher learning	300
	Choose a focus for your professional development for the school year	303
	Reallocate your professional development dollars for a pedagogical guide	304

Making Good Use of Your Power and Influence 305

Practice Assessing Your Organizational Climate 306

Reflexiones sobre mi jornada / Reflections on My Journey 308

CHAPTER 6 BRINGING YOUR VISION TO LIFE 315

Put Relationships Center Stage 318

PRINCIPLE Focus on People, Not Paper 320

Innovative Practice Invest in initial encounters 320

Host community-building orientations 321

PRINCIPLE Make Communication Meaningful 322

Innovative Practice Invite families to participate in communication systems 322

Use interactive technology to enhance communication 323

PRINCIPLE Bring and Keep People Together 324

Innovative Practice Institute continuity of care 325

Plan family meetings to build relationships 325

Hold group-family conferences 326

PRINCIPLE Invite Meaningful Contributions to Solve Problems 327

Innovative Practice Enlist excitement to build an infant/toddler playground 327

Invite the village to raise the children 329

Build Reflective Practices 331

PRINCIPLE Invest in Your Teachers Right from the Start 331

Innovative Practice Interview candidates in small groups 332

Create systems for reflection in your orientation process 332

PRINCIPLE Reconceptualize Professional Development as a Daily Experience 333

Innovative Practice Develop teachers as thinkers, not technicians 334

Design clear accountability systems 335

Provide side-by-side mentoring 336

Strengthen Connections to and Increase Care for the Natural World 338

PRINCIPLE Use Meaningful Experiences to Build Shared Values 339

Innovative Practice Create a field-study process to explore the natural world around the center 339

Plan family field trips to explore the local natural environment 340

PRINCIPLE Call for a Curriculum That Focuses on the Natural World 341

Innovative Practice Launch a program-wide science and nature study 342

Become a designated wildlife habitat 343

PRINCIPLE	Use Family Interests and Expertise to Grow Your Vision	343
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Form a family club with a mascot	343
	Learn about farms and gardens	344
PRINCIPLE	Keep Thinking Bigger	344
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Design an outdoor classroom	345
	Raise funds in ways that reinforce your vision	345
	Reach out to the community to grow your vision	346
	<hr/>	
	Take Charge of Standards, Outcomes, and Assessments	347
PRINCIPLE	View Standards and Rating Systems as Tools, Not Rules	348
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Expand the definition of desirable outcomes	349
	Form work teams for different assessment and rating-scale focus areas	350
PRINCIPLE	Develop Systems to Hold Yourself Accountable to Your Values	351
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	“Untiming” the curriculum	352
	Design your own forms and checklists	352
PRINCIPLE	Expand Your Thinking about Assessment	353
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Find resources and inspiration outside your borders	353
	<hr/>	
	A Vision for Social Justice and Antibias Education	355
PRINCIPLE	Seek Diverse Perspectives	358
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Build trusting relationships with diverse colleagues to support your social justice work	358
	Be honest, willing to make and learn from mistakes	358
PRINCIPLE	Promote Your Values through Recruitment and Enrollment	359
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Make your values and intentions visible in your marketing and recruitment	360
	Make your values visible to prospective families	360
PRINCIPLE	Invite Families to Join the Journey	360
<i>Innovative Practice</i>	Encourage families to share holiday boards	361
	Share antibias stories in your ongoing communications and meetings	361
	Develop research questions around family concerns	362
	Create an antibias library	364
PRINCIPLE	Set the Expectation That Staff Plan Environments and Curriculum Experiences Focused on the Antibias Education Goals	365

Innovative Practice Persona doll stories 366
Find teachable moments 366

PRINCIPLE Create Opportunities for Continual Reflection
and Assessing Your Progress with Antibias Goals 367

Innovative Practice Design multiple learning opportunities based on teachers' expressed goals,
backgrounds, and experiences 367
Know yourself and one another 368
Assess your own bias, power, and privilege 368
Engage teachers in parallel curriculum experiences 368
Use documentation as a tool for professional development 369

Bring Your Vision to Life 370

Remember to Nourish Yourself as You Nourish Your Vision 370

LIST OF ONLINE APPENDICES 373

RESOURCES 375

Antibias and Antiracism Resources 375

Visionary Projects We Follow 377

REFERENCES 379

FOREWORD TO THE THIRD EDITION

I am blessed to be in dialogue with countless leaders in my early childhood community. We often come together at meetings. So many meetings that I've lost count. Meetings that cover everything under the early childhood education (ECE) sun, from new licensing regulations, quality rating and assessments, and workforce registries to substitute pools, reimbursement rates, and sick leave. Over the years, the faces around the table have become like a familiar family. Sheila, from the campus program, runs the mentor programs. Bev, the policy council chair, codirects an amazing non-profit with her husband, Joe. Elena and Esperanza from the Latino Family Child Care Association are connected to everyone who's anyone. Easter, Cyndee, and Cheryl, from the Head Start programs, run small kingdoms of classrooms. Natalie represents the corporate world. Betty, from our school district—a comedian, dancer, and activist—brings data on school readiness gaps. They are our “leaders.” Multiply them many times over and you get a snapshot of our ECE community . . . not just in my city but in countless communities across the United States.

These are who I claim as colleagues. Sometimes we are friends and sometimes allies. When I am in their presence, I know in my soul that I am in the company of great human beings, people whose eyes smile as they share an amazing conversation they've just had with a child. People whose eyes blaze as they advocate for children who have less. One or two, I know well. Once upon a time, we were young directors asking one another for advice. Now we are the elders who have earned our gray hair, remembering a time before brain research made early education as important to others as we knew it to be all along. A time when media declared findings that child care was mediocre at best and poorest for the youngest. We celebrated the Perry Preschool Project and the release of the Abecedarian Project, long-awaited studies validating the long-lasting impact of quality early education. Ethics emerged for the profession. It was also a time when most in our field declared children as colors of a rainbow and few “never saw color at all.”

Among these faces are teachers just starting their journey. Promoted because of their mastery in the classroom. Promoted because they finished that required supervision class. Some are directing so they can make a living in their chosen profession, although if pressed they'd rather be in the classroom. Some are eager to realize visions of educational excellence that they've held as teachers. These directors are tunneling through the transition to the administrative side. Very few imagined that they'd be holding space for adults to grow when they started. I'm guessing that 99 percent got to where they are because, like me, they just loved kids.

I'm rooting for them not just to survive but to thrive, for we do so little in our field to prepare people for the crazy-making, never-ending, glorious job of being an early childhood administrator. If asked at ten in the morning what they've already accomplished in their day, the list they would amass would astound. If asked what is still on their plate at ten in the morning, the conversation might never end. Like school principals, directors juggle countless tasks and manage people while running a business on a shoestring budget. They still come to the meetings, finding their way across town after making sure that lunch has been served and the kids are down for naps . . . walking in the door with a sandwich in their hands. A phone will beep as they talk about the workforce crisis, and when someone leaves to cover for a teacher when no substitute can be found, no one blinks an eyelash. They know the drill. Responsibility calls, and they answer every time.

As I listen to the conversations around me, I find myself reflecting on my colleagues. Although rarely acknowledged, the wisdom, experience, and competence in the room is tangible. Humor is never far away, for our community uses it often in absurd times. There is brilliance as we spar about the reliability of assessments and the validity of the tools we use to measure quality. There is the persistence needed to secure integrated service systems for children. There is eloquence in their articulation and advocacy for the improvement of workforce conditions.

Despite all of this passion and brilliance, there is a growing vulnerability among us. Even as we talk about workforce wellness, everyone at the table is busier than seems healthy. The days seem shorter for getting to all of the growing tasks directors are called to do. Even as QRIS scores rise, stress levels of staff are rising. Perhaps in our acknowledgment of mediocrity in the nation's child care system, leadership is responding to the call for excellence. Expectations for our workforce, our leaders, and our systems

are higher. We have been stretching without sufficient resources and have been pushing educators to stretch as well, working on the edge of frenzy for solutions that take lifetimes to solve. Administrators report waking up dreaming of work, solving the problems at night that can't be resolved during the day. The plate of a director is different, fuller than ever. Accountability calls for multiple database systems. Braided funding comes with multiple reports and grant-making efforts. And all of it mounts as our work becomes more intertwined with the structural inequities and community vulnerabilities bearing down on our staffs. For even the most competent, the contents of our plates can be unbalanced at best and spilling over at worst.

The conversations seem different than even a decade ago. More real. More raw. More urgent. Undeniably complex. In truth, they reflect a context that is changing around us and within us. Even without a pandemic, as we face in 2020, none of us can deny that we live in a time of increasing wealth gaps and indisputable racial disparities. These conditions not only affect growing numbers of the families we serve but consistently and negatively impact the lives of early childhood educators. Just as we have families who are homeless, we have teachers who can't afford to live in our cities. Our educators care for other people's children while qualifying for the very subsidy systems we develop.

The inequities around us are in the fabric of our lives, in the practices of our classrooms, and in the policies of our systems. From categorical funding streams that result in segregated enrollments to low reimbursement rates that result in high turnover and poor working conditions, the early childhood field is facing hard realities. Our field's march to professionalism will be sabotaged by the continued exploitation of the workforce. Addressing the racial stratification in our workforce and among our system builders calls for new leadership development strategies. If closing opportunity gaps is determined by competent teachers, let us be intentional in recruiting and educating individuals who will truly be the diverse and multilingual workforce our children deserve.

As we navigate the underbelly of our field, we must be willing to have courageous conversations about white privilege, racism, classism, and exclusion. By committing to discomfort, we can address implicit biases that diminish the culture of caring in the classroom and that result in exclusionary practices and disciplinary actions that disproportionately impact Black and Brown children. To ignore these contexts, we risk perpetuating the

patterns of discrimination that live within our systems. We are at a pivotal time with much at stake. The bright promise of early care and education is worth little if the gains are for some and not all.

The time is *always now* for our field to mature and realize a greater contribution. As every generation of leaders has answered, you will find your responses to these questions: What does *this* moment ask of me? What am I willing to learn and to do, at this time and in this place in history, to make a meaningful difference for young children, families, educators, and our society?

If you are reading this third edition of *The Visionary Director*, I pose these questions with all humility and hope for your success as a leader in our beloved field of early care and education. Whether you will run the smallest of programs or the largest of agencies, you have been called for a good and noble purpose. Like those who came before, who read the first and second editions, you will find a treasure trove of wisdom to address the practicalities of the work, as well as some essential guidance to define your stance—who you will be—as a leader navigating through complex times.

In the span of three editions, a dialogue has taken place among the authors and leaders across the country. They have not been idle. Margie Carter and Deb Curtis have used their privilege to invite new voices to the table. With humility, they have opened the door to greater excellence through different perspectives from changing community contexts. They introduce us to leaders who hold visions equitable enough to have high expectations for every child and who create the culture for others to do so as well.

Through the gift of time and relationship, they have demonstrated how we can listen to those who are different from us. They invite us to consider the possibility that the answers for the next leg of the early education journey lie in the hearts and minds of the uncounted and unasked leaders of tomorrow. They reassure us that our own stories and capacities will only deepen and be transformed with theirs. When we listen to one another, we can shape a stronger will and shared purpose to forge a reality bolder than could have been imagined even a decade ago. For the future we want, we don't need one leader. We need many working for common good. How else will we build an early childhood system that is healthy, just, and equitable?

Just as the souls of children “dwell in the house of tomorrow,” as the poet Kahlil Gibran taught, the future of our profession will not go backward. Change is on the horizon. It is possible. Perhaps in dialogue, with

shared purpose, we can find that readiness is not the enemy of empathy. Assessment and data do not have to be the bane of an educator's existence. Accountability to all of our children will mean more than what can be measured. More importantly, we can create together a chorus with an equity ballad that is rich with all of our voices.

For those who have contributed to the wisdom gathered in this book, thank you. For those who are reading and bringing this timeless book to life, thank you. In you, our promise to all of our children endures. In your efforts to grow not just yourselves but those you touch, you sustain hope through action. In your willingness to be courageous in the face of complex realities and inequities, transformation is possible.

You are the leader we have dreamed about. You are seen. You are worthy. You are loved.

And PS: We have always been essential. *Sigh.*

Lisa Lee
Senior Program Officer
First 5 San Francisco Children and Families Commission

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the world of publishing, booksellers often use the term “shelf life” to capture the window of opportunity for marketing a new book. Shelf life is both an indicator of the timeliness of the content of a book and a realistic projection for book distributors to gauge sales. Most books have a pretty short shelf life, one to two years. A few, like the Holy Bible or Qur’an, have a timeless message that ensures an audience forever. A few others, like Oprah’s Book Club selections, ride a wave of healthy sales and multiple reprints over several years.

In the early childhood education arena, there are a handful of classics that embrace a timely message and merit regular updates and reprints. I believe *The Visionary Director* has earned a rightful place in that esteemed category of professional essentials. For this reason, I was pleased to learn that Margie and Deb had decided to write a new edition of their book to ensure it would remain available for directors across the country.

In my work supporting early childhood administrators at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, I have seen firsthand the power of *The Visionary Director* in the hands of directors. One of the initiatives we sponsor at the center is a yearlong leadership training program called Taking Charge of Change. The goal of the program is to help directors see themselves as change agents and empower them to create care and education environments that are active learning communities both for children and adults. *The Visionary Director* has been a required book in Taking Charge of Change since it was first published a decade ago. More than any other professional resource available for directors, I have felt this book has the transformational power to help our participant directors visualize what excellence means in the context of their programs and turn their dreams into concrete strategies for program improvement.

Being a center director has never been easy, but it seems the increasing demands of the accountability movement—quality rating systems, accreditation, performance standards, credentialing—have created even greater

pressure on program administrators. I believe the lopsided focus on school readiness and outcomes has had the unintended consequence of stifling directors' creativity and innovativeness, dulling their dreams and aspirations. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for standards and accountability. In fact, my colleague Teri Talan and I wrote the Program Administration Scale (PAS) as a guide for measuring early childhood leadership and management practices. But even the PAS will fall short as a blueprint for improving program quality if directors can't elevate their leadership mandate beyond just complying with standards. More than ever before, the central message of *The Visionary Director* is needed to help directors avoid feeling overwhelmed by traditional bureaucratic approaches to quality improvement and the new tensions around standards and outcomes.

Visionary directors give voice to and unleash the passions of their teachers. They understand that the heart of their enterprise is nurturing collaborative partnerships with families. And most of all, they recognize their enormous potential as advocates for social change. These are the qualities we need in every early childhood director. *The Visionary Director* is an inspiring resource to help directors embrace this higher calling.

Paula Jorde Bloom, PhD
Michael W. Louis Endowed Chair
McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National Louis University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

¡Para mi gente! Mis colegas, maestros y estudiantes. Especiales gracias a la comunidad de RIFC y todo su personal; mentores, maestros, familias y sobre todo nuestros niños que son la inspiración para dar lo mejor de mí en toda circunstancia. A Violeta Infante por su concejo y guía espiritual, Javier I. Casio por su sabiduría con las palabras y documentar nuestro proceso, y Karla Gomez por contribuir con su historia.

To the directors, caregivers, and teachers who have lent their stories to this book, we extend sincere appreciation. They represent programs large and small; diverse and homogeneous; serving middle-class, upper-class, and poor families; private, parent cooperative, or sponsored by Head Start, government, corporations, school districts, or colleges; and located across the United States and Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, and on US military bases in Europe. A very long list, indeed, so if we've omitted your name accidentally, know you are appreciated.

While many of us have removed ourselves from the day-to-day work of leading programs, folks who remain on the front lines pursuing their vision with great tenacity offer us tremendous inspiration and hope. We must call out a few who over the years and in different areas have invested in early childhood, and in fact, in us as traveling authors and consultants, far beyond what is their job. They work with a deep sense of purpose as inventors, craftspeople, cultural workers, activists, and artists.

Ijumaa Jordan has been our critical friend, graciously willing to challenge and support us in our work to overcome white supremacy, in word as well as in deed. Her leadership in our field to advance critical race theory and to demand equity is making a powerful impact on us and many others. Joining her in a strong place of influence, reminding us that anyone wanting to be a white ally must first become an antiracist, are other Black colleagues: Charlotte Jahn, Theresa Lenear, and Cynthia Davis-Vanloo. Conversations with them reshaped several aspects of this book.

Julie Bisson has inspired us as a white woman who works with a powerful antibias/antiracist vision at the center of her work. She has displayed humility, along with fierce passion, in her sustained efforts over many years of fighting for equitable programs for children, families, and teachers. Deb has grown her skills, knowledge, and teaching practices as an antibias/antiracist educator by learning from Julie and the staff of Epiphany Early Learning Preschool as she worked for her as a toddler teacher during the past five years. The ideas and strategies from their work fill the pages of this book. Julie has been a consistent antiracist white companion with Margie and Deb in striving to uncover where our work has fallen short of our aspirations.

Marcela Clark has wildly inspired us over the years in her work with childcare directors through the United Way Bright Beginnings program in Houston Texas. Her visionary approaches include the central goals of supporting directors to “love yourself, love your work, and love life.” She has influenced a huge cadre working as directors in the lowest-income programs in Houston to become visionary directors and leaders in their communities and the field.

Likewise, Lisa Lee, along with writing the potent forward to this edition, has demonstrated forceful ideas and actions to push for tangible quality initiatives that support directors, teachers, children, and families in San Francisco, California. She is a remarkable model of a visionary leader working in a complex bureaucratic organization.

Rukia Rogers, LaTisha Flowers, and the rest of the staff of the Highlander School have long shared their visionary ideas, stories, music, and dancing, such that their practices infiltrate the pages of this book. Rukia has been a joyful companion in learning together about what it means to be a visionary director. Our lives and work have been enriched in many ways since we met her over a decade ago.

An impressive team of colleagues went out of their way to create videos and visual material for QR code access from this book. Karina Rojas and Javier Casio, Luz’s leadership team at the Southwest Early Learning Program and the Refugee and Immigrant Family Center, helped shape far more resources than we could use, but the examples of their vision and values are sprinkled throughout this book. We thank Professor Martina Ebesugawa and her students Roland Bergfelt, Ashley Berryhill, Alexandra Castaner, Nancy Nelson, and Christine Knoll at Diablo Valley College; Julia Koumbassa and teachers at the University of Michigan Children’s Centers; Norma Villazana-Price and her coach Eliana Elias at Mission Child Development Lab School, City College of San Francisco; Maya

Yoshikawa and her director, Cathy Inamasu, at Nihomachi Little Friends; Jessica Mihaley at Early Learning Center, Menlo Park City School District, and Louise Stoney at Opportunities Exchange.

We continue to feel gratitude for the numerous people who contributed to the first and second editions of this book. Some of them have passed away, while others have retired or moved on, but they have left a legacy that others have built on with their offerings to this third edition. Special thanks to: Laila Aaen, Lorrie Baird, Amy Baker, Pauline Baker, Sabina Ball, Ruth Beagleholz, Diana Bender, Sarah Bishop, Ron Blatz, Pam Boulton, Cathy Burckett–St. Laurent, Caren Burgess, Becky Candra, Wendy Cividanes, Jim Clay, Christie Colunga, Dana Connoly, Anne Marie Coughlin, Ellen Dietrick, Lisa Dittrich, Linda Duerr, Shaquaam Edwards, Sarah Felstiner, Amy Fitzgerald, La Tisha Flowers, Belann Giarretto, Kathleen Gonzales, Leanne Grace, Mary Graham, Charlene Grainger, Bill Grant, Karen Haigh, Julie Hankes, Pamela Harris, Leslie Howle, Joy Humbarger, Susan Dumars Huvar, Kathryn Ingram, Barb Janson, Jennifer Kagiwada, Karen Kaushansky, Linda Kern, Michael Koetje, Becky Krise, Ann Lacy, Debbie Lebo, Debbie LeeKeenan, Susan Harris MacKay, Carmen Masso, Laura McAlister, Meg McNulty, Paula McPheeters, Jessica Mihaly, Paul Moosman, Alissa Mwenelupembe, John Nimmo, Kristie Norwood, Sheila Olan-Maclean, Leslie Orlowski, Paige Parker, Ann Pelo, Kendra PeloJoaquin, Kelly Ramsey, MaryAnn Ready (Deb’s first director, an enduring model), Jan Reed, Alice Rose, Caron Salazar, Teresa Senna, Margo Shayne, Linda Skibinski, Jennifer Slack, Alicia Smith, Dorothy Stewart, Louise Stoney, Teri Talan, Alicia Tuesta, Mayela Visconti, Marlys Vollegraaf, Julie Weatherston, Wendy Whitesell, Carol Anne Wien, Ellen Wolpert, Angela Woodburn, Cassie Worley, Adina Young, and Billie Young.

For this third edition, we are indebted to our editor, Melissa York, who worked with good cheer against significant impediments imposed by the stay-at-home mandates of a global pandemic. With reassurance, steadiness, and a boatload of skills, Melissa was a tenacious researcher and brought an attentive eye to our adoption of an equity lens for this book. We appreciated the patience of Renee Hammes in working with us to create a cover design that conveyed the aesthetic we desired. Other behind-the-scenes people at Redleaf Press made important contributions, especially Doug Schmitz, Ashley Brooks, Meredith Burks, and David Heath—you will always have a special place in our hearts.

We want to again thank the now-retired Marcy Whitebook and her colleagues at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment for their exceptional leadership and contributions to the Worthy Wage movement

and the first edition of this book. Though the Worthy Wage movement has sadly faded away, the work to address equitable compensation remains an ongoing call to action, as does crossing racial and cultural barriers to support the expansion of the leadership and advocacy base for our profession. Our partnership with Luz Casio for this third edition has enriched our thinking and warmed our hearts. As always, Margie and Deb are grateful to have spouses, Jeanne Hunt and Lonnie Bloom, who honor our passion and significant partnerships in our beloved profession.

The background of the entire page is a sepia-toned photograph of a vast desert landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling sand dunes with visible tracks. In the middle ground, a range of dark, silhouetted mountains stretches across the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and a bright sun is positioned in the upper center, creating a lens flare effect.

THE *VISIONARY* DIRECTOR

INTRODUCTION

A NEW BOOK FOR A NEW TIME

As the authors of the first and second edition of this book, Margie and Deb began considering revisions for the third edition in the summer of 2019. We found this task challenging because over the last ten years our work had taken us further away from the daily life of an ECE director, and the decade itself has brought so much change in our field and the wider world. Our own lives have also been immersed in reckoning with the incongruity between our commitment to education as a social justice undertaking (Schoorman 2011) and our privileged, yet constrained, position as two white women. With all the blind spots and benefits we as authors have in an education system imbedded in the service of preserving white supremacy, how could we undertake the revision of a book that needed perspectives and experiences outside that system of white privilege and domination that influence our lives?

Our first instinct was to turn to two directors of color whose visionary work we have followed and admired over the last decade. Could we offer support to Rukia Monique Rogers in Atlanta or Luz Maria Casio in Seattle to write the next book, drawing upon their experiences and viewed through their cultural lenses? Because of the numerous demands in their lives, neither of them could undertake the full responsibility of writing from the ground up. Fortunately, Luz was willing to sign on as a coauthor, adding her voice, stories, and perspectives on the journey to becoming a visionary director. Rukia contributed ongoing inspiration to us with her stories and tenacity in creating a culturally vibrant early childhood program, the Highlander School, rooted in the history of the civil rights era in the South and taking inspiration from the Chattahoochee River and the educators of Reggio Emilia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Other colleagues of color generously agreed to offer thoughts, feedback, and the gift of their time.



Here is a visual snapshot of what Rukia and her staff have created at the Highlander School. (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-1.pdf)

INTRODUCCIÓN

UN NUEVO LIBRO PARA UN NUEVO TIEMPO

Como autores de la primera y segunda edición de este libro, Margie y Deb comenzaron a considerar revisiones para la tercera edición en el verano de 2019. Encontramos esta tarea difícil porque en los últimos diez años nuestro trabajo nos había alejado más de la vida cotidiana de un director de ECE, y la década en sí ha traído tanto cambio en nuestro campo y en el mundo en general. Nuestras propias vidas también han estado inmersas en el recuento de la incongruencia entre nuestro compromiso con la educación como empresa de justicia social (Schoorman 2011) y nuestra posición privilegiada, pero limitada, como dos mujeres blancas. Con todos los puntos ciegos y beneficios que nosotros, como autores, tenemos en un sistema educativo incrustado al servicio de preservar la supremacía blanca, ¿cómo podríamos emprender una revisión de un libro que necesitara perspectivas y experiencias fuera de ese sistema de privilegio blanco y dominación que influyen en nuestras vidas?

Nuestro primer instinto fue recurrir a dos directores de color cuyo trabajo visionario hemos seguido y admirado en la última década. ¿Podríamos ofrecer apoyo a Rukia Monique Rogers en Atlanta o Luz Maria Casio en Seattle para escribir el próximo libro, aprovechando sus experiencias y visto a través de sus lentes culturales? Debido a las numerosas demandas en sus vidas, ninguna de ellas pudo asumir toda la responsabilidad de escribir desde cero. Afortunadamente, Luz estaba dispuesta a firmar como coautora, añadiendo su voz, historias y perspectivas sobre su viaje para convertirse en una directora visionaria. Rukia contribuyó con la inspiración continua con sus historias y tenacidad en la creación de un programa culturalmente vibrante de la primera infancia, La Highlander School, arraigada en la historia de la era de los derechos civiles en el sur e inspirándose en el río Chattahoochee y los educadores de Reggio Emilia y Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda. Otros colegas de color aceptaron generosamente ofrecer pensamientos, comentarios y el don de su tiempo.



Aquí hay una instantánea visual de lo que Rukia y su personal han creado en la Highlander School. (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-1.pdf)

By early March of 2020, we were finalizing the revisions with our Redleaf Press editor, Melissa York. Lisa Lee had written a new foreword for the book, and we were moving into the design and production phase toward publication. We were pleased with the numerous ways we thought the book had been strengthened and were eager to use the technology of QR codes to expand the resources a book in print could offer.

And then the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down. In the words of yoga teacher Denise Benitez (2020), “The certainty of uncertainty has become certain.” Before the end of March, disruptions in work life and the delivery of child care services were ubiquitous across the country. These were a reality for us as well. Melissa, our editor, started working at home with twin four-year-old boys as her companions. Luz closed her center and struggled to set up remote access for continuing connections with children and family, all while trying to figure out how to pay her furloughed staff. Suddenly her adult son was in the ICU on a ventilator fighting for his life, while Luz took care of the energetic grandchildren so her daughter-in-law could continue her work responsibilities while managing hospital communications and decisions.

Across the country and the world, loss and grief, fear, anger, and blame were unleashed but so too were stunning creativity, innovation, generosity, and community spirit. Apart from some disbelievers, ordinary citizens joined scientists, health care, and other essential workers in making stressful sacrifices, either working under fraught circumstances or staying home in service to the common good. After several weary months and with growing impatience, many people who were previously living stable lives pushed forward with an eagerness to get back to normal. Normal? How did we forget how flawed and unsustainable our way of living and doing business had become?

Things were already unraveling, even before the pandemic and financial meltdown overtook us. The global economy and climate change have been disrupting and displacing people, animals, and the natural world with increased frequency. While writing this introduction in late spring 2020 as our final task before going to print, our country was forced to face another pandemic that long preceded the coronavirus—systemic racism. Video footage of yet another immoral police killing of a Black man went viral and unleashed the undeniable truth of what our Black citizens have been suffering, mourning, and protesting since our country’s founding. A global protest erupted over the normalized world of racism and white supremacy, clearly a mandate that we cannot continue on this path.

A principios de marzo de 2020 estábamos finalizando las revisiones con nuestra editora de Redleaf Press, Melissa York. Lisa Lee había escrito un nuevo prólogo para el libro, y estábamos pasando a la fase de diseño y producción hacia la publicación. Nos quedamos satisfechos con las numerosas maneras en que pensamos que el libro había sido fortalecido y ansiosos por utilizar la tecnología de códigos QR para ampliar los recursos que un libro impreso podría ofrecer.

Y entonces la llegada de la pandemia de COVID-19 puso nuestro mundo patas arriba. En palabras de la profesora de yoga Denise Benítez (2020), “La certeza de la incertidumbre se ha vuelto cierta”. En marzo de 2020, las interrupciones en la vida laboral y la prestación de servicios de cuidado infantil eran omnipresentes en todo el país. Esto también fue una realidad para nosotros. Melissa, nuestra editora, empezó a trabajar en casa con niños gemelos de cuatro años como sus compañeros. Luz cerró su centro y luchó para establecer el acceso remoto para las conexiones continuas con los niños y la familia, todo mientras trataba de averiguar cómo pagar a su personal en espera. De repente, su hijo adulto estaba en la UCI en un respirador, luchando por su vida, mientras Luz se encargaba de sus energéticos nietos para que su nuera pudiera continuar con sus responsabilidades laborales mientras gestionaba las comunicaciones y decisiones del hospital.

En todo el país y el mundo la pérdida y el dolor, el miedo, la ira y la culpa se desataron, pero también lo fueron la creatividad, la innovación, la generosidad y el espíritu comunitario impresionantes. Aparte de algunos incrédulos, los ciudadanos comunes se unieron a los científicos, la atención médica y otros trabajadores esenciales para hacer sacrificios estresantes, ya sea trabajando en circunstancias difíciles o quedándose en casa al servicio del bien común. Después de varios meses de fatiga y con creciente impaciencia, que la mayoría de las personas tiene las cuales anteriormente vivían vidas estables y están ansiosas por volver a la normalidad. ¿Normal? ¿Hemos olvidado lo imperfecta e insostenible que se había vuelto nuestra forma de vivir y hacer negocios?

Las cosas ya se estaban desmoronando incluso antes de que la pandemia y la crisis financiera nos superaran. Teníamos grandes divisiones económicas, raciales y políticas. La economía mundial y el calentamiento global han estado perturbando y desplazando a las personas, los animales y el mundo natural con mayor frecuencia. Mientras escribíamos esta introducción a fines de la primavera de 2020 como nuestra tarea final antes de publicarla, nuestro país se vio obligado a enfrentar otra pandemia que precedió al coronavirus: el racismo sistémico. Las imágenes de video de otro asesinato inmoral por parte de la policía de un hombre negro se volvieron virales y desató la verdad innegable de lo que nuestros ciudadanos negros han estado sufriendo, lamentando y protestando desde la fundación de nuestro país. Estalló una protesta global

Before the pandemic and uprisings following George Floyd's killing, Rhian Evans Allvin, CEO of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), wrote on NAEYC's blog:

As our country sits in moments of reckoning in so many ways, we find ourselves at NAEYC with a welcome opportunity to do our own reckoning—to look in the mirror and honestly assess and question our progress and our shortcomings. (Allvin 2018)

Instead of undertaking this task of reckoning, most US governing bodies, white citizens, and people with extreme wealth have failed to fully tackle the dismantling of racism and reconciliation work required, a message echoed again and again in the summer of 2020. A version of this same reckoning failure has continued to plague the early childhood field. In the last few decades, policy makers and ECE interest groups have turned to increasingly bureaucratic approaches like requiring multiple reports assessments, reports, or curriculum criteria to define and measure outcomes, causing programs more stress rather than seeking solutions to systemic problems. Compared to others, our country appears to have a failure of imagination and a lack of will to provide truly adequate resources and support for a dedicated but beleaguered cadre of foot soldiers in the trenches of early care and learning work. When COVID-19 resulted in school closures and shelter-in-place regulations across the country, working parents were shocked into new appreciation for the work of teachers. As of this writing, it remains to be seen whether employers and policy makers will take action to overcome the historical undervaluing of child care as an essential service, a key infrastructure component to keep our economy functioning. We now wonder: If financial relief efforts do reach ECE programs, how can we seize this as an opportunity to reimagine and restructure the way the United States funds, values, and compensates educators? How might we reimagine a framework for describing the desired outcomes of early care and learning? If relief efforts don't significantly materialize, will the dire predictions about the collapse of our child care system be evident? What phoenix might rise from the ashes of the catastrophe, stronger, smarter, and more powerful?

As this book goes to press, so much remains uncertain, except for the certainty that our entire world has changed and the path forward is unpredictable. Even in the most optimistic scenarios, we know we are going to have bumps in the road before we come in for a landing. And we know the landing for many will be more like a crash. We do know that leadership matters more than ever, and we also know we'll have to discover how to

sobre el mundo normalizado del racismo y la supremacía blanca, claramente un mandato de que no podemos continuar por este camino.

Antes de la pandemia, en 2019, y levantamientos tras el asesinato de George Floyd, Rhian Evans Allvin, CEO de NAEYC, escribió en su blog:

Mientras nuestro país se sienta en momentos de cálculo de muchas maneras, nos encontramos en NAEYC con una buena oportunidad de hacer nuestro propio cálculo: mirarnos al espejo y evaluar y cuestionar honestamente nuestro progreso y nuestras deficiencias. (Allvin 2018)

En lugar de emprender esta tarea de cálculo, la mayoría de los legisladores estadounidenses, los ciudadanos blancos y las personas con extrema riqueza no han logrado abordar plenamente el desmantelamiento del racismo y el trabajo de reconciliación requerido, un mensaje que se repitió una y otra vez en el verano de 2020. Una versión de este mismo fracaso de cálculo ha continuado plagando el campo de la primera infancia. En las últimas décadas, los responsables políticos y los grupos de interés de ECE han recurrido históricamente a enfoques cada vez más burocráticos, como exigir múltiples evaluaciones de informes, informes o criterios curriculares para definir y medir los resultados, causando a los programas más estrés, en lugar de buscar soluciones a problemas más sistémicos. En comparación con otros, nuestro país parece tener un fracaso de la imaginación y la falta de voluntad para proporcionar recursos y apoyo verdaderamente adecuados para un grupo dedicado pero acosado de soldados a pie en las trincheras de la atención temprana y el trabajo de aprendizaje. Cuando COVID-19 resultó en cierres de escuelas y regulaciones de refugio en el lugar en todo el país, los padres trabajadores se sorprendieron en una nueva apreciación por el trabajo de los maestros. A partir de este escrito, queda por ver si los empleadores y los encargados de la formulación de políticas tomarán medidas para superar la infravaloración histórica del cuidado infantil como un servicio esencial, un componente clave de infraestructura para mantener nuestra economía funcionando. Ahora nos preguntamos si los esfuerzos de socorro financiero llegan a los programas de la ECE, ¿cómo podemos aprovechar esto como una oportunidad para reimaginar y reestructurar la forma en que los Estados Unidos funciona, valora y compensa a los educadores? ¿Cómo podríamos reimaginar un marco para describir los resultados deseados de la atención temprana y el aprendizaje? Si los esfuerzos de socorro no se materializan significativamente, ¿serán evidentes las terribles predicciones sobre el colapso de nuestro sistema de cuidado infantil? ¿Qué fénix podría levantarse de las cenizas de la catástrofe más fuerte, más inteligente y más poderoso?

A medida que este libro está en imprenta, muchas cosas siguen siendo inciertas, excepto la certeza de que nuestro mundo entero ha cambiado y el

work together to create a future where no one is left behind. This requires us to make a break from the status quo, even rejecting and replacing efforts that have worked toward incremental change. We must rebel against anything less than transformation.

From its first edition in 1998, *The Visionary Director* has always been a call for leadership that creates more life-affirming, community-strengthening approaches to our programs for young children. Now, in the context of the new decade of uprisings and challenges, LaShawn Routé Chatmon, executive director of the National Equity Project, suggests that what we need is rebel leadership:

Rebel Leadership—the kind where your palms are sweaty, your ears hot, and your voice quivers. The kind of leadership where you have the courage to say out loud, “*I don’t really know how we go forward, but I know we can get there together*” and actually mean it! . . . Rebel leadership requires us to make inequities visible; disrupt discourse, practices, and policies that perpetuate harm; and create new ways to engage and co-design with our communities so that each of us and our children can develop, thrive, and experience a sense of belonging. . . . What if, together as rebel leaders, we start designing for the future we want to live into *now*? What changes if we commit to being more radical in our thinking and action *now*? (Chatmon 2020)

As authors wanting to offer more of this kind of rebel leadership, we pondered, in the face of so much displacement and uncertainty, how to write a book that would be meaningful and not out of date by the time it was published. Because of the book’s message and role in supporting administrators with principles for thinking about their work, *The Visionary Director* could be an important resource after the fallout of a global pandemic, even if many of the strategies might feel untenable in the new context. And so, steady on we went toward publication. Pressing forward to complete a book was a hard focus to maintain. Margie and Deb, free of other urgent responsibilities and financial insecurity, sought the counsel of friends and colleagues. The response was consistently clear: “If ever there was a time for visionary thinking, it is now.”

camino a seguir es impredecible. Incluso en los escenarios más optimistas, sabemos que vamos a tener baches en el camino antes de aterrizar. Y sabemos que el aterrizaje para muchos será más como un accidente. Sabemos que el liderazgo importa, más que nunca, y también sabemos que tendremos que descubrir cómo trabajen juntos para crear un futuro en el que nadie se quede atrás. Esto requiere que rompamos con el status quo, incluso rechazando y reemplazando los esfuerzos que han trabajado hacia un cambio incremental. Debemos rebelarnos contra cualquier cosa que no sea la transformación.

Desde su primera edición en 1998, *The Visionary Director* siempre ha sido un llamado al liderazgo que crea más enfoques de reafirmación de la vida y fortalecimiento de la comunidad para nuestros programas para niños pequeños. Ahora, en el contexto de la nueva década de levantamientos y desafíos, LaShawn Routé Chatmon, directora ejecutiva de el Proyecto de Equidad Nacional sugiere que lo que necesitamos es liderazgo revolucionario:

Liderazgo revolucionario: del tipo en el que tus palmas están sudorosas, tus oídos calientes y tu voz se estremece. El tipo de liderazgo en el que tienes el valor de decir en voz alta: “Realmente no sé cómo seguimos adelante, pero sé que podemos llegar juntos” ¡y realmente decirlo en serio! El liderazgo revolucionario requiere que hagamos visibles las desigualdades; interrumpir el discurso, las prácticas y las políticas que perpetúan el daño; y crear nuevas formas de involucrarse y codiseñar con nuestras comunidades para que cada uno de nosotros y nuestros hijos podamos desarrollar, prosperar y experimentar un sentido de pertenencia. . . . ¿Y si, juntos como líderes revolucionarios, empezamos a diseñar para el futuro en el que queremos vivir *ahora*? ¿Qué cambia si nos comprometemos a ser más radicales en nuestro pensamiento y acción *ahora*? (Chatmon 2020)

Como autores que querían ofrecer más de este tipo de liderazgo rebelde, reflexionamos, ante tanto desplazamiento e incertidumbre, cómo escribir un libro que seguiría siendo actual y significativo para el momento en que se publicó. Debido al mensaje y el papel del libro en el apoyo a los administradores con principios para pensar en su trabajo, *The Visionary Director* podría ser un recurso importante después de las consecuencias de una pandemia global, incluso si muchas de las estrategias pueden parecer insostenibles en el nuevo contexto. Y así, seguimos avanzando hacia la publicación. Seguir adelante para completar un libro era un enfoque difícil de mantener. Margie y Deb, libres de otras responsabilidades apremiantes e inseguridad financiera, buscaron el consejo de amigos y colegas. La respuesta fue consistentemente clara: “Si alguna vez hubo un tiempo para el pensamiento visionario, lo es ahora”.

THE TIME IS NOW

Luz is well-known for the phrase “¡El momento ha llegado!” or “The time is now!” She was saying this long before a pandemic disrupted our lives. She has always sensed the urgency of not wasting a minute while children’s brains are rapidly developing. But Luz is also a champion of patience, careful listening, and leading by example. She is like the pioneers Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze (2011) describe in their book *Walk Out Walk On*. We like how these authors describe how systems change and the roles that different leaders can play:

Either we struggle to fix and repair the current system, or we create new alternatives. New alternatives can be created either inside or outside the failing system. But if we choose to walk out and walk on, there are two competing roles we’re called upon to play: We have to be thoughtful and compassionate in attending to what’s dying—we have to be good hospice workers. And we have to be experimenters, pioneers, edge-walkers. Playing these dual roles is never easy, of course, but even so, there are enough people brave enough to do so.

(For more information on how Wheatley and Frieze understand the way to change systems, visit <https://walkoutwalkon.net/walking-out-on/are-you-a-walk-out/> and read their paper from the Berkana Institute.)

Luz added her perspectives to this edition of *The Visionary Director* through the infusion of stories that illuminate her personal and professional journey, her critical thinking about cultural democracy, and her specific examples of structures that guide a program with a vision and clear values woven into all their systems. Though her program has multiple funding streams with complex bureaucratic demands, Luz insists on holding herself accountable to her program values and to her community. She brings alive aspects of what Wheatley and Frieze mean when they describe leaders who “consciously create oases or protected areas within the bureaucracy where people can still contribute, protected from the disabling demands of the old system.” Luz’s visionary work reframes the meaning of *normal*. Her normal adheres to inclusive community values, with tenacious efforts to keep learning and developing skills and a refusal to fall back on excuses when things get hard.

Why would we long for a return to what was previously normal in the early childhood world? Do we want to return to never having adequate resources, compromised by unlivable wages and thus constant staff

EL MOMENTO ES AHORA

Luz es bien conocida por la frase “el momento ha llegado”. Ella estaba diciendo esto mucho antes de que una pandemia interrumpiera nuestras vidas. Siempre ha sentido la urgencia de no perder un minuto mientras los cerebros de los niños se están desarrollando rápidamente. Pero Luz también es campeona de la paciencia, escuchar con atención y predicar con el ejemplo. Es como de las pioneras que Margaret Wheatley y Deborah Frieze (2011) describen en su libro *Walk Out Walk On*. Nos gusta cómo estos autores describen cómo cambian los sistemas y los roles que pueden desempeñar los diferentes líderes:

O nos cuesta arreglar y reparar el sistema actual, o creamos nuevas alternativas. Se pueden crear nuevas alternativas dentro o fuera del sistema que falla. Pero si elegimos salir y caminar, hay dos papeles que estamos llamados a desempeñar: Tenemos que ser considerados y compasivos al atender lo que se está muriendo—tenemos que ser buenos trabajadores de hospicio. Y tenemos que ser experimentadores, pioneros, caminantes de borde. Interpretar estos roles duales nunca es fácil, por supuesto, pero, aun así, hay suficiente gente lo suficientemente valiente para hacerlo.

(Para obtener más información sobre cómo Wheatley y Frieze entienden la forma de cambiar de sistema, visite <https://walkoutwalkon.net/walking-out-on/are-you-a-walk-out/> y leer su artículo del Instituto Berkana.)

Luz añadió sus perspectivas a esta edición de *The Visionary Director* a través de la infusión de historias que iluminan su trayectoria personal y profesional, su pensamiento crítico sobre la democracia cultural, y sus ejemplos específicos de estructuras que guían un programa con una visión y valores claros entrelazados en todos sus sistemas. Aunque su programa tiene múltiples flujos de financiamiento con demandas burocráticas complejas, Luz insiste en hacerse responsable de los valores de su programa y de su comunidad. Ella trae con vida aspectos de lo que Wheatley y Frieze significan cuando describen a los líderes que “crean conscientemente oasis o áreas protegidas dentro de la burocracia donde la gente todavía puede contribuir, protegida de las demandas incapacitantes del antiguo sistema”. El trabajo visionario de Luz encuadra el significado de lo normal. Su normalidad se adhiere a los valores comunitarios inclusivos, con esfuerzos tenaces para seguir aprendiendo y desarrollando habilidades y la negativa a recurrir a excusas cuando las cosas se ponen difíciles.

¿Por qué anhelaríamos volver a lo que antes era normal en el mundo de la primera infancia? ¿Queremos volver a no tener recursos adecuados, comprometidos por salarios inviables y, por lo tanto, constante saltaje de personal

turnover, and besieged by unsustainable, time-consuming demands for accountability to outcomes defined by funders? The time is now. We have an opportunity to create numerous examples of visionary programs, rather than recreate the mediocracy that has been so common in our US definition of a quality early childhood program. If not now, why? Why would you settle for less?

DISRUPTING THE TTWWADI SYNDROME

As the world is undergoing such dramatic changes, our hope is that this new edition of *The Visionary Director* can be both a beacon and toolbox for early childhood administrators. The revisions woven into each chapter preceded the disruption of a pandemic, but they are an earnest offering of our ongoing learning, our effort to prod you into disrupting the TTWWADI Syndrome—“That’s The Way We’ve Always Done It” thinking. For instance, you’ll find far more discussion than in previous editions of how we understand racism and the structures of white privilege impacting our work. This has been an elephant in our midst that our profession has ignored in favor of adding more multicultural materials to our classrooms. Our profession hasn’t fully acknowledged or tackled—and has perhaps intentionally avoided—an urgent need to address the deeper racist constructs that shape what we do, who we privilege, and how we undermine inclusive and equitable practices.

Long before the arrival of COVID-19, we had deep sickness arrive on our shores in the form of slave ships and genocide of the continent’s Native peoples. In a social media posting during the pandemic, Sean Codger (2020) described it this way:

Dear White America,

That sense of fear and dread you now feel whenever you leave your home—that feeling that one false move or letting your guard down for even one moment could result in your death—THAT is what it is like to be black in America . . . EVERY day and ALL day. So, when this pandemic is over for you, remember that black folks will continue living under quarantine until we find a cure for our 400-year affliction of racism.

A group of Black and Brown early childhood leaders have been making headway within and beyond the education field, calling out how racism,



Listen in to hear Jessica Mihaly describe how we need to address the intersection of race, privilege, and differing salaries for a definition of “qualified.” (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-2.aspx)

y asediados por demandas insostenibles y lentas de rendir cuentas a los resultados definidos por los financiadores? El momento es ahora. Tenemos la oportunidad de crear numerosos ejemplos de programas visionarios, en lugar de recrear la mediocracia que ha sido tan común en nuestra definición estadounidense de un programa de primera infancia de calidad. Si no ahora, ¿por qué? ¿Por qué te conformarías con menos?

INTERRUMPIR EL SÍNDROME DE TTWWADI

A medida que el mundo está experimentando cambios tan dramáticos, esperamos que esta nueva edición de *The Visionary Director* pueda ser tanto un faro como una caja de herramientas para los administradores de la primera infancia. Las revisiones tejidas en cada capítulo precedieron a la interrupción de una pandemia, pero son una oferta seria de nuestro aprendizaje continuo, nuestro esfuerzo para empujarte a interrumpir el Síndrome de TTWWADI—“Esa es la manera en que siempre lo hemos hecho [That’s The Way We’ve Always Done It]”. Por ejemplo, encontrarás mucha más discusión que en ediciones anteriores de cómo entendemos el racismo y las estructuras de privilegios blancos que afectan a nuestro trabajo. Este ha sido un elefante en medio de nosotros que nuestra profesión ha ignorado en favor de añadir materiales más multiculturales a nuestras aulas. Nuestra profesión no ha reconocido o abordado plenamente—y tal vez evitado intencionalmente—una necesidad urgente de abordar las construcciones racistas más profundas que dan forma a lo que hacemos, a quién privilegiamos y cómo socavamos las prácticas inclusivas y equitativas.

Mucho antes de la llegada de COVID-19, tuvimos una profunda enfermedad llegar a nuestras costas en forma de barcos esclavistas y genocidio de los pueblos nativos del continente. En una publicación en las redes sociales durante la pandemia, Sean Codger lo describió de esta manera:

Querida América Blanca,

Esa sensación de miedo y temor que ahora sientes cada vez que sales de tu casa, esa sensación de que un movimiento falso o bajar la guardia por un momento podría resultar en tu muerte, eso es lo que es ser negro en Estados Unidos. . . CADA día y TODO el día. Así que, cuando esta pandemia haya terminado para ti, recuerda que los negros seguirán viviendo bajo cuarentena hasta que encontremos una cura para nuestra aflicción de 400 años de racismo.

Un grupo de líderes de la primera infancia negros y morenos ha estado avanzando dentro y fuera del campo de la educación, gritando cómo el racismo, la supremacía blanca y los motivos deshumanizantes e impulsados por los



Escuche para oír a Jessica Mihaly describir cómo debemos abordar la intersección de la raza, el privilegio y los diferentes salarios para una definición de “calificado”. (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-2.aspx)

white supremacy, and dehumanizing, profit-driven motives support the status quo. From them we've learned that critical race theory must guide any efforts to implement antibias practices, and you'll find understandings of this expressed more clearly in our revisions. Likewise, we're heartened by white allies who've taken up the challenge to examine how they benefit from the system of white supremacy and how they can take action to decenter whiteness in their organizations.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Steadily over the last decade, visible threats posed by climate change and the continual advancement of technology have been challenging all of us to take stock of what we are sacrificing in the name of progress. We have been called to rethink how we want to live, in ways that may change the purpose and desired outcomes we pursue in educating our children. Perhaps a global pandemic has helped reinforce the message scientists and scholars have brought us from their research: humans, animals, and the natural world have deep interdependencies. But along with the bad—climate change, pandemics, and other ills—it suggests enlivening possibilities for how we define intelligence and how we understand systems beyond the human world. Ten years ago when we wrote the second edition of this book, we hadn't learned that trees send messages through the mycelium of their root systems. We were less aware of the power of biomimicry, as researchers have since discovered the value of creating models that imitate nature to solve complex human problems. A host of advances have shaken up our thinking and most certainly should be transforming the field of education.

We see ECE communities as full of the potential to offer leadership that demonstrates how critical thinking, dreaming, and scheming can lead to transformative changes, bringing us into closer harmony with the values we really care about. Despite how bad things have been, remarkable pockets of visionary leaders have been steadily reshaping their early childhood programs, connecting with each other, becoming more tenacious and bold in what Wheatley and Frieze (2011) describe as organizational change hospice workers and pioneers, who “walk out and walk on to give birth to the future.”

We highlight but a handful of these important voices in this book. Some of their stories were featured in earlier editions of *The Visionary Director*,



An example of how Margie shared new research about communication among trees can be found in this photo story she created to accompany the delivery of tree stumps to Luz's program. (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-3.pdf)

beneficios apoyan el statu quo. De ellos hemos aprendido que la teoría crítica de la raza debe guiar cualquier esfuerzo para implementar prácticas anti sesgos, y usted encontrará entendimientos de esto expresados más claramente en nuestras revisiones. Del mismo modo, nos alienten los aliados blancos que han asumido el desafío de examinar cómo se benefician del sistema de supremacía blanca y cómo pueden tomar medidas para descentrar la blancura en sus organizaciones.

LIDERAR CON EL EJEMPLO

En la última década, las amenazas visibles que plantea el cambio climático y el continuo avance de la tecnología nos han hecho desafiar a todos a hacer un balance de lo que estamos sacrificando en nombre del progreso. Hemos sido llamados a repensar cómo queremos vivir, de maneras que puedan cambiar el propósito y los resultados deseados que perseguimos en la educación de nuestros hijos. Tal vez una pandemia global ha ayudado a reforzar el mensaje que los científicos y los eruditos nos han traído de su investigación: los seres humanos, los animales y el mundo natural tienen profundas interdependencias. Pero junto con los malos—calentamiento global, pandemias y otros males—sugiere posibilidades animadas de cómo definimos la inteligencia y cómo entendemos los sistemas más allá del mundo humano. Hace diez años, cuando escribimos la segunda edición de este libro, no habíamos aprendido que los árboles envían mensajes a través del micelio de sus sistemas radiculares. Éramos menos conscientes del poder de la biocinética, ya que los investigadores han descubierto desde entonces el valor de crear modelos que imitan la naturaleza para resolver problemas humanos complejos. Una serie de avances han sacudido nuestro pensamiento y ciertamente debería estar transformando el campo de la educación.

Vemos a las comunidades de ECE llenas del potencial de ofrecer liderazgo que demuestra cómo el pensamiento crítico, el sueño y la intriga pueden conducir a cambios transformadores, lo que nos lleva a una armonía más estrecha con los valores que realmente nos importan. A pesar de lo malas que han sido las cosas, notables bolsas de líderes visionarios han estado remodelando constantemente sus programas de la primera infancia, conectando entre sí, volviéndose más tenaces y audaces en lo que Wheatley y Frieze (2011) describen como trabajadores de hospicio de cambio organizacional y pioneros, “caminando y caminando hacia el futuro”.

Presentamos sólo un puñado de estas voces importantes en este libro. Algunas de sus historias fueron presentadas en ediciones anteriores de *The Visionary Director*, y si permanecen o no en el campo, su inspiración continúa. Hemos añadido voces nuevas y actuales porque a través de sus valores,



Un ejemplo de cómo Margie compartió nuevas investigaciones sobre la comunicación entre los árboles se puede encontrar en esta historia de la foto que creó para acompañar la entrega de troncos de árboles al programa de Luz. (www.redleafpress.org/tvd/intro-3.pdf)

and whether or not they remain in the field, their inspiration carries on. We've added new and current voices because, through their values, vision, grit, and humility, they are showing us examples of answers to the questions Lisa Lee poses in her foreword to this edition:

What does *this* moment ask of me? What am I willing to learn and to do, at this time and in this place in history, to make a meaningful difference for young children, families, educators, and our society?

Revising *The Visionary Director* is part of our effort to align ourselves with a commitment to go beyond how things are and provide resources to those who long to walk this path with us. Leadership can be expressed in small community programs or large agencies. As we continue to illuminate growing visionary programs, large-scale cultural shifts and policy changes can happen. We've heard this story from the educators of Reggio Emilia, who created a widely acclaimed, publicly funded, exemplary set of early childhood environments and pedagogical practices. We saw it in Aotearoa New Zealand over three decades ago as they recreated their early childhood system to honor the treaty rights of their indigenous Māori people and drew inspiration from progressive educators such as those in Italy and Australia. We are further inspired by a more recent revamping of an early childhood framework for the province of British Columbia in Canada. Acknowledging the need for restorative justice in the treatment of their indigenous people, as well as the difficult realities of changing technology, an environmental crisis, and social and political upheaval, our Canadian colleagues challenge us to stop settling for a set of quick fixes when we need a whole new foundation for building our trajectory forward.

Taking up this challenge from our inspiring British Columbian colleagues, Luz and Margie accepted the invitation to join Ann Pelo and five other ECE professionals to launch a national "study for action" project across the United States, the Reimagining Our Work (ROW) Initiative. The time seemed ripe to call into question so much of what has been normalized with the pedagogical practices in our early childhood settings, along with the structural inequities that need to be dismantled. As with our intentions in writing *The Visionary Director*, the idea of "study for action" is to call upon educators and administrators not just to read books as assignments or for inspiration alone but to develop plans to transform how things are. The ROW Initiative asks, "What will you do now as a result of sharing the study of a book?"

visión, valor y humildad nos están mostrando ejemplos de respuestas a las preguntas que Lisa Lee plantea en su futuro a esta edición:

“¿Qué me pide *este* momento?” “¿Qué estoy dispuesto a aprender y a hacer, en este momento y en este lugar de la historia, para hacer una diferencia significativa para los niños pequeños, para las familias, los educadores y para nuestra sociedad?”

Revisar a *The Visionary Director* es parte de nuestro esfuerzo por alinear-nos con el compromiso de ir más allá de cómo son las cosas y proporcionar recursos a aquellos que anhelan caminar por este camino con nosotros. El liderazgo se puede expresar en pequeños programas comunitarios o grandes agencias. A medida que continuamos iluminando los crecientes programas visionarios, pueden ocurrir cambios culturales a gran escala y cambios en las políticas. Hemos escuchado esta historia de los educadores de Reggio Emilia, que crearon un conjunto ejemplar ampliamente aclamado y financiado con fondos públicos de entornos de la primera infancia y prácticas pedagógicas. Lo vimos en Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda hace más de tres décadas, ya que recrearon su sistema de primera infancia para honrar los derechos de los tratados de su pueblo indígena Maorí y se inspiraron en educadores progresistas como los de Italia y Australia. Nos inspira mostrando una renovación más reciente de un marco de primera infancia para la provincia de Columbia Británica en Canadá. Reconociendo la necesidad de justicia restaurativa en el tratamiento de su pueblo de las Primeras Naciones, así como las realidades difíciles del cambio de tecnología, una crisis ambiental y la agitación social y política, nuestros colegas canadienses nos desafían a dejar de conformarnos para establecer-nos para un conjunto de soluciones rápidas cuando necesitamos una base completamente nueva para construir nuestra trayectoria hacia adelante.

Aceptando este desafío de nuestros inspiradores colegas de British Columbian, Luz y Margie aceptaron la invitación de unirse a Ann Pelo y otros cinco profesionales de ECE para lanzar un proyecto nacional de “estudio para la acción” en los Estados Unidos, la Iniciativa Reimagining Our Work (ROW). Parecía oportuno poner en tela de juicio gran parte de lo que se ha normalizado con las prácticas pedagógicas en nuestros entornos de la primera infancia, junto con las desigualdades estructurales que deben ser desmanteladas. Al igual que con nuestras intenciones al escribir *The Visionary Director*, la idea de “estudiar para la acción” es hacer un llamamiento a los educadores y administradores para que no solo lean libros como tareas, o solo como inspiración, sino que desarrollen planes para transformar cómo son las cosas. La Iniciativa ROW pregunta: “¿Qué harás ahora como resultado de compartir el estudio de un libro?”

USING THIS BOOK

The chapters of this book focus on a conceptual framework for being a visionary leader. Included are self-directed activities to help you develop your own approach to working with the framework. For this third edition, we've included some new elements. Adding reflections on the ideas in each chapter, Luz's voice first arrives in Spanish, followed by an English translation. While it wasn't feasible to offer the entire book in both languages, it is important to hear Luz's ideas in her first language to both honor a linguistic preference and also provide Spanish speakers access to a way of thinking that doesn't always directly translate to English. Consistent with earlier editions of this book, other stories by native Spanish speakers are also honored in this way.

Luz describes her reflections throughout each chapter as “conversations with the text,” demonstrating how a person makes meaning during the reading process. At the end of each chapter, she offers an example of metacognition, thinking further about her responses, then adding reflections on the big ideas that resonate with her personal journey to becoming a visionary director. This contribution offers an additional layer of insight from this book, shining a light on how someone can come to understand themselves as a learner.

Periodically each chapter includes QR codes with links to more resources, stories, and examples of how the ideas look in practice. These links may lead you to documents, photo stories, short video clips, or other online content. Most smartphones and devices come with a QR code reader/scanner app installed. Alternatively, you can download one of your choice. To access the resources, simply open the app and hold the guides so that you can see the QR code framed within them. This will scan the code, and the content will pop up.

Chapter 1 offers our vision of early childhood programs as the new neighborhoods of the twenty-first century, poised to transform the cultural ills of our society with genuine, mutually respectful, and empowering relationships. Included are lessons from proverbs, organizational development theory, and our own childhood memories of life in a neighborhood or community.

Chapter 2 gives a taste of systems thinking as it pertains to developing a culture in early childhood programs. We offer a simplified explanation of a big field of study that suggests there are interrelated and interdependent aspects operating in our work structures whether or not we are consciously attending to them. Building your awareness of how structures create

Considera la democracia cultural



Consider Cultural Democracy

Preferiría el término “democracia cultural”. Tú puedes tener un aula democrática cuando eres justo con los niños. Pero en el contexto de la diversidad, el término democracia cultural sugiere acoger, honrar, dar el mismo valor a todas las culturas e idiomas. Cuando se promueve la democracia cultural, ustedes crecen personas empáticas y ansiosas por aprender sobre las diferencias y los puntos en común. También es importante no asumir que todos los del mismo grupo cultural o lingüístico son iguales. Tienes que hacer un punto de aprender acerca de los valores y metas de cada familia para sus hijos.

I would prefer the term *cultural democracy*. You can have a democratic classroom when you are fair with children. But in the context of diversity, the term *cultural democracy* suggests welcoming, honoring, and giving equal value to all cultures and languages. When cultural democracy is promoted, you grow people who are empathetic and eager to learn about differences and commonalities. It's also important to not assume that everyone of the same cultural or linguistic group is the same. You have to make a point of learning about each family's values and goals for their children.

Look for Luz's reflections throughout the book.

USANDO ESTE LIBRO

Los capítulos de este libro se centran en un marco conceptual para ser un líder visionario. Se incluyen actividades autodirigidas para ayudarle a desarrollar su propio enfoque para trabajar con el marco. Para esta tercera edición hemos incluido algunos elementos nuevos. Añadiendo reflexiones sobre las ideas de cada capítulo, la voz de Luz llega primero al español, seguida de una traducción al inglés. Si bien no era factible ofrecer todo el libro en ambos idiomas, es importante escuchar las ideas de Luz en su primera lengua para honrar una preferencia lingüística y también proporcionar a los hispanohablantes acceso a una forma de pensar que no siempre se traduce directamente al inglés. De acuerdo con ediciones anteriores de este libro, otras historias de hispanohablantes nativos también son honradas de esta manera.

Luz describe sus reflexiones a lo largo de cada capítulo como “conversaciones con el texto”, demostrando cómo una persona da sentido durante el proceso de lectura. Al final de cada capítulo ofrece un ejemplo de metacognición, pensando más en sus respuestas, luego añadiendo reflexiones sobre las grandes ideas que resuenan con su viaje personal para convertirse en una directora visionaria. Esta contribución ofrece una capa adicional de información de este libro, iluminando cómo alguien llega a entenderse a sí misma como una aprendiz.

Periódicamente, cada capítulo incluye códigos QR con enlaces a más recursos, historias y ejemplos de cómo se ven las ideas en la práctica. Estos enlaces pueden llevarle a documentos, historias fotográficas, clips de video cortos u otros sitios web. La mayoría de los teléfonos y dispositivos inteligentes vienen con una aplicación de lector/escáner de códigos QR instalada. Alternativamente, puede descargar uno de su elección. Para acceder a los recursos simplemente abra la aplicación y mantenga las guías para que pueda ver el código QR enmarcado dentro de ellos. Esto escaneará el código y el contenido aparecerá.

El capítulo 1 ofrece nuestra visión de los programas de la primera infancia como los nuevos barrios del siglo XXI, a la hora de transformar los males culturales de nuestra sociedad con relaciones genuinas, respetuosas y empoderadoras. Se incluyen lecciones de proverbios, teoría del desarrollo organizacional y nuestros propios recuerdos de la infancia de la vida en un vecindario o comunidad.

El capítulo 2 da una muestra de los sistemas de pensamiento en lo que se refiere al desarrollo de una cultura en los programas de la primera infancia. Ofrecemos una explicación simplificada de un gran campo de estudio que sugiere que hay aspectos interrelacionados e interdependientes que

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Consider Cultural Democracy

I would prefer the term *cultural democracy*. You can have a democratic classroom when you are fair with children. But in the context of diversity, the term *cultural democracy* suggests welcoming, honoring, and giving equal value to all cultures and languages. When cultural democracy is promoted, you grow people who are empathetic and eager to learn about differences and commonalities. It's also important to not assume that everyone of the same cultural or linguistic group is the same. You have to make a point of learning about each family's values and goals for their children.

Busque los reflejos de Luz en todo el libro.

conditions and consequences will improve your effectiveness as you work with a vision. (For further insights into systems thinking, visit <https://thesystemsthinker.com/systems-thinking-what-why-when-where-and-how>.)

In chapter 2 of the earlier editions of this book, we proposed thinking of a director's work as a triangle, carefully balanced on all sides between managing, coaching, and building community. Over the years, we've come to recognize some limitations of using a triangle symbol to represent our thinking. A triangle doesn't express the interconnectedness of a director's work. Drawing on research in neuroscience, we have also learned that sharp edges send stress signals to the brain, while curves tell the brain to relax. First as authors and then with our editor and graphic designer, we explored other options, considering intersecting circles or the shape of hands cupping, and finally settling on the image of three hands interlocking.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 offer more details about working from each side of the leadership framework, providing principles and strategies for you to consider. Chapter 6 offers five composite stories of directors working to bring a particular vision to life in their programs. This includes a new story about the journey of a white female director working with her team to create an organizational culture with systems that support the four goals of antibias education while uncovering elements of white centeredness that needed dismantling. Each of the stories offers detailed examples of how to translate your values into innovative practices for your center.

At the end of this book is a list of appendices that are available via QR codes. These online appendices offer sample forms for some of the strategies we describe. Along with our list of references, a new resources section includes antibias and antiracism materials we recommend, including books, podcasts, and online sources, as well as visionary organizations we follow.

What you will not find in this book is help with budgeting, fundraising, or financial management. We know there are other valuable resources to assist you in these areas. *The Visionary Director* focuses on ways of thinking about leading an early childhood program that produces a ripple effect of transformative change out into communities. We offer strategies and examples to strengthen your confidence as you walk on as an innovator and change maker.

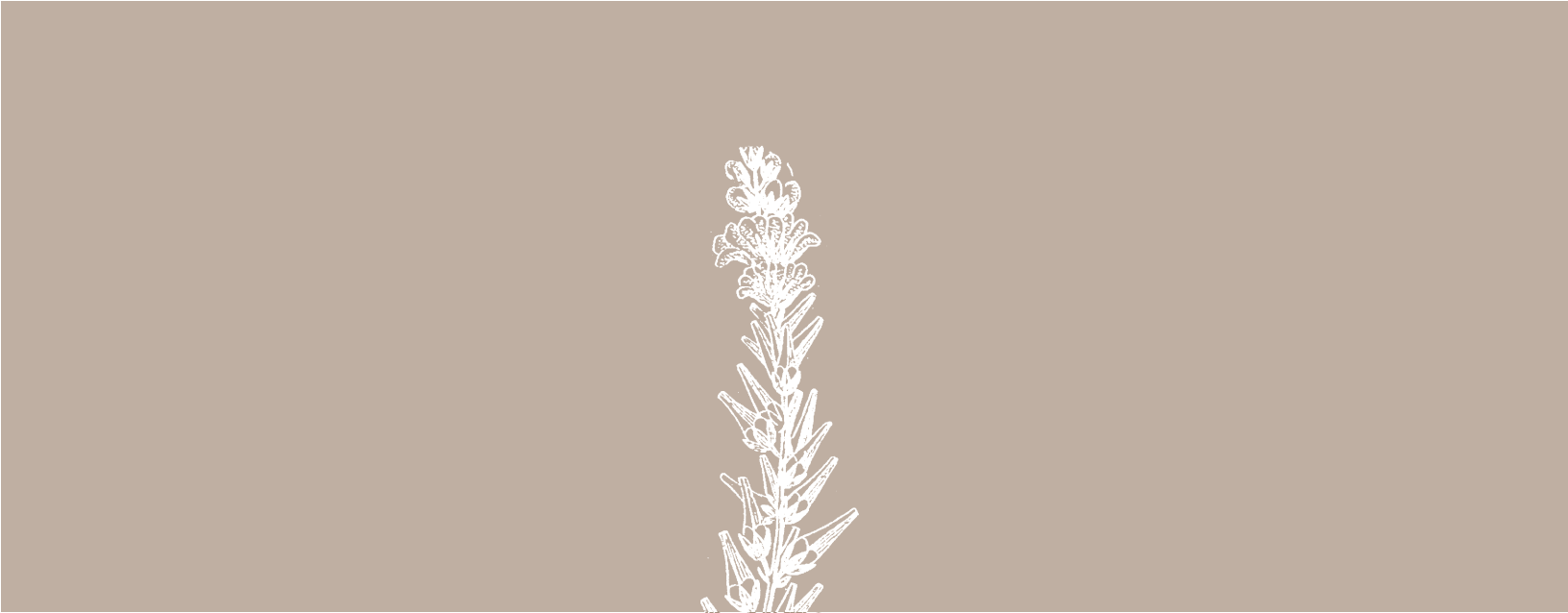
operan en nuestras estructuras de trabajo, independientemente de si los estamos atendiendo conscientemente. Construir su conciencia de cómo las estructuras crean condiciones y consecuencias mejorará su eficacia a medida que trabaja con una visión. (Para obtener más información sobre el pensamiento de los sistemas, visite <https://thesystemsthinker.com/systems-thinking-what-why-when-where-and-how>.)

En el capítulo 2 de las primeras ediciones de este libro propusimos pensar en el trabajo de un director como un triángulo, cuidadosamente equilibrado en todos los lados entre la gestión, el coaching y la construcción de la comunidad. A lo largo de los años hemos llegado a reconocer algunas limitaciones de usar un símbolo de triángulo para representar nuestro pensamiento. Un triángulo no expresa la interconexión del trabajo de un director. Basándonos en la investigación en neurociencia, también hemos aprendido que los bordes afilados envían señales de estrés al cerebro, mientras que las curvas le dicen al cerebro que se relaje. Primero como autores y luego con nuestro editor y diseñador gráfico, exploramos otras opciones, considerando la intersección de círculos o la forma de las manos en el acopamiento, y finalmente asentándose en la imagen de manos entrelazadas.

Los capítulos 3, 4 y 5 ofrecen más detalles sobre cómo trabajar desde cada lado del marco de liderazgo, proporcionando principios y estrategias que debe considerar. El capítulo 6 ofrece cinco historias compuestas de directores que trabajan para dar vida a una visión particular en su programa. Esto incluye una nueva historia sobre el viaje de una directora blanca que trabaja con su equipo para crear una cultura organizacional con sistemas que apoyen los cuatro objetivos de la educación anti-sesgo mientras descubre elementos de centrado blanco que necesitaban desmantelamiento. Cada una de las historias del capítulo 6 ofrece ejemplos detallados de cómo traducir sus valores en prácticas innovadoras para su centro.

Al final de este libro hay apéndices que ofrecen formularios de muestra para algunas de las estrategias que describimos. Junto con nuestra lista de referencias, una nueva sección de recursos incluye materiales sobre antibias y antirracismo que recomendamos, incluidos libros, podcasts y fuentes en línea, así como organizaciones visionarias que seguimos.

Lo que no encontrará en este libro es ayuda con la presupuestación, la recaudación de fondos o la gestión financiera. Sabemos que hay otros recursos valiosos para ayudarle en estas áreas. *The Visionary Director* se centra en formas de pensar en liderar un programa de primera infancia que produce un efecto dominó de un cambio transformador en las comunidades. Ofrecemos estrategias y ejemplos para fortalecer su confianza mientras camina como innovador y creador de cambios.



CHAPTER 1

GUIDING YOUR PROGRAM WITH A VISION

Before you begin reading our ideas about being a program director or supervisor, take a minute to consider yours. Which of the answers below best matches your thinking regarding the purpose of an early childhood program? Check the box that represents your highest priority.

- ☐ To provide a service for parents while they work
- ☐ To give children early intervention or a head start to be ready for school and academic success
- ☐ To give children a sense of belonging, confidence, and resiliency as they grow
- ☐ To enhance children's family and cultural identities and social skills as they learn to get along in the world
- ☐ To ensure that children have a childhood full of play, adventure, and investigation
- ☐ To create a community where the adults and children experience a sense of connection and new possibilities for making the world a better place

☐ _____

(add your own words here)

We start this book where we hope you will start—being aware of how you understand the primary purpose of your work. There is no right or wrong answer in the choices above. Your view of your work may encompass some version of each of these ideas. Most likely you go through your days with a general sense of purpose. We recommend taking the time to be specific about your purpose and vision because your image of an early childhood

program shapes the way you guide your program, consciously or unconsciously. Your vision plays the same role in your program as your breath plays in your body—distributing life-giving oxygen throughout your system, exploring where things are tense and need some attention, and providing a rhythm for your muscles to do their collaborative work.

How often do you pay attention to your breath? Right now, for instance, have you noticed how you are breathing? As you read these words, does your breath feel rushed, tight, or maybe even hard to detect? Are you aware of where your breath is in your body? Take a minute to check this out. Likewise, consider how frequently you do your job as a director with a vision flowing through your mind. Developing a regular awareness of your breath in your body cultivates mindfulness for all parts of your life. Similarly, when you move through your days with a vision of how things could be, you'll approach directing tasks and decisions in a thoughtful manner, with the mindset of a leader rather than administrator.

You may have come to this book searching for answers, for solutions to the stresses and strains of directing an early childhood program. We suggest you start your search by finding your breath, not only because this is literally a good thing to do but also because this action symbolically represents the essence of what this book can offer you. With all the pressures surrounding a director's job, no doubt you barely have time to catch your breath, let alone read a book. This means you probably spend most of your time reacting to how things are, rather than developing new ways of being. Consider the cigarette smoker who relies on cough drops to soothe a scratchy throat and neglects to find support for changing habits and healthier living. This is akin to directors who rely on management tips to survive instead of taking stock, reorienting their approach, and claiming their power to create something different.

SEARCHING YOUR HEART FOR WHAT'S IMPORTANT

When it comes down to it, looking for quick answers and formulas to run a child care program is like turning to diet pills and beauty products to improve your health. It's just not that simple. To be sure, it's important to acquire skills and learn the how-to's of developing a well-functioning management system, and a growing number of resources can help you with this. *The Visionary Director* suggests something books on supervision rarely discuss:

- ◀ finding the heart of what brought you to the early childhood field
- ◀ understanding your work as contributing to a vibrant democracy
- ◀ seeing yourself as a leader beyond management tasks and compliance issues
- ◀ remembering your actions with adults should parallel what you want them to offer children
- ◀ creating an organizational culture and systems that support your vision

Considera la democracia cultural

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As you take time to find your breath, literally and metaphorically, you will begin to discover deeper longings that live in your body, such as these:

- ◀ a desire for meaningful work that makes a difference in the world
- ◀ a focus on the joys of childhood and joining with children in exploring the wonders of the world
- ◀ a work life that is sustainable, with time for joy, tears, laughter, and celebrations
- ◀ a place where you have genuine connections with others, alike and different
- ◀ a way to learn from mistakes and setbacks, without a sense of failure
- ◀ a community where you feel safe, have history, and enjoy a sense of belonging
- ◀ an experience of seeing aspects of your vision come alive and take hold

When you embrace rather than ignore your longings, they can shape a vision to guide your work as fundamentally as your breathing guides your body.

Around the country, directors are reading blogs, attending conferences, and sitting in on webinars in search of ways to improve their work. We've discovered that although at the surface this appears to be a search for some quick ideas, a much deeper need often brings them together. Directors long for a place to unload the heavy burden they carry. The reality of their work is often different from what they imagined it to be. People usually come to the work of directing early childhood programs eager to make a difference in the lives of children and families. Faced with the current conditions, many directors are aware of a lot of "if only" feelings lingering below each breath—if only we had more money to pay the staff a decent salary, if only we could improve the facility, if only there weren't so many regulations and so much paperwork, if only we could offer more scholarships, if only we could just get parents more involved, if only people understood the importance of this work.

Beyond the need for a steady paycheck, most of us seek jobs in early childhood education because it is work with real meaning and real people, and it offers the possibility of making a difference in the world. Yet all too quickly, external pressures and the demands of this work make us lose sight of our original motivation. Budgets, regulations, required meetings and reports, shrinking substitute lists, and the traumas and dramas of people and our planet soon overwhelm our hearts and minds. There is hardly time to get to the bathroom, let alone attend to that stack of reading to be done and documents to be filed. Before long we find ourselves moving from crisis to crisis, too frazzled to remember all those time-management techniques and exhausted down to our bones. The original dreams we brought to our job can easily fade or seem totally out of reach.

This book is meant to rekindle a sense of new possibilities. Rather than help you get better at working with how things are, *The Visionary Director* offers you a framework and beginning strategies for transforming the limitations of your current mindset and conditions. In the language of the business world, we want you to "disrupt and innovate," redirecting your energy and redesigning your work to honor the lives of the children, families, and staff, and the precious gifts of the green planet that sustains our lives.

At the heart of this book is a vision of early childhood programs as places where people practice democratic principles—actively participating in communities where children, adults, and the natural world have mutual respect and reciprocal gifts to offer. In this way, we view democracy as a

verb. It's easy to talk about your problems and the things that bother you in your work, but too often directors neglect to describe how they would like their work to be, the specific elements of their vision. Letting your mind spin out new possibilities when you are so used to adapting and accommodating yourself to how things are can be a challenge. Breaking out of these confines can stir up old longings and remind you of how little you've settled for, how much more is possible, and the greater gifts you have to offer.

Author Alice Walker inspires us when she says, "Activism is the rent I pay for living on the planet" (Parmar 2013). How might we reimagine our early childhood work with this lens, for ourselves and for the enculturation of the next generation we are privileged to work with? With so much damage, so much at risk in our world, we can step away from the place of being an overwhelmed victim or bystander and into the broader active role of what Samantha Power and two high school students, Monica Mahal and Sarah Decker, call being an "upstander" (Power 2013). We can choose to guide our work on behalf of standing up for a better, more equitable world, rather than just learning to cope with how things are. This includes going beyond the prevailing "white-centered" way of thinking and, indeed, going beyond human-centered thinking. In today's work, there is ample evidence of the limitations of both of these. Our early childhood programs can begin to shift these old, destructive paradigms.

IMAGINING HOW IT COULD BE

The vision we have for early childhood programs replaces the institutional feel of items from an early childhood catalog. Lifeless descriptions of standards are replaced with natural materials that keep us in touch with the life cycle of living, growing, and dying and with the interdependence of living things. The walls are adorned not with commercially produced displays but with images from the lives of the people who spend their days there together. There are a variety of interesting textures, colors, and things to discover and investigate. Inviting smells of food and flowers overtake the odors of stuffy rooms, urine, and disinfectants. Natural light and soft-light lamps create comfy places for people to enjoy one another's company. Staff members and children have a place for their things, their meetings, and the tools they need for their work and play, as well as a quiet place for when they need a break away from one another. People build genuine relationships across differences in age, economic class, gender, and culture. They take responsibility for creating a future that heals the legacy of racism and environmental destruction, that replaces fear and hate with love and the principle Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put forth in his "Letter from

a Birmingham Jail”: “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” Adults and children both learn to listen to what the trees, rivers, animals, and stars have to teach us.

In our visionary ECE program, people actively listen to and learn from one another, share their passions, feel safe in expressing disagreements and vulnerabilities, and negotiate problems with remarkable creativity. Mutual admiration and appreciation flow between the staff, children, and families, keeping alive a sense of eagerness and hope. People adopt what Carol Dweck calls a “growth mindset,” rather than a fixed one (Dweck 2016). No one shies away from hard work and challenges. They have come to understand that these can deepen people’s connections with and commitment to one another, as well as to nonhumans on the planet. Respect from others translates into respect for oneself and a desire to make a contribution in righting the wrongs of the world. The way people learn to listen, talk, play, think, negotiate, value, and care for themselves and one another in these early childhood programs spills out to other lives in the surrounding community. People have a taste of a different way of being and are no longer willing to settle for the inadequacies and injustices of how things are.

Our intention in writing *The Visionary Director* goes beyond trying to make your job easier, though we certainly hope it does that. We believe early childhood programs are in a pivotal position to foster relationships that can heal the rift all people feel between themselves and others and between themselves and the natural world. We can address issues of bias, racism, and inequities in our thinking, actions, and structural arrangements. Early childhood programs can give the children and adults involved what Ann Pelo (2013) calls an “ecological identity,” an experience of empowerment, of democracy in action, so that they have the will and know-how to make this a priority in our country. On the whole, most early childhood programs haven’t been developed with this vision. They’ve been focused on the more limited goals of keeping children out of harm’s way or getting them ready for school. There is so much more we could be reaching for, seeing the connection between our work and larger social change. That vision could mobilize enormous energy and turn early childhood educators into a force to be reckoned with.

FORTIFYING YOURSELF WITH A VISION

In visiting directors around the country, we’ve found that those who actively work with a bold vision create programs that stand out from the grim statistics on mediocrity in child care. Think of your vision like the breath in your body. The more attention you give to it, the more it fortifies

you. When programs are led by directors who breathe a larger vision into everyday tasks, people feel more alive in their bodies, and their spirits lift with a new sense of hope. This is one of the greatest antidotes to burnout.

Over the years, we've asked directors to describe the vision that is guiding their work. To our surprise, many have a limited response. Some talk of a new playground, more scholarship dollars, or an active substitute teacher list. We see these responses as goals or items on a wish list, possibly indicators of a dream not yet fully articulated. A surprising number of directors point to accreditation, scores on assessment tools, or rating scales (such as the CLASS, ITERS, ECERS, or PAS) as reaching their vision. To be sure, we have great respect for these guideposts and have used such things for many years in our own work. But our hearts sink, especially in these critical times for our country and our planet, when we see so many programs primarily focused on compliance standards, overlooking the opportunity to be developing vibrant experiences of living together while learning to be active citizens in a cultural and political democracy. Somehow the idea of a vision for a program has been reduced to fidelity to a tool or reaching predefined academic outcomes, rather than a bigger picture of the purpose of education and raising the next generation. Our concern about vision begs other questions. What is the unique identity of a given program, its heart and soul? Who spends their days here, and what are their hopes and dreams? How do they see themselves in the context of the wider community?

Ser auténtico

La mayoría de los programas de la primera infancia tienen una declaración de misión impresionante. Se ve muy bien por escrito, en el sitio web. Tal vez tú tienes impresionantes manuales de empleados y padres, pero mi pregunta es, ¿realmente lo vives? Con una misión o declaración de visión, haces promesas. Este es un compromiso con las familias, con los empleados y la comunidad. No puedes tener palabras impresionantes. Tienes que ser auténtico y vivir tus valores. Esto significa que pones tu corazón en dar vida a estos, haciéndolos una prioridad. Cuando alguien lee palabras impresionantes pero luego no las ve en acción, se sienten engañadas. Por supuesto, esto no es una mentira intencional, sino un problema de distraerse y centrarse en otras demandas como listas de verificación y escalas de evaluación. No puedes vivir en tu visión si tus valores no son tu prioridad, si tu enfoque no está en el lugar correcto.



Being Authentic

Most early childhood programs have an impressive mission statement. It looks great in writing, on the website. Perhaps you have impressive employee and parent manuals, but my question is, do you really live it? With a mission or vision statement, you make promises. This is a commitment to the families, to the employees and the community. You can't just have impressive words. You have to be authentic and live your values. This means you put your heart into bringing these to life, making them a priority. When someone reads impressive words but then doesn't see them in action, they feel lied to. Of course, this is not an intentional lie but a problem of getting distracted and focusing on other demands like checklists and rating scales. You can't live into your vision if your values aren't your priority, if your focus isn't in the right place.



Ante los horrores que veo que ocurriendo diariamente, pido un milagro. Un milagro para que nunca más se le dé una paliza a un niño, que nunca más los niños sean golpeados ni abusados. Vivimos en una época en la que la violencia es aceptada como algo normal. Debemos cuestionar las golpizas y humillaciones a los niños así como las expresiones violentas de rabia y frustración de la misma manera que cuestionamos el tratamiento sexista y abusivo a las mujeres.

Cuando tuve la oportunidad de abrir un programa de cuidado infantil para madres adolescentes, sabía que la realidad de esas injusticias no se podría evitar en nuestro programa. Sabía que me agotaría muy rápidamente si no tenía una visión clara. Quería crear un lugar donde la gente pudiera participar en la lucha por la no violencia y en terminar con esa conspiración silenciosa que acepta, por ejemplo, darle una golpiza a un niño porque no quiere ponerse los zapatos. La clave para comprometerse a practicar la no violencia se basa en comprender el desarrollo del niño y aprender a tener paciencia.

La visión que tengo cada día cuando vengo al trabajo es ofrecer a las madres un santuario de paz y de liberación del dolor que traen de afuera. Un santuario donde se aceptan sin juicios las historias de cada una de las adolescentes. Un lugar de recuperación y cambio. Cuando las adolescentes vienen a nuestro programa, deben aprender que está mal ejercer la violencia hacia otra persona. Todas estas madres han vivido bajo la violencia la mayor parte de sus vidas. Ellas tienen que aprender a hacer las cosas de una manera diferente, aún cuando todavía no sean capaces de hacerlo. Nosotras les decimos, “No las vamos a juzgar y ustedes no van a mentir ni quedarse calladas acerca de lo que les sucede. Pueden enojarse o pueden odiar lo que les pasa, pero siempre sin violencia”. Ese es nuestro lema.

Es tan difícil y tenemos tantos contratiempos. A veces me canso y me pregunto a mí misma, “¿Cuántos años más de todo esto?”. Y, sin embargo, este es el trabajo que me hace sentir que puedo influenciar y ejercer un cambio. Y así lo hacemos. Cada año vemos como estas jóvenes madres se hacen más fuertes. Observamos como comienza a aparecer la esperanza seguida de la compasión. Aprenden a apoyarse las unas a las otras y nosotras vemos cómo cambian su manera de ser. Creo firmemente que luchan por ese cambio porque buscan tener esperanza para sus hijos.

—Ruth

With all the horrors one sees in our popular culture, I have a dream. If I could create one miracle before I die, it would be to stop children from being spanked, hit, or abused. We live in a culture where violence is normalized. We must question the cultural edicts that condone spanking and the humiliation of children, just as we must question the abusive and sexist treatment of women and the expression of frustration or anger in the form of violence.

So when I had the chance to open a child care program for teen mothers, I knew I couldn't divorce the politics of the wider injustices of the world from our program. Without a clear vision to focus on, I knew I would burn out very quickly. I wanted to create a place where people would take on this struggle for nonviolence and step out of this conspiracy of silence around such things as spanking toddlers for not wanting to put on their shoes. The key to making a commitment to nonviolence is through understanding child development and through learning patience.

The vision I form each day as I come to work is to provide teen mothers with a sanctuary of peace and freedom from the pain of the streets. A sanctuary of acceptance without judgment, where each teen's story is her own. A place of healing and change. When teens enroll their children in our program, they have to buy into this notion that violence toward someone without power is wrong. All of these mothers have been living with violence most of their lives. They have to want to do it differently, even if they aren't able to yet. We say to them, "We will not judge you, and you will not lie or keep silent about what's going on. You can be mad, you can hate what is happening, but no violence." That's our mantra.

It's so hard, and we have had so many setbacks. Sometimes I get so tired, and I ask myself, "How many more years can I do this?" Yet this work is what makes me feel like we can have some influence, create change. And we do. Every year we see these young mothers get stronger. Hope and compassion emerge. They support each other, and we watch them change the tide. I firmly believe that ultimately people will fight for change because they want hope for their children.

—Ruth



In the early years of developing programs for young children whose mothers worked all day, the vision was to create a home away from home. Teachers and directors took inspiration from the philosophies of early nursery school and kindergarten educators, as well as child psychologists—people such as Caroline Pratt, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget. The supervisor’s focus was on providing meaningful play experiences for children, not managing complex programs with multiple demands. Over the succeeding decades, the early childhood field came of age with a shared language, definitions of core competencies, best practices, and desired outcomes, and a huge selection of conferences, resources, assessment tools, accreditation, certification, and degree programs.

Time, history, and economic, political, and educational trends have brought us to a new place. We now have an ever-expanding body of research-based knowledge that includes profound implications for our work from the field of neuroscience, outlining the critical window of time for building brain pathways through sensorimotor play, for dual-language learning, self-regulation, and higher-level critical thinking. We have growing commercial interests supplying the early childhood field. Within the current educational thrust, the common reference to our field is “early education,” leaving “childhood” totally out of the contemporary terminology. Children’s right to play has become an equity issue, limited to programs serving more privileged white children, while publicly funded programs serving less advantaged populations favor drill-and-skill approaches with little opportunity for children to have self-directed play investigations rich with learning experiences.

A strong factor driving much of where we’ve been headed is fear, bolstered by litigious cultural norms. We have fears of children being harmed, left behind academically, or groomed for exploitation. If you are Black or an immigrant profiled for deportation, these fears are well-founded. But fears of children getting germs or injuries or being touched or abducted by predators will leave their lives so sanitized and inactive as to be unsafe and limited in their healthy growth and development. The absence of adventure, risk-taking, comforting touch, and affection deprives children of some essential experiences needed for brain development, disease resistance, and mental and physical well-being. Should we continue to take that risk?

In 2019 Stacie Goffin and Valora Washington updated their 2007 book, *Ready or Not*, which described the first decade of the twenty-first century as having arrived at a defining moment with a tremendous amount at stake.

They offered a compelling call to develop the leadership skills needed to become change agents. In their second edition, they analyze what has transpired in the intervening twelve years and question our field's capacity for adaptive leadership to address the changes needed.

As if on cue, in stepped Rhian Evans Allvin (2018), CEO of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), with a powerful blog post: "As our country sits in moments of reckoning in so many ways, we find ourselves at NAEYC with a welcome opportunity to do our own reckoning—to look in the mirror and honestly assess and question our progress and our shortcomings." Allvin writes of the importance of defining what we want to stand for as professionals and goes on to outline things NAEYC has come to understand and stand for. Among her points are these:

- « We are for elevating a new diversity and equity position statement and related resources.
- « We are for helping early childhood educators promote equity in early learning settings, even in the context of a diverse society that has not yet resolved its structural and institutional inequities.
- « We are for working to resolve those inequities. (Allvin 2018)

Writing with specific reference to "racial equity gaps," Allvin says, "Our society created the circumstances that created the gaps; we are, therefore, collectively capable of eliminating them" (Allvin 2018). What a hopeful example of adaptive leadership and a call to action.

We strongly agree with Goffin, Washington, and Allvin that our profession urgently needs a clear vision about its purpose, identity, and responsibility. Rather than leave this work to some outside experts, we believe program directors can take responsibility for growing a vision right where they are, joining with others in shaping the profession's future and keeping issues of equity in the forefront.

GETTING HONEST ABOUT DAILY REALITIES

Can busy, underresourced directors develop a vision that holds strong standards for their work without homogenizing their programs or standardizing childhood and curricula? Carol Anne Wien (2004) asks the question this way: "Are teachers able to find meaning in their work, to find relevance to children's lives and love of the world and its ecological diversity, beauty, pattern, and texture? How do teachers sustain themselves

through mechanistic, competitive, production-driven processes?” (xv). In early education policies in state governments across the United States and in the direction in which professional organizations in early care and education are moving, quality improvement seems tied to an ever-expanding set of requirements and expectations placed on teachers. Wien states her position clearly: “The use of prescriptive processes in education is misplaced because humans, who include intention, ethics, and creative joy in their ways of being, cannot be reduced to machines carrying out someone else’s prescriptions for teaching” (152–53).

Indicadores de un programa de alta calidad

Realmente me relaciono con este pensamiento de Carol Anne Wien sobre el aspecto humano de la alegría. En un momento pensé que un programa de alta calidad se demostraría a través una alta puntuación en la escala de calificación ECERS y obtener la acreditación para validar las prácticas de mi centro. Pensé que todos los esfuerzos necesarios para obtener esta validación valían la pena. La puntuación más alta significa que estás haciendo lo mejor que puedes, ¿verdad? Empecé a notar que esto no se sentía como lo mejor de mí. Las cosas se sentían secas. Con un enfoque en las puntuaciones como indicadores de calidad sacrificas las relaciones y la alegría en el trabajo. Eso es un precio muy alto para pagar y lo que realmente está recibiendo es estrés no satisfacción u orgullo.



Indicators of a High-Quality Program

I really relate to this thought from Carol Anne Wien about the human aspect of joy. At one time, I thought a high-quality program would be demonstrated by a high score in the ECERS rating scale and getting accreditation to validate the practices of my center. I thought that all the efforts required to get this validation were worth it. The highest score means you are doing your best, right? I began to notice that this didn’t feel like my best. Things were feeling dry. With a focus on scores as indicators of quality, you sacrifice relationships and joyful work. That is a very high price to pay, and what you are really getting is stress, not satisfaction or pride.

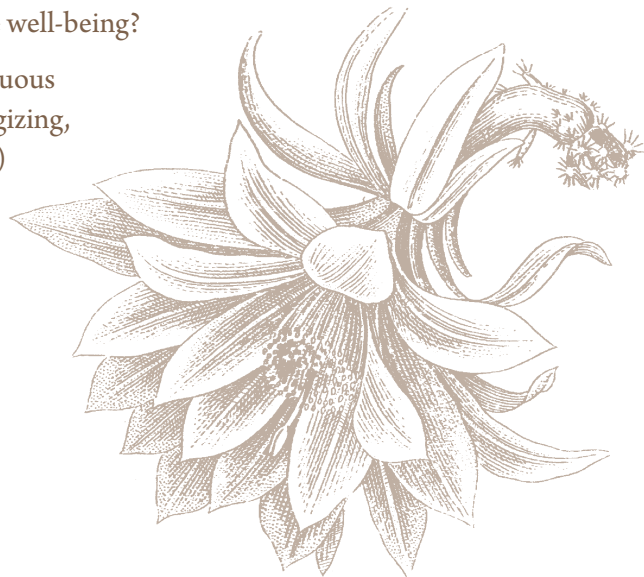
Visit a Head Start or newly accredited early childhood program in any region of the United States and you will likely find any number of thick binders documenting how they meet the criteria defining best practices. On the one hand, we feel proud to be part of a cadre of people determined to see that young children in group settings are educated and cared for with accountability to high standards. But for all their good intentions, we get the impression that most of the folks who are developing these new standards haven’t recently directed a program, let alone been responsible for a classroom of active young children. We want to ask some additional questions:

- « Do directors experience current quality enhancement initiatives as being worth the amount of time and focus they require?
- « Are new standards improving working conditions and salaries and supporting responsive pedagogy to engage teachers, children, and families in learning together?

- « Do new resources infringe on or enhance the vision teachers and directors are building?

Lisa Lee, senior program officer for early education at First 5 San Francisco, puts an even sharper focus on this publicly funded quality enhancement work, asking how we can rise above the assessments we use and find a way to measure those things we value most. She asks the following questions:

- « Will we use data respectfully and responsibly?
- « Can we avoid blaming teachers for outcomes that are much more correlated to system design than what they do with children every day?
- « Are we measuring things that matter, and are we not measuring things that matter more?
- « Will teachers leave the profession, burned out not only from low wages but from high-stakes assessment anxiety, documentation overload, and frustration with “best practices” that have little regard for community contexts and the educator’s reality?
- « Can we ethically continue to pour new and significant resources into the infrastructure of QRIS measurement and improvement efforts and their emerging industries, when teachers and teaching continue to be woefully underfunded across this country?
- « How do we know that the “help” is helping? Is there a buzz in the room? Are teachers rested and relaxed? Do they have a greater or lesser sense of voice in the conversations?
- « Is there a greater sense of efficacy—not about mastering the tools—but in what happens to the child? How do we build support systems that build competencies but do not sacrifice well-being?
- « How do we design QRIS so that that continuous quality improvement can be inspiring, energizing, and respectful to our teachers? (Carter 2015)



A new vision for a new time

Now is the time to work on a larger vision in leading your program with creativity and attention to values. Early childhood leaders Margie Carter, Luz Maria Caslo, and Deb Curtis provide inspiration and support in this newly updated edition of *The Visionary Director*.

The third edition welcomes a new co-author, director of a vibrant dual-language program who anchors her work in her cultural values while navigating the requirements of public funding. Personal stories in Spanish and English and extensive professional examples guide directors in creating an organizational culture shaped by diverse perspectives with an anti-racist, anti-bias, equity lens.

Discover a leadership framework for organizing your work, principles, and strategies with self-directed activities to support your vision for building a strong learning community for your staff and the young children in your care.



Margie Carter's speaking and consulting work as a teacher educator has her traveling throughout North America and New Zealand. With social justice as a lens, she is concerned about play as an equity issue, cultural and linguistic democracy, and uplifting the leadership, respect, and compensation of a diverse body of educators.



Luz Maria Caslo divides her time between directing Refugee and Immigrant Family Center Bilingual Preschool (RIFC), and consulting, training, adult instruction as adjunct faculty at Highline College. As a bilingual, bicultural educator, Luz has championed critical pedagogy and equity in education at the local and state level.



Deb Curtis is a passionate advocate for children and the adults who care for and educate them. She has spent over forty-five years working with children and teachers in early childhood programs throughout North American and is dedicated to learning meaningful anti-bias, anti-racist teaching practices with young children to help create a kinder, more equitable world.

"With humility, (the authors) have opened the door to greater excellence through different perspectives from changing community contexts. They introduce us to leaders who hold visions equitable enough to have high expectations for every child and who create the culture for others to do so as well."

—LISA LEE, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER,
FIRST 5 SAN FRANCISCO CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

