

Discussion & Activity Guide

MAKE A CIRCLE

A FILM BY JEN BRADWELL and TODD BOEKELHEIDE



"A beautiful, moving, important film"

Jon Else

Emmy Award Winning Filmmaker of *Eyes on the Prize* and *The Day After Trinity*

"Ambitious...visceral"

Michael Fox
KQED



www.makeacirclefilm.com

@makeacirclefilm



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About The Film



A love letter to early educators and a rallying cry for a child care system in crisis.

From an award-winning filmmaking team, *MAKE A CIRCLE* follows a group of child care providers who are determined to change how society values the education of its youngest citizens. With a mix of humor, outrage, and passion, *MAKE A CIRCLE* captures the unfolding stories of Patricia, a leader of the California child care workers union, as she fights on behalf of a largely immigrant workforce; Charlotte, another union member who tirelessly lifts up the low-income families in her care; and Anne, the director of a large preschool, who finds novel ways to value and support her teachers when jobs at McDonalds are offering higher pay.

Within their stories are interludes that offer a cinematic glimpse into the unique, imaginative world of the young children in their care. The film culminates as thousands of child care union members march on their state capitol demanding better working conditions just as their contract is set to expire. Weaving together the magic they create in the classroom, the struggles they endure at home, and their tireless activism for their profession, *MAKE A CIRCLE* is a moving portrait of life as an early childhood educator and a promising blueprint for fixing our broken child care system.

How To Use This Guide



This MAKE A CIRCLE Discussion and Activity guide aims to support various audiences in successful and engaging screenings that stimulate conversation and action around the experiences of early childhood educators.

Beginning with how to host a screening, the guide offers facts and stats, discussion questions and activities. Pre-screening activities support audiences in a playful warm up to center on the topic of the film before viewing. Post-screening activities guide audiences through brief exercises that further stimulate peer to peer conversation and offer potential next steps. Further resources offers a list of organizations working to advance the field of early childhood education where participants can take action.

This guide is broken into three sections, with content crafted for the following:

- **Community Settings For General Audiences:**

For use with public film screenings in settings such as libraries, film festivals, college campuses, gatherings of the business community, and other spaces not specifically targeted to an audience of early educators.

- **Advocacy and Educational Spaces:**

For use with advocates and students seeking to learn about and make change in the field of early education.

- **Parent Groups:**

For use with parents seeking to make change in the field of early education.

How to Host A Screening Event



For both in-person and online screenings, a little advance planning can go a long way towards having a well-attended and fully engaged audience experience. Here are some tips for creating an impactful screening event. Suggestions on how to tailor screenings for different audiences in community settings, advocacy spaces and parenting groups are further expounded upon in each section of this guide.

Create Goals For Your Event:

- **Who is my primary audience** for this screening?
- **What do I want my audience** to leave the event feeling or knowing?
- **What kind of conversation and/or action** do I hope to generate with this screening?
- **What themes in the film** are most related to current events experienced by my primary audience or community?

Design Towards Your Goals:

- **Will the audience be better served by** an in-person, online or hybrid event set up?
- **Will the screening show the full film?** Clips? A shorter version?
- **What event location** will be easily accessible and supportive towards my goals?
- **How much time should be planned** for after-screening activities and discussion?
- **Could the event benefit from any special guests**, musicians, panels, or community members? We encourage panels that center the voices and lived experiences of early educators from the local community.
- **Are there relevant local partner organizations** that would be interested in co-hosting, publicizing or attending this event?

Plan and Prep:

- **Assign an event lead** for the screening who will keep track of details and processes, as well as additional roles as needed. Such roles might include: Audio Visual specialist, host committee to welcome guests and direct them to their seats and a promotional lead/committee.
- **Choose a strong event host** who can facilitate introductions and post-screening activities in front of an audience.
- **Troubleshoot technology** in advance by touring the venue in person and testing equipment before the event occurs.
- **Create a run-of-show** that details the event top to bottom, measured by time: who introduces the event and for how long? How long is the screening? How much time will be allocated to each activity after the screening ends?

Sample run-of-show:

5:30pm: Set up venue if in-person event and coordinate arrival time(s) for anyone helping

6:45pm: Doors open if in-person event

7:10pm: Welcome audience and introduce the evening's activities

7:15-8:15pm: Screen film

8:15-8:30pm: Engage post-screening discussion

8:30-9:00pm: Engage 1-2 post-screening activities

9:00pm: Close out with thank yous, clean up event materials and break down venue

- **Given the content of the film, it is especially important to consider the role of children in this screening. Can free child care be provided?** Is there a parallel activity that children can engage in while their parents view the film?
- **Additionally, take measures for accessibility wherever you can when planning your event: Is the location wheelchair accessible?** Can it be accessed by public transportation? Can spaces be reserved for participants with disabilities? Do you plan to use captions or bring ASL interpreters to the event?

Publicize the Event:

- **At least 3 weeks in advance, send an invite** via targeted emails and invitations to relevant individuals and groups.



- **Post your event** to multiple social media platforms with a link to RSVP to your free event.
- **Continue to spread awareness** for your event via newsletters and word of mouth!

Engage Your Audience During the Event:

- **It is strongly suggested that at least one early educator has a presence at every screening**— preferably someone from the community who can speak to the needs of the workforce from their experience. You might also consider a panel-style conversation.
- **Consider opening with a brief question** related to the screening and invite attendees to share their thoughts out loud or as a journal prompt.
- **Utilize this guide** to engage the audience in post-screening activities!
- **Please let us know how it goes** by taking the provided **partner survey**.

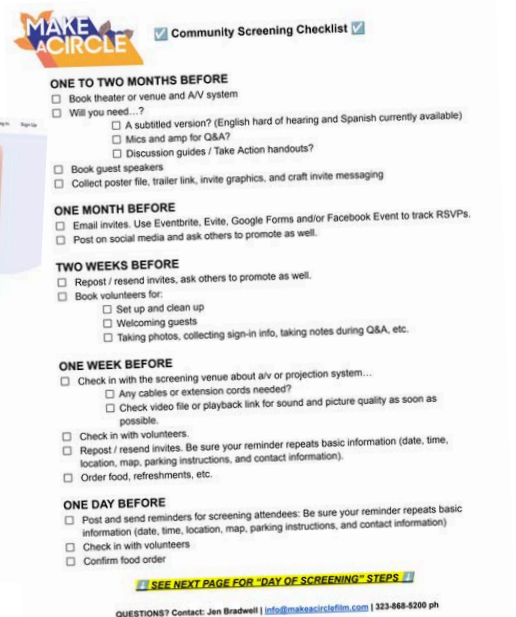
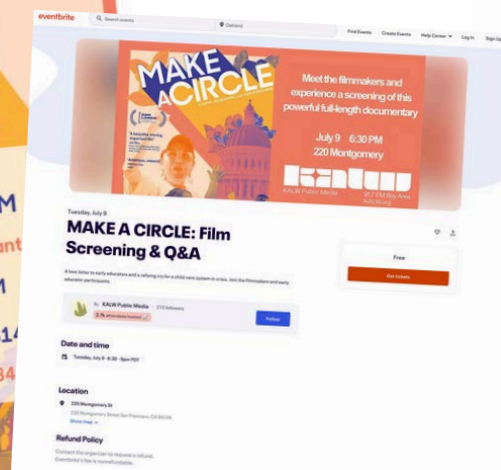
How to Use The Discussion Questions:

As you screen MAKE A CIRCLE, use the questions included in this guide to prompt group discussions with audiences and/or featured speakers at your event.

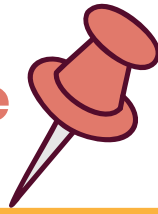
You can conduct a large group discussion posing the questions in turn or you can break the audience into small groups or pairs to talk through some of the questions; in a small group model, you can have each group present back to the larger audience the main points they came up with in their conversations. For small groups or pairs, consider assigning one question to each group with the aim of having each of the questions answered so that reports back cover the most ground. If there is time, you can facilitate a larger group conversation around the points that surfaced in the small group discussions.

To support your screening efforts, the following resources to bring MAKE A CIRCLE to your community exist online as open-access materials. The toolkit, [accessible here](#), includes:

- A One-Pager PDF **About the Film**
- A **Screening Checklist** to assist in your planning timeline
- A Screening **Pricing List**
- **Invite Templates** and Examples
- Film **Poster Files** and **Screencaps**
- **Press Kit** and Filmmaker **Headshots**
- This **Discussion and Activity Guide**
- A **Post-Screening Survey** to share with your audience



A Note About Language



While the term “daycare” is in common use, and film participants Patricia and Charlotte sometimes refer to their programs as “daycares,” many Early Childhood Educators are trying to move away from the word because it doesn’t encapsulate the skilled education work that is happening with children before the age of kindergarten.

And, as teacher Leila says in the film, “Care and Education: you can’t have one without the other.” Other terms to consider when talking about this workforce:

Early Childhood Educator or Early Educator: A good, inclusive term for all the educators featured in MAKE A CIRCLE, whether they work in homes or centers.

Family Child Care / Family Child Care Home / Home-Based Child Care: Film participants Patricia and Charlotte operate their child cares out of their homes and often refer to themselves as Family Child Care Providers, Child Care Providers, or simply Providers.

Center-Based Child Care / Preschool: All People’s School in the film (with participants Anne, Leila, Dan and Margarita) is considered a center-based facility for early care and education. Preschool often refers to learning environments for children from 2 to 3 years old until they enter kindergarten at age 5. Infant-toddler care can refer to kids from babies up to age 2 to 3. The educators in these center-based facilities often refer to themselves as Infant-Toddler Teachers and Preschool Teachers.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care: FFN Care is a crucial, but often overlooked, component of early learning and care systems. FFN caregivers consist of grandparents, aunts, uncles, extended family, caring neighbors, and friends who provide care for babies and young children in informal settings, typically in their own home. Because they are not required to have a state-issued license to provide care, many FFNs are often excluded from economic opportunities, such as access to training and adequate compensation, due to their race or immigration status.

Early Childhood Ed & Stats

Use these cards about early childhood education to open group conversations. Cut out each card and distribute to participants, inviting them to stand and read aloud as an interactive way to open the screening, or print and hang around the room.

“Parents can’t afford to pay, teachers can’t afford to stay.”

Child care costs more than rent in all 50 states, yet early childhood educators earn an average of \$13 an hour nationwide.

(Sources: Fortune.com, Berkeley.edu)

A “broken market” with huge potential...

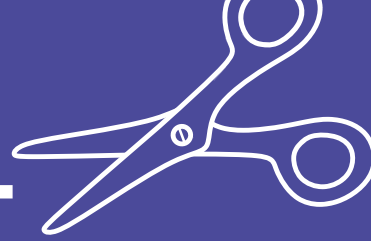
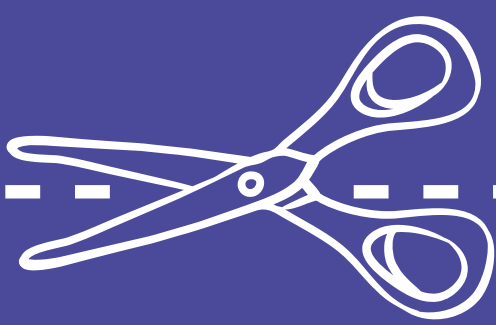
Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen said, “Child care is a textbook example of a broken market and one reason is that when you pay for it, the price does not account for all the positive things it confers on our society.” Studies have shown that every \$1 invested in early care and education can yield returns between \$4 and \$16.

(Source: Firstthingsfirst.org)

A critical time for brain development...

80% of a child’s brain develops before age 3, and 90% before age 5.

(Source: Firstthingsfirst.org)



Building the future...

High quality child care increases high school graduation rates by 25% and college graduation rates by 13%.

(Source: Buildthefuturescc.org)

“Care and Education...you can’t have one without the other.”

Nurturing, responsive relationships with steady routines help children learn. When they feel safe and loved, they are confident to explore their world and build new skills.

(Source: childrenslifetime.org)

Higher wages = less turnover...

Continuity of care is critical for quality early care and education. Yet the child care workforce has a turnover rate much higher than the average profession. Compensation is key. Child care centers with wages under \$10/hour experience high rates of turnover (23%) compared with centers that have wages of over \$25/hour (7.5%).

(Source: childrenslifetime.org).

A bipartisan issue...

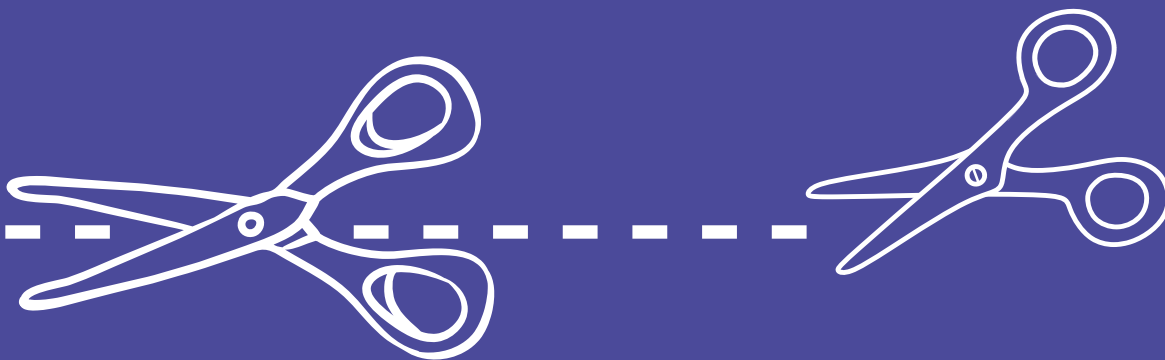
86% of American parents believe the federal government should prioritize addressing child care.

(Source: Thinkbabies.org)

A broad coalition...

Approximately 25 million parents in the United States rely on child care, and over one million people make up the early care and education workforce.

(Source: Csce.berkeley.edu)



MAKE A CIRCLE

In Community Settings For General Audiences



Discussion and activities for use with public film screenings in settings such as libraries, film festivals, college campuses, the business community, and other spaces not specifically targeted to an audience of early educators.



MAKE A CIRCLE IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS



Pre-Screening Warm Up: Imagining Educators

Provide the audience with blank paper and crayons—simple tools that evoke early life. Invite participants to take five minutes to draw (stick figures welcome) a representation of an early childhood educator drawn from their own ideas and imagination. What do you think they are wearing? What are their tools? Who is with them? Engage in a brief share out to the larger group from a handful of contributors, setting the stage for the film screening. After the screening, return to the exercise to ask if their representations would change after viewing.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. After watching MAKE A CIRCLE, consider: **What challenges do you see early educators in your life struggling with?** What human stories in the film made the most impact on you as a viewer?
2. MAKE A CIRCLE shows the unique work of early childhood educators, debunking the common notion that child care providers' and preschool teachers' primary job is to "babysit." In the film we see clear examples of **the many roles early childhood educators play in the lives of young people and their families.** What are some of those roles?
3. Across the film, we see early childhood educators being diminished in their importance through lack of access to fair pay and health benefits, but also in the career field. For example, in the film, Dan struggles to transition to elementary teaching because his experience in the early education field is devalued. **What is needed to help the general public understand the importance of care and education in the early years of life?**

4. “Kid-world” moments light up the screen in MAKE A CIRCLE—the secret inner world of children that all early educators witness, but have rarely—if ever—seen celebrated on screen. How does it feel to watch children play? **Citing examples from the film or your own lived experience, how is play, in fact, human development?** And why is it important?

5. As part of the union campaign to increase pay and provide basic benefits like health insurance for state subsidy program early educators, workers answered the question, **“What would you do if paid more fairly?”** on signs that were sent to politicians. If you were to advocate for the challenges noted in your answer to question #1, what strategies would you employ to catch the attention of decision-makers?

6. Over 1 million people—mostly women and disproportionately women of color—work in the field of early care and education in the United States. After watching the film, **what other social issues do you see as directly connected to the challenges facing early educators?**



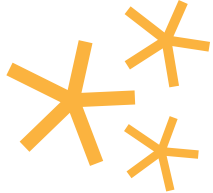
Post-Screening Activities

ACTIVITY ONE: CENTERING IN PURPOSE

Honor the stories of participants and the adults who shaped their lives. Invite participants to turn to the person next to them and share for 3 minutes each:

Who were the most impactful adults for you when you were a young child? Think back to people who shaped your experience, and contributed to your growth and development. What qualities did they hold?

Call the group’s attention to the front of the room. Invite volunteers to share what they learned from their partner’s story, creating a shared language to describe the value of early childhood mentors, caregivers and educators, and the depth of their impact.



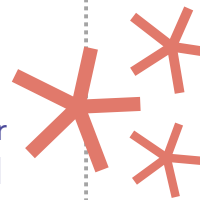
ACTIVITY TWO: MINI-ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Create your own mini-campaign, taking inspiration from discussion question five:

As part of the union campaign to increase pay and provide access to health insurance for state-funded early educators, workers answered the question, “What would you do if paid more fairly” on signs that were sent to politicians.

Take the question provided, or create your own unique question that touches on issues presented in MAKE A CIRCLE, and invite participants to answer them on a whiteboard, or pieces of paper, and snap photos of the creator holding up their sign.

Where can these photos and signs be displayed? Collectively determine if the location is physical—is there a community board in town?—or if the signs can be sent to local politicians, or posted on social media.



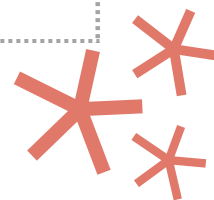
ACTIVITY THREE: IMPACT MAPPING

Map how early education connects to other issues affecting the participant’s community. Begin by sharing discussion question six:

“Over 1 million people—mostly women and disproportionately women of color—work in the field of early care and education in the United States. After watching the film, what other social issues do you see as directly connected to the challenges facing early educators?”

In response, make a list on chart paper of the social issues that audiences surface. Break participants into small groups of 3-4 and assign each group one of the listed issues. Task the groups with identifying 1-3 ways this social issue is present in their community.

Gather together to share out the issues they have discussed. How does early childhood education intersect with these issues? What case can be made about the health of a community’s early childhood education system and how it affects an entire ecosystem? How does this play out in your community?



MAKE A CIRCLE In Advocacy & Educational Spaces



Discussion and activities for advocates and students seeking to learn about and make change in the field of early education.

MAKE A CIRCLE IN ADVOCACY & EDUCATIONAL SPACES



Pre-Screening Warm Up: Entering Kid World

In **MAKE A CIRCLE**, audiences are invited into the vibrant world of kid-play. For example, one scene shows children pretending to put makeup on one another. Invite participants to pair up, and prepare to enter into the mindset of play. Instruct each pair to take five minutes to identify and mime a daily activity (walking the dog, reading a book to their kids, making a meal) they enjoy with a partner, generating a 10-30 second performance they can reenact in front of the group. When the five minutes is up, invite pairs to volunteer to perform their piece.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. After watching **MAKE A CIRCLE**, consider: What are the challenges you struggle with as an early educator? What challenges do you see early educators in your life struggling with? **What human stories in the film made the most impact on you as a viewer?**
2. On screen we see early childhood educators advocating for their profession within the political landscape. **What policies, legislation and/or advocacy is happening around child care in your community?** What impact does this have on your providers and families? Are there campaigns that can be readily tapped into?
3. Defining solutions starts with understanding your community stakeholders. **Who in your community makes the decisions connected to funding and policy that affects early childhood education?** What pathways already exist to influence the decision-makers and influencers in policy and government in your area?

4. In your opinion, after watching MAKE A CIRCLE, and drawing from your own experiences, why do you think this area is so underfunded and under-supported? **What arguments would be most effective in framing and advocating for early education to receive the resources it deserves?** Do you have a story that could be made into an advocacy narrative?

5. Zooming out to a national scale, what specific policy reforms are needed to create longevity and sustainability in the field of child care, allowing educators to thrive rather than just survive? **How would you define a thriving educator?** What does thriving look like?

6. In the film, we see a distinction between family child care (home-based) and preschool (center-based) educators, and these groups are often pitted against each other rather than being in solidarity in a fight for scant resources. **How do we ensure that all early educators, regardless of setting, have equitable access to resources, incentives, and tax breaks?**

7. **In what ways have you already engaged with lawmakers and decision makers about this issue?** What ways were you successful? Thwarted? What would make organizing more sustainable for you or the groups you are a part of?

Post-Screening Activities



ACTIVITY ONE: GET INFORMED

The first step to advocacy lies in understanding the landscape of your community. Engage participants as researchers post-screening to share and swap facts and stats about their state.

Assign half the group to use their smartphones to access the [Early Educators Pay Interactive Map](#) from Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, find the pay scale in your state, and discuss their findings in pairs.

Assign the other half of the group [The First Five Years Fund](#) to research Child Care and Early Learning Facts for your state, and discuss their findings in pairs.

Regroup to share findings, and facilitate a large group conversation on the results. What are the most pressing issues affecting our community in the early education realm? What are we doing well? What needs support? What facts move the group to take action? What facts could be leveraged in a campaign?

ACTIVITY TWO: EARLY EDUCATOR DECLARATION OF RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), was created in 1948 by nations across the globe coming together to create a document that outlines basic human rights. The document contains 30 articles outlining our most basic birthrights, including protection against torture, inhumane treatment, cruel punishment, slavery, and servitude.

Loosely taking a cue from this document, create an abbreviated community-sourced Declaration of Rights for early educators. What are the 10 key needs that all early educators deserve to have fulfilled in order to thrive? After watching the film, and thinking of people you may know (or are yourself), collaborate to build a draft of a collective Declaration.

Use chart paper and markers to brainstorm ideas from the group in response to the question: what do early educators need to thrive? It is likely that the group will present similar ideas that can be pulled into categories. If time permits, whittle the ideas down to 10 clearly defined needs. Take it further by taking the list home, typing it, and distributing it to participants post-screening.





ACTIVITY THREE: BEGINNING AN ADVOCACY NARRATIVE

Though each of us has an important story to tell, understanding where to start when building an advocacy narrative can be a daunting task. This brief activity, sourced from The New Organizing Institute and originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University, offers a series of questions that can be used as a first step in the development of an advocacy narrative.

These questions can be used in group settings to generate discussions, or as a solo journaling activity, to begin generating information for story creation:

1. Why should people care about this issue enough to make change?
2. How can they act on it? What will I be calling on others to do?
3. What values move me to action and might also inspire others to similar action?
4. What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

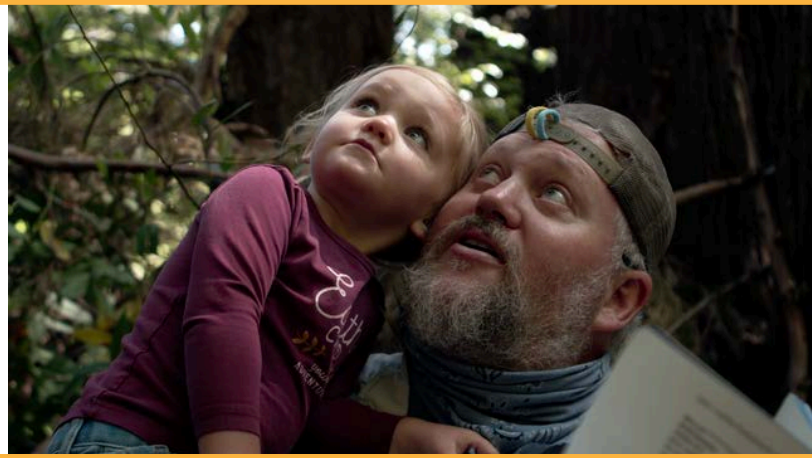
For a longer session, or to offer next steps for taking their advocacy narrative further on their own, engage and work with the full [Story of Self guide](#).



MAKE A CIRCLE **With Parent Groups**

Discussion and activities for parents seeking to make change in the field of early education.

MAKE A CIRCLE WITH PARENT GROUPS



Pre-Screening Warm Up: Daily Items Sculpture

In **MAKE A CIRCLE**, audiences are invited into the vibrant world of kid-play. Invite parents to embody the spirit of their children through a brief exercise that engages the senses.

Break participants into groups of 2-5, and instruct each to offer an item from their pocket or bags to become art materials for the group to use. Giving them a few minutes for creation, invite the groups to make a mini-sculpture with the items at hand. Walk the room, allowing each group to show off their work. Finish with a brief discussion on teamwork and collaboration through play—what was the experience like? What feelings came up? How did this exercise stretch their boundaries?

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. After watching **MAKE A CIRCLE**, consider: What did you learn from the film about the kinds of challenges early educators tend to face? What are the challenges you see early educators in your life struggling with? **What human stories in the film made the most impact on you as a viewer?**
2. Spend some time sharing memories of the early educators and other caregivers in your life. **How have they made an impact on your family's life?**
3. In the film, we witness children learning, eating, playing and being coached through relational conflict—holistic approaches to the child's full development. **Thinking about your child's needs—physical, emotional, and otherwise, what do you want the early educators in your life to know about your experience as a parent who needs child care?**

4. Having watched MAKE A CIRCLE, where we witness educators supporting not only children, but celebrating and engaging parents and families, take a moment to reflect on your own relationship with your child’s early educators. **What are you proud of in your partnership? What ideas did the film generate for how you might partner differently?**

5. In MAKE A CIRCLE, with her sarcastic motto, “Feed the teachers or they’ll eat the children,”—Anne makes the point that well-resourced teachers can better show up for their young students. **Discuss this teacher-first philosophy, and the ways in which it could impact your child.**

6. After watching the film, **do you think parents have a role in advocacy?** What ideas come to mind about ways in which parents and early educators can become partners in changing the field?

Post-Screening Activities



ACTIVITY ONE: INVITING DEEPER DIALOGUE

Engage in a discussion on shared advocacy opportunities and potential partnership between parents and early childhood educators. What approaches have been, or could be used, to start a partnership dialogue between parents and the early educators that support their children?



ACTIVITY TWO: CHANGING NARRATIVES

Narrative change is an important component of a bigger advocacy picture. This exercise leverages parents to develop new language in shifting the narrative around child care: one from being perceived as an undesirable job to being recognized as a respected and essential career path. Invite the participants to craft a short job description that “sells” the work at hand.

A job description contains the following components:

- Job title
- Job purpose
- Job duties and responsibilities
- Required qualifications
- Preferred qualifications
- Working conditions

Write these headers on chart paper where participants can easily view it.

Break the group into pairs, or small groups, and hand out writing utensils and something to write on—notecards, paper or chart paper. For each of the components, invite the pairs to have fun writing a creative line or two selling the role. Encourage participants to move away from standard job description language, and into a celebratory and playful stance. When complete, share out the results and discuss.



ACTIVITY THREE: GET INFORMED

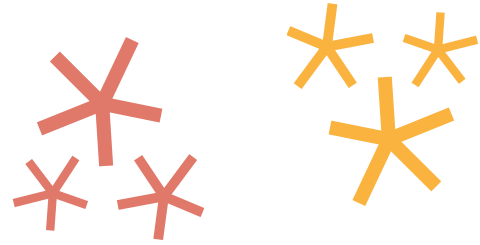
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Further Resources



Quick Start:

- Listen to a podcast covering America’s child care crisis: [No One is Coming to Save Us](#).
- Learn [why advocacy at the federal level matters](#) - See how additional federal funding would affect each state across the U.S.



Dive Deeper:

[The National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC) promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research.

[Child Care Aware® of America](#) (CCAoA) works with a national network of more than 500 child care resource and referral (CCR&Rs) agencies and other partners to ensure that all families have access to quality, affordable child care. CCAoA leads projects that increase the quality and availability of child care, conducts [research](#), and [advocates](#) for child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families.

[Community Change’s Report Card](#) is a great resource for parents and early educators to see how their congressman and senators stand on child care bills and then provides an easy take action tool. Community Change also produces an [annual “Day Without Child Care” action](#) to demand more support for early educators and families

[The Alliance for Early Success](#) works on state policies, and offers an interactive map that links to helpful information and advocacy organizations within each state in the U.S..

[Zero to Three](#) offers a helpful toolkit that includes a fact sheet, talking points for engaging community members and policy makers, easy to share graphics, and instructions on writing an Op-Ed as an advocacy tool.

[National Association for Family Child Care](#) offers a toolkit for family child care (home-based) providers that offers a one-pager on the issue in English and Spanish, templates for individual programs, fact sheets, a federal advocacy toolkit, social media toolkit and guide to hosting a site visit.

Further Resources

Moms First is an organization that is transforming our workplaces, our communities, and our culture to enable moms to thrive.

Parent Voices, through grassroots organizing and leadership development, activates and centers the wisdom of parents to transform child care and ensure all systems that impact our families are just, fair, and inclusive.

Power to the Profession: Learn about a collaboration with national stakeholders to develop a unified system of accreditation, training and compensation for early childhood educators across the country.

WeVision EarlyEd: What does an ideal early care and education system that works for both families and early educators look like? The Bainum Foundation's bold WeVision initiative is designing one.

Elliot Haspel: Nationally-recognized child & family policy expert and commentator Elliot Haspel's articles are always provocative and solutions-oriented. His forthcoming book will mention MAKE A CIRCLE!

