



SECTION

3

PROXIMITY EXPERTS ENDURING THE CURRENT

PAIN POINTS, RISKS, AND COMPROMISES

Consider the everyday stories we heard from our initial group of proximity experts, which were backed up by the data we collected at numerous conferences and events. →



Image courtesy of National Association for Family Child Care

Administrators are trying to maintain consistent quality and manage businesses with very low margins. Educators are working from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., juggling multiple responsibilities ranging from teaching to serving lunch to supporting families. Families are struggling to find a quality program that's a good fit for their children—particularly those children with special needs—not to mention affordable and convenient to their homes and workplaces.



Families are struggling to find a quality program that's a good fit for their child.

These families, educators, and administrators face similar pain points. All enter the system with anxiety, manage to survive along the way, and exit the system with worry. Am I choosing what is best for my child or just making do with what I can find or afford? When will I get off the waitlist? Did I waste my time as an early childhood educator earning poverty-level wages when I could have been working less and earning more elsewhere? Can I continue

The Current Experience

- * Community is strength
- * Math that “doesn’t add up”
- * Inconsistent quality
- * Fragmented information
- * Trade-offs and risks
- * Lack of work/life balance
- * Mistrust
- * Confinement with limited options
- * Time and resource scarcity
- * Constant regulatory changes
- * Top-down regulations
- * Too many hats/roles
- * Difficulty making child-centered and quality-centered decisions
- * Fragmented and inequitable
- * Advocacy only for self

to sacrifice my well-being and still be a good educator? Was it worth it, as an administrator, to pay monthly bills with my credit card to keep my ECE program open? How will I support myself when I retire?

Similarities Across States

We received similar data from proximity experts around the country. The following is a sample of the insights gleaned from the two largest professional conferences. Through the interactive exhibit, we surveyed 829 attendees at the NAEYC Annual Conference in November 2022 and 439 attendees at the NAFCC Annual Conference in July 2023. There were more similarities than differences across data collected at these and other gatherings, but we saw slight variances in how ECE professionals responded.

Consider the data collected on pain points/ what makes it hardest to support child growth and development. All NAFCC respondents (administrators, educators, and those in other roles) ranked “doing too many different jobs/ wear too many hats” as their top pain point. The same was true for administrators and those in other roles at the NAEYC conference. However, educators at the NAEYC conference ranked low pay as their top pain point.

“I experienced hard times looking for the right child care provider. I was faced with choices I didn’t want to make.”

—PARENT

Image courtesy of National Association for Family Child Care

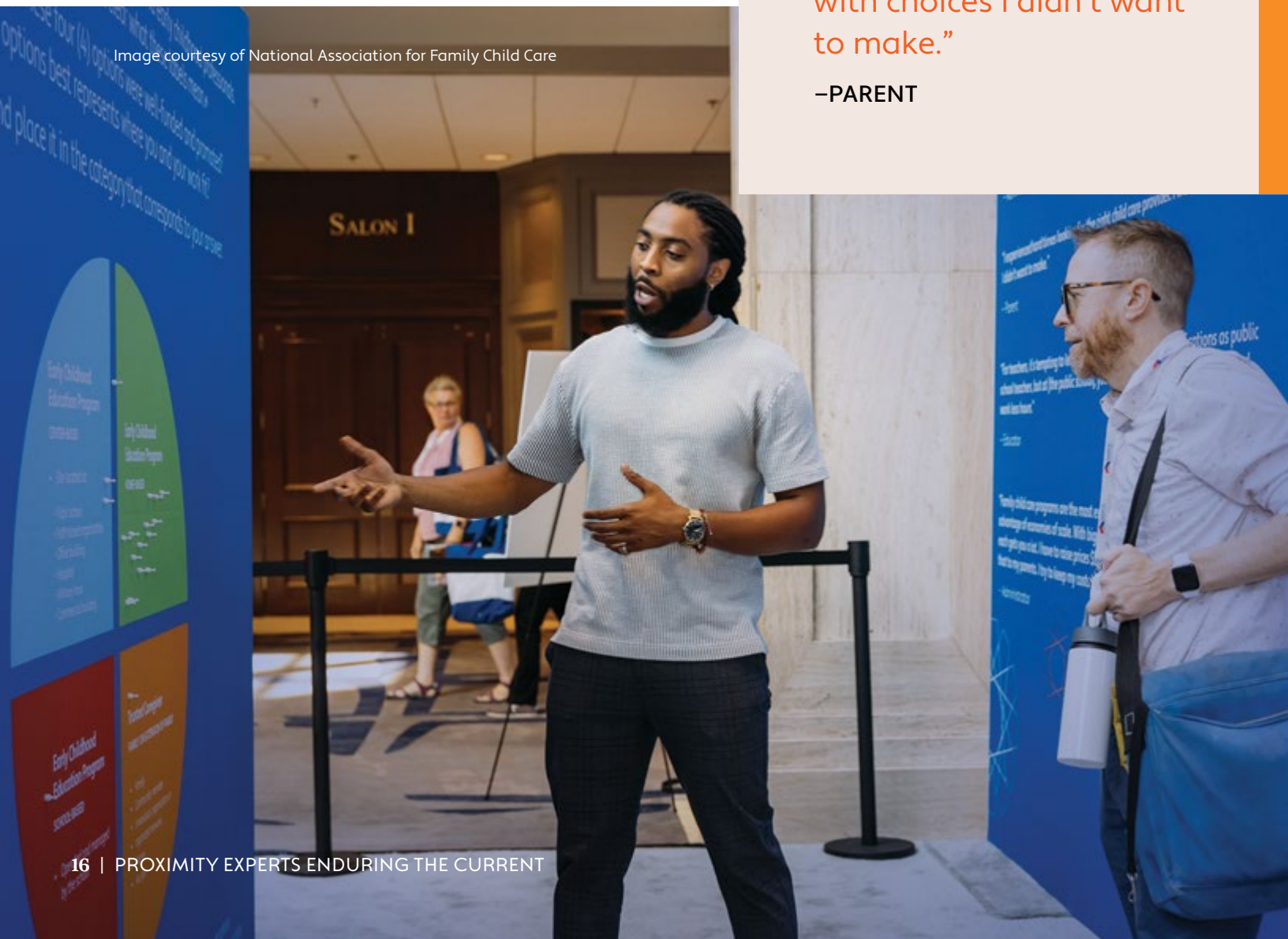


FIG. 3

The Current Experience

Educators, families, and administrators all have:

- * Similar journeys
- * Similar pain points
- * Similar compromises



FIG. 4

Pain Points, Ranked by Role

1 = Highest Pain Point

	NAEYC 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE			NAFCC 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE		
	Administrator	Educator	Other Role	Administrator	Educator	Other Role
Don't have the energy/close to burning out	4	3	4	4	4	4
Doing too many different jobs/wear too many hats	1	2	1	1	1	1
Pay is too low/can barely meet my basic needs	3	1	3	3	2	3
Program budget is too tight/can't get staff and resources the children need	2	4	2	2	3	2