



Call for Chapters

*Voices of Early Childhood Educators; Conversations About
Change in the US South*

Edited by:

Diane Bales, University of Georgia
Karen Walker, Louisiana Tech University
Kenya Wolff, University of Mississippi

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA), formally known as the Southern Association on Children Under Six (SACUS) has been committed to addressing issues that impact young children in the South for 75 years. Since the initial meeting in 1948 to the present, the membership has been composed of persons from all races, religions, philosophies, and from a multitude of national origins. At its first regional conference in 1950 there was no question about its interracial invitation. One hundred and thirty-four participants gathered from nine Southern states, with Blacks and Whites in attendance. Several Whites expressed pleasure in being a part of an interracial conference for the first time in their lives (SECA, n.d.). These meetings were held before the Supreme Court decision in 1954 in which the justices ruled unanimously that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). The organization takes pride in being a forerunner in the South for fostering and supporting interracial and multicultural conferences. The ground swell for civil rights in the early 60's justified the founding premise of SACUS that ALL persons interested in and concerned with the education and welfare of young children should be able to sit down together to learn, solve common problems and discuss concerns relative to their work for and with children and their families. In short, SECA has a long history of social justice and working towards equity for all young children and their families (SECA, n.d.).

This SECA edited book, will be titled “Voices of Early Childhood Educators; Conversations About Change in the US South”. Editors invite chapters that theorize, and/or report on the current state of early childhood education in US South, including where we have been and where we hope to go.

Rationale/Southern Context

The southern region of the United States generally, though not exclusively, considered to be south of the Mason and Dixon Line, the Ohio River, and the 36°30' parallel, is home a great diversity of people, dialects, food, art, and literature. As educators, it is important for us to understand the unique challenges we face in Southern states as well as celebrate its unique cultural and historic heritage. The challenges are great, as the South has the lowest median U.S. income and the poorest people per capita (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). In addition to higher poverty rates, the South has lower economic mobility, which occurs in areas of high racial segregation, places plagued with income inequality, and pockets that have a higher rate of poverty than the national average. These conditions can be found in many Southern states. In addition to lower economic mobility, wages tend to remain lower in the South. The poorest states in the U.S. are Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia, Alabama,

Kentucky, New Mexico, Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Oklahoma (Semuels, 2017). Along with poverty, the national opioid epidemic has hit rural Southern families as hard if not harder than those in urban and suburban areas of the country (Blau, 2019).

Many early childhood educators became first responders to aid other critical industries during the pandemic. Other early childhood education programs were closed or had a low enrollment (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) sent out a short survey to discover the challenges centers were facing throughout all states and programs and the effect a closing without substantial public funding would have on their programs. Between November 13-29, 2020, NAEYC received more than 6,000 responses that included all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The programs reported that the pandemic was causing them to face economic ruin from which they may not recover. Currently, the most significant factor driving the child care crisis is low staffing and high turnover fueled by low pay for childcare worker. Rural areas in southern states have been hit particularly hard. With options for quality and affordable care so sparse that these areas are referred to as “child care deserts,” an area where the number of children younger than six with working parents is at least three times greater than the capacity of licensed child care providers (Center for American Progress, 2022).

As child development and early education professionals, we envision a new South in which children have every opportunity to reach their highest potential. High quality early childhood education has been shown to aid in breaking the cycle and can be a major part of turning despair into hope. We are looking for book chapters that acknowledge the unique US Southern context as well as celebrate the progress that has been made. While it is important to bring problems to light, it is equally important (if not more so) to begin to envision and celebrate the new creative alternatives that are moving us in a different direction. Keeping in mind that it is crucial to learn from each other by sharing new knowledge, methods, and tools to inform our work. Acknowledging that class, ethnicity, culture, gender, and sexual orientation are important sites of struggle, we must move among, between and across these differences. We are all in this together. Foucault (1988) reminded us that power is reversible and unstable, and that relations are never fixed. Alternatives do not originate from those with the power (Werlhof, 2008). Often, they start as conversation about change. Lather (2012) once called this ‘popcorn activism’ because tiny pockets of change can produce chain reactions. We hope to show examples of programs, people, research, and/or public policy that have been and/or are currently working towards bringing about social justice, equity, and access for ALL southern children.

Possible topics include:

- A Historical Account of SECA and Our Social Justice Roots – the Nashville Meeting
- Early Childhood Education and the White Savior Complex
- Immigration and the South
- Southern Poverty – Low Pay in ECE
- Gender in Education – the “Southern Woman” teaches because she loves children... she doesn’t demand a fair wage
- Head Start and the War on Poverty’s Southern Origins
- Race & Segregation (possibly a discussion of Charter Schools in a Southern Context)
- The Bible Belt (Religion and/Spirituality) and Child Care
- What it means to be open to “ALL Families” in the South (LGBTQ+ and other diverse families)
- LGBTQ+ in the South – Stories from children, families and or ECE teachers
- Southern Child Care and the link to “The Help”

- Working with Bilingual Children and Families
- Hurricanes, Floods, & Tornadoes – Trauma in ECE
- Infant and Toddler Care in the Post Roe vs. Wade South
- The Post-Pandemic Child Care Crisis
- SECA and Critical Conversations for Change
- Children of Incarcerated Parents
- Grandparents Raising Children

Please submit a 500-word description of your proposed chapter, and your resume, or curriculum vitae to kewolff@olemiss.edu by June 15, 2023.

Book Timeline:

- 8/1/2023:* Authors receive feedback from editors on 500-word chapter proposal
- 12/15/2023:* Authors submit draft of 2000-word chapter
- 3/1/2024:* Authors receive feedback from editors on 2000-word chapter
- 4/30/2024:* Authors submit final chapter
- 6/30/2024:* Authors receive feedback from editors on final chapter
- 8/15/2024:* Authors submit revised chapter ready for publication
- 10/31/2024:* Editors submit book to Sail House Publishing
- 12/31/2024:* Anticipated book publication

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