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# Ready or Not: Issues and Choices

Iowa's Early Care, Health and Education System

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Stacie G. Goffin  
Valora Washington

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# Outline of Presentation

- ❑ Overview of Ready or Not
- ❑ Accomplishments
- ❑ New Realities
- ❑ Leadership as Adaptive Work
- ❑ Leadership Opportunities
- ❑ Leadership Issues and Choices

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# Overview

## Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education

This presentation is based on the book *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education* published by Teachers College Press.

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# Your Vision

## Our Vision

- Iowa's vision for children zero to five: All system development activities shall be aligned around "Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.
- Our vision: The early care and education field will have clarity regarding its purpose, identity, and responsibilities, permitting it to perform consistently at a high level of competence on behalf of children and in conjunction with system development activities

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# Ready or Not: It's Time to Call the Question

- You are engaged in difficult work.
- The work is made more difficult by the early care and education field's lack of clarity regarding purpose, identity, and responsibility.

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# Ready or Not: It's Time to Call the Question

## The Question:

What defines and bounds early care and education as field?

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# Ready or Not:

## It's Time to Call the Question

-- Consider:

- Can you explain what distinguishes “early care” from “early education”?
- Can you identify what defines and bounds Iowa’s Early Care, Health and Early Education system as a **System?**
- Are you working to create:
  - A single global system for early childhood?
  - OR
  - Are you striving to create strong subsystems that can be coordinated?

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# Ready or Not: It's Time to Call the Question

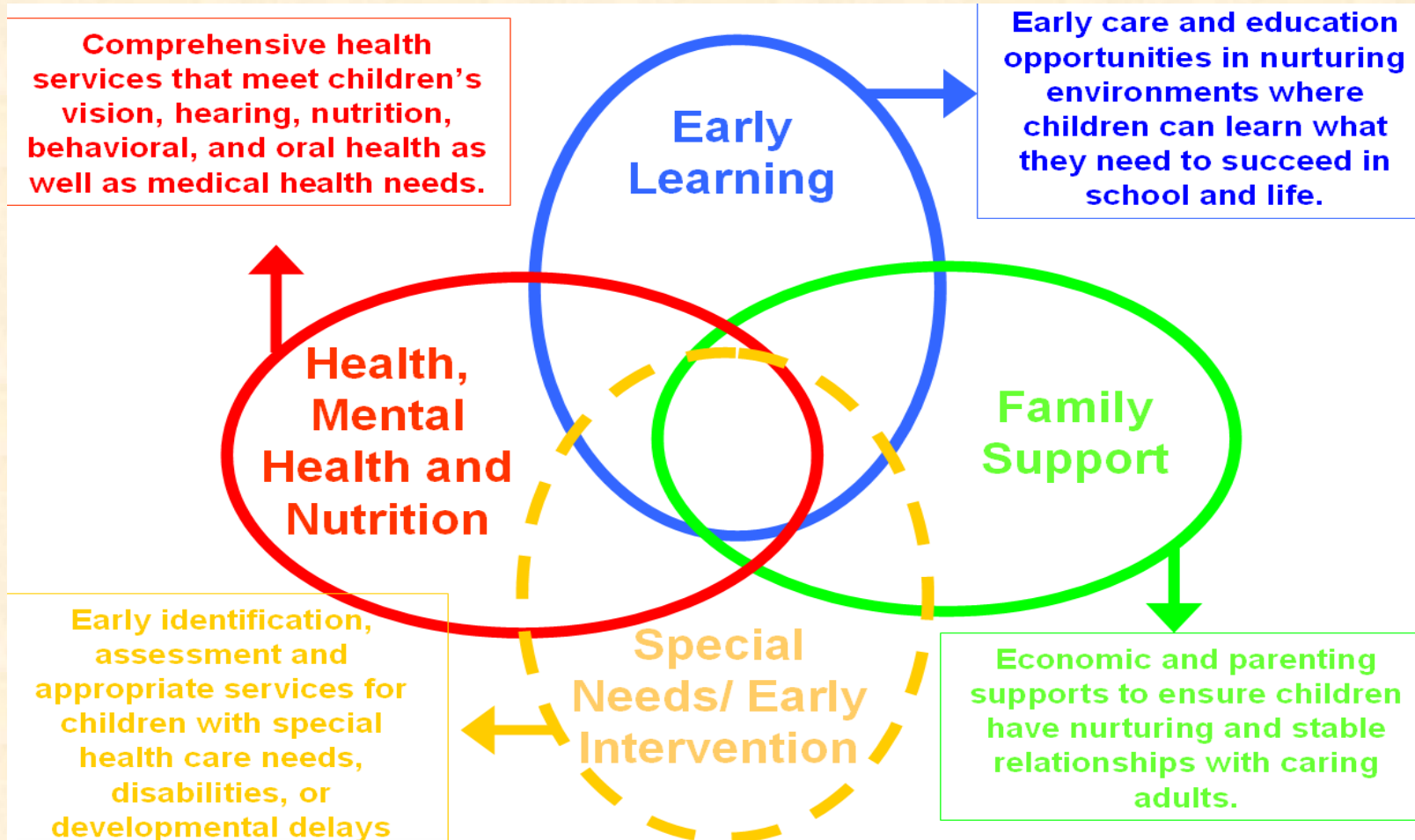
- The focus of *Ready or Not* is on the early care and education as a cohesive whole.

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# Ready or Not: It's Time to Call the Question

- ❑ Collective intentionality depends on the field doing the work needed to find answers that will take it into its preferred future.
  - ❑ Requires our taking responsibility for the field and its work
  - ❑ Requires a willingness to proactively & strategically adapt to new realities
  - ❑ Requires a willingness to make choices and shift toward “shared intentions”

# Our Early Childhood Systems Framework



# Iowa's System Frame of Reference

- ❑ Iowa's focus seems to be on a single system of Early Care, Health and Education, making your work especially complicated and challenging.
- ❑ You seem to be trying to meld into one system for children zero through five a system in need of reform and a system in need of forming.
- ❑ If so, you are pioneering an approach to system development on behalf of young children.

# Ready or Not:

## Leadership Issues and Choices

- ❑ The Field of Early Care and Education Lacks Collective Intentionality.
  
- ❑ For Example:
  - What is the name for our field?
  - What is the chronological scope for the early care and education field?
  - What does one need to know and be able to do to claim “membership”?
  - What, if anything, is accepted as collective responsibility?

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# Ready or Not:

## Leadership Issues and Choices

- **Collective Intentionality as a field requires answers to the issues of**
  - Purpose
  - Identity
  - Responsibility

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# Ready or Not:

## Leadership Issues and Choices

- ❑ In the absence of answering these questions as a field, it becomes much more difficult to answer these questions as a **system**.
- ❑ The difficulty of system building often is confused with challenges created by the field's lack of answers to the defining questions of purpose, identity, and responsibility.

# Ready or Not:

## Leadership Issues and Choices

- ❑ A gap exists between our rhetoric and our behavior – between our promises as advocates and our behavior.
- ❑ This calls for Adaptive Work – for reducing the disconnect between our promises and our performance.
- ❑ Responding to the Call is a matter of integrity – speaking out and acting on behalf of what we know is right for children.

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# This is a Defining Moment for Early Care and Education

- The early care and education field is at a pivotal moment in its evolution.
  - Its work is occurring in a dramatically changed context from 10 years ago.
- The field's future as a cohesive and viable field is in flux.

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# This is a Defining Moment for Early Care and Education

- The field's future will vary depending on whether:
  - We become a connected field of practice (or remain a mix of disconnected programs and services).
  - We will be a field that uniformly delivers strong programs (or rely on a handful of “model programs” to demonstrate program quality).
  - We will assume responsibility for our services (or retain this as an individual program option).

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# This is a Defining Moment for Early Care and Education

- ❑ Answers to these questions have implications for the value & respect given to early learning.
- ❑ Answers to these questions have implications for those of us:
  - Who care about the well being of young children.
  - Who care about the ability of the field and the system to well serve young children.
  - For the exercise of local and statewide leadership.
- ❑ Answers to these questions have implications for Iowa's Early Care, Health and Early Education **system**.

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# Ready or Not:

## Leadership Issues and Choices

- ❑ The Adaptive Question: Are we willing, as a collective, to address this disparity?
- ❑ Are we willing to do what we know based on what the research – and our speech-making - say is right for children?

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# A Moment of Reflection

- ❑ Think silently for a moment: What is the one word that comes to mind when you hear the phrase “adaptive change”? (e.g., possibility, anxiety, risk, anticipation)
- ❑ Turn to the person next to you, share your word and explain why you think this word came to mind for you.

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# Recognizing and Building On the Field's Accomplishments –

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- National recognition exists for the contribution of early learning to children's school and lifelong success
  - Well publicized longitudinal studies
  - Findings from early brain development

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- Provision of high quality early learning environments recognized for helping reduce academic achievement gaps
  - Support from National Governors Association
  - Council of Chief State School Officers
  - National Association of Elementary School Principals

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- Analysis of future return on investment from strong early learning programs has become powerful advocacy tool
  - Nobel Laureate Economist James Heckman
  - Federal Reserve Leaders Art Rolnick & Rob Grunewald
  - RAND Corporation

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- Business leaders promote early learning to expand availability of future human capital and advance global competitiveness
  - Committee for Economic Development
  - Partners in America's Economic Success
  - United Way – Success by Six
  - State and Community Business Groups

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- Governors and legislatures have made early learning a government priority, merging and/or creating new state departments to ensure coordinated delivery of early learning programs and services
  - Washington, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- ❑ Publicly funded pre-kindergarten a reality in 38 states and Washington, DC
- ❑ State-level attention to building early care and education systems that can ensure effective delivery and performance

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- For the first time: The President of the United States sees early care and education as foundational to achieving education excellence.

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# Accomplishments in Early Care and Education: 1990 - 2008

- Focus on promoting program quality via national standards; state content and program standards; professional development systems; financial incentives
  - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
  - NIEER Quality Standards
  - NAEYC Accreditation

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# Questions to Consider

- ❑ What are Iowa's accomplishments over the past 5 to 10 years?
- ❑ How have these accomplishments changed:
  - ❑ the State's landscape and
  - ❑ created new opportunities for advancing early care education as a priority?
- ❑ How have these accomplishments contributed to the State's system building efforts?

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# New Realities

# New Realities Propelling Need for Adaptive Work

- Early Care and Early Education:
  - Is expected to coordinate its programs and services with other systems such as health care
  - Is a formal out-of-home experience for the majority of the nation's young children
  - Is no longer an invisible field
  - Is subject of economic analysis & viewed as an "industry" important to community, state & national economic development
  - Has become politicized
  - Is expected to produce results
    - Early learning standards
    - Regular use of child assessments

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# New Realities Propelling Need for Adaptive Work

- The early care and education system:
  - Lacks capacity to meet public expectations
  - Is expected to organize itself as an effective delivery system
  - Is expected to deliver a consistent level of quality
  - Is expected to be of “one voice”

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# Questions to Consider

- ❑ How are these new realities affecting the availability of high quality early care and education programs and services in Iowa?
- ❑ What impact are these new realities having on your system's work?

# New Realities

- Symptoms of Adaptive Stress in Early Care and Education
  - Inability to deliver consistently good programs
  - Child care “caught” between function as a work support for families and an early learning environment for children
  - Indecision regarding teacher qualifications
  - Fear by providers of being “left out”
  - Anxiety that pre-k will dominate the field & be viewed as “silver bullet”
  - Fear by providers of being put out of business
  - Concern that the quality of infant and toddler care is being overlooked as a critical issue
  - Apprehension over external locus of decision making
  - Pressure to deliver results

# New Realities

- ❑ These new realities provide the context for the early learning field's adaptive work.
  - Help define the field's options for moving forward
  - Help define its relationship to other systems
- ❑ These new realities impinge on system building efforts within early care and education and across early care and education and health
- ❑ These new realities offer opportunities for creating an exciting shared future.

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# New Realities

- ❑ The Early Care and Education field is in the midst of disruptive change.
- ❑ While unique in its context and approach, Iowa is part of a national trend.
- ❑ This is a pivotal moment in field's history.
- ❑ This is a challenging moment for systems building work.

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# To Adapt and Be a Systems Building Partner, the Field Needs to Focus on Its Collective Intentionality

- Purpose
- Identity
- Responsibility

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# To Adapt and Be a Systems Building Partner, the Field Needs to Focus on Its Collective Intentionality

- **Purpose**: Will the ECE field have a core focus for its work *or* will the field's purpose vary based on current societal interests?
  - By way of example: Is our primary intent school readiness? Child development? Support for working families? Early intervention?

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# To Adapt and Be a Systems Building Partner, the Field Needs to Focus on Its Collective Intentionality

- Identity: Will the ECE field identify and enforce defined criteria to verify the field's collective competence *or* will the field prioritize open access and inclusion as overarching values?
  - By way of example: Is the chronological scope of the field birth to five? Birth through age 8? PreK through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade? Does it include school age care?

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# To Adapt and Be a Systems Building Partner, the Field Needs to Focus on Its Collective Intentionality

- Responsibility: Will the ECE field assume public responsibility for the results of its work *or* will the field endorse responsibility as the purview of individual programs?
  - By way of example: Will we/should we assume responsibility for children's basic health and safety? Will we/should we assume responsibility for what children entering kindergarten know and are able to do? Will we/should we assume responsibility for meeting state content standards?

# The Field is Experiencing a Gap Between Its Speech-Making and Practice

- ❑ The Performance Gap: The gap between the field's expressed commitment to children's high quality early learning and its uneven collective performance
- ❑ The Credibility Gap: The gap between the desire to be recognized as leaders on behalf of early learning and the field's self-protective behaviors

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# Leadership as Adaptive Work

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# These “Gaps” Expose Adaptive Challenges

## □ What is Adaptive Work?

(Based on work of Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky)

- Pre-existing answers aren't available
- Entails resolving conflicting values
  - Honoring 1 value over another
- Requires making choices/trade-offs
- Involves conflict
- Usually involves anxiety, discomfort, sense of loss
- Demands consideration of new realities as well as optimism for a different future

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# These “Gaps” Expose Adaptive Challenges

- Your work exposes adaptive challenges at multiple levels:
  - Individual
  - Within sub-systems
  - Across sub-systems

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# These “Gaps” Expose Adaptive Challenges

- ❑ The people with the problem are the problem and the solution.
- ❑ Purpose is what makes the work worthwhile.
- ❑ To begin: Be sensitive to your archetype.

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# Archetypes for Decision Making

- Four approaches to decision making/making choices required by adaptive work
  - All are equally valid.
  - All are necessary.
  - All can contribute to the field's future.

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# Four Archetypes for Decision Making

- Guardians
    - Protect historically valued positions
  - Accommodators
    - Work to maintain equilibrium
  - Entrepreneurs
    - Seek strategic opportunities
  - Architects
    - Focus on promoting sustainable results
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# A Moment of Reflection

- ❑ Which archetype best describes your approach to decision making?
- ❑ How can you use this self-knowledge to promote your and other's adaptive work?

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# Leadership Opportunities

- ❑ Using your knowledge of the differences between technical and adaptive leadership in your work.
- ❑ Self-assessing: What are you fearful of losing? What are you protecting? Help others to do the same.
- ❑ Understanding the important contributions of all four approaches to decision making.

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# Leadership Opportunities

- ❑ Creating opportunities for dialogue (vs. debate or persuasion or advocacy) around the field's adaptive challenges.
- ❑ Facilitating the early learning field's identification and focus on its core values.
- ❑ Recognizing that choices are inevitable.
- ❑ Intentionality around systems building.

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# Leadership Opportunities

- ❑ Creating opportunities for two - (or is it three?) way adaptation.
  - ❑ Between early care and education and health?
  - ❑ Between early care, health and education?
  
- ❑ Keeping your eye on the prize:
  - A System that Functions Effectively
  - Children's Success as Learners

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# Ready or Not: Issues and Choices

It's Time to Call the Question —

- ❑ For the Field
- ❑ For Our Systems Building Efforts

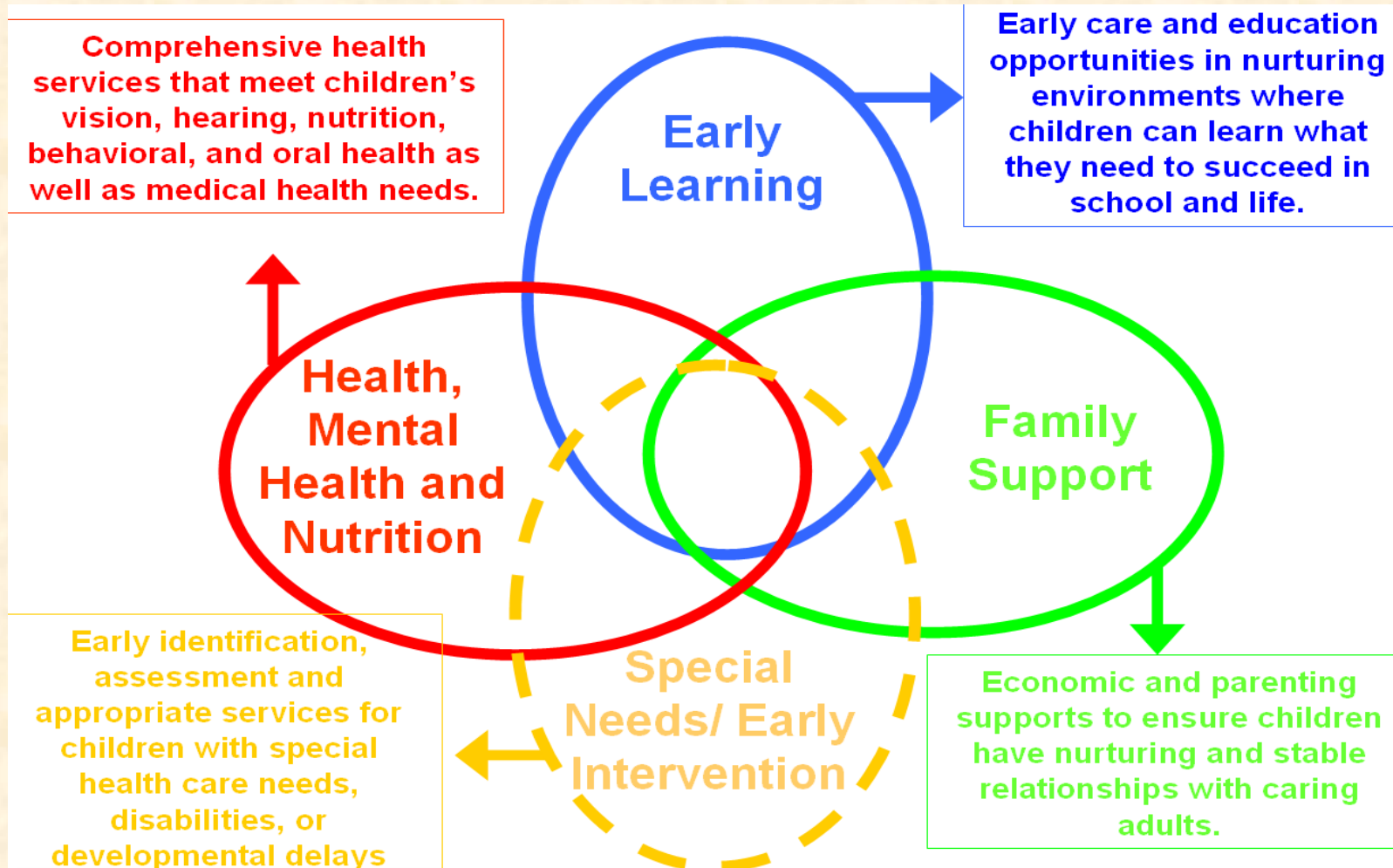
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# Ready or Not: Issues and Choices

## It's Time to Call the Question

- ❑ Are we willing, as a collective, to address the disparity between our promises and our practice?
- ❑ Are we willing to make the hard choices?
- ❑ Are we willing to ask our stakeholders to support us in engaging in adaptive work?
- ❑ Are we willing to do what we know is right for children?

# Our Early Childhood Systems Framework



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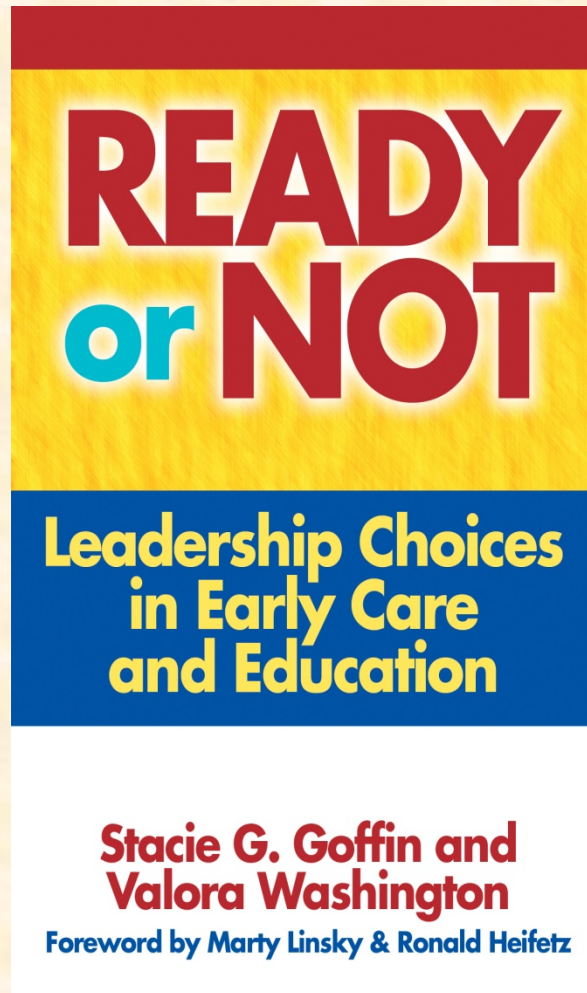
# In Conclusion

- ❑ Your system building efforts matter!
- ❑ This is collective work; it requires everyone's knowledge and skills.
- ❑ Recognizing when adaptive work is being called for can make a difference to your advancement.
- ❑ Recognizing when you're engaged with an issue in need of "re-form" vs. "forming" can help focus your energies.

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# In Conclusion

- ❑ You've been given the exciting opportunity – and responsibility – to form future possibilities for children's well being.
- ❑ We hope you'll keep us informed of your progress!



For more information: Stacie: [sggoffin@gmail.com](mailto:sggoffin@gmail.com)  
Valora: [valorawashington@aol.com](mailto:valorawashington@aol.com)