Early Years

Brand Guidelines

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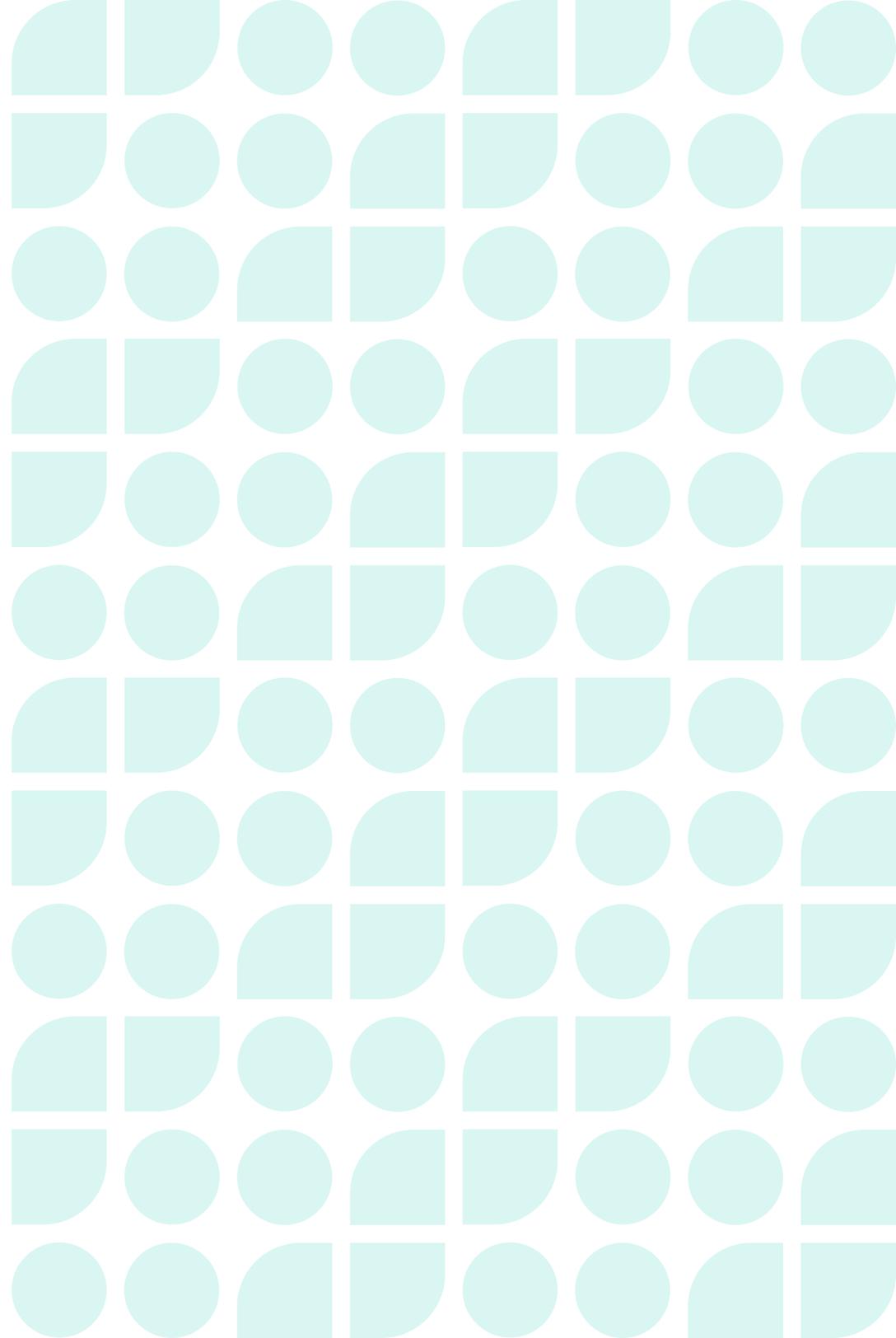
Brand Identity

01. **Logo**

The logo is the foundation of the Early Years visual identity. It is the most significant feature of the brand identity and should be used on all aspects of branded communication.

Logo Icon

The logo icon is built using simple, geometric shapes to make a mark that represents their dedication to research, growth and advancement for early care and education.

The logo icon should be used in full color when applicable, especially with light color backgrounds.

Primary Logotype with Tagline

The primary logotype pairs the logo icon with a complementary wordmark created with a custom geometric sans serif typeface.

The primary logotype pairs the brand tagline with the logo icon and wordmark to create a singular mark. It should be used throughout all applications except for when the brand tagline is being used nearby.

Early Years

A Comprehensive Approach to Enhancing Early Care and Education

Early Years

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Secondary Logotype

The secondary logotype removes the tagline from the lockup. This mark should be applied when the brand tagline is shown elsewhere on the given application. For example, the navigation of the website when the tagline is the headline.

Logo Spacing

For the Early Years logo to maintain impact, the surrounding area must be open and uncluttered. This applies to all versions of the logo.

Incorrect Usage

Never alter, tilt, distort or manipulate any version of the logo. All misuses apply to the logo icon and the logotype.

When placing the logo, always use one of the approved logo files.

Scaling
Do not alter the proportion of the logo.

Recoloring
Do not mix and match colors in the logo. The logo should always be dark blue, white or black.

Effects
Do not add any kind of effects, such as a drop shadow.

Contrast
The logo should always be clearly viewed and set in a color that properly contrasts the background.

02. Color Palette

Color is a primary means of visual identification used to create a powerful emotional response. Color aids brand recognition and should be used thoughtfully throughout communications. Consistent use of the palette will build strong external recognition and memorability for Early Years.

Color Palette

The color palette combines 4 energetic colors (sky blue, bright gold, mint green and dark green) with two neutral colors (navy blue and white). Color should be used intentionally to ensure everything looks and feels on brand.

When necessary, colors can be tinted to create lighter hues that remain on brand. The examples here are shown at 100%, 60% and 20%.

In order for typography to remain accessible, specific colors must be paired together to remain legible. The "AA" notation on a color means that color is accessible at all type sizes.

	100%	60%	20%
AA			
AA			
AA			
AA			
AA			

AA
AA
AA

AA
AA
AA
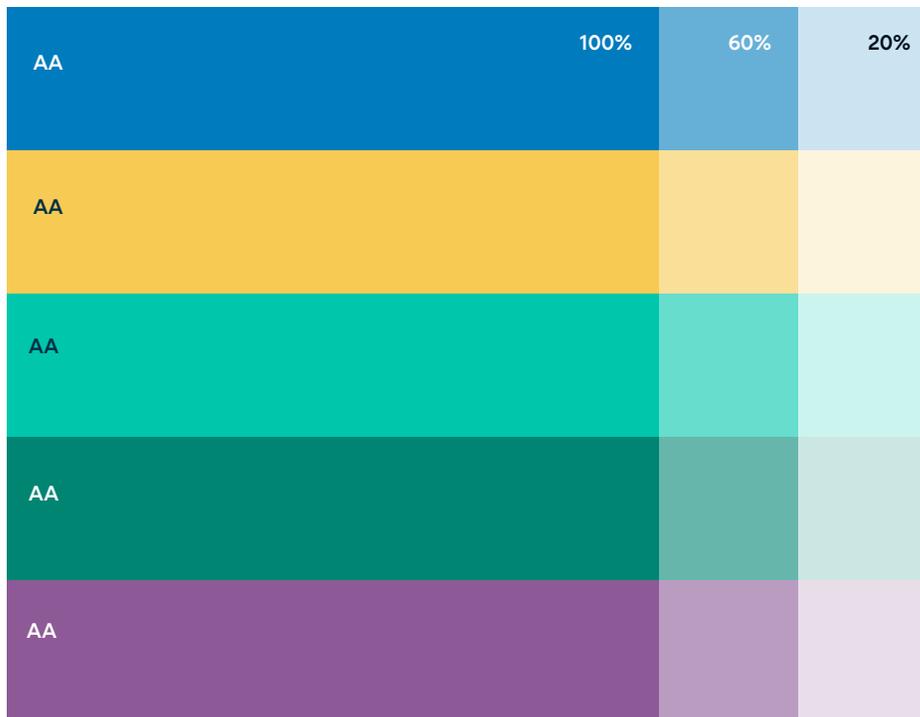
SKY BLUE
HEX   #007BBD
RGB   0, 123, 189
CMYK   100, 35, 0, 26

BRIGHT GOLD
HEX   # F7CA54
RGB   247, 202, 84
CMYK   0, 18, 66, 3

MINT GREEN
HEX   #00C6AC
RGB   0, 198, 172
CMYK   100, 0, 13, 22

DARK GREEN
HEX   #008573
RGB   0, 133, 115
CMYK   100, 0, 14, 48

DARK PURPLE
HEX   #8D5A97
RGB   141, 90, 151
CMYK   7, 40, 0, 41

NAVY BLUE
HEX   #002F47
RGB   00, 47, 71
CMYK   100, 34, 0, 72

WHITE
HEX   #FFFFFF
RGB   255, 255, 255
CMYK   00, 00, 00, 00

03. Typography

In order for the brand to remain visually consistent, it is critical to control all typography used in brand communications. Careful use of typography reinforces Early Years' personality and ensures the brand looks and feels consistent across all touch points.

Primary Typeface

Neulis Sans is a geometric and modern typeface. Neulis Sans consists of 10 weights, hairline through black, including accompanying italics. A combination of weights and italics should be used to create typographic hierarchy.

Neulis Sans should be used throughout all branded assets.

Poppins is the backup font when a free font is needed.

Arial is the backup font when a universal system font is needed.

Ee
Neulis Sans Hairline
Neulis Sans Hairline Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Thin
Neulis Sans Thin Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Extra Light
Neulis Sans Extra Light Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Light
Neulis Sans Light Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Regular
Neulis Sans Regular Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Medium
Neulis Sans Medium Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Semi Bold
Neulis Sans Semi Bold Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Bold
Neulis Sans Bold Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Extra Bold
Neulis Sans Extra Bold Italic

Ee
Neulis Sans Black
Neulis Sans Black Italic

Secondary Typeface

Merriweather is a low-contrast, easily readable serif typeface. It consists of 4 weights, light through ultrabold, including accompanying italics.

Merriweather should be used sparingly and intentionally, such as subheadlines, callout text or section titles.

Merriweather does not need to be used on every brand asset — it should be applied when necessary.

Ee

Merriweather Light
Merriweather Light Italic

Ee

Merriweather Regular
Merriweather Regular Italic

Ee

Merriweather Bold
Merriweather Bold Italic

Ee

Merriweather UltraBold
Merriweather UltraBold Italic

04. Brand Pattern

The Early Years logo icon can be duplicated and manipulated to create a unique pattern. This design feature can be used across assets as an expression of the Early Years brand. This pattern should be applied intentionally and with restraint.

Brand Pattern

The brand pattern is created duplicating and rotating the logo icon. Only use the logo icon in a single color when making a pattern.

The logo icon sits on a 1x1 grid — allowing the shapes to perfectly fit into one another.

The example to the right shows how the logo icon is rotated and interlocks into one another to fill space.

Designers should be creative with how they apply and create patterns using these guidelines.
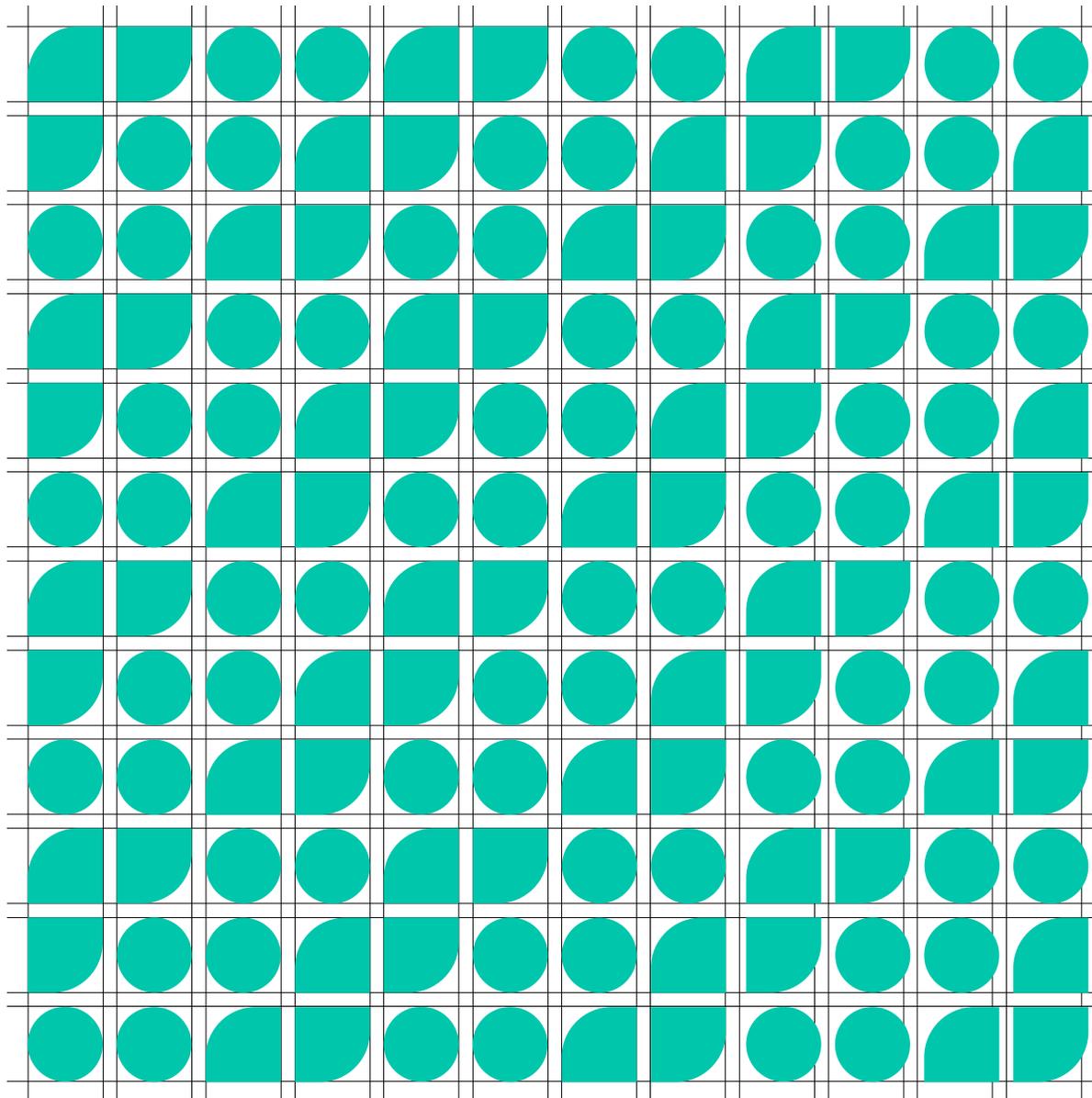
05. Usage Examples

The following are examples of the brand elements coming together and working in unison to visually represent the Early Years brand.

06. Program Logos

The following are examples of the brand elements coming together and working in unison to visually represent the Early Years brand.

Program Logos

Each program logo is individually designed using a custom typeface based on the Early Years primary typeface, Neulis Sans. The program logos follow a consistent layout that creates brand consistency across the different programs (described on page 21). Each program employs a unique color palette.

INFANT-TODDLER EDUCATOR

AWARD$ Plus
An Early Years Initiative

CHILD CARE

WAGE$®
An Early Years Initiative

TEACH
EARLY CHILDHOOD®
National Center
A Division of Early Years

TEACH
EARLY CHILDHOOD®
NORTH CAROLINA
An Early Years Initiative

Program Logo Template

The following template is the foundational structure of all program logos under the Early Years umbrella — and should be followed when designing additional program logos for Early Years. However, the content (word length, character count, etc.) of the logo needs to be considered when designing the program logo based on the template.

Descriptor of name when applicable (left aligned)

Primary name of program (customize type to embed shapes from logo)
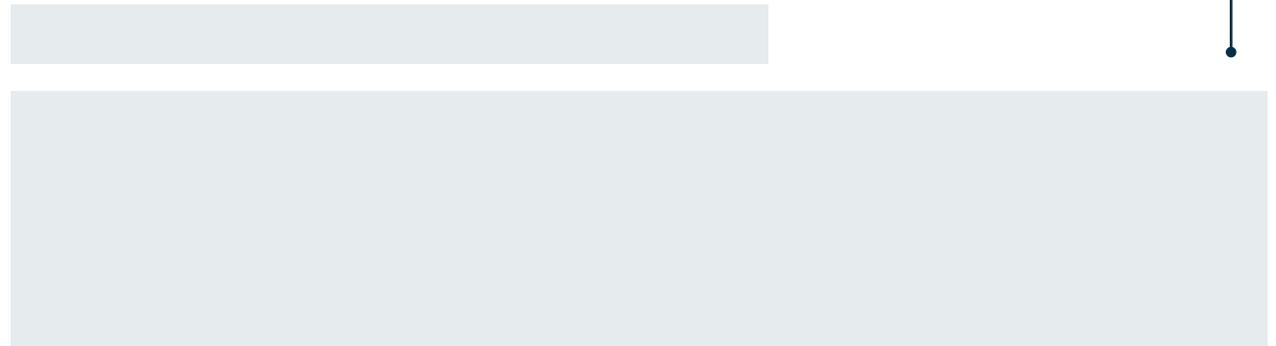
An Early Years Initiative

Parent brand label (right aligned) with horizontal line stretching across length of name

Brand Voice

07. Mission, Vision, Values

For your organization, the mission, vision, and values should not shift with a new brand except to replace the old with the new. Even with new branding, the goal of Early Years stays the same: To strengthen early care and education for all throughout the most formative years of our lives. Small grammatical changes have been made to stay with AP style for consistency.

Our Mission

Early Years leads efforts to strengthen accessible and affordable high-quality early care and education by providing support for families, communities and the workforce.

Our Vision

For all children to have equitable access to affordable, high-quality early care and education, which lays the foundation for successful life outcomes.

Our Values

We act with integrity, trust and respect

- We approach our interactions with honesty, transparency and respect.
- We acknowledge the trust placed in us and work diligently to uphold that in all we do.
- We hold privacy and confidentiality as foundational to our operations.

We are service-oriented and customer-focused

- When connecting with others, we work diligently to best meet their needs.
- We implement policies and procedures to provide equitable and excellent service.

We are committed to excellence, equity and data

- We work to overcome the impact of multi-generational poverty and systemic racism.
- We engage in research and use the best data available (both internally and externally) to guide our decision-making.
- In all we do, whether large or small, we commit to doing it to the best of our abilities.

We are committed to diversity and inclusion

- We embrace differences and are open to diverse perspectives.
- We acknowledge that people have different needs, perspectives and experiences.

We value flexibility and embrace change

- We think creatively, consider multiple perspectives and are open-minded in an effort to meet the unique needs of our customers.
- We recognize change as a constant and welcome opportunity to try new approaches.
- We work to continually expand our knowledge and skills.

08. Brand Story

For external audiences, explaining what your organization accomplishes can be a difficult task – especially because it performs so many services for such a wide variety of audiences. This is where the supplemental tag brings value to external marketing materials, but an elevator speech that slightly expands the supplemental tag can also help employees and stakeholders compound your impact into easier-to-digest speech.

Supplemental Brand Tag

A comprehensive approach to enhancing early childhood education

Secondary Brand Tag

For children. For families. For educators.

Elevator Pitch Options

Option 1

At Early Years, we take a comprehensive approach to enhancing early childhood education. We work alongside professionals, policymakers and parents to ensure equitable early care for all.

Option 2

Early Years is dedicated to enhancing early childhood education by partnering with professionals, policymakers and parents to provide research, resources and tools on equitable care for all during our most formative years.

Option 3

Working alongside professionals and policymakers, we take a comprehensive approach to enhancing early childhood education and ensuring all children have the opportunity to receive the best care possible.

Option 4

Our early years are our most influential, and we're dedicated to working alongside professionals and policymakers to ensure all children have a fair chance for success and a better education.

09. Brand Tone

From social media to fundraising, and every step in between, how you sound is just as important as how you look. While the goals of your messages may shift from audience to audience, the language you utilize and the tone you set should remain consistent to ensure audiences that the information you're providing is unmistakably you. We've created these personality prompts and anti-prompts to help guide content creation.

Early Years is...

✅ **Proud**

We take pride in the groundbreaking work we perform to advance early care for all and the partnerships we've created. We'll accept accolades and appreciation with grace, and always be grateful for the recognition.

✅ **Innovative**

Our goal is to never allow the conversations surrounding early care to take a back seat or be forgotten. We'll experiment, we'll listen, and we'll work hard to introduce new ideas and concepts that keep engagement high and great ideas flowing.

✅ **Familial**

Ultimately, we help children and families find equitable, high-quality early care. As we speak to audiences, from professionals to policymakers, that commitment, and the warmth and care of helping families, should always shine through.

Early Years is not...

❌ **Boastful**

We know this industry isn't an island (or a one-person show) and that we can't make great impacts alone. We'll never let our ego and accolades get in the way of the work, and will always highlight partnerships and team members that help make it happen.

❌ **Complacent**

We'll never be lazy and only look for quick wins (though we'll take them when we can as part of larger initiatives. We know that we've made great strides, but we won't rest on our laurels until all children have equal access to the early care and opportunities they deserve.

❌ **Corporate**

While our work expands to professionals and policymakers, our mission, our passion – and our target audience – should always be front of voice. We will never provide cold data and facts without warm justification and emotion.

Early Years is...

✓ Equitable

At Early Years, we're committed to helping all children, regardless of income level, background, or belief, succeed. We will never discriminate and always approach situations with an open mind.

✓ Data-Driven

Innovation and equitable care don't appear out of thin air; they're crafted from real-world insights and actionable data that drive conversations forward. We'll always utilize current, relevant data to prove our proof points and help create buy-in alongside impassioned and emotive conversations.

Early Years is not...

✗ Close-Minded

Our commitment to care and passion extends beyond our personal beliefs and emotions. We will always make decisions based on the good of all, instead of the opinions of one.

✗ Data-Drowned

While data is key to moving the needle, interpreting and understanding that data in the current industry landscape is just as important for creating buy-in. We'll never only present pages upon pages of data, and will always frame them with actionable insights and conversations that bring everyone to the table as close to the same level of knowledge as possible.

10. Topline Key Messages

This example copy, which utilizes your brand's tone and personality, is designed to serve as a starting point for marketing materials and external communications and help guide writers and freelancers to develop content more effectively in your voice.

Headlines

Championing the Need for High-Quality Care and Education for All Children

Ensuring Early Care is Equitable & Rewarding for All

Providing Tools & Resources for Advancing Early Care

Giving All Children The Opportunities for Success They Deserve

Helping Early Care Professionals Succeed. Helping Parents & Children Find the Early Care They Deserve.

Ensuring Children & Their Teachers Have All the Tools They Need for Success

Body Copy

At Early Years, we advocate for the advancement of early care services on the local, state, and national levels to ensure all children have access to the tools they need to succeed. And that professionals within the industry are appropriately equipped for long-term growth and success.

Children deserve equitable care, and we're committed to working at the local, state, and national levels to advocate for and champion improving early care standards across the country.

Here at Early Years, we're dedicated to working with early care professionals and policymakers to provide better opportunities for future generations, because we believe that the success of our children ensures a better future for all.

Calls to Action

Join Our Mission in Helping Children Succeed

Help Us Provide Equitable Early Care for All

Learn More About Early Years' Mission to Advance Early Care Initiatives

Discover More About Early Years' Commitment to Care

11. Style & Grammar Guidelines

In an effort to introduce consistency across channels and documentation, these style & grammar guidelines help writers provide clear messaging that always feels and looks like Early Years. Please note these are not meant to be firm rules but, instead, act as general guidelines, which can be shifted and flexed when designs and channels require it.

Always Use An Active Voice

ACTIVE: Early Years provides educational resources.
PASSIVE: Educational resources are provided by Early Years.

Keep An Eye On Jargon

Explain acronyms and insider language thoughtfully. While we are experts in our field, we balance conversational with technical language. It reflects who we are as an organization and how we work to nurture and educate those we work alongside and help.

Be Direct

We are clear, not just in the words we use but also in the way we structure our sentences. We clarify concepts by keeping them direct, concise and intentional. We break longer sentences into smaller, shorter ones and avoid unnecessary adjectives or overly flowery descriptions.

INDIRECT: "By offering professional development resources, Early Years provides educators with convenient access to the tools they need to succeed."

DIRECT: "Early Years offers professional development programs to teachers across the nation. These programs provide teachers with the tools they need to thrive in their careers."

Oxford Commas

Oxford commas can help clarify an otherwise complex series of items. However, they should only be used when necessary to avoid confusion.

Example with Oxford comma: "The boys like to play, run, and jump."
Without the Oxford comma: "The boys like to play, run and jump."

Double Spacing After Sentences

Don't double space after every sentence. It is an artifact of the age of typewriters and can make the spacing of the text look strange and clunky on websites and in print.

No: We are Early Years. We have a responsibility to the communities we work within.
Yes: We are Early Years. We have a responsibility to the communities we work within.

Punctuation After Bullets

Utilize periods and proper punctuation after each bullet.

Example: When it comes to education, Early Years provides:
- A large selection of resources and tools for educational professional development.
- Services that help families find, evaluate and pay for high-quality early care and education.
- Ongoing research and advocacy for improving early care and education.

Sentence Case

Em dashes (—) and commas (,) for sentence breaks. Commas should be used as sentence breaks in all formal writing, such as reports and official documentation. Em dashes should be used in less formal writing, such as social media, your website, and advertising, as they help provide a cleaner flow to sentence structure and can feel a bit warmer while still providing some breathing room for long sentences.

NOTE: *In many cases, for Early Years, we recommend writing sentences that are shorter in structure and do not require any sentence breaks. Keep sentences short and neat.*

Hyphens

Utilize hyphens in all use cases.

No: full service care.   **Yes:** full-service care.

Headlines

H1s ("Hero" headlines) should be title case. Proper punctuation use can be design-dependent.

Ex: Explore Our Work

H2s (sub-headlines) and smaller should be sentence case and follow proper grammar guidelines.

Ex: Discover how Early Years helps improve early care and education

Make It Personal

Keep language warm and personalized as much as possible with the use of words like "our," "we," and "us"

Ex: Need help getting parents to your facility?

In emails, utilize personalization tokens when possible and address people by their names instead of utilizing a generic tag ("Dear Early Years supporter").
- If it's someone Early Years has worked with in the past, utilize their first or full name.
- Casual and sales emails should use only their first name.
- Formal letters / important notices should use their full name.

For individuals who have not engaged with Early Years, address them by their full name or by a title and last name.

Ex: Dear Jesse Pinkman, / Dear Mr. Pinkman,

Inclusive Language Guidelines

Use universal phrases. Many idioms don't translate from country to country or across cultures. Using universal phrases helps support those who may not have specialized knowledge of a particular subject and creates more inclusive communication.

Gender-Inclusive Pronouns & Phrases

Use gender-neutral language. Language that encompasses all genders rather than only two genders is preferred. For example, children instead of boys and girls, or teams instead of guys.

Examples of gender-inclusive pronouns and phrases:
- They
- Y'all
- Everybody
- Folks
- Esteemed Peers

People-First Language

Use people-first language unless the person indicates another preference. Focus on the person, not their characteristics. For example:

SAY THIS
- "A man who is blind"
- "A person who is non-binary"

NOT THAT
- "A blind man"
- "A non-binary person"

Avoid Ableism

Sometimes when we speak, we accidentally alienate people by using language that places negative value on individuals who may have "invisible illnesses" or have mental illness, cognitive disability or physical disability.

In an effort to use inclusive, people-first language, here are some phrases that are best to avoid altogether:
- "Fallen on deaf ears"
- "Turn a blind eye"
- Spaz, spastic
- Normal

Inclusive Language Guidelines were created in partnership with Walk West's sister agency, The Diversity Movement (TDM).