

# Let's educate the candidates!

*This document outlines specific steps early childhood advocates can take to make a difference this election year.*

**Now is the time to raise our voices.** Candidates elected in 2018 will determine the outcome for the nearly 300,000 children under 5 in Alabama, and their families, for years to come. Most candidates, even those currently holding office, do not know how important early childhood is to **strong families, school readiness, and prosperity** in our state. They do not know that supporting early childhood is an opportunity. They do not know that Alabama has successful early childhood programs but a crisis of access to those programs. They do not know that recent Alabama polling showed voters strongly favor support for early childhood programs and that 30+ advocacy organizations are working together to make it happen. **Let's let them know.**

## GET UP-TO-DATE

Review the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) website for a collection of key information on early childhood issues.  
[www.smartstartalabama.org/programs/blueprint](http://www.smartstartalabama.org/programs/blueprint)

## PLAN WHAT YOU CAN DO

Each individual can offer a unique contribution to the early childhood movement. What can yours be? Do you have a connection to current policymakers or candidates? Connections to community leaders or journalists? A personal story in support of early childhood programs? Is there an event you can attend to spread the word? Could you make a donation? Do you have a social media account?

## CONNECT WITH CANDIDATES

The more candidates hear from constituents about early childhood issues, the more likely they are to support and expand programs once in office. You can call, make an appointment, send an email, or attend an event. In-person is best. Explain the issues. Ask questions. Share materials with them. Challenge them to bring early childhood to the forefront during forums, town halls, and local events.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR OWN NETWORK

Most people support early childhood programs, but they may not know the details—for example, how early childhood programs contribute to our state's prosperity, and how few children have access to these award-winning programs. Spread the word. Encourage others to advocate with you. Business and faith leaders are especially good partners to bring into the early childhood movement.

## USE AVAILABLE TOOLS

Check out the resources already prepared for you on the APC website, including:

**Messaging Guide.** Use these messages to describe the importance of early childhood in Alabama and to promote adoption and expansion of early childhood programs. When all advocates use the same messages, this repetition increases the chance they will be remembered and “taken to heart.”

**Social Media Calendar.** Use the images and sample posts on your organization’s and/or personal account, or just share the posts of advocacy organizations to which you belong. Use **#ALearlychildhoodmatters** to join the conversation on making early childhood issues a priority in our state elections.

**Print Materials.** Share hardcopy or electronic versions of APC’s Blueprint Information Package, including:

- **Blueprint Overview**
- **Strong Families Need Strong Foundations [Families & Communities]**
- **Children Are Healthy and Thriving [Health]**
- **Success in Schools Starts Early [Early Education]**
- **Questions for Candidates**

## STAY IN TOUCH

We are tracking outreach. We would love to hear about your activities and how we can help. Drop us an email at [info@smartstartalabama.org](mailto:info@smartstartalabama.org), or call us at (866) 711-4025.

Sign up for the APC e-newsletter at [www.smartstartalabama.org/maillingList](http://www.smartstartalabama.org/maillingList)

Also, sign up for the VOICES for Alabama’s Children “VOICES CAN” network to receive legislative updates and alerts at <https://alavoices.org/mission-and-vision/join-us/join>

During this election year, I am personally committed to taking the following actions in support of Alabama’s Blueprint for Strong Families, School Readiness, and Prosperity:

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*Thank you for your unique contribution to the Early Childhood Movement.*

**Learn more about Alabama’s Blueprint for Strong Families, School Readiness, and Prosperity at [www.smartstartalabama.org](http://www.smartstartalabama.org)**



*Every Alabama Child Will Have the Opportunity to Succeed in Life*