

# Celebrating the Week of the Young Child

By Heather Grocott



---

Each year, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (also known as NEAYC) celebrates young children by sponsoring the **Week of the Young Child** during the month of April. The purpose of this week is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families. Also, this week recognizes early childhood programs, services, and educators that work with young children. Perhaps even more importantly, the Week of the Young Child celebrates the joy and wonder of young children, and the gifts of energy, exuberance, and thirst for learning they exhibit throughout their early years.

The WYOC was first established in 1971 (recognizing birth through age 8). The main focus for the WYOC is to create awareness that the early years of a child's life truly lay the foundation for their future success in school and life. Ultimately, this special week is an opportunity for community members, families, and teachers, to come together to develop, improve, and sustain high quality services to meet the needs of all young children.

Today more than ever, we know how important and critical a child's first years of life are for the remainder of their development. It is extremely important that all children and all families are able to experience the same set of high quality early learning experiences. It is our responsibility as citizens of one nation to commit ourselves to the needs of young children in order to shape our future society.

This year, the WYOC will be celebrated from April 10 – 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The theme for 2011 is, "Early Years are Learning Years." Many local childcare providers hold events state-wide honoring children and their families such as special luncheons, reading events, awards nights, and children's activities.

Reach out to your local school or early childhood program – are teachers planning something special? How could you possibly donate your time? How can you celebrate your child's teacher? As a family, celebrate your young child. Activities to plan to celebrate your young child with your family are:

- Have a family spirit week – each day can be a different theme for all members of the family. Such as wear red day, crazy sock day, game night, etc
- Allow your child to plan a special outing the whole family will go on
- Plan a special dinner to celebrate your child
- Visit your child's school – read to the class or bring in a special healthy snack
- Create a memory book of your child's favorite memories
- Create an "all about me" book with your child
- Organize special play dates for your child and his or her friends

So, this year, think about the Week of the Young Child. Do you have young children? Do you live next to young children? Do you work with young children? Take an oath this year and every year to celebrate during the Week of the Young Child!