

# 80x3 Podcast Series - Part 3: Early Childhood Budgets, Boards, and Brain Development

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## SPEAKERS

Art R., Amanda, Priscilla W., Jamie B., Narrator

### **Narrator 00:02**

Welcome to Inclusion Matters, a podcast about children's development from the Center for Inclusive Child Care.

### **Priscilla W. 00:08**

Welcome to Inclusion Matters a podcast from the Center for Inclusive child Care. I am Priscilla Weigel back again with my amazing guests for part three of our conversation, early childhood budgets, boards and brain development. I have Amanda Ziebell Mawanda and Art Rolnick back and also Jamie Bonczyk. And we are really having just an amazing conversation about some important things that support quality care for all children and support the people doing the work and providing the care and the families and the whole community. And so our topic in this third part is really looking going to be looking at boards, nonprofit board of directors and Jamie, I would love to jump in with you telling us about your personal experience as a director of a nonprofit organization, providing early care and education to children. And thinking about how educators and administrators really can engage and make sure that they're ensuring buy in for their board members. And also talk a little bit about recruiting some of those key people because a board has a really important role in supporting this whole thing.

### **Jamie B. 01:40**

Yeah. So for three years, I was an executive director of a nonprofit. And before that I spent eight years as an administrator that also reported to a board. So I feel pretty comfortable in working with boards. But I don't know that everybody who works in a nonprofit child development center is a does has as much access as I did. So I'm going to kind of answer your question in two different ways. What I found, first and foremost, I'll just say like, as an administrator, I worked in Headstart organizations, and they have federal requirements of who should be on your board of directors like what kind of backgrounds those people should have as far as like understanding finance, and understanding child development. And so as I was an executive director, and people moved off of our board, and I would work with the board members to say, hey, I think we could for sure can do an open call. But right now, we

don't really have anybody who's got a background in marketing. But that would be a really good thing to have a lens of somebody who has ideas. So we looked at some of like, what is Headstart doing and like, maybe we should aspire to do some of those things. But the people who served on our board had a background in child psychology. There was a person who had a background, having worked at DHS, but wasn't in that role at the time, a background of somebody who had worked in philanthropy in another state, we had a person who had was a public health nurse, we had a lawyer, we had people who worked in investment of public, an accountant, and so looking at kind of like fully fleshing out the board. Also, on that particular child development board, we had a former parent, we didn't have a current parent. And there's different reasons that different organizations might choose to, like, do one or the other. But we thought it was really important to have somebody who had lived experience in the Center, but also was going to have some space away from when we had to discuss certain such certain things. And so, you know, I think that it's important to think about all these different considerations of who are the people that are going to be not only looking at your fiscal health of your organization and your strategy, but what's in it for them, like, why did they care about this issue? And like, what networks did they have? Because, you know, it is a nonprofit, there's going to be needs that are like, above and beyond what the organization can do. So I think, from the perspective of like, who are these people, who do we want. I think we want a lot of people from different industries that actually care about early childhood education and care, on the board of directors. I don't think you want all people that all know the same thing influencing your board. So that's my first perspective. And, how did I go about finding these board members was we worked with the Minnesota Council on nonprofits, we like put out open applications, but also sometimes it was board members recruiting other board members. It might have been people that I knew from a former job to say, hey, we're gonna have this. Are you interested? Do you know anybody you could recommend? Then there was a whole like application process and an interview and we did all these things. But you asked me a second point, Priscilla, which is how to staff like engage with their boards. I think everybody, at all aspects, want to feel proud of the work that they're doing. And I think that the if you're not directly talking to the board, there are reports that go to your board of directors if that's your executive director working with the board, the the executive director wants to, I would say, they want to say like this is what's going well. Of course, you're going to talk about what's not going well. But I think that the biggest thing is like, tell, if you're an assistant teacher, you're a classroom teacher, the bus driver, keep the person that reports to the board, like, there's got to be a way to inform that person so that they can share your stories in a way that makes sense to the board. You know, I was brought in sometimes, when I wasn't an executive director to meet with the board and give some real life. So I think that there's a lot that goes into this relationship of who do you know, and there's some power dynamics that are here, and different organizations do things in different ways. But ultimately, if we have an all in approach of we know what the mission is, we know why we're all here together, we know what value we bring, and we know why we're doing this together, then all of the relationship pieces like I think, move more cohesively together, and it feels more like we then meet.

**Priscilla W. 06:10**

Yes, and I do think speaking as a nonprofit executive director, who has a board, one thing that and thankfully, our organization is the size that allows for this, I don't know if a larger organization would be able to do this, but we've had, we have staff spotlights, so, you know, staff come to the board meeting the people doing the work, and they talk about what their job looks like on a day to day basis. And then they share, you know, some of that impact that they've had individually in their role. But I feel that we can always do better at having the board feel the we and to articulate we as an organization. So sometimes it's it's hard to feel a part of things when you're not regularly engaged in the work. And so how are nonprofits really pulling in their board members to understand the work and Art, you sit on a lot of boards, and, you know, clearly from our conversations in these parts, three parts series, you you have passion, you've you've adopted and taken on the passion of those organizations, we can hear it when you're talking about the work that they do. How have those organizations achieved that for you as a board member? What have they done? What are some thoughts?

**Art R. 07:32**

Sure, I'm getting into this space, believe me, I was very naive. You know, I'm a research guy, and now I'm getting into the nonprofit in the public policy space directly. And what I learned, right, almost right away, and this is United Way going back 20 years, Warren Staley was Chair of the board, he was CEO of Cargill, and what I learned is when you get business people involved on your board that have an influence, even if they don't know the issue, and they're ready to learn, like, I don't think Warren Staley knew anything about early ed. But once we sat down and talked about it, it was an easy sell, if you will. The reason I like some business people on the board, is there going to want to look beyond just how much money an organization raises. Many times nonprofits, they talk about how successful they are in raising money, because people are going to ask, what are you doing with that money? Are you having a difference? How can you show you're making a difference? They're going to make them more accountable. At least that's what I've seen. And I'm over the years I've been on a dozen plus boards, Minnesota, nationally and even internationally. And I find that typically, a business person will ask that question, and others may not. The other reason I like a business person or a former political person is, again, nonprofits, they can do wonderful things. But when it comes to taking like early at to scale for a whole state or country, you've got to be in you've got to be in the political space. And so I want people who can help us get into that political space and have influence. So if you have CEOs from Fortune 500 companies, that's a big deal. Now, I was very successful in getting Doug and Julie Baker, Doug was CEO of Ecolab, and Julie was on the board. I think they may have been on the United Way board too. And they became national spokespeople for this issue. And so, part of the recruitment you need people from the community. Clearly you need people who understand nonprofits and know how to, you know, motivate the workers, but you also need some people on that board that can take you to scale on certain issues. Ours clearly is one that we needed in especially in Minnesota. What happened with United Way United Way working with Warren Staley created another

a nonprofit called the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, and it was a combination of United Way, Warren Staley creating Cargo creating this nonprofit, and they invited a number of CEOs, Best Buy, Target, Ecolab, General Mills, Blue Cross Blue Shield. And that's when we created Parents Aware and we created the scholarships. We did. And mentors, we did a pilot study all with private money, partly raised by United Way, partly raised by mouth itself. But it was these business leaders that really made the difference. So when I'm looking at boards, Jamie has mentioned a number of important types of people, I would add to that, a somebody who's in the political space and has a business background, should be on that and most boards, I think, at least that's my experience. If you want to move beyond just what you're doing, but taking the good things you're doing as a nonprofit, even the things that you're not doing that that's not working, letting the the public policy space knows what's working, what's not working, from your experience, and what you should take to scale. I think you need those types of people.

**Priscilla W. 11:00**

Ok. That's very helpful. And Amanda, I know that Propell does a lot of work with board development and board work, and you do as well in that in your role. What are things that are coming to mind for you that you feel our listeners should know?

**Amanda 11:15**

Yeah, so a few things come to mind. I mean, most of my days are spent working with a board or a board committee, or Ed preparing to work with the board. So I get a lot of insight into different organizations. And what Jamie was saying about having some diversity of experience on your board is really, really crucial. The boards I find that have the hardest time moving things forward are folks who are all from the same industry or the same background. And so really, it's that diversity of thought and skills on the board that creates a dynamic that can really take an organization from good to great. I think it's important, just as basics in terms of board service, understanding that there are some fiduciary duties, and that being a board member comes with some responsibility, comes with the duty of care, the duty of loyalty. Not having conflicts of interest, or being able to name them, being able to put the organization first financial sustainability for the organization. So there are real, actual legal responsibilities that come along with being a board member. So I think that's a key thing for folks to be thinking about when you're thinking about joining a board or thinking about recruiting for your board is that you do want trustworthy people, the whole reason that a board of directors exists is to hold the public trust that is placed in nonprofit organizations. So I think it's important to think about the different roles. So I am very much in alignment with what Art saying about having some champions on your board, think that's wonderful. You also need some doers. So ideal board would be a mix of champions who are really good at being ambassadors for the sector, and for your organization. doers who are willing to kind of step in and lead the committees do the work, do the things that need to be done, serve as a treasurer serve as a secretary or a board president. And then not mutually exclusive to that is folks who have lived experience

and community experience. So I think my ideal board is a mix of kind of those three things like folks who have lived and community experience folks who are ready to lean in and get some things done. And then some folks who are really great champions or ambassadors. Now, those folks may or may not know each other and may or may not have relationships together. When I work with boards, I talk to them about what an ideal board meeting should look like. And in my mind, it's at least a fourth relationship, building a fourth learning something together, or developing your skill set as a board. A fourth about approving reports and going through kind of your sort of board business duties. And then at least a fourth of the time you're spending in generative conversation, where you're surfacing, you're actually surfacing dissent. And by dissent, I don't mean argument, I mean like surfacing different approaches to problem solving for the organization or spending time looking at what's coming down the pipeline in the next six months, two years, five years. So that the board is using all of their brain power to give the best advice to the ED. A couple of things we do at Propel that can be really helpful not that this is a Propel commercial. But we do do board fundamental training both in the board governance area and in the finance area. And so that's something that we're going to be doing with 80x3 programs this year, to be sure that they have access to the same knowledge so that that champion who's a Fortune 500 company leader, and that live, that person who has lived experience or learning to engage in the board in the same way, are both able to read the financials are able to have a sense of substantive and generative conversation together at the board level. I also have a few trainings coming up where we're just going to talk about how do you foster a good environment and then engaged environment for a board? How do you foster a place where people can show up as their best and bring you their best work and ideas so that you don't have boards who are apathetic or unengaged. I think, and Jamie can also share her from her experience about this too. But when I do have to work with an organization that sunsetting right now I'm working with one child childcare center that sunsetting. And a big part of the reason they got to that position was that the board was not engaged in the in the business model in sort of the oversight duties that they have. So a great board is doing oversight. They're providing insight, they're providing foresight, but keeping them engaged is a really, really important piece of the puzzle. They're engaged and equipped.

**Priscilla W. 16:35**

Right? I think, and I think for leaders of nonprofits, there's this fine line, because you're so grateful for those volunteers who have said, yeah, I'm going to sign on, I'm going to provide the support, I'm going to be part of your board. And in your mind, you're thinking, well, they're all busy professionals, they all have these other roles that, you know, they fill their lives, not to mention their own families. And and so you kind of walk this line of how much do I expect? And, and I do think that, that is the challenge a lot of times too, is one more challenge. I love the quadrants. We use those in our board meetings, and it just keeps things really consistent and predictable. As far as the board's members are concerned, they know what the meeting is going to look like, when they come and and that's super helpful. I love the way you frame that.

**Amanda 17:33**

It comes out of the city and through a lot of really bad board meetings.

**Priscilla W. 17:39**

Yes, I'm sure Art, I in all your years of, of the board attendees attendance and being a part of things, you know, as you said, all the way internationally, you probably have stories of successes and stories of failures that, you know, allow you as a board member to really be more choosy about where you sign on to, I would think,

**Art R. 18:05**

Ya no I've had quite a bit of experience with a variety of boards, but getting back to some of Amanda's comments, what I have found is the President and CEO of the organization is so critical, partly in managing the board, and partly in managing the business. And I'll give you one example. Not mentioning too many names. But when Way to Grow was created by Don Frazier, many years ago, they struggled. And in my mind, they struggled because the CEOs that they brought on who just didn't have the experience, and it wasn't a board problem so much it was a CEO problem. And in I think it was 02 or something they brought on Carolyn Smallwood, and she's been with them all these years. And she has done an incredible job. She's an incredible leader in this area, I would argue nationally, she's one of the best I've ever seen. And she was able to attract some amazing board members, me in particular. But but she's really had some great board members. And so there's a, you know, how do you create an organization? And I think it really does start with that leadership at the top. How you find that leadership? Maybe that takes a good board to begin with. We're right now in the process of Think Small, Barb Yates, is retiring. And we're in the process of trying to replace Barb which is going to be impossible. But in my mind, it's critical. And so that relationship and how you develop that is, to me, it's a bit of a mystery. I mean, we I think we were very lucky getting Carolyn Smallwood. But obviously we did it. But that to me is critical part of creating the kind of nonprofits that we've all been discussing. How do you make a nonprofit really successful and I think the top matters the person at the top matters a lot

**Jamie B. 19:54**

I'm going to jump in here because I get I come from early childhood leadership and to my understanding, like there just aren't a lot of people in the state of Minnesota who have, on purpose, become leaders in early childhood. Even if you're the executive director, so many people go into early childhood leadership. And it might not be the executive director, it might be somebody who is a center director, but because they were the best preschool teacher when the former director, retired, and I've like heard all sorts of stories. But I do believe that early childhood leadership development is going to be part of our strategy moving forward, we do have some important things to do. This is something that we found in the work funded through Greater Twin Cities United Way currently with 80x3 is that it is

important to look at investing in leadership not only in those people who are in classrooms, have classroom leadership skills, but those who are running and making good business decisions at the center director, the executive director level, we've worked with both Center for Inclusive Child Care and Propel nonprofits to look at what are the kinds of ways we can make sure that we are investing in leaders, I'm really excited about some upcoming leadership circles that are going to happen with Propel nonprofits. And we were able to do some cold design and listening and having conversations with Priscilla. And actually our friends over at Think Small and say what are the kinds of leadership skills classroom based or organizationally that our leaders or our people are asking for. And so Center for Inclusive Child Care has done some great content that is meant to be like leadership in the classroom around trauma sensitive care, and then Think Small made some content that's specifically for leaders. Like what are the kinds of things that leaders need support in for their own professional development so that we can have executive directors that do have lived experiences in classrooms, in in all of you know, all of the above. So as they're making decisions, as they're working with boards, as we're all in an all in all us kind of environment, that we can hold those. And so I'm really excited about some opportunities. I know other things exist, there's a directors credential, there's some Tell Talks. But I do think that is, as we're moving forward, and things that our boards want to think about as they're potentially recruiting future leaders is the talent pipeline. And I know Amanda, that is something that you think about in nonprofits. I'm just wondering, like, as we're like thinking about, well, what can we be doing now? Go to Think Small, go to CIC, look at some content that's been there, get involved with some things. 80x3 will have a website. Great. But Amanda, thinking about how are we going to develop our future executive directors that are going to be tackling these issues? Because we have some amazing people who are retiring, who have retired. And I think this is an a critical thing, as we're thinking as we're future forecasting. How is Minnesota going to achieve tackling that achievement or opportunity gap that Art has talked about is that we are going to need the people who are prepared with lived experience to bring us forward.

**Amanda 23:19**

Yeah, I would say Jamie, that we don't need to worry about that for the future. We need to worry about it right now. We're seeing an incredible level of turnover in the nonprofit sector right now, just across the board. But I think it would be fair to say maybe a third of the programs that I worked with last year had a Ed transition of early childhood programs that I worked with had a leadership transition during just that 12 month period. So it's not a looming issue. It's something to be thinking about right now. There's also movement in the nonprofit community to be looking at new leadership structures that can kind of counter burnout and counter some of the things that that isolation at the top. So a lot of places are looking at Cold Leadership models. I think that's something to consider moving forward and not in response to a crisis. But as something on the horizon, that might be a possible solution. One of the things that I did in the 80x3 work I did with Jamie was I did an organizational, a full 360 organizational assessment with the programs we were working with. And it was pretty apparent that there's not a great leadership pipeline and way of

developing leaders from the classroom up through administration up through leadership. And so that's something that we've put a lot of effort into thinking about how do you build those skills along the way and keep people in an organization or in the sector, right? Because we're, we're bleeding people, from the sector from organizations. So one, I mean, I'm gonna take this back to boards, and I'm gonna take it back to budget. So one thing I think boards need to be thinking about in relationship to this is having succession plans in place, both emergency succession plans, if somebody's ill, if somebody needs to be out for three months, what does that look like for your organization, where do responsibilities transfer so that you can just hit activate on that plan, if that happens, I also think boards have the responsibility for the longer term succession planning. So when a leader is leaving after 20 years, what that's a very risky time for an organization. What a board can do to help is have a plan in place ahead of time so that when that person is ready to move to another role, or retire, or is ready to do something else, that you again, have a strategy in place to deal with it and mitigate some of the risks that come along during that time. So there are things that the board can be doing in terms of making sure you're ready for those things. At the more programmatic and staff development level, it is building the pipeline and increasing people's responsibilities and skills and giving them the training they need along the way. And then that brings me back to the budget point. So just back full circle to our first conversation is that all of these things take time, and they take money. And they take willingness and eagerness from the professionals who are involved. But I don't think we're lacking that, I don't think we're lacking smarts, we're not lacking ambition, we're not lacking fortitude, we're not lacking desire from any of those professionals. They're making realistic decisions based on their life situations. What we need to do as organizations is give them the option. That staying, staying is healthier for them than going and then equipping them through through that leadership pipeline. But yeah, it takes it takes money, and it takes time. And time it is also money in this situation. So it kind of all circles back to having your budget undergird your mission and values.

**Priscilla W. 27:30**

Definitely, oh, my goodness, we could we could go on and on and on on it. I mean, this is such important information for those out there who are working in a nonprofit role are working in early childhood education. I think the topics of these three podcasts in this series will provide nuggets for many folks to be able to do that one thing that's going to make tomorrow go better and be able to find whether it's board recruitment, who's on the board, building relationships in the board and running a smooth meeting. And also talking about being able to articulate the important economic need to do something now. And Jamie I so appreciate the work at Greater Twin Cities United Way through the 80x3 efforts to just really build up the early childhood educators in the field who are able to be a part of that program. I thank you for the opportunity that we've had to be included in that work. It's been amazing to see the dedication, and as you said, you know, Amanda, there's no lack of passion, there's passion. It's just how do we as a community, as a whole community, support that passion to bring that to the children and families in a sustainable way, long term. So I thank Art Rolnick for your time today and your expertise. I look forward to future



conversations and hearing about you and your passionate advocacy for early childhood. You've been just an amazing role model for for a lot of those in the advocacy work to really push this topic forward. Amanda, it's always a treat to see you and I know that our paths cross in many ways through the work at Propel which CiCC has used in so many different situations in our work and Jamie, it's always a treat to spend time talking with you. And it's never dull. Jamie always has something moving in her brain that is creating a better life for kids and families and I so appreciate that about you, Jamie. So thank you for being on Inclusion Matters for being a part of this conversation. I look forward to seeing you all in our as our paths will cross in different ways. Take care.