

Deborah Kong, Director, Early Edge California

Deborah Kong has spent more than two decades advocating for and telling the stories of those who do not have a voice in public policy. As Director of Early Edge California, she has successfully advocated for early learning programs so that children can be happy, healthy, engaged learners by their first day of school and every day after. In her 10 years at the policy and advocacy organization, Deborah has led work to improve the quality of early learning for more of California's children by securing additional and more stable public funding; advocating for groundbreaking early childhood policies; educating local, state, and federal policymakers; cultivating strong relationships with key stakeholders across the state; and leading persuasive communications campaigns.

Prior to Early Edge, Deborah was a journalist for 15 years at media outlets including the Associated Press, San Jose Mercury News, Philadelphia Inquirer, Los Angeles Times, and Boston Globe. As a National Writer at the Associated Press, she covered the post-September 11, 2001 backlash violence, discrimination, and effects on communities of color, and received the Sikh Coalition's Excellence in Journalism award for her reporting.

Deborah holds a Masters of Public Policy degree from UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy, where she researched and co-authored a chapter of Professor David Kirp's book on early childhood education, "The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics." She also holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California at Los Angeles, with a specialization in Asian American Studies.

As the mother of a 5 year old, and the grandchild of immigrants who came to America seeking a better life for their children, Deborah understands the urgency of ensuring all of our children have quality early learning opportunities.