

VOICE for Children

2026 VOICE for Children

Distinguished Career Award Recipient

Sue Polojac, M.Ed.

Director, Rae Ann Hirsh Apprenticeship Program for Early Childhood Education, Carlow University

Sue Polojac is the Director of the Dr. Rae Ann Hirsh Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program at Carlow University in Pittsburgh. With over three decades of experience in early childhood education, Sue has established herself as an innovative leader, policy advocate, and mentor dedicated to elevating the early learning workforce and improving outcomes for children and families across Pennsylvania and beyond.

Since joining Carlow University in 2020, Sue has directed the growth and expansion of the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program—a model that allows early educators to pursue their degrees while continuing full-time work in the field. Through her leadership, the program has strengthened the connection between higher education and the early childhood community, providing educators with real-world pathways to professional advancement while addressing workforce shortages in the field. Sue's dedication to mentorship and teaching has enriched the lives of countless students.

Before joining Carlow, Sue served as the Director of both the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant and the Preschool Development Grant Birth–Five for Pennsylvania’s Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). There, she managed more than \$65 million in federal funding to build sustainable systems that improved program quality, expanded family engagement, and advanced community partnerships.

Throughout her career, Sue has held key leadership roles across early learning systems, including work in childcare, elementary education, Fayette County Head Start/Early Head Start, and nonprofit organizations such as Trying Together. She is a frequent presenter at local, state, and national conferences, a contributor to state and federal policy initiatives, and an advisor to multiple early learning councils and higher education consortiums.

Sue earned her associate degree from Westmoreland County Community College in Early Childhood Education, and both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in early childhood education from Carlow University. Her lifelong commitment to early education is fueled by a profound belief in the power of teachers, families, and communities to change the trajectory of a child’s life. Known for her integrity, compassion, and relentless advocacy, Sue continues to inspire others to create equitable, high-quality learning opportunities for all young children.

Sue lives in Monroeville with her husband John, and their pups, Oliver and Arlo. Sue loves to host parties and gatherings that bring together family and friends. In her spare time, Sue is an avid gardener, traveler, and loves to bake.