

Brenda Edmondson Heim (she/her) took on the challenge of educating communities about the benefits of early childhood education for low-income families after leaving her beloved classroom career in the early 2000s. This led to the creation of a Western suburban community-wide MELF (Minnesota Early Learning Foundation) pilot program called Caring for Kids Initiative in Wayzata. This state-wide initiative was spearheaded by Duane Benson, with research from Art Rolnick and the Federal Reserve Bank. The state subsequently implemented Early Childhood Education Scholarships, which continue to be supported by state legislation. While the importance of early childhood education was not widely recognized in the early 2000s, its benefits are now widely acknowledged.

Brenda brought the concept of and is currently working with Hamline University to create a Fellows Program supporting students who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color or those who have experience living in a low-income household or as a member of a historically disadvantaged community who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching. The goal of the program being to overcome specific barriers individual students may face and bring them from college enrollment to graduation and on to employment standing in front of a class of eager learners.

Brenda's husband, daughters with their husbands, and six grandchildren are at her core. She firmly believes that her voice can make a significant difference in their well-being, as well as countless others.