

on standards for programs to prepare early childhood professionals

Research shows that when early childhood professionals are well prepared, children are likely to experience warm, safe, and stimulating environments that lead to healthy development and constructive learning. Based on this research as well as professional values, NAEYC developed and promotes standards for the preparation of early childhood professionals. These standards present a shared vision of excellence for all early childhood professionals across education and training settings. They act as a signpost toward desired outcomes at colleges and universities and in community-based and other professional development settings.

At colleges and universities the standards apply to associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs. Students at each level of professional preparation are expected to demonstrate varying degrees of knowledge and skills, as appropriate to the program level. For example, an advanced degree student is expected to go beyond a foundational level, achieving proficiency in a specialized professional role such as teacher educator or researcher.

One of the ways NAEYC puts the five core standards to work is through a process of accreditation, a rigorous review of educational outcomes that determines academic quality. Higher education institutions aiming for accreditation voluntarily undergo this review process, which includes self-study, external peer review, and an accreditation or national recognition decision. The goal of accreditation is not only to recognize high-quality programs but also to provide programs with constructive feedback so they may continuously improve.

Preparing Early Childhood Professionals: NAEYC's Standards for Programs, the complete book of associate, baccalaureate, and advanced level standards, rationales, references, and other resources, is available online at www.naeyc.org/shoppingcart/Itemdetail.aspx?Stock_No=256.

What Tomorrow's Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do

1. Promoting child development and learning

Well-prepared early childhood professionals understand what young children are like; understand what influences their development; and use this understanding to create great environments where all children can thrive. This standard emphasizes knowledge of the range of influences on child development—including cultural contexts, economic conditions, health status, and learning styles—and an ability to apply knowledge to improve social interactions, assessment, instruction, and more.

2. Building family and community relationships

Well-prepared early childhood professionals understand and value children's families and communities; create respectful, reciprocal relationships; and involve all families in their children's development and learning. This standard emphasizes that respectful relationships with all families—whatever their structure, language, ethnicity, and child's ability or disability—are the foundation of early childhood education.

3. Observing, documenting, and assessing

Well-prepared early childhood professionals understand the purposes of assessment; use effective assessment strategies; and use assessment responsibly to positively influence children's development and learning. Good assessment practices measure what is developmentally and educationally significant in order to guide decisions about curriculum and instruction.

4. Teaching and learning

Well-prepared early childhood professionals build close relationships with children and families; use developmentally effective teaching and learning strategies;

understand content areas and academic subjects; and use their knowledge to give all children the experiences that promote comprehensive development and learning. Teaching and learning are at the heart of teacher preparation, and the elements of this standard reflect the highly interconnected nature of early development and learning.

5. Becoming a professional

Well-prepared early childhood professionals identify themselves with the early childhood profession; use ethical, professional standards; demonstrate self-motivated, ongoing learning; collaborate; think reflectively and critically; and advocate for children, families, and the profession. Early childhood professionals provide one of the most important services to society; they must understand and cultivate their role as professionals doing critical work.

Research and Resources

Why do the standards matter? For more information on what the research says about connections between standards, program quality, teacher quality, and child outcomes, see the following resources:

- Barnett, W.S. 2003. Better teachers, better preschools: Student achievement linked to teacher qualifications. *NIEER Policy Briefs*. 2. Online: <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/2.pdf>
- Hyson, M., ed. 2003. *Preparing early childhood professionals: NAEYC's standards for programs*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Hyson, M., & H. Biggar. 2006. NAEYC's standards for early childhood professional preparation: Getting from here to there. In *Critical issues in early childhood professional development and*

Recognition of Baccalaureate and Graduate Degree Programs

For baccalaureate and graduate degree programs, NAEYC works with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to grant national recognition to those programs that demonstrate that their students meet NAEYC's five core standards. Programs prepare a report presenting program information and evidence of student performance in relation to the standards. NAEYC-trained reviewers review the reports and determine whether the programs meet the NAEYC standards.

Institutions having NAEYC-recognized early childhood education programs also may receive accreditation at the unit (for example, Department of Education) level. Approximately 575 institutions are NCATE accredited, of which about 150 have NAEYC-approved early childhood education programs.

NAEYC's Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation

The new NAEYC Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation system is tailored to build on the unique characteristics and emphasize the strengths and assets of community colleges and other early childhood associate degree-granting institutions. The accreditation process includes extensive self-study and submission of a Self-Study Report by the associate degree program; a site visit to the program conducted by a Peer Review Team; and the accreditation decision made by a national commission of early childhood professionals.

The Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation Criteria describe a program's unique context, mission, conceptual framework, faculty, students, and resources. The criteria provide a detailed framework for meeting the five NAEYC standards for high-quality professional preparation at the associate degree level. The standards are student performance based and aligned with baccalaureate and graduate standards. They describe what well-prepared graduates with an associate degree in early childhood education (tomorrow's early childhood teachers) should know and be able to do. Accredited professional preparation programs use key student assessments to collect data on student performance in relation to the five standards. This evidence of student growth and competence is used continuously to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

More information, including a list of accredited associate degree programs, is available at www.naeyc.org/faculty/asdeg.asp.

- training and children's successful transition to elementary school*, eds. M. Zaslow & I. Martinez-Beck, 283–308. Baltimore: Brookes.
- National Research Council. 2001. *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy. B. Bowman, M. Donovan, & M. Burns, eds. Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2000. *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. J. P. Shonkoff & D.A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

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