

March 26, 2010

The Honorable George Miller  
Committee on Education & Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline  
Committee on Education & Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's leading voice for early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of children from birth through age eight, is pleased to submit recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act.

The importance of high-quality developmental support and learning experiences for all young children, beginning at birth and continuing through the early grades, are better known and appreciated than ever before. Public policies and investments, however, have not sufficiently changed to match our new knowledge. Our recommendations are grounded in research and other evidence that a continuum of developmentally appropriate and challenging standards, curriculum, and assessments, as well as comprehensive services and meaningful parent/family engagement from birth through the early elementary grades, can support better development and learning at each stage, more effective transitions among early learning settings, and consistent shared expectations among settings in which children are served.

The recommendations provided below are based on the following principles:

- State content standards must reflect the understanding that each domain of development and learning influences and is influenced by progress in other domains; that is, development and learning do not occur in neat content compartments, especially for children younger than third grade.

- Teaching practices and curriculum must be evidence-based and appropriate for the age and development of the child, and should include both teacher-led instruction and child-initiated activities and play.
- Assessments of children in the early grades and younger must be used to inform and improve instruction and should not be used for high-stakes purposes.
- To be effective, teachers, principals and other school administrators must be knowledgeable about all domains of child development, content areas, and how to support each classroom and each child in meeting expectations for achievement.
- Schools must be engaged with families and communities in order to support children's well-being, development and learning.

NAEYC will be providing suggested legislative language for our recommendations in the coming weeks.

We look forward to discussing our recommendations with you and other opportunities to ensure that every child has the content knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge, as well as the creativity, initiative, and motivation for lifelong learning and success in life.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Ginsberg, Ph.D  
Executive Director

## NAEYC Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act

### A Continuum of Developmentally Appropriate Standards, Curricula, and Instructional Assessments to Support Teaching and Learning of All Children From Birth Through Third Grade

#### *Breadth and Alignment of Standards*

- States should be required to review and revise K-3 standards to ensure that they address all domains including social and emotional development and approaches to learning, and at the district level, ensure that curricula and instructional assessments are consistent with expert recommendations concerning special issues in assessing younger children and are aligned to the standards. Reasonable expectations for younger children should form the basis for specifying and aligning standards for older children.

State standards for what children should know and do are an important component of a system of teaching and learning. In the early grades, children remain on a path of development that requires attention and support to their emotional, social and physical development and to their creativity, curiosity and tenacity (approaches to learning). A large number of research studies have linked emotional competence to both enhanced cognitive performance and academic achievement.<sup>1</sup> A number of factors in the emotional and social domain, such as independence, responsibility, self-regulation,<sup>2</sup> and cooperation, predict how well children make the transition to school and how they fare in the early grades.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the National Research Council Report, *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How?* notes that: "...A parallel effort to raise the attention of practitioners in the K-12 arena to the importance of social/emotional development and approaches to learning not only would improve the learning environment for elementary children, it would create a better environment to address alignment issues."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Linares, L.O., N. Rosbruch, M.B. Stern, M.E. Edwards, G. Walker, H.B. Abikoff, & J.M.J. Alvir. 2005. Developing cognitive-social-emotional competencies to enhance academic learning. *Psychology in the Schools* 42 (4): 405–17

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Linares, L.O., N. Rosbruch, M.B. Stern, M.E. Edwards, G. Walker, H.B. Abikoff, & J.M.J. Alvir. 2005. Developing cognitive-social-emotional competencies to enhance academic learning. *Psychology in the Schools* 42 (4): 405–17; Raver, C.C., P.W. Garner, & R. Smith-Donald. 2007. The roles of emotion regulation and emotion knowledge for children's academic readiness: Are the links causal? In *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability*, eds. R.C. Pianta, M.J. Cox, & K.L. Snow, 121–48. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

<sup>3</sup> McClelland, M.M., A.C. Acock, & F.J. Morrison. 2006. The impact of kindergarten learning-related skills on academic trajectories at the end of elementary school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 21 (4): 471–90; McClelland, M., C. Cameron, C.M. Connor, C.L. Farris, A.M. Jewkes, & F.J. Morrison. 2007. Links between behavioral regulation and preschoolers' literacy, vocabulary, and math skills. *Developmental Psychology* 43 (4): 947–59; Snow, K.L. 2007. Integrative views of the domains of child function: Unifying school readiness. In *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability*, eds. R.C. Pianta, M.J. Cox, & K.L. Snow, 197–214. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

<sup>4</sup> National Academies of Science, *Early Childhood Assessment: Why? What? How?* Washington, DC 20008.

Unfortunately, many states do not have standards that have been developed for kindergarten, first and second grade that reflect the breadth of the array of domains needed for children's learning success.<sup>5</sup> At this moment in time when the Common Core K-12 standards are now limited to English language arts and math, this reauthorization should require states, as part of their Title I state plans, to ensure the development and implementation of standards for third grade and below in each domain of development and learning (language and literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, approaches to learning, social development, physical development and health). The legislation must be clear that standards should be specific to each grade and based on research about the processes, sequences, and long-term outcomes of early learning and development and should be aligned moving forward with developmentally reasonable expectations at all levels and should not be developed through a backmapping of the standards for the higher grades.

### *Appropriate Screening and Assessment*

- For children in third grade and younger, states should create, in conjunction with early childhood experts and practitioners, assessments in all domains of development, including performance-based observational assessments, for the purposes of improving instruction and services.
- As defined by the National Academies of Science 2008 report on early childhood assessment, child outcomes assessments should not be used for high stakes decisions, and the report defines high stakes.<sup>6</sup>
- Schools should ensure that screenings, curricula, assessments, and other activities that support children's learning are appropriate to children's home languages or special needs.
- Through Title I and its relationship to IDEA and Head Start, the legislation should ensure that children receive a developmental screening when they enter kindergarten if they have not previously had such a screening, with referral to services as needed.

When assessment is directed toward a narrow set of skills, programs may ignore the very competencies that have been shown to build a strong foundation for success in areas including but not limited to academics (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine 2000; Raver 2002).

Furthermore, poor quality or poorly administered assessments, or assessments that are culturally inappropriate, may obscure children's true intellectual capacities. Many factors—*anxiety, hunger, inability to understand the language of the instructions, culturally learned hesitation in initiating conversation with adults, and so on*—may influence a child's *performance*, creating a gap between that performance and the child's actual ability, and causing staff to draw inaccurate conclusions that can limit the child's future opportunities. To assess young children's strengths, progress, and needs, teachers and schools should use assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children's daily

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<sup>5</sup> Kauerz, K., *K-2 Standards and Assessments: A 50 State Review*, June 2006. Prepared for The National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force at [www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k\\_education/kauerz%20K\\_2%20Paper\\_TSformatted\\_12Jun06.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/kauerz%20K_2%20Paper_TSformatted_12Jun06.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> National Academies of Science, *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*, at page 425, Washington, DC 2008.

activities, supported by professional development, inclusive of families, and connected to specific, beneficial purposes. States should be required to promote assessment in all domains, including social and emotional development.

### **Highly Effective Teachers, Elementary School Principals, Administrators and Others Responsible for Instruction and Services**

- The reauthorization should contain a definition of effective teacher that encompasses the specialized knowledge and skills for teaching and learning across all domains with children below third grade.
- For programs to be maximally effective there must be ongoing professional development for school principals and other administrators (e.g., special education directors, curriculum directors) in child development and developmentally appropriate practices, family engagement, and a supportive school climate of diverse cultures, languages and special needs.
- Teachers should be assigned to grades for which they have specialized credentials and knowledge, preferably a teacher license in early childhood education when teaching children in third grade and below.
- Elementary schools using Title I funds for programs for children younger than kindergarten should be required to provide joint professional development between community-based early childhood providers and kindergarten and first grade teachers on the continuity of expectations for development and learning and curricula.

#### *Specialized Knowledge To Be Effective*

Young children from birth through age eight develop and learn differently than older children. Teachers, administrators and others that help educate young children, through the early grades, require specialized knowledge, skills and credentials. A growing body of research suggests that a teacher's effectiveness depends upon teacher-child relationships and interactions in the early grades and earlier.<sup>7</sup> Effective teachers know how to organize the curriculum and use instructional assessments to support each child's learning and to engage families as partners in children's development and education. It is the teacher's classroom plans and organization, sensitivity and responsiveness to all the children, and moment-to-moment interactions with them that have the greatest impact on children's development and learning.<sup>8</sup> The way teachers design learning experiences, how they engage children and respond to them, how they adapt their teaching and interactions to children's background, the feedback they give—these matter greatly in children's learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Hamre, Bridget K., Pianta, Robert C., Can Instructional and Emotional Support in the First-Grade Classroom Make a Difference for Children at Risk of School Failure?, *Child Development*, September/October 2005, Volume 76, Number 5, Pages 949-967; see also Bergin, C. and Bergin, D, *Attachment in the Classroom*, *Educational Psychology Review* Volume 21, Number 2, June 2009, 141-170

<sup>8</sup> Hamre, B.K., & R.C Pianta. 2007. Learning opportunities in preschool and early elementary classrooms. In *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability*, eds. R.C. Pianta, M.J. Cox, & K.L. Snow, 49–83. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

### *Determining Effectiveness*

Many variables contribute to a teacher's effectiveness: their preservice education, classroom resources, professional development, ability to individualize education for each child, the experiences of children in the previous year, and indicators such as family income and maternal education. The evaluation process should be used as a way to inform, improve and plan for better teaching and a better school climate. In thinking of evaluation as part of a continuous improvement process, evaluations can be more meaningful and more focused. For example, the CLASS assessment<sup>9</sup> of teacher-child interaction is part of a professional development process. The unintended consequences of using assessments of children in preschool through third grade for teacher, principal and school accountability and associated incentives can include: 1) undue pressure on children regarding test taking rather than the comprehensive and critical thinking skills which are needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs; 2) teachers "teaching to the test," which could narrow the curriculum; and 3) inaccurate reflections of children's real abilities.<sup>10</sup>

Determining the effectiveness of principals should look to areas of leadership, knowledge and understanding of child development and learning at all levels, support for staff development, family and community engagement, an understanding and appreciation for diversity, and support for a positive school climate and culture for both students and staff.

### *Joint Professional Development Between School and Community Early Childhood Educators*

Prior to the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA which came to be known as No Child Left Behind, there was explicit statutory language in section 1119 of Title I allowing local educational agencies to use Title I funds for joint professional development between school staff and staff in Head Start programs. Unfortunately, that statutory recommendation was dropped in the reorganizing of professional development between Title I and Title II in 2001. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Education's 2004 nonregulatory guidance for Title I and preschool states that—

E-6. May Title I funds be used to provide professional development for preschool teachers and paraprofessionals not paid with Title I funds?

Title I funds may be used to provide professional development for any teacher or paraprofessional working in a Title I preschool program supported partly by Title I funding even if their salary is not paid for with Title I funds if the training is related to the Title I program and is designed to meet the educational needs of Title I children. For example, Title I funds may be used for professional development for a Head Start teacher working in a preschool program jointly funded by Title I and Head Start if the training is related to the Title I program or is designed to help the Head Start teachers meet the educational needs of Title I children.

Under certain conditions, Title I funds may also be used for joint professional development for non-Title I preschool teachers and paraprofessionals working in

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<sup>9</sup> For more information please refer to [www.virginia.edu/vpr/CASTL/?q=node/9](http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/CASTL/?q=node/9)

<sup>10</sup> Pianta, Robert C., Measure Actual Classroom Teaching, Education Week, 11/7/2007, Vol. 27 Issue 11 p. 36-30

programs with no Title I funds, such as Head Start staff, and for Title I elementary school teachers and paraprofessionals. For example, Title I funds may be used for such joint professional development if the children served in the non-Title I preschool are likely to be attending a Title I school when they enter kindergarten, and if the purpose of the professional development is to improve coordination between the non-Title I preschool and the Title I school or to facilitate children’s transition from preschool into the Title I elementary school.<sup>11</sup>

We believe that it is more likely that local educational agencies will make use of this opportunity for joint professional development if it is explicit in the ESEA statute that this type of aligned work is not only allowable but expected. This should mirror as appropriate a requirement in the Head Start Act of 2007 that local educational agencies and Head Start programs enter into Memoranda of Understanding that address coordination and transition between them and joint professional development “on topics such as academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula, and social and emotional development.”<sup>12</sup>

#### *Time for Planning and Coordination*

- District policies should mandate time for teacher planning and sharing within and across grades.

Time for teacher planning and sharing within and across grades is paramount along with high quality mentoring of teachers. Another valuable form of support for teachers is interaction with mentors and peers. Meeting the needs of diverse learners and helping all children to develop and learn require significant time for teachers to collaborate with colleagues, discuss and observe best practices, and participate in meaningful professional development. Most teachers, including novice teachers, get too little time for such activities. While providing time and opportunity for teachers to do these things can be very challenging for administrators, it is critical.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Elementary School Principals and Administrators Must Be Grounded in Child Development for Successful Support of School Staff and Better Learning*

For programs to be maximally effective there must be ongoing professional development for school principals and other administrators (e.g., special education directors, curriculum directors) in child development and developmentally appropriate practices, family engagement, and a supportive school climate of diverse cultures, languages and special needs.

#### **Ensuring that All Elementary Schools are Ready Schools for Every Child**

- Require all elementary schools to be “ready schools” and to assess themselves against indicators of their readiness for all children in each of the early grades, including processes for successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf) (March 4, 2004)

<sup>12</sup> Section 642 of P.L. 110-134

<sup>13</sup> Reeves, C., S. Emerick, & E. Hirsch. 2006. *Creating non-instructional time for elementary school teachers: Strategies from schools in North Carolina*. Hillsborough, NC: Center for Teaching Quality.

NAEYC believes it is the responsibility of schools to meet the needs of children as they enter school and to provide whatever services are needed in the least restrictive environment to help each child reach his or her fullest potential. A report by the National Education Goals Panel provided ten keys to ready schools.<sup>14</sup> Few schools, however, have a formal process for ensuring that they indeed are ready for all children and their families.

Schools must be able to meet the needs of a diverse student body not only in terms of culture, language, and ability but also in terms of previous early learning experiences and children's natural, normal variations at this age. Ready schools recognize that their mission of academic and social achievement can be realized best when the school administrators and educators understand and use developmentally appropriate curricula, assessments, and teaching practices; involve and engage families; and work cooperatively with the community to ensure that each child's development and learning needs and abilities are fully supported.

We recommend that elementary schools receiving Title I funds undertake a ready school assessment on a regular basis, perhaps more frequently if the school is identified as needing improvement, such as the Ready School Assessment by High Scope. The indicators for ready schools would look at a multiple of factors ranging from family engagement policies and practices to the use of developmentally appropriate curricula, classroom materials, teaching practices, and instructional assessment, transitions, and collaboration.<sup>15</sup>

### **Coordination and Continuity between Community Early Childhood Providers, Schools and Other Services for Children and Families**

- Create collaboration agreements and other mechanisms for ongoing communication between community-based early childhood programs and schools on issues of alignment, best practice, family involvement, and access to learning-related services.

The horizontal alignment of comprehensive services with the schools' academic mission is important to student achievement, particularly for more disadvantaged children. Coordination with other important services such as health, mental health, and nutrition is critical so that children have the opportunity to learn. The current section 1120B needs to be revised to create a "mirror image" of the memoranda of understanding required in the Head Start Act of 2007 between local educational agencies and Head Start programs on continuity issues as well as transitions. This should be broadened to include child care and other early childhood education settings serving children who are likely to enter the Title I schools.

### **Using Title I and Other ESEA Programs for Children Birth Through Third Grade**

- Provide incentives and policy direction to promote greater use of Title I funding for preschool aged children, not only to increase the availability of high-quality programs but to bring about collaboration with other funding streams and community-based providers to create full day, full year preschool opportunities

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<sup>14</sup> National Education Goals Panel, *Ready Schools*, Washington, DC 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Information on the Ready School Assessment is available at [www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=118](http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=118)

Title I funds historically been able to be used for early childhood education for children younger than kindergarten and for comprehensive services. Unfortunately, too few local educational agencies choose to use Title I funds for younger children. This reauthorization could be more specific about the possible uses of Title I, such as coordinating with Head Start and other high-quality child care programs serving low-income children to create full day and full year early childhood programs. In addition, Title I could be used to provide comprehensive services that wrap around state-funded prekindergarten programs. In addition, the reauthorization should retain the provision requiring Title I preschool programs to meet high-quality program and early learning standards.