

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation

Initial Licensure Programs

Approved by NAEYC Governing Board, July 2001

Approved by NCATE, October 2001

Introduction

Why have standards for early childhood professional preparation?

This document presents one part of NAEYC's standards for the preparation of early childhood professionals. The standards in this document are specifically intended for higher education programs that prepare practitioners at the "initial licensure" or certification level (usually a baccalaureate or master's degree). However, the standards, and the principles that these standards represent, are relevant to many other professional development settings. NAEYC recognizes and welcomes all those who teach young children—whatever their current education and experience—into the community of professional practice. NAEYC honors the commitment that draws so many talented people into this field, and we hope that these and other professional standards will help create a unified vision of excellence, with multiple, well-articulated professional pathways.

Standards and NAEYC's mission

Why should NAEYC have standards for the preparation of early childhood professionals? NAEYC's mission is to improve the quality of services for children from birth through age 8. Over the years, NAEYC has supported that mission through its leadership in developing position statements, guidelines, and standards on behalf of the profession. Collaboratively devel-

oped standards can provide a solid, commonly held foundation from which diverse structures may arise, incorporating the wisdom of local communities, families, and practitioners.

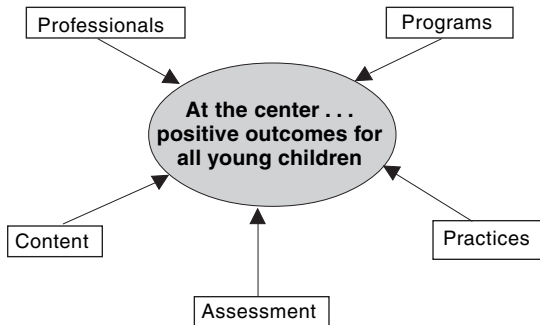
Connecting with others through standards

By developing and revising standards for early childhood professional preparation, NAEYC connects its vision of excellence with that of many other groups that are concerned about teacher preparation and performance. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has general, or "unit," standards that describe the kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that *all* well-prepared education professionals should possess.

NAEYC's "program" standards are closely aligned with those of NCATE but provide specific guidance about the preparation of early childhood professionals. Other NCATE-affiliated groups, including specialty professional associations like NAEYC but in elementary education, special education, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies, set their own expectations for high-quality professional preparation. NAEYC collaborates with those groups and works to coordinate its standards with theirs. NAEYC works especially closely with the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) to ensure that our standards complement and support one another, so that all early childhood teachers are well-prepared to teach young children with and without developmental delays or disabilities.

Teacher preparation standards and positive outcomes for children

Finally, NAEYC's standards for professional preparation are part of a larger set of expectations, or standards, that together form an image of what is required if all young children are to receive the kind of early education they need and deserve.



Yet standards cannot be rigid or “one size fits all.” As the diagram above suggests, NAEYC’s expectations—for children, for professionals, for programs, for teaching practices, for curriculum content, and for assessment—are always embedded within the context of specific cultures and communities. Within those contexts, young children are at the center of all of NAEYC’s efforts to set standards in early childhood education. If we intend to help all young children develop and learn well, we need high expectations for the programs they attend (see NAEYC’s *Accreditation Criteria and Procedures for Early Childhood Programs* [1998]), for the practices used by their teachers (see NAEYC’s *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* [Bredekamp & Copple 1997]), and for the approaches used in early childhood curriculum content and assessment (see NAEYC’s *Reaching Potentials*, Vols. 1 and 2 [Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992, 1995]). And we need high expectations for the preparation and performance of early childhood professionals—expectations that are articulated in this document. Indeed, as the picture shows, all of these expectations are linked, and all are needed to support young children’s development and learning. Finally, we need a system for financing early education—a system that ensures the resources needed to build an infrastructure for excellence.

The context and scope of the early childhood field

Context

As emphasized in NAEYC’s last standards publication (NAEYC 1996a) and elsewhere (e.g., NAEYC’s 1997 position statement *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs*), the field of early childhood education differs in significant ways from other domains of education, although it also shares common elements. As compared with elementary and secondary teachers, early childhood professionals work in many settings—not just public schools but also child care programs, private preschools and kindergartens, early intervention programs including Head Start and Early Head Start, family support and home-based programs, and so on. Similarly, the professional roles assumed by early childhood professionals are far more varied than those typical in elementary and secondary education—including roles as lead teachers, mentor teachers, education coordinators, early childhood trainers, inclusion specialists, resource and referral staff, technical assistance specialists, early childhood technology specialists, early interventionists, and home visitors. Even at institutions where the majority of graduates take teaching positions in public schools, high-quality early childhood professional preparation programs convey to candidates the range and complexity of those roles, most of which involve significant collaboration across professions, as well as collaboration with young children’s families.

Scope

NAEYC continues to define the “early childhood” period as spanning the years from birth through age 8. As in past editions of its standards, NAEYC recognizes that within that range, early childhood professionals—and the programs that prepare them—may choose to specialize within the early childhood spectrum (infants/toddlers, preschool, or kindergarten/primary). Teacher licensure complicates the picture, since states’ definitions of the early childhood age span and its subdivisions vary greatly (McCarthy, Cruz, & Ratcliff 1999).

Specialization can be valuable, but NAEYC believes that all early childhood professionals

should have a broad knowledge of development and learning across the birth–age 8 range; that they should be familiar with appropriate curriculum and assessment approaches across that age span; and that they should have in-depth knowledge and skills in at least two of the three sub-periods listed above. The reason is clear: Without knowing about the *past* and the *future* (the precursors to children’s current development and learning, and the trajectory they will follow in later years), teachers cannot design effective learning opportunities within their specific professional “assignment.” In addition, today’s inclusive early childhood settings—those that include young children with developmental delays and disabilities—require knowledge of an even wider range of development and learning than was needed in many classrooms of the past.

Two specific challenges face programs as they prepare early childhood professionals within the birth–age 8 range. First, even programs that emphasize the upper end of the age range may not adequately prepare candidates in the critical content or subject matter areas needed to build children’s academic success. Literacy is only one example: National reports (e.g., National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000) repeatedly fault teacher education for failing to provide candidates with research-based knowledge about reading and in-depth practical experience. But a second, equally important concern is the tendency for teacher education programs to give inadequate attention to children’s critical early years, especially the birth–age 3 period. National studies (e.g., Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips 1989, 1998) show that quality is lowest for infant-toddler child care programs, despite what is known about the importance of that period for children’s later language, cognitive, and social-emotional development. Candidates who take positions in infant-toddler care but whose preparation has slighted that period may fail to support children’s learning and development because the curriculum and teaching strategies they were taught to use are more effective with older children. NAEYC’s standards attempt to address both of these challenges.

Why revise now? Today’s context for standards revisions

NAEYC last approved standards (then called “guidelines”) for initial licensure programs in 1994. Why revise so soon? The new century brings new challenges (see, e.g., National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education 2000). Profound changes drive NAEYC’s standards revision process.*

Changes in the knowledge base of the early childhood field

First, the knowledge base for the early childhood field has expanded substantially since the mid-1990s. Long-term follow-up studies from the Chicago Parent-Child Centers, the Abecedarian Project, the Perry Preschool Project, and the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Project continue to demonstrate the importance of high-quality early experiences in homes, classrooms, and communities (Barnett, Young, & Schweinhart 1998; Peisner-Feinberg et al. 1999; Campbell et al. 2002; Reynolds et al. 2001). Major reports from committees of the National Research Council have synthesized research on the science of learning (1999), early literacy (1998), early childhood pedagogy and content (2001b), and integrated child development knowledge (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000).

Changes in contexts for early childhood education

Recent years have seen increases in the number of state-funded prekindergarten programs, with more than 40 states now having some investment in that form of early education. Public school involvement in early childhood education has brought with it an increased attention to standards and accountability—as has Head Start’s Child Outcomes Framework. Early Head Start has become a major form of early intervention for infants and toddlers, with both center- and home-based models implemented around the country. And inclusive early childhood programs, although certainly in place at the time of NAEYC’s last revision of its standards, are even

* NAEYC’s revised standards for advanced and associate degree programs are available online at www.naeyc.org.

more widespread now and welcoming young children with increasingly challenging disabilities and medical conditions. Technology, too, has changed the context for young children both at home and at school, expanding learning opportunities as well as professional challenges.

Changes in early childhood demographics

The face of America is rapidly changing. In three states including California, European-Americans are no longer the majority group. U.S. babies born today will reach adulthood in a country in which no one ethnic group predominates. By the year 2005, children and adolescents of color will represent 40 percent of all U.S. school children. The largest proportion of individuals with disabilities is found in the preschool population. Thus, tomorrow's early childhood teachers must be prepared to serve and to value a far more diverse group of young children and families than at any time in the past. In addition, the profession needs to recruit many more early childhood professionals who themselves share children's cultures and home languages. Institutions of higher education urgently need to create policies, incentives, and resources to recruit diverse teacher candidates and teacher education faculty and to provide ongoing support.

Changes in states' involvement in setting teacher preparation standards

Education reform is placing even greater emphasis on the preparation of teachers, with national reports pointing to inadequate preparation of teachers in areas including literacy (Committee 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000), knowledge of child development and of other content areas (National Research Council 2001b), knowledge of children's mental health and relationship issues (Child Mental Health 2000), and knowledge of the importance of family involvement (Shartrand et al. 1997; Epstein, Sanders, & Clark 1999). States have become increasingly involved in setting standards for higher education institutions and for entry into the profession. In that process, more states have forged partnerships with NCATE, and increasingly with NAEYC. Those changes are resulting in closer ties between national and state standards for early childhood teacher preparation.

Changes in general standards for teacher education

In 1997, NCATE undertook a major revision of its standards for "professional education units"—schools, colleges, or departments of education or entire institutions that engage in teacher preparation. The new performance-based standards, announced in May 2000, present an image of what competent professional education candidates should know and be able to do. NCATE grouped its previous standards into a smaller number of categories, and added rationales, or "explanations," of each standard, "critical elements" of that standard, and "rubrics" that describe different levels of performance with respect to each element. The nature of the evidence that institutions must provide in order to document compliance with the NCATE standards has changed dramatically. "Inputs" (courses, credits, hours) are far less important sources of evidence than are multiple, aggregated indicators of "outputs"—the results a particular program can demonstrate, in the quality of the teachers it produces and in their positive effects on children's learning.

As an NCATE constituent member, NAEYC has engaged in a similar process, aiming to make its standards even more performance-based; better supported by explanatory narratives, rubrics, and references; and even more focused on candidates' effects on the young children with whom they work.

The process of standards revision

As with all its revisions of position statements and other materials, NAEYC engaged in a comprehensive process to revise its standards for early childhood professional preparation at the initial licensure level. Important features of that process were as follows:

- NAEYC began by soliciting comments concerning strengths and gaps in its 1994 initial certification Guidelines, using conference sessions and electronic response options.
- In drafting revisions, NAEYC worked closely with NCATE and a number of NCATE's other specialty organizations. In particular, NAEYC's revisions were influenced by the work of the multidisciplinary group (which included an

NAEYC representative) that drafted the new NCATE/ACEI Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation. NCATE intended the work of that group to provide a model for its other specialty organizations. The format of the elementary standards document and NAEYC's desire to create a more coherent relationship between elementary and early childhood standards influenced NAEYC's revisions.

- NAEYC worked collaboratively with other professional groups that were also revising their standards, including with the Early Childhood/Generalist committee of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and with the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.
- NAEYC consulted with other groups that have a stake in standards for early childhood professional preparation. Those groups included the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE); the American Associate Degree Early Childhood Educators (ACCESS); the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE); and the Council for Professional Recognition. These are only a few of the groups with which NAEYC has continuing discussion about our collective work in developing appropriate, high expectations for professional preparation.
- In developing sections of NAEYC's standards in specific subject areas and other specialized areas of professional preparation, NAEYC consulted with specialists affiliated with related organizations including the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE); the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM); the National Association for Music Education (MENC); the International Reading Association (IRA); NAEYC's own Technology and Young Children Interest Forum; and ZERO TO THREE.
- NAEYC's revisions also align with general principles and standards in teacher education. The INTASC principles (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) were specifically examined for congruence with NAEYC's standards. Those principles, intended for all beginning teachers, are fully consistent

with NAEYC's standards. Many states have specifically adopted the INTASC principles, and so it is important that all specialty organizations share that common framework, while also setting forth their own professional expectations. Appendix A presents a framework for comparison of the INTASC principles with related sections of the NAEYC standards.

- Using those and other sources of insight, a subcommittee of NAEYC's Professional Development Panel and NAEYC staff identified areas for revision and appropriate formats for revision, and completed a first draft of a new Initial Licensure Standards document.
- It and later drafts were discussed at NAEYC conference sessions over the next two years; they also were posted on NAEYC's Website for comment. Revisions were made on the basis of feedback from the groups listed above and others.
- NAEYC's Governing Board reviewed a final revision of this Initial Licensure Standards document and voted approval of its substance in July 2001.
- NCATE approval came in October 2001, beginning an 18-month transition for higher education programs to the new NAEYC standards and to a new, performance-based system of documentation. After Spring 2003, all institutions seeking NCATE accreditation for their initial licensure programs must respond to these standards, with full implementation of the performance assessment system in 2005.

NAEYC's revised standards:

What is the same?

For readers who are familiar with NAEYC's 1994 initial certification Guidelines, the new format will seem different, but they also will find much here that affirms that previous document's central focus.

The scope of early childhood

These Initial Licensure Standards continue to encompass the birth–age 8 range. They also affirm and emphasize the diversity of settings in which early childhood professionals work.

Significant values and emphases

These Initial Licensure Standards continue to give weight to the core professional values and emphases in the 1994 Guidelines. For example, children’s play is explicitly acknowledged as a powerful influence on early development and learning. Child development knowledge is accorded great importance as a basis for professional decisions. Active and integrated learning, engaging children’s minds in real-life, meaningful issues, are again important themes. Reciprocal relationships with families continue to be highly valued. Children’s cultures and communities were emphasized in the earlier Guidelines and continue to be prominent in this document. Professional knowledge and skills in ethical practices and in policy advocacy again receive strong emphasis.

Finally, five of the major categories of professional competence from the 1994 Guidelines (i.e., Child Development and Learning; Curriculum Development and Implementation; Family and Community Relationships; Assessment and Evaluation; and Professionalism) remain, although with some differences in wording. Well-chosen and well-supervised field experiences, which in 1994 was a sixth category, continue to be seen as essential learning tools for early childhood teacher candidates.

NAEYC’s revised standards: What’s new?

Some of the differences between the 1994 Guidelines and these revised standards have to do with shifts in emphasis or clarifications in emphasis, reflecting changes in the early childhood knowledge base and among the children and families served in early childhood programs. Areas of difference:

Enhanced emphasis on linguistic and cultural diversity

These new Initial Licensure Standards maintain the Guideline’s emphasis on diversity, but make the emphasis even more explicit.

Enhanced emphasis on inclusion

Those familiar with the 1994 Guidelines will find the same commitment to inclusion, but throughout this document there is now substan-

tially greater explicitness about the knowledge and skills necessary to serve children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Enhanced emphasis on subject matter

While continuing to emphasize child development knowledge, in-depth integrated curriculum, and the central value of play in the lives of children, these standards now are more specific about what candidates should know and be able to do in academic disciplines or subject matter areas (understanding of content/core concepts/tools of inquiry, and applications in curriculum development). This document explicitly links that subject matter knowledge to national professional standards and to other key resources. While all candidates should have essential subject matter knowledge, these standards now make clear that different areas of specialization (e.g., infant/toddler and preschool specialization vs. kindergarten/primary) may call for different levels of knowledge and skill.

Enhanced emphasis on communities in which children live

This revision continues to emphasize candidates’ knowledge of young children’s families, but it adds greater understanding of the *communities* in which children live and the importance of embedding early childhood education within particular community settings.

More emphasis on the complexity of assessment issues in today’s educational settings

Assessment has been a critically important area for professional preparation in the past. This revision is even more explicit about the challenges of appropriate, effective early childhood assessment in the context of high-stakes testing, increasing diversity and inclusion in early childhood programs, and ethical responsibilities.

More explicit emphasis on a “continuum of teaching strategies” and developmentally effective approaches

Consistent with recent NAEYC publications (e.g., Bredekamp & Copple 1997), this revision emphasizes the varied approaches to teaching that competent early childhood professionals need to know. Candidates are expected to draw

from a continuum of strategies and tools in order to support the learning and development of all children.

Field experiences emphasized and integrated throughout the standards

In the previous Guidelines, “Field Experiences” constituted a separate major category of professional competence. These standards instead consider such experiences to be centrally important within each of the other five “core” standards categories. It is through field experiences that candidates are best able to translate knowledge into deep understanding and professional skills.

As NCATE points out, its new standards (and NAEYC’s, as well) require much closer partnership between institutions of higher education and community education settings than often has been the case in the past. With NCATE’s and NAEYC’s increased emphasis on assessment and evaluation of candidate performance, field experiences become a central component of the institution’s assessment system. Further, the quality of those experiences, as documented in candidate performance, becomes a critical part of the evidence used by program reviewers.

Changes in format and terminology in NAEYC’s revised standards

Besides the changes in emphasis outlined above, readers who are familiar with the previous Guidelines will see many changes in format and terminology here. Those changes are intended to focus on the “big picture” of early childhood professional preparation; highlight the rationale and knowledge base that undergird each standard; and provide institutions with a sense of what might constitute distinct levels of candidate performance or evidence within each area.

Standards are written more concisely

Building on the previous Guidelines, these standards now are organized into five core categories: Promoting Child Development and Learning; Building Family and Community Relationships; Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families; Teaching and Learning; and Becoming a Professional.

Note that the categories now are stated actively, reflecting the performances expected of candidates. For each category, one standards statement, of no more than a few sentences, captures the essential features of that standard (a variation is Standard 4, which due to its complexity comprises one overall standard and four sub-standards).

Expectations for candidates are worded in more strongly “performance-based” language

What should competent early childhood professionals know and be able to do? In the previous Guidelines, NAEYC had already moved toward using performance language. This revision adopts and extends that language.

Each standard is followed by a “supporting explanation”

In this revision, NAEYC attempts to help readers understand the “why” behind each standard. Therefore, each standards statement is followed by a narrative discussion of the knowledge base and professional values that support that particular standard. Those supporting explanations also provide more detail than do the brief standards statements about the competencies that candidates should demonstrate, and about why a standard is important in preparing capable early childhood professionals.

Supporting explanations are followed by “key elements” of that standard

This document identifies the key elements of each standard and of that standard’s supporting explanation. The key elements are presented as concise, bulleted points that identify that standard’s critical components as represented in the standard itself and as elaborated in its supporting explanation.

Each key element is aligned with “rubrics”

The rubrics are a set of descriptions of what would be expected at each of three levels of candidate performance, including candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions: “Exceeds Expectations” (program evidence of candidates’ exceptional performance in that element of the standard, beyond what one would typically

expect of beginning professionals); “Meets Expectations” (program evidence of satisfactory performance from well-prepared candidates); and “Does Not Yet Meet Expectations” (program evidence fails to show adequate performance).

Like the rubrics that NCATE developed for its unit-level accreditation, NAEYC’s rubrics are intended to help teacher educators and institutions to think about what kinds of evidence would be needed to document various levels of performance. (The rubrics are available online at www.naeyc.org.)

References address each standard.

Items in the References and Resources section include standards documents written by other professional groups, syntheses of relevant research, significant work on early childhood pedagogy, valuable Websites, and other resources intended to help programs find relevant information. Most items are keyed to one or more of the standards.

Some notes on the terminology used in this document

“**Candidates**” refers to those who are preparing for professional positions serving young children and their families. In this Initial Licensure Standards document, candidates are assumed to be preparing for initial licensure in a four- or five-year higher education program.

“**All children**” means *all*: children with developmental delays or disabilities, children who are gifted and talented, children whose families are culturally and linguistically diverse, children from diverse socioeconomic groups, and other children with individual learning styles, strengths, and needs. (Note that NAEYC uses the term *children*, rather than *students*, to reflect the focus on all aspects of development and learning and to remind ourselves that children have identities outside of their classroom roles.)

The term “**field experiences**” includes observations, field work, practica, and student teaching or other “clinical” experiences such as home visiting.

“**Know**” refers to candidates’ possession of key information; “**understand**” includes analysis and reflection; “**use**” refers to application in practice, always soundly based on professional knowledge.

The term “**culture**” includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic class, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child’s development and relationship to the world.

How programs will document compliance with NAEYC’s standards

A higher education institution applying for NCATE accreditation must submit documentation about its compliance with standards for the unit overall and for all specialty programs in which it prepares education professionals. NAEYC is the NCATE specialty professional association (SPA) for early childhood programs. Thus, if an NCATE-affiliated institution has an early childhood professional preparation program, it must submit materials for review by NAEYC (unless the institution has a state partnership approved by NCATE and NAEYC allowing state-level review of its early childhood program).

Both at the unit and the specialty program levels, the kinds of evidence required under NCATE’s new performance-based assessment system differ in substantial ways from the documentation that was previously required. The details of the process at the unit level may be found on NCATE’s Website at www.ncate.org.

To align with but not duplicate that documentation, the specialty organizations (i.e., NAEYC, Council for Exceptional Children, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, etc.) have drafted guidance for institutions concerning evidence required under the specialty organizations’ standards. That information may be found on NCATE’s Website at www.ncate.org/standard/interimsasbstand.pdf; see the attachment to that document, pp. 16–17.

Briefly, however, NAEYC expects institutions to provide documentation that includes:

- a description of the institutional and professional context within which the program operates
- an organized system by which the program tracks candidate performance across time, including positive effects on children
- a description of the kinds of evidence that the program collects to document candidate perfor-

mance in relation to the standards, with emphasis on multiple assessments in authentic contexts such as field experiences

- summarized evidence of candidates' performance using those assessments, with samples of candidate work at varying levels of performance
- evidence that the information is used for continuous program improvement.

Transition to NAEYC's new standards and documentation of performance

The Initial Licensure Standards for early childhood teacher preparation in this document were approved by NAEYC's Governing Board in July 2001 and by NCATE in October 2001. The next 18 months were a period of phasing in the new standards and the performance assessment system, during which initial licensure programs had the option of documenting compliance either with the 1994 Guidelines or the new standards. Effective Spring 2003, all institutions submitting Program Reports as part of NCATE accreditation of initial licensure early childhood programs must demonstrate compliance with NAEYC's 2001 standards as described in this document.

NCATE and the SPAs, including NAEYC, have also adopted a timeline for the transition to fully performance-based program review, with all NCATE institutions to have fully functioning assessment systems by 2005. Details of the timeline for transition are available on NCATE's Website at www.ncate.org. The use of candidate performance evidence by NAEYC also will be phased in over time, as institutions develop their own capacity. NAEYC's Program Report Outline and Transition Timeline to a fully operational assessment system are available online at www.naeyc.org.

Thus, the transition to use of NAEYC's revised standards and to a new system by which institutions and their specialty programs document performance is a gradual and developmental process—both for institutions and for candidates.

A developmental process for institutions

NCATE, NAEYC, and other professional organizations wish to work in a supportive way with institutions, to help them in the transition to new standards and assessment systems. The

processes of self-study and of developing performance assessment systems are both valuable aspects of that transition, and time was built in for those tasks.

A developmental process for candidates

NAEYC's standards, key elements, and rubrics are intended to focus on the competencies expected of *beginning* early childhood professionals who have been prepared in baccalaureate or master's programs. Becoming an accomplished early childhood practitioner takes time. While setting high expectations for candidate performance, we need to keep in mind the developmental nature of professional growth, which continues long after the candidate completes preservice education. We should also acknowledge the diverse routes taken by early childhood teacher candidates, many of whom have spent years serving children and families before entering higher education. Their wealth of experience and their commitment require recognition, as well as adaptation of some aspects of the higher education experience.

Putting it back together: Linking the elements of high-quality early childhood practice

When we try to identify the important categories of expectations for early childhood teacher candidates, we are forced to separate the complex elements of early childhood practice into what may seem to be artificial categories. How can one really separate a category such as "Becoming a Professional" from "Promoting Child Development and Learning"? In turn, how can one separate "Promoting Child Development and Learning" from "Building Relationships with Families and Communities"? All are interconnected. Listening to an orchestra playing a symphony, one hears the whole, not each individual instrument. Hearing each part played separately fails to convey the complexity and beauty of the whole. In the same way, when we watch a skilled early childhood teacher at work, it is difficult to identify each separate element of her practice. Yet the separation is necessary in order to write standards that can be understood and applied in preparing early childhood professionals.

As higher education programs use these standards to develop programs and to document teacher candidates' performance, NAEYC hopes the symphony will be heard above the separate parts. Often the performance of teacher candidates (and of experienced teachers) shows exemplary knowledge and skills in several standards categories simultaneously. For example, a student teacher might involve children in a project about their own hands, simultaneously showing her competence in supporting their physical skills; their scientific understandings; their insight into culture and language ("How many words do we know for *hand* or *finger*?—And what wonderful colors our hands are!"); her skills in assessing children's fine motor skills; and her support of early writing. For future early childhood teachers, learning is seamless and integrated, in the same way that learning is for young children.

Some final thoughts

Avoiding "mile wide and inch deep" professional preparation

As is evident from this introduction and from the standards that follow, both the standards themselves and the kinds of evidence needed to document candidate performance are more challenging and complex than in the past. To help all young children develop and learn, early childhood candidates require a great deal of knowledge, understanding, and skill in multiple domains, linked with dispositions that support candidates' actions. However, NAEYC would not wish to see programs substitute breadth for depth, nor sacrifice deep understanding for superficial coverage of topics. To avoid that risk, NAEYC suggests several strategies:

- While attending to the full birth–age 8 range, programs may, as in the past, elect to specialize in sub-periods—e.g., infancy through preschool, or preschool/kindergarten/primary. Such specialization has implications for, for example,

the level at which candidates must know and be able to implement curriculum in specific academic areas such as science or social studies. However, every candidate needs to know the basics of how young children gain understanding of those concepts and should be able to implement essential foundational experiences. In addition, all candidates need in-depth knowledge of early language and literacy, due to its long-term significance across multiple academic and developmental areas.

- Programs may—and should—emphasize "learning how to learn," helping candidates gain access to credible, research-based resources to support their work. Such resources, important both in academic subject matter areas and in addressing issues of disability and diversity, may include print and non-print resources such as journals, videos, and Websites, as well as persons with relevant expertise at the school or in the community.

Standards as a vision

With good reason, many educators have become wary of standards. At times, standards have constricted learning and have encouraged a one-size-fits-all mentality. But standards can also be visionary and empowering, for children and professionals alike. NAEYC hopes its standards for professional preparation can provide something more valuable than a list of rules for programs to follow.

The five brief standards statements in this document offer a shared vision of early childhood professional preparation. But to make the vision real, the details must be constructed uniquely and personally, within particular communities of learners. Good early childhood settings may look very different from one another. In the same way, good professional preparation programs may find many pathways to help candidates meet high standards, so that they can effectively support young children and their families.

Standards Summary

Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Candidates use their understanding of young children's characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children's development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for all children.

Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships

Candidates know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children's development and learning.

Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families

Candidates know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. They know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence children's development and learning.

Standard 4. Teaching and Learning

Candidates integrate their understanding of and relationships with children and families; their understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning; and their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all children.

Sub-Standard 4a. Connecting with children and families

Candidates know, understand, and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children.

Sub-Standard 4b. Using developmentally effective approaches

Candidates know, understand, and use a wide array of effective approaches, strategies, and tools to positively influence children's development and learning.

Sub-Standard 4c. Understanding content knowledge in early education

Candidates understand the importance of each content area in young children's learning. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas including academic subjects and can identify resources to deepen their understanding.

Sub-Standard 4d. Building meaningful curriculum

Candidates use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for all young children.

Standard 5. Becoming a Professional

Candidates identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies.

Standards

Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Candidates use their understanding of young children's characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children's development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for all children.

Supporting explanation

The early childhood field has historically been grounded in a child development knowledge base, and early childhood programs have aimed to support a broad range of positive developmental outcomes for all young children. Although the scope and emphasis of that knowledge base have changed over the years, and although early childhood professionals recognize that other sources of knowledge are also important influences on curriculum and programs for young children, early childhood practice continues to be deeply linked with a "sympathetic understanding of the young child" (Elkind 1994).

In basing their practice in child development, however, well-prepared early childhood professional candidates go beyond narrow or outdated developmental concepts. Their **knowledge and understanding of young children's characteristics and needs** encompasses multiple, interrelated areas of children's development and learning—including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, and aesthetic domains, play, activity, and learning processes, and motivation to learn—and is supported by coherent theoretical perspectives and by current research. Candidates also understand and apply their understanding of the many influences on young children's development and learning, and of how those influences may interact to affect development in both positive and negative ways. Candidates emphasize—both in their conceptual understanding and in their work with children—the **multiple influences on development and learning**. Those influences include the cultural and linguistic contexts for development, children's close relationships with adults and peers, economic conditions of children and

families, health status and disabilities, children's individual developmental variations and learning styles, opportunities to play and learn, technology and the media, and family and community characteristics. Candidates also understand the potential influence of early childhood programs, including early intervention, on short- and long-term outcomes for children.

Candidates' competence is demonstrated in their ability to **use developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments** for all young children (including curriculum, interactions, teaching practices, and learning materials). Such environments reflect four critical features. First, the environments are *healthy*—that is, candidates possess the knowledge and skills needed to promote young children's physical and psychological health, safety, and sense of security. Second, the environments reflect *respect*—for each child as a feeling, thinking individual and then for each child's culture, home language, individual abilities or disabilities, family context, and community. In respectful environments, candidates model and affirm antibias perspectives on development and learning. Third, the learning environments created by early childhood teacher candidates are *supportive*—candidates demonstrate their belief in young children's ability to learn, and they show that they can use their understanding of children's development to help each child understand and make meaning from her or his experiences through play, spontaneous activity, and guided investigations. Finally, the learning environments that early childhood candidates create are appropriately *challenging*—in other words, candidates apply their knowledge of contemporary theory and research to construct learning environments that provide achievable and "stretching" experiences for all children—including children with special abilities and children with disabilities or developmental delays.

Key elements of Standard 1

1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs

1b: Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on development and learning

1c: Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments

Rubrics for these key elements, outlining distinct levels of candidate performance and program evidence, are available online at www.naeyc.org.

Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships

Candidates know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children’s families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children’s development and learning.

Supporting explanation

Because young children’s lives are so embedded in their families and communities, and because research indicates that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with families and communities, early childhood professionals need to thoroughly understand and apply their knowledge in this area.

First, well-prepared candidates possess **knowledge and understanding of family and community characteristics**, and of the many influences on families and communities. Family theory and research provide a knowledge base. Socioeconomic conditions; family structures, relationships, stresses, and supports (including the impact of having a child with special needs); home language; cultural values; ethnicity; community resources, cohesiveness, and organization—knowledge of these and other factors creates a deeper understanding of young children’s lives. The knowledge is critical to candidates’ ability to help children learn and develop well.

Second, candidates possess the knowledge and skills needed to **support and empower families through respectful, reciprocal relationships**. Candidates understand how to build positive relationships, taking families’ preferences and goals into account and incorporating knowledge of families’ languages and cultures. Candidates demonstrate respect for variations across cultures

in family strengths, expectations, values, and childrearing practices. Candidates consider family members to be resources for insight into their children, as well as resources for curriculum and program development. Candidates know about and demonstrate a variety of communication skills to foster such relationships, emphasizing informal conversations while also including such approaches as exchanging e-mails and posting information and children’s work on the Web, with print copies sent home for families without Web access.

In their work, early childhood teacher candidates support and empower diverse families, including those whose children have disabilities or special characteristics or learning needs; families who are facing multiple challenges in their lives; and families whose languages and cultures may differ from those of the early childhood professional. Candidates also understand that their relationships with families include assisting families in finding needed resources, such as mental health services, health care, adult education, English language instruction, and economic assistance, that may contribute directly or indirectly to their children’s positive development and learning. Well-prepared early childhood candidates are able to identify such resources and know how to connect families with services, including help with planning transitions from one educational or service system to another.

Finally, well-prepared candidates possess essential skills to **involve families and communities in many aspects of children’s development and learning**. They understand and value the role of parents and other important family members as children’s primary teachers. Candidates understand how to go beyond parent conferences to engage families in curriculum planning, assessing of children’s learning, and planning for children’s transitions to new programs. When their approaches to family involvement are not effective, candidates evaluate and modify those approaches rather than assuming that families “are just not interested.”

Key elements of Standard 2

2a: Knowing about and understanding family and community characteristics

2b: Supporting and empowering families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships

2c: Involving families and communities in their children’s development and learning

Rubrics for these key elements, outlining distinct levels of candidate performance and program evidence, are available online at www.naeyc.org.

Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families

Candidates know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. They know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence children’s development and learning.

Supporting explanation

Although definitions vary, in these standards the term “assessment” includes all methods through which early childhood professionals gain understanding of children’s development and learning. Observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. Ongoing, systematic observations and other informal and formal assessments enable candidates to appreciate children’s unique qualities, to develop appropriate goals, and to plan, implement, and evaluate effective curriculum. Although assessment may take many forms, early childhood candidates demonstrate its central role by embedding assessment-related activities in curriculum and in daily routines, so that assessment becomes a habitual part of professional life. Even as new professionals, they feel empowered by assessment rather than viewing assessment as a necessary evil imposed by others.

Well-prepared early childhood candidates recognize the central role that appropriate assessment plays in the design of effective programs and practices for young children. They can explain the central **goals, benefits, and uses of assessment**. In considering the goals of assessment, candidates articulate and apply the concept of “alignment”—good assessment is

consistent with and connected to appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children. At its best, assessment is a positive tool that supports children’s development and learning, and that improves outcomes for young children and families. Positive assessment identifies the strengths of families and children; through appropriate screening and referral, assessment may also result in identifying children who may benefit from special services. Candidates are able to explain such positive uses of assessment and exemplify them in their own work, while also showing awareness of the potentially negative uses of assessment in early childhood programs and policies.

Early childhood assessment includes **observation and documentation, plus other appropriate assessment strategies**. Effective teaching of young children begins with thoughtful, appreciative, systematic observation and documentation of each child’s unique qualities, strengths, and needs. Observing young children in classrooms, homes, and communities helps candidates develop a broad sense of who children are—as individuals, as group members, as family members, as members of cultural and linguistic communities. Observation gives insight into how young children develop and how they respond to opportunities and obstacles in their lives. Because spontaneous play is such a powerful window on all aspects of children’s development, well-prepared candidates create opportunities to observe children in playful situations as well as in more formal learning contexts. All behavior has meaning, and well-prepared candidates demonstrate skill in reading young children’s behavior cues; the skill is especially important for infants and toddlers and for children whose verbal abilities are limited. Candidates demonstrate skills in conducting systematic observations, interpreting those observations, and reflecting on their significance.

With observation and documentation as their foundation, well-prepared candidates know about a wide range of assessment tools and approaches. More than reciting a list of assessment strategies, early childhood candidates can explain the connections between specific assessment approaches and specific educational and developmental goals. They can also identify the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of

specific assessment tools and strategies, including the use of technologies such as videotape and electronic record keeping. New practitioners are not assessment specialists; however, they do understand essential distinctions and definitions (e.g., *screening, diagnostic assessment, standardized testing, accountability assessment*) and are familiar with essential concepts of reliability and validity and other psychometric concepts. Their understanding helps them in selecting appropriate formal assessment measures, critiquing the limitations of inappropriate measures, and discussing assessment issues as part of interdisciplinary teams. Within the classroom or program setting, candidates demonstrate skills in using varied assessments that are appropriate to their goals and children's characteristics, with emphasis on curriculum-embedded, performance assessments.

Many young children with disabilities are included in early childhood programs, and early identification of children with developmental delays or disabilities is very important. All beginning professionals, therefore, need essential knowledge about how to collect relevant information, including appropriate uses of screening tools and play-based assessments, not only for their own planning but also to share with families and with other professionals. Well-prepared candidates are able to choose valid tools that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate; use the tools correctly; adapt tools as needed, using assistive technology as a resource; make appropriate referrals; and interpret assessment results, with the goal of obtaining valid, useful information to inform practice and decision making.

Although assessment can be a positive tool for early childhood professionals, it has also been used in inappropriate and harmful ways. Well-prepared candidates understand and practice **responsible assessment**. Candidates understand that responsible assessment is ethically grounded and guided by sound professional standards. It is collaborative and open. Responsible assessment supports children, rather than being used to exclude them or deny them services. Candidates demonstrate understanding of appropriate, responsible assessment practices for culturally and linguistically diverse children and for children with developmental delays, disabilities,

or other special characteristics. Finally, candidates demonstrate knowledge of legal and ethical issues, current educational concerns and controversies, and appropriate practices in the assessment of diverse young children.

Many aspects of effective assessment require collaboration with families and with other professionals. Such **assessment partnerships**, when undertaken with sensitivity and sound knowledge, contribute positively to understanding children's development and learning. Both family members and, as appropriate, members of interprofessional teams may be involved in assessing children's development, strengths, and needs. As new practitioners, candidates may have had limited opportunities to experience such partnerships, but they demonstrate essential knowledge and core skills in team building and in communicating with families and colleagues from other disciplines.

Key elements of Standard 3

3a: Understanding the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment

3b: Knowing about and using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches

3c: Understanding and practicing responsible assessment

3d: Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and other professionals

Rubrics for these key elements, outlining distinct levels of candidate performance and program evidence, are available online at www.naeyc.org.

Standard 4. Teaching and Learning

Candidates integrate their understanding of and relationships with children and families; their understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning; and their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all young children.

- Sub-Standard 4a. Connecting with children and families
- Sub-Standard 4b. Using developmentally effective approaches

- Sub-Standard 4c. Understanding content knowledge in early education
- Sub-Standard 4d. Building meaningful curriculum

Standard 4 is complex, with four Sub-Standards, because teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children's ages, characteristics, and the settings within which teaching and learning occur. Well-prepared early childhood professionals construct curriculum and program content from multiple sources. As described below, the early teaching and learning experiences that will support all children's success must be grounded in four interrelated elements: (a) positive relationships and supportive interactions; (b) a broad repertoire of appropriate, effective teaching/learning approaches; (c) essential content knowledge and familiarity with significant resources in specific academic disciplines; and (d) skills in developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum that integrates those elements to promote positive outcomes. Especially when planning curriculum and teaching strategies for young children with developmental delays or disabilities or are learning English, well-prepared candidates know about and have the skills to collaborate with professionals from other disciplines (e.g., special education, school psychology, speech and language).

The following subsections describe each of the four sub-standards of the Teaching and Learning standard in detail.

Sub-Standard 4a. Connecting with Children and Families

Candidates know, understand, and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children.

Supporting explanation

Throughout the years that children spend in educational settings, their successful learning is dependent not just on "instruction" but also on personal connections with important adults who support and facilitate their learning. It is through those connections that children develop not only academic skills but also positive learning dispositions and confidence in themselves as learners.

Infants learn about the world through their relationships with their primary caregivers. Responsiveness in caregiving creates the conditions within which very young children can explore and learn about their world. Candidates who plan to work with children of any age must have skill in creating responsive relationships, although the nature of those relationships differs as children develop. The close attachments children develop with their teachers/caregivers, the expectations and beliefs that adults have about children's capacities, and the warmth and responsiveness of adult-child interactions are powerful influences on positive developmental and educational outcomes.

Early childhood candidates demonstrate that they understand the theories and research that support the importance of relationships and high-quality interactions in early education. In their practice, they display warm, nurturing interactions with individual children and their families, communicating genuine liking for and interest in young children's activities and characteristics.

Candidates demonstrate the essential dispositions and skills to develop positive, respectful relationships with children whose cultures and languages may differ from their own, as well as with children who may have developmental delays, disabilities, or other learning challenges. In making the transition from family to a group context, very young children need continuity between the caregiving practices of family members and those used by professionals in the early childhood setting. Their feelings of safety and confidence depend on that continuity. Candidates know the cultural practices and contexts of the young children they teach, and they adapt practices to be culturally sensitive. With older children, candidates continue to emphasize cultural sensitivity while also developing culturally relevant knowledge and skills in important academic domains.

Sub-Standard 4b. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches

Candidates know, understand, and use a wide array of effective approaches, strategies, and tools to positively influence young children's development and learning.

Supporting explanation

Early childhood professionals need appropriate, effective approaches to help young children learn and develop well. Candidates must ground their curriculum in a set of core approaches to teaching that are supported by research and are closely linked to the processes of early development and learning. In a sense, those approaches *are* the curriculum for infants and toddlers, although academic content can certainly be embedded in each of them. With older children, the relative weight and explicitness of subject matter or academic content become more evident in the curriculum, and yet the core approaches or strategies remain as a consistent framework.

Although this subsection describes many of those approaches, they are not merely a list from which early childhood professionals may pick at random. Well-prepared candidates' professional decisions about approaches to early childhood teaching and learning are based on understanding of children as individuals and (in most cases) as part of a group, and on alignment with important educational and developmental goals. A flexible, research-based "continuum of teaching strategies" is the best support for children's developmental and educational needs.

Well-prepared early childhood candidates understand and effectively use the following approaches, strategies, and tools to promote young children's development and learning:

Fostering oral language and communication. Early childhood candidates embed every aspect of the curriculum within the context of rich oral language and other communication strategies, using technology as needed to augment communication for children with disabilities. Both verbal and nonverbal communication create links with children from infancy onward, not only supporting close relationships but also creating the foundations for literacy and cognitive development and later academic competence.

Drawing from a continuum of teaching strategies. Well-prepared candidates display a broad range of interactive and instructional skills. They understand and use teaching approaches that span a continuum from child-initiated to adult-directed learning, and from free exploration to scaffolded support or teacher modeling. In selecting the approaches, candidates demonstrate that they are basing their selection on knowledge

of individual children, on research evidence, and on understanding of appropriate, challenging teaching and learning goals.

Making the most of the environment and routines. Especially for the youngest children, the curriculum *is* the physical and social environment and in particular the daily routines of feeding, bathing, napping, and playtime. Candidates know the power of the environment to foster security and to support exploration, and they create physical environments and routines that offer predictability as well as opportunities for oral language development, social interaction, and investigations.

Candidates demonstrate understanding and skill in setting up all aspects of the indoor and outdoor environment to promote learning and development. Well-designed learning or activity centers can offer young children extensive opportunities to manipulate objects, build, paint, listen to stories or music, read, write, and challenge themselves. Candidates' work displays their skills in designing such centers and other features of the environment to support specific goals (including IEP and IFSP goals) and to expand children's learning. Well-prepared candidates also demonstrate skill in selecting and adapting bias-free, culturally relevant learning materials that support learning by all children, including those with developmental delays or disabilities. Daily, weekly, and longer-term schedules designed by candidates also provide evidence that candidates can apply their understanding of young children's need for balance, order, depth, variety, and challenge.

Capitalizing on incidental teaching. Because so much of young children's learning takes place informally and spontaneously, early childhood practitioners must be skilled at "incidental teaching," identifying and taking advantage of informal opportunities to build children's language, concept development, and skills. For those candidates preparing specifically to work with infants and toddlers, this will be the primary approach to teaching, but all candidates require skills in this area if they are to be effective. Depending on children's ages and program settings, candidates use diapering, meals, clean-up times, outdoor play, dressing, and other routines and transitions to support children's learning. Engaging conversations, thought-

provoking questions, provision of materials, and spontaneous activities are all evident in candidates' repertoire of teaching skills.

Focusing on children's characteristics, needs, and interests. Another developmentally effective approach is to focus on children's individual characteristics, cultures, temperaments, and central developmental concerns, using families as important sources of insight. Again, such practices form the heart of teaching and learning for infants and toddlers, yet they are also effective approaches for children at the upper end of the early childhood period. And the focus on children's needs is also at the center of good practices for young children with disabilities, whose IEPs and IFSPs are based on individual and family goals. Well-prepared early childhood candidates keep the child as the center, while also paying close attention to important standards and learning outcomes, connecting new learning with children's prior knowledge and areas of individual fascination.

Linking children's language and culture to the early childhood program. Before they come to school, all children learn and develop in their own unique and highly diverse linguistic, social, and cultural context. When previous learning and development are nurtured in early education programs, the overall benefits of early education are enhanced. Recognizing and using the child's and family's primary language ensures that early childhood education adds to and does not subtract from previous experiences at home and in the community. In implementing effective approaches to teaching and learning, candidates demonstrate that they use linguistic and cultural diversity as resources, rather than seeing diversity as a deficit or problem.

Teaching through social interactions. Because so much of children's learning takes place in a social context, their peer group can be viewed as a teaching tool. When working with groups of children, candidates show competence in promoting positive social interactions and—depending on children's ages and social skills—engaging children in parallel or collaborative learning activities. Candidates understand that children who have limited social skills or who are rejected by others may have difficulty in other areas, and so candidates actively work to increase social competence in all children, treating this as an

educational priority. Even as beginning teachers, they show a commitment to creating learning communities within early childhood classrooms, where children help and care for one another.

Creating support for play. All early childhood professionals must demonstrate competence in using play as a foundation for young children's learning from infancy through the primary grades. Although most children play spontaneously, well-prepared candidates can create and support environments that enrich and extend children's play, knowing when to intervene with questions, suggestions, and challenges. Especially for children with disabilities and developmental delays, candidates explicitly model and facilitate appropriate play and social interactions. Candidates create and support play experiences that reflect gender equity, respect for cultural diversity, and principles of nonviolence. Candidates demonstrate understanding of the value of play in itself, as a way for children to make sense of their experiences and to develop a wide range of skills.

Addressing children's challenging behaviors. "Classroom management" is the greatest difficulty reported by most novice practitioners. Well-prepared early childhood candidates demonstrate understanding of the multiple, underlying causes of children's challenging behaviors. Early childhood candidates demonstrate a varied repertoire of research-based guidance approaches to meet individual children's needs. Their work shows that they understand the importance of a supportive, interesting classroom environment and relationships as ways to prevent many challenging behaviors. In implementing guidance approaches, candidates aim to develop children's self-regulation and respect for others. Candidates also demonstrate knowledge and essential skills to meet the special needs of children whose behavioral difficulties are related to disabilities, family or community violence, or other stressful circumstances.

Supporting learning through technology. Rather than being merely an enrichment or add-on to the curriculum, technology has taken a central place in early childhood programs. Candidates demonstrate sound knowledge and skills in using technology as a teaching and learning tool. Appropriate technology, including computer software, digital or Web content,

cameras, and other peripherals, can support and expand young children’s learning, including (through assistive technology) the learning of many children with disabilities. Candidates display awareness of the benefits and potential risks of technology, as well as issues of economic and gender equity in distribution of technology resources. Candidates demonstrate knowledge about how to combine appropriate software with other teaching tools to integrate and reinforce learning.

Using integrative approaches to curriculum. Skills in developing integrated, thematic, or emergent curriculum are evident in the work of well-prepared early childhood candidates. Those skills go well beyond implementing prepackaged, superficial units of study about seasons and holidays. Depending on children’s ages and developmental levels, an integrated “project approach” to teaching and learning frequently allows children to immerse themselves for extended periods in the study of a topic of high interest to an entire class or a small group. Candidates with strong subject-matter knowledge (as discussed in Sub-Standard 4c) can embed valuable content from mathematics, the arts, literacy, social studies, and other areas in such thematic studies.

Sub-Standard 4c. Understanding Content Knowledge in Early Education

Candidates understand the importance of each content area in young children’s learning. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas including academic subjects and can identify resources to deepen their understanding.

Supporting explanation

Good early childhood curriculum does not come out of a box or a teacher-proof manual. Early childhood professionals have an especially challenging task in developing effective curriculum. As suggested in Standard 1, well-prepared candidates ground their practice in a thorough, research-based understanding of young children’s *development and learning processes*. In developing curriculum, they recognize that every child constructs knowledge in personally and culturally familiar ways. In addition, in order to

make curriculum powerful and accessible to all, well-prepared candidates develop curriculum that is free of biases related to ethnicity, religion, gender, or ability status—and, in fact, the curriculum actively counters such biases.

Content areas for early childhood

But these tasks are only part of the challenge. Guided by standards for early learning that are effective (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE 2002), the teacher of children from birth through age 8 must also be well versed in the essentials of many academic disciplines and content areas. And because children are encountering those content areas for the first time, early childhood professionals set the foundations for later understanding and success. Well-prepared candidates choose their approaches to the task depending on the ages and developmental levels of the children they teach. With the youngest children, early childhood candidates emphasize the key experiences that will support later academic skills and understandings—with great reliance on the core approaches and strategies described in Sub-Standard 4b and with great emphasis on oral language and the development of children’s background knowledge. Working with somewhat older or more skilled children, candidates also identify those aspects of each subject area that are critical to children’s later academic competence. With all children, early childhood professionals support later success by modeling engagement in challenging subject matter and by building children’s faith in themselves as young learners—as young mathematicians, scientists, artists, readers, writers, historians, economists, and geographers (although children may not think of themselves in such categories).

Going beyond conveying isolated facts, then, well-prepared early childhood candidates possess the kind of content knowledge that focuses on the “big ideas,” methods of investigation and expression, and organization of the major academic disciplines. Thus, the early childhood professional knows not only *what* is important in each content area but also *why* it is important—how it links with earlier and later understandings both within and across areas. The following sections outline some of this essential understanding in each major discipline.

However, early childhood educators cannot be experts in everything. Because of its central place in later academic competence, the domain of language and literacy requires in-depth research-based understanding and skill. Mathematics, too, is increasingly recognized as an essential foundation. Yet because early childhood professionals must be acquainted with such a breadth of content knowledge, additional resources are needed to supplement the basic knowledge of beginning practitioners. Items in the References and Resources section of this document, especially the professional association standards documents, offer greater depth and detail in all these content areas.

Common features in candidates' work across content areas. Well-prepared candidates demonstrate certain competencies that cut across content areas or academic disciplines. Certain "basics" are common features in candidates' work, whether they are developing curriculum in language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, physical activity and physical education, science, or social studies.

Well-prepared early childhood candidates understand the importance of each content area in children's development and learning. They demonstrate essential knowledge of the developmental foundations of children's interest in, and understanding of, each content area (i.e., how children's cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development influence their ability to understand and benefit from curriculum in each content area—as well as how that curriculum may support development in each domain). Candidates observe and describe the early roots of children's interest and capacities in each content area, and they know how early childhood programs can build on those interests. They demonstrate the essential knowledge and skills needed to provide appropriate environments that support learning in each content area for all children, beginning in infancy (through foundational developmental experiences) and extending through the primary grades—although the nature and depth of their knowledge and skills will vary depending on which sub-periods of early childhood their program emphasizes. Candidates demonstrate basic knowledge of the research base underlying each content area and they demonstrate basic knowledge of the core

concepts and standards of professional organizations in each content area, relying on sound resources for that knowledge. Finally, candidates demonstrate that they can analyze and critique early childhood curriculum experiences in terms of the relationship of the experiences to the research base and to professional standards.

Language and literacy. Early language and literacy form the basis for much later learning, and well-prepared candidates possess extensive, research-based knowledge and skill in the area, regardless of the age group or setting in which they intend to practice.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated elements. Verbal and nonverbal communication in its diverse forms, combined with competence as a reader and writer, are essential for children's later development. Even as infants and toddlers, children are building the foundations for literacy through early experiences.

Candidates—including those who are not currently teaching linguistically diverse young children—also demonstrate knowledge of second-language acquisition and of bilingualism. They know the home language environments of the children they teach and the possible effects on children when their classroom environment does not reflect the home language. Candidates know the sociopolitical contexts of major language groups and how those may affect children's motivation to learn English. Candidates understand the benefits of bilingualism and the special needs of young English language learners (ELLs), building on the home language systems that children already have developed and assisting them to add a second language to their repertoire. For young ELLs who are learning to read, candidates use, adapt, and assess research-based literacy activities and teaching methods that build on prior knowledge and support successful transitions for those learners.

Candidates are able to articulate priorities for high-quality, meaningful language and literacy experiences in early childhood, across a developmental continuum. Across the years from infancy through third grade, those experiences should help children to, for example:

- Explore their environments and develop the conceptual, experiential, and language foundations for learning to read and write

- Develop their ability to converse at length and in depth on a topic in various settings (one-on-one with adults and peers, in small groups, etc.)
- Develop vocabulary that reflects their growing knowledge of the world around them
- Use language, reading, and writing to strengthen their own cultural identity, as well as to participate in the shared identity of the school environment
- Associate reading and writing with pleasure and enjoyment, as well as with skill development
- Use a range of strategies to derive meaning from stories and texts
- Use language, reading, and writing for various purposes
- Use a variety of print and non-print resources
- Develop basic concepts of print and understanding of sounds, letters, and letter-sound relationships

The arts: Music, creative movement, dance, drama, and art. Even before children can speak, they move, gesture, and respond to color, sound, and rhythm. Their joy in the “hundred languages of children” shows the value of the arts in early childhood, both as important ends in themselves and as tools for success in other areas.

Candidates are able to articulate priorities for high-quality, meaningful arts experiences in early childhood, across a developmental continuum. Depending on children’s ages and other characteristics, those experiences should help children to, for example:

- Interact musically with others
 - Express and interpret understandings of their world through structured and informal musical play
 - Sing, play, and create music
 - Respond to expressive characteristics of music—rhythm, melody, form—through speaking, singing, moving, and playing simple instruments
 - Use music to express emotions, conflicts, and needs
 - Move expressively to music of various tempos, meters, modes, genres, and cultures to express what they feel and hear
- Understand and apply artistic media, techniques, and processes
 - Make connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Mathematics. Strong mathematical foundations are associated with later academic competence, but international comparisons have found American mathematics education to be seriously deficient. Yet for curious young children, mathematics is a powerful, exciting tool to use in making sense of their world.

Mathematics instruction should be guided by the principles and standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and by the joint position statement of NAEYC and NCTM (2002). Early childhood candidates apply the principles that guide all mathematics instruction, as well as the specific NCTM standards for preK–grade 2. The standards are based on the belief that “students learn important mathematical skills and processes with *understanding*” (NCTM 2000, ix). According to NCTM, understanding develops through interaction with materials, peers, and supportive adults in settings where students have opportunities to construct their own relationships when they first meet a new topic.

As outlined by NCTM, well-prepared candidates understand and apply the following six principles, or “themes,” of mathematics instruction:

- *Equity:* high expectations and strong support for all children
- *Curriculum:* more than a collection of activities: coherent, focused on important mathematics, and well integrated across grades and developmental levels
- *Teaching:* understanding what children already know and need to learn, and challenging and supporting them to learn it well
- *Learning:* children must learn with understanding, building new mathematical knowledge from experience and prior knowledge
- *Assessment:* should support the learning of important mathematics and give useful information to teachers and children
- *Technology:* is essential in teaching and learning mathematics; a tool to enhance learning

In addition to those principles, candidates understand which concepts and skills are developmentally appropriate for preK–grade 2 children in each of five content areas—operations, algebra, geometry, measurement, data analysis, and probability—as well as in the five process areas of problem solving, reasoning and proof, connections, communication, and representation. Early childhood candidates are able to link those two sets of standards together so that the process standards are used in teaching and learning mathematical content.

Physical activity and physical education. For young children, moving and exploring what their bodies can do are essential elements of early learning. All children, with and without disabilities, set themselves physical challenges and investigate the frontiers of their physical capacities. Candidates are able to articulate priorities for high-quality, meaningful physical activity and physical education experiences in early childhood, across a developmental continuum. Depending on children’s ages and other characteristics, those experiences should help children to, for example:

- Have varied, repeated experiences with functional movement and manipulation
- Demonstrate progress toward mature forms of selected physical skills
- Try new movement activities and skills
- Use feedback to improve performance
- Experience and express pleasure from participation in physical activity
- Apply rules, procedures, and safe practices
- Gain competence to provide increased enjoyment in movement

In promoting children’s physical development, candidates are aware of cultural differences and gender expectations. They know when to respect children’s and families’ preferences regarding dress for physical activity and level of participation, and when to make adaptations to help children meet physical goals, yet support culturally sensitive practices.

Science. Although their investigations may not be systematic and their ideas and questions may not be scientifically accurate, young children’s

intense curiosity and love of hands-on exploration give them much in common with more mature scientists. Early childhood offers unique opportunities to explore phenomena using skills of scientific inquiry, cultivate scientific dispositions, and build a foundation for understanding core scientific concepts.

Candidates are able to articulate priorities for high-quality, meaningful science experiences in early childhood, across a developmental continuum. Focused exploration of meaningful content (for example, the growth and development of a plant over time, or investigation of the properties of water at a water table) supports early scientific understanding. Depending on children’s ages and other characteristics, those experiences should help children to, for example:

- Raise questions about objects and events around them
- Explore materials, objects, and events by acting upon them and noticing what happens
- Make careful observations of objects, organisms, and events using all their senses
- Describe, compare, sort, classify, and order in terms of observable characteristics and properties
- Use a variety of simple tools to extend their observations (e.g., hand lens, measuring tools, eye dropper)
- Engage in simple investigations including making predictions, gathering and interpreting data, recognizing simple patterns, and drawing conclusions
- Record observations, explanations, and ideas through multiple forms of representation
- Work collaboratively with others, share and discuss ideas, and listen to new perspectives

Social studies. The social studies area presents special challenges to early childhood education. Because core concepts may be abstract or distant in time or space, providing many hands-on experiences is difficult yet essential for children’s interest and understanding. Candidates are able to articulate priorities for high-quality, meaningful social studies experiences in early childhood, across a developmental continuum. Depending on children’s ages and other characteristics, those experiences should help children to, for example:

Geography

- Make and use maps to locate themselves in space
- Observe the physical characteristics of the places in which they live and identify landforms, bodies of water, climate, soils, natural vegetation, and animal life of that place

History

- Use the methods of the historian, identifying questions, locating and analyzing information, and reaching conclusions
- Record and discuss the changes that occur in their lives, recalling their immediate past

Economics

- Develop awareness of the difference between wants and needs (the concept of scarcity)
- Develop interest in the economic system, understanding the contributions of those who produce goods and services

Social relations/Civics

- Become a participating member of the group, giving up some individuality for the greater good
- Recognizing similarities among people of many cultures
- Respecting others, including those who differ in gender, ethnicity, ability, or ideas
- Learn the principles of democracy, working cooperatively with others, sharing, and voting as they solve problems

Sub-Standard 4d: Building Meaningful Curriculum

Candidates use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for all young children.

Supporting explanation

In their work with young children, candidates demonstrate that they can draw upon all the preceding tools—relationships with young children and families; appropriate, effective approaches to early childhood teaching and learning; and meaningful content in the academic

disciplines—to design, implement, and evaluate curriculum for young children. The complexity of the process requires candidates, as well as experienced teachers, to go beyond their own basic knowledge to identify and use high-quality resources, including books, standards documents, Web resources, and individuals who have specialized content expertise, in developing early childhood curriculum. Curriculum planning starts with clear, appropriate goals and desired outcomes for children. Although national or state standards or desired expectations may influence curriculum in positive ways, several larger goals are also important guides:

Security and self-regulation. Appropriate, effective curriculum creates a secure base from which young children can explore and tackle challenging problems. Well-implemented curriculum also helps children become better able to manage or regulate their expressions of emotion and, over time, to cope with frustration and manage impulses effectively, rather than creating high levels of frustration and anxiety.

Problem-solving and thinking skills. Candidates who have skills in developing and implementing meaningful, challenging curriculum will also support young children’s ability—and motivation—to solve problems and think well.

Academic and social competence. Because good early childhood curriculum is aligned with young children’s developmental and learning styles, it supports the growth of academic and social skills.

With these goals in mind, candidates develop curriculum to include both planned and spontaneous experiences that are developmentally appropriate, meaningful, and challenging for all young children, including those with developmental delays or disabilities; that address cultural and linguistic diversities; that lead to positive learning outcomes; and that—as children become older—develop positive dispositions toward learning within each content area.

Depending on children’s ages and program settings, candidates demonstrate skill in building curriculum from relationships, daily interactions, and routines (the core elements of infant/toddler curriculum); in integrating academic disciplines with other content in an emergent, interdisciplinary, or thematic curriculum; and (especially for older children) in providing focused learning opportunities within a specific content area.

Candidates demonstrate that they can implement plans in organized yet flexible ways, adapting the curriculum to meet the interests and needs of diverse children while proactively supporting their learning. They demonstrate essential skills in evaluating the curriculum in light of their own goals and of children's engagement in learning activities, and they modify curriculum in light of their own evaluation and feedback from supervisors.

Key elements of Standard 4

4a: Knowing, understanding, and using positive relationships and supportive interactions

4b: Knowing, understanding, and using effective approaches, strategies, and tools for early education

4c: Knowing and understanding the importance, central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures of content areas or academic disciplines

4d: Using own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum to promote positive outcomes

Rubrics for these key elements, outlining distinct levels of candidate performance and program evidence, are available online at www.naeyc.org.

Standard 5. Becoming a Professional

Candidates identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies.

Supporting explanation

The early childhood field has a distinctive history, values, knowledge base, and mission. Early childhood professionals, including beginning teachers, have a strong **identification and involvement with the early childhood field**, to better serve young children and their families. Well-prepared candidates understand the nature

of a profession. They know about the many connections between the early childhood field and other related disciplines and professions with which they may collaborate while serving diverse young children and families. Candidates are also aware of the broader contexts and challenges within which early childhood professionals work and might work in the future.

Because young children are at such a critical point in their development and learning, and because they are vulnerable and cannot articulate their own rights and needs, early childhood professionals have compelling responsibilities to **know about and uphold ethical guidelines and other professional standards**. The profession's code of ethical conduct guides the practice of responsible early childhood educators. Well-prepared candidates are very familiar with the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and are guided by its ideals and principles. This means honoring their responsibilities to uphold high standards of confidentiality, sensitivity, and respect for children, families, and colleagues. Candidates know how to use the Code to analyze and resolve professional ethical dilemmas and are able to give defensible justifications for their resolutions of those dilemmas. Well-prepared candidates also know and obey relevant laws such as those pertaining to child abuse, the rights of children with disabilities, and school attendance. Finally, candidates are familiar with relevant professional guidelines such as national, state, or local standards for content and child outcomes; position statements about, for example, early learning standards, linguistic and cultural diversity, early childhood mathematics, technology in early childhood, and prevention of child abuse; child care licensing requirements; and other professional standards affecting early childhood practice.

Continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice is a hallmark of a professional in any field. An attitude of inquiry is evident in well-prepared candidates' writing, discussion, and actions. Whether engaging in classroom-based research, investigating ways to improve their own practices, participating in conferences, or finding resources in libraries and Internet sites, candidates demonstrate self-motivated, purposeful learning that directly influences the quality of their work with young children. Candidates—

and professional preparation programs—view graduation or licensure not as the final demonstration of competence but as one milestone among many, including for-credit and not-for-credit experiences.

At its most powerful, learning is socially constructed, in interaction with others. Even as beginning teachers, early childhood candidates demonstrate involvement in collaborative learning communities with other candidates, higher education faculty, and experienced early childhood practitioners. By working together on common challenges, with lively exchanges of ideas, members of such communities benefit from one another's perspectives. Candidates also demonstrate understanding of and essential skills in interdisciplinary collaboration. Because many children with disabilities and other special needs are included in early childhood programs, every practitioner needs to understand the role of the other professionals who may be involved in young children's care and education (e.g., special educators, reading specialists, speech and hearing specialists, physical and occupational therapists, school psychologists). Candidates demonstrate that they have the essential communication skills and knowledge base to engage in interdisciplinary team meetings as informed partners and to fulfill their roles as part of IEP/IFSP teams for children with developmental delays or disabilities.

As professionals prepared in four- and five-year higher education programs, early childhood candidates' decisions and advocacy efforts are grounded in multiple sources of knowledge and multiple perspectives. Even routine decisions about what materials to use for an activity, whether to intervene in a dispute between two children, how to organize nap time, what to say about curriculum in a newsletter, or what to tell families about new video games are informed by a professional context, research-based knowledge, and values. Well-prepared candidates' practice is influenced by **knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives**. In their work with young children, candidates show that they make and justify decisions on the basis of their *knowledge* of the central issues, professional values and standards, and research findings in their field.

They also show evidence of *reflective* approaches to their work, analyzing their own practices in a broader context, and using reflections to modify and improve their work with young children. Finally, well-prepared candidates display a *critical* stance, examining their own work, sources of professional knowledge, and the early childhood field with a questioning attitude. Their work demonstrates that they do not just accept a simplistic source of "truth"; instead, they recognize that while early childhood educators share the same core professional values, they do not agree on all of the field's central questions. Candidates demonstrate an understanding that through dialogue and attention to differences, early childhood professionals will continue to reach new levels of shared knowledge.

Finally, early childhood candidates demonstrate that they can engage in **informed advocacy for children and the profession**. They know about the central policy issues in the field, including professional compensation, financing of the early education system, and standards setting and assessment. They are aware of and engaged in examining ethical issues and societal concerns about program quality and provision of early childhood services and the implications of those issues for advocacy and policy change. Candidates have a basic understanding of how public policies are developed, and they demonstrate essential advocacy skills, including verbal and written communication and collaboration with others around common issues.

Key elements of Standard 5

5a: Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field

5b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other professional guidelines

5c: Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice

5d: Integrating knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on early education

5e: Engaging in informed advocacy for children and the profession

Rubrics for these key elements, outlining distinct levels of candidate performance and program evidence, are available online at www.naeyc.org.

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- ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, <http://ericae.net>
- International Reading Association, www.reading.org
- MENC: National Association for Music Education, www.menc.org
- MuSICA: Music and Science Information Computer Archive, www.musica.uci.edu
- National Association for Bilingual Education, www.nabe.org
- National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators, www.naecte.org
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, www.naeyc.org
- National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, <http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu>
- National Center on Education and the Economy, www.ncee.org
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, www.ncela.gwu.edu
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, www.nctm.org
- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, www.nectac.org
- National Education Goals Panel, www.negp.gov
- National Educational Technology Standards Projects, <http://cnets.iste.org>
- National Geographic Society, National Standards for Geography, www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/standards/
- National Institute for Early Education Research, <http://nieer.org/>
- Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, www.pitc.org
- Technology & Young Children (NAEYC Technology & Young Children Interest Forum), <http://techandyoungchildren.org/index.shtml>
- ZERO TO THREE, www.zerotothree.org

Appendix A

Comparison of INTASC principles with related sections of NAEYC Initial Licensure Standards

NAEYC Initial Licensure Standards	INTASC Principles									
	1. Subject Matter	2. Student Learning	3. Diverse Learners	4. Instructional Strategies	5. Learning Environment	6. Communication	7. Planning Instruction	8. Assessment	9. Reflection & Professional Development	10. Collaboration, Ethics, & Relationships
1. Promoting Child Development and Learning		X	X		X		X			
2. Building Family and Community Relationships			X				X			X
3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families					X		X	X		
4. Teaching and Learning										
4a. Connecting with children and families						X	X			X
4b. Using developmentally effective approaches	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
4c. Understanding content knowledge in early education	X									
4d. Building meaningful curriculum	X	X		X	X		X			
5. Becoming a Professional									X	X

Appendix B

Initial Licensure Standards Work Group

NAEYC gratefully acknowledges the expertise and commitment of the members of the Initial Licensure Standards Work Group:

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