A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development

A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Governing Board adopted the position statement, “A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development,” in November 1993. Grounded in NAEYC’s 60 years of work promoting high-quality programs for all young children and their families, the position statement cited “two major strands of activity” supporting that goal: “1) facilitating the professional development of individuals working for and with young children birth through age eight, and (2) improving public understanding and support for high-quality early childhood programs.”

Sixteen years later, the rationale for the 1993 position statement holds true. The knowledge and skills of those working with young children—birth through age 8—in a variety of program settings is a key factor in children’s development and learning. The Association’s mission statement notes that “NAEYC exists for the purpose of leading and consolidating the efforts of individuals and groups working to achieve healthy development and constructive education for all young children. Primary attention is devoted to assuring the provision of high-quality early childhood programs for young children.” To realize this mission, NAEYC cites three goals; the first goal addresses the topic of this position statement: “Improving professional practice…in early childhood education.”

Background and Rationale for NAEYC’s Position

As NAEYC began the revision process for updating the “Conceptual Framework…” position statement, the theme running through much of the Association’s work regarded excellence, as well as continuity and change. The beginning of the 21st century heralded a reinvented Accreditation System for programs serving young children, as well as revised developmentally appropriate practice principles and guidelines; revision and expansion of NAEYC’s position statement on curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation; initiation of the Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation program and continued refinement of the accreditation system for initial licensure and advanced programs; revision of NAEYC’s Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs; and other initiatives. For each of these efforts the common theme was NAEYC’s role in setting the standards (and in many cases raising the bar) to ensure high-quality programs for children and families. In addition, the concepts of continuity of best practices and change were threaded throughout the Association’s work: what holds true and should be continued, what changes are needed as new learnings are applied.
Other external changes also are reflected in NAEYC’s position statements on a variety of issues, including this one. For example, the definition of a “highly qualified teacher” under No Child Left Behind; the setting of standards for teacher qualifications and ongoing professional development in the 2007 Reauthorization of the Head Start Program; a focus on state-funded prekindergarten programs; and a focus on improving teacher preparation, induction, mentoring, and clinical experience in the Higher Education Opportunity Act also impact the professional development expectations and opportunities for early childhood educators.

Such is the case for this position statement. Many of the tenets of best practice in planning and conducting initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences for the field remain. Yet, these practices must be viewed in light of the “early childhood milieu” of the 21st century and current research on professional development programs—as outlined in the section that follows.

The Context for Professional Development Programs

The initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences provided to early childhood professionals is impacted by a number of factors—including the need for qualified professionals to work with a large number of children under the age of 5 who are cared for and educated outside the home, new knowledge in the ways that children learn best, the standards-based environment of today’s educational systems, new knowledge of best practices in professional development, and the development and enhancement of state professional development systems and supports for these systems.

There is a need for qualified professionals to provide early childhood education for a large number of young children who are cared for and educated outside the home.

More than seven and one-half million 5- and 6-year olds and more than 11 and one-half million 7- to 9-year-olds were enrolled in school programs in 2008. Many children younger than kindergarten age are enrolled in child care and Head Start programs. The number of children in child care has been stable through the beginning of the 21st century—approximately 12 million children in 2001 and again in 2005. Sixty percent of children under the age of 6 who had yet to enter kindergarten were receiving some type of care or education, or both, on a weekly basis from persons other than their parents. While the number of children has increased, this is about the same proportion of children in child care as in 1995.

Enrollment of children in the national Head Start Program increased from 540,930 in 1990 to 826,016 in 1999, and from 905,851 in 2005 to 908,412 in 2007. And, while “state-funded prekindergarten” is a relatively new phrase in the field, this form of early childhood education exists in 38 states. More than 1.1 million children attended state-funded preschool education in 2007-2008, 973,178 at age 4 alone. In the 2007-2008 academic year, enrollment increased by more than 108,000 children over the previous year.
A large number of early childhood professionals—who receive appropriate professional preparation and ongoing learning experiences—are needed to provide care for children from birth through the primary-grade years across the United States. In fact, if voluntary pre-kindergarten programs are offered to all 4-year-olds nationwide, an estimated 200,000 teachers will be needed to provide care and education for children under the age of 5—a dramatic increase from the current cadre of 27,000 early childhood teachers.

**Professional development for early childhood professionals is impacted by new knowledge of the ways in which children learn best.** Much is now known about which early social and emotional, cognitive, physical, and academic competencies enable young children to develop and learn to their full potential. Such findings are useful in determining curriculum content and sequences for all children—in helping those children most likely to begin school with lower levels of the foundational skills needed to succeed and most likely to fall farther behind with time—among whom children of color, children growing up in poverty, and English language learners are overrepresented. Research continues to confirm the greater efficacy of early action—and in some cases, intensive intervention—as compared with remediation and other “too little” or “too late” approaches. Changing young children’s experiences can substantially affect their development and learning, especially when intervention starts early in life and is not an isolated action but a broad-gauged set of strategies. For example, Early Head Start, a comprehensive two-generational program for children under age 3 and their families, has been shown to promote cognitive, language, and social and emotional development. The success of Early Head Start illustrates that high-quality services for infants and toddlers have a long-lasting and positive impact on children’s development, learning abilities, and capacity to regulate their emotions.

Although high-quality preschool programs benefit children (particularly low-income children) more than mediocre or poor programs do, fewer children living in poverty get to attend high-quality preschool programs than do children from higher-income households. Findings on the impact of teaching quality in the early grades show a similar pattern. In addition to this relationship of overall program and school quality to later school success, research has identified a number of specific predictors of later achievement. Some of these predictors lie in language/literacy and mathematics; others are dimensions of social and emotional competence and cognitive functioning related to how children fare in school.

The gains children make as a result of high-quality programs for children under 6 have been found to diminish in a few years if children do not continue to experience high-quality education in grades K–3. This consistent finding makes clear the importance of improving quality and continuity all along the birth–8 continuum.

**Professional development for early childhood professionals is impacted by the standards-based environment of today’s educational systems.** Content standards have long been a component of primary grade education. In recent years, increased public awareness of the importance of early education, the expanded involvement of public schools in education for 3- and 4-year-olds, and reports from the National Research
Council have stimulated a rapid expansion of the standards movement into early education. As of 2006, all states had developed preschool/prekindergarten early learning standards, and by early 2008 over 20 states had early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers.29 The Head Start Bureau (now Office of Head Start) has established the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework30 describing learning expectations in each of eight domains. Professional associations have developed content standards in areas including early mathematics and literacy.31

In a joint position statement with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), NAEYC has noted:

Significant expansion of professional development is essential if all early childhood teachers and administrators are to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to implement early learning standards. Well-educated, knowledgeable, and caring teachers are the key to positive outcomes for children. Efforts to create early learning standards must be accompanied by in-depth professional development, coaching, and mentoring for teachers, administrators, and teacher educators—not just about the standards themselves, but also about the appropriate curriculum, teaching strategies, relationships, and assessment tools that together make up a systematic approach to improving outcomes for all children.32

*Professional development for early childhood professionals is impacted by knowledge of best practices in professional development.* The traditional route to becoming a teacher in the primary grades (public school settings) involves completing a bachelor’s degree from a teacher education program and then obtaining a license.33 Many states offer alternative routes to licensure for those who have a college degree in other fields, and private school primary grade teachers do not have to be licensed, but may be required to hold a bachelor’s degree. Primary grade teacher preparation programs include courses designed specifically for those preparing to teach. These courses typically include mathematics, physical science, social science, music, art, and literature, as well as prescribed professional education courses, such as philosophy of education, psychology of learning, and teaching methods.

Unlike the professional development system for primary grade teachers, the preparation of early childhood professionals who (will) work with children under age 5 is “widely distributed and loosely regulated.”34 Much is known—and unfortunately yet-to-be known—about best practices in teacher preparation and ongoing learning experiences for these early childhood professionals. There is evidence that teacher qualifications correlate with preschool classroom quality—although it is important to note a caveat when making this statement: Teacher’s education tends to also correlate with other predictors of classroom quality, so it is difficult to tease them apart.35 Kathryn Tout, et al., have noted “more education, particularly with specialization in early childhood development, is related to a higher quality of [early childhood education] programs and interactions between teachers and children.”36 Young children learn best in classrooms taught by well-trained—and well-compensated—teachers—and “well-trained” is usually defined as
a minimum of a bachelor’s degree with specialized training in early childhood education. However, of the 40 states with prekindergarten, only 20 include the bachelor’s degree in their requirements—and only 16 of these specify a degree in early childhood education; only one state requires child care teachers to hold a bachelor’s degree, and most states require no postsecondary education or credentials.

Pianta has noted “training in child development, experience in working with young children, and support systems focused on their instructional behaviors and classroom management” are key to positive social interactions with children and teachers’ implementation of the curricula. Others have also noted that ongoing professional development (aka in-service programs) can be important to ensure that quality is reached and sustained. The components of such ongoing professional development programs have been identified to include a focus on professional practices and content-specific instruction; alignment with instructional goals and learning standards; and a program that is intense, sustained over time, and including feedback to the learner, as well as the “experience in working with young children” noted by Pianta above. Opportunities for ongoing support of early childhood professionals as part of their training have emerged as key, including coaching, mentoring, and the use of communities of practice and teacher study groups. Regarding mentoring, this strategy is often identified as an approach to working with in-service professionals—“knowing the learner’s understanding of what is to be learned or ‘uncovering’ where the learner’s understanding is in relation to the concept or skill to be learned; sharing one’s professional life and helping others to improve on what you have tried with your life; and helping early childhood professionals to maintain positive attitudes.

It is also important to note the impact of technology on early childhood education professional development. Online programs for pre- and in-service early childhood professionals have emerged in both higher-education and school-/center-based professional development programs. These programs deliver instruction completely through media or use a “blended or hybrid approach that includes some face-to-face interaction” and a variety of delivery media, “from downloaded texts to annotated video cases.” Participants in these programs can engage in real-time instruction/interaction (synchronous), or their interactions may be asynchronous (e.g., through the use of online threaded discussions). The professional development department of NAEYC has added technology-based resources to its repertoire of professional development programs—including computer-based training (e.g., The HRM Journal: Human Resources Management in Early Childhood Programs) and online programs (e.g., a series of self-paced interactive online programs on developmentally appropriate practice. And, similar to face-to-face instruction, much is known—and not yet known—about best practices in this form of professional development, including questions about the appropriate uses of technology, effectiveness of this teaching methodology, support for “e-learners,” and the preparation of faculty and trainers in this “emerging environment for teacher education and professional development.”

**Professional development for early childhood professionals is impacted by the development or enhancement of state professional development systems and supports**
**for these systems.** Many states have a professional development system that provides information, support, and other resources for early childhood professionals. The services and resources offered vary and can include career counseling and other professional development planning tools. A state professional development system can include a training calendar or database of state-approved trainers and training sessions; core knowledge or competency documents that define what early childhood professionals need to know, understand, and be able to do to work effectively with young children; and a career lattice or ladder that defines pathways to help early childhood professionals better understand the variety of roles, responsibilities, and requirements within the early care and education field in the state. A number of states have developed registries to track the training that early childhood professionals have obtained. State professional development systems can also provide information about scholarships and other forms of assistance for early childhood professionals.

In 2007 NAEYC initiated the Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative to assist states in developing, enhancing, and implementing policies for an integrated early childhood professional development system for all early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of young children. The Initiative produced *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems*, which focuses on the policies that connect professional development activities and that support and make possible an effective implementation of a state system of professional development. The blueprint highlights policy principles and essential policy areas that build or sustain an integrated system—a system that ensures quality in all settings in which early childhood professionals work. These principles and highlighted policy areas are aimed at the development and retention of a competent and stable early childhood workforce—a skilled cadre of effective, diverse, and adequately compensated professionals.

The Position, Principles, and Recommendations that follow are NAEYC’s vision for high-quality, accessible, inclusive professional development programs for the field. We put forth this vision with an understanding of the myriad challenges the field faces in planning and implementing professional development within the fragmented, under-funded, and often under-valued system of early childhood education in the United States. It is our hope that this vision becomes the new reality. To that end, the Association is committed to meeting the providers of professional development “where they are”—state systems, higher education programs, child care resource and referral agencies, schools and centers, and others—and helping these providers advance their agendas through NAEYC’s public policy advocacy, professional development, and other efforts and resources to work toward the goal of high-quality, accessible, inclusive professional development programs and systems for the field.

The appendices follow the Recommendations section:

- Appendix A: NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs
• Appendix B: NAEYC’s Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria
• Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

Note: In this position statement teaching staff refers to the adults in center-, home-, and school-based programs responsible for planning and implementing a curriculum to promote children’s learning and development and support families’ needs and interests. Teaching staff includes individuals with titles that include teacher, assistant teacher, teaching assistant, and family child care provider. Group programs serving infants and toddlers often use the title of caregiver for the early childhood professionals who educate and care for these children.

Statement of NAEYC’s Position

The position that follows outlines a high-quality system of professional development for early childhood professionals. The position is comprised of nine principles, which are expanded in the section that follows.

1. Professional development comprises initial preparation (preservice) and ongoing learning experiences (in-service) designed to improve the knowledge, skills/behaviors, and dispositions/values of early childhood professionals.

2. Ongoing professional development is required for early childhood professionals.

3. Professional development for early childhood professionals uses a systems approach.

4. Professional development specialists must have appropriate credentials, knowledge and experience in the subject matter being taught, and an understanding of the principles of adult learning.

5. Effective professional development experiences include a variety of methodologies and activities.

6. Professional preparation and ongoing professional development standards are a component of professional development programs in early childhood education.

7. Professional development experiences must be evidence based; structured to promote linkages between research and practice; responsive to each learner’s background, experiences, and the current context of his/her role; and supported to ensure accessibility for all.

8. Early childhood professionals should have individual professional development plans.
9. Professional development of all early childhood professionals—at all levels of expertise—should be continuous and coherent.

**Principles for planning, conducting, and evaluating high-quality professional development programs**

1. Professional development comprises initial preparation (preservice) and ongoing learning experiences (in-service) designed to improve the knowledge, skills/behaviors, and dispositions/values of early childhood professionals.

To address professional development that encompasses the diverse careers and career paths for early childhood professionals, the concept of a *career lattice* is a useful metaphor. The early childhood career lattice reflects the way in which individuals enter the profession with varied educational qualifications and experience, as well as a system in which ongoing professional development is encouraged for all individuals at all levels and in all roles. The lattice provides for the multiple roles and settings within the early childhood profession (vertical strands), each allowing for steps of greater preparation tied to increased responsibility and compensation within that role/setting (horizontal strands), and allows for movement across roles (diagonals). Each strand of the lattice is interconnected; all strands are part of the larger entity (the early childhood profession).

Recognizing the lattice approach to entering the early childhood profession and later movement within the profession, the preparation of early childhood professionals should include general *education* as well as specific *training* in child development and pedagogy. Those who work in programs that serve young children and their families—as well as those in other roles, such as child care resource and referral counselors—typically experience initial preparation and ongoing learning through educational and training programs as varied as the paths to their positions. Regardless of the career path and professional development “route,” for all early childhood staff who work with young children and their families, initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences must include (a) education/training in child development and other area addressed by the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, (b) experience working with young children, and (c) support focused on their instructional behaviors and classroom management. These professional development experiences should provide individuals with knowledge regarding the development of all children, including children of color, low-income children, children from immigrant families, second language/dialect speakers, children with diagnosed disabilities and other special needs, and their families and communities. Additional position-related education, training, and support are imperative for the non-teaching roles that early childhood professionals pursue, as well.

*Professional development experiences include education and training.*

*Education programs* help learners to “…have a deep foundation of factual knowledge, understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework, and organize knowledge...
in ways that facilitate retrieval and application.” Education programs are broad based. They include learning experiences specific to a primary area of inquiry (e.g., child development, early childhood education, elementary education, and early childhood special education) as well as subjects of general knowledge (e.g., mathematics, history, writing). Education programs typically lead to an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree or other credit-based certification. These programs provide the foundations for a lifetime of professional practice, expanded upon through experience and ongoing professional development.

**Training programs** are specific to an area of inquiry and set of skills related to an area of inquiry (e.g., a workshop series on positive discipline for preschoolers). Completion of training participation can lead to assessment for award of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or another type of credential, continuing education units (CEUs), clock hours, and certification. (Note: In some instances participants who successfully complete a training program are awarded credits that can lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree.)

Education and training programs can include face-to-face (FtF) instruction in a group setting, self-study, Web- or e-based learning, and blended learning (e.g., a combination of FtF and Web-based seminars). **Training** also includes other supports (often referred to as technical assistance), including reflective supervision, observation by a coach or mentor with feedback to the learner, participation in a community of learners, release time for observing the work of peers, and other strategies.

Regarding preservice and ongoing training and education…

The early childhood field is one in which entry-level requirements differ across various sectors within the field (e.g., nursing, family support, and bookkeeping are also fields with varying entry-level requirements). In early childhood, the requirements differ across center-, home-, and school-based settings. An individual could receive professional preparation (preservice) to be a teaching staff member in a community-based organization and receive subsequent education and training as part of an ongoing professional development system (in-service). The same individual could also be pursuing a degree for a role as a teacher in a program for which licensure is required—this in-service program would be considered preservice education for the certified teaching position. Therefore, the labels preservice and in-service must be seen as related to a position in the field, and not based on the individual’s professional development program.

2. Ongoing professional development is required for early childhood professionals.

All who provide direct services to young children and their families—as well as those who administer programs and support the work of these direct service providers—must receive appropriate professional development. Direct service providers include teaching staff, child life specialists, early intervention specialists, home visitors, parent educators, and nannies. Early childhood professionals who administer programs include program directors, education managers, curriculum specialists, and others who manage programs or have oversight responsibilities for classrooms in the programs noted above. Program
administrators also include principals in public and private schools that serve children from birth through third grade and their families, as well as staff in public and private agencies that administer family child care networks. In addition, other early childhood professionals include those who conduct research in child development and early childhood education; develop curricula and assessment systems; produce Web- and broadcast-based educational programs for young children; provide monitoring and support services to program administrators and direct service providers, such as state and local agency licensors and other early childhood agency staff and early childhood specialists in state (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs); and others who support the education of young children.

In addition to individuals who typically consider themselves to be early childhood professionals, the early childhood field also includes individuals who provide care for young children but do not necessarily consider themselves to be—nor aspire to be—professionals (e.g., some family, friend, and neighbor [FFN] providers and others who care for young children but do not see themselves on a career path in the field). In order to provide high-quality early childhood programs for young children—and assure that all children are prepared for success in primary school and beyond—everyone working with or on behalf of young children should understand child development and pedagogy. Indeed, many early childhood professionals begin their work in more “informal” roles, such as FFN providers, and by pursuing professional development opportunities begin a career path to become early childhood professionals. Therefore, administrators of professional development systems should ensure that all who provide care and education for young children are provided affordable, accessible education and training opportunities and other supports.

Professional development specialists themselves—including higher education faculty, trainers, and program administrators who provide training for staff in their programs—are in need of appropriate professional preparation, field experiences, ongoing professional development, and other opportunities to develop and enhance their competence.

Professional development in child development and early childhood education also should be provided for members of allied professions (e.g., nurses, mental health consultants) and support personnel (e.g., bus drivers, cooks) working in early childhood programs—related to their role(s) and responsibilities and typically conducted as inservice programs at these individuals’ places of employment or facilitated/convened by program administrators. Education and training programs for allied professionals and support personnel should address appropriate expectations for the ages of the children served, an overview of developmentally appropriate practice, and other content that will help these staff to enhance their understanding of the children with whom they work and to provide appropriate services.

In order to provide high-quality early childhood programs for young children, everyone working with or on behalf of young children has an obligation to pursue ongoing professional development opportunities for themselves.
3. Professional development for early childhood professionals uses a systems approach.

*System* implies an “organized approach to preparing for [the] profession. Pathways are well-known and understandable to prospective and current workers.” 61 Agencies and institutions overseeing a professional development system must ensure that early childhood professionals know and understand the opportunities to prepare for and continue to grow in a career in the field. The opportunities to prepare for these careers and the prospects for continuing education, once employed, are coherent, accessible, and rewarded. 62

The system for early childhood professional development should include planning and implementation of experiences for entry-level through “veteran” staff focused on the education of children in the primary grades, child care and Head Start settings, school- and other community-based program prekindergartens, family child care homes, programs for children with disabilities, and other settings. The system should include integration of professional development—crossing the early childhood sectors (e.g., child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, public schools, and early intervention services). The system should encompass programs for young children that are subsidized by federal and state funds as well as those that receive no subsidies.

Currently, a number of professional development systems are responsible for various components of the early childhood program “spectrum.” These include federal systems, such as the Head Start and Early Head Start Program and the Department of Defense Military Child Development System; quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS), SEA, child care administration agency, and other state systems—some providing professional development opportunities for center- and home-based child care staff and other state systems encompassing a wider range of early childhood professionals, including those in schools 63; regional and local systems, such as those administered by LEAs, child care resource and referral agencies, and early childhood resource centers; and family child care networks, administered by agencies or organizations or informally organized by family child care providers interested in supporting each other’s quality improvement efforts. 64

At the point in time in which this position statement is being developed there is a need to have comprehensive professional development systems for those working with infants and toddlers, as well as preschoolers enrolled in programs that are not part of LEAs. These systems should have linkages with the system of preparation and induction of kindergarten-through-third-grade (K–3) teachers—leading to one system for early childhood professionals who serve children from birth through age 8. Even though there is variation among state teaching licenses, local induction programs, and ongoing professional development for K–3 teachers, the baseline of entry into the teaching profession and opportunities for ongoing learning experiences (in-service) are more unified for K–3 than for teaching children in other settings. Regarding the latter, for example, the Head Start Program reauthorization requires that 50 percent of teachers hold a bachelor’s or advanced degree in early childhood education or related field by 2013. 65
and Head Start grantee and delegate agencies plan and implement ongoing learning experiences for all staff. Child care staff qualifications vary across states and programs: The licensing requirements for 39 states include minimum educational qualifications for teachers; the most common type (14 states) is experience alone or with a high school diploma or GED; and the provision of ongoing learning experiences vary greatly from program to program.

NAEYC has identified principles and essential policy areas that make it possible to build and support a comprehensive, integrated professional development system through the publication of *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems.* The principles that administrators of professional development systems should follow are integration; quality assurance; diversity, inclusion, and access; and compensation parity.

**Principles that Support a Comprehensive, Integrated Professional Development System**

The Principles that follow are based on and build from the *Workforce Designs* state policy blueprint.

- **Integration:** The professional development system should cross all early childhood sectors, including primary grades, child care, Head Start, school- and community-based prekindergarten, programs for children with disabilities, and so on. Policies regarding state professional development systems need to be cross-sector or have an element that encourages alignment.

- **Quality Assurance:** Mechanisms and processes must be in place to ensure accountability for investments in quality professional development that produces positive changes. This accountability should address the quality of the professional development program and the fidelity of the program (i.e., How is the program implemented? Are activities carried out as planned? Do the activities meet required standards or agreements?). Quality assurance processes, including QRIS and iterative evaluations at the individual, program, initiative, and system level should be built into systems and as they are planned. Quality assurance should also include implementation of teacher induction programs with components such as mentoring and opportunities for collaborative planning and participation in a community of practice.

- **Diversity, Inclusion, and Access:** Attention to diversity, inclusion, and access is a crucial part of planning and implementing professional development programs—and should be addressed across all roles in the early childhood profession. This pertains to the recruitment, development, and retention of early childhood professionals working directly with children and families (teaching staff and program administrators), as well as professional development specialists and others working with or on behalf of young children. The goal of an integrated professional development system is to encourage diversity and minimize discrepancies in individual and sector access to
resources and opportunities. All early childhood educators should have access to equitable, high-quality professional development.

- Compensation Parity: Compensation for early childhood professionals should be equal or equivalent to other similar fields. Compensation across school districts for kindergarten and primary grade teachers should be equitable, as well. The status of the work and the professional’s education, experience, and responsibilities should be recognized and rewarded appropriately. Setting standards for what early childhood professionals should know and can do must go hand-in-hand with compensation parity, or the field will not be able to compete with other education sectors or other industries in which workers have comparable credentials but are better compensated.

NAEYC defines six essential policy areas that make it possible to build and support a comprehensive, integrated professional development system. The policy areas are: professional standards, career pathways, articulation, advisory structure, data, and financing.

**Professional Development System Policy Areas**

The *Policy Areas* that follow are based on and build from the *Workforce Designs* state policy blueprint.

- Professional Standards: These standards define the content of professional development—initial preparation as well as ongoing education and training programs. NAEYC has defined these as the Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs. The standards should reflect qualifications and specify initial preparation and ongoing development for all roles—including teaching staff, agency and program administrators, and professional development specialists—and across sectors. These specifications should address levels and content of education as well as ongoing development. The preparation and ongoing development requirements for early childhood professional roles also should be explicitly detailed to show a progression of learning and encompass movement across the early childhood career lattice.

- Career Pathways: Professional development systems should support continuous progress of individuals to enable these individuals to plan and sequence the achievement of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities resulting from such acquisitions, and be appropriately compensated. These pathways should recognize and support individuals entering the early childhood field from other professions, as well.

- Articulation: Professional development systems should address the transfer of early childhood professionals’ credentials, courses, credits, and degrees, as well as student performance-based competencies, from one program or institution to another—ideally without a loss of credits. Articulation agreements should exist between
colleges and universities to assist early childhood professionals to move seamlessly through and across undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

- **Advisory Structure:** Professional development systems are best supported by groups of individuals who focus on the work. At the state level, policies should require the creation of an advisory structure to examine needs and provide policy recommendations to the entity or combined entities that fund the system. The advisory body should be free standing have some authority or direct link to authority in the state’s governance structure. The advisory group’s structure should include representatives from the diverse settings, auspices, and roles of the early childhood field and professional development supports. The work of the advisory structure also should be transparent, taking input and feedback from individuals and other stakeholders.

Advisory groups also can help to ensure that professional development systems under the auspices of institutions outside of state governments are high quality and are planned and implemented consistent with the principles identified in this position statement. These groups should apply the indicators listed above, as appropriate to their purpose, auspices, and early childhood professionals served.

- **Data:** To gauge impacts and systems change, good data are required. Information about professional development provided—and the impact of training and education programs on the work of early childhood professionals—can inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability.

- **Financing:** All systems require funding to operate, and resources should come with direction. Professional development systems benefit from financing policies that ensure monies are directed where they are most needed and that they are used efficiently.

Professional development systems should be funded to provide for the following:
- Financial support for early childhood professionals to obtain professional development, based on need;
- Financial support for programs/workplaces that facilitate professional development through resources for release time and substitute staff, teacher mentors and coaches, purchase of materials and equipment, and other supports;
- Explicit rewards and compensation parity for attainment of additional education and development; and
- Financing of the professional development system infrastructure, which may be linked and/or embedded in a state’s larger early childhood system. (Infrastructure pieces that require financing may include the advisory body, data systems, support to higher education institutions and other professional development specialists, and quality assurance processes.)

*Note that some areas have implications that are specific to professional development systems administered by state agencies, often with funding and guidelines from federal
agencies. These are noted in the descriptions of the policy areas. However, the issues addressed in these sections might apply to professional development systems administered by other agencies, institutions, and organizations, as well.

In addition to the principles and policy areas of the state policy blueprint, NAEYC notes that it would be beneficial for credentials and certifications to transfer across settings and states. Professional development systems’ alignment with the principles in this position statement, the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, and other key guidelines and requirements would foster a shared framework for early childhood professional development.

4. Professional development specialists must have appropriate credentials, knowledge and experience in the subject matter being taught, and an understanding of the principles of adult learning.

Professional development specialists comprise a growing component of the early childhood workforce. These are individuals with responsibilities for enhancing the knowledge base and improving the skills of program administrators, teaching staff, and other early childhood professionals. In addition to the field’s “traditional” professional development specialists—faculty in university and college settings—organizations and schools may employ individuals who provide professional development to staff. They hold a range of titles, including curriculum specialist, mentor, coach, consultant, education coordinator, technical assistance provider, accreditation facilitator, or quality rating assessor. Other professional development specialists conduct education and training outside of programs, typically in community-based or business settings. In addition, outside institutions and other (consulting) professional development specialists provide professional development to staff at their centers or schools.

A consistent and coherent system for ensuring the competence of professional development specialists is needed. All states have systems for approving degree programs in public universities, including standards for faculty. Regional accreditors of colleges and universities also have standards and systems for evaluation. Many states have trainer approval systems as a mechanism for quality assurance. Some states and professional associations have certification or credentialing programs. While no national system for credentialing early childhood professional development specialists has yet evolved, NAEYC puts forth the following qualifications for individuals who provide professional development to early childhood professionals:

- A high level of education—typically a master’s degree, in an appropriate specialization, with continued professional development
- Experience as an early childhood professional (or ability to adapt a specific knowledge base to an early childhood audience)
- Specific content knowledge for the subject matter (e.g., literacy, early intervention, human resources management)
- Demonstrated expertise in providing education/training and support to adult learners
- Demonstrated expertise in communication skills and education/training and support methodologies
• Demonstrated expertise in assessment of adult learners.

5. Effective professional development experiences include a variety of methodologies and activities.

Professional development activities include community college and university courses; pre- and in-service training sessions—on-the-job or administered by an agency, organization, business, consultant, or institution of higher education; observation with feedback from a colleague; and mentoring, coaching, and other forms of job-related technical assistance.

Professional development experiences can include FtF instruction in a group setting, self-study, online learning, blended learning (e.g., a combination of FtF and online seminars), observation by a coach or mentor with feedback to the learner, and other methodologies. The methodology selected must match the goal of the learning experiences (e.g., information dissemination, skill learning, or values clarification).

Field experiences that include practice, reflection, and feedback are important strategies for initial preparation of early childhood professionals, and can also be key to successful ongoing professional development for individuals who have been members of the workforce for a number of years but lack adequate initial preparation. The field experiences will be quite different depending on the specialization: program administration, center- or school-based teaching, family child care, early intervention, family support, child care resource and referral, and so on.

Individuals who are new to the profession or new to a role in the profession also need additional systemic support (e.g., induction programs for new teachers). This support can include one-on-one mentoring of new professionals, opportunities to network with peers, reflective supervision, observation by a seasoned professional with feedback to the new professional, participation in a community of learners, release time for observing the work of peers, and other strategies.

Professional development experiences should be planned in response to the assessed needs of the target audience. These needs should form the basis for learner outcomes, which are identified for the learners as a component of the experience. All professional development programs should include rigorous evaluation programs that go beyond the typical “customer satisfaction” form of appraisal (e.g., how useful did the learners think that the professional development experience was). Evaluation should also include outcomes—how has the professional development program augmented the knowledge base of the learners, how has the program facilitated change in practice. (Note: Typically assessment of individual learners is a component of credit-bearing and credentialing programs.)

6. Professional preparation and ongoing professional development standards are a component of professional development programs in early childhood education.
NAEYC has defined standards for professional preparation programs (See Appendix A—Standards and Key Elements). The standards express a national vision of excellence for early childhood professionals. They are deliberately written as statements of core knowledge, understanding, and methods used across multiple settings and in multiple professional roles. The key elements of each standard progress from a theoretical knowledge base, to more complex understanding, to the application of knowledge in professional practice.

The NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs promote the unifying themes that define the early childhood profession. These standards are designed for the early childhood education profession as a whole, to be relevant across a range of roles and settings. These core NAEYC standards are used across degree levels, from associate to baccalaureate to graduate programs. They are used in higher education accreditation systems, in state policy development, and by professional development programs both inside and outside institutions of higher education.

The NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs are valuable as both standards for the professional preparation of individuals aspiring to become early childhood professionals as well as for the ongoing professional development of individuals who are practitioners in the field. Therefore, they are included in this position statement as a principle in the conceptual framework for the professional development of pre-and in-service early childhood professionals. These core standards can provide a solid, commonly held foundation of unifying themes from which diverse programs may arise, incorporating the wisdom of local communities, families, and practitioners. These unifying themes include:

- Shared professional values including a commitment to diversity and inclusion; respect for family, community and cultural contexts; respect for evidence as a guide to professional decisions; and reliance on guiding principles of child development and learning.

- Inclusion of the broad range of ages and settings encompassed in early childhood professional development.

- A shared set of outcomes for early childhood professional development. These core standards outline a set of common expectations for professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in six core areas. They express what current and future early childhood professionals should know and be able to do.

- A multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on assessment of outcomes and balanced attention to knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

The NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs—adapted to address education/training for inservice early childhood professionals as well as preservice individuals—are:

**Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning**
Early childhood professionals are grounded in a child development knowledge base. They use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs and of the multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.

**Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships**

Early childhood professionals understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children’s families and communities. They 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**

Early childhood professionals understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. They 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 the development of every child.

**Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families**

Early childhood professionals understand that 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. They understand and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children and families. Early childhood professionals know, understand, and use a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies, and tools to connect with children and families and positively influence each child’s development and learning.

**Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum**

Early childhood professionals use their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for each and every young child. They understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in an early childhood curriculum. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen their understanding. Early childhood professionals use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula that promote comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.

**Standard 6. Becoming a Professional**
Early childhood professionals 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.

In addition, professional development for administrators and teaching and support staff in programs serving young children (birth through age 5) should address NAEYC’s Early Childhood Program Standards. (See Appendix B.) Ensuring the quality of children's daily experiences in early childhood programs and promoting positive child outcomes is the heart of these standards. Collectively, the ten standards represent essential, interlocking elements of high-quality programs for all children from birth through kindergarten. Note, however, that the Early Childhood Program Standards are global statements that identify performance expectations for ten key components of quality. As a stand-alone framework, the standards are broad. The accreditation criteria are evidence-based statements that define discrete expectations for program practice. These criteria are used by NAEYC’s Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation to recognize programs that have demonstrated the capacity to sustain quality over time. These criteria also provide guidance to all programs for quality improvement, regardless of whether a program intends to seek Accreditation; the standards and criteria can serve as standards in professional development programs for administrators and teaching and support staff in programs serving young children.

Professional development standards must be aligned to the standards for curriculum and assessments for each age/ grade of the children. As noted in the NAEYC-NAECS/SDE position statement on early learning standards: “Well-educated, knowledgeable, and caring teachers are the key to positive outcomes for children. Efforts to create early learning standards must be accompanied by in-depth professional development, coaching, and mentoring for teachers, administrators, and teacher educators—not just about the standards themselves, but also about the appropriate curriculum, teaching strategies, relationships, and assessment tools that together make up a systematic approach to improving outcomes for all children.” And, in the NAEYC-NAECS/SDE position statement on curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: “…provide the support, professional development, and other resources to allow staff in early childhood programs to implement high-quality curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation practices and to connect those practices with well-defined early learning standards and program standards.”

The professional development standards for specializations within the early childhood profession will need to augment the standards addressed above. For example, a specialist on early literacy needs to know child development and instructional methods for infusing literacy into the overall curriculum. Working with children who have developmental delays and disabilities requires additional understanding of these children’s development and supports and pedagogical skills needed to help them reach their potential. Likewise, home visitors, family support personnel, and child care resource and referral counselors need specialized knowledge in working with adults and other professionals. The
standards for these specializations should build from the core. In addition, other professional associations may have identified professional development standards appropriate for specific roles in the field, including the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Association for Family Child Care, Zero to Three, the National AfterSchool Association, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

7. Professional development experiences must be evidence based; structured to promote linkages between research and practice; responsive to each learner’s background, experiences, and the current context of his/her role; and supported to ensure accessibility for all.

Knowledge of the ways in which adults learn best—particularly adult learners in the early childhood workforce—has grown since NAEYC first adopted the position statement on professional development. It is important that current theory and research serve as the evidence for planning and implementing professional development systems. The term evidence-based practice is often used in the early childhood education field (“borrowed” from the field of medicine and also linked to the accountability movement in education). While it can be stated that the field has a way to go in adopting an approach in which—as a norm—evidence is used to demonstrate the effectiveness of our practices (e.g., the field needs to reach consensus on the meaning of evidence-based practice and to make the standards of evidence explicit), it is important that professional development is aligned with evidence-based practices. Professional development experiences should have clear linkages to standards appropriate for the current or future role of the learner. Professional development specialists must be able to access and appraise relevant research and apply this information to their programs. And, professional development specialists and front-line practitioners must have a role as participants in expanding the knowledge base of the field—working with researchers to ensure that they study the practices that matter to professional development specialists and practitioners (e.g., program administrators and teachers).

All professional development experiences should be based on specific outcomes that define what the professional should know and be able to do for young children and families as a result of their preparation and continuing education and training—aligned with instructional goals, learning standards, and the curriculum materials that [early childhood professionals] use in practice. Continuous assessment, tied to these outcomes, must be a component of all education programs, and should be a component of training programs, as well. (Note: Some topics that are addressed by discrete training programs will not lend themselves to a continuous assessment approach—such as first-aid training.)

To be most effective—and to ensure the appropriate use of resources—professional development experiences must also respond to the learners’ individual backgrounds, experiences, and the current context of their roles. This principle is particularly important for employed individuals who are often investing scarce resources—both time and money—in education and training and may feel cheated or frustrated when there are few
apparent links to their needs. Such congruence is particularly important in the beginning stages of professional development because it is more difficult to make connections on one’s own without a broad foundation of knowledge and skills.

Professional development should be supported with appropriate time, resources, and other facilitators to ensure that individuals have adequate opportunities to access and apply new knowledge and skills. Too often, professional development is not only financially out of reach of individuals—it also is delivered in ways that make it inaccessible (due to geography, time of offerings, and other factors). Attention must be given to making professional development available through a variety of means—offering synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous experiences, such as through distance learning programs, as well as offering release time for staff to attend education and training programs, providing in-program opportunities to assist staff who are furthering their education (and would benefit from a space and time to study), and providing financial assistance to help defray the costs of professional development.

8. Early childhood professionals should have individual professional development plans.

Each early childhood professional should participate in work with a supervisor, advisor (including academic advisors in institutions of higher education when degree attainment is a goal for the individual), mentor, or coach to develop a professional development plan. To facilitate growth on the early childhood career lattice, credit-bearing coursework should be included in the professional development plan whenever possible.

Each individual’s professional development plan should be written and based on needs identified through staff evaluation and from other information from program evaluation processes. Each individual should be a full participant in designing and implementing the plan, and the plan should include mentoring, coaching, and other professional development opportunities for all staff. The plan for teaching staff—and others as appropriate—should include discussions of ethical issues, training in the policies and procedures of the organization or school, and training in skills for building positive relationships, all aspects of the curriculum, teaching practices, skills for partnering with families and communities, and skills for collaborating and participating as a member of a team (when appropriate, e.g. in center- and school-based programs for young children).

9. Professional development of all early childhood professionals—at all levels of expertise—should be continuous and coherent.

All professionals need to update their knowledge and skills—through a coherent and systematic program of learning experiences. The ongoing process should begin with an understanding of an individualized approach to professional development, based on each individual professional’s (or student’s) strengths and areas of need, and combine content learning with practice. Learning opportunities should be “intense, sustained over time, and include guidance and feedback on how to apply specific practices through
methods such as coaching, mentoring, consultation, or facilitated collaboration (e.g., communities of practice, teacher study groups).”

To the extent possible, professional development opportunities should be linked to the career lattice. Teaching staff and other early childhood professionals—and the children and families they serve—benefit from individuals entering the profession with an appropriate knowledge base and skill set. These individuals’ supervisors, advisors, mentors, coaches, and others should encourage and support their efforts to pursue ongoing professional development to enhance their competence and prepare them for increased responsibility and compensation within that role and allow for movement into other positions, as appropriate for each individual.
**Recommendations**

The recommendations that follow are categorized for the stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development: Systems (e.g., federal or state, corporate), Programs (e.g., centers/schools serving young children and their families), Individuals (the recipients of professional development, the learners), and Professional Development Specialists (the providers of professional development: faculty, trainers, staff developers).

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Implement the principles of this position statement to ensure adequate and appropriate initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences for adults working in all sectors of the early childhood field.</td>
<td>Facilitate adoption of the principles of this position statement by all sectors of the early childhood field.</td>
<td>Plan and implement professional development programs consistent with the principles of this position statement.</td>
<td>Be “educated consumers”: Participate in professional development experiences that are consistent with the principles of this position statement.</td>
<td>Ensure that all professional development experiences are planned and implemented consistent with the principles of this position statement.</td>
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<td>2. Ensure that professional development programs include professional preparation and ongoing learning experiences for center-, school-, and home-based early childhood professionals that include a mix of education and training programs and other supports noted in Principle 1 and elsewhere in this position statement.</td>
<td>Coordinate professional development efforts across the various programs that provide care and education for young children, including child care administration agencies, higher education systems, education agency and community-based organization programs, school and center pre- and in-service programs, and others—ensuring the availability of a mix of opportunities to meet the needs of early childhood professionals served.</td>
<td>Assess staff education and training needs and evaluate programmatic professional development offerings to ensure the provision of the appropriate mix of supports: university and college coursework, on- and offsite training programs, coaching and mentoring, opportunities for staff participation in a community of learners, observation with feedback, release time, and other supports.</td>
<td>Assess your need for content and skill development as well as the education, training, and other supports most appropriate to meet these needs. Confer with administrators, agency representatives, and/or others responsible for professional development to facilitate the provision of professional development opportunities.</td>
<td>Establish strategies for coordinating professional development provided with other education, training, and/or support programs available to individuals.</td>
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<td>3. Establish a career</td>
<td>Incorporate a career lattice in</td>
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<td>Envision a future in</td>
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<td>lattice, providing incremental salary increases based on performance and participation in professional development opportunities.</td>
<td>the professional development system, linked to individuals’ professional development plans as well as appropriate compensation and benefits.</td>
<td>in the professional development program, linked to individuals’ professional development plans as well as appropriate compensation and benefits.</td>
<td>working with children and families (or other position in the field). Establish goals and objectives and ensure that professional development opportunities ensued are part of the professional development plan and lead toward these goals and objectives.</td>
<td>pathways for the individuals for whom education/training is provided; provide professional development experiences that address individuals’ professional development plans and facilitate movement along the career lattice.</td>
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<td>4. Ensure that professional development is provided to all who educate and care for young children—including those who do not consider themselves early childhood professionals.</td>
<td>Include early childhood practitioners who do not consider themselves to be professionals as target audiences for professional development experiences—with an awareness that these individuals’ experiences may differ from those of individuals who consider themselves to be (or aspire to be) early childhood professionals.</td>
<td>Build community connections by offering cross training that includes individuals who provide services to children and families feeding into the center or school.</td>
<td>Seek and plan for professional development opportunities to ensure the provision of high-quality care and education to young children.</td>
<td>Plan and implement experiences appropriate for the participants—including those who do not consider themselves to be professionals when these individuals participate in professional development.</td>
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<td>5. Establish or strengthen the systems approach to professional development that includes the principles and policy areas identified in this position statement’s Principle 3.</td>
<td>Ensure that the professional development system reflects the principles and includes all areas outlined in this position statement. Work toward a highly inclusive, cross-sector approach to professional development, which might include facilitation of informal networks for sectors of the field that are not currently part of the “system.”</td>
<td>Advocate for the inclusion of the professional development system principles and policy areas, as appropriate, to address the needs of staff.</td>
<td>Assume responsibility for your professional development. Make known to programs, schools, and system administrators the knowledge and skill needs that address your professional development.</td>
<td>Give feedback to the system representatives regarding content and delivery mechanisms that allow for effective professional development.</td>
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<td>6. Establish or strengthen pathways leading toward qualifications and credentials.</td>
<td>Facilitate articulation agreements among levels of education (associate-degree- and baccalaureate-degree-granting institutions); promote the transfer of credentials and certifications across settings and states through facilitating the alignment of all professional development programs with the principles in this position statement, the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, and other key guidelines and requirements.</td>
<td>Ensure that education and training provided to staff takes advantage of established articulation agreements to facilitate staff moving toward enhanced qualifications and credentials.</td>
<td>Be educated consumers when seeking out education and training experiences to ensure movement toward enhanced qualifications and credentials.</td>
<td>Be aware of existing articulation agreements and ensure that professional development provided is aligned with these agreements.</td>
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<td>7. Establish/enhance a system for assuring the competence of professional development specialists.</td>
<td>Develop and implement a professional development specialist approval system that addresses the education and experience of the specialists.</td>
<td>Ensure that in-house and consulting professional development specialists have the expertise for the education/training programs they conduct.</td>
<td>Learn about the credentials of individuals providing education/training programs for which you are registering/enrolling.</td>
<td>Participate in professional development credentialing/certification processes. Conduct education/training programs only in areas for which you have the appropriate expertise.</td>
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<td>8. Ensure that professional development experiences are evidence based; structured to promote linkages between research and practice; include meaningful,</td>
<td>Maintain knowledge regarding research on professional development and link the professional development system and its programs with current research.</td>
<td>Maintain knowledge regarding research on professional development and advocate for linkages of the professional development system and its programs with current research.</td>
<td>Be educated consumers when seeking out education and training experiences to ensure that they are evidence based; structured to promote linkages between research and</td>
<td>Maintain knowledge regarding research on professional development and link the professional development program provided with current research.</td>
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(e.g., informal networks of family child care providers).
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<td>engaged learning experiences; and responsive to learners’ backgrounds, experiences, and roles.</td>
<td></td>
<td>research.</td>
<td>practice; include meaningful, engaged learning experiences; and responsive to your background, experience, and role.</td>
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<td>9. Identify evidence-based professional preparation and ongoing professional development standards, consistent across all sectors of early childhood programs.</td>
<td>Ensure that professional development programs are aligned with NAEYC’s Standards for Professional Preparation Programs and, as applicable, NAEYC’s Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, system-specific standards (e.g., state and/or local education agency standards, Head Start Program Performance Standards), and/or standards promulgated by other professional associations.</td>
<td>Plan and implement professional development programs based on applicable standards.</td>
<td>Examine and ask questions about professional preparation and ongoing professional development standards and how they are included and tie in across all elements of your work.</td>
<td>Plan and conduct professional development programs based on applicable standards.</td>
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<td>10. Ensure an adequate research base on professional development content and delivery mechanisms.</td>
<td>Provide funding and support for research on the professional development system and practices.</td>
<td>Work with the research community to facilitate research on what matters in professional development program planning and implementation.</td>
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<td>11. Ensure the development, implementation, and evaluation of individual professional development plans (IPDPs).</td>
<td>Include in professional development system requirements: All early childhood education staff must develop and implement IPDPs. The IPDPs should</td>
<td>Work with program staff to develop IPDPs, support staff in implementing their IPDPs and evaluating their progress in meeting the goals and objectives of their</td>
<td>Work with program administrators, mentors, coaches, advisors, colleagues, or other support persons to develop IPDPs and be accountable for</td>
<td>Include professional development program participants’ IPDP goals and objectives when planning programs for these individuals.</td>
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DRAFT REVISED POSITION STATEMENT

November 2009 DRAFT

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### Recommendation

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<td>12. Include continuous assessment of adult learners in all education and training programs.</td>
<td>Facilitate movement on a career lattice for each early childhood professional.</td>
<td>IPDPs.</td>
<td>Meeting the goals and objectives of the IPDPs.</td>
<td>Incorporate continuous assessment methodologies when planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development programs.</td>
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<td>Include continuous assessment of adult learners in all education and training programs.</td>
<td>Similar to the assessment systems used by institutions of higher education, promote a system in which all education and training programs establish and incorporate continuous assessment of learners as a component of professional development programs.</td>
<td>Work with institutions, agencies, and specialists providing professional development for program staff to incorporate continuous assessment of these staff as a component of the performance appraisal and program evaluation systems.</td>
<td>Understand the assessments being used. Know what your assessment scores mean and how you can improve.</td>
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Incorporate continuous assessment methodologies when planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development programs.
Appendix A

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs

Standards and Key Elements

Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs are grounded in a child development knowledge base. They use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs and of the multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.

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

Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children’s families and communities. They 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.

Key elements of Standard 2

2a: Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics
2b: Supporting and engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships
2c: Involving families and communities in their children’s development and learning

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

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. They 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 the development of every child.
Key elements of Standard 3

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

3b: Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues

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

3d: Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child.

Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that 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. They understand and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children and families. Students know, understand, and use a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies, and tools to connect with children and families and positively influence each child’s development and learning.

Key elements of Standard 4

4a: Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of their work with children

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

4c: Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate teaching/learning approaches

4d: Reflecting on their own practice to promote positive outcomes for each child

Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs use their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for each and every young child. Students understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in early childhood curriculum. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen their understanding. Students use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.

Key elements of Standard 5

5a: Understanding content knowledge and resources in academic disciplines
5b: Knowing and using the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures of content areas or academic disciplines

5c: Using own knowledge, appropriate early learning standards, and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula for each child.

Standard 6. Becoming a Professional

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs 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.

Key elements of Standard 6

6a: Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field

6b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other professional guidelines

6c: Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice

6d: Integrating knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on early education

6e: Engaging in informed advocacy for children and the profession
Appendix B
NAEYC’s Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria\(^{84}\)

**Standard 1: Relationships:** The program promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child’s sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community and to foster each child’s ability to contribute as a responsible community member.

**Standard 2: Curriculum:** The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.

**Standard 3: Teaching:** The program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child’s learning and development in the context of the program’s curriculum goals.

**Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress:** The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children’s learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.

**Standard 5: Health:** The program promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness and injury.

**Standard 6: Teachers:** The program employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children’s learning and development and to support families’ diverse needs and interests.

**Standard 7: Families:** The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child’s family to foster children’s development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.

**Standard 8: Community Relationships:** The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children’s communities to support the achievement of program goals.

**Standard 9: Physical Environment:** The program has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development.

**Standard 10: Leadership and Management:** The program effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

Online: [http://www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/standardsintro](http://www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/standardsintro)
Glossary of Terms

For the purposes of this position statement, NAEYC is using the definitions that follow.

*Early childhood professionals* is the term used in this position statement to describe individuals who work in the early childhood field and consider themselves to be (or aspire to be) professionals providing services to children from birth through age 8 and their families. These professionals are direct service providers—including teaching staff, child life specialists, early intervention specialists, home visitors, parent educators, and nannies. Early childhood professionals who administer programs include program directors, education managers, curriculum specialists, and others who manage programs or have oversight responsibilities for classrooms in the programs noted above. Program administrators also include principals in public and private schools that serve children from birth through third grade and their families, as well as staff in public and private agencies that administer family child care networks. In addition, other early childhood professionals include those who conduct research in child development and early childhood education; develop curricula and assessment systems; produce Web- and broadcast-based educational programs for young children; provide monitoring and support services to program administrators and direct service providers, such as state and local agency licensors and other early childhood agency staff and early childhood specialists in state (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs); and others who support the education of young children.

*Teaching staff* refers to the adults in center-, home-, and school-based programs responsible for planning and implementing a *curriculum* to promote children’s learning and development and support families’ needs and interests. *Teaching staff* includes individuals with titles that include teacher, assistant teacher, teaching assistant, and family child care provider. Group programs serving infants and toddlers often use the title of *caregiver* for the early childhood professionals who educate and care for these children.

*Curriculum* consists of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and understandings children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which those gains will occur. To be developmentally appropriate, a program (center, school, or family child care home) must have a high-quality curriculum in written form, used by teaching staff to guide planning and implementation.\(^8\)\(^5\)

*Professional development* comprises the initial preparation (preservice) and ongoing learning experiences (in-service) designed to improve the knowledge, skills, behaviors, dispositions, and values of early childhood professionals.

*Education programs* help learners to “…have a deep foundation of factual knowledge, understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework, and organize knowledge in ways that facilitate retrieval and application.”\(^8\)\(^6\) Education programs are broad based: They include learning experiences specific to a primary area of inquiry (e.g.,
child development, early childhood education, or related fields including elementary education and early childhood special education) as well as subjects of general knowledge (e.g., mathematics, history, grammar). Education programs typically lead to an associate’s, baccalaureate, or graduate degree or other credit-based certification. These programs provide the foundations for a lifetime of professional practice, expanded upon through experience and ongoing professional development.

**Training programs** are specific to an area of inquiry and set of skills related to an area of inquiry (e.g., a workshop series on positive discipline for preschoolers). Completion of training participation can lead to assessment for award of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or another type of credential, continuing education units (CEUs), clock hours, and certification. (Note: In some instances participants who successfully complete a training program are awarded credits that can lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree.)

**Professional development specialists** are those individuals who provide education and training programs to individuals preparing to become early childhood professionals as well as those currently working in the early childhood field. These specialists include faculty in associate’s, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs in institutions of higher education; adult educators / trainers in public and private organizations; and program administrators who provide training and technical assistance to their staff.

**Professional development systems** are comprehensive systems of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early childhood professionals working with and on behalf of young children.

**Administrators of professional development systems** include chairs of early childhood education departments in institutions of higher education, directors of state and other agencies and organizations that provide education/training and technical assistance programs for early childhood professionals, Head Start / Early Head Start and child care program directors and education managers, child care resource and referral agency directors, and elementary school principals and curriculum specialists.
Endnotes

2 NAEYC Mission and Goals. Online: http://www.naeyc.org/about/mission.asp
3 The other goals are: “Supporting early childhood programs by working to achieve a high-quality system of early childhood education” and “Building a high-performing, inclusive organization of groups and individuals who are committed to promoting excellence in early childhood education for all young children.”
6 NAEYC works with NCATE (the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) to review the early childhood programs at four-year colleges and universities.
11 In the sections that follow for this position statement, the phrase “professional development” indicates “initial preparation (preservice) and ongoing learning experiences (in-service)” unless otherwise indicated.
18 Note: Includes children enrolled in prekindergarten programs cited in U.S. Census Bureau enrollment statistics above.


Note that the technical assistance paper on which this principle is based (Mitchell & LeMoine 2005) describes the current system of some states providing professional development opportunities for child care staff and other state systems encompassing a wider range of early childhood professionals, including those in schools. However, this principle calls for a more seamless approach of professional development opportunities for all early childhood programs.


This section is adapted from LeMoine, S. 2008. Workforce designs: A policy blueprint for state early childhood, professional development systems. NAEYC Public Policy Report. The policy blueprint was developed as a component of NAEYC’s Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative.


Online: http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards/

