

on professional preparation standards

Research shows that when early childhood professionals have specialized training and education, children benefit. These standards describe what early childhood professionals are expected to know and do, defining essential learning outcomes in professional preparation programs and presenting a shared vision of excellence.

These standards offer practitioners a framework for applying new knowledge to critical issues. They support important *early learning* goals across settings serving children from birth through age 8. They support critical *early childhood policy* structures including professional credentialing, accreditation of professional preparation programs, state approval of teacher education programs, and state professional development systems.

Preparation for *inclusion* and *diversity* is required to meet each of these standards. Thus, the phrase “each child” is incorporated to emphasize that every standard includes children with developmental delays or disabilities; children who are gifted and talented; children whose families are culturally and linguistically diverse; children from diverse socioeconomic groups; and children’s individual learning styles, strengths, and needs.

Early childhood teachers apply specialized knowledge of *child development*, *families*, *pedagogy*, and *academic disciplines* to plan and implement culturally relevant curriculum that both supports and challenges young children, building competence in language, literacy, mathematics, and other academic disciplines. Positive relationships with children and families are investments in later social, emotional, and academic competence.

These standards apply across degree levels, varying in depth and breadth. Strong associate and baccalaureate degree programs keep *transfer* options open, offering high-quality professional course work concurrently with general education. For students already working in the field, these programs enhance current practice and build

pathways from associate to baccalaureate to graduate degree programs.

Each standard includes a key element requiring application of knowledge and skills through *field* or *clinical experiences*. Excellent teachers are decision makers, engaged in a continuous interplay of theory, research, and practice.

Early childhood degree programs may voluntarily seek NAEYC *accreditation* through a rigorous process of self-study, external peer review, and documentation of key assessments and student performance data for each standard. The goal of accreditation is to support ongoing improvement in high-quality programs.

Significant Changes and Implications for Accreditation

- Standard 4 has been separated into Standards 4 and 5, increasing the total number of standards to six. The separation ensures that both pedagogy and content receive focused attention.
- The phrase “all children” is changed to “each child,” emphasizing inclusion and diversity across all standards.
- The standards are presented in one NAEYC position statement emphasizing the essentials that unite the profession.
- Materials used in NAEYC Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation and NAEYC Recognition of baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in institutions accredited by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCATE) were revised in 2010. The full standards position statement and accreditation updates can be found online at www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ppp.

What tomorrow's teachers should know and be able to do

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.

2. Building family and community relationships

Students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that successful early childhood education depends on 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.

3. Observing, documenting, and assessing

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.

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.

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 curricula. 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 curricula that promote comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.

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.

Programs seeking NAEYC Accreditation or Recognition must provide field experiences in at least two of these three early childhood age groups (0-3, 3-5, 5-8) and in at least two of these three early learning settings (P-12 schools, child care centers and homes, Head Start).

Related Position Statements

NAEYC offers related position statements on early childhood teacher certification; developmentally appropriate practice; early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation; early childhood mathematics; early learning standards; learning to read and write; responding to linguistic and cultural diversity; professional development; and school readiness. All NAEYC position statements are available online at www.naeyc.org/positionstatements

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