

A Message to the Early Childhood Field

NAEYC is releasing the first public draft of its position statement on “Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators”. This is a revision of the 2009 position statement on “NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation”. NAEYC position statements are driven by the early childhood field and serve as an important tool for building understanding and support for significant and often controversial issues related to early childhood education. This position statement is owned by the early childhood field and, as such, your feedback about the content and clarity of the statement is critical! We encourage you to **provide feedback through [this survey](#)**.

As a core and unifying position statement for the early childhood education profession, this position statement will significantly influence the following:

- Professional Preparation Programs
- Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation and Recognition
- Core Knowledge and Competencies
- Professional Licensure or Certification
- Professional Training and Development Systems
- Professional Evaluation and Accountability

This initial public draft of the statement was developed with the input of a workgroup (See Appendix B of the position statement) appointed by the NAEYC Governing Board under the leadership of the Board's Early Learning Systems committee. Members of the workgroup and committee will consider all of the feedback submitted via this survey later this fall. A final draft will be released for a second round of comment before it is considered for formal adoption by the Governing Board.

This revisions in the position statement are significantly driven by recommendations in Decision Cycle 2 - General Competencies of [Power to the Profession](#) (P2P), a national initiative to develop and implement a unifying framework for the early childhood educator profession. In this Decision Cycle, the [P2P Taskforce](#) recommended that NAEYC’s standards for professional preparation serve as the core competencies for the profession as they focus on the preparation of professionals across settings, degree levels and serving children birth through age 8. The Taskforce recommended that the standards be revised to:

- Focus on the individual early childhood educator, rather than on preparation programs. These standards will then be intended for wide use and adoption by the profession to develop individual licensing, preparation program accreditation, credentialing and other core components of the profession.
- Address potential missing elements identified in the Transforming the Workforce report, including teaching subject matter specific content, addressing stress and adversity, fostering socioemotional development, working with dual language learners and integrating technology in curricula.
- Consider the following competency documents:
 - Council for Exceptional Children - [Special Educator Professional Preparation Initial and Advanced Standards](#), the [Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention Specialty Set](#)
 - [DEC Recommended Practices](#)
 - Council for Professional Recognition - [Child Development Associate \(CDA\) Competency Standards](#)

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards - [Early Childhood Generalist Standards](#)
- ZERO TO THREE - [Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators](#)
- Elevate inclusion, diversity and equity beyond the currently integrated approach to fully capture the depth and breadth of these issues.

This initial draft does not include citations or a glossary; these will be incorporated later. Also, the final statement will be accompanied by additional resources that will provide guidance regarding specific implementation. Your suggestions regarding exemplary programs, activities, or resources that may be useful to include in this regard would be most helpful. You can provide these as part of the survey.

In addition, this draft does not include a leveling of the standards and competencies to the ECE I, ECE II and ECE III designations laid out in the [draft Decision Cycle 345](#) of Power to the Profession. This will be forthcoming to ensure alignment with future drafts of Decision Cycle 345 and the content of the Professional Standards and Competencies.

As you respond to the survey questions, you will be referring back to the position statement itself, so please ensure that you have read it fully prior to responding to [this survey](#).

Thank you for your review and comments. **This survey will be open until Friday, November 16, 2018.**

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

(Formerly “NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation”, 2009)

Public Draft #1
9/17/18



NAEYC Position Statement

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Purpose

The purpose of this position statement is to support a sustained vision of excellence for early childhood educators. The position statement presents the essential body of knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices required of all early childhood educators working with children **from birth through age eight, across all early learning settings**. It is intentionally developed to guide the preparation and practice of the early childhood education profession but can be used by others in the early childhood field. It also provides a framework for aligning specific and critical policy structures, including:

- State and national early childhood educator credentials and related qualification recommendations or requirements
- Early learning program settings
- National accreditation of early childhood professional preparation programs
- State approval of early childhood teacher education and training, and
- Articulation agreements between various levels and types of professional preparation and development programs.

To best serve this purpose the standards (which are comprised of the competencies) use terminology and a level of detail applicable to all early educators working in any educational setting serving children from birth through age eight. They serve as a unifying framework for the early childhood profession, a shared foundation from which more detailed standards and competencies can be developed, as needed, for specific early learning program approaches and types; specialized professional roles; state or community contexts; and accrediting or regulating bodies.

History

This position statement represents a revision of the NAEYC Position Statement on Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation. These standards focused on what completers of early childhood professional preparation programs should know and be able to do. With the charge from the Power to the Profession Taskforce to create nationally agreed-upon professional competencies (knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills) for early childhood educators using NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation as the foundation, this position statement shifts from a focus on professional preparation to competencies for early childhood educators.

NAEYC has a long-standing commitment to collaborative standard setting for early childhood teacher preparation and credentialing. The first NAEYC statement on standards for professional preparation was adopted in 1981. Associate degree standards were added in 1985, and advanced standards were added in 1991. The core body of knowledge and related practice was updated in 1996, 2001, and 2009. This 2018 statement is the fourth update to that core.

Each update to this position statement responded to current developments in the profession, changing federal and state policy contexts, and new research. Each revision solicited input from advisory groups; conference sessions; related early childhood and specialty organizations; other accrediting, credentialing and standard setting groups; and the public. Each revision reflects both the continuity that sustains the profession's identity and role and also the reality that the profession must engage with and prepare for

change in the field, in research, and in the social and political context in which early educators practice. See Appendix A for a summary of the changes made to each revision of the Position Statement.

The Position

Well-prepared early childhood educators are critical to realizing the early childhood profession's vision for every young child, birth through age eight, to have equitable access to high-quality learning and care environments. As such, there is a core body of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions all early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively support the development, learning and well-being of all young children. These are captured in the "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators" later in this statement. These standards will be updated regularly to respond to new developments in the early childhood field, new research, and changing social and policy contexts.

Critical issues in current context

The following sections summarize research findings and contextual issues facing the early childhood field that informed the revisions to this position statement.

A Response to Research and Practice

Since the publication of the 2009 Position Statement, significant research, much of it synthesized in the *2015 Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, has informed our understanding of young children and of the workforce that supports their learning and care. It has confirmed the importance of high-quality early learning experiences for young children, confirmed that from birth young children are actively developing across many domains, and helped the public and the early childhood field better understand the neuroscience that drives young children's cognitive development, particularly during the child's earliest years. This research runs parallel to contextual factors and research findings such as:

- Early childhood educators' knowledge and practice influences young children's educational outcomes;
- Early childhood educators having specialized knowledge of child development and early childhood education is correlated with better educational outcomes for young children¹;
- The relationship between an early childhood educator's degree level and impact on young children's learning and development is mixed; however, there is consensus among researchers that higher education is one important component of educator quality²

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>

² Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

- Professional learning systems for early childhood educators, those entering and those already serving in the profession, should be aligned to the knowledge and competencies shown to have a positive influence on young children's outcomes;
- A large segment of the early childhood workforce, in birth through five settings, does not have a college degree;³
- The large segment of early childhood educators pursue initial postsecondary credentials at community colleges, not baccalaureate-granting institutions⁴;
- Those pursuing postsecondary credentials in this profession often have challenges which can result in stopping out or dropping out of the credential program – such as low wages, needing to work full- or part-time while going to school, family responsibilities, language barriers, lack of academic readiness for postsecondary education, etc., and that these barriers are particularly burdensome and disproportionately affect individuals of low socio-economic status, people of color, and for those who are English language learners;⁵
- The racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the young child population to the early childhood workforce is more comparable than the diversity of the K-12 student population to that of the K-12 workforce; however, the diversity in the early childhood workforce is racially stratified, with white educators over-represented among higher status and higher paying positions.⁶ ; and
- There are benefits associated with having a teaching workforce that reflects the ethnic, linguistic and racial identities of the students it serves – including strong evidence that educators of color have a positive impact on child outcomes⁷.

The Need for Clarity and Coherence

Currently the early childhood workforce is fragmented – there are a variety of early education and care settings; individuals with varying credentials and qualifications provide education and care for young

<https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>; Whitebook, Marcy and Sharon Ryan. Degrees in Context: Asking the Right Questions about Preparing Skilled and Effective Teachers of Young Children. Preschool Policy Brief. NIEER and CSCCE, April 2011, Issue 22; Manning M, Garvis S, Fleming C, Wong T. W. G. The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2017:1 DOI: 10.4073/csr.2017.1

³ Early Childhood Workforce Index 2016, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley; Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. (2016) OPRE Report #2016-13, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁴ [Term Enrollment Estimates: Spring 2018](#). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Table 9 and Table 10.

⁵ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center; Accessing Career Pathways to Education and Training for Early Childhood Professionals October 2016, Manhattan Strategy Group.

⁶ Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field: Taking a Closer Look. Migrant Policy Institute; Early Childhood Workforce Index 2016, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

⁷ Seth Gershenson American University and IZA Cassandra M. D. Hart University of California, Davis Constance A. Lindsay American University Nicholas W. Papageorge Johns Hopkins University and IZA. The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers, A Discussion Paper. Institute of Labor Economics, March 2017.

children; and a compensation structure that, for the most part, does not enable nor encourage individuals in the field to pursue specialized early childhood postsecondary credentials. This fragmentation, for most, has an adverse impact on the effectiveness of early childhood educators and on developmental and educational outcomes for young children. The fragmentation is connected to a long history of inadequate and disconnected public policies and financing that has undervalued the care and education of young children. Furthermore, this system is characterized by systemic racism, women of color into the lowest-paid sectors and settings.

Each state and U.S. territory has its own set of standards or competencies for early childhood educators and its own teacher certification/licensure systems that in most cases only license/certify at the pre-K level or older. There is wide variation across professional preparation programs in terms of course content and availability and in terms of quality of field experiences as related to the specialized knowledge and practice needed to be an effective early childhood educator.

In many cases, there are also significant divisions in wages and benefits, career advancement opportunities, professional preparation and development and working conditions between early childhood educators working with particular age groups and among those working in home-based programs, center-based programs, and elementary schools.

The profession took the lead to address this fragmentation with a clear call for the agency we have to create and enact a vision for an effective, respected, and fairly compensated early childhood workforce, modeling the cohesiveness we desire, developing a unified definition of the profession, and reaffirming that all early childhood educators must have specialized knowledge and competencies, across a birth-through-age-eight continuum to be effective.

This cohesive response was developed under the auspices of Power to the Profession, an initiative led by 15 national organizations comprised of early childhood professionals, over 30 stakeholder organizations that influence and/or support the early childhood profession, and hundreds of thousands of early childhood educators. The initiative built on guidelines, frameworks, and standards currently operating across programs, organizations, and states to establish a shared, uniform framework of career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation to unify the entire profession. This will provide clarity and cohesion needed to advance and implement a comprehensive policy and financing strategy for the early childhood profession. This will further ensure that the profession takes ownership of our practice and commitment to society.

One of the major recommendations in Decision Cycle 2 made by the Power to the Profession Task Force was that NAEYC's Standards for Professional Preparation should serve as the foundation for the profession's core knowledge and competencies with some key revisions:

- The revision will be an inclusive and collaborative process, ensuring representation by subject matter experts as well as the organizations whose competency documents will be considered.
- The revised standards are reframed as "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators." These standards will then be intended for wide use and adoption by the profession to develop individual licensing, professional preparation program accreditation, credentialing, and other core components of the profession.
- The standards are reviewed in light of the most recent science, research, and evidence, with particular consideration to:
 - Potential missing elements identified in the *Transforming the Workforce* report, including teaching subject matter specific content, addressing stress and adversity,

fostering socioemotional development, working with dual language learners, and integrating technology in teaching practices and curricula.

- The following documents: (i) Council for Exceptional Children - Special Educator Professional Preparation initial and Advanced Standards, the Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention Specialty Set (Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education standards) (ii) DEC Recommended Practices (Evidence based practices necessary for high-quality inclusive programs for all children birth to age eight) (iii) Council for Professional Recognition - Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards for center-based: Infant/Toddler and Preschool; Family Child Care; and Home Visitor (iv) National Board for Professional Teaching Standards - Early Childhood Generalist Standards (for Teachers of Students Ages 3 to eight) (v) ZERO TO THREE - Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators (for educators supporting children birth through age three)
- Elevation of inclusion, diversity, and equity beyond the currently integrated approach to fully capture the depth and breadth of these issues

Design and Structure of the Professional Standards and Competencies

A Comprehensive, Not Exhaustive, List: These standards and competencies represent the core domains of knowledge and practice required of every early childhood educator and provide a baseline of expectations for mastery of these domains. They are not meant to represent an exhaustive list of what an early childhood educator should know and be able to do in order to serve young children, birth through age eight. For preparation programs, certification/licensure bodies, accrediting bodies, state early childhood career ladders, educator evaluation systems, etc., these competencies may be expanded upon, as needed, to address specific state and local contexts and include more discrete competencies.

Aligned to the Responsibilities of Early Childhood Educators: Power to the Profession recommends that members of the Early Childhood Education Profession are prepared to be accountable for several responsibilities:

- Planning and implementing intentional, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences that promote the Social-Emotional Development, Physical Development and Health, Cognitive Development, Language and Literacy Development, and General Learning Competencies of each child served (Standards 4 and 5);
- Establishing and maintaining a safe, caring, inclusive, and healthy learning environment (Standards 1 and 4);
- Observing, documenting and assessing children’s learning and development using guidelines established by the profession (Standard 3 and 6);
- Developing reciprocal, culturally responsive relationships with families and communities (Standard 2);
- Advocating for the needs of children and their families (Standard 6);
- Advancing and advocating for an equitable, diverse, and effective early childhood education profession (Standard 6); and
- Engaging in reflective practice and continuous learning (Standards 4 and 6).

Aligned to InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: Early childhood educators work in concert with the rest of the birth-12th grade teaching workforce. As such, the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* are aligned to the larger education field’s understanding of effective teaching as expressed through the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. See Appendix B for an alignment chart.

Integrated Content: Diversity, equity, inclusive practices and technology do not have separate standards; rather these important content areas are elevated and integrated in the context of each standard.

Simplified Structure: The major domains of competencies are captured in six core standards. Each standard describes in a few sentences what well-prepared early childhood educators need to know and be able to do. It is important to note, then, that the standard is not just that early childhood educators know something “about” child development and learning—the expectations are more specific and complex. Each standard comprises three to six “key competencies” to clarify the standard’s most important features. These key competencies break out components of each standard, highlighting what

early childhood educators need to know, understand, and be able to do. There is a “supporting explanation” that is tied to each key competency. This is the rationale that offers a general description of why that competency is important for all early childhood educators.

Standards and Competencies per Professional Designation and Preparation Level:

The draft recommendations in [Decision Cycle 345](#) of Power to the Profession lay out three designation levels, with associated scopes of practice, for early childhood educators – ECE I, ECE II and ECE III.

This draft does not include a leveling of the standards and competencies to the ECE I, ECE II and ECE III designations laid out in the draft Decision Cycle 345 of Power to the Profession. This will be forthcoming to ensure alignment with future drafts of Decision Cycle 345.

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

Summary of Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

Standard 1. Child Development and Learning in Context

1a: Understanding the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, and aesthetic domains

1b: Understanding each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, agency, strengths, interests, challenges, approaches to learning, experiences and abilities

1c: Understanding the ways that child development and the learning process occur within multiple contexts including family, culture, language, and community as well as within a larger societal context of structural inequities

1d: Using this multidimensional knowledge (developmental period of early childhood, individual child, context of development, and multiple social identities (race, language, culture, class, gender and others)) to make evidence-based decisions

Standard 2. Family and Community Partnerships

2a: Knowing about, understanding, and valuing the diversity of families and communities

2b: Knowing how to support and engage families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships

2c: Engaging as partners with families in young children’s development and learning

2d: Engaging as partners with colleagues and communities to support young children’s learning and development and to support families

Standard 3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

3a: Understanding the purposes of assessment in early childhood education

3b: Using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches

3c: Practicing responsible assessment that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child

3d: Practicing responsible assessment that is ethically grounded

3e: Building assessment partnerships with families, professional colleagues and children

Standard 4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Strategies

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

4b: Using knowledge of differentiated instruction in early learning settings

4c: Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect universal design for learning principles

4d: Developing and sustaining reflective, responsive and intentional practice

Standard 5. Content Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum

5a: Understanding essential content knowledge and resources—the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures—of the academic disciplines in an early education curriculum.

5b: Understanding pedagogical content knowledge—how children learn in each discipline—and how to effectively support young children’s learning in each curriculum area.

5c: Applying content and pedagogical knowledge in the use of early learning standards and other resources; in decision making during both planned and spontaneous teaching practices; and to curriculum development, implementation and evaluation.

5d: Applying understanding of the connections and unifying concepts across content areas to develop and implement integrated curriculum plans and to support children’s integration of knowledge from multiple content areas to solve problems and explore their world.

Standard 6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

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

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

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

6d: Integrating knowledgeable and critical perspectives on early education

6e: Engaging in informed advocacy for young children, families, and the early childhood profession

6f: Engaging in ongoing, proactive work to dismantle biases and prejudices within themselves, their program, and the community.

6g: Using strong communication skills to effectively support young children’s learning and development and work with families and communities

Standard 1. Child Development and Learning in Context

Early childhood educators are grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across developmental domains, and understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations. They understand that child development occurs within the context of families, cultures, languages and communities. They understand that larger societal contexts and structural inequities such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia and xenophobia impact young children's learning and development. They use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions to carry out their responsibilities.

Key competencies of Standard 1

1a: Understanding the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, and aesthetic domains.

1b: Understanding each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, agency, strengths, interests, challenges, approaches to learning, experiences and abilities

1c: Understanding the ways that child development and the learning process occur within multiple contexts including family, culture, language, and community as well as within a larger societal context of structural inequities.

1d: Using this multidimensional knowledge (developmental period of early childhood, individual child, context of development, and multiple social identities (race, language, culture, class, gender and others)) to make evidence-based decisions

Supporting explanation

1a. Well-prepared early childhood educators base their practice on deep and sound knowledge and understanding of the typical processes and trajectories in early childhood development from birth through age eight. This foundation encompasses multiple, interrelated areas of children's development and learning across this age range—including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, and aesthetic domains; critical aspects of brain development; learning motivation, social interaction and play—and is supported by coherent theoretical perspectives and research. Early childhood educators understand how biological and environmental factors influence children's learning and development. They understand the impact of stress and adversity on brain development and the implications for this on children's learning and development. They recognize the role that early education plays in children's short- and long-term physical, emotional and psychological health and its potential as a protective factor in children's lives.

1b. Early childhood educators know and understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, agency, strengths, interests, challenges, approaches to learning, experiences and abilities. They engage in responsive, reciprocal relationships with babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children in early school grades. They learn about each and every child through family and community relationships (Standard 2), observation and reflection (Standard 3). They make developmentally appropriate decisions, plans and adjustments to practice in response to individual developmental, cultural and linguistic variations.

1c. Early childhood educators understand the ways that children learn and grow in multiple contexts including family, culture, language, and community, within a larger societal context that is characterized by deep and persistent structural inequities. Children’s learning is shaped by cultural and linguistic contexts for development, their family and community characteristics, their close relationships with adults and peers, economic conditions of families and communities, their abilities, adverse and protective childhood experiences, ample opportunities to play and learn, and experiences with technology and media. Early childhood educators understand how systems of privilege and oppression (including, but not limited to, racism, colorism, capitalism, patriarchy, hetero-sexism, cis-sexism, Christian hegemony, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, colonialism, xenophobia, Western imperialism, ableism, ageism, adultism, sizism, and European cultural dominance) advantage members of certain social groups at the expense of other social groups and how this impacts young children’s learning and development. Using an anti-bias approach, educators gain awareness around ways that these systems impact their own lives and teaching practice, engaging with young children and families to promote social justice within and beyond the classroom. Early childhood educators also understand that early childhood programs are communities of learners with potential for long-term influence on children’s lives.

1d. Early childhood educators’ competence is demonstrated in their ability to use multidimensional knowledge (developmental period of early childhood, individual child, context of development), and multiple social identities (race, language, culture, class, gender and others) to make evidence-based decisions. Early childhood educators use available research evidence, promising practices, professional judgments and families’ knowledge, strengths, and preferences — for identifying and implementing early childhood curriculum, teaching practices, and learning environments that are safe, healthy, respectful, culturally and linguistically responsive, supportive and challenging for each and every child.

- Their practices reflect respect for each child as a feeling, thinking individual.
- They respect each child’s culture, languages, abilities, temperament, family, and community, modeling and affirming an anti-bias approach to teaching and learning.
- They possess the skills needed to recognize and support the assets, strengths, and unique ways that children make sense of the world, given variation in abilities and social identities.
- They possess the skills needed to support young children who have experienced adverse or traumatic experiences.
- They apply their knowledge of contemporary theory, research, and birth-through-age-eight learning trajectories in each curriculum area to construct safe learning environments that provide challenging and achievable experiences for each child through play, spontaneous interactions and exploration, and guided investigations. (Standards 4 and 5). They understand that professionals benefit from collaboration and that each early childhood educator needs to know where to find resources and when to reach out to colleagues within and across professions (Standard 6).

This standard provides a general description of the importance of understanding and applying sound theoretical foundations in early child development. It also provides a general description of anti-bias education. See the NAEYC publication **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight** (2009) and Antibias Education for Young Children and Ourselves (year) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard including the draft position statement “Advancing Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education”.

Standard 2. Family and Community Partnerships

Early childhood educators understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children's families and communities. They know about, understand, and value the importance of and diversity in family and community characteristics. They use this understanding to create respectful, culturally and linguistically responsive, reciprocal relationships to engage families and communities in young children's development and learning.

Key competencies of Standard 2

2a: Knowing about, understanding and valuing the diversity of families and communities

2b: Knowing how to support and engage families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships

2c: Engaging as partners with families in young children's development and learning

2d: Engaging as partners with colleagues and communities in young children's development and learning

Supporting explanation

2a. Well-prepared early childhood educators understand that each family is unique. They possess knowledge about the diversity of families and communities and of the many influences on families and communities in which they work. They have a knowledge base in family theory and research and the ways that various socioeconomic conditions; family structures, relationships, stressors, adversity, and supports; home languages, cultural values and ethnicities create the context for young children's lives. Early childhood educators affirm the families' culture and language(s) (including dialects), respect various structures of families and different beliefs about parenting, and access community resources to support learning and development. They understand how their own biases around family structures (e.g. LGBTQIA families, single-parent families, etc.) may impact their instructional decisions and their relationships and interactions with young learners and their families. They understand that children can thrive across various family structures.

2b. Early childhood educators understand the importance of having respectful, reciprocal relationships with families. They recognize families as partners in their children's learning and development. They take primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining respectful relations with families and caregivers. They understand the importance of respectful relationships that take families' preferences, values and goals into account. They learn about families' languages and cultures and demonstrate respect for variations across cultures and across individual family strengths, expectations, values, and childrearing practices. They know strategies for building reciprocal relationships and use those to learn with and from family members. They know how to find resources, how to implement technology-mediated communication and engagement strategies that are two-way, and how to partner with colleagues to support community, family and child well-being.

2c. Well-prepared early childhood educators demonstrate essential skills to partner with families to support children's development and learning. They use a variety of communication skills, including both

informal conversations and more formal conferences, to engage families as resources for insight into their children; for curriculum, program development, and assessment; and as partners in planning for children's transitions to new programs. Early childhood educators build on families' funds of knowledge through the curriculum, learning environment, and teaching practices; support family strengths, and equip families as advocates for their children.

2d. Well-prepared early childhood educators demonstrate essential skills to partner with colleagues and utilize community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support families. They assist families in finding needed resources, accessing and leveraging technology tools, and partnering with other early childhood experts (such as speech pathologists and school counselors) as needed to connect families to community cultural resources, mental health services, early childhood special education and early intervention services, health care, adult education, English language instruction, translation/interpretation services, and economic assistance.

This standard provides a general description of the importance of building partnerships with families and communities in early child education. See the NAEYC publication **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight** (2009) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard including the draft position statement "Advancing Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education".

Standard 3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

Early childhood educators understand that assessment (formal and informal) is conducted to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings. They 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 purposes of assessment. They know how to use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools in a responsible way, in partnership with families, professional colleagues and children, to document individual children's progress, and to promote positive outcomes for each and every child.

Key competencies of Standard 3

3a: Understanding the purposes of assessment in early childhood education

3b: Using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches

3c: Practicing responsible assessment that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child

3d: Practicing responsible assessment that is ethically grounded

3e: Building assessment partnerships with families, professional colleagues and children

Supporting explanation

3a. Well-prepared early childhood educators understand the central purposes of assessment (formative and summative) in early education. They understand that effective teaching of young children is evidence-based and is informed by thoughtful, appreciative, ongoing systematic observation and documentation of each child's qualities, strengths, and needs. They can articulate and apply the concept of alignment—assessment consistent with and connected to appropriate learning goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for individual young children. They understand assessment as a positive tool that supports continuity in children's development and learning experiences. They understand the essentials of authentic assessment—such as age-appropriate approaches and culturally relevant assessment in a language the child understand—for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades across developmental domains and curriculum areas.

3b. Early childhood educators use a range of observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches. They are adept in the use of a variety of assessment tools, including formative and summative, qualitative and quantitative standardized assessment tools and strategies. They understand the strengths, limitations and reliability of each assessment method and tools. They demonstrate skill in conducting systematic observations, interpreting those observations, and reflecting on their significance and impact on their teaching. They create opportunities to observe children in play and spontaneous conversation as well as in adult-structured assessment contexts.

3c. Well-prepared early childhood educators practice responsible assessment that is guided by sound professional practice and standards.

- They select developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate approaches and tools; document each child's strengths and progress related to early learning trajectories and standards; and use assessment to evaluate and guide teaching practices and other supports to individualize strategies and goals for each child.
- They are familiar with assessment issues and resources (such as technology), to identify and support children with differing abilities, including children whose learning is advanced, those who are dual language learners, and children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- They embed assessment-related activities in curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice.
- They are adept at analyzing data from a variety of assessment tools and using the data appropriately to inform teaching practices and to set learning and development goals for young children.

3d. Well-prepared early childhood educators practice responsible assessment that is ethically grounded.

- They are aware of the potentially harmful uses of inappropriate or inauthentic assessments and of inappropriate assessment policies in early education.
- If culturally or linguistically appropriate assessment tools are not available for particular children, they are aware of the limitations of the available assessments.
- When not provided autonomy to create or select developmentally appropriate assessments due to the early learning setting policies (e.g. standardized assessments in K-3 settings) early childhood educators exercise professional judgement in ensuring that the assessments have as minimal adverse impact as possible on young children and on informing instructional practice.
- Their assessment practices reflect knowledge of legal and ethical issues, including current professional practices related to equity issues in the assessment of young children.
- In order to ensure fairness in their assessment of children, they are aware of their personal values or cultural expectations when observing and assessing children's behavior, learning, or development. They consider the potential for implicit bias on their findings and their use of findings to plan for supporting children's learning and development.

3e. Early childhood educators partner with families, other professionals and children themselves as appropriate to create authentic assessments and to develop individualized goals, curriculum plans and practices that support each and every child.

- They recognize the assessment process as collaborative and open, benefitting from shared analysis and use of assessment results while respecting confidentiality and other professional guidelines.
- They demonstrate essential knowledge and core skills in team building and in communicating with families (particularly ensuring that assessment results and planning based on those results is conveyed in a language understood by the families), teaching teams, and colleagues from other disciplines including participating as professional partners in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams.

This standard provides a general description of developmentally appropriate assessment in early childhood education. See the NAEYC publication **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight** (2009) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard including the draft position statement "Advancing Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education".

Standard 4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

Early childhood educators 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, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. They are knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, universally designed materials and environments for early education. They understand that play is foundational to supporting children's learning and development. They use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect universal design for learning principles. They develop and sustain reflective, responsive and intentional practice.

Key Competencies of Standard 4

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

4b: Using knowledge of differentiated instruction in early learning settings

4c: Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect universal design for learning principles

4d: Developing and sustaining reflective, responsive and intentional practice

Supporting explanation

4a. Early childhood educators understand that all teaching and learning are facilitated by caring relationships and that lifelong dispositions, confidence, and approaches to learning are formed in early childhood. They know that positive and supportive relationships and interactions are the foundation for excellence in teaching practice with individual children as well as the foundation for creating a caring community of learners when working with groups of children. They know that how children expect to be treated and how they treat others is significantly shaped in the early childhood setting. They understand that children and families are inextricably intertwined (Standard 2), that each child brings his or her own experiences, funds of knowledge, interests, abilities and culture and languages to the early learning setting and that part of the educator's role is to build a culture that respects and builds on all that children bring to the early learning setting (Standard 1).

4b. Early childhood educators understand that young children require distinct teaching skills and strategies, appropriate to their age, level of development, their individual characteristics, and the sociocultural, family context in which they live, and they can apply this knowledge in their instructional practice. They understand that play is foundational to supporting children's learning and development. They understand that differentiating instruction based on professional judgment about individual children and groups of children to support important goals is at the heart of developmentally appropriate practice.

4c. Well-prepared early childhood educators make purposeful use of a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflects universal design for learning principles, reflects understanding of children from birth through age eight as individuals and as part of a group, and is in alignment with important educational and developmental goals. They apply knowledge about age levels, abilities, developmental status, cultures and language, and experiences of children to make professional judgments about the use of materials, the organization of indoor and outdoor physical space and materials, and the management of daily schedules and routines.

While not exhaustive, the repertoire of practices to draw upon includes:

- Using play in young children's learning;
- Creating environments that are physically and psychologically safe;
- Designing teaching and learning environments that adhere to universal design for learning principles by incorporating a variety of ways for children to gain access to the curriculum content, offer multiple methods to recruit children's active engagement, and include a range of formats for children to respond and demonstrate what they know and have learned.
- Differentiating teaching practices to respond to the individual strengths, needs, abilities, home cultures and languages, interests and temperament, positive and adverse experiences of each child;
- Setting challenging and achievable goals for each child and adjusting support to scaffold children's learning;
- Providing a secure, consistent, responsive relationship from which children can explore and tackle challenging problems and develop self-regulation, social skills, independence, responsibility, and cooperative learning to manage or regulate their expressions of emotion and, over time, to cope with frustration, develop resilience and manage impulses effectively;
- Using positive guidance strategies for group management, transitions between activities, challenging behaviors, and peer conflict resolution that develop empathy toward peers, trust in teachers, and positive attitudes toward school;
- Supporting children's self-expression, respecting various modes of communication;
- Fostering oral language and communication as well as early literacy experiences in English and in other home languages;
- Integrating children's home languages and cultures into the environment;
- Using the indoor and outdoor environment, schedule and routines as part of the curriculum;
- Integrating early childhood curriculum areas into projects and other experiences that reflect children's interests and are meaningful for young children;
- Encouraging and supporting children's problem solving and inquiry-based learning;
- Selecting materials and arranging the indoor and outdoor environment to support social and private spaces, restful and active spaces, and exploration of foundational concepts in each curriculum area; and
- Using media and technology with young children in ways that are appropriate for the individual and the group, that are integrated into the curriculum, that provide equitable access and that engage children in creative play, problem solving and interaction.

4d: Early childhood educators consistently engage in reflective, responsive and intentional practice knowing when and how to reach out for new resources and consult with peers in related professions. They make intentional, professional judgments each day based on knowledge of child development and learning from birth through age eight, of individual children, and of the social and cultural contexts in which children live. They take reflective approaches to their work, analyzing their own practices in a broader context, and using reflections to modify and improve their work with young children. They consider implicit bias and equity in the early education setting and reflect on their own biases as they work to provide effective supports for each and every child.

This standard provides a general description of developmentally appropriate and effective teaching strategies, tools and approaches for early childhood education. See the NAEYC publication *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight* (2009) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard.

Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

Standard 5. Content Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum

Early childhood educators use their content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and common content knowledge to design, implement, and evaluate experiences which promote positive development and learning for every young child. They understand essential content knowledge and resources of early education curriculum areas. They understand central concepts and inquiry tools in each content area and how young children learn and process information in the content areas. They apply their own knowledge of curriculum content and knowledge of what is meaningful to the children and families served to early learning standards and other resources, to spontaneous and planned teaching practices, and to curriculum development, implementation and evaluation.

Key competencies of Standard 5

5a: Understanding essential content knowledge and resources—the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures—of the academic disciplines in an early education curriculum.

5b: Understanding pedagogical content knowledge—how children learn in each discipline—and how to effectively support young children’s learning in each curriculum area.

5c: Applying content and pedagogical knowledge in the use of early learning standards and other resources; in decision making during both planned and spontaneous teaching practices; and to curriculum development, implementation and evaluation.

5d. Applying understanding of the connections and unifying concepts across content areas to develop and implement integrated curriculum plans and to support children’s integration of knowledge from multiple content areas to solve problems and explore their world.

Supporting explanation

5a. Early childhood educators demonstrate solid knowledge of the essential concepts, inquiry and application tools, and structures in each content area. They know how to continuously update and expand their own knowledge, turning to the standards of professional organizations in each content area and relying on sound resources for their own development as well as for the development of curriculum and selection of materials for young children in the following disciplines.*** (see asterisks for note below). They have a strong grasp of the structures, methods, content and value of each content area. For example, early educators understand that

- Language and literacy are foundational not just for success in school but for lifelong communication, socialization, self-regulation skills and citizenship. They understand essential elements of language and literacy such as semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology and of reading such as phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.
- The arts – music, creative movement, dance, drama, visual arts—are a primary media for human communication, inquiry, and insight. They understand that each of the arts has a set of basic elements such as rhythm, beat, expression, character, energy, color, balance, and harmony. They value the arts as a way to express, communicate and reflect upon self and others, culture, family, community and history.

- Mathematical thinking is used throughout life to recognize patterns and categories, solve real world problems, and as a foundation for abstract reasoning and critical thinking. They understand fundamental principles and concepts related to mathematical problem solving, exploration, and reasoning such as using mathematical language to communicate relationships and concepts, and using mathematical procedures such as counting and cardinality, number and operations. They understand algebraic and geometric concepts such as equality/inequality, lines and space, estimation and measurement, and graphical representation.
- Social studies is a science, a mode of inquiry that supports our human ability to experience, think about, and make informed decisions as members of a group or society.
- Science is a practice based on observation, inquiry and investigation and that connects to and employs mathematical language. They understand basic science concepts such as patterns, cause and effect, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing and testing explanations or solutions to problems based on evidence. They are familiar with the major concepts of earth science, physical science, and the life sciences. They are familiar with and can use scientific tools including technology and print to document science projects in text, graphs, illustrations, and data charts.
- Technology and engineering employ concepts, language, and processes of science and mathematics that are interrelated and integrated in practice and that have satisfying and important applications in everyday life, school and workplace, as well as significant impact on society and culture.
- Physical activity, physical education, health and safety have significant effects on the current and future quality of life. They understand the basic elements of kinesthetic; basic fine and large motor skills; neurological, executive function and brain development; the relationship of nutrition and physical activity to cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being. They know about prevention and management of common illnesses, diseases and injuries and know how to find and stay current regarding health, safety, and risk management guidelines for young children from birth through age 8.

5b. Early childhood educators have a strong pedagogical content knowledge in each curriculum area. This includes an understanding of how young children learn in each content area and their common conceptions and misconceptions within content areas. They know how to engage children in learning about essential and foundational concepts, principles and theories; in methods of investigation and inquiry; and in forms of representation that express ideas, relationships and patterns in each curriculum area. Early childhood educators know about and can access professional instructional resources, including those available from professional associations representing these disciplines. They understand early learning trajectories and related developmentally and culturally appropriate teaching and assessment strategies for each area of the early childhood curriculum. They know that each curriculum area develops from birth and builds increasing complexity during preschool and early grades. They can sequence goals and know related strategies to support development in each discipline, understanding that:

- language and literacy – oral and written, expressive and receptive – begins with early gestures, vocalizations, babbling, single words, scribbling, book handling and dramatic play are the foundation not only for the acquisition of phonemic awareness, vocabulary, grammar and reading. They know children develop the concept of print with progressive understanding that print carries meaning, has directionality, that letters represent sounds and compose words which compose sentences. They are familiar with children’s literature and know how to select and use literature based on children’s developmental, cultural and linguistic needs and interests.

- the arts – music, creative movement, dance, drama, visual arts – are a primary way that young children express and explore their thoughts, ideas and feelings, making connections across the arts and to other curriculum areas and developmental domains. They are familiar with a range of materials, techniques and strategies to foster both an appreciation of the arts and confident, creative practice for young children. They recognize each of the arts as an important pathway into learning across the curriculum especially as children develop competence in language, literacy, mathematics and science.
- mathematics begins with the development of pre-numeracy and early numeracy skills such as recognition of faces and shapes, visual matching, knowledge of numbers, visual recognition of numbers, ordering, sorting, classifying, sequencing, one-to-one correspondence, visual and physical representation of objects and relationships between objects. They have mathematical language and know the importance of modeling it and of fostering positive mathematical dispositions in each child.
- social studies develops from birth with the understanding of self and other, individuals and families, neighborhoods and communities, time and patterns of time, past / present / future, and an awareness of own and other cultures and over time, develops into the intentional study of history, geography, economics, civics and politics. They are familiar with strategies to help young children in preschool and early grades to reflect on the past, experience the present, and plan for the future. They are familiar with some of the emerging understandings and misconceptions that preschoolers and children in early grades are likely to have related to this and other areas of the curriculum. They know about developmentally appropriate strategies, materials and activities that can support children's increasing understanding of the social world and counter biases and fears in the context of a caring community of learners.
- scientific inquiry develops naturally in children as they observe, ask questions and explore their world. They understand the importance of providing opportunities for very young children to engage in sensory exploration of their environments, supporting their progressive ability to ask questions, conduct investigations, collect data, solve problems and share ideas and findings. They are familiar with materials that can be used to help children conduct experiments, represent theories and ideas, document findings, and build confidence in and positive dispositions toward science.
- technology and engineering concepts are explored as young children play with cause and effect, fitting and stacking, dropping, pushing and pulling physical objects. Children's abilities and understanding develop further as they build increasingly complex structures perhaps experimenting with balance, stability, speed and inclines in the block corner, dramatic play area, or outdoors. Early educators know the science and math language to model and know that asking good questions and supporting children to express and test their own ideas are often more effective teaching strategies than providing direct information and "right" answers.
- and physical activity, physical education, health and safety are more than rules and guidelines for adults to follow but are also important parts the curriculum for young children. They know the importance of daily routines and daily practice of basic skills and habits related to active and quiet times, meals, rest and transitions in early childhood. They are familiar with children's need for movement, play, rest, safety and nutrition and with individual and cultural variations in practices to meet these needs. They know developmentally and culturally effective ways to help older children think about, express, and reflect on their needs and their choices.

5c. Well-prepared early childhood educators apply, expand and update their knowledge of curriculum content resources, pedagogical content knowledge, foundational concepts, inquiry tools, processes and forms of representation to their teaching practice. They use this knowledge, along with children's and families' funds of knowledge, to:

- understand and reflect on early learning standards, elementary education standards (where applicable to preschool through early grades), and child assessment data;
- integrate teaching activities across multiple content areas;
- plan teaching activities, select materials and arrange environments, and engage children in exploring and expressing ideas during spontaneous conversation and play; and
- develop and implement decisions about meaningful, challenging curriculum for each child.
- design or select developmentally and culturally relevant teaching strategies that avoid and counter cultural or individual bias or stereotypes and foster a positive learning disposition in each area of the curriculum and in each child.

Early educators apply what they have learned about curriculum content and about pedagogy—how children learn and what teaching strategies are most likely to be effective based on the development of children as individuals and in groups. For example, educators of infants and toddlers model and responsively support development of early language, scribbling, music and movement; self and other, past, present and future; number and patterns; inquiry and discovery. Educators of children in preschool through early grades model engagement in challenging subject matter and support increasingly more complex knowledge and exploration. They respond to the developmental needs of individual children, building confidence in themselves as young learners and young citizens—as young readers, writers, artists, musicians, mathematicians, scientists, engineers, dancers, athletes, historians, economists, and geographers. In developing curriculum, they use their own solid knowledge in each curriculum area while also supporting each child's construction of knowledge in personally and culturally meaningful ways. In addition, in order to make curriculum powerful and accessible to all, they develop culturally relevant curriculum; encourage and support bilingualism/multilingualism; and actively counter biases related to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or differing abilities.

5d. Early childhood educators create and implement an *integrated curriculum* that makes connections across curriculum areas, explores and utilizes multiple content areas through supported play and projects, and facilitates the development of executive function skills and academic and social competence in young children. These cross-cutting, integrated curriculum outcomes include:

- **Security and self-regulation.** Appropriate, effective curriculum creates a secure base from which young children can explore and take on challenging problems. Well-implemented curriculum also helps children become better able to manage or regulate their expressions of emotion and, over time, to cope with frustration and manage impulses effectively, rather than creating high levels of frustration and anxiety.
- **Problem-solving and thinking skills.** Early childhood educators who have skills in developing and implementing meaningful, challenging curriculum will also support young children's ability—and motivation—to solve problems and organize their thoughts.
- **Planning, memory and focus:** Early childhood educators support young children's ability to organize and remember information. Within curriculum, they scaffold activities that are responsive to and help build children's ability to focus.

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

With these goals in mind, early childhood educators develop integrated curriculum to include both planned and responsive, spontaneous experiences that are developmentally appropriate, meaningful, individualized and challenging for all young children; that address cultural and linguistic diversities; that lead to positive learning outcomes; and that—as children become older—develop positive dispositions toward learning within each content area.

****Of note:** Because NAEYC’s standards are generalist standards that cross academic disciplines, they are informed by standards of those disciplines such as language and literacy, math, science, technology and engineering, social studies, visual arts, music, movement, dance and physical education. NAEYC turns to specialized professional organizations overseeing these disciplines to expand the knowledge base for the standards. In some cases, NAEYC has developed joint position statements with these organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, that describe how these academic discipline areas can best be taught and learned in the early childhood years⁸. NAEYC also encourages the profession to look to Zero to Three and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation’s (CAEP) K-6 Elementary Teacher Preparation Standards and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Early Childhood Generalist standards for recommendations related to the breadth and depth of needed content knowledge for working with specific age groups within the birth through age eight continuum.

This standard provides a general description of challenging and meaningful developmentally appropriate curriculum for early childhood education. See the NAEYC publication **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight** (2009) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard.

⁸ Examples include “*Early Childhood Mathematics: Promoting Good Beginnings*” a joint position of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and NAEYC and “*Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*” a joint position statement of the International Reading Association and NAEYC that is also endorsed by the following SPAs: Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), Division for Early Childhood/Council for Exceptional Children (DEC/CEC), Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Standard 6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Early childhood educators identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other early childhood professional guidelines. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on early childhood education to inform their practice. They are informed advocates for young children, families, and the early childhood profession.

Key competencies of Standard 6

- 6a:** Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field
- 6b:** Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines
- 6c:** Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice
- 6d:** Integrating knowledgeable and critical perspectives on early education
- 6e:** Engaging in informed advocacy for young children, families, and the early childhood profession
- 6f:** Engaging in ongoing, proactive work to dismantle biases and prejudices within themselves, their program, and the community.
- 6g:** Using strong communication skills to effectively support young children's learning and development and work with families and communities

Supporting Explanation

6a. Early childhood professionals have a strong identification and involvement with the early childhood field, to better serve young children and their families. The early childhood field has distinctive values, as well as a distinctive history, knowledge base, and mission. Well-prepared early childhood educators understand the nature of a profession. They know about the many connections between the early childhood field and other related disciplines and professions with which they collaborate while serving young children and families. They are aware of the broader contexts and challenges, current issues and trends that affect their profession and their work.

6b. Early childhood professionals have compelling responsibilities to know about and uphold ethical guidelines and other professional standards because young children are at such a critical point in their development and learning and because they are vulnerable and cannot articulate their own rights and needs. Well-prepared early childhood educators are very familiar with the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and guided by its ideals and principles. Early childhood educators know how to use the Code to analyze and resolve professional ethical dilemmas and are able to give defensible justifications for their resolutions of those dilemmas. They uphold high standards of confidentiality; sensitivity; and respect for children, families, and colleagues. They know and follow relevant laws such as reporting child abuse and neglect, health and safety practices, and the rights of children with developmental delays and

disabilities. They are familiar with professional guidelines such as national, state, or local standards and regulations and position statements from their professional associations.

6c. Early child educators engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice. This is a hallmark of a professional in any field. An attitude of inquiry is evident in well-prepared early childhood educators' writing, discussion, and actions. Whether engaging in classroom-based research, investigating ways to improve their own practices, participating in conferences, providing or receiving mentorship, or finding resources in libraries and Internet sites, early childhood educators demonstrate self-motivated, purposeful learning that directly influences the quality of their work with young children. Early childhood educators demonstrate involvement in collaborative learning communities with other early childhood educators as well as with others in related disciplines and professions. By working together on common challenges, with lively exchanges of ideas, members of such communities benefit from one another's perspectives and expertise. Early childhood educators also demonstrate understanding of essential skills in collaboration as they work in teams to support individual children and their families, including but not limited to IEP/IFSP teams.

6d. Early childhood educators' practice is influenced by knowledgeable and critical perspectives. Their decisions are grounded in multiple sources of knowledge and multiple perspectives and informed by a professional judgment, research-based knowledge, and values. They examine their own work, sources of professional knowledge, and assumptions about the early childhood field with a questioning attitude. They recognize that while early childhood educators share the same core professional values, they do not agree on all of the field's central questions. Early childhood educators demonstrate an understanding that through dialogue and attention to differences, early childhood professionals will continue to reach new levels of shared knowledge. Early childhood educators recognize that their professional knowledge base is constantly evolving. They recognize the limitations of child development theories and research based primarily on a normative perspective of white, middle-class children in educated families. They maintain professional currency as more strengths-based approaches to research and practice are articulated and are willing to seek non-dominant sources of information to supplement their knowledge.

6e. Early childhood educators are informed advocates for children, their families and the profession. They know about the central policy issues in the field, including professional compensation and financing of the early education system; standards setting and assessment in young children; and issues of equity, bias and social justice that affect children, families, communities and colleagues. They are aware of and engaged in examining ethical issues and societal concerns about program quality and provision of early childhood services and the implications of those issues for advocacy and policy change. Early childhood educators have a basic understanding of how public policies are developed and demonstrate essential advocacy skills.

6f. Early childhood educators engage in ongoing, proactive work to dismantle biases and prejudices within themselves, their program, and the community. Early childhood educators recognize the impact of racism, sexism, classism, able-ism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other systems of oppression on their own lives and on the lives of the children and families they serve. They identify ways that systems of privilege and oppression are manifesting in their early childhood program. They understand how their own experiences, family, race, gender and culture biases may impact their instructional decisions and their relationships and interactions with young learners and their families.

6g. Early childhood educators have strong communication skills – written and verbal – and can effectively communicate using many modalities, including technology. These skills allow them to provide positive language and literacy experiences for children, and they support professional communications with families and colleagues. These skills also support early childhood educators in implementing the knowledge and application of these standards and competencies.

Becoming a professional early childhood educator means developing the capacity to understand, reflect upon, and integrate all six of these professional standards. It is the integrated understanding of the following that defines a professional early childhood educator:

- child development;
- each individual child;
- family and community context and other influences on individual development and the ability to build respectful reciprocal relationships with families and communities;
- use of observation and assessment to learn what works for each child and for the children as a community learning together;
- use of a repertoire of appropriate practices;
- application of a deep understanding of early childhood curriculum;
- exercising professional knowledge, dispositions and ethics.

It is this knowledge and practice that will allow them to transform a new group of babies in the infant room or a group of second graders on the first day of school into a caring community of learners.

This Initial Standard provides a general description of the unique nature of the early childhood profession, its unique Code of Ethical Conduct and other guidelines, and special importance of collaboration and continuous learning in a rapidly evolving field that includes professional roles and settings inside and outside of traditional schools. See the NAEYC publication **Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age eight** (2009) and [list] position statements for expanded materials related to this standard including the draft position statement “Advancing Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education”.

Recommendations for Implementation

Recommendations for Professional Preparation Programs

1. **Preparation programs must align to these competencies and leveling**

The competencies should serve as the core learner outcomes for preparation programs. The learning opportunities, including field experiences, should be designed and scaffolded to support candidates in understanding and applying the competencies. Programs should carefully consider which level of early childhood educator they are preparing and ensure that the level of mastery of competencies is aligned with the breadth and depth of competency mastery recommended in the Power to the Profession framework for the profession.

2. **Faculty must be qualified to teach candidates in the competencies**

Faculty in early childhood teacher education programs should have advanced graduate work and professional experience related to their teaching assignments. Faculty teaching methods courses should have early childhood education professional preparation, early childhood teaching experience, and current knowledge of early childhood education professional practice through career-long participation in professional activities (NAEYC 1982, p 11).

3. **Standards not standardization**

Programs should be responsive to their local workforce needs, their community context and their institution's mission. These standards are intended to provide a vision of excellence--not to constrict innovative responses to the needs of children, families, or current and prospective early childhood educators (NAEYC 2003, 2009). This statement promotes standards for - not standardization of - preparation of early childhood educators. The competencies and accompanying leveling recommendations are meant to serve as a framework for preparation program design.

4. **Competencies and leveling should support transfer and articulation**

Programs should incorporate the leveling recommendations for the competencies, as defined by the profession, within each standard to facilitate articulation between and distinguish the level of depth and breadth of the competencies at each professional program level. As the profession works toward creating differentiated scopes of practice for each early childhood educator role, preparation programs should ensure that their programs are preparing candidates for a specific role while opening pathways that can lead to additional preparation and higher levels of responsibility as early childhood educators progress in their careers. These standards can be used as a unifying framework for progression in professional competency, and to develop articulation agreements and stackable, portable credentials that support workforce diversity, equity and access to higher levels of competence and new career opportunities.

5. **General education courses must ensure that candidates gain the necessary content knowledge to meet expectations in Standard 5, as well as the skills needed to support candidates' demonstration of all standards.**

General education courses are in the content areas named in Standard 5. They advance candidates' understanding of core and complex concepts in the disciplines. They build critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills, and grow candidates' communication skills – verbal and written.

6. A commitment to advancing equity and diversity

Professional preparation programs should work to ensure that they reflect principles of equity and diversity throughout all aspects of their programs. This includes ensuring that the preparation and field experiences provide opportunities to work effectively with diverse populations; employing a diverse faculty across multiple dimensions, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, language, ability, gender and sexual orientation; and providing time and space to foster a learning community among administrators, faculty, and staff that includes opportunities for reflection and learning regarding cultural respect and responsiveness, including potential issues of implicit bias.

Recommendations for Higher Education Accreditation

1. Ensure that programs are preparing candidates across and within competencies

Accreditation of early childhood professional preparation programs must ensure that graduates of these programs have mastered the standards and competencies. Accreditation must require evidence from professional preparation programs that their learning opportunities support mastery of the standards and competencies and that programs are evaluating candidates' mastery of these.

2. Ensure that program design and infrastructure facilitate candidate mastery of the competencies

While the learning opportunities and assessment of candidates' knowledge and practice should be the central focus of accreditors, it is also important for accreditation to evaluate the program design and infrastructure supports that facilitate high-quality learning opportunities and effective assessments. Evidence of how the program's mission, responsiveness to local context, faculty qualifications and responsibilities, institutional resources (such as budgets, IT and libraries), academic and non-academic supports for candidates, field experiences, course design and sequencing, and teaching quality support candidates' mastery of the competencies should contribute to the accreditation decision.

3. Ensure that programs are aligned to the leveling in the position statement

Expectations for meeting accreditation standards should align with the leveling of the competencies recommended in this position statement. In particular, the learning opportunities and related assessments of programs should be evaluated against the recommended leveling of competency mastery.

Recommendations for Early Learning Programs

- 1. Competencies should support early childhood educators' autonomy in early learning settings.**
Early childhood educators should be given appropriate autonomy in their settings to make sound professional judgments that are aligned with their level of mastery of these standards and competencies.
- 2. Ensure job candidates have completed the appropriate level of professional preparation needed for the early childhood educator positions.**
Graduation from or completion of a professional preparation program should be a requirement for job candidates, with preference for professional preparation programs that have demonstrated alignment with these standards and competencies through accreditation. Qualifications for specific positions should be based upon the scope of practice for the early childhood educator position (and associated level of mastery of competencies) as designated by the profession.
- 3. Design and support professional development that advances educators' mastery of the competencies**
Professional development should be aligned to the competencies to build on and advance the depth and breadth of early childhood educators' mastery of them. In addition, early learning programs should contribute to the preparation of future early childhood educators by serving as field sites where emerging professionals can develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions under the mentorship of experienced early childhood educators.
- 4. Design and conduct evaluations aligned to the competencies**
Early childhood educators should be supported and be held accountable for practices aligned to the appropriate level of mastery of these standards and competencies.

Recommendations for Federal, State, and Local Policies

- 1. Support higher education as the core pathway for individuals to be prepared in the competencies**
Policies should identify higher education pathways as the core pathway for individuals preparing to be early childhood educators or who are advancing their early childhood education credentials. Given the breadth and depth of the competencies and the need for early childhood educators to have deep knowledge and understanding as well as applied practice with the competencies, higher education institutions are best positioned to prepare early childhood educators.

Policies and resources should intentionally minimize the impact of racism, elitism and bias (at all levels) and ensure that all individuals are provided equitable opportunities to access and progress seamlessly through this core pathway.
- 2. Align teacher licensure, certification, and credentialing to the competencies**
Teacher licensure, certification and credentialing systems should ensure that all young children, birth through age eight, have teachers with sound understanding of birth-through-age-eight

learning trajectories, approaches to learning, the multiple influences on young children's development, and competence in the most effective teaching strategies for this stage of life using this statement as the set of national essential knowledge and competencies that may be expanded as needed to support state and local contexts.

- 3. Build professional development systems aligned to the competencies** Content of professional development systems should be driven by the competencies and recommended leveling for each early childhood educator designation.

- 4. All facets of the early childhood workforce should be aligned to and advance the competencies.**

The competencies should inform all dimensions of the early childhood workforce. This includes states' professional standards, professional preparation programs, licensing and certification bodies, induction/mentoring/coaching programs, legislative policies, leadership in early learning programs, financing of the workforce, working conditions, and professional networks and associations. (Lutton, 2011)

- 5. Financing of the early childhood educator workforce should support higher education capacity-building for preparing high quality educators.**

Financing should include support for individuals seeking to attain or advance the specialized knowledge and competencies included in this position statement as well as support for higher education programs to demonstrate alignment with the competencies through earning and maintaining accreditation.

Recommendations for Researchers

- 1. Create research agendas that examine the connections between the competencies and impact on young children's development and learning**

Ongoing research is needed to more directly connect how the competencies support young children's development and learning using a strengths-based approach that does not employ a White, middle-class normative perspective.

- 2. Identify key features of preparation programs that effectively prepare candidates in the competencies**

The research community can play an important role in helping the profession better understand how design, content, field experiences, assessments and other features of professional preparation programs support candidates' understanding of the competencies.

- 3. Inform the profession with new research on young children's development, educator quality, dimensions of effective teaching, etc. that should influence the next revision of the competencies**

Given that the research and practice that informs the early childhood educator competencies is always evolving, the research community plays an important role in leading and synthesizing research on child development across multiple social, cultural, and linguistic contexts; educator quality; effective teaching, etc. that is most relevant and informative to incorporate in the next iteration of the competencies.

Appendix A: History of Changes to the NAEYC Position Statement

1996 Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) updated language on preparing all early educators to support children with differing abilities in inclusive early childhood programs 2) reframed guidelines for program content and field experience as preparation program outcomes--what early childhood educators should know and be able to do. The purpose statement included use of these standards to guide state early childhood teacher licensure, preparation program approval, articulation agreements, and related professional development policies. NAEYC guidelines were published alongside those of CEC/DEC and NBPTS. NAEYC and DEC endorsed each other's statements and ATE endorsed both.
2001 Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) changed terminology from program guidelines to standards with assessment of graduates' knowledge and competencies related to these standards as the primary measure of program quality 2) expanded upon the importance of associate degrees, community colleges and articulation agreements in supporting and increasing teacher diversity at all levels of the profession 3) emphasized current challenges related to teacher recruitment, retention, education, diversity and compensation.
2009 Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) separated the two aspects of previous Standard 4 Teaching and Learning into Standard 4 focused on teaching practice and Standard 5 focused on understanding and applying content knowledge in academic disciplines. 2) updated content to more intentionally address inclusion, cultural competence and technology across all standards. The purpose statement included use by a broad audience, across various levels and types of professional development programs, and in the credentialing, accreditation and articulation structures that compose a professional career pathway. A separate 2010 accreditation standards document was adopted by the NAEYC higher education commission and the NCATE Specialty Area Standards Board for specific use in higher education program and accreditation systems. The Commission's 2010 standards affirmed this position statement as the profession's core body of knowledge and practice and added guidance for higher education programs seeking NAEYC accreditation, Peer Reviewers and Commissioners.
2018 Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shifts focus from expectations for professional preparation programs to expectations for early childhood educators 2) Elevates diversity and equity 3) Levels the standards to the scopes of practice for each early childhood educator designation 4) Lays out recommendations for implementation of the standards for multiples stakeholders in the early childhood education field

Appendix B: Professional Standards and Competencies Workgroup

A workgroup comprised of the Early Learning Systems Committee of the NAEYC Governing Board, early childhood practitioners, researchers, faculty, and subject matter experts informed the revisions to this position statement.

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