

# Early Learning Standards

## Creating the Conditions for Success

A Joint Position Statement of the  
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the  
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE)

Adopted November 2002

### Introduction

Early childhood education has become part of a standards-based environment. More than 25 states have standards\* describing desired results, outcomes, or learning expectations for children below kindergarten age; Head Start has developed the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework; and national organizations have developed content standards in areas such as early literacy and mathematics. This movement presents both opportunities and challenges for early childhood education. Rather than write a new set of standards, in this statement the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) address the significant educational, ethical, developmental, programmatic, assessment, and policy issues related to early learning standards. The position statement outlines four features that are essential if early learning standards are to be developmentally effective. The recommendations in this position statement are most relevant to young children of preschool or prekindergarten age, with and without disabilities, in group settings including state prekindergarten programs, community child care, family child care, and Head Start. However, the recommendations can guide the development and implementation of standards for younger and older children as well.

This joint position statement is endorsed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the State Collaborative on Early Childhood Education Assessment of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The concepts in this joint position statement are supported by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

\*The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCREST) defines *standards* as “the broadest of a family of terms referring to expectations for student learning.” This position statement uses the term *early learning standards* to describe expectations for the learning and development of young children. Narrower terms included in *standards* and *early learning standards* are *content standards* (“summary descriptions of what it is that students should know and/or be able to do within a particular discipline” [Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)]); *benchmarks* (“specific description of knowledge or skill that students should acquire by a particular point in their schooling” [McREL])—usually tied to a grade or age level); and *performance standards* (“describes levels of student performance in respect to the knowledge or skill described in a single benchmark or a set of closely related benchmarks” [McREL]). Important, related standards that are not included in this position statement’s definition of early learning standards are *program standards*: expectations for the characteristics or quality of schools, child care centers, and other educational settings. It should be noted that Head Start uses the term *performance standards* in a way that is closer to the definition of program standards—describing expectations for the functioning of a Head Start program and not the accomplishments of children in the program. A working group of representatives from NAEYC, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and other groups is developing a more complete glossary of terms related to standards, assessment, and accountability.

## The position

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The first years of life are critical for later outcomes. Young children have an innate desire to learn. That desire can be supported or undermined by early experiences. High-quality early childhood education can promote intellectual, language, physical, social, and emotional development, creating school readiness and building a foundation for later academic and social competence. By defining the desired content and outcomes of young children's education, early learning standards can lead to greater opportunities for positive development and learning in these early years. NAEYC and NAECS/SDE take the position that early learning standards can be a valuable part of a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children, contributing to young children's educational experiences and to their future success. But these results can be achieved only if early learning standards (1) emphasize significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes; (2) are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes; (3) use implementation and assessment strategies that are ethical and appropriate for young children; and (4) are accompanied by strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families.

Because of the educational and developmental risks for vulnerable young children if standards are not well developed and implemented, the recommendations in this position statement are embedded in and refer to the principles set forth in NAEYC's code of ethical conduct.<sup>1</sup> According to this code, early childhood professionals and others affecting young children's education must promote those practices that benefit young children, and they must refuse to participate in educational practices that harm young children. Thus, a test of the value of any standards effort is whether it promotes positive educational and developmental outcomes and whether it avoids penalizing or excluding children from needed services and supports.

## Desired effects of the position statement

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NAEYC and NAECS/SDE have developed this position statement, and invited other associations to support and endorse its recommendations, in order to

- Take informed positions on significant, controversial issues affecting young children's education and development
- Promote broad-based dialogue

- Create a shared language and evidence-based frame of reference so that practitioners, decision makers, and families may talk together about early learning standards and their essential supports
- Influence public policies—those related to early childhood systems development as well as to the development, implementation, and revision of standards—that reflect the position statement's recommendations
- Stimulate investments needed to create accessible, affordable, high-quality learning environments and professional development to support the implementation of effective early learning standards
- Strengthen connections between the early childhood and K–12 education communities
- Build more satisfying experiences and better educational and developmental outcomes for all young children

## Background and context

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### Standards and the early childhood education field

One of NAEYC's first publications, written in 1929, was called *Minimum Essentials for Nursery Education*.<sup>2</sup> Since then, NAEYC has developed criteria for accrediting early childhood education programs,<sup>3</sup> teacher education standards,<sup>4</sup> guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice,<sup>5</sup> and, in partnership with NAECS/SDE, curriculum and assessment guidelines.<sup>6</sup> NAEYC publications<sup>7</sup> have also described the role of professional organizations' content standards in early childhood education.

Yet the U.S. standards movement in elementary and secondary education, begun in the 1980s, did not have an immediate impact on education before kindergarten. In recent years, however, increased public awareness of the importance of early education, the expanded involvement of public schools in education for 3- and 4-year-olds, and reports from the National Research Council, including the influential report *Eager to Learn*,<sup>8</sup> have stimulated a rapid expansion of the standards movement into early education. Preliminary results from a recent national survey show more than 25 states with specific child-based outcome standards for children younger than kindergarten age.<sup>9</sup> The Head Start Bureau has established the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework<sup>10</sup> describing learning expectations in each of eight domains. Professional associations have developed content standards in areas including early mathematics and literacy.<sup>11</sup> National reports and public policies have called for the creation of standards—variously

including program standards, content standards, performance standards, and child outcomes—as part of a broader effort to build school readiness by improving teaching and learning in the early years.

### The distinctive characteristics of early childhood

Early childhood is a distinct period of life that has value in itself as well as creating foundations for later years. States and others must consider the characteristics of early childhood as the standards movement extends into the years before kindergarten:

- The younger children are, the harder it is to create generalized expectations for their development and learning, because young children's development varies greatly and is so heavily dependent upon experience.<sup>12</sup>
- This variability also creates greater challenges in assessing young children's progress in meeting standards or achieving desired results.<sup>13</sup>
- To a greater extent than when children are older, young children's development is connected across developmental domains, with progress in one area being strongly influenced by others. This again has implications for how standards are written and implemented.
- Young children's development and learning are highly dependent upon their family relationships and environments. The development and implementation of early learning standards must therefore engage and support families as partners.<sup>14</sup>
- Our youngest children are our most culturally diverse.<sup>15</sup> Early learning standards must take this diversity into account. In addition, many children transition from culturally familiar child care programs and family environments into settings that do not reflect their culture or language. These discontinuities make it difficult to implement early learning standards in effective ways.
- Early childhood programs include an increasing number of children with disabilities and developmental delays.<sup>16</sup> These children must be given especially thoughtful consideration when states or others develop, implement, and assess progress in relation to early learning standards.
- Finally, settings for early education before kindergarten vary greatly in their sponsorship, resources, and organization—far more than the K–12 system—and the vast majority of those programs are not regulated by public schools. In such a fragmented system, standards cannot have a positive effect without intensive attention to communication, coordination, consensus building, and financing.

### Risks and benefits of early learning standards

Reflecting on this expanded interest; on more than a decade of experience with systems of K–12 standards, curriculum, assessment, and accountability; and on the experience of a number of states and professional organizations, NAEYC and NAECS/SDE see risks as well as significant potential benefits in the movement toward early learning standards. Both need to be taken into account as early learning standards are developed and implemented.

#### Possible risks

The major risk of any standards movement is that the responsibility for meeting the standards will be placed on children's shoulders rather than on the shoulders of those who should provide opportunities and supports for learning. This risk carries especially great weight in the early years of schooling, which can open or close the door to future opportunities. Negative consequences potentially face children who fail to meet standards, because the data may be used to label children as educational failures, retain them in grade, or deny them educational services.<sup>17</sup> Culturally and linguistically diverse children, and children with disabilities, may be at heightened risk.

Other issues also require thoughtful attention. The development of high-quality curriculum and teaching practices—essential tools in achieving desired results—can be forgotten in a rush from developing standards to assessing whether children meet the standards. Standards can also run the risk of being rigid, superficial, or culturally and educationally narrow. In the K–12 arena, at times standards have driven curriculum toward a more narrowly fact- and skill-driven approach with a resulting loss of depth, coherence, and focus. In the early childhood field, this trend could undermine the use of appropriate, effective curriculum and teaching strategies. Finally, the K–12 experience has shown that even the best-designed standards have minimal benefit when there is minimal investment in professional development, high-quality assessment tools, program or school resources, and a well-financed education system.<sup>18</sup>

#### Benefits

Despite these cautions, past experience also suggests that under the right conditions early learning standards can create significant benefits for children's learning and development.<sup>19</sup> *Eager to Learn*,<sup>20</sup> *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*,<sup>21</sup> and other reports underscore young

children's great capacity to benefit from experiences that are challenging and achievable. Clear, research-based expectations for the content and desired results of early learning experiences can help focus curriculum and instruction, aiding teachers and families in providing appropriate, educationally beneficial opportunities for all children. These opportunities can, in turn, build children's school readiness and increase the likelihood of later positive outcomes.

Besides their potential benefits for young children, early learning standards may carry other advantages. The process of discussing what should be included in a standards document, or what is needed to implement standards, can build consensus about important educational outcomes and opportunities. Strong reciprocal relationships with families and with a wide professional community can be established through these discussions. Families can expand their understanding about their own children's development and about the skill development that takes place in early education settings, including learning through play and exploration. Teachers, too, can expand their understanding of families' and others' perspectives on how children learn.

Carefully developed early learning standards, linked to K–12 expectations, can also contribute to a more coherent, unified approach to children's education. Educators, families, and other community members see the connections between early learning opportunities and positive long-term outcomes. For example, they can see that standards emphasizing the value of conversations with toddlers are based on evidence that such conversations promote acquisition and expansion of vocabulary in preschool, which in turn predicts success in meeting reading standards in the early elementary grades.<sup>22</sup> Finally, a developmental continuum of standards, curriculum, and assessments, extending from the early years into later schooling, can support better transitions from infant/toddler care through preschool programs to kindergarten and into the primary grades, as teachers work within a consistent framework across educational settings.

### **Developmentally effective early learning standards: Essential features**

In order for early learning standards to have these benefits for young children and families, NAEYC and NAECS/SDE believe that four essential features must be in place:

- significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes
- informed, inclusive processes to develop and review the standards
- implementation and assessment strategies that are ethical and appropriate for young children
- strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families

Recommendations in each of these areas follow, with a brief rationale for each. NAEYC and NAECS/SDE have grounded these recommendations in a knowledge base that includes educational, developmental, and policy research; positions and other statements by our own and other organizations and agencies; and promising practices in a number of states.

### **1. Effective early learning standards emphasize significant developmentally appropriate content and outcomes.**

To be effective, early learning standards must explicitly incorporate (1) all domains of young children's development; (2) content and desired outcomes that have been shown to be significant for young children's development and learning; (3) knowledge of the characteristics, processes, and sequences of early learning and skill development; (4) appropriate, specific expectations related to children's ages or developmental levels; and (5) cultural, community, linguistic, and individual perspectives.

- *Effective early learning standards give emphasis to all domains of development and learning.*

Young children's development is strongly interconnected, with positive outcomes in one area relying on development in other domains. Therefore, early learning standards must address a wide range of domains—including cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and language development; motivation and approaches to learning; as well as discipline-specific domains including the arts, literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. Three recent early childhood reports from the National Research Council (*Preventing Reading Difficulties*,<sup>23</sup> *Eager to Learn*,<sup>24</sup> and *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*<sup>25</sup>) explicitly underscore this point.

K–12 standards have often focused on academic subject matter rather than including other domains. When standards give undue weight to only a few content areas while ignoring or lessening the importance of other areas, young children's well-being is jeopardized. Because research has emphasized how powerfully early social and emotional competence predicts school readiness and later success, and because good early environments help build this competence, this domain should

be given explicit attention in early learning standards.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, early learning standards must create and support expectations that promote children's learning in areas such as language, literacy, and mathematics,<sup>27</sup> which have at times been underemphasized or inappropriately taught.

- *The content and desired outcomes of early learning standards are meaningful and important to children's current well-being and later learning.*

In creating early learning standards, states and professional organizations must answer the "so what" question: What difference will this particular expectation make in children's lives? Standards developed for elementary and secondary education have varied in how well they address the issue of meaningfulness. Those standards that focus on the "big ideas" within domains or academic disciplines appear better able to support strong curriculum, high-quality assessments, and positive results for children.<sup>28</sup> Longitudinal research may provide guidance in selecting significant content for early learning standards—if a specific piece of learning appears to make little difference for children's current well-being or later outcomes, then it may not be worth attending to in a standards document.

- *Rather than relying on simplifications of standards for older children, the content and desired outcomes of effective early learning standards are based on research about the processes, sequences, and long-term consequences of early learning and development.*

Pressures to align standards with those in the K–12 system can influence standards for younger children in undesirable ways. For instance, working backward from standards for older children, some may reason that if the kindergarten standards say that 5-year-olds are expected to count to 20, then 4-year-olds should be expected to count to 10 and 3-year-olds to count to 5. This simplified approach to alignment contradicts developmental research consistently showing that earlier forms of a behavior may look very different from later forms.<sup>29</sup> One example is the finding that nonacademic strengths such as emotional competence<sup>30</sup> or positive "approaches to learning"<sup>31</sup> when children enter kindergarten are strong predictors of academic skills in later grades.

For these reasons, early learning standards should be built *forward*, from their earliest beginnings, rather than being simplified versions of standards for older children. The result will be more powerful content and more valid expectations for early learning and skill development. With this process, early learning standards do align with what comes later, but the connections are meaningful rather than mechanical and superficial.

- *Effective early learning standards create appropriate expectations by linking content and desired outcomes to specific ages or developmental periods.*

An especially challenging task is to determine how the expectations in early learning standards may best be linked to specific ages or developmental levels. When a standard is written to cover a wide age spectrum—for example, ages 3 through 6—adults may assume that the youngest children should be accomplishing the same things as the oldest children, leading to frustration both for the youngest children and for their teachers. Conversely, with such broad age ranges for standards, adults may also underestimate the capacities of older children, restricting the challenges offered to them.

Alternatives are available. Reports on standards development work from the U.S. Department of Education's Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)<sup>32</sup> recommend broadly written content standards but with specific grade-level benchmarks being used to describe year-by-year knowledge and skills related to a particular standard. Yet yearly age- or grade-level expectations may also ignore the wide developmental variability of young children who are the same age or in the same year in school, including children with disabilities. For early learning standards, then, a good approach may be to provide flexible descriptions of research-based learning trajectories or developmental continua, referring to but not tightly linked to age-related yearly accomplishments (as in NAEYC and the International Reading Association's joint position statement "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children"<sup>33</sup>).

- *The content of effective early learning standards, and expectations for children's mastery of the standards, must accommodate the variations—community, cultural, linguistic, and individual—that best support positive outcomes. To do so, early learning standards must encompass the widest possible range of children's life situations and experiences, including disabilities.*

Young children's learning is intimately connected to and dependent upon their cultures, languages, and communities. Research shows that there are wide cultural variations in the experiences and developmental pathways taken by young children, as well as in children's individual needs, including those of children with disabilities.<sup>34</sup> Early learning standards should be flexible enough to encourage teachers and other professionals to embed culturally and individually relevant experiences in the curriculum, creating adaptations that promote success for all children.

## 2. Effective early learning standards are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes.

The processes by which early learning standards are developed and reviewed contribute to their credibility and effectiveness. These processes should rely on appropriate expertise, stakeholder involvement, and regular evaluation and revision.

- *The process of developing and reviewing early learning standards relies on relevant, valid sources of expertise.*

Effective early learning standards are developed through a process that uses scientifically valid, relevant evidence to create and review expectations about content and desired outcomes for young children. A sound knowledge base of developmental and educational research exists, including syntheses recently published by the National Research Council,<sup>35</sup> as well as publications from national professional associations.<sup>36</sup> Over time, standards also require rigorous validation through studies demonstrating that the expectations in the standards do indeed predict positive developmental and learning outcomes.

- *The process of developing and reviewing early learning standards involves multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders may include community members, families, early childhood educators and special educators, and other professional groups. In all cases, those with specific expertise in early development and learning must be involved.*

The wide range of cultures, communities, settings, and life experiences within which young children are educated, the critical importance of families in early learning, and the educational significance of transitions into infant-toddler care, preschool, kindergarten, and beyond,<sup>37</sup> make it essential to engage many participants in developing and refining early learning standards. States and other groups must find effective ways to bring a wide range of stakeholders to the table, creating opportunities for dialogue between the public school community and others responsible for children's early learning.<sup>38</sup>

- *Once early learning standards have been developed, standards developers and relevant professional associations ensure that standards are shared with all stakeholders, creating multiple opportunities for discussion and exchange.*

Standards documents that just sit on shelves cannot be part of an effective early childhood system. Multiple sectors of the early childhood community (e.g., community child care, early intervention, family child care), as well as the K–3 community, families, and others committed to positive outcomes for young children, can de-

velop an understanding of how standards may be used effectively in early childhood education. This requires that standards be communicated in clear language. It also requires commitment from standards developers and from early childhood professional associations to create ongoing dialogue about early learning standards and their implications.

- *Early learning standards remain relevant and research based by using a systematic, interactive process for regular review and revision.*

The advancing knowledge base in education and child development, as well as changing community, state, and national priorities, require that standards be regularly reexamined using processes like those used in the standards' initial development. In addition, as K–12 standards are revised and revisited, standards for children below kindergarten age should be part of the process, so that expectations align meaningfully across the age and grade spectrums.

## 3. Early learning standards gain their effectiveness through implementation and assessment practices that support all children's development in ethical, appropriate ways.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in creating early learning standards is to establish valid, effective, ethically grounded systems of implementation, assessment, and accountability. In their joint position statement on curriculum and assessment,<sup>39</sup> NAEYC and NAECS/SDE offer detailed guidelines for the positive uses of child assessment, screening, and accountability systems. NAEYC's code of ethical conduct<sup>40</sup> provides further professional guidance. The recommendations that follow build on these position statements with specific focus on assessments that are linked to early learning standards.

- *Effective early learning standards require equally effective curriculum, classroom practices, and teaching strategies that connect with young children's interests and abilities, and that promote positive development and learning.*

Early learning standards describe the "what"—the content of learning and the outcomes to be expected—but they seldom describe the "how." While research does not support one best approach to teaching young children,<sup>41</sup> it consistently emphasizes the need for curriculum, educational practices, and teaching strategies that respond to children's needs and characteristics. Language-rich interactions and relationships with adults and peers; challenging, well-planned curriculum offering depth, focus, choice, engagement, investigation, and representation; teachers' active promotion of concept and skill development in meaningful contexts;

adaptations for children with disabilities and other special needs; an integrated approach to teaching and learning—these are just some of the components of the rich curriculum and repertoire of teaching strategies<sup>42</sup> that are essential to young children's learning.

• *Tools for assessing young children's progress must be clearly connected to important learning represented in the standards; must be technically, developmentally, and culturally valid; and must yield comprehensive, useful information.*

Assessment is an essential component of effective early childhood education,<sup>43</sup> and the development of appropriate assessments has long been a priority in the field. Appropriate assessment begins with a comprehensive understanding of what is to be assessed—in this case, the content and desired outcomes expressed in early learning standards. Broad, significant content cannot be assessed with narrow instruments. Beyond the important requirements of technical adequacy (reliability and validity), assessments must also be developmentally valid, including observations by knowledgeable adults in real-life early childhood contexts, with multiple, varied opportunities for assessment over time. Of special importance when developing standards-related assessments are the needs of culturally diverse children and children with disabilities. In addition, the information yielded by these assessments must be useful to practitioners and families. A number of states have intentionally addressed these critical assessment issues when developing their early learning standards.

Assessments that are developed or adopted to use with early learning standards should follow the same principles that have been articulated in the joint position statement of NAEYC and NAECS/SDE on curriculum and assessment<sup>44</sup> and by other professional groups such as the Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment convened by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Education Association (NEA), and the National Middle School Association (NMSA),<sup>45</sup> the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP),<sup>46</sup> the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME),<sup>47</sup> and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).<sup>48</sup>

Using instruments that were designed for older children to assess younger children's learning is unacceptable. Pulling poorly conceived assessments off the shelf to meet an immediate need, when these

assessments do not align meaningfully with the standards or with young children's characteristics, contradicts these expert recommendations. Such assessments yield developmentally, educationally, and culturally meaningless information. Assessments that are appropriate for young children, including classroom-based assessments, are available in all domains of development and learning and for a variety of specific assessment purposes. Professionals need not and cannot compromise assessment quality.

• *Information gained from assessments of young children's progress with respect to standards must be used to benefit children. Assessment and accountability systems should be used to improve practices and services and should not be used to rank, sort, or penalize young children.*

Professional associations are unanimous in stating that, whenever learning is assessed and whenever assessment results are reported, children must benefit from that assessment. These benefits can and should include improvements in curriculum and teaching practices, better developmental outcomes, greater engagement in learning, and access to special interventions and supports for those children who are having difficulty. The misuse of assessment and accountability systems has the potential to do significant educational and developmental harm to vulnerable young children. Children's failure to meet standards cannot be used to deny them services, to exclude them from beneficial learning opportunities, or to categorize them on the basis of a single test score.<sup>49</sup> For example, families should not be advised to keep a child out of kindergarten because a single test shows that their child has not met certain standards. Such misuses of standards-related assessments violate professional codes of ethical conduct.<sup>50</sup>

#### **4. Effective early learning standards require a foundation of support for early childhood programs, professionals, and families.**

Even the best standards for young children's learning will be ineffective unless early childhood programs themselves meet high standards, and unless programs, professionals, and families are strongly supported.

• *Research-based standards for early childhood programs, and adequate resources to support high-quality programs, build environments where early learning standards can be implemented effectively.*

Research has identified the kinds of early environments and relationships that promote positive outcomes for children.<sup>51</sup> Using this knowledge, national accreditation systems such as that of NAEYC<sup>52</sup> define

and assess early childhood program quality. In creating a system of standards for early education, a few states have begun by developing program standards before turning to content or performance standards for young children, believing that clear expectations and supports for program quality are an essential first step.

- *Significant expansion of professional development is essential if all early childhood teachers and administrators are to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to implement early learning standards.*

Well-educated, knowledgeable, and caring teachers are the key to positive outcomes for children.<sup>53</sup> Efforts to create early learning standards must be accompanied by in-depth professional development, coaching, and mentoring for teachers, administrators, and teacher educators—not just about the standards themselves, but also about the appropriate curriculum, teaching strategies, relationships, and assessment tools that together make up a systematic approach to improving outcomes for all children.

- *Early learning standards will have the most positive effects if families—key partners in young children’s learning—are provided with respectful communication and support.*

Families’ hopes and expectations play a critically important role in early development.<sup>54</sup> Families and

other community members also provide many of the experiences and relationships needed for young children’s success. Any effort to develop and implement shared expectations or standards for early learning will be more successful if families are well supported as part of the process.

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## Conclusion

This position statement is subtitled “Creating the Conditions for Success.” In describing the four conditions under which effective early learning standards can be developed and implemented, NAEYC and NAECS/SDE set forth significant challenges to states, professional groups, and the early childhood field. Important, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes; informed, inclusive processes for standards development and review; standards implementation and assessment practices that promote positive development; strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families—each of these requires substantial commitment of effort and resources. Shortcuts are tempting. Yet when these conditions are met, early learning standards will contribute to a more focused, responsive, and effective system of education for all young children.

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## APPENDIX

### Developing a joint position statement from NAEYC and NAECS/SDE: Background and processes

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#### Background

In July 2000, NAEYC’s Governing Board voted to give focused attention to early learning standards, as a high priority issue for the organization. Following Board discussions and dialogue at several conference sessions, NAEYC’s Governing Board decided to develop a position statement articulating principles or criteria for developing, adopting, and using early learning standards. NAEYC’s long history of collaboration with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education quickly led to a decision by both organizations to create a joint position statement.

#### Developing the position statement

The processes used to develop the position statement have been collaborative, beginning with the establishment of a joint working group and an invitation to multiple stakeholder organizations and experts to help identify the key issues that the position statement should address. Conference sessions and e-mail distribution to the organizations’ members, other groups, and individuals with special expertise were used to seek feedback on drafts of the position statement. After further input and revisions, NAEYC’s Governing Board and the membership of NAECS/SDE voted to approve the position statement on November 19, 2002.

## ENDNOTES

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