Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

Effective early childhood educators are critical for realizing the early childhood profession's vision that each and every young child, birth through age 8, have equitable access to high-quality learning and care environments. As such, there is a core body of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively promote the development, learning, and well-being of all young children.

A Position Statement Held on Behalf of the Early Childhood Education Profession

Professional Standards and Competencies
for Early Childhood Educators

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Developing the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

In 2017, the Power to the Profession Task Force began an extensive process to review the range of the field's existing standards and competencies and establish a process for arriving at a set of agreed-upon standards and competencies for the early childhood education profession, working birth through age 8 across states, settings, and degree levels. This work included a deep look at multiple national standards and competencies; following a deliberative decision-making process, it resulted in the Task Force recommendation that the 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs be explicitly positioned as the foundation for the standards and competencies of the unified early childhood education profession.

At the same time, the Task Force set four specific conditions and expectations for the revision of the NAEYC professional preparation standards. These included an expectation that the standards would be reviewed in light of the most recent science, research, and evidence; it gave particular consideration to potential missing elements identified in the *Transforming the Workforce* report, including teaching subject-matter specific content, addressing stress and adversity, fostering socio-emotional development, working with dual language learners, and integrating technology in curricula. To revise the standards, and respond to these and other expectations, including the expectation that the revisions would occur in the context of an inclusive and collaborative process, a workgroup was convened in January 2018. The workgroup comprised the Early Learning Systems Committee of the NAEYC Governing Board, early childhood practitioners, researchers, faculty, and subject-matter experts, including individuals representing organizations whose competency documents were considered, referenced, and used to inform the revisions. The organizations included the following Task Force members: the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Early Childhood; the Council for Professional Recognition; and ZERO TO THREE.

In September 2018, the workgroup released the first public draft of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. This was followed by an extensive public comment period and months of intensive work to release the second public draft for needed feedback and guidance from the field, higher education, and others. The second public draft of the competencies, which included a first draft of the leveling of the competencies to ECE I, II, and III, was open from May to July 2019.

The second comment period was followed by extensive rewriting, supported by a group of experts drawn from preparation programs at ECE levels I, II, and III. The result was a third public draft focused solely on the leveling, which was open from October to November 2019. Ultimately, the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, leveled and aligned to ECE Levels I, II, and III, are being released in conjunction with the full *Unifying Framework*.

This excerpt is adapted from the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*.

Message from the NAEYC Governing Board

The NAEYC Governing Board is deeply honored to hold the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* ("*Professional Standards and Competencies*") on behalf of the early childhood education profession.

In response to the Power to the Profession (P2P) Task Force's 2018 decision to name the 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (a NAEYC position statement) as the foundation for the standards and competencies for the unified early childhood education profession, the Governing Board seriously considered and responded to the attendant conditions and expectations. The revisions process is outlined in detail on the opposing page, and we are deeply grateful to all of the Governing Board members, P2P Task Force members, early childhood practitioners, researchers, faculty, state agency personnel, national and state organizations, and subject-matter experts for their extensive engagement, feedback, and guidance.

Given that the Professional Standards and Competencies were developed by and are intended for the early childhood education field, and need to be adopted and used by practitioners, states, professional preparation programs, employers, and others, NAEYC has updated the name of the standards. The Governing Board agreed to this because we believe it is critical for all of us in this profession to own and use these standards and competencies to guide our work.

While it is the members of the early childhood education profession who, with support from professional preparation programs, state systems, and others, are responsible for implementing the Professional Standards and Competencies, the NAEYC Governing Board commits to uphold its responsibilities as the holder of the competencies and its intellectual property to ensure that the competencies are faithfully and appropriately utilized and that all future revisions occur through an inclusive process that engages the early childhood field across states and settings.

With gratitude to our profession for doing the hard work of defining and leveling the core standards and competencies for all early childhood educators,

Amy O'Leary
President, NAEYC Governing Board

Elisa Huss-Hage
Chair, Early Learning Systems Committee
of the Governing Board

Introduction

This update to the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation responds to the charge from the Power to the Profession (P2P) Task Force to create nationally agreed-upon professional competencies (knowledge, understanding, abilities, and skills) for early childhood educators. As such, it revises the NAEYC 2009 position statement "Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation" and expands the intent of the standards and competencies to allow their application across the early childhood field, including professional preparation programs, professional development systems, licensure, and professional evaluations. It places diversity and equity at the center and responds to the critical competencies identified in *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, the seminal 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council.

This update levels the standards to the scope of practice for each early childhood educator designation recommended in the *Unifying Framework for Early Childhood Education Profession* established by Power to the Profession: ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III. For clarity, see Appendix A, "Leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies." This document also lays out recommendations for implementation of the standards for multiple stakeholders in the early childhood education field.

Details about the context in which the updated standards were developed and the history of NAEYC's professional preparation standards can be found in Appendices B and E.

Relationship of Five Foundational Position Statements

This position statement is one of five foundational documents NAEYC has developed in collaboration with the early childhood education field. While its specific focus is on defining the core standards and competencies for early childhood educators, this statement complements and reinforces the other four foundational documents, which do the following:

› Define Developmentally Appropriate Practice

› Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education

› Define the profession's Code of Ethical Conduct

› Outline Standards for Early Learning Programs

NAEYC's Foundational Documents

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards

Code of Ethical Conduct

Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education
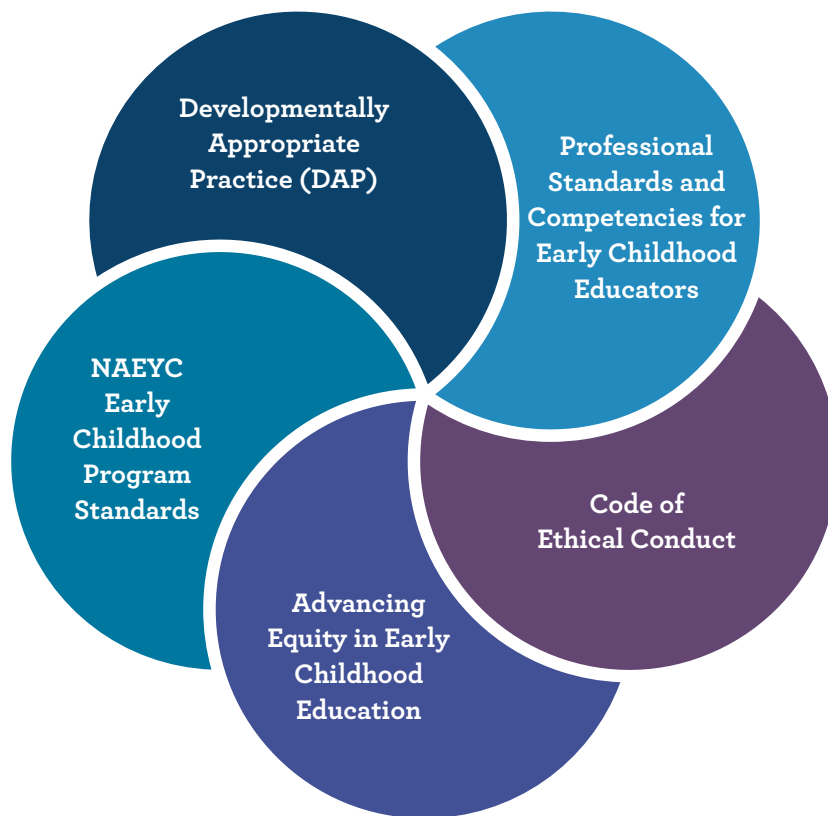
These foundational statements are grounded in NAEYC's core values, which emphasize diversity and inclusion and respect the dignity and worth of each individual. The statements are built upon a growing body of research and professional knowledge that underscores the complex and critical ways in which early childhood educators promote early learning through relationships— with children, families, and colleagues—that are embedded in a broader societal context of inequities in which implicit and explicit biases are pervasive.

The early childhood educator professional preparation standards herein are aligned with the five broad categories of educators' decision-making described in depth in the developmentally appropriate practice position statement:

❯ Using knowledge of child development and learning in context to create a caring community of learners (Standard 1)

❯ Engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families and fostering community connections (Standard 2)

❯ Observing, documenting, and assessing children's development and learning (Standard 3)

❯ Teaching to enhance each child's development and learning (Standard 4)

❯ Understanding and using content areas to plan and implement an engaging curriculum designed to meet goals that are important and meaningful for children, families, and the community in the present as well as the future (Standard 5)

The key elements of Standard 6, "Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator," pull forward the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that early childhood educators need in order to make decisions that exemplify ethical, intentional, and reflective professional judgment and practice.

Early childhood as an interdisciplinary, collaborative, and systems-oriented profession

Effective early childhood education and the promotion of children's positive development and learning in the early years call for a strongly interdisciplinary and systems-oriented approach. By its nature, the early childhood field is, and historically has been, interdisciplinary. That is, early childhood educators need to integrate knowledge of all aspects of child development—content in academic disciplines, early intervention programs, and other programs for young children—and draw on knowledge from other disciplines, including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, special education, bilingual education, family dynamics, mental health, and multiple other approaches to the comprehensive well-being of young children and their families. An interdisciplinary, systems-oriented perspective is essential if professionals, particularly as they advance in their practice, are to integrate multiple sources of knowledge into a coherent approach to their work.

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Purpose

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 8, across all early learning settings. It articulates a vision of sustained excellence for early childhood educators. The statement has been intentionally developed not only to guide the preparation and practice of the early childhood education profession but also to be used by others in the early childhood field. It is intended to serve as the core early childhood educator standards and competencies for the field, a document that states can use to develop their own more-detailed standards and competencies that address their specific contexts. Ideally, the field will use this position statement to align critical professional and policy structures, including the following:

› State licensing for early childhood educators

› State and national early childhood educator credentials and related qualification recommendations or requirements

› Curriculum in professional preparation programs

› Articulation agreements between various levels and types of professional preparation programs

› National accreditation of early childhood professional preparation programs

› State approval of early childhood educator professional preparation programs and professional development training programs

› Expectations for educator competencies in early learning program settings through job descriptions and performance evaluation tools

The Position

Effective early childhood educators are critical for realizing the early childhood profession's vision that each and every young child, birth through age 8, have equitable access to high-quality learning and care environments. As such, there is a core body of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively promote the development, learning, and well-being of all young children. These are captured in the next section, "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators." These standards will be updated regularly to respond to new developments in the early childhood field, new research, and changing social and policy contexts.

These standards and competencies are informed by

› Research and practice that advance our understanding of what early childhood educators need to know and be able to do

› Early childhood standards as well as educator standards from other professional organizations

› The current context of the early childhood workforce and higher education

› The imperatives from the *Unifying Framework* developed through Power to the Profession

Input from a broad-based workgroup (see Appendix F) and the early childhood field underpins the updated standards and competencies.

Design and Structure

Comprehensive, not exhaustive: These standards and competencies represent the core domains of knowledge and practice required of every early childhood educator, and they 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 educate and care for young children. For preparation programs, certification/licensure bodies, accrediting bodies, state early childhood career ladders, educator evaluation systems, and such, the competencies may be expanded, as needed, to address specific state and local contexts and to include more discrete competencies.

Aligned with the responsibilities of early childhood educators: The standards and competencies align with the early childhood education responsibilities designated by the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession ("Unifying Framework") developed through Power to the Profession:

› Planning and implementing intentional, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences that promote the social and 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 (Standards 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)

› Engaging in reflective practice and continuous learning (Standard 6)

Aligned with InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: Early childhood educators work in concert with the rest of the birth through grade 12 teaching workforce. As such, the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators are aligned with the larger education field's understanding of effective teaching, as expressed through the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards.

Integrated content: Diversity, equity, inclusive practices, and the integration of technology and interactive media do not have separate standards; rather, these important content areas are elevated and integrated in the context of each standard. Included in each standard and its associated key competencies are examples of how the content areas apply to early childhood educators working with particular age bands of children—infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary age children. Whether or not examples are found in a competency, though, the intention is that every competency applies across the birth through age 8 continuum.

Intentionally higher-level language: The language used in the standards and competencies is based in the science of human learning and development and reflects the technical language of research and evidence used in the early childhood profession. In their preparation, early childhood educators will be introduced to the terminology and concepts found throughout this document.

Simplified structure: The major domains of competencies are captured in six core standards. Each standard describes in a few sentences what early childhood educators need to know and be able to do. It is important to note, then, that the expectation is not just that early childhood educators know something about child development and the science of effective learning—the expectation is more specific and complex. Each standard comprises three to five key competencies to clarify its 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. A supporting explanation tied to each key competency describes how **candidates** demonstrate that competency.

Leveling of the standards and competencies to ECE I, II, and III: The recommendations in the *Unifying Framework* lay out three designations with associated scopes of practice for early childhood educators–ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III. Appendix A serves as a guide for the profession in articulating expectations for mastery of the standards and competencies at each level.

To find the resources listed in the Introduction and the following standards and competencies, please see Appendix D.

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators: Summary

STANDARD 1

Child Development and Learning in Context

Early childhood educators (a) are grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across developmental domains. They (b) understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations. Early childhood educators (c) understand that children learn and develop within relationships and within multiple contexts, including families, cultures, languages, communities, and society. They (d) use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions about how to carry out their responsibilities.

1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.

1b: Understand and value each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and with the capacity to make choices.

1c: Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur in multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning setting, as well as in a larger societal context that includes structural inequities.

1d: Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.

STANDARD 2

Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

Early childhood educators understand that successful early childhood education depends upon educators' partnerships with the families of the young children they serve. They (a) know about, understand, and value the diversity in family characteristics. Early childhood educators (b) use this understanding to create respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships with families and to engage with them as partners in their young children's development and learning. They (c) use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support children's families, and they build connections between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies.

2a: Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.

2b: Collaborate as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.

2c: Use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support families, and build partnerships between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies.

STANDARD 3

Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

Early childhood educators (a) understand that the primary purpose of assessments is to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings. They (b) know how to use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools. Early childhood educators (c) use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, ability, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. In partnership with families and professional colleagues, early childhood educators (d) use assessments to document individual children's progress and, based on the findings, to plan learning experiences.

3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.

3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.

3c: Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.

3d: Build assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues.

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 and characteristics and on the settings in which teaching and learning occur. They (a) understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. They (b) understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child. Early childhood educators (c) use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.

4a: Understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of early childhood educators' work with young children.

4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills are critical for young children.

4c: Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.

STANDARD 5

Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum

Early childhood educators have knowledge of the content of the academic disciplines (e.g., language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, social studies, science, technology and engineering, physical education) and of the pedagogical methods for teaching each discipline. They (a) understand the central concepts, the methods and tools of inquiry, and the structures in each academic discipline. Educators (b) understand pedagogy, including how young children learn and process information in each discipline, the learning trajectories for each discipline, and how teachers use this knowledge to inform their practice They (c) apply this knowledge using early learning standards and other resources to make decisions about spontaneous and planned learning experiences and about curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that learning will be stimulating, challenging, and meaningful to each child.

5a: Understand content knowledge—the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, and structure—and resources for the academic disciplines in an early childhood curriculum.

5b: Understand pedagogical content knowledge—how young children learn in each discipline—and how to use the teacher knowledge and practices described in Standards 1 through 4 to support young children's learning in each content area.

5c: Modify teaching practices by applying, expanding, integrating, and updating their content knowledge in the disciplines, their knowledge of curriculum content resources, and their pedagogical content knowledge.

STANDARD 6

Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Early childhood educators (a) identify and participate as members of the early childhood profession. They serve as informed advocates for young children, for the families of the children in their care, and for the early childhood profession. They (b) know and use ethical guidelines and other early childhood professional guidelines. They (c) have professional communication skills that effectively support their relationships and work young children, families, and colleagues. Early childhood educators (d) are continuous, collaborative learners who (e) develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

6a: Identify and involve themselves with the early childhood field and serve as informed advocates for young children, families, and the profession.

6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.

6c: Use professional communication skills, including technology-mediated strategies, to effectively support young children's learning and development and to work with families and colleagues.

6d: Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice.

6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

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 contexts and other influences on individual development and the ability to build respectful reciprocal relationships with families and communities

> The use of observation and assessment to learn what works for each child and for young children as a community learning together

> The use of a repertoire of appropriate pedagogical practices

> Early childhood curriculum

> The application of professional knowledge, disposition, and ethics

To deepen their understanding of and ability to navigate complex situations, early childhood educators develop a habit of reflective practice, including integrating their knowledge and practices across all six standards in order to create optimal learning environments, design and implement curricula, use and refine instructional strategies, and interact with children and families whose language, race, ethnicity, culture, and social and economic status may be very different from educators' own backgrounds. It is this knowledge and practice that will allow teachers 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.

STANDARD 1

Child Development and Learning in Context

Early childhood educators (a) are grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across developmental domains. They (b) understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations. Early childhood educators (c) understand that children learn and develop within relationships and within multiple contexts, including families, cultures, languages, communities, and society. They (d) use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions about how to carry out their responsibilities.

Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development. Early childhood educators base their practice on the profession's current understanding of the developmental progressions and trajectories of children birth through age 8 and on generally accepted principles of child development and learning. They are familiar with current research on the processes and trajectories of child development, and they are aware of the need for ongoing research and theory building that includes multicultural and international perspectives.

Educators consider multiple sources of evidence (e.g., research, observations from practice, professional resources) to expand their understanding of child development and learning. Their foundational knowledge across multiple interrelated areas encompasses the physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development; early brain development, including executive function; and the development of learning motivation and life skills. They understand the roles of biology and environment; the importance of interactions and relationships; the critical role of play; and the impact of protective factors as well as the impact of stress and adversity on young children's development and learning. They know and can discuss the theoretical perspectives and research that ground this knowledge and continue to shape it.

1b: Understand and value each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, and approaches to learning, and with the capacity to make choices. Early childhood educators learn about each child through observation, open-ended questions, conversations, reflections on children's work and play, and reciprocal communication with children's families. They understand that developmental variations among children are normal, that each child's progress will vary across domains and disciplines, and that some children will need individualized supports for identified developmental delays or disabilities.

1c: Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur in multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning setting, as well as in a larger societal context that includes structural inequities. Early childhood educators know that young children's learning and identity are shaped and supported by their close relationships with and attachments to adults and peers and by the cultural identities, languages, values, and traditions of their families and communities. Early childhood educators know that young children are developing multiple social identities that include race, language, culture, class, and gender, among others. Educators recognize the benefits to children of growing up as bilingual/multilingual individuals and the importance of supporting the development of children's home languages.

Early childhood educators understand that all children and families are widely impacted by society's persistent structural inequities related to race, language, gender, social and economic class, immigration status, and other characteristics, which can have long-term effects on children's learning and development. They know that young children are more likely than any other age group to live in poverty, and they understand how poverty and income inequality impact children's development. Early childhood educators understand how trauma and stress experienced by young children and their families, such as violence, abuse, serious illness and injury, separation from home and family, war, and natural disasters, can impact young children's learning and development.

Early childhood educators also understand that early childhood programs are communities of learners that have the potential for long-term influence on children's lives. They recognize the role that early education plays in young children's short- and long-term physical, social, emotional, and psychological health and its potential as a protective factor in children's lives. They understand that they as early childhood educators, along with the social and cultural contexts of early learning settings, influence the delivery of young children's education and care.

1d **Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.** To support each child and build a caring community of children and adults learning together, early childhood educators engage in continuous decision making by integrating their knowledge of the following three aspects of child development: (a) principles, processes, and trajectories of early childhood development and learning; (b) individual variations in children's development and learning; and (c) children's development and learning in different contexts. Teachers apply this knowledge across all six standards presented here, as they build relationships with children, families, and communities; conduct and use child assessments; select and reflect upon their teaching practices; develop and implement curricula; and think about their own development as professional early childhood educators. In doing so, they create learning environments that are safe, healthy, respectful, culturally and linguistically responsive, supportive, and challenging for each young child by

› Promoting children's physical and psychological health, safety, and sense of security

› Demonstrating respect for each child as a feeling, thinking individual and respect for each child's culture, home language, individual abilities, family context, and community

› Building on the cultural and linguistic assets that each child brings to the early learning setting

› Communicating their belief in children's ability to learn through play, spontaneous activities, and guided investigations, helping all children understand and make meaning from their experiences

› Constructing group and individual learning experiences that are both challenging and supportive and by applying their knowledge of child development to provide scaffolds that make learning achievable and that stretch experiences for each child, including children with special abilities, disabilities, or developmental delays.

STANDARD 2

Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

Early childhood educators understand that successful early childhood education depends upon educators' partnerships with the families of the young children they serve. They (a) know about, understand, and value the diversity in family characteristics. Early childhood educators (b) use this understanding to create respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships with families and to engage with them as partners in their young children's development and learning. They (c) use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support children's families, and they build connections between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies.

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Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

2a: **Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.** Early childhood educators understand that each family is unique. They know about the role of parents (or those serving in the parental role) and about family development, the diversity of families and communities, and the many influences on families and communities. Early childhood educators have a knowledge base in family theory and research and the ways that various factors create the home context in young children's lives: social and economic conditions; diverse family structures, cultures and relationships; family strengths, needs and stressors; and home language and cultural values. They recognize that families who share similar socioeconomic and racial and/or ethnic backgrounds are not monolithic but are diverse in and of themselves. Early childhood educators understand how to build on family assets and strengths.

2b: **Collaborate as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.** Early childhood educators take primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining respectful and reciprocal relationships with children's families and other caregivers; they work with them to support young children's positive development both inside and outside the early learning setting. Teachers learn with and from families, recognizing and drawing on families' expertise about their children for insight into curriculum, program development, and assessment. Early childhood educators strive to honor families' preferences, values, childrearing practices, and goals when making decisions about young children's development and care. They share information with families about their children in ways that families can understand and use at home, using families' preferred communication methods and home languages as much as possible.

When collaborating with families, early childhood educators employ a variety of communication methods and engagement skills, including informal conversations when parents pick up and drop off children, more formal conversations in teacher–family conference settings, and reciprocal technology-mediated communications, such as phone calls, texting, or emails. They help families and children with transitions at home, such as adapting to a new sibling, and with transitions to new services, programs, classrooms, grades, or schools. Early childhood educators reflect on their own values and potential biases in order to make professional decisions that affirm each family's culture and language(s) (including dialects) and that demonstrate respect for various family structures and beliefs about parenting.

2c: **Use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support families, and build partnerships between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies.** Early childhood educators demonstrate knowledge about a variety of community resources and use them to support young children's learning and development and families' well-being. These might include community cultural resources, mental health services, early childhood special education and early intervention services, health care organizations, housing resources, adult education classes, adult courses in English as a second language, translation/interpretation services, and economic assistance resources. Educators help families to find high-quality resources and to partner with other early childhood experts (e.g., speech pathologists, school counselors), as needed, to support young children's development and learning.

Regardless of their own work settings, all early childhood educators contribute to building respectful, reciprocal partnerships with the various early learning programs and schools in their communities, as well as with community organizations and agencies, through activities such as sharing information about or organizing visits to libraries or museums, participating in community events, visiting fire houses, helping children get to know their neighborhood, and partnering with other programs and schools to support child and family confidence and continuity during transitions.

Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

Early childhood educators (a) understand that the primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings. They (b) know how to use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools. Early childhood educators (c) use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, ability, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. Early childhood educators (d) build assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues.

Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings. Early childhood educators understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. They are close observers of children. Educators understand that assessment is a positive tool that can build continuity in young children's development and learning experiences. They understand that effective, evidence-based teaching is informed by thoughtful, ongoing systematic observation and documentation of each child's learning progress, qualities, strengths, interests, and needs. They understand the importance of using assessments that are consistent with and connected to appropriate learning goals, curricula, and teaching strategies for individual young children. Early childhood educators understand the essentials of authentic and strengths-based assessment—such as age-appropriate approaches and culturally relevant assessment in a language the child understands and assessment that is conducted by a speaker of the child's home language—for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades across developmental domains and curriculum areas.

3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools. Early childhood educators are familiar with a variety of formative, summative, qualitative, and standardized assessments. They know a wide range of formal and informal observation methods, documentation strategies, screening tools, and other appropriate resources, including technologies that facilitate assessments and approaches to assessing young children that help teachers plan experiences that scaffold children's learning. Early childhood educators understand the strengths and limitations of each assessment method and tool. They understand the components of the assessment cycle and concepts of assessment validity and reliability as well as the importance of systematic observations, interpreting those observations, and reflecting on observations' significance for and impact on their teaching.

3c: Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. Educators embed assessment-related activities in the curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice. They create and take advantage of unplanned opportunities to observe young children in play and in spontaneous conversations and interactions as well as in adult-structured assessment contexts. Early childhood educators analyze data from a variety of assessment tools and use the data appropriately to inform teaching practices and to set learning and developmental goals for young children.

They understand assessment issues and resources, including technology, related to identifying and supporting young children with differing abilities, including children whose learning is advanced, those who are bilingual or multilingual learners, and children with developmental delays or disabilities. They seek assistance, when needed, on how to assess a particular child. This might mean reaching out to colleagues who can bring new understanding, experience, or perspective related to child and family ethnicity, culture, or language. For example, a bilingual colleague may be better prepared to successfully observe a child's receptive and expressive language skills, social interaction skills, and emerging reading skills in both the child's home language and second language.

Early childhood educators know about 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 young children, educators are aware of the limitations of the available assessments. When not given the autonomy to create or select developmentally appropriate, authentic assessments due to the setting's policies, such as the use of standardized, normative assessments in pre-K through grade 3 settings, early childhood educators exercise professional judgment and work

to minimize the adverse impact of inappropriate assessments on young children and on instructional practices. They use developmental screenings to bring resources and supports to children and families and to avoid excluding children from educational programs and services. They advocate for and practice asset-based approaches to assessment and to the use of assessment information.

Early childhood educators use assessment practices that reflect knowledge of legal and ethical issues, including confidentiality and the use of current professional practices related to equity issues. In order to ensure fairness in their assessments of young children, early childhood educators consider the potential for implicit bias in their assessments, their findings, and the use of their findings in creating plans for supporting young children's learning and development.

3d: Build assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues. Early childhood educators partner with families and with other professionals to implement authentic asset-based assessments and to develop individualized goals, curriculum plans, and instructional practices that meet the needs of each child. They recognize the assessment process as collaborative and open, and they benefit from shared analyses and use of assessment results while respecting confidentiality and following other professional guidelines. They encourage self-assessment in children as appropriate, helping children to think about their own interests, goals, and accomplishments.

Early childhood educators particularly ensure that assessment results and the planning based on those results are conveyed using jargon-free explanations that are easily understood by families, teaching teams, and colleagues from other disciplines. Teachers recognize that their responsibility is to identify, but not diagnose, children who have the potential for a developmental delay or disability or for advanced learning. They know when to refer families for further assessment by colleagues with specialized knowledge in a relevant area. Early childhood educators participate as professional partners in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) teams for children birth to age 3 and in Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams for children ages 3 through 8.

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 and characteristics and on the settings in which teaching and learning occur. They (a) understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. They (b) understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child. Early childhood educators (c) use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.

Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

4a: Understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of early childhood educators' work with young children. They understand that all teaching and learning are facilitated by caring relationships and that children's lifelong dispositions for learning, self-confidence, and approaches to learning are formed in early childhood. When working with young children, early childhood educators 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.

They know that how young children expect to be treated and how they treat others is significantly shaped in the early learning setting. Early childhood educators understand that each child brings his or her own experiences, knowledge, interests, motivations, abilities, culture, and language to the early learning setting and that part of the educator's role is to build a classroom culture that respects and builds on this reality (Standard 1). They develop responsive, reciprocal relationships with individual babies, toddlers, and preschoolers and with young children in early school grades. As such, teaching practices might include

❯ Integrating informal child observation throughout various routines and activities in the day and using those observations to learn about each child's strengths, challenges, and interests to guide

teachers' decisions about teaching strategies and curriculum implementation; and to build positive relationships with each child and between children

❯ Providing a secure, consistent, responsive relationship as a safe base from which young children can explore and tackle challenging problems and can develop self-regulation, social and emotional skills, independence, responsibility, perspective-taking skills, and cooperative learning skills to manage or regulate their expressions of emotion and, over time, to cope with frustration, develop resilience, learn to take on challenges, and manage impulses effectively

❯ Integrating young children's home languages and cultures into the environment and curriculum through materials, music, visual arts, dance, literature, and storytelling

4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills are critical for young children. Early childhood educators understand that teaching young children requires teaching skills and strategies that are responsive to and appropriate for individual children's ages, development, and characteristics and the social and cultural family contexts in which they live. They understand that differentiating instruction based on professional judgment about individual children or groups of young children—including children who use multiple

languages or dialects, children whose learning is advanced, and children who have developmental delays or disabilities in order to help them meet important goals is at the heart of developmentally appropriate practice.

Early childhood teachers understand the importance of both self-directed play and guided play, as well as the role of inquiry, in young children's learning and development across domains and in the academic curriculum. Early childhood educators are familiar with the types of play (e.g., solitary, parallel, social, cooperative, onlooker, fantasy, physical, constructive) and with strategies to extend learning through play across the full age and grade span of early education. They understand that play helps young children develop symbolic and imaginative thinking, peer relationships, language (both English and the home language), physical skills, and problem-solving skills.

Early childhood educators understand the importance of helping children develop executive function and life skills, including ability to focus, self-regulation, perspective taking, critical thinking, communicating, remembering, making connections, taking on challenges, cooperating, resolving conflicts, solving problems, moving toward independence, feeling confident, planning, and participating in self-directed, engaged learning in early childhood. They know that these skills are developed through supportive, scaffolded interactions with adults and are critical for school readiness and ongoing success. Early childhood educators know about learning and diverse motivation theories, environmental design, instructional design, and the appropriate and intentional use of technology and interactive media to enhance and improve access to learning.

As such, teaching practices might include

> Differentiating instructional practices to respond to the individual strengths, needs, abilities, social identity, home culture, home language, interests, motivations, temperament, and positive and adverse experiences of each child

> Setting challenging and achievable goals for each child across physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains; helping children set their own goals, as appropriate; and adjusting support to scaffold and/or extend young children's learning

> Stimulating and extending multiple forms of play as part of young children's learning to help them develop symbolic and imaginative thinking, peer relationships, social skills, language, creative movement, and problem-solving skills; play would include imitative play and social referencing in babies; solitary, parallel, social, cooperative, onlooker, fantasy, physical, and constructive play in toddlers, with increasing complexity and skills in preschool and early grades

4c: **Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.** Educators apply knowledge about ages, abilities, cultures, languages, interests, and experiences of individual and groups of young children in making 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. All decisions about and use of instructional approaches and the learning environment are grounded in and promote positive, caring, and supportive relationships with and between young children.

While not exhaustive, the repertoire of practices to draw upon across the birth-through-age-8 early childhood period includes those addressed in 4a and 4b as well as the following practices:

Creating the physical and social environments

> Arranging indoor and outdoor environments that are physically and emotionally safe

> Using consistent schedules and predictable routines as part of the curriculum

> Providing time, space, and materials to encourage child-initiated play and risk taking and allowing children space to roll, crawl, run, jump, exercise, and engage in both fine and gross motor activities

> Designing teaching and learning environments that adhere to the principles of universal design for learning by incorporating a variety of ways for young children to gain access to the curriculum content, offering multiple teaching strategies to actively engage children, and including a range of formats to enable all children to respond and demonstrate what they know and have learned

- Selecting materials and arranging the indoor and outdoor environments to create social and private spaces, offer restful and active spaces, designate spaces for fine and gross motor development, and create learning centers to stimulate inquiry, problem solving, practice, and exploration in foundational concepts in each curriculum area

- Using interactive media and technology with young children in ways that are appropriate for individuals and the group, that are integrated into the curriculum, that provide equitable access, and that engage children in problem solving, creative play, and interactions as well as expanding their digital communication and information capabilities in a safe and secure manner

- Using the environment and the curriculum to stimulate a wide range of interests and abilities in children of all genders, avoiding the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and countering sexism and gender bias

- Engaging children as co-constructors of the environment to help them express and represent their interests and understandings, care for and take joy in nature, and develop positive approaches to learning, participating in school, and building relationships with peers and teachers

Advancing academic knowledge

- Integrating informal child observation throughout various routines and activities in the day and using those observations to inform decisions about teaching strategies and curriculum implementation

- Integrating early childhood curriculum content into projects, play, and other learning activities that reflect the specific interests of each child or of groups of children to help them make meaning of curriculum content and to incorporate playful learning from infancy through the early grades

- Engaging in genuine, reciprocal conversations with children; eliciting and exploring children's ideas; asking questions that probe and stimulate children's thinking, understanding, theory-building, and shared construction of meaning; encouraging and affirming young children's self-expression while respecting various modes of communication; fostering oral language and communication skills; modeling desired behaviors and language; and providing early literacy experiences both in English and in children's home languages

Providing social and emotional support and positive guidance

- Responding to stress, adversity, and trauma in young children's lives by providing consistent daily routines, learning the calming strategies that work best for individual children, anticipating individual children's difficult experiences and offering comfort and guidance during those experiences, supporting the development of self-regulation and trust, and seeking help from colleagues, as needed

- Using varied approaches to positive guidance strategies for individual children and groups, such as supporting transitions between activities, modeling kindness and respect, providing clear rules and predictable routines, directing and redirecting behavior, and scaffolding peer conflict resolution to help children learn skills for regulating themselves, resolving problems, developing empathy, trusting in early childhood educators, and developing positive attitudes about school

Using culturally and linguistically relevant anti-bias teaching strategies

- Becoming aware of implicit biases and working with colleagues and families to use positive and supportive guidance strategies for all children to help them navigate multiple home and school cultural codes, norms, and expectations and to prevent suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary measures that disproportionately affect young children of color

- Incorporating accurate age-appropriate and individually appropriate and relevant information about ethnic, racial, social and economic, gender, language, religious, and LGBTQ+ groups in curriculum and instruction

- Confronting and teaching about racism and other -isms as they arise in the classroom and on the playground and addressing biases and stereotypes in books and other resources used in the classroom in ways that are developmentally appropriate for toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades

- Using the home languages of children, as appropriate, in the classroom to help them learn the content at the same level as their English-speaking peers and to allow them to use all of their linguistic assets to learn, and differentiating instruction for dual language learners to ensure they learn the content while they are learning English

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Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum

Early childhood educators have knowledge of the content of the academic disciplines (e.g., language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, social studies, science, technology and engineering, physical education) and of the pedagogical methods for teaching each discipline. They (a) understand the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, and structures in each academic discipline. Educators (b) understand pedagogy, including how young children learn and process information in each discipline, the learning trajectories for each discipline, and how teachers use this knowledge to inform their practice. They (c) apply this knowledge using early learning standards and other resources to make decisions about spontaneous and planned learning experiences and about curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that learning will be stimulating, challenging, and meaningful to each child.

Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

5a: Understand content knowledge—the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, and structure—and resources for the academic disciplines in an early childhood curriculum. Early childhood educators know how to continuously update and expand their own knowledge and skills, turning to the standards of professional organizations in each content area and relying on sound resources for their own development, for curriculum development, and for selection of materials for young children in the following disciplines.

Early childhood educators understand that

› Language and literacy learning are foundational not just for success in school but for lifelong success in communication, self-expression, understanding of the perspectives of others, socialization, self-regulation, and citizenship. Early childhood educators know that listening, speaking, reading, writing, storytelling, and visual representation of information are all methods of developing and applying language and literacy knowledge and skills. They understand essential elements of language and literacy, such as semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology, and of reading, such as phonemic awareness, phonics decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Early childhood educators understand the components and structures of informational texts and of narrative texts, including theme, character, plot, and setting. They are aware that oral language, print, and storytelling are similar and different across cultures, and they are familiar with literature from multiple cultures.

› The arts—music, creative movement, dance, drama, visual arts—are primary media for human communication, inquiry, and insight. Educators understand that each of the arts has its own set of basic elements, such as rhythm, beat, expression, character, energy, color, balance, and harmony. They are familiar with a variety of materials and tools in each of the arts and with the arts' diverse styles and purposes across cultures. Educators know that engagement with the arts includes both self-expression and appreciation of art created by others. They value engagement in the arts as a way to express, communicate, and reflect upon self and others and upon culture, language, family, community, and history.

› Mathematics is a language for abstract reasoning and critical thinking and is used throughout life to recognize patterns and categories, to make connections between what is the same and what is different, to solve real-world problems, and to communicate relationships and concepts. Early childhood educators are familiar with the concepts that underlie counting and cardinality and number and operations. They understand algebraic and geometric concepts such as equal/not equal, lines and space, and estimation and measurement. They know that the tools for mathematical inquiry include observation, comparison, reasoning, estimation and measurement, generation and testing of theories, and documentation through writing, drawing, and graphic representation.

› Social studies is a science used to understand and think about the past, the present, and the future and about self and identity in society, place, and time. Early childhood educators know that the field of social studies includes history, geography, civics, economics, anthropology, archeology, and psychology—and that all of these areas of inquiry contribute to our ability to make meaning of our experiences, think about civic affairs, and make informed decisions as members of a group or of society. They are familiar with central concepts that include social systems and structures characterized by both change and continuity over time; the social construction of rules, rights, and responsibilities that vary across diverse groups, communities, and nations; and the development of structures of power, authority, and governance and related issues of social equity and justice. They know that oral storytelling, literature, art, technology, interactive media, artifacts, and the collection and representation of data are all tools for learning about and exploring social studies.

› Science is a practice that is based on observation, inquiry, and investigation and that connects to and uses mathematical language. Early childhood educators understand basic science concepts such as patterns, cause and effect, analysis and interpretation of data, the use of critical thinking, and the construction and testing of explanations or solutions to problems. 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 that include, for example, technology, interactive media, and print to document science projects in text, graphs, illustrations, and data charts.

› Technology and engineering integrate and employ concepts, language, principles, and processes from science and mathematics to focus on the design and production of materials and devices for use in everyday life, school, the workplace, and the outdoor environment. Early childhood educators know that, from zippers to bridges to computers and tablets to satellites, technology and engineering have a significant impact on society and culture. They are familiar with technology and engineering tools and inquiry methods, including imagining, data gathering, modeling, designing, evaluating, experimenting, and modifying.

› Physical education, health, and safety have significant effects on children's current and future quality of life. Early childhood educators understand development of fine and gross motor skills; neurological development, including executive function; and the relationship of nutrition and physical activity to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being in young children. They know that the components of physical education include spatial awareness, agility, balance, coordination, endurance, and force. They know about health and safety guidelines and practices for the prevention and management of common illnesses, diseases, and injuries, and they know how to promote wellness in adults and children. Educators are able to find and stay current in health, safety, and risk management standards and guidelines for young children from birth through age 8. They are familiar with the processes that help children develop fundamental competence, skillful practices, and fitness in physical education, including participation in games and sports, aquatics, dance and rhythmic activities, fitness activities, outdoor pursuits, and individual performance activities.

5b: Understand pedagogical content knowledge— how young children learn in each discipline—and how to use the teacher knowledge and practices described in Standards 1 through 4 to support young children's learning in each content area. This includes children's common conceptions and misconceptions in content areas. Early childhood educators know how to engage young 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. They know about and can access professional instructional resources, including those available from professional associations representing various disciplines. They understand early learning trajectories and related developmentally and culturally appropriate teaching and assessment strategies for each area of the early childhood curriculum.

Early childhood educators know that children learn and develop in each curriculum area from birth and that learning in each area increases in complexity during preschool and the early grades. Teachers understand the connections between young children's learning in and across disciplines and teachers' knowledge and practices described in Standards 1 through 4 and that young children learn in each of these content areas simultaneously, exploring and integrating them into their play, projects, and conversations. Early childhood educators can sequence goals, and they know related strategies to grow young children's learning in each discipline, understanding that

› Language and literacy learning (oral and written, expressive and receptive)—beginning with early gestures, vocalizations, babbling, single words, scribbling, book handling, and dramatic play- are the foundation for the acquisition of phonemic and phonological awareness, vocabulary, grammar, and reading. They know that children develop understanding

of the concept of print, with progressive understanding that print carries meaning and has directionality and that letters represent sounds and compose words, which compose sentences and support development of the writing process. Early childhood educators are familiar with young children's literature—both narrative and informational texts—and know how to select and use books in interactive and responsive ways, based on children's developmental, cultural, and linguistic needs and interests.

> Teachers have a deep understanding of the bilingual language development process in young children, including the strong role the home language plays as a foundation for academic success and the damaging effects of home language loss. They are aware that bilingual and multilingual development benefits young children's learning and development and that teachers need to foster home language development as children are exposed to English. They know strategies for supporting the development of the home language in both the classroom and at home, and they encourage the development of multiple languages for all children.

> The arts—music, creative movement, dance, drama, visual arts—are a primary vehicle for young children's expression and exploration of their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, facilitating connections across the arts and to other curriculum areas and developmental domains. Teachers know that creative and skillful expression and appreciation of the arts develop from birth and throughout this age range, from melodic babbling to singing, from scribbling to drawing, from bouncing to dancing, from pretend play to dramatic performance, script writing, and characterization. Teachers are familiar with a range of materials, techniques, and strategies to foster children's appreciation of the arts and their confident, creative participation in the arts. They also recognize the arts as an important pathway to learning across the curriculum, especially as young children develop competence in language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science.

> Mathematics begins with the development of prenumeracy 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, including understanding similarities and differences. Early childhood educators have a grasp of mathematical language and know the importance of modeling it and of fostering positive mathematical dispositions in each child. They know the expected trajectories of mathematical learning, including common misconceptions and errors. They use

this knowledge to select scaffolding strategies to advance children's development of mathematical understanding. They know that children learn mathematical thinking through active exploration, conversations, observation, and manipulation of both natural and manufactured materials. They know that play, stories, music, dance, and visual arts can all be used to illustrate and discuss mathematical ideas in ways that are more meaningful to young children than isolated, abstract exercises.

> Social studies knowledge develops from birth with the gradual understanding of self and others, individuals and families, neighborhoods and communities, time and patterns of time, and past/present/future, and with an awareness of one's own and others' cultures. Over time, social studies develops into the intentional study of history, geography, economics, civics, and politics. Early childhood educators are familiar with strategies to help young children in preschool and early grades learn perspective-taking skills, explore ideas of fairness, reflect on the past, experience the present, and plan for the future. They are familiar with some of the emerging understandings and misconceptions related to these and other areas of the curriculum that preschoolers and children in early grades are likely to have. They know about developmentally appropriate strategies, materials, and activities, including the use of pretend play, games, stories, field trips, and the arts to grow young children's increasing understanding of the social world and to counter biases and fears in the context of a caring community of learners.

> Scientific inquiry develops naturally in young children as they observe, ask questions, and explore their world. Early childhood educators understand the importance of providing opportunities for very young children to engage in sensory exploration of their environments and of supporting their progressive ability to ask questions, engage in scientific practices, collect data, think critically, solve problems, share ideas, and reflect on their findings. Teachers are familiar with materials that help young 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. Young 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, and outdoors. Early childhood educators model the use of science and the language of mathematics to develop children's imaginations, curiosity, and wonder. They know that asking

good questions and encouraging young children to express and test their own ideas are often more effective teaching strategies than providing direct information and "right" answers. Knowing that young children have been born into the digital age, educators use technology inside and outside of the classroom and supervise young children in the appropriate use of technology in play and in learning.

❯ Physical activity, physical education, health, and safety are important parts of the curriculum for young children and are essential to their well-being. Early childhood educators know that young children "learn by doing" across disciplines, and that active physical play helps brain development and is a primary means for children to learn about themselves, others, and the world. Teachers understand the learning progression of movement skills, from infancy (e.g., roll, crawl, creep) through preschool age (hop, throw, bend, stretch) to the early grades (e.g., engagement in organized and more complex team and individual sports and dance)—skills that lay the foundation for a lifetime of enjoying physical activity.

❯ Early childhood educators provide opportunities for children to develop and maintain health-enhancing physical fitness, attain knowledge of movement concepts, and develop mature fundamental movement skills. They intentionally plan daily adult-led physical activities and unstructured physical activities that will facilitate the maximum participation of all children. They know the importance of healthy daily routines and daily practice of basic skills and habits related to active and quiet times, meals, rest, and transitions in early childhood settings. They are familiar with young 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 effective ways to help older children think about, express, and reflect on their needs and their choices in this area.

5c: **Modify teaching practices by applying, expanding, integrating, and updating their content knowledge in the disciplines, their knowledge of curriculum content resources, and their pedagogical content knowledge.** Early childhood educators use their understanding of preschool and early elementary standards, their content knowledge, and their pedagogical knowledge, along with experiences and cultural assets that young children and their families bring, to create an integrated curriculum that makes connections across content areas through play and projects. The curriculum includes both planned and responsive experiences that are individualized to be developmentally appropriate, meaningful, engaging, and challenging for each child and that reflect cultural and linguistic diversity.

Early childhood educators make and implement decisions about offering meaningful, challenging curricular activities for each child, using observation and assessment to scaffold new learning in each academic discipline. They design or select a developmentally and culturally relevant curriculum that avoids and counters cultural or individual biases and stereotypes and that fosters a positive learning disposition in each child in all areas of the curriculum. Early childhood educators engage in continuous development of their own abilities in each content area, drawing on the resources of professional organizations and engaging in professional development (such as postsecondary education) to improve their knowledge and skills in each discipline.

Early childhood educators encourage and grow every child's interests and abilities in each academic discipline, countering gender, ability, racial, ethnic, and religious biases that can limit children's opportunities and achievements. Early childhood educators help children reflect upon and learn from their mistakes, fully understanding that making mistakes and learning from them in positive ways fuels learning. Early childhood educators foster each child's sense of efficacy and their ability to make choices and decisions, to develop their own interests and learning dispositions, and to gradually gain a sense of control, intention, and autonomy in their environment.

Early childhood educators apply what they have learned about curriculum content and about pedagogy—how young children learn and what teaching strategies are most likely to be effective, based on children's development as individuals and as participants in groups. For example, educators of infants and toddlers model and responsively support development of early language, scribbling, music, and movement; sense of self and others; understanding of past, present, and future; knowledge of number and patterns; and development of inquiry skills and discovery. Educators of children in preschool through early grades model engagement in challenging subject matter and support children's acquisition and exploration of increasingly complex knowledge. They respond to the developmental needs of individual children, building their confidence as young readers, writers, artists, musicians, mathematicians, scientists, engineers, dancers, athletes, historians, economists, and geographers and as young citizens of a caring learning community. In developing curricula, educators use their solid knowledge in each curriculum area while also helping individual children construct knowledge in personally and culturally meaningful ways.

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Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Early childhood educators (a) identify and participate as members of the early childhood profession. They serve as informed advocates for young children, for the families of the children in their care, and for the early childhood profession. They (b) know and use ethical guidelines and other early childhood professional guidelines. They (c) have professional communication skills that effectively support their relationships and work young children, families, and colleagues. Early childhood educators (d) are continuous, collaborative learners who (e) develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

Key Competencies and Supporting Explanations

6a: Identify and involve themselves with the early childhood field and serve as informed advocates for young children, families, and the profession. Early childhood educators understand the profession's distinctive values, history, knowledge base, and mission, as well as the connections between the early childhood education profession and other related disciplines and professions with which they collaborate while serving young children and their families. They know that equity in education begins in early childhood and that early childhood educators have a special opportunity and responsibility to advance equity in their daily classroom work with children and their work with families and colleagues.

They are aware of the broader contexts, challenges, current issues, and trends that affect their profession and their work, including challenges related to compensation and financing of the early education system; trends in standards setting and assessment of young children; and issues of equity, bias, and social justice that affect children, families, communities, and colleagues. Early childhood educators embrace their responsibility as advocates to strive to improve the lives of young children and their families as well as the lives of those serving in the profession. They engage in advocacy in early learning settings and at wider levels—such as in local, state, federal, or national contexts—and have a basic understanding of how public policies are developed.

6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines. Early childhood educators have a compelling responsibility to know about and uphold ethical guidelines, federal and state regulatory policies, and other professional standards because young children are at a critical point in their development and learning and because children are vulnerable and cannot articulate their rights and needs. Teachers know about and understand the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and are guided by its ideals and principles. They know how to use the Code to analyze and resolve professional ethical dilemmas and can give defensible justifications for their resolution of those dilemmas. They uphold high standards of confidentiality and privacy, sensitivity, and respect for young children and their families and for their colleagues.

Early childhood educators can find and use professional guidelines, such as national, state, and local child care regulations, and special education standards and regulations, and professional health and safety practices. They uphold their professional obligation to report child abuse and neglect, and their practice is informed by the position statements of their professional associations. They know and follow relevant federal and state laws protecting the rights of young children with developmental delays or disabilities, including the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

6c: Use professional communication skills, including technology-mediated strategies, to effectively support young children's learning and development and to work with families and colleagues. Early childhood educators use professional communication skills to understand and apply the standards and competencies in this position statement, work effectively with families and colleagues, and facilitate their own professional development including their academic success when pursuing postsecondary education. These skills include competency in formal and informal speaking and in listening, reading, and writing. Early childhood educators use appropriate, grammatically correct language, and their written communications are clear and understandable, with few errors. Early childhood educators employ the most respectful, sensitive, and effective communication techniques: attentive listening with young children, families, and colleagues; skillful and empathetic dialogue with families about their children's development; a translator or other resource for exchanges with speakers of languages other than English; use of technology-mediated strategies for communication, where appropriate; and assistive technology tools with children and adults, as needed. Early childhood educators know that developing, enhancing, and improving their communication skills is an ongoing process.

6d: Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice. An attitude of inquiry is evident in early childhood educators' writing, discussions, and actions. They demonstrate self-motivated, purposeful learning, and they actively investigate ways to improve their practice, such as engaging in classroom-based research, participating in conferences and workshops, providing or receiving mentorship, and finding evidence-based resources. Early childhood educators know how to participate in reflective and supportive supervision, both as supervisors and as recipients of supervision. In the case of the former, they have skills related to conducting performance evaluations, providing guidance to supervisees, identifying professional development needs, understanding personnel policies in early learning settings, and developing supervisees' professional behaviors and addressing their unprofessional behaviors. Early childhood educators receive and act on feedback from their supervisors, seek assistance when they need it, and consistently carry out the responsibilities of their jobs. Early childhood educators partner with other members of their teaching team, recognizing the importance of respectful, cooperative relationships and shared responsibilities between all members of the team when interacting with children and families and with each other.

Educators engage in collaborative learning communities and professional learning networks with early childhood educators and with others in related disciplines and professions, working together on common challenges and exchanging ideas to benefit from one another's perspectives and expertise. They recognize that while early childhood educators share the same core professional values, their professional knowledge base is constantly evolving and that dialogue and attention to differences is part of the development of new shared knowledge. They know where to find and how to use resources and when to reach out to early education colleagues within and across professions. They work collaboratively with colleagues in their early learning settings and in other professional disciplines to support individual children and their families, including, but not limited to, IFSP and IEP teams. They stay current in the field and realize that, through their own research and practice, they can contribute to expanding the profession's knowledge base.

6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession. Early childhood educators examine their own practice, sources of professional knowledge, and assumptions about the early childhood field with a spirit of inquiry. They make intentional professional judgments each day, based on knowledge of young children's development and learning, of individual children, and of the social and cultural contexts in which children live. Using supervisors' and peers' feedback, they reflect on their daily practice and analyze their work with young children in a broader context to modify and improve it.

Early childhood educators consider multiple sources of evidence and knowledge in decision making, including new and emerging research, professional learning, experience and expertise, and the interests, values, needs, and choices of the children, families, and communities they serve. They consider how their own social and cultural contexts and implicit biases may influence their practice and equity in their early learning settings as they strive to provide effective supports for each and every child.

As reflective practitioners, early childhood educators know that managing their own resilience, self-efficacy, mental health, and wellness is critical to the effectiveness of their work, particularly when addressing challenging behaviors. They take responsibility for their own well-being and have strategies to manage the physical, emotional, and mental stress inherent in their profession in order to be healthy and to engage effectively and empathetically with children and families.

Recommendations for Implementation

Early Childhood Educator Professional Preparation Programs

1. **Align preparation programs with these standards and competencies and with associated leveling**

   The standards and competencies should serve as the core learner outcomes for early childhood educator professional preparation programs. Learning opportunities within programs, including field experiences, should be designed and scaffolded to develop candidates' understanding and application of the competencies. With this revision, professional preparation programs should carefully consider which early childhood educator designation (ECE I, II, or III) they are preparing candidates for (see Appendix A for leveling recommendations) and ensure that the level of mastery of standards and competencies aligns with the breadth and depth of competency mastery in the *Unifying Framework*[1] developed through Power to the Profession. The expectation is that every early childhood professional preparation program prepares candidates to work with children birth through age 8; some programs, though, might include an emphasis on or specialization in a particular age group or early learning setting.

2. **Ensure faculty are qualified to teach candidates in the standards and competencies**

   Faculty in early childhood educator professional preparation programs should have advanced degrees and professional experience related to their teaching assignments. Faculty who teach education methods courses should have experience teaching in programs for young children as well as have current knowledge of child and adult development and the science of learning. Faculty also gain expertise through career-long participation in professional activities and memberships in professional organizations.

3. **Promote standards, not standardization**

   Professional preparation programs should be responsive to their local workforce needs, their community contexts, and their institutions' missions. These standards and competencies are intended to provide a vision of excellence—not to constrict innovative responses to the needs of young children and their families or to current and prospective early childhood educators. This position statement promotes standards for—not standardization of—preparation of early childhood educators. The standards and competencies and accompanying leveling recommendations are meant to serve as a framework for professional preparation program design.

4. **Ensure that standards and competencies and leveling facilitate transfer and articulation**

   Professional preparation programs should incorporate the leveling recommendations (see Appendix A) for the standards and competencies to facilitate articulation and transfer and distinguish the depth and breadth of the standards and competencies at each professional preparation program level. These standards and competencies and their associated leveling can be used to support the progression of professional competency through professional preparation programs and to develop articulation agreements and stackable, portable credentials that increase workforce diversity, equity, and access to new career opportunities.

5. **Ensure that a mix of general education courses and education methods courses offer candidates the necessary content knowledge to meet expectations in Standard 5 and to demonstrate their application of all standards and competencies**

   In partnership with professional preparation program accrediting bodies/recognizing bodies, consider the general education content knowledge and education methods courses necessary to support mastery of Standard 5 at each early childhood educator designation (ECE I, II, and III).

6. **Commit 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 curricula. This includes ensuring that professional preparation programs provide field experiences that give candidates opportunities to work effectively with diverse populations; employ a

diverse faculty across multiple dimensions, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, language, ability, gender, and sexual orientation; and allow time and space to foster a learning community among administrators, faculty, and staff, with opportunities for reflection and learning regarding cultural respect and responsiveness, including potential issues of implicit bias.

Higher Education Accreditation

1. **Ensure that professional preparation programs are preparing candidates across as well as within standards and competencies**

   Accreditation of early childhood educator professional preparation programs must require evidence from those programs that learning opportunities facilitate candidates' mastery of the standards and competencies and that the programs are evaluating candidates' mastery of these.

2. **Ensure that professional preparation program design and infrastructure facilitate candidates' mastery of the standards and competencies**

   While the learning opportunities and assessment of candidates' knowledge and practice should be the central focus of accreditors, it is also important for accrediting bodies to evaluate the program design and infrastructure that facilitate high-quality learning opportunities and effective assessments related to the standards

and competencies. Evidence of a program's mission, responsiveness to local context, faculty qualifications and responsibilities, institutional resources (such as budgets, technology, and libraries), academic and nonacademic supports for candidates, field experiences, course design and sequencing, and teaching quality should contribute to the accreditation decision.

3. **Ensure that professional preparation programs are aligned with the leveling in the position statement**

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

Early Learning Programs

1. **Ensure that standards and competencies are reflected in early childhood educators' responsibilities and levels of autonomy in early learning settings**

   Early childhood educators should be given appropriate autonomy in their settings to make sound professional judgments that align 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 they seek**

   Early learning programs hiring teachers should require completion of a professional preparation program 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 and associated level of mastery of the standards and competencies for the appropriate early childhood educator designation — ECE I, II or III — for the position.

3. **Design and support professional development that advances early childhood educators' mastery of the standards and competencies**

   Early learning programs should create respectful professional growth plans aligned with the standards and competencies in order to broaden and deepen their staffs' mastery of the standards and competencies. 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. These programs should also provide professional development opportunities for their staffs—particularly through coaching and mentoring—in order to advance staff's understanding and application of

the standards and competencies. Professional development should strengthen early childhood educators' ability to engage in reflective practice.

4. **Design and conduct evaluations aligned with the standards and competencies**

Early childhood educators should be supported and be held accountable for practices aligned with the appropriate level of mastery of these standards and competencies.

Federal, State, and Local Policies

1. **Align all early childhood workforce supports with the standards and competencies**

The standards and competencies should inform all policies and systems that address early childhood workforce recruitment, development, and retention. These policies and systems include 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. In adopting the standards and competencies, states may need to expand them to address state and local priorities and contexts.

2. **Elevate professional preparation programs designated and accredited by the early childhood education profession as the core pathway for individuals to be prepared in the standards and competencies**

Policies should elevate the professional preparation programs that are designated by the profession as the core pathways for individuals who are preparing to be early childhood educators or who are advancing their early childhood education credentials.[2] Given the breadth and depth of the standards and competencies and the need for early childhood educators to have deep knowledge and understanding of, as well as applied practice in them, these pathways are best positioned to prepare early childhood educators.

Policies and resources should ensure that all individuals are provided equitable opportunities to access and progress seamlessly through these pathways.

3. **Align early childhood educator licensure, certification, and credentialing with the standards and competencies**

Early childhood educator licensure, certification, and credentialing systems should ensure that all young children, birth through age 8, have access to educators with a sound understanding of and skills in using the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. States should develop timelines and benchmarks for advancing the education credentials of the entire early childhood workforce, along with associated compensation increases.

4. **Build professional development and QRIS systems that align with the standards and competencies**

Content of professional development systems and QRIS (quality rating and improvement systems) should be driven by the standards and competencies and recommended leveling for each early childhood educator designation.

5. **Adequately finance the early childhood education workforce so that every early childhood educator is prepared in the professional standards and competencies**

Financing should be targeted to individuals seeking to attain or advance their knowledge and application of the standards and competencies included in this position statement and to the professional preparation programs that seek to demonstrate or have already demonstrated alignment with the standards and competencies through earning and maintaining accreditation. Early childhood educators who demonstrate effective practice in the competencies should be fairly compensated.

Researchers

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

   Ongoing research is needed to more directly connect how the standards and competencies facilitate young children's development and learning. In addition, the field would benefit from more applied research through partnerships between the research community and the practice community.

2. **Identify key features of design, content, field experiences, assessments, and more, in professional preparation programs that effectively prepare candidates in the standards and competencies**

   The research community can play an important role in helping the profession better understand how features of professional preparation programs develop candidates' understanding of the standards and competencies. In addition, this research should advance the field's understanding of the educator preparation program landscape and the availability and effectiveness of faculty development and pipelines.

3. **Inform the profession about new research on young children's development, educator quality, and dimensions of effective teaching that will influence the next revision of the standards and competencies**

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

Leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies by ECE Designation

This Leveling of the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (Professional Standards and Competencies)* is a first iteration that will change over time as new knowledge about how young children develop and learn emerges as well as knowledge about effective early childhood educator practice; as distinctions in content between the programs preparing ECE I, ECE II and ECE III practitioners become clearer and more consistent; and as the scopes of practice for each practitioner designation are refined and updated to reflect the context of the profession at that time.

The Leveling is not a replacement for the *Professional Standards and Competencies* but rather serves as a companion document. While the Leveling addresses every standard, it does not address every aspect of each key competency within a standard.

The *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession (Unifying Framework)* generated through Power to the Profession lays out an audacious vision for an "effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce" so that each and every young child has access to high quality early childhood education and care. Included in this vision is that every early childhood educator with lead responsibilities has an early childhood bachelor's degree, in recognition of the advanced knowledge and skills the degree brings as well as of the status it confers on the individual and the profession. At the same time, the Unifying Framework lifts up the critical value and unique contributions of early childhood educators who have acquired their competencies through such opportunities as a CDA credential and a high-quality early childhood associate degree.

The *Unifying Framework* also recognizes the current realities of the early childhood education workforce. Many educators in our field have gained deep knowledge and expertise through experience. Half of the early childhood workforce doesn't have a postsecondary credential. Policies across and within states and across and within early learning settings vary widely. Early childhood educators face significant barriers to accessing professional preparation programs. The content within and across professional preparation programs varies widely.

Hence the recommendations in the *Unifying Framework* serve as a bridge to support the workforce in moving from the current reality to the audacious vision. In this vein, the Unifying Framework recommends three designations of early childhood educators (ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III), each with a distinct, meaningful scope of practice and associated level of preparation. Individuals at each designation are expected to have mastery of the standards and competencies so that they can effectively work within their scope of practice. As such, the Leveling describes the expectations for early childhood educators' mastery of the standards and competencies across the ECE designations.

How the Leveling Will be Used

The Leveling is meant to be a guide to help the early childhood education ecosystem (e.g. practitioners, professional preparation programs, accreditors, licensing bodies, etc.) understand the level of knowledge and skills related to the standards and competencies they need to master or support in their professional roles. These include informing:

> the knowledge and skills early childhood educators need to have in order to effectively carry out their scope of practice

> the content, assessments, and field experiences in professional preparation programs

> the content in licensure assessments

> professional development offered by employers or through state professional development systems

> state early childhood educator competencies

> how early childhood accrediting/recognition bodies evaluate professional preparation programs

Members of the early childhood education ecosystem will need to build on the leveling to further define and support competence at each level as it relates to their professional responsibilities. For example, accreditors of professional preparation programs might work with higher education to designate general education requirements that would support

individuals in gaining competency in Standard 5 *Knowledge, Application and Integration of Academic Discipline Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum* for the ECE I, II, and III designations. Accreditors and professional preparation programs might also set requirements for programs related to field experiences at each designation level.

How to Read the Leveling Chart

The Leveling Chart describes expectations for mastery of the Professional Standards and Competencies across the ECE I, II and III designations for each Key Competency within each standard. It focuses on important areas within the Professional Standards and Competencies that need to be distinguished across the designations and includes examples of where distinguishing across the designations is not critical. For the latter, these similarities are primarily based on hours of content exposure in early childhood education professional preparation programs throughout the standards and competencies as well as the scopes of practice outlined in Decision Cycles 3,4,5 and 6 of Power to the Profession. While every key competency of each standard is included in the Leveling Chart, not every aspect of each key competency is "leveled".

The expectations for the mastery of standards and competencies build on each designation. In other words, ECE II practitioners are expected to know and practice what is described for the ECE I designation as well as what is described for the ECE II designation. Likewise, ECE III practitioners are expected to know and practice what is described for the ECE I and ECE II designations in addition to what is described for the ECE III designation. In some cases, there may be a blank space in a box. This indicates that an individual with that ECE designation is not expected to have the knowledge or skills related to a particular aspect of the Key Competency.

The scopes of practice for each ECE designation determine the necessary depth and breadth[1] of mastery of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. The chart below provides an underlying explanation for the distinctions between ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III designations based on the recommendations generated in Decision Cycles 3,4, 5 and 6 of Power to the Profession.[2] For each designation the level of responsibilities within the scopes of practice increases related to whether the practitioner has support or lead responsibilities for working with young children, birth through age eight, in selecting and administering assessments, implementing curriculum, working in complex practice environments and having supervisory capacity. As noted in the following chart, one of the differentiating factors between designations is that those with ECE I designations implement the standards and competencies in their practice under the supervision of those with ECE II and ECE III designations. Thus, ECE II and ECE III designations have supervisory roles related to supporting those with ECE I designations and ECE II designations (in the case of ECE IIs who work in public PreK-grade 3 settings) in applying the standards and competencies in their practice.

Mastery of the competencies is gained across a professional learning continuum that includes professional preparation as well as ongoing professional development throughout early childhood educators' careers. Professional preparation programs, particularly in institutions of higher education, include programs of study that address a broad array of content beyond early childhood education. As individuals progress through the ECE I, II, and III professional preparation programs, the level of depth and access to this content grows. The Leveling, though, only addresses early childhood content knowledge and skills as laid out in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*.

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1 The "depth" of a standard refers to "know-understand-do" continuum within each component of the standard (i.e. the cognitive demands outlined in the standard). "Breadth" refers to the different components that come together to make up the content of a standard--e.g., in Standard 2 there is a focus on families as well as communities; in Standard 5 various content areas are included; in Standard 6, advocacy is part of identifying as a profession. Professionals who demonstrate the breadth of a standard go beyond demonstrating individual components in isolation; instead, there are sufficient opportunities in their preparation and/or practice to provide assurance about their proficiency related to the full continuum of the standard.

2 Recommendations from Decision Cycles 3,4,5+6 designate three primary categories of professional preparation programs. In particular, ECE II and ECE III programs are housed within higher education institutions. Other qualifying professional preparation programs, particularly non-degree-awarding programs or programs in freestanding institutions, will also be incorporated, as needed, when the Unifying Framework is implemented. ECE III professional preparation programs include both early childhood baccalaureate and initial early childhood master's degrees. Initial master's degree programs refers to programs preparing individuals for their first roles as early childhood educators. These are not referencing master's degree programs that prepare individuals as advanced practitioners and or prepare individuals for specializations within the early childhood education profession.

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
Expectations during preparation regarding depth of mastery of the competencies	**Professional Certificate/ Credential Program (at least 120 hours) completers** are *introduced* to all professional standards and competency areas but are not expected to know and apply the full depth and breadth of them across the birth through age 8 continuum and settings.	**Associate degree graduates** know and apply the depth and breadth of all professional standards and competencies areas across the birth through age 8 continuum and settings, *with a dedicated focus on young children in birth through age 5 settings.*	**Bachelor's degree graduate or Master's degree graduate (initial prep)** know and apply the breadth and depth of all professional standards and competencies across the birth through age 8 continuum and settings
Expectations regarding responsibilities for practice	**Birth–age 8 Settings:** **Professional Training Program (at least 120 hours) completers** can *help* develop and sustain high-quality development and learning environments. Completers can serve as effective members of early childhood education teaching teams.	**Birth-age 5 Settings:** * **Associate degree graduate** can be responsible for developing and sustaining high-quality development and learning environments with *staffing models that provide frequent access to ECE IIIs for guidance.* **Kindergarten*–age 8 Settings:** **Associate degree graduate** can *help* develop and sustain high quality development and learning environments. **Associate degree graduate** can serve as effective members of ECE teaching teams and *can guide the practice of ECE I.* ** In state-funded preschool programs (as defined by NIEER), provided in mixed delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system, ECE II graduates can serve in the support educator role. ECE III graduates must serve in the lead educator role*	**Birth–age 8 Settings:** **Bachelor's degree graduate or Master's degree graduate (initial prep)** can be responsible for developing and sustaining high-quality development and learning environments. **Bachelor's degree graduate or Master's degree graduate (initial prep)** can serve as effective members of ECE teaching teams and can guide the practice of ECE I's and II's.

	Preparation Program Progression		
	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
General Education Content	○	◉	⬤
ECE Content (0–5)	●	◉	⬤
ECE Content (K–3)	●	◉	⬤
Pedagogy and other non-ECE focused education courses/content	●	◉	⬤
Integration of disciplinary and ECE content knowledge	●	◉	⬤
Understanding and implementing culturally, linguistically and ability responsive strategies	●	◉	⬤
Supervised, Sustained, and Sequenced field experiences	○	◉	⬤
Preparation in Supervision Skills	○	◉	⬤
Preparation in Advocacy Skills	○	◉	⬤
Preparation in Communicating Effectively with Diverse Stakeholders	●	◉	⬤

Note: Empty small circle = no or very limited exposure to the content and/or practice opportunities. The filled circles represent the increase of depth and breadth in the content and opportunities for practice across the ECE I, II and III professional preparation programs.

While there may be similarities across the ECE designations in the Leveling, there are certainly other components of professional preparation (e.g. field experiences, general education courses, and pedagogy and other non-ece focused education courses), not reflected in the leveling chart, that differentiate and deepen the knowledge and skills that completers/graduates of professional preparation programs acquire.

Professional development is also an important part of early childhood educators' professional learning continuum. While professional preparation programs provide critical exposure to the standards and competencies, the structural limitations of clock and credit hours mean that programs have to make careful choices about the content and field experiences they include. Early and ongoing career professional development, then, plays an important role in building practitioners' knowledge and skills in key areas such as developing supervision skills for ECE II and III practitioners, selecting and administering assessments and analyzing assessment data, supporting children with disabilities, and using culturally and linguistically appropriate practices.

Standards and Competencies by ECE Designation

NOTE: The expectations for the mastery of competencies build on each level (mastery of listed competencies in ECE I would be expected of ECE II, mastery of listed competencies in ECE I and ECE II would be expected of ECE III). This is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains including bilingual/multilingual development.	Identify fundamental theoretical models of developmental periods of early childhood across physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic domains	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base (that reflects multicultural and international perspectives) of the developmental periods of early childhood and how development and learning intersect across the domains	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base (that reflects multicultural and international perspectives) of the developmental periods of early childhood and how development and learning intersect across the domains
	Identify critical aspects of brain development including executive function, learning motivation, and life skills	Describe brain development in young children including executive function, learning motivation and life skills	Describe brain development in young children including executive function, learning motivation and life skills
	Identify biological, environmental, protective, and adverse factors that impact children's development and learning	Describe how biology, environment and protective and adverse factors impact children's development and learning	Describe how biology, environment and protective and adverse factors impact children's development and learning
	Know the importance of social interaction, relationships and play	Describe how social interaction, relationships and play are central to children's development and learning	Describe how social interaction, relationships and play are central to children's development and learning
1b: Understand and value each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and with the capacity to make choices.	Identify how each child develops as an individual	Use research and professionally recognized terminology to articulate how each child is an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and capacity to make choices,	Use research and professionally recognized terminology to articulate how each child is an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and capacity to make choices,
	Engage in responsive, reciprocal relationships with babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children in early school grades	Engage in responsive, reciprocal relationships with babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children in early school grades	Engage in responsive, reciprocal relationships with babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children in early school grades
		Describe ways to learn about children (e.g. through observation, play, etc.)	Evaluate, make decisions about, and communicate effective ways to learn about children (e.g. through observation, play, etc.)
	Identify individual characteristics of each child through family and community relationships, observation and reflection Support young children in ways that respond to their individual developmental, cultural and linguistic variations	Describe developmentally appropriate decisions, plans and adjustments to practice in response to individual, developmental, cultural and linguistic variations of young children	Describe developmentally appropriate decisions, plans and adjustments to practice in response to individual, developmental, cultural and linguistic variations of young children

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
1c: Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur within multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning settings as well as within a larger societal context that includes structural inequities.	Identify family, social, cultural and community influences on children's learning and development	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base that shows that family and societal contexts influence young children's development and learning	Analyze, and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base that shows that family and societal contexts influence young children's development and learning
		Describe how children's learning is shaped by cultural and linguistic contexts for development, their close relationships with adults and peers, economic conditions of families and communities, adverse and protective childhood experiences, ample opportunities to play and learn, experiences with technology and media, and family and community characteristics	Describe how children's learning is shaped by cultural and linguistic contexts for development, their close relationships with adults and peers, economic conditions of families and communities, adverse and protective childhood experiences, ample opportunities to play and learn, experiences with technology and media, and family and community characteristics
	Identify structural inequities and trauma that adversely impact young children's learning and development	Describe how structural inequities and trauma adversely impact young children's learning and development	Describe how structural inequities and trauma adversely impact young children's learning and development
	Know that quality early childhood education influences children's lives	Describe how quality early childhood education influences children's lives	Explain how and why quality early childhood education influences children's lives
1d: Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.	Support the implementation of early childhood curriculum, teaching practices, and learning environments that are safe, healthy, respectful, culturally and linguistically responsive, supportive and challenging for each child	Use multidimensional knowledge (developmental period of early childhood, individual child, family, and multiple social identities, ability, race, language, culture, class, gender and others) to intentionally support the development of young children	Use multidimensional knowledge (developmental period of early childhood, individual child, family, and multiple social identities, ability, race, language, culture, class, gender and others) to intentionally support the development of young children
		Use available research evidence, professional judgments and families' knowledge 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 child	Use available research evidence, professional judgments and families' knowledge and preferences — 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 child

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
2a: Know about, understand and value the diversity of families.	Identify and understand diverse characteristics of families and the many influences on families Identify stages of parental and family development	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base on family structures and stages of parental and family development	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base family structures and stages of parental and family development
	Identify some of 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	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base about the ways that various socioeconomic conditions; family structures; cultures and relationships; family strengths, needs and stressors; and home languages cultural values create the home context for young children's lives	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base of the ways that various socioeconomic conditions; family structures; cultures and relationships; family strengths, needs and stressors; and home languages cultural values create the home context for young children's lives
	Identify that children can thrive across diverse family structures and that all families bring strengths	Explain why it is important to build on the assets and strengths that families bring	Explain why it is important to build on the assets and strengths that families bring

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
2b: Collaborate as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.	Identify the importance of having respectful, reciprocal relationships with families	Take primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining respectful relationships with families and caregivers	Contribute to setting-wide efforts to initiate and sustain respectful, *reciprocal* relationships with families and caregivers
	Recognize families as the first and most influential "teachers" in their children's learning and development	Use strategies to support positive parental and family development	Use strategies to support positive parental and family development
	Affirm and respect families' cultures, religious beliefs, language(s) (including dialects), various structures of families and different beliefs about parenting	Demonstrate the ability to negotiate sensitively any areas of discomfort or concern if there are potential conflicts between families' preferences and cultures and the setting's practices and policies related to health, safety and developmentally appropriate practices	Demonstrate the ability to negotiate sensitively any areas of discomfort or concern if there are potential conflicts between families' preferences and cultures and the setting's practices and policies related to health, safety and developmentally appropriate practices
	Identify effective strategies for building reciprocal relationships and use those to learn with and from family members	Use a broad repertoire of strategies for building relationships to learn with and from family members	Use a broad repertoire of strategies for building reciprocal relationships, *with a particular focus on cultural responsiveness,* to learn with and from family members
	Initiate and begin to sustain respectful relations with families and caregivers that take families' preferences, values and goals into account	Engage families as partners for insight into their children for curriculum, program development, and assessment; and as partners in planning for children's transitions to new programs	Engage families as partners for insight into their children for curriculum, program development, and assessment; and as partners in planning for children's transitions to new programs
		Use a variety of communication and engagement skills with families and communicate (or find resources) in families' preferred languages when possible	Use a variety of communication and engagement skills with families and communicate (or find resources) in families' preferred languages when possible

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
2c: Use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support families, and build partnerships between early learning settings, schools and community organizations and agencies.	Identify types of community resources that can support young children's learning and development and to support families Partner with colleagues to help assist families in finding needed community resources	Assist families with young children in finding needed resources, access and leverage technology tools, and partner 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	Advocate for families with young children in finding needed resources, access and leverage technology tools, and partner 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, housing and economic assistance
		Support young children and families during transitions between classrooms and/or other early learning settings to help ensure a continuum of quality early care and education	Collaborate with early learning settings in the community to support and advocate for a continuum of quality early care and education that ensures successful transitions
			Support young children and families experiencing sudden, severe incidents (e.g. divorce, death, immigration concerns)

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.	Identify the central purposes of assessment	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base regarding the purposes and use of assessment	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base regarding the purposes and uses of assessment
	Understand that observation and documentation are central practices in assessment	Understand that observation and documentation are central practices in assessment	Understand that observation and documentation are central practices in assessment
	Understand assessment as a positive tool to support young children's learning and development	Understand assessment as a positive tool to support young children's learning and development	Understand assessment as a positive tool to support young children's learning and development
		Describe how assessment approaches should be connected to the learning goals, curriculum and teaching strategies for individual young children	Explain why assessment approaches should be connected to the learning goals, curriculum and teaching strategies for individual young children
		Describe the essentials of authentic assessment—such as age-appropriate approaches and culturally relevant assessment in a language the child understands—for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades across developmental domains and curriculum areas	Describe the essentials of authentic assessment—such as age-appropriate approaches and culturally relevant assessment in a language the child understands—for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades across developmental domains and curriculum areas
3b: Know a wide-range of types of assessments, their purposes and their associated methods and tools.	Identify common types of assessments that are used in early learning settings	Describe the structure, strengths, and limitations of a variety of assessment methods and tools (including technology-related tools) used with young children	Describe the structure, strengths, limitations, validity and reliability of a variety of assessment methods and tools (including technology-related tools), including formative and summative, qualitative and quantitative, and standardized assessment tools, used with young children
	Identify the components of an assessment cycle including the basics of conducting systematic observations	Describe the components of an assessment cycle including the basics of conducting systematic observations and interpreting those observations	Explain components of an assessment cycle including making decisions on "who, what, when, where, and why" in conducting systematic observations, selecting the most appropriate assessment method to gather information, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing assessment results and reflecting on their significance to inform teaching

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	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
3c: Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.	Identify the appropriateness of features of assessments for the developmental stage, culture, language, and abilities of the children being assessed	Select and use assessments that are appropriate for the developmental stage, culture, language, and abilities of the children being assessed	Select and use assessments that are appropriate for the developmental stage, culture, language, and abilities of the children being assessed (including high stakes assessments used for more than informing practice)
	Support the use of assessment-related activities in curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice	Create opportunities to observe young children in play and spontaneous conversation as well as in adult-structured assessment contexts

Embed assessment-related activities in curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice | Create opportunities to observe young children in play and spontaneous conversation as well as in adult-structured assessment contexts

Embed assessment-related activities in curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice |
| | Identify that assessments must be selected or modified to identify and support children with differing abilities | Use assessment resources (such as technology) to identify and support children with differing abilities, including children whose learning is advanced as well as those whose home language is not English, and children with developmental delays and disabilities | Use assessment resources (such as technology) to identify and support children with differing abilities, including children whose learning is advanced as well as those whose home language is not English, and children with developmental delays and disabilities |
| | Identify legal and ethical issues connected to assessment practices | Describe the limitations of various assessment tools and minimize the impact of these tools on young children | Explain the research base and theoretical perspectives behind harmful uses of biased or inappropriate assessments

Explain the developmental, cultural, and linguistic limitations of various assessment tools; recognize the circumstances under which use of these tools may be inappropriate (including the use of their results); minimize the impact of these tools on young children; and advocate for more appropriate assessments |

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
3c (cont'd.): Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.		Analyze data from assessment tools to make instructional decisions and set learning goals for all children	Analyze data from assessment tools to make instructional decisions and set learning goals for children, differentiating for all children including those who are exceptional learners
	Identify implicit bias or the potential for implicit bias in one's own assessment practices and use of assessment data	Identify implicit bias or the potential for implicit bias in one's own assessment practices and use of assessment data	Identify implicit bias or the potential for implicit bias in one's own assessment practices and use of assessment data as well as support others on the teaching team in doing so
			Communicate and advocate for the ethical and equitable use of assessment data for multiple audiences including families, early learning setting leadership, allied professionals and policymakers
3d: Build assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues	Partner with families and other professionals to support assessment-related activities	Initiate, nurture and be receptive to requests for partnerships with young children, their families and other professionals to analyze assessment findings and create individualized goals and curricular practices for young children	Demonstrate ability to skillfully communicate with families about the potential need for further assessment/supports when this information may be difficult for families to hear
	Support young children as part of IFSP and IEP teams	Work with colleagues to conduct assessments as part of IFSP and IEP teams	Work with colleagues to conduct assessments as part of IFSP and IEP teams
		Demonstrate judgment in knowing when to call on professional colleagues when assessment findings indicate young children may need additional supports or further assessments to identify developmental or learning needs	Demonstrate judgment in knowing when to call on professional colleagues when assessment findings indicate young children may need additional supports or further assessments to identify developmental or learning needs

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
4a: Understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of early childhood educators' work with young children.	Establish positive and supportive relationships and interactions with young children	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base related to facilitating positive, supportive relationships and interactions with young children and creating a caring community of learners when working with groups of children	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base related to facilitating positive, supportive relationships and interactions with young children and creating a caring community of learners when working with groups of children
	Identify ways that each child brings individual experiences, knowledge, interests, abilities, culture and languages to the early learning setting	Take primary responsibility for creating a classroom culture that respects and builds on all that children bring to the early learning setting	Take primary responsibility for creating a classroom culture that respects and builds on all that children bring to the early learning setting
	Support a classroom culture that respects and builds on all that children bring to the early learning setting		
4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectory of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills is critical for young children.	Identify teaching practices that are core to working with young children including differentiating instruction for individual children and groups of children, using play in teaching practices, and using teaching practices that build young children's executive function skills.	Describe the theoretical perspectives and core research base about various teaching strategies used with young children	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base on various instructional practices used with young children
	Use teaching practices with young children that are appropriate to their level of development, their individual characteristics, and the sociocultural context in which they live	Use teaching practices with young children that are appropriate to their level of development, their individual characteristics, and the sociocultural context in which they live Use teaching practices that incorporate the various types and stages of play that support young children's development Use teaching practices that support development of young children's executive function skills	Design, facilitate and evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated teaching practices based on the level of development, individual characteristics and interests, and sociocultural context of young children Design, facilitate and evaluate teaching practices that incorporate the various types and stages of play that support young children's development Design, facilitate and evaluate teaching practices that support development of young children's executive function skills

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
4c: Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias and evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.	Use developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant teaching practices to facilitate development and learning and classroom management	Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant teaching approaches to facilitate development, learning and classroom management Guide and supervise implementing effective teaching practices and learning environments	Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant teaching approaches to facilitate development, learning and classroom management Guide and supervise implementing effective teaching practices and learning environments
		Apply knowledge about age levels, abilities, developmental status, cultures and languages, and experiences of children in the group 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	Apply knowledge about age levels, abilities, developmental status, cultures and languages, and experiences of children in the group 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
5a: Understand content knowledge and resources—the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, and structure — , and resources for the academic disciplines in an early education curriculum.	Has preparation in general education content areas as demonstrated through holding a high school credential or equivalent	Has preparation in general education content areas as demonstrated through holding an associate degree3	Has preparation in a broad range of general education content areas as demonstrated through holding a baccalaureate degree4
5b: Understand pedagogical content knowledge—how young children learn in each discipline—and how to use the teacher knowledge and practices described in Standards 1 through 4 to support young children's learning in each content area.	Recognize that there are different ways that young children learn across content areas and that instructional decisions should be responsive to how children learn	Describe how young children learn across core content areas and use this understanding of pedagogical content knowledge to make instructional decisions	Analyze and synthesize the theoretical perspectives and research base undergirding pedagogical content knowledge
		Describe how to engage young children in learning about essential and foundational concepts, principles, and theories; in methods of investigations and inquiry; and in forms of representation that express ideas, relationships, and patterns in multiple content areas	Analyze models of engaging young children in learning about essential and foundational concepts, principles, and theories; in methods of investigations and inquiry; and in forms of representation that express ideas, relationships, and patterns in multiple content areas

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3   Settings/states might consider an equivalent credential for a practitioner whose postsecondary preparation took place outside the United States
4   Settings/states might consider an equivalent credential for a practitioner whose postsecondary preparation took place outside the United States

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
5c: Modify teaching practices by applying, expanding, integrating and updating their content knowledge in the disciplines, their knowledge of curriculum content resources, and their pedagogical content knowledge.	Identify early learning standards relevant to the state and/or early learning setting	Identify early learning standards relevant to the state and/or early learning setting	Identify early learning standards relevant to the state and/or early learning setting
	Support implementation of curriculum across content areas for birth- age 8 settings	Combine understanding of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and early learning standards to select or create an integrated curriculum across content areas for birth-five settings Support the implementation of curriculum across content areas for K-3 settings	Analyze the content in an integrated curriculum across content areas for birth-age 8 settings
	Support implementation of curriculum that counters biases and stereotypes, fosters young children's interest in the content areas, and facilitates individual and group learning in birth-age 8 settings	Select or create curriculum that counters biases and stereotypes, fosters young children's interest in the content areas, and facilitates individual and group learning in birth-five settings Support implementation of curriculum that counters biases and stereotypes, fosters young children's interest in the content areas, and facilitates individual and group learning in K-3 settings	Select or create curriculum that counters biases and stereotypes, fosters young children's interest in the content areas, and facilitates individual and group learning for birth-age 8 settings
		Use resources from professional organizations representing content areas as well as through professional development to support instructional practice and to grow their own knowledge in content areas	Use resources from professional organizations representing content areas as well as through professional development to support instructional practice and to grow their own knowledge in content areas

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
6a: Identify and involve oneself with the early childhood field and serve as an informed advocate for young children, families and the profession.	Identify as a committed professional in the early childhood education field Be a member of a professional early childhood education organization (at the local, state, or national level)	Describe the distinctive history, knowledge base, and mission of the early childhood education profession and the early childhood field as a whole	Take responsibility for increasing the stature of the early childhood field
	Identify basic professional and policy issues in the profession, such as 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 young children, families, communities and colleagues	Describe the broader contexts and challenges, current issues and trends that affect the profession including 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 young children, families, communities and colleagues	Analyze and synthesize the broader contexts and challenges, current issues and trends that affect the profession including 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 young children, families, communities and colleagues
	Advocate for resources and policies that support young children and their families as well as for early childhood educators, with a primary focus on advocacy within the early learning setting	Describe the basics of how public policies are developed Advocate for resources and policies that support young children and their families as well as for early childhood educators, within early learning settings as well as in broader contexts such as at the local, state, federal or national levels	Advocate for resources and policies that support young children and their families as well as for early childhood educators, within early learning settings as well as in broader contexts such as at the local, state, federal, national or global levels

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.	Identify the core tenets of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and abide by its ideals and principles	Use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to analyze and resolve professional ethical dilemmas and give defensible justifications for resolutions of those dilemmas	Facilitate the use of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to analyze and resolve professional ethical dilemmas and give defensible justifications for resolutions of those dilemmas
	Practice confidentiality, sensitivity and respect for young children, their families, and colleagues	Practice confidentiality, sensitivity and respect for young children, their families, and colleagues	Practice confidentiality, sensitivity and respect for young children, their families, and colleagues
	Identify 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	Identify 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	Identify 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
	Identify the basic elements of professional guidelines such as national, state, or local standards and regulations and position statements from professional associations	Reflect upon and integrate into practice professional guidelines such as national, state, or local standards and regulations and position statements from professional associations as appropriate for the role/designation in the profession	Explain the background and significance of professional guidelines such as national, state, or local standards and regulations and position statements from professional associations
6c. Use professional communication skills, including technology-mediated strategies, to effectively support young children's learning and development and work with families and colleagues.	Apply proper grammar, spelling, and usage of terms when communicating with young children, families and colleagues equivalent to the expected level of a U.S. high school graduate	Apply proper grammar, spelling, and usage of terms when communicating with young children, families and colleagues equivalent to the expected level of a college graduate	Apply proper grammar, spelling, and usage of terms when communicating with young children, families and colleagues equivalent to the expected level of a college graduate
	Supports communication with families in their preferred language	Supports communication with families in their preferred language	Supports communication with families in their preferred language
	Use clear and positive language and gestures with young children Use a positive, professional tone to communicate with families and colleagues Use appropriate technology with facility to support communication with colleagues and families, as appropriate	Use clear and positive language and gestures with young children Use a positive, professional tone to communicate with families and colleagues Use appropriate technology with facility to support communication with colleagues and families, as appropriate	Use clear and positive language and gestures with young children Use a positive, professional tone to communicate with families and colleagues Use appropriate technology with facility to support communication with colleagues and families, as appropriate
		Conduct sensitive, challenging conversations with young children, their families, and colleagues	Conduct sensitive, challenging conversations with young children, their families, and colleagues

	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
6d: Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice	Demonstrate self-motivated commitment to continuous learning that directly influences the quality of their work with young children	Identify the theoretical perspectives and research base related to continuous and collaborative learning and leadership	Describe the theoretical perspectives and research base related to continuous and collaborative learning and leadership
	Participate in and act on guidance and reflective supervision related to strengths and areas for growth.	Lead teaching teams in birth through age 5 settings through providing guidance to teaching team members, conducting performance evaluations, identifying professional growth needs in members of the teaching team, and adhering to personnel policies in the early learning setting	Lead teaching teams in birth through age 8 settings through providing guidance to teaching team members, conducting performance evaluations, identifying professional growth needs in members of the teaching team, and adhering to personnel policies in the early learning setting
	Determine when it is appropriate to reach out for new resources and consult with peers in related professions and other members of their teaching team	Determine when it is appropriate to reach out for new resources and consult with peers in related professions and other members of their teaching team	Determine when it is appropriate to reach out for new resources and consult with peers in related professions and other members of their teaching team
	Participate in collaborative learning communities, informal or formal, with colleagues and with professionals in related disciplines	Participate in collaborative learning communities, informal or formal, with colleagues and with professionals in related disciplines	Lead collaborative learning communities, informal or formal, with colleagues and with professionals in related disciplines
6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily practice with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.	Regularly reflect on teaching practice and personal biases to support each child's learning and development.	Examine own work, sources of professional knowledge, and assumptions about the early childhood field with a spirit of inquiry	Examine own work, sources of professional knowledge, and assumptions about the early childhood field with a spirit of inquiry
	Reflect on own needs and incorporate self-care into routines to maintain positive engagement with young children and professionalism with families and colleagues	Advocate for, model, and practice self-care to maintain positive engagement with young children and professionalism with families and colleagues	Advocate for, model, and practice self-care to maintain positive engagement with young children and professionalism with families and colleagues

Critical Issues and Research Informing the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

This appendix summarizes research findings and the contextual issues facing the early childhood field that informed this position statement.

A Response to Research and Practice

Since the publication of the 2009 position statement "NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation," significant research—much of it synthesized in the Institute of Medicine (IM) and National Research Council's (NRC) 2015 report *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. This new evidence affirms the importance of high-quality early learning experiences for young children, confirms that from birth young children actively develop across many domains, and helps the public and the early childhood field better understand the neuroscience behind young children's cognitive development, particularly during the earliest years. The research runs parallel to contextual factors and research findings such as the following:

› Early childhood educators' knowledge and practice influence 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 children (IM & NRC, 2015)

› The relationship between an early childhood educator's degree level and the educator's 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 quality (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011; IM & NRC, 2015; Manning, Garvis, Fleming, & Wong, 2017)

› Professional learning systems for early childhood educators— those entering and those already serving in the profession— should be aligned with the knowledge and practices shown to have a positive influence on young children's outcomes

› A large segment of the early childhood education workforce does not have a college degree (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2016; OPRE, 2016)

› Those early childhood educators who do not have college degrees often pursue initial postsecondary credentials at community colleges, not at baccalaureate-granting institutions (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018)

› Those pursuing postsecondary credentials in the early childhood profession often have challenges—low wages, the need to work full time or part time while going to school, family responsibilities, language barriers, lack of academic readiness for postsecondary education, and so forth—that can result in stopping out or dropping out of the credential program. These barriers are particularly burdensome to, and disproportionately affect, individuals of low social and economic status, people of color, and English language learners (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2016)

› The racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the early childhood education profession is more reflective of the young child population than the diversity of the K-12 educator workforce to the diversity of the K-12 student population; however, the diversity in the early childhood workforce is racially stratified, with white educators over-represented among higher-status and higher-paying positions (Park, McHugh, Zong, & Bataloya, 2015; Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2016)

› There are benefits associated with having a teaching workforce that reflects the ethnic, linguistic, and racial identities of the children it serves, including strong evidence that educators of color have a positive impact on child outcomes (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017)

The Need for Clarity and Coherence

Currently, the early childhood workforce is fragmented. This fragmentation, for most, has an adverse impact on the effectiveness of early childhood educators and on developmental and educational outcomes for young children. It is the result of a long history of inadequate and disconnected public policies and financing that has undervalued the care and education of young children. As such, individuals with varying credentials and qualifications provide education and care for young children and the compensation structure, for the most part, does not enable or encourage individuals in the field to pursue specialized early childhood postsecondary credentials. Furthermore, because of systematic racism, much of the early childhood workforce is comprised of women of color serving in the lowest-paid sectors and settings.

Each state and US territory has its own set of standards or competencies for early childhood educators and its own licensure/certification system that in most cases licenses/certifies only at the pre-K grade level or higher. There are wide variations 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 practices 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, those working in home-based programs, educators in center-based programs, and those in elementary school settings.

The profession took the lead in addressing this fragmentation, issuing a clear call for early education professionals to exercise their agency to create and enact an effective, respected, and fairly compensated early childhood workforce, modeling the cohesiveness that professionals desire, developing a unified definition of the profession, and reaffirming that all early childhood educators must have specialized knowledge and competencies across the birth-through-age-8 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 the guidelines, frameworks, and standards currently operating across programs, organizations, and states, sought to establish a shared, uniform framework of career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation to unify the entire profession. The initiative provides the clarity and cohesion needed to advance and implement a comprehensive policy and financing strategy for the early childhood profession. It will further ensure that those in the profession take ownership of their practice and commitment to society.

One of the major recommendations from the Power to the Profession Task Force in Decision Cycle 2 was that the "NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation" (NAEYC, 2009) should serve as the foundation for the profession's core knowledge and competencies, with some caveats for key revision:

> That the revision process be inclusive and collaborative, ensuring representation by subject matter experts as well as by the organizations whose competency documents will be considered.

> That the revised standards be reframed as "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators". These standards will be intended for wide use and adoption by the profession in developing individual licensing, professional preparation program accreditation, credentialing, and other core components of the profession.

> That the standards be reviewed in light of the most recent science, research, and evidence, with particular consideration given to

- Potential missing elements identified in Transforming the Workforce, including teaching subject-matter-specific content, addressing young children's stress and adversity, fostering social and emotional development, working with children who are bilingual learners, and integrating technology into teaching practices and curricula.

- The following documents: (1) 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); (2) Division for Early Childhood (DEC)—Recommended Practices (evidence-based practices necessary for high-quality inclusive programs for all children birth to age 8); (3) Council for Professional Recognition—Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards for Center-Based Infant-Toddler and Preschool, for Family Child Care, and for Home Visitor; (4) National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBTS)—Early Childhood Generalist Standards (for Teachers of Students Ages 3 to 8); (5) ZERO TO THREE—Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators (for educators supporting children birth through age 3)

- Elevation of inclusion, diversity, and equity beyond the currently integrated approach in order to fully address the depth and breadth of these issues

In summary, using the imperatives from P2P's Decision Cycle 2 and the findings from current research and practice, and informed by a workgroup comprised of faculty, researchers, practitioners, and subject matter experts, NAEYC has revised the 2009 position statement "NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation." This document, the updated position statement, was adopted in 2019 and is now titled "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educator.

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Glossary

Some definitions may be organized in logical order rather than alphabetical flow.

anti-bias. An approach to education that explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2009).

assessment. A systematic procedure for obtaining information from observations, interviews, portfolios, projects, and other sources, that is used to make informed judgments about learners' characteristics, understanding, and development to implement improved curriculum and teaching practices (Hansel 2019).

assessment cycle. Periodic, ongoing evaluation to track performance, to support and improve student learning outcomes, and to monitor progress of programs.

authentic assessment. Age-appropriate approaches and culturally relevant assessment in a language the child understands— for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in early grades, across developmental domains and curriculum areas.

formal and informal assessment. Formal assessment is cumulative and is used to measure what a student has learned. It includes standardized testing, screenings, and diagnostic evaluation. Informal assessment is ongoing and includes children's work samples and quizzes and teachers' anecdotal notes/records, observations, and audio and video recordings.

formative assessment and summative assessment. Used to inform and modify real-time instruction in order to improve student outcomes, formative assessment refers to the teacher practice of monitoring student learning. Summative assessment takes place at the end of the instructional period to measure student learning or concept retention.

asset-based approaches. Approaches to assessment and planning focused on the strengths and experiences unique to each child in the contexts of family, community, culture, and language.

bias. Attitude or stereotypes that favor one group over another.

explicit biases. Conscious beliefs and stereotypes that affect one's understanding, actions, and decisions.

implicit biases. Beliefs that affect one's understanding, actions, and decisions but in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases reflect an individual's socialization and experiences in broader systemic structures; they work to perpetuate existing systems of privilege and oppression.

anti-bias. An approach to education that explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2009).

candidate. A college student who is a candidate for completion in an early childhood professional preparation program. In some cases, these candidates are also candidates for professional licensure or certification (NAEYC 2017, 41).

child observation. Observation of a child to gather information on the child's development, behavior, levels of learning, interests, and preferences.

competencies. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to support high-quality practice across all early childhood education sectors, settings, and roles (NAEYC 2016, 12).

content knowledge. The knowledge of subject areas in the early childhood curriculum to be taught and the ability to implement effective instructional strategies.

continuity of care. A term used to describe programming and policies that ensure that a child and his or her family are consistently engaged in high-quality early learning experiences through a stable relationship with a caregiver who is sensitive and responsive to the young child's signals and needs (Ounce of Prevention 2017).

Code of Ethics. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct offers educators guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. Refer to the NAEYC position statement "Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment."

culture. Patterns of beliefs, practices, and traditions associated with a particular group of people. Culture is increasingly understood as inseparable from development (Reid, Kagan, & Scott-Little 2017; Rogoff 2009). Individuals both learn from and contribute to the culture of the groups to which they belong. Cultures evolve over time, reflecting the lived experiences of their members in particular times and places.

culturally relevant. Culturally relevant curriculum and practice emphasize content and interactions that are meaningful to the social and cultural norms, traditions, values, and experiences of the learners.

culturally responsive. "A culturally responsive teaching approach values all children's cultures and experiences and uses them as a springboard for learning. A culturally responsive early childhood teacher learns about others' values, traditions, and ways of thinking" (Bohart & Procopio 2018, 56).

curriculum. The knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which their acquisition occurs. In developmentally appropriate practice, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant.

developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). The NAEYC position statement (2009) refers to a framework of principles and guidelines for practice that promotes young children's optimal learning and development. DAP is a way of framing a teacher's intentional decision making. It begins with three Core Considerations: (1) what is known about general processes of child development and learning; (2) what is known about the child as an individual who is a member of a particular family and community; and (3) what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which the learning occurs.

differentiated instruction. An approach whereby teachers adjust the curriculum and their instruction to maximize the learning of all students: average learners, dual language learners, struggling students, students with learning disabilities, and gifted and talented students. Differentiated instruction is not a single strategy but rather a framework that teachers use to implement a variety of strategies, many of which are evidence based (IRIS Center n.d.)

disability or developmental delay. Legally defined for young children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), disabilities include intellectual disability; hearing, speech or language, visual, and/or orthopedic impairment; autism; and traumatic brain injury. Under IDEA, states define developmental delays to include delays in physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, and adaptive development. These legal definitions are important for determining access to early intervention and early childhood special education services (Beneke et al. 2019).

dispositions. Individual attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, and tendencies toward particular actions. Professional dispositions are considered important for effective work in a specific profession and are expected of all members of that profession. Critical dispositions for educators have been defined in the CCSSO's Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards (CCSSO, 2013) and in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). NBPTS dispositions for early childhood educators include collaboration, respect, integrity, honesty, fairness, and compassion; educators with these characteristics promote equity, fairness, and appreciation of diversity in their classrooms (NBPTS 2012).

diversity. Variations among individuals, as well as within and across groups of individuals, in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences. These experiences are related to social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin. The terms diverse and diversity are sometimes used as euphemisms for nonwhite. NAEYC specifically rejects this usage as it implies whiteness as the norm.

early childhood. The first period in child development, beginning at birth. Although developmental periods do not rigidly correspond to chronological ages, early childhood is generally defined as including all children from birth through age 8.

early childhood education (ECE). A term defined using the developmental definition of birth through approximately age 8, regardless of programmatic, regulatory, funding, or delivery sectors or mechanisms (NAEYC 2016, 12).

early childhood educator. An individual who cares for and promotes the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age 8 in all early childhood education settings, while meeting the qualifications of the profession and having mastery of its specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies.

early childhood education profession. Members of the profession care for and promote the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age 8 to establish a foundation for lifelong learning and success.

early learning settings. These include programs serving children from birth through age 8. Settings refers to the locations in which early childhood education takes place—child care centers, child care homes, elementary schools, religious-based centers, and many others.

equity. The state achieved if the way one fares in society was no longer predictable by race, gender, class, language, or any other social/cultural characteristic. Equity in practice means each student/family receives necessary supports in a timely fashion to develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential. Advancing equity requires remediating differences in outcomes that can be traced to biased treatment of individuals as a result of their social identities.

Equity is not the same as equality. Equal treatment, laid upon unequal starting points, is inequitable. Instead of equal treatment, early childhood professionals aim for equal opportunities. That requires considering individuals' and groups' starting points, then distributing resources equitably (not equally) to meet their needs. Attempting to achieve equality of opportunity without consideration of historic and present inequities is ineffective, unjust, and unfair.

evidence based. Using multiple sources as the foundation for decisions about practice, including best available research; professional wisdom, values, knowledge, and expertise; and knowledge about the interests, values, cultures, needs, and choices of children, families, and communities served (Buysse & Wesley 2006).

executive function skills. Executive function skills include the ability to remember and use information; to sustain and shift mental focus and flexibility; and to exercise self-regulation, set priorities, and resist impulsive actions (Center on the Developing Child). Related **life skill** include the development of focus and self-regulation, perspective taking, communication skills, the ability to make connections, critical thinking, the ability to take on challenges, and self-directed engaged learning (Galinsky 2010; Shonkoff 2019). These are Mental processes that begin to develop early and are crucial to children's learning and development. Their development requires supportive scaffolding from adults and is endangered by toxic stress and adversity, which can interfere with healthy development of the brain.

family structure. The household make-up to which children belong. Family members may include biological or adoptive parents, guardians, single or married adults, foster parents or group homes, grandparents, blended families, siblings, and individuals who are LGBTQ, multiracial, multilingual, multigenerational, and others. Pets may be viewed as family members in some households. These examples of family structures are not exhaustive, and they are intended to provide insight into the diversity of familial identities (Koralek, Nemeth, & Ramsey 2019).

field experience. Includes informal and formal opportunities for field observations, field work, practicum, student teaching, residencies, internships, clinical practice, and other learning experiences that take place in an early education setting with guidance from a skilled mentor, coach, or early childhood instructor. A planned sequence of these experiences supports candidate development of understanding, competence, and dispositions in a specialized area of practice (NAEYC 2017, 42).

Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs

early childhood education associate's degree programs. Associate's degree programs usually require at least two years, but less than four years, of full-time equivalent college work. An associate's degree is at least 60 credit hours of college-level coursework (Power to the Profession 2018, Discussion Draft 2: Decision Cycles 345+6, 13).

early childhood education bachelor's degree programs. Bachelor's degree programs normally require at least four years, but no more than five years, of full-time equivalent college work. A bachelor's degree is at least 120 credit hours of college-level coursework (Power to the Profession 2018, 13).

early childhood education master's degree programs (initial preparation). Master's degree programs usually require at least one, but not more than two, full-time academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Initial level master's degree programs are designed for individuals whose bachelor's degrees are not in early childhood education (Power to the Profession 2018, 13).

early childhood education professional training program. A program that culminates in a degree, certificate, or credential that provides a candidates with the appropriate level of mastery of the agreed-upon standards and competencies. Early childhood educator professional preparation programs are responsible for preparing educators serving children birth through third grade across settings.

higher education programs. Defined in the Higher Education Act as "postsecondary education programs offered by an institution of higher education that leads to an academic or professional degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential" (Higher Education Act of 2008, section 602.3; NAEYC & National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies 2011, 5–6).

Inclusion. The practice and legal requirement to include children with delays or disabilities in the least restrictive environments possible, making accommodations and adaptations to teaching practices and learning environments as needed (DEC & NAEYC 2009; also see *universal design for learning* (UDL), under definition of *universal design*).

Individualized Education Program (IEP). A plan to ensure free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for children ages 3 to 21 years with delays or disabilities, in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B (NAEYC 2018, 12).

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). A plan to ensure free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for children ages birth to 3 years with delays or disabilities, in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (NAEYC 2018, 12).

induction programs. Comprehensive staff development programs designed by a school or other institution to support, train, and retain first-year teachers. Induction programs may be part of professional or leadership development plans and can include peer-to-peer networks, teacher learning communities, mentoring, and coaching. Induction programs are often a partnership between an institution of higher education and a school or other early learning setting, supporting college or university students' transitions from clinical practice as part of degree completion to first years of work in a new professional role (NAEYC 2018).

interactive media. Digital and analog materials, including software programs, applications (apps), broadcast and streaming media, some children's television programming, e-books, the internet, and other forms of content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults (NAEYC & the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media 2012, 1).

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards. The model core teaching standards outline what all teachers across all content and grade levels should know and be able to do to be effective in today's learning contexts.

integrated curriculum. Planned curriculum experiences that integrate children's learning in and across the domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and the disciplines (including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health). (NAEYC 2009, 21 [in revision]).

learning communities. Provide a space and a structure for people to align around a shared goal. Effective communities are both aspirational and practical. They connect people, organizations, and systems that are eager to learn and work across boundaries, all the while holding members accountable to a common agenda, metrics, and outcomes. These communities enable participants to share results and learn from each other, thereby improving their ability to achieve rapid yet significant progress (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Learning Communities).

leveling. A structure in which the standards and competencies for early childhood educators are aligned to three distinct and meaningful designations: Early Childhood Educator I (ECE I), Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II), and Early Childhood Educator III (ECE III). (Unifying Framework; also see Appendix A of this position statement).

life skills. Critical fostered abilities that help children successfully navigate the joy and challenging complexities of life. The seven critical areas are (1) focus and self-regulation; (2) perspective taking; (3) communicating; (4) making connections; (5) critical thinking; (6) taking on challenges; and (7) self-directed, engaged learning (Galinsky 2010).

linguistic interactions. Actions that include speaking and listening in order to assign meaning and facilitate communication. Literacy skills are encompassed in linguistic development.

NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards. NAEYC's "Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs" represent a sustained vision for the early childhood field and, more specifically, for programs that guide professionals working in the field. The standards are used in higher education accreditation systems, in state policy development, and by professional development programs both inside and outside of institutions of higher education. These core standards can provide a solid, commonly held foundation of unifying themes (NAEYC 2009). (This 2020 position statement, "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators," represents the revised standards.)

national accreditation or recognition. Public recognition of Institutions of higher education and professional degree programs awarded by nongovernmental agencies through a process of standard setting, self-study, peer review, accreditation decision, and ongoing reporting (NAEYC 2011, part 2: 6).

pedagogical content knowledge. Knowledge of how children learn in academic disciplines and the ability to create meaningful learning experiences for each child by using effective teaching strategies.

play. A universal, innate, and essential human activity that children engage in for pleasure, enjoyment, and recreation. Play, solitary or social, begins during infancy and develops in increasing complexity through childhood. Play integrates and supports children's development and learning across cognitive, physical, social, and emotional domains and across curriculum content areas. Play can lead to inquiry and discovery and facilitate future learning. While there are multiple and evolving theories about the types and stages of play, as well as about the teacher's role in play, the professions of child psychology and of early childhood education have long recognized play as essential for young children's development of symbolic and representational thinking, construction and organization of mental concepts, social expression and communication, imagination, and problem solving.

position statement. Adopted by the Governing Board to state the NAEYC's position on an issue related to early childhood education practice, policy, and/or professional development about which there are controversial or critical opinions. A position statement is developed through a consensus-building approach that seeks to convene diverse perspectives and areas of expertise related to the issue and provide opportunities for members and others to provide input and feedback. (NAEYC, About Position Statements, www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/about-position-statements).

positive guidance. An approach to maintaining respectful relationships with children by modeling positive interactions, thereby creating learning environments that support clear routines and choices and help extend learning (Dombro, Jablon, & Stetson 2011).

professional development. A continuum of learning and support opportunities designed to prepare individuals with the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions needed in a specific profession. Professional development for early childhood educators includes both professional preparation and ongoing professional development; training, education, and technical assistance; university/college credit-bearing coursework, and preservice and in-service training sessions; observation with feedback from a colleague or peer learning communities; and mentoring, coaching, and other forms of job-related technical assistance. (NAEYC & NACCRRA 2011, 5; NAEYC 2016, 13).

professional judgment. The application of professional knowledge, professional experience, and ethical standards in context with understanding, analysis, and reflection. Early childhood educators exercise professional judgment to make intentional, informed decisions about appropriate practice in specific circumstances.

race. A social construct that categorizes and ranks groups of people on the basis of skin color and other physical features. The scientific consensus is that using the social construct of race to divide people into distinct and different groups has no biological basis (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2009). Early childhood educators recognize that there is significant diversity within racial categories.

reciprocal relationships. In reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families, there is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibilities, and negotiation of conflicts to achieve shared goals for children (NAEYC 2009, DAP position statement, 23 [in revision]).

social referencing. An infant behavior in which the child "checks in" with a parent or other trusted adult for cues on how to respond in unfamiliar situations (Galinsky 2010).

standards. The national standards formally adopted by a profession to define the essentials of high-quality practice for all members of the profession. They may be applied in the development of national accreditation, state program approval, individual licensing, and other aspects of professional development systems. They provide the unifying framework for core as well as specialized or advanced knowledge and competencies.

structural inequities. The systemic disadvantage of one or more social groups compared to systemic advantage for other groups with which they coexist. The term encompasses policy, law, governance, and culture and refers to race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, class, sexual orientation, and other domains (NASEM 2017).

supervision. Directing, coaching, and monitoring the work of another, including guidance, motivation, and feedback on performance and professional growth. May also include developing goals, action plans, and evaluation for improved outcomes.

technology. Broadly defined as anything human-made that is used to solve a problem or fulfill a desire. Technology can be an object, a system, or a process that results in the modification of the natural world to meet human needs and wants. Additionally, technology includes digital tools like computers, tablets, apps, e-readers, smartphones, TVs, DVDs and music players, handheld games, cameras, digital microscopes, interactive whiteboards, electronic toys, non-screen-based tangible technology, and simple robots.

Familiar analog tools found in early childhood classrooms include audio recorders, VHS and cassette players, record players, headphones, crayons and pencils, scissors, rulers, blocks, and magnifying glasses.

Social media, email, video conferencing, cloud collaboration tools, e-portfolios, blogs, pod casts, and other methods of communication are used by young children (Early Childhood STEM Working Group 2017; Donohue 2017, 2019; International Society for Technology in Education 2019).

universal design. A concept that can be used to support access to environments in many different types of settings through the removal of physical and structural barriers. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) reflects practices that provide multiple and varied formats for instruction and learning. UDL principles and practices help to ensure that every young child has access to learning environments, to typical home or educational routines and activities, and to the general education curriculum.

young children. Refers to children in the period of early childhood development, from birth through approximately age 8. Although developmental periods do not rigidly correspond to chronological ages, early childhood is generally defined as including all children from birth through age 8.

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Disciplinary Organizations

Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)

Association of Children's Museums (ACM)

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Early Childhood Art Educators (ECAE)

Early Childhood Art Educators

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, Council of Chief State School Officers

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

National Association for Music Education (NAFME) Early Childhood Music Education (ECEA)

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

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The History of Standards for Professional Preparation

NAEYC has a long-standing commitment to collaborative standards setting for early childhood teacher preparation and credentialing. The first NAEYC statement on standards (then called guidelines) for professional preparation was developed by a 22-member commission of national leaders that included Millie Almy, Elizabeth H. Brady, Barbara T. Bowman, Josué Cruz, Asa Hilliard III, Lilian G. Katz, and Bernard Spodek. The guidelines were adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board in 1981 and published in 1982 (NAEYC 1982). That same year, they were adopted as the national standards for early childhood teacher education by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

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 appointed advisory groups; related early childhood and specialty organizations; other accrediting, credentialing, and standards-setting groups; NAEYC members; and the public. Each revision reflects 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 contexts in which early childhood educators practice.

Defining Professional Preparation Content, Levels and Specializations

Over two decades of updates reflected a need to define shared professional knowledge and practices at varying professional levels, to propose optional specializations, and to promote articulation pathways that connect them.

1982: "Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines for four- and five-year programs" affirmed that

- Four-year teacher education programs are sufficient to prepare individuals in the knowledge and skills needed to serve as early childhood educators.
- Teacher development is continuous. Teacher educator programs provide the foundational knowledge in child development and instructional practice to effectively work with young children.
- Early childhood teacher education curriculum is integrative and interdisciplinary and it includes preparation to support diversity and to counter discrimination and inequity.

1985: "Guidelines for Associate Degree Programs" described this level as

- Including the core knowledge and skills.
- Addressing variations in serving specific communities and populations.
- Preparing individuals sufficiently to advance to upper-division coursework.
- The statement encouraged strong articulation policies to advance the education of the workforce.

1991: "Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines: Basic and Advanced" was developed in collaboration with NAECTE (National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators) and approved by NCATE in 1998. This update clarified that advanced preparation is not defined simply as graduate level but as preparation that

- Ensures graduates meet the shared competencies at higher, advanced levels, beyond what was then called the "basic" standards.
- Provides increased professional development for a specialized career role.
- Assures that the graduate demonstrates capacity to evaluate and apply research to improve practices.

1996: "Guidelines for Preparation of Early Childhood Professionals" consolidated expectations for associate, baccalaureate, and advanced levels of preparation into one publication. NAEYC guidelines were published alongside those of CEC/DEC (Council for Exceptional Children/Division of Early Childhood) and NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards). NAEYC and DEC endorsed each other's statements, and ATE (Association of Teacher Educators) endorsed both. The introduction summarized the following:

- At the associate level, the graduate demonstrates knowledge of theory and practice necessary to plan and implement curriculum
- At the baccalaureate level, the graduate demonstrates the ability to apply and analyze the core knowledge, to systematically develop curriculum, and to develop and conduct assessments of individual children and groups
- At the master's level, the graduate demonstrates greater capacity to analyze and refine core knowledge and evaluate and apply research to improve practices
- At the doctoral level, the graduate conducts research and studies practice to expand the knowledge base and influence system change

- At each of these levels, the professional is expected to reflect on his or her practice and to advocate for policies designed to improve conditions for children, families, and the profession.

The content of the standards was updated to:

- Reflect the need to prepare all early childhood educators to support children with differing abilities in inclusive early childhood programs
- Reframe the 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 educator 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.

2003: "Preparing Early Childhood Professionals: NAEYC's Standards for Programs" included the following revisions:

- Expanded upon the importance of associate degrees, community colleges, and articulation agreements in supporting and increasing teacher diversity at all levels of the profession
- Emphasized current challenges related to teacher recruitment, retention, education, diversity, and compensation
- Added details to core knowledge areas to guide student assessment, reflecting a general shift from inputs to student outcomes in higher education evaluation, reform, and quality improvement
- Changed terminology from program guidelines to program standards, with assessment of graduates' knowledge and competencies related to these standards as the primary measure of program quality
- Added rubrics to illustrate meeting the expectations at associate, Initial Licensure, and advanced levels

2006: "NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation Standards". This document summarized the Commission's full program standards, including

- Knowledge and competencies expected of associate degree program graduates, using the 2003 NAEYC standards as the framework for required student assessment
- Structural characteristics expected of programs

2009: "Standards for Early Childhood Preparation"

- Separated the two aspects of previous Standard 4 into new Standard 4, focused on teaching practices, and Standard 5, focused on content knowledge in academic

disciplines, in order to elevate the importance of college-level content and competency in academic disciplines or curriculum areas and their application in early childhood curriculum and assessment

- Updated content to more intentionally address inclusion, cultural competence, and technology across all standards
- Separated the 2009 position statement, intended for the field and adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board from the 2010 program standards which were adopted for implementation by NAEYC and NCATE higher education accreditation governing boards. In 2010, the NAEYC higher education accreditation commission adopted the 2009 position statement as its standards framework and defined accreditation expectations at two levels of preparation program standards--Initial and Advanced--using the 1991 definitions of Basic/Initial and Advanced levels of professional knowledge and practice.

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Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

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