



**Joint Statement of the
National Association for the Education of Young Children
and the
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education
on the Common Core Standards Initiative Related to Kindergarten Through Third Grade**

Early childhood – the period from birth through age eight – is a distinct period of life that has value in itself as well as creating foundations for later years. Policymakers at every level must consider the characteristics of early childhood as the standards movement extends into the years before kindergarten and in the early grades of school. A developmental continuum of standards, curriculum, and assessments, extending from the early years into later schooling, can support better transitions from infant/toddler care through preschool programs to kindergarten and into the primary grades, as teachers work within a consistent framework across educational settings.

Standards are not new to early childhood education. All states have developed early learning standards in at least language arts and mathematics for preschool-age children; more than half of the states have developed early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers. Since 2000, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework has described the desired outcomes or expectations for eight domains of children’s learning and development.

NAEYC and NAECS-SDE affirm that standards – challenging and achievable, appropriate to children’s development, and addressing each area of children’s inter-related development and learning – are an important component of teaching and learning success for every child. Our joint position statement, *Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success*, based on the research of child development and learning and the input of numerous experts and practitioners, states that standards can be a valuable part of a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative focused on kindergarten through twelfth grade content standards. Had the standards omitted kindergarten, first, second and third grade standards and started in fourth grade, we believe that there would be even greater potential for inappropriate alignment and pushdown of standards from the later grades, and less assurance of developmentally appropriate practices in the absence of guidance on reasonable age and grade expectations in kindergarten and the early grades.

As to our comments submitted on the March 10 draft standards, both NAEYC and NAECS-SDE separately provided specific and general recommendations. Both organizations gathered and shared with each other the reflections of a variety of developmental content experts and policy stakeholders among their members. Based on a synthesis of those comments we here highlight a few key points:

- ***We believe that taken as a whole, the draft standards were fair and age appropriate for kindergarten through 3rd grade.***
- ***We provided substitute language or additional language in many specifics of the standards –addressing both issues of clarity and appropriate learning progressions.***
- ***We each were emphatic that the final document be clarified to assure the standards should never be used to deny entry to kindergarten or retention in a grade.***
- ***Each of us stressed in our general comments that the standards in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) should not preclude focused attention in classroom practice on other standards for learning.***
- ***Throughout the core standard development process, we have jointly expressed concern to the developers that effort on only two content domains could result in the unintended consequence of narrowing curriculum and instructional practice to the detriment of student learning.***
- ***We have specifically urged the addition of social and emotional development and approaches to learning as the next necessary area for high-quality, developmentally and grade appropriate common standards work.***

We wish to be very clear that significant work lies ahead even with the best written and most comprehensive standards. There is an urgent need for the development of comprehensive and appropriate curricula and assessments, professional development for teachers and administrators in effective practice, and resources to ensure that all children have opportunities to meet challenging and achievable expectations for learning. ***Our organizations are ready to partner together and with others in these efforts to assure the best education for the Nation's young learners.***

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