

Building California's Preschool For All Workforce

A SERIES OF POLICY BRIEFS

Establishing Teacher Competencies in Early Care and Education: A Review of Current Models and Options for California

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□ In recent years, growing knowledge of the critical importance of early childhood development for lifelong learning and growth had led to increased calls for the professionalism of early educators, including higher standards for teacher training and education. As part of this renewed attention to professional development, more than a dozen states have established a set of *teacher competencies* for the early care and education (ECE) field, with the goal of assuring that all teachers of young children have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet children's developmental needs.

□ Flowing from an understanding of the "domains" or areas of early learning and development, *competencies* focus on what teachers need to know and do in order to demonstrate that they are well-rounded and well-prepared to educate and care for young children.¹ While no single set of early childhood teacher competencies has been adopted universally in the United States, broad agreement is emerging. And in California, several policy proposals and legislative efforts have called in the past year for a comprehensive ECE workforce development plan that would include establishing teacher competencies. While the exact process through which this would occur has not yet been determined, it is clear that competencies are increasingly seen as a cornerstone of assuring professionalism and stability for California's ECE workforce.

□ The foremost previous effort in California is represented by the *Child Development Permit Matrix*, for which the Advancing Careers in Child Development project at Pacific Oaks College developed a brief set of competencies for each of the six Matrix levels (assistant, associate teacher, teacher, master teacher, site supervisor, and program director). This document provides guidelines grouped into five areas: personal and professional behavior; classroom environment; health, safety and nutrition; working with families and communities; and administration and management (Sharpe, Brown, Krieger & Clarke, 1999).

□ But while the Child Development Permit Matrix has made significant progress in the ECE field, new knowledge and new expectations suggest a strong need for updating and expanding these competencies. Answering the question "What do teachers need to know and do?" has also been somewhat hampered by conflicting views of the purpose of early care and education. Is it indeed early education, focused on young children's developmental and school readiness needs, or is it primarily a custodial service to benefit working parents and reduce welfare dependency? California's inconsistent regulatory system, with highly variable training and education requirements for teachers and providers depending on the type of program in which they work, reflects this longstanding lack of agreement.

¹ Generally, efforts to develop competencies in the early care and education field have focused on teaching staff; relatively little work has been done concerning competencies for administrators, teacher trainers, and other professional roles.

As a result, competencies, courses of study and certification processes are still poorly aligned in California, making it difficult for students to develop their professional knowledge and skills in any kind of logical progression.

□ This policy brief will discuss the topics that teacher competencies generally cover, options for how they might be developed and structured in California, and examples of major efforts by national organizations and other states. Such efforts in other states have often been elaborate, multi-year processes, enlisting the expertise of broad-based panels of experts as well as input and buy-in from many ECE practitioners and other interested parties. □ □

□ Typically, the first step is to identify and define the domains of children's early learning and development, and to agree on one set of domains. The second step is to link these domains with knowledge and skill standards for teachers at different levels (e.g., assistant teacher, master teacher, and program director, or entry-level, mid-career, and advanced). From these flow the further steps of defining the appropriate course content for teaching these competencies, establishing a certification process, and developing tools to measure effectiveness in teaching competencies to early childhood teachers.

Defining Goals for Young Children: The Domains of Early Childhood Learning and Development

□ While no single definition of the domains of early learning and development has been adopted by the entire field, broad overall agreement is emerging. Certain questions of emphasis, however, remain controversial. Some argue that in current debates over school readiness, cognitive development has been overemphasized, and social and emotional development have been neglected, as a result of rising concerns about preparing young children for the academic demands of elementary school. Others contend that "child-centered" curricula have often been implemented in ways that do not focus sufficiently on developing children's pre-literacy and numeracy skills. And while "language development" is generally cited as one of the four or five primary

domains of child development, the particular experiences of English language learners and bilingual children are not always explicitly addressed - but these will be of great concern as California develops teacher competencies, given the state's very diverse child population.

□ All can agree that it is essential for teachers to understand the multiple facets of how children grow and learn, and that "school readiness" has multiple dimensions. In particular, human relationships - with parents, teachers, and other children - have been identified as critical ingredients of early brain development. And since nurturing, responsive, individual social interactions are known to build healthy "brain architecture," a teacher's skill in fostering relationships - as well as imparting knowledge - is all the more important (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

□ The following is a brief definition, with variations, of the most generally recognized developmental domains.

□ The *National Education Goals Panel*, a bipartisan group established in 1990 to track state and national progress in meeting eight key education goals, cited five "dimensions" or domains of development and learning during early childhood, as follows (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995):

- ***Physical well-being and motor development.*** This dimension covers such factors as health status, growth, and disabilities; physical abilities, such as gross and fine motor skills; and conditions before, at, and after birth, such as exposure to toxic substances.
- ***Social and emotional development.*** *Social development* refers to children's ability to interact with others. A positive adaptation to school requires such social skills as the ability to take turns and to cooperate. *Emotional development* includes such factors as children's perceptions of themselves and their abilities to both understand the feelings of other people and to interpret and express their own feelings.
- ***Approaches to learning.*** This dimension refers to the inclination to use skills, knowledge, and

capacities. Key components include enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence on tasks, as well as temperament and cultural patterns and values.

- **Language development.** This dimension includes verbal language and emergent literacy. Verbal language includes listening, speaking, and vocabulary. Emergent literacy includes print awareness (e.g., assigning sounds to letter combinations), story sense (e.g., understanding that stories have a beginning, middle, and end) and the writing process (e.g., representing ideas through drawing, letter-like shapes, or letters).
- **Cognition and general knowledge.** This aspect includes knowledge about properties of particular objects and knowledge derived from looking across objects, events, or people for similarities, differences, and associations. It also includes knowledge about societal conventions, such as the assignment of particular letters to sounds, and knowledge about shapes, spatial relations, and number concepts.

□ The recently released *Minnesota Early Learning Standards* (Minnesota Department of Education, 2005) add a sixth domain, "creativity and the arts," described as follows: "The emphasis in this domain is on children's engagement with the arts both actively and receptively. The component areas of creating, responding and evaluating recognize how using and appreciating the arts enables children to demonstrate what they know and allows them to expand their thinking about creative endeavors."

□ By contrast, the *Desired Results* system developed by the California Department of Education (CDE) cites four domains, which roughly match the first four of the system's six desired results: cognitive development, social-emotional development, language development and physical development. This framework does not include a separate fifth domain for "approaches to learning." The six desired

domain for "approaches to learning." The six desired results, to which all CDE-funded child care and development programs are expected to contribute, are the following:

1. Children are personally and socially □ □ competent.²
2. Children are effective learners.³
3. Children show physical and motor □ □ competence.⁴
4. Children are safe and healthy.⁵
5. Families support their children's learning and □ development.
6. Families achieve their goals.

National Standards for Teachers and/or Teacher Training Programs

□ Just as the definitions of children's developmental domains vary and are not standardized, standards for teachers have been defined in various ways by different groups. Thus far, at the national level, much of the focus of professional standards for teaching young children has been on the early elementary grades (K-3), but new efforts are underway to link preschool and K-3 education into one continuum (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005).

□ The foremost national efforts include work by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialing system, and the Council for Exceptional Children/Division for Early Childhood (CEC/DEC).

□ In a 2003 publication (Hyson, 2003), the *National Association for the Education of Young Children* offered guidelines for early childhood

² Indicators cited for this result are: 1) Children show self-awareness and a positive self-concept; 2) Children demonstrate effective social and interpersonal skills; 3) Children demonstrate effective self-regulation of their behavior; 4) Children show awareness, acceptance, understanding and appreciation of others' special needs, genders, family structures, ethnicities, cultures and languages; 5) Children show growing abilities in communication and language.

³ Indicators: 1) Children are interested in learning new things; 2) Children show cognitive competence and problem-solving skills through play and daily activities; 3) Children show interest real-life mathematical concepts; 4) Children demonstrate emerging literacy skills.

⁴ Indicator: Children demonstrate an increased proficiency in motor skills.

⁵ Indicator: Children show an emerging awareness and practice of safe and healthy behavior.

professional preparation at three levels: Initial Licensure Programs (programs that prepare practitioners at the 'initial licensure' or certification level, usually a bachelor's or master's degree); Advanced Programs (advanced master's and doctoral training); and Associate Degree Programs. These standards were also approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Each of these three sets of detailed guidelines is organized around five basic standards for what teachers - at different levels - should know and be able to do:

1) *Promoting child development and learning.*

Well-prepared early childhood professionals:

- • Understand what young children are like
- • Understand what influences their □ □ development
- • Use this understanding to create great □ □ environments where all children can □ □ thrive.

2) *Building family and community relationships.*

Well-prepared early childhood professionals:

- • Understand and value children's families □ □ and communities
- • Create respectful, reciprocal relationships
- • Involve all families in their children's □ □ development and learning.

3) *Observing, documenting and assessing.* Well-prepared early childhood professionals:

- • Understand the purposes of assessment
- • Use effective assessment strategies
- • Use assessment responsibly, to □ □ positively influence children's □ □ development and learning.

4) *Teaching and learning.* Well-prepared early childhood professionals:

- • Build close relationships with children □ □ and families
- • Use developmentally effective teaching □ □ and learning strategies
- • Have sound knowledge of academic □ □ disciplines or content areas
- • Combine all of these to give children □ □ experiences that promote development and □ □ learning.

5) *Becoming a professional.* Well-prepared early childhood professionals:

- • Identify themselves with the early □ □ childhood profession
- • Are guided by ethical and other □ □ professional standards
- • Are continuous, collaborative learners
- • Think reflectively and critically
- • Advocate for children, families and the □ □ profession.

□ The *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards* (online at www.nbpts.org) offers an Early Childhood/Generalist certification. The process is an extensive series of performance-based assessments that includes teaching portfolios, student work samples, videotapes and analyses of the candidates' classroom teaching and student learning. Teachers also complete a series of written exercises that probe the depth of their subject-matter knowledge, as well as their understanding of how to teach those subjects to their students.

□ The NBPTS divides "subject-matter knowledge" is divided into the following six curriculum areas: literacy and English language arts; mathematics; science; social studies; children's play; and physical education, health, and safety. The NBPTS standards are outlined as follows:

I. Understanding Young Children

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their knowledge of child development and their relationships with children and families to understand children as individuals and to plan in response to their unique needs and potentials.

II. Equity, Fairness, and Diversity

Accomplished early childhood teachers model and teach behaviors appropriate in a diverse society by creating a safe, secure learning environment for all children; by showing appreciation of and respect for the individual differences and unique needs of each member of the learning community; and by empowering children to treat others with, and to expect from others, equity, fairness, and dignity.

III. Assessment

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize strengths and weaknesses of multiple assessment methodologies and know how to use them effectively. Employing a variety of methods, they systematically observe, monitor, and document children's activities and behavior, analyzing, communicating, and using the information they glean to improve their work with children, parents, and others.

IV. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers promote children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic development by organizing and orchestrating the environment in ways that best facilitate the development and learning of young children.

V. Knowledge of Integrated Curriculum

On the basis of their knowledge of how young children learn, of academic subjects, and of assessment, accomplished early childhood teachers design and implement developmentally appropriate learning experiences that integrate within and across the disciplines.

VI. Multiple Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers use a variety of practices and resources to promote individual development, meaningful learning, and social cooperation.

VII. Family and Community Partnerships

Accomplished early childhood teachers work with and through families and communities to support children's learning and development.

VIII. Professional Partnerships

Accomplished early childhood teachers work as leaders and collaborators in the professional community to improve programs and practices for young children and their families.

IX. Reflective Practice

Accomplished early childhood teachers regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work.

The *The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program* for child care providers and home visitors was initiated in 1971. The Council for Professional Recognition (online at www.cdacouncil.org.) administers the assessment and CDA credentialing of candidates. According to the Council, more than 100,000 providers have earned the CDA credential since 1975, and 46 states, plus the District of Columbia, have incorporated the credential in their child care licensing regulations.

The CDA Competency Standards are divided into six "Competency Goals," which are defined in more detail in 13 "Functional Areas." Separate *CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards* booklets are available, in English and Spanish, for "Preschool Caregivers in Center-Based Programs," "Infant-Toddler Caregivers in Center-Based Programs," and "Family Child Care Providers" (Council for Professional Recognition, 2004, 2003 & 2001), as well as for "Home Visitors." Each of these publications offers the following basic description of the standards:

The six Competency Goals are the same for all settings. However, the Functional Area definitions differ according to the particular skills needed for specific child care settings and/or age groupings....

CDA Competency Goals:

- I. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment. [Functional areas: "Safe," "Healthy," and "Learning Environment."]
- II. To advance physical and intellectual competence. [Functional areas: "Physical," "Cognitive," "Communication," and "Creative."]
- III. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance. [Functional areas: "Self," "Social" and "Guidance."]
- IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families. [Functional area: "Families."]
- V. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs. [Functional area: "Program Management."]

- VI. □ To maintain a commitment to □ □
- professionalism. [Functional area: □ □
- "Professionalism."]

□ The *Council for Exceptional Children/ Division for Early Childhood* Special Education Content Standards (summarized in Hyson, 2003) are organized into ten standards, which are used by CEC to review all special education programs:

1. □ Foundations
2. □ Development and Characteristics of □ □
- Learners
3. □ Individual Learning Differences
4. □ Instructional Strategies
5. □ Learning Environments and Social □ □
- Interactions
6. □ Language
7. □ Instructional Planning
8. □ Assessment
9. □ Professional and Ethical Practice
10. □ Collaboration.

Competencies or Standards Developed by Other States

□ At least a dozen states have developed competencies or standards for early childhood teachers. While state competencies differ significantly in various details and in areas of emphasis, there are many similarities in their broad categories of concern. The following is a selection of states that have done relatively detailed work in this area.

□ As shown in the chart, states are generally covering the same topics found in national standards, but are giving them a variety of names. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), for example, separates the categories of "Understanding Young Children" and "Promoting Child Development and Learning," where several states group these areas together. Conversely, some of the state categories - such as "Diverse Learners" in New Jersey - could fit into more than one NBPTS category. Readers can examine these state competencies in greater detail at the links provided below.

□ For a detailed illustration of the variety of ways in which state and national organizations have approached the task of defining competencies for early care and education teachers, see Appendix A, which presents ten examples of competencies in one area, *child observation and assessment*.

□ *Illinois*. "Standards for Certification in Early Childhood Education," part of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code, can be found at www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/26ark.pdf. As of July 1, 2004, approval of teacher training programs or courses of study is based upon congruence with these standards. For each area, the document lists "Knowledge Indicators" and "Performance Indicators."

□ *New Jersey*. New Jersey has developed standards for teachers, but has not yet completed specific ECE competencies; its Professional Development Center is in the midst of developing them. The "Professional Standards for Teachers" are in Section 6A:9-3.3 (page 7) of the document at <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/code/current/title6a/chap9.pdf>. The standards are organized into 10 areas.

□ *New Mexico*. New Mexico's "Competencies for Early Childhood Education," which apply to early childhood professionals who have completed a BA degree and are applying for licensure (credential), can be found under Item 6.61.8.10 at: <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.061.0008.htm>. The competencies are grouped into seven areas. See also, in the following section, a case study of the process by which New Mexico developed these ECE teacher competencies.

□ *New York*. The Career Development Initiative of New York State (2001) has developed and published "The New York State Early Care and Education Core Body of Knowledge Framework: Essential Areas of Knowledge Needed in Working Effectively with Young Children, Birth through Age 8," which defines six "knowledge base areas." For each of the six knowledge base areas, the Framework outlines three levels of competency, designed as a continuum - entry-level, mid-career, and advanced. The 26-page Framework document can be found at: <http://www.earlychildhood.org/pdfs/CoreBody.pdf>.

National and State Early Childhood Teacher Competencies: A Comparison of Categories

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards	Illinois	New Jersey	New Mexico	New York	North Carolina
Understanding Young Children	Human Development & Learning	Human Growth & Development	Child Growth, Development & Learning	Child Growth & Development	Child Development & Learning
Equity, Fairness & Diversity	Diversity	Diverse Learners; Special Needs			
Assessment	Assessment	Assessment	Assessment of Children & Evaluation of Programs	Child Assessment	Assessment
Promoting Child Development & Learning	Learning Environment	Learning Environment	Health Learning Environment & Curriculum Implementation; Safety & Nutrition	Environment, Curriculum & Content	Interactions with Children
Knowledge of Integrated Curriculum	Curriculum*	Subject Matter Knowledge	Learning Environment & Curriculum Implementation; Developmentally Appropriate Content	Environment, Curriculum & Content	Curriculum & Environment
Multiple Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning	Planning for Instruction; Instructional Delivery	Instructional Planning & Strategies; Diverse Learners; Special Needs			Individual Learning Differences
Family & Community Partnerships	Communication; Collaborative Relationships	Communication; Collaboration & Partnerships	Family & Community Collaboration	Families in Society; Communication	Family & Community Partnerships
Professional Partnerships	Communication; Collaborative Relationships; Professional Conduct & Leadership	Communication; Collaboration & Partnerships; Professional Development	Professionalism	Communication; Professionalism & Leadership	Professionalism
Reflective Practice	Reflection & Professional Growth				

* The Illinois standards list seven curriculum areas: General, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development & Health, & Fine Arts.

See also, in the following section, a case study of the process by which New York developed these ECE teacher competencies.

□ *North Carolina.* The North Carolina State Board of Education revised its "Core Standards for All Teachers" most recently in March 2002. The Core Standards for "Birth Through Kindergarten (B-K) Teachers" can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/humanresources/downloads/specialtystandards.pdf> (pages 16-22). These standards are organized into seven areas.

State Processes for Developing ECE Teacher Competencies: Case Studies from New Mexico and New York

□ The following is an account of the kinds of processes that two states have gone through in developing ECE teacher competencies. In both cases, these were multi-year efforts, raising several implications for California about how such a process might proceed in this state. For instance:

- • *Formation of a drafting committee:* What □ □ kind of issue expertise should be represented? □ □ How large should this group be?
- • *Outreach:* Should this group prepare a draft □ □ document on ECE teacher competencies, with □ □ limited outside input, and then circulate it □ □ broadly? Or should it solicit broad input first, □ □ and then prepare a draft? The former option □ □ appears to be the more usual one.
- • *Replication:* To what extent is it possible for □ □ California to adopt another state's set of □ □ competencies, while making its own □ □ adjustments? Neither New York nor North □ □ Carolina decided to do so; having reviewed □ □ documents from various organizations and □ □ states, the committees in both states went □ □ ahead with extended processes to develop □ □ their own document. On the other hand, it is □ □ also clear that California can benefit greatly □ □ from the extensive groundwork that has □ □ already been completed elsewhere.

□ *New Mexico*

□ New Mexico has a two-part licensure system, revamped in the late 1980s, for the care and education of children ages 0-8: one for public school personnel (who are required to hold a BA degree plus credential) and one for non-public school personnel (i.e., the community-based child care system, with standards now set roughly at the Child Development Associate and/or associate degree level). The state Board of Education and the state Child Development Board agreed early on that its licensure and professional development system should be competency-based.

□ Public School ECE Personnel, Children 0-8

□ The first set of competencies to be developed was for BA-level teachers in public schools. The state Board of Education and Child Development Board jointly appointed a Task Force in 1991, and the preparation of draft competencies took about eight months. The Task Force reviewed a number of models, including the North Carolina licensure system (because it was inclusive of children with special needs), the Child Development Associate system of "13 functional areas," and the NAEYC content areas. The Task Force decided to group New Mexico's competencies into seven areas:

- • Child Growth, Development and Learning
- • Health, Safety and Nutrition
- • Family and Community Collaboration
- • Developmentally Appropriate Content
- • Learning Environment and Curriculum □ □ Implementation
- • Assessment of Children and Evaluation of □ □ Programs
- • Professionalism

□ The approval process was lengthy. The Office of Child Development (OCD) first presented the draft for review to the State Board of Education's Professional Standards Commission. Then it mailed about 4,000 copies of the proposal to "interested and affected parties" throughout the state, including public school administrators, elementary school teachers, higher education personnel who would be charged with designing and implementing teacher education

programs in line with the competencies, and a variety of others. Next came three public hearings at different locations in the state. The birth-to-eight licensing system and competencies were finally approved by the State Board of Education in July 1993. The competencies were then distributed to faculty at all universities in the state with teacher preparation programs, who were required to prepare a matrix indicating the courses that covered the competencies.

□ Non-Public School Personnel, Children 0-8

□ The next phase was to focus attention on the non-public school personnel working with children ages 0-8. This became a multi-year process that led to the creation of New Mexico's ECE professional development system, the "Career Lattice for Early Care, Education, and Family Support" - also known as "La Ristra" (the commonly known southwestern U.S. term for a string of chilies tied together). This Lattice originally had four levels: 1) entry level certificate holders (requiring completion of a 45-hour Entry Level Course); 2) CDA or one-year certificate holders; 3) those with AA degrees; 4) those with BA degrees. These have subsequently been revised to three levels, combining levels 2 and 3 (CDA certificates and AA degrees), essentially raising the expected level of competence for all ECE programs up to the AA degree level.

□ According to Dan Haggard at the New Mexico Office of Child Development, "The career lattice is designed so that each level articulates with the next level. That is, a CDA counts toward work for the one-year certificate; a certificate constitutes the equivalent of the first year of work toward an AA degree; and an AA degree transfers to any early childhood program as the first two years toward a BA degree."

□ A Higher Education Early Childhood Task Force developed a three-part process for determining the knowledge and skills needed for the levels of professional preparation *preceding* the BA:

- • A review of NAEYC and CDA guidelines, as well as work from other states, including North Carolina, Colorado, Georgia and

- and Washington;
- • A statewide survey of ECE practitioners and administrators; and
- • Preparation of a draft that matched competencies and indicators to each of the levels on the Career Lattice. This draft was then circulated widely for review, and revised.

□ The result was a "Common Core Content" document finalized by the Task Force in December 1996 and approved by the state Child Development Board in June 1997. This document was again revised in 2002. Since that time, the Higher Education Early Childhood Task Force has also developed a "Universal Catalogue of Courses for Early Care, Education and Family Support," containing recommended syllabi for AA and BA level courses.

□ A great deal of information about New Mexico's professional development system - including the process for developing teacher competencies, and the "Core Content" competencies document itself - is available at the "New Mexico Kids" website sponsored by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, www.newmexicokids.org, under "New Mexico Kids Publications / Child Development."

- • *Common Core Content and Areas of Specialization for Professional Preparation in Early Care, Education and Family Support in New Mexico: Entry through Master's Level* (May 2002)
- <http://www.newmexicokids.org/Resource/Library/LaRistraPDF/cc%20indicator.pdf>
- This document includes a description of New Mexico Career Lattice system; and lays out competencies ("Common Core Content") in each of the seven areas of knowledge for three levels: Entry level, Certificate/Associate Degree, and Bachelor's Degree. (Despite the title, the state has not yet developed Master's Level competencies.)
- • *La Ristra: New Mexico's Comprehensive Professional Development System for Early Care, Education, and Family Support* (1999, revised 2002)

□ <http://www.newmexicokids.org/Resource/Library/LaRistra.pdf>
□ The first two chapters of this document - □
□ "Partners in Change," and "Foundational □
□ Principles" - give a detailed history of the □
□ process of developing the professional □
□ development system, including competencies □
□ at the BA level.

□ • *NM's Universal Catalogue of Courses for □
□ Early Care, Education, and Family Support: □
□ Recommended Syllabi for Foundational (AA) □
□ and Upper (Bachelor's) Levels* (June 2004)
□ <http://www.newmexicokids.org/Resource/Library/Syllabi.doc.pdf>

□ *New York*

□ New York's ECE teacher competencies, called the "Core Body of Knowledge Framework," are part of a much larger statewide Career Development Initiative (CDI) begun in 1991 by an interagency committee, which agreed early on about the need for a competency-based system of credentialing. Ad-hoc work groups were formed around a number of professional development topics, including a "Core Body of Knowledge" group.

□ In April 1994, this group began developing the *New York State Early Care and Education Core Body of Knowledge Framework*. The roughly 20-member committee (which reported, in turn, to a roughly 25-30-member CDI Steering Committee) consisted of representatives of the state Department of Education and Department of Social Services, the New York City Department of Health (responsible for child care licensing within the city), the state Pre-K program, the United Teachers union, the Head Start Collaborative Project, university and college faculty, the New York Association for the Education of Young Children, a private for-profit child care network, and others.

□ The work group identified six essential areas of knowledge needed for staff working in early care and education:

- • Child Growth and Development
- • Environment, Curriculum, and Content

- • Families in Society
- • Child Assessment
- • Communication
- • Professionalism and Leadership

□ This committee further recommended ascending skill levels or competencies within each knowledge area. Initially, they reviewed early childhood frameworks from other states (including New Mexico), the guidelines produced by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the New York State Teacher Certification requirements for elementary education, and the professional development criteria of several child care associations.

□ The Consistent Standards Subcommittee of CDI, convened in July 1995, was responsible for the continued development and further refinement of The Framework. A number of forums for public input from the field were held in different venues around the state, such as conferences. The first edition of The Framework was published in 1997, and contained a page in the back to solicit readers' comments. The CDI Core Body of Knowledge Work Group then revised The Framework, and the second edition was published in 2001. The following section of the Framework's Introduction describes and defines the three competency levels that the group conceptualized.

□ Competency Levels in Each Knowledge Base □
□ Area

□ What does an individual working with young children need to know to respond to each child's strengths and interests, within the context of family, community, and culture?

□ *The Framework* outlines levels of competency for each knowledge base area. The competency levels are designed as a continuum. They range from those skills necessary for entry into the field to levels for those who work with children on a daily basis (Level One and Level Two), and to an advanced level for academic preparation and varied experience (Level Three). Each individual's progression through these levels is accomplished by formal study as well as through reflective and guided experience gained in

work with children and families. At each competency level, the individual that cares for and educates young children is expected to continue their participation in professional development activities and to increase their knowledge within each area. In a knowledge base area, each higher competency level encompasses the skills and knowledge of previous levels.

□ *Skills necessary for entry into the field.*

Individuals that enter the field and provide early care and education without formal preparation should be teamed with others at higher levels and, in all settings including family child care and school-age child care, receive direct and ongoing supervision from those at Level Two or above. Entry-level individuals require orientation and ongoing professional development.

□ Essential characteristics and skills of an entry-level individual are:

- • A desire to work with children
- • A receptivity to learning
- • An ability to reflect on one's practice
- • Good interpersonal and communication skills □
□ with children and adults
- • Problem-solving abilities
- • Flexibility
- • A commitment to the quality care and □ □
□ education of young children
- • Respect for and acceptance of the diversity of □ □
□ children and families
- • Caring for and acceptance of children's □ □
□ individual needs, including those children □ □
□ with special or exceptional needs

□ *Competency Level One:* Level One addresses the competencies needed by entry-level adults plus the ability to contribute to and ensure the maintenance of a safe and nurturing environment where children learn and develop. An adult at Level One learns about children and families through participation in professional development activities provided in a variety of learning situations. In each knowledge base area, at Competency Level One, an adult receives ongoing supervision from an individual at a higher competency level.

□ *Competency Level Two:* Many of the adults working in early care and education are at Level Two

in most, if not all, knowledge base areas. Adults reaching Level Two, in a given knowledge base area, must have achieved the competencies at Level One. In addition, they consistently exhibit practices grounded in theories of growth, development, and learning. They work cooperatively with others, establish good mentoring relationships, and sometimes provide direct supervision. When adults attain Level Two in all knowledge base areas, they have refined their knowledge through guided and reflective experiences with young children and families and have participated in formal study leading to a credential, degree, or teaching certificate.

□ *Competency Level Three:* In addition to the competencies described in each of the previous levels, adults at Level Three, in all knowledge base areas, have extensive academic preparation and experience in the field. They demonstrate a mastery of developmentally appropriate practices, which allows them to mentor peers as well as individuals at other levels. At Level Three, adults possess the ability to provide new resources and innovative practices to the program.

Conclusion

□ As a variety of state and national groups have learned, the process of developing early childhood teacher competencies can be a complex and lengthy one, but it also has great potential in bringing greater simplicity and clarity to a highly fragmented and confusing professional development system. In order for the process to be effective, input from a broad range of stakeholders should be sought out and welcomed: early childhood practitioners, postsecondary trainers and educators, experts from other fields such as mental health, language acquisition and family support, and policy makers with the ability to effect significant systems change.

□ Competencies can help the field as a whole to clarify its goals across all age groups (from infants through early elementary students), job categories (including program administration), and career stages (entry-level, mid-career and advanced). Competencies can help individuals identify what they are trying to accomplish, articulating the body of

knowledge and skill that can be developed through training and education. And for parents and the general public, a system of teacher competencies can help build wider awareness of and respect for early care and education as skilled, professional work.

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APPENDIX A

Case Example: Teacher Competencies in the Area of Child Observation and Assessment

□ As a more detailed illustration of the varied ways in which different national and state bodies have addressed the same area of teacher competency, we provide here ten examples of work that has been done on the subject of competency in "child observation and assessment."

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

□ The Early Childhood Generalist Standards handbook (NBPTS, 2001) contains the following guidelines on observation and assessment:

□ □ Accomplished early childhood teachers observe and assess young children in the context of □
□ ongoing classroom life. They are skilled in collecting and interpreting a variety of evidence to evaluate □
□ where each child is in a sequence or continuum of learning and development. They know how to move □
□ from assessment to decisions about curriculum, social support, and teaching strategies to increase the □
□ prospects for successful learning and development.

□ Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize strengths and weaknesses of multiple assessment □
□ methodologies and know how to use them effectively. Employing a variety of methods, they □ □
□ systematically observe, monitor, and document children's activities and behavior, analyzing, □ □
□ communicating, and using the information they glean to improve their work with children, parents, and □
□ others.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

□ "Observing, documenting and assessing," Standard #3 (of 5) in NAEYC's standards for teacher preparation programs (Hyson, Ed., 2003), reads as follows:

□ Well-prepared early childhood professionals:
□ □ • Understand the purposes of assessment
□ □ • Use effective assessment strategies
□ □ • Use assessment responsibly, to positively influence children's development and learning.

□ NAEYC standards at the "associate degree" level outline the details of a "foundational understanding" of the goals, benefits and uses of assessment. "Initial licensure" (i.e., initial teacher credential) standards outline a more highly developed ability to articulate the goals, benefits and uses of assessment, and to apply them in practice. "Advanced degree" standards call for a "greater depth and specialization" related to assessment, equipping them to be "at the forefront of research, policy, and best practices in the assessment of young children and in program evaluation."

Council for Exceptional Children/Division for Early Childhood (CEC/DEC)

□ In the CEC "Special Education Content Standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers of Early Childhood Students" (summarized in Hyson, Ed., 2003), Assessment is one of 10 standards, and it is organized into five guidelines for "Knowledge" and 15 guidelines for "Skills."

Knowledge:

- Basic terminology used in assessment.
- Legal provisions and ethical principles regarding assessment of individuals.
- Screening, pre-referral, referral, and classification procedures.
- Use and limitations of assessment instruments.
- National, state or provincial, and local accommodations and modifications.

Skills:

- Gather relevant background information.
- Administer nonbiased formal and informal assessments.
- Use technology to conduct assessments.
- Develop or modify individualized assessment strategies.
- Interpret information from formal and informal assessments.
- Use assessment information in making eligibility, program and placement decisions for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Report assessment results to all stakeholders using effective communication skills.
- Evaluate instruction and monitor progress of individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- Create and maintain records.
- Assess the development and learning of young children.
- Select, adapt and use specialized formal and informal assessments for infants, young children and their families.
- Participate as a team member to integrate assessment results in the development and implementation of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- Assist families in identifying their concerns, resources and priorities.
- Participate and collaborate as a team member with other professionals in conducting family-centered assessments.
- Evaluate services with families.

California: Competencies for the Various Levels of the Child Development Permit

□ These competencies (Sharpe, Brown, Krieger & Clarke, 1999) devote relatively little attention to the subject of child observation and assessment. At the "teacher" level and above (not assistant or associate teachers), under the category of "Classroom Environment," the document notes that a practitioner "assesses individual and group needs and provides appropriate experiences in each development area." Slightly more attention to this subject is offered under the category of "identifying special needs of children and/or families."

California: Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines

□ This guide (California Department of Education, 2000) contains a chapter on "Planning for Assessment" which presents seven overall guidelines, each accompanied by a set of recommended "program characteristics and activities." Note: These are program guidelines, not teacher competencies *per se*.

Guidelines:

1. Assessment is done to benefit the children and to enhance the effectiveness of parents and teachers.
2. Assessment includes multiple sources of information and is balanced across the cognitive, social, □ □ emotional, and health domains.
3. Assessment takes place in a context or setting that is natural, non-threatening, and familiar to the □ □ children.

4. Assessment is continuous and is used regularly for planning and developing specific strategies to support children's learning and development.
5. Assessment for admission or placement purposes has few appropriate uses in preschools; but, if it is done, it should have an established reliability and validity, and it should be conducted by trained examiners.
6. Programs direct significant efforts toward developing assessments that are accurate, fair, and free of cultural bias.
7. As much as possible, parents are aware of and involved in assessments of their children.

Illinois

Assessment standards from the Illinois Administrative Code can be found on pages 29-30 of the document at www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/26ark.pdf. They are organized into five "Knowledge Indicators" and eight "Performance Indicators."

The competent early childhood teacher understands various formal and informal assessment strategies and uses them to support the continuous development of all children.

a) Knowledge Indicators - The competent early childhood teacher:

1. understands assessment as a means of evaluating how children learn, what they know and are able to do in relationship to national, State, and local standards, and what kinds of experiences will support their further growth and development.
2. understands the purposes, characteristics, and limitations of different kinds of assessments.
3. understands measurement theory and assessment-related issues such as validity, reliability, bias, and scoring.
4. understands how to use the results of assessment to reflect on and modify teaching.
5. understands how to select, construct, and use assessment and evaluation strategies and instruments for diagnosis and prescription.

b) Performance Indicators - The competent early childhood teacher:

1. uses a variety of assessment results to diagnose students' learning and development, develop a student profile, align and modify instruction, and design teaching strategies.
2. maintains useful, accurate, and ethical records of students' work and performance and communicates about students' progress knowledgeably and responsibly to students, parents, school, and community.
3. uses assessment results for the purpose of planning appropriate programs, environments, and interactions and adapting for individual differences.
4. participates and assists other professionals in conducting family-centered assessments.
5. selects, evaluates, and interprets formal, standardized assessment instruments and information used in the assessment of children and integrates authentic classroom assessment data with formal assessment information.
6. communicates assessment results and integrates assessment results from others as an active participant in the development and implementation of students' IEPs and IFSPs.
7. involves families in assessing and planning for individual children, including children with disabilities, developmental delays, or special abilities.
8. uses appropriate technologies to monitor and assess students' progress.

New Mexico

□ Guidelines for "Assessment of Children and Evaluation of Programs" are found in Title 6 of the New Mexico Administrative Code at <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.061.0008.htm>:

□ □ Early childhood professionals must develop knowledge of diverse assessment approaches, □ including observational skills. They use appropriate ongoing documentation and report information to □ families and professionals. Appropriate early childhood assessment is responsive to cultural and □ linguistic differences. It includes information from multiple sources, e.g., observations, checklists, □ interviews, and both formal and informal standardized measures in diverse settings for making □ □ educational decisions about children. The assessment data gathered from multiple sources that has a □ major impact on children should be made by a team of family members, teachers, and other □ □ professionals. In addition, early childhood professionals engage in systematic, ongoing evaluation of □ their programs.

- Demonstrate knowledge of assessment and evaluation practices that are valid and appropriate.
- Demonstrate knowledge of maintaining appropriate records of children's development and behavior that safeguard confidentiality and privacy.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the educator's role as a participating member of the assessment process as described and mandated by state and federal regulations for Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP).
- Demonstrate understanding of the influences of environmental factors, cultural/linguistic differences, and diverse ways of learning on assessment outcomes.
- Involve the family and, as appropriate, other team members in assessing the child's development, strengths, and needs in order to set goals for the child.
- Share assessment results as appropriate with families in clear, supportive ways.
- Involve all stakeholders in program evaluations.
- Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of techniques and procedures to evaluate and modify program goals for young children and their families.
- Develop and use formative and summative program evaluation to ensure comprehensive quality of the total environment for children, families, and the community.
- Use both self and collaborative evaluations as part of on going program evaluations.

New York

□ The New York State Early Care and Education Core Body of Knowledge Framework (Career Development Initiative of New York State, 2001) contains perhaps the most detailed state-level effort to define early childhood teacher competencies on the subject of assessment. In this framework, "Knowledge Base Area IV: Child Assessment" is divided into four categories:

- knowledge of how to assess children using multiple sources of information
- collaboration
- periodic review of children's progress
- confidentiality.

□ Competency is then described in a detailed list of skills for three different levels of practice:

Level One. The adult providing early care and education will:

- • Understand the purposes and procedures involved in child assessment including the need

- for confidentiality
- • Observe and keep records of children engaged in program activities and interactions with □
- other children and/or adults
- • Collect samples of children's work that illustrate development and learning in such areas □
- as language, problem solving, social interaction, motor activity, creative abilities, □
- interests, and unique skills.

Level Two. The adult providing early care and education, in addition to Level One competency, will:

- Apply knowledge of child growth, development, and learning to identify children in need of an evaluation
- Follow the established process of referring a child with a suspected disability
- Understand information that supports appropriate diagnosis and provision of special education services
- Use assessment information as a resource for planning curriculum and working with families
- Use formal and informal assessment for individualizing curriculum, adapting/modifying for individual differences, and for identifying children in need of further evaluation
- Participate in the development and implementation of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP) for children with disabilities, based on assessment results, regular classroom routines and activities, and goals identified by the family
- Modify child assessment as a result of additional observations, interactions, and new work produced by children
- Integrate activities that meet the IEP/IFSP goals into the daily routine and curriculum.

Level Three. The adult providing early care and education, in addition to Level One and Level Two competencies, will:

- Understand the purposes and appropriateness of various developmental screening and assessment procedures and instruments
- Select, evaluate, and interpret information from developmental screening and standardized assessment instruments used in the assessment of children
- Integrate informal child assessment data with formal assessment information to plan for each child and for groups of children
- Utilize child assessment information to increase the range of options for fostering growth, development, and learning
- Broaden knowledge and ability to use and develop a variety of procedures for assessing child development, learning, environments, and curricula
- Plan and implement necessary adaptive strategies to include children with disabilities based on assessment results and IFSP/IEP goals and information
- Stay abreast of current research and best practice related to the assessment of children
- Recognize that planning for children, staff, families, and programs emerges from review of assessment data.

North Carolina

□ Standard #2 of North Carolina's "Standards for Birth through Kindergarten Teachers" (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999), which can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/humanresources/downloads/specialtystandards.pdf>, states that "Birth-Kindergarten

professionals understand assessment processes, including their goals, benefits and uses." The standards then describe four indicators of competency in this area:

- Indicator 1: □ Are aware of a variety of assessment tools and procedures and their purposes, including □
□ □ ongoing observation, data collection and analysis.
- Indicator 2: □ Are knowledgeable of informal and formal assessment procedures and the need for □
□ □ collaboration with families and other professionals.
- Indicator 3: □ Are knowledgeable of health appraisal procedures and referral processes.
- Indicator 4: □ Understand that appropriate assessment is an embedded (rather than pull-out) process that □
□ □ supports children's development and learning.

Oklahoma

□ Oklahoma's "Full Subject-Matter Competencies for Licensure and Certification" (Oklahoma State Board of Education, 2002), which can be found at <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/pro/tcert/pdfs/Competencies.pdf>, state that "The candidate for licensure and certification (in ECE)...uses performance assessment (i.e., observation and documentation) and formal assessment to evaluate young children's development and learning for the purpose of planning appropriate programs, environments and interactions, and adapting for individual differences."