

# Early Learning Standards: Results from a National Survey to Document Trends in State-Level Policies and Practices

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## Abstract

Early learning standards—documents that outline what children should know and be able to do before kindergarten entry—are increasingly common in the United States. Data from a national survey are presented to illustrate trends in how states have developed and implemented early learning standards within the past four years. Results indicate that almost all states have developed early learning standards for prekindergarten-age children, and the number of states that have developed infant-toddler early learning standards has increased markedly. States have used a variety of strategies to support teachers in their use of early learning standards, and a number of states have or are developing monitoring systems to gauge the extent to which programs are using the standards. The authors discuss the implications that trends related to the development and implementation of early learning standards have for early childhood policies and practices, and they discuss areas where further research is needed.

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## Introduction

The movement to improve student achievement through stronger accountability for schools is one of the most significant developments in the field of education (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Within the past decade, K-12 education systems have been increasingly held accountable for making sure that students achieve at high levels. As part of this accountability movement, standards have been written to articulate what exactly students are expected to learn. Wide-scale assessments have been implemented to gauge what students have learned at specified grades, and states have put into place systems that report results from the assessments to parents and to the public. No Child Left Behind instituted federal mandates that specify consequences when schools do not show “adequate progress” on the assessments. This movement to hold education systems accountable for what students learn has had significant and pervasive impacts on K-12 education.

The field of early childhood education has not been exempt from these reforms, although the trend has largely taken place in the past five years. Federal initiatives such as Good Start, Grow Smart, revised guidance for the Child Care Development state plans, and changes within the reauthorization of Head Start in 1998 have emphasized greater accountability for child outcomes. State-level policy makers have also called for increased accountability. With this rapid advent of accountability-related policies in early care and education has come a corresponding need to understand how the policies and related practices are unfolding in programs across the country. As new accountability requirements become established in states, what do they look like? To answer this question, in June 2005, the Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium of the Council of Chief State School Officers conducted a Web-based survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to collect information on existing and emerging policies and practices related to early learning standards (documents to outline what

children should know and be able to do), early childhood assessments that are used to collect data from children, and early education program assessments that are used to evaluate program quality. This paper examines survey results related to the development and implementation of early learning standards.

## **A Historical Look at Early Learning Standards**

Although the introduction of accountability-related policies is relatively new to the field of early care and education, there have been several significant trends in state activities prior to the time of this survey. We begin with a brief summary of trends noted in earlier research related to early learning standards.

### **Development of Early Learning Standards**

Early learning standards, also known as “early learning guidelines,” are documents that outline expectations for what preschool-age children should know or be able to do. Although they come in a variety of formats, the central premise is that these documents articulate what should be taught and what children should learn prior to kindergarten entry. While the field of early care and education has long had program standards to define expectations for how programs will be implemented, standards that define what children will learn are relatively new.

#### *The Impetus for Early Learning Standards*

In 1999, only 10 states had a document that outlined expectations for children’s development and learning prior to kindergarten entry. By May 2002, 27 states had an early learning standards document for preschool-age children, and four states had developed a similar document to describe expectations for infants and toddlers (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2003a, 2003b). Several developments within the field of early care and education and within the K-12 education system have contributed to the trend to develop early learning standards, including our expanding knowledge about what children are capable of learning, efforts to improve the quality of programs, and policy developments that have called for increased accountability.

Momentum for the development and use of early learning standards comes, in part, from recent research on children’s learning and development. The National Research Council’s report *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers* suggested that “the accumulation of convincing evidence from research [is] that young children are more capable learners than current practices reflect and that good educational experiences in the preschool years can have a positive impact on school learning” (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001, p. 2). In short, research has indicated that children are capable of learning more than many in the field might have thought previously and that children’s experiences before they start school are vitally important in shaping how successful children are later. Early learning standards have been put into place, in part, to better define expectations for what children should know and be able to do prior to kindergarten in order to facilitate shared understanding of these expectations across persons caring for young children. This shared understanding, in turn, can contribute to a more coherent approach to educating our youngest citizens (Kendall, 2003; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002; Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

A second impetus for developing early learning standards has been the desire to promote high-quality early education programming for all children. In an effort to establish high-quality programs, the field has specified different types of standards to define expectations for programs—program standards to define how programs should provide services and early learning standards to define the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that programs should seek to help children develop. Standards are a starting point to promoting high-quality programming—the foundation upon which high-quality programming is built. Early learning standards, along with

other types of standards, are the building blocks to ensure high-quality programming across the wide variety of programs serving children before they enter kindergarten (Ackerman & Barnett, 2006; Bodrova, Leong, & Shore, 2004; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002).

A final and perhaps overarching impetus for development of early learning standards is the desire to improve child outcomes in early care and education programs. Early in 2002, President Bush launched the Good Start, Grow Start initiative (2002), a federal initiative designed to improve the quality of early care and education programs and promote children's success in school. Good Start, Grow Smart required states to develop "voluntary early learning guidelines" to address children's language and literacy skills. The basic premise is that standards to define what children should learn can help teachers be more intentional in their teaching. Some evidence from the K-12 standards-based education reform effort suggests that standards to define what children should learn can be an effective strategy to promote positive child outcomes. Research suggests that students score higher on various measures of achievement when teachers are using standards that define what children should learn (Bodrova, Leong, & Shore, 2004). Although early learning standards have been put into place for a variety of reasons, one overarching reason is the expectations that documents that define what children should learn can help teachers be more intentional about what they teach and, in turn, help improve child outcomes (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

### *Considerations Regarding Early Learning Standards*

Although the reasons for developing and implementing early learning standards are varied and positive, the advent of standards-based education has not been unequivocally embraced in the field. Historically, many in the field have questioned the appropriateness of such standards and pointed out many potential dangers of such documents—children being unfairly denied placements based on what they do or do not know, programs being unfairly judged based on whether children in their care meet such standards, and the demise of a child-centered approach to curriculum development and instructional practices (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). In a position statement regarding the development of early learning standards, NAEYC & NAECS/SDE (2002) outlined several potential risks inherent with the development of early learning standards: that the responsibility for meeting the expectations outlined in standards "will be placed on children's shoulders" rather than on the adults who provide learning opportunities for them; that children (particularly children with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse children) will be labeled as failures if they do not exhibit the skills and knowledge described within the standards; and that high-quality teaching will be marginalized in the effort to have children meet the standards—that the curriculum will become rigid and that teachers will "teach to the test." Children's development and learning at this age is highly dependent on what they have experienced, and the experiences children have had vary tremendously. Is the movement to define "standard" expectations that are used across children with such diverse experiences fair, and what effect will it have on teaching? Despite these worries, the number of states that have early learning standards has increased tremendously; therefore, it is important to systematically study how early learning standards are being implemented—what states are doing to help teachers use the standards appropriately and effectively.

### **Implementation of Early Learning Standards**

Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2003a) conducted a study during a time when states were just beginning to develop early learning standards to document the early efforts to implement the documents in the field. At the time, 27 states had published early learning standards (most within the past four years), and 12 states were in the process of developing early learning standards. To collect data on how the early learning standards documents had been developed and how states were implementing the relatively new documents, Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow

(2003a) conducted in-depth interviews with early childhood specialists in state Departments of Education, Child Care Block Grant fund administrators, and state Association for the Education of Young Children representatives. In total, 77 respondents were interviewed in 2001 and 2002. The interviews collected data on any early learning standards documents that had been developed, who had been involved in developing the documents, and the intended purpose of the documents. Respondents were also asked to indicate what content had been included in their state's document, what programs were supposed to use the document, and what was being done (or what was being planned) to help teachers use the documents.

Respondents indicated that the early learning standards that existed at the time had primarily been developed to improve curriculum and instruction in state-funded preschool programs. Respondents from 21 states indicated that their state-funded preschool programs were the targeted users for the early learning standards, but no state had an accountability system in place to monitor the extent to which programs were using the early learning standards. Twelve states had plans for some type of monitoring/accountability system underway. In eight instances, the standards documents were considered to be voluntary and were not targeted to particular programs (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2003a, 2003b).

At the time, states had done relatively little to disseminate and implement the early learning standards. Most states had mailed copies of their early learning standards documents to potential users and/or posted the document on a Web site. Approximately nine states (33%) either had or were in the process of developing training materials or training sessions. Most were, however, one-shot or conference-type training sessions designed to promote awareness of the early learning standards. Only four states reported efforts to incorporate the early learning standards into preservice teacher education programs. Clearly, most of states' efforts had been directed toward developing the early learning standards, with far less attention to the implementation of the documents.

## **Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of this study was to document and analyze trends in the development and implementation of early learning standards in the United States. While the Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2003a, 2003b) study provided important information about the first steps that states took to implement early learning standards, it is important to update this information to see what states have done after those first steps. Therefore, one purpose of this study was to provide more current information on the implementation of early learning standards. We also collected more extensive data on training and professional development being provided for early childhood practitioners to support the use of early learning standards and examined the degree to which these standards have become part of an accountability system within early childhood programs.

## **Methods**

### **Survey Instrument**

The survey was created by members of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Early Childhood State Collaborative on Student Standards and Assessments (ECEA-SCASS), a collaborative group of state specialists engaged in implementing early childhood standards and assessments. The group began developing the survey by identifying potential topics/issues of interest. Draft questions were developed based on a review of the questions asked by Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2003a), a scan of the issues raised in recent publications related to early learning standards, and the group's collective experiences in implementing early learning standards. Draft survey questions were then reviewed by a number of different stakeholder groups, including representatives from the CCSSO, the Education Information Management

Advisory Consortium, Child Care Bureau, National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), Child Trends, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG Institute), National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Pew Accountability Task Force, America Public Human Services Association (APHSA), National Governors' Association (NAG), Education Commission for the States (ECS), and the Children's Project. After the suggestions were incorporated, the draft instrument was piloted with two states, and the content and format of the survey were then finalized. The result was a 72-item instrument with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions that generally fell into the following categories: early learning standards (21 questions), child assessments (35 questions), program assessment (14 questions), and contact information for persons who participated in completing the instrument (2 questions). Data from the questions related to early learning standards will be reported in this article. The survey questions related to early learning standards are provided in the [appendix](#).

## **Data Collection Process**

In June 2005, the survey instrument was emailed to early childhood specialists in state departments of education with a deadline for completion of mid-July. State specialists were asked to complete the online survey in collaboration with state program specialists for the federal early childhood programs in their state—that is, the Head Start collaboration director, the IDEA Sec. 619 coordinator, and a state representative from the office coordinating the federal child care subsidy and quality enhancement programs. One response, reflecting the collaborative input of the appropriate individuals, was collected from each state. Survey responses were entered directly into a Web-based survey platform called "Survey Monkey" (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). Technical assistance for the survey process was provided through email and two technical assistance conference calls with early childhood specialists who were asked to complete the survey. Related documents and questions and answers from the conference calls were posted on the ECEA-SCASS Web page.

Once respondents had entered the data into Survey Monkey, a copy of their completed response was emailed back to the person responsible for entering the data to confirm the accuracy of the information. Additions and corrections were made based on feedback from respondents.

## **Respondents**

Complete responses were received from 41 states and the District of Columbia—a response rate of 82%. The mean number of persons who responded for each state was 3.19 ( $SD = 1.5$ ), and the range in participants on state teams was from 1 to 7 persons. The survey was completed by a team that included more than one person in the majority of states. The modal number on the teams was 4 persons.

## **Data Analyses**

Quantitative data from the survey responses were coded and entered into an SPSS database. Descriptive analyses were run, and the data were examined for outliers. All noted outliers were examined and confirmed or corrected. Descriptive analyses were then run again to provide information on the number of states providing specific responses. The research team studied the open-ended interview responses carefully, looking for themes. Based on the themes that emerged from each open-ended question, coding categories were developed. The open-ended responses were then re-coded according to the categories, and descriptive analyses were run on the data in the same manner as described above for the closed-ended questions. The data that resulted from this process indicate the number of states that responded with different types of answers for each question.

## Results

Results from the survey are presented below, along with examples to illustrate select findings. Readers are reminded that data from the survey were collected in June 2005. Many states were in the process of developing and implementing initiatives related to early learning standards and assessments at the time. Therefore, these data are perhaps more useful for examining trends across states than for providing detailed information about individual states. Data presented illustrate where an individual state was in June 2005 but may not accurately reflect a particular state's policies and practices at a later point in time.

### The Status of Early Learning Standards

#### *Number of States with Early Learning Standards*

Results from the survey indicate that the trend toward developing and implementing early learning standards has continued. Forty-nine states plus the District of Columbia had developed prekindergarten early learning standards, and the one remaining state (North Dakota) was in the process of developing standards.<sup>1</sup> Each of the states represented in the survey had published early learning standards that define expectations for prekindergarten children (see Table 1). Of these, well over three-fourths of the respondents (35 of 42) had early learning standards documents published or revised since 2002. Respondents from 26 states indicated that their early learning standards address the age range between 3 to 5 years. Eight states had early learning standards for 3- to 4-year-old children, four had early learning standards for 4-year-old children, and three for 4- and 5-year old children. One state (Wisconsin) had early learning standards for children ages 3 years through first grade in the same document.

**Table 1**  
Characteristics of Early Learning Standards\*

State	Yr Pre-K Adopted/ Revised	Yr Inf-Tod Adopted/ Revised	Purposes Related to Accountability			Align with K-12 Stands	Align ELS with Curricula	Align ELS with Assessments	Guidance-ELL Children	Guidance-Children with Disabilities
			Guide Child Assess.	Evaluate Programs	Acct System					
AL	2004					Y	N	N	N	N
AZ	2005		Y			Y	IP	IP	Y	Y
AR	1996	2002	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
CA	2005		Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	IP	IP
CT	1999	IP	Y			Y	Y	Y	N	Y
DE	2003	IP				Y	N	N	Y	Y
DC	2005		Y		Y	Y	IP	N	N	N
FL	2000	2004	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	Y	N
GA	1995	2006	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP
HI	2002				Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
ID	2002		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
IL	2004		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
IA	2005	IP	Y			Y	IP	IP	N	N
KS	2006	2006				Y	IP	Y	IP	IP
KY	2003	2003				Y	Y		N	Y
LA	2003	2005	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
ME	2005	IP	Y			Y	Y	N	Y	Y
MD	2004	2004	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
MA	2003				Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

MI	2005	IP	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	N	IP	IP
MN	2005	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP
MO	2004					Y	Y	Y	Y	N
MS	2004		Y			Y	Y	N	Y	Y
NE	2005	2005				Y	Y		Y	Y
NV	2004		Y			Y	N	N	Y	Y
NH	2005	2005				Y	N	N	N	Y
NJ	2004		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
NM	2004		Y			Y	N	Y	IP	IP
NC	2004	IP				Y	Y	N	Y	Y
OH	2003	2006	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
OK	2003/04		Y			Y	Y	N	Y	Y
PA	2005		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	N	N
RI	2003		Y			Y	Y		Y	Y
SC	2005		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	IP	IP
SD	2006					Y	N	N	Y	Y
TN	2004	2004	Y			Y	Y	N	N	N
TX	1999		Y			Y	N	N	Y	Y
UT	2005	2005	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	IP
VT	2003	IP	Y			Y	Y	Y	N	Y
VA	2003		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
WV	2004		Y	Y		Y	Y	IP	N	Y
WI	2003					Y	N	N	IP	Y

\*Note: Y = yes; N = no (answered explicitly); IP = in process; blank cell = did not answer the question.

Two states (Oklahoma and New Hampshire) had two separate early learning standards documents for preschool-age children. In Oklahoma, the State Department of Education published prekindergarten early learning standards targeted at 4-year-old children in 2003, and in 2004, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Division of Child Care expanded the prekindergarten standards to include 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. New Hampshire's Division for Children, Youth, and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services developed their state's "Early Learning Guidelines" and published them in 2005. These early learning standards address infants-toddlers and preschool-age children. During the same year, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE), Preschool Special Education Office, published "New Hampshire Early Learning Curriculum Guidelines and Preschool Child Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities Ages 3-5." This document was initiated prior to the birth-through-5 early learning guidelines and is designed to "support families and providers who live and work with young children with special needs" (NHDOE, 2005, p. 4). The state embarked on a coordinated effort to develop the two documents, with some committee members serving on both work groups. Both documents use the same domain categories and preschool indicators of progress, but the NHDOE document provides more-detailed examples for the indicators.

One remarkable development has been the number of states that have developed or are developing early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers. Fourteen states had published standards that target infants and toddlers, and eight states were in the process of writing early learning standards for this age group.<sup>2</sup> In 2002, only four states had developed standards for this age. Of the 14 states that had infant-toddler early learning guidelines, most elected to publish their infant-toddler early learning standards in separate documents, but some (Alaska, Kansas, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Tennessee, and Washington) published early learning standards documents that address birth through age 5 years within the same document.

### *Purposes of Early Learning Standards*

Respondents noted that the early learning standards documents had been developed for a

variety of purposes. As in 2002, the primary stated purpose of the early learning standards was to improve teaching practices. In the current survey, respondents from each state indicated that their state intended for the early learning standards to be a resource to improve the instruction or curriculum to be used in early childhood classrooms. The next most commonly cited purposes for the standards were to improve professional development (36 states) and to educate parents about children's development and learning (32 states). Other miscellaneous purposes mentioned by individual states included "improve consistency across different types of programs," "become part of the state's quality rating system," and to "educate policy makers."

Several states indicated that at least one purpose associated with their early learning standards was related to improved outcomes or accountability for programs. Thirty states (see Table 1) indicated that a purpose of their early learning standards was to guide decisions related to child assessments. Responses from 11 states indicated that one purpose of the early learning standards was to play a role in program evaluation, and 14 states indicated that one purpose for their early learning standards was to be a part of an accountability system. These last two uses of the standards differ markedly from the primary purposes indicated for early learning standards in 2002, which were to improve instruction, serve as a basis for assessments, improve program quality, and improve children's school readiness. Although the use of early learning standards as part of an accountability system appears to be a growing trend, the majority of states did not indicate that their early learning standards were associated with an accountability movement, focusing instead on curriculum development, parent education, professional development, etc.

## **Considerations in the Development of Early Learning Standards Documents**

In an effort to write standards in a way that promotes positive outcomes and appropriate uses of the standards, states have invested a great deal of effort in the development of the standards documents themselves. Although a number of issues must be taken into account when developing standards, we were particularly interested in how states had addressed alignment between the standards and other elements of the education system and what guidance states had provided for using the document with children from special circumstances. We were particularly concerned about these two issues based on our experience working with states during the process of developing standards. We knew that standards developers often struggle with how best to address these two issues as they write standards. This section presents data on how states have sought to promote alignment and to facilitate appropriate use of the standards with children from special circumstances (such as English-language learners and children with disabilities).

### *Alignment Efforts*

Alignment between the early learning standards and the K-12 standards (typically the state's kindergarten standards) has been an important issue. Every state that responded to the survey had, in some way, addressed alignment with K-12 standards (see Table 1). This finding is not unexpected given that the federal Good Start, Grow Smart initiative called for states to develop voluntary early learning guidelines that align with the state's K-12 standards. States have, however, used a variety of approaches in addressing alignment with K-12 standards. Twenty-seven states indicated that they used their state's K-12 standards document as a guide or built upon kindergarten standards as they were developing their prekindergarten standards. Eleven states indicated that they conducted analyses to see the degree to which their prekindergarten standards aligned with K-12 standards, and two states (Pennsylvania and Rhode Island) indicated that their state revised kindergarten standards so that they aligned with the prekindergarten early learning standards.

Open-ended responses to the survey further illustrate the variety in how states have approached



alignment with K-12 standards. In some states, the process of developing prekindergarten standards was viewed more as an extension downward of the K-12 standards, and considerable emphasis was placed on consistency between K-12 standards and the early learning standards. For instance, one respondent wrote, "our early learning standards align directly to the K-12 standards. We have followed the same process for identifying the indicators and for peer review." Other states saw their approach as one of writing early learning standards that were foundational to, but not necessarily derived directly from, the K-12 standards. A quote from one respondent illustrates this approach: "One of our main goals was to align the Pre-K standards with the existing K-12 standards. However, we made the decision to not let the K-12 standards limit us either. So, for example, we felt it was important to include standards on Social/Emotional [development] even though K-12 did not have any to align to [in this area]." Another respondent wrote, "In the development process, the task force analyzed the kindergarten standards to ensure the early learning standards did not duplicate kindergarten expectations, but rather served as a foundation for kindergarten."

States had also made efforts to align their early learning standards with curricula. Table 1 indicates that 26 states had completed some type of activity to address alignment with curricula, and seven were in the process. Once again, the approaches varied from state to state. Most ( $n = 13$ ) had conducted alignment analyses. In some cases, states relied on the vendors of published curricula to conduct the analyses. Seven states required that programs choose curricula that are aligned with the states' early learning standards. For example, Georgia requires prekindergarten programs to select a curriculum that has been analyzed and shown to be consistent with their early learning standards. If programs propose a different curriculum, they must document alignment between their proposed curriculum and the state's early learning standards in order to be approved. Eight states addressed curriculum alignment through training or resource materials designed to help programs understand alignment issues and examine alignment with their own curriculum. One state (Maryland) incorporated the early learning standards within its curriculum.

Although a commonly stated purpose for the early learning standards was to guide assessment (see above), far fewer states had formally addressed alignment between assessments and their early learning standards. Sixteen states had addressed alignment with assessment, and five states were in the process. Ten states reported that they had developed an assessment based on their state's early learning standards, and two states reported that they had developed their early learning standards based on or using an assessment as a guide. Five states had required programs to choose an assessment that is aligned with the early learning standards, and three states had conducted alignment analyses to indicate the degree to which their state's early learning standards are aligned with an assessment. Four states indicated that they had implemented an aligned assessment to collect data from children after they enter kindergarten.

### *Guidance on Using Early Learning Standards with Children from Special Circumstances*

One issue of concern within the field is how early learning standards will be used with children from special circumstances—children from limited-income or non-Caucasian families, children whose home language is not English, and children with disabilities. This issue is of particular concern because standards outline general expectations for what children should know and be able to do. Children from special circumstances often have limited access to high-quality learning experiences or may be less likely to exhibit "typical" development and learning. If early learning standards are to be used to guide instruction or to serve as a basis for assessing children's progress, it is important that persons using the standards understand how to apply the standards when children are faced with circumstances that could affect the extent to which they are able to make progress on the indicators described in the standards.

In 2002, respondents recognized the importance of the issue but offered few specific strategies for addressing the needs of children from special circumstances. In 2005, many respondents reported that their state had addressed the issue. Twenty-three states had provided some type

of guidance related to the use of the standards with English-language learners, and seven states were in the process of providing guidance. The majority ( $n = 21$ ) either had or were developing training to provide guidance related to English-language learners. Eight states had provided guidance on using the early learning standards with English-language learners within the standards document itself, and several states had translated their early learning guidelines into another language. Delaware, Missouri, Ohio, and South Carolina had published their early learning standards in Spanish, Ohio had translated its document into Somali, and Missouri had published its standards in Bosnian. Minnesota reported that it was in the process of developing parent versions in several languages.

Slightly more states—27—had developed some type of guidance related to the use of the early learning standards with children with disabilities (and 8 were in the process). As with guidance of English-language learners, the majority of the states (24) had developed (or were developing) training to teach teachers how to use the early learning standards with children who have disabilities. Seven provided guidance within the early learning standards document itself, four had developed separate resource documents, and two were providing technical assistance. Maryland had used state funds to issue grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and nonpublic school providers to promote the use of its early learning standards in inclusive programs, and Massachusetts funded college courses and study groups for providers. Maine piloted its early learning standards in inclusive settings and used an agency that was involved in the pilot process to provide technical assistance to programs.

## Implementation of Early Learning Standards

Results from the survey indicated that states have used a variety of strategies to implement their early learning standards. In the following section, we report the programs that have been targeted with the early learning standards, the types of strategies that states have implemented to help programs use the early learning standards, and how programs are being held accountable for using the standards.

### *Programs Expected to Use the Early Learning Standards*

The vast majority of early learning standards are intended to be used in the state's prekindergarten program (see Table 2). Thirty-nine states indicated that their state's standards were used in prekindergarten programs that receive state funds (and the remaining three did not have state-funded prekindergarten programs). Of these, 23 indicated that the prekindergarten program was required to use the standards (either by law or by regulation), and 16 indicated that use of the early learning standards was voluntary. Although the finding that most states target their early learning standards toward prekindergarten programs is consistent with findings in 2002, the number of states that required programs to use the early learning standards increased markedly. In 2002, no state officially required use of the standards, but four states were phasing in such requirements. In contrast, over half of the states that responded to the 2005 survey indicated that specific programs were required to use the early learning standards.

**Table 2**  
Implementation of Early Learning Standards and Assessments\*

	Use in Pre-K Program	Dissemination	Training/ Professional Development	Tech. Assist.	Higher Education	Teacher Competencies	Monitoring System	Assess. Linked to ELS
AL	R	Y		N			Y	N
AZ	V	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	IP
AR	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP
CA	L						Y	IP

CT	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
DE	R	Y	Y	N	Y	Y		N
DC	R		Y	N	IP	N	IP	N
FL	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	N		N
GA	R	Y	Y	Y			Y	IP
HI	V							N
ID	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
IL	V	Y	Y	Y		N	Y	Y
IA	V	IP	IP		N	IP		N
KS	V							IP
KY	V	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		N
LA	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	IP
ME	V	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP		N
MD	R	Y	Y	Y	IP	N	Y	Y
MA	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	IP
MI	L	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	Y	N
MN	V	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y
MO	V	Y	Y		Y	IP		Y
MS		Y	Y	Y	Y			N
NE	V	Y	Y	Y	Y	N		N
NV	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
NH		Y	Y	N	Y	IP		N
NJ	R	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
NM	L	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	IP
NC	R	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
OH	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y
OK	V	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	N
PA	V	Y	Y	Y				N
RI	V	Y	Y		Y	Y	IP	Y
SC	R	Y	Y	N	Y	N	IP	N
SD		Y	IP		IP	N	N	N
TN	L	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	N	IP
TX	V	Y	Y			N	N	N
UT	V	Y	Y					N
VT	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	IP
VA	R	Y	Y	N				Y
WV	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
WI	V	Y	Y		IP	IP		N

\*Note: L = required by law/statute; R = required by regulations; V = voluntary; Y = yes; N = no (answered explicitly); IP = in process; blank cell = did not answer the question.

In addition to prekindergarten programs, states also promoted the use of early learning standards in a number of other programs, including child care (39 states), Head Start (38 states), IDEA programs (26 states), and Even Start (27 states), but the use of the standards in these programs was typically on a voluntary basis. There was, however, a noticeable trend for respondents to indicate that federally funded IDEA and Even Start programs were required to use the state's early learning standards. Fourteen states indicated that their state's IDEA/619 program was required by law or regulation to use the state's early learning standards, and 11 states indicated that Even Start programs were required to use the state's early learning standards. A few respondents indicated that their state's parenting program (such as the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters or HIPPY) was voluntarily using the early learning standards. Although states clearly targeted their own prekindergarten programs, many respondents reported that other programs were expected to use the standards as well.

## *Strategies to Support Implementation of the Early Learning Standards*

*Training and Technical Assistance.* While in 2002 the most commonly mentioned strategies for implementing the standards was to mail the document out and to post the document on the World Wide Web, data from the 2005 survey indicate a marked increase in the number of strategies used to implement the standards (see Table 2). Forty-one out of 42 responses indicated that their state was disseminating the document widely, and one indicated that the respondent's state was planning for wide-scale dissemination. States distributed thousands of copies of their early learning standards, developed posters to promote the use of the early learning standards, and developed materials to help parents and family members learn about the early learning standards. North Carolina and a number of other states developed a "Tool Box" of materials that support the use of their state's early learning standards. In Rhode Island, a group of parents designed resource materials for parents that were disseminated through early childhood programs and were available online.

In addition to print materials, states were also providing inservice training (36 states with 2 in process of developing training) and technical assistance to programs (23 states with 1 in process). See Table 2 for details. Early learning standards had been addressed through conferences, train-the-trainer models, and inservice training provided directly to program staff. Nineteen states indicated that they had developed new inservice training initiatives specifically to address the early learning standards.

Many states reported that the goal of their new inservice initiatives was targeted at the "awareness" level—simply to help programs become familiar with the early learning standards. Training had also been developed to help programs learn to link the early learning standards to curricula and to assessments, and to use the early learning standards with children with disabilities and children learning English as a second language. Nebraska, for instance, had developed "train the trainer" modules to facilitate training across the state. While most of the training efforts targeted teachers/caregivers, one state (Rhode Island) reported that it developed training specifically designed to help administrators become familiar with and support their staff in using the early learning standards.

States had provided a variety of training options for programs. The reported length of the training sessions ranged from one hour to a year-long course, with participants in at least three states receiving college credit hours for the training. In West Virginia, three universities had provided a weeklong three-credit-hour course taught by professors at the institutions with financial and staff support from the department of education and the Head Start Collaboration Project. Ohio had developed a two-hour workshop to introduce participants to the state's early learning standards and had developed a year-long course that covered the early learning standards, assessment, and examples of best practices. Two states (Illinois and Kentucky) reported that they had established model centers to demonstrate effective use of early learning standards.

*Institutions of Higher Education.* The role of higher education in implementation of the standards also changed since 2002. While in 2002 only four states mentioned that institutions of higher education (IHE) were involved in implementing early learning standards, in 2005, 24 states indicated that IHEs were incorporating the early learning standards in coursework, and seven additional states indicated that they were in the process of engaging the higher education community (see Table 2). In addition, nine states reported that their professional development standards or core competencies had been developed or revised based on the early learning standards, and nine states indicated that they were in the process of revising core competencies for teachers based on their state's early learning standards. The reported extent to which the IHEs had been involved varied, ranging from examples of individual faculty members who were using the early learning standards in their courses to states where the early learning standards had been adopted by university or community college systems. One respondent wrote, "We need to strengthen this part of the program [use of the state's early learning standards in institutions

of higher education]. It varies from institution to institution. Some colleges/universities do a good job of this; others do not." In a few states, respondents noted that community colleges had been more actively involved in implementing the early learning standards than four-year institutions.

States have used a variety of strategies to engage IHEs in the implementation process. Many included representatives from higher education on the committees that developed the early learning standards. States also provided training for faculty members or free copies of the early learning standards documents to faculty. Rhode Island, for instance, reported that members of the state's early childhood staff had met with teacher educators from all institutions of higher education in the state to explain the standards and discuss how they might use them in coursework. They also provided free copies of the standards document for students in teacher preparation programs. Kentucky is an example of a state that had begun to institutionalize efforts to utilize early learning standards in colleges and universities. In addition to some of the same strategies described above, representatives from state universities and community colleges met with the Division of Early Childhood Development staff on a regular basis to discuss the use of the standards in teacher education programs. Massachusetts offered grants to IHEs to align their coursework with the early learning standards and to provide courses to child care providers. Clearly states have been quite active in promoting the use of early learning standards through inservice and preservice professional development initiatives.

### *Accountability for the Use of Early Learning Standards*

In addition to providing support for the use of the early learning standards, states have implemented various mechanisms to ensure that they are used. Whereas in 2002 no state had a monitoring system in place to gauge the extent to which programs used the early learning standards, in 2005, respondents in 17 states indicated that their state had developed a system to monitor the use of the early learning standards, and four states were in the process of developing a monitoring system (see Table 2). State prekindergarten programs were most often the focus of the monitoring system (16 states), but monitoring systems were also in place or being developed to gauge the extent to which the early learning standards were being used in Even Start (3 states), special education (3 states), child care (3 states), and Head Start programs receiving state funding (2 states). For example, Arkansas indicated that examination of the use of early learning standards was part of the monitoring process in public prekindergarten, Even Start, and early childhood special education programs within the state. The reported frequency with which states intended to monitor the use of early learning standards varied from semi-annually to once every five years, with the majority monitoring programs semi-annually or annually. Respondents typically indicated that the state's department of education or the agency that houses the state's prekindergarten program was or would be responsible for conducting the monitoring, but other entities such as the state's department of social services and local districts were also listed.

States varied in the type of data they collected as part of the monitoring process. The most frequent type of data that states indicated they collected as part of the monitoring process was evidence that the early learning standards had been used in program planning or daily lesson planning. For example, New Jersey asked programs in the Abbott districts to examine the extent to which they used the early learning standards in professional development plans, in lesson plans, and in classroom quality assessments as part of their annual self-assessment process. States also indicated that they monitored the use of early learning standards in development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). In Idaho, for instance, state department of education staff reviewed IEPs to document the use of early learning standards in programs receiving IDEA Part B funding. States also reported that they looked for evidence of alignment between the early learning standards and the curricula or assessments that programs used. A few states indicated that they collected child assessment data as part of their monitoring process, and a few others

indicated that they documented the use of early learning standards through classroom observations.

States reported using a variety of mechanisms to implement their monitoring system, including review of annual plans/proposals and on-site visits. Several reported that the use of the early learning standards was or would be a required element of their state's quality rating system. States had invested a great deal of time and effort in developing and implementing the early learning standards, and several were beginning to develop systems to ensure that programs used them.

## **Discussion**

Given the recent emphasis on the potential of early childhood education to positively affect student outcomes, the investments that policy makers have made in early childhood services, and the sweeping reforms taking place as accountability movements take hold in early education, this survey makes a significant contribution to our understanding of state-level and national developments within the field. The data shed light on recent trends in the implementation of early learning standards in early care and education programs, raise significant policy and practice issues, and illuminate areas where further research is needed. The following discussion section addresses each of these three topics—trends, issues, and future research.

### **Trends in the Implementation of Early Learning Standards**

Data from the survey indicate that not only has the trend for states to develop early learning standards continued, almost every state in the nation now has early learning standards for preschool-age children. Certainly the Good Start, Grow Smart requirement that states develop voluntary early learning guidelines has played a role in this increasing trend. However, in 2002, just prior to implementation of the Good Start, Grow Smart initiative, 27 states had early learning standards, and 12 states were in the process of developing them. Good Start, Grow Smart likely served as a catalyst in the 11 states that had not begun the standards development process at the time, but states may also have developed early learning standards because they see them as a useful resource. The fact that 14 states have published early learning standards for infants and toddlers, a truly remarkable finding given that there is no corresponding Good Start, Grow Smart requirement for early learning standards to address this age group, further suggests that states have embarked on developing early learning standards because they see them as important features of early care and education.

Another trend noted in the data is the tremendous effort that states have invested in supporting the implementation of early learning standards. States have taken a variety of approaches to providing guidance, training, and technical assistance to support teachers in their effort to learn to use early learning standards. Many new training opportunities have been developed, some addressing the early learning standards specifically and others incorporating the topic of early learning standards into more general training. The trend to involve institutions of higher education in efforts to support implementation of the standards was also noteworthy.

Finally, data from the survey indicate that states are increasingly serious about ensuring that programs use their early learning standards. The number of states with a monitoring system in place or under development has increased dramatically. Some states collect data on whether programs are using the standards in their planning processes, while other states have developed child assessments based on the standards to further promote their use. The number of states that have or are designing some type of system to evaluate the extent to which programs are actually using the early learning standards has also increased dramatically.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The rapid introduction of early learning standards has significant and potentially far-reaching implications. Steeped in the tradition of child-initiated programming, many have worried about the impact that the use of early learning standards might have on pedagogy and, worse yet, that early learning standards might be misused and have negative repercussions for children (Carter, 2006). In order to maximize the potential benefits of early learning standards, states must address the following—the content of their standards, professional development for teachers using their standards, and alignment between the standards and other elements of education programs.

### *Content of the Standards*

If early learning standards are to define what will be taught and what we expect children to learn, it is imperative that the content of the standards is appropriate. The content should reflect “significant and developmentally appropriate content” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002) and be based on what we know from research on children’s learning (Neuman & Roskos, 2005). It is therefore important to examine the content of the standards to ensure that they are appropriate. Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2005, 2006) conducted content analyses on early learning standards documents and reported that several significant areas of early learning and development often have been left out of early learning standards. Kendall (2003) pointed out that states often have mixed content standards with performance standards, making it difficult to use the standards effectively. Given that early childhood programs will base their instruction on what is outlined in these early learning standards, it is essential that we get the content “right.” States should conduct formal analyses to examine the content of the early learning standards through a validation process, using research related to specific areas of learning to evaluate what is included in the standards. In addition, states should examine the utility of their standards. Several states reported that they piloted their early learning standards, suggesting that it can be helpful for practitioners in the field to use the early learning standards before the content is finalized.

### *Training and Professional Development*

States have embarked on a variety of training and professional development initiatives to promote the use of early learning standards, presumably to capitalize on the potential benefits that these documents can have for programs and perhaps to try to minimize some of the potential negative consequences that might be associated with implementation of early learning standards. This trend is guided by an assumption that the availability of the standards can lead to better instruction. However, many programs employ practitioners who lack a strong background in child development or early education pedagogy. Simply having the guidelines does not mean that they will be used effectively. The use of early learning standards, along with other developments that have taken place with the increased emphasis on accountability for student outcomes, must be examined within the current context of early learning programs. Given that programs often have limited resources—that teachers often have limited professional qualifications and limited access to preservice or ongoing inservice professional development, that programs are often under funded, and that programs face tremendous challenges such as teacher turnover—the benefits of early learning standards will not be realized without efforts to promote overall improvements in the quality of early care and education programs. While implementation of early learning standards can create shared understandings, help teachers be more intentional about what they teach, and improve child outcomes, without efforts to improve the qualifications of the workforce, increase resources available to programs, and improve program quality standards, early learning standards will not be fully implemented and, conversely, may be more likely to be misused.

The use of early learning standards is a tremendous “mind shift” for the field. Teachers are

being asked to be intentional about what skills and knowledge they seek to cultivate in children. Implementing standards-based education in a child-centered and developmentally appropriate manner requires a high degree of sophistication on the part of the teachers. Teachers must recognize where individual children are in relation to indicators specified in the standards, understand what skills and abilities that individual children need to develop in order to make progress, and be able to implement activities that help children make progress in a way that is sensitive to each child's individual interests and current cognitive and developmental levels. Continued and expanded training and professional development will be needed to help teachers use the standards effectively. Without intensive training, teachers may resort to the rigid "one-size-fits-all" approach that critics of the early learning standards movement feared—teaching to the standards rather than to the children. The trend toward increasing involvement of institutions of higher education and teacher preparation programs is encouraging. Providing training to teachers very early in their careers could potentially be of great benefit to their ability to use the standards. Extensive preservice and inservice training on what is included in the early learning standards and how to implement them, coupled with mentors and model programs where teachers can see the standards being implemented, will be necessary to ensure that the early learning standards are used as intended.

### *Alignment Issues*

There is much discussion about the alignment of each state's early learning standards with a variety of elements of early care and education programs. Alignment with K-12 standards has received a great deal of attention—each of the states has done something to examine alignment between their state's early learning standards and the K-12 standards in their state. Federal policies have perhaps been at least part of the impetus for states to examine alignment with K-12 standards. The Good Start, Grow Smart initiatives as well as Early Reading First grants suggest that the guidelines be aligned with K-12 standards. Momentum for the alignment between early learning standards and K-12 standards also comes from other sources. Bogard and Takanishi (2005) advocate a PK-3 system where states develop a systematic and integrated approach to educating children from age 3 years through third grade, aligning standards, curricula, and assessment practices across these age levels.

The focus on alignment between early learning standards and later grade levels brings forth a number of issues. First, aligning from early learning standards with the K-12 standards is an effective strategy only if the K-12 standards are appropriate and if "alignment" is not interpreted simply as "watering down" what is expected of children in later grades (Kendall, 2003). Indeed, several of the respondents to the survey pointed out that they were aware of the importance of alignment and also cognizant of the uniqueness of the developmental period before kindergarten. Therefore, they worked to ensure that their early learning standards provided a foundation for what was expected of children in later grades but that the early learning standards were not necessarily a "one-to-one" correspondence with the K-12 standards.

A second issue that this emphasis on alignment with K-12 standards raises is the role of early care and education services for children from birth to age 3. The importance of the learning and development that take place before children turn 3 is widely recognized, yet there is significantly less emphasis on alignment between infant-toddler and prekindergarten early learning standards. As additional states develop infant-toddler standards, states will need to focus attention on alignment with standards that define expectations for children's learning before and after the prekindergarten period.

As significant as alignment with standards for other age levels is, two other types of alignment have direct implications for how teachers use early learning standards in the classroom. States have begun to address the importance of alignment with curricula. It is difficult to imagine that children will make progress on areas of development and learning outlined in early learning standards if they are not addressed (or are addressed differently) within the curriculum the



teacher is using. Sadowski (2006) suggests that there are strong outcomes for children in programs with curricula that are aligned with their primary school curricula. However, often curricula are designed separately from the early learning standards development process. Some curricula have a particular content bent such as literacy or social/emotional development, which may or may not fully reflect the content of a state's early learning standards. It is, therefore, critically important that states examine alignment between the standards and the curricula being used in programs.

The issue of alignment and assessment also has important implications for the implementation of early learning standards. Analyses that have examined alignment between standards and assessments being used in K-12 education systems have suggested that sometimes there is a "mismatch" or misalignment between what is supposed to be taught (the standards) and what is being assessed (Achieve, 2000; Webb, 1999, 2002; Wixson, Fisk, Dutro, & McDaniel, 2002). States and programs need to carefully consider the assessments they use and the alignment of those assessments with their standards. In some cases, measurement tools may not directly assess the expectations contained within the standards. The tools may focus on assessing different skills than those emphasized within the standards. This could result in assessment data that would not provide an accurate picture of what is happening in the program.

Finally, further explication is needed of the concept of alignment—what form does alignment take and how does a state determine whether there is or is not a close alignment between the early learning standards and these other elements of the education system? While it is widely recognized as an important issue, little guidance exists on what alignment should look like and how it should be operationalized. There is tremendous variability in how states conduct alignment analyses and the criteria they use for determining whether alignment is at an acceptable level.

## **Future Research**

The development of early learning standards is relatively new, but they are quickly becoming an important force within the field. It is, therefore, important that we systematically examine a number of issues related to their use in the field. First, research is needed to determine the extent to which the early learning standards have "penetrated" various types of programs. Are they actually being used in the programs where they are required? Are other programs using them?

Research is also needed to examine various strategies for supporting teachers in their efforts to use early learning standards. How can we best facilitate effective use of early learning standards in the field? Some research indicates that teachers need far more than just training on the content of the standards. They need to learn how to integrate standards within their practice in a meaningful way (Wien, 2004). Results from a pilot study suggest that it is important that program administrators communicate that early learning standards are important, that teachers receive ongoing professional development, and that teachers have informal opportunities to discuss with colleagues how they are implementing the standards in their classrooms (Scott-Little, Choplin, & Weisner, 2006). Much additional research is needed on the types of supports needed to help teachers use early learning standards effectively.

Systems-level research is needed to determine how early learning standards fit within the greater context of early care and education and what impact they might be having on the field. This type of research would include systematic study of alignment between early learning standards and other features of the education system (curricula, assessments, etc.) and the implementation of early learning standards across different programs. Has the implementation of early learning standards led to greater coordination or continuity across different programs, or have they contributed further to the fragmentation of early care and education services?

Ultimately the developers of early learning standards hope that they will make a positive

difference in outcomes for children. Additional research is needed to address whether the use of early learning standards results in greater benefits for children—are teachers who use early learning standards more effective in facilitating children’s learning and development?

## Conclusion

Data from the survey indicate that states have been quite active in developing and implementing early learning standards. The findings suggest that elements of an accountability system are being put into place in many states. Much work, however, remains to be done. In many places, the early learning standards are still a new development, and there continues to be a somewhat piecemeal approach to implementing the various components of what should be a coherent, coordinated approach to early care and education. Early learning standards are seen as a framework for improving early education. The field will need to further examine how it can effectively use the standards to support effective instruction and improved child outcomes.

## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the members of the Council of Chief State School Officers Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium for their assistance in designing and implementing the survey and persons from other early childhood organizations who provided feedback on the draft survey instrument. The authors are particularly grateful to the state-level administrators from early childhood programs across the country who completed the survey.

## Notes

1. Data from the survey responses combined with information on the National Child Care Information Center Web site indicate that 49 states have completed their standards development process as of June 2006.
2. Data from the survey responses combined with information on the National Child Care Information Center Web site indicate that 13 states have completed infant-toddler early learning standards as of June 2006.

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## **Appendix**

### **Survey Questions Related to Early Learning Standards**

1. Please provide the year the early learning standards were or will be completed or adopted.
2. For which age groups were the standards developed (check all that apply)
  - a. One-year-olds
  - b. Two-year-olds
  - c. Three-year-olds
  - d. Four-year-olds
  - e. Five-year-olds
  - f. Other (please describe)
3. If your state's early learning standards for any of the age categories are available online, please confirm their Web addresses below.
4. States vary in the degree to which they require programs to use their standards. For each program, please indicate whether the standards are mandated by law, mandated by program regulation, or if programs are encouraged to use them on a voluntary basis.

- a. Prekindergarten programs receiving state funds
  - b. Licensed/Regulated center-based child care
  - c. Licensed/Regulated family- or home-based child care
  - d. Federally funded Head Start
  - e. IDEA/Section 619
  - f. IDEA/Part C
  - g. Even Start
5. Please include a one-sentence description of any additional programs that use the early learning standards, and include whether their use is mandated or voluntary.
6. What are the intended purposes of the early learning standards? (check all that apply)
- a. Guide instruction
  - b. Enhance professional development
  - c. Guide assessment
  - d. Educate parents
  - e. Program evaluation
  - f. Program accountability
  - g. Other (please describe)
7. Has your state done anything specific to align curricula with the early learning standards? If yes, please describe.
8. If you have any form of state-level assessment, did your state do anything specific to align the assessments with the early learning standards? If yes, please describe.
9. Has your state aligned the early learning standards with the kindergarten or K-12 standards? If yes, please describe.
10. Who was involved in the development of the early learning standards? (check all that apply)
- a. Early Childhood Specialist in the State Department of Education
  - b. K-12 Content or Standards Specialist in the State Department of Education
  - c. Child Care Block Grant Administrator
  - d. Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
  - e. IDEA/619 Coordinator
  - f. Head Start Collaboration Director
  - g. Institutions of Higher Education
  - h. Parents
  - i. Practitioners
  - j. Others (please list)
11. Who is involved in implementing the early learning standards? (check all that apply)
- a. Early Childhood Specialist in the State Department of Education
  - b. K-12 Content or Standards Specialist in the State Department of Education

- c. Child Care Block Grant Administrator
  - d. Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
  - e. IDEA/619 Coordinator
  - f. Head Start Collaboration Director
  - g. Institutions of Higher Education
  - h. Parents
  - i. Practitioners
  - j. Others (please list)
12. Has your state provided any specific guidance or targeted assistance for programs on how to use the early learning standards with children from diverse family backgrounds and children who are English language learners? If so, please describe.
13. Has your state provided any specific guidance or targeted assistance for programs on how to use the early learning standards with children with disabilities? If so, please describe.
14. What strategies are in place to support implementing the early learning standards? (Check all that apply)
- a. Training/professional development
  - b. Dissemination (mail and/or email)
  - c. Customized training and technical assistance
  - d. Monitoring
  - e. Other (please describe)
15. If there is (or will be) a monitoring system to measure how programs are using the early learning standards, please respond to the questions below:
- a. Which programs are monitored?
  - b. How often?
  - c. By whom?
  - d. What types of data are collected?
16. What organizations or agencies are involved in supporting the use of early learning standards within each of the following programs: state-funded prekindergarten, IDEA/Section 619, center-based child care, family/home-based child care, and Head Start.
- a. State Department of Education
  - b. Intermediate Service Districts
  - c. Local Education Agencies
  - d. 2-Year Institutions of Higher Education
  - e. 4-Year Institutions of Higher Education
  - f. Federal ACF Regional Offices
  - g. Child Care Bureau State TA Specialists
  - h. Head Start Bureau TA Case Managers
  - i. USDOE Regional Laboratory/Center

j. Professional Organizations (for example, AEYC, R & R's)

17. Have standards or core competencies for teachers/caregivers been developed or revised based on the early learning standards? If so, please describe how.
18. How are the early learning standards being used in your state's preservice teacher education programs within institutions of higher education?
19. How are the early learning standards being used in your state's inservice training for teachers and providers?
20. Describe any additional or new professional development activities related to your state's early learning standards. Please include the goals of the training (e.g., general awareness, linking standards to curricula, linking standards to assessment) and how much training is provided (e.g., number of sessions, hours, days).
21. Has your state implemented an assessment system linked to the early learning standards? If your state has an assessment system, please describe it and when it was or will be implemented.