



In order to receive your Registry Tier 2 credit: 1-Read the materials, 2-Answer and return the following summary questions within 15 business days.

Mail to:Child Care Providers' Helper 7819 W Potomac Ave. Milw. Wi, 53222 or scan and email to gcoggs@gmail.com

3 Advocating for Policies to Improve Practice

Although the material you just read is a major part of DAP. Remember it is through close observation and interaction with the individual children in their classrooms that skilled teachers assess where children are and thereby know how to best guide them.

Use the Table Below to Fill in the Blank

- 1. Research shows, programs deemed to be of high quality “_____ teachers who have completed more years of education than do lower-quality programs.”
- 2. Increased access to _____ training is important.
- 3. Program standards define program expectations; content standards define what a student should know and be able to do; and performance standards tell _____ how to gauge whether a child is meeting the content standards.
- 4. Children who interact with teachers with a bachelor’s degree and training in child development and early childhood education _____ improved social, communicative, and academic performance
- 5. Teachers who receive such training also are more likely to engage in developmentally appropriate practices and to interact with children in ways that _____ their learning across developmental domains
- 6. Use newsletters, postings outside your program or classroom door, and word of mouth to inform this audience about issues central to _____early childhood education.

1	demonstrate	2	facilitate
3	employ	4	professional
5	stakeholders	6	improving

List three ways you will use this information:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

When we receive your completed worksheets and evaluation, we will email you a Certificate of Completion.



Course Evaluation (return this evaluation with homework)

Please take a few minutes to evaluate this training. Your input will be very helpful to us.

Name: _____ Registry# _____

Course Name: _____ Email: _____

Date you Completed Course: _____ Circle: Family or Group Center Phone#: _____

Training Evaluation Survey

Please circle your response here

The presentation consisted of hands on training, questions and answers, and lecture.	1 2 3 4 5
Overall effectiveness of training (I feel the training was clear and easy to understand)	1 2 3 4 5
The interactive classroom and homework assignments were helpful learning materials	1 2 3 4 5
This subject was useful and I have incorporated the information into my childcare environment	1 2 3 4 5
Overall effectiveness of training	1 2 3 4 5
The method used to present this information was in step with my learning style	1 2 3 4 5
I would recommend other providers to attend this training	1 2 3 4 5
The materials used in this training were valuable and relevant (i.e. handouts, books, homework assignments, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5

Please share your comments. We want to include you in our evaluation process

What did you like best about this training/topic?

What did you like least about this training session/topic?

How can this training be improved?

- My learning style is: (please check one)
- Visual Learner- You learn by seeing and looking.
 - Auditory Learners - You learn by hearing and listening.
 - Kinesthetic Learners - You learn by touching and doing.

What class/topics would you like for us to present as it relates to this training session?

Was the information presented difficult to understand? Yes No

Would you like access to monthly childcare updates? Yes No

The course materials were well organized? Yes No

I received the materials in a timely fashion? Yes No

The information will be helpful to me in my position? Yes No

Would you consider taking another training offered by Child Care Providers' Helper? Yes No

Thank you for allowing us to serve your training needs.

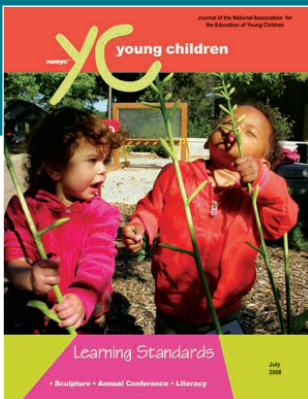
Developmentally
Appropriate
Practice



A reading from the CD accompanying
*Developmentally Appropriate Practice in
Early Childhood Programs Serving Children
from Birth through Age 8, Third Edition.*

READING #3

Advocating for Policies to Improve Practice



Christopher P. Brown

Reprinted from the July 2008 edition of *Young Children*

CATEGORIES:

Policy

Early Childhood Professional

naeyc

National Association for the Education of Young Children
www.naeyc.org

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Advocating for Policies to Improve Practice

Christopher P. Brown

Early childhood education continues to gain considerable prominence in national, state, and local political discussions. However, early childhood policy initiatives are often made with little consultation with or consideration of those who must implement them. This creates an environment in which early childhood practitioners struggle to align their personal beliefs and professional knowledge with policy. For example, much of the current interest in early childhood education by policy makers centers on preparing children for later academic success. Their focus on performance has led to reforms that tend to emphasize the acquisition of specific cognitive skills over other facets of the learning process (Neuman & Roskos 2005; Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow 2006).

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This Research in Review article was edited by journal research editor **Sharon K. Ryan**, associate professor of early childhood education, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers—The State University of New Jersey.

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Most early childhood practitioners would argue that a focus on academics without consideration of children's social, emotional, and physical learning is not developmentally appropriate.

Research confirms practitioners' insight by consistently demonstrating that children's success in school and in life is dependent upon much more than expanded academic learning experiences (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2001). Effective early childhood programs are those in which educators implement developmentally appropriate curricula and assessment practices based on what is known about how children learn best across developmental domains, and they reflect the values and priorities of the children, their families, and the surrounding community (Frede 1998; National Research Council 2000; Kagan & Kauerz 2006).

Unfortunately, most people outside the field do not realize that developmentally appropriate practice, programs, and systems of education require policies that support program structure,

Programs deemed to be of high quality "employ teachers who have completed more years of education than do lower-quality programs."



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teacher practices with children and their families, and appropriate curricular expectations for young children (Frede 1998). In this journal, several authors (e.g., Gordon 2000; Thornburg 2001; Edelman 2002; Meyer 2005) have encouraged the early childhood community to take a proactive role in political conversations to ensure that policy makers make informed choices to improve the quality of care provided to young children and their families.

This review of research examines how early childhood stakeholders can become informed advocates with the knowledge and confidence to talk with families, community members, and policy makers about what it is they do with young children, why they do it, and how they know it works. Empirical studies offer feasible strategies for improving the early childhood educa-

tion field through policy. This article illuminates the ways in which reforms can improve teacher training and compensation; create appropriate early learning expectations and experiences for young children; foster a system that aligns teaching, content, and assessment practices across children's early education experiences; and expand the field so that it becomes a community-based system of care and education. The article ends with suggestions about how one can start advocating for the field and with a list of resources to help early childhood stakeholders stay abreast of the research and policies that directly impact their work.

Policy and working with young children

Educators are concerned about how policy makers' increasing interest in early education will affect teachers' work. Many stakeholders see this renewed attention as an opportunity to improve teacher training and to enhance compensation for early childhood educators (see, for example, Kagan & Scott-Little 2004; Gallagher, Clifford, & Maxwell 2005).

Increased access to professional training is important. It is one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of early learning experiences for young children. Significantly, programs deemed to be of high quality "employ teachers who have completed more years of education than do lower-quality programs" (Saluja, Early, & Clifford 2002, 3). Moreover, children who interact with teachers with a bachelor's degree and training in child development and early childhood education demonstrate improved social, communicative, and academic performance (Howes 1997; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2001; Burchinal et al. 2002; Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon 2005). Teachers who receive such training also are more likely to engage in developmentally appropriate practices and to interact with children in ways that facilitate their learning across developmental domains (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2001). (NAEYC supports all professionals who work with young children and is committed to expanding opportunities for

individuals to further their skills and knowledge to improve the quality of services provided to young children [NAEYC 2001].)

While these studies demonstrate that specialized training improves the quality of teaching, the teachers with such training typically work in public schools rather than in center- or home-based care environments (Saluja, Early, & Clifford 2002). Additionally, the educational attainment of the individuals who work in center- or home-based programs is decreasing (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley 2005). Further troubling is the fact that the highest percentage of caregivers and program directors holding a four-year college degree are older than 50 (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley 2005), and as they retire, the number of college-educated practitioners is likely to decrease even more.

This research creates several dilemmas for state policy makers who are interested in expanding access to early childhood programs such as prekindergarten in their local school districts. Will there be enough qualified people to fill the teacher openings that new programs would create? What about the teaching positions that will open up as baby boomers retire and leave the field?

In Illinois, Presley, Klostermann, and White (2006) tackled this issue by surveying a sample of state-certified teachers, licensed to work with children from birth to third grade, who were not currently working in Illinois public schools. The authors wanted to know whether there would be enough qualified individuals to fill the new teaching positions if the state's policy makers continued to increase access for families with children ages 3 and 4 to state-funded early childhood programs through the Illinois Preschool for All initiative. By surveying a sample of individuals who had received an Illinois Early Childhood Certificate but were not teaching in early childhood centers, they found that the majority (83 percent) of those surveyed would consider working in early childhood centers under the right conditions. The primary condition for those surveyed would be offering certified teach-

ers a salary that matched their professional training and education.

Such findings by Presley, Klostermann, and White (2006) demonstrate that if policy makers do continue to expand access to early education services, fill-

Policy makers must make a sustained effort to coordinate educational opportunities through their state's various learning institutions to give educators easy access to training.

ing new teaching positions with qualified individuals may not be as big a hurdle as once thought if the compensation for teachers matches their professional training and education. (NAEYC has consistently supported policies that improve access to educational opportunities and increase compensation, and it has provided standards for institutions of higher education in educating early childhood professionals [Hyson 2003].)

A second issue is whether policy makers can create educational opportunities for educators to improve their professional and academic knowledge in a relatively short period of time so that children who are currently in early childhood programs benefit from this type of reform. A court case forced New Jersey to face such an issue (Ryan 2004; Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede 2004; Ackerman 2005; Lobman, Ryan, & McLaughlin 2005; Ryan & Ackerman 2005). The State Supreme Court ruled in *Abbott v. Burke* (1998, 2000) that New Jersey's 30 poorest school districts had to create a high-quality early childhood system for all 3- and 4-year-olds (Ryan & Ackerman 2005). In defining a high-quality environment, the court mandated that each state-funded preschool classroom must have a state-certified teacher and teacher assistant by 2004, which meant that the lead teacher had to have a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood education (Ackerman 2005).

It must be noted that the educational conditions for the children in the 30 districts were so dire that the court had to step in to force change. Nevertheless, the mandate was effective (Lobman, Ryan, & McLaughlin 2005; Ryan &

Ackerman 2005). Ryan and Ackerman (2005) estimated that by the court's deadline of September 2004, potentially 90 percent of the teachers working in the Abbott schools would have a bachelor's degree and, at a minimum, would be provisionally certified. Ryan and Ackerman state that in 2000, when the court handed down its ruling, only 15 percent of teachers in private child care settings (that is, not working in the public schools or being a Head Start teacher) had a BA in early childhood. At the time of their study (December 2002–September 2003), this number had increased to 58 percent of the private teachers having a BA and being certified.

While research on this change process in New Jersey is ongoing, the Abbott case offers several important lessons in increasing educational opportunities for early childhood teachers within a limited time frame. For instance, the state realized that its existing core of early childhood leaders, advocates, and education programs could train preschool teachers quickly. Thus, as other states consider ways to improve the training of early educators and caregiv-



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and who offered them professional development opportunities to improve their teaching (Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede 2004).

To coordinate and expand these training services to the Abbott teachers, policy makers provided funding to colleges and universities and the teachers themselves. The funding allowed the institutions of higher learning to increase their capacity to train teachers and establish a scholarship program so the teachers could take the required classes for certification (Ryan & Ackerman 2005).

To effect such dramatic change in other states, policy makers must make a sustained effort to coordinate educational

opportunities through their state's various learning institutions to give educators easy access to training. They must assemble a cadre of early childhood leaders and mentors who can help teachers seeking certification navigate the higher education system effectively. Simply implementing one policy change at a time (such as providing access to professional development funds) would not have allowed New Jersey's Abbott schools to achieve the court-mandated goals so quickly or effectively.

These studies (Ryan 2004; Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede 2004; Ackerman

2005; Lobman, Ryan, & McLaughlin 2005) provide a practical set of information that early childhood advocates can use to inform policy makers about how the field can be professionalized in a rapid and cohesive manner. Policy makers should be aware that they must enact reforms that provide stakeholders with the funding needed to attend and expand professional training programs, support institutions of higher learning so they can offer early childhood teachers better access to their courses, and compensate teachers who become certified and/or improve their teaching credentials. It should be noted that as early childhood educators in New Jersey's Abbott schools earn their certification, they are more likely to move out of private preschool and Head Start programs, which typically require long hours and less compensation, and into public programs, which offer better benefits and less work time (Ryan & Ackerman 2005). (See King and Luebchow [2006] for comparisons of early childhood teacher salaries.)

Standards and systems alignment

Alongside these policy discussions about professionalizing the field is a political debate over what should be taking place in early childhood classrooms and programs. Policy makers have the ability to shape the learning expecta-

Program standards define program expectations; content standards define what a student should know and be able to do; and performance standards tell stakeholders how to gauge whether a child is meeting the content standards.

ers, they also may already have a core group of leaders, advocates, and educators available that could help implement and coordinate new training programs in a short period of time (Lobman, Ryan, & McLaughlin 2005; Ryan & Ackerman 2005).

At the local level, the Abbott school districts created new leadership positions that assisted their preschool teachers with this change process. These positions included supervisors and master teachers who provided technical assistance so teachers could access new funds and training resources

tions and experiences of young children in numerous ways. The most controversial and politically hyped discussion about the future of early childhood education in the United States involves policies rooted in the standards-based reform movement. Federal and state standards-based education policies (K–12) emphasize the issue of accountability to motivate teachers and students to improve their performance. This has led many early childhood educators to automatically link standards-based reform to testing, an issue much maligned in early education history (see, for example, Meisels 1987; Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz 1998).

However, the process of standards-based reform is much more complex than simply administering tests to children to effect change. First, there are numerous types of standards. Program standards define program expectations; content standards define what a student should know and be able to do; and performance standards tell stakeholders how to gauge whether a child is meeting the content standards (Bowman 2006; Consortium for Policy Research in Education 1996). Moreover, standards for early childhood education (typically referred to as early learning standards), which define program, content, and performance expectations, are increasingly common across the United States (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Freelow 2006).

The proliferation of early learning standards has led researchers to question how an emphasis on standards and performance might improve the field. For example, Bowman (2006) contends that standards are “at the heart of educational equity” (p. 42). She sees standards as offering all stakeholders the opportunity to scrutinize what is valued in early childhood education and what should be the field’s priorities in terms of teaching and learning.

Bowman, other early childhood researchers (LaMarca et al. 2000; Kagan & Scott-Little 2004; Kagan et al. 2006; Kauerz 2006), and organizations such as NAEYC (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE 2002) believe that early learning standards may be the beacon envisioned by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) that could foster alignment across the field. An aligned field of early education would first synchronize the content and perfor-

mance expectations for young children across particular age or grade levels (horizontal alignment) and then align the entire domain of early childhood education so that children’s experiences at each level of early education would build on what children have already experienced and prepare them for what’s next (vertical alignment).

A community-based system of early care and education

Another emerging policy issue related to this idea of alignment is the creation of a system of early childhood education that extends beyond the immediate program or classroom and into the larger community. One such example is the School Readiness Indicators Initiative (see www.gettingready.org/matriarch), in which 17 states have each created a set of school readiness indicators so that local government agencies can track the growth and development of children from birth through age 8. Such indicators not only measure key characteristics of children and their families, such as immunization rates, but also chart the community resources, program services, and school elements that influence children’s development and their readiness for school. By creating a detailed data set that measures indicators across the span of a child’s life, the initiative hopes to provide state and local policy makers with information needed to formulate and implement policies that create an integrated system of care that supports the development of all children across the entire community. Such a vision could lead to the creation of a system of early learning that spans infancy, preschool, and early elementary school (Meisels 2006)—what Reynolds (2003) calls “the first decade.”

Alignment of the entire system of early childhood education and a coordinated set of services beginning at birth are attractive policy issues for the early childhood community, but there are concerns that this process of aligning content and performance expectations for young children across early learning programs will fall short of these goals. Many researchers worry that policy makers might simply put in place inappropriate expectations for young chil-

dren (Hatch 2002) and create learning environments that encourage teachers to teach to the test or the standard and ignore the variation that exists in their classrooms (for example, Firestone et al. 2000; Hatch & Grieshaber 2002). The most dramatic consequence that could result from these reforms would be the reemergence of readiness tests that create artificial measures of academic performance or social development that children must meet to enter kindergarten or to advance to the next grade level (for NAEYC’s position on readiness testing, see NAEYC 1995 and NAECS/SDE 2000).

Although such tests would be an extreme result from these reforms, states are looking at ways to evaluate how effective local early childhood programs and their teachers are in preparing their children both academically and socially for elementary school. For example, the



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turing of children, not the teaching of content” (Kagan & Kauerz 2006, 163). For standards-based reforms to have a positive influence, early childhood advocates must promote policies that create a horizontally aligned system rooted in age-appropriate early learning standards, curricula, and assessments spanning the developmental domains. Furthermore, this system must be vertically aligned so that as children transition from one early education program to another, or from a program to kindergarten, their experiences build on each other and foster their growth and learning in a developmentally appropriate way (Frede 1998; Kagan & Scott-Little 2004; Kagan et al. 2006).

Going forward

As policy makers continue to focus on young children’s educational experiences prior to kindergarten entry as a means to improve children’s performance, early childhood advocates and educators will have numerous opportunities to promote reforms that improve the field and the lives of young children. The above review outlines research-based reforms that have the potential to

- strengthen the professionalism of the field;
- build coherent and developmentally appropriate curricula, practice, and program expectations;
- align early childhood systems both horizontally and vertically; and
- expand early childhood education programs into community-based systems of care and education.

These policies can shift the focus of reform from just preparing the child for later learning to developing a system of early childhood education

that is prepared to work with each child who enters it (Shore 1998). (For more information on the importance of using research on early childhood and development, visit www.naeyc.org/resources/research/.)

Achieving early education goals

Early childhood educators must be vocal advocates for policies that allow teachers to do what research has demonstrated to be most effective in improving the lives and learning of young children. Here are some suggestions that can assist educators in becoming advocates for our field.

- Start small and connect with your immediate early childhood environment. Teachers and center directors have an instant audience of people whose lives are affected by the policies that shape the quality of education and care they provide. Use newsletters, postings outside your program or classroom door, and word of mouth to inform this audience about issues central to improving early childhood education. Your communications will help foster an environment of informed advocates who can carry these concerns to the larger community.
 - Reach out to other teachers and program directors in your community to strengthen the coalition of committed educators who can work toward change within your local early education environment.
- Locate other early educators in your community** through your local NAEYC Affiliate, which can be found at www.naeyc.org/affiliates.
- Broaden your audience beyond those who work in early childhood education, and connect with the larger education and political communities in your area. Talk with your education and political leaders, such as school board members and locally elected officials, about their positions on early childhood education. Your expertise might persuade them to consider the issues in a new light, and you may even be able to assist them in developing appropriate policies that strengthen the field.

Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston has put in place a school readiness certification system (Lake 2005; Hupp 2007). This voluntary program creates a leveled “School Ready” rating system that informs parents about how effective an early childhood program is in encouraging children’s development of the literacy and social skills needed for kindergarten. While the Texas voluntary rating system defines school readiness strictly through a child’s acquisition of particular literacy and social skills, changes such as these represent ways in which other policy makers might attempt to align the goals and practices of an early childhood education program with the expectations of their state’s K–12 education system. (For more information about the Texas Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education, visit www.uth.tmc.edu/circle/; and to learn more about the state’s School Readiness Certification System, go to www.tea.state.tx.us/p16/council_mtg_attach/presentations/aug06_school_readiness_system.pdf.)

As the presence of content, performance, and program standards becomes more common within the field, early childhood stakeholders must encourage policy makers to implement policies that foster early learning environments that “prioritize the teaching and nur-

Find tips on being an effective advocate in NAEYC's Toolbox for Advocates (www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox.asp). This resource provides information about the legislative process, working with the media, and developing coalitions.

Seek assistance in reaching out to the larger education and political communities in your area from your local NAEYC Affiliate.

- Become aware of what's happening in early childhood education policy across your community, state, neighboring states, and the nation. The history of education reform demonstrates that most local and state education policies are simply the retooling of another state or local community's reform.

Learn what is happening across the United States by signing up for NAEYC's policy update e-mails at www.naeyc.org/policy.

Read about current early childhood education policy issues, and about how well solutions are grounded in research, in articles and reports at the National Institute for Early Education Research, at www.nieer.org, and the Foundation for Child Development, at www.fcd-us.org. Each organization produces newsletters offering insight and access to policy and research issues that affect early childhood education.

Gain a more global perspective on early care and education through the World Forum on Early Care and Education, at www.worldforumfoundation.org.

- Stay up-to-date on the current growth of public prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds—one of the most robust reform movements in early education. Become familiar with the policy implications emerging from the expansion of these prekindergarten programs, because they have the potential to influence the field in numerous ways for years to come.

Find out more about prekindergarten and current state policies surrounding this issue at Web sites such as Pre-K Now, at www.preknow.org, or the Education Commission of the States, at www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=184.

Early childhood educators must be vocal advocates for policies that allow teachers to do what research has demonstrated to be most effective in improving the lives and learning of young children.

- Become familiar with the many policy organizations that evaluate and analyze early childhood education issues and typically put forward a policy plan or set of initiatives they feel will improve the status of the field. Here are links to some of their Web sites:

The New America Foundation—www.newamerica.net/issues/education

The Children, Youth, and Family Consortium—www.cyfc.umn.edu

RAND Corporation—www.rand.org/education

The Brookings Institution—www.brookings.edu/topics/education.aspx

The Future of Children—a collaboration of Brookings Institution and Princeton University, at www.futureofchildren.org.

Conclusion

As Bredekamp and Copple (1997) pointed out more than 10 years ago, we must strive to be “lifelong learners” so that we can provide appropriate services and practices to the children and families with whom we work (p. vii). We need to ensure that our learning goes beyond what takes place in our immediate early education environments and encapsulates an understanding of how policies from all levels of government affect what we and the larger early childhood community do. Using this knowledge, we can work with members of the field, the families we serve, and other local education and political stakeholders to advocate for changes that respect the uniqueness of each child, their learning, and our interactions with them. Our involvement will lead to a system of early education that ensures the provision of the essential components of effective and appropriate instruction and care.

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New NAEYC Initiative Supports Workforce Development Policies

NAEYC, under a grant from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and Cornerstones for Kids, has embarked on the Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative. The initiative focuses on the underlying state public policies that support an integrated early childhood professional development system. Such a system is a comprehensive approach for preparation and ongoing development and support for *all* early childhood education professionals.

Initiative activities are designed to help advance state policy agendas toward building and sustaining a stable, highly skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and well-compensated professional workforce. Project activities include the development of a policy blueprint for state early childhood education professional development systems, an interactive Web interface providing direct links to states' key professional development public policies and initiatives, and national opportunities for collaboration among state policy leaders and administrators whose work directly impacts the early childhood workforce.

To learn more about the initiative, visit www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/default.asp.

The Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative is part of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance. For information about the alliance, go to <http://birthtofivepolicy.org>.

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