

# Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

## SUMMARY

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

Disponible en Español: [NAEYC.org/competencias](https://naeyc.org/competencias)

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

Adopted by the NAEYC National Governing Board November 2019

## SUMMARY

The Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators responds to the charge from Decision Cycle 2 of the Power to the Profession initiative to create nationally agreed-upon professional competencies (knowledge, understanding, abilities, and skills) for early childhood educators. It places diversity and equity at the center and respond to the critical competencies identified in *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Framework* that are necessary for effective practice with young children.

The Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators is a position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children that is held on behalf of the early childhood education profession.

The full document includes:

- › the leveling of the standards and competencies to the ECE I, II, and III
- › designations described in the Unifying Framework
- › recommendations for implementing the standards and competencies across the early childhood field
- › a summary of the research
- › resources and references that informed the document
- › a glossary of terms, and
- › the list of the workgroup members who led the revisions.

The six standards are briefly summarized on the following pages.

To access the full Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, including the leveling to the scopes of practice for the ECE I, II, and III designations, please visit [PowerToTheProfession.org](https://www.naeyc.org/power-to-the-profession).

### Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

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## STANDARD 1

### Child Development and Learning in Context

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

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 2

### Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 3

### Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 4

### Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 5

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

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 6

### Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

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

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

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

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

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

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