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Early Learning Guidelines Support Children's Development

By Jim Lesko, Ed.D. Director, Early Development and Learning Resources, Delaware Department of Education



This article is translated into Spanish on page 2. Ver la versión española de este artículo en la página 2.

Produced by the State Department of Education Early Childhood Special Education Program and the Connecticut Birth to Three System in collaboration with the



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States across the country are committed to supporting early childhood development for young children birth through age five. Having children come to school prepared to be successful is an important part of the early childhood services delivered to children and their families. Many individuals, families, organizations, agencies and school districts are focused on and provide activities and services that are designed to ensure that young children have available what they need to develop to their best potential.

Early learning guidelines are important because they provide a helpful roadmap for those individuals who are working with young children. A state's guidelines provide a framework for early childhood staff to use as they interact with and plan activities for young children. Guidelines are a springboard for children's later learning because states give careful consideration to linking early guidelines with the Kindergarten expectations and the broader Kindergarten through Grade 12 learning standards.

Much more information has become available to help the early childhood field understand what children need to know and what they are capable of learning. Research has demonstrated that high-quality early education does have a positive impact on children's later school achievement and success. New research and printed information has been made available around such learning areas as language and literacy, math, approaches to learning and nutrition. It is important to recognize that the guidelines and the focus on

teaching and instructional practices reflect the latest knowledge available.

A new focus of how we teach infants, toddlers and preschoolers practice is called 'intentional teaching.' While intentional teaching has been around for some time, there is a renewed interest in using intentional teaching/instructional approaches in early childhood programs because it has been demonstrated to be a powerful learning tool. Early learning guidelines serve as a framework for early childhood staff to be more intentional about the types of learning experiences and supports that are provided to children. Early learning guidelines serve as specific instructional targets staff can use for planning experiences, activities and opportunities for a child.

Activities that are carefully planned and implemented constitute intentional teaching. While involvement in materials and with peers is essential for learning, it is the careful planning that will help ensure a young child's engagement. An important component to planning is the concept of making sure that the classroom environment is adequately ready to support learning. Professionals need to make sure there are a sufficient number and variety of materials across the different learning areas, that the materials are in good shape, and that the materials are varied over time.

The question always is, so how is this translated into practice? The response is that the guidelines become a focal point for planning. Learning center time becomes a series of activities pre-planned by practitioners with intentional learning targets.

Block play becomes an activity that targets children's acquisition of measurement, spatial and geometric skills, as well as acquiring skills in problem solving and persistence. Snack routine is a time for acquiring and mastering social/emotional skills, understanding good nutritional practices and mathematical concepts. Each routine/activity becomes a vehicle for targeting children's acquisition of the critical skills they need to be ready for later school success. The guidelines are used for daily, weekly, and monthly planning. They assist practitioners to ensure children have the experiences they need for immediate and later learning.

Linda Goodman (Birth to Three) and Maria Synodi (Early Childhood Special Education) provided the following update on Connecticut Early Learning Standards. Currently, Connecticut has Infant/Toddler Guidelines for children under the age of three that were developed under the leadership of the Department of Social Services. Early learning standards for preschool age children identify the skills and knowledge children should have at the end of their preschool experience prior to entering kindergarten. Links to these documents can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. One of the goals of the State Advisory Council for Early Childhood is to have one set of early learning standards from birth to age five that are well coordinated with the common core of standards, Preschool through Grade 12, recently adopted by the State Board of Education. Work on the early learning standards for infants, toddlers and preschoolers will begin in 2011 and will be completed over the next three years.



Las normas para enseñar en la tierna infancia apoyan el desarrollo de los niños

Por Jim Lesko, Ed.D.

Director, Recursos para el desarrollo y aprendizaje en niños tiernos

Departamento de Educación de Delaware

Varios Estados del País se han comprometido a apoyar el desarrollo infantil desde el nacimiento hasta los cinco años. Que los niños lleguen a la escuela preparados para tener éxito es meta importante de los servicios de primera infancia para niños y sus familias. Muchos individuos, familias, organizaciones y agencias y distritos escolares se concentran en actividades y servicios diseñados para asegurar que los niños menores tienen lo necesario para desarrollar su potencial.

Las normas para esa primera educación son importantes porque son hoja de ruta para esos individuos que trabajan con niños menores. Las normas de un Estado brindan una estructura o el personal de la tierna infancia utilizables en su interacción con niños tiernos y planificación de sus actividades. Las normas son un trampolín para la enseñanza ulterior porque los Estados dan mucha consideración a la conexión entre las normas y las expectativas para el kindergarten y hasta el grado 12.

Hay mucha más información para ayudar al campo de la primera infancia a comprender qué necesitan saber los niños y qué son capaces de aprender. La investigación ha demostrado que una educación temprana de alta calidad de tiene un impacto positivo en el aprovechamiento y éxito escolar futuros. Hay inves-

tigaciones y publicaciones recientes sobre temas de aprendizaje como el lenguaje, la capacidad de leer y escribir, las matemáticas, enfoques al aprendizaje, y la nutrición. Es importante reconocer que las normas y la concentración en la enseñanza y prácticas de instrucción reflejan el más reciente conocimiento.

Un nuevo enfoque de cómo se enseña a los infantes, párvulos y preescolares es la "enseñanza intencional". Aunque el concepto no es nada nuevo, hay un renovado interés en aplicarlo en los programas de la temprana infancia porque ha probado ser un poderoso instrumento de aprendizaje. Las normas del aprendizaje temprano sirven como marco para que el personal de temprana infancia pueda ser más intencional respecto a los tipos de experiencias y apoyo que se ofrece a los niños. Las normas de aprendizaje temprano sirven como objetivos específicos que pueden usarse para planificar experiencias, actividades y oportunidades para el niño.

La enseñanza intencional consiste en actividades cuidadosamente planificadas e implementadas. Mientras que la implicación de materiales y compañeros es esencial para el aprendizaje, es la esmerada planificación lo que más ayuda a que el niño tierno participe. Un componente importante de la planificación es asegurar que el ambiente escolar esté adecuadamente listo para apoyar el aprendizaje. Los profesionales necesitan cerciorarse de que hay suficientes materiales disponibles para las diferentes áreas de aprendizaje y que los materiales están en buena forma y varían oportunamente. La cuestión es siempre cómo llevar esto a la práctica. La respuesta es que las normas se conviertan en un punto focal para el aprendizaje. El tiempo en el centro de aprendizaje se convierte en una serie de actividades planificadas por profesionales con objetivos de aprendizaje intencional. Jugar con los bloques se hace una

actividad para que los niños adquieran aptitudes de medición, espaciales y geométricas, así como aptitudes para resolver problemas y persistir. La rutina de la merienda es un momento para adquirir y dominar actividades socio emocionales, entender buenas prácticas de nutrición y conceptos matemáticos. Cada rutina o actividad resulta un vehículo para la adquisición de aptitudes críticas necesarias para el aprovechamiento escolar ulterior. Las normas se aplican a la planificación diaria, semanal y mensual. Ayudan a los practicantes a asegurarse de que los niños tienen la experiencia que necesitan para el aprendizaje inmediato y ulterior. Linda Goodman (Birth to Three) y María Synodi (Educación especial en la temprana infancia) resumen como sigue la actualización de las normas de aprendizaje temprano en Connecticut. Actualmente Connecticut tiene guías para niños de menos de 3 años desarrolladas bajo la dirección del Departamento de Servicios Sociales. Las normas de aprendizaje temprano para los niños

de 3 a 5 años (antes del Kindergarten) fueron desarrolladas por el Departamento de Educación. Se pueden encontrar enlaces a estos documentos en este boletín. Una de las metas del Consejo estatal de asesoría (State Advisory Council) para la temprana infancia es tener un juego de patrones para cada edad desde el nacimiento hasta los cinco años coordinados con los patrones recientemente adoptados por la Junta de Educación del Estado para preescolares y alumnos hasta del grado 12. El trabajo para desarrollar patrones para infantes, párvulos y preescolares comenzará en el año 2011 y estará completo en tres años.



ICC Update

By Mark A. Greenstein, MD,
State ICC Chair

It was a busy fall. We had our first retreat in five years and though we have said farewell to one parent member whose child is now too old to let her be on the SICC (State Interagency Coordinating Council) we have welcomed two new parents and two new agency representatives, both of whom are also parents of children who have special needs. We all learned a great deal about each other at the retreat and so many of us have a personal connection that leads us to want to help children and families; it was a very special day.

We have also begun to work on our committees and to urge parents to help lead these. We have committees that address Communication, Fiscal, and Service issues with our Legisla-

tive subcommittee working with both Communication and Fiscal as we move forward. While we now have four parent members, we really need more help and more ideas. The challenges that we are facing here in Connecticut can best be addressed by group efforts to be creative in our problem solving. We, along with the Lead agency, want to reach more families, especially those who have not heard our outreach messages. We seek new ways to address the challenges we face in order to help children.

Parents already have their hands full, but some want to help their children by helping others as well, by supporting or helping to improve the system. Sharing your own experiences and ideas with others and working to help keep Connecticut in the forefront of early intervention are things that help all of us. We want and need

more parental involvement. Are you the parent of a child who is or recently was in Birth to Three? Do you like how the Birth to Three system worked with you and your child? Do you have ideas about how you might want things to be? Help us. You can either join the ICC as a member or even just attend a meeting (our schedule is always posted on the internet at www.birth23.org (we are under ABOUT Birth to Three, The State Interagency Coordinating Council, The Next Meeting) or contact either Anna Gorski, RN, ICC support at 860-418-8716 or anna.gorski@ct.gov, or me at MGreens@ccmckids.org. As we move from winter to spring, do consider joining us in some way as we move forward.



Early Learning Standards

By Marlene Cavagnuolo, MS, Former Coordinator of Preschool Special Education, Fairfield Public Schools

Established preschool standards for early learning in Connecticut are described in the Preschool Curriculum Framework, available for review on the State Department of Education website: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/Preschool_framework.pdf.

What do these guidelines look like in real life? Providers create a setting that meets the young child's need to learn so that all areas of development are being addressed, often all at the same time. For example, a time-honored part of any preschool day is circle-time. Essentially, this is a time when students gather to participate as a group. This one activity has unlimited potential to incorporate a full range of developmental skills. Children

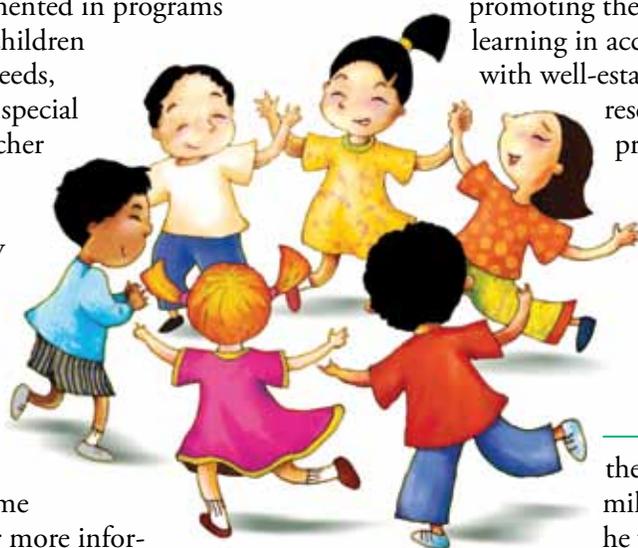
are, indeed, developing the social skills of listening and waiting for a turn, but they are also counting their peers, observing the weather, judging appropriate ways to document it, perhaps choosing appropriate clothing, creating and recognizing calendar patterns, learning new vocabulary, listening and speaking to teachers and peers, responding and moving to music—the list is endless. Students are developing cognitive/reasoning, motor, communication, and social skills simultaneously.

When implemented in programs designed for children with special needs, the preschool special education teacher incorporates this concept and effectively structures experiences to meet the abilities of

individual students. For example, perhaps a student can count easily to twenty and can shine in that part of circle-time but requires assistance to complete the calendar pattern; the latter may thus be an objective in this student's Individualized Educational Program and, with repeated practice within the group activity, the student can master this skill.

Parents can readily apply these same principles while carrying out their daily activities. They can walk the dog or grocery shop, knowing that they are

promoting their children's learning in accordance with well-established research and practices!



One Success Story

By Magdalena Rosales-Alban, MBA, LULAC Head Start, New Haven, CT

BJ was referred by a CT Birth to Three provider to LULAC Head Start in New Haven in March of 2010. He was 28 months of age and dealing with several health and developmental delays since birth. He was using a feeding tube and his gross motor skills were delayed. One leg was shorter than the other and he was using a brace. BJ was not able to squat and return to standing without falling. His mother, who was a single parent and out of work for two years to support her baby, walked into our center full of emotions. She was scared, hesitant to enroll her child, yet in desperate need for help and support in caring for BJ's development.

Our staff conducted home visits to gather more information about how to support the family. The program adapted the classroom environment by adding specific gross motor equipment so that BJ could eat with the other children in a family style setting. The daily interaction with children and the coordination of services between the parent, the Birth to Three provider, and staff made his first month in our program a success. At that point BJ showed incredible improvements in his social interactions and speech development and LULAC had gained his mother's trust.

Using the Infant/Toddler Early Learning Guidelines developed by the Department of Social Services, BJ's mother was able to identify and enjoy

the small milestones he was reaching. Today we can proudly say that BJ is able to drink from a cup slowly on his own, he is able to eat solids without choking, the brace on his leg has been removed, and he is able to maintain balance and squat while playing with the ball. He enjoys climbing daily in the portable gross motor equipment staff has arranged in the classroom. BJ's mother will begin a new job shortly. The program will arrange BJ's drop off and pick up time to meet mother's working schedule needs.

It is now six months later and BJ has turned three. He has met the expectations of the Early Learning Guidelines for his age, he has met all his IFSP goals, and he no longer receives disability services.

Birth to 3 Update

By Linda Goodman, Director, Birth to Three System

Early learning, as the topic of this newsletter, covers a wide range of activities. In helping families to embed early learning opportunities into daily routines and activities we've discovered a website, The Center for Early Literacy Learning or CELL, that has now posted what they are calling CELLcasts for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Each video includes pictures and voiceover on a particular topic and is no more than three minutes long. Each video is organized into an Introduction, What the practice looks like, Doing the practice, and How do you know the practice worked? For infants, there are two topics called Diaper Ch Ch Changes (fun things to do during diapering) and Oohs and Aahs (sound play and

beginning speech). For toddlers, there's Act Natural (pretend play) and Up, Down, All Around (understanding words such as over, under, beside, and next to). There are also two preschooler topics.

So, if you've got a computer or a mobile phone with Internet access, check out: www.earlyliteracylearning.org/ta_cellcasts1.php.

In terms of actual Connecticut early learning standards or guidelines for infants and toddlers, the Department of Social Services issued such guidelines about two years ago. State and federally funded childcare providers have received training (as you can see from the provider article) and have been implementing them. The next step will be to have those guidelines align with or become part of early childhood learning standards

from birth to age five that are a part of the proposed work of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet.

We don't, at this point, know what changes, if any, may be in store for Birth to Three's next fiscal year (July, 2011) until Governor Malloy and the Legislature complete their work in the spring on the enormous projected budget deficit. Perhaps I'll have more news for you then.



Parent Tips



by Amy McCoy and Kristen Peck

- Use bath time as a time for learning fun. Your children are calm and still while they are in the tub, a perfect environment for learning. Use this as a time to review colors, count bath toys, learn your phone

number, and sing the ABCs. Review body parts as you are washing them: "now I will wash your knees, next let's wash your ears."

- At mealtime most young children are in high chairs, so they are still and perhaps more able to focus. Choose one meal per day where you can sit and make learning fun for your young child. Count the crackers and notice the different colors of the food. Talk about crunchy and chewy. If your child will allow, chew something crunchy close to her ears so she hears what crunchy sounds like (sensory seekers will enjoy this). Talk about eating food that is good for your body first, to make you big and strong.
- Encourage your child's efforts to talk to you. Name things, make connections, tell stories, sing songs, and recite nursery rhymes and poems.

- Read aloud every day to your child!
- Demonstrate a love of reading by pointing out to your child when and what you are reading.
- Point out letters in your child's name all throughout their environment – books, signs, cereal boxes, favorite snacks.
- Encourage your child to draw a picture and then dictate the story to you. Children love seeing their words written down.
- Choose a letter of the day and make that your focus.
- Have fun with activities such as coloring, play dough, books, shopping and chores.
- Create a home 'office' for your child where they can have access to paper, crayons, etc.



Information for Families and Professionals is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

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Winter Training Schedule

For more information visit the SERC website: www.ctserc.org (professional development) or contact Nattaneal Wilson, 860-632-1485 X268, Wilson@ctserc.org

2/23/11 **Enhancing Early Literacy of Children with Significant Disabilities**

Anne Marie Davidson

Smita Worah, Ph.D.

Middletown 9:00 – 3:30

\$40

3/5/11 **Including Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs**

SERC Consultants

Middletown 9:00 – 1:00

\$25

3/11/11 **Diagnosis of Infants and Toddlers: Introduction to the Diagnostic Classification System**

DC: 0-3R

Heather Bonitz-Moore

Kim Shepardson

Cromwell 9:00 – 3:30

\$65

3/18/11 **Overview of Evaluation Instruments and Practices**

Marianne Barton, Ph.D.

Hartford 9:00 – 3:30

\$40

SAVE THE DATE

Together We Will (TWW) Conference

Thursday, April 7, 2011

at the Crowne Plaza, Cromwell, CT.

The 2011 theme for the conference is:

“Create Positive Early Learning Experiences for Young Children”



We need your help!

Please send your ideas or suggestions for future newsletter topics to:

Cathy.malley@uconn.edu
or call 203-207-3267.

Thank you so much for your input.

Early Childhood Special Education Update: Early Learning Standards

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator

One of the Connecticut State Department of Education's priorities is setting high standards for all students receiving a public education. High standards for all students include a focus on teaching and learning that is aligned with curriculum content standards, such as in the areas of reading and math. Curriculum content standards are a part of a national standards-based education framework and they apply to the preschool-age population, with or without disabilities, as well as to students, with or without disabilities, in grades kindergarten through Grade 12.

Currently, there are approximately 25 states that have early learning standards. Early learning standards typically reflect the expectations and/or results of a child's learning, often called 'outcomes.' Learning environments for young children that are of high quality utilize early learning standards to promote a child's intellectual, language, physical, social, and emotional development. By addressing these standards, teachers build a foundation for a child's later academic and social competence and success in school. A focus on early learning standards leads to a child's

greater development and learning in the preschool years.

The State Department of Education's early learning standards for the preschool population are reflected in Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework (2006) which focuses on four primary areas: personal social, physical, cognitive, and creative expression/aesthetic development. These and the curriculum content standards and grade level expectations in mathematics, language arts, social studies and science, for Preschool through Grade 12, identify the results and outcomes that Connecticut's teachers and staff work to achieve for all students, including the preschool population.

Along with working on the end result of a child's learning, the State Department of Education also has a num-

ber of companion documents. The Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework (2008) is a document to help teachers monitor children's progress over time as children move along in their learning and development through the preschool years. Connecticut's Early Childhood Guide (2007) provides guidance in curriculum development, suggestions for appropriate and engaging content in key subject areas, ideas for successful teaching strategies, and examples of appropriate contexts for learning along with suggested best practices.

The resources identified in this Early Childhood Special Education Update can be found at the State Department of Education website at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320780>.



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This newsletter is available in English and Spanish. Visit the Birth to Three website at www.birth23.org and click on Publications, or the Department of Education website at www.sde.ct.gov, then click on the Early Childhood link.

Este boletín está disponible en inglés y en español. Visite el sitio del Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años en www.birth23.org y pulse a Publicaciones o el del Departamento de Educación en www.sde.ct.gov. Pulse entonces el enlace 'Early Childhood' (primera infancia).

Resources

Early Learning Standards Resources

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has a Position Statement on Early Learning Standards that can be accessed at: http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/position_statement.pdf.

The State Department of Education's document, **Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework (2006)** can be accessed at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/Preschool_framework.pdf.

The State Department of Education's document, **Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework (2008)** can be accessed at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/Preschool_Assessment_Framework.pdf along with the accompanying flipchart at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/early/flipchart.pdf>.

The State Department of Education's document, **Early Childhood: A Guide to Early Childhood Program Development (2007)** can be accessed at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/early_childhood_guide.pdf.

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) has a page devoted to early learning standards at: <http://www.nectac.org/topics/quality/earlylearn.asp>.

A recently released document, **Creating the Conditions for Success with Early Learning Standards: Results from a National Study of State-Level Standards for Children's Learning Prior to Kindergarten** can be accessed at: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v5n2/little.html>.

