Early Learning Standards and Curriculum in the United States

8th Meeting of the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care: Standards, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

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“It will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education from the day they are born to the day they begin a career ... we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life.”

President Barack Obama
February 24, 2009
The Early Learning Goal

… improving the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children, especially high-need children, from birth through 3rd grade.
A Focus across Multiple Domains

- Physical health and well-being
- Social-emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language and literacy
- Cognitive skills
From Cradle to College and Career

Goal: All kindergarten students arrive ready to succeed and remain on track to 4th grade.

Goal: All students enter middle school with foundational skills to tackle advanced subjects.

Goal: All students graduate high school on time prepared for at least one year of post-secondary.

Goal: All graduates have opportunities for success in the 21st century economy.
Federal vs. State and Local Education Funding

Elementary and Secondary Education Funding
Fiscal Year 2008

Source: National Center for Education Statistics; New America Foundation
Variability in State and Local Funding

State and Local Share of Elementary and Secondary Education Funding
Lowest and Highest State Share (FY 2008)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics; New America Foundation
Early Learning Standards

No national Birth - 5 standards

Preschool early learning standards:
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia

Infant/toddler early learning guidelines:
- 26 states
Incentives

- Race to the Top ($4.3B)
- i3 ($650M)
- Promise Neighborhoods ($10)
9 of the 12 winners specifically addressed the invitational Priority for early learning:

- Improve educational outcomes for high-need children preschool through third grade

- Enhance the quality of preschool programs:
  - improve school readiness - social, emotional, and cognitive domains
  - improve the transition between preschool and kindergarten
**i3: Investing in Innovation ($650M)**

- Competitive priority for activities to improve outcomes for high-need young children birth through 3rd grade

- 13 of the 49 highest-rated applicants (27%) addressed the Competitive Priority ($229M)

- $109 million of all proposals focused exclusively on the early learning years
Promise Neighborhoods ($10M)

- 339 Applications
- 21 planning grants
- Comprehensive education reform to high-need communities
- Improved educational and life outcomes for children from birth through college and to career
Common Core K-12 Standards

National Governors’ Association
Council of Chief State School Officers

- Mathematics
- English/Language Arts
- Adopted by 40 States
Major Federal Early Childhood Funding Streams

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Child Care

U.S. Department of Education
- Special Education
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act
Interagency Policy Board

- Increase coordination, effectiveness and outcomes for children among the major federally funded early learning programs

- Composed of Federal Agency Officials from ED, HHS, DPC, and OMB

- Oversee other interagency collaborations, including identifying opportunities for policy coordination
Standards Challenges

- Teacher training and professional development
- Family Engagement
- Use in curricula and assessment decisions
- Use in accountability or program evaluation
Curriculum

No National Early Learning Curriculum

- *Tight on Goals, Loose on Means*

Head Start Program Curricula Options:

- Self-developed
- Local or state developed
- Adopted or adapted model developed by an educational publisher

States and the District of Columbia often provide options
Curriculum Challenges

- Fidelity of Implementation
- Teacher training and professional development
- Alignment with standards and assessments
Standards and Curriculum: Broad Federal Recommendations to the States

- Address multiple domains
- Align with K-12 system
- Evidence-based
• Inclusive

• Engage a broad range of stakeholders

• Regularly reviewed and revised
Assessment Questions

• Are children meeting the standards?

• Is the curriculum effective?
Assessment Challenges

- Philosophical differences on assessment
- Inadequate instruments for the variety of English learners
- History of inappropriate use of assessment results