# **Virtual Kit: Early Learning Standards**

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Recently politicians, policy makers and the general public have begun to recognize the many benefits of early education. This new valuing of early childhood education has resulted in the development of learning standards for preschoolers in most states. The development of standards in early childhood also coincides with the emphasis on standards in kindergarten through twelfth grade and the desire for alignment of early childhood standards with state K-12 standards. Currently, most states in the U.S. have developed some form of standards or early learning guidelines for children ages 3-5, and many now have also added standards or expectations for infants and toddlers as well.

The Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CSSO) defines early learning standards as follows:

Statements that describe expectations for the learning and development of young children across the domains of health and physical well-being; social and emotional well-being; approaches to learning; language development and symbol systems; and general knowledge about the world around them.

Given this information, early childhood professionals must keep in mind that standards for children younger than kindergarten age differ from those standards created for the K-12 world. It is the task of early education to build foundational skills that will help young children learn the content and information in the later grades (Gronlund, 2006). The standards are intended to be a guideline for tracking a child's progress in gaining these foundational skills allowing individual differences in development to shine through.

When used appropriately, early learning standards can enhance the quality of education for young children. Early learning standards do this by bringing clarity to what children can and should be learning, fostering accountability among teachers for what they are teaching and what children are learning, and ensuring that all children have opportunities to maximize their developmental potential. All of this is accomplished when educators use early learning standards to add a layer of awareness and intentionality to their planning, so they know when and where the standards are being addressed throughout their day as well as when children's play offers opportunities for learning within the domains covered by the standards (Gronlund & James, 2008). This virtual kit was designed to provide resources and information to professionals to guide them and support their understanding of early learning standards and how to apply them to enhance their programs as they work with both children and families.

#### Show me now! (I need this information tomorrow)

* NAEYC 's Where We Stand -- [Summary and Executive Summary on Early Learning Standards](http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/learning_standards) (.pdf)
* [NIEER Policy Brief](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/5.pdf) (.pdf): Child Outcome Standards in Pre-K Programs: What are Standards; What is Needed to Make Them Work?
* States' Use of [Early Learning Guidelines](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/188-putting-standards-into-practice-states-use-of-early-learning-guidelines) for Infants and Toddlers from the ZERO TO THREE policy center

#### What does this look like in practice? (I have a little more time to read about this)

* [NAEYC 's Position Statement](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/position_statement.pdf) (.pdf) on Early Learning Standards
* [Kansas Early Learning Guidelines](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/KsEarlyLearningStandards.pdf) (.pdf)

#### What does ECRC have on this topic?

Gronlund, G. (2006). Making standards come alive: connecting your practices to early childhood curriculum to state standards. St. Paul, MN.: Redleaf Press.

Gronlund, G. & James, M. (2008). Early learning standards and staff development. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Horn, E., Peterson C., & Fox, L. (2007). Linking curriculum to child and family outcomes. Missoula, MT: DEC.

Widerstrom, A. (2004). Achieving learning goals through play: teaching young children with special needs. Baltimore, MD: P.H.Brookes Pub.

Visit the [KITS Early Childhood Resource Center](http://opac.libraryworld.com/opac/signin?libraryname=KITS%20ECRC) for a complete listing.

#### How can I find training on this topic?

Visit KITS Training System Collaborative Training Calendar on the KITS website to find out if there might be an upcoming training related to this topic.

#### What if I still need help?

If you thought this kit was helpful you might also like….

* [DEC's Promoting Positive Outcomes for Children with Disabilities: Recommendations for Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation](https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PrmtgPositiveOutcomes.pdf) (.pdf)

#### Evaluation

Please take a few minutes to complete a brief survey located on the Virtual Kits page on the website to let us know what you think about this virtual kit, and what other topics you would like to see addressed in the future.

#### References:

Gronlund, G., (2006). Make early learning standards come alive: connecting your practice and curriculum to state guidelines. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Gronlund, G. & James, M. (2008). Early learning standards and staff development. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.