

NBPTS **Early Childhood Generalist** **STANDARDS** Second Edition



for teachers of students ages 3–8

The National Board would like to express appreciation to the U.S. Department of Education for its support in the cost of developing and publishing this standards document.

This project is funded in part with grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation. Through September 2000, NBPTS has been appropriated federal funds of \$90.8 million, representing approximately 55 percent of the National Board Certification project. More than \$75.5 million (45 percent) of the project's cost will be financed by nongovernmental sources.

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and the reader should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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Early Childhood/Generalist STANDARDS

(for teachers of students ages 3–8)

Second Edition

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The world-class schools the United States requires cannot exist without a world-class teaching force; the two go hand in hand. Many accomplished teachers already work in the nation's schools, but their knowledge and skills are often unacknowledged and underutilized. Delineating outstanding practice and recognizing those who achieve it are important first steps in shaping the kind of teaching profession the nation needs. This is the core challenge embraced by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards™ (NBPTS). Founded in 1987 with a broad base of support from governors, teacher union and school board leaders, school administrators, college and university officials, business executives, foundations, and concerned citizens, NBPTS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization governed by a 63-member board of directors, the majority of whom are teachers. Committed to basic reform in education, NBPTS recognizes that teaching is at the heart of education and, further, that the single most important action the nation can take to improve schools is to strengthen teaching. To this end, NBPTS has embraced a three-part mission:

- to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards; and
- to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning.

Dedication to this mission is elevating the teaching profession, educating the public about the demands and complexity of accomplished teaching practice, and making teaching a more attractive profession for talented college graduates with many other promising career options.

National Board Certification® is more than a system for recognizing and rewarding accomplished teachers. It offers both an opportunity to guide the continuing growth and development of the teaching profession and a chance to design ways to organize and manage schools so as to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers®. Together with other reforms, National Board Certification is a catalyst for significant change in the teaching profession and in education.

The Philosophical Context

The standards presented here lay the foundation for the Early Childhood/Generalist certificate. They represent a professional consensus on the aspects of practice that distinguish accomplished teachers. Cast in terms of actions that teachers take to advance student achievement, these standards also incorporate the essential knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments that allow teachers to practice at a high level. Like all NBPTS Standards, this standards document is grounded philosophically in the NBPTS policy statement *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. That statement identifies five core propositions.

1) Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Accomplished teachers are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They act on the belief that all students can learn. They treat students equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and taking account of these differences in their practice. They adjust their practice, as appropriate, on the basis of observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances, and peer relationships.

Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. They incorporate the prevailing theories of cognition and intelligence in their practice. They are aware of the influence of context and culture on behavior. They develop students' cognitive capacity and respect for learning. Equally important, they foster students' self-esteem; motivation; character; sense of civic responsibility; and respect for individual, cultural, religious, and racial differences.

2) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subjects is created, organized, linked to other disciplines, and applied to real-world settings. While faithfully representing the collective wisdom of our culture and upholding the value of disciplinary knowledge, they also develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students.

Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and of strategies and instructional resources that can be of assistance. Their instructional repertoire allows them to create multiple paths to learning the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve challenging problems.

3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

Accomplished teachers create, enrich, maintain, and alter instructional settings to capture and sustain the interest of their students. They make the most effective use of time in their instruction. They are adept at engaging students and adults to assist their teaching and at making use of their colleagues' knowledge and expertise to complement their own.

Accomplished teachers command a range of instructional techniques and know when to employ them. They are devoted to high-quality practice and know how to offer each student the opportunity to succeed.

Accomplished teachers know how to engage groups of students to ensure a disciplined learning environment and how to organize instruction so as to meet the schools' goals for students. They are adept at setting norms of social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They understand how to motivate students to learn and how to maintain their interest even in the face of temporary setbacks.

Accomplished teachers can assess the progress of individual students as well as the progress of the class as a whole. They employ multiple methods for assessing student growth and understanding and can clearly explain student performance to students, parents, and administrators.

4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

Accomplished teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students—curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity, and appreciation of cultural differences. They demonstrate capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth—the ability to reason, take multiple perspectives, be creative and take risks, and experiment and solve problems.

Accomplished teachers draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter, and instruction, and their understanding of their students, to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are grounded not only in the literature of their fields but also in their experience. They engage in lifelong learning, which they seek to encourage in their students.

Striving to strengthen their teaching, accomplished teachers examine their practice critically; expand their repertoire; deepen their knowledge; sharpen their judgment; and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas, and theories.

5) Teachers are members of learning communities.

Accomplished teachers contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development, and staff development. They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives. They are knowledgeable about specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

Accomplished teachers find ways to work collaboratively and creatively with parents, engaging them productively in the work of the school.

The Certification Framework

Using the Five Core Propositions as a springboard, NBPTS sets standards and offers National Board Certification in nearly 30 fields. These fields are defined by the developmental level of the students and the subject or subjects being taught. The first descriptor represents the four overlapping student developmental levels:

- Early Childhood, ages 3–8;
- Middle Childhood, ages 7–12;
- Early Adolescence, ages 11–15;
- Adolescence and Young Adulthood, ages 14–18+.

The second descriptor indicates the substantive focus of a teacher's practice. Teachers may select either a subject-specific or a generalist certificate at a particular developmental level. Subject-specific certificates are designed for teachers who emphasize a single

subject area in their teaching (e.g., Early Adolescence/English Language Arts, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Mathematics); generalist certificates are designed for teachers who develop student skills and knowledge across the curriculum (e.g., Early Childhood/Generalist, Middle Childhood/Generalist). For some subject-specific certificates, developmental levels are joined together to recognize the commonalities in teaching students at those developmental levels (e.g., Early and Middle Childhood/Art).

Standards and Assessment Development

Following a nationwide search for outstanding educators, a standards committee is appointed for each field. The committees are generally made up of 15 members who are broadly representative of accomplished professionals in their fields. A majority of committee members are teachers regularly engaged in teaching students in the field in question; other members are typically professors, experts in child development, teacher educators, and other professionals in the relevant discipline. The standards committees develop the specific standards for each field, which are then disseminated widely for public critique and comment and subsequently revised as necessary before their adoption by the NBPTS Board of Directors. Periodically, standards are updated so that they remain dynamic documents, responsive to changes in the field.

Determining whether or not candidates meet the standards requires performance-based assessment methods that are fair, valid, and reliable and that ask teachers to demonstrate principled, professional judgments in a variety of situations. A testing contractor specializing in assessment development works with standards committee members, teacher assessment development teams, and members of the NBPTS staff to develop assessment exercises and pilot test them with teachers active in each certificate field. The assessment process involves two primary activities: (1) the compilation of a portfolio of teaching practice over a period of time and (2) the demonstration of content knowledge through assessment center exercises. Teachers prepare their portfolios by videotaping their teaching, gathering student learning products and other teaching artifacts, and providing detailed analyses of their practice. At the assessment center, teachers write answers to questions that relate primarily to content knowledge specific to their fields.

The portfolio is designed to capture teaching in real-time, real-life settings, thus allowing trained assessors from the field in question to examine how teachers translate knowledge and theory into practice. It also yields the most valued evidence NBPTS collects—videos of practice and samples of student work. The videos and student work are accompanied by commentaries on the goals and purposes of instruction, the effectiveness of the practice, teachers' reflections on what occurred, and their rationales for the professional judgments they made. In addition, the portfolio allows candidates to document their accomplishments in contributing to the advancement of the profession and the improvement of schooling—whether at the local, state, or national level—and to document their ability to work constructively with their students' families.

Teachers report that the portfolio is a professional development vehicle of considerable power, in part because it challenges the historic isolation of teachers from their peers. It accomplishes this by actively encouraging candidates to seek the advice and counsel of their professional colleagues—whether across the hall or across the country—as they build their portfolios. It also requires teachers to examine the underlying assumptions of their practice and the results of their efforts in critical but healthy ways. This emphasis on reflection is highly valued by teachers who go through the process of National Board Certification.

The assessment center exercises are designed to complement the portfolio. They validate that the knowledge and skills exhibited in the portfolio are, in fact, accurate reflections of what candidates know and can do, and they give candidates an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills not sampled in the portfolio because of the candidate's specific teaching assignment. For example, high school science teachers assigned to teach only physics in a given year might have difficulty demonstrating in their portfolio a broad knowledge of biology. Given that the NBPTS Standards for science teachers place a high value on such capabilities, another strategy for data collection is necessary. The assessment center exercises fill this gap and otherwise augment the portfolio. Each candidate's work is examined by trained assessors who teach in the certificate field.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards believes that a valid assessment of accomplished practice must allow for the variety of forms sound practice takes. It must also sample the range of content knowledge that teachers possess and must provide appropriate contexts for assessments of teaching knowledge and skill. Teaching is not just about knowing things; it is about the use of knowledge—knowledge of learners and of learning, of schools and of subjects—in the service of helping students grow and develop. Consequently, NBPTS believes that the most valid teacher assessment processes engage candidates in the activities of teaching—activities that require the display and use of teaching knowledge and skill and that allow teachers the opportunity to explain and justify their actions.

In its assessment development work, NBPTS uses technology for assessment when appropriate; ensures broad representation of the diversity that exists within the profession; engages pertinent disciplinary and specialty associations at key points in the process; collaborates closely with appropriate state agencies, academic institutions, and independent research and education organizations; establishes procedures to detect and eliminate instances of external and internal bias with respect to age, gender, and racial and ethnic background of teacher-candidates; and selects the method exhibiting the least adverse impact when given a choice among equally valid assessments.

Once an assessment has been thoroughly tested and found to meet NBPTS requirements for validity, reliability, and fairness, eligible teachers may apply for National Board Certification. To be eligible, a teacher must hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution; have a minimum of three years' teaching experience at the early childhood, elementary school, middle school, or high school level; and have held a valid state teaching license for those three years or, where a license is not required, have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state.

Strengthening Teaching and Improving Learning

The National Board's system of standards and certification is commanding the respect of the profession and the public, thereby making a difference in how communities and policymakers view teachers, how teachers view themselves, and how teachers improve their practice throughout their careers. National Board Certification has yielded such results in part because it has forged a national consensus on the characteristics of accomplished teaching practice in each field. The traditional conversation about teacher competence has focused on beginning teachers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has helped broaden this conversation to span the entire career of teachers.

Developing standards of accomplished practice helps to elevate the teaching profession as the standards make public the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of accomplished teachers. However, making such standards the basis for National Board Certification promises much more. Since National Board Certification identifies accomplished teachers in a fair and trustworthy manner, it can offer career paths for teachers that will make use of their knowledge, wisdom, and expertise; give accomplished practitioners the opportunity to achieve greater status, authority, and compensation; and accelerate efforts to build more successful school organizations and structures.

By holding accomplished teachers to high and rigorous standards, National Board Certification encourages change along several key fronts:

- changing what it means to have a career in teaching by recognizing and rewarding accomplished teachers and by making it possible for teachers to advance in responsibility, status, and compensation without having to leave the classroom;
- changing the culture of teaching by accelerating growth in the knowledge base of teaching, by placing real value on professional judgment and accomplished practice in all its various manifestations, and by encouraging teachers to search for new knowledge and better practice through a steady regimen of collaboration and reflection with peers and others;
- changing the way schools are organized and managed by creating a vehicle that facilitates the establishment of unique teacher positions, providing accomplished teachers with greater authority and autonomy in making instructional decisions and greater responsibility for sharing their expertise to strengthen the practice of others;
- changing the nature of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development by laying a standards-based foundation for a fully articulated career development path that begins with prospective teachers and leads to accomplished teachers;
- changing the way school districts think about hiring and compensating teachers by encouraging administrators and school boards to reward excellence in teaching by seeking to hire accomplished teachers.

Although National Board Certification has been designed with the entire country in mind, each state and locality decides for itself how best to encourage teachers to achieve National Board Certification and how best to take advantage of the expertise of the National Board Certified Teachers in their midst. Across the country, legislation has been enacted that supports National Board Certification, including allocations of funds to pay for the certification fee for teachers, release time for candidates to work on their portfolios and prepare for the assessment center exercises, and salary supplements for teachers who achieve National Board Certification. Incentives for National Board Certification exist at the state or local level in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia.

As this support at the state and local levels suggests, National Board Certification is recognized throughout the nation as a rich professional development experience. Because National Board Certification provides states and localities with a way to structure teachers' roles and responsibilities more effectively and to allow schools to benefit from the wisdom of their strongest teachers, National Board Certification is a strong component of education reform in the United States.

Early childhood teachers have the unique opportunity to introduce young children to the challenges and rewards of learning in classroom settings. Each year, teachers in early intervention programs, childcare centers, and a variety of prekindergarten programs welcome three- and four-year-old children to the formal community of learners. Other early childhood professionals open the doors of kindergarten and primary-grade classrooms. They facilitate the child's transition from the private world of home and family to the more public world of formal education.

These professionals relish their roles as the orchestrators of a cohesive community of young learners. They take pride in their ability to create a productive, safe, and enriching environment in which children with often vastly differing backgrounds, abilities, and needs work together successfully. They work to help children gain the knowledge, skills, habits, and dispositions toward learning that are essential for later success in school and in life.

Accomplished early childhood teachers enjoy and appreciate young children. They love children's unbridled enthusiasm and curiosity and the excitement they bring to their explorations and to the new things they learn each day. They are engaged by the variety and diversity of their charges across many dimensions—including their talents, interests, and cultures. They welcome the challenge and responsibility of guiding young children through their ever-expanding and dynamic worlds. They apply what they know about how children grow and develop to create learning experiences that allow their children to use the resources around them and their own abilities as pathways to learning.

Accomplished early childhood teachers nurture children's experiments with language, sounds, and images as they build their expressive repertoires. They also encourage children to expand their worlds to include new friends and experiences and a whole range of never-before-experienced emotions and feelings. These range from pride in their ability to demonstrate a unique skill to wonder and surprise at new observations such as exploring a found bird's nest or a complex pattern in a picture.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are aware that children do not come to them as empty vessels—they have begun to make sense of the world long before they arrive at school. Their primary goal is to help children understand themselves and the world around them as they develop the skills and knowledge essential for thinking, problem solving, and expanding their sense of confidence in their abilities.

As generalists, early childhood teachers develop skills and knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. In doing so, they draw on a wide range of subject matter knowledge and pedagogy. This foundation allows them to meet the needs of young children who grow and develop at different rates and to respond effectively to groups of boys and girls who—while the same age—are at vastly different points in their development. Whether teaching three-year-olds in a child development center or eight-year-olds in the third grade, these teachers advance student understanding and respond to the capacity and interests of their children.

Today's early childhood teachers work with a rich *mélange* of eager learners from a wide range of backgrounds and a variety of experiences and personal challenges. They teach young children who are maturing, developing skills, and acquiring knowledge at different rates. Typically, this process occurs unevenly, rather than in a smoothly incremental fashion. Accomplished early childhood teachers are distinguished by their skill at recognizing and responding to the individual differences that children bring to the classroom. For example:

- Accomplished early childhood teachers create integrated curriculum to build on children's present knowledge and understandings and move them to more sophisticated and in-depth skills, knowledge, concepts, and performances. They calibrate their responses to children, designing learning experiences that fit the children's learning and developmental needs.
- Accomplished early childhood teachers employ a range of instructional strategies and resources to match the variety of children they teach and to provide each student with several ways of exploring important ideas, skills, and concepts. They understand how to work as facilitators, coaches, models, evaluators, managers, and advocates. They know how to use various forms of play; different strategies for grouping children; and different types of technology, media, and other instructional resources.
- Accomplished early childhood teachers observe and assess young children in the context of ongoing classroom life. They are skilled in collecting and interpreting a variety of evidence to evaluate where each child is in a sequence or continuum of learning and development. They know how to move from assessment to decisions about curriculum, social support, and teaching strategies to increase the prospects for successful learning and development.
- Accomplished early childhood teachers understand and respect the diverse cultures, values, languages, and family backgrounds of their class members, and they use community people and settings as resources for learning.
- Accomplished early childhood teachers involve parents and families as active partners in children's total development.

Like the conductor of a great orchestra, accomplished early childhood teachers make and execute dozens of complex decisions as they create the symphony that is their work with children. Each moment presents the opportunity for them to respond creatively to the unique challenges of classroom life. They analyze through formal and informal observations of individual children and of the overall environment and use their analyses to guide their judgments and responses. They reflect on their own performances—considering student progress, seeking the views of colleagues and parents, and thinking about current knowledge bases and options and the consequences of their choices.

While seeing to the needs of individuals, accomplished early childhood teachers also are responsible to the group. They can attend to the needs of each child while managing a sizable and active group enterprise. They make children feel special in the midst of a crowd, allowing them to experience the pleasure of being one of the group and making the group an enjoyable, harmonious place to be.

Increasingly, society is appreciating and research is documenting the complexity and significance of learning during the early childhood period. More resources than ever before are provided to preschool, child care, kindergarten, and primary-grade programs; and more healthy scrutiny is given to the quality of these environments and of those who work there. There is a growing recognition that high-quality early childhood teaching is vital to the educational development of all children, an awareness that erodes any misconception that young children are easier to teach than older children and therefore do not need the strongest teachers.

Developing High and Rigorous Standards for Accomplished Practice

In 1990, a committee of early childhood teachers and other educators with expertise in this field began the process of developing advanced professional standards for teachers of students ages three to eight. The Early Childhood/Generalist Standards Committee was charged with translating the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards into a standards document that defines outstanding teaching in this field.

In 2000, a committee comprising original committee members and a new group of educators (including National Board Certified Teachers) was convened to examine and update as necessary the published *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards*. This second edition of the standards is the result of the committee's deliberations at meetings and their input into working drafts of the standards.

This NBPTS Standards document describes in observable form what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The standards are meant to reflect the professional consensus at this point about the essential aspects of accomplished practice. The deliberations of the Early Childhood/Generalist Standards Committee were informed by various national and state initiatives on student and teacher standards that have been operating concurrently with the development of NBPTS Standards. As the understanding of teaching and learning continues to evolve over the next several years, *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards* will be updated again.

An essential tension of describing accomplished practice concerns the difference between the analysis and the practice of teaching. The former tends to fragment the profession into any number of discrete duties, such as designing learning activities, providing quality explanation, modeling, managing the classroom, and monitoring student progress. Teaching as it actually occurs, on the other hand, is a seamless activity.

Everything an accomplished teacher knows through study, research, and experience is brought to bear daily in the classroom through innumerable decisions that shape learning. Teaching frequently requires balancing the demands of several important educational goals. It depends on accurate observations of particular students and settings. And it is subject to revision on the basis of continuing developments in the classroom. The professional judgments that accomplished teachers make also reflect a certain improvisational artistry.

The paradox, then, is that any attempt to write standards that dissect what accomplished teachers know and are able to do will, to a certain extent, misrepresent the holistic nature of how teaching actually takes place. Nevertheless, the fact remains: Certain identifiable commonalities characterize the accomplished practice of teachers. The nine-standards that follow are designed to capture the craft, artistry, proficiency, and understandings—both deep and broad—that contribute to the complex work that is accomplished teaching.

The Standards Format

Accomplished teaching appears in many different forms, and it should be acknowledged at the outset that these specific standards are not the only way it could have been described. No linearity, atomization, or hierarchy is implied in this vision of accomplished teaching, nor is each standard of equal weight. Rather, the standards are presented as aspects of teaching that are analytically separable for the purposes of this standards document, but that are not discrete when they appear in practice.

The report follows a two-part format for each of the nine standards:

- I. **Standard Statement**—This is a succinct statement of one vital aspect of the practice of the accomplished Early Childhood/Generalist. Each standard is expressed in terms of observable teacher actions that have an impact on students.
- II. **Elaboration**—This passage provides a context for the standard, along with an explanation of what accomplished teachers need to know, value, and do if they are to fulfill the standard. The elaboration includes descriptions of teachers' dispositions toward young learners, their distinctive roles and responsibilities, and their stances on a range of ethical and intellectual issues that regularly confront them.

Early Childhood/Generalist STANDARDS

(for teachers of students ages 3–8)

Second Edition

OVERVIEW

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has organized the standards for accomplished Early Childhood/Generalist teachers into the following nine standards. The standards have been ordered to facilitate understanding, not to assign

priorities. They each describe an important facet of accomplished teaching; they often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of accomplished practice. These standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in this field.

I. Understanding Young Children (p. 7)

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their knowledge of child development and their relationships with children and families to understand children as individuals and to plan in response to their unique needs and potentials.

II. Equity, Fairness, and Diversity (p. 11)

Accomplished early childhood teachers model and teach behaviors appropriate in a diverse society by creating a safe, secure learning environment for all children; by showing appreciation of and respect for the individual differences and unique needs of each member of the learning community; and by empowering children to treat others with, and to expect from others, equity, fairness, and dignity.

III. Assessment (p. 15)

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize the strengths and weaknesses of multiple assessment methodologies and know how to use them effectively. Employing a variety of methods, they systematically observe, monitor, and document children's activities and behavior, analyzing, communicating, and using the information they glean to improve their work with children, parents, and others.

IV. Promoting Child Development and Learning (p. 19)

Accomplished early childhood teachers promote children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic development by organizing and orchestrating the environment in ways that best facilitate the development and learning of young children.

V. Knowledge of Integrated Curriculum (p. 29)

On the basis of their knowledge of how young children learn, of academic subjects, and of assessment, accomplished early childhood teachers design and implement developmentally appropriate learning experiences that integrate within and across the disciplines.

VI. Multiple Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning (p. 45)

Accomplished early childhood teachers use a variety of practices and resources to promote individual development, meaningful learning, and social cooperation.

VII. Family and Community Partnerships (p. 51)

Accomplished early childhood teachers work with and through families and communities to support children's learning and development.

VIII. Professional Partnerships (p. 55)

Accomplished early childhood teachers work as leaders and collaborators in the professional community to improve programs and practices for young children and their families.

IX. Reflective Practice (p. 59)

Accomplished early childhood teachers regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work.

The pages that follow provide elaborations of each standard that discuss the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits of mind that describe accomplished teaching in the field.

Standard I: Understanding Young Children

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their knowledge of child development and their relationships with children and families to understand children as individuals and to plan in response to their unique needs and potentials.

Accomplished early childhood teachers know how young children develop and learn. They know the culture, history, and values of the communities and families they serve, and they know the attributes of the individual children in their care. Their knowledge of young children in general, and of the children in their own class in particular, continues to grow as they spend time observing and learning from children.

This knowledge base serves them in many pursuits, including managing their classroom and planning their overall program and schedule in a fashion that will engage children's interests, evaluating and creating resources and experiences, and providing a context for assessing children's progress. Most of all, their knowledge of young children helps them interpret and understand the actions and responses of their children, and it fosters in them an appreciation of young children as unique individuals.

Accomplished Teachers Know How Young Children Grow and Develop

Accomplished early childhood teachers keep up-to-date in their knowledge of early childhood development, including advancements in cognitive science and other current research. They know that all children, including children with exceptional needs, arrive at their

first formal schooling as seasoned learners and explorers with a wide range of past experiences, some of which may have been positive and others negative. Teachers¹ understand that young children vary considerably, one from another, in the pattern and pace of their growth, thinking, language, approaches to learning, emotional competence, and social capacities because of individual differences, influences of home culture and language, and special learning and developmental challenges. They recognize when a child's pattern of growth or development varies significantly from what might be expected—such as when an unusual skill or ability is manifest or when an atypical struggle is needed to acquire a skill. They note such variations and ensure that the child has access to additional support.

Accomplished teachers understand the importance of creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for young children's development and learning. They understand the links among the patterns of physical development in young children, physical health, and successful experience in early childhood classrooms. They know the vital aspects of developing increased skill in using different senses for learning and in using large and small muscles in physical coordination. Teachers provide ample time in the daily schedule for children to engage in physical activity. For example, while working on a skill in mathematics, the children might sing or clap their hands, sort various objects, or engage in a variety of other experiences that afford them multiple ways to learn important mathematical ideas.

1. All references to teachers in this document, whether stated explicitly or not, refer to accomplished Early Childhood/Generalists.



Accomplished teachers understand that children develop cognitive abilities in different ways and at different rates. Some children learn best when they move their bodies. Others respond to music or to creating their own works of art. Still other young children express what they know by talking about learning experiences. Some children prefer logical mathematical representations to explain their understanding. Although social interaction is an essential learning vehicle for many during their early childhood years, some young learners prefer to work alone.

Accomplished teachers recognize the strengths of their children and encourage and provide ongoing opportunities for them to develop and use all their modalities for learning within the created and natural environments. They know that young children build understanding from concrete experiences. They know that children learn simple concepts and then build on these concepts to understand more complex ideas. They know that interacting with materials and with other people gives children the opportunity to interpret their experience in order to make sense of the world.

Accomplished early childhood teachers also recognize the importance of imagination in the development of young children. Through their imaginative lives, children gain a better understanding of the world and their place in it and thus gain confidence in their ability to function securely and with a sense of control. Creative expression and play nurture children's imaginative lives and help them organize their thinking and make sense of otherwise chaotic or confusing events. Therefore, accomplished teachers provide multiple opportunities for children to extend their imaginations through play, free exploration, guided discovery, creative dramatics, and other child-centered methods.

Accomplished teachers understand that children's ultimate academic success depends on their willingness to try new tasks, to put

forth persistent effort, and to believe that they can perform at high levels. Teachers realize that development occurs when children have meaningful opportunities to practice newly acquired skills that challenge the learner just beyond the level of present mastery. And, just as self-esteem contributes to academic performance, the reverse also is true. Children who work well in classrooms and experience tangible success view themselves as competent and valuable. Thus, teaching children to cooperate with adults and peers and to carry out classroom routines are important goals in the early primary grades. Accomplished teachers know how young children develop social and intellectual capacities, and they use that knowledge to establish the classroom environment and routines and to govern their personal interactions with children.

While attending to the overall management of the classroom, accomplished teachers seek to maximize opportunities to engage each child, thus building a cumulative picture of strengths and interests and of how each child speaks, reasons, and interacts socially. Teachers continually observe and listen to children, not principally to compare their performance with that of their peers or with grade-level objectives, but rather to understand the children as individuals and to inform their practice. (See Standard III—*Assessment*.)

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand that children's learning is shaped by language, culture, family, and community values, as well as by individual attributes and talent. These teachers are aware of cultural differences in social conventions, authority structures, and age-related expectations. They know that children's self-esteem and personal identity evolve from their place in their family and culture. They know that children are alert for cues that teachers respect, understand, and value them for the knowledge and social competence they have developed. Accomplished teachers therefore adapt their

Standard II: Equity, Fairness, and Diversity

Accomplished early childhood teachers model and teach behaviors appropriate in a diverse society by creating a safe, secure learning environment for all children; by showing appreciation of and respect for the individual differences and unique needs of each member of the learning community; and by empowering children to treat others with, and to expect from others, equity, fairness, and dignity.

All teachers must dedicate themselves to understanding and meeting the needs of heterogeneous populations as society becomes more culturally diverse. Accomplished teachers promote fairness and equity in their classrooms. They confront issues of diversity proactively to promote equity and to ensure that their children—regardless of race, nationality, ethnic group, primary spoken language, socioeconomic class, age, ability, exceptionalities, sexual orientation, family structure, or gender—receive equal opportunities to learn. They challenge children to advance. They actively and positively challenge prejudice, derogatory comments, and stereotypical perspectives.

Accomplished teachers know that the attitudes they manifest set powerful examples for young people, and they conscientiously demonstrate appropriate behaviors they wish to inculcate in their children. They maintain high expectations for all learners and challenge them to achieve their best. They select experiences and approaches to instruction that ensure equitable participation by both boys and girls. When young learners are given the opportunity to select experiences, accomplished teachers ensure that the choices available are varied and not gender-based.

Teachers establish a climate of fairness and respect in their classrooms. They create situations that allow young learners to demonstrate fairness and personal and social

responsibility. They provide opportunities for children to practice teamwork, cooperation, and effective communication—skills that will help them function effectively as citizens.

Accomplished Teachers View Exceptionalities as Strengths

Accomplished early childhood teachers are aware of the challenges involved in providing instruction to youngsters with exceptionalities. Using multiple forms of assessment, they understand how to modify curriculum and their instructional practices to meet the needs of all children. They model appropriate interactions in making certain that children with exceptionalities are involved in meaningful ways. Teachers see the inclusion of children with exceptionalities as a learning experience for other youngsters. They involve children with exceptionalities, and they advocate for them in and beyond the school setting.

Accomplished teachers are familiar with and comply fully with federal regulations such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and state and local policies concerning children with exceptionalities. They know that specialists and



support personnel have valuable insights into young learners' abilities and know how to facilitate learning. They willingly team with colleagues to address the needs of children with exceptionalities and to ensure that all children achieve success in their individualized education goals and objectives.

Accomplished Teachers View Diversity in Language and Culture as a Strength

Accomplished early childhood teachers view student diversity—including the physical, emotional, cultural, and intellectual variability of children—as an opportunity for a richer social and learning environment. They are articulate about their own culture, show curiosity about other people's history and beliefs, and are aware of their own responses to diversity. They are active in investigating and sharing the culture and history of their children and the school community. (See Standard VII—*Family and Community Partnerships*.) They seek out people, experiences, and other resources that will help them understand the strengths, accomplishments, and mores of children's families and neighborhoods and the history and values that form the context in which their children grow up.

Accomplished teachers create learning environments that embody high expectations and fairness for all children. They value and build on the diversity and richness of cultural groups, and they promote respect for others by modeling and teaching appreciation for the differences among children. They are sensitive to various family structures and cultural issues that affect children's attitudes toward school and others. They recognize and address relevant diversity issues affecting instruction, class management, and

student participation. They strive to educate themselves about their children's cultures and implement this knowledge to improve student learning.

Accomplished teachers show respect and appreciation for each child's cultural background and family structure. They seek to introduce children to the range of other cultures in their learning community and in the larger society. They know how to build connections among children's families, cultures, languages, communities, and schoolwork. By nurturing links to the child's background in positive ways, teachers create a more successful learning environment. They invite children to share their cultures and values and enrich the learning for all through their repertoire of songs, games, and stories. They build a classroom community that fosters curiosity and respect for other people's history, language, values, beliefs, family structures, cultures, and communities.

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand that group diversity may cause reactions ranging from curiosity to discomfort among children. They understand that their own values and style of speaking and interacting, as well as the public purposes of schooling, may be in conflict with some children's family cultures. For example, many early childhood teachers seek to foster children's abilities to make individual choices and to think independently. In some communities, however, most decisions are made by elders or by group consensus, and the valued attribute for children is conformity. Parents² in such communities may perceive children's efforts to express themselves and make choices as imposing on adult authority.

These concerns are recognized and addressed by accomplished early childhood teachers through discussions with parents, peers, and community members, without either relinquishing their important goals or being disrespectful to family or community members. They negotiate an alignment of

2. The word "parents" is used in this document to refer to the people who are the primary caregivers and guardians of children.

Standard III: Assessment

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize the strengths and weaknesses of multiple assessment methodologies and know how to use them effectively. Employing a variety of methods, they systematically observe, monitor, and document children's activities and behavior, analyzing, communicating, and using the information they glean to improve their work with children, parents, and others.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are systematic and insightful observers of young children at work and at play. Assessment is not a separate event in the classroom calendar; rather, it is a daily, ongoing, performance-based activity. Given the importance of understanding the developmental levels and diversity in learning of children, accomplished teachers use a variety of methods to assess growth, stability, and patterns in how children speak, interact with peers, represent, and carry out learning tasks. They are skilled in identifying and responding to classroom concerns, recognizing problems in social relationships, identifying unusual stress or excitement in children, and finding opportunities for new levels of learning. They use their observations to help children and parents understand and celebrate progress and to establish future goals.

Accomplished teachers employ systematic strategies to identify children's knowledge and emerging capacities. They establish a goal- or standards-based assessment cycle that is continuous and recursive in nature—assess, plan, implement, assess. This assessment cycle begins with the assessment of children for the purposes of planning and implementing instruction that will support and advance student learning. Accomplished teachers are committed to being accountable to the public for their practice, working with colleagues to promote public understanding of the aims and achievements of the schools.

Accomplished teachers involve parents and the children themselves in the process of

setting goals and assessing performance. They recognize that assessment is an ongoing process that begins with knowledge of the family and environment from which children come. Families' ideas and expectations are sought, considered, and addressed as the teacher determines curriculum.

Accomplished Teachers Use a Variety of Approaches for Assessing Children

Accomplished early childhood teachers assess all the goals of their practice, collecting and analyzing information on how children are growing cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally. In assessing learning, their concerns are not confined to children's levels of factual knowledge. Rather, accomplished teachers also record and analyze the following:

- the forms of children's responses;
- the processes that children employ in creating products, solving problems, and arriving at answers;
- children's patterns of persistence and curiosity and their ability to work with peers, adults, and a variety of resources.

Accomplished teachers process assessment data against several frames of reference:

- goals, standards, and desired outcomes for children's learning and development;



- the unfolding picture of the individual child as a learner and person, which sets a context for judging changes in skills, knowledge, concepts, dispositions, and behaviors;
- a map of typical stages and patterns of learning in young children;
- how children develop within the context of their peers, which provides insight in interpreting the information they collect.

Accordingly, accomplished teachers employ multiple systematic assessment strategies that establish, define, and prioritize instructional goals to address children's needs. They make appropriate adaptations and modifications, ensuring individualization and successful learning for all children. They assess children over time and in different settings, employing multiple methods and documentations such as the following:

- providing opportunities for children to self-assess and set goals, and helping them to understand how they learn;
- observing, questioning, and listening to find out what and how children are thinking;
- employing systematic procedures to document children's use of time, their social relationships, the modes of learning that seem particularly engaging to or productive for them, and their use of language;
- taking systematic samplings of children's activities and performance, including collecting examples of their writing, art work, audiotapes or oral reading, dictated stories, literature response logs, and records of participation in group projects;
- using standardized instruments, when they are appropriate, accurate, and an efficient part of a multistage assessment or diagnostic process.

Accomplished teachers encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning; to assess their own growth; and to develop skill in judging their own work, the work of their peers, and the work of others. Accomplished teachers provide a means to establish understanding of and set clear expectations for student performance. They routinely develop and encourage children to design sets of criteria against which to judge their work and monitor their own performances. They encourage and enable children to evaluate their work on the basis of these data and then set new goals.

Accomplished Teachers Use Assessment to Inform Teaching and Learning

Accomplished teachers employ a systematic approach to assessing children's learning and development. They use these assessment data as the starting point for informing their teaching practices. Accomplished teachers use assessment results as one important source of information for making decisions about organizing learning environments; selecting teaching and learning materials; creating instructional groups; selecting instructional goals and objectives; planning and implementing instruction; and communicating with children, parents, and other professionals.

Accomplished teachers also are skilled in noticing children whose growth and development are somehow unusual or outside the expected range. They can distinguish between children who should be referred for screening and assessment to identify those who might benefit from special resources and children whose learning and behavioral challenges are likely to be temporary or indicative of a need to

change classroom routines, learning experiences, or social supports. As advocates for appropriate assessments, they are effective team members in such assessment and planning procedures, contributing specific observations and insights from the child's classroom learning and behavior.

Accomplished teachers understand the major types of exceptionalities and the assessment strategies that address those needs. They also know how to involve parents in the assessment process, considering them equals in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs), using Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for transitional purposes, and monitoring and revising these plans. Accomplished teachers know how to implement the IEP by including its functional goals and objectives in their daily lesson plans and making modifications and adaptations as necessary. They take responsibility for communicating with other staff members who work with their youngsters and with the teachers their children will have during the next year, conveying documentation on their abilities, interests, and receptivity to different instructional strategies.

Accomplished teachers are well-informed about current assessment practices in the

early childhood years. They are cognizant of controversies regarding testing; the problems surrounding inappropriate design and use of test data (e.g., when such data are used as the sole determinant to retain young children in their current grade); and positive trends in the development of more comprehensive, meaningful, and constructive forms of observational and performance-based assessments for young children.

Accomplished teachers may find themselves in situations in which a program, school district, or state mandates tests that are flawed or that fail to reflect the full range of goals in learning and development. They do not allow such practices to exert a detrimental influence on their work with children. In addition, they work to advocate changes in assessment policy so that testing practices are aligned with effective instructional practices. They also communicate effectively with parents to explain the significance and limitations of test data.



Reflections on Standard III:

Standard IV: Promoting Child Development and Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers promote children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic development by organizing and orchestrating the environment in ways that best facilitate the development and learning of young children.

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their knowledge of child development and learning to create a safe, caring, inclusive, and intellectually engaging environment. They intentionally build with the children a dynamic classroom community that reflects ongoing changes. Such teachers carefully consider how to design and adjust the physical space to provide opportunities for movement and varied arrangements for group and individual experiences. They consider the social and emotional climate by creating an ambiance that fosters relationships that promote safety, encourages the participation of all children, and supports children as they take intellectual risks. Their schedule is flexible and responsive to the variety of needs present in an inclusive early childhood classroom. The teacher advocates for material and human resources that are appropriate to the children's needs.

Accomplished teachers use their knowledge of child development and observations about their own children to create challenging, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences. They understand that children build knowledge and understanding on prior experiences and concepts. They are skilled at connecting children's interests and responses with longer-term curricular and developmental goals. In their teaching, they use their knowledge of how young children learn. They use experience, technology, and hands-on material as the basis for developing concepts and understandings.

Teachers make adjustments throughout the year on the basis of their assessment of class members and knowledge of young children in general. They do this by adding new resources (e.g., people, materials, technology), creating new learning experiences, adjusting the schedule, building on the interests and questions of the children, and involving them in decision making about group experiences and problems. Teachers understand and orchestrate the classroom environment so that it teaches young children to learn by making choices and by interacting with resources, peers, and adults. They provide a variety of meaningful content experiences to enrich children's understanding and promote higher-level thinking and questioning to extend their learning.

Accomplished Teachers Understand the Central Role of Play in Child Development

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand the important role of play in all areas of children's development. They provide ample opportunities for various kinds of play within the school day. They understand the importance of play in helping young children develop thoughts and concepts while teaching problem solving,

exploration, investigation, cooperation, communication, and social skills. They understand how children use play to express their ideas and feelings and to make their first attempts at symbolic representation. They also understand how play can be an important vehicle for integrating and understanding content across the curriculum, as well as for helping children process other experiences they have had in their lives.

Accomplished teachers understand the process of play. They know that—as in any other activity—children need to “warm up.” They know that it often takes time for children to settle into productive play. They understand the ways that children move in and out of activities, for example, leaving the group that is acting out a medical emergency when the restaurant group seems more appealing. They also know that children come in and out of roles as they are playing, sometimes stopping in mid-sentence to make a pronouncement in their “real” persona.

Accomplished teachers understand that some children have a hard time gaining access to a group because of their gender, because they are culturally different from the group, because they are physically or emotionally challenged, because they have exceptionalities, because English is a new language, or because they are shy or are still developing socially. They know that some children may think that certain types of activities are for boys and others are for girls, and that some children may have had limited experience with any kind of play.

Teachers are attentive to the needs of children who reach levels of exuberance that may not be appropriate to the space or may be potentially harmful to themselves or others. They work to help all children gain access to play; manage play so that it stays within the boundaries of safety and reasonableness; and organize play so that it does not perpetuate or engender divisiveness or deteriorate into nonproductive, destructive, prejudicial, or

otherwise harmful behavior. They may play alongside children to help enrich and extend the play and to model the behaviors they want the children to learn.

Accomplished early childhood teachers also are aware of the role of play in social development. They understand how it can help children begin to deal with issues of justice and fairness. They know that conflict can occur in any play situation and that play provides opportunities for children to practice generosity, fairness, tolerance, understanding, and other key social-development traits. As they observe and play alongside their children, accomplished teachers take advantage of these opportunities to guide the development of social interactions and to help children understand and manage their own responses when the game has not gone the way they wanted or when they perceive that an injustice has occurred.

Accomplished teachers know about and value the different forms of play, including indoor and outdoor play, solitary and cooperative play, dramatic play, and directed and free play. They create an environment that stimulates discovery through these different varieties and combinations. They understand that play often presents opportunities to gain valuable knowledge—for example, when children engage in a counting game or decide which building blocks make a construction more stable. Teachers provide opportunities for older children to make sense of their world and new knowledge through manipulation of objects, role play, and dramatic play. Teachers provide a wide variety of materials and equipment for play, and they make safety a primary consideration in the selection and use of all materials.

Accomplished teachers are aware that children construct their own approaches to learning and conceptualizing with support from adults, other children, and environments. They understand the importance of providing a variety of materials, such as

sand, water, blocks, and other building materials, for open-ended play experiences, experiments, and problem-solving tasks. They key into children's interest in particular topics or themes, and they locate materials that might lend themselves to role-playing activities.

As keen observers of children as they play, accomplished teachers draw inferences from children's behavior and dialogue during play situations. Teachers understand the literal meaning of what they are watching, and they also are aware that children often use play metaphorically to act out a range of emotions and ideas. They are aware of the social dynamics of the playgroup, and—as they observe—may intervene strategically and appropriately to guide or encourage the play or to get caught up in the spirit of fun. Their interventions may extend a concept from an earlier lesson, facilitate the social development of a member of the group, or solve a problem. They also use their observations to gather information about the children and to inform their design of class activities.

Accomplished early childhood teachers act as advocates for play. They can explain their allocation of time for games, outdoor play, and child-initiated forms of activity to parents, colleagues, and administrators. They are articulate and effective in discussing with parents and community leaders such issues as opportunities for play and recreation in community settings; the influence of watching television, playing video games, and surfing the Internet on young children; the appropriate ages for children to engage in competitive team sports; and the provision of safe and well-equipped space for play outside of school and home.

Accomplished Teachers Promote Cognitive Development

Accomplished teachers plan and engage young children in activities that build upon their prior knowledge and experience. They help their young children develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions by constructing new knowledge, recognizing and developing strategies for learning, organizing, connecting, explaining, defending, and reflecting on experiences so that they can function successfully in and make sense of the world around them.

Accomplished teachers know that purposeful learning builds on practices that are appropriate for children of this age. They build on the curiosity, imagination, and creativity of young children to help them form concepts about a range of disciplines. They provide adequate time, rich resources, rigorous expectations, and adequate support for young children to construct complex ideas, recognize patterns, understand relationships, and establish connections within and among disciplines.

Accomplished teachers choose tasks built on the principles of inquiry. These investigations engage young children in making predictions, conducting experiments, and reaching and evaluating conclusions to make generalizations. Knowing and using these processes allow children to make responsible choices and decisions about their own learning. Teachers develop and use criteria for negotiating, making compromises, and valuing learning experiences. These investigations and explorations look different among the range of ages within early childhood.

Accomplished teachers model and teach communication as an essential skill by having young children pose and respond to questions to solve problems and to reason about and prove “theories.” Through discourse, young children listen to multiple perspectives and



reflect on, compare, contrast, and extend their own thinking to move from concrete to abstract thinking. Metacognition is within the reach of young children and is crucial to processing and making sense of information. It also helps children think deeply, flexibly, and incisively about their world and recognize their place in it.

Accomplished teachers of young children know and value the social aspects of the construction of knowledge. They solicit and build on the wisdom of the group. They expect and nurture respect. They recognize where young children are and know how to move them beyond their current level of performance. They thoughtfully plan so that children are challenged but not overwhelmed. They organize and orchestrate an environment in which young children build the confidence and competence that prepares them for a life of learning.

Accomplished Teachers Enhance Social Development and Social Skills

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand the importance of social development in early childhood education. They understand that social development is key to successful learning in groups and is a core component of success for adults in work, family, civic, and community contexts. They know that social interaction is essential to a child's linguistic and cognitive development. And, they know that children from ages three to eight typically make tremendous progress in their level of skills in this area.

Teachers understand their responsibility for establishing a climate that fosters learning and develops life skills, setting norms for social interaction and intervening to assist

children in resolving disputes and conflicts. They help children develop social knowledge about learning in groups, the behavioral expectations of peers and adults, and the need to adapt to classroom rules and routines as well as to the norms of society at large. In these ways, they begin to teach the early childhood social studies curriculum.

Accomplished teachers help move children from a primary concern about themselves to the ability to acknowledge the needs of others. They recognize that an important goal for many young children is to learn how to exercise self-control, particularly in their interactions with other children and in public settings such as the classroom. These teachers provide children with learning experiences and feedback that lead them to make choices that are appropriate in classroom settings and help them learn to manage themselves in social situations. They view social development as an important goal. They model, recognize, and encourage such virtues as honesty, fairness, and compassion. Whenever possible, they allow the children in their classrooms to participate in developing rules and guidelines for behavior and for settling their own disputes.

Accomplished teachers foster social responsibility by encouraging actions that support the common good as well as by helping students appreciate other points of view. They manage the teaching and learning environment by providing children with frequent opportunities to use such skills as initiating and sustaining interactions, working collaboratively with others, planning, sharing, taking turns, negotiating differences, exhibiting acceptance and appreciation, finding nonphysical ways to resolve conflicts, and making decisions.

Accomplished teachers appreciate the implications of instructional strategies for social relationships in the classroom. For example, they group children in a variety of ways. They change grouping patterns over

time and regularly provide opportunities for children to choose their own groups or partners. They also provide opportunities for children to experience individual success, thereby fostering independence and a sense of personal accomplishment. Such skills can be enhanced in many settings, including multiage and nongraded groupings. Teachers use various social arrangements to help children learn to appreciate their different ways of learning and understanding.

Accomplished teachers are alert to stereotypes and deficit images in written and visual materials; current events; and children's own play, language, and social interactions. They work to build respect for, appreciation for, and acceptance of different cultures, races, languages, genders, social classes, learning modalities, exceptional needs, and family types. (See Standard II—*Equity, Fairness, and Diversity*.) They do this, in part, by choosing their grouping practices, by locating and creating instructional materials and learning experiences that draw from different cultures, and—wherever possible—by including the community in school events. In this same vein, they are adept at engaging family and community members as learning resources.

Accomplished Teachers Support Children's Emotional Development and Self-Respect

Accomplished teachers work in a variety of ways to enhance children's self-respect and confidence. They seek to promote independence, risk taking, and persistence in their youngsters. They establish relationships with their children that allow them to observe their young learners closely and enable them to better understand the children's unique needs

and foster their emotional development. They observe how their youngsters feel about themselves, their work styles, and their place in the classroom community. Teachers recognize typical and atypical patterns of emotional development and regulation, and they promote positive behavior. They help children understand their own emotions and those of others and express themselves in healthy ways.

By responding to the interests and concerns of children instead of simply providing direction, accomplished teachers show respect for them. They balance the need to bring children into the social world with a respect for the privacy that each individual values. They use their understanding of child development to create learning experiences that are meaningful, challenging, attainable, and designed to foster children's natural desire to understand their environment and develop competence. They know that as children recognize their growing competence in various spheres, reinforcement of their self-worth usually follows. Teachers also select resources and learning experiences that promote positive images of different races, genders, religions, cultures, and languages, as well as individuals who are different or who have exceptional needs, as a way to enhance the self-respect of all children.

Accomplished early childhood teachers serve as models in their enthusiasm for and commitment to learning. They recognize their ability to encourage, support, and affirm children's work and their personal worth. They also understand that self-respect and self-esteem develop as children gain autonomy from adults by solving problems and coping with difficulties and setbacks. They appreciate individual differences in children's personalities and temperaments and in how children acquire and show self-confidence.

Providing a blend of challenges and support in learning tasks and in their personal responses to each student is a skill



of accomplished teachers. These teachers also are skilled at dealing with the consequences of traumatic events in the lives of individuals and their communities. They know how to work with children who, for example, exhibit anger or a lack of social skills. Rather than label these children, teachers use their knowledge and resources to determine how to best meet the needs of each child.

Accomplished teachers know when children need additional support to better manage their own feelings and behavior, and they are able to connect these children with the resources they need. When appropriate, they recommend alternative services that are in the best interest of the child and of others in the class. They know that very often, children who have difficulty with their peers and with adults need help in developing social skills that will enable them to contribute as members of a community. Teachers work to develop in their children empathy for others and the skills to effectively join a group.

Accomplished Teachers Foster Physical Health, Development, and Growth

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand the physical development and growth of young children. They create learning experiences and schedules that attend to the physical needs of young children for movement, rest, play, fine and gross motor development, health, and fitness. They draw on a repertoire of movement activities from dance and physical education to give children a wide range of experience with movement. They provide children with daily opportunities for outdoor play and activities to develop physical skills and learn about their environment.

Accomplished teachers help their children learn about health, nutrition, and safety through direct experience rather than admonitions, although they stand ready to warn children about activities and hazards in the immediate environment that might cause them harm. They provide younger children with opportunities to develop daily living skills in eating, dressing, hygiene, and toileting. They are alert to evidence of medical and physical conditions that may detract from a child's ability to learn (e.g., hearing or vision problems, illness, neglect, abuse, poor nutrition, dental problems, lack of sleep, indications of possible exceptionalities, or other health conditions).

They know that evidence of certain kinds of physical difficulties or limitations may indicate a more serious problem. They work effectively with other staff members—including nurses, physicians, nutritionists, therapists, social workers, psychologists, special education teachers, physical education teachers, dentists, coaches, and related professionals—as well as with parents, to help develop appropriate intervention strategies for children with such challenges. These teachers know that physical development is not addressed solely through separate physical education and health education periods and specialized staff experts. Rather, the entire schedule and range of learning experiences are designed to support health and physical development.

Accomplished Teachers Support the Development of Children's Language Acquisition

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that the acquisition of language skills is an essential developmental task of childhood.

They understand the language acquisition process and know the stages that children go through as they develop facility with language. They know that at this age, many children are in transition from the language that is used at home to the more formal language of society. They help children understand that language is a powerful tool that allows them to organize and express their views and questions about the world, demonstrate their growing expertise, and communicate with other people.

Teachers know that young children are at a particularly critical time in the acquisition and development of their language. They understand the special capacities for language development that children have at this age. They create learning experiences and a classroom environment that provide children with a variety of daily opportunities to use oral and written language to carry out, understand, and give meaning to activities and relationships. They treat dialogue among children and between children and adults as an especially important means to promote understanding.

The knowledge base of how children use language informs accomplished teachers' efforts to enrich further language development and helps them understand the ways children approach problems, their modes of understanding, and their stages of conceptual development. (See Standard V—*Knowledge of Integrated Curriculum*.) Teachers recognize that the development of early literacy skills—speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, and using multiple representations—is an important means of integrating learning that takes place in various subject areas and outside the classroom.

The classrooms of accomplished teachers are inclusive places where varieties of language are accepted and celebrated and where teachers model a variety of uses and means of oral, visual, and written language. Teachers are aware of the benefits and special challenges of helping children for

whom English is a new language to develop and maintain two or more languages. To the best of their ability, teachers encourage and promote literacy in the home language of these children as they advance their ability to communicate in English. Simultaneously, teachers move children toward an understanding of the role of Standard English in their future academic and economic success. Teachers also work with children who experience delayed language acquisition and children with communication disorders, helping them build their language skills and comprehension.

Accomplished Teachers Facilitate Positive Dispositions and Approaches toward Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand that every child comes to school with a vast amount of prior knowledge and experience and a desire to continue learning. They know that children come to them with a wide range of ideas and misconceptions about the things to which they have been exposed—both in the media and in their communities—and they know that children have a curiosity and an excitement about learning more. They see their role as continuing to foster this excitement by introducing children to a wider range of resources and opportunities for learning.

Accomplished teachers know the importance of motivation in the learning process, and they use a variety of means to encourage children to do their best. They know that ultimately, developing self-direction and finding the pursuit of knowledge intrinsically valuable are important goals. They offer children opportunities to exhibit and



enhance persistence, curiosity, willingness to take risks, and the ability to use peers and adults as resources. They know that children exhibit these attributes in different ways and at different levels in different tasks, times, and situations.

At the same time, accomplished teachers are keenly aware that not all children learn in the same way. All children employ multiple modalities of learning. However, some modalities are more central than others to individual children. All children benefit from a variety of learning experiences and resources that allow them to confront important ideas and concepts from several perspectives. Consequently, accomplished teachers create learning situations that maximize each child's unique approach to learning while also creating and maintaining an environment in which all participants feel safe to explore and discuss different approaches, responses, and understandings of tasks and activities. They also constantly observe what children do and the ways they do it. They listen to what children say to help determine what support their children need to continue developing and learning.

Accomplished teachers value and model thinking, discourse, and reading about ideas as worthwhile activities. They encourage children to explore phenomena, question the world around them, learn to solve problems in multiple ways, and share and test their explanations and interpretations with other youngsters. They let children know that they are respected as individuals. They help them

understand that it is natural and desirable for learners to differ in their ideas, opinions, and explanations. They also help children understand that many worthwhile questions do not have a single “right” answer. In the classrooms of accomplished teachers, children feel safe to venture opinions, to make mistakes and to learn from them, and to learn from the ideas of their peers. Teachers help young learners understand that confusion is natural, even for adults. They model inquiry, help children identify questions, and support their efforts to answer these questions.

The importance of creating a foundation for future learning during the early childhood years—not only in basic knowledge and skills, but also in children's habits of mind and attitudes toward the subjects they will be learning—is clearly understood by accomplished early childhood teachers. They give priority to helping children learn in a variety of ways, to understand concepts, to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, to appreciate different responses to a question, and to relate information across the boundaries of traditional disciplines and between the classroom and community settings. They provide many opportunities for children to explore concepts and problem-solving strategies through the scientific inquiry process, manipulative materials, and group discussions.



Reflections on Standard IV:

Standard V: Knowledge of Integrated Curriculum

On the basis of their knowledge of how young children learn, of academic subjects, and of assessment, accomplished early childhood teachers design and implement developmentally appropriate learning experiences that integrate within and across the disciplines.

Accomplished early childhood teaching melds knowledge and insights from child development with the structure of knowledge and concepts in the academic disciplines. Accomplished practice is neither exclusively child-centered nor driven solely by curriculum content. Rather, it is a rich and careful melding of both. Decisions about curriculum, resources, use of technology, and learning experiences are made for a variety of compelling reasons. These include promoting worthwhile knowledge and concepts (categorized within the academic disciplines), developing meaningful concepts and skills that cut across the disciplines, helping children apply their knowledge to issues that require an integrated approach, and making learning in schools personally relevant and captivating to children.

Integrated Curriculum

Curriculum integration involves the learning community in making natural connections. Accomplished teachers know that children learn and construct meaning by making multiple connections. Integrated curriculum may be developed and organized from a subject-matter topic such as plants, a key concept (big idea) such as change, or an essential question such as how climate affects living things. Throughout the year, to be authentic and not artificial, teachers may provide different degrees of integration. For

example, teachers may integrate two or more topics within a discipline, such as geometry and numbers in mathematics, or two or more disciplines, such as science, social studies, and language arts. At times, teachers may be able to connect all disciplines into a seamless learning experience.

Teachers draw on their broad understanding of the core academic subjects (literacy and English language arts; mathematics; science; social studies; the arts; and physical education, health, and safety) in planning and implementing integrative experiences. They know the key concepts, ideas, and facts that young children should understand in each subject area, the typical ways that children reason and talk about them, the kinds of naive theories that children develop about the world around them, and the difficulties that children are likely to encounter as they explore new terrain. They also are familiar with the different routes and stages of children's progress in developing skills, knowledge, dispositions, and understandings.

Accomplished teachers who work with children at the earliest ages employ a considerable amount of integrated teaching in their practice. In fact, an observer in many of their classrooms might be hard pressed to identify the lines between a literature lesson, a science lesson, and an art project. Such teachers are adept at creating projects and learning experiences that foster the joining of skills and knowledge from multiple disciplines. They understand that many issues that young children find fascinating do not fall easily into

distinct disciplinary boxes, nor do young children naturally think in terms of disciplines. Although accomplished teachers integrate across disciplines, they retain a focus on standards and the rigor, breadth, and depth of the individual subject areas.

The Content Disciplines

Teachers working with the oldest children at this developmental level may find themselves in departmentalized programs in which such disciplinary distinctions may seem more apparent. Regardless of their teaching assignment or the way their instruction is organized, accomplished early childhood teachers have a strong grasp of the disciplinary knowledge that is the basis for their teaching. The disciplines inform the work of the teacher in supporting children's learning interests and needs.

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their knowledge of the disciplines to make a variety of decisions and judgments: distinguishing between powerful core ideas and topics and those of lesser importance, setting ambitious but reasonable expectations for student learning, and sequencing learning experiences in ways that make sense conceptually. They work with other staff in planning curriculum; judging the quality of resources and activities; and creating themes and projects across subject areas that interest children and encourage them to develop and apply knowledge, skills, and ideas to real-world problems. They are familiar with the student and teacher standards for each field they teach.

Accomplished teachers demonstrate a purpose, create relevance, and model enthusiasm for the content areas. They also seek to support children's enthusiasm, wonder, and curiosity about the world and to increase their understanding of it. The following sections focus on the domains of subject-matter

knowledge. They consider the major ideas, concepts, themes, and topics that Early Childhood/Generalists draw on as they create learning experiences for their youngsters.

Literacy and English Language Arts

Accomplished early childhood teachers are conversant in the major theories, knowledge bases, and controversies about the teaching of reading and writing and the nature of literacy. They create language arts programs that promote the skills of the interrelated and mutually reinforcing areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing. They promote daily print and oral experiences. They also use visual representations, such as graphic organizers, graphs, charts, illustrations, photographs, and available technologies, to foster critical and creative thinking through the use of language. They draw on their knowledge of the key challenges and typical processes in the initial development of these skills and capacities. They also have a broad understanding of the differences in language development and reading development and of the ways these differences shape a model for teaching language arts.

A clear understanding of how children acquire a second language enables the accomplished teacher to support the learning of children for whom English is a new language. They use this knowledge base to design appropriate learning experiences for children of different ages and with different levels of literacy in their first language, and they can explain their teaching strategies to parents, administrators, and colleagues.

Accomplished teachers also recognize that skilled reading involves the integration of interacting systems of knowledge, including complex schemata, such as story structure, and more discrete knowledge, such as letter recognition. They know that readers use multiple cueing systems (e.g., meaning,

syntactical, visual) as they recognize words. They know that comprehension processes are guided by strategies that may be fostered among children through a thoughtful discussion of books. They understand that literacy also extends throughout the curriculum by building on oral language skills, including the ability to reflect on language, the development of a rich oral vocabulary, and the ability to communicate and understand complex thoughts through spoken language.

Recognizing the professional debates and current knowledge about reading and language arts instruction, accomplished early childhood teachers strive to introduce children to the power of literacy and all genres of literature while ensuring that all children acquire the requisite foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for reading success in all disciplines. Thus, they provide children with the instruction they need to attend to and understand patterns of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, semantics, and syntax, while also providing a rich and varied range of experiences with spoken and written language that are necessary for literacy development.

Accomplished early childhood teachers create a rich environment for literacy learning, using language and stimulating stories based on their thorough knowledge of both classical and contemporary children's literature; they connect these stories with things children already know and about which they are curious. They make ample use of print in the classroom, providing for children a rich and stimulating environment with labels, signs, expressions, and words. In all classroom settings, including those where children's home languages are not English, teachers build on the previous linguistic experience of their children. They organize their instruction in ways that take advantage of children's prior literacy experiences, and they promote and encourage the ongoing development of language and literacy in English as well as in

the language spoken in the home and community. They encourage children to read at home; help them learn how to use the library; and, in general, put them on a course to enjoy reading and recognize its value in their lives.

They help children talk and write to express their ideas and feelings and communicate with other people. They help them read to clarify their ideas and learn from other people in their classroom, their community, and the larger world. They create a variety of meaningful literacy experiences that may include writing learning logs; keeping diaries about solving problems in mathematics or science; having conversations and discussions; keeping various types of journals; corresponding with other people; and using signs, labels, charts, and lists in the classroom. Teachers use technology, as appropriate, to facilitate these learning experiences. They encourage play with words and sounds through such means as rhymes, chants, and songs. They demonstrate the importance of oral traditions to all cultures through the teaching of fables, folktales, folk songs, and legends. They also use their knowledge of oral language and literacy development during these learning experiences to identify children who may benefit from screening and assessment by a specialist.

Accomplished teachers encourage a variety of forms of language and expression and multiple purposes of communication. They show their own enjoyment of and involvement in writing, literature, and conversation through reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing. They develop children's appreciation of literature and learning through books by regularly exposing them to different genres of children's literature, to literature from various cultures, and to good books of all kinds. They read regularly to the children in their class and the children read to each other, both to build enjoyment in reading and to model skills in comprehension and analysis. Teachers read to



children individually and in groups, stimulating thinking about texts by asking questions before, during, and after reading. They provide multiple opportunities for children to read on their own and to apply comprehension strategies.

Accomplished teachers understand the importance of providing children with ample opportunities to select their own discussion topics and materials for reading, writing, viewing, and visually representing from a rich array of resources so that they may continue to grow and mature in these areas. They encourage children to discuss their thoughts and ideas about stories, the things they are learning in school, and their own experiences. Such strategies are especially important for children who come from homes where the literary environment is modest at best. They also provide opportunities for children to engage in critical and creative analysis of what they are reading.

Teachers recognize the importance of social interaction in the development of strong language and literacy skills, and they provide ongoing opportunities and facilitate interaction in this area for their youngsters. They have children dictate individual and group stories, which are written and then read aloud so that they understand the connection between what is said and what is written. They use this activity to help children begin to adapt these stories by following the conventions of written language. Teachers also view dramatic play—spontaneous pretending, dramatization of their own and other people's stories, reenactment of literature—as an important way to support reading, writing, viewing, listening, speaking, and visually representing skills.

Accomplished teachers develop the process of writing, using oral language as the starting point and encouraging children to capture their ideas on paper in the form of drawings, scribbles, letters, and labels, which through the purposeful scaffolding of

instruction eventually mature into more complete written text. They understand the characteristics of emergent writing, including developmental spelling and the lack of conventional mechanics. They know that developmental spelling reflects children's efforts to communicate using print and that it is a powerful means for acquiring insight into children's literacy and linguistic growth. Therefore, they focus on responding to the nature of the content and ideas produced by their youngsters.

They know that children acquire skills at their own pace, and they constantly monitor skill development to assist children at critical stages. As their children's experiences as writers and readers grow, accomplished teachers are further able to develop in them an understanding of the importance and proper use of conventions. They do not ignore the conventions of grammar and spelling, but rather provide instruction in these areas as it becomes appropriate for each child.

Students of accomplished teachers are encouraged to write and illustrate their own stories, poems, letters, books, and reports at progressive levels of skill and complexity. They write about experiences in and outside of school and come to see the power of permanently committing their ideas to writing. Teachers work with children to develop their metalinguistic knowledge, helping them understand the learning strategies they are being taught and when and why to use a particular form of language.

Accomplished early childhood teachers employ Standard English in their writing, oral reading, questioning, and discussions with their children. They accept and value children's unique modes of expression and distinctive dialects as they guide them toward conventional spelling, speaking, and writing. They recognize that mastery of the conventions of workplace language is a key to future economic success. Therefore, they work with children to help them make

choices as to which language to use in which circumstance.

Teachers understand the issues that arise when Standard English is not the language a child speaks on a regular basis. They know that language development is tied to culture, and they are careful to take into consideration such factors as the way learning and literacy are valued in the home and the effect that may have on children. An understanding of the home cultures and language of each child allows teachers to adapt their program in ways that increase the prospects for success and maintain high expectations for all children.

Accomplished early childhood teachers also recognize that each of us speaks what is, in effect, a personal dialect that reflects our particular regional upbringing, ethnicity, occupation, age, and socioeconomic class. They celebrate the diversity of language forms in the United States, but they also understand that having a shared form of English facilitates communication across societal divisions. They provide models of Standard English for the children in their classrooms. They encourage youngsters to practice and incorporate it into their own communication and to know when its use is especially important.

Accomplished teachers use their knowledge of the typical stages of language and literacy development to assess children's responses. However, they do not simply measure the quantity of children's reading, speaking, listening, writing, viewing, and visually representing as evidence of skill and thoughtfulness. Rather, they employ a process, noticing and recording what children have to say and how they use language as well as the strategies that children employ to make sense of reading, writing, and oral language. They then work to build connections between children's present level of knowledge and more sophisticated levels of performance. Accomplished teachers also are adept at offering suggestions to children

about how they can improve their learning. They do so without hindering the growth of children's expressive abilities, diminishing the importance of their family's primary language, or dampening their desire to continue learning. (See Standard III—*Assessment*.)

Literacy and English language arts are evident and easily integrated into the other disciplines. For example, in mathematics, a children's book may provide a context for the math lesson; journal writing or drawing encourages children to communicate their mathematical thinking. Teachers ensure that students make the reading-writing connection across the curriculum.

Mathematics

Accomplished early childhood teachers know how children develop mathematical understanding. They know that they must use the knowledge and language of mathematics in designing and selecting resources, choosing teaching and assessment methods, and framing discussions and responses to individual children. They observe, listen to, and document the mathematical knowledge and skills that young children demonstrate in order to plan instructional experiences built on children's knowledge and abilities. Their aim is to build children's interest in, understanding of, enjoyment of, and curiosity about mathematics in their world to develop the desire and capacity to use mathematical concepts in meaningful ways.

Teaching strategies are explained by the accomplished teacher in terms of the structure of mathematical concepts, knowledge, processes, and ideas that define number and number systems, geometry and spatial sense, measurement, data and probability, and algebra (i.e., the pattern, relationship, and functions of numbers). They draw on this knowledge and their understanding of the curriculum to plan learning experiences that

deepen children's understanding of and positive disposition toward mathematics. Their goal is for young children to develop their ability to apply mathematics to everyday problems in purposeful ways.

Accomplished teachers know the major concepts, procedures, processes, and ideas of mathematics that define number systems and number sense, and they know how to form introductory lessons that develop strong mathematical foundations. They represent numbers in multiple ways. They provide experiences in which young children investigate number relationships using a variety of tools. These include objects, mental computation, estimation, paper and pencil, and calculators.

Accomplished teachers use geometry to help their children investigate and describe their surroundings. They provide opportunities for drawing, building, and analyzing two- and three-dimensional shapes. They provide opportunities for children to investigate symmetry of objects and transformations (e.g., slides, flips, and turns). While working with shapes, they further develop concepts of distance, size, location, and spatial sense.

Teachers use measurement to help children compare and order objects in their surroundings. They provide experiences for children to use tools to become familiar with the attributes of measurement, including standard and nonstandard units.

Accomplished teachers engage children in using mathematics to answer questions for which the answers are not immediate. They help children pose questions about themselves and their surroundings and collect and organize data to answer the questions. They help children interpret data, identifying trends, patterns, and relationships while using objects, pictures, or graphs.

They help young children develop algebraic thinking through sorting, classifying,

and describing objects by properties. They understand that recognizing, describing, and creating patterns also are important foundations for algebraic thinking. They provide children with experiences in which they model and make symbolic notations by using concrete objects, pictures, words, and symbols. Accomplished teachers create experiences that lead children to understand the relationships among numbers and to make appropriate generalizations.

Accomplished teachers' knowledge of mathematics and the interrelatedness of mathematical structures helps them select and create a variety of resources and learning experiences—including appropriate technological tools (e.g., calculators and computer environments), manipulative materials, textbooks, newspapers, puzzles, charts, and games for counting, recognizing patterns, and using numerical, geometrical, and spatial relationships. They view technology as a tool for children to use to explore mathematical ideas, develop concepts, focus on problem-solving processes, and investigate realistic applications.

Accomplished teachers help children employ mathematics as a way to explore and solve problems in their environment at home and at school. Their mathematics curriculum begins with and builds on children's intuitive insights and language. This curriculum helps children develop the competence and confidence to view themselves as mathematical learners and users.

Accomplished teachers give children many opportunities to construct their own concepts and understandings of mathematics by working with different problems, games, and situations. The goals are for young children to think and reason mathematically, to communicate multiple ways to approach and solve problems, and to connect ideas within the field of mathematics to make accurate generalizations about mathematics. Children

learn to use objects, calculators, computers, charts, graphs, and other representations to understand and express ideas and present problems and solutions in multiple ways.

Accomplished teachers make use of opportunities to apply mathematics to everyday situations—for example, helping children discover the geometric patterns on a leaf during a nature walk. Children learn to look for and recognize patterns as a way to form concepts, recognize connections, and make sense of problems. Teachers use mathematics during routine experiences, including field trips, science experiments, literature engagements, cooking and snack times, sports, role playing, and games. They show children how they can use mathematics to solve problems, to symbolize phenomena and relationships, and to communicate. They encourage children to work together, exchanging ideas and strategies and learning to appreciate and use different approaches to problems.

Accomplished teachers ask questions frequently to clarify how children perceive problems, develop strategies, and understand different approaches to reasoning and thinking in mathematics. They help children generate their own questions, propose their own solutions to problems, and prepare to explain and defend their responses. Teachers stress conceptual understanding, fluency, and accuracy in solving problems instead of focusing exclusively on memorization or speed. They emphasize increasing children's confidence in their ability to think and communicate mathematically, to solve problems, to make appropriate decisions in selecting strategies and techniques, to recognize familiar structure in unfamiliar settings, to detect patterns, and to analyze data.

Teachers integrate mathematics where it fits naturally with subject areas across their curriculum. For example, in science, children might measure plant height, then make a graph to show plant growth over time. As with

all subjects, accomplished teachers know their math curriculum and its relationship to the curriculum of the entire school. They continually build on students' prior knowledge to provide a solid foundation and smooth continuum of knowledge and skills throughout the grades.

Science

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize that young children come to school abounding with natural curiosity about the world and how it works. They know that they can build on children's ability to use their senses to acquire information by examining, exploring, comparing, classifying, describing, and asking questions about materials and events in their environment. As children grow, they learn more focused, expanded, and systematic ways to explore their world.

Accomplished teachers also know that attitudes and dispositions toward science form at an early age. They know that the foundation must be laid in the early school years for equal opportunity for females, males, and members of low-income communities to engage science as a means to better understand, explain, and enjoy the natural world as well as to follow career paths in the sciences. They constantly look at knowledge bases, technology, and new methods to provide children with current knowledge and themes. They realize that science is everywhere and that it can be integrated into the curriculum in a variety of ways. They provide sufficient time to develop a deep understanding of essential scientific ideas rather than a superficial acquaintance with many isolated facts. They show a love for science and generate in children curiosity and wonder about the world around them.

The importance of having ongoing exploration, investigation, and inquiry in science is clearly understood by accomplished



teachers. They understand that children need to be able to explore, construct knowledge, and reflect on science experiences.

Accomplished teachers are familiar with the major concepts of the earth, life, and physical sciences that form the basis of theories and concepts that explain how the world works. They understand the nature of scientific inquiry and the ways in which the scientific community works to test theories and build knowledge over time. They are familiar with how scientific knowledge is applied in various careers, in inventions and technology, and in addressing a variety of social issues. This knowledge base helps them create engaging and useful projects and introduce children to major areas of knowledge and ideas in science.

They understand that hands-on, minds-on exploration of materials and phenomena is the cornerstone of science learning for young children. They help children test their own questions and ideas about phenomena and materials in their environment. They introduce them to methods of investigation that include predicting, observing, gathering, and analyzing data and inferring and generalizing toward their own hypotheses. They help children pursue multiple paths to investigate a problem, become aware of the scientific nature of their questions, and raise new questions. As a rule, accomplished teachers facilitate children's open exploration of important ideas and concepts while reinforcing the scientific frame of mind they bring to their discoveries.

Accomplished teachers know that young children typically have roughly formed ideas and a variety of naive misconceptions about how the natural and constructed worlds work. Teachers design learning experiences that will help children build their knowledge and understanding of science and uncover for themselves the counterintuitive nature of many scientific principles. They incorporate a variety of experiences from each of the three major categories of science. They realize the importance of safety, environment,

and conservation. They understand the scientific method and provide experiences in which the children can explore the scientific method and document what they observe.

Teachers encourage science projects and field experiences that involve community and family (e.g., bug collections, science fairs). They understand how systems, cycles, patterns, change, and cause and effect all play an important part in the science curriculum. They realize that children need to have time to explore on their own as well as in group settings.

Accomplished teachers value the thinking processes behind children's naive conceptions and use them as they design learning experiences that may help children uncover explanations that are closer to scientific reality. Teachers recognize that children will evaluate their own ideas in their own ways as their experiences with a range of phenomena and materials grow. Teachers know the value in this type of development, and to encourage it, they expose students to a variety of experiences and observations.

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that children learn best by working with concrete materials, employing all their senses, and discussing their ideas. Therefore, they help children do science rather than only read about it. They design projects, field experiences, and experiments that involve children as investigators. They allow children to build on their own intuitive explanations of how the world works. They set up a rich array of open-ended learning experiences so children can work with them in a variety of ways, guided by their interests and questions.

They encourage children to talk about their experiences and ideas to engage their minds rather than to simply execute cookbook experiments. They understand that discussions can transform a class from a collection of individuals into a community of learners sharing their interpretations of the natural world with their peers. Such experiences help children reform and refine their

theories and explanations—to learn how to think through their ideas, to pose additional questions, and to reconsider their ideas on the basis of others' views.

Accomplished teachers extend projects to connect a series of science experiences often based on unique local circumstances. They expose children to an array of tools—including appropriate technology—that they can use to generate and find answers to questions.

Teaching science to young children is integrated with other aspects of the curriculum, such as using mathematics, exploring technology, deciphering history, learning about physical health and development, and acquiring language arts skills. Accomplished teachers often stock the classroom with science materials, books, and objects of exploration; read books about science at story time; and provide science-related literature during free-choice reading time. Children often work together to generate language experience charts and whole-class journals, individual reports, data sheets, and charts. They may even publish individual and whole-class books and newspapers about their experiences in learning science.

Social Studies

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that all children bring to school a range of experiences from their families, homes, neighborhoods, and communities. They recognize that most children have had experiences with siblings or neighbors, most have accompanied parents on errands around town, and most have played some part in an important family event or celebration. Children with recent immigrant experience, children who are members of cultural minority groups, or children for whom English is a new language also have stories and insights that are unique. Accomplished teachers use these experiences and the environment of their classrooms or centers to help children begin to understand social studies concepts

and to develop the dispositions toward social studies learning that will ensure success as their studies progress.

Teachers recognize that children are aware of many of the most visible events featured in the news media or in home discussions. Teachers take advantage of this natural background and curiosity and their own knowledge base in economics, government, geography, and history to introduce children to the ways social science looks at issues and events. They also begin to introduce their youngsters to the different languages, beliefs, and cultural norms of other nations and societies.

Accomplished teachers know that for young children, the social studies fundamentally begin with questioning who one is and what one's place is in the world. They understand the natural fascination that young children have with things that are exotic or different. The diversity within many classrooms provides a starting point for children to begin to understand and value the many distinct cultures of the nation and the world. Accomplished teachers take advantage of this opportunity as one of many starting points in their social studies program.

They know the importance of developing in children the capacity to learn cooperatively with others who may come from different backgrounds. They also know that achieving this competency may take time and some assistance from the teacher. They anticipate and know how to respond to children's questions and views about racial, physical, cognitive, economic, cultural, and language differences in people they encounter.

Accomplished teachers use their grounding in geography to build spatial vocabulary as they orient children to the classroom and the way it changes over time. They use literature studies, art lessons, and field trips to help children learn aspects of physical geography that may not be present in their own immediate environments. As children mature, they begin to create their own maps and other

representations of their classrooms, homes, and neighborhoods. Accomplished teachers help children understand more formal concepts about the spatial organization of the world and its places and regions and how people interact with the earth.

Accomplished teachers use civics and government to help children understand that in their learning communities—just as in their homes—there are rules, rights, and responsibilities that allow the classroom to run smoothly. In their classrooms, children create and interpret the classroom codes of conduct.

Young children may be aware of and concerned about problems in their neighborhoods or issues they have learned about from various media. Accomplished teachers help them begin to understand the role that government and its institutions play in addressing such problems, and especially the work of such agencies as the fire and police departments.

As children get older, accomplished teachers are able to help them understand the broader context of civics and government. They help children learn about what government is and the way it works and how, as participants, they can act as agents of change. Teachers help children understand the basic values and principles of democracy and how a constitutional government embodies these purposes, values, and principles. They help children begin to understand the relationship of the United States to other nations in the world and to envision their role as citizens.

In the area of economics, accomplished teachers may use play money as a means not only to help children master concepts from mathematics but also to introduce ideas about how the marketplace works. Teachers have knowledge of the fundamental concepts in economics, particularly those that young children can understand, and they help children differentiate between needs and wants in their home, school, and

community. Their classrooms may have a store in the play area that is amply supplied with play money, products, and other props that allow children to explore careers they have observed in their communities.

Accomplished teachers use the scenarios that children create as opportunities to extend learning about supply and demand and other economic concepts. Although some economic concepts are too complex for even the oldest children in this age range, accomplished teachers know that children are consumers from an early age; they have a keen interest in such issues as scarcity and resource allocation. Accomplished teachers find opportunities to incorporate such learning in their curriculum. For example, they might involve children in a project to determine the amount of food a guinea pig needs each month and then determine how to raise the money to purchase it.

All children come to the classroom with stories to tell, and accomplished teachers know that these stories are the groundwork for historical understanding. Accomplished teachers are knowledgeable about the major ideas, concepts, events, and processes in United States and world history. They use children's own stories as a way to begin the chronological thinking that is essential to historical thinking.

Accomplished teachers use a rich, multicultural array of children's resources—including technology—to introduce youngsters to important figures and events from history, as well as to illustrate lessons about social development, ethics, and democracy. They design lessons around the classroom calendar to enhance children's understanding of time, order, and sequence; they use national holidays, holidays in other countries, or other special celebrations and memorials to create a starting point for children's historical learning.

In addition to chronological thinking, accomplished teachers begin to work with

children on historical comprehension. They might help students draw upon data in photographs and other visual images, for example. They start children on the road to historical interpretation, using literature as an opportunity to show how the same story can be told in several different ways. They help children understand the differences between fact and fiction and the important role that perspective plays in historical understanding.

They help children begin to answer their own historical questions and to think analytically. For example, they might allow a child to suggest his or her own solution to a problem confronted by a national leader. In addition to helping older children learn about their own families and communities, teachers also help them understand the history of their state, region, and country and see how that history compares with and is influenced by the history and culture of other nations.

Accomplished teachers build important skills and understandings in these fields in an environment that affords respect to the communities of all their children. They are adept at addressing the issues that arise as some youngsters have their first experiences with peers and adults who are different from themselves.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are skilled at incorporating social studies ideas across the curriculum. They know, for example, that understanding the world and its history provides them with an opportunity to employ legends and mythology from world cultures in their teaching. The goals of history and the social studies—promoting social development, social understanding, democratic ideals, and civic values—lend themselves well to the early learning goals of helping children develop cooperative relationships and the mutual respect of their peers.

The Arts

The arts—visual arts, dance, music, and drama—are an integral part of the early childhood curriculum. Accomplished teachers have a broad background in the arts that allows them to design learning experiences that are appropriate and enriching for young children. They are skilled at integrating the arts into all areas of the school curriculum. They give their children opportunities to create art, to look at and talk about art, and to develop an awareness of the arts in their everyday lives.

Teachers allow children to understand and experiment with various sources of inspiration for their work and to come up with their own ideas for expression and for understanding and using a variety of materials. They know the kinds of tools, materials, and processes—including appropriate technology—that are particularly useful and that young children can manipulate, and they help children learn to select, control, and experiment with a variety of media that help them facilitate their own expression.

They expose children to a variety of visual art forms and help them begin to identify their preferences and discuss the similarities and differences of various pieces. They help children understand that there are many different aesthetic approaches and responses to art. They explain that some viewers may consider a particular work of art beautiful, whereas others may find the same work unsettling or thought provoking. They use examples from a variety of cultures to help expand children's understanding of different approaches to beauty and aesthetic expression. They help children appreciate the forms of beauty in the world around them and begin to manipulate their own aesthetic environments.

Young children are at a time in their physical development when coming to understand the functioning of their growing bodies is of



particular importance. Many are able to acquire significant understanding of the world around them by the way they move through it. Dance and other forms of structured and creative movement are a particularly important part of the early childhood arts curriculum, and these activities allow teachers to capitalize on children's capacities and need to move in order to progress toward a number of goals. Accomplished teachers bring a repertoire of movement techniques and experiences to their curriculum; they provide the time, place, and appropriate supervision to execute them.

Music is a central component in the lives of almost all children, and accomplished teachers make use of it in their teaching in a variety of ways. They introduce children to music and help them appreciate different musical forms and styles. In addition to helping children broaden their perceptions of the variety of music that abounds in the world, teachers use music to enhance the study of other cultures and forms of expression.

Accomplished teachers begin to build in children a basic vocabulary for talking about music. They introduce such concepts as rhythm, melody, and tone and help children discriminate differences in pitch, beat, and volume. They also provide opportunities for children to express themselves through music, through songs, and through the playing of simple instruments. They recognize how performing music enables forms of emotional expression that may not be available in others parts of children's lives. Accomplished teachers also see music as a useful tool for extending other parts of children's learning—for example, using rhythm patterns to enhance a counting lesson or providing for unique wordplay that supports learning in English language arts.

Drama, or dramatic play, is one of the primary ways young children learn about life. It is through pretend play or dramatization—creating situations, assuming roles,

interacting with peers, arranging the environment, directing the course of the action, responding to each other, and solving problems—that children make sense of their world. Accomplished teachers encourage students in their selection of characters, settings, and situations by providing opportunities, meaningful experiences, stories, and props that extend play, develop imagination, and encourage creativity. They guide older children in their ability to identify and compare similar characters, settings, and situations in stories and dramatizations. (See also the “Role of Play” section of Standard IV—*Promoting Child Development and Learning*.)

Teachers show their own enjoyment and participation in the arts by creating, responding to, questioning, and discussing various forms of the arts. They use artistic materials and experiences as catalysts for talking and thinking with their children about important and interesting questions and phenomena.

Accomplished teachers recognize that confidence building is an important aspect of artistic development. They provide learning experiences that give children an opportunity to play as they practice a given artistic activity. They use the arts to help children express and understand knowledge and ideas in other disciplines (e.g., representational drawing and modeling in science or museum displays and dramatizations in literature or current events). They promote children's knowledge of various criteria for evaluating the arts, and they enable children to begin to understand how the arts represent ways to perceive and interpret the world.

Physical Education, Health, and Safety

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that the development of the whole child is very important. They understand that the development of motor skills, healthy living habits, and

safety awareness is an essential part of the growth process. They know that physical fitness and good health support children's progress in all areas of the curriculum.

Accomplished teachers realize that children must try out their body parts to understand what they can do with their body. They provide experiences that help children practice fine and gross motor skills and develop body control, coordination, and balance. They provide experiences that help children develop a sense of spatial orientation. Accomplished teachers understand the typical progression of such skills. They recognize that children have different needs and limitations and that no two children are at the same level of physical development at the same time. They accept children as they are and give them the experiences and opportunities necessary to learn the skills they need to develop.

Teachers appreciate and recognize exceptionalities. They work with physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, other specialists, and parents to meet students' exceptional needs and to provide opportunities for all children to develop their bodies and to move in their environment. They help children understand how to work and play with youngsters who have physical limitations or serious illnesses.

Accomplished teachers understand the importance of group and individual experiences, and they use such experiences to teach many different concepts across the curriculum. They know that it is important for children to have fun while they are developing their motor skills. They provide time for fitness games, outdoor play, movement relays, and free-choice activities. They provide time to release tension. (See Standard IV—*Promoting Child Development and Learning*.)

Accomplished teachers understand the importance of teaching rules and regulations. They know that children must learn to be cooperative and to show respect for

themselves and others. They know that children must learn to be team players and show good sportsmanship.

Accomplished teachers consistently monitor their children's health. They are aware of the symptoms of childhood diseases, medical needs, and social and emotional needs. They are prepared to administer help and know where to get additional help when needed.

Accomplished teachers recognize the importance of self-care, good hygiene habits, and nutrition. They use everyday experiences to teach these basic concepts and explain how they affect our bodies and our health. They teach children about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol and about the proper use of medications.

Accomplished teachers explain what is meant by safe and unsafe behavior. They help their children understand why safety rules are important. They consider safety factors when planning activities. They understand that safety is largely a matter of using common sense and good judgment. They conduct regular safety inspections. They know how equipment should be used, and they ensure that it is used properly.

Accomplished teachers supervise their children at all times. They watch for signs of fatigue and other problems, especially when children are outside or involved in physical activities. They recognize behavior problems. They are alert and ready to intervene when necessary.

Accomplished teachers are aware of emergency procedures and take prompt and appropriate measures to protect children from injury and harm.

When integrated into other disciplines, physical education and movement activities provide opportunities for children to learn in a kinesthetic manner. For example, in science, they may role play the growth of a plant. In mathematics, they may act out a problem in order to solve it. In social studies, children may learn a cultural dance.

Standard VI: Multiple Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers use a variety of practices and resources to promote individual development, meaningful learning, and social cooperation.

Accomplished early childhood teachers collect assessment data and make decisions on the basis of the data rather than simply implement routine practices and experiences. They understand the importance of aligning instruction with curriculum and assessment and know how this alignment translates into daily practice. Because they know that young children learn in a variety of ways, they develop and provide a variety of resources and employ a variety of learning experiences and grouping arrangements. They present multiple paths to learning so that children confront important subjects from several angles and through a variety of lenses. These techniques allow teachers to create learning experiences that respond to the diversity of their children and to provide each child with multiple perspectives on key issues, problems, and areas of knowledge. This variety increases the chances that children will assimilate important and difficult concepts and ideas.

Accomplished Teachers Have a Variety of Strategies to Help Children Uncover and Explore Their Ideas about What They Are Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers use their past experience, along with their knowledge of children and core subject areas, to

develop an ongoing mix of learning experiences, discussions, and social interactions that allow children to begin creating their own understanding of what they are learning. They model the kind of creative-thinking and problem-solving skills that will enable children to become successful in their own endeavors. They are skilled at observing, listening, facilitating discussion, orchestrating play, creating a positive learning environment, asking questions, adapting resources and routines to new uses, and helping children make connections with past ideas, experiences, and bodies of knowledge.

Accomplished teachers ask questions that promote a different focus, extend or clarify an idea or concept, or promote deeper or more diverse understandings of a phenomenon. They help children develop discussion skills. They teach the importance of listening carefully and responding thoughtfully to the topic at hand. They may present problems or provide explanations during the course of a learning experience, or they may allow children to do so. They may simply provide feedback in the form of a summary or synthesis of what has been said.

Accomplished teachers encourage children to begin to formulate questions and to develop hypotheses. They provide and model strategies for organizing and synthesizing information, allowing children to begin to construct their own knowledge base and make their own meanings about the world around them. They intervene appropriately as children work alone or in groups to focus and



sustain attention, to provide information, to provoke consideration of other questions, or to raise a perspective on an issue that children may not have considered. They also know when to hold back and let children pursue their own interests and hunches or allow a group to answer a question, resolve a difficulty, or pursue a discussion on its own.

Social interaction supports children's learning from one another and is a key strategy that accomplished teachers employ. They encourage children to talk about what they are thinking and experiencing. They understand the importance of such discussions in helping children form, extend, and refine their theories and explanations—to learn how to think through their ideas, to pose additional questions, to unscramble confusions, and to reconsider their ideas on the basis of another point of view. Accomplished teachers use a variety of effective groupings that encourage learning. These include individualized instruction and flexible groupings that encourage multiple forms of expression.

Accomplished Teachers Use a Variety of Instructional Resources

Accomplished early childhood teachers are knowledgeable about a broad range of instructional resources. They are adept at selecting, combining, adapting, and creating print and nonprint media resources, including current and emerging technologies that foster learning and connect to their larger curricular goals as well as to the experience and interests of their children. They continually seek out and review new books and games, various forms of technology and media, manipulative materials, and experiments. They also find new ways to use familiar items in the classroom. In doing so, they use the expertise of other teachers, specialists, and resource personnel.

The choice and design of resources reflect the concerns of accomplished teachers for child safety, for the applicability of the resources to different disciplines and learning goals, for their potential for multiple forms and levels of engagement, and for their connections with young learners' interests and prior experiences. Teachers use resources that reflect the many cultures represented in their classrooms and in society. They draw on older children, parents, colleagues, and other community members to complement classroom learning experiences. They may take children to observe and become involved in community events, settings, and institutions.

Accomplished Teachers Make Appropriate Use of Technology

Accomplished teachers recognize the increasing importance of technology, including assistive technology, as a tool for working with all children. They integrate technology into the learning environment, using it to support and extend traditional resources, and help children become lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

They know the ways in which technology can be a tool to facilitate the writing process and a creative medium for a variety of artistic expressions. They understand that even young children can begin to use basic technological reference sources—such as computer software, the Internet, and emerging technologies—to access a variety of information. They evaluate and select software carefully, making sure that the software they select is age, gender, and culturally appropriate. They help children become critical consumers of information obtained from the Internet.

They are aware of the power of various other technological tools—such as video, audio, and digital materials—to enhance many

aspects of their curriculum. Accomplished teachers are aware of inequalities in access to computer technology, and—even where such resources are scarce—they work to find ways to provide equitable access for all their children to the potential and possibilities that computer technology can provide.

Accomplished Teachers Challenge and Support Children and Provide Opportunities to Help Them Succeed

Accomplished early childhood teachers act on the belief that every child can learn. They provide high expectations, strong support (including early interventions), and engaging, achievable learning experiences for each child daily. They view each child as an individual. They assume that children will learn and develop at different rates and with different patterns of accomplishment.

They understand differences in approaches to learning and patterns of talent, and they design instruction to build on children's strengths as the basis for growth. Therefore, they often select tasks and resources that accommodate a wide range of abilities (e.g., thematic projects, journal writing, creative dramatics, dance, play, computer projects, and other technologies and media tools). They also are skilled at strategies that capitalize on different levels of children's abilities and interests, such as cooperative learning and learning centers.

Accomplished Teachers Foster Children's Capacity to Make Choices and Work as Independent Learners

Accomplished teachers are well organized and purposeful while pursuing practices that enhance children's autonomy in learning. They help children take responsibility for making appropriate choices about how they spend some of their time each day, how they respond to assignments and experiences, and how they can evaluate their own work.

Accomplished teachers provide a variety of flexible grouping arrangements and learning centers that allow children to choose learning experiences from different content areas at developmental levels that will extend their learning. They provide sufficient time and resources for children to make choices and to pursue questions and interests at some length and in some depth. They observe and respond to children's interactions and discourse, taking actions, asking questions, and making suggestions to extend, challenge, and encourage children to elaborate on, reflect on, change, or refine their responses.

Accomplished Teachers Work Successfully with Children with Exceptional Needs

Some children's development may be outside the range that is typical for their age group. Accomplished teachers recognize learning differences and seek assistance from others to further investigate their concerns, plan services to address children's individual



needs, and provide meaningful and educationally effective classroom experiences that are developmentally appropriate. They work with a variety of specialists, including speech and language pathologists, physical and occupational therapists, health professionals, counselors, special educators, psychologists, and other specialists in child development.

With these specialists, accomplished teachers plan, adapt, and implement classroom practices, accommodations including assistive technologies, modifications, and learning experiences that are individually appropriate and that ensure that each child is an important and valued member of the class. They create an environment to help children learn about one another and understand that all individuals have capacities and limitations that make them unique. They also respond to children who need to concentrate on a different set of outcomes than others in the classroom, such as those who would benefit from a more systematic approach to developing certain skills and those who would benefit

from enrichment activities and advanced challenges to further their learning. Regardless of the specific learning needs of students, teachers do not compromise their commitment in the areas of promoting thinking, encouraging conceptual development, developing problem-solving abilities, and building social relationships.

When a child's needs are greater than can be provided for in the classroom, accomplished teachers support the child and family in seeking alternative settings that better serve the child's needs. They know that families have insights into their children's functioning and adaptation that may not be manifest in the school setting. Consequently, teachers make special efforts to learn from those families, to involve them in decision making, and to inform them of their children's progress.



Reflections on Standard VI:

Standard VII: Family and Community Partnerships

Accomplished early childhood teachers work with and through families and communities to support children's learning and development.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are resourceful in using a variety of strategies to engage families in their children's education. They view their children's parents³ as allies in their work, and they recognize the dependence of young children on their families. They know that parents' affirmation of the school staff and program is important to children's motivation and sense of well-being in the classroom. They also understand that the school's affirmation of the child's home culture and language is important to the child's well-being and to the ability of the home to support the child and the school.

Accomplished teachers are respectful of the varying types of families that are represented in their community, and they understand that parents' patterns of child-rearing, as well as their values and beliefs about education, may differ from their own. They gauge parents' special abilities, interests, and "comfort zones" regarding involvement in their child's education. And, they respond with a range of options to encourage parent involvement beyond helping their child achieve classroom outcomes. These include observing in the classroom, working as regular volunteers, or assisting in the creation of materials at home.

Teachers recognize the complexities and tensions common in working with families. Communicating with and involving families are complex activities, even when parents and educators speak the same language and share opinions and values, and it is clearly more difficult when they disagree. Accomplished teachers recognize the need for consultation and negotiation about differences in values, relationships,

and routines. They do not presume that the school culture is superior to the home environment and values, and they exhibit a willingness to solve problems over time with the cooperation of children's families.

3. The word "parents" is used in this document to refer to the people who are the primary caregivers and guardians of children.

Accomplished Teachers Communicate Effectively with Families to Inform and Enhance Support for Children's Learning

Accomplished early childhood teachers are skilled in listening to, observing, and learning from family members. They also are adept in conveying information and ideas so that parents understand how their children are doing; what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish; and what the family can do to complement, enrich, and extend school-based learning.

Accomplished teachers are eager to listen to and learn from parents because parents are especially knowledgeable about the past development and present attributes of their children. They solicit parents' goals and priorities for their children, reports of children's responses to program experiences and relationships, and information on how children function at home and in the community.

They use a variety of means to learn from families, such as home visits, simple written surveys, parent meetings, phone calls, or e-mail exchanges. They listen actively and patiently to make sure that they understand what parents have to say. They make special efforts to seek out families that are less



assertive or open in expressing their views. They also are careful to respect the confidentiality of information provided by families while using that information to cross-check their own perceptions of how children are doing.

Accomplished teachers provide parents with information about their programs and about their children's progress in school. They explain the rationale for their major goals, experiences, and teaching methods. They offer convenient opportunities for conferences and meetings, and they seek to provide information in language that families can understand.

Accomplished teachers are honest in communicating with families, telling them what goes on in the classroom and admitting when they are not sure how to resolve an issue or a problem. They place a priority on regular communication with parents about each child's progress. They use a number of methods to explain assessment procedures and results, including written reports, samples of children's work with comments, and formal conferences. They find occasions to celebrate children's accomplishments with families. Teachers make a special effort to involve parents who might feel excluded or alienated from the school because of their own past educational or cultural experiences.

Accomplished Teachers Work Effectively with Family and Community Volunteers in Classroom and School Experiences

Accomplished early childhood teachers are comfortable working with and coordinating the efforts of a variety of people to help them meet their objectives. They understand how the presence of family and community members provides support to individual children and to the different cultural groups

that may be represented in the classroom. Consequently, family members are welcome to participate in the classroom.

Accomplished teachers actively solicit family members (including fathers and male family members, grandparents, senior citizens from the community, and older children) to serve as volunteers, and they offer a variety of options for involvement (e.g., preparing materials for projects, presenting experiences to the class or a small group, supporting a particular child with an immediate need).

Accomplished teachers recognize that not all who assist in their classrooms come well prepared with the skills necessary to work productively with young children. Therefore, they actively supervise and provide guidance and support to the family members, volunteers, and paraprofessionals who work alongside them to enhance the learning environment. They work to anticipate problems (such as volunteers gossiping about classroom events or using inappropriate language or disciplinary procedures), and they head off problems by orienting and debriefing volunteers and observers and clearly explaining classroom norms and routines.

Accomplished Teachers Assist Families in Supporting Children's Learning and Development at Home

Accomplished early childhood teachers share information about child development and learning that families can apply at home. They are knowledgeable about programs and materials for family education and support, and they provide resources that families can use to extend and complement classroom learning experiences.

Accomplished teachers help family members understand that they are important

members of the education team. They encourage and assist family members in sharpening their ability to observe and understand their child's behavior and discourse. They respond to questions and observations about children's growth, development, behavior, and language at home.

Accomplished Teachers Work Effectively with Families in Decision-Making Roles and on Policy Issues

Accomplished early childhood teachers acknowledge family members as citizens, taxpayers, welcome advocates for their children, and valuable stakeholders in schools and early childhood programs. They explain the rationale for major changes in areas such as curriculum, resources, testing, or special programs, and they seek family input before implementing such changes.

Accomplished teachers work effectively with family representatives in planning or reviewing school programs. They invite participation from parents and other family members when forming committees and advisory groups. They are skilled at participating with family members in special education service planning and assessments, and they protect the families' due process rights in these settings.

Accomplished Teachers Assist Families in Obtaining Support and Services To Help Their Children

Accomplished early childhood teachers exercise good judgment in working to help meet

the needs of families and children. They understand their capabilities and limitations in responding to stresses and problems in the lives of families. They recognize the value, at times, of simply listening with empathy to a family's concerns. They recognize situations for which a referral to other school professionals or community agencies is the most appropriate course of action. They advocate on behalf of young children and their families by engaging colleagues and networking for information and social support.

Accomplished teachers know about the amalgam of related services for families and children that often are available from school systems, agencies, and informal neighborhood organizations. They are alert to evidence of children's and families' needs in areas such as health examinations and services, immigration, social and recreational opportunities, adult literacy and employment training, respite care and mental health services, income support or employment opportunities, and services to children or adults with exceptionalities.

Accomplished preschool teachers are familiar with kindergarten and primary-grade programs, and they help families transition successfully to their child's elementary school. For example, a teacher of younger children might assist parents in the child's adjustment to a longer school day or to the higher expectations of kindergarten or first grade.

Similarly, accomplished kindergarten and primary-grade teachers have a working knowledge of other early childhood programs in the community in order to understand the abilities and needs of children and families about to enter the elementary school setting. They know about children's previous educational experiences both at home and in organized programs, and they can assist families in seeking support from other early childhood agencies.



Standard VIII: Professional Partnerships

Accomplished early childhood teachers work as leaders and collaborators in the professional community to improve programs and practices for young children and their families.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are able to work effectively with and assume leadership among supervisors, para-professionals, interns, peers, professionals from other disciplines, and volunteers. They work to overcome structures or traditions that separate teachers from one another, and they seek to make the school a collaborative enterprise that draws out the best from its faculty. They also work to build and strengthen a community of professional educators committed to the healthy development of young children.

Accomplished Teachers Are Skilled at Working with Others in Providing Effective Early Childhood Education

Accomplished early childhood teachers know how to give and receive support, advice, feedback, and criticism from one another. They work collaboratively to construct curricula, implement instruction, and design assessments. They know what is involved in training and coordinating the variety of adults who often fall under their supervision in early childhood programs. They work to develop regular forums for talking with peers about how to improve their collective efforts. They are able to articulate to supervisors and parents the knowledge base for their practices.

Accomplished teachers are skilled in identifying and celebrating successes as well as reconciling conflicts with colleagues, parents, and administrators. Using a professional knowledge base and ethical standards for practice, teachers are able to challenge people whose behavior is detrimental to children or other adults. They contribute effectively to assessment teams and processes with other professionals and related service providers.

Accomplished teachers can contribute their observations and insights about the classroom and draw implications from the insights of staff from other disciplines. To coordinate the school program better, they consult with teachers of other grade levels for background information on how children have been prepared and to understand how well they are preparing children to move ahead.

Accomplished Teachers Contribute to the Professional Development of Colleagues and Support Staff

In many early childhood programs with differentiated and multiple staff roles, teachers are responsible for planning and supervising the work of an instructional team while continuing to work directly with children. Accomplished teachers are effective in



training, managing, monitoring, and mentoring other staff members who want or need their guidance or assistance. They are capable of assessing the knowledge, abilities, and strengths of team members; creating appropriate assignments; encouraging and contributing to their professional growth; and providing appropriate feedback and support as they work with children.

Accomplished teachers show skill in communicating their knowledge of child development and early childhood teaching principles to paraprofessionals, assistant teachers, and volunteers in the context of everyday work. They use a variety of techniques and resources to promote the development of other staff. These include reading, discussing, modeling, observing, providing feedback, working jointly to develop materials or carry out an activity, group planning, and making use of more formal evaluation and training activities provided through the school program.

Accomplished Teachers Understand and Participate in Shaping Policies That Influence Their Work with Children

Because of the vulnerability of young children and the variety of programs and institutions that provide early childhood education, early childhood teachers face special challenges in their work. Accomplished teachers understand how various factors have a major impact on their work and on the children they teach. Among others, these factors include the following:

- curriculum, testing, grouping, and promotion standards;
- time for planning, developing materials, and analyzing assessment information on children;

- time and opportunities for meaningful professional development;
- adult-to-child ratios and class size;
- physical space, equipment, and materials; and
- the way teacher evaluations are conducted.

Accomplished teachers seek an active role in and contribute productively to the formulation of such policies. Early childhood teachers work in a wide variety of contexts (ranging from highly favorable and supportive environments to settings with many barriers), so there is often no single ideal stance for teachers to assume in responding to policy influences. However, in all cases accomplished teachers work to educate policymakers, parents, and citizens about the underlying principles of excellence in early childhood education and to help them understand how these principles might best be translated into programmatic initiatives within their own particular context.

Accomplished teachers understand the basic policy structure and sources that affect the learning environment, including mechanisms such as licensing standards for child-care centers, the Head Start performance standards and monitoring system, major federal education programs such as Title I, and legislation governing services to young children with exceptionalities.

Accomplished Teachers Demonstrate Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Accomplished early childhood teachers seek to shape attitudes and opinions by taking the initiative in suggesting to other educators and to the lay community readings, conferences, and opportunities to observe classrooms and programs that will inform their thinking about early childhood education.

When given the opportunity, they are effective participants in decision making. They use their knowledge of the children and the community, their understanding of educational research, and their ability to work collaboratively with peers to fashion creative approaches to such issues as curriculum, assessment, and allocation of material resources and staff. When they are faced with educationally inappropriate mandates, they can use professional knowledge and standards for ethical practice to articulate their concerns to administrators and policy-makers and to devise creative responses that safeguard the interests of children.

Accomplished Teachers Contribute to the Field of Early Childhood Education

By providing professional development, networking, participating in professional organizations, writing, and other such means, accomplished teachers are involved with the advancement of early childhood education. Some choose to become involved in issues or service in their local communities that have an impact on the children they are serving, such as local work sessions for colleagues. Others may choose to contribute to new knowledge by sharing findings from research in their classrooms; collaborating on projects with researchers; presenting workshops and symposiums; collaborating with higher education faculty in designing, evaluating, and implementing teacher education programs; reflecting and sharing ideas and practices with colleagues; and participating in professional organizations.



Reflections on Standard VIII:

Standard IX: Reflective Practice

Accomplished early childhood teachers regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work.

Accomplished early childhood teachers consider reflection on their practice central to their responsibilities as professionals to steadily extend their knowledge base, improve their teaching, and refine their evolving philosophy of education. They examine their strengths and areas needing improvement and employ that knowledge to analyze, synthesize, and refine their teaching practice. They use their knowledge base as a guide for goal setting and a basis for decisions and can thereby articulate their reasons for curricular choices.

Accomplished teachers understand that the impact of specific lessons, instructional resources, strategies, assignments, or assessment tools may vary from class to class as the mix of children changes. They analyze the needs of their children in relation to both the circumstances of the moment and their own long-term objectives. They evaluate and articulate the relative merits of teaching practices that are considered accomplished, and they judge the appropriateness of these practices for their own particular circumstances. Consequently, they distinguish themselves by their capacity for ongoing, dispassionate self-examination; their openness to innovation; and their willingness to change in order to strengthen their teaching and promote children's learning.

New information about teaching, subject matter, and child development proliferates. Thus, teachers who do not stay abreast of new developments allow their knowledge base to become outdated. Motivated by both the change they see around them and by the desire to equip children for a changing future, accomplished teachers regularly engage in the process of professional growth. Two valuable

sources of such growth are self-reflection, aided by interaction with other professionals, and self-renewal. Teachers approach self-renewal by exploring new resources; studying professional literature; and participating in professional development experiences, professional organizations, and advanced education programs.

Accomplished Teachers Evaluate Results and Seek Input Systematically from a Variety of Sources

Every class and every activity provides opportunities for reflection and improvement for accomplished early childhood teachers. When things go well, they think about why the class succeeded and how to adapt the lessons learned to other classes and situations. When things go poorly, they reflect on how to avoid such mishaps in the future. When they review the works in progress and the final products of their children, they assess themselves as well as their youngsters.

Their conversations with children about classroom climate and interactions provide accomplished teachers with insight and direction. They carefully analyze the input they receive from parent-child-teacher conferences, parent-teacher conferences, and informal conversations with family members. They regularly and systematically seek knowledge and advice through discussions with colleagues, self-analysis of classroom practices, and observations of other teachers' practices. These observations and discussions shape their decisions about



whether, when, how, and why their practice should change. They abandon less effective practices and replace them with more promising approaches.

Accomplished Teachers Are Open to New Ideas and Continually Refine Their Practice

Accomplished early childhood teachers participate in a wide range of reflective practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth, and enhance their professionalism. They use the results of their reflective practice to understand the developmental continuum of the child; to understand how that continuum fits into the overall school experience, curriculum, benchmarks, and state standards; and to engage colleagues, families, and the community in assessing and addressing strengths and areas of needed change. They exemplify the highest ethical ideals and most rigorous professional standards in assessing their practice. They consider the roles their own cultural background, biases, values, and personal experiences play in their teaching. Ultimately, self-reflection contributes to teachers' depth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and it adds dignity to their practice.

Accomplished teachers take responsibility for their own professional growth, which might include keeping a personal journal, having regular discussions with colleagues, soliciting the input of a mentor, or participating in professional development. They may participate in seminars, workshops, and courses that challenge their current thinking and actions. They may also conduct research in their classrooms or collaborate with other professionals to examine their practice critically. For example, they may conduct systematic classroom-based inquiry to solve

problems or answer questions related to their teaching practice. They select from theories, emerging practices, current debates, and promising research findings those that could improve their practice. In doing so, they explore topics in which they may have limited expertise and experiment with alternative resources, approaches, and instructional strategies to improve their teaching.

They also draw on systematic study and analysis from their own practice as an ongoing guide to setting the future direction of their work. This type of personal and collegial study and reflection supports their instructional decisions and their ability to cogently articulate a rationale for their actions. It also contributes to their consistent ability to aggressively seek solutions to issues and problems in their practice.

Accomplished teachers are models of the educated individual as they sharpen their judgment, expand their repertoire of teaching methods, and deepen their knowledge base, in part by keeping abreast of significant developments and debates in the disciplines. Such efforts are essential because research in early learning is ongoing and dynamic, and ideas about practice change regularly. Concurrently, the profession is steadily rethinking, reinventing, and debating a broad range of pedagogical and content issues that have curricular implications.

Accomplished teachers consider the prevailing research findings about young children, learning, and intelligence while acknowledging the limitations of this evidence. They are able to distinguish trends from real breakthroughs and hype from knowledge. They are conscious that not all ideas about how practice should change are good. They stay current with and evaluate professional and other literature and curricular materials along with the issues affecting families and schooling in their community.



The nine standards in this report represent a professional consensus on the characteristics of accomplished practice and provide a profile of the accomplished Early Childhood/Generalist teacher. Although the standards are challenging, they are upheld every day by teachers like the ones described in these pages, who inspire and instruct the nation's youth and lead their profession. By publishing this document and offering National Board Certification to early childhood educators, NBPTS aims to affirm the practice of the many teachers who meet these standards and challenge others to strive to meet them. Moreover, NBPTS hopes to bring increased attention to the professionalism and expertise of accomplished generalists and in so doing, pave the way for greater professional respect and opportunity for these essential members of the teaching community.

In addition to being a stimulus to self-reflection on the part of teachers at all levels of performance, *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards* is intended to be a catalyst for discussion among administrators, staff developers, and others in the education community about accomplished practice in this field. If these standards advance the conversation about accomplished teaching, they will provide an important step toward the NBPTS goal of improving student learning in our nation's schools.

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The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, Second Edition*, reflects nearly a decade of dialogue about accomplished teaching in the early childhood curriculum. These standards derive their power from an amazing degree of collaboration and consensus. Through the expertise and input of two standards committees, convened eight years apart; numerous reviews by a 63-member board of directors; and two periods of public comment by educators, policymakers, parents, and the like; as well as through the intense study of candidates for National Board Certification who have immersed themselves in the first edition; these second-edition standards emerge as a living testament to what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, Second Edition*, represents the best thinking by teachers and for teachers about advanced teaching practice in the field.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is deeply grateful to all those who contributed their time, wisdom, and professional vision to *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, Second Edition*. Any thank-you must begin with the pioneers in 1992, who spent three years debating, reflecting on, and articulating the multiple facets of accomplished teaching so that they could help advance the field and provide a rigorous and sound basis for national certification of teachers. In particular, the National Board would like to show its appreciation to Chair Baiba Woodall and Vice Chair Mary Zapata Huerta, NBCT, who so skillfully led the effort to weave the National Board's Five Core Propositions into field-specific standards of teaching excellence.

Any field grows, shifts, and evolves over time. Standards, too, must remain dynamic and therefore are subject to revision. In January 2000, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards convened a second Early Childhood/Generalist Standards Committee. This committee was charged with achieving both continuity and change, using the first edition of the standards as the foundation for its work, but modifying the standards to reflect best practice of the early twenty-first century. The Early Childhood/Generalist Standards Committee exemplified the collegiality, expertise, and dedication to the improvement of student learning that are hallmarks of accomplished teachers. Special thanks go to Chair Inna Rivera Colemere, Vice Chair Marlene Henriques, NBCT, and Facilitator Emelie Parker, NBCT, for their invaluable leadership in making the second edition a reality. We also are appreciative of International Reading Association Representative Joyce Hinman, who contributed to standards committee meetings.

The Standards and Professional Development Working Group of the board of directors is also an important collaborator in the creation of the second-edition standards. The working group consists of a diverse group of educators who reviewed *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, Second Edition*, at various points in its development, made suggestions about how it could be strengthened, and recommended to the full board the adoption of the standards. Representing the board of directors as liaisons to the Early Childhood/Generalist Standards Committee were Julie Hutcheson, NBCT, and Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, whose extensive knowledge of the field made them treasured advisors.

Hundreds of individuals not directly associated with the National Board aided in the development of these standards. Early childhood teachers and scholars, state and local officials, and representatives of disciplinary organizations—to name just a few—reviewed a draft of *Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, Second Edition*, when the standards were disseminated nationwide during a public comment period.

Acknowledgments

Many staff members of the National Board also deserve thanks for helping make the publication of these standards possible. Chuck Cascio, former Vice President for Certification Standards and Teacher Development, shepherded the standards from their inception. In the early stages, Jacqueline Olkin, former Manager for Certification Standards and Teacher Development, was especially instrumental. Writing credits go to Carol Bruce, consultant to the National Board; Angela Duperrouzel served as on-site coordinator for standards committee meetings; Holly Baker edited the document during production. I would like to give a special thanks to the dedicated staff I have worked with: Michael Knab, Manager for Certification Standards; Teachers-in-Residence Mary Lease, NBCT, and Maria Telesca, NBCT; Jane George, Specialist for Certification Standards Production; and Administrative Assistant Glowena Harrison. National Board staff collaborated in all aspects of standards development.

In presenting these standards for accomplished teaching, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards recognizes that this publication would not have been possible without the considerable contributions of individuals and institutions too numerous to mention. On behalf of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, I extend my thanks to all of them.

Katherine S. Woodward
Director, Certification Standards



The core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

- 1) *Teachers are committed to students and their learning.*
- 2) *Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.*
- 3) *Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.*
- 4) *Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.*
- 5) *Teachers are members of learning communities.*