

Early Education Commission

*A community leadership collaborative supporting the
United Way's goal of ensuring children are ready for school*



United Way of
Metropolitan Atlanta

Research Abstract

Title: “Key Messages from the Position Statement,” NAEYC Position Statement: Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

Author(s): National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

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Abstract

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has spent several years developing a revision to its “developmentally appropriate practice” position statement. The 2009 position statement (3rd Edition, adopted in the fall of 2008) is a 31-page document available on the NAEYC website: www.naeyc.org. This is a digest of the NAEYC “Key Messages from the Position Statement” document:

What is developmentally appropriate practice? Developmentally appropriate practice requires both meeting children where they are, which means teachers must know them well, and enabling them to reach challenging goals. All teaching practices should be attuned to them as unique individuals. Best practice is based on research and knowledge – not on assumptions – about how children learn and develop.

A call to reduce the achievement gap. Narrowing the gaps between demographic groups in the U.S. must be a priority. The earlier in life that early learning is provided, the better results for children. Parent engagement, health services and mental health supports are also critical.

Comprehensive, effective curriculum. Children’s learning experiences across the early childhood years (birth to age 8) need to be far better integrated and aligned, particularly between prekindergarten and K-3.

Improving teaching and learning. Both child-guided and teacher-guided experiences are vital to children’s development and learning. Rather than reducing the time devoted to academic activities, play promotes key abilities that enable children to learn. Because of how they spend their time outside of school, many young children now lack the ability to play at the level that promotes cognitive, social and emotional benefits; early childhood settings must provide these opportunities. Effective teachers are intentional in their use of a variety of approaches and strategies. For high quality care and education, teachers must be well prepared, participate in ongoing professional development and receive sufficient support and compensation.