

Joint Statement of Early Childhood Health and Education Professionals on the Common Core Standards Initiative

Issued by the Alliance for Childhood

March 2, 2010

www.allianceforchildhood.org

WE HAVE GRAVE CONCERNS about the core standards for young children now being written by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The draft standards made public in January conflict with compelling new research in cognitive science, neuroscience, child development, and early childhood education about how young children learn, what they need to learn, and how best to teach them in kindergarten and the early grades.

We have no doubt that promoting language and mathematics is crucial to closing the achievement gap. As written, however, the proposed standards raise the following concerns:

- *Such standards will lead to long hours of instruction in literacy and math.* Young children learn best in active, hands-on ways and in the context of meaningful real-life experiences. New research shows that didactic instruction of discrete reading and math skills has already pushed play-based learning out of many kindergartens. But the current proposal goes well beyond most existing state standards in requiring, for example, that every kindergartner be able to write “all upper- and lowercase letters” and “read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.”
- *They will lead to inappropriate standardized testing.* Current state standards for young children have led to the heavy use of standardized tests in kindergarten and the lower grades, despite their unreliability for assessing children under age eight. The proposed core standards will intensify inappropriate testing in place of broader observational assessments that better serve young children’s needs.
- *Didactic instruction and testing will crowd out other important areas of learning.* Young children’s learning must go beyond literacy and math. They need to learn about families and communities, to take on challenges, and to develop social, emotional, problem-solving, self-regulation, and perspective-taking skills. Overuse of didactic instruction and testing cuts off children’s initiative, curiosity, and imagination, limiting their later engagement in school and the workplace, not to mention responsible citizenship. And it interferes with the growth of healthy bodies and essential sensory and motor skills—all best developed through playful and active hands-on learning.
- *There is little evidence that such standards for young children lead to later success.* While an introduction to books in early childhood is vital, research on the links between the intensive teaching of discrete reading skills in kindergarten and later success is inconclusive at best. Many of the countries with top-performing high-school students do not begin formal

schooling until age six or seven. We must test these ideas more thoroughly before establishing nationwide policies and practices.

We therefore call on the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to suspend their current drafting of standards for children in kindergarten through grade three.

We further call for the creation of a consortium of early childhood researchers, developmental psychologists, pediatricians, cognitive scientists, master teachers, and school leaders to develop comprehensive guidelines for effective early care and teaching that recognize the right of every child to a healthy start in life and a developmentally appropriate education.

G. Rollie Adams, President and CEO, Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY
Cynthia K. Aldinger, Executive Director, LifeWays North America, Norman, OK
Edith Adams Allison, Learning Disabilities Specialist, Amherst, MA
Joan Almon, Executive Director, Alliance for Childhood, College Park, MD
Defne Apul, Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH
Ruth H. Aranow, Senior Academic Advisor, Krieger School of Arts & Sciences, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Cara Armstrong, Curator of Education, Fallingwater, Mill Run, PA
Anne Austin, Director, Early Learning Center, Baruch College, New York, NY
Ray Bacchetti, Vice President, Planning and Management, Emeritus, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA
Lyda Beardsley, Director, Child Development Programs, College of Marin, Kentfield, CA
Sara Bennett, Founder, Stop Homework, Brooklyn, NY
Laura M. Bennett-Murphy, Associate Professor, Psychology, Westminster College, Salt Lake City, UT
Marilyn Benoit, M.D., Past President, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Washington, DC
Karen D. Benson, Professor, California State University, Sacramento, CA
Eugene V. Beresin, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA
Wendy C. Blackwell, Director of Education, National Children's Museum, Washington, DC
Wil Blechman, M.D., President, Docs for Tots Florida; Past President, Kiwanis International, Miami, FL
Herb Bleich, early childhood teacher, Community School 133, New York, NY
Amy Blesi, board member, Winnetka Alliance for Early Childhood, Winnetka, IL
Paula Jorde Bloom, Professor of Early Childhood Education, National-Louis University, Wheeling, IL
Lila Braine, Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Psychology, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY
Michael Brody, M.D., Chair, Media Committee, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Washington, DC
Stuart L. Brown, M.D., Founder and President, National Institute for Play, Carmel Valley, CA
Sylvia Bulgar, Professor, Mathematics Education, Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ
Blakely Bundy, Executive Director, Winnetka Alliance for Early Childhood, Winnetka, IL
Kathleen Burriss, Professor, Early Childhood, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN
Wei Cao, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, Flint, MI
Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Professor of Early Childhood Education, Lesley University, Cambridge, MA
Catherine Carotta, Associate Director, Center for Childhood Deafness, Boys Town National Research Hospital, Omaha, NE
Julie Ann Carroll, Founding President, Winnetka Alliance for Early Childhood, Winnetka, IL
Ingrid Chalufour, Lead Developer, Foundations of Science Literacy, Education Development Center, Newton, MA

Barbara C. Chauvin, Supervising Teacher, University of Maryland Baltimore County, Catonsville, MD
Sherry Cleary, Executive Director, NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, City University of New York, NY
Carol Cole, Executive Director, Sophia Project, Oakland, CA
Patricia M. Cooper, Assistant Professor of Literacy and Early Childhood Education, New York University, New York, NY
Jayna Coppedge, Children's Minister, First Baptist Church, Tahlequah, OK
Colleen Cordes, Executive Director, Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Washington, DC
Donna Couchenour, Professor and early childhood teacher educator, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, Shippensburg, PA
Milly Cowles, Dean, Principals' Academy, Mobile, AL
Ellen F. Crain, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY
William Crain, Professor of Psychology, City College of New York, NY
Sara McCormick Davis, Associate Professor, University of Arkansas Fort Smith; President Elect, National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, Fort Smith, AR
Diane Trister Dodge, President, Teaching Strategies, Inc., Bethesda, MD
Aviva Dorfman, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Michigan, Flint, MI
Georgianna Duarte, Professor, University of Texas, Brownsville, TX
Barbara Dubitsky, Director, Mathematics Leadership Programs, Bank Street College, New York, NY
Eleanor Duckworth, Professor of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Sean Durham, Director, Early Learning Center for Research and Practice, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
Carolyn Pope Edwards, Willa Cather Professor of Psychology and Child, Youth, and Family Studies, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
David Elkind, Professor Emeritus of Child Development, Tufts University, Medford, MA
Ann S. Epstein, Senior Director of Curriculum Development, HighScope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, MI
Beverly Falk, Professor, School of Education, City College of New York, NY
Stephanie Feeney, Professor Emerita of Education, University of Hawaii; Chair of the Advocacy Committee, National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, Honolulu, HI
Margery B. Franklin, Professor Emerita of Psychology, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY
Doris Fromberg, Professor and Director of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY
Joe L. Frost, Parker Centennial Professor Emeritus, University of Texas, Austin, TX
Ellen Galinsky, author and work life researcher, New York, NY
Howard Gardner, Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
Suzanne Gellens, Executive Director, Florida Association for the Education of Young Children, Tampa, FL
Roberta Golinkoff, H. Rodney Sharp Professor of Education, Psychology, and Linguistics and Cognitive Science, University of Delaware, Newark, DE
Elizabeth N. Goodenough, Lecturer in Literature, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Rachel Grob, Director, Child Development Institute, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY
Marcy Guddemi, Executive Director, Gesell Institute of Human Development, New Haven, CT
Joan Gussow, Professor Emerita of Nutrition and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY
Winifred M. Hagan, Early Care and Education Consultant, CAYL Institute, Cambridge, MA
Darell Hammond, CEO and co-founder, KaBOOM!, Washington, DC
Jane M. Healy, educational psychologist and author, Vail, CO
Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Stanley and Debra Lefkowitz Professor of Psychology, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Craig Holdrege, biologist, educator; Director, The Nature Institute, Ghent, NY
Carla M. Horwitz, Director, Calvin Hill Day Care Center and Kindergarten; Lecturer, Yale Child Study Center, Yale University, New Haven, CT
Carollee Howes, Professor, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Kim Hughes, Therapeutic Teacher, Trainer, and Consultant; 1999-2000 North Carolina Teacher of the Year, Project Enlightenment, Wake County Schools, Raleigh, NC
Mary Hynes-Berry, Faculty, Erikson Institute for Early Childhood, Chicago, IL
Olga S. Jarrett, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
Candace Jaruszewicz, Director, N. E. Miles Early Childhood Development Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC
Jim Johnson, Professor-in-Charge of Early Childhood Education, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Constance Kamii, Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham, AL
Lilian G. Katz, Professor Emeritus and Co-director, Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL
Merrie B. King, Montessori Program Director and Associate Professor of Education, Belmont University, Nashville, TN
Ethan H. Kisch, M.D., Child Psychiatrist; Medical Director, Quality Behavioral Health, Warwick, RI
Robert H. Klein, Professor Emeritus of Physics, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH
Tovah Klein, Director, Center for Toddler Development, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY
Edgar Klugman, Professor Emeritus, Wheelock College, Boston, MA
Alfie Kohn, author and lecturer, Belmont, MA
Linda Kroll, Professor, School of Education, Mills College, Oakland, CA
Vicki LaBoskey, Professor of Education, Mills College, Oakland, CA
Linda Lantieri, Director, The Inner Resilience Program, New York, NY
Deborah Lenny, Principal, Golden Valley Charter School of Sacramento, Orangevale, CA
Diane E. Levin, Professor of Early Childhood Education, Wheelock College, Boston, MA
Susan Lyon, President, Susan Lyon Education Foundation, Mills College, Oakland, CA
Yeou-Cheng Ma, M.D., Developmental Pediatrician, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY
Fran P. Mainella, Co-Chair, U.S. Play Coalition, Clemson University, Clemson, SC
David Marshak, Professor Emeritus, Seattle University, Bellingham, WA
Milbrey McLaughlin, David Jacks Professor of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA
Gillian D. McNamee, Professor and Director, Teacher Education, Erikson Institute, Chicago, IL
Deborah W. Meier, Educator and Senior Scholar, New York University, New York, NY
Edward Miller, Senior Researcher, Alliance for Childhood, New York, NY
Mary Sue Miller, Lead Educator for Early Learning, Chicago Children's Museum, Chicago, IL
Lowell Monke, Associate Professor of Education, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH
Mary Ruth Moore, Professor, University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX
Dorine Morese, Instructional Coordinator, NYC Office of Early Childhood Education, New York, NY
John Nimmo, Executive Director, Child Study and Development Center, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH
Nel Noddings, Lee Jacks Professor Education Emerita, Stanford University, Stanford, CA
Pedro A. Noguera, Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education and Executive Director, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, New York University, New York, NY
Susan Ohanian, Fellow, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Arizona State University, Charlotte, VT
Sharna Olfman, Professor of Clinical and Developmental Psychology, Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA
Linda Olivenbaum, Director, California Early Childhood Mentor Program, San Francisco, CA
David Osher, Vice President, Education, Human Development, Workforce, American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC

Vivian Gussin Paley, author and teacher emerita, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, Chicago, IL
Kim John Payne, director, Center for Social Sustainability, Antioch University, Northampton, MA
Jane P. Perry, Research Coordinator and Teacher, Harold E. Jones Child Study Center, University of California, Berkeley, CA
Helene Pniewski, M.D., Developmental Pediatrician and Child Psychiatrist, Family Service Association, Providence, RI
Ruth Prescott, Professional Development Director, Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children, Chicago, IL
Baji Rankin, Executive Director, New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children, Albuquerque, NM
Fretta Reitzes, Director, Goldman Center for Youth and Family, 92nd Street Y, New York, NY
Mary S. Rivkin, Associate Professor, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD
Joe Robertson, Director of Parent/Child Programs, Free to Be Under Three, New York, NY
Alvin Rosenfeld, M.D., Child Psychiatrist; Lecturer, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA
A. G. Rud, Head, Department of Educational Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
Eliza Russell, Director of Education, National Wildlife Federation, Reston, VA
Susan Riemer Sacks, Professor of Psychology, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY
Eric Schaps, President, Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, CA
Lawrence J. Schweinhart, President, HighScope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, MI
Dorothy G. Singer, Senior Research Scientist, Dept. of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven, CT
Jerome L. Singer, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven, CT
Mary Stone, President, Missouri Association for the Education of Young Children, Springfield, MO
Maurice Sykes, Executive Director, Early Childhood Leadership Institute, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC
Molly Thompson, Director, Early Childhood Programs, Breakwater School, Portland, ME
Arlene Uss, Director, Center for Early Care and Education, Bank Street College, New York, NY
Rosario Villasana-Ruiz, Faculty, City College of San Francisco, CA
Macy Welsh, Director, National Lekotek Center, Chicago, IL
Donald Wertlieb, Professor, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University, Medford, MA
Frank R. Wilson, M.D., Neurologist (retired), Stanford University School of Medicine, Portland, OR
Marie Winn, Writer, New York, NY
Lisa Witkowski, Director, Future Workforce Unit, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, Fort Worth, TX
Chip Wood, Author and educator, Courage and Renewal Northeast, Wellesley, MA
George Wood, Principal, Federal Hocking Middle & High School, Amesville, OH
Karen Worth, Instructor, Wheelock College, Boston, MA

Note: Signers' affiliations are listed for identification purposes only and do not signify the organizations' endorsement of this statement. For a full list of signers, see www.allianceforchildhood.org. For more information about this statement and the Alliance, contact Executive Director Joan Almon (joan.almon@verizon.net) or Senior Researcher Edward Miller (ed@allianceforchildhood.org).