

Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention Personnel Preparation Standards of the Division for Early Childhood: Field Validation

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Abstract

Results of the field validation survey of the revised initial and new advanced Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Division for Early Childhood (DEC) early childhood special education (ECSE)/early intervention (EI) personnel standards are presented. Personnel standards are used as part of educational accountability systems and in teacher personnel preparation program accreditation to train highly qualified teachers. DEC and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) members were partners in the validation survey. The method and survey procedures are described along with the knowledge and skill standards selected as essential and retained in the final DEC ECSE/EI approved sets of standards. Purposeful sampling was used to select DEC respondents for their knowledge and expertise in personnel preparation and operation of ECSE/EI and early childhood education (ECE) programs. Results from the DEC and NAEYC respondents are compared and contrasted. Challenges and limitations are discussed.

Keywords

personnel standards, ECSE/EI initial and advanced standards, field validation study, purposeful sampling, NCATE/CAPE accreditation, highly qualified teachers

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), revised and validated initial and developed and validated advanced personnel preparation standards for early childhood special education (ECSE) and early intervention (EI) between 2005 and 2008. The DEC standards are specialized standards that specifically address ECSE and EI.

CEC Personnel Standards Framework

CEC, the special education professional organization, is responsible for the development and dissemination of professional standards and uses a “rigorous consensus evaluation process to identify, update and maintain sets of knowledge and skills for entry-level and advanced special educators” (CEC, 2009, p. 8). CEC has developed and refined their standards revision, development, and validation process with an increasing emphasis on standards as a component in the educational accountability system that emerged and has been refined since the beginning of the standards accountability movement and the passage of No

Child Left Behind. One of the components of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) reauthorization is the requirement that there is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. This requirement emanates from research that indicates that one of the most important variables related to student achievement is the presence of a highly qualified teacher in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2000). Personnel preparation standards provide the foundation for the development of higher education teacher preparation programs, credentialing

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Table 1. CEC's Knowledge and Skill Domains for All Common Core and Specialized Initial and Advanced Personnel Standards

Initial standard domains	Advanced standard domains
1. Foundations	1. Leadership and policy
2. Development and characteristics of learners	2. Program development and organization
3. Individual learning differences	3. Research and Inquiry
4. Instructional strategies	4. Evaluation
5. Learning environments and social interaction	5. Professional development and ethical practice
6. Language	6. Collaboration
7. Instructional planning	
8. Assessment	
9. Professional and ethical practice	
10. Collaboration	

examinations, the teacher professional internship evaluation, and new teacher induction programs. As a result, personnel preparation standards need to represent the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of teachers. The rigorous consensus development process used by CEC to develop, revise, and validate standards ensures that the professional standards are field initiated, evidence based, and validated by stakeholder groups. These standards are a critical component of an aligned accountability system.

Standards are developed at two levels, initial and advanced. There are 10 domains in the CEC initial standards and 6 domains in the advanced standards. Within each domain, there are knowledge and skill statements. Table 1 lists the domains for the initial and advanced standards, which are consistent across all CEC divisions and specialty areas. The initial personnel standards specify the knowledge and skills required of entry-level special education personnel and apply to those teacher education candidates who are working on their initial special education teaching license in an accredited personnel preparation program. The advanced personnel standards specify the knowledge and skills required in advanced personnel preparation programs. CEC (2010) defines initial programs as those “at the baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate levels preparing candidates for the first license to teach,” while the advanced programs are those “at post-baccalaureate levels for (1) the continuing education of teachers who have previously completed initial preparation or (2) the preparation of other school professionals” (p. 7).

The CEC standards consist of a set of “common core” standards at the initial and advanced licensure levels. The “common core” represents the knowledge and skills required of all candidates across *all* special education practice areas, whereas the specialized area standards, such as the DEC ECSE/EI standards, differentiate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of the professionals in specialized practice areas for the specific populations they serve, which for DEC would be children birth to age 8 with a disability and their families. CEC is responsible for the development and revision of the initial and advanced

common core, whereas the CEC divisions are responsible for the revision and development of the standards for their specialty areas.

Importance of DEC Standards

The DEC standards emanate from the profession, as they are developed by ECSE/EI personnel and teacher education faculty and then are validated through field surveys of professional members. They provide guidance to states in the development of ECSE/EI licensure and certification frameworks. According to CEC, all 50 states have committed to align their special education certification/licensure requirements with the CEC standards (CEC, 2009). Furthermore, teacher education faculty use personnel standards to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of their curricula. Higher education personnel use the knowledge and skill statements to conduct systematic analysis of special education personnel preparation programs to “assure that the candidates they prepare have mastery of the appropriate knowledge and skills” (CEC, 2009, p. 223).

Professional accrediting organizations, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is soon to become the Council for the Accreditation of Professional Education (CAPE), use personnel preparation standards in accreditation of teacher preparation programs (NCATE, 2004). Early childhood special educators and early interventionists use these standards to guide their practice and as a guide for professional development. The use of professional standards assures that special educators have the knowledge and skills to deliver effective and appropriate services to children birth through 8 years with special needs and their families.

CEC's Process for Revising Standards

CEC establishes a time frame for revision of common core and division-specific standards at approximately 5- to 7-year intervals, and DEC collaborates with CEC in

developing and revising standards according to this timetable. CEC's Professional Standards and Practices Committee (PSPC) oversees the work of CEC's Knowledge and Skills (K and S) Committee, which is responsible for the personnel standards revision process. The K and S Committee approve the proposed standards after revising and refining the language of the standards. Once approved, the K and S Committee submit the standards to the PSPC for final approval. The K and S Committee is comprised of representatives from each of the CEC divisions and also include a CEC staff liaison. When a division revises their standards, the division representative on the K and S Committee is responsible for coordinating the revision process and serves as the liaison between the division's executive board, the standards revision work group, and the K and S Committee.

All of the standards must be supported with evidence from the literature, so a DEC work group identifies relevant evidence from research, theory, and practice sources. The K and S Committee "smooths" the draft standards to (a) present the standards as clear concise straightforward statements of what a teacher does as opposed to what the postsecondary teacher education candidate does or learns, (b) eliminate redundancy across standards, (c) ensure the use of parallel language across standards, (d) ensure that division standards do not duplicate the CEC common core or the NCATE standards, and (e) use a common set of terminology. This process results in a draft set of standards that the division presents to its members for feedback. Professionals in the field provide information about the importance of each item through a survey that the division and CEC use to validate the standards. The K and S Committee oversee the survey process with the help of CEC staff (CEC, 2009). There is a standard survey format used for the consensus evaluation of all standards at the initial and advanced levels with the sampling data provided by the respective CEC division. The K and S Committee use the results of the surveys to determine which standards in the draft to retain and present for final approval. The K and S Committee then presents the validated standards to the PSPC for final approval, and they are then included in the CEC personnel preparation publication, *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (6th ed., 2009), and used by NCATE in the personnel preparation accreditation process.

DEC Standards Revision Timeline

The PSPC scheduled the revision of the DEC initial standards for 2005, and the development of the advanced standards for 2006. It also designated the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as DEC's partner in revising the standards because CEC in collaboration with DEC and NAEYC jointly reviews the accreditation applications when a college or university operates a blended

personnel preparation program. NAEYC is the NCATE-designated early childhood Specialized Professional Association (SPA) and CEC is the NCATE-designated special education SPA. Colleges and universities operate blended ECE/ECSE/EI personnel preparation programs (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; CEC, 2010; Stayton & McCollum, 2002), where candidates receive joint licensure in ECE and ECSE/EI. The CEC common core, DEC ECSE/EI, and NAEYC standards are used to determine the candidate competencies and guide the development and evaluation of the blended teacher preparation programs. As a result, NAEYC is a natural partner for DEC in the standards revision process because of its joint involvement in the accreditation review of blended ECE and ECSE/EI programs. This partnership builds on a history of collaborative efforts between DEC and NAEYC which began in the 1980s with the development and dissemination of joint policy statements on Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Inclusion, and Response to Intervention (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

The DEC executive board formed and charged a work team with the task of revising the initial standards and developing the advanced standards. The chair of DEC's Personnel Preparation Committee led the work group and also served as DEC's division representative on the K and S Committee. There were 11 members of the work group representing personnel preparation program faculty, special education practitioners, parents, and research faculty. During the initial standards revision and the advanced standards development, the DEC work group provided input and obtained feedback from their membership at annual conferences with the final draft of the initial standards presented at the 2006 DEC annual conference (Lifter et al., 2006), the final draft of the advanced standards at the 2007 DEC annual conference (Lifter et al., 2007), and both sets of standards at the 2008 CEC annual conference (Lifter, Christensen, & Gallagher, 2008). Readers can find more details about the DEC standards development/revision process in Lifter et al. (2011). The purpose of the current article is to describe the methods, data, and results of the field validation survey of the revised DEC initial and new advanced standards.

Method

Survey Procedures

Personnel from the CEC K and S and PSPC constructed the initial and advanced ECSE/EI standards validation surveys using Survey Monkey. Each survey began with an introduction that explained the purpose of the survey, assured respondent confidentiality, and described how the Committees would use the results. In the initial standards survey, respondents rated each standard in terms of the following values: "essential for personnel to know or be able

to do,” “desirable, but not essential for personnel to know or be able to do,” or “other.” In the advanced standards survey, respondents rated each standard in terms of the following values: “essential,” “desirable but not essential,” or “unnecessary” for the advanced special education early childhood specialist. Respondents also identified their affiliation with either DEC or NAEYC and provided additional demographic information. The surveys were available for a 30-day period. After 30 days, Committee members extracted and reported the survey results separately for DEC and NAEYC members.

Sampling

The universe for sampling in the initial and advanced standards survey was (a) the memberships of DEC and NAEYC and (b) Part C (EI) and 619 (preschool) coordinators in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

Identification of DEC Respondents. A purposeful sample of the DEC membership was selected using member role data from the membership roster. To select the purposeful sample, two groups of potential respondents were identified. The first group was a select sample of DEC members who identified themselves as college and university personnel. This group was considered important because they develop, teach, and supervise teacher education candidates in university ECSE/EI teacher preparation programs. The second group consisted of state-level Part C (birth to 3 years of age) and 619 (preschool) coordinators in all 50 states and U.S. territories who are responsible for administering EI and ECSE services in their state. The DEC work group selected these coordinators to focus on individuals who were knowledgeable about ECSE/EI personnel preparation standards and who used them in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of ECSE/EI programs in their respective states and territories. These decisions are consistent with Patton’s (2002) recommendations for selection of a purposeful sample.

DEC sent an electronic response link for the standards validation survey to those individuals who accepted the invitation. DEC staff identified 858 DEC members who indicated that their primary position was in the field of personnel preparation and 140 Part C and 619 coordinators (who may or may not have been DEC or NAEYC members), yielding a total of 998 persons who were individually invited. The standards work group consulted with the DEC Research Committee and decided a priori that a response rate in the 50% to 80% range would constitute organizational representation from a purposeful sample. In addition to the purposeful sampling of higher education faculty and state coordinators, DEC also provided members with access to the survey by posting the draft standards and a link to the survey on the DEC website.

Identification of NAEYC Respondents. While DEC preferred to select a purposeful sample of the NAEYC membership, it was not possible because NAEYC does not keep data on the roles of their members nor do they release the e-mail addresses of membership. The NAEYC membership was sampled by posting a stakeholder invitation to participate in the survey in the NAEYC newsletter. The invitation described the purpose of the survey and included a link to the survey. This NAEYC newsletter was sent to all 55,000 NAEYC members.

Data Analysis

There were two levels of data analysis. First, the standards were analyzed using the CEC K and S Committee criteria for inclusion and exclusion of standards to determine which standards to include in the final set of standards. In the second level of analysis, the standards ratings between the two stakeholder groups were compared. Each of these levels of analysis is explained below.

Criteria for Inclusion of Standards. Once the surveys were completed, CEC staff sent the results to the DEC work group. CEC refers to the validation process as a consensus process and has developed a set of rules to guide the determination of consensus from the field survey results. All divisions use these rules to determine whether a knowledge or skill standard was accepted (i.e., retained) or rejected (i.e., excluded) in the final standards document. Those three rules are as follows:

1. Standards that were rated as “essential for personnel to know or be able to do” (initial) or “essential” (advanced) by 80% or more of the respondents were automatically accepted;
2. Standards that were rated as “essential for personnel to know or be able to do” (initial) or “essential” (advanced) by less than 30% of the respondents were automatically rejected from the set of standards;
3. Standards that were rated as “essential for personnel to know or be able to do” (initial) or “essential” (advanced) by 30% to 79% of the respondents were reviewed by the K and S Committee and decisions for inclusion or exclusion were made by consensus of the group.

These rules represent the a priori standard applied to the initial and advanced survey results across all CEC divisions. The K and S Committee used the first rule to select those standards that are automatically accepted. The work group then discussed the standards that fell under Rules 2 and 3. Although the standards that fell under Rule 2 were to be automatically rejected based on the CEC criteria, the

work group discussed standards that fell under Rules 2 and 3 because the DEC work group members felt that some of the items were important to ECSE/EI practice.

The DEC work group examined demographic data (e.g., organization membership, professional role) as well as the target population of practice for specific standards (e.g., knowledge or skills needed to work with children who presented specific types or prevalence, that is, low incidence, of disabilities) in making recommendations through their representatives about the retention of standards rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents.

Comparison of the Stakeholder Responses. As DEC and NAEYC were represented in the field validation survey, the work group felt it was important to compare the responses across these two groups. There has been a history of collaboration between the two organizations, and they both review blended personnel preparation program accreditation applications. However, there are differences in practices, philosophy, and approaches to service delivery, which the group felt might influence the rating of standards. The rating of standards by each group was rank ordered and then compared. The differences in ratings were also compared by looking at rating differences in two bands: ones that differed by 0 to 10 percentage points and ones that differed by more than 10 percentage points. Differences in the 0 to 10 percentage point range represent variations within standards of practice required to address individual needs due to difference in populations, cultures, language, and developmental levels of the individuals served, whereas differences of more than 10 percentage points represent differences in philosophy, practice, and approaches to service delivery between the DEC and NAEYC groups.

Results

The results of the initial and advanced standards surveys are presented in separate sections that follow. For each validation survey, the results are presented in sections on the response rate, the role identification of the respondents, and the respondents' evaluation of the standards.

Initial Standards

Initial Standards Response Rate. Of the 998 DEC members, Part C and 619 coordinators and other invited stakeholders, 174 or 17% agreed to participate in the purposeful sample for the initial standards survey and received the electronic link to the survey. A total of 102 respondents completed the survey yielding a 59% response rate from the purposeful sample of the DEC membership and state Part C and 619 coordinators. Of these, 10 individuals responded to the general invitation to participate in the survey on the DEC

website. This response rate was acceptable for purposeful sampling because it fell within the predetermined target response range of 50% to 80%, set by DEC to infer organizational representation. Of the approximately 55,000 members of NAEYC who were invited to participate in the initial standards survey, 242 completed the survey yielding a response rate of approximately 0.5%.

Of the 344 respondents (102 DEC and 242 NAEYC), 29% of the respondents represented DEC, 68% represented NAEYC, and 3% responded from the posting on the DEC website. Regarding organizational membership, 21% were members of DEC and NAEYC, 10.1% were only members of DEC, and 63.4% were only members of NAEYC. Among them, 5.5% were not members of either DEC or NAEYC. These respondents probably represented state-level Part C or 619 coordinators who were not members of either professional organization but had been invited as key informants even if they were not members of the professional organization.

Role Identification. Table 2 presents a breakdown of respondent roles and response rates from DEC and NAEYC respondents.

All 344 respondents in the initial standards survey identified their professional role in the field. The administrator, teacher, and teacher educator roles are broken out by membership in the ECE versus the ECSE/EI field. There were more ECE administrators (61%) than ECSE/EI (39%) administrators. There were slightly more ECSE/EI (53%) higher education teacher educators than ECE (47%) higher education teacher educators. There were also slightly more ECE teachers (53%) than ECSE/EI (47%) teachers. More than one third (35%) of all respondents chose "other" as their role. In all, 3% of the respondents identified themselves as policy makers and 1% of all respondents were members of a family that included a person with a disability.

Evaluation of Initial Personnel Standards

Standards rating and inclusion. Of the 93 knowledge and skill standards contained in the draft DEC standards set for field validation, 55% or 51 standards were rated as essential by at least 80% of the respondents, 45% or 42 of the standards were rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents, and none of the standards were rated as essential by less than 30% of the respondents (Rule 2). The 51 standards rated as essential by more than 80% of the respondents were automatically accepted in the final set of standards. The remaining 42 standards were discussed by the work group. The DEC standards work group reached consensus on which standards in the 30% to 79% range the chairperson and liaison to the K and S Committee would lobby for inclusion because of their importance to ECSE/EI practice. There were 29 standards that were retained.

Table 2. Initial Standards Role Identification for All Respondents ($n = 344$)

Role	Administrators		Teacher educators		Teachers		Policy makers	Family members	Other
%	ECSE/EI 39 ($n = 29$)	ECE 61 ($n = 46$)	ECSE/EI 53 ($n = 31$)	ECE 47 ($n = 27$)	ECSE/EI 47 ($n = 37$)	ECE 53 ($n = 41$)			
Total %	22 ($n = 75$)		17 ($n = 58$)		22 ($n = 78$)		3 ($n = 9$)	1 ($n = 3$)	35 ($n = 121$)

Abbreviations: ECSE, early childhood special education; EI, early intervention; ECE, early childhood education.

Thirteen standards, which were rated as essential by only 30% to 79% of the respondents, were removed from the 93 draft standards based on the field survey results. During the discussion of these 13 standards by the DEC work group, 3 skill standards (ECSE5S6, ECSE5S7, and ECSE10S12) were determined to be similar to either CEC's common core or another ECSE/EI standard and were therefore considered redundant and eliminated. Nine additional standards (3 knowledge—ECSE2K4, ECSE2K6, ECSE2K7—and 6 skill—ECSE1S1, ECSE4S3, ECSE8S14, ECSE10S4, ECSE10S9, ECSE10S12) were eliminated because they were not rated as essential by more than 80% of the respondents, and there was not a sufficient rationale presented during the work group discussion for retaining them. One knowledge standard (ECSE5K1) was considered to be similar to a knowledge standard in another standard domain and so it was combined with that standard. The standards combined and eliminated are listed in Table 3.

After the revision process, 86% or 80 of the initial 93 draft standards were retained across 10 standard domains. In the four domains of Individual Learning Differences, Language, Instructional Planning, and Professional and Ethical Practice, there were no changes in the number of knowledge and skill statements, suggesting that the standards in these domains were highly acceptable to the respondents from the field. The highest rated standard statements by DEC and the NAEYC respondents fell in the four following domains: Individual Learning Differences, Learning Environments, Language, and Assessment. These standards are listed in Table 4.

Comparison of stakeholder ratings. The second level of analysis was the comparison of DEC and NAEYC members' ratings of the standards. Response differences ranged from 0.2% to 20.4%. For the first band of comparison where rating differences fell in the 0 to 10 percentage point range, there were 72 or 77% of the knowledge ($n = 21$) and skill ($n = 51$) standards. This represents an agreement within standard practice for more than three quarters of the standards. In the second band of comparison, where the differences were more than 10 percentage points, there were 21 or 23% of the knowledge ($n = 3$) and skill ($n = 18$) standards. Those standards where DEC and NAEYC ratings differed more than 10 percentage points are listed in Table 5.

In August 2007, the Board of Governors of CEC voted to accept the recommendations of its PSPC approving the revised DEC initial standards.

Advanced Standards

Advanced Standards Response Rate. Of the 998 DEC, Part C, and 619 coordinators and other invited stakeholders, 174 or 17% agreed to participate in the purposeful sample for the advanced standards survey and received the electronic link to the survey. The work group extended an invitation to NAEYC membership to participate in the survey through the NAEYC newsletter that reaches its 55,000 members. The invitation described the purpose of the survey and included a link to the survey. There were 522 responses to the advanced standards survey. A total of 405 respondents listed NAEYC, 15 respondents listed DEC, and 102 respondents did not identify an organization as inviting them. When using the 15 respondents, who listed DEC, to calculate response rate, the result is an 8.6% response rate from the 174 DEC members who agreed to participate. However, there were 102 respondents who did not identify an organization, so an accurate response rate by organization could not be calculated for the advanced standards survey sample. There were no responses from the invitation on the DEC website to complete the validation survey.

Role Identification. Table 6 displays the roles for all respondents by membership in the ECE versus the ECSE/EI field for administrators, teacher educators, and teachers. Of the 522 respondents in the advanced standards survey, 416 respondents or 80% answered this question. There were approximately 4 times as many ECE administrators (79%) compared with ECSE/EI (21%) administrators. There were more than 6 times as many ECE higher education (87%) teacher educators, than ECSE/EI (13%) teacher educators. There were almost 4 times as many ECE teachers (79%) than ECSE/EI teachers (21%). More than one third (37%) of the total respondents chose "other" as their role. Only 2% identified policy maker as their role, and there were no identified family members of a child with a disability who responded to the survey.

Evaluation of Advanced Personnel Standards

Standards rating and inclusion. Of the 34 draft advanced standards, 47% or 16 standards were rated as essential by 80% or more of the respondents, and 53% or 18 standard statements were rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents. None of the standards were rated as essential by less than 30% of the respondents.

Table 3. Initial Standards Deleted or Combined by Area With DEC and NAEYC Rating

Action		Domain	Number	Standard	DEC	NAEYC
Eliminated	Combined				(%)	(%)
X		Foundations	ECSE1S1	Articulate a personal philosophy that encompasses three distinct age levels: Early intervention, preschool, and early elementary	51.1	48.1
X		Development and characteristics of learners	ECSE2K4	Significance of sociocultural and political contexts for the development and learning of infants and young children from diverse backgrounds	68.9	62.4
X			ECSE2K6	Impact of medical conditions on family concerns, resources, and priorities	65.6	60.8
X			ECSE2K7	Developmental consequences of stress and trauma, and of protective factors and resilience	68.9	69.6
X		Instructional strategies	ECSE4S3	Incorporate technology to increase access to curriculum, instruction, and assessment	58.6	38.2
	X	Learning environments and social interaction	ECSE5K1	Aspects of medical care for infants who are preterm, low birth weight, or medically fragile, and may be dependent on technology (combined with EC2K5)	27.1	32.1
X			ECSE5S6	Use adaptive and assistive technology (redundant with CC)	68.2	53.5
X			ECSE5S7	Implement nutrition and feeding strategies for children with exceptional needs (redundant to EC5S8)	37.6	52.2
X		Assessment	ECSE8S9	Administer assessment instruments for specific sensory and motor disabilities	41.5	49
X			ECSE8S14	Use summative evaluation to improve program quality	56.1	57.8
X		Collaboration	ECSE10S4	Provide consultation and training in early childhood curriculum and service areas	42	35.7
X			ECSE10S9	Provide feedback and evaluate performance in collaboration with adults	51.9	54.3
X			ECSE10S12	Apply models of team process across service delivery settings (redundant EC9S4, some CC items)	71.6	60.7

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children; ECSE, early childhood special education; CC, common core.

Table 4. Highest Rated Initial Standards by DEC and NAEYC Personnel

Domain	Number	Standard	DEC (%)	NAEYC (%)
Individual learning differences	ECSE3K1	Impact of child's abilities, needs, and characteristics on development and learning	97.8	93.2
Learning environments and social interactions	ECSE5S3	Embed learning opportunities in everyday routines, relationships, activities, and places	96.5	93.7
Language	ECSE6K1	Impact of language delays on cognitive, social-emotional, adaptive, play, temperament, and motor development	96.5	91.7
	ECSE6K2	Impact of language delays on behavior	96.5	95.5
Assessment	ECSE8S7	Gather information from multiple sources and environments	95.1	85

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children; ECSE, early childhood special education.

The 16 standards rated as essential by more than 80% of the respondents were automatically accepted in the final set of standards. The remaining 18 standards were discussed by

the work group. The DEC standards work group reached consensus on which standards in the 30% to 79% range the chairperson and liaison to the K and S Committee would

Table 5. Initial Standards With More Than 10% Difference in Rating Between DEC and NAEYC Invited Respondents

Domain	Number	Standard	DEC (%)	NAEYC (%)
Instructional strategies	ECSE4S2	Use strategies to develop universally designed curriculum and instruction (changed to knowledge)	58.6	45.9
	ECSE4S3	Incorporate technology to increase access to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (deleted)	58.6	38.2
	ECSE4S7	Use individual and group guidance and problem-solving techniques to develop supportive relationships with and among children	77	86.5
	ECSE4S8	Use strategies to teach social skills and conflict resolution	81.6	92.4
Learning environments and social interaction	ECSE5S6	Use adaptive and assistive technology (deleted)	68.2	53.5
	ECSE5S7	Implement nutrition and feeding strategies for children with exceptional needs (deleted)	37.6	52.2
	ECSE5S9	Use evaluation procedures and recommend referral with ongoing follow-up to community health and social services	48.2	65.4
Instructional planning Assessment	ECSE7K2	Developmental and academic content	86.9	73.5
	ECSE8S4	Select and administer assessment instruments in compliance with established criteria	78	63.3
	ECSE8S13	Conduct ongoing formative child, family, and setting assessment to monitor instructional effectiveness	85.4	70.7
Professional and ethical practice	ECSE9S2	Integrate family systems theories and principles into professional practice	70.7	59.9
	ECSE9S5	Advocacy for professional status and working conditions for those who serve infants and young children, and their families (accepted as a knowledge statement)	37.8	54.2
	ECSE9S6	Participate in professional organizations relevant to early childhood special education and early intervention	34.1	53.5
	ECSE9S8	Advocate on behalf of infants and young children and their families	62.2	72.5
Collaboration	ECSE10S6	Involve families in evaluation of services	70.4	88.6
	ECSE10S10	Implement processes and strategies that support transitions among settings for infants and young children	75.3	62.9
	ECSE10S12	Apply models of team process across service delivery settings (deleted)	71.6	60.7

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children; ECSE, early childhood special education.

Table 6. Advanced Standards Role Identification for All Respondents ($n = 416$)

Role	Administrators		Teacher educators		Teachers		Policy makers	Family members	Other
%	ECSE/EI 21 ($n = 6$)	ECE 79 ($n = 22$)	ECSE/EI 13 ($n = 25$)	ECE 87 ($n = 175$)	ECSE/EI 21 ($n = 7$)	ECE 79 ($n = 27$)			
Total %	7 ($n = 28$)		48 ($n = 200$)		8 ($n = 34$)		2 ($n = 1$)	0 ($n = 0$)	36.8 ($n = 153$)

Abbreviations: ECSE, early childhood special education; EI, early intervention; ECE, early childhood education.

lobby for inclusion because of their importance to ECSE/EI practice. There were 17 standards that were retained. There were 16 standards (3 knowledge and 13 skill) rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents, which were advocated for retention. These standards covered all six advanced standard domains and are listed in Table 7.

There were two knowledge standards in the Professional Development and Ethical Practice domain that 30% to 79% of the respondents rated as essential, which the work group combined into one knowledge statement. They were as follows: AEC5K1—specialized knowledge in at least one developmental period—and AECK2—specialized

Table 7. Advanced Standards Rated as Essential by 30% to 79% of the Respondents That Were Advocated for Retention

Area	Number	Standard	DEC (%)	NAEYC (%)
Leadership and policy	AEC1K1	Sociocultural, historical, and political forces that influence diverse delivery systems, including mental health	78	72.2
	AEC1S1	Advocate on behalf of infants and young children with exceptional needs, and their families, at local, state, and national levels	78	66
	AEC1S2	Provide leadership to help others understand policy and research that guide recommended practices	67.8	60.3
	AEC1S3	Provide leadership in the collaborative development of community-based services and resources	62.7	57.5
Program development and organization	AEC2S2	Design, implement, and evaluate home- and community-based programs and services	82.8	72.3
	AEC2S4	Address medical and mental health issues and concerns when planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and services	77.6	77.8
	AEC2S5	Incorporate and evaluate the use of universal design and assistive technology in programs and services	72.4	66.8
Research and inquiry	AEC3S1	Create and disseminate new advances and evidence-based practices	55.2	52.4
	AEC3S2	Apply interdisciplinary knowledge from the social sciences and the allied health fields	62.1	61.8
	AEC3S4	Interpret and apply research to the provision of quality services and program practices to infants and young children, and their families, in a variety of educational and community settings	84.5	77.5
Standards and evaluation	AEC4K1	Policy and research implications that promote recommended practices in assessment and evaluation	81.0	71.2
	AEC4S2	Provide leadership in the development and implementation of unbiased assessment and evaluation procedures for child care and early education environments and curricula	74.1	76.9
Professional development and ethical practice	AEC5S2	Participate in peer mentoring and other types of reciprocal professional development activities	70.7	56.9
	AEC5S3	Provide leadership in organizations that represent recommended practices of early intervention and early childhood special education on a national, state, and local level	46.6	34.4
Collaboration	AEC6K2	Theories, models, and research that support collaborative relationships	74.1	72.3
	AEC6S1	Implement and evaluate leadership and models of collaborative relationships	74.1	59.3

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

knowledge in at least one particular area of disability or delay.

After the revision process, 33 or (97.1%) of the draft advanced DEC standards were retained. The highest rated advanced standard statements were in the Leadership and Policy, Program Development and Organization, and Professional Development and Ethical Practice domains and are listed in Table 8.

Comparison of stakeholder ratings. The second level of analysis was the comparison of DEC and NAEYC members' ratings of the standards. Response differences ranged from 0.2% to 14.8%. For the first band of comparison, where rating differences were in the 0 to 10 percentage point range, there were 27 or 79% of the knowledge ($n = 8$) and skill

($n = 19$) standards. In the second band of comparison, where the differences were more than 10 percentage points, there were 7 or 21% of the skill ($n = 7$) standards. Those standards where DEC and NAEYC ratings differed more than 10 percentage points are listed in Table 9.

In August 2008, the Board of Governors of CEC voted to accept the recommendations of its PSPC approving the ECSE/EI advanced standards. The CEC's ECSE/EI Initial and Advanced Standards are available on either the DEC website at http://www.dec-sped.org/About_DEC/Position_Statements_and_Concept_Papers/Personnel_Standards or on the CEC website in the publication: *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (6th ed., 2009).

Table 8. Highest Rated Advanced Standards by DEC and NAEYC

Domain	Number	Standard	DEC (%)	NAEYC (%)
Leadership and policy	AEC1K2	Policy and emerging trends that affect infants and young children, families, resources, and services	91.5	86.4
	AEC1K3	Community resources on national, state, and local levels that affect program planning and implementation and the individualized needs of the child and family	91.5	87.5
Program development and organization	AEC2K1	Range of delivery systems for programs and services available for infants and young children and their families	89.7	91.5
	AEC2S1	Apply various curriculum theories and early learning standards, and evaluate their impact	89.7	88.6
	AEC2S7	Design, implement, and evaluate plans to prevent and address challenging behaviors across settings	93.1	88.9
	AEC2S8	Design, implement, and evaluate developmentally responsive learning environments, preventive strategies, programwide behavior supports, and tiered instruction	94.8	91.3
Professional development and ethical practice	AEC5S1	Engage in reflective inquiry and professional self-assessment	91.4	83.7

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Table 9. Advanced Standards With More Than 10% Difference in Rating Between DEC and NAEYC Invited Respondents

Domain	Number	Standard	DEC (%)	NAEYC (%)
Leadership and policy	AEC1S1	Advocate on behalf of infants and young children with exceptional needs and their families, at local, state, and national levels	78	66
Program development and organization	AEC2S2	Design, implement, and evaluate home- and community-based programs and services	82.8	72.3
Professional development and ethical practice	AEC5S2	Participate in peer mentoring and other types of reciprocal professional development activities	70.7	56.9
	AEC5S3	Provide leadership in organizations that represent recommended practices of early intervention and early childhood special education on a national, state, and local level	46.6	34.3

Abbreviations: DEC, Division for Early Childhood; NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Discussion

The results of the field validation surveys point to the strengths of the CEC field validation process as well as to areas where the process could be improved. Overall, the process produced a set of final standards with strong agreement from DEC and NAEYC. Using a purposeful sample of DEC, members in the initial survey targeted members who have knowledge and expertise in ECSE/EI and use the standards in personnel preparation programs, in program evaluation and design, and in the delivery of ECSE/EI services. However, it was not possible to select a purposeful sample of the NAEYC membership which resulted in the use of two sampling methods. This is an area where DEC

will need to work with CEC and NAEYC to determine whether a stratified or purposeful sampling will be most appropriate in future field validation surveys.

This was the first time the DEC advanced standards were validated and there was a low response rate from DEC members, so it will be important to identify and define the sampling universe for the advanced standards. Because there were approximately one third of the respondents in the initial and advanced surveys who selected “other” as their role, there is a need to further define and expand the respondent role categories which point to the need for close collaboration with the CEC K and S Committee who administer the surveys. These results also point to the need to further describe and refine the process for reaching consensus

on standards that are rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents. The following discussion highlights these points and identifies limitations in the study that can be addressed in future validation surveys.

The Quality of the Standards and the Field Validation Process

The DEC revised initial and new advanced ECSE/EI personnel standards are a critical part of an aligned education accountability system designed to ensure that all children learn and achieve targeted learning standards in the prekindergarten to Grade 12 educational systems. The results of this field validation study support the CEC K and S Committee standards development and revision process in producing a strong set of rigorous, evidence-based standards supported by the field. DEC and NAEYC were partners and the primary stakeholder groups in the DEC ECSE/EI standards development, revision, and validation process. For the initial (55% or 51 standards) and advanced (47% or 16 standards) standards surveys, approximately half of the draft standards were automatically accepted because they were rated as essential by 80% or more of the respondents. This suggests that the DEC work group was successful in developing high-quality standards across all domains that were accepted by the field. These results also support the DEC work group selection process that included DEC members from the research, teacher preparation, policy, practitioner, and family groups, as well as DEC members holding dual membership with NAEYC, as work group members. In comparison of responses from DEC and NAEYC, for 77% or 72 of the 93 draft initial standards and for 79% or 27 of the 34 draft advanced standards, the ratings for each group were within 10 percentage points of each other, indicating strong agreement in rating standards as essential. Following the work group discussion of standards rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents, 86% or 80 of the 93 draft initial standards were retained and 97% or 33 of the 34 draft advanced standards were retained. This lends support for the process of developing high-quality standards, which includes direct involvement by key stakeholders in the field.

Comparisons and Differences in Responses From DEC and NAEYC

Initial Standards. The initial standards ranked higher by DEC than NAEYC members can be grouped into three major areas that are central to ECSE/EI practice. Those areas are as follows: (a) universal design for learning (ECSE4S2) and using technology (ECSE4S3) and assistive and adaptive technology (ECSE5S6) to access learning, (b) selection and use of ongoing assessment (ECSE8S4 and ECSE8S13) to monitor instructional effectiveness and the developmental

of academic content (ECSE7K2), and (c) integration of family systems theory in professional practice (ECSE9S2) using a teaming process across service delivery models (EC10S12). The first two areas are related and focus on designing accessible curricula through the use of relevant technologies and the use of ongoing assessment to monitor and inform instruction, which are critical skills and reflect the essence of ECSE/EI services designed to increase student's access, participation, and progress in the general education curriculum. The design of accessible curricula, assessment, and progress monitoring are also important when working collaboratively in a team environment to support inclusive services and practices for children birth through 8 years with special needs and their families. Recommended practices in ECSE/EI (Sandall, Hemmeter, McLean, & Smith, 2005) advocate the use of a teaming approach for the effective provision of services with ECSE/EI, ECE, related services professionals, and families collaborating in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the individual family service plan (IFSP) or the individualized education program (IEP).

The standards ranked higher by NAEYC than DEC members can be grouped into four major areas that are central to ECE practice. Those areas are as follows: (a) individual and group guidance and problem solving (ECSE4S7) and using strategies to teach social skills and conflict resolution (ECSE4S8), (b) evaluation procedures and recommending referral with ongoing follow-up to community health and social services (ECSE5S9) and involving families in evaluation of services (ECSE10S6), (c) implementing nutrition and feeding strategies (ECSE5S7), and (d) advocacy on the part of infants and young children and their families (ECSE9S8) along with advocacy for professional status and working conditions for those who serve infants and young children (ECSE9S5) and participation in professional organizations (ECSE9S6) relevant to ECSE/EI. These may be areas where the ECE field looks to the ECSE/EI field for support and collaboration as the themes that emerged are related to ECSE/EI areas of expertise such as (a) developing classroom rules and routines, along with the use of behavior management strategies and social skills instruction and (b) collaborating and teaming with multidisciplinary teams and connecting children and families with community resources. The implementation of nutrition and feeding strategies is a specialized skill standard, which was dropped because less than 80% of the respondents rated it as essential and there was not sufficient support for retention as a standard. The fourth area points to the strong advocacy role that ECSE/EI personnel play and also points to possible areas where the ECSE/EI field could provide professional development for the ECE field and work collaboratively to provide these services in inclusive settings.

The competencies rated highest by DEC and NAEYC, as well as those rated higher by the members of each

professional organization, could serve as a guide to higher education faculty who operate blended ECSE/EI and ECE teacher preparation programs. In these programs, the teacher education candidates graduate with certification/licensure that qualifies them to provide services in ECE/ECSE/EI programs or classrooms. One of the outcomes of the collaborative standard development process was the development of a document aligning the DEC ECSE/EI standards with the NAEYC ECE standards (Chandler et al., 2012). This article identifies those knowledge and skill standards that are similar and those knowledge and skills standards that are specific to each organization. This alignment document could be used along with the standard ratings from the field validation studies to determine areas of emphasis in the design of curricula and field-based experiences for these blended programs.

Advanced Standards. The standards rated highest by DEC and NAEYC were the same seven standards, though the order of priority ranking was different. This demonstrates a consensus on the importance of the knowledge and skills required at the advanced level from the ECSE/EI and ECE field. These seven standards fell in the Leadership and Policy, Program Development and Organization, and Professional Development and Ethical Practice domains. Two knowledge standards (AEC1K2, AEC1K3) in the Leadership and Policy domain and one knowledge standard (AEC2K1) and two skill (AEC2S7, AEC2S8) standards in the Program Development and Organization domain received the same or the next closest rank from DEC and NAEYC members. The knowledge standards in the Leadership and Policy domain concern policy and emerging trends that affect infants and young children, families, resources and services, and community resources on national, state, and local levels. These standards affect program planning, implementation, and evaluation to meet the individualized needs of the child and family. In the Program Development and Organization domain, the knowledge standard concerns the range of delivery systems for programs and services available for infants and young children and their families, whereas the skill standards concern designing, implementing, and evaluating plans to prevent and address challenging behaviors across settings and designing, implementing, and evaluating developmentally responsive learning environments, preventive strategies, programwide behavior supports, and tiered instruction. The additional skill (AEC2S1) standard in the Program Development and Organization domain concerned the application of various curriculum theories and early learning standards, and evaluation of their impact. The skill standard (AEC5S1) in the Professional Development and Ethical Practice domain concerns reflective inquiry and professional self-assessment. This standard relates to the need for the professional to be a lifelong learner, who is constantly reflecting on new knowledge and acquiring new skills to provide services and

implement evidence-based practices that improve the learning conditions and achievement of children birth through 8 years with special needs and their families.

Sampling Differences

There were two different sampling methods employed in this survey, a purposeful sample for the DEC members and an invitation to the NAEYC membership through the NAEYC newsletter. Although these two methods resulted in large differences in sample sizes between the two groups, the ratings of the standards as essential were similar. For the initial standards, 72 or 77% of the knowledge ($n = 21$) and skill ($n = 51$) standards ratings were within 10 percentage points. For the advanced standards, 27 or 79% of the knowledge ($n = 8$) and skill ($n = 19$) standards ratings were within 10 percentage points. This indicated a high level of agreement in the rating of more than three quarters of the standards by both the groups. The work group attributed differences in ratings to standard variations in practice due to differences in populations, cultures, language, and developmental levels. It may be that sampling by invitation or self-selection and purposeful sampling resulted in targeting similar groups. This is an area that CEC and the divisions will need to address in future sampling for validation surveys.

Effect of Response Rate on Standards Rating

The response rate by DEC-invited respondents differed from the initial standards and advanced standards surveys. The response rate for DEC-invited respondents for the initial standards survey was 59%, whereas in the advanced standards survey, the response rate for DEC-invited respondents was only 8.6%. In the initial standards survey, the work group considered 5 of the 93 draft standards or 5% as important and advocated for their retention. Conversely, in the advanced standards survey, the work group considered 16 of the 34 or 47% of the draft advanced standards important and advocated for retention. The difference in response rate by the DEC membership could have influenced the percentage of items that were rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents and thus the number of standards that were subsequently advocated for retention. After the discussion between the DEC work group and the K and S Committee, the Committee retained 97% or 33 of the 34 advanced standards. These results illustrate the importance of using a purposeful sampling strategy, so that the population evaluating the standards has knowledge and expertise in ECSE/EI service delivery, personnel preparation, and program evaluation. If the purposeful sampling in the advanced survey had reached the target response rate range of 50% to 80% to infer organizational representation,

respondents may have rated a larger number of the advanced standards as essential. As this was the initial development of the advanced standards, the membership may not have been familiar with the standards and, therefore, did not respond to the survey.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Field Validation Surveys

The use of two sampling methods, a purposeful sample of DEC membership and an invited sample of the NAEYC membership, creates limitations for this study as does the low representation of family members and policy makers. The sample was limited to professionals in the fields of ECSE, EI, and ECE, and they consisted of teachers, administrators, policy makers, family members, and teacher preparation personnel from higher education. The use of a purposeful sample was different from the procedures CEC previously used for the field validation surveys (i.e., use of a stratified sample to solicit feedback from the general membership). The DEC work group advocated for a purposeful sample to increase response rates from those individuals most involved in the preparation of EI/ECSE professionals.

It should also be noted that the use of a nonprobability sampling technique such as purposeful sampling is not free from bias and the interpretation of these results is limited to the population under study. The DEC work group chose respondents in the purposeful sample because of their knowledge and expertise in personnel preparation and operation of EI and ECSE programs. However, the focus of this sample, which would represent “bias” in probability sampling, becomes the intended focus in the field validation sampling and, therefore, a strength because the respondents represent the insight and in-depth understanding rather than generalization (Patton, 2002, p. 273).

The larger number of respondents in the “other” category for DEC could have occurred for a number of reasons. First, the survey did not differentiate between ECSE teachers and EI providers. It may be that individuals who provide EI services chose the “other” category because they do not identify themselves as teachers. Second, related services personnel (e.g., physical and occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, nurses, etc.) also may have checked the “other” category because their role is not that of a teacher. In addition, in the EI field oftentimes the primary early interventionist could be a related service member and most likely chose the “other” role as they do not identify themselves as a teacher. Finally, although we included a category titled “teacher educator,” that term may not have been clear to all respondents. It may be that some college and university teacher educators selected the “other” category thinking that teacher educator meant classroom teachers.

It is possible that the representation of family members of children with special needs was actually higher than it appears. Respondents were asked to identify their professional roles, so it is possible that respondents who were professionals and family members of a child with special needs identified their professional role. The small number of policy makers may have occurred because Part C and Part B 619 coordinators may not have considered themselves as policy makers and thus did not choose that role. It may also be possible that individuals who are policy makers tend to be members of organizations other than DEC and NAEYC. Future field validation efforts should assure that family members of children with special needs and policy makers are included in the process and that individuals with dual roles (i.e., family member and professional) have the opportunity to identify all possible roles.

In the DEC advanced standards survey, 102 respondents failed to complete the question about which organization invited them to participate and only 15 of 522 respondents indicated they were invited by DEC. As a result, the work group could not calculate an accurate response rate for the purposeful sample in the advanced standards survey. The 8.6% response rate for the respondents who chose DEC as the inviting organization is low and is not sufficient to infer organizational representation. There could be several reasons why a higher response rate was not obtained with the advanced standards field survey. First, it may be that because the two surveys occurred at separate times, with several months in between the surveys, that respondents thought they had already responded to the survey. Second, it could be that the target population for the initial standards was not the appropriate target population for the advanced standards surveys. It is possible that those invited DEC members who agreed to complete the surveys were more involved in initial teacher preparation programs and not as involved in advanced teacher preparation programs and, therefore, did not respond to the second advanced standards survey request. Third, it is also possible that the 30-day window for response was not sufficient. There were no reminders sent out after the initial survey link was sent, so the combination of a longer response window combined with reminders may increase response rate in future studies. To know which organization invited the respondents, two separate surveys and links could be used in the future.

As it was not possible to use a purposeful sample for the NAEYC membership, it may be possible to send the survey to all U.S. college and university contacts for initial and advanced professional teacher education programs to ensure that the appropriate populations are targeted in the future. NCATE could provide this information as it maintains a database of contact information for these programs. Another possibility is to make the survey available at the NAEYC and DEC professional conferences where the general

members of both organizations could respond as well as personnel preparation special interest group members. To access the related services personnel in a purposeful sample, DEC could send the survey to members of relevant allied professional organizations (i.e., those representing related service providers). DEC will need to continue to investigate this option prior to the next revision of the standards.

This collaborative partnership between DEC and NAEYC in the development of the ECSE/EI standards was a successful effort that resulted in the development of a strong set of evidence-based, field-validated standards with agreement on the importance of the standards across domains. This effort also resulted in further collaboration with the development of a document aligning the personnel standards from both organizations (Chandler et al., 2012). This article can provide guidance in the development of blended professional education programs. These standards, which reflect the collective knowledge and values of the ECSE/EI and ECE fields, are part of a larger educational accountability system and serve as the foundation of our professional teacher preparation programs and state licensure and certification requirements. It is critical that DEC and NAEYC continue to collaborate to support the provision of EI and educational services in inclusive settings by highly qualified ECSE, EI, and ECE personnel.

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