

# DEC Personnel Preparation Standards:

## Revision 2005-2008

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The revision and process of validation of standards for early childhood special education (ECSE) and early intervention (EI) personnel at the initial and advanced levels of preparation, which occurred during 2005-2008, are described to provide a record of the process and to inform future cycles of standards revision. Central components focus on the importance of the relationships forged in the process, especially with Council for Exceptional Children, and their contributions to its success. The results are discussed in terms of changes in terminology for the ECSE/EI standards, limitations of the process, and suggestions for next revisions.

**Keywords:** *personnel standards, ECSE/EI initial standards, ECSE/EI advanced standards*

Personnel preparation constitutes a major emphasis of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and is reflected in the DEC strategic plan (DEC, 2009), the DEC Recommended Practices book (Sandall, Hemmeter, McLean, & Smith, 2005), and the DEC Special Interest Group on Personnel Preparation. Indeed Goal 2 of DEC's strategic plan for 2009-2012 is "to increase the competence and confidence of the early childhood workforce who provides services for

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**Table 1**  
**Components of the Validation Process**

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1. Integrating DEC's independent standards with CEC's then called EC standards to develop one set of initial ECSE/EI standards for preparation of beginning professionals in the field;
  2. Integrating the ECSE/EI standards with the common core to delete ECSE/EI items that were addressed in the common core, resulting in a revised draft set of ECSE/EI standards;
  3. Working with CEC's Knowledge and Skills (K and S) Committee to develop an advanced common core of standards for preparation of all special education professionals at the graduate level for leadership roles;
  4. Revising and then integrating DEC's independent advanced ECSE/EI standards with CEC's newly developed advanced common core standards;
  5. Finalizing development of a draft set of advanced ECSE/EI standards; and then,
  6. Validating both sets of standards.
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Note: DEC = Division for Early Childhood; CEC = Council for Exceptional Children; ECSE/EI = early childhood special education/early intervention.

children (birth through age 8) who have or are at risk for disabilities and their families" (p. 1 from the following link): [http://www.dec-sped.org/About\\_DEC/DEC\\_Strategic\\_Plan](http://www.dec-sped.org/About_DEC/DEC_Strategic_Plan)

Standards provide guidance to states in the development of certification requirements and to personnel preparation programs at the college and university levels in the development and evaluation of curricula. DEC has a long history of developing and revising standards for programs that prepare personnel in early childhood special education (ECSE), early intervention (EI), and for blended programs that prepare personnel to work in ECSE, EI, and early childhood education (ECE; McCollum, 2000; McCollum, McLean, McCartan, & Kaiser, 1989). Standards are the mainstay of these programs. Faculty use standards to guide the development of courses, course content, field experiences, and assessment activities. They also use standards to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. Moreover, professional accrediting organizations, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), use standards for their evaluations of these college and university programs. Finally, at the state level, it is useful to consider personnel standards when designing professional development agendas or when developing state-specific personnel competencies (e.g., infant/toddler or preschool competencies). Supervisors and school-based administrators can also use personnel standards to reflect on the competencies of their staff and provide both locally based professional development as well as effective supervision to their staff.

CEC publishes common core standards for personnel preparation for all special education professionals and division-specific standards, which were first published in 1996 (CEC, 1996). The standards are composed of knowledge statements and skill statements that constitute the competencies that adequately prepared personnel must possess and demonstrate. The standards developed from the process described herein were published in the sixth edition of the volume (CEC, 2009). As a division of CEC, DEC collaborates with CEC in developing and revising standards, and CEC's procedures and schedules for revising the standards for each of its divisions drive the revision process.

The primary purpose of our article is to provide a record of the process through which the DEC standards for personnel preparation were revised and validated during the period from 2005-2008. The major components of the process are presented in Table 1. A

secondary purpose is to inform future cycles of standards revision, given that revision and validation occur on a periodic basis. The process was complex, with many moving parts and many new procedures. The ongoing collaboration with CEC, particularly their engagement with DEC in the development of new terminology that was reflective of the needs and changes for personnel in ECSE/EI, was central to the process.

We organized this article as follows: First, we present the background for the process. Then we describe the participants, resources, and procedures of the validation. Our results are presented in terms of the number of standards that were developed, reviewed, and accepted in the final sets of standards; the revised terminology for division-specific standards that is used in CEC's (2009) standards; and an overview of the final sets of standards. The full sets of initial and advanced standards are available on the DEC and CEC websites. The DEC website, which also includes a brief introduction to the standards, is at the following URL: [http://www.dec-sped.org/About\\_DEC/Position\\_Statements\\_and\\_Concept\\_Papers/Personnel\\_Standards](http://www.dec-sped.org/About_DEC/Position_Statements_and_Concept_Papers/Personnel_Standards)

On the CEC website, the standards for all the divisions can be downloaded or purchased at the following URL: <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/>

Finally, we discuss the limitations of the process and make suggestions for future revisions. Limitations include the use of different sampling methods (i.e., purposeful sampling in only one of two large surveys), the resulting different response rates, the failure to include family members explicitly, although they were included indirectly, and the use of professional expertise in deciding to include a standard when less than 80% of the respondents included it as "essential." Future directions include the alignment of these standards with the standards developed by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; Chandler et al., 2010; Lifter, Chandler, Christensen, Cochran, & Gallagher, 2009), a more detailed presentation of the results, a review of the literature that supports the standards, guidance for programs in how to use these standards, and the integration of the standards with the DEC Recommended Practices (Sandall et al., 2005). These projects are under development by participants from the DEC Validation Work Team.

## Background

Two issues led to the development and validation of the initial and advanced standards. The first relates to the timeline established by CEC for revising standards and the second relates to confusion in the field because there were two sets of standards addressing the preparation of ECSE and EI professionals.

## CEC's Schedule for Revising Standards

The CEC establishes a time frame for revision of common core and division-specific standards. Standards are revised approximately every 5 to 7 years. CEC's Professional Standards and Practices Committee (PSPC), which oversees the work of CEC's Knowledge and Skills (K and S) Committee, drives the process of revision. The K and S Committee develops and revises the language and content of the standards, which, once approved,

are submitted to the PSPC committee for final approval. Each division sends a representative to the K and S Committee.

The PSPC committee scheduled the revision of the initial standards for DEC in 2005, and the development of the advanced standards for 2006. It also designated the NAEYC as DEC's partner in revising the standards. The collaboration between DEC and NAEYC was important in field validation of the standards and will be described later in the manuscript. During this time period, the K and S Committee developed the advanced common core standards. Representatives from the other divisions worked on revising or developing their division standards in addition to participating in the development of the advanced common core standards.

The standards are designed for initial and advanced preparation programs. CEC (2009) provides guidance on when to use the Initial Special Education Preparation Standards and when to use the Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards. In general, initial programs are those that prepare candidates for an initial special education credential and/or teaching role. Customarily, they are programs at the baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate levels. Advanced programs are generally restricted to candidates who already hold a valid special education teaching credential or some other school-based credential. Advanced programs commonly award graduate credit and include master's, specialist, and doctoral degree programs as well as nondegree licensure programs offered at the postbaccalaureate level.

## **DEC's Independent Standards as Discrepant**

At the start of the revision process, DEC had existing sets of initial and advanced standards that addressed the preparation of personnel in ECSE. These standards were referred to as the EC standards. The initial standards were the same on both DEC's website and in CEC's original publication of its standards (CEC, 1996). This continued to be true up to the fifth edition of that publication (CEC, 2003). In 2001, the initial standards were revalidated based on the K and S Committee's validation process, resulting in the elimination of some of the EC standards. After the revalidation, DEC maintained the original, complete set of EC standards in its policy documents, and thus, that set of standards, now referred to as the DEC standards, was different from the initial EC standards that were included in CEC's (2003) fifth edition. The original set of EC standards had been developed to address DEC members' needs for a comprehensive set of standards to guide program development and evaluation. Although DEC collaborated with CEC in the revalidation process, the resulting set of CEC EC standards were not as thorough as DEC members wanted, even when combined with the CEC common core standards.

The discrepancy between the DEC and CEC EC standards created problems for college and university faculties who prepared personnel for roles in ECSE and sought accreditation for their programs. Accrediting bodies, such as NCATE, use standards that are put forth by Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs), and in this case for CEC's divisions, CEC is the recognized SPA. Accordingly, the CEC standards for EC personnel were recognized and used by accrediting bodies. As a result, programs that had used the DEC standards in program development had to also align their programs with the CEC common core and CEC EC standards and address these standards in SPA reports. Members of DEC also had

**Table 2**  
**Participants on DEC's Work Teams and CEC's Knowledge and Skills Committee**

Role/subgroup	Name
Chairperson, liaison to K and S Committee, set facilitator	Karin Lifter, Northeastern University
Initial standards Subgroup	Lynette K. Chandler (DEC Board), Northern Illinois University Kimberly A. Christensen (parent), Bowling Green State University Peggy A. Gallagher, Georgia State University Eva Horn, University of Kansas
Advanced standards Subgroup	Monica Sheerer (student, DEC Board), University of Denver Laurie A. Dinnebeil, University of Toledo Vicki D. Stayton, Western Kentucky University
Research committee Subgroup	Deborah C. Cochran, Ohio University Wu-Ying Hsieh, University of Illinois, Chicago Sarah Jackson (student), Kent State University Kristi Prett-Frontczak, Kent State University
Chairpersons, K and S Committee	Kathlene Shank, Eastern Illinois University
CEC liaison to K and S Committee	Scott Sparks, Ohio University
CEC staff	Richard Mainzer, associate executive director, Professional Services LaTisha Putney, senior director, Professional Development Sabata G. Morris, administrative coordinator

Note: DEC = Division for Early Childhood; CEC = Council for Exceptional Children.

developed a set of standards for advanced personnel in ECSE. However, at the time this revision began, a process did not exist for accrediting preparation programs at the advanced level. Moreover, CEC had not yet developed an advanced common core of standards for personnel preparation. The discrepancies between and among sets of standards, in addition to the different levels of preparation for the different sets of standards, presented challenges to the revision process.

## Method

### Participants

The DEC Executive Board formed and charged a work team with the task of revising the standards. The chairperson of DEC's Personnel Preparation Committee worked with the DEC Executive Board to identify participants. As a research component was required for identifying the literature base for the revised standards, participation also was solicited from the DEC Research Committee. The final work team was constituted in December 2005 and was organized into smaller working groups. The participants on these work groups are presented in Table 2. The DEC Personnel Preparation Committee chairperson served as the chairperson of the work team, liaison to the K and S committee, and "set facilitator" of standards. The person who chaired the work team that was charged with the task of revising the EC "set" of standards was known as the "set facilitator." The chairpersons of the K and S Committee and staff from CEC are also presented in Table 2.

## Materials and Resources

The materials and resources consisted of several sets of standards that needed to be integrated and revised, such as specifications and resources from CEC, ongoing support from the DEC Board, and ongoing liaison of DEC with NAEYC.

*Standards.* Several sets of standards were reviewed, revised, and integrated during the revision process. These included the CEC EC standards: CEC Knowledge and Skill Base for All Entry-Level Special Education Teachers of Students in Early Childhood, published by CEC (5th ed., 2003); the DEC standards, which were developed in the 1990s; the CEC common core standards for initial preparation of special education professionals; the advanced common core standards that CEC was in the process of developing (through the K and S Committee); and the DEC advanced standards that were developed in the 1990s for personnel beyond the entry level of preparation.

*Resources from CEC.* The K and S Committee consisted of a chairperson, a liaison from CEC, and members from each of the divisions of CEC. Staff from CEC provided support and assisted in the process. CEC, through the K and S Committee, provided several guidance documents for the validation. These documents included the schedule for revision; guidance on the revision and development of standards (e.g., division standards needed to augment rather than duplicate the common core); an electronic boilerplate form for supporting each standard with a literature base; guidance for editing proposed knowledge and skills statements, known as the “smoothing guidelines”; and guidance for accepting/rejecting standards from field surveys. A representative from DEC participated on the subcommittee that developed the foregoing guidelines. CEC also managed the survey and provided Survey Monkey™ software for the field surveys.

*DEC Board, staff, and membership.* DEC’s participation was central to the success of the revision. The DEC Executive Board and the executive director provided support and advice regarding the revision and field validation on an ongoing basis. DEC staff communicated with the DEC membership when requested. The DEC membership provided input and feedback on the standards through field validations and by providing feedback during conference presentations. Finally, members of the DEC Research Committee also provided citations from the literature that were used to support many of the standards.

*NAEYC.* NAEYC collaborated with DEC and CEC by providing access to the NAEYC membership for responses to the field validation surveys. Many members of DEC are also members of NAEYC. Indeed, university faculty members who have developed and managed blended programs actively participate in both organizations. Several members of the work team held joint memberships.

## Procedures

The procedures are described here in several stages, although several parts intersected. An overview is presented first, followed by various details that surrounded components of the procedures.

*Overview of procedures.* In brief, the procedures for the validation consisted of the following components: revising and developing the standards, compiling the literature base that supported each standard, “smoothing” the standards with the K and S Committee, presenting the standards to the DEC membership for input, conducting field validations by surveying DEC and NAEYC members, revising standards based on field validation outcomes, review and approval of the standards by CEC’s K and S Committee, and finally, review and approval by CEC’s PSPC committee. Each step included negotiation between and among the participants from the various units (e.g., K and S Committee, work team, and NAEYC), with ongoing attention to needs and concerns of the various stakeholders, in addition to ongoing communication with the DEC Board.

*Participation on the K and S Committee.* Central to the process was being an active participant in the work of the K and S Committee. Although DEC always had a representative to the K and S Committee, and actively collaborates with CEC in general, the process of revising the standards required a heightened degree of collaboration with this CEC committee. This participation helped set the context for the revision and contributed to the positive responsiveness of the committee regarding concerns of DEC. Active participation included attendance at the two semiannual meetings (one during CEC’s annual convention and one at CEC’s headquarters). It also included active participation in the ongoing work of the K and S Committee: substantiating the common core standards with literature, developing the advanced common core standards, substantiating the advanced common core standards with literature, and participating in the ongoing revisions of standards for the other divisions. Members of each of the divisions helped each other.

*Liaison with DEC.* Ongoing communication and collaboration with the DEC Executive Board were essential to the process and included several components. First, members of the K and S Committee were welcomed at a DEC Board meeting and presented an overview of the validation process. Second, the DEC liaison to the K and S Committee reported regularly to the DEC Executive Board (e.g., provided information about discussions regarding revisions of terminology for our standards), and sought input and approval from the Board regarding various decisions (e.g., sampling procedures for the survey and which groups to be included in the survey). DEC staff also assisted with mailings to and electronic communications with DEC members. Finally, the work group obtained input from DEC members through presentations at annual conferences with the final draft of the new set of initial standards presented at the 2006 DEC annual conference (Lifter et al., 2006), the final draft of the advanced standards presented at the 2007 DEC annual conference (Lifter et al., 2007), and both sets of standards presented at the 2008 CEC annual conference (Lifter, Christensen, & Gallagher, 2008).

*Development of a new set of initial standards.* The work team developed the initial standards in several steps. First, they had to organize the DEC-developed standards into CEC’s 10 areas of knowledge and skills statements. These areas, in addition to the 6 areas for the advanced standards, are presented in Table 3. Second, the team developed an integrated draft of DEC initial standards by mapping correspondence between the CEC EC standards and the DEC-developed standards. The results were collated and discussed in conference calls or meetings.

**Table 3**  
**CEC's Areas of Knowledge and Skills Statements**  
**for Initial and Advanced Standards**

Initial standard areas	Advanced standard areas
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	

Note: CEC = Council for Exceptional Children.

The third step included the review of CEC's initial common core standards and the initial DEC standards; if a DEC knowledge or skill statement was redundant with a CEC common core knowledge or skill standard, the DEC standard was eliminated. Moreover, the team was required to examine all of the skill statements to determine whether a skill statement presumed a specific knowledge base. If this occurred, then a corresponding knowledge statement needed to be deleted. The whole team reviewed the results of this process again, once it was completed. An example of a knowledge standard is as follows:

EC3K1: Impact of child's abilities, needs, and characteristics on development and learning.

At the time, the prefixes to the standards represented CEC's division (EC = early childhood); the first number designated the area of standards, presented in Table 3 (3 = Individual Learning Differences); the letters K and S represent knowledge statements and skill statements, respectively; and the final number designates the series of statements in that category (e.g., the 1 of EC3K1 indicates that it is the first knowledge statement in the series of knowledge statements in the category "Individual Learning Differences").

An example of a skill statement is as follows:

EC3S1: Develop, implement, and evaluate learning experiences and strategies that respect the diversity of infants and young children, and their families.

As above, the EC designates early childhood, the first number ("3") indicates the category "Individual Learning Differences," the "S" designates a skill statement, and the final number ("1") indicates its position in the list of skill statements. The skill statements needed to begin with a verb, to be distinguished from knowledge statements.

*Development of literature support.* The K and S Committee required that each of the standards be substantiated with a citation from the literature. As determined by the K and S Committee, citations were organized in terms of research-based, literature-/theory-based,

**Table 4**  
**Definitions for Three Types of Supporting Literature (Council for Exceptional Children, 2005)**

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1. Research-based knowledge or skills are based on peer-reviewed studies that use appropriate research methodologies to address question of cause and effect and that researchers have independently replicated and found to be effective.
  2. Literature-/theory-based knowledge and skills are based on theories or philosophical reasoning. They include knowledge and skills derived from sources such as position papers, policy analyses, and descriptive reviews of the literature.
  3. Practice-based knowledge or skills are derived from a number of sources:
    - Practices based on a small number of studies or nomination procedures, such as promising practices, are usually practice based.
    - Practice-based knowledge or skills derived primarily from model and lighthouse programs.
    - Practice-based knowledge and skills include professional wisdom. These practices have been used so widely with practical evidence of effectiveness that there is an implicit professional assumption that the practice is effective.
    - Practice-based knowledge and skills also include “emerging practice,” practices that arise from teachers’ classroom experiences validated through some degree of action research.
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and/or practice-based citations, for electronic submission to the committee. The definitions for these categories of literature are presented in Table 4.

The Research Support subgroup provided the leadership in developing an extensive database of citations. DEC members in personnel preparation also contributed their literature reviews to help with the process. The literature, on final review, will be available on the DEC website at the same URL, listed above, where the standards are available.

*“Smoothing” of the standards.* Once the DEC work team was satisfied with the new set of standards, and there was at least one citation for each knowledge and skill statement, the chairperson submitted the set to the K and S Committee for “smoothing” at one of the semiannual K and S meetings. There, the K and S Committee members reviewed each knowledge and skill statement and edited the language and tenor of the standards so that they were parallel with the common core and other division standards. Participants use the “guidance for editing proposed knowledge and skills statements” from CEC for this purpose. “Smoothing” had to be completed and approved by the K and S Committee before the standards could be sent out for field validation.

*Development of advanced standards.* The procedures for the development of the advanced standards were essentially the same as those for the initial standards. The group began with 57 DEC skills statements that were organized into 20 categories. These skills needed to be examined against CEC’s newly developed advanced common core of standards, and they needed to be reorganized from the initial 20 areas into the 6 CEC advanced content areas presented in Table 3. The set facilitator presented the draft of the new CEC EC advanced standards to the K and S Committee at its April 2007 meeting.

An example of an advanced knowledge standard is as follows:

AEC2K1: Range of delivery systems for programs and services available for infants and young children and their families.

The prefix AEC refers to Advanced Early Childhood; the first number (2) refers to the designated area of standards, presented in Table 3 (2 = Program Development and Organization); the letter represents knowledge statements; and the final number designates the series of statements in that category (e.g., the 1 of AEC2K1 indicates that it is the first knowledge statement in the series of knowledge statements in the category “Program Development and Organization”).

An example of an advanced skill statement is as follows:

AEC2S3: Integrate family and social systems theories to develop, implement, and evaluate family and educational plans.

*Field validation of initial and advanced standards.* The CEC, DEC, and NAEYC organizations collaborated in conducting the field validation of the ECSE/EI standards.

*Sampling.* In designing the field validation surveys, it was important to match the survey design and analysis to the purpose of the study, which in this case was to validate the set of ECSE/EI personnel preparation standards: for use in preparation programs, for evaluation of college and university programs, and for use by administrators at the state level to ensure the competence of their workforce. The populations of people who possess the expertise to address these purposes are professionals who are knowledgeable about the development, use, and application of these standards. As a result, the work team, in consultation with persons with research expertise on the DEC Board, determined that purposeful sampling was required for the survey. Patton (2002) contends that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting ‘information-rich’ cases . . . from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 273).

Three groups of potential respondents were identified; the first two of these groups constituted the purposeful sample. The first was a select sample of DEC members who identified themselves as college and university personnel. This sample was selected to focus on individuals who were most knowledgeable about ECSE/EI personnel preparation standards and who used them in their positions. The second group consisted of state-level Part C (birth to 3 years of age) and 619 (preschool) coordinators across the country, who were responsible for administering EI and ECSE services in their state.

For these two groups, DEC staff identified 858 DEC members who indicated that their primary position was personnel preparation and 140 Part C and 619 coordinators, yielding a total of 998 persons who were invited individually to participate in the field validation. Of these 998 persons, 174 agreed to participate. DEC sent the file of the 174 e-mail addresses to staff members at CEC who sent these individuals a link to the field validation survey. In addition to the purposeful sample of DEC members, participation from DEC members was solicited by posting an invitation to comment on the standards and a link to the survey on the DEC website.

The third group of respondents was drawn from the membership of NAEYC. NAEYC does not identify members by their professional positions, so it was not possible to select a purposeful sample of the NAEYC membership. As a result, all NAEYC members were invited to participate in the field validation through an invitation and link that was published

in the December 2006 NAEYC newsletter to the 55,000 members. It was NAEYC's decision to administer the field validation to their entire membership in that manner.

The work team developed materials of invitation and introduction to the surveys, which the CEC staff accepted. These materials explained the background and purpose of the survey, the need for a purposeful sample (at least for DEC personnel preparers, Part C, and 619 participants), why they were being invited to participate, and what the survey would involve in terms of time and tasks. Field validation respondents were asked to complete a survey in which they 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."

## Results

The results are described here in terms of the results of the field validation survey, in addition to the number of standards that were developed, reviewed, and accepted in the final set of standards; and the revised terminology for division-specific standards that is used in CEC's standards (2009).

### Results of the Survey: Acceptance/Rejection of Standards

*Initial standards.* Of the 174 invited persons (personnel preparation providers, Part C, and 619 coordinators) who accepted DEC's invitation to participate, 102 completed the survey (yielding a 59% response rate regarding completed/invited). Of the approximately 55,000 members of NAEYC who were invited to participate, 242 completed the survey (yielding a response rate of 0.5%). CEC staff who managed the survey presented the resulting data to the work team separately and combined. That is, the data could be evaluated in terms of the percentage of respondents from the DEC survey and the NAEYC survey who rated a standard as "essential." Finally, 10 persons responded to the link on the DEC website. All responses were taken into account in analyzing the results.

The K and S Committee reviewed the survey results at its January 2007 meeting. The members used the committee's standard rules for acceptance and rejection:

1. Those standards that at least 80% of the respondents identified as "essential for personnel to know or be able to do" were automatically accepted into the set of standards.
2. Those standards for which fewer than 30% of all respondents identified as "essential for personnel to know or be able to do" were rejected from the set of standards.
3. Any standards for which between 30% and 79% of the respondents identified as essential were open for discussion in terms of keeping or eliminating from the set of standards.

Of the 93 knowledge standards and skills standards that were in the set for field validation, 55% (51 standards) were rated as essential by at least 80% of the respondents, 45% (42 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.

**Table 5**  
**Examples of Standards in the Three Categories of Respondents**

Initial standards	
Greater than 80% essential	EC3K1: Impact of child's abilities, needs, and characteristics on development and learning (95%)
Between 30%-79% essential	EC9S6: Participate in professional organizations relevant to early childhood special education and early intervention (46.4%: Retained) EC5S7: Implement nutrition and feeding strategies for children with exceptional needs (48%: Deleted)
Less than 30% essential	None
Advanced standards	
Greater than 80% essential	AEC1K1: Policy and emerging trends that affect infants and young children, families, resources, and services (87.2%)
Between 30%-80% essential	AEC6S1: Implement and evaluate leadership and models of collaborative relationships (61.5%: Retained). AEC5K2: Specialized knowledge in at least one particular area of disability or delay (46.6%: Deleted and integrated with another standard)
Less than 30% essential	None

In the context of the K and S Committee meetings, the representative for the division can argue for the inclusion of a standard that falls between the 30% to 80% agreement. To prepare for the K and S meeting, the set facilitator discussed the survey results with members of the work team (i.e., an expert panel of personnel preparers) to inform the rationale for the inclusion of certain standards.

Of the 51 standards rated as essential by at least 80% of the respondents, 50 were retained in the final set; the remaining standard was eliminated due to redundancy with the CEC's common core. Of the 42 standards that were rated as essential by 30% to 79% of the respondents, 30 were retained in the final set. A total of 13 standards were eliminated due to redundancy with CEC's common core ( $n = 5$ ), redundancy to another EC standard ( $n = 2$ ), or too restrictive for initial preparation and/or more appropriate for the advanced set ( $n = 6$ ). The final set of standards for initial preparation consists of 80 knowledge and skills statements.

*Advanced standards.* A total of 520 persons responded to the survey, with a minimum of 436 persons responding to each question. CEC staff who managed the survey presented the resulting data to the work team in a combined format (DEC and NAEYC together). The K and S Committee reviewed the survey results at its October 2007 meeting.

Of the 34 advanced knowledge and skills standards, 47% (16 standards) were rated as essential by at least 80% of the respondents, 53% (18 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.

Of the 34 standards developed by the work team, 33 (97%) were retained in the final set. Examples of standards that received different levels of endorsements are presented in Table 5.

## Revision of Terminology

As the work group developed the initial DEC division-specific standards and compared them to the CEC common core standards, it became clear that the terminology used within

**Table 6**  
**Terminology Developed for CEC's ECSE/EI Personnel Preparation Standards**

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1. Infants and Young Children: all children from birth to age 8 years.
  2. Exceptional Needs: In response to ELN specified in the CEC standards, “infants and young children with exceptional needs” will be used and not ELN because infants and young children have developmental needs as well as learning needs.
  3. Infants and Young Children with Exceptional Needs: refers to infants and young children, birth to age 8 years, who have, or are at risk for, developmental delays and disabilities.
  4. Development and Learning: terms to be used, and in that order, to convey the focus of the following knowledge and skills for personnel—to support the developmental and learning needs of infants and young children, and their families.
  5. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP): The language of the standards requires spelling out IFSP and IEP. K and S Committee suggests using “family or educational plan” to (a) simplify the expressions and (b) include Canadian terminology in the standards. DEC respectfully requests the use of “individualized plan” to simplify the language because the IFSP is an educational plan too.
  6. Developmental Domains: term to be used to simplify the listing of the five developmental domains specified in federal law—cognitive, communicative, social-emotional, motor, and adaptive development.
  7. Settings for Infants and Young Children: to avoid lists, these settings refer to home, community-based, and school-based settings.
  8. Developmental and academic content: refers to curriculum.
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Note: CEC = Council for Exceptional Children; ECSE/EI = early childhood special education/early intervention; ELN = exceptional learning needs; K and S = knowledge and skills; DEC = Division for Early Childhood.

the EC standards did not reflect the continuum of ages ranging from birth through age 8 years. In addition, the title of the EC standards did not represent the interests of the DEC personnel preparation membership.

*Revised terminology.* During the ongoing K and S Committee meetings and throughout the process of integrating the EC standards with CEC's common core, the work team determined that new terms were required for the DEC standards. The CEC initial and advanced common core and the CEC division-specific standards, in general, are designed for teachers of children and adolescents with exceptional learning needs. The terms used for these standards often did not capture the developmental and learning needs of infants and young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families, who may receive services in schools as well as other contexts such as home and community settings. As a result, the CEC terminology could not be used in the DEC division-specific standards. So the work group defined new terminology for use in these standards. The K and S Committee accepted the new terminology at its April 2006 meeting. The new terminology for the DEC standards is presented in Table 6.

As can be seen in the table, the term *infants and young children* was specified to refer to children in the age group of interest for the DEC membership. The following skill standard reflects the revised terminology:

EC3S1: Develop, implement, and evaluate learning experiences and strategies that respect the diversity of infants and young children, and their families.

Additional revisions centered on the addition of the term *development* to the terminology (e.g., *development and learning*) because infants and children develop as well as learn. The following knowledge statement reflects this kind of revision.

EC3K1: Impact of child's abilities, needs, and characteristics on development and learning.

*Title changes.* The work team also determined that the DEC division-specific standards needed to address the preparation of personnel to work with infants and young children who are at risk or have developmental delays and disabilities, rather than focusing on school-based special education professionals. The title for the Initial Common Core Standards was “Initial Special Education Teachers of Individuals With Exceptional Learning Needs in Individualized General Education Curricula,” which did not reflect the mission of DEC. Accordingly, members of the work team advocated with CEC staff, the DEC Executive Board, and the K and S Committee for title changes as follows:

*Initial standards:* Initial Special Education Professionals in Early Childhood Special Education/  
Early Intervention (Birth to Eight)

*Advanced standards:* Special Education Professionals in Early Childhood Special Education/  
Early Intervention (Birth to Eight).<sup>1</sup>

*Prefix changes.* The prefixes for the standards were revised for the final sets of standards. For the initial standards, the prefix for the ECSE/EI standards, which was originally EC, is ECSE. For the advanced standards, the prefix is AEC for Advanced Early Childhood.

## Discussion

### Limitations of the Current Revision

There were several limitations to the processes for the current revision. The response rate from the purposeful sampling of the DEC membership and the Part C and 619 coordinators was 59% ( $n = 102$ ) for those who agreed to participate. For a purposeful sample, this rate was acceptable. However, the response rate from the survey to NAEYC’s 55,000 members was approximately 0.5%, although 242 persons completed the survey. These discrepancies, in addition to different sampling methods that were used for the two groups within each field validation, contribute limitations to the survey results. The fact that family members were not included explicitly in the sample contributed additional limitations. However, DEC has a long tradition of encouraging and including family members in its membership; although participants self-identified according to their professional roles, many could have been family members too. The sample was limited to professionals in the fields of ECSE, EI, and ECE, and they consisted of teachers, administrators, and personnel preparers from higher education. Although we asked participants to self-identify their roles, 35% of respondents from DEC and 37% from NAEYC listed themselves as “other” for the initial standards survey, and 37% of the participants listed themselves as “other” for the

advanced standards survey. Accordingly, we could not determine with a high degree of accuracy the different roles of the participants.

Another limitation centers on decisions that were made regarding the retention of standards when less than 80% of the respondents rated the standard as “essential.” Decisions to include a standard in these cases were based primarily on professional opinion and/or practitioner expertise as opposed to scientific evidence. In many cases, empirical evidence did not yet exist for some of the standards.

## Suggestions for Future Revisions

Suggestions for future revisions include greater attention to the sampling process, in addition to broadening the stakeholder groups in the sample (i.e., families and students). The purposeful sample provided useful and meaningful results, given that the participants were presumably invested in the preparation of the workforce. The bulk of the standards the respondents regarded as “essential” for personnel were included in the final set. The use of a purposeful sample was different from the procedures CEC had been using for field validation of various sets of standards, which consisted of soliciting feedback from the general membership. CEC was troubled by the low response rates obtained from standard surveys. Consequently, purposeful sampling was used in an attempt to increase response rates, and, given the 59% response rate obtained, purposeful sampling should be used in future field validations of standards revisions.

Future revisions should include greater attention to the empirical basis for decisions about personnel preparation standards. However, much of the supporting literature is based on literature-/theory-based knowledge and skills- or practice-based knowledge and skills. It is anticipated that the empirical literature to support various standards of preparation will increase, given increased attention to accountability in preparing personnel to provide services that result in important outcomes for children and families.

It also is essential that DEC continue to be involved in future revisions of the ECSE/EI standards, which it will be. Therefore, understanding the process and the components of the process, as well as the role of CEC divisions, is critical—hence, the purpose of this manuscript: to provide information about the process and its components. Many of the components described here were being developed for the 2009 revisions. The participants had to sort things out as they went along.

Moreover, as in every activity in which persons with somewhat divergent perspectives come together, the importance of ongoing collaboration across groups (e.g., DEC, NAEYC, and CEC) must be recognized with the roles of each group specified. The need for ongoing communication with and input from DEC and NAEYC membership also is key to the process. In addition, DEC must have representatives who are knowledgeable regarding personnel standards and personnel preparation on relevant committees to ensure that the association is involved directly in the process of personnel standards revision and validation. Finally, the quality of the relationships that were forged in the process proved critical too. Relationships were constructed in the context of the activities of the many work teams involved in the process, whether within DEC or between DEC members and CEC members.

Consistent and positive relationships between and among participants helped facilitate the process for completing the revision.

## New Directions for Personnel Preparation

This process of revising and validating the standards constituted a large commitment of effort and time for the team members. As a result, the team members engaged in many discussions along the way in terms of the uses for these standards and how the standards benefit DEC and its membership, in addition to the tasks at hand. Many members of the original team are continuing with extensions of the work. Issues surrounding personnel preparation, such as the alignment of these standards with the standards developed by NAEYC (Chandler et al., 2010; Lifter et al., 2009), a review of the literature that supports the standards, guidance for programs in how to use these standards, and the integration of the standards with the DEC Recommended Practices (Sandall et al., 2005) are under development by participants from the DEC Validation Work Team.

It is anticipated that these team members will continue this work to provide guidance to higher education faculty, state policy leaders, district-level or center-based administrators, other professional organizations who focus on young children with disabilities (e.g., the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the American Physical Therapy Association), as well as EI/ECSE professionals themselves as to the use of these standards in personnel preparation. Within the context of higher education personnel preparation programs, the standards could be used to map out the required program of study, as a guide for course content and development, and to plan field experiences, in developing teacher mentor/induction programs. They could be used also to focus professional development and coaching activities to support both novice and experienced teachers in improving child outcomes and their participation and progress in the general education curricula. In addition, there are currently no EC standards for teachers and instructional aides attending 2-year personnel preparation programs. Indeed, a significant component of the workforce in EC education and EI are prepared at the paraprofessional level, yet standards do not exist for their preparation.

On the state and national level, these standards can be used to inform national and state standards for the practitioners. They could serve also as guidelines for developing components and supports for inclusive practices in EC programs serving children from birth to Grade 3.

Opportunities and challenges exist also for conducting research relative to the standards. Research focused on the extent to which the standards are used as a foundation for (a) higher education EI/ECSE curriculum, (b) state-level EI/ECSE competencies and licensure policies, and (c) state-level professional development systems in EI/ECSE is needed to inform the policies and practices of a variety of entities (e.g., professional associations, accrediting bodies, and state and national government agencies). The development of evaluation systems within higher education programs and state professional development systems based on these standards would have the potential to provide much needed data specific to learner outcomes. To facilitate the development of comprehensive higher education and professional development curricula, the degree to which the processes identified in the DEC personnel preparation–recommended practices (Stayton, Miller, & Dinnebeil,

2003) support and align with the knowledge and skills in the standards merit study. In addition, the evidence base for the standards must be maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure that the standards reflect current research in personnel preparation.

## Note

1. Council for Exceptional Children (2009) adjusted this title to “Special Education Early Childhood Specialists in Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention (Birth to Eight)” to conform to their designation of “specialist” for those professionals at the advanced level of preparation.

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