



The Illinois Subdivision of the Division for  
Early Childhood (IDEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

To: Office of the Secretary, Department of Education  
Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Resources

From: Robin Miller Young, Ed.D., NCSP  
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Re: Early Learning Listening Tour: Standards and Assessment; Chicago, IL May 11, 2010  
“Implementing Innovative and Successful Approaches to Improving Early Learning  
Outcomes for Children, Birth through Grade Three”

Date: May 18, 2010

Presented below are highlights of the comments I submitted to the US Department of Education’s “Early Learning Listening Tour” as a registered “Public Speaker” on Tuesday, May 11, 2010 held in Chicago, IL.

Good afternoon, my name is Robin Miller Young, President of the Illinois Division for Early Childhood (IDEC) a subdivision of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). I am here today to share with you perspectives from the collective experiences of preschool principals and assistant principals, early childhood program coordinators, early childhood center directors and other Illinois “in-the-field” leaders who are developing, implementing and sustaining innovative practices that are improving learning outcomes for young learners across our state and across our nation. Please consider ways in which you can support development of policies and practices that would be congruent with the following 12 recommendations.

1. NAEYC and DEC Supported Recommendations: Early childhood policy and practice recommendations for “Standards” and “Assessments” should always be aligned with NAEYC position statements, and the “Recommended Practices” of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC).

2. Early Learning Standards: Leadership in the early childhood field is required to develop, implement, and up-date various standards documents so we can deliver effective and efficient services to all children. They provide a common target for us all. Specifically, states should develop and hold educational programs accountable for using Early Learning Standards regarding what students should know and when they should know it to guide program development, delivery, evaluation, and accountability.

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3. Assessment Tools Linked to Early Learning Standards: Innovative service delivery system initiatives such as "Inclusive" programs, tiered instructional models linked to data-based decision-making ["Response to Intervention (RtI)"], and a "Seamless Continuum from Birth to Age Eight" will require us to ensure that our assessment tools are linked to the Early Learning Standards. References on these service delivery system initiatives are presented below.
4. Assessment Tools Must Meet Technical Adequacy Standards: Additionally, the tools we use to make decisions within these service system initiatives (screening, progress monitoring, eligibility determination, program planning, evaluation and accountability) must meet agreed-upon technical adequacy standards (e.g., *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, AERA, 1999) including instructional validity (see Snyder et al, 2008), so we can use the results with confidence.
5. Assessment Must Be Conducted to Answer a Specific Question about a Student or Group of Students: Professionals should use a multi-informant, multi-method, multi-trait approach so the assessment is comprehensive, yet focused and time efficient. Use records review, observation, interview and testing (RIOT) as needed to answer the question(s) you need to know about a student or group of students.
6. Curriculum-based Measurement (General Outcome Measures - GOMs) and Curriculum-based Assessment (CBA - Mastery Models): We need to have quick and easy "indicators" regarding the children's progress toward long-term predictors of programmatic success (e.g., GOMs such as IGDIs and Preschool Numeracy Indicators - PNIs), as well as information on how they are progressing through the specific curricula (e.g., discrete skills in a specific curricula).
7. Early Childhood Assessment Tools that Support a Seamless Continuum: Tools that allow us to connect from early intervention (EI) through preschool and into the early elementary years are necessary for some purposes, as are tools that can be used with all types of children (e.g., typically developing children, children with disabilities, ELLs, etc.). A few such as Ages and Stages can perform this function, as well as the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs); others are reportedly in the development stages. See references below.
8. Efficient Data Collection that Leads Easily to Decisions for Individual Children and Groups of Children: Early childhood school leaders need data that are easily collected and displayed visually, so the data can be easily compared to the decision-making criteria. The data also need to be easily aggregated across various sub-groups of a school/program.
9. Leadership Needed to Operationalize the DEC Concept Paper (2009) on Developmental Delay (DD) as an Eligibility Category: We need leadership enacted at the national, state, and local levels to understand how to use the ideas of "rate of improvement" over time and "level of performance" in order to shift into a newer definition of DD. This will involve tools/measures, as well as teaming and decision-making processes.

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10. New Environmental, Curricular, and Instructional Tools Need to Meet Standards too: As new tools are being developed to provide data on other essential parts of the instructional process (e.g., Math Environmental Checklist developed by Robin Hojnoski, etc.), those tools need to be developed according to standards for those types of tools/measures

11. Interventions Need to Meet Standards Too: The interventions we put into place need to have met some type of "scientific" or "evidence-base" criteria. The standard now is that a certain amount of research, values and wisdom can be used to substantiate our choice of an intervention. Over time, we need to raise the bar and make the criteria stronger on the side of research. We also need to ensure that a social validity standard is met (treatment integrity and treatment acceptability).

12. Staff Development at the Pre-service and In-service Levels Needs to be Conducted: Early childhood professionals (teachers, SLPs, OTs, PTs, Social Workers, Psychologists, etc.), need training in the above-referenced ideas. They also need to know how to write-up an assessment report and how to share the information with parents and teammates.

Policies and practices that can be enacted at the federal, state and local levels would continue enhancing the learning outcomes for ALL students.

Respectfully submitted,

(Not signed, as this was submitted by e-mail)  
Robin Miller Young, Ed.D., NCSP

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