

Good Start, Grow Smart: The State of the States

Early Learning Guidelines Requirement

Voluntary State guidelines on literacy, language, and pre-reading skills activities for children ages 3 to 5 that align with State K-12 standards. These guidelines should be able to be adapted to various child care settings.

Questions Raised by the States

- What is meant by “guidelines”?
- Will States have the flexibility to build on their own literacy initiatives in responding to *Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS)* mandates?
- Will sufficient time be allowed to respond to the mandates in order to develop relationships with other key stakeholders and to link efforts to their other school readiness activities?
- What will constitute “alignment” of early learning guidelines with K-12 standards?
- Will Federal expectations be realistic in light of State fiscal situations and the lack of resources accompanying the GSGS mandates?
- How could/should these guidelines align with the requirements under the “Leave No Child Behind” Act?



What We Know

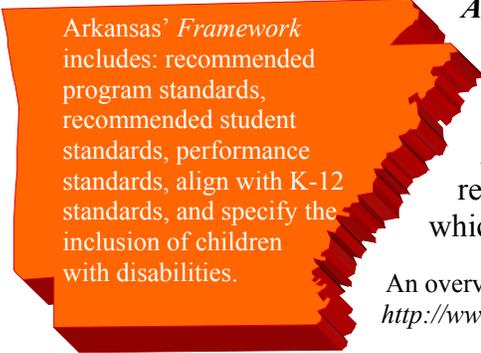
The States feel it is critical to implement the mandates of GSGS while building on their current efforts regarding literacy and early learning. According to *Quality Counts* (2002), 19 States and the District of Columbia have standards for kindergarten children and 15 States have prekindergarten standards (Quality Counts, 2002). Numerous other States have, in recent years, developed their own guidelines. These guidelines vary along a number of dimensions:

- They go by various names, including “benchmarks,” “standards,” “essential elements,” and “indicators;”
- They may apply just to preschool programs or to programs that meet certain criteria (e.g., receiving State funds and applying a set of standards);
- They often apply to several developmental domains which may or may not be similar to ones used by the State’s K-12 system;
- They may include reference to infants and toddlers;
- They are likely to be applicable to multiple early care settings;
- They are likely to be research-based;
- They are likely to have taken more than a year to develop, and to have been developed as a collaborative project with other early care and education stakeholders; and
- They may be linked to professional development, assessment, or other elements of an early education system.

States are interested in assistance that will help translate research into practice and that will help them identify “best practices” used by other States.

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State Examples



Arkansas' *Framework* includes: recommended program standards, recommended student standards, performance standards, align with K-12 standards, and specify the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Arkansas

In July of 1999, the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education released the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework: Benchmarks with Strategies/Activities for Three and Four Year-Old Children*. The guidelines include recommended student standards organized in five major categories, which include *Cognitive/Intellectual Learning*, and *Language*.

An overview of the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework is available online at <http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/Sparc/states/AR.pdf>.

Florida

Developed by Florida's Partnership for School Readiness, Florida's *School Readiness Performance Standards* are designed for 3- to 5-year-olds. The standards are divided into six general domains, including Language and Communication. Subcategories of the Language and Communication standards include: Listening; Speaking; Literature and Reading; and Writing.

Florida's School Readiness Performance Standards can be viewed online at <http://www.unf.edu/dept/fie/downloads/manual.pdf>.



Florida's *School Readiness Performance Standards* include: Performance based indicators, and align with K-12 standards.

Missouri



Missouri's Pre-K Literacy Standards include: student performance standards and benchmarks and examples for each standard.

Missouri has developed specific literacy guidelines, titled *Missouri Pre-K Literacy Standards*. The standards are broken into six areas of development: Symbolic Development; Spoken/Expressive Language; Listening/Receptive Language; Written Language; Knowledge of Print and Books; and Sounds of Language (Phonological Awareness). Specific indicators are listed for each of the six general categories.

An overview of the *Missouri Pre-K Literacy Standards* is available online at <http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/sparc/states/MO.pdf> and at <http://nieer.org/states/langlit.php?StateID=MO>.

Additional Selected Resources

Promoting Early Childhood Literacy: Highlights of State Efforts. Amy Finch and Sheri L. Azer, 2002. http://www.naeyc.org/childrens_champions/literac1.pdf.

A Framework for Early Literacy Instruction: Aligning Standards to Developmental Accomplishments and Student Behaviors: Pre-K through Kindergarten. Elena Bodrova, 2000. <http://www.mcrel.org/products/standards/framework.pdf>.

Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success. A joint position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. Draft, 2002. http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position_Statements/conditions.htm.

Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school. Valerie Lee, David Burkam, 1992. http://www.epinet.org/books.starting_gate.html.

Success for All: Closing the Book Gap for Children in Early Education. Susan Neuman, Donna Celan, Albert Greco, Pamela Shue, 2001.

State Preschool Accountability Research Collective. <http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/sparc/>