Good teachers do not abandon good practice for high standards.

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Authors

Increasing Age of Entrance to Kindergarten

One response to concerns about children's capacity to be successful in kindergarten has been to tinker with the age of entrance. In states with early fall kindergarten-entry dates, concerns about children who are perceived to be uneady are expressed in the same terms as those states that have late winter dates. During the past two decades a number of state legislatures have responded to pressures to raise the entrance age (i.e., cause children to be older when they are able to enter kindergarten). After experience with this practice in a few states, the date was moved back to the beginning of the summer. Others are now working to reinstate fall entry dates. Leaders in those states have discovered that expectations remain high, but that teaching practices are adapted to suit the range of capacities of young learners, so that repeated success leads each child toward higher and higher achievement. Appropriate practice is about how children learn and how highly qualified and competent teachers teach. Standards are the target. One does not abandon good practice to lead children toward the achievement of high standards. Doing so results in the opposite outcome.

Persistent Misunderstandings and Ineffective Practices

In reaction to the adoption of preschool and early elementary learning standards by most states and many local school districts, some practitioners are returning to practices that were shown to be ineffective in the past. These practices, such as those described in this section, continue to be ineffective and continue to have unintended negative consequences. Responsible teachers will do nothing to improve children's achievement (Meisels, 1992; NAEC/SDE, 2000).


Efforts of Television Violence on Young Children: Viewed From Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective, (2), 22-30.


Connect Standards and Developmentally Appropriate Practice, (3), 13-17.

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Nearly two decades ago inappropriate influences from earlier educational reform movements coupled with the need to define best practice for the rapidly growing number of prekindergarten programs led to the development of standards setting, arising from the most recent reform movement, having similar negative influences on the early childhood settings of the early 21st century. Continuing misunderstanding about the nature and purpose of developmentally appropriate practice has persisted, often resulting in early childhood settings that are “experientially rich” but “content poor.” This is just as unacceptable as inappropriate application of learning standards in programs for young children.

The early learning years can provide rich experiences that offer high-quality content, are appropriate for the learning capabilities of the children, and lead children to achieve high standards. High learning standards can be implemented and achieved at any level only through the application of teaching practices that are appropriate to the diverse learning needs of the children (Nebraska & Iowa Departments of Education, 2001).

This article is part of the Fall 2003 special theme issue of Dimensions of Early Childhood. Due to space limitations in that issue, it is published here. Effective early childhood classrooms provide rich experiences that offer both worthwhile content and are appropriate for children’s learning capabilities. High learning standards can be implemented and achieved only through application of appropriate early childhood learning practices.