

**A Review and Response to the Revised NAEYC Position Statement on
Developmentally Appropriate Practice by the Board of Directors of the
Southern Early Childhood Association**

March 29, 2008

We would like to commend the National Association for the Education of Young Children for undertaking a revision of the position statement that has defined practice in our field for so many years. As the context of the systems and society in which we work changes, we think it is critical to review and update this framework to ensure that it is accessible to the field and consistent with best practices as research helps us to refine and modify those practices. We commend NAEYC for recognizing that we continue to have an achievement gap between children in our society, and we understand the need to proactively address how that gap can be addressed through early childhood education programs.

We believe in these underlying principles:

Early childhood educators must consider the development of the whole child, and we stand firm on the issue of ensuring that curricula and practices designed to promote the cognitive development of children are developmentally appropriate and avoid the trap of pushing early childhood educational practices into an inappropriate academic construct.

We feel that **individual teachers should be decision makers within the context of their classrooms and programs** and that our responsibility as a professional organization is to assist them in gaining the skills necessary to competently make those decisions as they work with children.

Instructional designs in early childhood programs should include a variety of delivery strategies including self-directed activities as well as teacher directed activities and assisted instruction.

We would suggest that the Revision Committee consider strengthening these areas of the draft:

- Because we are dedicated to the development of the child from birth, we would recommend an **enhanced description and focus on best practices for infant and toddlers**. We feel that this focus is critical to the later success of pre-K and early elementary programs. We understand that Zero to Three is assisting with this component of the statement and are delighted to know that organizations with expertise in these areas are being consulted and asked to participate in the drafting of the statement.

- **Inclusion of children with special needs** is an area that demands additional attention, and we would recommend that this be strengthened, perhaps with assistance and input from DEC.

We feel very strongly that one of the most important components of the statement will be the policy statement and, because this component has not yet been released, we do not have a comprehensive and complete document on which to submit our final comments. We would ask that this component of the statement be released for review as quickly as possible so that a comprehensive document is available for comment and review.

Additionally, we understand that there are plans to develop materials that will supplement the formal statement. These materials will include the “how to’s” that so many practitioners will need to translate the formal position statement into practice in the classroom. We would recommend that these materials be subjected to as rigorous a review as the formal statement, and that the materials that demonstrate best practice are definitive in their content and role within the profession. Quite often in the South, controversy surrounding developmentally appropriate practice had more to do with the implementation examples and recommendations than the underlying principles in the statement. We would recommend that these materials be developed with a sensitivity to the cultural context in which they will be utilized, and the Southern Early Childhood Association would be pleased to assist you in determining what potential cultural issues might be contained in materials that would be utilized in our region of the country.

As an organization dedicated to supporting the early childhood practitioner, we commend NAEYC for providing us with a renewed and reinvigorated position statement on developmentally appropriate practice. We also understand that we have significant challenges facing us to ensure that any document that is developed is made “real” for the practitioners in the field and that our responsibility is to assist with this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the initial draft, and we look forward to providing our input and expertise as the process develops.

***The Board of Directors
Southern Early Childhood Association***