

# **Early Learning Standards: A Foundation for Systemic Efforts to Improve Children's School Readiness**

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	<b>WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?</b>

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	<b>WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?</b> Better outcomes for children!

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	<b>HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT CHILD OUTCOMES WE'RE AIMING FOR?</b>

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	<b>HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT CHILD OUTCOMES WE'RE AIMING FOR?</b>
	<b>Early Learning Standards articulate what we expect children to know and be able to do.</b>

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	<b>Purposes for ELG/ELS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Improve children's readiness for school</li><li>■ Improve quality of program/curriculum</li><li>■ Improve professional development</li><li>■ Educate parents</li><li>■ Guide decisions regarding assessments</li> <li>■ Use as part of an accountability system or program evaluation</li></ul> <p>■ Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella &amp; Milburn (2007)</p>

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	<b>Today we'll discuss how to use ELS/ELGs systemically</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Ensuring quality ELS</li><li>■ Using them systemically</li><li>■ Implementation issues</li><li>■ Implications of the national standards movement</li></ul>

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	<b>I. QUALITY STANDARDS</b>

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	<b>IA. State Variation in Content and Format of ELS/ELG</b>

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	<b>Status of Early Learning Standards</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All 50 states have early learning standards for preschool-age children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Many have revised their documents at least once</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Approximately half of the states have early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Some of these have revised/are revising their documents</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Content Analyses</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Infant-toddler ELG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 21 state ELG documents published as of July 2007</li> </ul> </li>   <li>■ Preschool ELS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 46 state ELS documents published as of January 2005</li> </ul> </li>   <li style="padding-left: 40px;">■ Scott-Little, Kagan, Frelow, &amp; Reid (2008)</li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;">■ Scott-Little, Kagan, &amp; Frelow (2006)</li> </ul>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Coding Framework</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Five domains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Physical Development and Motor Skills</li> <li>– Social and Emotional Development</li> <li>– Approaches Toward Learning</li> <li>– Language and Communication Development</li> <li>– Cognitive Development and General Knowledge</li> </ul> </li>   <li>■ Elements related to specific aspects of learning and development within each domain</li> </ul>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Basic Content Analysis Process</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Read documents</li> <li>■ Record features of the document such as the age levels addressed</li> <li>■ Code what element of development and learning each ELG/ELS addresses</li> <li>■ Calculate percentage of ELG/ELS that addressed each indicator on the framework</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>Summary of Results:</b></p>
	<p><b>There is considerable variation in states' early learning standards</b></p> 

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	<p><b>SUMMARY OF INFANT-TODDLER ELG ANALYSES</b></p> 

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	<p><b>Organization of Infant-toddler ELGs</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Age levels used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Birth to 36 months: 8 states</li> <li>- Birth to 18 and 18 to 36 months: 3 states</li> <li>- 3 age levels: 5 states</li> <li>- 4 ages levels: 2 states</li> <li>- More than 4 age levels: 3 states</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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## Number of I/T ELGs— Variation Across States

- Number of ELG indicators
  - State with fewest: 34
  - State with most: 688
  - Mean number of indicators: 218.2

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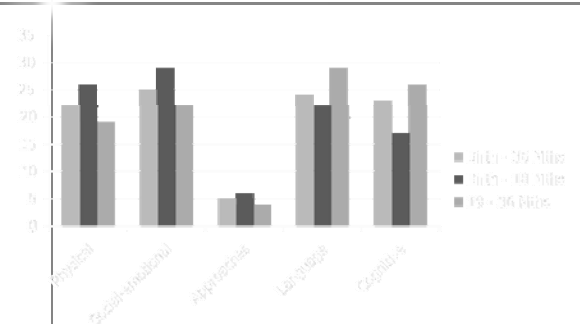
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## Domains Addressed in I/T ELGs— Variation Across Age Levels




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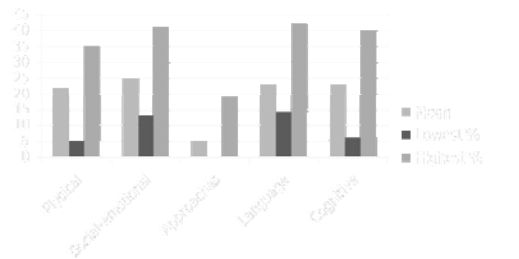
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## Domains Addressed in I/T ELGs—Variation Across States




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## SUMMARY OF PRESCHOOL ELS ANALYSES




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## Number of Preschool ELS—Variation Across States

- Number of Indicators
  - State with fewest: 42
  - State with most: 434
  - Mean across states: 154.3

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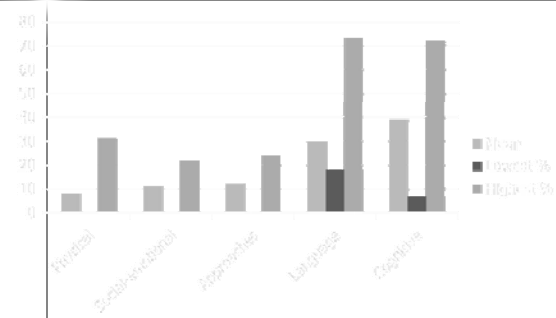
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## Domains Addressed in Preschool ELS—Variation Across States




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	<b>Limitations to Keep in Mind</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Data are dated</li> <li>■ Limitations within the coding system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unevenness across the indicators and domains</li> <li>– Difficult to capture “nuances”</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Other challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Important characteristics of development are interrelated and are foundational</li> <li>– Unevenness in research literature</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<b>IB. Considerations for High Quality ELS</b>
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	<b>Purpose and Target Audience</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Characteristics of the target audience and purposes of ELS document must be considered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Format of the document</li> <li>– Number and wording of ELS</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>

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	<h2>Appropriate Content</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Age appropriate</li> <li>■ Holistic</li> <li>■ Developmentally significant</li> </ul>

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	<h2>"Useability" of the ELS</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Age range and age groupings</li> <li>■ "Structure" or "levels"</li> <li>■ Observable</li> <li>■ Parsimonious</li> </ul> 

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	<h2>Inclusiveness of ELGs</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cultural and linguistic diversity</li> <li>■ Ability-level diversity/children with disabilities</li> </ul> 

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	<h2>Review and Validation</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Expert review</li><li>■ Content analysis</li><li>■ Age-appropriateness evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Research validation process</li><li>– Age validation study</li></ul></li></ul>



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	<h2>II. USING ELS SYSTEMICALLY</h2>

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	<h2>IIA. ALIGNMENT CONSIDERATIONS</h2>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Alignment</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Horizontal alignment between standards, assessments and curricula is the foundation upon which we build a coherent and cohesive pedagogy for young children</li>   <li>■ Vertical alignment of standards across age/grade levels is critical to continuity for children and an effective Birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade approach to education</li> </ul>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Analyzing Alignment</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One way to look at alignment is to create a matrix to look at the extent to which content from one document “matches” that of another</li>   <li style="text-align: center;">“Low complexity” analysis</li> </ul>

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Limitations of Low Complexity Alignment Analyses</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Documents may address the same content, but may be mis-aligned in their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Balance” in areas of learning that are emphasized</li> <li>- Cognitive complexity or age level</li> <li>- Theoretical or philosophical orientation</li> <li>- Overall quality</li> </ul> </li>   <li>■ Even if the content “match” is good, the documents may still not support high quality instruction</li> </ul>

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# High Complexity Alignment Analyses

- Developed a construct template used to code
  - Standards and assessments
  - Birth through third grade
- Developed an analysis protocol to analyze the data according to four parameters:
  - **Balance**
  - **Coverage**
  - **Depth**
  - **Difficulty**
    - Kagan, Scott-Little, Reid, et al. (2008)
    - Scott-Little & Reid (in press)

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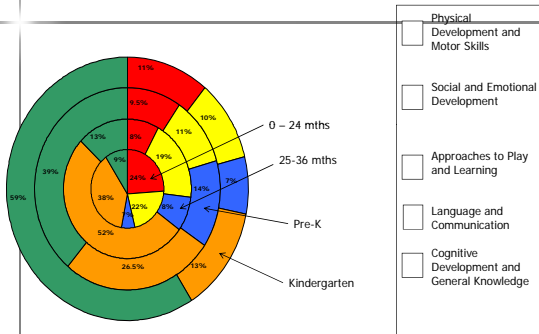
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Example of Balance Findings—  
Birth through Kindergarten




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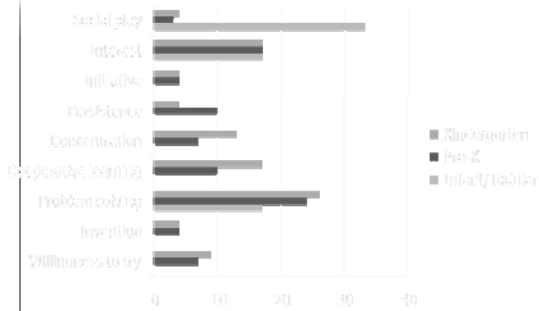
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Example of Depth Findings—Birth through Kindergarten  
**APPROACHES TOWARD LEARNING**




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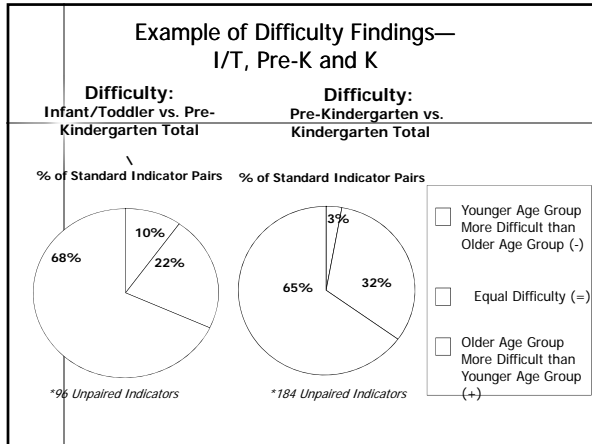
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**IIB. INFUSING ELS INTO  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
SYSTEMS**

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**ELS Used Across Systems**

- Examples of systems that can implement requirements related to ELS
  - Specific programs such as the state's pre-K program
  - Licensing and program standards
  - Quality improvement grants and initiatives at the program level
  - Early childhood professional competencies
    - Scott-Little, Cassidy, Lower & Ellen (2010)

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	<p><b>ELS, Requirements, and Evaluation Strategies</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Example from teacher practices             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ELS: Importance of children developing relationships with adults</li> <li>- Requirements:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Early Childhood Professional Competencies                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Require teachers to be knowledgeable of ELS and of how children develop relationships</li> <li>- Promote positive, individualized teacher child interactions</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Licensing: appropriate group sizes and ratios</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Evaluation strategies                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Measures that evaluate teacher-child interactions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<p><b>QRIS CAN BE A SYSTEM FOR PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Accountability requirements</li> <li>-Resources</li> <li>-Evaluation of quality</li> <li>-Multiple systems</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>III. IMPLEMENTATION</b></p>
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	<h3>Purposes for ELG/ELS</h3>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improve quality of program/curriculum</li> <li>■ Improve professional development</li> <li>■ Educate parents</li> <li>■ Guide decisions regarding assessments</li>   <li>■ Use as part of an accountability system or program evaluation</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">■ Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella &amp; Milburn (2007)</p>

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	<h3>Programs Required to Use ELS/ELG</h3>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pre-kindergarten programs most commonly required to use ELS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 23 required by law or regulation</li> <li>– 16 voluntary</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ States are encouraging other programs to use them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child care</li> <li>– Head Start</li> <li>– IDEA</li> <li>– Even Start</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<h3>Implementation</h3>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cannot overlook the complexity of implementation</li> <li>■ Must dedicate significant resources to ensure that the ELS are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Infused across systems</li> <li>– Used in different settings</li> <li>– Used appropriately with all children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<b>Implementation of ELG/ELS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In-service professional development</li> <li>■ Teacher professional competencies</li> <li>■ Higher education/teacher preparation programs</li> <li>■ Alignment with curricula and assessments</li> <li>■ Other elements of systems and quality improvement efforts</li> </ul>

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	<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that the ELS are high quality</li> <li>■ Think carefully about how the ELS can be infused into different systems and requirements</li> <li>■ Dedicate significant resources to support implementation</li> </ul>

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	<b>Challenges</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Systems level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Buy in, responsibility and consistency/coordination across agencies and funding streams</li> <li>– Infusion of ELS within Professional Development systems</li> <li>– Monitoring use of ELS</li> <li>– Constant state of change in systems</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Program level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Administrator knowledge of ELS</li> <li>– Programs with multiple sets of requirements</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Teacher level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Limited knowledge related how to use ELS, particularly with diverse children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scott-Little, Cassidy, Lower &amp; Ellen (2010)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<b>New Resource</b>
	<p><b>Early Learning Guidelines Resource: Issues for Consideration When Writing or Revising Early Learning Guidelines (Scott-Little, Kagan &amp; Frelow, in press)</b></p>

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	<b>IV. National Standards</b>

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	<b>Common Core for K-12</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ States will need to re-examine how their ELS align with Kindergarten standards</li> <li>■ Important to think of alignment at a “high complexity” level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-cursor skills</li> <li>– Contributions of all domains of development to progress in reading and mathematics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<b>National ELS?</b>

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<b>Pros and Cons of National ELS Effort</b>	
<b>Pros (if done well)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Pool national resources to address issues and produce high quality document</li><li>■ Conduct more in-depth analyses of content</li><li>■ Generate greater consensus and consistency across the country</li></ul>	<b>Possible "cons"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Reflect the cultural backgrounds and values of individual states?</li><li>■ Age-validation within states?</li><li>■ "Buy in" from state-level stakeholders?</li><li>■ Alignment within states?</li><li>■ Implementation?</li></ul>

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	<b>Conclusion</b>
	<b>Efforts to create an aligned system that integrally connects quality improvement efforts and ELS have great potential for improving the quality of services, "leveling" the playing field for children being served in different programs/settings, and improving children's readiness for success in school.</b>

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## Sources

- Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S. L., & Frelow, V. S. (Fall, 2003). Creating the Conditions for Success with Early Learning Standards: Results from a National Study of State-level Standards for Children's Learning Prior to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 5 (2). Available at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v5n2/little.html>
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- Scott-Little, C., Cassidy, D. J., Lower, J., & Ellen, S. (2010). Early learning standards and program quality-improvements initiatives: A systemic approach to supporting children's learning and development. In P. W. Wesley & V. Buysse (Eds.), *Expanding Program Quality in Early Childhood: Raising the Bar*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

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