

Standards, curriculum, and assessment in early childhood education: Examining alignment across multiple state systems ^[1]

Author: Whitaker, A. A., Jenkins, J. M., & Duer, J. K.

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from abstract

State governments are largely responsible for most early childhood education (ECE) policies (e.g., state pre-K, Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF]). However, multiple ECE funding streams and governing agencies within a state can lead to misaligned policies and incoherent systems. Thus, there exists great variability within and across states in ECE policy implementation. In our study we descriptively analyzed nationally, publicly available data to assess alignment within state policy systems on three policy levers often used in K-12 education research: state ECE standards, curricula, and assessment, the latter of which we operationalized as states' quality rating and improvement systems. Additionally, we examined the extent to which the governance of our focal policy levers is dispersed across, or housed within, different state-level institutions or agencies (i.e., alignment via governance). Our descriptive analyses reveal little and limited alignment between a state's policy levers of standards, curriculum, and assessment, and between state preschool policies—state pre-K and CCDF—with respect to curricular guidance. We also find wide variation in the number of ECE governing agencies within a state. The findings indicate potential for confusion around policies for early learning providers and demonstrate largely misaligned or poorly specified policies that are dispersed at the state level. We hope that researchers will continue to refine this initial model of alignment in the context of a rapidly changing ECE policy field.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: policy ^[4]

quality ^[5]

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