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The Effects of Multiple External Mandates on Curriculum, Pedagogy and Child Activity in the Preschool Classroom

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**THE EFFECTS OF MULTIPLE EXTERNAL MANDATES ON CURRICULUM,
PEDAGOGY AND CHILD ACTIVITY IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM**

A Dissertation Presented

by

KATHLEEN A. STRUB-RICHARDS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Child and Family Studies

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF MULTIPLE EXTERNAL MANDATES ON CURRICULUM,
PEDAGOGY AND CHILD ACTIVITY IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

MAY, 2011

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Within the last decade, the pressures of implementing state mandated early learning guidelines and meeting the requirements from federal, state and local agencies, have taken their toll on many preschool programs. In the present study, preschool programs were given a chance to voice their opinions about how curriculum standards and other external mandates were directly and indirectly influencing curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity. A brief survey was sent to 90 preschool directors in a region in Massachusetts, 28 directors completed this survey. A sample of nine directors, from the survey respondents, volunteered to be interviewed. In two separate interviews

the researcher asked a series of questions to obtain data from the participants. These interview questions focused on how the participants made sense of the mandatory integration of early learning standards and other external mandates into their preschool program and their concerns based on their role as a preschool director.

The results of the study revealed that external guidelines set forth by the state and federal government were a great concern to the preschool directors. These directors agreed that curriculum mandates were necessary yet the amount of work, time and expenditure needed to meet the demands of these mandates could be quite overwhelming. Concerns were particularly relevant in the areas of obtaining or maintaining NAEYC accreditation and the push for a standardized curriculum and/or a standardized assessment tool. To receive specific types of funding, a program must be using a standardized assessment tool. Many funding sources also require that a program be accredited by NAEYC. The financial and physical expense of both of these requirements was prohibitive .

The results were analyzed with respect to child development and early childhood education principles. The findings indicated that curriculum mandates focused primarily on young children's cognitive development to the detriment of social and emotional competence. The findings also indicated that children were being pressured to spend more time on narrow academic skills and less time on play. Yet play has been found to provide children with opportunities to interact socially, express and control emotions, and develop symbolic thinking skills (Nicolopoulou, 2010).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“I wish we could have spent more time discussing the specific uses of the guidelines in our curriculum only because the state is placing so much emphasis on this at this time.” KM, preschool teacher, excerpt from final reflection for Curriculum in Early Education class, HCC, May 2006

Teaching preschoolers no longer relates merely to planning developmentally appropriate curriculum that is meaningful and engaging for four- and five-year-olds. Most preschool teachers now have to consider mandated early learning standards, as well as other local, state and federal regulations, as they plan their curriculum. Preschool teachers have reported about the daily problems they encounter with behavior issues, special needs concerns, the administration, parental concerns, rules and regulations, budgets, and the challenging task of preparing preschoolers for kindergarten. Now in addition to these every day responsibilities many of these teachers have to contend with a variety of curriculum mandates, as they plan their daily instruction. Teachers provide varying accounts about the benefits and downfalls of local, state and federal regulations concerning mandated curriculum guidelines. This researcher was interested in conducting in-depth interviews with preschool program directors to decipher these anecdotal accounts about the positive and negative effects of the state mandated early learning standards. The researcher was particularly interested in knowing how external curriculum mandates, including state early learning standards, had directly and indirectly influenced curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity.

Conceptual Framework

The mission of the National Association for the Education of Young Children is to promote high-quality, developmentally appropriate programs for all children and their families. Developmentally Appropriate Practice is based on theories of child development, the individual differences of each child, and the child's cultural background (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; NAEYC, 2008). These basic tenets assert that children learn holistically, that all aspects of a child's development, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical are interrelated. Development proceeds at varying rates among children. Young children learn best through active, engaged meaningful experiences. Childhood learning is influenced by maturation, by the environment, and by early dispositions and perceptions. Children have different ways of understanding and learning and different ways of representing what they understand (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Kostelnik et al, 2004; Helm, 2000).

This is in contrast to some of the state mandated early learning standards developed for preschoolers. Many of these early learning standards list recommended guidelines for preschool education that are based heavily on curriculum standards for older students and are thus centered on upper elementary and secondary subject areas. The early learning standards are often put together by focusing on preschoolers' knowledge of subject matter, without considering child developmental theories, the nature of the child or the child's cultural identity.

There are various reasons why some early learning standards, external curriculum mandates and developmentally appropriate practice don't always intermingle well. These often include the following issues.

- State guidelines are often developed for political reasons, or are based on easily measured accountability or narrowly defined school readiness, rather than early childhood issues. Early learning standards are being developed with one set of stated intentions, notably the improvement of instruction, yet the possibility remains that the data collected from the standards might someday be used for other accountability purposes or school readiness (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Children, teachers, and programs can be regarded unfavorably in an effort to make them accountable (Hatch, 2002). A child's progress expressed in the early learning standards might be used to determine whether a child is "ready" to go to kindergarten (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

- Early learning standards, and various external curriculum mandates, can contribute to the narrowing of the curriculum and thus negatively affect pedagogy. Since some domains or approaches toward learning and social/ emotional development are frequently absent from early learning standards, teachers might attempt to directly teach narrowly defined skills or knowledge and neglect important cognitive and social emotional processes such as problem solving and self-regulation (Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

- Early learning standards and external mandates often disregard the distinct developmental and cultural variability in young children. Development during the preschool years is highly individualized. One set of goals cannot be applied to all children. Since early learning standards are a downward extension of K-12 standards, and

are more academic than developmental in orientation, they might fail to take into consideration the unique developmental orientations of preschoolers or favor certain domains and give little attention to others (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; Stipek, 2006).

Many early childhood educators are caught in a conundrum. Teachers who receive certification from regional colleges must complete a course in child development and several courses in early childhood curriculum and methods. Recent graduates in the early childhood education programs are imbued with theories of child development and developmentally appropriate practice. They understand the need to create curriculum based on the needs of the whole child, in terms of the child's environment and their social, emotional, physical and cognitive level. They know that children have different strengths and weaknesses. They know that development proceeds at varying rates among children. They are aware that no two children are alike, that each child has a different learning style. Early childhood educators know that education for young children needs to be meaningful. They know that children need to be actively involved in their own learning. They recognize that young children learn best through experimentation and exploration. Yet now early childhood educators are being asked to develop a curriculum based on specific early learning standards while adhering to external curriculum mandates. How do these teachers plan a curriculum that is aligned with early learning standards, satisfies the various requirements of the state and federal government, and is also developmentally appropriate?

Background

Until the last decade, early care and education programs were largely exempt from the standards based education movement. Traditionally the focus within early

childhood education had been on program standards that articulated requirements for basic elements for early care and education services, such as staff-child ratios, health and safety practices, and daily schedules and activities. Within the past five years, however, the number of states that have developed standards for children's learning and development before kindergarten entry have increased significantly (Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006). According to the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER), 2009, 37 U.S. states and the District of Columbia were implementing comprehensive Early Learning Standards during the 2008-2009 school year (Barnett et al, 2009).

Specific developments at the federal level have provided incentives for states to develop early learning standards. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the movement toward early learning standards was kindled in 1999 when Congress decreed, that to be reauthorized, Head Start programs must implement standards of learning in early literacy, language, and numeracy skills (Schumacher, Greenberg & Mezey, 2003). However, three years later, when the Bush administration alleged that the standards of learning specified in this Reauthorization had not been fully realized, the federal administration implemented an early childhood initiative, entitled "Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS)." The GSGS, among other things, strongly encouraged that *Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines* (state guidelines that align with state K-12 Standards) be strongly encouraged and adapted for various childcare settings (The White House, 2002; Scott-Little et al, 2004).

Several influences, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, have contributed to this push for early learning standards. To begin with, several recent

reports, such as *Eager to Learn* (National Research Council, 2001), have shown that children have a great capacity to learn before kindergarten. Secondly, the various federal, state and local agencies who have contributed resources for prekindergarten children should know what children at this age are learning. Finally, the accountability pressures in the K-12 education system have encouraged many people in the field to look at prekindergarten as a source for improving student performance in the early grades which will thus improve student performance in later grades (Scott-Little et al, 2004).

Early learning standards are not alone in their new found popularity nor in their impact on developmentally appropriate curriculum. Within the last decade several external mandates have had a huge influence on early childhood programs. Many of these external curriculum mandates are tied directly to funding. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted Statewide Early Learning Standards in 2003 (Barnett et al, 2005) and two years later, in 2005, the Commonwealth launched the Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. The UPK offers funding to programs that meet specific criteria, including that a program be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent and that the program be incorporating one of four approved assessment tools (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care [MA DOE], 2009). The MA DOE also funds Community Partnerships for Children (CPC). CPC help make quality preschool education and services available to low-income families. To receive CPC funding a program must be accredited by NAEYC or working towards it (CPC, 2008). Additionally, the Head Start funds include a requirement for a standard non-specified assessment tool and a standard, but non-specified, curriculum. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Early Childhood

Learning and Knowledge Center, 2010) [UPK, Head Start and CPC will all be discussed in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and Appendix A.] Thus besides the necessity of implementing Statewide Early Learning Standards many programs must also adhere to the requirements of different external mandates or funding sources: Head Start, UPK, and CPC. These funding sources include that a program be accredited by NAEYC and/or they have implemented a standardized assessment tool and/or a standardized curriculum.

The Problem

Government officials and other people who are not experts in the field of early education and care are often included in the committees formed to develop standards (MA Dept. of Education, 2003). These guidelines are frequently developed for accountability and school readiness issues rather than early childhood issues. These early learning standards for preschoolers are often aligned with the K-12 standards. The focus is primarily on curriculum that is more appropriate for older grades. Academics are given precedence over developmental issues. These standards are often narrowly defined.

Young children's development is not uniform. Development during the preschool years varies according to the individual, young children develop physically, mentally and emotionally at very different rates. Young children are highly influenced by their cultures, their families, their exposure to books and their experience in preschool. Since there is so much variation between young children, the development of standards can be quite difficult (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

Many articles have been written about the rise of mandated standards in early childhood education yet limited research has been conducted about how these early learning standards are affecting the preschool programs. Vast changes have occurred due

to the rapid rise of accountability measures in early childhood education. Mandates have been imposed on preschool programs with little regard to the preschool teachers themselves. Some of these enforced mandates, such as the National Reporting System, have failed miserably. How do we know that these new mandates will not have the same repercussions? How will these new mandates effect curriculum planning? Will they change the relationship between students and teachers? Will free play in preschool no longer be valid? A myriad of questions exist yet the people who know the most, those who are actually teaching preschoolers, have seldom been heard. There was thus a need for a study such as this since it truly looked into how early learning standards and other mandates were affecting the actual preschool programs through the viewpoints/perspectives of the teachers and directors.

Purpose

To be licensed, accredited or receive state or federal funding many preschool programs have specific mandatory curriculum standards and other local, state and federal regulations. To receive accreditation from the National Association for Young Children (NAEYC), funding for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants, or reauthorization from Head Start, an early childhood program must be incorporating curriculum standards. Furthermore to receive funding from UPK grants, a program must not only incorporate early learning standards, it must be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent and it must be implementing a UPK approved standardized assessment tool. Head Start funds also require that a program be implementing a non-specified, standardized, curriculum and assessment tool. The purpose of this study was to examine the process by which the pressures of integrating state mandated early learning standards and other external

mandates had directly and indirectly influenced curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity as viewed by directors of publicly and privately funded preschools.

Research Questions

1. Do individual programs consider the early learning standards as a guide for school readiness?
2. How have early learning standards and other external mandates affected individual preschool programs?
 - a. Are teachers, as reported by directors, narrowing their curriculum?
 - b. Has free play been affected?
 - c. Have academic issues taken precedence over social/emotional development?
3. Do different types of preschool programs, with different license requirements, such as UPK or Head Start, have different types of concerns about the implementation of early learning standards or other external mandates than other programs?
4. How do preschool directors integrate early learning standards and other mandates while maintaining a developmentally appropriate curriculum?
5. In what ways does a director's belief systems have an impact on their attitude toward integrating the early learning standards?
6. In what ways have the relationships between teacher and child or child-to-child changed as a result of this process?

Design

In order to observe the process by which state mandated early learning standards and other external mandates had directly and indirectly influenced curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity, preschool directors were surveyed and interviewed. A two-step process was followed.

Part I. Introduction and Brief Mail Survey

A brief letter/survey was sent or emailed to ninety group childcare centers in a region of Massachusetts. The letter included a brief introduction about the researcher, the purpose of the study and an outline of the scope and procedure.

The survey opened with a series of closed questions about the demographics of the preschool and the directors. The second half of the survey addressed current curriculum concerns. A checklist of items included questions about external guidelines, early learning standards, and the program's affiliation with particular programs. A short answer item asked about the director's curricular decisions based on state guidelines. To conclude, the directors were asked if they would be interested in being interviewed.

Part II. In-Depth Interviews with Directors

Volunteers from nine centers agreed to be interviewed. Two of the programs were UPK grantees, two were Head Start programs, one program was part of a college campus, and one program was a parent cooperative. Each director had at least eight years experience in the field of early childhood education. The directors were interviewed on

two separate occasions. The responses generated from the first interview formed the basis for the second interview.

Interview I. – During the preliminary interview rapport was established between the researcher and the director. The purpose of the interview, the assurance of protection and an overview of discussion topics were discussed. The researcher reviewed the data presented in the survey for review and clarification. General questions about the early learning standards and other external mandates were discussed. These general questions paved the way for more specific questions that were addressed during the second interview.

Interview II. – The second interview began with a brief Likert scale questionnaire concerning the directors' belief systems. The researcher posed additional in-depth questions about curriculum concerns based on the answers from the first interview. Using the Concerned Based Adoption Model (CBAM) the researcher ascertained which stage of concern and level of use of the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences the director was presently experiencing.

Rationale

The rationale for conducting these in-depth interviews, with nine informants, was to uncover the processes of change that the preschool programs had experienced during the mandatory integration of early learning standards and other external mandates. The researcher wanted to know how state standards and other curriculum mandates had impacted these specific preschool programs in the design of learning activities, staff training, and curriculum development. Change is a difficult process including obstacles, competing demands and sometimes-active resistance. Only through careful in-depth

interviews can the details of this process be uncovered, with the ultimate goal of understanding the process and providing ways to assist those on the front line of educational change.

State standards have been in existence for less than ten years. Some early childhood educators and directors have been teaching in the field for twenty or more years. How were these veteran teachers addressing the new obligatory state mandates? Many of these educators and directors were facing the same problems regardless of their demographics or geographic location. All of these programs had similar pedagogical and development issues that they faced daily as they guided young children's learning. Most of the schools that were being targeted were currently integrating the relatively new learning standards into the curriculum. These preschools were encountering the various triumphs and obstacles of introducing new guidelines into their teaching. What was this process of change that they were experiencing? What types of measures were these programs undertaking to fully integrate state mandated curriculum standards and other external mandates?

This researcher was interested in conducting in-depth interviews with preschool program directors to unfold these personal narratives about the affirmative and adverse effects of the state mandated early learning standards and other mandatory regulations. The researcher was interested in knowing how external mandates had directly and indirectly influenced curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity.

The information gathered highlighted the obstacles that these particular preschools had faced and the steps they had taken to integrate curriculum guidelines and other external mandates with developmentally appropriate practice. Their lessons could

serve as a guide for other childhood professionals as they consider the various developmentally appropriate ways of integrating the state and/or federal learning standards and other guidelines into their preschool curriculum.

Significance

This study was significant, even though a fairly small population of licensed childcare programs in a region in Massachusetts was chosen for sampling. Challenges and issues uncovered here may be relevant to other preschool programs that are required to include comprehensive early learning standards in their curriculum. Of the 37 states, and District of Columbia, that are currently incorporating comprehensive early learning standards for preschool-aged children, many concerns still exist (Barnett et al, 2009; Scott-Little et al, 2006). Through these in-depth interviews, the researcher hoped to learn about the various issues that childcare centers were facing in relation to the implementation of the curriculum mandates. The information gathered can lead to a better understanding of competing issues and the resolution of these issues in different types of preschool centers. Those administrators in the Early Childhood Profession, at several levels, may be able to plan staff training and develop curriculum in more effective ways with a better understanding of the central issues.

Limitations

There were various limitations in this research design. The researcher was engaging in dialogue with the participants and thus had the numerous issues of rapport development, optimal flow of honest dialogue, and the participants' concern about

“proper” responses that might have effected the outcome (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

It was difficult to measure complex human characteristics. Human beings actively select the elements to which they respond. The directors may not have wanted to respond to specific questions. One needs to view human beings in the context of their life. For example, one of the directors did have a negative personal issue with the integration of curriculum standards because of her own children’s experience with the curriculum standards (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

The researcher interviewed human participants of whom there was linguistic and cultural diversity. Linguistic diversity caused some difficulty in translation. Cultural diversity caused complexity in the analysis of data because the researcher had dissimilar cultural norms (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

The external environment influences public institutions. This study took place in a region in Massachusetts. What’s true for a preschool in Massachusetts might not be applicable for another. Limited outdoor time due to potential demands of curriculum guidelines may have a more unfavorable effect on the curriculum in California than they might in Massachusetts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Finally, there was program variability. The sample reflected perhaps too narrow sampling of this range. Only 18 in-depth interviews in one specific area of the United States was conducted and these nine participants may have provided too narrow a sample from which to make generalizations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“The early childhood profession has a long history of engagement with standards settings of all kinds: standards for programs, for professional preparation, for practice, and most recently, standards for children’s learning. At the same time the field of early childhood education has a profound ambivalence toward the concept of standard setting in general, as well as concern over specific standard-setting efforts, particularly those involving pre-established child outcomes” (Bredekamp, 2009, p. 258).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the complex issue of standards for young children’s learning and development. First the movement toward the establishment of early learning standards for young children will be explored (Bredekamp, 2009), followed by a description of the early learning standards, and a discussion of the potential benefits as opposed to the potential negative effects of early learning standards. Developmentally appropriate practice will then be examined in its relationship to early learning standards. Research studies concerning the development, the content and the implementation of early learning standards will be reviewed. A discussion of belief systems in relation to the integration of early learning standards will be discussed. Theories of educational change particularly the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) will be examined. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications of early learning standards for developmentally appropriate practice.

The Standards Movement

One of the most significant trends in education in the last few decades has been the standards movement (Bredekamp, 2009). The national trend was triggered with the publication of *A Nation at Risk, The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983. President Reagan's secretary of education, Terrell Bell had been appointed to dismantle the brand-new U.S. Department of Education. Hoping for a "a Sputnik-like occurrence" (Borek, 2008, p. 572) Bell opted to enlist the National Commission on Excellence in Education to study current research and data on public school students instead of closing down the U.S. Department of Education and moving programs to other federal departments. The information gathered about U.S. students would be disseminated and recommendations would be provided to President Reagan (Borek, 2008).

The publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which was developed in response to declining SAT scores and general discontent with the American public school systems, characterized the American educational system as "being eroded" by tides of mediocrity that "threaten our very future as a nation" (Seefeldt, 2005. p.5). The report listed inadequate or declining achievement scores, graduation rates, expectations of students, and insufficient focus on academics. The Secretary of Education's report criticized the absence of standards and called for major educational reforms (NY Dept. of Education, 2002). Reflecting concern for the need to improve public education, the nation's governors convened at the Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1989. To meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, new levels of achievement were called for, beginning with higher expectations for America's education system. Concluding the meeting the governors established six broad goals for education that were to be achieved

by the year 2000. The first goal was targeted directly to early childhood education and stated that *all children in America will start school ready to learn*. The objectives for this goal included that all children would have access to high quality appropriate preschool programs (Shepard, Kagan & Wurtz, 1998; Seefeldt, 2005; Bredekamp, 2009).

In 1990, when Congress established the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, the governor's educational goals were validated. The National Council on Education Standards and Testing was developed for the purpose of deciding what subject matter American students should know, how this knowledge should be assessed, and what performance standards should be utilized (Seefeldt, 2005).

Subsequent to the establishment of the governors' educational goals, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) drafted *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (NCTM, 1989). This report ushered in new era of national organizations being involved in the practice of schooling (Kendall and Marzano, 2004). The mathematics standards paved the way for other national subject-area groups to contribute to the improvement of education. Virtually every other discipline including science, history and language/reading arts, physical education and the arts followed (Seefeldt, 2005; Bredekamp, 2009).

Movement Toward Early Learning Standards

Up until recently, early care and education programs were relatively unaffected by the standards based education movement. Within the last decade, however, the number of states that have developed standards for children's learning and development before kindergarten entry has more than quadrupled (Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006). In 1999, for instance, only seven U.S. states had adopted statewide early learning standards.

Five years later, in 2004, 29 U.S. states had adopted statewide early learning standards (Barnett et al, 2005). Then, in just another five years, in 2009, 37 of the U.S. states had adopted statewide early learning standards (Barnett et al, 2009).

Several developments at the federal level have provided further impetus for states to develop early learning standards. In 1999 Congress mandated that Head Start programs implement standards of learning in early literacy, language, and numeracy skills in order to be reauthorized. These standards of learning goals, that children should achieve before leaving Head Start, included developing phonemic, print, and numeracy awareness; understanding and using language to communicate for various purposes; recognize a word as a unit of print; identify at least 10 letters of the alphabet and associate sounds with written words (Schumacher, Greenberg & Mezey, 2003). All Head Start programs would be required to report progress toward these goals (Grisham-Brown, Hallam & Brookshire, 2006.)

In 2001 President George Bush, in an attempt to close the achievement gap, initiated *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. This federal act, which was part of the 2001 reauthorization of Title 1, required that all states, school districts, and schools be accountable for ensuring that all students meet high academic standards. It was imperative that each state develop a system of sanctions and rewards to hold districts and schools accountable for improving academic achievement; annual reading and math assessments were to be administered; and specific consequences would be bestowed upon schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (The White House, 2002).

In 2002, in the wake of the NCLB, the Bush Administration alleged that the standards of learning specified in the Reauthorization of Head Start 1999 had not been

fully implemented. In order to ensure Head Start programs were effectively preparing children to meet standards of learning an early childhood initiative, entitled “Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS),” was implemented. In an attempt to strengthen Head Start the GSGS wanted to ensure that Head Start programs were evaluated on whether they effectively prepared children to meet standards of learning. All 3-5 year old children would be assessed three times a year to analyze the assessment data on the progress and accomplishments of all enrolled children. Head Start teachers would be trained to use the best methods of early reading and language skills instruction in order to better teach to these standards. *Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines* (state guidelines on literacy, language, and pre-reading skills activities for children ages 3 to 5, that align with state K-12 Standards) would be strongly encouraged. The Good Start, Grow Smart initiative specified that these *early learning guidelines* should be adapted to various childcare settings (The White House, 2002; Scott-Little et al, 2004; Grisham-Brown et al, 2006; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; Stipek, 2006).

Professional associations and subject matter organizations were not alone in the development of standards. Federal, state, and local legislative bodies also have developed-and mandated-standards of learning and teaching in an effort to reform schools to raise the level of achievement of all children. Every state and the District of Columbia have developed a set of common learning standards in the core subject areas of math, language arts, the arts, social studies, and science and thirty-seven states have developed early learning standards at the preschool level (Barnett et al, 2009; Seefeldt, 2005; Bredekamp, 2009).

Early Learning Standards

The vocabulary of the standards movement encompasses several related terms. *Standards* is the broadest term referring to expectations for students learning. *Content standards* define the knowledge concepts and skills to be taught at each age or grade level (Bowman, 2006). *Early learning standards* are content standards for young children. They specify what young children should know and be able to do. Typically, they are designed to apply to children from ages 3 to 5 years old (Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). *Performance standards*, also called benchmarks, which sometimes accompany content standards, describe expected levels of student performance related to the content standard (Bredekamp, 2009, p.260).

Why Have Early Learning Standards been Developed?

Several factors have mediated this push for early learning standards. First, research studies over several decades have demonstrated that children have a great capacity for learning during the years before kindergarten, and several recent reports, such as *Eager to Learn* (National Research Council, 2001), have pointed out the great potential for learning at this age. Early education programming can have a great influence on children's learning and development. Second, the federal government, states, local school districts, and communities have supplied considerable resources in services for children this age. It seems only fair that these people should know just what children are supposed to be learning in early education settings. Finally, the accountability pressures in the K-12 education system have trickled down to the need for improving student performance in the early grades. To promote student learning before kindergarten, standards have been developed to define just what children are supposed to learn at this

age. This, in turn, will improve student performance in later grades. In conclusion, because young children have such potential for learning, and being that funders need to know just what children are learning, and in view of the pressures of accountability, early learning standards have become more and more prevalent (Scott-Little et al, 2004).

Potential Benefits of Early Learning Standards

The principal reasons for the development and use of standards are to establish clarity of curriculum content; to raise expectations of the achievement of all children; and to ensure accountability for public education.

Clarity of Content

Early learning standards bring distinct content to the curriculum. They provide teachers with a basis in which to plan instruction. Early learning standards specify what young children can and should be learning, thus uniting the diverse field of early childhood education. Curriculum is derived from a variety of texts or the teachers themselves. Well-defined standards can provide direction and coherence to early childhood education. Standards can help focus the curriculum, presenting all students with a manageable set of concepts to be mastered within a given time. Early learning standards can help foster improvement in the development of curriculum for young children and bring continuity to young children's curriculum from preschool through the primary grades (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al. 2006).

Raise Expectations

Standards raise expectations for students learning. Consistent expectations for standards for education can inspire high expectations for the academic achievement of all students. These high expectations could then lead to higher academic performance for all students (Seefeldt, 2005). Furthermore, early learning standards can help bring professionalism into the field (Carter, 2006).

Accountability

Perhaps the most apparent motivation for the development and implementation of standards of learning is accountability. Students' achievement needs to be accounted for. Since education is mandatory, the public must be able to justify the value and effectiveness of its laws and regulations and for the funds spent on education. Because education is responsible for preparing children to become productive members of a democratic society, the public must know how the children are being educated (Seefeldt, 2005). Additionally, early learning standards can foster accountability among teachers for what they are teaching and what young children are learning (Carter, 2006).

Potential Negative Effects of Early Learning Standards

Early childhood educators have been reluctant to set specific goals for young children's learning and development for several reasons (Bredekamp, 2009). Early learning standards are sometimes developed for political reasons, and could thus be used for the purpose other than that which was intended such as accountability or school readiness. Early learning standards have the potential of narrowing the curriculum and

negatively affecting pedagogy. Some educators believe that early learning standards trivialize the fundamental variability in young children.

Accountability and School Readiness

State guidelines are often developed for political reasons, or easily measured accountability and school readiness, rather than early childhood issues. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) required that states have standards in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science for grades 3 through 12. The NCLB exerted a heavy influence on the states and focused their attention on defining expectations for what children should learn before they enter kindergarten. The Good Start, Grow Smart Act (2002) strongly encouraged that states develop early learning standards for preschool aged children (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; The White House, 2002; Stipek, 2006). Standards are being developed with one set of stated intentions, notably the improvement of instruction. Yet the possibility remains that the data collected from the standards might someday be used for other accountability purposes or school readiness (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

Children, teachers, and programs can be regarded unfavorably in an effort to make them accountable (Hatch, 2002). A child's progress on skills and abilities expressed in the standards might be used to make placement decisions or to determine whether a child is "ready" to go to kindergarten (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Additionally some fear that some children who fail to meet standards will be seen as failures and become victims of low expectations and tracking, which could have a detrimental effect on their school learning (Stipek, 2006).

A prime example of how standards and accountability issues were misused is the standardized achievement test, entitled the National Reporting System [NRS] (2003),

which was administered biannually to every English and Spanish speaking Head Start preschooler. Though it was officially developed to evaluate teacher and program effectiveness for the purpose of accountability its overly narrow definition of standards and inappropriateness for young children was highly criticized and paved the way to its ultimate demise. The NRS, was criticized, among other things, because it lead to “narrowing the curriculum” and ignoring the high cultural and developmental variability of young children (Katz, 1997; Meisels, 2004; Meisels, 2006; Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2004; Robinson, 2003; Schumacher, Greenberg & Mezey, 2003; Stipek, 2006; The White House, 2002).

Narrowing the Curriculum

Specifying early learning outcomes can narrow the curriculum and negatively affect pedagogy. Since some domains or approaches toward learning and social and emotional development are frequently absent from early standards teachers might attempt to directly teach narrowly defined skills and neglect important cognitive and social emotional processes such as problem solving and self-regulation (Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). For example, many Head Start teachers, who administered the National Reporting System (NRS) to their Head Start students claimed that they changed their instruction after their preschoolers were given the NRS. These teachers focused more on isolated skills that were on the test, spending less time on play and developing social skills and emotional control, areas that were not measured on the test (Stipek, 2006).

Pedagogical questions still remain about the appropriate balance between teacher intentionality and child initiation (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004); and the appropriate

content, curricular and instructional practices with young children (Brown, 2007; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Some experts fear that a standards based curriculum can reduce a rich curriculum to a narrow sequence of lessons (Hatch, 2002) or that early learning standards will lead to fragmented teaching of isolated skills that are not meaningful or motivating to children (Stipek, 2006).

Variability in Young Children

During the preschool years a child's development is highly individualized, each child develops at a different rate, while one child may be having a growth spurt another may be lagging developmentally. There is inconsistency across all developmental domains (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Most early childhood educators believe that no one set of individual goals can be applied to all children. Furthermore, since child development is influenced by social and cultural contexts there is concern that standards will not be sensitive to cultural and linguistic variation in young children (Bredekamp, 2009).

Many early learning standards are a downward extension of goals for upper grades; they focus primarily on curriculum that is more appropriate for older grades (Kendall, 2003; MA Dept. of Education, 2003). Since these early learning standards are a downward extension of K-12 standards, some question if they will take into consideration the unique developmental orientations of preschoolers (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; Stipek, 2006). Since standards based on K-12 Frameworks are more academic than developmental in orientation, might they favor certain domains and give little attention to others (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Some critics fear that expectations about what children should know and be able to do at specific ages will encourage instruction that is

not responsive to the individual strengths and needs of young children (Hatch, 2002; Stipek, 2006).

Children's development is strongly affected by what they experience in the world - interactions with their parents, and community members, exposure to literacy-rich environments, and experiences in preschools. Early learning standards do not encode specific behaviors and beliefs of different children with special circumstances - children with disabilities, children for whom English is not the primary language, and children with other experiences or characteristics associated with poor performance in school (Bowman, 2006; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Family and cultural differences can be ignored if programs emphasize sameness (Hatch, 2002).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Early Learning Standards

One of the most common reasons for renouncing early learning standards is the apprehension and concern that they will lead to practices that are developmentally inappropriate (Bredekamp, 2009). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's leading organization of early child educators, published position statements on developmentally appropriate practice in 1986 and 1987 (Bredekamp, 1997). The primary purpose of the position statements was to provide guidance for program personnel seeking NAEYC accreditation. A second purpose was to respond to a growing trend towards more formal, academic instruction of young children caused by a tendency of pushing down first grade curriculum into kindergarten and preschool (Bredekamp, 1997; Bredekamp, 2009). *The NAEYC governing board defines developmentally appropriate practice as the outcome of a process of teacher decision making that draws on at least three critical, interrelated bodies of knowledge: (1) what*

teachers know about how children develop and learn; (2) what teachers know about the individual children in their group; (3) knowledge of the school and cultural context in which these children live and learn (Bredekamp, 1997, p. v). NAEYC's position statement was revised in 1996 to address several key issues including the discernment of the relationship between teaching, curriculum and assessment; the teacher's role as a decision maker; the genuine representation of culture; the importance of appropriate practices for individuals, especially for children with disabilities; and the need for shared relationships with families (Bredekamp, 2009). The 1997 position statement stated that children could benefit from both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning experiences. NAEYC's position statements are regularly reviewed and revised (Bredekamp, 2009). Approved by the NAEYC Governing Board in spring of 2005, the New NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, replacing the 1998 Accreditation Criteria, took effect in September of 2006 (NAEYC, 2005; NAEYC 2011).

Principles of Child Development and Learning that Define Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Within the last decade various legislatures have insisted that publicly funded preschools must adhere to early learning standards and other forms of assessment in order to receive funding. Yet these regulations are sometimes in direct contrast with how children learn. In order to discuss how the mandatory integration of early learning standards have effected preschool learning environments it is imperative that one has an understanding of the principles of child development and learning.

Principles of Child Development

Children develop holistically. All areas of development, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical, are interconnected. All areas of development are dependent on each other. Social development has a direct effect on cognitive development, while cognitive development shapes or restricts social development. At the same time physical development affects cognitive development (Kostelnik, Soderman & Whiren, 2004). Educators need to focus on the whole child, on all aspects of their development. Development occurs in a relatively orderly predictable sequence with later abilities, skills and knowledge building on those already acquired (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). For example first infants lift their head, then they roll over, sit, crawl, stand and eventually walk.

Child development varies significantly among children. Different aspects of development are dominant at different times for each child throughout childhood. For instance, physical development is rapid for infants while language development occurs at a much slower rate; furthermore a preschooler's language development increases while his/her physical development slows down (Kostelnik et al, 2004). New development is based on previous development. New information that children learn is based on what they already know. Children first need to understand one-to-one correspondence before they can learn to count objects; they need to recognize the sounds and symbols that represent letters before they can learn to decipher new words (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Principles of Childhood Learning

Children are constantly learning. They learn about fractions when they eat half a sandwich, they learn about science as they feel the changes in the weather, they learn to retain information when they memorize their phone number. Children are active learners. During preschool and early primary years children learn best through active, engaged meaningful experiences. The work of Piaget has demonstrated the importance of sensory experiences and concrete learning activities (Helm, 2000). When children are actively involved in an activity that concerns them they want to learn more and explore ways to absorb more information in order to build their own understanding of their world. Young children are motoric beings. They are biologically programmed to reach out, pull up, stand upright, move forward and move about. Children use their whole bodies as instruments of learning taking in data through all their senses. Young children want to taste, smell, touch, and look at objects to discover their essence. They are active participants in their learning. They energetically seek ways to obtain new knowledge (Kostelnik et al, 2004).

Children learn tremendously through play. They develop social, emotional, cognitive, physical and self-reflective skills as they collaborate with one another. Play provides children with opportunities to understand their world, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Maturation, the physical environment, and early dispositions and perceptions, heavily influence childhood learning. Additionally, a child's biological timetable affects his/her learning. As a child grows older his/her physical and neurological abilities

increase. The biological, physical and social environment play critical roles in the learning process. Biological factors, including nutrition, medical care and physical exercise; physical factors, including clothing, shelter, climate and access to materials; and the social environment, including family, peers, schools, community, and culture, all have an immense influence on a child's learning. In addition, learning is influenced by a child's disposition. Some children are curious others are apathetic. Learning is influenced by the perceptions children have of themselves (Kostelnik et al, 2004). For instance if a child thinks that he/she is incompetent he/she may refuse to even attempt a challenging task.

Children have different approaches of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Each person has a preferred mode (or sensory approach) through which they perceive the world. For instance, auditory learners often rely on auditory and spoken language. Visual learners may respond best to what they see. Kinesthetic and tactile learners prefer to move around and touch objects in order to understand them. Children learn through a combination of physical experience, social interaction and reflection. They learn as they touch, taste, smell and climb on top of objects. They learn through their interactions with people. Children learn as they reflect on what they have seen, heard or experienced (Kostelnik et al, 2004). Insight from brain research suggests that learning is easier when experiences are interconnected rather than compartmentalized into narrow subject areas (Helm, 2000). Children need to see the whole picture, not just bits and pieces of it. They do this through hands-on exploration and various modes of thought-provoking inquiry.

True learning occurs when children make a relatively permanent change in their thinking or behavior as a result of the interaction between maturation and experience (Kostelnik et al, 2004). Learning has been attained if a person is able to transfer what she/he has learned in school to everyday settings of home, community and workplace. Successful transfer is influenced by the degree of mastery of the original subject and by the degree to which it is learned with understanding rather than just through memorization. Motivation highly influences the desire and ability to learn. Children that are motivated to learn will spend large amounts of time mastering the subject (National Research Council, 2000).

What do we actually know about early learning standards? What are they composed of? How have states developed and implemented early learning standards? Are they similar for all states? Are early standards developmentally appropriate? How have or will early learning standards impact the early childhood curriculum? These are all questions that will be explored through research studies that have been conducted since the early learning standards have been instituted.

Research Studies Concerning Early Learning Standards

Though the advent of early learning standards began only eight years ago, with the birth of Good Start Grow Smart, 2002, they nonetheless had a huge impact on early childhood practices. Much has been written about the concerns that early educators have about the mandatory integration of early learning standards. In the following section, the various research studies that have been centered on the development, content and implementation of the early learning standards, will be discussed.

Development of Early Learning Standards

To illustrate trends in how states have developed and implemented early learning standards Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella, and Millburn (2007) conducted a national survey of early childhood specialists in state departments of education. The survey was created by members of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Early Childhood State Collaborative on Student Standards and Assessments (ECEA-SCASS), a collaborative group of state specialists engaged in implementing early childhood standards and assessments. The group began developing the survey by identifying potential topics/issues of interest. Draft questions were developed based on a review of the questions asked by Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2003), a scan of the issues raised in recent publications related to early learning standards, and the group's collective experiences in implementing early learning standards. Draft survey questions were then reviewed by a number of different stakeholder groups, including representatives from the CCSSO, the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium, Child Care Bureau, National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), Child Trends, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG Institute), National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Pew Accountability Task Force, America Public Human Services Association (APHSA), National Governors' Association (NGA), Education Commission for the States (ECS), and the Children's Project (Scott-Little et al, 2007, p. 4).

A draft instrument, based on the suggestions offered by the aforementioned groups, was piloted with two states, and the content and format of the survey were then finalized. A 72-item instrument was developed with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions that generally fell into the following categories: early learning standards (21 questions), child assessments (35 questions), program assessment (14 questions), and contact information for persons who participated in completing the instrument (2 questions) (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

The survey instrument was emailed to early childhood specialists in state departments of education in June 2005. State specialists were asked to complete the online survey in collaboration with state program specialists for the federal early childhood programs in their state. One response, reflecting the collaborative input of the appropriate individuals, was collected from each state. Survey responses were entered directly into a Web-based survey platform called "Survey Monkey." Once respondents had entered the data into Survey Monkey, a copy of their completed response was emailed back to the person responsible for entering the data to confirm the accuracy of the information. Additions and corrections were made based on feedback from respondents (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

The results of the survey were based on the status of early learning standards, considerations in the development of early learning standards documents and the implementation of the early learning standards. Results concerning the status of early learning standards indicate that almost every state in the nation now has early learning standards for preschool-age children.

Respondents to the survey noted that the early learning standards documents had been developed for a variety of purposes. The primary stated purpose was to improve teaching practices, (particularly improving the instruction or curriculum). Thirty-six states reported the purpose of the early learning standards was to improve professional development and 32 states reported that the purpose of the early learning standards was to educate parents about children’s development and learning. Several states noted that one purpose associated with their early learning standards was related to improved outcomes or accountability for programs. Thirty states indicated that a purpose of their early learning standards was to guide decisions related to child assessments. A quarter of the states indicated that a purpose of early learning standards was for program evaluation (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

Concerning considerations in the development of early learning standards, every state that responded to the survey had, in some way, addressed alignment with K-12 standards. Alignment between the early learning standards and the K-12 standards had been an important issue (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

Many respondents reported that their state had addressed the issue of children from special circumstances—children from limited-income or non-Caucasian families, children whose home language is not English, and children with disabilities. Twenty-three states had provided some type of guidance and training related to the use of the standards with English-language learners, and seven states were in the process of providing guidance. Over half of the states had developed some type of guidance related to the use of the early learning standards with children with disabilities (and 8 were in the process). The majority of the states (24) had developed (or were developing) training to

teach teachers how to use the early learning standards with children who have disabilities (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

States reported that the vast majority of early learning standards would be used in the state's prekindergarten program. Thirty-nine states indicated that their state's standards were used in prekindergarten programs that receive state funds. Twenty-three states indicated that the prekindergarten program was required to use the standards, and sixteen states indicated that use of the early learning standards was voluntary (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

Various strategies were employed to support implementation of the early learning standards. Forty-one states noted that their state was distributing the document widely. Thirty-six states were providing in-service training and 23 states were providing technical assistance (Scott-Little et al, 2007).

Most states have developed learning standards that will be incorporated into the states prekindergarten programs. These standards have been developed for a variety of purposes: to improve teacher practices and professional development; to educate parents; to guide decisions for assessments; and for accountability. All of the states have addressed the issue of K-12 alignment. Many of the states have addressed issues concerning children whose home language is not English, and children with disabilities. Many of the states are also providing in-service training and are monitoring the implementation of the process.

Content of Early Learning Standards

To gain a better understanding of what has been included in the early learning standards Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2004) analyzed the content of 38 early learning standards in 36 states. The criterion for early learning standards to be eligible for the study was that they had to have been published and available for review by November of 2003 (Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2004; Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006). Scott-Little et al (2004) developed a system for recording the area of development and learning that each standard addressed. They began with the five domains of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals Panel: physical, social and emotional, approaches toward learning, language and communication, and cognition and general knowledge. Each domain was then broken down into specific categories of skills, knowledge and characteristics pertinent to that domain.

Scott-Little et al (2004) discovered that early learning standards vary drastically from state to state. They learned that early learning standards documents have more standards related to language and communication (31%) and cognition and general knowledge (39%) than the other three domains. The other three domains were much smaller: physical well-being was 8.7%, social and emotional development was 12.1%, and approaches toward learning was 9.6% (Scott-Little et al, 2004; Scott-Little et al, 2006).

Scott-Little et al (2004) discovered that certain categories of skills within specific domains had been addressed more often than others. The standards within the physical domain addressed motor skills (49 %) and self help skills (24 %) more often, and physical fitness (12%) and overall health and growth (2%) the least. The standards within

the social-emotional domain addressed social skills with peers (33%) and expresses emotions appropriately (19 %) more often, and relationships with peers (5%), self-efficacy (4%), and relationships with adults (2%) the least often. Within the approaches toward learning domain curiosity (32%) and reflection and interpretation (28%) were addressed more often, and imagination (17%) and initiative and task persistence (17%) the least. Within the domain of language and communication the standards addressed the most often were writing (11%), creative uses of language (11%), vocabulary (10%) and print awareness (10%), while comprehension (4%), book awareness (3%), questioning (2%) and non-verbal communication (1%) were addressed the least. The standards within the cognition and general knowledge domain addressed logico-mathematical knowledge (43%) and knowledge of the physical world (38%) more often, and understanding of social groups and relationships (13%) and understanding of rules and routines (7%) the least (Scott-Little et al, 2004; Scott-Little et al, 2006).

Many of the states have already developed standards for early childhood learning or are well on their way to doing so. Many of the standards put emphasis on language and cognition and much less emphasis on social and emotional development. Yet research continues to demonstrate that social/emotional development and health factors predict as well if not better academic success in later years.

A number of researchers have demonstrated that children who enter kindergarten with strong, positive social-emotional skills, not only are more successful in developing a positive attitude about school and a successful early adjustment to school, but also have improved grades and achievement. Social and emotional considerations, including

positive interactions with teachers, positive self image, social skills, emotional control, and non-rejected peer status, often uniquely predict academic success (Denham, 2006)

On the contrary, children with adverse social-emotional skills are at risk of multiple problems. For instance, children who are aggressive or are victimized by peers have more difficulty adjusting to school. They are more likely to have academic hardships, delinquency, and drug abuse. When developmental milestones of social and emotional competence, such as negative emotion, and limited self control, are unattended, preschoolers are at risk for mental disorders and academic failure, both in preschool and later in life (Denham, 2006).

To develop a consensus for school readiness the National Education Goals Panel requested a survey about the current beliefs and professional judgments of public school kindergarten teachers regarding school readiness. The National Center for Education Statistics conducted this survey in the spring of 1993. A sample of 1,448 public school kindergarten teachers was selected from 860 public schools. The survey covered three general areas: public school kindergarten teachers knowledge and beliefs about school readiness, the tone of their kindergarten classes and their practices in these classrooms, and the demographics of the public school kindergarten teachers (Heaviside & Farris, 1993).

The top three qualities that public school kindergarten teachers consider essential for school readiness is that the child is, physically healthy, well-nourished and rested; is able to communicate their needs, wants and thoughts verbally; and that the child be enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities, and can take turns and share (Heaviside and Farris, 1993; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000).

Hair, Halle, Terry-Human, Lavelle, and Calkins (2006) examined the patterns of school readiness of children entering kindergarten and how these patterns predict first grade outcomes. Over 17,000 children were assessed at the kindergarten entry level and again at the end of first grade. The prekindergarten children were measured using the National Education Goals Panel (1995) framework to identify domains of school readiness: physical health, social/emotional development, approaches to learning, language and cognitive development. Language and cognitive development were assessed based on letter recognition, beginning sounds, counting, numbers, shapes, and relative size; the mean of the scores was used as the direct cut-point for each assessment. Children's social/emotional development and approaches to learning skills were gathered from parents and teachers using scales such as "in progress," "intermediate" or "proficient." The child's body mass index (BMI) was used for scoring the child's physical well-being and motor development. Scores for fine and gross motor development were based on the number of skills the child completed (Hair et al, 2006).

A cluster analysis procedure was performed on four of the domains of readiness and four distinct profiles emerged. "Comprehensive positive development" consisted of children who scored above the mean in all four dimensions of school readiness. "Social emotional and health strengths" consisted of children who scored above average in the dimensions of social emotional and physical well-being but below average in the dimensions of language and cognition. "Social emotional risk" included children who scored below average in all four dimensions of school readiness, but had the distinction of being well below the mean in social emotional development. "Health risk" included children who were more than one standard deviation below the mean in the area of health

and physical well being as well as below the mean in both language and cognition (Hair et al, 2006, p. 443).

In the second part of the study the researchers measured the background characteristics, kindergarten year experience and the child's outcome in first grade. They also measured the extent to which the child's school readiness profile at the beginning of kindergarten predicted the child's outcomes at the end of first grade, while controlling for background characteristics and kindergarten year experiences. Children with comprehensive positive development profiles performed the best in math and reading assessments at the end of the first grade even after controlling differences based on socio-demographic background characteristics, characteristics of the child, and characteristics of the kindergarten experience. Children with social emotional risk profiles and health risk profiles performed poorly on the math and reading assessments. Children with social emotional risk profiles were rated the lowest by their teachers on self control and working to their best ability (Hair et al, 2006).

Results from this study confirm that language and cognitive skills are not the only relevant factors that predict later school success. Below average language and cognition skills in combination with severely poor health or a lack of social skills at the beginning of kindergarten predicts the lowest rating on self-control and classroom motivation at the end of first grade. These results suggest that assessments of school readiness should encompass not only children's cognitive and literacy abilities but also their health and social emotional development (Hair et al, 2006, p. 450).

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement sponsored a longitudinal cross-national study to examine program attributes that promote

optimal child development. The goal of the study, known as the preprimary project, was to identify the process and structural characteristics of care and education settings for four year olds and relate these characteristics to their age seven cognitive development. Ten countries, including Finland, Poland, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia (Java), Ireland, Italy, Spain, Thailand and the United States participated in this study. Various types of preschools were selected from each of the ten countries (public and private, urban and rural, or disadvantaged and advantaged preschools). The goal was to choose 24 settings of each type and 96 children so that a maximum of four children could be randomly selected from each classroom (Montie, Xiang & Schweinhart, 2006).

Three observation instruments were used to collect information about what the four-year-old children and primary adults were doing and how adults organized the children's time. A child activity observation system was used to record the activities of the target child in a given setting. 12 activities, such as physical, pre-academic, media-related, were recorded. The adult behavior observation system was used to document the behaviors, such as teacher's participation or nurturance, of the primary teacher in the classroom. A management of time observation system was used by an observer to keep a running record of each activity, such as group activity or free choice, proposed by the primary adult during a specific time period. Three questionnaires were developed to collect information about the family background, physical characteristics of the settings, and the teacher's expectations (Montie et al, 2006).

The instruments for measuring language and cognition were developed by a cross-national team using a combination of items from previous tests. The age 4-language measure tested receptive and expressive language. The age 4-cognitive measure assessed

the child's skills in spatial relations, quantity and time. The age 7-language measure tested oral skills such as telling stories, matching, ordering sentences and repeating statements. The age 7-cognitive measure assessed the child's knowledge and skills in spatial relations, quantity, time, memory and problem solving (Montie et al, 2006).

The results revealed that children in settings that promoted free choice achieved a significantly higher language score at age seven. Age seven cognitive performances improved if the child had spent less time in whole group activities and if a variety of materials and equipment were available. Age 7 children's language improved as the level of teacher's education increased. The findings from this study confirm that despite the diversity of children's experiences in childcare settings in various countries some characteristics that lead to desirable outcomes remain constant. These findings emphasize child-initiated activities and de-emphasize whole group instruction and are consistent with developmentally appropriate practices promoting active learning that have long been advocated by the NAEYC (Montie et al, 2006, p. 330).

Sometimes states are in conflict about how to integrate early learning standards with developmentally appropriate practice. Yet, as Brown (2007) explained, the state of Wisconsin provided an excellent synthesis of combining early learning standards with DAP. Brown (2007) examined how early childhood stakeholders responded to the Good Start Grow Smart (GSGS) initiative by creating a "double-voiced" document. Their document fulfilled the requirements of the GSGS initiative while also meeting the needs of ECE practitioners by formulating the standards in the language of "best practices" for the child and the teacher. At the time when the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' issued its requirement for

states to include their early learning standards in its 2004 Child Care and Development Form request, Wisconsin did not have any early learning standards in place. To develop these standards, various state agencies, including the Department of Workforce Development, the Department of Public Instruction, and the Department of Health and Family Services established the Early Learning Standards Steering Committee (Brown, 2007).

For this study Brown (2007) interviewed a representative from each of the five organizations that made up the Early Learning Standards Steering Committee (ELSSC), the project consultant, and six of the project advisees (composed of university faculty, members of parents associations, school district employees, and early childhood teachers). The majority of the interviewees had work experience as an ECE teacher or administrator. Brown also selected relative public documents that referred to the Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) initiative and the Model Early Learning Standards (MELS) themselves, including drafts of MELS that led up to its first printing (Brown, 2007).

In responding to this political framing of education reform, the Early Learning Standards Steering Committee (ELSSC) developed a “double-voiced” document that satisfied the demands of policy makers by speaking the language of Standard Based Accountability (SBA) reform while attempting to attract the interest and support of the early childhood community so that practitioners would want to implement them in their classrooms. The ELSSC satisfied the demands of the GSGS initiative by aligning the MELS with the state’s 4, 8, and 10 standards (a requirement of GSGS) and ensuring that the MELS mirrored the form of the state’s K-12 standards. The ELSSC also defined the practices of ECE. The committee members created a document that represented the

common beliefs of the early childhood community (e.g., grouping the standards by developmental domains rather than content areas) and ensured that the MELS would not be used as a “gate-keeping” device to limit children’s access to entering kindergarten and elementary school. If the school wanted to create restrictions or barriers it would be up to the school or district to do so. Protection for the child and the practitioner offered professional autonomy. These committee members wanted the MELS to fill this gap in policy to prevent inappropriate expectations for and practices with young children, and to rid those that were present in early childhood classrooms across the state. The ELSSC also saw the MELS as tool to educate parents about quality early childhood programs and appropriate practices for young children (Brown, 2007).

The MELS identified a clear difference between early childhood education and K-12 education, and they required the early childhood teacher to be a key decision maker in implementing content and performance expectations. The ELSSC exercised political and professional equity in developing this double-voiced document. This response symbolizes the complex history in which early childhood stakeholders have had to position their beliefs to remain politically relevant and professionally viable within the circulating discourses of early childhood education reform (Brown, 2007).

Implementation of Early Learning Standards

Goldstein (2007) conducted a case study of two kindergarten teachers who were grappling with the tension of maintain a developmentally appropriate curriculum while adhering to Texas state mandates for implementing K-12 curriculum standards. The two teachers were both employed by the same affluent, predominantly white elementary school, which had received special recognition for student achievement in various

academic subjects. Goldstein observed these two kindergarten teachers for a minimum of 25 hours each during 2003-2004 school year. She also facilitated interviews with the teachers. Goldstein wanted to know how these two teachers were coping with developmentally appropriate practice and state standards but did not broach these topics directly. To avoid leading questions she asked them about their curricular and instructional decision making, their beliefs about children's needs, the challenges facing kindergarten teachers and changes in kindergarten (Goldstein, 2007).

Goldstein's findings revealed that even though these teachers practiced a developmentally appropriate approach to teaching, they did not find their commitment to using developmentally appropriate practice to teach mandated curriculum standards to be particularly difficult. The teachers faced other challenges in implementing state standards. There was less freedom, fewer choices and increasing demands to get more done in a less time. They felt that their classrooms were now similar to first grade classrooms. There were additional demands from parents who expected evidence of academic work from their children. First grade teachers also had increased demands for the kindergarten teachers. The first grade teachers wanted the kindergarten teachers to increase their use of direct instruction, and reinforce their focus on teaching academic skills so that the kindergartners would be thoroughly prepared for first grade (Goldstein, 2007).

Wien (2004) conducted case studies of eight primary school teachers in Ontario, Canada as they implemented a major standard based reform movement. Wein observed and interviewed two kindergarten teachers, three first grade teachers, two second grade

teachers and one second/third grade teacher on two or three occasions for approximately two or three hours. These observations were followed by a 45 – 70 minute interview.

Response to the mandatory curriculum standards varied widely. One of the kindergarten teachers, with 30 years of teaching experience, viewed the curriculum standards as a guide that described the specific aspects of her program, though they inhibited her from building sufficient relationships with the parents. Another kindergarten teacher, with four years of teaching experience, thought that the curriculum standards allowed her to focus on bigger topics and thus expand her curriculum though she felt there was not enough emphasis on the development of friendships and the importance of play. A first grade teacher of 12 years felt that her classroom life had become threatened by set expectations and assessment requirements. She thought that the mandatory curriculum standards made teaching unpleasant and unworkable for her and her young children. Another first grade teacher of nine years felt that the curriculum standards had fragmented her teaching into discreet time frames. She also believed that the curriculum standards had taken a lot of fun out of learning (Wein, 2004).

Wein discovered four different approaches that these teachers followed toward the standardized curriculum. The first approach was a confined inflexible approach, separated by subject. This approach included a tendency to focus on one or more expectation at a time, designated within a distinct timeframe, each containing an explicit segment of the curriculum that would be taught separate from one another. The second approach was to ignore the standardized curriculum and resist its compulsion toward practices that the teacher considered unsuitable for young children. The third approach was a linear and integrated approach in tension. These teachers were moving in the

direction of integrating the curriculum but were also pulled toward a tendency to focus on one or more expectation at a time. The fourth approach attempted to integrate curriculum across subject areas while maintaining a developmentally appropriate, child centered approach (Wein, 2004).

Early Learning Standards, Belief Systems & Educational Change

The research for this study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews with preschool directors. To gather information about how early learning standards are impacting curriculum goals it is important to understand the belief systems and stages of change that the directors are immersed in. Techniques for ascertaining belief systems will first be discussed followed by a specific theory of educational change.

Belief Systems

Are belief systems associated with specific attitudes toward integrating early learning standards? Previous research indicates that teachers' practices are associated with their beliefs and that teachers filter new information through personal beliefs (Kagan, 1992). Information on early childhood educators' beliefs about appropriate practices and policies is helpful, therefore, in informing efforts to change teachers' practices (Stipek and Byler, 1997).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides guidelines to assist teachers in making decisions (Bredekamp, 1989; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). They recommend that teachers serve primarily as resources to children's self-initiated activities, providing open-ended opportunities for children to

explore concrete materials and to interact with each other. This type of practice is often referred to as “child-centered” (Stipek & Byler, 1997).

The NAEYC Guidelines reflect the opinion of most early childhood education experts and are generally supported by research on the effects of instructional approaches on children’s learning and motivation. A minority, however, endorse a greater emphasis on basic skills using direct, highly structured teaching approaches. These practices include structured, teacher-directed instruction, drill and practice activities, workbooks, worksheets, carefully sequenced tasks, repetition, practice, and review. Stipek and Bylar refer to this practice as “basic-skills” oriented (Stipek & Byler, 1997).

These two approaches have very different theories of how children learn and the role of adults in the learning process. The child-centered approach has roots in the constructivist theory, in which children are assumed to construct their understanding through direct experience. The basic-skills approach is linked to learning theory, which emphasizes the reinforcement of correct answers (Stipek, 2006; Stipek & Byler, 1997).

Stipek and Bylar (2006) interviewed 60 primary grade teachers to examine their beliefs about how children learn, goals for Early Childhood Education (ECE), their positions on policies of school entry, testing, retention, their satisfaction with current pressures and practices for change and their actual practices. The study included 18 preschool, 26 kindergarten, and 16 first grade teachers. Teacher ethnicity was fairly evenly distributed across the three grades. The mean number of years teaching was 15, with a range from 1 to 45 years. Education ranged from a high school diploma to a master’s degree; the mode was a bachelor’s degree plus a teaching credential.

Using Stipek's early childhood program observation measure, an observer made 47 ratings of the classroom instruction and social climate after several hours of observation. The range of scores for the items varied from 3 to 5. Each item had different descriptions associated with particular ratings. For example, for the item "work vs. play" there were three alternatives: (a) clearly distinguished, (b) occasionally distinguished, and (c) not clearly distinguished. For "teacher acceptance" the alternatives were: (a) highly critical, (b) moderately critical, (c) moderately accepting, and (d) highly accepting (Stipek and Byler, 1997, p. 311).

To assess teacher's beliefs all participating teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning their own beliefs about appropriate education for young children. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the first part, teachers rated on a 5-point Likert scale the relative importance of seven goals for their program: (a) social skills, (b) independence and initiative, (c) basic skills, (d) cooperation, (e) knowledge, (f) self-concept, and (g) creativity. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to assess teachers' endorsement of practices associated with a basic-skills or a child-centered orientation. Teachers indicated on a 5-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagree with 31 statements. [See Appendix D.] The items were combined to create two subscales: a basic-skills orientation scale and a child-centered orientation scale. The basic-skills orientation scale included items indicating that the teacher believed in the effectiveness of formal, highly structured instruction of basic skills. The second, "child-centered orientation" scale, included items that are consistent with NAEYC developmentally appropriate practices, emphasizing children's self-initiation, control, and exploration of concrete objects (Stipek and Byler, 1997, p. 312).

The two teacher beliefs scales (basic skills and child centered) were negatively associated with each other. The teachers who supported formal basic-skills practices, were less likely to support child-centered practices. The preschool teachers who believed that children learn best through child-centered practices rated independence and a positive self-concept as goals. The kindergarten teachers who embraced child-centered practices, had lower basic skills and knowledge acquisition as goals. Support of basic skills oriented practices was associated with learning basic skills as a goal for teachers at all grade levels. Teachers whose beliefs were of the basic skills orientation did not associate a positive self-concept as a goal for preschool teachers (Stipek and Byler, 1997).

Teachers reported that parent pressure tended to be toward a stronger emphasis on basic skills and was one factor in some teachers using more structured approaches than they liked. Teacher beliefs, goals, and practices did not vary systematically with their ethnicity. Teachers of economically disadvantaged children rated knowledge as a more important goal and tended to agree more with a basic-skills orientation than did teachers of middle-class children (Stipek & Byler, 1997).

Stipek and Byler' study is particularly important for developing an instrument for assessing belief systems. Since basic skills and child-centered approaches are negatively associated with each other, would teachers who lean more toward a basic skills approach be less resistant to implementing early learning standards? This is a question that the researcher plans to explore.

Educational Change

Various models of change are discussed throughout the literature. Models that describe change have common elements, yet each also contains unique views of the change process (Osborne, 1993). Some literature suggests that successful educational change can be divided into three stages: adoption or initiation, implementation and incorporation as a permanent feature (Waugh & Punch, 1987). An exhaustive list of models of educational change exists throughout the literature, and is beyond the scope of this study. This paper will be limited to a brief description of a few models of educational change, the Fullan's Model of the School Improvement Process, the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities; the Rand Change Studies, and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model.

Three models that look specifically at the change process in school are the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (I/D/E/A), the Rand Study and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The I/D/E/A study reviewed change in relationship to school improvement efforts. The three-step process included dialogue, decision and action. The dialogue stage commenced with a discussion about the organizational problems of the schools. Teachers shared new ideas and made suggestions on their ability to perform new roles. In the second stage decisions were made concerning those initial issues. In the third stage implementation of plans and collaboration of staff members commenced. The Rand Corporation reviewed the role of the change agent in implementing organizational change. The study suggested that a supporting setting, a strategy for adopting change and strong leadership are necessary for the implementation of change. The CBAM described the stages of concern that individuals face as they

encounter organizational change. Individuals move through stages of concern beginning with personal concerns, and then task concerns, and culminates with impact concerns. The CBAM lists seven stages of concern that the individual must pass. These seven stages are: awareness, information, personal, management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing (Osborne, 1993).

While the CBAM focuses on the individual school change Fullan's Model of the School Improvement Process focuses on system change at the institutional level (Berlin & Jenson, 1989; Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005). Fullan lists eight principles that are essential for creating effective and lasting change. The first and foremost principle is engaging people's moral purposes, why is change necessary, who is it effecting. The second principle is building capacity, improving people's collective power by developing new knowledge, skills and competencies, new resources and new-shared identity to work together. The third principle is to understand the process of change by establishing conditions for continuous improvement. The fourth principle is to develop cultures for learning, designing a set of strategies for people to learn from each other. The fifth principle is to develop a culture of evaluation, to increase collective capacity to engage in ongoing assessment of learning. The sixth principle is to focus on leadership to change, to seek innovative leaders. The seventh principle is to foster coherence by making sure that all cultures of learning and evaluation can create their own level of coherence. The eighth principle is to cultivate trilevel of development since system transformation needs to occur at three levels, school and community, district and state (Fullan et al, 2005).

Schools can and do change though usually slowly and discretely and seldom the direct result of a large educational change movement. Change usually occurs at a local

level and is developed or adapted by individual or small groups of teachers based on their own personal practical knowledge of their students and their community and ideas from outside sources (Farrell, 2006). Each of the four models of educational change have common elements, I/D/E/A, Rand and CBAM look specifically at the change process in schools yet I/D/E/A focused on dialogue, decisions and action in the school; the Rand study focused on the change agent and the CBAM focused on the user (Osborne, 1993). The CBAM focuses on the individual school change while Fullan's Model of the School Improvement Process focuses on system change at the institutional level. The model that will thus be examined for this research study will be the CBAM since it focuses on the individual school change through the perspective of the user.

Many educational change models focus on administrative change. The CBAM model is of particular interest because it looks at individual teachers. Adopting change for individual teachers is ideally a reflective and creative process not just obedience to necessary change regulations. This type of change enriches what is already being done. The CBAM treats the teacher's change process with respect since it can do it while reflecting their process and conflicting demands. This model was selected because it is respectful of individual teachers and allows for the process of reflection, synthesis, and refinement.

The CBAM lists seven stages of concern. These are awareness, people must be made aware of the intended change; information, individuals need to know basic information about the intended change; personal, individuals must understand how the change will affect them personally; management, how the change will fit into an already

busy day; consequence, what differences the change will make; collaboration, how will the change affect users; and, refocusing, how can change be improved (Osborne, 1993).

The levels of use are: non-use, user has no interest, is taking no action; orientation, user is taking the initiative to learn more about the innovation; preparation, user has definite plans to begin using the innovation; mechanical, user is making changes to better organize use of the innovation; routine, user is making few or no changes and has an established pattern of use; refinement, user is making changes to increase outcomes; integration, user is making deliberate efforts to coordinate with others in using the innovation; renewal, user is seeking more effective alternatives to the established use of the innovation (The National Academies, 2005, p 1).

An example of how the concerned based adoption model was utilized to assess public school teachers' views about the adoption of state standards occurred in Alaska a half decade ago. Fenton (2002) assessed secondary school teachers concerns in the Anchorage school district as they adopted the Alaska and Anchorage Standards and Benchmarks using the CBAM. The CBAM was selected because the researchers wanted to observe the acceptance of this innovation based on the concerns of the participants through natural conversations. After reviewing both the CBAM process and an evaluation instrument adapted to focus on the implementation of a standards based approach, curriculum coordinators collected data, through periodic visits, in all secondary schools. The coordinators listened to faculty members as they spoke, often during faculty meetings, in order to devise methods of providing support that would assist faculty members help all students meet State and District Standards. Many faculty members expressed apprehension that was specific to individual schools or courses within the

curriculum areas. They also expressed concern about the current status, specific to the curriculum review cycle, for the individual content areas. There were however general curriculum concerns that helped provide guidance for curriculum managers as they planned additional means of support for the teachers and schools in the implementation process (Fenton, 2002).

The CBAM process was beneficial because not only did it provide an overall picture of the Anchorage secondary school district's status but also it also provided direction as to the next steps that need to be made for the successful implementation of a standards based curriculum. Teachers across the curriculum areas stated that integration and alignment were pressing issues. Many teachers had concerns about children who have trouble keeping up. Some teachers suggested that more effort be employed to track and individualize instruction in the regular classroom. Faculty members expressed concern for additional support for special education and bilingual students. Teachers also had concerns with assessment, evaluation and the amount of time that is needed to allow for training, collaboration, and integration needed to refocus and improve what they are doing now (Fenton, 2002).

The basic tenet of the CBAM is that you take individuals where they stand, address their concerns, and help them move along to a higher level. This examination of the specific concerns that Alaska secondary school teachers faced as they began their implementation of the state standards and benchmarks is relevant to preschool directors concerns about implementing early learning guidelines in Massachusetts because both approaches review the implementation process through direct conversations with the

educators. The teachers concerns will probably be similar and can thus help guide the direction of this study.

Conclusion

Early learning standards can enrich curriculum. They can help close the achievement gap between children of different cultures, abilities and socioeconomic status. Early learning standards can provide teachers with a foundation in which to plan instruction. They can raise expectations for students' learning and provide accountability for the preschool profession (Bredekamp, 2009; Stipek, 2006).

Yet early learning standards (ELS) can also promote programs that undermine children's self confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Additionally they can restrict curriculum to skills and knowledge that are easily measured. ELS can lead to the narrowing of curriculum and also ignore the variability in young children. Some fear that they can lead to developmentally inappropriate practice. ELS focus more on academic skills and development at the expense of social and emotional development. They de-emphasize the importance of play as they overshadow free choice time, even though free choice time and play, are essential for school success. ELS can be used to determine if a child is "ready" for kindergarten, which can have an adverse effect on a young child's outlook toward school. Furthermore, as noted by Wein (2004), ELS can have a negative effect on teachers' pedagogy and attitude toward teaching (Bredekamp, 2009; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al, 2004; Wein, 2004).

In conclusion, research-based, clearly written and comprehensive standards for student learning can assist closing the achievement gap for all children though teachers must play a pivotal part. Preschool teachers need to utilize a intellectually engaging,

culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate curriculum that is attentive to not only cognitive development but also social, emotional and physical development. Furthermore it is necessary for early childhood educators to employ a wide range of teaching strategies that reflect the interdependence and complexity of the skills that young children need to learn (Bredekamp, 2009; Stipek, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose

To be licensed, accredited or receive state or federal funding many preschool programs have specific mandatory curriculum standards and other local, state and federal regulations. To receive accreditation from the National Association for Young Children (NAEYC), funding for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants, or reauthorization from Head Start, an early childhood program must be incorporating curriculum standards. Furthermore to receive funding from UPK grants, a program must not only incorporate early learning standards, it must be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent and it must be implementing a UPK approved standardized assessment tool. Head Start funds also require that a program be implementing a non-specified, standardized, curriculum and assessment tool. The purpose of this study was to examine the process by which the pressures of integrating state mandated early learning standards and other external mandates had directly and indirectly influenced curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity as viewed by directors of publicly and privately funded preschools.

Research Questions

1. Do individual programs consider the early learning standards as a guide for school readiness?
2. How have early learning standards and other external mandates affected individual preschool programs?
 - d. Are teachers, as reported by directors, narrowing their curriculum?

- e. Has free play been affected?
 - f. Have academic issues taken precedence over social/emotional development?
3. Do different types of preschool programs, with different license requirements, such as UPK or Head Start, have different types of concerns about the implementation of early learning standards or other external mandates than other programs?
 4. How do preschool directors integrate early learning standards and other mandates while maintaining a developmentally appropriate curriculum?
 5. In what ways does a director's belief systems have an impact on their attitude toward integrating the early learning standards?
 6. In what ways have the relationships between teacher and child or child-to-child changed as a result of this process?

Study Design

This research study was conducted in two stages: an initial introductory survey followed by a series of interviews with a sub-sample of respondents. The brief survey about the participants' demographics and their familiarity with the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences* was sent to every preschool director in a region in Massachusetts who met the specific criteria. A sample of nine directors, from the survey respondents, volunteered for the in-depth interviews. In two separate interviews the researcher asked a series of semi-structured open response questions to obtain data from the participants. These interview questions focused on how the

participants make sense of the mandatory integration of early learning standards and other external mandates into their preschool program and their concerns based on their role as a preschool director (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

This two stage research design provided both a broad snapshot of the current stage of adaptation of preschool centers to a range of “curriculum standards,” together with a more detailed look at the processes of change as experienced by participants. The research approach was qualitative thus multiple forms of data were collected including interviews, surveys, and the collection of artifacts. The analysis of the data focused on the curriculum development process in particular contexts and circumstances, as experienced and understood by the participants. The outcome was more of an examination of the change process rather than a product (Creswell, 1998). The combination of a brief quantitative survey of ninety preschool programs together with the in-depth interviews provided the researcher with a tool for evaluating how programs were involved in the process of meeting the mandates set forth by districts, state and federal government.

Rationale

The rationale for choosing a qualitative in-depth interview approach was that the researcher hoped to uncover the processes of decision and of change that preschool directors are facing as they respond to state and federal regulations concerning curriculum standards and other external mandates. As these directors try to construct good programs for children, how do they and their teachers personally juggle the many competing demands on them, together with the philosophical and practical guidelines of the mandatory curriculum standards and other external mandates? This type of inquiry

could only be truly examined through in-depth interviews. To investigate the true meaning of change within a specific stage of the process, interviews were necessary.

The fundamental nature of this process of change was closely observed and explored in dialogue. The researcher reviewed with the director the sequence of events, the hurdles experienced, the richness of the implementation of the process of integrating the curriculum guidelines (and other external mandates) or the rejection of parts or much of the process. An examination of how and why the programs were implementing which standards ensued. Various qualitative methods were employed to achieve this goal.

In the next sections the site and population selection will be explained, followed by the sampling strategy. This will include the demographics of the actual sample and snapshots of the nine respondents. The two-step process for collecting data from program directors will then be described. The method of data analysis selection will be discussed. Finally, the procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and the researcher's profile will also be addressed.

Site and Population Selection

Participant Selection

The participants were selected in a two-part process. A survey was delivered to the entire population of one region of licensed preschool programs listed on the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) website that met specific criteria. A list of regional group childcare centers with a capacity of over 50 students was selected. All the public school programs were deleted. The list of criteria provided a population of ninety centers for the initial survey. The various types of childcare centers

were then earmarked, as to whether the center was a Head Start program, accredited by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or a recipient of a Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grant.

Directors from different types of preschool programs were included in this list for in-depth interviews. Some of the programs were seeking NAEYC Accreditation, UPK funding and/or Head Start grants. Fortunately the directors who volunteered represented a wide range of centers with varying accreditation or funding requests. The centers included a broad range of demographics with student populations from both rural and urban settings, public and private institutions and full and half day programs. The programs had dissimilar requirements for integrating state or federal curriculum standards thus the researcher was able to differentiate between the programs who were exploring different paths toward integrating the standards, grappling with standards or trying to comply with the state or federal regulations to receive additional licensing or state or federal funding.

To receive NAEYC accreditation, funding for UPK grants, or reauthorization from Head Start an early childhood program must be incorporating curriculum standards. Since the focus of this study is on curriculum standards and other external curriculum mandates only the requirements pertaining to the curriculum requirements for NAEYC, UPK and Head Start will be listed. Since all of these childcare centers fall under the umbrella of centers licensed by The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), links to license requirements and basic regulations for the EEC, NAEYC, Head Start and UPK will be included in the Appendix A.

The Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning

All preschool programs need to be aware of the Massachusetts Department of Education's Guidelines for Preschool Learning since they are preparing preschoolers for entering into public schools. These guidelines are based on the standards of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, for levels pre-K to grade 4. The learning guidelines are composed of a list of standards for each subject area followed by ideas for learning experiences that educators can use to incorporate the standards into their curriculum. Guidelines are listed for the following subject areas: English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, history and social science, health education and the arts (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003).

Part I. Introduction and Brief Mail Survey to 90 Directors

To take a snapshot of the situation in a specific region with respect to mandatory external guidelines for preschool programs a brief letter/survey was delivered to all of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) licensed group childcare centers in a region in Massachusetts that were not affiliated with the public schools, and had a minimum capacity of fifty students. The letter stated that all data on the survey would be used anonymously. [See Appendix B.]

Closed questions about the demographics of the preschool included number of preschoolers, full or half day, rural or urban, inclusive of infants and toddlers, and public or private. Closed questions about the demographics of the director included age of director, education, years of experience, ethnic identity, gender and whether or not he/she was responsible for planning the curriculum and/or training the staff (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

A checklist of items included questions about early learning standards, external guidelines, implementation stage of specific curriculum guidelines, and affiliation with particular programs, such as Head Start or UPK. An open-ended question asked about required external curriculum guidelines. The directors were asked to rate the importance of including specific developmental areas (social/emotional, physical or cognitive) as well as language arts, science & technology, history & social sciences, mathematics, health education and the arts in early childhood curriculum standards.

The questions concluded with an open ended response in which the directors were asked to comment on the decisions they had made about their curriculum in the current climate of competing demands. The letter ended by asking the directors if he/she would be interested in participating in an interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Ninety preschool programs fit this criterion. Emails, including a brief introduction and a link to Survey Monkey were sent to the seventy-four preschools that listed email addresses. Reminder emails were sent on two separate occasions. Twenty-four directors replied to the online survey, though two of the surveys were incomplete. The incomplete surveys were discounted. Ten of the respondents agreed to be interviewed.

Sixteen letters/surveys, with self-addressed envelopes were mailed to all the remaining programs that were unreachable through email, either they did not have email addresses or had emails that were no longer accurate. Reminder post cards were mailed to these programs. Six directors mailed back their completed surveys. One of the directors volunteered to be interviewed.

Survey Respondent Demographics

A total of twenty-eight directors completed surveys that were used for the analysis of Part I. A 31% response rate was considered adequate. The resulting sample were 96% female, and 86% white (non-white sample included Hispanic, Native American/White, African American/Hispanic, and African American/Hispanic/White). The directors ranged in age from 20-69 years old: 2 directors (7%) were 20-29, 8 directors (29%) were 30-39, 12 directors (43%) were 40-49, 6 directors (21%) were 50-69 years old.

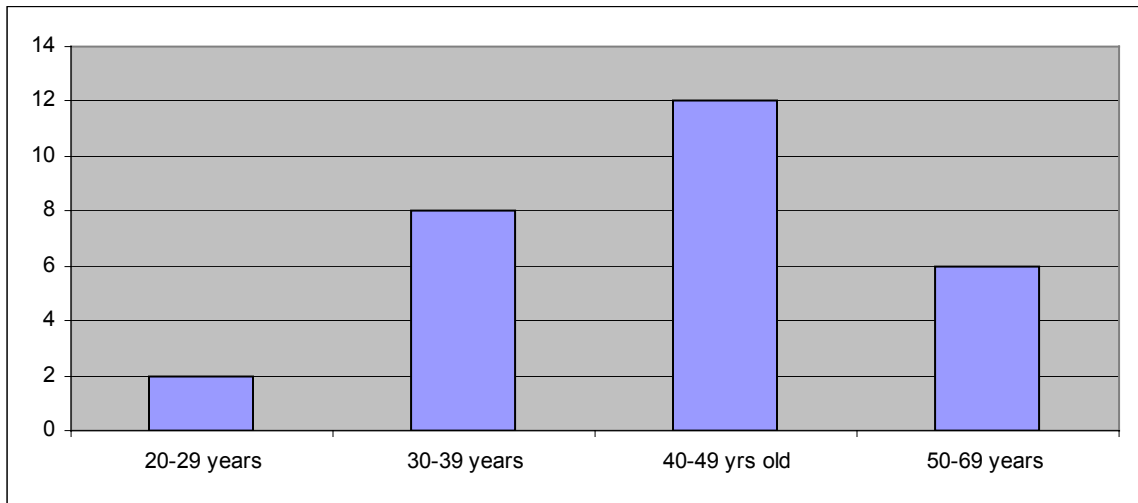


Figure 3. 1: Age of Survey Respondents

The survey participants' highest education ranged from a High School diploma to a Masters degree: 1 director (3%) had a High School diploma, 8 directors (29%) had Associate's Degrees, 8 directors (29%) had Bachelor's or Bachelor's degree plus 30 degrees, 10 directors (36%) had a Master's degree, and 1 director (3%) had a Montessori Degree.

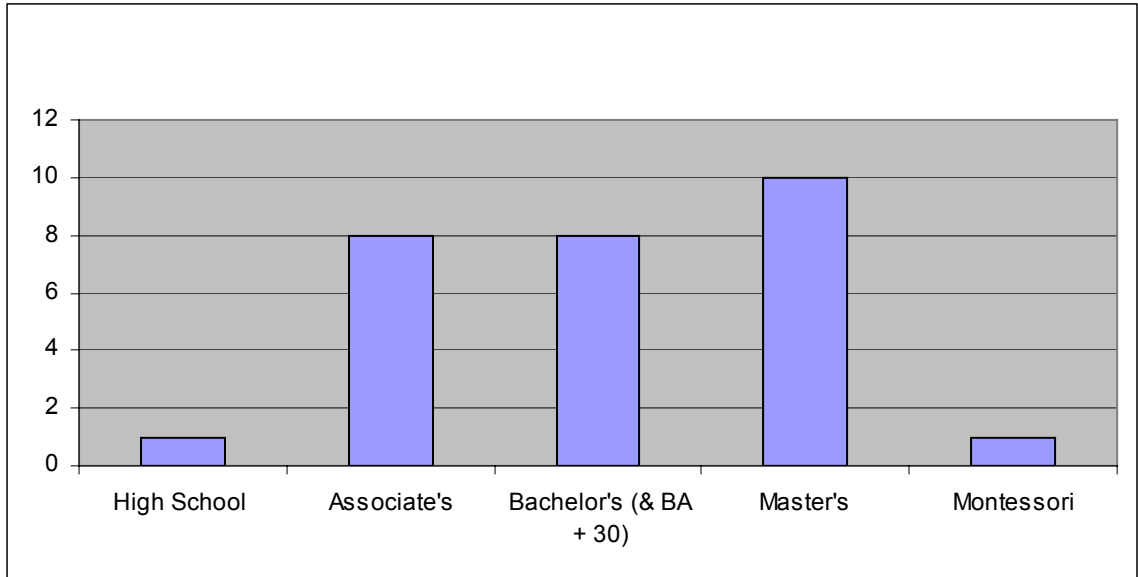


Figure 3. 2: High School/College Degree of Survey Respondents

Participants were asked to record their years of experience as director in one of 4 categories. Their years of experience varied from less than eight years to over twenty-five years: 8 directors (29%) had been directors for less than eight years, 8 directors (29%) had been directors for eight to fifteen years, 9 directors (32%) had been directors for fifteen to twenty-five years, and 2 directors (7%) had been directors for over twenty-five years.

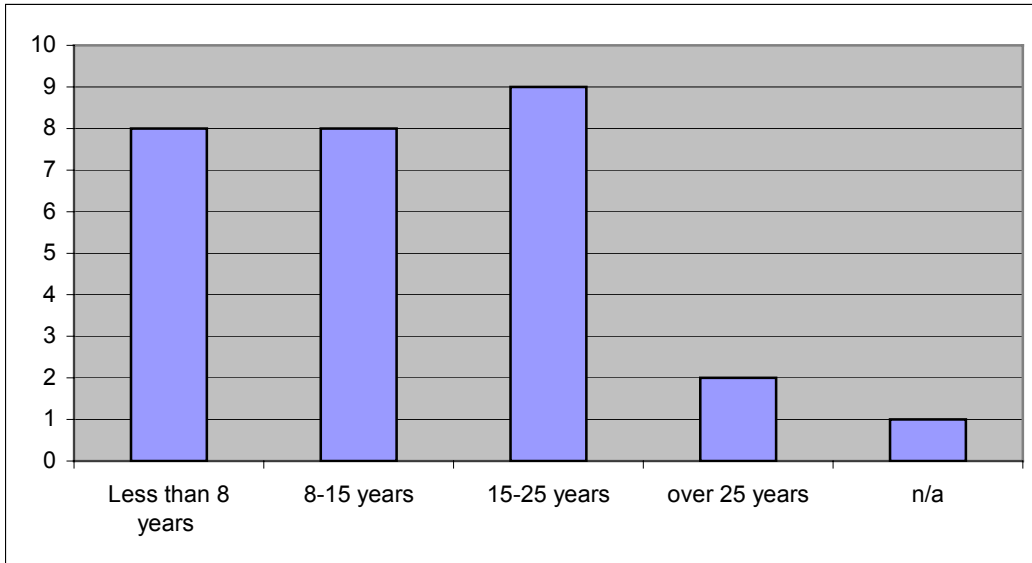


Figure 3. 3: Number of Years that the Survey Respondents have been the Director

The preschool programs varied considerably with respect to location, funding sources, size, and hours available for preschoolers. Of the eleven directors who noted their preschools' location, 6 of the programs (54%) were in rural areas, 5 of the programs (45%) were in urban areas and two of the programs (18%) had locations that were both urban and rural. Of the twenty-three directors who stated whether their program was public or private, 5 of the programs (22%) were public, 16 of the programs (70%) were private, and 2 programs (8%) were both public and private. Exactly one half of the programs (50%) had full day only programs and one half of the programs (50%) had both full and half days programs.

The number of preschoolers enrolled, varied from 25-50 to over 100: 9 of the programs (32%) had 25-50 preschoolers enrolled, 11 of the programs (39%) had 50-100 preschoolers enrolled, and 8 of the programs (29%) had over 100 preschoolers enrolled.

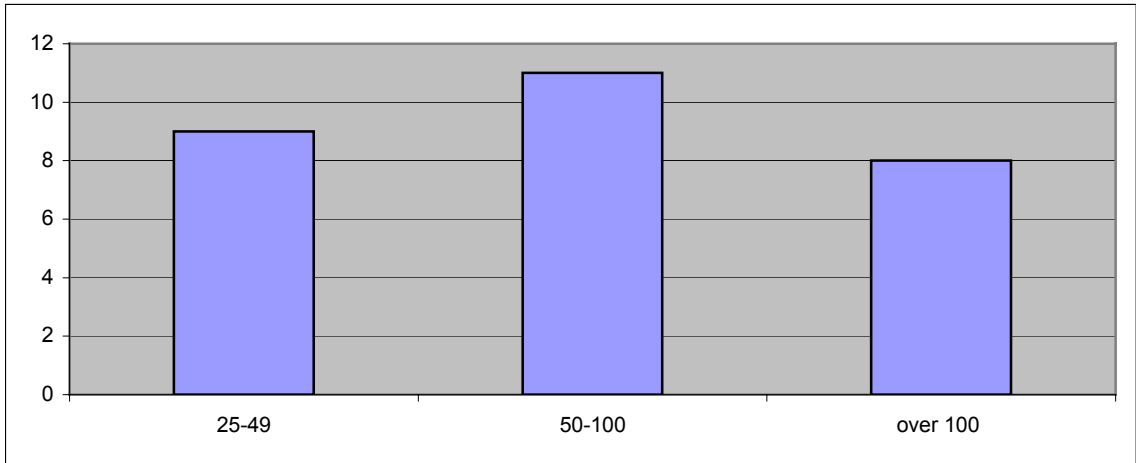


Figure 3. 4: Number of Preschoolers Enrolled in Programs Surveyed

Volunteer Demographics

Of the twenty-eight directors who completed the survey eleven of these directors volunteered to participate in in-depth interviews. Two of these directors later decided not to be interviewed; one because her agency did not permit her to be interviewed and the other because of time constraints. All of the nine remaining directors who volunteered to be interviewed were women, eight were white and one was of mixed ethnic background. Two of the volunteers were between the ages of 30-39, three of the volunteers were between the ages of 40-49, and four of the volunteers were between the ages of 50-59.

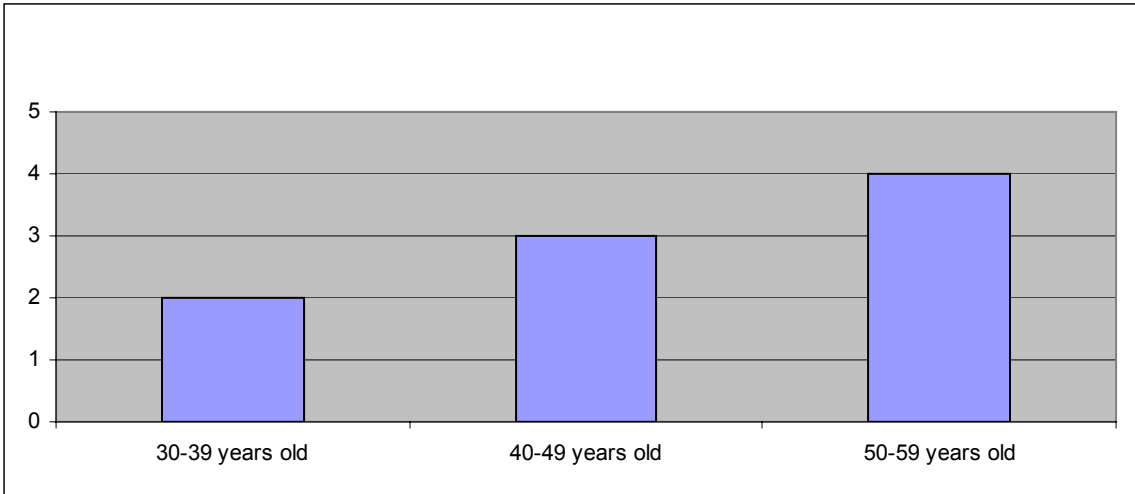


Figure 3. 5: Age of Interview Participants

One of the volunteers had an Associate's Degrees, two had Bachelor's degrees, one had a Bachelor's degree plus 30, and five had Master's degrees.

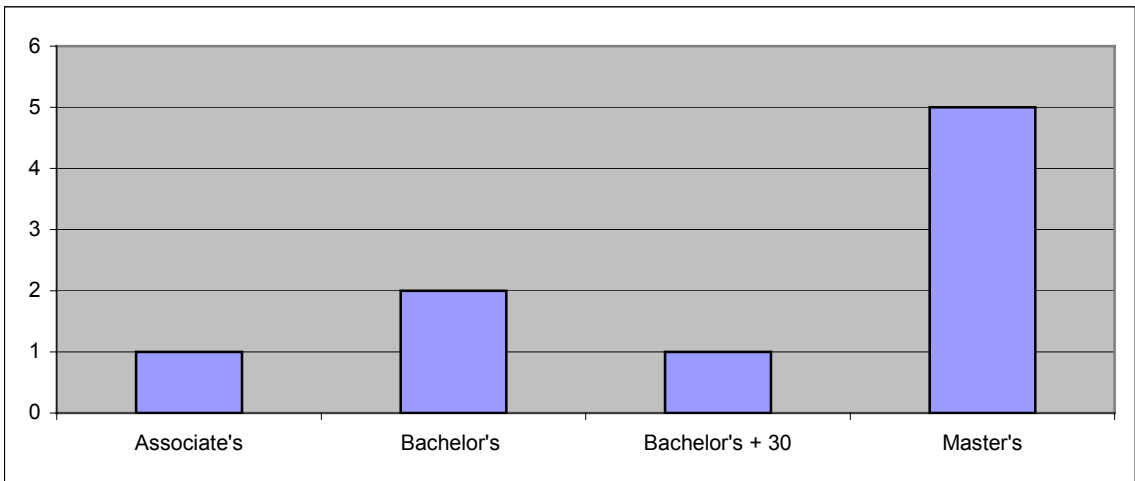


Figure 3. 6: College Degree of Interview Participants

One of the volunteers had been a director for less than eight years, two had been directors for eight to fifteen years, five had been directors for fifteen to twenty-five years, and one had been a director for over twenty-five years.

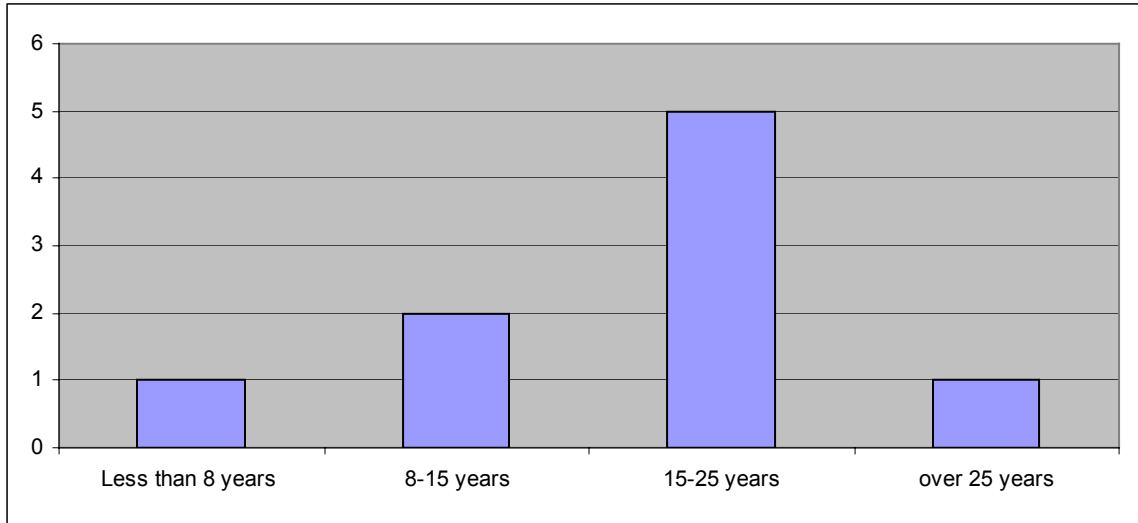


Figure 3. 7: Number of Years that the Interview Participants have been the Director

The demographics of the preschool programs of the interview participants varied considerably. Of the nine programs that were represented by the volunteers, five of the preschool programs were in rural communities. Three of the preschool programs were in urban communities, and one of the programs had locations in both urban and rural communities. Four of the preschool programs were private, four of the preschool programs were public, and one of the preschool programs was both public and private. Three of the volunteer’s programs had full day only programs and six of the programs had both full and half days programs.

Three of the programs had 25-50 preschoolers enrolled, three of the programs had 50-100 preschoolers enrolled, and three of the programs had over 100 preschoolers enrolled.

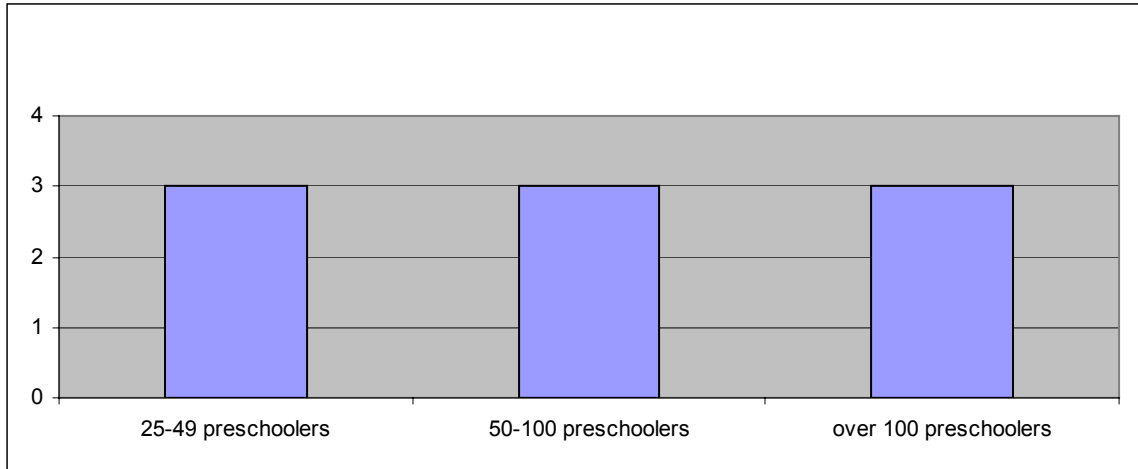


Figure 3. 8: Number of Preschoolers Enrolled in Interview Participants' Programs

Brief Description of the Interview Participants

Nine women volunteered to be interviewed. All of these women are college educated directors of preschool programs in an area in Massachusetts. Though their ages, college educations, years of experience and preschool program demographics vary, all of these women offered invaluable information that formed the backbone of this research study. Some of the information that was gathered from the volunteers was specific to their particular situation. Brief introductions to the nine volunteers are thus included. All names are pseudonyms.

Teresa is a woman of mixed race in her 50s with a Master’s degree. She has been in the field of Early Childhood for over 30 years. For the past 3.5 years Teresa has been the assistant director of an Early Childhood Center in a small rural working class city in Massachusetts. Prior to her position as assistant director she was the manager for fourteen years. Teresa is the Early Head Start manager; she also supervises the center based service delivery area and some other non-specified departments. The Early Childhood

Center is a public Head Start program but also includes state subsidy slots and children from low income families. The Early Childhood Center serves over 600 families in two different counties. The Child Development Center serves infants, toddlers and over 100 preschoolers in both full and half day programs. Teresa is not responsible for planning the curriculum. Since hers is a Head Start program the Education Managers and Family Child Care Manager oversee their child care services. Teresa has some training responsibilities but the education managers for each county are primarily responsible for making sure that all of their policies, procedures and educational guidelines are followed. They do a lot of the training.

Donna is a Caucasian woman in her 50s with a Master's degree. She has been in the field of Early Childhood for over 30 years. For the past seventeen years Donna has been a director of a Head Start Program in a rural working class city in Massachusetts. Donna has also worked in both public and parochial schools. Donna's Head Start Program includes nearly twenty classrooms throughout the county. Her program serves the public with over 100 preschoolers in both full and half day programs. Donna is responsible for training the staff. Donna oversees the curriculum planning and implementation alignment with the Head Start frameworks and the MA preschool guidelines. The classroom teachers are responsible for planning curriculum.

Evelyn is a Caucasian woman in her 50s with a Master's degree. She has been in the field of Early Childhood for over 20 years. Evelyn is the director of a private religious affiliated preschool in a city in Massachusetts. Before she was the director she was the associate director for seventeen years. Evelyn's program serves both toddler and

preschool programs. There are over 100 preschoolers in both full and half day programs. Evelyn is responsible for planning the curriculum and training the staff.

Nicole is a Caucasian woman in her 30s with a Bachelor's plus 30 degree. She has been the director of a private preschool program in a city in Massachusetts for over eight years. Before Nicole was the director in Massachusetts she taught in a different state. Nicole's program serves between 50-100 preschoolers in both full and half day programs. Nicole is responsible for planning the curriculum and training the staff.

Wendy is a Caucasian woman in her 40s with a Bachelor's degree. She has been the director of a public YMCA preschool program in a city in Massachusetts for four years. Before Wendy was the director in this particular YMCA she was the director in another YMCA preschool program for almost twenty years. Wendy's program serves between 25-49 preschoolers in both full and half day programs. Wendy is responsible for planning the curriculum and training the staff.

Frannie is a Caucasian woman in her 40s with an Associate's degree. She has been the director/owner of a private preschool program in a town in Massachusetts. She has been in the field of early childhood education over fifteen years. Frannie's program serves between 50-100 preschoolers in a full day program. Frannie is responsible for planning the curriculum and training the staff.

Irene is a Caucasian woman in her 50s with a Master's degree. She has been in the field of Early Childhood for over 10 years. For about the past eight years Irene has been the director of a private parent cooperative preschool program in a small city in Massachusetts. Irene's program serves between 25-49 preschoolers in a full day program.

Irene is responsible for training the staff. The teachers are responsible for planning the curriculum.

Jill is a Caucasian woman in her 40s with a Master's degree. She has been in the field of early childhood education between 15-25 years. She has been the director of a public, college affiliated preschool program in a rural town in Massachusetts for several years. Jill's program serves both toddlers and preschoolers. 50-100 preschoolers attend Jill's full time year round program. Jill is responsible for training the staff. The full-time early childhood classroom teachers are responsible for planning the curriculum.

Becky is a Caucasian woman in her 30s with a Bachelor's degree. She has been the director/owner of a public/private preschool program in a rural town in Massachusetts for the past three years. Becky has been in the field of early childhood education between 8 to 15 years. Becky's program serves infants, toddlers and preschoolers. There are between 50-100 children in both her full and half day programs. Becky is responsible for training the staff. Becky's teachers are responsible for planning the curriculum though Becky reviews their curriculum and adds her ideas before returning it to them.

Procedures for Part II - The Interview Study

Obtaining Volunteer Informants, Informed Consent, Human Subject Approval

To obtain volunteer informants the researcher asked the directors if they would be interested in being interviewed in the initial survey. If the directors reported that he/she was amenable to an interview a confirmation letter was sent. This letter thanked the directors for agreeing to participate. The availability of the director was also addressed. A

sample copy of informed consent was included in the letter. The informed consent letter was brought to the interview and the researcher asked the director if he/she had any questions before he/she signed the consent form. [See Appendix C.]

To protect the rights of the informants the researcher agreed to abide by the ethical principles that underlie all human subject research, as stated in the Belmont Principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. To comply with the principle of respect for persons, the researcher obtained and documented informed consent. To respect the privacy interests of the participants pseudonyms were used. Identifying marks such as specific towns or regions were replaced with urban centers or rural centers. Identifying information was disguised by grouping responses together. To be respectful to the participants the researcher explained to the participants that he/she didn't have to answer questions that he/she was uncomfortable with and that he/she had the right to withdraw from the research at any time (CITI, 2008).

To meet the terms of the principle of beneficence the researcher minimized the risks of harm and maximized the potential benefits of her research. The researcher monitored the data to ensure the safety of participants. Benefits were offered in terms of a discussion about the integration of curriculum standards, the opportunity for an integration of curriculum standards workshop, and a chance to share concerns with a caring professional (CITI, 2008).

In order to comply with the principle of justice the researcher selected subjects equitably. All participants were volunteers who met the criteria for experience and their affiliation with a particular program (CITI, 2008).

Interview with Directors

The researcher conducted two semi-structured guided interviews with the directors. (Since the directors were all female the researcher will limit herself to the female pronoun).

Interview I. – During the first interview, rapport was established between the researcher and the director. The researcher provided the opportunity for the director to tell her own personal story about her view of current curriculum mandates. The interview was informal so that the director could tell her narrative in her own words. The researcher remained neutral as she conducted her interviews. The purpose of the interview, the assurance of protection and an overview of discussion topics was discussed. Informed consent was agreed upon and the researcher reminded the participant that the audio could be stopped at any time during the interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

During the interview the researcher reviewed the data presented in the survey for review and clarification. General questions about the early learning standards and other external mandates were discussed. These general questions acted as probes to generate more specific questions to be addressed during the second interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The goal of the interview was to recognize the impact that the new mandates or external curriculum guidelines, particularly the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Experiences had had on the program. The questions that were addressed during the first interview included:

Interview 1 Questions

Questions Concerning the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences

- Have you used or are you presently using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences? If so, for how long?
- In which of the following implementation stages of the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG) would you place your program?

Presently not considering PLG	Recently begun integration of PLG
Undecided about PLG	Commitment to sustaining PLG
Trying to implement PLG	Other

- What goals do you have for your program? How do the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences correspond with these goals?
- How do the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences affect your curriculum planning?
- Do your teachers ever discuss the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences? What do they have to say about them?
- Has the relationship between teacher and child changed because of the necessity to incorporate Early Learning Guidelines? If so how?
- Does your program consider the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences as a guide for school readiness?

Questions Concerning the External Guidelines

- Are other external curriculum guidelines required for your program? If so, can you tell me about these?

Questions Concerning Curriculum

- What's the most difficult decision you've made, about your curriculum, in the last five years?
- What are you particularly proud of (concerning your curriculum)?
- What are you struggling with (concerning your curriculum)?

At the end of the interview a subsequent interview was scheduled.

The data from the first interview was transcribed and analyzed and used as a basis for the construction of the second interview.

The results from the first interview indicated that the Preschool Learning Guidelines were not an obstacle for most of these directors. These were already being integrated into most of the programs. The questions that provided the most fertile answers were questions concerning the most difficult decision and current struggles about the curriculum.

The most difficult curriculum decision preschool directors had made in last 3 years were equally divided into three themes: NAEYC accreditation (3), standardized assessment tools (3) and developing new innovative Curriculum (3). Specific topics that the preschool directors were struggling with were divided into six themes: planning time/ staff training (6), finances/funding (4), NAEYC accreditation requirements (3), parents (2), continuous changes in EEC (2), and standardized assessment and testing (2). The questions for the second interview were thus based on these results from the first interview.

Interview II. – The second interview began with a brief Likert scale of Stipek and Byler’s questionnaire (Stipek & Byler, 1997) concerning the director’s belief systems. The researcher hoped to uncover the directors particular belief system be it a basic skills or a child-centered orientation. The Likert scale included questions such as:

Basic Skills Orientation Belief Scale Items

- Preschool teachers should make sure their students know the alphabet before they start kindergarten.
- Basic skills should be the teacher's top priority.
- Children learn basic skills best through repetition and review.
- Practicing letters and their sounds is the best way for children to learn to read.

Child-Centered Orientation Belief Scale Items

- Children learn best through active, self-initiated exploration.
- Having children experiment with writing through drawing, scribbling or inventing their own spelling is a good way for children to develop literacy skills.
- Young children learn math best through manipulating concrete objects. [See Appendix D.]

Following the completion of the belief systems questionnaire the researcher engaged in conversation with the directors. The questions were grouped according to the themes that were uncovered in the first interview: funding, NAEYC accreditation, standardized assessment tools, current trends and changes in the EEC (including Quality Rating Improvement Scale) and how these were affecting the director's ideal principles and practices.

Through a semi-structured interview the researcher followed a general script yet adapted the questions to the ongoing dialogue. Based on the responses to the open ended questions in the first interview the researcher was able to elicit elaboration and

clarification from the participants through a series of detailed follow up questions
(Rossman & Rallis, 2003)

Interview II Questions

Questions about Funding

- What types of funding do you receive?
- What are the requirements for receiving this funding?

General Questions about NAEYC Accreditation

- How has it gone for you, this process of completing the requirements set forth by NAEYC? Or Why did you choose not to receive NAEYC Accreditation?
- Tell me about how it started. What were some of the obstacles you faced?
- What were you working on three years ago? What are you working on now?
- Tell me about the staff training. What types of techniques did you use for training?

General Questions about Standardized Assessment Tool

- What types of Assessment Tools are you using? Are these mandatory for accreditation or funding?
- How has it gone for you, this process of implementing a standardized assessment tool?
- Tell me about how it started. What were some of the obstacles you faced?
- What type of assessment tools were you implementing three years ago?
- Tell me about the staff training. What types of techniques did you use for training?

Additional Questions

Are you familiar with the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)? (Give handout). What do you think of it?

How has the climate changed since you first became the director?

What are your ideal principles and practices and what factors and/or mandates interfere or modify these preserved ideals?

The first and second interviews were recorded using the audio program, Garage Band. A microphone was attached to the inconspicuous Mac Book to record audio. Written notes were recorded concurrent with the interview. Field notes were recorded immediately after leaving the facility.

Documents and Artifact Collections

The researcher collected artifacts from the childcare centers such as brochures about the programs, parent handouts, parent letters, and school philosophy statements. The schools website, when applicable, were also reviewed. This material provided the researcher with additional data about the schools so as to have a better understanding of the context (Creswell, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Field Observations and Supplementary Techniques

To maintain an audit trail the researcher kept track of the research process. Process notes of daily activities were recorded. Daily reflections on the day's activities, the decision-making procedures and procedural notes were recorded. Materials relating to intentions and reactions were maintained. Personal notes about motivations were written. Immediate reflections on experiences with participants were noted. Instrument development information was recorded. Interview questions or line of inquiry were revised after each interview (Creswell, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Data Analysis Procedures

The raw data from the audiotapes was transcribed verbatim following each interview. The data collected during the interviews was compared with what was actually observed. Field notes and transcriptions were assessed to reveal any discrepancies between what was recorded during the interviews as opposed to that which was observed in the interviews.

The research design evolved as the process unfolded. The transcriptions from the interviews were examined with attention to their programs affiliation (NAEYC, UPK, Head Start, or EEC only). The data was then reduced and redundant information was paired together. Significant statements and common themes were extracted from this reduced data. Did particular programs have similar views on the integration of curriculum standards? Did particular types of preschool programs, with specific license requirements, have different types of concerns about the implementation of early learning standards than other programs? Did belief systems correspond with attitudes towards the integration of early learning standards? The researcher then looked for significant statements and common themes within the four sets of affiliated programs. Did some of the programs find that integrating the curriculum standards had been particularly beneficial? Were some of the programs in a state of disequilibrium? Were some of the programs dissatisfied with the necessity of the integration of curriculum standards?

Inductive coding commenced from these transcriptions. The transcripts were scrutinized looking for important concepts and initial themes or categories of information that might be relevant to the research questions. An axial coding followed in which the researcher color-coded the relevant information according to specific themes. The themes

were then divided into specific categories and again selectively coded in accordance to the categories and subcategories. The themes that were extracted during the inductive analysis (from the interviews and field notes) were based upon the research questions (Creswell, 1998).

Researcher's Profile

In a qualitative study the researcher is a key instrument in the data collection. It is therefore necessary to know relevant personal and professional data about the researcher. The researcher is a graduate student in the doctoral program in Child and Family Studies at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. The researcher is a mother and has two children who are attending public schools in Massachusetts.

Knowledge of the Field

The researcher has been an early childhood educator for over a decade. She has educated both young children and teachers. She has taught Child Development, Preschool Curriculum Methods, and Computers in Elementary Education at Holyoke Community College. She is presently adjunct faculty at the University Without Walls at UMass/Amherst where she teaches Preschool Curriculum Methods and Teaching Math in the Elementary School. Most of her students through this outreach degree program are preschool teachers.

Researcher's Biases

Being a former preschool teacher, and a mother of school aged children, the researcher has encountered various biases about the state and federal governments

demands on early childhood programs. In her role as a college professor she has worked with students who have both agreed and disagreed with the push toward accountability. Some of her students are creating developmentally appropriate curriculum that is both exciting and challenging for preschoolers. Some of her students are seeking support in how to create a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and/or the Guidelines for Preschool Learning. The researcher is therefore very interested in directly asking preschool directors about how the new requirements of integrating curriculum standards are affecting their programs and their teachers.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

A qualitative study can produce much descriptive detail about the setting, participants, artifacts, and the operation of a given situation. In this particular type of study however the researcher not only had a responsibility to describe setting in ways that it was lived by the participants, but also to inspire the readers trust in the accuracy of what is being portrayed (Graber, 1991, p.43). Several strategies were employed to assess the trustworthiness of this data; they were triangulation, member checks, and auditing.

Triangulation. Multiple sources of data were collected and a variety of methods were used. Multiple sources of data included information about the childcare centers from the directors and school websites, when applicable. Additional information was gathered from the EEC, NAEYC, UPK and Head Start. The methods of data collection included an initial survey, two in-depth interviews with each director, questionnaires from directors, and a collection of documents, artifacts and field observations and various other material gathered from the site.

Member checks - The researcher conducted member checks in which she asked the directors to reiterate some of their answers. The researcher summarized what she had learned from the director then reviewed the summary with the director to make sure that what she understood was correct. Directors were asked to review key material for any discrepancies.

Auditing. The researcher maintained process notes in which she kept a record of day-to-day activities. Daily reflections on the day's activities were noted. Procedural notes and decision-making procedures were recorded. Immediate reflections on experiences with informants were noted. Field notes were compared with transcribed audiotapes (Creswell, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the process by which the pressures of integrating state mandated early learning standards and other external mandates had directly and indirectly influenced preschool environments. Data about the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and other mandatory external guidelines, approaches to learning and the importance of including various developmental domains within the curriculum standards was examined. Additionally the directors' personal reflections on the current climate of curriculum standards and their curriculum decisions were reported. The results were separated into two parts: results from the surveys and results from the interviews. The surveys were subdivided into survey results from all respondents and survey results from the interview participants.

Part I. Survey Results

A total of twenty-eight directors completed the surveys. Nine of the directors who completed the survey also agreed to be interviewed. The results from these surveys will be included in Part 1. The survey began with closed questions about the childcare center demographics, the directors' demographics and closed questions about current curriculum concerns. The survey also included two open ended questions about specific curriculum concerns. The survey results were divided into two sections: "all survey respondents" and "survey results from interview participants." The "all survey respondents" section included answers to the closed questions about demographics and current curriculum

concerns from all of the survey respondents (including the directors who agreed to be interviewed). Additionally this section included the responses for the open ended questions about specific curriculum concerns for the anonymous survey respondents only. The “survey results from interview participants” section included the closed questions about demographics and current curriculum concerns for the interviewees only. The responses for the open ended questions about specific curriculum concerns of the interview participants only were also included in this section.

All Survey Respondent Results

The “all survey respondents” section included answers to the closed questions about demographics and current curriculum concerns from all of the survey respondents. In addition, the anonymous director’s responses to the open ended questions about specific curriculum concerns were also included in this section.

Duration of Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences

The Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG) were approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education in April of 2003 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003). Of the 28 directors, the majority of the preschool directors (71 %) who responded to the survey had been using these guidelines for at least two years. Eighteen of the directors had been using these guidelines for approximately five years, five of the directors, (18%), had been using these guidelines for at least three years and 7 of the directors, (25%), had been using these guidelines for at least two years. Only 4 of the directors used the PLG as a guide or reference and another 4 of the 28 directors had not been using the PLG.

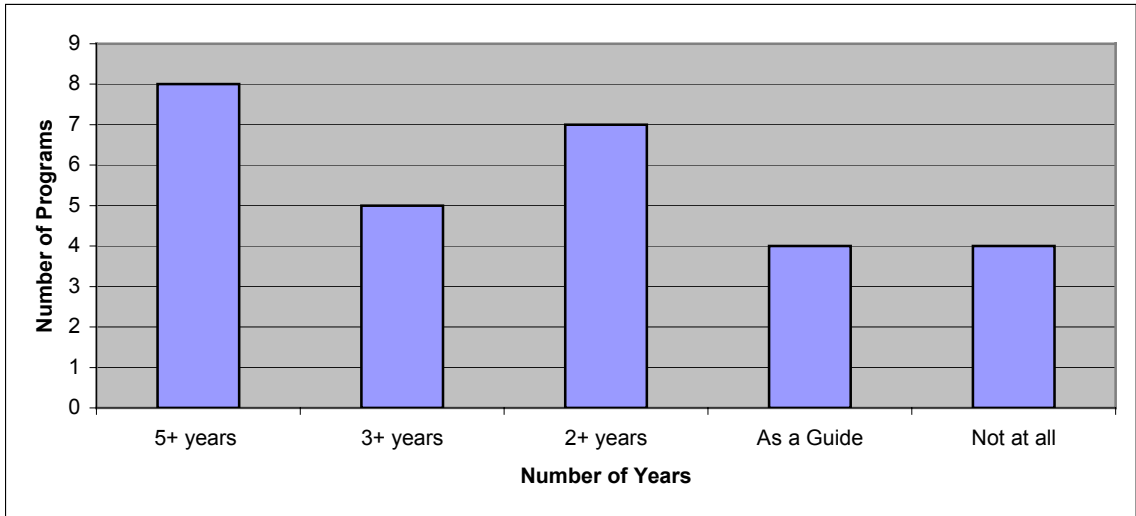


Figure 4. 1: Duration of Use of Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences for Survey Respondents

Required External Curriculum Guidelines

To ascertain the types of mandates that the directors might be required to implement, the survey included a checklist of specific external guidelines and approaches to learning that the directors enlisted. Many of the directors listed more than one external guideline or approaches to learning. The vast majority of the directors (79%) reported that their program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Eighteen of the directors, 64 %, included the Creative Curriculum in their programs. In addition 4 of the programs, 14%, received Universal Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Planning Grants (UPK APG). Also 4 of the programs, 14 %, received Universal Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Quality Grants (UPK CQG). Three of the directors, 11 %, were from Head Start Programs. In addition 5 of the programs, 18 %, incorporated Ages and Stages.

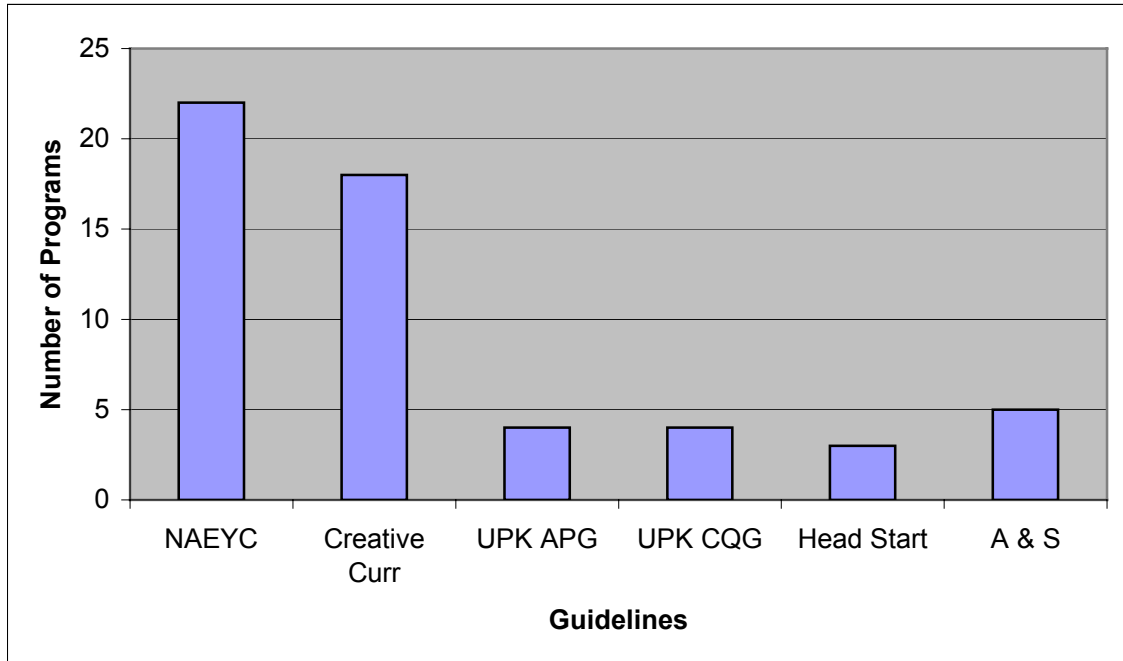


Figure 4. 2: Number of Surveyed Programs that Report the Use of Specific External Guidelines

Approaches to Learning

When asked about approaches to learning that were specific to their programs a smattering of the directors listed a range of different approaches that were being integrated into their programs. Two of the directors stated that their program practiced the Reggio Approach. The Montessori Approach was practiced by two of the programs. For the development of social and school readiness skills two of the programs used Second Step. Beyond Behavior Management (BBM) was utilized by one of the programs for social and emotional development. High Scope was practiced by one of the programs. One of the programs practiced the Project Approach. Finally one of the directors reported that her program included Ethics in their curriculum.

Implementation Stage of Non-Specified Curriculum Guidelines

When asked about the implementation stage of the non-specified curriculum guidelines (CG) for their particular programs, fully 15 programs were committed to sustaining curriculum guidelines. In addition, six programs were trying to implement curriculum guidelines. Three of the directors were undecided about curriculum guidelines, one program had recently begun integration of curriculum guidelines, and one of the directors reported that she/he was presently not considering curriculum guidelines.

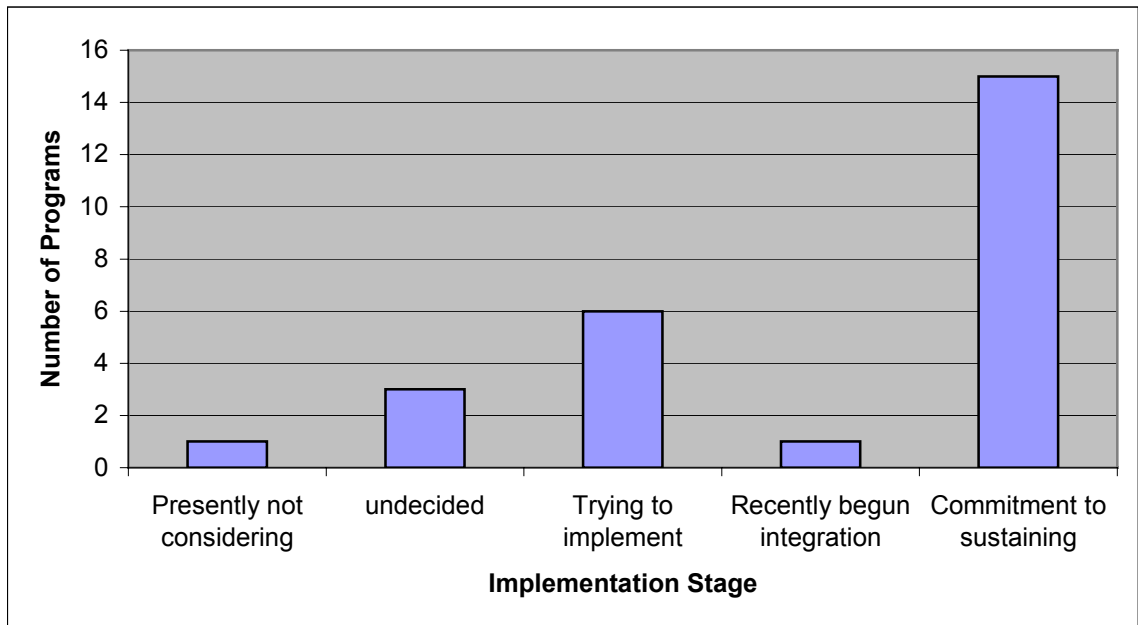


Figure 4. 3: Implementation Stage of Curriculum Guidelines (C-G) for Survey Respondents

Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards

The directors were asked about the importance of including developmental areas in curriculum standards for early childhood education. The six directors who were mailed the original survey stated that social/emotional development was the most important developmental area to be included in curriculum standards. Four of the directors who

received the first survey were unable to give a rating for the importance of the various developmental areas. The remaining 18 directors were asked to rate the importance of including specific developmental areas in the curriculum standards for ECE. The results indicated that social emotional development was the most important area to be included in the curriculum standards, followed closely by physical development. One of the directors stated –

“Health education is less important to this population, as their health routines are well supported by their families. Science is more important than technology at the preschool level: questioning, examining, sorting, etc.”

Language arts came in third in utmost importance in being included in the curriculum standards, followed by health education and the arts.

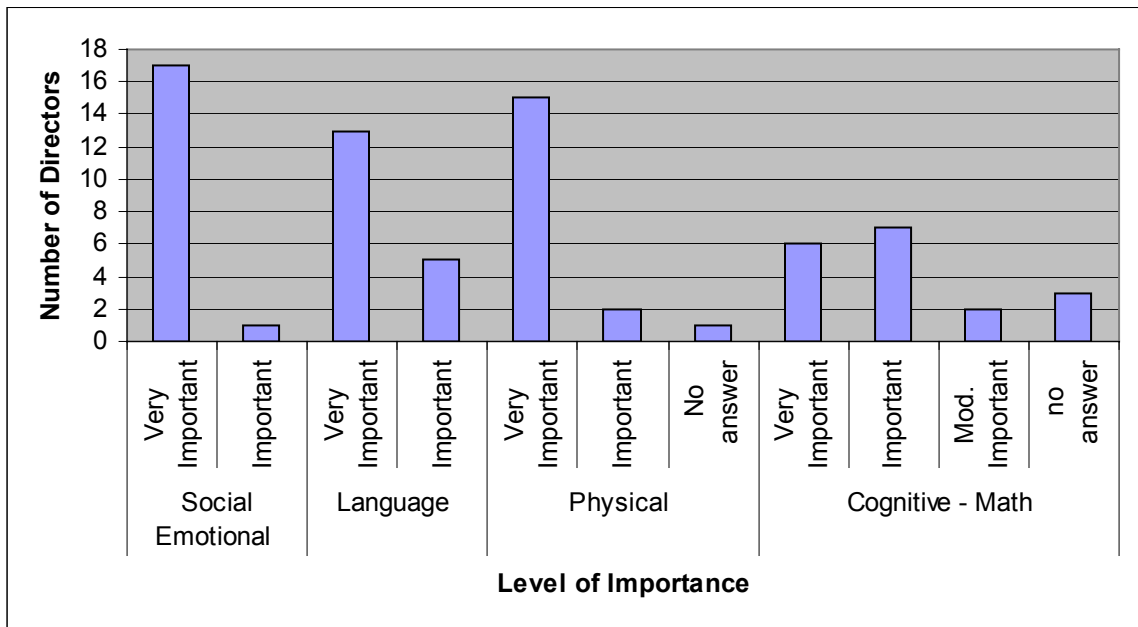


Figure 4. 4: Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards (Social/Emotional, Language, Physical and Mathematics) for Survey Respondents

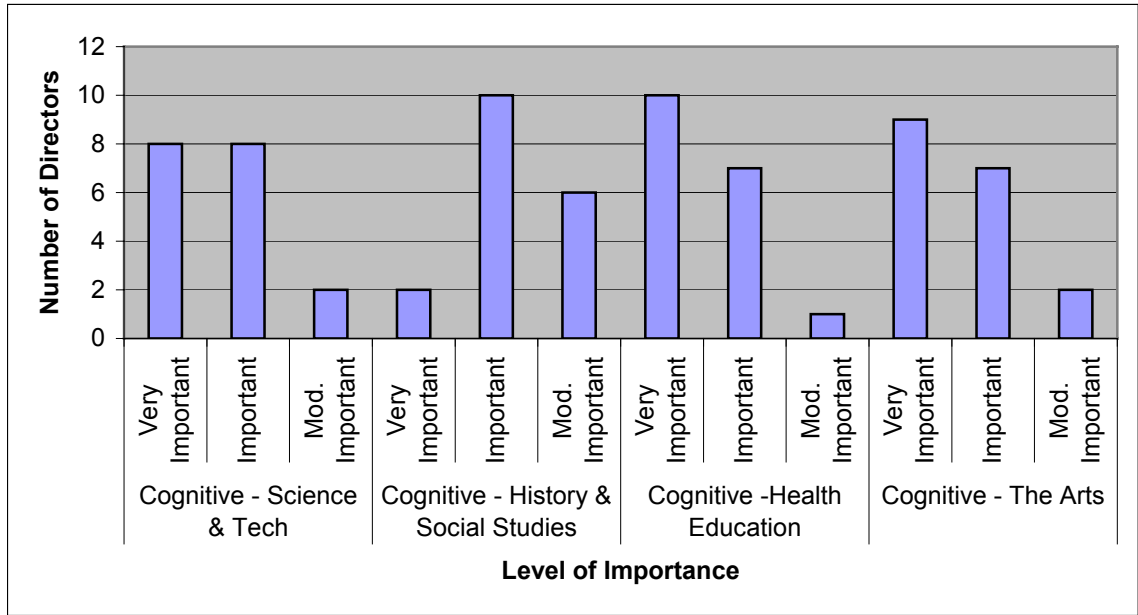


Figure 4. 5: Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards (Science, History, Health and Art) for Survey Respondents

Current Climate of Curriculum Standards

The two open ended survey questions were subdivided between the anonymous survey respondents and directors who agreed to be interviewed.

The survey respondents were asked: As you consider the current climate of curriculum standards what is the first thing that comes to mind? Fourteen of the 20 anonymous directors adequately answered this question. Of these 14 remaining directors, 9 of the directors (64 %) were disgruntled with the current climate concerning curriculum standards, and 5 of the directors (36%) were somewhat pleased with the current climate of curriculum standards. The categories and themes that emerged are based on the answers of these 14 anonymous respondents.

Table 4.1: Themes and Categories Based on the Survey Respondents Initial Responses Concerning the Current Climate of Curriculum Standards

Themes	Categories
Curriculum Standards are Imperative	Create Professional Standards and High Expectations Positive base but need to consider other issues
Stress on Teachers	Overall stress Financial constraints Time Constraints
Pressure on Children	Learning through play most important Academics take precedence over play

Curriculum Standards are Imperative

The directors reported that curriculum standards created professional standards and high expectations and that they had a positive base but other issues also needed to be considered.

Two of the anonymous directors stated that curriculum standards create professional standards and high expectations, for example:

“All childcare centers should be maintaining the highest possible level of quality care and education for young children. Standards are a necessary and integral component of a quality program to ensure that children are exposed to meaningful activities that span the areas of curriculum.”

Three of the directors stated that curriculum standards had a positive base but other issues also needed to be considered, such as:

“Standards are great for providing guidelines and requirements to maintain quality care. However, I wish all "standards" could be combined into one guideline to follow (HS Standards, NAEYC, Creative Curriculum, EEC Regs, ITERS, ECERS,.)”

Stress on Teachers

Several directors mentioned that curriculum standards caused stress on teachers, this included overall stress and stress related to financial constraints and time constraints.

One of the anonymous directors stated that there was overall stress:

“There are too many balls in the air.”

Three of the directors noted financial constraints, for example:

“The raised expectations for staff with no monetary compensation or salary increases for advanced training.”

Two of the respondents noted time constraints, such as

“The lack of time given to staff for training.”

Pressure on Children

The directors also wrote about pressure on children. Five of the anonymous directors stated that academics take precedence over play. For example:

“That children’s natural growth and need to play to develop should not become lost in an early achievement war to succeed on third grade MCAS.”

“These are young children and they should be enjoying their young years rather than being pressured.”

Curriculum Decisions in Climate of Competing Demands

The directors were asked to “Comment on what decisions you have made about your curriculum in this climate of competing demands.” Thirteen of the 22 anonymous directors surveyed answered this question. The categories and themes that emerged are based on the answers provided by these 13 directors.

Table 4. 2: Themes and Categories Based on the Survey Respondents Initial Responses to Questions Concerning Curriculum Decisions

Themes	Categories
Curriculum Standards	Unhappy with Mandatory Curriculum Standards Mandatory Curriculum Standards are important Keep things the way they are.
Additional Mandates: Assessment Tools and Accreditation	Approved Assessment Tools NAEYC Accreditation
Financial Constraints	
Interests of Children over Curriculum Standards	

Curriculum Standards Theme

The directors had various responses to the curriculum standards. Some directors were unhappy with mandatory curriculum standards, others thought that curriculum standards were important, and still others wanted to just keep things the way they were.

Two of the surveyed directors indicated that they were unhappy with mandatory curriculum standards.

“Given the requirements of the state, there was little thought given to NOT moving forward with implementing a standardized curriculum.”

“We feel our current curriculum which is considered "not standardized" works well and we are not happy to have to make the change to "standardized curriculum" just to be able to access state funding.”

Five of the directors felt that mandatory curriculum standards were important, for example:

“I believe that childcare centers/preschools should uphold the philosophy of implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum, while using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experience. Teachers should plan curriculum based on observations and children's interest regarding what individual children need to grow and learn to reach their potential.”

Two of the directors wished to keep things the way they were, such as:

“We have a defined curriculum that with minor changes has stayed relevant over the last 100 years. We continue to look at what is out there to make sure that we are meeting the needs of children.”

Additional Mandates Theme (Assessment Tools and Accreditation)

Some of the directors were concerned about mandates other than state guidelines, particularly the related “approved assessment tools “and the NAEYC Accreditation process.

Two of the anonymous directors mentioned approved assessment tools. For example:

“We are beginning to train staff in Creative Curriculum.”

One of the respondents mentioned NAEYC Accreditation.

“We will maintain NAEYC accreditation (reaccredited 10/08) and follow all state requirements.”

Financial Constraints Theme

Two of the survey respondents mentioned financial constraints, for example one of the survey respondents commented on

“lack of funding for training and support .”

Interests of Children over Curriculum Standards Theme

Three of the anonymous survey respondents noted that the interests of the children were more important than curriculum standards, for example

“Play and investigation is our priority. Skills are supported as the children's development and interests emerge.”

“Getting to know our children comes first. So many children have developmental needs that are beyond the scope of the curriculum, making it very difficult to follow the guidelines. It becomes very frustrating.”

Survey Results from Interview Participants

The “survey results from interview participants” section included the answers to the closed questions, about demographics and current curriculum concerns, from the nine directors who agreed to be interviewed. These nine directors’ responses to the open ended questions about specific curriculum concerns were also included in this section.

Duration of Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences

The 9 interview volunteers, as compared with the full sample of 28 survey respondents, had been using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG) longer on average. See Figure 4-6 which shows the interview volunteers as compared to the full sample. All of the interview volunteers were integrating the PLG at some capacity while 4 of the full sample, 14 %, had not been using the PLG at all. Five of the volunteers had been using the PLG for approximately five years. Two of the volunteers had been using PLG for approximately three years. Finally two of the volunteers had been using PLG as a guide.



Figure 4. 6: Duration of Use of Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences for Interview Participants

Required External Curriculum Guidelines & Approaches to Learning

When asked about required external curriculum guidelines and approaches to learning for their specific programs many of the volunteers listed more than one external guideline. Eight of the 9 directors reported that their program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Five of the nine directors included one of the UPK Approved Assessment tools in their programs (four used Creative Curriculum [CC] and one used Ages and Stages [A & S]). Three of the programs received, or hoped to receive, Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants: two received UPK Classroom Quality Grants and one received a UPK Assessment Planning Grant. Two of the directors were from Head Start Programs. Three of the programs employed a specific curriculum model: the Reggio Approach, the Project Approach or High Scope. One of the programs included Ethics in their curriculum. These nine volunteers had to comply with the guidelines from ten separate sources, a total of 22 external curriculum guidelines and approaches to learning were recorded. This was an average of 2.4 external guidelines per program. This was comparable to the total sample who also had an average of 2.4 external mandates per program. Similar to the total sample NAEYC Accreditation and the Creative Curriculum were the most often used curriculum guidelines employed by the majority of the programs.

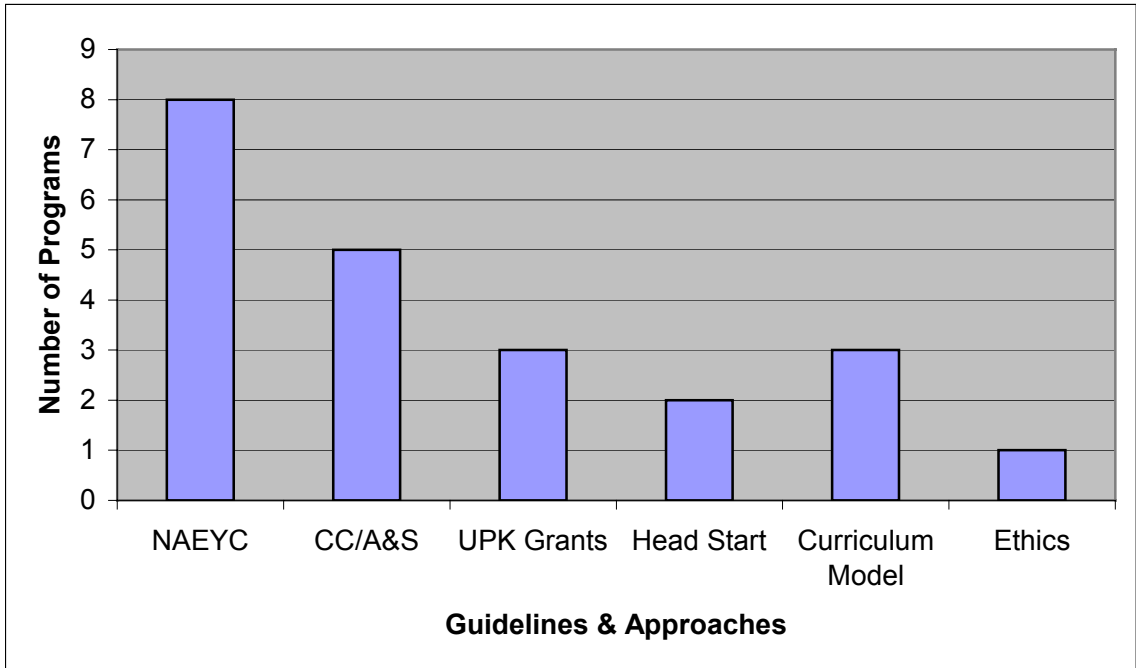


Figure 4. 7: Number of Interview Participants that Report the Use of Specific External Guidelines & Approaches to Learning

Implementation Stage of the Curriculum Guidelines

When asked about the implementation stage of the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG) fully six of the volunteers were committed to sustaining the PLG. Two of the volunteers reported that their program had been trying to implement the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG). And one of the programs was trying to both implement and was committed to sustaining the PLG. This is similar to the total sample in that the majority of the programs were committed to sustaining the PLG.

Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards

The volunteers were asked about the importance of including developmental areas in curriculum standards for early childhood education. The one volunteer who was mailed the original survey stated that social/emotional development was the most important developmental area to be included in curriculum standards, followed by physical development, then English language arts, science and technology and mathematics. The remaining 8 directors were asked to rate the importance of including specific developmental areas in the curriculum standards for early childhood education (ECE). The results indicated that social emotional development was the most important developmental area to be included in the curriculum standards followed closely by physical development and the language arts. One the volunteers stated,

“Personal Safety Curriculum: Talking About Touching and Second Step (anti-violence) Curriculum” should be in this list. [Teresa]

These results were similar to those of the total sample in that the volunteers also listed social emotional development as the most important developmental area to be included in the curriculum standards followed by physical development and the language arts.

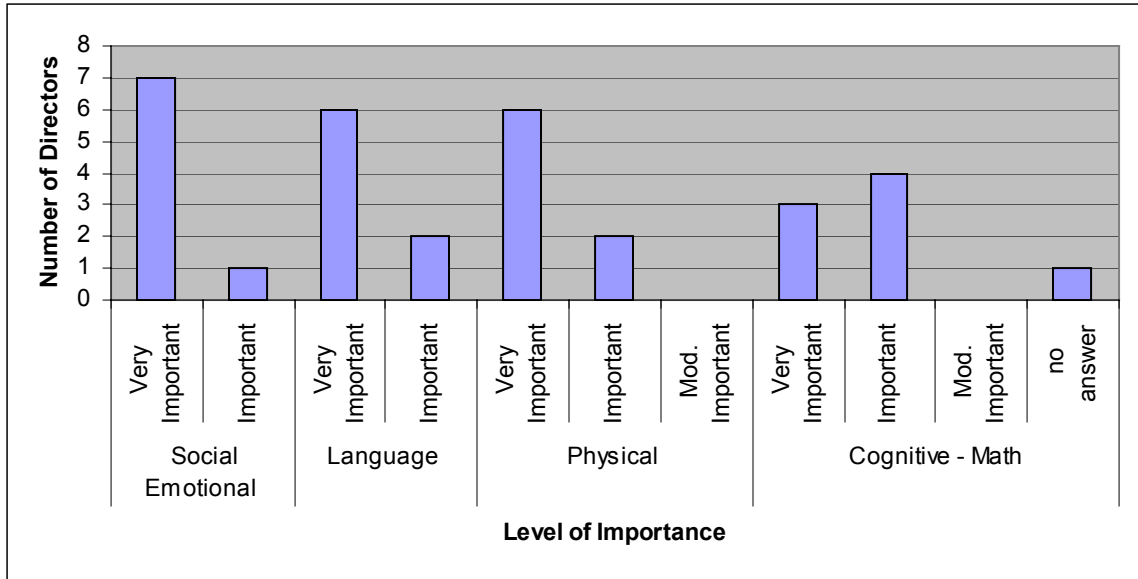


Figure 4. 8: Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards (Social/Emotional, Language, Physical and Mathematics) for Interview Participants

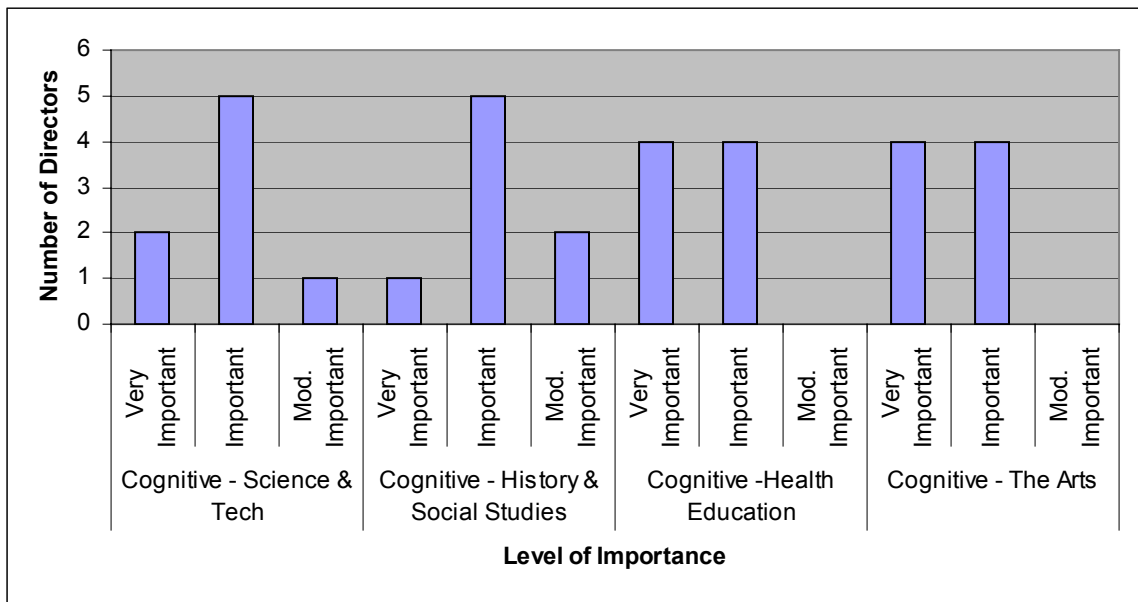


Figure 4. 9: Importance of Developmental Areas in Curriculum Standards (Science, History, Health and Art) for Interview Participants

Current Climate of Curriculum Standards

The volunteers were asked: As you consider the current climate of curriculum standards what is the first thing that comes to mind? Eight of the 9 volunteers answered

this question. Of these 8 directors 6 were disgruntled with the current climate concerning curriculum standards. One of the directors was pleased with the current climate of curriculum standards and one director was both disgruntled and pleased with current climate. The categories and themes that emerged were based on the answers from these 8 volunteers.

Table 4.3: Themes and Categories Based on the Interview Participants Initial Responses Concerning the Current Climate of Curriculum Standards

Themes	Categories
Curriculum Standards are Imperative	Help Teachers focus and be intentional Create Professional Standards and High Expectations
Stress on Teachers	Overall stress Financial constraints Time Constraints
Pressure on Children	Learning through play most important

Curriculum Standards are Imperative

Some of the directors stated that curriculum standards were imperative. Some thought that curriculum standards helped teachers focus and be intentional, and, that they created professional standards and high expectations.

Stress on Teachers

Several directors mentioned that curriculum standards caused stress on teachers, this included overall stress and stress related to financial constraints and time constraints.

Two of the directors listed overall stress as the first thing that came to mind, for example:

“Stress on teachers as seen in public school which leads to stress on children”

[Frannie]

Two of the volunteers listed financial constraints, for example

“How can I justify placing all of these demands on the staff when they are not adequately compensated?” [Nicole]

One of the volunteers listed time constraints

“These poor teachers, when do they have time to be able to engage with children in their play. Is there time to have fun with children and build on strong teacher/child relationships; so important for child care programs.” [Donna]

Pressure on Children

The directors also wrote about pressure on children. Three of the volunteers stated that learning through play was most important, for example:

“These poor kids....when do they have time to be kids, and play and fantasize...which is how they learn in the first place.” [Donna]

“Children need to have time to explore and play within their environment. Children need relevant experiences in order to retain what they are learning.”

[Evelyn]

Curriculum Decisions in Climate of Competing Demands

The volunteers were asked to “Comment on what decisions you have made about your curriculum in this climate of competing demands.” Seven of the nine volunteers

surveyed answered this question. The categories and themes that emerged are based on the answers from these 7 volunteers

Table 4.4: Themes and Categories Based on the Interview Participants Initial Responses to Questions Concerning Curriculum Decisions

Themes	Categories
Curriculum Standards	Being pulled in too many directions
Additional Mandates: Assessment Tools and Accreditation	Approved Assessment Tools NAEYC Accreditation
Interests of Children over Curriculum Standards	

Curriculum Standards Theme

The directors had the same initial response to the curriculum standards. Three of the directors, stated that they were being pulled in too many directions, for example:

“Trying to juggle several demanding curriculums from different licensors and funding sources (NAEYC, state, federal, UPK) which are basically the same but all have some areas that supercede others. Each one also demands using their format to document, so it becomes a paper nightmare for documentation....”

[Donna]

“While it can be overwhelming to think of having to meet multiple criteria (Mass. Dept of EEC licensing, NAEYC Accreditation, Mass. Preschool Guidelines, Project Approach, Work Sampling, etc.), they all provide useful frameworks for us to guide our work with young children and families.” [Jill]

Additional Mandates Theme (Assessment Tools and Accreditation)

Some of the directors were concerned about mandates other than state guidelines, particularly the related “approved assessment tools “and the NAEYC Accreditation process.

Three of the directors listed approved assessment tools, for example:

“Moving forward, the school is investigating programs such as The Creative Curriculum and Work Sampling as possible standard assessment tools that are required if we are to become a part of the UPK program.” [Nicole]

“We chose to use the Work Sampling Assessment system because it is a good fit for our Project Approach curriculum model, and provides evidence which can be easily used for Accreditation portfolios and licensing documentation.

There are ways to integrate the various pieces so that they work in tandem and efficiently - rather than as separate processes.” [Jill]

Two of the directors mentioned NAEYC Accreditation, for example:

“We continue with our practice of 30 years but are feeling pushed and pulled as we try to become reaccredited by NAEYC and apply for state grants.” [Irene]

Interests of Children over Curriculum Standards Theme

Two of the directors noted that the interests of the children were more important than curriculum standards, for instance,

“We are educating our Parents to the importance of discovery and play.” [Evelyn]

“To let children be children, guide their learning of interest, allow children and staff to be happy, have fun. I listen to so many families who have children

who have dropped out of school. I feel it all begins when they are young but also the stress of what our teachers are expected to teach is too much.” [Frannie]

Interview Participants as Compared to Survey Respondents

On average the interview volunteers were older, better educated and more experienced than the survey respondents. The 9 interview volunteers, as compared with the full sample of 28 survey respondents, were on average, older. While 79% of the survey participants were between the ages of 30-49 years (47% were between 40-49 years old and 32% were 30-39 years old), 77 % of the interview volunteers were between 40-69 years old (44% were 50-69 years old and 33% were 40-49 years old).

The 9 interview volunteers, as compared with the full sample of 28 survey respondents, were on average, better educated. While 52 % of survey respondents had their Bachelor’s, Bachelor’s + 30, or Master’s degree (equally divided between Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees), 55% of the interview volunteers had their Master’s degrees and 33% had either their Bachelor’s or their Bachelor’s + 30 degree.

The 9 interview volunteers, as compared with the full sample of 28 survey respondents, had on average, more experience as a preschool program director. While 72% of the survey respondents had been the director from less than 8 years to 8-15 years (39% had been the director for less than 8 years and 33 % had been the directors for 8-15 years), 77 % of the interview volunteers had been the director from 8-15 years to 15-25 years (55 % had been the director for 15-25 years and 22 % had been the director for 8-15 years).

Concerning the current climate of curriculum standards 9 of the 14 survey respondents (64%)who answered this question were disgruntled with the current climate

of curriculum standards. Where as 8 of the 9 interview volunteers (89%) were disgruntled with the current climate.

When asked to “Comment on what decisions you have made about your curriculum in this climate of competing demands,” two of the 13 survey respondents who answered this question were unhappy with the current climate, 5 directors thought that curriculum standards were important and two directors wanted to keep things the way they are. Meanwhile, six of the 7 interview volunteers who answered this question (86%) were unhappy with the current climate. Three of interview volunteers felt that they were being pulled in too many directions, 5 of the interview volunteers were particularly concerned with the UPK assessment tools or NAEYC accreditation.

Perhaps the reason why the interview volunteers were on average less pleased than the survey respondents with the current climate of curriculum standards was because they were older, better educated, and had been in the field longer. These directors could remember when preschool programs were more focused on the importance of play and less concerned with academics. They could remember when days were shorter and there was less paperwork to complete. They could remember when preschool programs were autonomous and did not have to answer to the demands of the federal, state and local agencies.

Summary

In summary, all of the directors agreed that curriculum standards were imperative, they helped the teacher focus, be intentional and they created professional standards. Yet the curriculum standards were stressful, overly so, particularly for the teachers whose

directors agreed to be interviewed. Curriculum standards created financial constraints and time constraints though this was more apparent with the anonymous directors.

Curriculum standards put pressure on children: the volunteers noted that learning through play was of the utmost importance for children, while the anonymous respondents were concerned that academics took precedence over play.

The curriculum decisions for all the directors were centered on curriculum standards, additional mandates and interests of children over curriculum standards. Only the anonymous directors noted financial constraints. Concerning curriculum standards several of the volunteers felt that they were being pull in too many directions while a couple of the anonymous respondents were unhappy with the standards. Many of the anonymous respondents believed that mandatory curriculum standards were important and a couple of the anonymous respondents felt that things should be kept the way they are. The directors who agreed to be interviewed were clearly struggling with the overall stress of implementing curriculum standards. Their immediate responses concerning curriculum standards were quite pessimistic.

Further concerns over curriculum decisions listed by the directors included the task of juggling additional mandates and the interests of children. The necessity for and the implementation of an approved assessment tool and the lengthy process of accreditation for NAEYC were a concern for both groups. Finally, several of the volunteers and the anonymous respondents felt that the interests of children should be of greater concern than the curriculum standards.

Part II. Interview Results

The interviews occurred in two sessions. The questions addressed during the first interview focused on the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences, other external guidelines, and specific open ended questions concerning their curriculum: most difficult curriculum decision, accomplishments and struggles concerning curriculum. The results from the first interview indicated that the Preschool Learning Guidelines were already being integrated into most of the programs. The open ended questions revealed that the most difficult curriculum decision preschool directors had made in last 3 years included several of the same themes that were included in their current struggles. These were equally divided into three themes: complying with NAEYC accreditation, selecting and implementing standardized assessment tools, and developing new innovative curriculum. Based on these responses the questions for the second interview focused on funding, NAEYC Accreditation, Standardized Assessment Tools, the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), climate change, and the director's ideal principles and practices and the factors and/or mandates that interfered or modified these preserved ideals.

The results from the two interviews will be divided into four categories: [I] The Guidelines for Preschool Learning, [II] Curriculum Decisions/Current Struggles [III] Climate Change and [IV] Ideal Principles and Practices. The Curriculum Decisions/Current Struggles category will be subdivided into five themes: funding, NAEYC Accreditation, standardized assessment tools, developing innovative curriculum, and the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS).

The Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and Educational Change

In the original survey the directors were asked about their program's implementation stage of the curriculum guidelines. Of the 28 directors who completed the survey, 15 directors reported that their programs were committed to sustaining unspecified curriculum guidelines, six programs were trying to implement the unspecified curriculum guidelines, three programs were undecided about the curriculum guidelines, one program had recently begun integration of the curriculum guidelines, and one program was not considering the curriculum guidelines.

When asked more specifically about the implementation stage of the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG) six of the nine interviewed directors reported that their programs were committed to sustaining the PLG. Two of the programs had been trying to implement the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. And one of the programs was trying to implement and committed to sustaining the PLG. The directors by and large were not overly concerned with the implementation of the Guidelines for Preschool Learning. Indeed the flawless integration of Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences was an additional point of pride for the majority of the volunteers.

“I was proud of the fact that when I came here, and it's continued, the staff just went right along with the green book (*Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences*). They just knew how to operate the green book. That was the greatest thing. That we were doing what we were supposed to. Anybody can come in and look at their (*the teachers*) books and see that it was all in line” [Wendy]

The relatively smooth adaptation to the state Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences was measured using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and reflected in these individual directors response to the mandatory PLG. The directors attitudes (their stages of concern) about the curriculum change fell about half way through the six stages of concern: Awareness (0), Stage 1: Information, Stage 2: Personal, Stage 3: Management, Stage 4: Consequence, Stage 5: Collaboration, and Stage 6: Refocusing (Osborne, 1993; The National Academies, 2005). Six of the directors were at the fifth stage of concern. The other three directors were at the 3rd, 4th and 6th stage of concern.

The six directors who were at the Collaboration stage (5th stage of concern) were committed to sustaining the Guidelines for Preschool Experiences (PLG). Evelyn, Wendy, Frannie, Nicole, Teresa and Becky had already implemented the PLG into their curriculum planning and they were working with their teachers to improve the benefits of the integration of the PLG for their students (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005).

Two of the directors had been trying to implement the PLG. Irene was at the 3rd stage of concern: Management. She had begun to experiment with integrating the PLG into curriculum planning and documentation though she still was concerned with the logistics and how her teachers would respond to implementing the PLG (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005). Jill was at the 4th stage of concern: Consequence. She was concerned about the impact of the implementation of the PLG for her teachers in their classrooms and possibilities of documenting/modifying the PLG language to make them more accessible to her teachers (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005).

Donna had reached the 6th level of concern: Refocusing. Her program was trying to implement and committed to sustaining the PLG. She was thinking about how she could replace or combine the PLG with other guidelines that were also mandatory for her program (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005).

When measuring the levels of use of the particular educational change the CBAM focuses on the general patterns of the director's behavior as they begin to use and gain experience implementing a program change. The majority of directors level of use were at the 4th level of the six levels of use: Non-use (0), Level I: Orientation, Level II: Preparation, Level III: Mechanical, Level IVA: Routine, Level IVB: Refinement, user is making changes to increase outcomes; Level V: Level VI: Renewal, user is seeking more effective alternatives to the established use of the innovation (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005). Six directors were at Level IV: Routine. They were committed to sustaining the Guidelines for Preschool Experiences (PLG). These guidelines were part of their teacher's classroom routines. They had established a pattern of use for the PLG and had made few changes in their usage. Two directors were at Level III: Mechanical. They were trying to implement the PLG. They were struggling with the logistics of implementing the PLG. They were concerned with making the PLG more manageable and easier to implement. Donna was at Level IVB: Refinement. She was trying to implement and committed to sustaining the PLG. She had gone past routine and was now initiating changes in the use of the PLG as she tried to devise a way to combine the PLG with other guidelines (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005).

Similar to Fenton's (2002) findings when he assessed Alaskan secondary school teachers' concerns over adopting their state standards and benchmarks using the CBAM,

these preschool program directors also had concerns over the general curriculum. The Massachusetts educators, like the Alaskan teachers had concerns with assessment, evaluation and the amount of time that was needed to allow for training, collaboration, and integration needed to refocus and improve what they were doing now. These concerns, like those of the Alaskan teachers, will also help provide guidance for the directors as they prepare for new curriculum and assessment demands from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

As noted in the above discussion the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences were not an impediment for the majority of the volunteers. The Guidelines for Preschool Learning were an integral part of curriculum planning and documentation for the majority of these directors. For many of the teachers these guidelines were systematically included in curriculum planning. The terminology written in this document articulated the teaching and learning that was occurring in these preschool programs. The only problem concerning the PLG was that the PLG was yet another guideline for the programs to adhere to. This can be overwhelming for the programs who are committed to other guidelines such as Head Start, NAEYC Accreditation, UPK Grants and/or Standardized Assessment Tools. Other external mandates, such as NAEYC accreditation and approved assessment tools were the true barrier.

Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences Summary

Most of the directors had adjusted their educational believes and practices in relationship to the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG). Six of the directors had already implemented the PLG into their curriculum planning and they were working with their teachers to improve the benefits of the integration of the

PLG for their students. One of the directors had begun to experiment with integrating the PLG into curriculum planning and documentation though she still was concerned with the logistics and how her teachers would respond to the process. One director was concerned about the impact of the implementation of the PLG for her classroom teachers and was considering modifying the PLG language to make the guidelines more accessible to her teachers. One director was trying to implement and committed to sustaining the PLG. She was thinking about how she could replace or combine the PLG with other guidelines that were also mandatory for her program (Osborne, 1993, The National Academies, 2005).

Furthermore, for six of the directors, use of the guidelines was routine. These guidelines were part of their teacher's classroom daily practice. These teachers had established a pattern of use for the PLG and had made few changes in their usage. Two directors were struggling with the logistics of implementing the PLG. They were concerned with making the PLG more manageable and easier to implement. One director had gone past routine and was now initiating changes in the use of the PLG as she tried to devise a way to combine the PLG with other guidelines.

Curriculum Decisions/Current Struggles

The responses to the questions about the most difficult curriculum decision the preschool directors had made in last 3 years, were equally divided into three themes: NAEYC accreditation, standardized assessment tools, and developing new innovative Curriculum. These three themes were repeated in the directors reports of their current struggles. Additional concerns included planning/ training, funding, parents and continuous changes in Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). This section will be centered on these five overall decisions concerning curriculum and

current struggles, these are: Funding, NAEYC Accreditation, Standardized Assessment Tools, Developing Innovative Curriculum and The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

The Influences of Sources of Funding on Mandatory External Guidelines

In Massachusetts, as in many states, early education and care programs are supported by a complex network of funding sources. Not just parents but federal, state and non-governmental organizations provide funding and therefore have the potential to influence the educational standards in many ways. In this study three main categories of funding and hence of influence on the mandatory external guidelines emerge: Federal funding, state funding and non-governmental organizations.

Federal Funding for Early Education and Care Programs

The majority of funding for Head Start programs comes from the federal government through a grant directly from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010). The Head Start funds require that programs adhere to all the Head Start Standards. Head Start funding includes a requirement for a standard non-specified assessment tool with which to assess progress of children by reporting outcomes and analyzing child development data. An assessment tool for assessing teachers is also required. In addition Head Start requires that its programs have a standard, but non-specified, curriculum. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Early Childhood Learning

and Knowledge Center, 2010) [For additional Information about Head Start see Appendix A.]

To meet the non-specified curriculum requirement and the assessment requirement one of the Head Start programs used Creative Curriculum and the other Head Start program used the High/Scope Curriculum. Both of these curriculum models had corresponding assessment tools that were also utilized by each of the Head Start programs. These were the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum and the High/Scope Child Observation Record.

State Funding for Early Education and Care Programs

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) offers funding for families in need through contracted slots and vouchers. Parents obtain state vouchers through welfare or by meeting income or disability qualifications. These EEC income eligible slots do not require the placement program to have NAEYC accreditation but the EEC gives a program more points if they are NAEYC accredited. If a program receives more points they have a better chance of getting the families who are voucher eligible. The EEC voucher programs do not require a standardized assessment tool but they do ask about the kind of assessment tool a program is using and if the program is using a screening tool. EEC funding is distributed through Community Partnership for Children (CPC), New England Farm Workers Council and through specific city departments.

In addition the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care presently oversees and administers Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten grants (Strategies for Children, Early Education for All, *Universal Pre-Kindergarten*, 2005-2007).

The Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program was initiated by the Early Education for All (EEA) Campaign in 2005. The EEA Campaign, launched in the summer of 2000 addressed the need for high-quality early education in Massachusetts. The EEA was spear headed by Strategies for Children, Inc. (SFC), an independent non-profit organization committed to improving the well-being of children and families in Massachusetts and nationally through public policy, advocacy, research, constituency building and public awareness. SFC provides the operating and financial infrastructure for the Early Education for All Campaign and related projects (Strategies for Children, 2005-2007; Strategies for Children, 2009).

The requirements to receive Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) funding, include, that a program be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent. The program must also be incorporating one of four approved assessment tools: Creative Curriculum, High Scope, Work Sampling or Ages and Stages (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 2009).

Both Head Start programs received additional funding from Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants. To comply with the UPK requirements both of the Head Start programs were accredited by NAEYC and both used an approved assessment tool. Six of the remaining seven programs were also accredited by NAEYC though they did not receive UPK grants.

Eight of the programs, including the two Head Start programs, received funding from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The two Head

Start programs received additional funding from EEC state subsidies. The state monies included childcare vouchers that were supplemented by the state.

Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) are programs that help make quality preschool education and services available to low-income families. The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) funds the CPC programs. Community organizations apply for grants to start Community Partnership programs in their communities. Community Partnerships for Children are state run but administered locally. In some communities, CPC programs have recently consolidated with other EEC-funded programs to provide a comprehensive system of early childhood education and family support services (Massachusetts Resources, 2001-2010, p. 1). To receive CPC funding a program must be accredited by NAEYC or working towards it (Community Partnerships for Children, 2008).

One of the programs received funding from their local Community Partnerships for Children (CPC).

New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC), an affiliate of Partners for Community (a non-profit agency that promotes self-sufficiency for human service affiliate agencies), provides access to affordable childcare in specific urban areas in Massachusetts. NEFWC runs the largest voucher childcare program in a large area in Massachusetts and provides access to nearly 1,500 childcare providers in the area. Eligible parents select a provider then the New England Farm Workers' Council provides a written voucher to the family with the daily service rate, the amount of state

reimbursement and other contract terms. This voucher can be used to pay for care at the selected provider (New England Farm Workers Council, 2009). Eligible families obtain these vouchers. Eligibility is based primarily on the family's income and family's size.

Two of the programs received vouchers through the state sponsored New England Farm Workers Council. This subsidy money, in this area, used to be from Community Partnership for Children (CPC) but was recently shifted over to the New England Farm Workers Council.

Early Education and Care Affiliate Funding - One of the programs received funding from a specific city Departments of Early Education and Care. This EEC affiliate only provided funding if a program was licensed by the state of Massachusetts, accepted voucher slots and was accredited by NAEYC.

Massachusetts State College/University - For the college based preschool nearly half of the operation was subsidized by the state run campus.

The seven preschool programs received their funding primarily from parental tuition and from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The two Head Start programs received some additional monies from fee paying parents.

Non-Governmental Organizational Funding Sources for Early Education and Care Programs

United Way is a worldwide network in 45 countries and territories, including over 1,200 local organizations in the U.S. The mission of the United Way is to advance the

common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all, by focusing on education, income and health. The United Way supports community efforts that focus on school readiness and the ability of children to enter kindergarten ready to learn (United Way, 2009).

In order to be eligible for United Way funds an early childhood program must be serving some population in need, accepting vouchers, and licensed by the EEC. In order to receive funding from the United Way the program must describe the type of assessment tool the program is using for parental feedback, and student performance. NAEYC accreditation is not required for United Way funding but whether or not a program is accredited by NAEYC is most definitely noted by the United Way staff.

Two of the centers in this study received funding from United Way.

Additional Non-Governmental Organizational Funding Sources - Some of the programs also received funding through other grants and religious affiliations.

Acquiring & Maintaining NAEYC Accreditation

Given all these funding resources for many programs, it is necessary that many of these programs become accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Since three of the participants stated that the most difficult curriculum decision they had made in the last three years concerned NAEYC Accreditation the researcher included questions about NAEYC accreditation in the second interview.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Governing Board approved new Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation

Criteria in the spring of 2005. These new standards and criteria took effect in September of 2006, replacing the 1998 Accreditation Criteria (NAEYC, 2005). These new standards were reportedly much more complex and demanding than the previous standards. For more information concerning NAEYC Accreditation refer to Appendix A.

Of the nine women that volunteered to be interviewed eight of their programs were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Twenty-two of the 28 directors who completed the initial survey reported that their program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The reasons why they chose to be accredited and some of the obstacles they faced will be discussed. Several of the directors listed more than one reason for choosing to be accredited by NAEYC or several obstacles they faced concerning NAEYC accreditation. Some of the directors discussed obstacles they contended with because of the new (2006) accreditation process. One of the directors decided to not renew her program's NAEYC accreditation.

Reasons for Choosing to be Accredited by NAEYC

The directors listed several reasons why they chose to be accredited by NAEYC. These reasons included that NAEYC was mandated by the EEC in order to receive funding from UPK or the CPC, their supervisors demanded NAEYC accreditation or the director felt it was necessary in order to be viewed as a high quality program.

NAEYC Accreditation is Mandatory for Program UPK Requirement - Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) requires that a program be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 2009). Three of the

programs had chosen to be accredited by NAEYC partially because of the UPK requirement. This was the reason that both of the Head Start Programs were accredited by NAEYC because some of their preschool sites received funding from UPK. Another director stated that she wanted her program to remain accredited by NAEYC in case they chose to apply for federal grants such as UPK.

“Our ...center ...did not have a choice whether or not to receive NAEYC accreditation as UPK funding was attached which helped the program with quality improvements, such as, mental health staff who work on site, one on one teacher assistants, classroom supplies, and extra hours for a family advocate.”

[Teresa]

CPC Requirement - To receive funding from the Community Partnership for Children (CPC) a center based program must be accredited by NAEYC or it's equivalent or working towards it (Community Partnerships for Children, 2008).

Four of the programs were accredited by NAEYC because they were part of a Community Partnership for Children (CPC). These programs joined the CPC in order to get funding for the children that received assistance through CPC.

“The Community Partnership for Children provides access to a health team, such as occupational therapists who are available to observe students, a behaviorist, a nurse, and training for the directors and teacher.” [Nicole]

Executive Director Demands NAEYC Accreditation - One of the directors admitted that her program was accredited when she was hired. She was not interested in

getting reaccredited because it was too much time and money but, “My executive director wants NAEYC. I tried to talk him out of it... he said no, no, no we’re going to go for it and he gave me a pep talk.” [Wendy]

NAEYC Accreditation is Indicative of a High Quality Program - One director wanted her program to be considered a high quality program and she felt that the state licensing standards were not enough. She found that the NAEYC had national standards and criteria that were definitive of a high quality program. Her program was one of the first in the area to become accredited by NAEYC when it was first established and her program has remained accredited. When the criteria changed her program made the necessary changes. Having this accreditation let her staff know that they are part of a high quality program.

“We can say to the campus and to our community, we know we’re high quality and somebody else a national exterior evaluator can say that we’re high quality too.” [Jill]

It was also important for her program to stay connected to the national language and the national understanding and perspective. NAEYC accreditation was a way to keep all of her staff connected to “what’s happening to the field as a whole.” [Jill]

Evelyn explained that in the very beginning her program felt that NAEYC accreditation was a necessity. It was almost a coup. There were only three schools in the her urban area that had received NAEYC accreditation, so it made her program stand out. Now she feels that many, many schools are going for or receiving their accreditation and there's less exclusivity because of this. She told me that parents don’t ask her if her

program is accredited. She said that they have been looking at the necessity for accreditation.

Obstacles to Obtaining and Maintaining NAEYC Accreditation

The programs faced various obstacles when it came to acquiring NAEYC Accreditation and maintaining NAEYC Accreditation. These obstacles included costs, time, proving that criteria are met and engaging the teachers in the added tasks.

The Cost of NAEYC Re/Accreditation - There are basic fees for NAEYC accreditation and reaccreditation that are applicable to all programs. There is the (re) accreditation fee and the annual fee. The four step accreditation process [Enrollment in self study, Application/Self Assessment, Candidacy and Site Visit ranges from \$1275. for a Level 1 Program (serving 10-60 children) to \$2350, for a Level 4 Program (serving 241-360 children). There is an additional annual fee that that accredited programs must submit yearly. The price of the annual report begins at \$300. and increases by increments of \$50. up to level 4 (NAEYC, 2009).

The costs of NAEYC accreditation were a concern for five of the programs. The three programs with over 100 preschoolers were particularly concerned.

“It costs our program in five years \$22,000. for NAEYC Accreditation. That is just the cost in fees, never mind paying the people the overtime to get all the things done that they have to do, paying me to come away from my Head Start time and just focus on getting things organized so there’s a lot of money involved in all of this.” [Donna]

“It is an enormously expensive proposition it will cost this center at least \$5000. for this reaccreditation, that’s because of all the supplies that we need to do, the extra pay that I need to give to our teachers and a hired consultant. So the obstacles that we face clearly are financial, absolutely financial. ...NAEYC wants to see natural objects in the classroom and they want to see different curricular activities going on. That \$5000. that I’m spending to put together the books and portfolios I could SO better spend in other ways. ... there are a lot of mixed feelings about it.” [Evelyn]

The two programs with less than 100 preschoolers were also concerned about the expense of NAEYC accreditation. Both these directors reported that they used to be reimbursed through the state but they no longer are.

One director stated the Community Partnership helped offset some of the costs the first two times her program went through the reaccreditation process. The CPC helped with some of the fees and other expenses such as purchasing the folders and binders for the portfolios and digital ink for the printers.

“When you think about all the different classrooms documenting all these different criteria that they want to show and demonstrate it through pictures and things, it’s quite costly. ... This year we’ll spend \$350. on just the annual report and we used to get either reimbursed partially, one year it was 50%, one year it was all of it but now we get nothing.” [Nicole]

The Amount of Time Needed to Complete the Requirements for NAEYC

Re/Accreditation - Three of the directors noted that time was a major obstacle in the NAEYC accreditation process.

“It takes an incredible amount of time. For a site like his where we have eight classrooms it is absolutely overwhelming and I need two people to handle it, besides teachers doing what they need to do.” [Donna]

“It is more work for teachers. We have difficulty finding the time for teachers to work on the classroom portfolio of which ... our program... has 26 classrooms to complete in one school year inured to comply with NAEYC accreditation process.” [Teresa]

“It was one of the most challenging things we’ve ever done, the most time consuming. The obstacles are fitting into what they expect and finding the time to do it. When you think about when the teachers are in the classroom, when are they supposed to do these portfolios? That was a big challenge.” [Nicole]

Proving that NAEYC Accreditation Criteria is Met - One director said that her biggest task to cover was proving that everything for the whole center was in order, from the curriculum to the playground. She said that the program and individual classroom portfolios, took a whole year to bring together. She said they were already doing it all. It was just putting it all together and thus proving that they were doing everything was a huge amount of work.

Engaging Teachers in Added Tasks -Three of the directors said that enlisting their teachers was the biggest obstacle.

“Getting everybody on board was an obstacle. Because it’s not something they can opt out of. If we’re going to do NAEYC then every classroom has to do a

portfolio. I have five classrooms so each classroom will have their own portfolio. So it's just coming up with the time and the money." [Wendy]

"Well we're unionized. So if the teachers were going to be required to make a classroom portfolio they needed to know how, when they were going to do that and was that during school or after school and what were we going to pay them. So some programs just said "do it" to their teachers and their teachers just did it but we couldn't do that so it took us a year to negotiate how we were going to do this." [Irene]

"The amount of work that NAEYC asks the staff to do, the busy work, the paper work takes away the teachers from their passion, being with children." [Evelyn]

Obstacles Relative to New (2006) NAEYC Accreditation

Many of the directors discussed obstacles that were particular to the newest 2006 Accreditation process. The directors comparison of the older (1998) process will be discussed in relation to the newer (2006) accreditation process.

Old NAEYC Accreditation Criteria was More Efficient and User Friendly -Three of the directors spoke wistfully about the old accreditation process:

"NAEYC accreditation originally came about through Community Partnerships 15 to 18 years ago. NAEYC has changed it's process over the years. It was more of a self reflection type of assessment. The CPC was trying to bring together all early childhood programs from all different sects: public, private, federal, despite what their funding was from and try to bring some quality to each program. They

had some commonalities and I thought that was real good. It was about bringing to parents good choices and kind of having something to base it on because there had never been any of that before...With the old accreditation when the validator came it was through her eyes and your eyes and a particular rating system and you had to match and there was negotiation.” [Donna]

“We got accredited using the old accreditation tools, the old system, which mainly was that the director had to do a lot of work, there were parent surveys, there were staff surveys the director had to prepare a portfolio that was not very difficult to show that we met accreditation and then a volunteer (they were paid a stipend from NAEYC) came from NAEYC to observe and we got our accreditation and it was good for three years.” [Irene]

New NAEYC Accreditation Criteria is Less Efficient than Previous Version - The directors listed several areas in which they are unhappy with the new NAEYC criteria for accreditation. Irene concluded that “NAEYC decided to reinvent accreditation.”

These areas of discontent include: constant changes in the accreditation process, program and classroom portfolios, annual reports, staff qualifications, validator visits, training books, information is confusing and redundant, online component, stress and whether or not it is worth it. Several of the directors mentioned that the new accreditation process has changed drastically from its earlier version.

“The NAEYC process has changed incredibly. There’s more criteria, lots more.

Before it was a lot of reflection on teaching methods. It stayed the same in terms

of the focus on teacher/children relationships it's just the particulars of the process that have gotten harder. It's less friendly, the whole Academy itself." [Donna]

"It's constantly changing, certain things. One year its like oh yeah that's all set and the next year you say, oh ummm, how are we gonna do that?" [Nicole]

"They changed the things that you had to say that you did. So there were things that we were not doing that we really had to start to do, mostly about formal assessment. They added a lot more about assessment and families." [Irene]

Three of the directors were concerned with the program portfolios, for example:

"There is a program portfolio that the administration does, over a hundred criteria that you have to prove certain things. It's just organizing it and putting it in how they want it done. It's very tedious." [Donna]

"There's a 47 page program portfolio that you do on the computer for candidacy. But they have made it easier because you can do your portfolios online. There's a place called 'School Chapters' for \$50. you submit your criteria and they match it up. Like you can say we did this lesson plan with the children and maybe send them a picture and then they will put it in the right category."
[Wendy]

Two of the directors noted the classroom portfolios, for example,

"The teachers have to do a classroom portfolio and there's all these items that they have to put in the blocks that says how they meet things (*a long table/list of specific tasks with a block of space left for the teachers to respond in*)." [Irene]

Two of the directors mentioned the mandatory annual reports:

“Every year there are mandatory annual reports to do which is also another fee, and it’s also more questions and time and updates and things.” [Donna]

“The annual report is an ongoing challenge because they kind of tweak their criteria ever so slightly every year.” [Nicole]

Three of the directors were concerned about staff qualifications:

“It not only talks about your teacher, but your assistant teachers and if you fall below a fifty percent mark with certain things you can possibly lose what they call candidacy or be up for a review. We have two assistant teachers and this is the first year we have a one-on-one aid. She has her Bachelor's but it’s in English, it’s not in Early Childhood so technically she doesn’t fit so now because there’s three of them. It used to be that there was one that was all set and one that was working on it, so that was like 50% OK we’re fine, now that there’s three of them it’s not 50% anymore. And it’s just one of those things, you say, but she's a one-on-one aid with a child with special needs, she has her Bachelor's degree and we might not make the requirements. It just doesn’t really seem to make sense, some of the things. I understand the philosophy behind it about having the educational background in the actual field is ideal and they want us to move so that everybody has that but is it realistic when you’re paying someone nine dollars an hour to be an aide. [Nicole]

“NAEYC and soon EEC is going to require that everyone, all of your teachers have an Associates or a Bachelor’s degree but I can’t pay you. If you’ve gone to school for four years and you have a Bachelor’s degree in Education I

can't give you \$38,000. a year. I can't. So who's going to come to work for us, kind of thing. It's very much of a Catch 22." [Evelyn]

Two of the directors discussed the expectations for the validator, for instance,

"There's no negotiation when the validator comes in. There's no interviews, the validator comes in and it's some classroom observation but it's basically taking all those portfolios and things that you have and it's basically paper and she reviews it and it's all based on that." [Donna]

Two of the directors mentioned the ten training books that discuss portfolio content, one for each of the ten standards, that NAEYC provides (for a fee):

"It used to be one book, now there's ten books. It's always changing you get these particular ten books that tell what they want out of you but you still need to refer to this TORCH (*The Online Center Resource Headquarters which offers NAEYC accreditation support*) because they change it so that is particularly frustrating. You are paying 200 or more dollars for these books and they are coming to you not updated." (NAEYC, 2010) [Donna]

"These NAEYC booklets you assume would have further clarification but they really don't. These booklets are what they originally gave us are now sort of obsolete. Now you're just suppose to go online. The booklets don't really give much guidance anyway." [Irene]

Three of the directors noted that the information provided by NAEYC was very confusing, for example,

“They basically don’t know what they are doing. Whenever I call for clarification, when I do talk to a human they have no clue. They really cannot answer you so it’s very frustrating and it’s not just me.” [Donna]

“The biggest challenge is, ‘figuring it out.’ I mean I have teachers come to me and say, ‘what do you suppose this means?’ and I’ll read it and I’m like, ‘well I’m not sure.’ People who were not NAEYC would make up these things that said guideline/road map to tell you just what the heck you were supposed to be doing because it was really hard to even figure out where to start.” [Irene]

Three of the directors mentioned that the information provided by NAEYC was redundant.

“Many people think that they did not sufficiently edit it before they put it out. There are things that are repeated a lot.” [Irene]

“These booklets were always very annoying because they had broken them down for each standard and it repeated a lot of the information over and over again.” [Irene]

“The general understanding of NAEYC is sound and it is wonderful, the redundancy in the program, in the books that we are asked to do are simply that. It’s just redundant.” [Evelyn]

Three of the directors noted that NAEYC information was provided on the web, for example,

“They decided because we have this technology they could give us updates about this all the time so they keep changing it. So you have to constantly go online. So this (*NAEYC computer printouts she is holding*) is like currently updated.” [Irene]

“There’s all these center directors who have gone before me and figured it out and they’re very willing to share and so you can go on a number of websites right now and get all the typed up labels for all the classroom portfolios and administrative portfolios. People have shared all this stuff (on websites) sample policies and all these things. I’m not as anxious when I first read all this stuff.”
[Jill]

One director admitted that the accreditation process had been very stressful.

“This accreditation process it has put incredible stress on our parent cooperative, incredible stress on our staff, on me, it’s just really been less than helpful. It’s end result has not been a positive I think. I think it should be. I should be able to use it in a positive way.” [Irene]

Two of the directors questioned the benefits of maintaining their NAEYC accreditation:

“We’re finding that very high quality places are doing the work and certainly becoming accredited we’re finding that some of the folks that are not as high quality are also getting accredited so I am losing some of my respect for the process. I definitely feel like, where is the benefit to the center?” [Evelyn]

“I have a transition meeting where the EC community comes together and we talk about issues such as this and everybody is frustrated about the NAEYC and *want to* throw it out the window but it’s all the same thing and it’s linked to some of the funding. For them they really need it because their funding is quite dependent on it but ours you know, but we still have to coordinate and collaborate so...” [Donna]

No Longer Accredited by NAEYC

One of the directors explained that she had dropped the NAEYC Accreditation. When she bought the business five years it was already accredited so she just continued with the yearly report. Financial constraints and finding teachers with actual degrees in early childhood kept her from seeking reaccreditation.

“To reapply for the candidacy we didn’t have enough teachers with full degrees in early childhood. You have to have so many having Associates, so many having a Bachelors. I have one teacher with a Bachelors so we weren’t even making candidacy. And too much money. We still perform within EEC regulations and some of what NAEYC wanted. We just don’t have that certificate on the wall and that constant annual report and the money going out too. Over the five years that I had NAEYC accreditation we’ve only had about three children on it so for the cost of renewing and the cost of it we weren’t breaking even.” [Becky]

NAEYC Accreditation Training

Teachers were trained in how to use the NAEYC materials in various manners. Seven of the nine programs offered in-house training. In this case either the directors conducted the training or a trainer visited the program and trained the staff at the facility. Four of the programs had their teachers attend outside workshops to be trained about NAEYC accreditation requirements.

In-House NAEYC Accreditation Training by Staff - Seven of the programs offer staff training for NAEYC accreditation within their own faculty either through staff

meetings, through the educational coordinator or through observations by the administrators.

Four of the programs offer in-house training through staff meetings, for instance, “If we have a new staff member come in who wasn’t here for this process we’ll give them basically what the ten standards are from NAEYC. That gives them kind of an overview of what accreditation is all about and when they’re working in a particular classroom they will be able to see the portfolio to kind of show them what kinds of things the accreditation team looks for.” [Nicole]

“We do a lot of teacher sharing. Like what kind of transitions do you use? Let’s share. Let’s do a make it take it after. I try to keep it so that teachers when they come in for training get a little energized and removed because they are really burned.” [Donna]

Two of the programs offer training through the Educational Coordinator.

“We also are required through the state to provide two hours of training every month. So much of our training goes toward the NAEYC requirements. We have that training right here based on specific topics that NAEYC puts out it’s also based on the specific needs that the teachers have. Myself and my educational coordinator, we do most of the training ourselves.” [Evelyn]

One of the programs first has the administrators and directors observe the classroom and then model their expectations.

“The administrators, assistant director and director did observations in the classroom, met with each team individually and modeled their expectations.” [Jill]

In-House NAEYC Accreditation Training by Outside Trainer - NAEYC

Accreditation training is offered locally by various organizations. These organizations include NAEYC, the Community Partnership for Children, the Preschool Enrichment Team (PET.) and the county educational collaborative. The Preschool Enrichment Team (PET), is a non-profit resource, referral, and training agency, that offers childcare information to families, early childhood educators, and employers in a specific area in Massachusetts [including but not limited to infant and toddler care, preschool education, after school programs, subsidized care and children with special needs] (The Preschool Enrichment Team, 2009). In one area, a local county collaborative, a nonprofit, multi-service educational agency offers high-quality programs and services for at-risk children and families. The collaborative offers programs in early childhood, after school, special education, and adult education in a specific area in Massachusetts. The county collaborative is governed by school committee representatives from local member school districts (Hampshire Educational Collaborative, 2009). Six of the programs had an outside trainer visit the classroom.

Three of the directors had someone from NAEYC offer training to their staff. Another program offered staff training through a representative from a local partnership.

One of the programs offered staff training through a representative of a preschool enrichment team.

“I will bring in people from PET (Preschool Enrichment Team), our NAEYC mentors, and they will come in and help us do that too. The Preschool Enrichment Team is a wonderful resource for all the directors in the area.” [Evelyn]

One of the programs offered staff training through a representative from their county school system collaborative.

“Somebody came from the educational collaborative and did a training, a year ago this December, two Decembers ago, on “there’s a new system now” and gave an overview of the big picture and what were some of the significant changes and what was different.” [Jill]

Training Workshops for NAEYC Accreditation

Four the programs offered staff training through outside workshops. These workshops were sponsored by NAEYC or the county educational collaborative of the school system.

Three of the programs asked their staff to attend outside workshops offered by NAEYC, for instance,

“During the year teachers are required by the state to have professional development hours. When we were going through the accreditation, ...and there was also still a lot of funding, there were a lot of workshops offered that focused on ...accreditation... Now they still have some training for places that are just getting started ... different workshops that might address accreditation as a piece of it. Some are free, most are not. ...we have built into our budget some money set aside to help pay some of the costs of their workshops. And some are free or a very reduced rate through the state funding.” [Nicole]

One of the programs asked their staff to attend outside workshops offered by the local county educational collaborative.

“The educational collaborative at one point was offering classes for doing the portfolios, and for doing some of this stuff but they were far and few between.”

[Becky]

Standardized Assessment Tools

All of the interview participants were concerned about assessment and assessment tools at some point during Interview I. Indeed three of the volunteers stated that the most difficult curriculum decision they had made in the last three years had been choosing and or implementing a standardized assessment tool. The directors discussed the depth in which they were presently administering one of the four approved assessment tools. Six of the directors declared that their program had begun implementation, were about to begin implementation or were currently using one of the four Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) approved assessment tools. (THE EEC approved assessment tools are also referred to as the UPK approved assessment tools). One of the programs was seriously considering implementing one of the standardized assessment tools and two of the programs were hoping to implement one of these tools at some point. These standardized assessment tools were Creative Curriculum, High Scope, the Work Sampling System and Ages and Stages. [See Appendix A for links to the UPK approved assessment tools.]

One of the directors stated:

“NAEYC (*National Association for the Education of Young Children*) does not ask you to use a standardized assessment tool. It asks you to use varying methods of assessment including all different tools. It’s not prescriptive. But UPK (*Universal Prekindergarten*) funding through Massachusetts requires people to be

using one of four EEC Approved assessment tools. I think that NAEYC is wanting people to be using an assessment tool. I think it would be hard to say that you are meeting all the things under assessment if you weren't using formal and informal (*assessment tools*) and under formal (*assessment tool*) either a UPK approved one or something much like it. NAEYC does not request that you use a UPK approved assessment tool but it appears to be highly suggested.” [Irene]

Creative Curriculum

The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment is one of the four EEC approved assessment tools. It offers authentic, ongoing assessment instrument in both a written and an online version (Teaching Strategies, 2000-2010; Teaching Strategies, 2002-2010). Two of the programs were currently implementing Creative Curriculum's assessment tool. One of the programs was using the online version. The other program was using the hand written version. One of the programs was about to begin implementation.

Donna's program had been implementing the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment tool for about fifteen years. Within the past three years her program had begun using the online component of the Creative Curriculum. Donna's district wide Head Start program included some classrooms which received Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) funding thus a standardized assessment tool was mandatory for her program.

“We've been using it (*Creative Curriculum*) for maybe 15 years and that's what made us decide that we will keep with it and use that assessment tool because it

appeared the criteria for UPK ... We were familiar with it plus it is part of the NAEYC accreditation so it all fit in.” [Donna]

Challenges using the Creative Curriculum - Donna’s program encountered some challenges when they began using the online version of Creative Curriculum. Donna explained that the online component was a bit of a process since they had to train their teachers. Some of her teachers were good with the online component and some were not. The experienced teachers mentored the inexperienced teachers.

“It was a big struggle at first. The two parts to it I guess, it was good because we were using Creative Curriculum already as to how to use your areas of the classroom, so now it was the same kind of thinking and theory but the hardest part was the vehicle which was now the computer instead of paper and pencil. We had to transition so that was the biggest part. It wasn’t the assessment itself because we were using the same kind of observations, the same kind of recording but now it was into the computers. So I think that was the hurdle, was the computer itself.”

Strategies for using the Creative Curriculum - Donna’s program employed various strategies for implementing the online version of the Creative Curriculum. Her program broke items down into yearly training goals. Their goal for the year was to get the staff accustomed to the online component. This included completing the progress reports and submitting some observations and documentation into the computers. Some of her staff did just that. Some staff went far beyond that, which was to scan in digital photos for the

children's portfolio (their second year goal) and other staff members began using the resources Creative Curriculum (CC) had available through the CC online component (their third year goal). Her program had staff members who were at different levels, some just barely got through entering some observations, while others were at the third year goal level.

“The teachers really like the Creative Curriculum assessment tool. They think it's pretty accurate in and of itself. It was just a matter of the computer which had nothing to do with the tool.”

Evelyn's program also implemented the Creative Curriculum's assessment tool. Her program was using the hand written version of the assessment tool. Evelyn had not purchased the computer program. She couldn't afford it. When she applies for grants the grant money tends to go to centers that service a more low income population. Her program used the Creative Curriculum assessment tool, but they had not purchased the online version. She was using Creative Curriculum because she received funding from the Community Partnership for Children and because her program was accredited by NAEYC.

“NAEYC accreditation strongly encourages the online component (*for Creative Curriculum*). And that may or may not determine whether we can be reaccredited but I just don't have the money. Because my center is so large that's another \$5000. I mean I don't have it \$10,000. is (*a lot of money*).” [The online version of Creative Curriculum is sold as an annual license on a per child basis. The price is based on the number of children included in the subscription (Teaching Strategies, 2000-2010).] “I look at these things and if I buy that, I can't have my music

specialist. I'm sorry but my music specialist is more important to me. So that's really where it goes."

Prior to choosing Creative Curriculum Evelyn's program had been looking at all kinds of assessment tools, online, ... and they had made up their own assessment. Then Evelyn "fell in love" with the Creative Curriculum. She probably had it before people even knew that it was a requirement. She stated, "It IS a great tool." Her program bought the Creative Curriculum book and they just used the assessment tool in the back.

Additional Challenges using the Creative Curriculum - Evelyn discussed some of the challenges she foresaw in using the online component of Creative Curriculum. One challenge would be adding all the data into the online version. The other challenge would be getting all the teachers to switch over to the Creative Curriculum. Evelyn stated that what Creative Curriculum does is not a bad thing. They will take all of your data and they will make the assessment. They will tell you where that child is weak or where that child is strong ...

"but meanwhile that's what we're here for. It also means that someone either myself or my secretary or the teacher has to input it. It's gonna take us forever! So then again, my teachers already work eight hours a day. In my opinion they're trying to make early childhood into a business. But the government nor the agencies are helping us to supply the funds for that."

Evelyn's program also encountered resistance from her teachers.

"Well truthfully it was trying to get all the teachers to standardize and use that one (*the Creative Curriculum*). (*The teachers*) had been comfortable with the one they

were using. And this one is much more involved. Where the other one might have taken them a half hour to fill out per child this one is going to take you an hour per child to fill out. So I think that that was really the problem, but now it's in place and being used. (*Now*) the teachers feel much more comfortable using that one (*the Creative Curriculum*).

Wendy's program was not using a standardized assessment tool. They planned to begin implementing the online version of Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment within a few months. Her program was presently looking into purchasing the Creative Curriculum. This decision was made between Wendy and her executive director. Wendy's greatest challenge was the funding.

“Funding was the biggest decision and I talked to other directors at a meeting and I kind of got a feel for what other centers in our area are using. Most of them are using Creative Curriculum, which is going to help us, because if I have a problem or something I can call. ---Three years ago we were just using the standards.”

Working Sampling System (WSS)

The Working Sampling System is another one of the four EEC approved assessment tools. The WSS authentic assessment systems involves observations, anecdotes, examples of work sampling, a developmental checklist, a summary report and a conference. WSS is offered in both a hand written and an online format (Meisels, 1995; School Success & Pearson Early Learning, 2000-2008). Two of the programs were presently implementing the Work Sampling System. One of the program's was using the online version. The other program was using the hand written version.

Jill's program started implementing Work Sampling ten months prior to our second interview. Interest was perked because WSS is mandatory for the UPK grants and her program had recently been denied the UPK Classroom Grant because they weren't using one of the four selected tools, even though they met all the criteria. Jill also submitted for a UPK Planning Grant and didn't receive that either but her program decided to implement the WSS for their preschool classrooms anyways.

Originally Jill's program was using a homemade in-house developed checklist and report form and some of the staff had taken it to the next step and had started to collect work samples ...but it wasn't universally done within the center. Jill believed that wasn't good practice. She felt they should all be doing the same thing. She felt that her program was overdue to renovate and revise their assessment tools. When the UPK stuff came along Jill originally planned to just revise their assessment tool and make it better. Then they decided to look at the four assessment packages, Ages & Stages, Creative Curriculum, High Scope and Work Sampling. She was sold on the Work Sampling System because it was the best fit for the project approach. Once her staff learned the computer component (online piece) of WSS they got it. The only glitch was on a couple of different days people couldn't get into the online component because nationally so many people were getting into the system that day. Lately that hadn't been so much of an issue.

Challenges using the Work Sampling System - There were various challenges that Jill's program encountered when they began using the Work Sampling System. In the beginning, Jill's staff was confused about the tool. Yet she and her staff were able to

develop strategies to make the tool work within their classrooms, this raised their confidence levels. One of Jill's challenges was that her staff was spending too much time writing the summary reports, as though the summary itself was a case study for each child. The report was an assessment, an update, not a full therapeutic case study. She had to remind her staff that they also needed to focus on the parent/teacher conferences. Jill felt that she had to get her staff to be including less. She felt that there needed to be a self editing component to help teachers make the summary report more compact.

Another challenge was the necessity of time off the floor for her teachers.

“To do this kind of work so we give (*teaching*) teams 2 1/2 hours a week as team time together. And that's meant to do things that you need to do together like talk about curriculum and plans. The staff also has 2 1/2 hours individually off the floor to do individual things. It could be assessment writing and the summary report stuff.”

An additional challenge that Jill faced was “the crunch” at the end of the semester. Since her preschool program was housed on a college campus the children and staff left the campus at different times. The teachers who left early had to complete the assessment piece in a short amount of time while the ones who stayed longer had additional time. She felt that her program had to pace the assessment piece so that it corresponded with everyone's schedules. Jill admitted that they were still in the learning phase of using the WSS.

Irene's program had begun to implement, in different stages, in different classrooms the hand written version of Work Sampling System for the preschool classrooms. The WSS involves a checklist, a narrative, and some sort of documentation

(either photos or kids work) and it's all supposed to be together. What her teachers had been doing was just a narrative. Her program included three preschool classrooms. In one classroom the teachers had started with the portfolio part, and they had been collecting mostly pictures, not examples of kid's work. In the other two rooms the teachers started with the checklist. So none of the teachers were completing the entire WSS package. The teachers were completing different pieces of the WSS, in different ways.

Additional Challenges using the Work Sampling System - Irene's parent
cooperative program has faced various challenging using the Work Sampling System. The classroom that started out with doing the work sampling part found out that the parents did not think that just work sampling was enough, the parents still really wanted the narrative. The teachers had not written much of a narrative and parents felt that it wasn't a progress report. The classroom teachers that were doing the checklists, were really struggling with the fact that they hated checklists. These teachers didn't think checklists were good. They believed that narratives were better,

“and then the idea of doing the whole thing, the checklist, the narrative and the work sampling is just, ‘how are we supposed to have time to do that?’ So people haven't really bought into it and they're struggling along doing it because they have to.”

Three years ago Irene's program was not assessing, they were just writing progress reports. The progress reports were being written as narratives. They focused mostly on positives, they didn't necessarily look at the whole child. For good or for bad, one of the things that more than one parent has had happen for their child when they left there, was

that their child would have difficulties with writing. Irene admitted that that was the reason for an assessment tool, to make sure that children were learning what they needed to learn, such as pre-writing skills, before they headed off to kindergarten.

“Now that we have to send off our things to kindergarten, they decided to standardize that. Teachers were upset about that, some of the long term teachers. ...one just said to me the other day ‘you know the reason why I got into this field and what I’m being required to do now?’ (*This teacher was referring to the Kindergarten Checklist for WSS and the classroom portfolios for NAEYC*) ... We will use the checklist for Work Sampling for Kindergarten. And I just told a teacher it was due June 1st and I got shit for it.”

High Scope

The High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) Assessment tool is another one of the four EEC approved assessment tools. The High/Scope COR is an observation based authentic assessment tool (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2010). One of the programs was presently implementing the High/Scope Child Observation Record.

Teresa’s Head Start program had been implementing a standardized assessment tool for several years, before it was mandated. The center based programs used High/Scope COR Assessment three times per year. Her program implemented High Scope because a standardized assessment tool was mandatory for all monitoring sources including NAEYC.

“Introducing a formalized assessment tool has been a work in progress. With training and supervisory support the tools we use are implemented in a

professional manner. Teaching staff understand that in order to plan curriculum in an individualized manner one needs concrete developmental data which *(includes)* ongoing observation leading to assessment and individual gains”

Other Assessment Tools

Not all of the directors that were interviewed have instituted a standardized assessment tool into their preschool programs. Three of the programs are not implementing one of these tools for various reasons. Two of these programs have developed their own assessment tools.

Frannie’s program developed their own assessment tool. Her program was utilizing an assessment tool in the form of a progress report. Frannie’s program developed this progress report themselves along with the input from an old partnership that they used to have in a nearby city. The speech and hearing person from the old partnership, along with the behavioral person, helped Frannie devise a really nice progress report. Her program used this progress report for their assessment tool.

Frannie would like to use the Creative Curriculum because she’d heard that the Creative Curriculum was supposed to be the best. She also felt that it was very expensive to purchase. She stated that this was one of the drawbacks. They just didn’t have the funding right then.

Nicole’s Program currently had their own self created forms of assessment that coincide with the overall goals and objectives of the program and with the different content areas of the state standards. Nicole said that if one of the standardized assessment tools did become required she would choose the Work Sampling System. The previous

year she attended one of the workshops on the different assessment tools that were offered by the Preschool Enrichment Team and WSS was her favorite. Her program hadn't chosen a standardized assessment tool because they hadn't received any funding, not even training for the staff. They couldn't move forward until they found a way to fund it.

“WSS is extremely costly and it would involve not only actually getting the physical tool itself but developing an online system for record keeping that they would want us to do. It would cause a lot of questions like what would we have set up for the teachers to have access to the computers to do that within a preschool classroom. The teachers are not given specific prep times to do things like that. It would be difficult to manage the time. The paid prep time for the teachers is when the children have Phys Ed or music yet one of the two teachers has to stay with the music or the Phys Ed teacher. ...it's really hard to manage that time.... We have not purchased one (*a standardized assessment tool*) yet and it's going to be a big deal to get that all going.”

Becky's program had a progress report that they followed to assess the children individually on a personal basis. For the teachers to do an overview of the preschool classroom, how the classrooms function with the teachers, Becky used the ECERS (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale) for the preschoolers. Her program was trying to incorporate the Creative Curriculum into the ECERS. They were trying to change the ECERS a little bit, critique it a little bit, to coincide with the Creative Curriculum.

“We are thinking of moving toward the Creative Curriculum. The ECERS is great for a basic overview but to assess the children individually I don’t even think at this point the progress reports are touching the base that we need. We need something a little stronger like the Creative Curriculum.”

The progress reports were not tied in with the ECERS. They were on a personal basis for the individual children. The ECERS was more of an overview of the classroom and the teachers performance.

Standardized Assessment Tool Training

Six of the directors reported that they were implementing or were about to implement a standardized assessment tool. The remaining three directors were hoping to eventually implement a standardized assessment tool. What type of training was offered to acquaint the teachers and administrators with these specific tools? The following section will focus on the training sessions that were offered for the three assessment tools that were currently being used by several of the directors: the Creative Curriculum, the Work Sampling System and the High/Scope COR.

Creative Curriculum Training - Wendy’s program had not yet begun to use the Creative Curriculum. Their plan was to begin using the Creative Curriculum assessment tool within a few months. Wendy was apprehensive about the forthcoming training.

“Training is going to be a big issue because to use Creative Curriculum properly I believe it’s like a three day training. And I don’t know how we’re going to be able to do that. I can purchase it but I don’t want to purchase it and have it just sit here. So I don’t know how we’re going to lead into training. And I know that there’s an

online piece where you can do the assessment of a child using Creative Curriculum (CC) so I don't know how we're going to do all that."

Wendy told me that the folks from Creative Curriculum said that it was possible to use this assessment tool without the training but Wendy disagreed. She admitted that "you're not going to get what it's really supposed to do if you don't go to the training. You really need to go to that training. So I don't know what we're going to do."

Donna's program had been using the Creative Curriculum for over fifteen years. Her program began using the online version of Creative Curriculum less than three years ago. Donna acknowledged that her program offered a lot of computer training.

"With our assessment tool some teachers are better than others in observing and recording what they are looking for so that is reflected in our training. We'd do some overview on observing and recording and different ways that they can get organized and take time to do that. We have mentored some seasoned staff that have a really good handle on it. They were presenting and teaching the others through peer mentoring."

Donna stated that the teachers were also looking at how to observe and how to record those observations. The teachers wanted to know what to look for in an observation. The online assessment tool told the teachers where to go and what to look for in their observations, such as the pieces that were missing. The teachers knew that in order to feed the right information and get what they wanted they had to go back and look for certain things. For example, what the online version will say is:

“ ‘you’ve looked at this child in terms of literacy and numeracy but what about his fine motor? You haven’t done anything on that.’ So it will give the teachers places to go and look. Like a road map of what to look for. It is really, really good in terms of that and it will become more specific so that a general observation such as, ‘Oh he just decided to choose the R’. (*The online version urges the teachers to*) get a little bit more involved in that observation and find out ‘OK what hand is he using when he’s doing R?’ That kind of stuff.”

Donna thought that the online assessment of Creative Curriculum was an excellent tool.

“I think they’re onto something really good. I’m very prejudice about it. But really I like it. And there are some holes but we have a relationship with one of the tech people at cc.net who’s very interested in what we are saying and is trying to develop a lot with it so. We have a good working relation so it’s very personal for us.”

Evelyn’s program offered an in-service training for her staff on the hand written version of Creative Curriculum.

“We had staff training for using the Creative Curriculum. Clearly we had to go over all of it and make sure that the teachers understood the questions we were really asking.”

Work Sampling Training - Jill’s staff were being trained in work sampling by Judy Helm, who is not only the founder of the Project Approach but is also a certified Work Sampling trainer (Best Practices Inc, 2010). For clients that she works with on Project Approach curriculum she can do Work Sampling training as well. Judy Helm has

a “Year One - 4 Days” series that she has put together. The first two consecutive days of the training include an introduction to authentic assessment, and specific work sampling assessment tools, including the developmental checklists and portfolios. Later on during the school year, another day of training occurs that focuses on trouble shooting and creating another specific work sampling assessment tool, the summary report. A final training session is offered at the end of the year or before the second year. This one day session leads the staff through the effectiveness of the WSS and helps them make the necessary changes for the WSS to work best for them. Day four also includes the development of a plan for year two (2010, Best Practices Inc.)

High Scope Child Observation Record Training - Teresa stated that High Scope training was offered at her facility, at local and regional training sessions and through the High/Scope Foundation. The High/Scope Foundation provided formal training. She said that formal and informal supervision of High/Scope were used on an ongoing basis. This formal and informal supervision was offered to support professional development for all teachers around curriculum development and assessment.

Other Assessment Tools - The three remaining directors were currently not using a standardized assessment tool. Only one of the three directors answered this question about the training they offered for their non-standardized assessment tools.

Becky admitted that staff training for the progress reports would

“usually be done in a staff meeting and the director would be doing the training on it (*the progress report*).”

Developing Innovative Curriculum

Three of the volunteers were proud of their curriculum decisions, particularly the three directors who had been developing new curriculum in their classroom. These specific types of curriculum were the Project Approach, the Outside Classroom and the Ooey Gooley Curriculum.

“Seeing the impact that’s happening in the classrooms with the children and the teachers of this project approach is so exciting.... They’ve got the vocabulary, they know what it is. .. the teachers are reporting that they don’t feel like they have to push the project system or the project process the kids are starting to get that....” [Jill]

“Right now one of the teachers in the preschool program and I are working on doing an outdoor classroom. It’s about teaching children more about nature, having classrooms held outside... It’s been found to have children who are less sick because they are out in the elements more and children who are more aware and balanced with their surroundings, less injuries. So we’ve done some research so that’s our goal right now. It’s where I’m really interested right now is getting them out....[Becky]

“To introduce the ooey gooley notion of letting the children really be involved in their learning. Becoming more child directed and less teacher directed. The hard part of this change (*of moving toward the Ooey Gooley Curriculum*) was explaining it to the parents and reassuring them that the children's educational needs will be met.” [Evelyn]

Other points of pride included the overall effectiveness of the program, as shared by one of the Head Start teachers. The teachers willingness to facilitate a comprehensive or emergent curriculum; the ability to uphold a caring curriculum or to sustain a negotiated curriculum without going to a canned curriculum; and the seemingly flawless integration of Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences were additional points of gratification.

“I see the teachers doing all of that stuff (mental and oral health, nutrition, comprehensive). And they do it in such developmentally appropriate ways, using puppets, using creative movement, everything.” [Donna]

“I am most proud of the staff who are taking up the challenge of emergent curriculum. It was comforting for our older teachers to open up their February folder and teach what they have taught for years. We now look for the interests of the children and move our curriculum in that direction.” [Evelyn]

“I think right now what I’m personally proud of is that we haven’t gone to a canned curriculum. We haven’t gone to, everybody’s doing apples the second week of September.” [Nicole]

“I think that the curriculum is jointly negotiated between the children and the teachers.” [Irene]

The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Many of the directors noted that standards and regulations concerning early childhood education were in a constant state of flux at both the state and federal level. For example, at the time of this study a brand new “system” was being introduced in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) was “up for review” on the Massachusetts’ Department of Early Education and Care

website. The QRIS, a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education and after school settings, had been established in twenty-one states and in Washington D.C., and 27 states were in some phase of development. The QRIS was originally developed in Massachusetts in 2007 to improve coordination and accountability for early education programs and services participating in the Universal Prekindergarten Program. As the process evolved, the QRIS expanded to provide a framework for the governance, monitoring and assessment of the entire early education system (Strategies for Children, Early Education for All. 2009, p.1).

The Quality Rating and Improvement System consisted of five program quality levels from [Level 1] being a program that was just licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to [Level 5] being a program that was accredited by NAEYC and had a teacher in every classroom with the minimum of a Bachelor's degree. If a program was licensed by EEC and wanted to achieve a higher level, additional points could be gained by meeting specific criteria within nine quality areas (MA Department of Early Education and Care Massachusetts, 2009). [For additional information about the QRIS see Appendix A.]

The QRIS was mentioned during the first interview. The researcher therefore included questions about the QRIS in the second interview. Of nine of the volunteers who were interviewed six of them were familiar with the QRIS. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) was causing concern for the directors particularly in the

Bachelor's Degree requirement for teachers in order to reach level 5, and also the QRIS being "one more set of guidelines to have to adhere to."

The directors compared the QRIS to the Head Start Frameworks, NAEYC accreditation, UPK requirements and EEC licensing. The two Head Start Teachers were concerned that the QRIS was going to be yet another mandate that Head Start would have to adhere to:

"Another hoop to jump through. I don't know what I think about it yet. I'm scared. How many more now are we going to do? I understand accountability, I really do but come on, enough is enough. If the state's going to choose that and that's what it's going to be then eliminate a lot of other things and let's just do this and be accountable for that. [Donna]

"It is yet another observation and rating tool. I'm not sure of what I think of the tool, but I do know if it is implemented it is another mandate that Head Start has to adhere to." [Teresa]

Two of the directors hoped that the QRIS would replace accreditation or other external mandates.

"I'm hoping that it replaces something such as accreditation because it's a lot like it. It has big pieces of Head Start standards in it but so does accreditation and so does the Frameworks so I just don't know where it's all going but it could be a really good tool." [Donna]

"I don't think it will be such a bad thing. I'm hoping what they intend to do is take EEC, NAEYC and everything and pull them all into one source ...so as

a director you don't feel like you're going in 50 directions. I would love it if they made it, 'OK so all the centers are going to do this assessment tool, this is what you do. And this is the progress report you do'." [Wendy]

Two of the directors thought that the intent of the QRIS was good but it still needed some work. These directors felt that the QRIS requirements were unclear and repetitive. They felt that the QRIS could be a good tool once it was more cohesive and understandable.

"It's my opinion that they're doing a good job of taking the things out of accreditation and making them doable and manageable. So instead of having like these huge long things that you're like "what on Earth does this mean and how would I show this?" They are saying that this is what you need to do and this is how you would show it. So I actually think that if they flush it out that it could work to help people getting towards accreditation." [Irene]

"It needs some development because it's not really clear to me, ... it just didn't seem all the way gelled to me and some of it seemed kind of repetitive. My understanding is it's coming from a Federal initiative. If you want more Federal money you have to show us that you have rating scales. ... What's the motivating (*factor*), why do it? Other states have done it and they use it for scales they say so parents will know are you a star 1,2,3,4,5. ... But I think it might have something to do with the state reimbursement rates ... if we know you're a higher quality we'll pay a higher rate for that higher quality. I could hope." [Jill]

The requirement for a Bachelor's degree, for 1 teacher in every classroom in order to reach Level 5 was a heated topic among five of the directors. Wendy reported that she thought the Bachelor's degree requirement was great. When she hires teachers she stipulates that

“they have to go back to school to get their Bachelor's within a certain time.”

On the other hand, four of the directors explained that the Bachelor's degree requirement was not very attainable. Several of the directors explained that the teachers with the Bachelor's degrees would choose to teach in an early childhood facility that paid better wages. They also noted that their programs could not afford to pay their teachers higher salaries. Nicole wondered if some programs could be grandfathered in?

Frannie reported that she had to replace one of her highly qualified teachers (who did not even have her Associates degree) with a new teacher who had her Bachelor's degree. Becky wondered about why people with a Bachelor's degree or higher would choose to be teaching preschool and making \$10.00 or \$11.00 an hour. She explained that:

“Some of my teachers said, ‘if I'm gonna have a Bachelor's or Master's Degree I'm gonna work for the (*public*) school system.’”

Becky explained that she was seeing this more and more. She reported that the economy had effected her program and it was a constant stress. She admitted that she still had to pay her bills, she still had to pay her teachers and she was losing kids. She felt that

“It's taking the stress of everyday of running this type of business and then asking us for all these degrees to a new level and we're basically being pushed out the

door because when you say to me, ‘you have to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher, from what I make out here? No.’ ... We can’t pay them more.”

Evelyn explained that her program would never get to level 5, ‘Every classroom has a teacher with a Bachelor’s degree.’ She reported that she employed wonderful teachers with Associates degrees who had been teaching with her for 15 years. She told me that one teacher was 44 years old and she was NOT going back to college, thus her program would never reach level 5. She told me that if she insisted that this teacher did go back to school, and thus paid the annual \$12,000. tuition fee, Evelyn could not possibly pay her the same wages she received before she went back to school. She explained that

“The folks who don’t work in the trenches are making all these wonderful decisions without thinking about the repercussion of what’s going to happen next. And this is really my question. Let’s say right now I’m a level 4 school. What if I stay a level 4 school for ever and ever and ever? Am I going to be penalized? There are plenty of schools out here right now that are level 2 and level 3 schools but they’re receiving more grant money in funding than I am because of the population that they serve.”

Since the focus of this reserch project was on curriculum and assessment the researcher asked the directors if they had any particular reaction to the criteria listed for the Curriculum and Assessment Quality Area of the QRIS. Three of the directors explained that Curriculum and Assessment Quality Area was similar to the criteria for NAEYC

accreditation. Evelyn was concerned about how she was going to document the use of curriculum or a curriculum framework.

“Do you want me to take a picture of it (the standard or framework)? ‘Well here’s the child doing a particular standard or framework.’ One of the questions is, do you have something about a fresh air system? And one of my friends, who is another director, opened up her window and took a picture of it. Yes I do. These are called windows.” [Evelyn]

Nicole was concerned about standardized assessment tool requirement

“It’s the question of having a standardized assessment tool in place in your program and how we’re all gonna afford to do that.”

Becky felt like the state Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) was taking over NAEYC’s role and requirements

“I really feel is EEC is going to take NAEYC over. I think NAEYC will become a thing of the past.”

Curriculum Decisions/Current Struggles Summary

Within the last several years the volunteers have had to contend with some powerful issues surrounding their curriculum. Though the majority of these concerns were seen as a challenge there were also some triumphs. The challenges were centered on issues of sources of funding, acquiring and maintaining NAEYC accreditation, acquiring and maintaining a standardized assessment tool, and the Bachelor’s degree requirement to reach the optimum level for the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The

triumphs included developing innovative curriculum and maintaining an autonomous child-centered program while meeting demands of external curriculum mandates.

In order to receive funding from federal, state or non-governmental organizations, a program must adhere to the requirements associated with that funding source. For instance Head Start programs must comply with the Head Start requirements to receive federal funding. Among other requirements, Head Start funding includes a requirement for a standard non-specified assessment tool and a standard, but non-specified, curriculum. To meet the non-specified curriculum requirement and the assessment requirement one of the Head Start programs used Creative Curriculum and the other Head Start program used the High/Scope Curriculum.

The Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten was also a major source of funding. To receive Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) funding a program must be accredited by NAEYC or its equivalent. It must also be incorporating one of four approved assessment tools: Creative Curriculum, High Scope, Work Sampling or Ages and Stages (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 2009). The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (MA EEC) also offers funding through Community Partnership for Children (CPC), New England Farm Workers Council and through specific city departments. To receive CPC funding a program must be accredited by NAEYC or working towards it.

Both Head Start programs received additional funding from Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants. To comply with the UPK requirements both of the Head Start programs were accredited by NAEYC and both used an approved assessment tool. Six of the remaining seven programs were also accredited by NAEYC. Eight of the

programs, including the two Head Start programs, received funding from the MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The two Head Start programs received additional funding from EEC state subsidies. A non-governmental organization, the United Way, also offers funding to eligible families. To receive funding from the United Way this agency prefers that a program be accredited by NAEYC. Two of the centers in this study received funding from the United Way.

As noted above, in order to receive funding from various sources a program must be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Indeed, of the nine women that volunteered to be interviewed eight of their programs were accredited by the NAEYC. Twenty-two of the 28 directors who completed the initial survey reported that their program was accredited by the NAEYC. Of the nine volunteers whose programs were accredited by NAEYC, three of these programs were accredited because of the UPK requirement. Four of the programs were accredited to receive funding or services from the Community Partnership for Children (CPC). One of the directors stated that her program was accredited by NAEYC because her executive director demanded it. Finally, one of the directors felt it was necessary to be accredited by NAEYC to be viewed as a high quality program.

Yet the programs faced various obstacles when it came to acquiring and maintaining NAEYC accreditation, particularly the newest (2006) rendition. The costs of NAEYC accreditation were a concern for five of the programs. Three of the directors noted that time was a major obstacle. Three of the directors said that engaging their teachers in additional tasks was the biggest impediment. Additionally, one director said that her biggest task was proving that NAEYC accreditation criteria was met.

Another curriculum concern was based around choosing and or implementing a standardized assessment tool. Six of the directors declared that their programs were in various stages of implementation. One of the programs was seriously considering implementation and two of the programs were hoping to eventually implement one of these tools. These standardized assessment tools are Creative Curriculum, High Scope, the Work Sampling System and Ages and Stages. Purchasing a standardized assessment tools is very costly, labor intensive and time consuming. Three of the programs were currently implementing the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment (CCDC) or planning to begin implementation soon. Two of the programs were employing the Work Sampling System and one program was using the High/Scope COR Assessment. Concerns that were particular to the implementation of a standardized assessment tool were centered around: the expense, staff confusion, the amount of time required, teachers not liking the tool and finally parents preference for the program's previous assessment methods.

The final curriculum concern/struggle was focused on the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The directors had varying levels of response to the QRIS. For many of them it was just one more thing to worry about. The directors compared the QRIS to other mandates: Head Start Frameworks, NAEYC accreditation, UPK requirements and EEC licensing. The two Head Start Teachers were concerned that it was going to be yet another mandate that Head Start would have to adhere to. Two of the directors hoped that the QRIS would replace accreditation or other external mandates. Two of the directors thought that the intent was good but the QRIS still needed some work. They felt that the QRIS could be a good tool once it was more cohesive and

understandable. The Bachelor's degree requirement necessary to reach level five was a concern for four of the directors, though one of the directors thought it was an excellent idea. Four of the directors thought that the Bachelor's degree requirement was not very attainable.

Yet not all of the curriculum decisions were a challenge, some were triumphs. Three of the volunteers were proud of their curriculum decisions, particularly the three directors who had been developing new curriculum in their classroom. The one director who was employing the Project Approach was very excited about how this approach was impacting her teachers and students. A director who was planning an outdoor classroom was really interested in how the outdoor classroom would positively effect her children's physical and mental well being. Finally the director who was implementing the Ooey Goey Curriculum was very animated about empowering the children by allowing them the opportunity be more involved in their learning.

Changes in Climate at the Preschool Centers since the Director took Office

To ascertain whether or not preschool programs had undergone major changes during the director's tenure particularly in relation to external mandates the volunteers were asked to discuss the changes in climate at their preschool centers since they became the director. Their replies fell within four specific categories: accountability, financial strains on the early childhood education community, the increased amount of expected administrative time for directors and programs, and changes in classroom morale in early childhood centers. Each of these categories will be explored here.

Accountability

Accountability was a concern for all the directors. Several of the participants noted that the demands of accountability had increased significantly in the last few years.

Donna, who had been a manager for almost 20 years, stated that

“there is a lot more accountability which is a good thing in some ways.... a lot more standards and criteria but I don’t see the money either. I haven’t seen that improve one bit.... Accountability is one thing, education is great but then where are the rewards to all that. It’s just not equal and I really have some big issues with that.”

Teresa, who had been in an administrative position for 17 years, stated that

“the staff are expected to be more accountable within the areas of curriculum and individualization....which is excellent and the way it should be. More information on brain development and its impact on learning have been equally important.... There is more mandated accountability for Head Start programs.”

Participants specified that accountability had made early childhood education become more professional, that there were more expectations and demands in all areas of ECE and that there was more emphasis on academics in ECE. Two of the directors stated:

“I think that with everybody going back to school it’s become more professional. When I first became a director 23 years ago, you just basically had moms that had young children who thought it would be nice to work in a classroom. It’s different now, it’s a different focus now, you still have mothers, but you have more people in college, educated.” [Wendy]

“As a center I would hope that the sense is we have gotten more professional, the expectations are more professional, everything from basic day to day communication with one another and with families and with children to the caliber of our work and the intention that we are putting into the planning of curriculum and materials.” [Jill]

Participants stated that there was more emphasis on academics in early childhood education. Irene explained that when she first came to her parent cooperative nine years ago the center was similar to the way childcare was in the 1970s. She referred to a chart in “Ready to Learn” by Valora Washington and Stacie Goffin.

Table 4. 5: Descriptors of the Early Care and Education Field in the Years of 1980 and 2000

	Prior Context (1980s and Forward)	Emerging Context (2000 and Forward)
Teacher Role	Teachers as nurturers of “whole child,” including physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. ... caregivers as primarily responsible for ensuring child safety.	Shift to education role with decreased interest in teachers as nurturers. Teachers as instructors responsible for preparing children for success in school....
Curriculum	Emergent curriculum based on children’s interests. Reliance on play and child-selected activities as medium for implementing the curriculum.	Increasingly informed by state content and early-learning standards. Increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. Growing presence of commercially packaged curricula. Many states identify acceptable curricula/curriculum models.

(Goffin & Washington, 2007, p.63)

Irene, as she referred to the chart, spoke about childcare in the 1970s and how social emotional growth was what was so important, and that children learn through play. She stated that the early childhood community including the NAEYC still believed this. Then she spoke about childcare curriculum now in the 2000s: increased expectations for outcomes, increased focus on math/science. She told me

“We believed in emergent curriculum, we believed that children learn through play. We believed that social emotional growth is the most important thing. We had started to do some rudimentary documentation based more on the influences of Reggio Emilia than the influences of assessment or NAEYC.”

Irene explained that how it has changed is that now there, “is much more requirement for writing, and teachers being out of the classroom to do that writing.”

She stated that one of her teachers told her that when he read about the Work Sampling or the Early Learning Standards that there seemed to be an equal focus on everything, that math and science had become as important as social emotional development. She told me she didn’t think that anybody in the field really believed that math and science were as important as social emotional development but that was the message that’s coming out.

“This feeling that there’s a push down curriculum. I don’t think children should be writing in Kindergarten or Reading Recovery in kindergarten, but they are.

There is ... much more emphasis on academics.”

Participants reported that there were more expectations and demands in all areas of early childhood education. For instance one director with over eight years of experience stated that there have been

“more expectations, and more demands from every aspect whether it be from the bureaucracies like the state licensing agencies or the national agencies but everywhere, parents, children, what teachers need and want just more demands and higher expectations are placed in every single area.” [Nicole]

Financial Strains on the Early Childhood Education Community

The directors discussed the financial strains that their programs were encountering. These financial strains included the effects of the present state of the economy, the fact that there had been no increase in teachers or directors pay, and that the directors had been experiencing difficulty hiring and retaining teachers with college degrees yet agencies required them.

Financial strains on the early childhood education community was noted as a significant change by five of the directors. Three of the directors stated that the financial strains were tied to the effects of the present state of the economy, for example:

“I think that the economy itself has become an obstacle in that parents are opting out, they’re not sending their children as much.” [Evelyn]

“With the economy being the way it is we are really going out there and expanding on working together as a team, pulling in new enrollment, doing things in the community, really making ourselves known.” [Becky]

Donna stated that there had been no increase in pay for teachers or directors. She explained that the staff still had wages that were “really, really bad.” She explained that her program had some teachers who had four year degrees and their pay was not equal with that of public school teachers. Preschool teachers at the public schools made twice as much money as Head Start preschool teachers. Donna didn’t think it was fair. She stated that salaries should increase incrementally based on every new level that a staff member obtains. She explained that it was not just she who felt this way; she had heard the same thing at the various meetings that she attended across the state. She stated that,

“Even within Head Start too, we can’t keep good staff.”

Donna said that she was having problems hiring and retaining teachers with college degrees. She explained that it was unequal in terms of hiring and maintaining staff with degrees. She explained that some of the programs were not recruiting people with degrees. She explained that these teachers were going other places where the pay was better.

The Increased Amount of Expected Time for Directors and Programs

The increased amount of expected time for directors and programs was noted as a significant change for four of the directors. Two of the directors stated that there was much more of a time commitment for the directors. Frannie explained that when she first became the director, over eleven years ago, there was very little paperwork, that the bulk of her paperwork was tuition. She said that the bulk of the paperwork now was just constantly proving that she had a good program.

“I used to be in the classroom 80-90% of the time and I could get away with working an eight hour day. Now I am working an eleven hour day and it’s not done and I’m not in the classroom as much as I used to be. So yeah everything looks great on paper but who’s getting gypped? ...the kids..., just like anyone’s home, the kids aren’t getting what they used to need... There’s just not enough time... because of all the paperwork. They just keep giving us more and more.”

Wendy commented on the extended preschool hours. She explained that her program used to be only half time. Now her program was full day, full year from 6:30 am to 5:30 pm. She explained they were closed on 14 holidays.

“When I first became a director, 23 years ago, we worked September to June, we followed the school day calendar, snow days off, all the holidays off. That’s

where it's changed, just the need. When I first started it was just 9-12 where you wanted some socialization for your child, now it's "I have to work. They (*the children*) have to be here from 8-5, 7-5."

Changes in Classroom Morale in Early Childhood Centers

Classroom morale had changed for many of the programs. For some of the programs this had been an improvement in other programs not so much. Improved classroom morale in early childhood centers was a notable change for four of the directors.

Evelyn, a newly hired in-house director, stated that teacher and parent morale had improved. After 17 year position as the associate director, Evelyn had recently become the director. When she began her new job the morale in the center, with the teacher and the families, was not good. People felt like they were not being listened to as well as they could be. Once Evelyn took over she had to rebuild the climate's reputation. She did this by instituting an open door policy. She asked the parents and staff to seek her out with questions or a suggestions. Evelyn explained, "I can't make everything work but at least I can listen and if I can, I will." Because of this new policy the school's curriculum changed. She attended an innovative curriculum conference and told her teachers and parents, "THIS is how children need to learn. This makes the most sense to me." The teachers and the parents have embraced this new curriculum. There was a huge change in the climate. There was now a sense of playfulness, a sense of joy, a sense of family. The parents now understood that this director would listen to their concerns. They wouldn't have to wait until they were angry to seek her out. They knew they could go to her anytime they wanted.

Jill said that the classroom climate was better. She explained that the climate to her was about what the temperature was among the staff. This temperature was secured through annual trainings about communication skills. After the trainings the staff were expected to practice the skills they had learned. In the last couple of years her center has had it as a center wide goal to maintain a positive workplace environment and positive communication. Jill noted that if her staff were not getting along the children were not getting along either.

“as an administrator I see my role as creating a place for staff to learn and grow so the children can learn and grow and to have that environment as seen as it’s safe to try something new initially with the curriculum. It’s OK to try things. You’ve got support, you’ve got resources, and you’ve got encouragement and guidance and sometimes nudging when needed.”

Two of the directors stated that they were more relaxed than they were several years ago. For instance,

“I’m a little more laid back as far as my staff and the children. I have expectations of the teachers and they know that. I’m in and out of their rooms all the time. I’m very aware of what’s going on. I think it’s less of a stressful climate than when I purchased it three years ago. The other director was really, really iron fist and I think that’s good and bad. You have to let these teachers run these rooms the way they need to within reason, and the teachers know that I have expectations and when they’re clearly not that, there’s going to be a problem.” [Becky]

On the other hand several of the participants noted that the current climate was discouraging. The teachers and directors were feeling burdened. At least three of the

directors, during some point in the interviews, made comments that expressed discouragement about loss of staff or motivation. One director expressed it this way:

“We can’t keep good staff. I don’t blame them and sometimes I wonder about myself. Why am I still here, maybe when that golden job comes by I may jump. I have kids that go to college. I have mouths to feed. At some point, it’s really difficult. You kind of juggle and I juggle and they juggle with how long can I do this. And I love my job, I LOVE it but at some point you have to make some decisions because the money’s not there and I find that’s not equal.” [Donna]

“I think that for me the struggle of all this stuff is very hard, you know like when I have teachers giving me a hard time about this stuff its really hard for me. We’re gonna lose good me’s. It’s just too much.” [Irene]

“The government itself is putting the cart before the horse. And I see myself as the horse so if I can’t be involved in this process I’m gonna sit down and I’m gonna say I can’t move anymore. A lot my director friends, who are all my age, 54 and older, we’re all saying “we can’t do this anymore.” They’re taking the joy out of the job. And the joy is the children and the joy is what they’re learning, the hands on experiences they’re having and writing something for NAEYC is not ... I digress.” [Evelyn]

Becky was going back to school for Special Education so that she could change careers.

Changes in Climate at the Preschool Centers Summary

Several of the directors were disgruntled with the current demands of accountability. In order to prove that they were accountable these early childhood programs must adhere to the demands and expectations set forth by state licensing

agencies, national agencies, teachers, children, and parents. Curriculum exceptions once reserved for kindergarten or older have shifted down to the preschool classroom. Instead of focusing primarily on social and emotional development, programs must give equal attention to cognitive development particularly in the areas of math, literacy and science. On the other hand several of the directors saw the positive side of accountability. These directors believed that because of accountability the field of early childhood education had become more professional. College degrees were now required of the teachers. Curriculum planning and communication between the teachers, the children, and their families had become more professional. Yet there was a downside to this increased professionalism. Becoming more proficient meant much more paperwork outside of the classroom. Unfortunately this increase in paperwork did not coincide with an increase in pay.

Financial strains had placed huge burdens on these preschool programs. The current economy and its effects on parental salaries had lead the parents to choose free public preschools over tuition based private preschools. The teachers and directors had not received increases in pay. Public school preschool teachers were often making twice as much money as private school preschool teachers (including Head Start). Head Start and the private preschools did not have the funds to increase their teachers salaries. The teachers, particularly those with four year degrees, were seeking teaching positions where the pay was better, often in public schools.

An increased amount of expected time for directors and programs was noted as a significant climate change for nearly half of the directors. The amount of time required to complete paperwork for accountability had escalated significantly. The directors now

spent much more time in their offices completing paperwork than in the classrooms with the children. The preschool hours had also increased significantly. Programs that once met for four hours a day and were closed for the summer were now open 10-11 hours per day, year round.

The classroom morale had changed in many of the preschool programs. Half of the directors felt that the classroom morale had improved. Teachers and parents were happier because of the more open and positive communication between the teachers themselves and the teachers and the families. The school environment was more inviting and the directors and teachers felt more relaxed. On the other hand, some of the directors felt overburdened by the current climate of increased demands on their programs. They were weary of hearing their staff complain about increased paperwork, decreased amount of time with the children and no increase in pay. Some of the staff were leaving for better paying jobs. The directors were discouraged because the amount of work that they themselves had done for NAEYC accreditation and other external mandates was not equal to the amount of pay they received. Three of the directors were considering leaving the profession entirely. Another director had returned to school to pursue a degree in special education.

Ideal Principles and Practices and the Factors and/or Mandates that Interfere with or Modify these Preserved Ideals

The interviews concluded with a question about the director's ideal principles and practices and the specific factors and/or mandates that interfere or modify those preserved ideals. Of the nine volunteers who were interviewed six of the volunteers stated that the

mandates did interfere with their ideal principles and practices. Three of the volunteers stated that the mandates did not interfere with their ideal principles and practices.

Ideal Principles and Practices

The nine directors were asked about their ideal principles and practices. Eight of the directors spoke in terms of enriching the lives of the children by providing an environment that is safe, loving, hands-on, centered on the interests of the children and their families and where learning is fun and meaningful. One director spoke of the mandates.

Evelyn and Jill both focused on the interests of the children and their families as they discussed what they thought was important in an early childhood classroom.

Evelyn's ideals and principles included two factors:

“I want the children to learn things that are important in their life and I need to know that it's a team of three. Those are my passions.”

Evelyn stated that children learn best when they're learning something that they are interested in and that is relevant to their life. She asked the teachers

“to look at the interests of the children ...the thematic curriculum has to come from the children. We know what skills they need to have and that was definitely an ideal.”

The team of three were the school staff, the parent (guardian or grandparent), and the child. Evelyn stated,

“take care of the family because there has to be a great bond between the adult who is dropping off that child, either a parent, a guardian, a grandparent, and us...

we all work together because if one is not working well the stools going to fall over and that's what really is my driving force.”

Jill stated that her center was a place where childhood was happening and that it was really important that all members of the classroom were aware of this.

“This is a place where children are growing up. Just having that be ever present, learning, growing, being, as a child, this is childhood. Working with the staff to really understand and see, ... parents are the first teacher, we're the second teacher, the environment is the third teacher. Remembering the part that this is childhood, what's the rush? (*Jill says slowly and softly*) What's the hurry? ...let's play outside.”

Jill discussed the importance of their project work

“because that's where the children are learning. Sitting next to you at the snack table they're learning, changing a diaper, they're learning, this is what kids do. So how do I help shape all the components of the program to be that place to be growing up?”

Nicole and Donna concurred that it was all about the children. Nicole told me that preschool was

“all about, what the children get out of it. What initially I found appealing about early childhood education and the preschool sector is that there weren't so many restrictions and requirements that were placed on these teachers. That you could have experiences set up that are going to help the children learn and grow in all the different areas in a way that you were comfortable with and after getting to

know your students you felt your students were comfortable with. There was a lot of freedom and a lot of autonomy in the classroom.”

Donna had always believed and still very strongly believed that “early childhood was just a golden opportunity.

“You either kill kids or you enrich kids in terms of lifelong learning. This is when it’s all supposed to be fun, it makes sense, it’s concrete, everything is hands-on.”

Frannie and Irene felt that having a loving, safe and stimulating environment were paramount. Frannie’s ideal practices were

“to let the children know that they are loved and they are safe and I think that that’s the number one thing that you can do and from there is teaching them.”

Irene believed that “having a loving, stimulating environment with people who like to be with kids is what kids need.” Irene also believed that, “people need to be paid well to do that.”

Becky and Wendy felt that children learn through play and experimentation.

Becky felt that “we push our children too much some times. I allow the teachers to have more of the playing curriculum where you’re learning through play but they still have their responsibilities of offering the pre-writing, the pre-reading, and the art projects and doing all of that in a classroom structured way.”

Wendy noted the importance of repetition, experimentation and hands-on learning when teaching children.

“I don’t feel like children should be forced to do a project like at this young age. I think that they learn a lot by repetition, our schedule just repeats itself. Children

learn from that. But then when they go into the older room I think that they need a little bit more because then they are going to go off to kindergarten.”

Wendy admitted that older preschoolers need a little more structure.

“I don’t like the worksheets and stuff which we don’t do, I think kids learn hands on and experimenting.”

Teresa’s response was based on practice not principles. Teresa’s ideal practice was “to meet all the mandates especially since we are Head Start regulated and funded.”

Factors and/or Mandates Interfere or Modify Preserved Ideals

Of the nine volunteers who were interviewed six of the volunteers stated that the mandates did interfere with their ideals. Three of the volunteers stated that the mandates did not interfere with their ideal principles and practices.

Mandates Interfere - Donna discussed the need for preschool to be fun for children and teachers. She noted that curriculum development was all about teaching kids to have fun and learn at the same time but she didn’t see that anymore.

“This whole thing about CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) It’s really breaking down a teacher’s formal methods in teaching children and God help them if they’re not on target all the time and make use of every single opportunity and moment in time with kids in terms of teaching. Where’s the fun? Where is it? Where do you sit back with kids and laugh? ...God help them if they missed a teaching opportunity with all of this. I think it’s coming to, and I hear from public school, time on task. ‘Time on task.’ ‘time on task.’ and I think it’s filtering down to the preschool classroom. Too many mandates maybe, I don’t

know. I can't quite figure it out. But there's a lot we're asking teachers. There's 19 kids in the classroom. There's behaviors all over the place because life is not happy out there for these kids. Everything is all about academics, but let's focus for some of these kids who need life skills. At this point I think it's really important that you teach kids how to spread peanut butter on a piece of toast because that's important to them. They may have to be doing that themselves."

Donna believed that the focus was too much on academics. She believed that academics were really important, particularly in regards to brain development, but there was a place and a time for academics. She also believe that jumping around and shimmying and shaking and creative movement all had its place too. She noted that trying to find the balance between academics and non-academic learning could be really, really hard especially in a three and a half hour Head Start program.

"An hour of it has to be movement, and I agree you can fit in math, you can fit in things, 'one, two, three, four, *shake*' you can fit in all of that but my God, it's getting so compact and so everything single part is getting so... Can they just have fun? Can they just chill out a little bit too? But I hear it all too, I guess that's how kindergarten is becoming. Preschool is becoming the boot camp to kindergarten, Kindergarten is becoming the boot camp to first grade and on and on and on. I guess in some ways accountability is good but on the other hand it's becoming too microscopic, that's my feelings. And I feel it in the classroom too, I really feel it. It's become more tense with the teachers and the kids, yeah. You're pushing kids."

Frannie explained that the paperwork was taking the teachers away from the time where that child could be getting that warm, cozy feeling, like being part of a family.

“We’re mandated to do so much ... if we didn’t have to do so much paperwork, even their daily notes that parents want and then they don’t read, ... the paperwork is just too much.”

Frannie mentioned that the NAEYC suggests that the teachers should sit and eat with the children and she always did,

“but I can look up on my screen and I can see the teachers just running around the room and it’s like, no, don’t worry about it, sit.”

The teachers felt like they need to be doing all this paperwork. Even when her teachers do sit down to eat with their kids the teachers were doing the paperwork while the kids ate.

Irene believed that all the emphasis on early learning could actually be detrimental for kids. She believed that

“most kids are going to learn no matter what. So for most kids a little bit of drill isn’t going to hurt them. I think it’s going to hurt teachers. I think it’s going to hurt the field because we are going to lose the good teachers so eventually it will hurt the kids.”

Irene admitted that

“increased expectations for what teachers are doing and increased expectations of how teachers are doing it puts increased expectations on supervisors too. The more we up [the teachers] workload the more we up the workload for the supervisors too.”

Irene stated that the supervisor and the director were one and the same though she thought that the supervisor position needed to be more than one person.

“Just running a business is a lot of work. Every time there is new stuff, I had to go to a Community Partnership for Children meeting last night, if I had Universal Pre-Kindergarten I’d have to filling out that paperwork,...as well as just somebody needs unemployment, there’s that kind of paperwork. There’s a lot of stuff.”

One of Irene’s biggest struggles was that she didn’t think teachers should need so much. She thought that her job was “to get kids in there and to give them the space to play.” She believed that increased expectations of teachers was making increased expectations all around, that parents expected more.

Jill stated that there were three factors that interfered with or modified her ideal principles and practices: money, time and people. “There’s a limit to what parents can afford to pay for and there’s going to be limits to what the university is going to offset [money].”

Jill discussed the importance of continuity of care for the children [Time]. She stated that “children should be with the same teachers for all hours that they’re here” but her center was open from 8 - 5:30 and “that is not a typical 8 hour work day.” Her classroom teachers worked 40 hours a week. Besides being in the classroom they also had time “off the floor” for planning and reflection. In order to maintain consistency for her young students Jill’s program had a resource team who filled in when the full time staff were not available. She noted that this team of three were known by all the children. They were familiar with all the rooms and routines and they were doing the extended day.

“The children who are there for the extended day have the same routine and are with the resource teachers who they already know.”

To create more time Jill’s center was working in partnership with the families. Jill discussed the cast of characters who made up her daycare center: the teachers, the undergraduate students, who were brand new to teaching, and the families [People]. The teaching teams were composed of a wide range of personalities. The dynamics of the teaching teams could either contribute to the success of the program or it could deter it.

“you put all these personalities together in their teaching teams as a whole program and that gets in the way sometimes. Sometimes that is absolutely what makes it so successful and other times its what makes it kind of hard...So how to develop professionals who understand different professional personal boundaries. What’s appropriate to talk about in the classrooms, what’s not and/or how to reflect on their work and so we improve it...”

Jill also mentioned the families. She stated that some families had only one child and some families had five children. The parents ranged from the grateful undergraduate student who appreciated the care for their child to the faculty member or other professional with economic stability “and certain expectations of entitlement”

‘what do you mean that you’re saying no to me I can’t have five days when I first started with four days? I need five now.’

Jill summed up all the different people:

“...we wouldn’t be here without (*all the different people*) and almost all the time make it be the positive, exciting, enriching thing, the place to be, and other times makes it kind of hard. It sometimes gets in the way of remembering that this is

about *childhood* (Jill whispers). It's not about you want to get home in time to watch the Red Sox. What do the kids need right now? The kids need to have the same teacher here at the end of the day with them or the parents need to talk to the teacher whose here at the end of the day."

Becky believed that the teachers should have the leeway of telling her what works and what doesn't work instead of her telling them. She thought that the staff needed to run their rooms based on the needs of the children. She felt like her young students were learning but they were also allowed to be kids.

"With the NAEYC, the Standards, although we withhold them, their asking so much of the teacher, the portfolios and the constant writing, they're taking away from the time [the teacher] has with the kids. The teacher needs to be there to interact and help with the social behaviors. I think with the amount of documentation, although it looks great, it hinders their [the teachers] time with the children and their ability to perform in the classroom."

Becky felt that

"if this profession isn't careful and they keep pushing more and more on these young children, the assessments and the tools and all the things that they set up that are supposed to make the programs better, are going to hinder [the profession instead].

Teresa stated that her program needed to answer to three major sources in comparison to other preschool programs. She would have liked to see Head Start exempt from NAEYC as long as they passed the Head Start monitoring review every three years.

“The Head Start programs who pass this monitoring review should be still eligible for the NAEYC benefits.”

Mandates Do Not Interfere - Evelyn and Nicole refused to let external mandates interfere with their ideal principles and practices though this is “no easy task.” Evelyn admitted that her childcare center was not letting the mandates and accreditation impede upon her ideal principles and practices.

“But it could because there are times when all I’m doing is paperwork and that is sucking the life blood out of me.”

She lamented about the amount of time that she spent doing paperwork instead of being with the children and their families.

“What I should be doing at dismissal time is sitting out in the Play Scape here just talking to the parents, playing with the children...”

Evelyn believed that the essence of accreditation was “very, very sound.” She believed that the nit picking and the redundancy were ridiculous and that this was the problem.

She stated that the NAEYC’s belief was the same as hers, “Let’s keep the children happy and excited to learn and keep the family involved, and keep the community involved.”

She believed that all those things were right, but that the NAEYC had just gone a little overboard with the requirements. She would love to see one of the NAEYC employees who was actually writing the policies to come and see what’s going on. She believed that they needed to venture out to the world and see what a school really does.

“I want the people who are writing this stuff to come and I’ll put them up. I will spend the money, I’ll put them up for two nights. ‘Come spend the time with me.’”

Come touch the children that I work with. Talk to those parents. See what's important to them.”

Evelyn admitted that the parents didn't care about NAEYC accreditation, they were not interested in what assessment tools she was using. They wanted to know that their children were well loved and well taken care of. They wanted their child to be happy and to learn. Evelyn stated that the assessment tools were wonderful but they were already doing those assessments without that piece of paper.

“We can tell you what the child likes to eat and when the child is going to go to the bathroom, we know before the parent does when that child doesn't feel well. Those are the important things. Whether they can spout off the ABCs we can teach a monkey to do that.”

Nicole admitted that she was still hanging onto the freedom and autonomy of her program “for dear life.” She thought that there's something to be said about the uniqueness in each classroom. She appreciated not feeling like her program had to do “this, this, this and this by this amount of time.” She appreciated not feeling that pressure to force feed some things on the kids out of fear that they needed to know this. Ideally she thought letting the teachers within the context of the overall goals and objectives of the school present those things the way that they felt comfortable and the way that they felt that their children were receiving it best.

“I think that that's the best way for the children to learn. Where both the teacher and the child are comfortable.”

Nicole felt that NAEYC accreditation requirements could be very specific about what children should be doing, learning, and should know by the time they completed preschool or kindergarten.

“I think that changes the dynamic in a preschool classroom where it’s a little bit becoming now more of a results driven than experience and process and having that sense of their first time in a school having it be like... an exciting, enjoyable experience for a child to have so that when that first seed is planted it’s a positive one, to start off on the right track. I think that’s a challenge, to continue to do that without feeling like there are things that, “you gotta know this, you gotta know this, why don’t you know this?”

Wendy did not think the mandates (Curriculum Standards, NAEYC Accreditation) interfered with how she thinks children should learn.

“If anything NAEYC requires that, they don’t expect the children to just sit and do worksheets in a project so they don’t allow you to do [worksheets], and even the EEC [Department of Early Education and Care] they don’t want you to do worksheets. It is good because you’re set to follow the regs [*regulations*] because one time, I didn’t. A staff was using a cut out face having the children color it and the licensor came out and she cited me for it. She said that they shouldn’t be forced to. I said, ‘We’re not enforcing the child,’ and she said, ‘well...’ So I think it’s better because they make you not do that. NAEYC is more child centered.”

Ideal Principles and Practices and the Factors and/or Mandates that Interfere with or Modify these Preserved Ideals Summary

In summary, when discussing their ideal principles and practices eight of the directors referred immediately to the preschoolers. More explicitly they noted that early childhood education was all about the children and what the children got out of it. Many of these directors looked specifically at the interests of the children and their families. The directors stated children were constantly learning and that their knowledge was more meaningful and more retainable if classroom activities were interesting and relevant and to their life experience. These directors conferred that children learn through play, repetition and experimentation. They believed that learning needs to be fun, concrete, hands-on and it should make sense. The early childhood environment should be loving, safe and stimulating and that the teachers ought to be people who like to be with kids.

Six of the directors stated that the mandates did interfere with their ideal principles and practices. Donna believed that early childhood needed to be fun since it sets the stage for lifelong learning. She felt that this fun was being replaced with “Time on Task.” Frannie believed that children needed to know that they were loved and they were safe. She explained that paperwork was lessening bonding time between the teachers and the children.

Like Frannie, Irene believed that children needed a loving, stimulating environment. She also believed that most kids will learn regardless of the circumstances. Yet she stated that all the emphasis on early learning may cause good teachers to leave and this would eventually hurt the children.

Jill stated that her center was a place where children were growing up, and that all members of the classroom needed to be aware of this. She stated that three factors:

money, time and people, could interfere with this. There was a limit to what parents could afford to pay and what the university was going to offset. There was a limit to the amount of time that the teachers could spend with the children. Finally there was a wide range of people and personalities who were part of her childcare center. The teachers, resource teachers, undergraduates administrators, and families sometimes forgot that this was about childhood.

Becky believed that the teachers needed to have autonomy as they created curriculum based on the interests of children. She felt that the children needed time to learn through play. She thought that the demands of external mandates were limiting the amount of time that the teachers could spend with the children and that this had an effect on the teacher's classroom performance.

Teresa noted that her program must answer to three major sources in comparison to other preschool programs. Under certain conditions she would like to see Head Start exempt from NAEYC accreditation.

Additionally, three of the directors asserted that they did not let external mandates interfere with their ideal principles and practices. Evelyn stated that children learned best when learning was relevant and was centered around their interests. She also felt that the role of the family was very important. Evelyn was not letting the mandates and accreditation impede upon her ideal principles and practices yet she was dismayed with the amount of time spent on paperwork that could be spent with the children and their families. She explained that the NAEYC's beliefs were the same as hers though she felt that the NAEYC had become a bit extreme with their requirements. Nicole believed that preschool was all about the needs of the children. The sovereignty of the preschool

environment was what initially drew her to the profession. Nicole admitted that she was “still hanging onto the freedom and autonomy of her program for dear life.” She felt that the teachers, while considering the best interests of the children, should be the ones to decide how they would present class materials to the children. Nicole felt that the NAEYC could be quite rigid in their expectations. She felt the early childhood curriculum was evolving into a results driven process. Wendy believed that children learn best through physical activity and repetition. She did not think that young children should be forced to complete a task. Wendy did not think that curriculum standards and NAEYC Accreditation interfered with how she thought children should learn. Indeed she stated that NAEYC’s beliefs were the same as hers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Over the last three decades, much has changed in the public dialogue about early education and care. The purpose of early care and education has shifted from focusing on the growth and development of the “whole child” for some children and providing daycare for working parents for others, to school readiness and training for success in a global economy – albeit beginning rather early. Then a primary purpose of early care and education was to diminish poverty; presently an often reported purpose of early care and education is to lessen achievement gaps (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

As a consequence of this shift in the public dialogue in early education and care, there has occurred particular changes in the areas of public interest, financing and government support. Public interest, has shifted from the private responsibility of the families to a deep concern for reducing the achievement gap between low and high performing prekindergarten students, particularly those children who are at risk of failure. Thirty years ago, financial support was determined primarily by families’ ability to pay. Public subsidies were available for low-income families established by individual states. Now there are a array of specific public funds available that are tied to specific programs. The extent of federal and state investment has escalated since the 1990’s and the availability of private support is limited. Government support back then was essentially at the federal level and tied to interests of particular programs. Currently there has been an increase in state level funding and quality improvement efforts through the establishment of standards and quality rating systems (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Indeed, a Quality

Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is currently established in twenty-one states and 27 states are in some place of development (Strategies for Children, Early Education for All. 2009). A QRIS Pilot was launched in Massachusetts in March 2010 (MA EEC, 2011).

The characteristics of early education and care programs, particularly in the areas of accountability and the relationship to K-12 education, have also changed. Three decades ago, there was minimal linkage between early education and care and K-12 Education. The supervision or control by funders or public agencies was minimal. Presently there are greater expectations for public accountability along with public financing for results. An interest in creating governance and accountability systems has thus increased significantly. The strong resistance within the field of early education and care field to a results driven curriculum and potential loss of individual program autonomy through imposition of standards has been replaced by a demand for program and content standards and the measurement of child outcomes. Currently there are an increasing number of school districts with pre-kindergarten programs and/or financial relationship with community based early education and care programs. Numerous school administrators are now viewing early education and care as a means for advancing school readiness (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

Federal and state governmental support along with peaked interest in accountability is evidenced in the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. The NCLB required that all states, school districts, and schools be accountable for ensuring that all students meet high academic standards. The NCLB exerted a heavy influence on the states and focused their attention on defining expectations for what children should learn **before** they enter kindergarten. The Good Start, Grow Smart Act (2002) strongly

encouraged the states to develop early learning standards for preschool aged children (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; The White House, 2002; Stipek, 2006). How has this push towards accountability affected preschool programs?

Many early childhood programs must adhere to specific federal, state and local external mandates in order to demonstrate that they are accountable. It is also necessary that they adhere to other external mandates in order to receive funding, accreditation and recognition as a quality program. The purpose of this study was to examine the processes by which the pressures of assimilating state mandated early learning standards or other external mandates have directly and indirectly influenced preschool programs as viewed by directors of publicly funded preschools. Three areas of impact have emerged: the effects of external mandates on curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity.

External Mandates Versus Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Planning

The role of curriculum in early care and education has changed significantly in the last three decades. Curriculum which once emerged based on children's interests is now more often than not prescribed by state defined content and early learning standards. Indeed, within the last eight years state assigned early learning standards have risen from 27% of states implementing these standards to 74% of states implementing early learning standards. According to the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) 37 of the states, including the District of Columbia, were implementing comprehensive Early Learning Standards during the 2008-2009 school year. During the 2001-2002 school year only 14 states employed comprehensive Early Learning Standards (Barnett et al, 2009).

Thirty years ago play and child preferred activities were the main method for implementing the curriculum. Today there is a heightened accentuation on literacy and numeracy skills and play is frequently replaced with didactic instruction (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Experts and childcare directors alike wonder how this storm of external mandates will effect the planning and execution of a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

There is a growing body of commercially assembled curricula and many states recognize specific curricula/curriculum models (Goffin & Washington, 2007). The Massachusetts preschool programs in this study, listed several curriculum models that they adhere to in there programs. Of the 28 programs in this study, 18 of the programs used Creative Curriculum, five programs employed Ages and Stages, four used Head Start, two followed the Montessori Method, two programs used the Reggio Approach, and the Project Approach or High/Scope was utilized by two programs. In addition, two of the programs were using the Work Sampling System for assessment. Nationally, the Creative Curriculum is aligned with the state standards in 18 states and the District of Columbia (Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2002-2010). Thirteen states have approved High Scope curriculum as one of their options for their pre-k programs (including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vermont) (Pre[K] Now, 2005-2009). The Work Sampling System is used as a state kindergarten readiness assessment tool in Minnesota, South Carolina and Maryland (Stedron, 2009).

When asked about the decisions she had made about her curriculum in this climate of competing demands Donna replied,

“ -- Trying to juggle several demanding curriculums from different licensors and funding sources (NAEYC, state, federal, UPK) which are basically the same but all have some areas that supercede others. Each one also demands using their format to document, so it becomes a paper nightmare for documentation. One of my decisions is complying first with our biggest funding source, which is the Head Start grant and their frameworks. -- Making sure that curriculum planning and assessment/outcomes are in place that brings our program into compliance with these rigorous but wonderful (*Head Start*) standards that have been around for 40+ years.” [Donna]

Many of the directors stated that they must adhere to particular external guidelines in order to receive funding from the federal government, the state and local agencies. Head Start programs have more external mandates than other programs though none of the programs were free of the demands set forth by the different funding sources.

In Massachusetts, as in many of the other states (Barnett et al, 2009; Bredekamp, 2009; Seefeldt, 2005), preschool programs are strongly encouraged to use the Commonwealth's Guidelines for Preschool Learning (PLG) in their classrooms. These guidelines that are based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks were currently being implemented or integrated into the curriculum of 22 of the 28 programs surveyed. As demonstrated in the results, the Guidelines for Preschool Learning were not an impediment for the preschool programs. The real quandary were NAEYC accreditation and issues concerning a standardized assessment tool. One third of the directors listed NAEYC accreditation and another one third of the directors listed choosing or

implementing a standardized assessment tool as the most difficult curriculum decision they had made in the last three years.

NAEYC Accreditation

Three of the nine interview participants listed “NAEYC accreditation” as the most difficult curriculum decision they had made in the last three years.

“-- Going for NAEYC accreditation. It’s huge and unwieldy and repetitive and then some of the things they wanted you to do changed. It was very challenging to think about because it required teachers to do a lot more work and it required a lot more money...” [Irene]

A full 79% of the directors surveyed (including eight of the nine interviewees) were currently accredited by NAEYC. Since obtaining and maintaining NAEYC accreditation can be quite arduous why did these directors choose to be accredited by NAEYC? Many of these programs are accredited because it is mandatory. Three of the programs chose to be accredited by NAEYC to be eligible for a Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Grant. Four of the programs chose to be accredited by NAEYC to receive Community Partnership for Children (CPC) funding. One of the directors chose to be accredited by NAEYC because her executive director demanded it.

“My executive director wants NAEYC. I tried to talk him out of it -- he said no, no, no we’re going to go for it and he gave me a pep talk.” [Wendy]

Another director chose to be accredited by NAEYC because she felt that NAEYC Accreditation was indicative of a high quality program.

“We can say to the campus and to our community, we know we’re high quality and somebody else a national exterior evaluator can say that we’re high quality too.”

[Jill]

Many teachers feel overwhelmed when they receive the initial self-study from NAEYC, not only these directors in Massachusetts. A group of early childhood teachers in Salt lake City, Utah, had difficulty understanding how they could take on even one more responsibility on top of the daily tasks of teaching and caring for the children, preparing activities, and communicating with families (Jacobson, 2009).

Standardized Assessment Tools

Three of the nine participants listed “choosing or implementing a standardized assessment tool” as the most difficult curriculum decision they had made in the last three years. Six of the directors were in various stages of implementation of one of the four Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) approved (standardized) assessment tools. One of the programs was seriously considering implementing one of the standard assessment tools and two of the programs were hoping to implement one of these tools at some point.

“-- a big piece now is assessment. It’s an ongoing decision because it is extremely costly and it would involve not only actually getting the physical tool itself but developing an online system for record keeping that they would want us to do. It would be difficult to manage the time.” [Nicole]

Since this can be such a daunting task why did these directors chose a standardized assessment tool? Some of the programs implemented a standardized assessment tool to receive Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) funding, others chose to

implement a standardized assessment tool for NAEYC accreditation. The Head Start recipients are required to have a standard non-specified assessment tool and a standard, non-specified, curriculum (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2010) and an EEC approved assessment tool fulfilled this requirement.

In the following section the positive and negative effects of external mandates on curriculum planning will be discussed.

Positive Effects of External Mandates on Curriculum Planning

Of the 22 directors who answered the survey question concerning curriculum standards only six of the respondents were somewhat pleased with the current climate. An additional director was both pleased and displeased. Of these seven directors, they mentioned that the standards were good for providing guidelines and requirements to maintain quality care; and that they provided a positive base for developing curriculum.

“While it can be overwhelming to think of having to meet multiple criteria (Mass. Dept of EEC licensing, NAEYC Accreditation, Mass. Preschool Guidelines, Project Approach, Work Sampling, etc.), they all provide useful frameworks for us to guide our work with young children and families.” [Jill]

Early childhood experts agree that Early Learning Standards (ELS) were developed to improve child outcomes in early care and education programs (Scott-Little, et al, 2007). Early learning standards define universal expectations for what children should know and be able to do before they enter kindergarten. ELS can help foster improvement in the development of curriculum for young children and bring continuity

to young children's curriculum from preschool through the primary grades (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al, 2006; Scott-Little et al, 2007).

Create Professional Standards and High Expectations

Two of the directors mentioned that curriculum standards created professional standards and high expectations for what children are capable of learning.

“I believe that childcare centers/preschools should uphold the philosophy of implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum, while using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experience. Teachers should plan curriculum based on observations and children's interest regarding what individual children need to grow and learn to reach their potential.” [Survey Respondent]

These survey respondents echo the sentiment of other Early Education and Care experts who state that early learning standards bring clarity of content to the curriculum. They specify what young children can and should be learning. ELS help teachers be more intentional about what they teach, which in turn, helps advance child outcomes thus uniting the diverse field of early childhood education. Standards can help focus the curriculum (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al, 2006; Scott-Little, et al, 2007).

Furthermore experts in the field agree that standards raise expectancy level of what students are capable of learning. This can lead to high confidence levels for the academic achievement of all students, which in turn, would produce better scholarly

performance (Seefeldt, 2005). Early learning standards can help bring professionalism into the field (Carter, 2006).

Ensure Smooth Transitions for Children

Several of the directors surveyed mentioned that curriculum standards ensured a smooth transition for the children. If all preschool programs included the same academic content then all children would be prepared for kindergarten.

“We have made a conscious decision to hold them to our philosophies while integrating state standards to ensure smooth transitions for our students.” [Survey Respondent]

“We use the MA state guidelines as a standard for what children should be taking away from their preschool experiences.” [Survey Respondent]

If all programs are using a standardized curriculum in which every child is expected to be able to write his/her name, recognize all the letters of the alphabet and count to ten they will all have the same basic academic competencies when they head off to kindergarten. By exhibiting their not fully formed knowledge of reading and mathematics they will be ready for kindergarten.

Several studies demonstrate that children have a great capacity for learning during the years before kindergarten (National Research Council, 2001). Research studies have also indicated the important impact that early education programming can have on children’s learning and development. Standards that define what children can be expected to learn at this age have become an increasingly important part of efforts to promote

student learning before kindergarten and in turn, improve student performance in later grades (Scott-Little et al, 2004).

Negative Effects of External Mandates on Curriculum Planning

Of the 22 directors who answered the survey question concerning curriculum standards fifteen of the respondents were dissatisfied with the current climate of curriculum standards. An additional director was both displeased and pleased. The directors were particularly concerned about financial issues, planning time and staff training and an increased amount of time requirements and expectations for both the directors and their staff. These concerns were particularly relevant in the areas of obtaining or maintaining NAEYC accreditation and the push for a standardized curriculum and/or a standardized assessment tool.

“We feel our current curriculum which is considered "not standardized" works well and we are not happy to have to make the change to "standardized curriculum" just to be able to access state funding.” [Survey Respondent]

In order to receive state funding through the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grant certain requirements must be adhered to. These requirements include that a program be licensed by the EEC, that the program use an EEC approved child assessment tool, that a program implement early Childhood Program Standards for three and four year olds and Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. Furthermore the program must provide full day - full year services and it must be nationally accredited by NAEYC or it's equivalent (MA DEEC, 2010).

Financial Constraints

Of the fifteen discontented survey respondents six of the directors (including two of the interviewees) were concerned with financial issues. During the interviews three additional directors stated that financial constraints concerning curriculum standards were a concern to their programs. A total of nine of the 22 (or 41%) directors were thus concerned about their financial states. These financial concerns were based on the economy and concerns over NAEYC accreditation and/or the implementation of a standardized curriculum or assessment tool.

When asked about the first thing that comes to mind as you consider the current state of curriculum standards one survey respondent replied,

“-- The raised expectations for staff with no monetary compensation or salary increases for advanced training.” [Survey Respondent]

Early childhood educators earn notoriously low pay yet the costs of running their programs are not inexpensive as will be discussed in this section.

The Economy

Four of the directors stated that financial constraints were directly related to the present state of the economy in areas such as state and federal budget cuts and lower incomes. Becky explained that in order to pull in new enrollment, she and her staff had to be active in the community in order to make themselves known. Evelyn lamented:

“I think that the economy itself has become an obstacle in that parents are opting out, they’re not sending their children as much.” [Evelyn]

On average the number of children (including infants, toddlers, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and school age children) attending Massachusetts EEC licensed family or large group child care centers has remained considerably below capacity. On the other hand the number of children attending public preschools in Massachusetts has increased incrementally for the last eight years. In the region of Massachusetts in which this study occurred, the capacity for children in EEC licensed family or large group child care centers is 28,307, yet the total number of children presently enrolled is 20,126. Twenty percent of these children (9,216) are pre-kindergarten students. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the capacity for children in EEC licensed family or large group child care centers is 220,746 while the amount of children enrolled is 166,023 (84,156 being pre-kindergarten students). These programs are 13% below capacity (MA DEEC, 2010).

In contrast pre-kindergarten enrollment has increased in the public schools in Massachusetts. In the 2002-2003 school year 22,803 pre-kindergartners attended public school. This number increased to 24,617 pre-kindergartners attending public school by the 2005-2006 school year. Presently in the 2009-2010 school year there are 27,871 pre-kindergartners enrolled in public school preschool programs. Though the number of pre-kindergarten students attending EEC licensed family or large group child care centers is significantly higher than the number of children attending public preschool programs the numbers at the non-public school programs are well below capacity while the numbers of pre-kindergarten students attending public school programs are increasing annually (MA DEEC, 2010).

Concerns over NAEYC, Standardized Curriculum & Assessment Tools

The costs of NAEYC accreditation were a concern for five of the programs. The directors of the three programs with over 100 preschoolers were particularly worried.

“It costs our program in five years \$22,000. for NAEYC Accreditation. That is just the cost in fees, never mind paying the people the overtime --.” [Donna]

“It is an enormously expensive proposition it will cost this center at least \$5000. for this reaccreditation, that’s because of all the supplies that we need to do, the extra pay that I need to give to our teachers and a hired consultant. So the obstacles that we face are --absolutely financial. -- That \$5000. that I’m spending -- could SO better spend in other ways...” [Evelyn]

The directors of the two programs with less than 100 preschoolers were also concerned about the expense of NAEYC accreditation. Both these directors reported that they used to be reimbursed through the state but they no longer are. One director stated the Community Partnership for Children (CPC) helped offset some of the costs.

“When you think about all the different classrooms documenting all these different criteria that they want to show and demonstrate it through pictures and things, it’s quite costly.-- This year we’ll spend \$350. on just the annual report and we used to get either reimbursed partially, -- but now we get nothing.”

[Nicole]

There are many basic fees that are applicable to NAEYC accreditation and reaccreditation. The four step accreditation process ranges from \$1275. for a program serving 10-60 children to \$2350 for a program serving 241-360 children. Additionally,

there is an annual fee that begins at \$300. and increases by increments of \$50. based on the number of children (NAEYC, 2009). Besides the accreditation fees there is a great deal of expense in producing the classroom and administrative portfolios and paying substitute teachers to cover the classroom while the regular classroom teachers work on their portfolios.

The cost of purchasing a standardized assessment tool was a concern for two of the interviewees, for example:

“NAEYC accreditation strongly encourages the online component (*for Creative Curriculum*). And that may or may not determine whether we can be reaccredited but I just don't have the money. -- my center is so large that's another \$5000. I mean I don't have it \$10,000. is (*a lot of money*). I look at these things and if I buy that, I can't have my music specialist. I'm sorry but my music specialist is more important to me.” [Evelyn]

The cost of implementing a standardized curriculum was a concern for another director. When asked about the first thing that comes to mind as you consider the current state of curriculum standards this survey respondent replied,

“ -- The lack of funds to pay \$1500.00 for a 5-hour introduction to the curriculum.” [Survey Respondent]

The four approved EEC assessment tools are expensive, particularly the training sessions. The HighScope Assessment Tool CD Rom is \$199. for 25 children for one year with an annual renewal price of \$160. Yet fifteen clock hours of HighScope's Child Observation Record (COR) online training is \$240. per teacher (HighScope, 2009).

The Work Sampling System (WSS) Assessment Tool CD Rom is \$156. yet the WSS license includes a \$19.95 fee per child if there are less than 100 Children, a \$13.95 fee per child if there are 100 to 499 children, a \$12.95 fee per child if there are 500 to 999 children, and a fee of \$11.95 per child if there are 1,000 to 1,999 children attending the program (Work Sampling Online, 2000 -2008).

The Creative Curriculum for Preschools, 5th edition, five volume set costs \$189.95. Meanwhile Creative Curriculum four day Training Sessions for administrators are \$765. This same price is applied to a two day training session for preschool teachers. The training sessions for 2011 are in Bethesda, MD so additional costs will include minimally the price of the hotel (Teaching Strategies, 2002-2010).

The Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ - 3) Starter Kit is \$249.95 and the ASQ-SE (Social Emotional) Starter is \$194.95. The ASQ onsite training seminar speaker fees range from \$1,200 to \$1,950 for one day and \$1,950 to \$2,475 for two days. These fees are based on groups of 20 participants (The Ages and Stages Questionnaires, 2009).

Planning Time and Training Staff

Six of the nine interviewees and one of the survey respondents stated that they were struggling with planning time and staff training concerning the newest NAEYC Accreditation (2006) and implementing a standardized curriculum or assessment tool.

“Given the requirements of the state, there was little thought given to NOT moving forward with implementing a standardized curriculum. We have been able to provide minimal training and support to our staff due to lack of funding. Our center has moved forward to require staff to complete either CDA, Assoc, or BA degrees.” [Survey Respondent]

NAEYC Staff training was not an obstacle for most of the programs. The teachers were trained in how to use the NAEYC materials in house or at workshops. Seven of the nine programs offered in-house training lead by the directors or a visiting trainer. Four of the programs had their teachers attend outside workshops to be trained about NAEYC requirements.

Staff training was a struggle for many of the directors concerning the standardized assessment tool, for instance:

“It was a big struggle at first. ...we were using Creative Curriculum already -- so -
- it was the same kind of thinking and theory but the hardest part was the vehicle
which was now the computer instead of paper and pencil.”[Donna]

The amount of planning time it took to obtain or maintain the new (2006) NAEYC Accreditation was where the real concerns resided particularly with the program portfolios, classroom portfolios and the annual report. Nicole noted that the annual report was an ongoing challenge because every year NAEYC tweaks their criteria slightly. Irene mentioned the tediousness of classroom portfolios. Irene also lamented over the old NAEYC accreditation procedure:

“We got accredited using the old accreditation tools, the old system, which mainly was that the director had to do a lot of work, there were parent surveys, there were staff surveys the director had to prepare a portfolio that was not very difficult to show that we met accreditation and then a volunteer -- came from NAEYC to observe and we got our accreditation and it was good for three years.” [Irene]

“There is a program portfolio that the administration does, over a hundred criteria that you have to prove certain things. It’s just organizing it and putting it in how they want it done. It’s very tedious.” [Donna]

Additionally several of the interviewees stated that they encountered difficulties concerning planning time over the standardized assessment tools

“They (Creative Curriculum) will tell you where that child is weak or where that child is strong but meanwhile that’s what we’re here for. It also means that someone either myself or my secretary or the teacher has to input it. It’s gonna take us forever! So then again, my teachers already work eight hours a day. In my opinion they’re trying to make early childhood into a business. But neither the government nor the agencies are helping us to supply the funds for that.”

[Evelyn]

Increased Time and Expectations for the Directors and their Staff

Four of the interviewees stated that that they had encountered difficulties concerning increased time requirements for themselves as directors and for their staff.

The directors stated that there was much more of a time commitment for the directors and the preschool program itself.

“I think -- and probably if you talk to anybody whose been in this field in any position will say -- as the years have gone on, more expectations, more demands from every aspect -- whether it be from the bureaucracies like the state, -- you know licensing agencies or the national agencies, but everywhere, parents,

children, what teachers need and want, -- just more demands and higher expectations are placed in every single area. [Nicole]

One of the directors explained that when she first became the director, over eleven years ago, there was very little paperwork, that the bulk of her paperwork was tuition. She said that now the bulk of the paperwork was just constantly proving that she had a good program.

“I used to be in the classroom 80-90% of the time and I could get away with working an eight hour day. Now I am working an eleven hour day and it’s not done and I’m not in the classroom as much as I used to be. So yeah everything looks great on paper but who’s getting gyped? -- the kids --, just like anyone’s home, the kids aren’t getting what they used to need -- There’s just not enough time -- because of all the paperwork. They just keep giving us more and more.”

[Frannie]

One of the directors commented on the extended preschool hours. She explained that her program used to be only half time. Now her program is full day, full year from 6:30 am to 5:30 pm. She explained they are closed on 14 holidays.

“When I first became a director, 23 years ago, we worked September to June, we followed the school day calendar, snow days off, all the holidays off. That’s where it’s changed, just the need. When I first started it was just 9-12 where you wanted some socialization for your child, now it’s “I have to work. They (*the children*) have to be here from 8-5, 7-5.” [Wendy]

All nine of the directors that were interviewed reported that they offered full day, full year services. Three of these presently received, or hope to receive, Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) grants. To be eligible for a UPK grant a program must provide full day, full year services (MA DEEC, 2010). The hours of operations for preschool programs in Massachusetts are determined locally. Nationally preschool hours of operation vary, 9 of the states and the District of Columbia offer full day programs, 10 of the states offer half day programs, and for 31 of the states hours of operation are determined locally. Nationally the operating schedule for 39 of the states and the District of Columbia is the academic year. The operating schedule for 11 of the states (including Massachusetts) is determined locally (NIEER, 2009).

NAEYC and Standardized Assessment Tools Expectations for Directors and Staff

Three of the interviewees noted that time was a major obstacle in the NAEYC accreditation process. Teresa explained that it was more work for teachers. Her program, of 26 classrooms, had difficulty finding the time for teachers to work on their individual classroom portfolio. Donna explained that with eight classrooms, it took “an incredible amount of time” to complete the accreditation process. Nicole conferred,

“It was one of the most challenging things we’ve ever done, the most time consuming. The obstacles are fitting into what they expect and finding the time to do it. When you think about when the teachers are in the classroom, when are they supposed to do these portfolios? That was a big challenge.” [Nicole]

Three of the directors that were interviewed said that engaging their teachers in additional tasks was their biggest obstacle. Evelyn explained that all the busy work demanded by

NAEYC took the teachers away from their passion of being with children.” Wendy explained that it was a challenge just to get her five classroom teachers to commit to completing an individual classroom portfolio. Irene added,

“Well we’re unionized. So if the teachers were going to be required to make a classroom portfolio they needed to know how, when they were going to do that and was that during school or after school and what were we going to pay them. So some programs just said “do it” to their teachers and their teachers just did it but we couldn’t do that so it took us a year to negotiate how we were going to do this.” [Irene]

Similarly, Evelyn’s program encountered resistance from her teachers concerning the implementation of a standardized assessment tool. When asked about the obstacles she faced when she first began to use the Creative Curriculum Evelyn replied,

“Well truthfully it was trying to get all the teachers to standardize and use -- (*the Creative Curriculum*). (*The teachers*) had been comfortable with the one they were using. And this one is much more involved. Where the other one might have taken them a half hour to fill out per child this one is going to take you an hour per child to fill out. So I think that that was really the problem --”.

Irene’s parent cooperative program has faced various challenges using the Work Sampling System. The preschoolers’ parents wanted a narrative/ progress report in addition to work sampling. The classroom teachers who were creating the WSS

checklists were struggling because they hated checklists. They believed that narratives were better,

“ --and then the idea of doing the whole thing , the checklist, the narrative and the work sampling is just, ‘how are we supposed to have time to do that?’ So people haven’t really bought into it and they’re struggling along doing it because they have to.”

Three years ago Irene’s program was just writing progress reports in the form of a narrative. Her staff focused mostly on the positive and didn’t necessarily look at the whole child. One or more of the children who attended Irene’s preschool had difficulties with writing in kindergarten. Irene noted that an assessment tool was good in that it ensures that all children are learning what they need to learn, such as pre-writing skills, before they head off to kindergarten. Yet some of her long-term teachers were not happy

“Now that we have to send off our things to kindergarten, they decided to standardize that. Teachers were upset about that, some of the long-term teachers. ... One (*teacher*) referring to the *Kindergarten Checklist for WSS and the classroom portfolios for NAEYC*) just said to me the other day ‘you know the reason why I got into this field and what I’m being required to do now?’ -- We will use the checklist for Work Sampling for Kindergarten. And I just told a teacher it was due June 1st and I got shit for it.”

Donna’s program did encounter some challenges when they began using the online version of Creative Curriculum. Donna explained that the online component was a bit of a process since they had to train their teachers. Some of her teachers were good with the

online component and some were not. The experienced teachers mentored the inexperienced teachers.

Summary

The most difficult curriculum decisions one third of the participants had encountered in the last few years were centered around NAEYC accreditation. For an additional one third of the directors choosing or implementing a standardized assessment tool was the most difficult curriculum decision. Though 79% of the directors were accredited by NAEYC, and 69% were currently implementing a standardized assessment tool, many of these directors were overwhelmed by the process.

The directors listed both positive and negative effects of external mandates on curriculum planning. Of the surveyed directors, 32% were somewhat pleased with the current climate and 68% were dissatisfied with the current climate of curriculum standards. These directors were particularly concerned with financial issues, planning time, staff training and an overall increase in expectations and time commitment for both the directors and their staff. These concerns were particularly relevant in the areas of obtaining or maintaining NAEYC accreditation and the push for a standardized curriculum and/or a standardized assessment tool.

Nearly half of the nine interviewed directors stated that financial constraints were directly related to the present state of the economy. Some noted that parents were keeping their children home or they were sending their preschool-aged children to free public preschools. Indeed public preschool enrollment has been increasing incrementally for at least the last eight years. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the amount of children attending public preschool programs has risen from 22,803 children in the 2002-2003

school year to 27,871 children attending public preschool programs in the 2009-2010 school year (MA DEEC, 2010). In the meantime Massachusetts EEC licensed family and large group child care centers have remained considerably below capacity. The Massachusetts EEC licensed family and (non-public) large group child care centers are 13% below capacity (MA DEEC, 2010).

The costs of NAEYC accreditation and the purchase of a standardized assessment tool were a concern for many of the programs. The cost in fees for NAEYC accreditation in and of itself were tremendous yet teachers also needed to be paid overtime, consultants needed to be hired, directors themselves needed to be paid extra, and supplies such as folders, paper, ink and binders needed to be purchased. The cost of purchasing a standardized assessment tool was not terribly expensive however the training sessions could be quite expensive. For instance, the Creative Curriculum, which is presently, or about to be, implemented in three of the volunteer's programs, costs \$765. for a four day training session for each administrator or a two day training session for each preschool teacher (Teaching Strategies, 2002-2010).

Sixty-seven percent of interviewees and one of the survey respondents stated that they were struggling with planning time and staff training. These endeavors were centered on the newest NAEYC Accreditation and the implementation of standardized curriculum or assessment tools. The amount of planning time it took to obtain or maintain the (2006) NAEYC Accreditation, particularly the program portfolios, classroom portfolios and the annual report, was a major concern.

Four of the interviewees stated that that they had encountered difficulties concerning the increased amount of time for themselves as directors and for their staff.

The directors were working extended hours and still not completing all their work. The paperwork itself was outrageous. Preschool hours have also increased. Most programs that were once half day and followed an academic calendar were now full or extended day, full year programs. All nine of the directors that were interviewed reported that they offered full day, full year services.

Three of the interviewees noted that time, such as completing the classroom and program portfolios, was a major obstacle in the NAEYC accreditation process. Three of the directors that were interviewed said that engaging their teachers in additional tasks was their biggest obstacle. Not all the teachers wanted to create classroom portfolios, nor did they want to spend time away from the children in order to complete the paperwork and other busy work.

Some directors encountered resistance from their teachers concerning the implementation of a standardized assessment tool. Some of the teachers did not want to change assessment tools nor did they want to spend the time required to complete the additional tasks needed for the new standardized assessment tools. Some of the teachers were reluctant to learn how to use a computer to complete the online assessment tool task. Sometimes, even the parents, preferred the old assessment tools.

Curriculum Requirement Demands Verses Child Centered Teaching Practice

The role of the teacher in early care and education has changed significantly in the last three decades. Then early childhood teachers were seen as nurturers who fostered learning and development of the whole child.

“When I first became a director 23 years ago, you just basically had mom’s that had young children who thought it would be nice to work in a classroom. It’s different now, it’s a different focus now, you still have mothers, but you have more people in college, ...educated.” [Wendy]

Today teachers are seldom seen as nurturers but are viewed instead as instructors whose main responsibility is preparing children for academic success in school, often at the expense of social, emotional and physical development (Goffin & Washington, 2007). This alarming requirement on preparation and physical proof of academic competence has experts and childcare directors alike wondering about how these preschool teachers can maintain a developmentally appropriate child centered approach to teaching practice while they’re drowning in curriculum requirements and paperwork.

Preparing preschoolers for academic success in school is imperative yet the need to focus on cognitive development can override the importance of social, emotional and physical development. According to the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative (2005), school readiness should be measured and addressed across five distinct but connected domains: physical well-being and motor development (including health status, growth, and disabilities; physical abilities; and conditions before, at, and after birth), social and emotional development (including children’s ability to interact with others, self-regulation, self-perception, their abilities to understand the feelings of other people, and their ability to interpret and express their own feelings), approaches to learning (children’s inclination to use skills and knowledge including enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence on tasks), language development (listening, speaking, and vocabulary, print

awareness, story sense, early writing, and the connection of letters to sounds) and cognition and general knowledge (thinking and problem-solving, mathematical knowledge, abstract thought, and imagination) (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2005).

This sentiment is echoed by early childhood teachers throughout the nation. According to nearly 1500 preschool teachers in 860 public schools the top three qualities that public school kindergarten teachers consider essential for school readiness is that the child is, physically healthy, well-nourished and rested; is able to communicate their needs, wants and thoughts verbally; and that the child be enthusiastic, curious and be able to take turns and share (Heaviside and Farris, 1993; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000).

One of the interviewees was more in agreement with the 1500 kindergarten teachers than with the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative:

“What is school readiness? It’s about, can you follow directions? Can you put your own coat on? Are you starting to know some letters? We had a kindergarten teacher come... and talk with our parents about getting ready for kindergarten and she asked the parents, “Can they dress themselves mostly all by themselves? Can they follow directions? And are they attentive and engaged in solving problems. And she said with those three things they’re going to do just fine... They don’t have to know how to read and write before they get to kindergarten. So that they’re engaging in all these activities or any or some or all were not using it as a checklist to say that you’re ready for kindergarten or not.” [Jill]

Three decades ago early care and education pedagogy ranged from glorified babysitting to assisting development to didactic instruction. Developmentally appropriate practice was validated by the National Association for the Education for Young Children. Presently the public expectation for evidence-based practice and direct instruction has increased significantly (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

“I think that changes the dynamic in a preschool classroom where it’s a little bit becoming now more of a results driven than experience and process and having that sense of their first time in a school having it be like... an exciting, enjoyable experience for a child to have so that when that first seed is planted it’s a positive one, to start off on the right track. I think that’s a challenge, to continue to do that without feeling like there are things that, “you gotta know this, you gotta know this, why don’t you know this?” [Nicole]

Thirty years ago the early childhood programs were autonomous with the teachers in charge of making the decisions about of the daily activities. Since then this professional autonomy has declined considerably (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

“I think what initially I found appealing about early childhood education and the preschool sector is that there weren’t so many restrictions and requirements that were placed on these teachers so that you could have experiences set up that are going to help the children learn and grow in all the different areas in a way that you were comfortable with and after getting to know your students you felt your students were comfortable with. There was a lot of freedom and a lot of autonomy in the classroom...” [Nicole]

Presently teaching practice is progressively more informed by state program, content and early learning standards. Guidelines have been developed that iterate what children should know and be able to do (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Indeed thirty-seven states, and the District of Columbia, have developed early learning standards at the preschool level (Seefeldt, 2005; Bredekamp, 2009; Barnett, et, 2009). In Massachusetts, the Guidelines for Preschool Learning were instituted in 2003. These guidelines are based on PreK-K (or PreK-Grades 1-4) Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MA DOE, 2003).

This academically driven didactic curriculum is sometimes in direct contrast with the philosophy of these directors. The six directors who were mailed the original survey stated that social/emotional development was the most important developmental area to be included in curriculum standards. The data from the 18 directors who completed the online survey indicated that social emotional and physical development were the most important areas to be included in curriculum standards.

The interviewees were asked to complete a belief systems assessment questionnaire that determined whether the director was teacher directed or child centered in their approach to educating young children. The results from these questionnaires [see Appendix E.] clearly demonstrated that these directors took a child-centered stance on early childhood pedagogy. According to Stipek & Byler (1997) the more preschool teachers believed that children learn best through child-centered practices; the more important independence and a positive self-concept were rated as goals. The more

kindergarten teachers embraced child-centered practices, the lower basic skills and knowledge acquisition were rated as goals (Stipek and Byler, 1997).

Furthermore, when asked about their ideal principles and practices eight of the nine interviewees spoke in terms of the importance of creating developmentally appropriate child-centered environment. They spoke of their desire to enrich the lives of the children by providing an environment that was safe, loving, hands-on, centered on the interests of the children and their families and where learning was fun and meaningful.

In the following section the positive and negative effects of external mandates on teaching practice will be addressed. Implications for the future will also be discussed.

External Mandates are Helpful for Teachers

Experts and respondents agree that external mandates help teachers focus and be intentional. Early learning standards provide teachers with a basis in which to plan instruction. Curriculum is derived from a variety of texts or the teachers themselves. Well-defined standards can provide direction and coherence to early childhood education (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al. 2006).

The process of earning NAEYC Accreditation can be beneficial for teachers. Teachers have reported that the process of reviewing the NAEYC standards and criteria has helped them strengthen their lesson plans and has inspired them to move ahead in their own careers. Furthermore, by focusing on the NAEYC accreditation and criteria teachers have noted that they were able to recognize areas of their teaching that need more attention. By reviewing the NAEYC process teachers are able to recognize that she/he is focusing too much on language and literacy and not enough on science and social studies. Finally, earning NAEYC Accreditation offers teachers solid evidence that

their practices are meeting the expectations of current research and that they are in accord with what early childhood experts recommend (Jacobson, 2009).

“State licensing standards are abysmally low to say that we are a licensed facility to me doesn’t really say much. ...we say that we are going to be a high quality program how do we define that? Well thank goodness AEYC came up with some national standards and criteria we can say to the campus and to our community, yeah we know we’re high quality and somebody else a national exterior evaluator can say that we’re high quality too... [Jill]

Early childhood experts and the directors alike agree that external mandates can be helpful. External guidelines and early learning standards can encourage accountability among teachers for what they are teaching (Carter, 2006). Yet many people in the field, particularly the participants, noted that external mandates can also be very trying for teachers.

External Mandates are Stressful for Teachers

External mandates can be very stressful for teachers. 68% of the directors surveyed stated that they were unhappy with the current climate concerning curriculum standards. These directors stated that the current climate was placing too much focus on academics, too much time was being spent on meeting the requirements, too much money was being spent, and that they were overall being pulled in too many directions. The first thing that comes to mind when Frannie considers the current climate of curriculum standards is

“stress on teachers as seen in public school which leads to stress on children.”

Too Much Focus on Academics

Many of the directors felt that external mandates were putting too much focus on academics and not enough focus on social/emotional development. Many felt that learning through play should be more important than didactic instruction. Several of the directors thought that the focus on academics was detracting from the time that could be spent with the children. Some of the directors felt that the teachers were narrowing their curriculum as they concentrated on preparing their preschoolers for kindergarten.

Academics Have More or as Much Concentration as Social Emotional Development

Experts agree that external mandates are putting too much focus on academics and not enough focus on social/emotional development. When Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2004) analyzed the content of 38 early learning standards in 36 states they discovered that early learning standards vary drastically from state to state. They discovered that early learning standards documents have more standards related to language and communication (31%) and cognition and general knowledge (39%) and fewer standards for physical well-being (8.7%), social and emotional development (12.1%), and approaches toward learning (9.6%) (Scott-Little et al, 2004; Scott-Little et al, 2006).

Research has demonstrated that children who enter kindergarten with an enhanced positive social-emotional profile have more success in developing positive attitudes about school. They are more successful at early adjustment to school and they have better grades and achievement than their classmates (Denham, 2006)

“There’s a lot we’re asking teachers. There’s 19 kids in the classroom. There’s behaviors all over the place because life is not happy out there for these kids.

Everything is all about academics, but let's focus for some of these kids who need life skills. At this point I think it's really important that you teach kids how to spread peanut butter on a piece of toast because that's important to them. They may have to be doing that themselves." [Donna]

Irene spoke about childcare in the 1970s and how social emotional growth was what was so important, and that children learn through play. She stated that the early childhood community including the NAEYC still believes this. Then she spoke about childcare curriculum now in the 2000s: increased expectations for outcomes, increased focus on math/science. She explained,

[In the 1970's...] "we believed in emergent curriculum, we believed that children learn through play. We believed that social emotional growth is the most important thing. Now [...2000's...] there is much more requirement for writing, and teachers being out of the classroom to do that writing."

Teachers Believe that Learning through Play is Most Important

According to Bodrova and Leong (2009), based on Vygotsky's theory of child development, play helps children develop the ability to regulate their physical, social and cognitive behavior. Play helps children renounce reactive behavior and enhances abstract/symbolic thinking (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Bodrova & Leong, 2009). Play provides children with opportunities to understand their world, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum. *Tools of the Mind*, based on the teaching of Lev Vygotsky, and developed by Bodrova and Leong, proposed that the ability of young children to control their emotional and cognitive impulses is a strong indicator of both short-term and long-term academic and social emotional success (Tough, 2009). The basic principles of Tools of the Mind is that (1) children construct their own knowledge, (2) development cannot be separated from its social context, (3) learning can lead development, and (4) language plays a critical role in development (Bodrova and Leong, as quoted in Barnett, Jung, Yarosz, Thomas, Hornbeck, Stechuk, and Burns, 2008, p.301). *Tools of the Mind* curriculum focuses on expansive introductory skills including children's ability to regulate their own social and cognitive behaviors and to incorporate and to commit to memory the use of symbolic representation. At the same time there is an emphasis on specific pre-reading, pre-writing skills and pre-math skills. The tools curriculum, which embodies 40 Vygotsky inspired activities, was devised to promote mature dramatic play, encourage the use of self-regulatory private speech, and teach the use of external aids to facilitate learning and memory. Since self-regulation is considered a learned behavior, each learning activity is designed to teach self-regulation. Play is viewed as the primary source of self-regulation as well as leading children to higher levels of development (Barnett et al, 2008, p.301).

To ascertain the effectiveness of the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum, Barnett and al. (2008) conducted a randomized trial of 210 children in a preschool education program in a high poverty district in New Jersey during the 2002-2003 school year. Teachers and 3- and 4-year-old students were randomly assigned to either a *Tools of the Mind* curriculum classroom (n = 88) or a district curriculum classroom (n = 122). The children were

assessed individually using six different instruments in the spring and in the fall. The preschoolers were compared on social behavior, language, and literacy growth. The results of the study indicated that *Tools of the Mind* curriculum was found to improve children's classroom experiences, social development and cognitive development (though at a lesser scale). There was a less problem behavior in the *Tools of the Mind* classroom, which demonstrates that self-regulation can be taught. The findings of this study suggests that a child centered developmentally appropriate curriculum with a strong emphasis on deliberate play can enhance learning, lessen problem behavior and increase both the social, emotional and cognitive success of young children (Barnett et al, 2008).

As verified in the belief systems assessment questionnaire [See Appendix E.] all nine of the directors interviewed agreed that "children learn best through active, self-initiated exploration." Six of the nine directors strongly agree with this statement, the remaining three agree that children learn best this way.

Academics are Taking Away from Time with the Children

Complying with regulations set forth by the state and federal government is extremely time consuming. Many of the directors explained that too much of their time was being spent on writing and preparation and this took time away from just being with the children.

"There are times when all I'm doing is paperwork and that is sucking the life blood out of me. What I should be doing at dismissal time is sitting out in the Play Scape here just talking to the parents, playing with the children ..." [Evelyn]

"This whole thing about CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) It's really breaking down a teacher's formal methods in teaching children and

God help them if they're not on target all the time and make use of every single opportunity and moment in time with kids in terms of teaching. Where's the fun? Where is it? Where do you sit back with kids and laugh? ...God help them if they missed a teaching opportunity with all of this. " [Donna]

Donna's thoughts are not uncommon. When Wein (2004) conducted a case study of primary school teachers in Ontario, Canada as they implemented a major standard based reform movement she found similar results. One of the teachers, a first grade teacher of nine years felt that the curriculum standards had fragmented her teaching into discreet time frames. She also believed that the curriculum standards had taken a lot of fun out of learning (Wein, 2004).

Teachers are Narrowing Their Curriculum as they Prepare Children for Kindergarten

Specifying early learning outcomes can narrow the curriculum and negatively affect pedagogy (Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Since some domains or approaches toward learning and social and emotional development are frequently absent from early standards, teachers might attempt to directly teach narrowly defined skills and neglect important cognitive and social emotional processes such as problem solving and self-regulation (Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004)

Donna noted that trying to find the balance between academics and non-academic learning can be really, really hard especially in a three and a half hour Head Start program.

"An hour of it has to be movement, and I agree you can fit in math, you can fit in things, 'one, two, three, four, *shake*' you can fit in all of that but my God, it's

getting so compact and so everything single part is getting so... Can they just have fun? Can they just chill out a little bit too?"

According to Montie et al (2006), children in settings that promoted free choice achieved a significantly higher language score at age seven. With so much time on academic tasks children are losing out on free choice activities that actually help with their language development.

Time Constraints

Goldstein (2007) mentioned that while teachers were implementing state standards there was less freedom, fewer choices and increasing demands to get more done in a less time.

“These poor teachers, when do they have time to be able to engage with children in their play. Is there time to have fun with children and build on strong teacher/child relationships; so important for child care programs.” [Donna]

Too Much Paperwork

External mandates such as NAEYC, Approved Assessment Tools and other requirements set forth by the state and federal government require a ridiculous amount of paperwork. The directors complained that the amount of paperwork they had to complete took much time away from when they could be in the classrooms, or with the teachers, children, or parents. Frannie and Evelyn both lamented on the tremendous amount of paperwork, for example:

“We’re mandated to do so much ... if we didn’t have to do so much paperwork, even their daily notes that parents want and then they don’t read, ... the paperwork is just too much.” [Frannie]

The directors concerns over the increased amount of time and expectations for themselves and their staff was echoed in a survey of over 800 early education and care professionals nearly eight years ago. In 2002, a sample of 815 NAEYC professionals in the care and education of children ages three to five from 17 states completed a Early Childhood Professional Questionnaire (ECPQ). Fully 48% of these professionals were caregivers or teachers engage in care educations with preschoolers for all or most of the day. Another 39% of the survey respondents were administrators and the remaining 13% were involved in the preschool environment in some capacity. The questionnaire addressed various issues concerning professional relationships, strategies and support for dealing with work place stress and job satisfaction (McMullen, Alat, Buldu, and Lash, 2004).

Concerning job satisfaction, the participants were asked to respond to the question, “If I could change one thing about my job position it would be _____ . The five most popular responses to this were (1) benefits/pay, (2) more time (more hours in the day, more time to plan, and so), (3) amount of paperwork, (4) general respect, and (5) administrative support (McMullen et al, 2004, p 90-91). 84% of these early childhood professionals, who earned less than \$15,000 to more than \$45, 000 annually, were either satisfied or completely satisfied with their current positions (McMullen et al, 2004).

Financial Constraints

Financial constraints were also a chief concern for several of the directors.

“How can I justify placing all of these demands on the staff when they are not adequately compensated?” [Nicole]

Donna stated that there has been no increase in pay for teachers or directors. She explained that the staff still has wages that are really, really bad. She explained that her program has some teachers who have four year degrees and their pay is not equal with that of public school teachers. Preschool teachers at the public schools make twice as much money as Head Start preschool teachers. She doesn't think it's fair. Donna stated that salaries should increase incrementally based on every new level that a staff member obtains. She explained that it is not just she who feels this way; she hears the same thing at the various meetings that she attends across the state. She stated that,

“Even within Head Start too, we can't keep good staff.” [Donna]

Donna went on to say that she was having problems hiring and retaining teachers with college degrees. She explained that it is unequal in terms of hiring and maintaining staff with degrees. She explained that some of the programs are not recruiting people with degrees. She explained that these teachers are going other places where the pay is better.

Donna's sentiment is echoed in an Australian study that focused on why 102 preschool teachers had left the profession. This study revealed that 43 per cent of the preschool teachers who left their jobs between May 2002 and February 2003 cited insufficient pay, heavy workloads and overly large class sizes as their reason for

departure. The results of this study indicated that many preschool teachers were leaving their jobs at preschool centers to work in primary schools where wages and benefits were better. The study also suggested that university graduates who had planned to become preschool teachers were now choosing other teaching positions (Tomazin, 2003).

Non-public preschool teachers salaries are notoriously low. In 2003 Head Start teachers were paid \$21,000 a year while public school teachers earned an average of 43,000 annually (NIEER, 2003). Five years later, during the 2008-2009 fiscal year the average salary for Head Start Teachers in Massachusetts was \$26,712. This amount is quite similar to the national average Head Start teacher salary of \$27,650. (Barnett, S., Epstein, D., Friedman, A., Sansanelli, R. and Hustedt, J.: The National Institute of Early Education Research, 2009)

Head Start teachers wages were significantly higher than childcare teachers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009, average childcare worker wages ranged from \$16,120. and \$23,504 in May 2008. Preschool teachers salaries averages ranged between \$18,840 to \$31,430. In Massachusetts, the average salary for a childcare teacher who had completed a two-year vocational CC course, was \$22, 910 (Barnett al, 2009). Childcare workers, non-public school preschool teachers and Head Start teachers all earn significantly less than public school preschool teachers. Indeed, during the 2005-2006 school year, beginning public school teachers with a bachelor's degree earned an average of \$33,227 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). In May 2008 The average annual wages of kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary school ranged from \$47,100 to \$51,180 (Barnett al, 2009).

An Australian study that focused on why 102 Australian preschool teachers who left the profession between May 2002 and February 2003 revealed that 43 per cent of preschool teachers left their jobs due to insufficient pay, heavy workloads and overly large class sizes. The results of this study indicated that many preschool teachers were leaving their jobs at preschool centers to work in primary schools where wages and benefits are better. The study also suggested that university graduates who had planned to become preschool teachers were also choosing other teaching positions (Tomazin, 2003).

Teachers Pulled in too Many Directions

“Today, teachers often feel pulled in several directions. Further, parental, and state influences are placing an increased emphasis on accountability and proof of effectiveness (Dacey & Eston, 2002, p.13)”

Irene believes that all the emphasis on early learning could actually be detrimental for kids. She believes that

“most kids are going to learn no matter what. So for most kids a little bit of drill isn’t going to hurt them. I think it’s going to hurt teachers. I think it’s going to hurt the field because we are going to lose the good teachers so eventually it will hurt the kids.”

“With the NAEYC, the Standards, although we withhold them, they’re asking so much of the teacher, the portfolios and the constant writing, they’re taking away from the time [the teacher] has with the kids. The teacher needs to be there to interact and help with the social behaviors. I think with the amount of documentation, although it looks great, it hinders their [the teachers] time with the children and their [the teachers] ability to perform in the classroom.” [Becky]

This same sentiment was echoed by teachers in the Southwestern part of the United States: “When we first received the Self-Study Kit (*for NAEYC Accreditation*) we were overwhelmed” stated a preschool director in Salt Lake City, Utah. Teachers often don’t understand how they can take on one more responsibility on top of preparing activities, communicating with families, and teaching and caring for the children in their class everyday (Jacobson, 2009, p.73)

Implications for the Future

The interview volunteers reported that the current climate of mandatory external mandates is making a huge impact on their plans for the future. For these directors the future of their early childhood programs is both exciting and fearful. These veteran administrators have seen both the up and downside of the early childhood profession. They are only too aware of the constant changes they must face with every new judicial administration, state departments of Early Education and Care, personnel and policy staff, and reaccreditation requirements. The future of their programs is teetering on the edge of doing what they think is in the best interests of their programs and what the state or federal government is demanding they do.

Hopes for the Future

Despite the requirements set forth by the state and federal government these directors are proud of what they have accomplished. The overall effectiveness of the program was what one Head Start teacher was particularly proud of. The teachers willingness to facilitate a comprehensive or emergent curriculum; to uphold a caring

curriculum; to sustain a negotiated curriculum and not go to a canned curriculum were other points of pride, for example,

“I think right now what I’m personally proud of is that we haven’t gone to a canned curriculum. We haven’t gone to, everybody’s doing apples the second week of September.” [Nicole]

Although these preschool directors are facing various obstacles these they are moving forward and planning developmentally appropriate innovative curriculum. Jill’s program has been implementing the Project Approach. Becky’s program has been developing an outdoor curriculum. Additionally, Evelyn’s program has been integrating the play based, “Ooey Gooey Curriculum.”

Concerns for the Future

The directors listed several concerns that they have for the future of their programs. One of their main concerns was the Bachelor’s Degree Requirement listed within the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Another concern was that they are feeling somewhat overwhelmed, overworked and ready to terminate their role as the director.

Quality Rating and Improvement System - Bachelor’s Degree Requirement

The Quality Rating and Improvement System, which was developed to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early education and care settings consists of five quality levels: Level 1 being that a program is licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to Level 5 in which the program is currently accredited by NAEYC and every classroom has a teacher with at least a

Bachelor's degree (MA Department of Early Education and Care Massachusetts, 2009).

[See Appendix A.]

The directors reactions to the QRIS were mainly concerned about Bachelor's Degree requirement that must be obtained in order to reach to Level 5.

“In order to reach Quality Level 5 center and school-operated programs must have current accreditation from NAEYC and every classroom has at least one teacher with a higher education degree (BA or higher) in education, child development, or a related field....” (MA QRIS Center and School-Operated Program Standards, 2009. p. 2)

One of the director's thought that the Bachelor's degree requirement was a good thing.

“And as far as the schooling for the staff, I think that's a great thing. Now when I hire staff that's the requirement that they have at least their Child Growth and Development so that they can become teacher qualified and that they have to go back to school to get their Bachelor's within a certain time. I help them with the college, we set them up with a program.” [Wendy]

Four of the director's thought that the Bachelor's degree requirement was not very attainable.

Frannie was being forced to replace a highly qualified veteran teacher without an Associates Degree with a new teacher with a Bachelor's Degree.

“-- And always having at least one teacher with a Bachelor's degree or higher in every class. We don't always have that. ... It's very frustrating, 'cause right now the state licensing, ...we're the ones who are like suffering through the growing pains right now because you have some that are where they should be, some that

have the knowledge but are not where they should be with educational background and it's like how is this all gonna mesh. Are they gonna grandfather some people in maybe?" [Nicole]

"What person with a Bachelor's degree or higher is going to be teaching preschool and making \$10.00 or \$11.00 an hour. Some of my teachers said, 'if I'm gonna have a Bachelor's or Master's Degree I'm gonna work for the school system.' ... and we're basically being pushed out the door because when you say to me, 'you have to have a bachelor's degree or higher, from what I make out here? No.' ... We can't pay them more." [Becky]

"I have teachers who have been teaching with me for 15 years and they have an Associates Degree. One teacher is 44 years old. She is NOT going back to college right now. So I'll never reach level 5. And they're wonderful teachers. And the same problem is, so I insist that she go back to school and now she's spending \$12,000. a year to go back to school but I'm gonna still pay her that same pay? No way, that's not right. ... And this is really my question. Let's say right now I'm a level 4 school. What if I stay a level 4 school for ever and ever and ever? Am I going to be penalized? There are plenty of schools out here right now that are level 2 and level 3 schools but they're receiving more grant money in funding than I am because of the population that they serve." [Evelyn]

Director's Overworked and Ready to Quit

Several of the directors stated that the various strains on their programs due to demands set forth by the state and federal government were really taking their toll on the directors themselves.

“We can’t keep good staff. I don’t blame them and sometimes I wonder about myself. Why am I still here, maybe when that golden job comes by I may jump. I have kids that go to college. I have mouths to feed. At some point, it’s really difficult. You kind of juggle and I juggle and they juggle with how long can I do this. And I love my job, I LOVE it but at some point you have to make some decisions because the money’s not there and I find that’s not equal.” [Donna]

“I think that for me the struggle of all this stuff is very hard, you know like when I have teachers giving me a hard time about this stuff its really hard for me. We’re gonna lose good me’s. It’s just too much.” [Irene]

“The government itself is putting the cart before the horse. And I see myself as the horse so if I can’t be involved in this process I’m gonna sit down and I’m gonna say I can’t move anymore. A lot of my director friends, who are all my age, 54 and older, we’re all saying “we can’t do this anymore.” They’re taking the joy out of the job. And the joy is the children and the joy is what they’re learning, the hands on experiences they’re having and writing something for NAEYC is not ... I digress.” [Evelyn]

Just like Wien (2004) reported in her case study of primary school teachers in Ontario, Canada, as they implemented a major standard based reform movement, some of the outside pressures provoked the teachers to quit. One of the teachers, a first grade teacher of 12 years felt that her classroom life had become threatened by set expectations and assessment requirements. She thought that the mandatory curriculum standards made

teaching unpleasant and unworkable for her and her young children. She ultimately left the teaching profession (Wein, 2004).

Summary

The directors and researchers alike believed that mandatory external mandates can be both beneficial and harmful concerning teaching practice. As teachers adhered to requirements set forth by external mandates they became more focused. Their lesson plans and pedagogy became more centered and deliberate. External mandates provided teachers with a starting point in which to plan instruction. Well-defined standards can provide direction and consistency to early childhood education. Early learning standards can promote accountability among teachers for what they are teaching (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al., 2006). External mandates offer teachers solid confirmation that their practices are in accord with current research and that they are complying with what early childhood experts recommend (Jacobson, 2009).

On the other hand, external mandates can be very stressful for teachers. Many of the directors felt that external mandates focused primarily on cognitive development as opposed to social and emotional development. Early childhood educators were apprehensive that curriculum was actually being narrowed to focus primarily on academic achievement, with little attention was given to social, emotional or physical development. This was in direct contrast with the theory that social and emotional development is imperative for school success. Furthermore since this domain is repeatedly absent from early standards it is feared that teachers might try to directly or indirectly teach narrowly defined skills and neglect important cognitive and social

emotional processes such as problem solving and self-regulation (Bredekamp, 2009; Denham, 2006; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; Scott-Little et al, 2006).

This excessive focus on academics was in direct opposition to the directors' belief that young children learn best through active, self-initiated exploration and play. These directors were in accordance with the experts who also believe that that learning through play should be more important than didactic teaching. Besides helping children develop the ability to regulate their physical, social and cognitive behavior, play also provides children with opportunities to understand their world and develop their representational competence. Play can improve both the social and academic success of young children (Barnett et al, 1998; Bodrova & Leong, 2009; Bodrova & Leong, 2009; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Yet, many of these directors felt that numerous programs were favoring instructive teaching over play, in order to adhere to external mandates.

External mandates were stressful for teachers because the need to meet the demands of external mandates was impinging on the teachers/directors time and on the program's finances. External mandates required a vast amount of paperwork. The directors complained that the amount of paperwork they had to complete took much time away from when they could be in the classrooms, or with the teachers, children, or parents. Researchers agree that while teachers are implementing state standards there is less freedom, fewer choices and increasing demands to get more done in a less time (Goldstein, 2007).

The directors concerns over the increased amount of time and expectations for themselves and their staff is not uncommon. Indeed when 815 NAEYC early childhood professionals were asked if there was one thing about their job position that they could

change the three most popular responses were (1) benefits/pay, (2) more time (more hours in the day, more time to plan) and (3) amount of paperwork (McMullen et al, 2004).

Financial constraints were also a chief concern for several of the directors. The directors felt that too many demands were placed on themselves and their teachers without adequate compensation. Some of the directors were having problems hiring and retaining teachers with college degrees because their programs were unable to pay as much as the public preschools. Potential preschool teachers were applying for jobs where the pay was better. Non-public school preschool teachers average salaries range between \$18,840 to \$31,430. Head Start teachers earn an average of \$27,650 nationally. The average annual wages of public kindergarten through secondary school teachers range from \$47,100 to \$51,180 (Barnett al, 2009).

Finally external mandates were stressful for the teachers because the demands of these mandates were pulling the teachers in too many directions. External mandates such as NAEYC accreditation and curriculum standards, were demanding too much of the teachers. The portfolios, the constant writing, and communication with families was impeding on time that could be spent with the children. The teacher were torn between being with the children and completing tasks for the state and federal government.

External mandates were having a huge effect on the future of these programs. These directors were both excited and apprehensive about the future of EEC. Although they were facing various obstacles these directors were hopeful as they were moving forward and planning developmentally appropriate innovative curriculum. Yet these directors were also fearful about the future. Their main concern was with the Quality

Rating Improvement System (QRIS), particularly the Bachelor's Degree requirement that must be obtained in order to reach Level 5. Though one of the directors felt that the Bachelor's degree requirement was "a good thing," four of the director's thought that the Bachelor's degree requirement was not very attainable. The directors stated that some of their teachers had the knowledge base but they didn't have the formal educational background. Many of these teachers could not afford to return to school to obtain a Bachelor's degree. Furthermore some of the programs couldn't afford to pay the increased salaries that coincided with a Bachelor's degree. Thus potential teachers would be looking for jobs in the public schools instead of smaller independent preschools. One director was concerned that if her teachers did not have Bachelor's degrees, would she be penalized and remain as a level 4 school indefinitely (MA Department of Early Education and Care Massachusetts, 2009).

Several of the directors were feeling overwhelmed, overworked and ready to terminate their role as the director. The various strains on their programs due to demands set forth by the state and federal government were in actuality taking their toll on the directors themselves. Termination factors included not being able to keep good staff, not being paid very well themselves, constant complaints from teachers about the extra work required of them and the lack of enjoyment since paperwork was overshadowing time with the children.

'Time on Task' Verses Meaningful Play

The view of the child has changed considerably in the last three decades. Thirty years ago it was assumed that child development followed a natural path that was fostered by a nurturing and supportive learning environment. Today children are seen as

being much more capable of ingesting new information than was formerly thought. There is thus considerably more focus on academic achievement in the early years since this is synonymous with future success (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Yet experts and childcare directors alike wonder if this learning should translate into structured lessons. With so much demand for ‘time on task,’ is there still time for meaningful play?

Three decades ago the curriculum was based on play and child selected activities. The curriculum emerged based on children’s interests. Teachers focused on the “whole child,” including physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Today curriculum is often based on state mandated content and early-learning standards, with much focus on literacy and numeracy skills (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Play is often discarded for more academic structured learning.

These state and federal content and early-learning standards, are affecting child activity at the preschool level in both positive and negative ways. External mandates can be helpful; they assure that all children are exposed to the same content. There are certain expectations for all four and five-year olds as they are preparing for kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers know what to expect about the academic knowledge that their incoming students have obtained before the school year actually begins.

External mandates can also have a negative effect particularly in the area of free play. Free play, which researchers state is essential for social and emotional growth and development (Miller & Almon, 2009; Nicolopoulou, 2010; Tough, 2009), is being replaced by academic tasks. One of the directors explained that what a kindergarten teacher is actually looking for in terms of school readiness is that the child can mostly dress him/herself, follow directions, be attentive and engaged in problem solving. This

kindergarten teacher explained that preschoolers do not need to know how to read and write before they get to kindergarten. Another director, speaking of parental preschool expectations, reiterated this statement when she admitted,

“[Parents] want to know that their children are well loved and well taken care of... Those are the important things. Whether [the preschoolers] can spout off the ABCs we can teach a monkey to do that.” [Evelyn]

In the following section, mandatory external mandates will be addressed in regard to child activity. A discussion of both the benefits and detriments of external mandates on free play will be addressed.

External mandates are beneficial.

Some of the directors who were surveyed believed that external mandates, such as standardized curriculum were necessary. They assure that children are being taught the same standardized content. A standardized curriculum ensures that every child is taught specific content. Regardless of the preschool setting all children are learning the same basic academic skills.

“All childcare centers should be maintaining the highest possible level of quality care and education for young children. Standards are a necessary and integral component of a quality program to ensure that children are exposed to meaningful activities that span the areas of curriculum.” [Survey Respondent]

Early learning standards specify what young children can and should be learning, thus uniting the diverse field of early childhood education. Standards can help focus the curriculum, presenting all students with a manageable set of concepts to be mastered

within a given time. (Carter, 2006; Seefeldt, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Scott-Little et al. 2006). Standards raise expectations for students learning. Uniform expectations for standards for education can lead to high expectations for the academic achievement of all students, which in turn would produce better academic performance (Seefeldt, 2005, p. 7). Early learning standards can foster accountability for what young children are learning (Carter, 2006).

External Mandates Put too much Pressure on Children

Many of the directors felt that external mandates put too much academic pressure on children and minimize the role of play. Children were under pressure to complete specific tasks and this took the joy out of preschool.

“These are young children and they should be enjoying their young years rather than being pressured.” [Survey Respondent]

Many of the directors felt that social and emotional development is essential and that learning through play is of utmost importance. Children learn through investigation and experimentation. Learning needs to be meaningful in order to be retained. If children are having fun as they are learning they are more likely to retain this new knowledge.

Many child development experts agree that young children learn tremendously through play, exploration and imagination. They develop social, emotional, cognitive, physical and self-reflective skills as they collaborate with one another. Play provides children with opportunities to make sense of their world, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997; Nicolopoulou, 2010). Play helps children develop the ability to regulate

their physical, social and cognitive behavior. Play helps children renounce reactive behavior and enhances abstract/symbolic thinking (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Bodrova & Leong, 2009).

Several researchers contend that children need a certain amount of self-directed free play. Play fosters academic, social and physical development. Academically, children need to develop language and literacy skills yet this is best accomplished through play based practices rather than through didactic instruction of letter recognition and decoding. It is necessary for young children to develop social competence. They need to exhibit emotional and behavioral self regulation. Young children need to be able to cooperate and to understand social situations. Play maintains a critical role in promoting social and emotional skills for preschoolers. Children are restless, it is necessary for them to engage in physical activity. This is easily accomplished through self directed free play. When young children spend too much time engaged in sedentary activities, such as drill and testing, they can become overstressed, underexercised, and more likely to be anxious and overweight (Nicolopoulou, 2010).

Too Much Academics, Not Enough Play

Several of the directors were concerned because there was much more focus on academics in the early childhood classroom than on play.

“Children’s natural growth and need to play to develop should not become lost in an early achievement war to succeed on third grade MCAS.”[Survey Respondent]

One of the survey respondents was concerned that curriculum standards, which are organized, defined, and labeled according to elementary school subjects, detract from

the role of and importance of play. She believed that socio-dramatic play skills are the number one indicator of kindergarten success. Another survey respondent concurred that academic expectations and developmental readiness were in conflict due to external pressure.

These comments echo those of other researchers. Bredekamp (2009) notes that one of the most prevalent reasons for rejecting early learning standards is a concern that these standards will lead to developmentally inappropriate practice. Similarly, Nicolopoulou (2010) concludes that pre-kindergarten play is being replaced by teaching academic skills through direct instruction. She states that this emphasis on more didactic, academic, and content based approaches to preschool education is supplanting more child-centered, play oriented, and constructivist approaches to early childhood education.

Standards and Other External Mandates are Overriding the Interests of Children

The directors had various concerns that external mandates were prevailing over the interests of children. These concerns included the fact that free play was being replaced with time on task and that preschool is no longer fun

“Children need to have time to explore and play within their environment.

Children need relevant experiences in order to retain what they are learning.”

[Evelyn]

One survey respondent has become very frustrated. She commented that getting to know her children comes first yet many of her young students have developmental needs that are beyond the scope of the curriculum, making it very difficult to follow the guidelines. Frannie, one of the interviewees, said that she has had many conversations

with parents whose children have dropped out of school because of their lack of engagement beginning at a young age. Frannie believes that in the preschool classroom it is important to let children be children and to guide their learning of interest. It is important to allow children and staff to be happy and have fun.

Free Play is Replaced with Time on Task

Two of the volunteers were particularly concerned that free play is being replaced with time on task. They were concerned that academics and the need to succeed in kindergarten and elementary school was being pushed down to the preschool classroom.

“This feeling that there’s a push down curriculum. I don’t think children should be writing in Kindergarten or Reading Recovery in kindergarten, but they are. There is . . . much more emphasis on academics.” [Irene]

Irene is not alone in her belief that there is a push down curriculum. Indeed, Kendall (2003) and the Massachusetts Department of Education (2003) contend that many early learning standards are a downward extension of goals for upper grades. Kagan & Scott-Little (2004) and Stipek (2006) question whether early learning standards, which are a downward extension of K-12 standards, will they take into consideration the unique developmental orientations of preschoolers. Since standards based on K-12 Frameworks are more academic than developmental in orientation, might they favor certain domains and give little attention to others. Developmental goals such as being able to sit still or put on your coat are developmental goals not academic goals. Since these developmental goals are not included in the K-12 curriculum standards will they also be excluded from goals for preschoolers?

I think it's coming to, ... 'Time on task.' 'time on task.' ... Preschool is becoming the boot camp to kindergarten, kindergarten is becoming the boot camp to first grade and on and on and on." [Donna]

Miller & Almon (2009) reported that kindergarteners spend two to three hours per day on literacy and math instruction or preparing for tests and only thirty minutes or less in free play or choice time. Kindergartners are expected to meet inappropriate expectations, that until recently were reserved for 1st grade. Even though this can be very stressful for kindergarteners, the benefits of play, a major stress reliever, are being denied to these young children. Miller & Almon suggest that this may be contributing to a rise in anger and aggression, which is causing severe behavior problems. The authors worry that if these problems are not resolved they might be passed on to preschool aged children or younger.

Preschool is No Longer Fun

Many of the directors were concerned that external mandates were creating an atmosphere that was no longer fun for the children.

"These poor kids.... when do they have time to be kids, and play and fantasize...which is how they learn in the first place.This is when it's all supposed to be fun..." [Donna]

Tough (2009) like Barnett et al (2008) and Bodrova and Leong (1998) concurs with Donna in that children learn through play. He, too, references the "Tools of the Mind" curriculum. The Tools of the Mind program is being used to teach 18,000

prekindergarten and kindergarten students in 12 states around the country. The basic tenet to the Tools of the Mind methodology is that the key to developing self-regulation is “mature dramatic play:” complex, make-believe scenarios, involving multiple hours and lasting for hours, even days (Tough, 2009, p. 34). Children acting out a dramatic scene can control their impulses much better than in a non-play situation as noted in the following two experiments. In one experiment 4-year-old children were asked to stand still as long as they could. They lasted less than a minute. But when they were in a make believe situation in which they were guards in a factory they were able to stand at attention for more than four minutes. In another experiment prekindergarten children were asked to memorize a list of unrelated words, then they played “grocery store” and were asked to memorize a similar list of words. On average they were able to memorize twice as many words. In the Tools of the Mind curriculum children are learning emotional, physical and cognitive self-regulation in a fun and engaging manner through meaningful play (Tough, 2009).

Yet another researcher, Wien (2004) came to the same conclusion that for some teachers fun had been removed from learning. Wien conducted case studies of eight primary school teachers in Ontario, Canada as they implemented a major standard based reform movement. Wien observed and interviewed eight primary school teachers. One first grade teacher of nine years felt that the curriculum standards had fragmented her teaching into discreet time frames. She also believed that the curriculum standards had taken a lot of fun out of learning.

Summary

The directors and researchers alike believed that mandatory external mandates can be both beneficial and harmful concerning child activity. They assured that children were being taught the same standardized content, they helped focus the curriculum, presenting all students with a manageable set of concepts to be mastered within a given time.

Standards raised expectations for students learning. Early learning standards fostered accountability for what young children are learning.

On the other hand, external mandates put too much academic pressure on children and minimize the role of play. Many of the directors felt that social and emotional development was essential and that learning through play was of utmost importance.

Children need a certain amount of self-directed free play. Young children learn tremendously through play, exploration and imagination. Play provides children with opportunities to make sense of their world, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities. Play helps children develop the ability to regulate their physical, social and cognitive behavior and renounce reactive behaviors (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Bodrova & Leong, 2009; Nicolopoulou, 2010).

Yet both the directors and the researchers were concerned that there was much more focus on academics in the early childhood classroom than on play. Early childhood curriculum standards, which are based on K-12 curriculum frameworks, focus mostly on academic subject areas as opposed to social and emotional development and thus detract from the role of and importance of play. Some fear that early learning standards will lead to developmentally inappropriate practice and others fear that pre-kindergarten play is

being replaced with teaching academic skills through direct instruction (Bredekamp, 2009; Nicolopoulou, 2010).

Both the directors and the researchers were concerned that standards and other external mandates were prevailing over the interests of children. They were anxious that free play was being replaced with time on task and that academics and the need to succeed in kindergarten and elementary school was being pushed down to the preschool classroom. Since standards are based on K-12 Frameworks they are more academic than developmental in orientation, they might thus favor academic goals over developmental goals. Academic goals that were once required for kindergartners and 1st graders are now being offered in the preschool classroom. These academic demands that are contributing to a rise in anger and aggression in kindergartners might be passed on to preschool aged children (Kendall, 2003; MA DOE, 2003; Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004; Stipek, 2006; Miller & Almon, 2009)

Finally, directors and researchers alike, are concerned that external mandates are creating a preschool atmosphere that is no longer fun for the children. When children play they are not only having fun they are also learning how to self regulate. They are able to follow directions and maintain self-control. In a play situation preschoolers can stand still longer and memorize more information. Through meaningful play children are learning emotional, physical and cognitive skills, including self-regulation, in a fun and engaging manner (Wien, 2004; Tough, 2009). In a teacher directed, didactic classroom, where meaningful play is replaced with worksheets and drill and practice, children will get restless and bored. They may lose all interest in academics and this may contribute to a negative outlook on their view of education.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The process of meeting new curriculum demands of the state and federal government has been a grueling and rigorous process for many early childhood program directors. In the present study, preschool programs, in a particular area in Massachusetts, were given a chance to voice their own opinions about how curriculum standards and other external mandates were directly and indirectly influencing curriculum planning, teaching practices, and child activity. The mandatory integration of learning guidelines, external mandates and professional accreditation, are relatively new. As in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Guidelines for Preschool Learning were established in 2003, Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) grant program was initiated in 2005, the latest accreditation criteria for the National Association for the Education of Young Children took effect in 2006, and the Massachusetts Quality Rating Improvement System was first introduced in 2007. Since these guidelines and mandates have only been introduced within the last decade, other available research studies that focus on this topic, are uncommon. Furthermore, research studies, in which directors themselves are actually heard discussing this matter, are quite isolated.

Through a series of surveys, interviews and questionnaires the researcher gained an intimate glimpse of the curriculum issues that early childhood directors were currently facing. A brief survey was sent to 90 preschool directors in a region in Massachusetts. A total of 28 directors completed this survey. A sample of nine directors, from the survey respondents, volunteered to be interviewed. In two separate interviews, the researcher

asked a series of questions to obtain data from the participants. These interview questions focused on the director's response to the process of implementing mandatory early learning standards and other external mandates within their preschool program. The director's broader concerns based on their role as a preschool director were also addressed.

In the area of curriculum planning this researcher originally assumed that the directors would be struggling with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experience (PLG). She soon found out that this was not the case. The individual anecdotal accounts about the positive and negative effects of the state mandated early learning standards concerning the Guidelines for Preschool Learning were predominantly positive. Indeed seventy-one percent of the surveyed directors reported that their teachers were presently integrating the PLG into their curriculum and lesson plans. The researcher soon discovered that other external guidelines set forth by the state and federal government or professional organizations were a much greater concern than the state's guidelines.

Though these directors agreed that curriculum standards and other external mandates were necessary they felt that the amount of work, time and expenditure in order to meet the demands of these mandates could be quite overwhelming. Perhaps this was the reason why some of these women chose to complete the survey and/or be interviewed. They had something they wanted to say and they welcomed a colleague who wanted to listen.

These directors were being pulled in many directions as they tried to comply with the demands of various state and federal agencies. All of the directors had more than one

agency with which their programs were affiliated. These organizations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Universal Pre-Kindergarten grants and Head Start, that offer support, recognition, accreditation, and funding, each had their own criteria that these directors had to comply with. Concerns were particularly expressed in the areas of obtaining or maintaining NAEYC accreditation and the push for a standardized curriculum and/or a standardized assessment tool (Creative Curriculum, Ages and Stages, Work Sampling System and High Scope). NAEYC accreditation was very expensive to purchase and to maintain. It was extremely time consuming for both the directors and their staff. Purchasing approved assessment tools, together with the training, was also very expensive.

The economy itself was taking its toll on preschool programs. The non-public preschool programs were losing children. Many parents were sending their children to public pre-k programs or they were just keeping their preschoolers home. There were greater expectations for both the directors and their staff. Often preschool hours were considerably longer than before. Many preschool programs offered full day, and full year hours, as was the case for all of the directors that were interviewed. The directors were spending long hours at their schools trying to complete paperwork and other administrative tasks with little monetary gain.

In the area of teaching practice, the teachers and directors were becoming discouraged, there was too much focus on teaching academics skills at the expense of social and emotional development. Teachers seemed to be narrowing their curriculum as they prepared children for kindergarten. Time that could have been spent with the children was being replaced with paperwork and kindergarten preparation. These

directors were in a quandary because they believed that learning through play was more important than didactic teaching yet this type of teaching was sometimes necessary to meet the demands of external mandates.

Teachers and directors were feeling overwhelmed. They had to spend too much time and money on meeting the requirements of the state and federal government. These directors were striving to implement innovative non-canned curriculum, yet there were many barriers along the way. One of these barriers was the requirement for the Bachelors degree for teachers, that was necessary for obtaining certain quality points for the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). Some of these directors were overworked and were considering leaving the profession.

In the area of child activity the children were spending too much time on academics and not enough time on play. Curriculum standards and other external mandates were overriding the interests of the children. Only too often free play was being replaced with 'time on task'. Some of the directors and teachers felt that preschool was no longer fun. If "pre" school is not fun what will be these young children's outlook towards kindergarten and elementary school?

Conclusion

The directors, in this study, were truly invested in their preschool programs. They were compassionate and very dedicated women determined to create rich and warm learning environments that offered the optimum social, emotional, physical and cognitive benefits for their children, teachers and the children's families. These women truly cared about what was best for the children. For many of these directors working with children was their original attraction to the profession. These directors worked long hours, in which they were often not adequately compensated, as they tried to create an environment that was inviting to the children and their families. They were not only creating and maintaining developmentally appropriate child centered facilities they were also developing new curriculum that was even more child centered.

Yet the state and federal governments were asking for too much administrative detail. Just like Goldstein discovered in her study of kindergarten teachers in Texas (2007), these directors, who also practiced a developmentally appropriate approach to teaching, did not find their commitment to using developmentally appropriate practice to teach mandated curriculum standards to be particularly difficult. The directors and teachers faced other challenges in implementing state demands. There was less freedom, fewer choices and increasing demands to get more done in a less time (Goldstein, 2007).

Many of these directors were stretched to the limit. Even though they believed that social and emotional development, and the importance of play, were more valuable than academics, demands from the state and other professional sources were impinging upon this non-academic time. Just like Wein discovered in her study of primary teachers in Ontario (2004) these directors also thought that with the advent of curriculum

standards there was not enough emphasis on the importance of play. Some of the directors, like Wein's teachers, believed that outside pressures were making teaching unpleasant and unworkable. Further more, like Wein's teachers, some of the directors believed that curriculum demands had taken a lot of fun out of learning (Wein, 2004).

Similar to the Australian study of 102 preschool teachers who had recently left the profession, nearly half of the directors, who were interviewed, were considering leaving the profession due to insufficient pay and heavy workloads, among other things. According to Wein (2007) some of her primary teachers were also considering leaving the profession. As the directors noted, their preschool teachers, like those in the Australian study, were leaving their jobs at preschool centers to work in primary schools where wages and benefits were better (Tomazin, 2003).

The findings from this study indicate that perhaps it would be advisable to listen to these directors who have been administrators in the field of early education for many years. State mandates assume that people need a lot of direction yet these intelligent people (directors) already understand what to do. We need to be more respectful of the early childhood program directors and listen to what they have to say. Policy makers would benefit by consulting experienced preschool directors as they develop guidelines for early childhood education and care. These directors are the experts in the field. They can help facilitate the development and implementation of external mandates concerning early childhood in a more practical and user friendly manner.

Limitations

This study was limited to one region of Massachusetts during 2009. The results were based on the data collected from surveys completed by 28 preschool directors – a response rate of approximately 1/3 of the directors of the larger preschools in this region. Additionally nine of these 28 directors participated in two in-depth interviews. Consequently the results reflect the circumstances, changing mandates and pressures on directors in this area and at this time. Nevertheless some of the stresses and conflicting demands may well have parallels in other parts of the country. All states are under pressure to increase accountability and implement state and national standards. It should also be particularly noted that the interview participants were drawn from survey participants but reflected the older, better educated, and more experienced preschool directors, than the survey respondents. They were self selected as volunteers and hence may have had more motivation to have their opinions and insights recorded. In comparison with the survey respondents the interview participants appeared to be more insightful and articulate. They had a broader base of knowledge and professional history from which to draw. These more experienced directors may have been somewhat more critical than less experienced directors might have been.

The survey and interview methodology brings with it the usual limitations of the particular questions used and the objectivity of the interviewer. The survey had been used before successfully by Stipek & Byler (1997). Every effort was made to reduce interviewer bias and opportunity was allowed in both the survey and the interviews to facilitate free responses to open ended questions. Multiple sources of data were collected, interview participants were provided the opportunity to review key material, and daily

records were maintained by the researcher, that were compared with the audio files. Nevertheless, as in any survey or interview, there may have been issues or concerns left unsaid or not fully explored.

Implications for Practice

This study has contributed to the field of early childhood education since it provides a glimpse into the way preschool directors are coping with national, state and local external curriculum mandates. Though the state and local mandates are particular to this study the national external mandates are applicable to programs across the nation. The trials and tribulations of these directors in Massachusetts concerning federal mandates may be mirrored in other areas. Much of what was shared by these particular directors could also be relevant for directors across the country.

Although there certainly is a need for standards or at least guidelines nationally, the process for implementing these standards needs to be changed. At the state or organizational level when standards are developed there must be a better process for helping the centers with the implementation so as to guide against conflicts. This process needs to be improved by offering workshops and various types of trainings for the directors and the teachers at minimal cost.

The findings from this study can also be considered for policy development. When issuing regulations such as the need for a Bachelor's Degree in order to teach in a preschool, federal and local agencies need to consider the consequences. There isn't a match between the salary of preschool teachers and the education level requirement. Certainly, the policy for the staffing patterns of non-public school preschools, such as Head Start programs and child development programs, might well be less stringent.

Additionally it seems unreasonable for federally and state funded agencies to demand college degrees without providing for additional pay or sources of funding. For example, at the time of this study, the Quality Rating and Improvement System required that every classroom have at least one teacher with a Bachelor's Degree, to reach the highest quality level (MA Department of Early Education and Care Massachusetts, 2009). Yet monetary assistance to support the attainment of this goal was not being offered. To lessen the burden on the center, paperwork and ways of implementing higher standards, could be limited. For instance, perhaps professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) could condense their accreditation requirements, particularly with their portfolios. Perhaps individual classroom portfolios and program portfolios could merge into one portfolio that is created collaboratively between the director and all the classroom teachers. This would lessen the paperwork/busywork considerably.

Finally, it seems like we have somehow lost track of early childhood education priorities, for example, that of recognizing the primacy of social and emotional development over academic development. Young children need to develop in all developmental domains yet many of these external curriculum mandates are downward extensions of K-12 curriculum standards. Guidelines may need to focus more on social and emotional development in addition to cognitive development.

Implications for Further Research

For generalizability, this type of study needs to be replicated in other parts of the country and in different types of educational settings. As far as the researcher is aware this is the only study of this type in which preschool directors are given the opportunity to voice their concerns about the current state of curriculum standards and other external mandates. Do preschool directors in Des Moines, IA or Anchorage, AK feel the same way about curriculum standards and other external mandates as these directors in Massachusetts? Do other states have conflicting mandatory curriculum requirements linked to funding sources? Are expectations as confusing and extensive? Is the process facilitated by state agencies? This study occurred in a small progressive area in the country. It needs to be replicated in other parts of the country, or in other areas that have different patterns. For instance 883 preschool programs are accredited by NAEYC in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, only half of this number (409) of programs are accredited by NAEYC in Connecticut, and a tenth of this Massachusetts number (80) are accredited in New Mexico (NAEYC, 2011). On the other hand, as of January, 2011 there were 36 Head Start grantees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 22 Head Start grantees in Connecticut and 37 Head Start grantees in New Mexico (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, 2010). Furthermore, Massachusetts has a population of approximately 6.6 million people, Connecticut has a population of approximately 3.5 million people, and New Mexico has a population approximately 2 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In relation to its population, New Mexico has many more Head Start grantees than NAEYC accredited programs, while Massachusetts has many more NAEYC accredited programs than Head Start grantees. Do we need to know about

different strategies for implementation in order to meet the needs of states or communities where NAEYC accreditation is not as much of a priority as Head Start?

Further studies need to be conducted reflecting different standards across the nation. Research studies might include simple library research concerning the comparison of different efforts, the nature of the integration, as well as how directors concerns differ across the country. For example Massachusetts considered NAEYC accreditation requirements as they developed the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (PLG). The PLG are NOT just a downward extension of the MA K-12 Curriculum Standards. Have other states tried to do this too? What happens if a state doesn't have state preschool learning guidelines, then what?

A second area of research could be centered around the types of external mandates and curriculum requirements that public preschool classroom must adhere to and the issues generated there. How does this context affect curriculum concerns as compared to non-public preschool program mandates? Educators, including teachers, are in most cases, required to hold a license issued by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in order to be eligible to teach in the Massachusetts Public Schools. To be eligible for an initial license a teacher must hold a bachelors degree, have a passing score on the Massachusetts Tests for Education Licensure (MTELS), and have completed an Educator Preparation Program (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010).

Do public school preschool teachers have similar curriculum concerns as non-public school preschool teachers? Do public school preschool teachers have to comply with several licensing agencies or are they just committed to those of their particular

state? The context is quite different. School hours for public school preschool teachers and children are normally shorter as compared to non-public school preschool teachers and children. There are typically more children with special needs in public preschools as compared to non-public preschools. Do public school and non-public school teachers of young children have the same concerns over competing demands or the increased emphasis given to cognitive development over social emotional development?

In conclusion, the present study looked at one particular area in the United States. This study needs to be replicated in other areas of the country. The data uncovered in this study shows a candid picture of how external mandates are affecting preschool programs. It illustrates that changes need to occur in order to retain the integrity and the candor of these dedicated preschool directors. Additionally, further research that compares public school preschool programs to non-public school preschool programs could also be explored. Many school districts now have preschool programs included in their elementary schools. How are these public preschools different and similar to non-public school preschool programs? How do the requirements for public school teachers and policies compare with non-public public school teachers and policies.

APPENDIX A – LICENSE REQUIREMENTS AND BASIC REGULATIONS

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)

EEC Group Childcare Licensing Requirements

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in its capacity as a licensing agency, licenses all childcare programs in Massachusetts. EEC enforces strong licensing standards for the health, safety and education of all children in childcare (EEC, 2011, p.1).

Link to *Licensing Requirements for Group Child Care (GCC) and School Age Child Care (SACC)*

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eduterminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Pre+K+-+Grade+12&L2=Early+Education+and+Care&L3=Licensing&L4=Child+Care+Licensing&sid=Eoedu&b=terminalcontent&f=EEC_programs_licensing_gcc_licensing&csid=Eoedu

EEC Regulations and Policies Group and School Aged Childcare

The Regulations delineate the definitions and requirements that apply to all programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. The policies refer to the way in which the Department of Early Education and Care guide matters related to child care and early education in light of present and future decisions (EEC, 2011, p.1).

Link to *Group and School Age Child Care Policies*

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=edusubtopic&L=6&L0=Home&L1=Pre+K+-+Grade+12&L2=Early+Education+and+Care&L3=Laws%2C+Regulations%2C+and+Po>

licies&L4=Child+Care+%26+School+Age+Program+Policies&L5=Group+%26+School
+Age+Child+Care+Policies&sid=Eoedu

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Steps and Requirements to Achieve and Maintain NAEYC Accreditation

NAEYC's reinvented accreditation system requires early childhood programs to complete four steps to achieve NAEYC Accreditation. The four steps and requirements were developed with extensive input from early childhood educators and reviewed by the Reinvention Commission on NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, Council for NAEYC Accreditation, a board-appointed work group of representatives from large system of programs for young children. These requirements are designed to increase the accountability of the system for children, families, and all customers of NAEYC Accreditation (NAEYC, 2006. p. 1)

Link to *Steps and Requirements to achieve and maintain NAEYC Accreditation*

<https://oldweb.naeyc.org/accreditation/steps.asp>

Head Start

Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations

The Head Start Program Performance Standards are the mandatory regulations that grantees and delegate agencies must implement in order to operate a Head Start program. The standards define the objectives and features of a quality Head Start program in concrete terms; they articulate a vision of service delivery to young children

and families; and they provide a regulatory structure for the monitoring and enforcement of quality standards (USDHHS/ACF, 2006, p. 1)

Link to *Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Requirements>

Universal Pre-Kindergarten

To be eligible for a UPK Grant a preschool program must be (1) EEC Licensed or licensed exempt, (2) Use an EEC approved assessment tool, (3) Use Early Childhood Program Standards for three and four year olds, (4) Provide access to full-day full-year services, and (5) Be nationally accredited by NAEYC or it's equivalent (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2011).

Quality Requirements for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Pilot Grant Program (FY10) and other pertinent UPK information is linked below. Retrieved Jan. 10, 2011 from

http://www.mass.gov/Eoedu/docs/EEC/programs_licensing/20091217_upk_factsheet.pdf

UPK Approved Assessment Tools

One of the FY10 UPK Quality Requirements is that a preschool program use one of four EEC child approved assessment tools. These tools are: Creative Curriculum, Work Sampling, High Scope Child Observation Record or Ages and Stages. The links for additional information concerning these four assessment tools are listed below.

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool

Retrieved Jan. 10, 2011 from <http://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/creative-curriculum-for-preschool.cfm>

Work Sampling Online

Retrieved Jan. 10, 2011 from www.worksamplingonline.com/

High Scope Assessment

Retrieved Jan. 10, 2011 from <http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=2>

Ages and Stages

Retrieved Jan. 10, 2011 from <http://www.agesandstages.com/asq/index.html>

Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) - Revised Provisional Standards (12/14/2010) Center and School Based QRIS Standards Retrieved January 10, 2011 from <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=edusubtopic&L=6&L0=Home&L1=Pre+K+-+Grade+12&L2=Early+Education+and+Care&L3=Provider+and+Program+Administration&L4=Quality+Rating+and+Improvement+System+%28QRIS%29&L5=About+the+MA+Quality+Rating+and+Improvement+System+%28QRIS%29&sid=Eoedu>

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (2011) Center and School Based QRIS Standards Retrieved Jan., 10, 2011 from http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/board_materials/20101214_qris_standards_ctr_based.pdf

APPENDIX B – LETTER/SURVEY SENT TO PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS

Letter to Preschool Directors

Preschool teachers are currently facing a great deal of external pressures. Those of us in early childhood education often find ourselves with competing demands from policy makers, school districts, teachers and children. From my conversations with other educators I understand that there are common concerns about how the curriculum has been modified to accommodate for curriculum standards. I am particularly interested in the adaptations that have been created due to of the mandatory integration of curriculum standards in early childhood programs.

I am a graduate student in the doctoral program in Child and Family Studies at the University of Massachusetts/ Amherst. I have been an early childhood educator for over a decade. I have taught classes in early childhood development and education at Holyoke Community College and at UMass/Amherst. I am presently teaching *Preschool Curriculum Methods* and *Math in the Elementary School* through the University Without Walls at UMass/ Amherst. Being a former preschool teacher I have first hand knowledge of the uniqueness of each child. In my role as a college professor I have been fortunate to exchange knowledge of young children with other educators. For my dissertation I am studying the process of how pressures from state standards impact school's progress. My goal is to interview preschool center directors and discuss their concerns about doing what's best for the child.

I was hoping to ask you to complete a brief survey about, the new mandates or external curriculum guidelines you, as the director, have been facing? All data on the survey will be used anonymously. Any reports indicate your voluntary consent. I am also looking for volunteers who would be willing to be interviewed two or three times during the next few months. In exchange for these interviews I am offering a workshop, to interested groups, on how to integrate math standards into the curriculum. You can contact me through email, telephone or mail.

My contact information:

Kate Strub-Richards
34 Russell St. Greenfield, MA 01301
Phone: 413-773-3015
Email: richards@educ.umass.edu

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kate Strub-Richards

Competing Interests in Curriculum Survey

Background information about the childcare center

How many preschoolers attend your program?

- Less than 25 preschoolers 25 to 50 preschoolers
 50-100 preschoolers Over 100 preschoolers

Check which applies

- Full day Half day
 Public Private
 Rural Urban
 Inclusive of Toddlers Inclusive of Infants

Background information about the director

Please mark the appropriate range of your age

- 20-30 years old 30-40 years old
 40-50 years old 50-60 years old

Education

- Associate's Degree High School
 Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree
 _____ Other, _____

How many years of experience do you have as the director?

- Less than 8 years 8 years – 15 years
 15 - 25 years Over 25 years

Mark all of the following categories that best describe you.

- African American Pacific Islander
Native American Hispanic
Asian Other, please specify: _____
White

What is your gender?

- Female Male

Are you responsible for planning the curriculum?

- yes no, If not can you tell me who is _____

Are you responsible for training the staff?

- yes no, If not can you tell me who is _____

Current Curriculum Concerns

Have you used or are you presently using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences?

_____ yes, if yes for how long? _____ no

Are external curriculum guidelines required for your program? If so what are these?

Besides the MA Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experience, which of the following external guidelines do you follow? Please check all that apply.

_____ NAEYC	_____ UPK Assessment Planning
_____ Creative Curriculum	Grant
_____ Montessori	_____ UPK Classroom Quality Grant
_____ Reggio Approach	_____ Head Start
_____ High Scope	_____ Ages and Stages
	_____ Other _____

Comment _____

In which of the following implementation stages of the specific curriculum guidelines (CG) listed above would you place your program?

_____ Presently not considering	_____ Recently begun integration of CG
CG _____ Undecided about CG	_____ Commitment to sustaining CG
_____ Trying to implement CG	_____ Other _____

What do you think is the most important developmental area to be included in curriculum standards for early childhood education?

_____ English Language Arts	_____ Health Education
_____ Social/Emotional	_____ The Arts
Development _____ Science and Technology	_____ Physical development
_____ History and Social	_____ Mathematics
Sciences	

As you consider the current climate of curriculum standards what is the first thing that comes to mind?

Comment on what decisions you have made about your curriculum in this climate of competing demands. _____

Would you be interested in participating in a series of 1-3 interviews about your concerns and progress towards integrating the curriculum standards? If so please include contact information: Your name, Location of center, Phone number, Email address.

APPENDIX C – OBTAINING VOLUNTEER INFORMANTS

My name is Kate Strub-Richards. I am a doctoral student in the Child and Family Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am a former preschool teacher and am presently teaching in the Department of Early Education and Care through the University Without Walls also at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. For my dissertation I am conducting a research project about the current accountability trends in early childhood education. I am asking you to participate in this study.

I am interested in recognizing the impact that the new mandates or external curriculum guidelines have had on preschool programs. I would like to interview you about how mandatory curriculum standards have influenced your planning. I am seeking your permission to allow me to use any of the information I have gathered through these interviews for my research project. This information will be combined with interviews from seven other preschool directors. No individual director will be the focus of this study.

If you agree to participate I will interview you on two or three separate prearranged occasions during the fall and winter of 2008. These interviews should last between 30 minutes to an hour. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to refuse to answer questions that you are uncomfortable with. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty, comment, or prejudice. In addition you may review the key materials before the interviews are submitted to the University. These interviews will be used to create a profile of preschool program director's responses to mandated curriculum standards. I will audiotape these interviews. The audiotape can be stopped at any time during the interview. I will be the sole viewer/listener of the audiotapes; I will erase them after I transcribe them. I will protect the identities of participants through the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. Identifying marks such as specific towns or regions will be replaced with urban centers or rural centers. Identifying information will be disguised by grouping responses together. You should understand that you might be quoted directly but that your name will not be used in any part of the report. The information gained from these interviews will be shared with my dissertation committee using pseudonyms.

I am providing you with a sample letter of informed consent. During the first interview you may ask me to change the content, which I will gladly do. I will then have you sign two copies of this informed

consent. One copy should be retained for your records and the other I will keep. Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided, that you willingly agree to participate, and that you know you may withdraw your consent at any time. If you have any questions about the research you can reach me at:

Home: 413-773-3015

Email: richards@educ.umass.edu

You may reach my committee chair, Dr. Grace Craig, at:

212 Furculo Hall

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

413-545-1195

Email: gcraig@educ.umass.edu

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D – QUESTIONS FOR ASSESSING BELIEF SYSTEMS

The following Likert Scale will be applied for each of the following statements:

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Basic Skills Orientation Belief Scale Items

Children who begin formal reading and math instruction in preschool will do better, academically, in elementary school.

Worksheets and workbooks are a good way for children to master academic skills such as math and reading.

Preschool teachers should make sure their students know the alphabet before they start kindergarten.

Basic skills should be the teacher's top priority.

Children learn basic skills best through repetition and review.

Practicing letters and their sounds is the best way for children to learn to read.

Children should be given formal instruction in number skills, even if they show little interest in them.

Child should work silently and independently on seatwork.

Teachers should emphasize the importance of quality in final products.

If a child is not doing well in kindergarten, time should be set aside every day after school to practice school work.

It is important for preschool children to become good at counting and recognizing numbers.

Giving rewards and extra privileges for good performance is one of the most effective ways to motivate children to learn.

Formal instruction in math- and reading-related skills should only be given if children want it. (-)

School work should not be graded in the early elementary grades. (-)

Teachers should not emphasize right and wrong answers. (-)

Child-Centered Orientation Belief Scale Items

Teachers should allow children to opt out of activities.

Children learn best through active, self-initiated exploration.

Curricular areas should not be taught as separate subjects at separate times.

Having children experiment with writing through drawing, scribbling or inventing their own spelling is a good way for children to develop literacy skills.

Homework should not be given in kindergarten.

Young children learn math best through manipulating concrete objects.

Teachers should not permit a child to leave an activity or task before finishing it. (-)

The enthusiasm and interest children have in a task is more important than how well they can do it.

It is important for children to follow exactly the teacher's plan of activities. (-)

Even four- and five-year-old children should be told whether their work is correct or incorrect. (-)

During the time a teacher is presenting a lesson, children should not be allowed to interrupt or to relate personal experiences. (-) (-) item reversed.

Questions borrowed with permission, from Stipek & Byler (1997) *Early childhood education teachers: Do they practice what they preach?*

**APPENDIX E – DIRECTOR’S RESPONSES TO BELIEF SYSTEMS
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Assessing Belief Systems	-				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither A nor D	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 - Formal Instruction - earlier better	+	xXxX****	*X+X**X**		
2 - Worksheets		+	xXX****		xx+XX
3- Know Alphabet	x+	XxX	X***X	x+	
4 - Basic skills (define?) - top priority	x+X****	xXX**		x+	XX*** (ABC 123)
5 - Basic skills - repetition/review	+	xxXxX**		X+	X
6 - Practicing letters & sounds - Best	+	xxX		Xx+XX***	
7 - Formal instruction - numbers		x	+	xXx*+XX	X
8. C work silently/alone		X*		xX	xx**++XX
9. Emphasize quality - final prod		X	XX*X*	xxx++	
10 - practice schoolwork daily			++X**X*	xxXx***X	
11- Important - C counting/num.recogn		xxXX	X+	x+XX	
12 - Rewards good for motivating C		X*		Xx**++X'X	xx
13 - Formal Instruct - only if C wants it	+	xX+	X"X	xxX	
14 - Schoolwork not graded	+	Xx+XXX	x	x	
15 -T not emphasize right/ wrong answers		Xx+	X*+X'"*	xxX	
16 T- let C opt out of activities	+	Xx+X*X	*xX*	x	
17 - C learn best thru active, self initiation	xxx+XX	X+X			
18 - Curric. not taught as sep subjects	+	xxxX	X+X'"X*		
19 - C experiment w/writing	xxx++XX	XX			
20 - Homework not given	xx+X****	X+XX		x	
21- C learn best manipulating objs	xx++XX	xXX			
22 - T not allow C leave incomp task			xXx****X*	x+X*X**	+
23 -enthusiasm more important than task	x++X*	xXxX***	X		
24 - C must follow T's activity plan			X***	xxXx+X	X+
25 - C told if work is correct/incorrect		x	xX*	Xx+X	X+
26 - C - no interrupt T			X**	XxxXx+	X+

Combined Responses to Assessing Belief Systems Questionnaire Key

Assessing Belief Systems Key	
C represents Children	
T represents Teachers	
Donna -Red x	Nicole - Black Bold X
	*****if it is formal as in devel approp experiences
Frannie -Blue x	****"can be helpful "practice"
*depends on situation	***"as in social skills
Wendy - Green X	**depends on child and type of learner
Teresa - Black x	***it is one way
*manipulation of objects	**sometimes
active learning best	*sometimes depending on project
***consider individual development	**depends on the situation
**"intrinsic motivation vs extrinsic	
*****depends on each child's development & attention span	*sometimes they should
	*sometimes, depending on the situation
Evelyn - Blue +	*sometimes it is
Becky - Red +	
Irene- Brown Bold X	Jill - Red Bold X
**initially yes but not in long run	**formal?
***give them opportunities to learn	***definition of basic skills?
	*****sharing, following directions, Prob solving
*depends	*depends on issues needed to be addressed
rewards work for behavior but any gains in learning would not last	*award of adult attn/ not food/stickers
"some is probably good	**give C opport to demounderstanding
"balance is good	
****except "fun" assignments extending learning "look at stars" for ex.	*depends on the activity
	*depends on the age/grade

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