

**An EdGate Correlation Services White Paper:
Differentiating Pre-K from Early Childhood
April 2007**

Many publishers wish to have their materials correlated to standards for young children and do not know that there are actually two sets of standards that can apply to this age group. This white paper provides a summary of the two sets of to assist each publisher in the selection of standards that best meet their marketing or curricular need and also some pointers for using these standards as part of an ECS correlation.

Early Childhood Standards

When children begin school behind, they tend to continue to fall further and further behind. High-quality early childhood education can help close this gap. Early Childhood Education attempts to counter socio-economic and gender-related inequities to start all children on a leveled field. Expanding on the very successful Head Start initiative, individual states have focused on the development of programs and learning standards in the effort to positively impact child growth and learning.

An example of the Texas TEKS standards for Early Childhood, age 3:

TX.8. - Physical Development

8.3. - Fine-Motor Development - Fine-motor manipulative movements involve object-handling activities that emphasize motor control, precision, and accuracy of movement. Using a computer mouse, cutting with scissors, and drawing are the foundational skills needed for the demands of handwriting and other small-motor skills in later school years.

8.3.1. - The child begins to develop pincer control in picking up objects (e.g., weaving, touching small objects)

More than 25 states have standards describing desired results, outcomes, or learning expectations for children below kindergarten age; Head Start has developed a Child Outcomes Framework; and national organizations have developed content standards in areas such as early literacy and mathematics.
[NAEYC.](#)

Early Childhood standards identify the appropriate learning goals and outcomes for children from birth to age 5. At ECS, we systematically monitor each state's department of education for changes and addition to Early Childhood standards and add them to our repository when and if they become available. Since many of the state standards are based in the Head Start Child Outcomes, ECS will use these national standards (Head Start) until we have included the state-specific standards in our system. If a state does not have Early Childhood standards, then the Head Start standards will always display for that state.

Even though, there are some literacy and early mathematical content standards included in the Early Childhood standards, these are not the same academic standards used by the K-12 school system.

To easily differentiate the Early Childhood ages from pre-K through 12 grades, ECS represents i.e. Age 1 with A1. The complete group is:

- A1 = Infants, 0 – 1 year
- A2 = Toddlers/Twos, Age 2
- A3 = Preschool, Age 3
- A4 = Preschool, Age 4
- A5 = Kindergartners, Preschool for young 5's, Age 5

In general, Early Childhood standards are used by public and private infant/toddler care facilities and/or preschools to support a fluid transition to the primary grades in a K-12 system. In general, preschools are normally private or federally funded Head Start programs whereas PreK programs are part of public schools.

To learn more about Early Childhood Education we recommend you visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) at <http://www.naeyc.org/ece/> and/or visit to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/>.

Pre-K Standards

More than a dozen states now have academic standards by subject area that extend below Kindergarten to the level known as Pre-K. These standards are part of the Scope and Sequence that has been identified as the Learning Objectives for a specific grade and a subject in that state. They focus on the subject content rather than growth and cognitive development of a child and are used in public school programs for Pre-Kindergartners. Here is an example from the Pre-K – K grade group in English Language Arts for the state of Massachusetts:

GRADES PREK–K

- 4.1: Identify and sort common words into various classifications (*colors, shapes, textures*).
- 4.2: Describe common objects and events in general and specific language.

And from Science (Pre-K to Grade 2):

<p>1. Recognize that water, rocks, soil, and living organisms are found on the earth's surface.</p>	<p>Walk around the playground observing and discussing where water, rocks, soil, and living organisms are found.</p>	<p><i>Identify characteristics shared by naturally occurring rocks and manmade concrete. (T/E 1.1)</i></p>
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To find these standards in the ECS system, simply select the subject as normal and the grade of "Pre-K." It is expected that more and more states will include this grade to insure a smoother transition into kindergarten.

Preschool vs. Pre-Kindergarten

To those not within the system there seems to be no difference between preschool and pre-kindergarten, they are talking about the same aged children, however research is showing that there are subtle difference in the preschool and pre-kindergarten programs. Preschools are normally private or federally funded Head start programs that try to mitigate potential socio-economic deficits, whereas prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs, are usually connected with school districts and are specifically intended to provide a bridge to school for all young children.