The Need to Individuate Standards of Best Practice for Early Childhood and School Age Programs:
A Call to Action and Partnership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School Age (SA) programs encompass a wide range of service and program offerings provided to young people outside of their regular school day. This paper will serve to explore the importance of identifying program quality as it relates to the SA and Early Childhood (EC) years and the key role that standards play in identifying markers of program quality for SA youth, with a specific focus on the need to individuate standards between SA and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs to maximize impact for program participants.

Initial exploration will center on the shared history and development of ECE and SA programs which evolved in light of one another in the context of industrialization, drawing their roots from the late 1890s and into the early 20th century, and which emerged in response to the dual need to provide safe spaces for young people while also offering developmentally appropriate learning opportunities. As society changed through the depression and war years, through the War on Poverty in the 1960s and across federal funding expansions, both ECE and SA programs focused on defining program quality and identifying outcomes that would support young people in achieving life-long success. Through the implementation of Head Start in the 1960s, and more recently with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act implemented in the 1990s, there has been significant attention to defining and incentivizing program quality, often with ECE programs taking center focus and SA programs utilizing shared standards of quality.

Program quality needs to take a contextualized approach that considers differences in developmental needs between children and school-aged youth, typically defined as ages six to 14 with some research extending through age 17, to create structures and services that support this differentiation.

Furthermore, outcome targets for early childhood related to school readiness, as compared with college, career and workforce readiness are similar in concept, but are supported through the development of different skill sets. Utilizing information about EC and SA development, this paper will explore the need to develop program standards that respond to readiness and which are situated in age-appropriate best practice.

"Children ages 6 to 13 represent 33% of all children receiving CCDF assistance. School-age children receive an estimated one-third, or $1.7 billion, of CCDF funds...In 2011, 61% of school-age children receiving CCDF assistance were in center-based programs" (Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

Currently, both ECE and SA programs are seeking, through multiple avenues, to expand program access. Building on the need for individuated ECE and SA program standards, opportunities for the development of partnerships between Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and national bodies that have established SA standards will be explored as an avenue to further the work of individuating ECE and SA standards, in a resource-effective method, that meets the goal of expanding access to quality programming for today's early children and youth.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Nomenclature and the School Age Field

If you were to talk to six different providers about the services they offer students upon dismissal from the regular school day, you could very well hear six different titles for the types of programs they provide: School Age Care; After School; Expanded Learning Time; Extended Learning Time; Out of School Time; School Age Programming. Some providers, researchers and professionals use these terms interchangeably, while others attribute specific outcome targets, methodologies and areas of focus to these types of care for youth provided during the hours following the regular school day, and, depending on the program, in the mornings before school, during school closures, and throughout summer recess as well. The term School Age (SA) will be used in this paper to provide continuity. This is done to provide a framework for shared conversation rather than simplifying or merging the rich diversity of the SA field.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

A Historical Framing of the Early Childhood and School Age Fields and Contemporary Implications

The development of ECE and SA programs in the United States have both shared and disparate origins. The following synopsis features several key aspects of how programs have come to evolve over time, and will situate the current context for the emphasis on individuated program quality and standards development.

1890s-1920s: Safety and Development

At the end of the 19th century and into the start of the 20th century, industrialized areas in the United States began to see two major changes related to the roles of children and youth. The first was a decreasing need for paid child labor in factory settings and the second was the passing of compulsory education laws at the state level. As of 1918, every state in the union had enacted a compulsory education law (Katz, 1976) and from 1900-1928, the United States saw a 21 percent increase in school enrollment among youth ages 5-17 years old, as well as a shift from 5th to 8th grade as the average exit point for youth from the formalized education system (Halpern, 2002).

These changes had implications for SA youth who needed safe places to spend time during the unsupervised hours following the school day. This was one factor that led to the formation of the initial SA programs, which at the time were settlement-based boys' clubs. McArthur (1975), characterizes this time in the lives of youth: "Streetcorner gangs with nothing better to do found an outlet for their energy by stealing from pushcarts and baiting policemen. And children who escaped the lure of gang life did not always escape the wheels of a passing wagon" (p. 377).

Adults were concerned that unsupervised time outside exposed children to illegal activity (Halpern, 2002) and that youth, when left to their own devices, were a public nuisance to other pedestrians and local businesses where they would loiter (Kadzielski, 1977).

Concurrent with the emerging focus on risk factors impacting children and youth was the establishment of the child study movement, followed by the play movement, part of which centered on scientific and social research related to play as a critical component of development (Halpern, 2002). The Play Movement provided an alternative framework for children's early learning and unsupervised hours as a source of opportunity, as opposed to a problem to be solved. Proponents of the Play Movement recognized play as a key element in the lives of youth and identified that play provided relief from the realities of tenement living along with supporting how children naturally made sense of the world around them. Privately financed nursery schools were opened for children under five and were often affiliated with universities where research related to the role of play and further study into child development was being conducted.

The juxtaposition of ECE and SA programs as serving both the need to offer safe spaces for children and youth while also having the potential to expand learning and to support development is seen across the ECE and SA fields today and often surfaces in standards that include items related to health and safety alongside of service delivery practices that promote development, learning and support positive child and youth outcomes.

1920s-1950s: Exploring Quality and Defining Program Purpose

During the depression and war years, various institutions were grappling with the question of where responsibility lay for providing education and supportive programming for EC children and SA youth. In the 1920s, professionals began to recognize an increased need for nursery schools which led to the formation of the National Association for Nursery Education (NANE) in 1929. One of the central aims of NANE was to define quality in the nursery school context and increase program availability.

At the same time NANE was being formed, providers of SA programs expanded to include "churches and ethnic associations; assorted other community and neighborhood centers; family service agencies; and more selectively, schools, park districts, and newly established public housing developments" (Halpern, 2003, p. 45). Schools, in particular, were in a position of balancing the perceived benefits of playing a role in students' lives outside of school hours, while navigating a relinquished control over programming and structure. Some schools began hosting their own SA programs, while others managed sometimes uneasy relationships with community organizations to provide programming jointly (Halpern, 2003). As SA program providers were diversifying, they were also beginning to define their work and roles across some common themes which, according to Halpern (2003) included:

• Supporting prevocational and trade skills for boys, and family life for girls;
• Identifying and nurturing children's talents;
• Offering opportunities for creative expression;
• Emphasizing political and ideological loyalty and nationalism; and
• Continuing to curtail the perceived dangers associated with unsupervised time.

In this way, the period of the 1920s-1950s marked shared progression for ECE and SA programs in defining key program characteristics and starting to identify markers of program quality. Simultaneously to this progress, both fields of service were facing funding challenges and drew support from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) relief measure of 1935 which helped provided financial support for staffing and facilities development (Halpern, 2003; "History of NAEYC," n.d.). For SA programs in particular, the recruitment and retention of qualified staff has remained a key issue since this time.

The professionalization of the SA field began to take root with some universities offering courses of study for after school professionals, typically in the sociology or social work departments. "Professionalizing meant articulating the relevant theory and methods for after-school work" (Halpern 2002, p. 49), which invariably meant that differing schools of thought on the priorities and purpose of SA programs began to take hold, leading to the sometimes decentralized character of SA programs still seen today. Appendix A offers an overview of some of the foundational frameworks for ECE and SA programs.

1960s-1980s: Limitations to Access: Capacity Challenges, Under-funded Requirements and Gaps in Services

During the 1960s, in response to a renewed economic crisis, President Johnson launched the War on Poverty. The struggle to find sustainable funding sources continued to be a critical issue for ECE and SA programs. To combat the impact of the economic recession, Johnson introduced the Economic Opportunity Act out of which Head Start was formed. Head Start is a series of federally funded ECE programs that still exist today; however, this funding stream did not include support for SA programs. In 1974, Title XX of the Social Services Amendments was passed which allocated 2.3 billion dollars to various programs, including child care and was not limited to ECE as Head Start funds had been (Cohen, 1996).

While federal monies were made available to both ECE and SA programs, funds were often linked to additional service requirements which impacted programs' ability to effectively utilize these monies, particularly in the case of SA programs.

Also during this time, urban environments were experiencing a transformation in residential demographics along racial lines. White families were moving to suburban areas, often taking jobs with them. Simultaneously, high-rise urban development housing was expanded within cities, which led to African American families and youth being "left behind." By 1963, unemployment rates of African Americans was 112% higher as compared to their white counterparts (Halpern, 2003). The resulting economic disparity resulted in access gaps for inner city, low-income youth across the spectrum of educational services, including ECE and SA programs.

1980s-1990s: Federal Funding Expansion and QRS Emergence

Continued competition for funding across the 1980s and 1990s helped fuel an interest in program quality and identifying programs that were most closely meeting the needs of youth. Originally implemented in 1990 under the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act ("OCC Fact Sheet," 2017), the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) was authorized as a provision of federal monies to support access to child care programming for parents who were employed, seeking employment or pursuing educational opportunity and training (Cohen, 1996). The pool of money dedicated by the CCDBG Act is known as the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), although sometimes the CCDBG and CCDF are used interchangeably within the ECE and SA fields.

Administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) to help states, territories and tribal governments support development of and access to high-quality ECE and SA programs, CCDF monies:

• Are allocated in part to provide direct funding to low-income, working families through subsidy reimbursements for enrollment in quality ECE and SA programs; and
• Are allocated to provide funding to states, territories and tribal governments which they can utilize to develop quality improvement systems and provide resources at the program level to support quality improvement efforts.

The first Quality Rating Systems (QRS) began to emerge in the late 1990s when state administrators of subsidy programs, which had been rewarding program quality through a system of tiered subsidy reimbursements, decided to pursue more organized and systemic strategies to identify markers of quality EC programs (Mitchell, 2005).

"CCDF funds are used for two main purposes—to provide child care subsidies for low-income children under the age of 13 and to enhance the quality of child care for all children… The quality dollars are the most flexible funds in the CCDF, and many states dedicate a portion of these dollars to out-of-school time activities" (Deich, Bryant, & Wright, 2001, p. 3).

2000s to Today: Proliferation of QRIS and SA Incorporation

Most recently, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) have seen tremendous growth, expanding from the initial QRS programs of the 1990s to over 41 state and regional systems either in operation, or currently being piloted as of 2017 (QRIS National Learning Network, 2017). While all QRIS active today include standards for ECE programs, to date there are 24 state QRIS that allow SA programs to participate (NCASE, 2017). Within the 24 systems that allow for SA program participation, modes of participation vary greatly from state to state. Some states allow SA programs to participate utilizing the same pathway as ECE programs, with the provision that SA programs are able to request exemptions for unrelated standards. Others have developed either a SA strand, or in some cases have adopted a specific set of SA standards. Additional approaches fall somewhere in between.

Current Field Impact from Historical Influences

Early ECE and SA programs were almost universally funded by private sources and sponsoring organizations. Both the ECE and SA fields have a shared history of centering the identification of program quality and access to quality programming in the face of funding challenges and have experienced varied federal support over time. Additionally, ECE and SA programs have served a dual purpose of providing safe and healthy spaces for youth, while also working to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for program participants.

Separate from ECE programs, the initial proliferation of SA programs was characterized by a theme of decentralization. Given the decentralized roots of SA programs, Halpern (2003) has identified a leading challenge in the organization of the school age field today:

Among the historic and emergent challenges facing the after-school field, one stands out, and in fact organizes the others: to broaden the base of programs providing good experiences for children. Addressing that challenge will require that stakeholders in the field attend to a number of tasks. The first two, largely conceptual, will be to clarify the role of after-school programs in meeting low-income children's developmental needs, and from that to develop a more specific picture of the types (and qualities) of experiences children should have in after-school programs. Subsequent tasks include identifying the program attributes that lead to good experiences for children, the domains in which programs most need assistance and the types of supports most likely to be helpful to programs. Finally, it will be necessary to figure out how to organize and offer support to programs (p. 114).

Utilizing the challenge set forth by Halpern, this paper will explore the developmental context for SA youth as compared with EC children in which programs are operating, and then, drawing upon that context, identify opportunities for the development of standards which can be used to define and identify program quality across the spectrum of SA programs operating today, as well as identify program structures and administrative practices that specifically support outcomes for SA program participants.

One Size Does Not Fit All

## Key Developmental Markers in the Early Childhood and School Age Years

Looking at the available information on development across the ECE and SA years from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016, 2017), children from ages two through five and youth from ages six through 14 experience a progression of developmental milestones related to social-emotional changes and their thinking and learning as captured in Appendix B. Although this paper explores the distinctive milestones associated within each of these age spans, it is important to denote that development occurs in a continuum across one's lifespan with school-age specific skills and abilities building upon and extending out from those achieved in the early childhood years. While there are notable differences in the social-emotional domain between the ECE and SA years, where one can see pronounced differentiation is in relation to advancements in thinking and learning between these two age groups. Children in ECE programs are developing foundational skills related to their language, cognitive and fine- and gross-motor ability.

SA youth, on the other hand, are developing the capacity for layered reasoning and the capacity to consider academic content in a multi-disciplinary context which requires advanced reasoning and meaning-making coupled with the capacity for abstract thought.

Standards need to account for best practices in adapting activities, program design and the environment to support developmentally specific skill sets and targeted outcomes for program participants. Research on stage-environment fit indicates that "youth development depends on the degree of match between a child's existing abilities, characteristics, and interests and the opportunities afforded to him/her in the immediate social environment. Fit is optimal when the environmental features experienced are structured according to the child's current needs and developmental level" (Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2009, p. 15). Ergo, to support children and youth along the developmental continuum, the creation of any standards of best practice would need to be age and program specific.

Documenting Program Quality through Standards Development

When identifying best practices that support optimal youth development and learning, standards development work will need to address both program structure, which involves the features of the program itself and can include, but are not limited to ages served, activities, size, administrative and human resource practices, funding sources, and activities, as well as program quality which "is process-oriented, and captures the actual program as it is implemented" (Miller & Hall, 2007, para. 5).
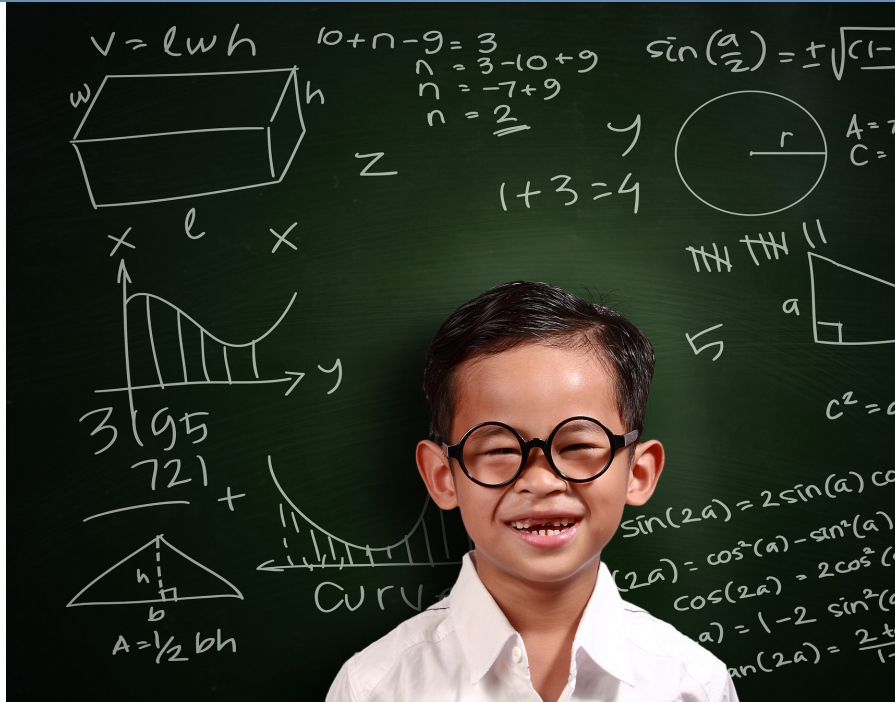
Exploring and understanding the developmental needs of SA youth as they differentiate from children in the EC years and utilizing that information in the creation of SA specific standards will serve the dual function of providing programs with frameworks for program design as well as elevating best practices to coincide with positive youth-centered outcomes that are applicable across SA program types and missions.

One of the key youth centered outcomes that emerged in the 1990s, and which is shared by many programs, is the focus on readiness. The notion of readiness, and specifically school readiness, is rooted most strongly in the establishment of the National Education Goals in 1990 by then president George Bush in cooperation with 50 state Governors (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995) which enumerate the first of five key goals as ensuring that by the year 2000, all children would enter school ready to learn. Head Start (2017) defines readiness as "children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life."

Over time, the definition of readiness and associated factors have expanded to include not only the innate skills and abilities that youth bring to educational settings, but to explore issues of inequity and access within educational systems and the responsibility programs have for meeting students where they are upon program entry. While readiness was originally centered on EC children and their relative preparedness to enter ongoing schooling, it has since come to include college, career readiness for SA youth.

As Rosenberg, Wilkes, and Harris (2014) point out, "learning experiences can include those that focus on academic skills, but also extend beyond to provide youth with active, applied, and collaborative learning opportunities that promote a variety of other skills that youth need to succeed, such as creativity, problem solving, team work, critical thinking, and digital literacy" (p. 18). While traditional emphasis has been placed on the academic and technical knowledge associated with school, college, career and workforce readiness, the development and acquisition of soft skills has been gaining traction as being as important as these other two items. Soft skills, alternatively referred to as social-emotional learning or non-cognitive, 21st Century or employability skills depending on the research or practice area, can be defined as, "a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. These skills are broadly applicable and complement other skills such as technical, vocational, and academic skills" (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015, p. 4).

Lippman et al. (2015) focused their research on identifying which soft skills were the greatest predictors of successful workplace outcomes for young people. The following are the top five skills that emerged:
• Higher order thinking skills
• Social skills
• Self-control
• Positive self-concept
• Communication

When looking at youth from ages six through 14, one can see that these soft-skills correlate with developmental stages as highlighted in Appendix C. Additionally, research suggests that the ability to develop and improve upon skills varies across ages, and that the development of character-related skills in particular are more malleable at later ages as compared with cognitive skills (Heckman & Kautz, 2013).

"Malleability is especially important given the inequality of opportunity experienced by youth in resource-deprived contexts, including unequal access to high-quality education and exposure to stress from poverty or violence. It is crucial to know that these skills can be developed among young people despite a lack of previous opportunities for them to be cultivated" (Lippman et. al, 2015, p. 39).

Additional research suggests that not only do both cognitive and non-cognitive skills play a role in determining social and economic success later in life, but non-cognitive skills may be the more highly correlated of the two factors in impacting long-term success (Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006).

In an article linking after-school program quality with youth outcomes, Deborah Lowe Vandell and Lee Shumow (1999) find in their summary that "Program benefits also appear to depend on program features such as opportunities for children to make choices and a positive emotional climate. These aspects of program quality can, in turn, be linked to structural factors such as child-staff ratios and staff qualifications" (p. 77). Based on this knowledge, the objective then becomes to develop standards of best practice that support youth development and hone in on the structural factors that are proven to contribute to positive outcomes for participating youth.

Collaborative Opportunities for Standards Development

One of the most active current arenas for standards development and revision is within Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. Most states have either developed their own standards, or are working to collaborate with other organizations to modify existing standards to meet their state's needs. This work takes financial and human capital investments which leaves QRIS administrators sometimes having to choose whether efforts will be focused on ECE or SA programs with the result that opportunities for SA programs to participate in QRIS can be limited by having to follow ECE focused standards and to use tools and quality indicators that were developed with ECE programs in mind.

As previously explored, SA program participants have different developmental needs than their EC peers and outcomes for SA youth are best realized through programs that are designed to meet their developmental needs and support the expansion of skills that are linked with promoting readiness. Where does this leave QRIS administrators who would work towards standards differentiation lest the competition for funding and overextended resources? At least part of the answer is that the cost burden of individuating and implementing standards for ECE and SA programs can be mitigated by seeking partnership with other organizations that already specialize in generating and maintaining SA standards.

Several organizations and regional networks have developed SA standards related to specific sub-sets of programs in the SA field, including the American Camp Association (ACA), the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), state affiliates of the C.S. Mott foundation's afterschool networks initiative, and the National Afterschool Association and some of its affiliates. As an accrediting body, the Council on Accreditation (COA) has also developed SA standards in partnership with national and regional partners resulting in a set of SA standards that reflect programs across the nation, as well as the thinking of practitioners and leading school age-focused organizations. In 2009, the COA partnered with the National Afterschool Association to combine their SA standards and provide one, comprehensive offering which then underwent panel review by national experts from the SA field. Since that time, the Council on Accreditation has maintained its regional and national partnerships to continue a process of ongoing research and, as necessary, revision, to ensure that the available SA standards retain relevance in an evolving field. Of note, COA's standards are written with the larger continuum of SA program types in mind – whether community or school based; operating as single entities or as a part of a network; serving youth between 5 – 18 years of age or any sub-set of that range; having a defined content focus or integrating several; or occurring before or after school, during school recess or the summer months.

As reflected in COA's work, standards ideally speak to sets of fundamental and best practices. Fundamental practices emphasize critical areas that support the health and safety of children and youth and correlate to the basic licensing requirements shared by most states. Building upon those fundamental practices, standards also help programs to focus on the best practices that facilitate positive youth development and promote college and career readiness and skill development. COA has identified categories of best practices related to program structure and quality that when combined with fundamental practices work together to provide a quality framework that offers programs the best chance of promoting positive outcomes for youth served. These categories include:

• Quality Supervision
• Quality Awareness and Improvement Practices
• Program Administration for Safety and Sustainability
• Effective Program Design with Aligned Implementation
• Qualified, Trained and Retained Staff

COA is recognized in 22 instances across 18 states as an accreditor of school-age programs.

An additional benefit of having standards that provide strong program frameworks is that this helps meet a need of School Age programs themselves. Although 24 states currently allow for the participation of SA programs within their QRIS, SA programs may opt out of participation if they experience dissonance between their operational modalities and the need to seek a large number of exemptions, if offered by the state, in light of the system's focus on the ECE context. As QRIS personnel continue the rigorous work of identifying and incentivizing program quality, partnering with organizations that have nationally vetted standards for SA programs is a resource-effective method for helping to elevate quality for SA programs.

Conclusion

Currently, both ECE and SA programs are seeking through multiple avenues, such as participation in state-based Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and state and national accreditation, to further define program quality, demonstrate adherence to standards of best practice, and expand program access through the utilization of support funds available from the federal sector. The ability to define program quality is contingent upon utilizing standards that speak to best practices across the related field of service. While each ECE and SA program has its own mission, structures and methodologies for administration and service delivery, programs must be able to share common language to reflect on their practices and to contextualize quality.

Standards also need to be responsive to the populations being served and to align with target outcomes for those populations.

For this reason, as standards development progresses, the need to differentiate standards of best practice for ECE and SA programs becomes readily apparent. While both sets of programs share a rich history, EC children and SA youth and the programs that support them will be optimally served by organizations engaged in standards development that individuate sets of standards for ECE and SA programs.

The development of individuated ECE and SA standards is not only important, but critical for Quality Rating and Improvement Systems as they strive to meet and support the needs of today's youth. Seeking out and developing partnerships with organizations and accrediting bodies that have already developed nationally vetted standards for school age programs provides an opportunity to elevate and individuate school age program quality from early childhood program quality while making the most effective use of available resources for incentivizing access to quality ECE and SA programs.

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Appendix A
EC and SA Philosophical Frameworks (Halpern, 2003)

School Age

Group Work: Proponents of group work believed that the group, rather than the individual, was the most important part of a SA program which situated the adult as the de-facto leaders. Group formation theory was important for these professionals and group work supported the development of youth during a time frame in which an emerging sense of importance related to cooperation, responsibility to others, expanding peer relationships, and critical thinking and problem solving skills are all developmental milestones.

Informal and Recreational Education: Focus on crafts and specific skill development, sometimes using a crafts person-apprentice relationship as the model.

Character Formation: Decreased focus on specific program content and centering the adult as a role model to influence youths' character development through observation and absorption.

Progressive Education: Focusing on learning by doing and placing as much, if not more, emphasis on process as opposed to product. Progressive education also focused on centering the child with activities and programs being designed to support the child's interests and abilities.

Early Childhood

Montessori: Following the lead of the child and allowing freedom of exploration in the environment.

Reggio Emilia Approach: Project-oriented curriculum focused on process over product with a strong focus on the involvement of the whole community in the education process.

Play-based learning: Play is the central curricular focus with the belief that learning emerges naturally from children's play activities.

Direct Instruction: The teacher is the central classroom figure and leads the students through learning activities. Direct instruction is typified by practices such as drilling and rote learning.

Appendix B
Key Developmental Milestones for Children and Youth

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

EARLY CHILDHOOD	SCHOOL AGE
Evaluation of Friendship and Peer Relationships	**Evaluation of Friendship and Peer Relationships**
From ages two through five, children move from independent parallel play to developing an understanding of ownership (mine versus yours), learn about turn-taking and cooperation and develop a desire to please their friends, as well as exhibit affection for peers without adult prompting	Youth move from a general need to be liked and accepted by friends to forming more complex relationships and a deeper emotional importance of having friends, particularly of the same sex. Youth also pay more attention to teamwork and think about their place in relation to the world around them. As strong emotional connections form between youth, peer pressure increases to conform to social norms among friend groups.
Relationships with Parents and Family	**Relationships with Parents and Family**
Early childhood is the period at which children learn to separate from their parents with ECE programs often offering the first experiences with separation. Children are likely to move from exploring defiant behaviors during their twos to demonstrating alternating cooperative and challenging behaviors as they progress through the early childhood years.	Relationships between youth and their parents and family shift with youth showing increasing independence and potentially a decrease in affection towards parents that coincides with their increased emotional reliance on peer friendships.
Changes in Self-Concept and Self-Image	**Changes in Self-Concept and Self-Image**
This is the age at which children become aware of gender and may explore gender through dramatic play incorporating family roles such as acting as moms, dads and babies. Children become more independent in developing self-help skills and show a broadening range of emotions.	Body image and consciousness of physical self become more central as youth enter puberty. This is accompanied by increasing concern over appearance which can include focus on body image and outward appearance such as clothes and personal style which is coupled with youth varying between high-personal expectations and deficits in self-confidence. In addition to physical changes, youth may experience changes in mood which can manifest in the forms of anxiety and depression which coupled with increase peer pressure can lead to body-image related issues and adverse decision making concerning alcohol and drug use, sexual relationships and other areas.

THINKING AND LEARNING

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Language and Communication

Children show speech development by moving from the verbal repetition of overheard words, word-image recognition and speaking two to four word sentences to being able to speak clearly and maintain a conversation using short sentences. Regarding literacy, children move from being able to point to things in a book when prompted to grasping initial grammar concepts, being able to tell a basic story and to start using future tense. By age five, many children are able to use prediction to verbally relate what they anticipate may happen in a story.

Children show literacy development as they move from completing familiar sentences in well-known books, to remembering parts of a story and being able to recite songs and simple poems from memory. Children's comprehension of complex stories is greater than their ability to produce stories of equal complexity (NAEYC, 1995).

Cognitive Development

During the ECE years, children experience rapid growth and development in their cognitive skills. Children learn about sequencing and following multi-step tasks, spacial relations through building and puzzle assembly tasks, emerging numeracy and math concepts and they show an evolution in dramatic play. Make-believe play evolves from constructing simple games to incorporating characters such as dolls, animals and people and shows a developing sense of symbolism. Children also begin to move from non-differentiation to a demonstrated understanding of fantasy and reality.

Fine and Gross Motor

During the early childhood years, children develop both their fine and gross motor skills which leads to enhanced body autonomy. Children learn to develop grip and over time can write numbers, upper and lower case letters, draw images of increasing complexity, use scissors and can work successfully with small manipulatives such as buttons and zippers.

SCHOOL AGE

Increasing Academic Complexity

Youth begin to face greater academic rigor within the regular school day. Subject matter becomes interdisciplinary with a need for students to think across content areas and to draw connections and relationships. This coincides with a rapid increase in the development of mental skills during this time span as well as an increased attention span and capacity for prolonged engagement.

Self Actualization

In addition the development of critical thinking skills that support the demands associated with expanding academic complexity, youth in this age range become more self-actualized. There is a marked increase in ability to articulate thoughts and feelings using a greater range of emotional complexity. This is paired with a developing capacity to consider the viewpoints, thoughts and feelings of others while focusing less on oneself. Ultimately, youth have an increased capacity to differentiate between right and wrong and to empathize with those around them who may or may not conform to their personal beliefs, feelings or attitudes.

Children also learn an expanding set of gross-motor skills as their bodies develop which include enhanced coordination, increased dexterity, flexibility, and muscle development as exhibited by the attainment of the ability to complete such tasks as kicking, consistently catching a ball that is bounced or thrown, running, climbing and peddling a tricycle, and being able to balance on one foot for increasing lengths of time. As children's fine and gross motor skills develop, they learn to get onto and off of furniture without adult assistance, walk up and down stairs, pour, cut, and mash their own food, and move from using diapers to independent toileting.

Appendix C

Correlations between SA Development and Soft-Skills

Developmental Domain (CDC, 2017)	Related Soft-Skills (Lippman et. al, 2015)
Evaluation of Friendship and Peer Relationships	Social Skills, Communication
Relationships with Parents and Family	Social Skills
Changes in Self-Concept and Self-Image	Positive Self-Concept
Increasing Academic Complexity	Higher Order Thinking Skills
Self Actualization	Higher Order Thinking Skills, Social Skills, Self-Control, Positive Self-Concept, Communication

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