

**WHAT PRINCIPALS SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO:  
Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities  
National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005**

**Overview**

Expanding the continuum of learning between preschool and the primary grades has become a major issue in recent years. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) believes that elementary school principals should be at the forefront of discussions and activities that reach beyond the elementary campus. Everyone involved in pre-K programs should understand what it takes for students to be ready to succeed on the first day of school.

**NAESP Standards of Effective Principals**

This article focuses on the six standards of education and early learning that effective principals demonstrate.

1. Embrace early childhood learning – Effective principals embrace high-quality early education programs, principles and practices as the foundation for education throughout the school community. This means supporting an expanded continuum of learning that includes children from age 3 through third grade.
2. Engage families and communities- Effective principals work with families and community organizations to support children at home, in the community and in pre-K and kindergarten programs. Principals who create a seamless support system help parents with their children’s learning at home and in early education programs.
3. Promote appropriate learning environments for young children – Principals should be knowledgeable about the key elements of an appropriate learning environment for young children. They should use their leadership and management skills to ensure appropriate environments when they observe and analyze interactions in the classroom.
4. Ensure high-quality teaching – Effective principals ensure high-quality curriculum and instructional practices that foster young children’s learning and development. In a developmentally appropriate classroom, the curriculum strives to help children become lifelong learners and think critically.
5. Use multiple assessments to strengthen learning- Effective principals use multiple assessments to create experiences that strengthen student learning. This is a key ingredient in building high-quality pre-K programs and forging paths to students’ intellectual growth. Assessments can be built around teacher observations and analysis of student work and can be used to create a true continuum or early learning.
6. Advocate for high-quality, universal early childhood education – Effective principals advocate for universal opportunity for children to attend high-quality early childhood education programs. Schools focused on building a strong continuum across the community to better educate young children form strong connections to families, community organizations and individuals and groups serving children. Principals become community leaders, not just school leaders

**Conclusion**

Principals and schools who employ these six standards as a starting point and a bench-mark for academic alignment will be in a position to provide the best possible educational opportunities to their schools and community.

(2005). *What principals should know and be able to do: Leading early childhood learning communities*. Alexandria, Virginia: The National Association of Elementary School Principals.