Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: Guiding Principles

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Steering Committee has established the following Guiding Principles to inform the development and application of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards in Wisconsin. These guiding principles reflect the knowledge base in scientific research, our values, and our commitment to young children and families.

All children are capable and competent.

Development and learning begins at birth, for all children and in all settings. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support practices that promote development and protect young children from the harm that results from inappropriate expectations. In this, they are aligned with ethical principles of the early childhood profession.

Early relationships matter.

Beginning at birth, a child forms relationships with adults who will guide their learning and development. Especially during the earliest years of a child's life from birth to age 3, a child's growth and development is shaped within the context of those relationships. Positive relationships are essential for the development of personal responsibility, capacity for self-regulation, for constructive interactions with others, and for fostering academic functioning and mastery. Warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions help children develop a secure, positive sense of self and encourage them to respect and cooperate with others.

A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.

Developmental domains are highly interrelated. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the interconnectedness of the domains of children's development: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and communication, health and physical development, and cognition and general knowledge.

Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards are based on research about the processes and sequences of young children's learning and development, and the conditions under which children develop to their fullest potential.

Children are individuals who develop at various rates.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards recognize that there are individual rates of development and learning across any age range.

Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards acknowledge that children's development and learning opportunities reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of children, families and environments.

Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support the development of optimal learning experiences that can be adapted for individual developmental patterns.

Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the belief that children should be provided with opportunities to explore and apply new skills through child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities, and through interactions with peers, adults and materials. Teachers and families can best guide learning by providing these opportunities in natural, authentic contexts. Positive relationships help children gain the benefits of instructional experiences and resources.

Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.

Families, communities and schools all have significant roles to play in terms of what opportunities are available to children, and how well a child is able to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Children who see themselves as highly valued are more likely to feel secure, thrive physically, get along with others, learn well, and feel part of a community.

"*Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards" with Introduction.* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2008.

Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners. http://www.collaboratingpartners.com.