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**To:** [AZSBE Inbox](#)  
**Cc:** [Jackie Jones](#); [Carol Lippert](#)  
**Subject:** 2016 Arizona Draft Standards - Public Comment  
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Please accept the following as my public comment relating to the most recent draft ELA and Math Standards. They exceed the 500-character limit. I will also be submitting additional comments that are specific to some of the ELA and Math Standards, via the website.

It appears to me that the [2016 Arizona Draft Standards](#) have hardly been changed, especially for Kindergarten through Grade 3. They are still Common Core. They are still developmentally inappropriate.

Grades K-3 are critically important, because whatever is learned in these grades affects a child's success in every grade that follows. The [English Language Arts](#) and [Math Executive Summaries](#) indicate that the review Committees considered Clarity, Cognitive Demand, and Measurability.

Why didn't they ask this question? **"Is the standard developmentally appropriate?"**

Members of the Arizona public brought forth this concern over a year ago. Child development professionals all across America did, too, before[1] and after the Standards were released in June 2010.[2]

This is an astonishing omission, because I'm sure that every teacher has been required to take at least one course in early child development in college. I was a business major and took a class in child psychology!

According to clinical child psychologist Dr. Megan Koschnick[3], and other experts[4] in this field, young children are not little adults. Their brains haven't developed to where they can reflect on their own thinking. They cannot think abstractly. They cannot understand another person's perspective. Learning to identify numbers and letters is far different from learning to perform mathematical operations and to read with understanding.

Kindergarteners are internally motivated to be independent and creative. They want to organize their stuff on their own; dress themselves on their own, paint, dance, recite stories, build a fort. They're openly proud of their accomplishments. **We should encourage their independence and unique abilities.** This is when teachers have a Golden Opportunity to introduce age-appropriate materials.

Since 1990, creativity has steadily diminished in American classrooms. Part of the problem is an obsession with standards.[5] In Kindergarten English Language Arts alone, there are 50

standards. If you include every itemized standard within a standard, there are 77.[6] And this doesn't include Kindergarten Math standards, of which there are 35![7]

*The pressure of implementing the standards leads many kindergarten teachers to resort to inappropriate didactic methods combined with frequent testing. Teacher-led instruction in kindergartens has almost entirely replaced the active, play-based, experiential learning that we know children need from decades of research in cognitive and developmental psychology and neuroscience.*[8],[9]

K-3 is not the time to encourage dependence and conformity. It is not the time to demand that young children collaborate and seek their peers' opinions and suggestions about their work.

Teachers will have to drill and drill to get young children trained to respond correctly. Some of these children won't be able to meet, or will balk at, these standards and will experience much stress. They will suffer disapproval from teachers and parents. They might be considered "delayed" and subjected to remedial classes they don't need, or become behavioral problems. [10]

Sadly, they will miss out on age-appropriate learning, and will be forced to catch up while struggling with the demands for new learning.

There is also an obsession with advanced reading and writing skills at very early ages, before children have a grasp of oral language.[11] This trend over the last several years isn't producing better readers by the 4th grade any more than children who walk as early as 9 months old are better walkers than children who don't walk until they are 17 months.[12] In fact, forcing overly directive academic skills on young children may have an opposite, harmful effect, especially in the social-emotional realm.[13],[14]

*Consider this: "Finnish education often seems paradoxical to outside observers because it appears to break a lot of the rules we take for granted. Finnish children don't begin school until age 7. They have more recess, shorter school hours than many U.S. children do (nearly 300 fewer hours per year in elementary school), and the lightest homework load of any industrialized nation. There are no gifted programs, almost no private schools, and no high-stakes national standardized tests. 'Yet over the past decade Finland has consistently performed among the top nations on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized test given to 15-year olds in 65 nations and territories around the world'." [15]*

As stated by Laura Pappano of the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College, "Children's brains haven't changed; Kindergarten's expectations have." [16]

Here are a few examples of Inappropriate [English Language Arts](#) and [Math Standards](#) required of Kindergarteners. This list is by no means exhaustive. It's the tip of the iceberg.

## English/Language Arts

[K.RF.4](#). "Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding." [K.W.5](#). "With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed. [K.W.6](#). "With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers."

## Math

[K.MP.2](#): "Reason Abstractly and Quantitatively." [K.MP.3](#). "Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others." [K.MP.6](#). "Attend to precision."

## REFERENCES

- [1] [Joint Statement of Early Childhood Health and Education Professionals on the Common Core Standards Initiative](#). Issued by the Alliance for Childhood, March 2, 2010.
- [2] [Reading Instruction in Kindergarten: Little to Gain and Much to Lose](#). by Defending the Early Years and Alliance for Childhood.
- [3] [Dr. Megan Koschnick presents on Common Core at APP Conference](#) and [Common Core 101: Dr. Megan Koschnick](#).
- [4] [Statement for New York State Assembly Education Forum Brentwood, New York October 10, 2013](#). Mary Calamia, LCSW, CASAC.
- [5] [The Creativity Crisis](#). Bo Bronson and Ashley Merryman.
- [6] [2016 Arizona Draft ELA Standards Kindergarten](#)
- [7] [Arizona's Draft Standards Mathematics Kindergarten](#)
- [8] [Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul](#). Stuart Brown. 2010.
- [9] [A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool](#). Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, R. M. Golinkoff, L.E. Berk, and D. G. Singer. 2009.
- [10] [Dr. Megan Koschnick presents on Common Core at APP Conference](#)
- [11] [Is Kindergarten the New First Grade? The Changing Nature of Kindergarten in the Age of Accountability](#). Daphna Bassok and A. Roem.
- [12] ["Important New Findings linking self-regulation, pretend play and learning in young children."](#) Marcy Guddemi. SEEN, August 21.
- [13] ["The High/Scope Pre-school Curriculum Comparison Study through age 23."](#) Larry J. Schweinhart and D. P. Weikart. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 12. Pp. 117-143.
- [14] ["Moving up the grades: Relationship between pre-school model and later school success."](#) R. A. Marconi Ph.D., Developmental Psychology. Early Childhood Research & Practice 4(1).
- [15] [Finnish Education Chief: 'We Created a School System Based on Equality'](#)
- [16] ["Kids Haven't Changed; Kindergarten Has."](#) Laura Pappano.

**SEE ALSO**

[The Joyful, Illiterate Kindergartners of Finland](#)

[Piaget's Stages of Development \(YouTube\)](#)

[Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development](#)

Sincerely,

Anita Christy

Grandmother/Great-Grandmother

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