Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners
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Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners
Florida Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Education Practitioners

The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners is a set of knowledge and skill standards that define what early care and education practitioners who work directly with children should know and be able to do in order to facilitate child growth and development and partner effectively with families. The core competencies include expectations across a continuum of training, education and experience, ranging from entry-level practitioner to practitioners with degrees, certifications and extensive experience. Identifying a core body of knowledge, that defines the content knowledge expectations for those working in the profession, is a crucial and foundational component to developing and implementing a professional development system in Florida.

The framework for developing the core competencies has included reviewing the purpose and importance of competencies, assessing the research and best practices evidence in compiling the competencies and considering various pathways, both formal and informal, to attaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the competencies. Deliberations and work also addressed core knowledge subject areas and levels of expertise.

Purpose

The development of the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners was led by a steering committee of state leaders representing government agencies, higher education institutions, early care and education provider associations, training and technical assistance organizations, and other early childhood stakeholders. The importance and purpose of the core competencies are summarized as follows:

- Identifies and defines what practitioners need to know and be able to do, the knowledge and behavioral expectations, to provide quality early care and education for children and their families.

- Outlines a set of characteristics and attributes that define a continuum of professional development over time, along multiple pathways and supports effective job performance in early care and education.

- Creates a framework and common language for professional development; defines terms and expectations that can be used consistently among practitioners and across agencies, institutions, programs and organizations when communicating about early care and education.

- Serves as a standard for decisions and practices carried out by practitioners in all early care and education settings and programs.

- Provides guidelines for developing, tracking, supporting and promoting staff qualifications, curricula, distance learning and professional development tools and resources for practitioners in multiple early care and education systems and settings.

- Creates a framework to promote recognition of the significance of the early care and education profession, inform accountability systems and guide training, education, articulation agreements between institutions and interagency agreements.
About the Core Competencies.

The core competencies are used as follows:

- **Providers, Directors, Practitioners, Teachers.**
  - A self-assessment tool to measure levels of knowledge and skill in each of the seven core knowledge areas.
  - A guide to identify specific areas for future professional development.

- **Directors, Program Administrators.**
  - Create job descriptions and staff evaluation tools.
  - Specify education and training requirements for teaching positions.
  - Develop and track staff professional development and growth plans.
  - Create compensation incentives based on levels of competency achieved by practitioners.

- **Trainers, Training Entities.**
  - Guide planning and developing education and training efforts and curriculum across levels of competencies.
  - Encourage cross-sector involvement in training.
  - Promote training and education opportunities that address specific competencies.

- **Higher Education Entities.**
  - Coordinate and design course content to facilitate transfer and articulation agreements.
  - Assess current program content to determine course development and modification.
  - Design pathways leading to qualifications, degrees and credentials.

- **Federal, State and Local Agencies.**
  - Develop and implement policies that will enhance professionalism in early care and education.
  - Link core competencies to other early care and education system efforts (e.g., Early Learning Guidelines, Early Care and Education Frameworks, Quality Rating Improvement Systems, Accreditation Systems, and Expanding Opportunities).
  - Link core competencies to efforts to support school success for children.
  - Promote use of core competencies across programs, agencies and higher education institutions.
  - Link core competencies to compensation initiatives to improve wages within early care and education, linking competence to compensation.
  - Core competencies for other professionals in the early care and education field are available. The knowledge and skill requirements for after school practitioners, directors and technical assistance specialists are significantly different from those required of practitioners who work directly with children. These differences underscore the need for developing core competencies for these professionals.
Standards of Development

The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners were developed based on a thorough review of research and best practices and are grounded in developmentally appropriate practice. The work completed at the state level in early 2000, Pathways to Professionalism, and at the local level, by a collaborative of early childhood partners in Palm Beach County provided a base of research and criteria for the core competencies. A multitude of national standards were reviewed and incorporated into the core competencies, including those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Development, Program, and Accreditation Standards; the Child Development Associate Competency Standards developed by The Council for Professional Recognition; National Teacher Certification Standards; guidance regarding infant and toddler teachers developed by Zero to Three; National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation standards; and professional development guidelines developed by the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Resources and information from the National Child Care Information Center and the NAEYC Early Childhood Workforce Initiative guided development of the core competencies. National standards and state comparisons regarding competencies, system frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms, funding, access and data were reviewed and considered.

Core competencies from numerous other states were also examined. Extensive efforts were made to ensure broad-scale input into developing the core competencies within the Florida early childhood community. In addition to the guidance of the Professional Development Initiative Steering Committee, a core competency workgroup (utilizing teachers, directors, administrators, trainers and other stakeholders) and several teacher and trainer focus groups assisted with competency development. Input from other system initiatives within Florida (e.g., Inclusion Task Force, Frameworks Initiative) was also considered.

Formal and Informal Pathways

Practitioners develop knowledge and skill in a variety of ways, and the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners are designed to support formal and informal pathways of early care and education training and education. For those who choose a more formal route of college and university education, the core competencies provide a framework for developing coursework and curricula for higher education institutions. In a similar way, local trainers and training systems can utilize the core competencies to plan and develop informal training programs and modules.

Teachers and their supervisors can utilize the core competencies to develop personal professional development plans and evaluate course and workshop offerings based on their alignment with identified needs.

As teachers and directors become more accustomed to a professional development system and are afforded more financial and resource supports, it is likely that some individuals will want to move from the informal to the formal system.
Tiers of Competencies

Professionals in the early care and education field become increasingly competent through their experiences and professional development opportunities. The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners have been organized from basic- to high-level skills across four levels or tiers. Each tier is a prerequisite to the next, with knowledge and skill in one tier required before moving to the next higher tier. Knowledge and skill development generally progresses from knowing and following practices to planning and implementing activities and procedures to eventually analyzing and evaluating programs and practices.

In some instances, however, skills and knowledge are not linear and not all begin at the entry level, so some skills may seem similar across different levels. The tiers of competencies provide a pathway to enter and progress within the early childhood field. Each tier assumes greater knowledge and skill than the previous tier, and assessment documents have been developed to demonstrate alignment of the competencies to the formal educational system of credentials and degrees. The intent of the document is to describe knowledge and skills that can be obtained in a variety of ways; thus, tiers should not be tied to a particular job or position of employment.

TIER 1

Tier 1 represents demonstrated knowledge and skills across all seven core knowledge areas; these are knowledge and skills that practitioners with minimal training and experience need in order to work effectively with young children.

TIER 2

Tier 2 represents demonstrated knowledge and skills in addition to those described at Tier 1 across all seven core knowledge areas; it is likely that teachers who have completed approximately 120 clock hours of specialized training and education in early care and education, with some professional development in each core knowledge area will be at this level.

TIER 3

Tier 3 represents demonstrated knowledge and skills in addition to those described in Tier 2 across all seven core knowledge areas; it is likely that teachers that have completed approximately 180 clock hours of specialized training and education in early care and education in addition to Tier 2, with some professional development in each core knowledge area will be at this level.

TIER 4

Tier 4 represents demonstrated knowledge and skills above Tier 3 across all seven core knowledge areas; it is likely that teachers who have completed at least 120 college credits with at least 42 hours of Early Childhood Education/Child Development; Family and Child Sciences; Elementary Education or Youth Development from a regionally accredited college or university, with some professional development in each core knowledge area will be at this level.
Core Knowledge Areas

Core knowledge is defined as the specific knowledge, competencies and characteristics needed by early care and education practitioners to work effectively with young children and their families. Each subject area describes the knowledge and skills that practitioners need in order to work with children birth through age 5 and their families. Information is applicable to a wide variety of settings and programs. The Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners includes the following knowledge or subject base areas:

- Health, Safety and Nutrition.
- Child Development and Learning.
- Building Family and Community Relationships.
- Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions.
- Curriculum.
- Observing, Documenting, Screening and Assessing to Support Young Children and Their Families.
- Professionalism.

The core knowledge areas are interconnected and support each other. The order of presentation is offered to help organize the information and is no indication of priority.

Practitioner Disposition

Equally as important as core knowledge and skills are key dispositions or temperaments. Practitioners with certain characteristics are more likely to interact successfully with young children and families and provide quality early care and education environments. These essential characteristics and dispositions are important at each tier of professional development and include:

- Interest in working with children.
- Appreciation for and curiosity about development in all children.
- Flexibility.
- Stable and responsible work habits.
- Desire to learn.
- Utilizes self-reflection.
- Contributes positively to team efforts.
- Ability to articulate own feelings and needs.
- A sense of humor.
- Respect for and acceptance of the diversity of children and families.
- Ability to solve problems.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills with children and adults.

Practitioners are encouraged to consider their own dispositions when making decisions about entering or staying in the early care and education field. As with any profession, it is important to find work that fits individual personalities and skills in order to build competence, personal contentment and professional satisfaction. Directors are encouraged to consider using these dispositional qualities in screening new job applicants, as part of annual performance evaluations and in developing staff professional development plans.

“All of life is education and everybody is a teacher and everybody is forever a pupil.”

—Abraham Maslow
Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety and Nutrition.

A. Have thorough knowledge of rules and regulations.

TIER 1

1. Follow regulations for the release of children to authorized persons.
2. Follow regulations on staff/child ratios.
3. Follow posted emergency procedures.
4. Identify signs of child abuse and neglect and report according to guidelines.
5. Follow procedures for administering and storing medications.
6. Follow procedures for maintaining a list of children in the classroom who have food allergies.
7. Identify signs of suspected communicable diseases and/or atypical behaviors that may indicate illness, and report accordingly.
8. Complete daily health checks on children and record any concerns to share with families.

TIER 2

1. Ensure health, safety and nutritional needs of young children.
2. Display instructions for emergency procedures that can be understood by children and adults.
3. Maintain emergency supplies and equipment.
4. Verbalize, practice and adhere to emergency, illness and communicable diseases, injury response, and transportation procedures and safety drills for staff and children, including those with disabilities.
5. Monitor staff/child ratios.
6. Ensure that state/federal mandated child abuse and neglect regulations are followed.
7. Ensure confidentiality of health records and adhere to children’s health requirements as defined by state codes.
8. Ensure that procedures for health referrals and reporting to families/guardians are followed.

TIER 3

1. Assess violations of regulations according to a professional code of ethics.
2. Assist with revision of program regulations and standards according to need.
3. Assess policies and procedures for effective compliance with all applicable health and safety regulations.
4. Evaluate the relationship between regulations and program quality.
5. Evaluate facility for meeting local, state and national standards.

TIER 4

1. Assess violations of regulations according to a professional code of ethics.
2. Assist with revision of program regulations and standards according to need.
3. Assess policies and procedures for effective compliance with all applicable health and safety regulations.
4. Evaluate the relationship between regulations and program quality.
5. Evaluate facility for meeting local, state and national standards.
Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety and Nutrition.

**B. Design, maintain and assess safe environments.**

**TIER 1**

1. Recognize safe and unsafe use of indoor/outdoor equipment and facilities and respond accordingly.
2. Respond to children’s injuries and report to appropriate staff member.
3. Follow program policies designed to address health and safety corrective measures.
4. Maintain a clean, safe and clutter-free environment including safe equipment and toys.
5. Follow established safe sleep practices for infants.

**TIER 2**

1. Prepare safe environments that maximize the independence and inclusion of children with differing abilities.
2. Teach age-appropriate safety precautions and rules to children, and enforce rules consistently.
4. Understand and follow guidelines to ensure the safety of the physical environment, including proper function and use of safety equipment.
5. Know how to access family contact numbers in case of emergency.

**TIER 3**

1. Plan and monitor safe and sanitary environments, inside/outside.
2. Modify indoor and outdoor activities to maximize the independence and inclusion of children of differing abilities.
3. Practice classroom management strategies that minimize hurtful behaviors among children.
4. Prepare dedicated safe spaces for young children that promote movement and explorations.

**TIER 4**

1. Analyze environmental design and maintenance efforts, and implement strategies for improving environmental safety.
2. Articulate, evaluate and apply current theory, research and policy on environmental safety.
3. Evaluate center’s philosophy and policies for appropriate actions for guiding children’s behavior that may become dangerous or hurtful to others.

“To help stem the childhood obesity epidemic, the nation must pay more attention to the food and the physical activity offered in ...child care settings.”

—The Future of Children
Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety and Nutrition.

C. Respond to children’s health needs.

TIER 1

1. Follow appropriate hand-washing requirements/procedures, including use of universal precautions, for self and children.
2. Discuss, model and practice age-appropriate health and safety procedures with children.
3. Maintain a clean, sanitary environment, including toys, equipment and furniture.
4. Follow established safe diapering practices.

TIER 2

1. Recognize signs and symptoms of common childhood health problems, and refer accordingly.
2. Model, monitor and encourage healthy behaviors, including universal precautions.
3. Talk with and provide health resource information to families.
4. Implement curriculum activities emphasizing healthy bodies, active lifestyles and a safe environment.

TIER 3

1. Integrate knowledge of health issues common to infants, toddlers and young children into program procedures.
2. Prepare and implement health plans for children with special needs.
3. Plan and conduct safe field trips.

TIER 4

1. Evaluate policies and procedures to ensure a healthy environment on the premises and on field trips.
2. Collaborate with community health care professionals to ensure that the health needs of children are met.
3. Act as a resource and advocate for public education for prevention of child abuse and neglect.
4. Identify causes of stress and trauma and assess children’s resiliency and need for services.
5. Articulate, evaluate and apply current theory and research on health practices.
6. Promote physically active and safe life styles.
Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety and Nutrition.

D. Promote good nutrition.

TIER 1

1. Assist children during meals and cooking sessions.
2. Follow procedures for children with special food needs and/or allergies.
3. Identify and attend to the nutritional needs of children.
4. Provide a relaxed, positive and social atmosphere during meal times.
5. Follow guidelines for sanitation practices and safe food handling.

TIER 2

1. Plan and implement age-appropriate nutrition education experiences with children, taking into account cultural considerations.
2. Maintain records of nutritional intake for infants, toddlers and children with special needs.
3. Provide opportunities and reinforcement for children’s practice of healthy nutritional choices.

TIER 3

1. Plan and evaluate menus following USDA guidelines including ethnic foods.
2. Understand and know how to make adaptations and use adaptive equipment for a wide range of special needs.
3. Follow a flexible feeding schedule for infants and toddlers that meets the child’s needs and family preferences.

TIER 4

1. Evaluate policies and procedures that support a safe and nutritious food program and implement accordingly.
2. Articulate, evaluate and apply theory, research and policy on nutritional choices and practices.
Core Knowledge Area 2: Child Development and Learning.

A. Know and understand children’s characteristics and needs.

**TIER 1**

1. Recognize that children develop at different rates and have different temperaments that may affect their learning.
2. Practice respect for cultural diversity and the uniqueness of each child.
3. Identify and describe basic developmental milestones.

**TIER 2**

1. Distinguish among the different child developmental domains (corresponding to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Five)
2. Identify different temperaments and learning styles

**TIER 3**

1. Assess children’s temperaments and develop individual learning plans based on differences in temperament.
2. Observe, determine and record risk factors, delays or differences in abilities including executive functioning that may indicate a need for special services.
3. Apply comprehensive knowledge of prominent child development theories to planning and practice

**TIER 4**

1. Analyze current developments in the field, including new research, theory and best practices.
2. Compare and contrast how major historical and current child development theories influence the practice of early childhood education.
Core Knowledge Area 2: Child Development and Learning.

**B. Know and understand the similarities and differences between children who are developing typically and atypically.**

**TIER 1**

1. Identify and respond to similarities and differences among children.
2. Encourage and support independence for all children.

**TIER 2**

1. Assist in adapting environments and experiences to meet the individual needs of all children.
2. Plan activities to promote positive relationships among all children.

**TIER 3**

1. Modify environments and experiences to meet the individual needs of all children.
2. Adapt and modify activities to support and meet the needs of children with special needs.
3. Recommend children, as appropriate, for referral and further assessment in conjunction with family members.

**TIER 4**

1. Plan and implement curriculum to include all children.
2. Understand and know how to make adaptations and modifications for a wide variety of special needs.
3. Include family input in planning activities and environments that include all children.

"It is with children that we have the best chance of studying the development of logical knowledge, mathematical knowledge, physical knowledge, and so forth."

—Jean Piaget
Core Knowledge Area 2: Child Development and Learning.

C. Know and understand the multiple influences on development and learning.

TIER 1

1. Demonstrate respect for all children and their families.
2. Identify variations in rates of growth and development.

TIER 2

1. Explain how cultural differences may affect behavior and development.
2. Summarize the major influences that affect children’s behaviors and interactions.
3. Understand that children with special needs including executive function disorders may require additional or adapted strategies to be successful.
4. Partner with families and consult with professionals to support the growth and development of children.

TIER 3

1. Examine how major influences affect brain development and learning.
2. Assess and provide information on resources and services for all children.
3. Describe how infant and toddler caregiving practices set the framework for their learning.

TIER 4

1. Evaluate policies and practices needed to support and meet the specific needs of individual children.
2. Integrate information on major influences, growth and development, and learning patterns of individuals and groups to improve classroom practice.
3. Analyze and relate theories, research and issues relevant to child growth and development for use by colleagues, families and communities.

“If formal instruction is introduced too early, too intensely and too abstractly, the children may indeed learn the instructed knowledge and skills, but they may do so at the expense of the disposition to use them."

—Lillian Katz
Core Knowledge Area 2: Child Development and Learning.

D. Use developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging early learning environments.

TIER 1

1. Recognize that children learn through play.
2. Respond and interact positively with all children and reinforce appropriate and/or expected behaviors.
3. Encourage and support independence in all children.

TIER 2

1. Provide a warm, caring and responsive environment where children initiate and extend their learning through play.
2. Encourage activities that foster communication, problem solving, creativity, self-confidence and executive functioning.
3. Motivate children to learn through activities that address all domains of development.
4. Practice appropriate expectations of individual children according to developmental level, strengths and needs.
5. Describe how cultural differences affect interactions between adults and between adults and children.
6. Describe how infant and toddler development occurs within the context of a secure relationship with a consistent caregiver.

TIER 3

1. Design supportive, motivating and nurturing environments that demonstrate respect for cultural, linguistic, developmental and learning style differences and rates across all developmental domains.
2. Assist families to understand principles of child growth, development and learning.
3. Participate in staff development opportunities that enhance understanding of child development and learning for children who are developing typically and for children with special needs.

TIER 4

1. Assess program responsiveness to children’s need for warm, caring relationships with adults and with their peers.
2. Evaluate and refine goals and practices, curriculum experience, inclusion of families and design of the physical space for evidence of application of developmental theories and principles.
3. Analyze personal and professional perspectives or biases in interpreting and applying developmental theories and practices to interactions with children and families and program planning.
Core Knowledge Area 3: Building Family and Community Relations.

A. Know about and understand family and community characteristics.

TIER 1

1. Follow rules of confidentiality.
2. Demonstrate awareness of and respect for cultural differences and diverse family structures.
3. Recognize and respect that culture, language, socioeconomic factors, support systems and special needs may influence how families nurture their children.

TIER 2

1. Apply understanding of the cultural context when planning children’s experiences.
2. Model respect for and support of cultural differences, special needs and diverse family structures.
3. Demonstrate how to work effectively with families from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the impact on families of family structure, disabilities, socioeconomic status and culture.

TIER 3

1. Identify and demonstrate respect for variations in terms of family strengths, expectations, values and child rearing practices.
2. Incorporate the different cultural contexts of children into the daily program.

TIER 4

1. Incorporate cultural diversity of the community in offering resources and information on comprehensive services for children and families, including those with special needs.
2. Integrate theories of family systems and the effect of stress/crisis into planning family supports.
3. Evaluate programs for children from a cross-cultural and bias-free perspective.
Core Knowledge Area 3: Building Family and Community Relations.

B. Support and empower families through respectful, and reciprocal relationships.

TIER 1

1. Greet families respectfully.
2. Identify ways to support the child’s relationship with his or her family.
3. Demonstrate respect for the family’s role as primary educator.
4. Demonstrate respect for families’ choices and goals for their children.

TIER 2

1. Establish frequent contact with families through a variety of communication strategies.
2. Invite family members to be active in their child’s education, recognizing that family’ attitudes influence children’s abilities and interests in learning.
3. Model a family-centered approach, recognizing that families are their children’s most important teachers.

TIER 3

1. Provide ongoing, relevant information and resources to families concerning child growth and development, learning, social and life skills, and developmental concerns.
2. Explain the effects that family stress can have on the behavior of children.
3. Incorporate the families’ desires/goals for children into planning, as appropriate.
4. Develop family-child activities that will enhance learning in the home.

TIER 4

1. Involve family members as decision makers.
2. Evaluate various family stressors and crises and make referrals and program adaptations as appropriate.
3. Assist families in finding and accessing resources and services to support child and family language and literacy development.
4. Assist families in finding and accessing resources and services to address their concerns about their child’s development.

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

—Carl W. Buechner
Core Knowledge Area 3:
Building Family and Community Relations.

C. Develop collaborative partnerships with families and communities to optimize child growth and development.

TIER 1

1. Work cooperatively and appropriately with program volunteers.
2. Identify community resources that support and assist families.
3. Maintain open, friendly and cooperative relations with families and communicate daily events.

TIER 2

1. Communicate with families about curriculum, their individual child’s progress and developmental growth.
2. Involve families and community members in contributing to the diversity of the learning environment.
3. Make appropriate use of resources and services for children with special needs.
4. Actively assist families in identifying and accessing community resources as needed.

TIER 3

1. Plan and conduct family-teacher meetings and family events on a regular basis.
2. Develop relationships with community resources, provide families with resource information and make appropriate referrals.
3. Assess opportunities and support family participation in program activities and events.

TIER 4

1. Assess needs and plan and conduct activities to enhance family support and participation.
2. Involve and support families in the development of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).
3. Help families obtain clear, understandable information about their child’s disability and information about the family’s legal rights under federal and state laws.
4. Work collaboratively with supervisors, agencies and community resources to meet the needs of families and children.
5. Assess and facilitate effective conflict resolution techniques with staff/families when needed.
Core Knowledge Area 4: Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions.

A. Connect with children and families through positive and supportive relationships.

**TIER 1**

1. Use children’s names and interact with them at their eye level.
2. Respond positively to child’s obvious emotional distress.
3. Interact responsively with family members during arrival and departure times.
4. Use some words in the family’s language to show respect for individual children and families.
5. Request assistance when needed to support English language learners.

**TIER 2**

1. Use a variety of strategies with children for building relationships, such as: one-on-one attention, talking about interests, listening to children, responding consistently and smiling at children.
2. Use strategies to help children understand and value their feelings.
3. Practice and model responsive, consistent, encouraging and nurturing interactions that build positive relationships with children and families.
4. Use information from families to support individual children.
5. Demonstrate understanding of infant and toddler behaviors and supportive positive responses.

**TIER 3**

1. Implement theories and practices that recognize the critical importance of supportive relationships for young children.
2. Recognize and use children’s needs and interests in planning activities.
3. Use oral and written communications that are sensitive to linguistic differences and individual needs of children and families.

**TIER 4**

1. Synthesize current research on relationships and supportive interactions to share with colleagues and families through presentations, posters and/or papers.
2. Identify, promote and use materials, policies and practices that support positive and effective interactions between adults and between adults and children.
Core Knowledge Area 4: Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions.

B. Use developmentally appropriate practice.

TIER 1

1. Understand the importance of children’s play.
2. Explain what is meant by developmentally appropriate practice.
3. Discuss how children learn through play and allow them time to play.
4. Use a variety of teaching strategies including cooperative learning, large and small group instruction, and one-on-one instruction.

TIER 2

1. Identify components of a developmentally appropriate program and environment for infants, toddlers and preschool children.
2. Identify instructional strategies to meet specific needs of individual children including the need to develop executive functioning skills such as having working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control. See Key Terms, p.44.

TIER 3

1. Plan developmentally appropriate learning environments and interactions that are meaningful and intentional in content for all children.
2. Adapt and/or modify instructional strategies to meet developmental and specific needs of each child including executive functioning disorders.

TIER 4

1. Analyze current research and practices related to developmentally appropriate environments and interactions including executive functioning.
2. Know and understand importance of play and implement methods of observing, facilitating and adapting each child’s play to promote development.
Core Knowledge Area 4: Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions.

C. Use developmentally appropriate guidance strategies.

TIER 1

2. Assist in communicating limits for acceptable behavior.
3. Describe realistic behavioral expectations.
4. Model and point out appropriate positive behaviors for children.

TIER 2

1. Establish and communicate limits for acceptable behavior to children and their families.
2. Practice use of developmentally appropriate guidance approaches such as redirection, ignoring, choice-making, limit setting, conflict resolution, and positive feedback and encouragement.
3. Involve children in setting realistic limits and expectations in the early childhood setting (based upon age and ability appropriateness).
4. Identify appropriate expectations of infants and toddler attention spans, interests, social abilities and physical needs.

TIER 3

1. Develop and model developmentally appropriate guidance approaches that promote positive behaviors, problem solving and self-control.
2. Modify and adapt guidance strategies through observation and assessment of the children and in collaboration with families.
3. Use guidance techniques appropriate to the age of children and to individual children’s special needs.
4. Seek and utilize the child’s family, colleagues and other professionals when needed to develop guidance approaches for specific behavioral concerns.

TIER 4

1. Design supportive environments in which all children can learn and practice appropriate behaviors as individuals and as members of a group.
2. Evaluate and promote use of effective positive child guidance techniques and policies with colleagues and families.
3. Develop and implement individualized behavior support programs, as needed.
4. Know local, state and national resources relative to behavioral concerns and provide information to families in coordination with supervisors and partners.

“Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.” —Plato
Core Knowledge Area 4: Teaching and Learning Environments and Interactions.

D. Design a learning environment that promotes positive outcomes for children.

TIER 1

1. Create an environment that offers children a variety of activity choices indoors and outdoors.
2. Follow a daily schedule and appropriately communicate the schedule to children.
3. Use age appropriate technology such as TV and computers with a specific purpose.
4. Welcome children’s individual cultural practices and resources into the learning environment.

TIER 2

1. Develop an appropriate schedule with a balance of active and quiet, child-directed and teacher-directed, individual and group, indoor and outdoor activities.
2. Select materials that combine different and multiple sensory features and are appropriate to the developmental level of all enrolled children, including children with special needs.
3. Display and use a wide variety of materials and activities representing diverse cultures and languages.
4. Monitor appropriate use of technology.
5. Plan and implement activities that support a variety of learning styles.
6. Understand relationship between space arrangement and organization and children’s behaviors.
7. Provide infants and toddlers flexibility with activities throughout the daily routine.

TIER 3

1. Plan culturally relevant activities throughout the learning environment.
2. Match program models and learning environments to appropriate age and developmental levels of all children.
3. Integrate appropriate technologies into the learning environment.
4. Adapt physical environment to support instructional strategies.
5. Work with colleagues and families to support Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes for children.

TIER 4

1. Analyze and provide toys/materials for different levels of complexity.
2. Plan, implement and evaluate learning environment and interactions to reflect variations in family structure and social background.
3. Implement learning environment changes based upon child assessments and program assessments.
4. Articulate, evaluate and apply current theory and research on learning environments and various teaching approaches to maximize learning potential.
5. Plan and implement activities and practices to assist children in transitioning to other schools and programs.
6. Integrate Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes into planning for learning environments.
Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum.

**A. Understand content knowledge in early childhood education.**

### TIER 1

1. Identify appropriate Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Five at various ages.
2. Describe young children’s emerging skills.

### TIER 2

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Five content areas including language, literacy, math, science, social studies, art, music, drama and movement.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the importance of integrating content areas across the early childhood curriculum.
3. Recognize secure relationships with infants and toddlers as the base for exploration and learning.

### TIER 3

1. Include family priorities and individual child interests in curriculum planning.
2. Recognize core foundational concepts including executive functions that build toward later learning.
3. Examine different ways in which children construct knowledge.
4. Plan and implement activities and experiences to support all children’s attainment of the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Five.
5. Implement infant-toddler curriculum based upon caregiving routines, child preferences and individual characteristics.

### TIER 4

1. Explain the developmental curriculum within and across content areas and the relationship between earlier and later learning and the importance of possessing executive functioning skills.
2. Integrate the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Five in curriculum planning.
3. Analyze and apply current research on content areas in early childhood.
4. Implement curriculum changes based upon child assessments and program assessments.

“The teacher must orient his work not on yesterday’s development in the child but on tomorrow’s.”

—**Lev Vygotsky**
Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum.

**B. Implement a curriculum to support physical health and motor development.**

**TIER 1**

1. Closely supervise and interact with children during physical activities.
2. Assist with fine and gross motor skill development activities indoors and outdoors.

**TIER 2**

1. Recognize characteristics at each stage of physical development.
2. Select physical activities and equipment that promote children’s individual cognitive, creative and language growth as well as motor skills and sensory development.
3. Plan a balance of active and quiet time.
4. Plan opportunities to develop eye-hand coordination.
5. Review and follow environment and activity guidelines to ensure safety of children with special needs.
6. Identify potential environmental hazards and risks and take corrective actions.
7. Plan opportunities when infants and toddlers can practice fine and gross motor development.

**TIER 3**

1. Integrate physical development activities across curriculum areas.
2. Adapt physical activities according to child assessments and children’s special needs.
3. Design and implement outdoor activities to extend classroom learning experiences.
4. Adapt physical activities with infants based on their readiness to engage with adults and the environment.

**TIER 4**

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of physical development activities.
2. Articulate, evaluate and apply current theory and research on promoting physical development.
3. Understand the importance of sensory integration and its impact on children’s ability to learn, and identify sensory integration supports and resources.

“Many things can wait; the child cannot. Now is the time his bones are being formed, his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow; his name is today.”

—Gabriela Mistral
Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum.

C. Implement a curriculum to support social and emotional development.

**TIER 1**

1. Engage in communication and develop individual relationships with children.
2. Foster positive interactions among children.
3. Support children’s participation in age and ability appropriate group activities.
4. Encourage age-appropriate emotional expression.
5. Identify ways young children express and communicate both verbally and non-verbally.
6. Foster attachment in care with infants and toddlers.

**TIER 2**

1. Provide children with many opportunities to participate in age-appropriate cooperative play.
2. Model appropriate interactions when young children display emotions.
3. Help children through periods of stress, separation and transition.
4. Facilitate the social inclusion of all children.
5. Plan and implement activities for smooth transition from one activity to another.
6. Practice responsive caregiving techniques to calm infants and toddlers in distress.

**TIER 3**

1. Guide children in expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in positive ways.
3. Recommend and facilitate, when necessary, further screening and assessment of children.
4. Support secure attachments between families and infants.

**TIER 4**

1. Develop a curriculum that assures a secure base from which children can explore.
2. Apply theory and current research to create a community in the classroom that fosters social and emotional development.
3. Understand and promote emergence of prosocial skills and behaviors among children.
4. Understand the effects of disability and high-risk status on social and emotional development.
5. Access appropriate professional interventions as needed in coordination with supervisors and families.
6. Implement practices for continuity of care with infants and toddlers.
Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum.

D. Implement a curriculum to support cognitive development and general knowledge.

TIER 1
1. Ask children relevant open-ended questions about their surroundings and actively listen to their responses.
2. Encourage child-centered play that takes into account the interests of children.
3. Provide opportunities to develop mathematical and scientific thinking through use of manipulatives, tools, blocks, puzzles, sensory activities and sequencing activities.
4. Understand difference between a focus on “process versus product” and plan activities appropriately.
5. Provide a variety of materials including materials that can be manipulated and used in a variety of ways to encourage imagination and creativity.
6. Encourage exploration in infant and toddler play.

TIER 2
1. Select and implement activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration and problem-solving appropriate to the developmental levels and learning styles of all children.
2. Select and implement activities and opportunities for exploring math, science, social studies and early literacy using an integrated curriculum approach.
3. Demonstrate awareness of common resources and materials that support cognitive development.
4. Support children’s exploration of different media including language, technology, music, dramatic play and art.
5. Select safe and developmentally appropriate materials for infants and toddlers.

TIER 3
1. Plan activities and opportunities for exploring math, science, social studies and creative expression using an integrated curriculum approach.
2. Design activities that promote children’s thinking and life skill development such as decision-making, problem solving and constructing their own knowledge.
3. Encourage and integrate creative arts throughout the curriculum.
4. Facilitate infant and toddler play by following their lead and interests.

TIER 4
1. Assess learning styles of children and plan variations in learning opportunities accordingly.
2. Adapt teaching styles to children’s learning styles.
3. Evaluate curriculum and experiences to promote the creative expression of all children.
4. Understand that infants and toddlers have a culturally based approach to play and exploration.
Core Knowledge Area 5:
Curriculum.

E. Implement a curriculum to support language and literacy development.

**TIER 1**

1. Provide formal and informal book reading experiences that encourage both listening and talking.
2. Use age-appropriate techniques to support language and literacy such as reading, singing, talking, labeling and word and picture recognition.
3. Help children use words or communication devices to express their thoughts.
4. Model appropriate speech and listening techniques.
5. Respect other languages and support English language learners.
6. Encourage verbal and nonverbal communication with infants and toddlers.

**TIER 2**

1. Encourage and support children’s communication interactions with one another in a variety of ways.
2. Provide a print-rich environment in the classroom, providing opportunities for children to see writing and to use beginning writing skills.
3. Implement book reading experiences to support learning goals for children.
4. Demonstrate awareness of common resources and materials that support language and literacy.
5. Describe typical and atypical language abilities of infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

**TIER 3**

1. Use concrete experiences and play to extend language and literacy development.
2. Plan and implement language experiences and activities throughout the day.
3. Understand typical and atypical language acquisition skills of children who are learning two or more languages and implement curriculum supports.
4. Collaborate with specialists, as needed, to address individual language and literacy needs.
5. Identify objects and activities in the infant and toddler daily routines by name.

**TIER 4**

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of language and literacy curriculum and modify as needed.
2. Plan, implement and evaluate activities for English language learners.
3. Know and understand language and emergent literacy theories and strategies.
4. Integrate language, literacy and writing activities across all aspects of the curriculum.
5. Know and understand effects of various disabilities on language and early literacy development.
6. Understand the importance of modeling turn-taking during verbal and non-verbal communication for infants and toddlers.
### Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum.

_F: Implement a curriculum to support positive approaches to learning._

**TIER 1**

1. Encourage children to try new activities.
2. Show interest in children’s ideas and choices.

**TIER 2**

1. Engage children in problem solving and decision-making.
2. Support children’s exploration of all forms of art.
3. Plan a variety of choices for children.
4. Provide support for group interactions between toddlers.

**TIER 3**

1. Encourage and integrate creative expression throughout the curriculum.
2. Develop curriculum and activities to promote curiosity.
3. Provide ample time for sustained activities to encourage persistence and use of planning skills.
4. Support the different learning needs of young infants, mobile infants and younger and older toddlers.

**TIER 4**

1. Evaluate curriculum, environment and experiences to promote an interest in learning among all children and support positive approaches to learning including the development of executive functioning skills.
2. Create and evaluate opportunities for families to understand approaches to learning.
3. Evaluate curriculum for promotion of curiosity, persistence and creativity.
4. Plan and implement curriculum to engage infants and toddlers in curious exploration.

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> “What children need most is loving care and new experiences. Talking, singing, playing and reading are some of the key activities that build a child’s brain.”

—Author Unknown
Core Knowledge Area 6: Observing, Documenting, Screening and Assessing Young Children and Their Families.

A. Understand the goals, benefits, purposes and uses of screenings and assessments.

TIER 1

1. Discuss benefits of identifying strengths and needs of children.
2. Identify differences in screening and assessment.
3. Recognize that assessment is an ongoing process.
4. Describe differences in development and skill levels among children.

TIER 2

1. Explain ways to get to know each child as an individual, including strengths, needs, interests, families and life situation.
2. Demonstrate the use of basic principles of growth and development in conducting screening and assessment.
3. Discuss the purposes and limitations of formal and informal assessment.
4. Use observation findings in planning and implementing learning activities.

TIER 3

1. Select, create, adapt and use multiple modes and methods of assessment that are sensitive to the unique cultural, age level and learning needs of each young child.
2. Understand the use of screening as a brief procedure to identify and refer children who need more intensive child assessment or diagnosis.
3. Use curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction in daily lesson planning on an ongoing basis.

TIER 4

1. Use the results of child assessment to assist in developing Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or care plans for children with special needs and to improve staff practices.
2. Analyze and evaluate observation and assessment findings.
3. Develop an assessment plan that utilizes assessment information to improve curriculum, modify instruction and learning experiences and make referrals if needed.
4. Articulate and apply current theory, research and policy on screening and assessment.
Core Knowledge Area 6: Observing, Documenting, Screening and Assessing Young Children and Their Families.

B. Know about and use observation, documentation and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches.

TIER 1

1. Assist with collection of relevant background information to include with assessment records.
2. Understand importance of keeping records to document children’s progress.

TIER 2

1. Know and follow appropriate procedures of child observation, including objectivity, respect and accuracy.
2. Collect and organize information about each child on an ongoing basis including samples of the child’s work, anecdotal notes and accurate records.
3. Be familiar with a variety of assessment techniques and processes.

TIER 3

1. Identify developmentally appropriate formal and informal assessment tools with primary emphasis on tools that assess children in their natural settings.
2. Plan and utilize culturally appropriate assessment methods.
3. Interpret assessment results; including those from other professionals, and make appropriate decisions for instruction as well as referrals in conjunction with family members.
4. Select and use a variety of formal and informal assessment methods.

TIER 4

1. Establish criteria, procedures and documentation methods for assessment, including modifications of assessment procedures for children with special needs.
2. Compile a variety of appropriate assessment tools to record child observations.
3. Provide written reports/summaries of formal and informal assessments, aligning methods and tools with the purposes of the assessment.
4. Analyze current research and practices related to assessment tools and approaches.
Core Knowledge Area 6:
Observing, Documenting, Screening and Assessing Young Children and Their Families.

C. Understand and practice responsible screening and assessment.

TIER 1

1. Recognize the need for informed consent from family or guardian prior to screening and assessment.
2. Protect confidentiality of children’s screening and assessment information.
3. Seek help as needed to address concerns about individual children.

TIER 2

1. Follow a schedule for recording children’s development and behavior.
2. Ensure results of screenings and assessments are used responsibly and to benefit the child and family, including planning and implementing appropriate learning activities.
3. Recognize environmental factors that may interfere with screening, assessment, and a child’s learning and development.

TIER 3

1. Understand the potential influences of culture, language, environment, learning style and special needs on screening and assessment practices and results.
2. Create and implement individual learning plans based on assessment results.
3. Accommodate the range of development and skills among children in a learning group.
4. Compile and support regulations and professional standards regarding assessment rights and responsibilities of families and children.

TIER 4

1. Design methods for improving assessment procedures and for using assessment to improve professional practices.
2. Assist other staff and families in interpreting assessment information and integrating information into program planning and/or revisions.
Core Knowledge Area 6: Observing, Documenting, Screening and Assessing Young Children and Their Families.

D. Know about assessment partnerships with families and other professionals.

TIER 1

1. Seek guidance and support from supervisors and other professionals as needed (such as with behavioral problems, atypical behavior, developmental concerns).
2. Understand importance of involving families in assessing children.

TIER 2

1. Discuss observations with families in a clear, understandable and supportive way.
2. Collaborate with families and children, when appropriate, to make decisions which support development and learning.
3. Provide regular opportunities for family involvement in child assessment.

TIER 3

1. Generate a plan to refer children/families to other agencies and programs offering diagnostic and/or intervention services.
2. Share observation and assessment results with families on a regular, systematic basis.
3. Produce a plan to help families incorporate relevant child development activities based on assessment data into the family's daily routines.

TIER 4

1. Involve multidisciplinary team members (when appropriate) and family members in developing goals for the child based on assessment data in coordination with supervisors.
2. Demonstrate sensitivity for the profound impact on families of receiving a diagnosis of developmental delay and/or need for special services for their child.
3. Know local and state resources and provide information to families as needed.
Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism.
A. Identify with the early childhood field.

**TIER 1**

1. Demonstrate a positive attitude toward working with children.
2. Demonstrate commitment to program standards of developmentally appropriate practice.
3. Follow a professional development plan.
4. Indicate an awareness of the Core Competencies.

**TIER 2**

1. Model professional behavior.
2. Identify level of knowledge and skills according to the Core Competencies and pursue professional development accordingly.
3. Use professional publications or participate in professional associations.

**TIER 3**

1. Support coworkers and colleagues through mentoring, coaching and leadership.
3. Explore professional development career pathways and evaluate according to personal goals and objectives.

**TIER 4**

1. Recognize causes and symptoms of “burnout” and develop strategies to prevent it.
2. Assume responsibility for a personal professional development plan based on the Core Competencies.
3. Evaluate the results of professional development on program improvement.
4. Participate in professional organizations in a leadership capacity.
Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism.

B. Know about and uphold ethical standards and other professional guidelines.

TIER 1

1. Demonstrate the ability to work effectively with coworkers.
2. Describe organizational structure and its relationship to job duties.
3. Explain procedures consistent with federal, state and local policies, regulations and laws, including the privacy rights of families, children and center personnel.
4. Recognize potentially unethical activity, and report it according to guidelines and procedures.
5. Demonstrate respect for coworkers, families and children through dependability and timeliness.

TIER 2

1. Complete and maintain designated records.
2. Participate in program evaluation activities.
3. Demonstrate awareness of ethical responsibilities in an applicable professional code of ethical conduct (e.g., NAEC Code of Ethical Conduct) through own behaviors.

TIER 3

1. Articulate and adhere to an applicable professional code of ethics.
2. Promote the ethical responsibilities in the applicable code of conduct.
3. Defend the need for a professional value system that embraces all children and the importance of early childhood education.
4. Practice and support teamwork to promote a fair, pleasant and productive workplace.
5. Assist with planning and implementing program evaluation activities.

TIER 4

1. Integrate an applicable professional code of ethics into practice, policies and instruction.
2. Analyze ethical dilemmas and determine appropriate course of action.
3. Assess professionalism by completing self-evaluations.
4. Analyze program evaluation findings and implement instructional and environmental changes based on findings.
Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism.

C. Engage in ongoing, interactive learning to inform practice.

TIER 1

1. Demonstrate an awareness of the types of professional resources.
2. Establish and maintain professional relationships with colleagues and other professionals.

TIER 2

1. Use professional resources and training to guide effective practices.
2. Assess personal training needs, set goals and take steps to promote professionalism.
3. Work toward credentials, degrees and/or program accreditation.
4. Network with other early care and education professionals.

TIER 3

1. Synthesize current trends and research-based practices in early childhood education into professional decision-making.
2. Serve as a daily model of professional behavior and activity.
3. Generate and utilize team decision-making strategies.

TIER 4

1. Evaluate and apply current trends, research and policy in early childhood education and revise practice as appropriate.
2. Facilitate professional development opportunities for others.
3. Participate in research activities when requested (such as responding to surveys and participating in on-site studies) to advance the knowledge base in early childhood education.
4. Evaluate and apply current trends, research and policy in early childhood education, including infant-toddler early childhood education and revise practice as appropriate.
Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism.

_D. integrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on early childhood education._

**TIER 1**

1. Discuss experiences and practices with colleagues, identifying areas of strengths and opportunities for growth, and seek input from supervisors where improvement might be needed.
2. Identify personal commitment to program goals.

**TIER 2**

1. Discuss personal goals based on reflections of current practice and create plan to achieve goals.
2. Use professional resources to improve practice.
3. Reflect on personal performance and seek feedback from others to provide objective information.

**TIER 3**

1. Make program decisions based on professional standards.
2. Relate theory to practice in concrete, observable ways.
3. Self-assess own work, sources of professional knowledge, and early care and education field.

**TIER 4**

1. Integrate knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological and social foundations of early childhood education into planning and decision-making.
2. Evaluate practices in relationship to quality standards.
3. Encourage the expression of multiple perspectives.
4. Support and teach reflective and holistic developmental system approaches to current practice.

“__Education must no longer be regarded only as a matter of teaching children, but as a social question of the highest importance, because it is the one question that concerns all mankind. The many other social questions have to do with one group or another of adults, with relatively small numbers of human beings; the social question of the child, however, has to do with all men everywhere.__”

—Maria Montessori
Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism.

E. Engage in informed advocacy for children, families, communities and the profession.

TIER 1

1. Advocate for early care and education as a profession based on its importance to child growth and development.
2. Participate in organizations that advocate for children and early childhood programs and professions.

TIER 2

1. Recognize situations that call for advocacy in the workplace or community.
2. Advocate high quality services for all children.
3. Discuss the significance of the early years and the value of early care and education programs to families in the community.

TIER 3

1. Examine how national, state and local legislation and public policy affects children, families, programs and the early care and education profession.
2. Validate early care and education as a profession.
3. Inform others of current research, trends and best practices.

TIER 4

1. Advocate for appropriate attention to and support for young children and families.
2. Create and implement strategies to influence public policy.
3. Develop an advocacy plan for the workplace.
4. Participate in local, state and/or national events to promote appropriate programs and services for young children and their families.

“If you are planning for a year...plant rice. If you are planning for a decade...plant a tree. If you are planning for a lifetime...educate a child.”

—Chinese Proverb
Key Terms for Early Care and Education Practitioners

**Best Practices:** A *best practice* is a teaching technique or method that is proven effective through experience and research. In this case, proven to optimize the educational experience of young children.

**Cognitive Flexibility:** *Cognitive flexibility* is the ability to switch gears and apply different rules to different settings. This skill is associated with executive functioning. An example is when children understand they use inside voices inside but when they go outside they may use an outside voice. This capacity also allows children to “think outside the box” when problem solving.

**Director:** A *director* is the staff person or the team responsible for the *day-to-day operations*, supervision and administration of the *program* and for *planning*, implementing and evaluating its operations.

**Executive Function:** *Executive functions* are a group of skills that helps us to focus on multiple streams of information at the same time, monitor errors, make decisions in light of available information, revise plans as necessary, and resist the urge to let frustration lead to hasty actions.

**Inhibitory Control:** *Inhibitory control* is a skill associated with executive functioning. It means the ability to control impulses and resist temptations and distractions. For young children this includes resisting the urge to lash out physically when they are mad and the ability to stay on task.

**Practitioner:** A *practitioner* is a staff person who works in the field of early care and education, inclusive of the various roles and positions in a *program*.

**Program:** A *program* means any type of environment that offers childcare such as corporate centers, faith- based centers, community childcare centers, family homes and schools.

**Reflective Practice:** *Reflective practice* is the process of thoughtfully considering one’s own experiences and applying new learning to teaching practices.

**Stakeholder:** *Stakeholders* are all people with a legitimate interest in preparing children for school and life.

**Working Memory:** *Working memory* is a skill associated with executive functioning. It refers to the capacity to hold and use information in our heads over short periods of time such as remembering whose turn comes next in a game or multi-step directions.
