

# Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners

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# 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 that 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 the entry-level practitioner to practitioners with degrees, certifications, and extensive experience. The identification of a core body of knowledge, defining the content knowledge expectations for those working in the profession, is a crucial and foundational component to the development and implementation of a professional development system in Florida.

The framework for the development of the core competencies has included a review of purpose and importance of competencies, an assessment of research and best-practice evidence in compiling the competencies, and a consideration of 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, that develops over time, along multiple pathways, and supports effective job performance in early care and education
- Creates a framework and common language for professional development, defining 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 might be 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 development of 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.

It is anticipated that core competencies for other professionals in the early care and education field will be developed at a later date. The knowledge and skill requirements for directors, administrators, trainers, and coaches are significantly different from those required of practitioners that work directly with children. These differences underscore the need for development of 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 the development of 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 that choose a more formal route of college and university education, the core competencies provide a framework for the development of 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.

Still under development are mechanisms and linkages between formal and informal systems. 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. Ways to translate accomplishments within the informal system to the formal system need to be developed, possibly through competency exams or portfolio reviews. The core competencies will serve as a critical foundation to assist in the development of translation efforts.

## 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

completely linear and not all begin at the entry level, so some skills may seem similar across different levels.

The tiers of competencies are not awards or certificates but 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 I

Tier I 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 II

Tier II represents demonstrated knowledge and skills in addition to those described at Tier I across all seven core knowledge areas; it is likely that teachers that have completed at least 120 clock hours of specialized training and education in early care and education, with some professional development in each core knowledge area, and at least one year of experience in the field will be at this level.

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

Tier IV represents demonstrated knowledge and skills above Tier III across all seven core knowledge areas; it is likely that teachers that have completed 180 clock hours of training and education above Tier III, with some professional development in each core knowledge area, and have over four years of experience in the field 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 five 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 the 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 problem-solve
- Good interpersonal and communication skills with children and adults

Practitioners are encouraged to consider their own dispositions and how they do or do not align with the characteristics listed above in 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 & Nutrition

## A. Have thorough knowledge of rules and regulations

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

8. Discuss health, safety and nutritional needs of young children
9. Display instructions for emergency procedures that can be understood by children and adults
10. Maintain emergency supplies and equipment
11. 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
12. Monitor staff/child ratios
13. Ensure that state/federal mandated child abuse and neglect regulations are followed
14. Ensure confidentiality of health records and adhere to children's health requirements as defined by state codes
15. Ensure that procedures for health referrals and reporting to families/guardians are followed

### TIER III

16. Ensure the availability of emergency supplies/equipment and demonstrate use on regularly scheduled basis
17. Maintain proficiency in emergency regulations and procedures, and train on regularly scheduled basis
18. Assist with development and implementation of internal procedures for children and adults suspected of communicable diseases as defined by state statute and rule
19. Assist staff and family members in recognizing and reporting abuse and neglect
20. Modify instruction, environment, and/or procedures to ensure the safety of children with special needs

### TIER IV

21. Assess violations of regulations according to a professional code of ethics
22. Assist with revision of program regulations and standards according to need
23. Assess policies and procedures for effective compliance with all applicable health and safety regulations
24. Evaluate the relationship between regulations and program quality
25. Evaluate facility for meeting local, state, and national standards



# Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety & Nutrition

## B. Design, maintain and assess safe environments

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

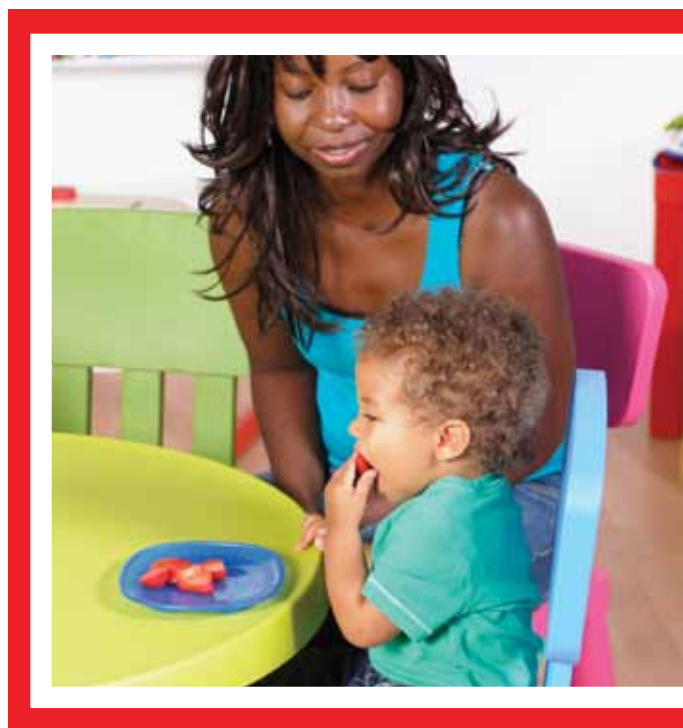
5. Prepare safe environments that maximize the independence and inclusion of children with differing abilities
6. Teach age-appropriate safety precautions and rules to children, and enforce rules consistently
7. Document children's injuries and notify families/guardians
8. Understand and follow guidelines to ensure the safety of the physical environment, including proper function and use of safety equipment
9. Know how to access family contact numbers in case of emergency

### TIER III

10. Plan and monitor safe and sanitary environments, inside/outside
11. Modify indoor and outdoor activities to maximize the independence and inclusion of children of differing abilities
12. Practice classroom management strategies that minimize hurtful behaviors among children

### TIER IV

13. Analyze environmental design and maintenance efforts, and implement strategies for improving environmental safety
14. Articulate, evaluate, and apply current theory, research, and policy on environmental safety
15. 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 physical activity offered in . . . child care settings.”*

*–The Future of Children*

# Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety & Nutrition

## C. Respond to children's health needs

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

4. Recognize signs and symptoms of common childhood health problems, and refer accordingly
5. Model, monitor, and encourage healthy behaviors, including Universal Precautions
6. Talk with and provide health resource information to families
7. Implement curriculum activities emphasizing healthy bodies, active lifestyles, and a safe environment

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

11. Evaluate policies and procedures to ensure a healthy environment on the premises and on field trips
12. Collaborate with community health care professionals to ensure that the health needs of children are met
13. Act as a resource and advocate for public education for prevention of child abuse and neglect
14. Identify causes of stress and trauma and assess children's resiliency and need for services
15. Articulate, evaluate, and apply current theory and research on health practices
16. Promote physically active and safe life styles



# Core Knowledge Area 1: Health, Safety & Nutrition

## D. Promote good nutrition

### TIER I

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 II

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

### TIER III

9. Plan and evaluate menus following USDA guidelines and including ethnic foods
10. Understand and know how to make adaptations and use adaptive equipment for a wide range of special needs

### TIER IV

11. Evaluate policies and procedures that support a safe and nutritious food program, and implement accordingly
12. 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 I

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 II

4. Distinguish among the different child developmental domains (corresponding to the *Florida Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards* and *VPK Education Standards*)
5. Identify different temperaments and learning styles

### TIER III

6. Assess children's temperaments and develop individual learning plans based on differences in temperament
7. Observe, determine, and record risk factors, delays, or differences in abilities which may indicate a need for special services
8. Apply comprehensive knowledge of prominent child development theories to planning and practice

### TIER IV

9. Analyze current developments in the field, including new research, theory, and best practices
10. Compare and contrast how major historical and current child development theories impact 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 I

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

## TIER II

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

## TIER III

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

## TIER IV

8. Plan and implement curriculum to include all children
9. Understand and know how to make adaptations and modifications for a wide variety of special needs
10. 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 I**

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

#### **TIER II**

3. Explain how cultural differences may affect behavior and development
4. Summarize the major influences that impact children's behaviors and interactions
5. Understand that children with special needs may require additional or adapted strategies to be successful
6. Partner with families and consult with professionals to support the growth and development of children

#### **TIER III**

7. Examine how major influences affect brain development and learning
8. Assess and provide information on resources and services for all children

#### **TIER IV**

9. Evaluate policies and practices needed to support and meet the specific needs of individual children
10. Integrate information on major influences, growth and development, and learning patterns of individuals and groups, to improve classroom practice
11. 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 I

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 II

4. Provide a warm, caring, and responsive environment where children initiate and extend their learning through play
5. Encourage activities that foster communication, problem solving, creativity and self-confidence
6. Motivate children to learn through activities that address all domains of development
7. Practice appropriate expectations of individual children according to developmental level, strengths, and needs
8. Describe how cultural differences affect interactions between adults and between adults and children

## TIER III

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

## TIER IV

12. Assess program responsiveness to children's need for warm, caring relationships with adults and with their peers
13. 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
14. 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 I

1. Follow rules of confidentiality
2. Demonstrate an 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 II

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

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

10. Incorporate cultural diversity of the community in offering resources and information on comprehensive services for children and families, including those with special needs
11. Integrate theories of family systems and the effect of stress/crises into planning family supports
12. 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, reciprocal relationships

### TIER I

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 II

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

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

12. Involve family members as decision makers
13. Evaluate various family stressors and crises and make referrals and program adaptations as appropriate
14. Assist families in finding and accessing resources and services to support child and family language and literacy development
15. 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 I

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 II

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

## TIER III

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

## TIER IV

11. Assess needs and plan and conduct activities to enhance family support and participation
12. Involve and support families in the development of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)
13. Help families obtain clear, understandable information about their child's disability and information about the family's legal rights under federal and state laws
14. Work collaboratively with supervisors, agencies, and community resources to meet the needs of families and children
15. 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 I**

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 home language to show respect for individual children and families
5. Request assistance when needed to support English language learners

### **TIER II**

6. 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
7. Use strategies to help children understand and value their feelings
8. Practice and model responsive, consistent, encouraging, and nurturing interactions that build positive relationships with children and families
9. Use information from families to effectively support individual children

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

13. Synthesize current research on relationships and supportive interactions to share with colleagues and families through presentations, posters, and/or papers
14. 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 I

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 II

5. Identify components of a developmentally appropriate program and environment for infants, toddlers and preschool children
6. Identify instructional strategies to meet specific needs of individual children

### TIER III

7. Plan developmentally appropriate learning environments and interactions that are meaningful and intentional in content for all children
8. Adapt and/or modify instructional strategies to meet developmental and specific needs of each child

### TIER IV

9. Analyze current research and practices related to developmentally appropriate environments and interactions
10. 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 I

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

### TIER II

5. Establish and communicate limits for acceptable behavior to children and their families
6. Practice use of developmentally appropriate guidance approaches such as redirection, ignoring, choice-making, limit-setting, conflict resolution, and positive feedback and encouragement
7. Involve children in setting realistic limits and expectations in the early childhood setting (based upon age and ability appropriateness)

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

12. Design supportive environments in which all children can learn and practice appropriate behaviors as individuals and as members of a group
13. Evaluate and promote use of effective positive child guidance techniques and policies with colleagues and families
14. Develop and implement individualized behavior support programs, as needed
15. 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 I**

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 individual children's cultural practices and resources into the learning environment

### **TIER II**

5. Develop an appropriate schedule with a balance of active and quiet, child directed and teacher directed, individual and group, indoor and outdoor activities
6. 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
7. Display and use a wide variety of materials and activities representing diverse cultures and languages
8. Monitor appropriate use of technology
9. Plan and implement activities that support a variety of learning styles
10. Understand relationship between space arrangement and organization and children's behaviors

### **TIER III**

11. Plan culturally relevant activities throughout the learning environment
12. Match program models and learning environments to appropriate age and developmental levels of all children
13. Integrate appropriate technologies into the learning environment
14. Adapt physical environment to support instructional strategies
15. Work with colleagues and families to support Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes for children
16. Use the outdoor environment and natural settings as an integral part of the learning environment

### **TIER IV**

17. Analyze and provide toys/materials for of different levels of complexity
18. Plan, implement, and evaluate learning environment and interactions to reflect variations in family structure and social background
19. Implement learning environment changes based upon child assessments and program assessments
20. Articulate, evaluate and apply current theory and research on learning environments and various teaching approaches to maximize learning potential
21. Plan and implement activities and practices to assist children in transitioning to other schools and programs
22. 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 I

1. Identify appropriate *Florida Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards* and *VPK Education Standards* for children at various ages
2. Describe young children's emerging skills

### TIER II

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the *Florida Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards* and *VPK Education Standards* content areas including language, literacy, math, science, social studies, art, music, drama, and movement
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the importance of integrating content areas across the early childhood curriculum

### TIER III

5. Include family priorities and individual child interests in curriculum planning
6. Recognize core foundational concepts that build toward later learning
7. Examine different ways in which children construct knowledge
8. Plan and implement activities and experiences to support all children's attainment of the *Florida Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards* and *VPK Education Standards*

### TIER IV

9. Explain the developmental curriculum within and across content areas, and the relationship between earlier and later learning
10. Integrate the *Florida Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards* and *VPK Education Standards* in curriculum planning
11. Analyze and apply current research on content areas in early childhood
12. 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. Design and implement a curriculum to support physical health and motor development

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

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

### TIER III

9. Integrate physical development activities across curriculum areas
10. Adapt physical activities according to child assessments and children’s special needs
11. Design and implement outdoor activities to extend classroom learning experiences

### TIER IV

12. Evaluate the effectiveness of physical development activities
13. Articulate, evaluate, and apply current theory and research on promoting physical development
14. Understand the importance of sensory integration, 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. Design and implement a curriculum to support social and emotional development*

## TIER I

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

## TIER II

6. Provide children with many opportunities to participate in age-appropriate cooperative play
7. Model appropriate interactions when young children display emotions
8. Help children through periods of stress, separation and transition
9. Facilitate the social inclusion of all children
10. Plan and implement activities for smooth transition from one activity to another

## TIER III

11. Guide children in expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in positive ways
12. Guide children through problem-solving and conflict resolution situations
13. Recommend and facilitate, when necessary, further screening and assessment of children

## TIER IV

14. Develop a curriculum that assures a secure base from which children can explore
15. Apply theory and current research to create a community in the classroom that fosters social and emotional development
16. Understand and promote emergence of prosocial skills and behaviors among children
17. Understand the effects of disability and high-risk status on social and emotional development
18. Access appropriate professional interventions as needed in coordination with supervisors and families



# Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum

## *D. Design and implement a curriculum to support cognitive development and general knowledge*

### **TIER I**

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

### **TIER II**

6. Select and implement activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem-solving appropriate to the developmental levels and learning styles of all children
7. Select and implement activities and opportunities for exploring math, science, social studies, and early literacy using an integrated curriculum approach
8. Demonstrate awareness of common resources and materials that support cognitive development
9. Support children's exploration of different media including language, technology, music, dramatic play, and art

### **TIER III**

10. Plan activities and opportunities for exploring math, science, social studies, and creative expression using an integrated curriculum approach
11. Design activities that promote children's thinking and life skill development such as decision making, problem-solving, and constructing their own knowledge
12. Encourage and integrate creative arts throughout the curriculum

### **TIER IV**

13. Assess learning styles of children and plan variations in learning opportunities accordingly
14. Adapt teaching styles to children's learning styles
15. Evaluate curriculum and experiences to promote the creative expression of all children

# Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum

## *E. Design and implement a curriculum to support language and literacy development*

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

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

### TIER III

11. Use concrete experiences and play to extend language and literacy development
12. Plan and implement language experiences and activities throughout the day
13. Understand typical and atypical language acquisition skills of children who are learning two or more languages and implement curriculum supports
14. Collaborate with specialists, as needed, to address individual language and literacy needs

### TIER IV

15. Evaluate the effectiveness of language and literacy curriculum and modify as needed
16. Plan, implement, and evaluate activities for English language learners
17. Know and understand language and emergent literacy theories and strategies
18. Integrate language, literacy, and writing activities across all aspects of the curriculum
19. Know and understand effects of various disabilities on language and early literacy development

# Core Knowledge Area 5: Curriculum

## F. *Design and implement a curriculum to support positive approaches to learning*

### TIER I

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

### TIER II

3. Engage children in problem-solving and decision-making
4. Support children's exploration of all forms of art
5. Plan a variety of choices for children

### TIER III

6. Encourage and integrate creative expression throughout the curriculum
7. Develop curriculum and activities to promote curiosity
8. Provide ample time for sustained activities to encourage persistence and use of planning skills

### TIER IV

9. Evaluate curriculum, environment, and experiences to promote an interest in learning among all children and support positive approaches to learning
10. Create and evaluate opportunities for families to understand approaches to learning
11. Evaluate curriculum for promotion of curiosity, persistence and creativity

*“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 I**

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 II**

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

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

12. 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
13. Analyze and evaluate observation and assessment findings
14. Develop an assessment plan that utilizes assessment information to improve curriculum, modify instruction and learning experiences, and make referrals if needed
15. 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 I**

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 II**

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

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

10. Establish criteria, procedures, and documentation methods for assessment, including modifications of assessment procedures for children with special needs
11. Compile a variety of appropriate assessment tools to record child observations
12. Provide written reports/summaries of formal and informal assessments, aligning methods and tools with the purposes of the assessment
13. 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 I**

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 II**

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

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

11. Design methods for improving assessment procedures and for using assessment to improve professional practices
12. 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 I**

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 II**

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

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

9. Involve multidisciplinary team members (when appropriate) and family members in developing goals for the child based on assessment data in coordination with supervisors
10. Demonstrate sensitivity for the profound impact on families of receiving a diagnosis of developmental delay and/or need for special services for their child
11. 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 I

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 II

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

### TIER III

8. Support coworkers and colleagues through mentoring, coaching, and leadership
9. Articulate personal philosophy of early childhood education based on knowledge of child development and best practices
10. Explore professional development career pathways and evaluate according to personal goals and objectives

### TIER IV

11. Recognize causes and symptoms of “burnout” and develop strategies to prevent it
12. Assume responsibility for a personal professional development plan based on the Core Competencies
13. Evaluate the results of professional development on program improvement
14. 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 I**

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 II**

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

### **TIER III**

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

### **TIER IV**

14. Integrate an applicable professional code of ethics into practice, policies, and instruction
15. Analyze ethical dilemmas and determine appropriate course of action
16. Assess professionalism by completing self-evaluations
17. 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 I

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

### TIER II

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

### TIER III

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



### TIER IV

10. Evaluate and apply current trends, research, and policy in early childhood education and revise practice as appropriate
11. Facilitate professional development opportunities for others
12. 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

# Core Knowledge Area 7: Professionalism

## D. Integrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on early childhood education

### TIER I

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 II

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

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

9. Integrate knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of early childhood education into planning and decision-making
10. Evaluate practices in relationship to quality standards
11. Encourage the expression of multiple perspectives
12. 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 I

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 II

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

### TIER III

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

### TIER IV

9. Advocate for appropriate attention to and support for young children and families
10. Create and implement strategies to influence public policy
11. Develop an advocacy plan for the workplace
12. 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*





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