north dakota department of human services





North Dakota
Core Competencies
for Early Education and Care Practitioners





Welcome!



Welcome to the North Dakota Core Competencies for Early Education and Care Practitioners. They are the result of years of extensive work of many dedicated individuals from across the field of early childhood education and care in Minnesota and other states. With permission, North Dakota chose to adopt these competencies as part of its Growing Futures Professional Development Plan. The core competencies are divided into eight content areas. Each of the eight areas contains five levels that range from the skills and knowledge of a beginning practitioner to the more advanced skills and knowledge possessed by a professional with a master's degree.

The core competencies are designed to serve as a guide for improving your work with children and families. The competencies are worded so they can be measured or demonstrated. You may also find the core competencies contain new ideas or provide a new way of reflecting on your teaching. This publication is designed to be a practical and living document, and we hope you will enjoy using it. We also hope you will contribute to the ongoing refinement of core competencies for early education and care practitioners in our state. In this way you will be ultimately contributing to the healthy growth and development of infants, toddlers, and young children throughout North Dakota.

Sources:

- *Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals in Kansas and Missouri, Summer 2000*
- *Common Core Content and Areas of Specialization for Personnel Preparation in Early Care, Education and Family Support in New Mexico, May2002*
- *Competencies for the Various Levels of the Child Development Permit, Pacific Oaks Colege, California, 1999 Revised Edition*
- *Leading the Nation: The Minnesota System of Early Childhood Professional Development, January 1997*
- *Minnesota Early Childhood and School-Age Practitioner Core Competencies, Level III Practitioner, February 2001*
- *Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: A Resource Guide, 2000*
- *The Work Sampling System Preschool –4 Developmental Guidelines, 4th Edition*

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Introduction



Reasons why core competencies are critical to the early childhood field

- Core competencies define what practitioners need to know and be able to do to provide quality education and care.
- Core competencies serve as the foundation for decisions and practices carried out by practitioners in all early childhood education and care settings and programs.
- Core competencies provide guidelines for education and training programs in meeting the needs of practitioners in the field.
- Core competencies serve as a means for incorporating new research findings and knowledge into practice in early childhood education and care.
- Core competencies establish a set of standards for early childhood education and care that promote recognition of the significance and professional nature of this field.

Different ways core competencies may be used

Providers, Practitioners, Teachers

- Self-assess level of knowledge and skill in each of the eight content areas
- Self-identify specific areas for future professional development (e.g., education, training)

Directors, Program Administrators

- Create job descriptions and performance review instruments
- Specify education and training requirements for staff positions
- Develop staff education and training plans and policies
- Establish a salary scale based on levels of competency achieved by employees

Trainers, Training Organizations

- Plan and organize training and education to meet specific and consistent competencies
- Promote training and education opportunities that meet specific and consistent competencies

Higher Education Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

- Coordinate and design course content to facilitate transfer and articulation agreements
- Assess current program content to determine course development and modification

Federal, State, and Local Agencies

- Develop and implement policies that will enhance professionalism in the field
- Link core competencies to efforts to support the success of each child in school
- Use core competencies as one tool to assess the quality of the early childhood education and care system
- Promote use of core competencies across programs, agencies, and higher education institutions

Professional Development Efforts

Create the framework for a career development system that

- enables practitioners to plan and implement career development in early childhood education and care
- provides access to competency-based education and training
- strengthens professionalism and quality of early childhood education and care
- promotes compensation commensurate with education and training

Core Content Areas

The areas of competency address the development and learning of the "whole" practitioner and correspond with traditional curricular areas in early childhood education and care. Each content area describes the knowledge and skills practitioners need in order to work with children birth through age eight and their families. The core competencies are applicable in a wide variety of settings and programs, including child care, family child care, school readiness and preschool, early childhood family education, Head Start, early childhood special education, school age child care, and others. The core competencies recognize the primary and central role of families in the growth and development of children and the strong influence of culture on all areas of practice in early childhood education and care.

I. Child Growth and Development: understand how children acquire language and develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially.

II. Learning Environment and Curriculum: establish an environment that provides learning experiences to meet each child's needs, capabilities, and interests.

III. Assessment and Planning for Individual Needs: observe and assess what children know and can do in order to provide curriculum and instruction that addresses their developmental and learning needs.

IV. Interactions with Children: establish supportive relationships with children and guide them as individuals and as part of a group.

V. Families and Communities: work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet children's needs and to encourage the community's involvement with early childhood education and care.

VI. Health, Safety, and Nutrition: establish and maintain an environment that ensures children's health, safety, and nourishment.

VII. Program Planning and Evaluation: establish, implement, evaluate, and enhance operation of an early childhood education and care program

VIII. Professional Development and Leadership: serve children and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of early childhood education and care.



Levels of Competency

The levels of competency establish a continuum from the preliminary skills necessary to enter the field to an advanced level of academic preparation and varied experience. Practitioners progress from one level to another through a combination of formal study and reflection on practice. Depending on the practitioner's role, setting, or experience, she or he may have skills at varying levels in the different core content areas.

The five levels are intended to be cumulative. For example, a practitioner working at Level 3 has knowledge and skills to meet the competencies at Levels 1, 2, and 3. At all levels, adults who educate and care for young children continue their participation in professional development activities and advance their knowledge and skills within each of the core content areas.

Level 1 includes the knowledge and skills expected of a practitioner new to the early education and care field, with minimal specialized training or education.

Level 2 includes the knowledge and skills of Level 1 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with a Child Development Associate credential, a certificate or diploma in child development, or equivalent training, education, and relevant experience.

Level 3 includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1 and 2 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an associate's degree in early childhood education or child development, or equivalent training, education, and relevant experience.

Level 4 includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1, 2, and 3 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development and experience working with young children.

Level 5 includes the knowledge and skills of Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an advanced degree in early childhood education or child development and extensive experience working with young children.

Content Area I:

Child Growth and Development



Level 1

a. Recognizes children learn through play.
b. Recognizes individual personalities and temperaments of children.
c. Accepts cultural and linguistic variations and the effects those variations may have on behavior and development.
d. Accepts special needs variations and the effects those variations may have on behavior and development.
e. Addresses the individual needs of children.
f. Understands the need to help each child feel accepted in the group.
g. Helps children learn to communicate and get along with others.
h. Encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.

Level 2

a. Identifies basic physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language developmental milestones of children.
b. Recognizes individual children's personalities and variations in development and their effects on children's needs in the program.
c. Matches activities and teaching strategies to children's variable needs.
d. Understands the value of children's constructive errors and does not limit exploration, experimentation, and creativity for the sake of ensuring "right" answers or standardized products.
e. Recognizes variations in ability and development that may indicate a need for special attention.

Level 3

a. Understands that culture and family have a critical impact on children's development and that children are best understood in the contexts of family, culture, and society.
b. Uses a variety of strategies to encourage children's physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.
c. Identifies and describes age-typical physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language characteristics of children.
d. Demonstrates knowledge of the inter-relatedness of children's physical, language, literacy, cognitive, personal/social, and creative development.
e. Employs teaching practices inclusive of children with variations in learning styles, cultural perspectives, ability, and special needs.
f. Demonstrates understanding of protective factors, resilience, the development of mental health, and the importance of supportive relationships with adults and peers.
g. Demonstrates understanding of the developmental consequences of stress and trauma related to loss, neglect, and abuse.

Level 4

a. Understands and applies current child development theory, information, and practice.
b. Explains how developmental variations and family culture, language, and environment influence a child's growth and development.
c. Describes individual children relative to developmental characteristics typical of their age.
d. Understands and describes various personality and learning styles of children.
e. Identifies and uses appropriate resources and services for children with risk factors, delays, or disabilities.
f. Shares information with families about general principles of child growth and development.

Level 5

a. Integrates information on growth, development, and learning patterns of individuals and groups and applies to work with children, families, and staff.
b. Understands and articulates the significance of family-child attachments and family dynamics for development and learning.
c. Applies knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the significance of socio-cultural and political contexts for development and learning.
d. Promotes and communicates information about promising practices, issues, and research relevant to child growth and development.
e. Understands and articulates a systems perspective on issues of mental health, the effects of stress on development, and child support and protection.
f. Analyzes current research and suggests additional topics to researchers as needed.
g. Is aware of current and future trends in education and the larger society and the implications for children's development.

Content Area II:

Learning Environment and Curriculum

A. Creating the Learning Environment and General Curriculum

Level 1



a. Follows a daily routine.
b. Gives children choices.
c. Supports and encourages children's participation in a variety of activities.

Level 2

a. Maintains and monitors flexible daily routine.
b. Participates in providing an interesting and safe environment that encourages play, exploration, and learning.
c. Encourages children's learning through play.
d. Arranges effective and appropriate learning centers.
e. Selects materials appropriate to the developmental levels of individual children.
f. Engages children actively, not passively, in the learning process.
g. Gives children opportunities to make meaningful choices.
h. Begins to assist in planning learning activities and lessons.
i. Shares children's general progress and achievements with families.

Level 3

a. Provides an environment that facilitates the development of a sense of trust in infants and a sense of autonomy in toddlers.
b. Provides an environment that supports children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, hygiene, elimination, and nourishment.
c. Creates environments and experiences that respect and affirm cultural and linguistic diversity.
d. Creates environments and experiences that respect and affirm children's ties to their families.
e. Adapts curriculum to meet individual needs of children.
f. Understands and implements principles for designing curriculum goals in response to developmental characteristics of children.
g. Provides and uses materials that demonstrate acceptance of all children's gender, family, race, language, culture, and special needs.
h. Designs and offers learning opportunities that reflect a wide variety of cultures, including those represented in the program's community.
i. Uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage children's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and competence.
j. Revisits learning activities with children so they can reflect and build on previous interests.
k. Encourages and offers simple parent-child learning activities for use at home.
l. Maintains ongoing communication with families about children's education and care.

Level 4

a. Uses space, materials, relationships, activities, and routines to provide an interesting and safe environment that encourages play, exploration, and learning.
b. Designs, creates, and maintains a predictable, yet flexible environment that reflects the backgrounds and experiences the children bring to the program.
c. Plans, implements, and adapts an environment that is balanced between active and quiet, child-directed and adult-directed, individual and group, indoor and outdoor activities.
d. Plans activities and provides materials appropriate to the developmental levels of all children served.
e. Plans, implements, and adapts an integrated curriculum that includes literacy, language arts, math, science, social studies, health, safety, nutrition, art, music, drama, and movement.
f. Takes advantage of opportunities to modify curriculum to build on children's interests.
g. Demonstrates developmentally appropriate use of media and technology with young children (including English language learners).
h. Uses appropriate assistive technology for children with disabilities.
i. Uses and explains the rationale for developmentally appropriate teaching methods that include play, small group projects, open-ended questioning, group discussion, problem solving, cooperative learning, and inquiry experiences.
j. Understands and applies the major theories of teaching and learning and uses a variety of teaching strategies to correspond to multiple learning styles and linguistic abilities.
k. Involves families in ongoing learning activities with children at home and school.

Level 5

a. Plans, evaluates, and modifies curriculum to engage children in problem solving and active learning.
b. Teaches others how to design curriculum.
c. Develops strategies that support families' and children's roles in planning curriculum.
d. Analyzes and applies current theory and research on promoting children's learning.
e. Recognizes and articulates the family's role as first educator of the child.
f. Works collaboratively with community resources and agencies to communicate information on early childhood education.

B. Promoting Physical Development

Level 1

a. Actively participates in children's activities.
b. Interacts appropriately with children during physical activities.
c. Spends time with children in "floor time" activities.

Level 2

a. Acknowledges and supports children's need to move and be active.
b. Introduces sensory experiences to children (exploration of texture, color, sound, size, shape, smell, taste, weight, etc.).
c. Uses a variety of equipment, activities, and opportunities to promote the physical development of children.

Level 3

a. Provides space and equipment for formal and informal large motor activities that are fun and challenging.
b. Provides safe structures and experiences for infants and toddlers to move and explore the environment, with special attention to their current developmental challenges, such as crawling, standing, walking, climbing, pushing, and pulling.
c. Provides safe structures and experiences for young children to move and explore the environment, with special attention to their current developmental challenges, such as running, jumping, hopping, throwing, and catching.
d. Provides adequate time and appropriate materials for small motor development (e.g., drawing, assembling puzzles, stringing beads, writing, etc.).
e. Uses music, dance, and movement with children informally and frequently.
f. Understands and implements frequent opportunities for movement and physical exercise as a way to reduce or prevent many of children's health and behavioral issues.

Level 4

a. Includes movement as a teaching strategy for a variety of skills (e.g., jump four times to teach the quantity of four).
b. Plans activities that integrate physical development with the arts and all curriculum areas.
c. Plans indoor and outdoor activities for both large and small motor skills.
d. Adapts activities for children with special needs.
e. Works with families to encourage and reinforce parent-child activities that involve physical activity and movement, both inside and outdoors, and in natural settings and parks when possible.

Level 5

a. Explains how physical development and other areas of development interrelate.
b. Understands and articulates concepts of sensory integration.
c. Uses knowledge of kinesthetic learning styles when teaching others.

C. Promoting Language Development and Literacy

Level 1

a. Listens and responds to children's verbal and non-verbal attempts to communicate.
b. Encourages children to ask questions and actively listens to their responses.
c. Talks with children and stimulates conversation among children.
d. Demonstrates realistic expectations for children's understanding and use of speech.
e. Responds to children's communication in home language.
f. Shares books with children, re-reads favorite stories, and models reading behaviors.
g. Asks children questions about stories read and told together.
h. Encourages children to predict what will happen next in a story.
i. Plays word and rhyming games.
j. Models appropriate handling and selection of books.

Level 2

a. Asks children relevant open-ended questions.
b. Encourages play and acts as adult facilitator or partner in play.
c. Encourages and supports children's verbal and nonverbal communication with others.
d. Uses conversations to enrich and expand vocabulary.
e. Provides clear verbal and pictorial instructions that help children move from simple directions to a more complex sequence of directions.
f. Encourages understanding of the relationship between spoken and printed words.
g. Provides opportunities for children to chant familiar rhymes and experiment with beginning word sounds.
h. Points out the names of things, signs, labels, etc. in learning environments.
i. Talks about the meaning of words and writes down dictation of children.
j. Encourages children to recognize own name in print and to practice writing letters of their name.
k. Provides opportunities for children to draw and print using markers, crayons, etc. on a variety of surfaces.
l. Uses a variety of music and sings frequently with children.
m. Understands and implements the importance of reading out loud daily with children.
n. Shares children's progress and achievements in language development and literacy with families.

Level 3

a. Responds to preverbal and English language learner children's behaviors with understanding of their possible meanings, e.g., tries to comfort children and find causes for and solutions to their problems.
b. Responds to preverbal and English language learner children's attempts at language by extending their words without correcting them (e.g., when the child says "doggy," say "Yes, the little black dog is wagging his tail;" when the child says "big truck," say "Yes, here comes a big grey truck with a stripe on its side").
c. Applies a variety of infant and toddler teaching techniques, e.g., prompting, turn-taking, elaborating, using puppets to communicate and elicit language, and facilitating self-directed learning.
d. Uses concrete experiences and play to enhance and extend young children's language development and emerging literacy.

e. Builds on children's interests to introduce new vocabulary and ideas.
f. Helps children learn about beginning concepts of literacy (e.g., print conveys a story; print is read from top to bottom; books have sequences such as beginning, middle, and end).
g. Provides writing materials and models of writing throughout the learning environment.
h. Encourages and offers simple parent-child language and literacy activities.

Level 4

a. Communicates with children and families using home language with interpreters when necessary.
b. Talks about a variety of topics and uses language to ask questions, give answers, make statements, share ideas, or use pretend, fantasy, or word play.
c. Uses a variety of songs, books, stories, and games from many cultures.
d. Facilitates language development by respectfully expanding, extending, and elaborating upon children's communication attempts.
e. Recognizes and responds to the general warning signs of communication/language delays or disorders for children of various ages, making referrals as needed.
f. Provides materials such as puppets, flannel board sets, and other props to act out and tell stories.
g. Provides many types of children's books, references, pictures, and posters in the environment.
h. Immerses children in a print-rich environment including languages represented in the community and facilitates the relationship between spoken and printed words.
i. Promotes literacy-related play activities that encourage children's attempts at writing and storytelling.
j. Offers ongoing information to family and community members on simple ways to promote language development and early literacy at home.
k. Responds to language differences and literacy abilities of families in printed materials sent home with children.

Level 5

a. Analyzes and applies current theory and research on promoting language acquisition and early literacy.
b. Designs curriculum consistent with current theories of language use and language acquisition, including English as a second language.
c. Informs families and others about the importance of adult-child and child-child interactions in children's English and home language development.
d. Develops family and community awareness about importance of reading to young children.
e. Works cooperatively with local public libraries to sponsor events such as book fairs and story hours that encourage children and families to use the library and to read and tell stories together.

D. Promoting Cognitive Development

Level 1 – Mathematics

a. Encourages children to explore, group, and order objects and materials in the environment.
b. Provides opportunities for conversation using everyday words to indicate space, location, shape, and size of objects.

Level 2 – Mathematics

a. Discusses the sequence of daily and special family or community events.
b. Provides opportunities to develop an understanding of space (e.g., filling and emptying, building, observing from different viewpoints).
c. Shares children's progress and achievements in mathematics learning with families.

Level 3 – Mathematics

a. Provides opportunities for children to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems.
b. Encourages beginning understanding of number and quantity (e.g., counting footsteps, jumps, or repetitions of exercises; commenting there are more girls than boys at the table).
c. Facilitates children's recognition and description of shapes (e.g., identifying a triangle and counting its sides; identifying and labeling shapes found in the environment).
d. Encourages children's interest in measuring activities (e.g., measuring the length of a block road or height of a block tower; noting that they can fill a large bowl in the sand table with three small cups of sand).
e. Provides sensory experiences that encourage children to practice changes in structure, shape, and size of substances (e.g., building structures with blocks or Lego toys).
f. Encourages and offers simple parent-child activities with number and quantity.

Level 4 – Mathematics

a. Provides opportunities for children to sort objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes (e.g., sorting markers from crayons; sorting buttons and pegs into egg cartons; sorting pattern blocks according to shape and color).
b. Provides opportunities for children to recognize simple patterns and duplicate them (e.g., copying a sound pattern of two claps and a pause, then one clap and a pause; stringing beads in a repeating pattern according to color, shape, or size).
c. Facilitates children's understanding and use of several positional words (e.g., putting a block *on top of* or *underneath* another block; going *in front of* or *behind* another child; standing *inside* or *outside* of a playhouse).
d. Provides opportunities for children to order, compare, and describe objects according to a single attribute (e.g., figuring out who of two children has the smaller piece of sandwich; arranging three blocks from shortest to longest).

Level 5 – Mathematics

a. Analyzes, evaluates, and applies current research and theory and research on mathematics teaching and learning.
b. Includes emphasis on practical strategies for mathematics teaching and learning in staff development programs.

Level 1 – Science



a. Takes walks in the neighborhood or community to observe natural objects and events.
b. Discusses objects and events that have been observed indoors and outdoors.

Level 2 – Science

a. Encourages children to ask questions and find answers through active exploration of materials in the environment.
b. Actively participates in sand and water play with children.
c. Shares children's progress and achievements in science learning with families.

Level 3 – Science

a. Observes nature and natural phenomena and makes predictions about natural events (e.g., growing seeds, caring for animals, charting weather).
b. Asks questions to facilitate children's reflection on what they are learning (e.g., why a snowball melts into water when inside a warm room; why some objects float and others sink).
c. Provides more information to extend areas of children's observations and interest (e.g., pictures and discussion of animals who hibernate in the winter or who live in the ocean).
d. Models and discusses importance of reusing and recycling and caring for the environment.
e. Provides materials and experiences that encourage curiosity and promote a sense of wonder in children.
f. Encourages and offers simple parent-child science activities.

Level 4 – Science

a. Plans activities and provides materials for a variety of sensory experiences (e.g., focusing on sight, smell, hearing, taste, and/or touch).
b. Creates simple charts and graphs to document information observed in science activities.
c. Provides opportunities for enhancing the ability to observe, see, and perceive and to pay attention to natural phenomena.
d. Arranges field trips to nature centers, parks, and farms, with related preparation for and reflection on the experience.

Level 5 – Science

a. Analyzes and applies current theory and research on science teaching and learning.
b. Arranges opportunities for children and families to work on community projects such as community gardens or picking up litter in park areas.
c. Includes approaches to scientific thinking and problem solving in staff development programs.

Level 1 – Social Studies



a. Talks about jobs people do in the family and community.
b. Discusses program roles, jobs, and rules.

Level 2 – Social Studies

a. Encourages children to describe and appreciate their own characteristics and those of others.
b. Discusses family and community member roles, jobs, and rules.

Level 3 – Social Studies

a. Supports children's understanding of recent and past events.
b. Creates maps of the school, local area, or neighborhood.
c. Incorporates photos, art, music, food, clothing, etc. from a wide variety of cultures into the curriculum.
d. Acknowledges and discusses differences in family and community member roles, jobs, and rules in various cultures.

Level 4 – Social Studies

a. Involves children in service and social action projects.
b. Explores and talks about land, water, and other features in the community.
c. Invites workers and community leaders to come to the program and talk about their work.
d. Invites parents and family members to come to the program and talk about their interests, culture, and country of origin.
e. Encourages children to see themselves as part of a larger community.
f. Discusses appropriate use of technology (e.g., television, videos, DVDs, computers, etc.) with children and families.
g. Facilitates children and families learning to become critical and thoughtful users of technology.

Level 5 – Social Studies

a. Encourages community leaders and members to become involved with early childhood programs.
b. Includes peaceful conflict management and problem solving strategies in staff development programs.

E. Promoting Personal and Social Development

Level 1

a. Engages in everyday conversation with infants, toddlers, and young children.
b. Treats children as individuals with their own strengths and needs.
c. Recognizes that periods of stress, separation, and transition may affect children's personal and social development.
d. Shares children's excitement in discoveries, exploration, and manipulation of items in the environment.

Level 2

a. Affirms children's worth and growing identity as individuals.
b. Works to ensure continuity of care, especially for infants and toddlers (e.g., each infant is assigned and learns to identify a primary caregiver).
c. Shows respectful and matter-of-fact attitude when diapering, undressing, feeding, and nurturing (e.g., instead of using words like stinky, dirty, or messy, say "Let's get you a fresh diaper" or "We need to wash your hands now").
d. Handles children gently and goes as slowly as circumstances permit during diapering, dressing, feeding, or putting children down for sleep.
e. Avoids talking about children to other staff as though children are not present or can't hear (e.g., does not say "Elena's being naughty – can you deal with her so I can feed Ben?").
f. Helps children learn to communicate and get along with others.
g. Models recognizing, naming, and expressing feelings.
h. Models and encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.
i. Helps children through periods of stress, separation, and transition.
j. Helps children feel valued as members of the group.
k. Emphasizes cooperation in games and activities and provides many opportunities for cooperative play.
l. Intervenes when necessary to help children develop socially.
m. Is sensitive to varying cultural values and expectations about the child as a member of a family and an ethnic or social group.
n. Models curiosity and information seeking.
o. Supports children's sustained efforts at activities and problem solving.
p. Tells infants, toddlers, and young children what will happen next (e.g., I'm going to change your diaper now; in a little while we're going to clean up our toys; it's almost time to clean up our toys; let's pick up our toys now).
q. Shows support for and acceptance of individual children and their families.

Level 3

a. Works to create a community in the program or home setting and encourages children to include others who may be isolated.
b. Guides children in understanding and expressing their feelings and those of others.
c. Guides children in asserting themselves in positive ways and helping others.
d. Helps children learn and practice empathy and respect for the feelings and rights of others.
e. Encourages shy or quiet children to interact with others while respecting their personality style and temperament.

f. Learns the individual eating and sleeping rhythms of infants and toddlers and their preferences for comforting and approaching new people and experiences.
g. When possible, offers toddlers and young children two acceptable choices to promote autonomy and reduce oppositional behavior.
h. Develops positive relations with families and recognizes the child is an integral part and extension of the family.

Level 4

a. Provides physical environments, schedules, and routines that promote self-control and self-regulation.
b. Designs and provides a curriculum that emphasizes and enhances development of social skills, relationships, and friendships.
c. Guides children through problem solving and conflict resolution interactions.
d. Serves as a steady and reliable listener and supporter for each child as a loveable person, even when his/her behavior seems to push others away.
e. Creates environments that offer an appropriate amount of stimulation and opportunities to choose new as well as familiar activities.
f. Provides sufficient time for children to engage in sustained activities.
g. Provides an environment of psychological safety where children are encouraged to experiment without fear of making mistakes.
h. Recognizes atypical personal and social development and initiates appropriate referral strategies.
i. Works to support and reinforce families for their primary role in children's personal and social development.

Level 5

a. Analyzes and applies current theory on attachment and promoting social development.
b. Identifies and communicates to others specific strategies for interacting with children with challenging behaviors.
c. Communicates to others the process for developing curriculum that promotes social and emotional development and positive approaches to learning.



F. Promoting Creativity and the Arts



Level 1

a. Values the process of creating as more important than the end product.
b. Encourages individual creative expression.
c. Accepts cultural differences that may affect children's ways of expressing themselves creatively.
d. Provides opportunities for children to use a variety of media for creative activities.

Level 2

a. Encourages and supports children's use of unstructured materials such as water, clay, paints, and blocks.
b. Encourages children to express their creative abilities through language, music, dramatic play, and art.
c. Describes, discusses, and accepts the process as well as the product of children's creative activities.

Level 3

a. Ensures that all children have access to opportunities that allow for individual creative expression.
b. Supports development and acceptance of personal preferences by giving children choices and supporting discussions of likes and dislikes.
c. Shows respect for creative expression though appropriate documentation and display of children's work.
d. Uses art, music, and dramatic play as a springboard for language and conversation.

Level 4

a. Provides time, materials, and space to explore and experiment with creative expression in multiple media (e.g., problem solving, visual arts, construction, music, movement, drama).
b. Exposes children to and helps develop their appreciation for creative and aesthetic experiences in their community.
c. Encourages awareness and appreciation of the arts and creative expression from a variety of cultures.
d. Challenges children to extend their creative thinking and problem solving by asking open-ended questions.

Level 5

a. Using specific examples, explains how children represent their thoughts, feelings, and ideas through creative outlets.
b. Informs families about the importance of individual creative expression.
c. Encourages and integrates creative expression throughout the curriculum.
d. Communicates to others the process for developing curriculum that promotes creative expression.

Content Area III:

Assessment and Planning for Individual Needs

Level 1

a. Understands that each child develops at his/her own rate.
b. Assists with collection of information about each child's development.
c. Raises concerns about children's development to supervisors.
d. Maintains confidentiality between the program and families regarding each child's observation and assessment.
e. Is aware of the signs of emotional distress, child abuse, and neglect and complies with mandated reporting procedures for child abuse and neglect.

Level 2

a. Identifies various ways to get to know each child as an individual, including strengths, needs, interests, families, and life situations.
b. Contributes to assessments and aids in informal evaluation.
c. Collects and organizes information about each child, such as collecting samples of the child's work and recording anecdotal notes.
d. Assists in the reporting of assessment results to families.

Level 3

a. Maintains appropriate records of children's development and behavior that safeguard confidentiality and privacy.
b. Works cooperatively with assessment and health care teams for children with special needs or suspected developmental delays or disabilities.
c. Understands the use and limitations of both formal and informal screening and assessment of young children.
d. Involves the family and other team members in assessing children's development, strengths, and needs to set individual goals for children.
e. Uses observational techniques to learn about individual infants, toddlers, young children, and their families' needs, interests, preferences, and particular ways of responding to people and events.
f. Plans for and includes non-verbal demonstrations of skills with preverbal or English language learner children.
g. Engages families in positive dialogue about assessment processes, results, and implications.

Level 4

a. Objectively observes and records children's patterns of development, behavior, and preferred learning style.
b. Analyzes findings of observations and uses the information to plan for and guide curriculum, instruction, and interaction with children.
c. Exhibits understanding of the influences of environmental factors, cultural/linguistic differences, and diverse ways of learning on assessment outcomes.
d. Uses authentic, performance-based assessments of children's learning to assist in planning and to communicate with children and parents.
e. Communicates assessment results to families in a clear, supportive, and collaborative manner.
f. Involves families in assessing and planning for individual children, including children with disabilities, developmental delays, or special abilities.
g. Develops, implements, and evaluates a curriculum and environment that focuses on children's developmental needs and interests and incorporates their home experiences and cultural and societal values.
h. Fully understands and uses local process for initiating referrals for young children with health and developmental concerns.
i. Integrates comments and recommendations from families about child needs and strengths into education program.

Level 5

a. Understands and applies major theories and research relevant to observation and assessment.
b. Addresses issues relevant to observation and assessment.
c. Establishes criteria, procedures, and documentation methods for assessment of children's progress.
d. Establishes criteria, procedures, and documentation methods for assessment of program effectiveness with individual children.
e. Understands and articulates assessment issues and strategies and communicates these to families and other professionals.

Content Area IV:

Interactions With Children

Level 1



a. Uses positive behavior guidance.
b. Avoids actions that would cause physical and emotional harm.
c. Provides appropriate supervision.
d. Understands and supports child-directed play.
e. Interacts in a manner reflecting respect for self and others.
f. Addresses behaviors or situations, rather than labeling the child.
g. Shows respect for children in all situations.

Level 2

a. Modifies play that is inappropriate for the learning environment.
b. Establishes and communicates limits for acceptable behavior.
c. Responds to children's behavior in ways that encourage self-regulation.
d. Provides a supportive environment in which children can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.
e. Uses a variety of positive direct and indirect guidance methods and avoids negative methods.
f. Provides an environment that helps all children to know, accept, and take pride in their identities and to develop a sense of belonging and inter-dependence.
g. Builds a trusting relationship with children, providing physical and emotional security.
h. Maintains professionalism and respect for children when communicating with other adults about children's behavior.
i. Reports positively to families about children's progress and challenges.
j. Uses information from parents to inform interactions with children.

Level 3

a. Adapts the learning environment and curriculum to minimize potential for challenging behaviors, especially in multi-age settings.
b. Actively communicates with children and provides opportunities and support for children to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings.
c. Uses strategies to assist children in learning to express emotions in positive ways, solve problems, and make decisions.
d. Gives, tells, and shows children acceptable alternatives to unacceptable or undesirable behaviors.

e. Encourages children to take initiative in generating ideas, problems, questions, and relationships.
f. Facilitates smooth transitions of individuals and groups from activity to activity.
g. Alerts children to changes in activities or routines well in advance.
h. Builds relationships with parents that allow for constructive communication about children's behavior.

Level 4

a. Demonstrates realistic expectations about children's attention spans, interests, social abilities, and physical needs.
b. Understands the influence of the physical setting, schedule, routines, and transitions on children and uses these experiences to promote children's development and learning.
c. Communicates with families regarding areas of concern, developing cooperative strategies to manage problems.
d. Facilitates group membership and decision-making among children.
e. Involves children in establishing guidelines and limits for behavior.
f. Facilitates smooth transitions of children from one age group to another age group.
g. Relates guidance practices to knowledge of children's personalities, developmental levels, and developmental or environmental stressors.
h. Uses the learning methods of open-ended questioning, group discussion, problem solving, cooperative play, and guided experiments.
i. Demonstrates knowledge of instructional and guidance practices for integrating children with disabilities.
j. Proactively encourages and reinforces positive adult-child interactions within the family.

Level 5

a. Develops written policies for effective child guidance.
b. Understands and describes the principles for intervention and conflict resolution in children's play and learning.
c. Recognizes and advocates family-teacher partnerships to establish positive interaction patterns in program, school, and home.
d. Develops individual guidance plans, using relevant professionals and family members for support as needed.
e. Develops cooperative skills that focus on working in pairs or small groups, negotiating, compromising, and problem solving.
f. Uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
g. Analyzes, evaluates, and applies current theory and research on individual and group guidance.

Content Area V:

Families and Communities

Level 1

a. Respects the family's role as primary educator.
b. Establishes positive communication and relationships with families.
c. Responds appropriately to parent questions, and/or refers them to supervisor or service agency in the community.
d. Acknowledges the varying structures and cultures of children's families.
e. Accepts individuality of each child.
f. Follows rules of confidentiality.



Level 2

a. Maintains an open and cooperative relationship with each child's family and communicates daily events.
b. Is aware that his/her interactions with children and other adults may be viewed by parents and community members as models for interaction and behaves accordingly.
c. Supports the child's relationship with his or her family.
d. Respects parents' choices and goals for their children.
e. Understands the collaborative role of parents and teachers.
f. Respects and supports cultural and linguistic differences and diverse family structures.
g. Recognizes stress factors affecting families.

Level 3

a. Invites family involvement in the program and provides opportunities for families to share skills and talents.
b. Maintains a safe and welcoming environment for families and community members.
c. Effectively and positively communicates verbal and written information to families.
d. Shares knowledge of general child development with families.
e. Demonstrates knowledge of and respect for variations across cultures and family structures, in terms of family expectations, values, and childrearing practices.
f. Demonstrates understanding of the complexity and dynamics of family systems.
g. Exhibits understanding of the effects of family stress on the behavior of children and other family members.
h. Incorporates the families' desires and goals for their children into program and/or intervention strategies.
i. Works cooperatively with families on mutually agreed upon practices (e.g., infant feeding, toddler toilet learning).

Level 4

a. Seeks and maintains a collaborative relationship with parents, guardians, families, community agencies, and other professionals to meet the needs of each child.
b. Establishes frequent contact with families through variety of communication strategies, including information in children's home language and use of interpreters, to provide information to families about child growth, development, and learning.
c. Supports parents in meeting the challenges of their family goals and lifestyles.
d. Acknowledges and builds on strengths of each family.
e. Helps parents assess educational and parenting options.
f. Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
g. Implements effective conflict resolution techniques with families when needed.
h. Plans and conducts family conferences.
i. Supports families in development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs), and Interagency Individual Intervention Plans (IIIPs).
j. Works as member of a child's team to help families obtain clear and understandable information about their children's disabilities and about the family's legal right to services within the special education and interagency service system.
k. Develops relationships with community resources, provides families with resource information, and makes appropriate referrals.
l. Promotes public awareness about early education and care by educating consumers.

Level 5

a. Acts as advocate both for children and their families.
b. Articulates the various theories of family systems and the effect of stress and crisis on families.
c. Plans, conducts, and evaluates activities for family support and participation.
d. Helps families move through the changes of their specific family system.
e. Promotes staff growth and development in communicating and relating with families.
f. Serves as a resource to colleagues, teachers, and staff in connecting families to services in the community.
g. Works collaboratively with agencies and community resources to meet the needs of families in the community.

Content Area VI:

Health, Safety, and Nutrition



Level 1

Health

a. Practices appropriate hand-washing techniques.
b. Helps children practice appropriate hand-washing techniques.
c. Practices safe diapering procedures.
d. Implements practices to avoid and control blood-borne pathogens.

Safety

a. Is aware of environment and the potential for hazards, corrects those that are correctable, and alerts supervisor to any others.
b. Actively supervises and interacts with children to ensure safety both indoors and outdoors.
c. Releases children only to authorized persons.
d. Follows safety regulations and participates in emergency and disaster drills.

Nutrition

a. Practices safe food handling and observes general sanitation practices.
b. Maintains sanitary environments.
c. Recognizes health hazards in meals (choking, allergies, etc.) and takes steps to prevent dangerous situations.

Level 2

Health

a. Responds to children's injuries and documents any injuries, while assuring the comfort and care of other children.
b. Monitors children daily for signs of illness and possible signs of abuse and neglect.
c. Follows procedures to avoid transmission of communicable diseases.
d. Follows instructions for administration of medicine and approved medical treatments, including related documentation.

Safety

a. Describes and maintains a safe environment, including equipment and toys, to prevent and reduce injuries.
b. Teaches simple safety precautions and rules to children and enforces rules consistently.
c. Demonstrates ability to use safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher.
d. Identifies and reports problems regarding staff to child ratios.
e. Verbalizes and adheres to emergency, illness, injury, and sanitation procedures.

Nutrition

a. Monitors eating habits to ensure a healthy diet, including the need of children to eat frequently.
b. Provides appropriate meals and snacks in a relaxed and social setting with no coercion.
c. Guides cooking experiences with children.

Level 3

Health

a. Models and provides direction on sanitation procedures.
b. Demonstrates basic knowledge of health issues common to infants, toddlers, and young children.
c. Identifies, documents, and reports suspected emotional distress, abuse, and neglect of children in an immediate and appropriate way.
d. Uses appropriate health appraisal and management procedures and makes referrals when necessary.
e. Assists young children in establishing health-promoting behaviors and making healthy choices.
f. Informs families when child has been exposed to communicable disease or illness.

Safety

a. Maintains and assesses safe environments inside and outside.
b. Recognizes and responds to each child's safety needs.

Nutrition

a. Demonstrates basic knowledge of the nutrition and feeding needs specific to infants, toddlers, and young children, including those with physical impairments.
b. Teaches children about nutrition and healthy food choices.
c. Bases educational activities on nutritional information responsive to multiple cultures.

Level 4

Health

a. Provides a consistent daily routine for rest/sleep and physical exercise as developmentally appropriate.
b. Recognizes and responds to each child's needs for physical health and emotional well-being.
c. Talks with and provides resource information to families about health in a culturally responsive manner.
d. Designs and implements curriculum activities emphasizing healthy bodies, lifestyles, and environment.
e. Recognizes signs of emotional distress, physical illness, child abuse, and neglect and acts appropriately to the situation, e.g., initiates discussions with families, refers to appropriate professionals, and/or reports to designated authorities.

Safety

a. Plans and implements safe field trips.
b. Designs and facilitates indoor and outdoor learning environments to promote each child's physical and emotional well-being.
c. Keeps informed about and shares safety information and resources with families.
d. Demonstrates and informs others about emergency, illness, and injury procedures.

Nutrition

a. Recognizes and responds to each child's nutritional needs.
b. Communicates with families about the foods children need and prefer.
c. Plans and evaluates menus.
d. Includes foods from diverse cultures.
e. Plans and implements cooking experiences with children.
f. Provides opportunities and reinforcement for children's practice of healthy nutritional choices.

Level 5

Health

a. Provides an environment that is physically and psychologically healthy for children, families, and staff.
b. Designs, documents, and informs others of emergency, illness, injury, and sanitation procedures.
c. Establishes procedures for documentation and notification of suspected abuse and neglect.
d. Works with health care professionals in community to ensure that the needs of the children are met.

Safety

a. Maintains appropriate levels and standards for state and federal regulations.
b. Identifies opportunities to fund environmental safety improvements.
c. Develops and documents contingency plans to meet ratio requirements in all situations.
d. Conducts self-assessments of facility for licensing and accreditation.

Nutrition

a. Assesses program's nutritional plan and adapts practices accordingly.
b. Coordinates food activities with cultural calendar.

Content Area VII:

Program Planning and Evaluation

Level 1

a. Behaves as a responsible staff member.
b. Participates as a team member in the program.
c. Keeps appropriate records.
d. Complies with program policies and licensing requirements.
e. Communicates and works effectively with other staff, volunteers, and administrators.
f. Has or is gaining functional technological skills (e.g., computer, fax machine, speaker phone, etc.)
g. Is able to receive and use constructive feedback.

Level 2

a. Supports the program mission and purpose.
b. Organizes, plans, and keeps records effectively.
c. Assists in gathering information for evaluation.
d. Values and works to strengthen the program's team of staff, administrators, and volunteers.
e. Is able to give constructive feedback.

Level 3

a. Possesses and uses functional computer skills.
b. Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for the program.
c. Recognizes the importance of evaluation, assisting in evaluating the program's effectiveness.
d. Uses both self and collaborative staff evaluations as part of ongoing program evaluation.
e. Verbalizes the relationship between the program's philosophy and daily practice.
f. Understands and articulates agency policies related to legal and safety issues of children and families.

Level 4

a. Plans and implements parent orientation and parent education programs.
b. Demonstrates knowledge of valid and appropriate assessment and evaluation practices.
c. Uses a variety of techniques and procedures to evaluate and modify program goals for young children and their families.
d. Develops curriculum for program.
e. Provides effective lines of communication among staff and administrators.
f. Conducts and maintains the inventory of supplies, materials, and equipment.
g. Assists in planning budget.
h. Supervises student teachers and practicum students.
i. Encourages and supports staff in meeting professional development goals.
j. Clearly articulates developmentally appropriate practices to colleagues, parents, and others.

Level 5

a. Sets clear policy and practices for positive family-staff relationships.
b. Communicates effectively with board and advisory groups.
c. Communicates effectively with community and media representatives.
d. Applies knowledge of federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, and professional standards to provide healthy and safe practices for all children and maintain current license and accreditation standards.
e. Develops and implements program policies and fee structure.
f. Identifies, develops, and implements formative and summative program evaluation strategies and understands their benefits, strengths, and limitations.
g. Plans for, recruits, orients, and supervises staff.
h. Designs and implements staff job descriptions and performance review forms and procedures.
i. Plans and implements staff development opportunities.
j. Sets clear policy and practices for positive and mutually supportive work environment.
k. Evaluates assessment practices and remains updated on assessment research.
l. Advocates for developmentally appropriate assessment of children and program.
m. Plans, maintains, and reports on budget.
n. Identifies and seeks additional funding opportunities as needed.
o. Develops and maintains program marketing plan as needed.
p. Possesses legal knowledge necessary for effective management.
q. Provides strong leadership and visionary direction.

Content Area VIII:

Professional Development and Leadership

Level 1

a. Enjoys working with children and models a positive attitude.
b. Exhibits good hygiene and personal appearance.
c. Demonstrates good work habits.
d. Consults with supervisor or resource person regarding concerns.
e. Works cooperatively with colleagues.
f. Is aware of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) code of ethics for early education and care and its main topics.
g. Behaves ethically, maintaining confidentiality and impartiality.
h. Shows commitment to the program's goals.
i. Seeks out knowledge and skills to improve practice.

Level 2

a. Manages demands of personal and professional commitments.
b. Uses problem-solving skills as needed.
c. Interacts in a manner reflecting respect for self and others.
d. Performs well as a team member.
e. Promotes value of quality in early education and care.
f. Demonstrates a commitment to NAEYC code of ethics.
g. Is aware of professional resources.
h. Takes advantage of opportunities to improve competence.
i. Accepts advice and constructive criticism to improve practice.
j. Participates in one (or more) professional association.

Level 3

a. Demonstrates early education and care practices that support inclusion and cultural and linguistic diversity.
b. Routinely reflects on teaching practices and behavior of children.
c. Plans and implements routine tasks to maximize the amount of time spent interacting with children.
d. Participates in professional organizations and on-going professional development to enhance knowledge and skills.
e. Consistently adheres to NAEYC code of ethics.
f. Demonstrates understanding of the early childhood profession and historical, social, and political influences on its current practices.
g. Is aware of other professions providing related services for young children and their families.
h. Exhibits knowledge of child and family advocacy issues.
i. Demonstrates knowledge of federal, state, and local regulation of programs and services for children birth through eight years of age.
j. Demonstrates awareness of own culture and begins to articulate how cultural heritage influences values, decisions, and behavior.
k. Seeks out professional relationships to enhance professional growth (e.g., identifies a mentor).

Level 4

a. Demonstrates critical reflection on own professional and educational practices from community, state, national, and global perspectives.
b. Articulates and uses NAEYC code of ethics for making professional decisions.
c. Participates in group problem solving of ethical dilemmas.
d. Articulates personal philosophy of early childhood education based on knowledge of child development and best practices.
e. Evaluates current trends in early childhood education and revises practices as appropriate.
f. Demonstrates knowledge of basic principles of administration, organization, and operation of early childhood programs, including supervision of staff and volunteers.
g. Uses professional resources to continually improve practice.
h. Actively participates in career development.
i. Acknowledges and assesses personal values and own cultural biases.
j. Serves as a mentor to others working with young children and families.
k. Advocates for excellence in programs and services for young children and families.
l. Communicates and interacts with parents/guardians, families, colleagues, and the community to support children's learning and well-being.
m. Establishes effective working relationships with early elementary education practitioners to promote continuity in children's development and learning.

Level 5

a. Initiates and mediates group problem solving of ethical dilemmas.
b. Recognizes causes and symptoms of "burnout" and develops strategies to prevent it.
c. Keeps current on research and policy relevant to early education and care and revises practice as needed.
d. Understands how historical, philosophical, and social foundations of early childhood education affect current practices and future trends.
e. Understands the impact of public policy upon children, families, and educational programs and advocates for supportive public policies.
f. Designs staff development opportunities for staff and colleagues.
g. Ensures staff development in cultural dynamics, (e.g., ethnocentrism, prejudice, cultural mistrust, white privilege).
h. Recognizes variations in adult and child learning styles and applies knowledge to practice.
i. Provides a work culture that fosters staff initiative to solve problems and resolve conflict.
j. Serves on professional boards and committees.

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