



Unit 1 – Current Issues in Early Childhood Education

Key Topic 1: Overview and Rationale of the Chapter

Focus Statement

Students gain an overview of key issues and research related to high-quality preschool programs from both national and California perspectives.

Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses, CAP expansion courses, and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide learning experience. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Child, Family, and Community
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Jigsaw reading
- Notetaking outline or tool
- Pairs or small groups
- Reflective discussion

California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

These competency areas are from the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division's *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies* (CDE 2011). The "Competency Areas to Consider" below are listed in this instructional



guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these learning experiences.

- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Family and Community Engagement
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



Unit 1 – Current Issues in Early Childhood Education

Key Topic 1: Overview and Rationale of the Chapter

Before You Start

Chapter 1 in the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* focuses on issues in early childhood and preschool education that are related to enhancing the quality of preschool programs. There are two major sections in this chapter. The first section presents research and findings from a national perspective. The second section is a discussion of implications of these issues for California, including current initiatives that address some of the research findings and issues.

In this key topic, students will review the chapter to acquire an overview of the chapter’s contents—its main messages and some of the research behind these messages. Students work both individually and in groups to read sections of the chapter, discuss the key points, and develop a brief summary of the two major sections. The purpose of this key topic is to familiarize students with the chapter; more in-depth exploration of some of the chapter’s content is provided in this unit’s other key topics.

Handout 1, “General Issues in Early Childhood Education and the California Context,” is a notetaking form that students can use when taking notes on their reading and discussions. An electronic version of this handout will be available when this instructional guide is online at <http://facultyinitiative.wested.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016). Students will also be asked to review parts of Chapter 1. If students do not have copies of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, the Portable Document Format (PDF) version can be downloaded from the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoolproggdlns2015.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2016).

Information Delivery



Slide 2

As described in the “Before You Start” section, Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* is divided into two major sections. The following four general issues, summarized in the second paragraph of the chapter on page 3, are discussed in the first section:

- Benefits of high-quality preschool programs



Slide 3

- Societal benefits of investing in early childhood education programs
- Research on brain development and implications for young children’s learning and development
- Key features of preschool relevant to young children’s school readiness and long-term achievement

The second major section focuses on issues and initiatives in California:



Slides 4-5

- Demographics—including young dual language learners, socioeconomic status of families, and children with disabilities or other special needs
- Readiness gap and California’s children
- Desired Results assessment system
- California preschool learning foundations

This information could be delivered by lecture. However, it is recommended that students read assigned sections to become familiar with the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* publication.

Active Learning

Getting it started

Introduce this key topic by summarizing or asking students to read the first two paragraphs of Chapter 1, “Current Issues in Early Childhood Education,” on page 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. Then point out the two major divisions or sections of the chapter and the subsections for each. Students will be reviewing the chapter to become familiar with its major points and rationale.

Keeping it going

Ask the students to form small groups and explain that each group will be reading the chapter to identify key points, main messages, and research highlights. Each group will present its main messages and research highlights to the other groups.

The reading is to be done with the jigsaw method, in which students in each group first individually read a designated subsection and



Slide 6

record the key points in the appropriate column of the handout. They then share their findings with the other students in their group. Handout 1, “General Issues in Early Childhood Education and the California Context,” is provided as a notetaking form that lists the two major sections and nine subsections of the chapter, which are summarized in the following table:

General issues		Pages 3–11
	Evidence from Research (benefits of ECE programs)	Pages 3–4
	The Need for High-Quality Preschool Programs	Page 5
	Early Childhood Investments and Societal Impacts	Pages 5–6
	Recent Research on Brain Development	Pages 6–10
	School Readiness	Pages 10–11
California developments		Pages 11–15
	The California Context	Pages 11–12
	Readiness Gap	Page 12
	Desired Results for Children and Families	Pages 12–15
	Overview of Preschool Learning Foundations	Page 15

The students in each group are to decide how to divide the nine subsections among the members of their group. Depending on each group’s size, some students may read more than one subsection or a part of a subsection. For example, students may decide to assign the subsection “Evidence from Research” to two students. One reviews the first four paragraphs, and the second reviews the last two paragraphs titled “*How is quality in preschool measured?*”

Students may note that there is not a lot of space for writing notes in Handout 1. This is intentional because this review is to create an overview—not a detailed outline—of the chapter. The intent is to capture the most salient information in bullet points, key words, and symbols. For example, a few key points in the first column about benefits of early childhood education might be these phrases:



- High-quality preschool → ↑ cognitive, language, social skills
- Positive benefits → adolescence, adulthood

Also explain that the last two rows on each page of the handout are to be completed by the group after the students in the group have shared and discussed each of the subsections.

Taking it further

After the students have read and taken notes on their assigned subsections, they are to present and discuss their notes with the others in their group. It is suggested that the other students record some of their classmates' points on their own handout.

After all students in the group have shared their sections, each group comes to agreement on the main messages and research highlights for the two major sections of the chapter. Each group also decides which member should record these messages and research highlights and how the group will share them with the rest of the class.

Online Options

Students work in small groups out of class to complete the handout. Each group then posts online its key messages and research highlights for the other groups to review prior to a class discussion. If there is online-discussion capability, the instructor could facilitate this discussion online, asking students to note similarities and differences among the groups' selection of key messages and research highlights.

Putting it together

Ask each group to share its summary of the chapter. It may be helpful to have the groups first discuss the general issues section and then the California section. Focusing on one section may make it easier to compare findings among the groups.

Another approach

Instead of using the jigsaw approach, students could all read the whole chapter and complete Handout 1. This might best be done as an out-of-class reading assignment. Then students could

Online Options

Students could post online their completed handouts for their classmates to review prior to a class discussion. If there is online-discussion capability, the instructor could facilitate this discussion online, asking students to note similarities and differences among their key messages and research highlights.



compare and discuss their main messages and research highlights as a full class or in small groups.

Reflection

Conclude this learning experience by asking students to reflect on the following questions:



Slides 7-8

- What key points do you remember from your group's discussion of the chapter? Which main message? Which research highlight?
- Describe how your group decided on the main messages and research highlights. What was easy about the process? What was more challenging?
- What relationships do you see between the two major sections of the chapter?
- What are implications from this chapter for your program or community?

This second set of more general reflective questions can be used in this and other key topics for additional class discussion or to guide individual student journaling.



Slides 9-11

- Which ideas or part of this class session stood out most for you?
- What seemed familiar or reinforced what you already know or have experienced? What gave you a new perspective or insight that causes you to think differently about teaching preschool children and/or engaging their families?
- Why do you think the content of this class session was presented the way it was? How did this approach help you understand the content? What else would have helped? What does this tell you about how you learn?
- How will you decide what to apply from this class session in your work with preschool children and families? What will you do to ensure you will implement what you have decided to use?



General Issues in Early Childhood Education and the California Context

Record the key points for your designated pages, and then share your key points with the other members of your group. Discuss with your group what the key message(s) and research highlight(s) should be for each section.

<p>Section 1: “ . . . issues that are central to early childhood and preschool education throughout the United States.” (pp. 3–11)</p>				
<p>Evidence from Research (benefits of ECE programs)</p>	<p>The Need for High-Quality Preschool Programs</p>	<p>Early Childhood Investments and Societal Impacts</p>	<p>Recent Research on Brain Development</p>	<p>School Readiness</p>
<p>Key message(s):</p>				
<p>Research highlight(s):</p>				

Unit 1 : Current Issues in Early Childhood Education
 Key Topic 1 – Overview and Rationale of the Chapter
 Handout 1 : General Issues in Early Childhood Education and the California Context



General Issues in Early Childhood Education and the California Context
(Continued)

<p>Section 2: “ . . . recent developments in early childhood and preschool education in California.” (pp. 11–15)</p>			
<p>The California Context</p>	<p>Readiness Gap</p>	<p>Desired Results for Children and Families</p>	<p>Overview of Preschool Learning Foundations</p>
<p>Key message(s):</p>			
<p>Research highlight(s):</p>			