



# Unit 1 – Current Issues in Early Childhood Education

## Key Topic 2: Exploring the Benefits and Quality Features of Preschool Programs

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### Focus Statement

Students explore elements and considerations in determining what constitutes high quality in preschool programs and the benefits that result when children attend high-quality preschools.

### 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.

- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Administration I: Programs in Early Childhood Education
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

### Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Creation of a visual representation
- Literature review
- Pairs or small groups
- Reflective discussion
- Short paper or report



## 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.

- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



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### Before You Start

This key topic looks at the issues of what constitutes high quality in a preschool program and the benefits that children and society experience when children attend a high-quality preschool. After reviewing the sections in Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* that address these issues, students explore some of the chapter's references to further their understanding of the major points.

Faculty may wish to review the references prior to doing this key topic to guide students to material that is commensurate with the course objectives and the students' experience with reviewing and analyzing articles and reports from peer-reviewed journals and professional organizations. Faculty may also have additional references related to this key topic that they would prefer their students to use.

Students prepare a poster on one of the articles from the reference list. In addition to becoming familiar with some of the research base for the chapter, students will also have the opportunity to analyze a research article and learn about poster sessions that are often held at professional conferences. The Writing@CSU Web site, an online resource through Colorado State University, provides an overview, tools, and samples for creating a poster. The poster session information can be found at <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=78> (accessed January 20, 2016). It is suggested that faculty review this resource and/or prepare their own examples and guidance before doing this key topic.

Faculty can choose how much detail the students should put into their posters as there will be some expenses associated with the materials. Posters often are made with poster board or foam board and include text and graphics done with different colored materials that are attached to the board. For this learning experience, it is suggested that the posters be simple and even done on chart paper or some kind of paper that may not be as durable as poster or foam board but less expensive. Most students have access to computers and printers to create the text and graphics, and they can also cut out images from magazines or make their own.



Because there are several steps in this learning experience, faculty may find it most effective to plan part of two or three class sessions for this key topic plus time between sessions for students to work out of class.

Students will also be asked to review parts of Chapter 1 as part of the active learning. 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

This key topic focuses on pages 3–6 and the reference list on pages 16–18 of Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. As mentioned in the “Before You Start” section, faculty may also choose to provide a specific list of references for students to use.

Students will be asked to prepare a poster for this learning experience. In addition to what faculty may wish to provide as guidance in developing a poster, information on how to prepare a poster can be found at the Writing@CSU Web site, an online resource through Colorado State University described in the “Before You Start” section.

### Active Learning

#### Getting it started

Begin this key topic by having students read the three parts of Chapter 1 on pages 3–6:

- Evidence from Research
- The Need for High-Quality Preschool Programs
- Early Childhood Investments and Societal Benefits



Slide 2

If students have done Key Topic 1 for this unit, they can refer to the notes they made for those parts of the chapter. If this is their introduction to Chapter 1, ask them to consider the following questions in their reading:



Slide 3

- What are some of the benefits that children experience by attending a high-quality preschool?
- What are some of the benefits to society?



Slide 4

- How is quality measured in a preschool program?
- What are some factors that need to be considered when defining quality in preschool programs?

### Keeping it going

Students next form groups of three or four and choose one of the four questions to explore further. They are to consider the key points raised in answering the question and look for research in the chapter that is referenced for those points.

For example, on page 3 there are three articles—Howes et al. 2008, Mashburn et al. 2008, Peisner-Feinberg et al. 2001—cited for the point that children who attended preschool programs characterized by high-quality teacher-child interactions and a positive emotional climate showed greater social competence and fewer behavior problems. Students are to locate the articles, read and discuss them, and then choose one article that will be the basis for a poster.

### Taking it further

Explain to students that they will practice developing an informational poster to present in a class poster session. If students are not familiar with poster sessions at professional conferences, it will be helpful to provide an overview of what one is. The major difference is that students will not be presenting their own work or research but summarizing a research article. However, they should try to include the following information\*:



Slides 5-6

- Abstract and full citation for the article
- Research question/problem
- Methodology
- Summary of results
- Conclusion(s)

\*These items are from the poster session information from the Writing@CSU Web site.

### Putting it together

Hold a poster session during one of the class meetings, and provide time for students to look at the posters sometime during the session. Because groups of students have developed each poster, students



can take turns staying with the poster while the other group members look at the other posters. One student should remain with each poster to answer any questions.

## Reflection



Slides 7-8

The poster session can be concluded with a class discussion on the following questions:

- What caught your attention as you reviewed the different posters?
- Where were you particularly drawn in? What surprised you?
- How did the posters help you better understand some of the points from the chapter?
- After seeing your classmates' posters, what might you do differently the next time you create a poster?

### Online Options

Instead of doing a poster session in class, faculty could ask students to post online photos of their posters for their classmates to review. If there is a method for online discussion, faculty could monitor students' questions about the posters and responses to the first set of questions in the "Reflection" section. A separate discussion thread could be used for the students' questions about their classmates' posters and each of the reflection questions.

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?



## Deeper Understanding

Two options are suggested that provide students opportunities to more closely examine the elements of a high-quality preschool program and the benefits for children and society.

**Option 1:** A list of elements attributed to high-quality preschool programs is on page 81 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*:



Slides 12-14

- Intentional teaching
- Support of integrated learning
- Positive teacher-child relationships
- Positive home-school relationships
- Play as a context for learning
- Teacher planning time
- Qualified teachers
- Appropriate child-teacher ratios
- Individualized adult-child conversations that promote language and positive relationships
- Opportunities for children to learn and practice new vocabulary
- Frequent assessment that documents child progress and informs instructional planning
- Parent engagement



Slide 15

Students select one of these elements and look for articles in peer-reviewed journals that address that element. Ask students to select three or four articles and write a brief summary of each article and how it contributes to the evidence base for why that element is a defining feature of a high-quality preschool program.



Slide 16

**Option 2:** Three programs are listed in the bar graph on page 6 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* that demonstrated positive cost benefits when children who participated in those programs became adults: Abecedarian Project, Nurse Family



Partnership, and Perry Preschool. Students are to select one of these programs and find three to four articles describing the program. Students then write a one- to two-page paper that includes the following information:



Slides 17-18

- Purpose and history of the program
- Principal program developer(s) and/or researcher(s)
- Program model
- Research highlights and results
- Implications for practice in early care and education programs

For either option, faculty may choose to ask students to submit their papers for the instructor to review and/or provide time for the students to share their work with their classmates.