



Unit 1 – Current Issues in Early Childhood Education

Key Topic 5: A Closer Look at the California Context

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Focus Statement

Students acquire an increased awareness of some of the demographics related to young children and their families in their counties. Students then consider how they can apply this information to ensure elements of their preschool programs address the children and families enrolled in their programs.

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 Growth and Development
- Child, Family and Community
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Introduction to Children with Special Needs

Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Class presentation
- Interview
- Lecture
- 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.

- Child Development and Learning
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Family and Community Engagement
- Special Needs and Inclusion
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



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Key Topic 5: A Closer Look at the California Context

Before You Start

This key topic provides students with an opportunity to compare some of the information in the “California Context” section found on pages 11–15 of Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* with data for the counties in which they live or work. Students then reflect on how their county’s data influences what they need to consider as preschool teachers to ensure high quality in their programs.

It is suggested that faculty check some of the data sources before starting this key topic to be sure that students will be able to locate the requested information. Faculty may choose to provide the data sources or suggest how students can find them as part of their assignments. For example, the data on the number of children with disabilities or other special needs on page 13 in the text box, “Profile of Preschool Children in California,” is from Appendix C of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* on page 220. The footnote in the text box on page 13 includes the URL for the Web site source. Faculty can decide how much detail to point out to the students. Some other data sources are provided in the “Information Delivery” segment.

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

The second section of Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, pages 11–15, includes the following topic areas or subsections that students are to read:

- The California Context (pp. 11–12)
 - ~ *Demographics*
 - ~ *Dual Language Learners*
 - ~ *Socioeconomic Status*
 - ~ *Children with Disabilities or Other Special Needs*



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- Readiness Gap (p. 12)
- Desired Results for Children and Families (pp. 12–15)
~ *Background of Desired Results for Children and Families*
- Overview of Preschool Learning Foundations (p. 15)

Students are to find data on similar demographics for their own counties. Faculty may wish to suggest the following data sources:



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- Kidsdata.org - Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health
<http://www.kidsdata.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- KIDS COUNT data center – Annie E. Casey Foundation
<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- Children Now
<http://www.childrennow.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- California Department of Education DataQuest
<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dataquest.asp> (accessed January 20, 2016)

Active Learning

Getting it started

Begin by asking students to read or review pages 11–15 in the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. Discuss with students how their experiences in preschool programs and their communities in general align with the demographic data presented.

Keeping it going

Next, ask students to look for specific demographic data for the county in which they live or work. If students are from several different counties, faculty may choose to group students who either live in the same county or work in the same county. Or students could find partners and then decide which county to research. Try to ensure that all counties represented by students are assigned, as this will provide richer comparisons and discussion.

Students are to find the most current data they can to compare with the state-level data presented in the chapter. This data can include but is not limited to the following categories:



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- Total population



- Number of children under the age of five by ethnicity
- Number of children with home languages other than English
- Number of children in linguistically isolated households
- Number of languages spoken in public schools
- Number of preschool-age children enrolled in preschool
- Number of children living in low-income families and in poverty (include definition of low income and poverty)
- Number of children with disabilities or special needs



Slide 6

Encourage students to also report data that is of particular interest to them and explain what issue it impacts and why it is an important consideration for their role as preschool teachers in ensuring high quality in their programs.

Taking it further

Students then prepare their findings to share with the rest of the class. Each presentation should point out how the county data compares with the state data. Students should also conclude with thoughts about how they would consider that data in their work as preschool teachers.



Slide 7

Encourage students to think of different ways to present their information that will capture the interest of their classmates. Possibilities include posters, electronic slide presentations, fact sheets with graphics or photographs, or a role-playing interview. Each presentation should be approximately 5- to 10-minutes long.

Putting it together

Students present their findings during a class session or across multiple sessions, depending on

Online Options

Students' presentations could include methods that can be posted online such as electronic slide presentations, Portable Document Format (PDF) versions of fact sheets, photographs of posters, and so forth. After students review their classmates' presentations, the instructor can facilitate a discussion either in class or online if there is online-discussion capacity. Discussion threads could include the questions from the "Reflection" section of this key topic.



the course schedule and instructor's preference. If more than one group reports on the same county, having these groups present during the same session can provide opportunities for comparison. Allow time for questions and feedback following each presentation.

Another approach

Instead of students finding data on several categories for one county, students could be assigned a specific category or topics and find data on that category for all the counties represented by the students in the class. Students still compare the county data with the state data. After all the presentations, the class could discuss what policymakers should consider when enacting state level policies or legislation.

Reflection

The following questions can be used to conclude the key topic through a class discussion or individual written responses:



Slides 8-9

- What information from your research stands out the most for you? What information from your classmates' findings was the most interesting?
- What data was the easiest to find? What was more challenging?
- Was the information about your county what you expected? Where were there some surprises? What was of particular concern?
- What might you do differently as a preschool teacher based on what you learned about your county?

Deeper Understanding

Three other topics are addressed in the section on California in Chapter 1: "Readiness Gap," "Desired Results for Children and Families," and "Overview of Preschool Learning Foundations." Students could choose one of these topics for more in-depth study.



Slides 10-12

- **Readiness Gap.** After reading the information in Chapter 1 on page 12, students research the California Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) program and write a summary of what it is and how it is addressing the school readiness gap. If students live in one of the 16 RTT-ELC counties, they could interview a staff member of the lead organization.
- **Desired Results for Children and Families.** If students are not familiar with the California Department of Education's Desired Results system, the students review the material in the chapter



(pages 12–15) and the Desired results Web site at <https://desiredresults.us/> (accessed January 20, 2016). Students then write a two- to three-page paper that describes how the Desired Results system is designed to improve program quality in California’s early care and education programs.



Slide 13

- **Overview of Preschool Learning Foundations.** Unit 2, Key Topic 2 of this instructional guide has a learning experience that guides students through a review of the nine domains in the foundations and the five domains of school readiness. One segment of that key topic also guides students through a review of the content and background for each of the nine domains of the foundations. Faculty may ask students to do all or part of this key topic to develop more familiarity with California’s preschool learning foundations.