



Unit 2 – The Preschool Child

Getting Ready for the Unit and Connecting to Experience

Focus Statement

Students reflect on how the concepts of (1) integrated learning across developmental domains and (2) individual differences that impact learning are evident in their everyday activities as adults.

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
- Introduction to Curriculum
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Practicum-Field Experience
- Curriculum Strategies for Children with Special Needs

Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Conversation grid
- Pairs or small groups
- Personal reflection
- 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.

- Child Development and Learning
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Special Needs and Inclusion
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism



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Getting Ready for the Unit

California’s Preschool Program Guidelines have been developed to support teachers and administrators in offering high-quality programs to children in their preschool years. They specify practices that would provide the optimum support needed by children in their preschool years to progress through the learning and development described in the California preschool learning foundations to achieve readiness for school.

This unit will familiarize students with the content of Chapter 2 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, which provides an overview of children’s learning and development in the preschool years. This crucial knowledge base is addressed in Chapter 2 in the context of the five essential domains of school readiness, as defined by the National Education Goals Panel in 1995 and in the context of the California preschool learning foundations and the ways in which California’s preschool learning foundations address the five essential domains of school readiness.

Unit 2 will provide opportunities for students to refresh their connections to the *California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volumes 1, 2, and 3*. If faculty are working with students who have not had prior opportunities to learn about the foundations, suggestions are provided for experiences that support them in learning about the foundations.

Key Topic 1 in Unit 2 explores some key factors that affect learning and development in the preschool years. There is also a look at why it is so important for those working with children in the preschool years to have a solid foundation in understanding learning and development in those years. The teacher’s role in supporting early learning and development is explored in more depth in Chapter 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* and Unit 3 of this instructional guide.

Key Topic 2 reviews the California preschool learning foundations as they relate to the five essential domains of school readiness. It will help students see the ways in which the foundations, which address nine domains of learning and development, are consistent with the five domains of school readiness. The foundations offer a broad approach to early development and a way to recognize how children progress through nine domains of learning and development.

The California Department of Education has produced a set of two DVDs to accompany the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. The DVDs provide examples of children’s



behaviors and adult approaches that exemplify the program guidelines, as well as the views of experts and experienced practitioners and administrators in the field regarding the content of the guidelines. It is recommended that faculty preview the entire set for a more complete sense of the guidelines as implemented within the California Early Learning and Development System.

Motivator and Connection to Experience

Before You Start

In this learning experience, students are introduced to the content of Chapter 2 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* by relating some of their daily activities to early developmental skills and individual differences, two factors that influence children's learning and development and are described in Chapter 2. Students are asked to list some daily activities they perform as adults, think about the knowledge and skills needed to carry out those activities, and then identify which of the developmental domains include those skills and knowledge.

As part of the preparation for this initial learning experience, it may be helpful for faculty to review the nine domains that make up the preschool learning foundations and prepare some examples. The domains are listed on page 23 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* and in the "Information Delivery" section that follows.

Faculty may also find it useful to preview this unit's two key topics so they can explain to students what is addressed in this "Connection to Experience" and what will be explored in those topics.

Students do not need to read the chapter for this learning experience, but faculty may choose to have students start to familiarize themselves with the chapter by reviewing the discussions about the nine domains on pages 22–32. If they are not familiar with the preschool learning foundations, this reading may help students make connections between some of their adult activities and skills and knowledge from different domains.

Handout 1, "Exploration of How Learning is Integrated," which students can use to record their activities and those of their classmates, is provided with this learning experience. An electronic version of this handout will be available when this instructional guide is available online at <http://facultyinitiative.wested.org/> (accessed January 20, 2016). 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

Briefly let students know that Chapter 2 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, titled “The Preschool Child,” is focused on the importance of understanding children’s development and learning in the preschool years. In this chapter, this is approached through looking at



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- some factors that influence development and learning (pp. 19–22);
- how the California preschool learning foundations describe development and learning progressions in the preschool years (pp. 22–32);
- a brief description of the nine domains of the California preschool learning foundations and how they align with the National Education Goals Panel’s five essential domains for school readiness (pp. 22–32); and
- how play is an essential context for preschool learning and development (pp. 32–33).

These topics will be explored further in Key Topic 1 and Key Topic 2 of this unit, but this initial outline of the chapter will provide context for the learning experience that follows.

Chapter 2 begins with some brief descriptions of factors that can influence learning and development in the early years. Two of these are the integrated nature of early development and individual differences. Remind students that they will explore these and other factors mentioned in the chapter more fully as they continue to explore Chapter 2 through Key Topic 1.



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Let students know that, for now, they will be looking at their own experiences in relation to those two factors—the integrated nature of early development and individual differences. Point out that, as adults, we still use knowledge and skills in each of the learning and development domains of the foundations and continue to learn across these domains. Explain to the students that they will be looking at their own experiences, as adults, in relation to some of the factors in Chapter 2 that influence development, and exploring how these factors still influence their development and use of skills and knowledge in adult contexts.



A brief review of the names of the domains, as listed on page 23, might be helpful to set the stage for the following active learning segment.



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- Social–Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- English-Language Development
- Mathematics
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Physical Development
- Health
- History–Social Science
- Science

Again let students know that they will be taking a closer look at these foundation domains in Key Topic 2 as they continue to explore Chapter 2.

Students won't need to list the relevant domains on their handouts as they do this learning experience. However, if they can briefly think of what kinds of skills and knowledge might be involved, it will help communicate the integrated nature of how we, as adults, and children learn and develop skills and knowledge. Students can also see how individual differences play a role in our development.

Active Learning

Getting it started

Give students Handout 1, “Exploration of How Learning is Integrated,” included with the learning experience, and point out the two factors in the headings:



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- Learning is integrated
- Individual differences affect what and how we learn

Ask them to think of these two factors, one at a time, and consider the prompts on the handout. There are rows on the handout for their



own responses and the responses of the other students. Give students a few minutes to consider their own responses first.

Online Options

Students could complete the handout prior to class and post it online for the instructor and their classmates. Students could then review their classmates' handouts and be prepared to discuss the "Putting it together" questions in an instructor-facilitated discussion in class or online, if the course has online-discussion capability.

Keeping it going

Organize students into groups of three or four and ask them to compare results. Encourage them to take notes of their classmates' activities and thoughts about individual differences on their handout.

Putting it together

After students have had a chance to review their own responses and those of other students in their group, reconvene the class as a whole group and consider the following questions:

- What stands out for you from comparing responses?
- Where did you discover similarities? Differences?
- What might account for these differences? Family, language, or community differences? Different learned approaches?
- Did you discover different strategies for approaching a problem to be solved or in organizing a complex task?
- Were there some things that one person liked and another did not?
- Did you discover strengths and challenges among students in each group?

Ask students what they discovered, in general, about integrated learning and/or integrated skills and knowledge and the possible effect of individual differences on learning.

Remind students that they will continue to explore these issues as they work through the key topics for this chapter.



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Reflection

The questions in the “Putting it together” section can be used for a reflection on this learning experience.



Exploration of How Learning is Integrated

This handout provides an opportunity to explore some ways in which we, as adults, use skills and knowledge relating to the developmental domains of the California preschool learning foundations and ways in which some of the key concepts in Chapter 2 of the California Preschool Program Guidelines continue to be at work in our daily lives.

First, think of some activities you do and briefly record some of the domains of skills and knowledge that you use to successfully accomplish those activities. A few examples of activities are suggested, but you might think of others.

Next, work with other students to compare your notes. You might find other skills and knowledge that other students suggested for activities you noted, or you might find different activities.

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Handout 1: Exploration of How Learning is Integrated

	Learning Is integrated	Individual differences affect what and how we learn
	<p>Think of how some activities that you do routinely require integrating skills and knowledge from several of the developmental domains in the foundations.</p> <p>Examples: cooking, driving, performing daily health routines, shopping, organizing an event</p>	<p>Are there ways in which we approach these activities that are different from other students?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we cook? With whom? • Who taught us to drive? • What are our daily health routines—washing hands, brushing teeth, bathing? • How do we organize our shopping?
Self		
Student 1		
Student 2		
Student 3		
Student 4		