



Unit 2 – The Preschool Child

Key Topic 1: Some Factors That Influence Learning and Development in the Preschool Years

Unit 2: The Preschool Child
Key Topic 1 – Some Factors That Influence Learning and Development in the Preschool Years

Focus Statement

Students explore the importance of understanding child development and some factors of child development that impact preschool-age children’s progress across developmental domains. Students also consider how teachers’ understanding of child development and these factors relate to an integrated curriculum.

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
- Practicum-Field Experience
- Administration I: Programs in Early Childhood Education
- Curriculum Strategies for Children with Special Needs

Instructional Methodologies

- Class discussion
- Pairs or small groups
- Reflective discussion
- Video observation



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
- Special Needs and Inclusion
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



Unit 2 – The Preschool Child

Key Topic 1: Some Factors That Influence Learning and Development in the Preschool Years

Unit 2: The Preschool Child
Key Topic 1 – Some Factors That Influence Learning and Development in the Preschool Years

Before You Start

This key topic will focus students' attention on important factors that can influence children's development and learning as they are described in Chapter 2 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. These factors are described on pages 19–22 and 32–33. This information is fundamental to designing programs that appropriately support children as they move toward achieving the knowledge and skills described in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*. The foundations themselves are further explored in Key Topic 2 of this unit in this instructional guide.

Working with the foundations and understanding how these factors can influence the ways in which children will progress toward achieving the knowledge and skills as described in the foundations, will enable staff and programs to develop curriculum and program policies that will optimally support the children and their families with whom they work.

This key topic relies on information not only in the text of the program guidelines but also on information contained in Disc 1 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines DVD Set*, two DVDs that accompany the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. Two chapters of this first disc are an essential part of the active learning for this key topic. Each of these chapters is further divided into segments, all of which are relevant to the question posed to students. It is important for faculty to preview these chapters of the DVD and to be familiar with the entire DVD set. The *California Preschool Program Guidelines DVD Set* can be ordered through CDE at www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc or contact the CDE Press sales office at (800) 995-4099.

Students will also be reviewing part of Chapter 2 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. If students do not have copies of this publication, 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

Let students know that they will be thinking about preschool children as the focus of Chapter 2, titled “The Preschool Child,” in the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. For this active learning experience, they will consider the young child's development in the preschool years in relation to two important topics:



Slide 2

- Why it is important to know about child development
- What are some factors of child development that play a role in how children progress through the preschool years

The first topic will be addressed by viewing a DVD and responding to some questions related to the content of a selected chapter in the DVD. The second topic will be addressed by exploring some specific sections of Chapter 2 and some of the content of a selected chapter of the DVD.

Active Learning

Getting it started

Begin by asking students to read through pages 19–22 and 32–33. They can read these sections before coming to class or can be given time in class to do the reading.



Slide 3

Organize students into pairs, and ask each pair to again review pages 19–22 and 32–33. As they review these pages, ask them to look for and record factors in a child's life or characteristics of a child that play a role in how children develop through the preschool years. As they go through these pages, they might have questions about how detailed their responses should be. Suggest that this is something of an open-ended process and they should just record whatever they read about on those pages that they think might influence preschoolers' development.

Keeping it going

After they have had some time to explore these ideas, reconvene as a whole class and compile a master list. This should include, but need not be limited to, the following factors:



Slide 4

- Brain development (healthy or limited)
- Home language
- Dual language



- Opportunities for play and exploration
- Physical development
- Culture
- Gender
- Age
- Individual differences
- Socioeconomic status

Online Options

If there is document-sharing capability for the course, faculty could facilitate an online development of a class list of the factors in a child's life or characteristics of a child that play a role in how children develop through the preschool years. Or students individually could post their findings online and review their classmates' postings in preparation for an instructor-facilitated in-class discussion.

Any of these can be expanded or explored in more detail, but the point to emphasize is that there are many variables in each child's life that can require adaptation or adjustment of interactions, strategies, or materials to provide optimal support to that child and the child's family.



Slide 5

Point out that the last sentence of the top paragraph on page 22 states, "Research-based information on the learning and development that occurs during the preschool years in each domain can deepen families' and parents' understanding of who the preschool child is and how best to nurture and support the preschool child."

Taking it further

Let students know that they will now turn to a deeper exploration of the importance of understanding research-based child development and how it affects what we do with young children in their preschool years. They will be viewing some selected segments from Disc 1 of a two-set DVD that has been produced to accompany the program guidelines, the *California Preschool Program Guidelines DVD Set*. These segments can be accessed by opening Disc 1 to the main menu and clicking on "Select Chapters." Then choose the first chapter titled "Aspiring To Be a High Quality Program." View the first segment of this chapter, titled "Using Knowledge of Child Development to Inform Practice"; it is about three minutes long.



Disc 1



Slide 6

Ask students to consider the following general question: How does knowledge of child development guide our work?



It may be helpful to view the DVD segment twice, and ask students to just view and not take notes as they watch the first time. After the initial viewing, ask them to record what they remember that responds to the question. The second time through, ask them to record more of what they are hearing that responds to the question. Then, as a whole class, develop a master list.

Putting it together

Let students know that they will be bringing together the discussion of knowledge of factors influencing child development and the discussion of the importance of knowing child development. They will examine these in the context of integrated curriculum.

Explain to students that they will be viewing another segment of the DVD. This time they are to keep in mind these two questions:



Slide 7

- How does knowledge of child development support the importance of integrated curriculum?
- How would knowledge of the factors that can play a role in each child's development support integrated curriculum or learning across all domains?

Faculty can choose to organize students' responses in several ways. Each student can be responsible for responding to both questions, each student can be responsible for one of the questions, or pairs can be responsible for both questions. Because of the nature of these questions, this might be most effective in pairs, where students can discuss their ideas with a peer.



Disc 1

To view this second segment, open Disc 1 to the main menu and click on "Select Chapters." Then choose the last chapter titled "Promoting an Integrated Approach to the Learning Environment and Experiences." Open the first segment of this chapter, titled "Children Learn and Develop in an Integrated Way Across All Domains"; it is slightly over 2 ½ minutes long.

The process described in the "Taking it further" section could be used again—students view the segment a first time for familiarity and record what they remember in response to the question(s) and then watch the same segment a second time.

Reconvene the class as a whole and develop an aggregated list. The questions for this second DVD segment might elicit more diverse



responses, since they are based on requiring students to integrate information from several discussions.

Reflection

Following this active learning, ask students to reflect on their experience with the material by responding to the following questions:



Slides 8-9

- What stood out for you? What is particularly memorable about the content in these learning experiences?
- What was new?
- Where were there differences among you and your classmates in your responses?
- What might account for these differences?
- How might this experience influence your work with young children and their families now and in the future?