



## Unit 3 – The Role of the Preschool Teacher

### Key Topic 1: Overview and Rationale of the Chapter

#### Focus Statement

Students become familiar with the responsibilities of the preschool teacher and the rationale for the teacher's role in ensuring high-quality in preschool 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.

- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Practicum-Field Experience
- Adult Supervision and Mentoring in Early Care and Education
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

#### Instructional Methodologies

- Brainstorming
- Class discussion
- Jigsaw reading
- Lecture
- 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
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



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### Before You Start

Chapter 3 in the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* focuses on several major responsibilities that preschool teachers have as part of their role in ensuring their programs are of high quality. The discussion around each responsibility reviews how and why effective teachers can support all children’s learning and development and engage all families.

In this key topic, students acquire an overview of the content of Chapter 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*—the major responsibilities of preschool teachers and how teachers play an important role in planning and implementing a high-quality preschool program. Students work individually or in small groups to identify key elements of each responsibility and then do a crosswalk of the major responsibilities and qualities of a high-quality preschool program.

Handout 1, “Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs,” is provided with this key topic for students to use when doing their crosswalk. An electronic version of this handout for this key topic 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 3. 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

Students are asked to consider the characteristics of high-quality preschool programs and several responsibilities of preschool teachers. This information can be presented through a lecture or by having students read all or certain sections of Chapter 3 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. It is recommended that students read the sections to become familiar with the publication.

### Active Learning

#### Getting it started

Begin this learning experience by discussing the characteristics of high-quality preschool programs, which are listed in the third



paragraph on page 81 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*:



Slides 2-4

- 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 individual progress and informs instructional planning
- Parent engagement

Ask students to cite examples of each characteristic, drawing from their own experiences in early care and education settings as much as possible.

### **Keeping it going**

Point out to students the major responsibilities of preschool teachers on pages 39–46 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*:



Slides 5-6

- Build and Maintain Positive Relationships with Children (pp. 39–40)
- Build and Maintain Positive Relationships with Families (pp. 40–41)
- Create an Environment for Social and Emotional Learning (p. 41)



- Be Responsive to Children’s Linguistic and Cultural Experiences (p. 42)
- Include Children with a Wide Range of Abilities and Approaches to Learning (pp. 42–43)
- Understand Children’s Needs and Capabilities (pp. 43–44)
- Plan the Learning Environment and Curriculum in the Domains of School Readiness (pp. 44–45)
- Balance Child-Initiated and Teacher-Initiated Activities (p. 45)
- Assess How Well the Program Meets Children’s Needs (p. 46)



Slide 7

Explain that each of these responsibilities corresponds to a section of the chapter and that there is an additional section titled “Include Children with a Wide Range of Abilities and Approaches to Learning” on pages 42–43 that is not included in the bulleted list of major responsibilities on page 39 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. It is included in the list above.

Ask students to form pairs or small groups of three or four and assign one of the nine sections to each group. Depending on the size of the class, more than one group may work on a section. In their groups, students are to read and identify the key points for their section, including the rationale for how that responsibility supports children’s learning and development and/or engages and builds partnerships with families.

### Online Options

Students could post online the key points for their assigned section and how the major responsibility they reviewed supports children’s learning and development or builds partnerships with families.

### Taking it further

Give students Handout 1, “Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs,” or ask them to create a similar notetaking form for their assigned responsibility or section. They are then to consider each component of a high-quality preschool program and decide if and how their responsibility supports that component. Some of the responsibilities may not be directly linked to one or more of the program features.



Slides 8-9



Each group completes its assigned section of the grid and should be prepared to explain its responses.

### Putting it together

After the groups have completed their part of the matrix, convene the students to discuss their findings. This can be done in different ways:

- It may be helpful for students to identify and understand how different responsibilities can support the same program quality feature by asking each group to share its responses by feature. In other words, all groups would first discuss the responsibilities that relate to intentional teaching and then continue through the rest of the features.
- Online Options**

Students could post their completed handouts online for their classmates to review prior to a class discussion of their choices. If there is online-discussion capability, the instructor could then facilitate an online discussion of the students' choices.
- Or each group could present its results for their assigned responsibility, explaining why they made their choices. As each group presents, encourage students to look for similarities and differences in their selections and reasons.

Whichever method is used, ask each group to first briefly describe the major responsibility it reviewed. Even if the students have read the whole chapter, this recap can help ensure all students are clear about the key aspects of each responsibility.

### Another approach

Students could first review the elements of high-quality programs and then brainstorm things teachers would be responsible for doing to help achieve and sustain high quality. The brainstorming could be done individually or as a full class. The items could then be grouped by common theme, and these themes could be compared to the major responsibilities listed in Chapter 3.



Slide 10

### Reflection



Slides 11-12

Conclude this learning experience with a class discussion. The following questions are suggested to guide the discussion:

- What caught your attention as you reviewed and discussed a preschool teacher's major responsibilities?



- Which ones seemed the most critical in creating a high-quality preschool program?
- What insights are emerging from this crosswalk of preschool teacher responsibilities and the elements of high-quality programs?
- What will you consider from this discussion for your own professional development?

### Online Options

If there is online-discussion capability, faculty could facilitate a discussion of the reflection questions. A separate discussion thread could be done for each question.

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 13-15

- 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?



**Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs**

Review each of these major responsibilities of preschool teachers. Then list some dispositions, knowledge, skills, and personal attributes you feel are needed to carry out each responsibility. It is okay to list the same characteristic for more than one responsibility.

<b>Major Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers</b>	Assess how well the program meets children’s needs				
	Balance child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities				
	Plan the learning environment and curriculum in the domains of school readiness				
	Understand children’s needs and capabilities				
	Include children with a wide range of abilities and approaches to learning				
	Be responsive to children’s linguistic and cultural experiences				
	Create an environment for social and emotional learning				
	Build and maintain positive relationships with families				
	Build and maintain positive relationships with children				
<b>Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs ↓</b>	Intentional teaching	Support of integrated learning	Positive teacher–child relationships	Positive home–school relationships	

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 Handout 1 : Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs



**Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs**  
(Continued)

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<b>Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs ↓</b>	Assess how well the program meets children’s needs				
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	Plan the learning environment and curriculum in the domains of school readiness				
	Understand children’s needs and capabilities				
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	Be responsive to children’s linguistic and cultural experiences				
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	Build and maintain positive relationships with families				
	Build and maintain positive relationships with children				
Play as a context for learning					
Teacher planning time					
Qualified teachers					
Appropriate child–teacher ratios					



**Responsibilities of Preschool Teachers and Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs**  
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Individualized adult–child conversations that promote language and positive relationships	Opportunities for children to learn and practice new vocabulary	Frequent assessment that documents individual progress and informs instructional planning	Parent Engagement		