

INTRODUCTION TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Gayle Julian et al.

Washington State Early Childhood Faculty

Introduction to Early Childhood Education (Julian)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

Preface

Author and Review Statement

Context for this Text

Licensing

Chapter 1: An Overview of the Field of Early Childhood Education

- 1.1: Introduction to Chapter 1
- 1.2: The Teacher as a Person
- 1.3: The Teacher as a Professional
- 1.4: The Structure of the Field of Early Learning
- 1.5: Historical Roots
- 1.6: Government Funding that Supports Early Learning
- 1.7: Today's Trends Bound to History
- 1.8: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 2: Professionalism in Early Childhood Education

- 2.1: Introduction to Chapter 2
- 2.2: Defining terms - A vocabulary for discussing professionalism
- 2.3: NAEYC's efforts - Power to the Profession and the Unifying Framework
- 2.4: Other Standards Defining Professional Performance
- 2.5: Advocacy
- 2.6: Chapter 2 Appendix
- 2.7: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 3: Theories and Program Approaches

- 3.1: Introduction to Chapter 3
- 3.2: Theories
- 3.3: Program Approaches
- 3.4: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 4: Brain Development

- 4.1: Introduction to Chapter 4
- 4.2: Brain Development
- 4.3: How Brain Development Connects With Other Topics in Early Childhood
- 4.4: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 5: Child Development and Developmentally Appropriate Practices

- 5.1: Introduction to Chapter 5
- 5.2: How Development Unfolds
- 5.3: Developmental Domains
- 5.4: Typical and Atypical Development

- 5.5: Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- 5.6: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 6: Observation and Assessment

- 6.1: Introduction to Chapter 6
- 6.2: Observation
- 6.3: Recording Observation
- 6.4: Assessment
- 6.5: Appendix to Chapter 6
- 6.6: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 7: The Value of Play

- 7.1: Introduction to Chapter 7
- 7.2: What is Play?
- 7.3: Play and Children's Development
- 7.4: Play in the Early Childhood Classroom
- 7.5: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 8: Early Learning Environments

- 8.1: Introduction to Chapter 8
- 8.2: Managing Space - Indoor Learning Environments
- 8.3: Managing Space - Outdoor Learning Environments
- 8.4: Managing Time - Schedules and Routines
- 8.5: Environment Philosophy
- 8.6: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 9: Family Connection

- 9.1: Introduction to Chapter 9
- 9.2: Families today
- 9.3: Overcoming Conflicts
- 9.4: When families are struggling - Challenges and Barriers to Connections
- 9.5: Chapter 9 Appendix
- 9.6: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 10: Beyond Behaviors

- 10.1: Introduction to Chapter 10
- 10.2: Behavior Defined
- 10.3: The role of relationships
- 10.4: Social and emotional connections to behavior
- 10.5: Classroom Climate
- 10.6: The relationship between trauma and behavior
- 10.7: Chapter 10 Appendix
- 10.8: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

Chapter 11: Diversity and Equity within the Early Childhood Education Field

- 11.1: Introduction to Chapter 11
- 11.2: Diversity and Equity within the Early Childhood Education Field
- 11.3: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

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Preface

Overview to this Textbook

Welcome to Introduction to Early Childhood Education. This textbook will cover the following topics:

- An overview of the field of early learning
- Historical roots of early learning
- Professionalism, values and ethics required for working in the field
- Philosophers and theorists that have contributed to early learning
- Brain development and the importance of executive function
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Developmental theory: how children grow and develop
- The value of play for young children
- Environments both indoors and outdoors and the contribution both make to the developing child
- Family connections and support for all families
- Issues and trends within the field of early learning
- Beyond behaviors: guiding children's behavior
- Adverse Childhood Trauma and building resiliency
- Diversity and equity within the field of early learning

The beginning of each chapter includes a brief biography of the author and peer reviewer for the chapter along with a side note containing an overview of the topics discussed within the chapter.

Student Learning Outcomes

ECED& 105 Introduction to Early Childhood Education is found in the common course inventory in Washington State. It is one of the first courses found in the ECE Initial Certificate and holds a set of common student learning outcomes that are aligned with Washington State Core Competencies as published by the Department of Children Youth and Families www.dcyf.wa.gov as well as the national organization: National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org

Noted at the beginning of each chapter is the student learning outcome(s) that best aligns with content written in the chapter. The table that follows notes the alignment of the student learning outcomes at most Washington State Community and Technical Colleges. It should be noted that some colleges have additional outcomes.

Student Outcomes: upon completion of the course, students will be able to:	Washington State Core Competency	NAEYC Standard with Key Elements
explain current theories and ongoing research in early care and education.	I. Child Growth & Development—3.f VIII. Professional Development & Leadership—3.f	6. Becoming a Professional. Key Element 6c, 6d.
describe the role of play in early childhood programs.	I. Child Growth & Development—1.f II. Curriculum & Learning Environment—2.k, 3.i	1. Promoting Child Development and Learning. Key Element 1c 2. Building Family and Community Relationships. Key element 4d
compare early learning program models.	VII. Program Planning and Development—3.a. VIII: Professionalism—2.e	4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families. Key element 4d.
explain the importance of developing culturally responsive partnerships with families.	IV. Family & Community Partnerships—1.b., 2.i.	2. Building Family & Community Relationships. Key Element 2.b, 2.a, 2.c. 6. Becoming a Professional. Key Element 6.b.

Student Outcomes: upon completion of the course, students will be able to:	Washington State Core Competency	NAEYC Standard with Key Elements
identify appropriate guidance techniques used in early care and education settings.	VI. Interactions—1.b., 2.d., 2.f., and 2.i	1. Promoting Child Development & Learning. Key Element 1.c. 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children & Families. Key Element 4.a.
describe the observation, assessment, and teaching cycle and used to plan curriculum for all young children.	II. Curriculum—Environment, 2.j. VIII. Professional Development & Leadership—3.a.	4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children & Families. Key Element 4.d. 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum. Key Element 5.c 6. Becoming a Professional. Key Element 6.a, 6.b., 6.c, 6.d
apply the professional code of ethics for early care and education to resolve dilemmas.	VIII. Professional Development & Leadership—1.g, 3.c, 3.d	6. Becoming a Professional. Key Element 6.a, 6.b.
describe major historical figures, advocates, and events shaping today's early childhood education.	VII. Program Planning & Development—3.a VIII. Professional Development & Leadership—3.c	4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children & Families. Key Element 4.d 6. Becoming a Professional. Key Element 6.d.

One of the beauties of Open Resource materials is that instructors are able to edit as they see fit to suit their course needs. Although the authors feel that we have included rich information that meets the needs of students taking an introductory course in the field, instructors might choose to add additional materials or edit chapters to fit their communities. It is our hope that you will find this book to be a foundational piece to your introductory course keeping in mind that our vision for the book was much like going to your favorite buffet restaurant . . . you get a little bit about a whole lot.

Funding restrictions did not allow us to create test banks or PowerPoint presentations to match the text. It is our sincere hope that with version 2.0 of the text those ancillary materials might be included.

In the meantime, we hope you and your students enjoy our textbook.

Gayle Julian, Olympic College

Author and Review Statement

Introduction to Early Childhood Education Open Education Resources Textbook for common course ECED& 105 Introduction to Early Childhood Education was produced with support from funding secured through the Carl D. Perkins Act.

Authors

This book was a collaboratively written textbook by Early Childhood Faculty from around Washington State. The following contributed to the completion of this textbook:

Gayle Julian, Project Coordinator, Olympic College

Brenda Boyd, Washington State University

Angela Blums, Pierce Community College

Chris Moon, South Puget Sound Community College

Davida Sharpe-Haygood, Pierce Community College

Jennifer Karshna, Tacoma Community College

Sharene Leek, Pierce Community College

Ardene Neimer, Olympic College

Ninder Gill, North Seattle Community College

Peer Review

This book has been peer reviewed by 11 subject experts from five higher education institutions and one Early Childhood Agency in Washington State. Each chapter received an open and collaborative review from two reviewers, one based on their area of expertise and another with required specific knowledge in accessibility and annotations. In addition, an overall review of the text for continuity was conducted by a content area expert.

Reviews were structured around considerations of the intended audience of the book, and examined the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and relevance of content. Reviews were also focused on relevance longevity, clarity, consistency, organization structure flow, grammatical errors, and cultural relevance.

Gayle Julian would like to thank the review team for the time, care, and commitment they contributed to the project. I recognize that peer reviewing is a generous act of service on their part. This book would not be the robust, valuable resource that it is were it not for their feedback and input.

Reviewers included:

Sophie Truman, Lake Washington Technical College

Linda Felch, Clover Park Technical College

Jessica Kirchhofer, Western Washington University

Hannah Mechler, Grays Harbor College

Brandi Renis, Lake Washington Technical College

Holly Lanoue, Olympic College

Mary Garguile, Olympic College

Meka Riggins, Child Care Aware of Washington

Sharon Romppanen, Bellevue College

Shanti Connors, Lake Washington Technical College

Sally Holloway, Whatcom Community College

Administrative Support:

Danessa Gray, Olympic College

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Context for this Text

“Each and every child, beginning at birth, has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood education, delivered by an effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce”—Power to the Profession Vision Statement, NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)

Today’s children live in an increasingly diverse world that is dynamic and changing . . . minute by minute. What remains constant in the minds of people who make the profession of early education a part of their world is that the work involves learning about yourself as much as it does learning about the field of early learning and the children and families we serve.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is an organization that guides the work that we do each day. NAEYC’s *Power to the Profession* initiative is a framework to unify the field. Pieces of the framework have guided this textbook, and to that end the authors would like to share common terminology used through the text that supported our efforts and give context to the book.

Early childhood is defined as the period of life that includes pre-birth through age 8. The field is referred to as **early childhood education** and encompasses education and care provided in all types of settings for children birth to age 8. Within this context, each state’s unique and complex systems exist, and the focus of this text is based in Washington State policies.

Education is defined as a series of learning experiences with related and age-appropriate assessments of learning within a program. Programs may be called **childcare centers**, **preschools**, **child development centers** or **family childcare centers**. Programs might also include components of **parent education** or **home visiting**. Settings in a home environment in Washington State are referred to as **Friends, Families and Neighbors (FFN)** and programs for children ages 5 to 8 include **kindergarten** as well as **primary grades** and can be found in publicly funded or privately funded settings. Probably the most important common term throughout this text will be the use of the word **teacher** “because it is the broadest term, it captures most of the job responsibilities, commands society’s respect, and is, after all, what children usually call the adults who care for and educate them no matter what the setting” (Bredekamp, 2011, pg. 21)

Welcome to this journey. It is a beautiful and fulfilling one.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: An Overview of the Field of Early Childhood Education

- 1.1: Introduction to Chapter 1
- 1.2: The Teacher as a Person
- 1.3: The Teacher as a Professional
- 1.4: The Structure of the Field of Early Learning
- 1.5: Historical Roots
- 1.6: Government Funding that Supports Early Learning
- 1.7: Today's Trends Bound to History
- 1.8: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

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1.1: Introduction to Chapter 1



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This chapter aligns with student learning outcome (SLO) # 1: explain current theories and ongoing research in early care and education and SLO #7: describe major historical figures, advocates, and events shaping today's early childhood education.

Welcome to the field of early childhood education and to the profession of working with young children! You are beginning the path to the rewarding career of teaching and caring for young children and connecting with the adults and families that care for them. In this first chapter we will explore what it means to be a caring and nurturing educator, discuss the field of early childhood education in general, and learn about some of the historical figures and events that impact the work we do today.

Key points from this chapter

- A teacher of young children brings a personal and professional perspective to the classroom.
- Many types of programs exist in the field of early learning.
- The humanistic field of early learning has significant historical roots that tie to trends found in modern society.
- The government plays a role in the field of early learning.

Terminology found throughout this chapter

In addition to terms found in the preface to the text, this chapter introduces terminology including:

1. **NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children—a national association dedicated to the services for children birth to age 8.
2. **Power to the Profession:** a national collaboration led by NAEYC that defines the early childhood education profession.
3. **DCYF:** Department of Children, Youth and Families. A cabinet level agency focused on the well-being of children in Washington State.
4. **Washington State Core Competencies:** a framework that guides decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all early care and education settings.
5. **Values:** principles or standards that person believes to be important, desirable, or worthwhile.
6. **Morality:** people's views of what is good, right, or proper: their beliefs about their obligations and ideas about how they should behave.
7. **Temperament:** a set of inborn traits that organize the way we approach the world.
8. **Bias:** showing favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.
9. **Code of ethics:** a set of guidelines for responsible behavior within the field. Sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in the field of early childhood education.

10. **Advocate:** a person who public supports or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
11. **Inclusion:** the act or practice of including all students in the classroom community.

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1.2: The Teacher as a Person

The most important task asked of you as an early childhood teacher is working directly with children. Yes, you will play with them. You will also teach them, talk with them, guide their behaviors, provide for their physical and psychological growth and development, document their progress, model appropriate interactions, and nurture them. You will interact with the adults in their lives, and the connection you build to each child and their families served will live on in your professional life for however long you continue to work in the field of early learning. One of the primary goals of the early childhood educator is to be a nurturing teacher: one that promotes respect among everyone involved in the classroom, and that this level of respect is underlined by a sense of the joy in teaching children.

You may have an image in your mind of what a nurturing teacher might look like, and it could include some of the behaviors and tasks listed above. It also includes building a positive classroom community that involves many elements beyond bright colors and having the appropriate number of math manipulatives. In fact, creating warm inviting classrooms is among some of the most important work that we do for children and families. Positive relationships are at the heart of everything we do as teachers and the messages we send leave lasting impressions that will lay a foundation for children's approaches to learning for the rest of their lives. All of the children you will teach in your career will come to your classroom with varying levels of experiences, backgrounds and family structures.



Image 1.2 [Teacher with toddlers](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

In addition, each day you walk into the classroom, you will bring with you a set of personal and professional values that will guide your work, and although there is no “one way is the correct way” or one personality that lends itself better to the teaching profession, there are tendencies, personalities and skills that contribute to the daily success you will have working in the profession. We will begin the book by exploring what all teachers of young children carry with them as they enter the classroom each day.

The Teacher as a Person

Who you are as a person will be the foundation of the daily work that you will do with children and families and impacts the professional that you are aspiring to be within the field of early learning. You will bring with you the skills and knowledge you have about children and child development, the life experiences you have had, your personal values and morality as well as your own temperament and personality. Attitudes that you hold about diversity and inclusion of children will factor in to how your classroom is set up and managed.

Skills and Knowledge

Every profession has set of skills and a knowledge base that individuals within that profession use to define the field of study (or profession itself). For example, a dentist should have skills to check your teeth and fill cavities, whereas a car mechanic has knowledge about how to diagnose a faulty carburetor. Working as an effective teacher means that you should have knowledge and a specialized skill set about many topics within the profession of early childhood education.

A recent study entitled *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8* explores implications of research-based child development practices that influence those who work with children. **NAEYC** has relied on this book and its findings to inform the **Power to the Profession** movement dedicated to improving the well-being of all children focusing on the educational development

services for children birth to age 8. NAEYC has a set of national standards for early childhood professional preparation programs described in chapter 2 of this text.

In Washington State, **DCYF** has published a set of **core competencies** (www.dcyf.wa.gov/corecompetencies) and frameworks to guide decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all early care and education settings. These competencies coordinate and design courses for certificates and degrees as part of the skills and knowledge Washington State feels is important for teachers to possess and are described in detail in chapter 2.

Washington State also has a set of certificates called the Early Childhood Education Stackable Certificates that build on one another and can lead into an Associate degree in early childhood education and beyond. The certificates are offered at community colleges throughout the state and is the starting point in Washington to begin a career in early learning. This course, ECED& 105 Introduction to Early Childhood Education is one of the courses listed in the Initial 12 credit certificate, so you are on your way to acquiring the skills and knowledge recommended by our state.

As you work in the field, you will gain a set of skills not only through college courses, but also through continuing education such as STARS hours earned, your day-to-day interactions with children and families, your work with colleagues and leaders in the field, membership in professional organizations, additional reading you enjoy about a particular topic, or you may choose to pursue advanced degrees. Each of these experiences, along with many others, will contribute to your own personalized knowledge and skills that are unique to you and your work.

Life Experiences

Whatever career a person chooses, they bring with them into their work their whole history as a person including all life experiences from early childhood and beyond. Each day when you walk into your classroom environment, you are bringing your personality/temperament, attitudes and values that grow from your culture and your own individual influences on your own early childhood experiences.

Remembering that you were a child and how those early experiences shaped you as a person are worth thoughtful reflection as you enter the field. It is important to recognize that your experiences will not be the same ones that you provide to the children you work with and that both the positive, as well as the not so positive, parts of our past influence our work. Being able to compassionately care for children requires that you know and acknowledge those experiences, remembering that self-care is critical. As the saying goes, “you cannot pour from an empty cup” and reviewing your past in nonjudgmental ways as you observe and work with children is paramount. Recognizing that everyone experiences negative feelings and experiences can provide you with a critical lens as you assist a child struggling with their own self-acceptance.

Part of the reflective process (a process that is a critical component to working with children) is to think about every interaction you have with children and families and determine who you want to be as a teacher.

Personal Values and Morality



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Personal **values** are the things that are important to us. They are the characteristics and behaviors that motivate us and guide our decision making. Our values are comprised of the moral code that guides our actions and defines who we are. Some values follow a universal rule of conduct, and others are personal and are defined by our family of origin, culture, religious beliefs, the communities in which we live and work. In addition, our life experiences will also impact the values we hold as a person.

It is possible that you have chosen to work with children and families because you value children. You could also be motivated by social justice, equality, a passion for learning, or an experience you might have had as a child. Awareness of your own values and recognizing that not everyone will have the same set of values that you have, are very much the foundation of what makes you *you*.

Personal **morality** has roots firmly in early childhood education. At a very young age we learn what is right and what is wrong in a multitude of ways through the adults that care for and guide us as children. This could be found in homes, classrooms, neighborhoods, places of worship and communities as we navigate how to treat others and respect differences. It becomes the basis of how we make decisions and choices daily. The NAEYC code of ethics, which you will learn about in the next chapter, is a professional document that can offer guidance as we work with children and families, especially if situations arise that cause us to question or think about the situation as it is related to our own individual set of values and morals.

Temperament and Personality

Temperament is defined as a set of inborn traits that organize the way we approach the world. These traits are instrumental in the way we learn about the world around us. Researchers Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess (1977) have studied temperament related to ways in which we respond to the environments where we live and work (and for children, play!). Figure 1.1 below illustrates the nine individual traits as related to adult learning shown in a continuum model. It is important to remember that these traits should not be viewed as “good” or “bad” but do provide information about how we interact within our environments.

Figure 1.1 Nine Dimensions of Temperament

Thomas and Chess Temperament Continuum Examples		
High/Active -----	Activity Level -----	Low/Inactive
Predictable -----	Regularity/Rhythmicity -----	Unpredictable
Bold/Approaching -----	Initial Reaction -----	Inhibited/Cautious
Flexible/Quick -----	Adaptability -----	Rigid/Gradual
Intense -----	Intensity -----	Mild
Positive -----	Mood -----	Negative
Rarely -----	Distractibility -----	Often
Persistent/Long -----	Attention Span -----	Intermittent/Short
Nonreactive -----	Sensitivity -----	Sensitive

Looking at the continuum above, you could place yourself at the higher end of the continuum for example in activity level (very high/active), or anywhere along the continuum all the way to something akin to “low/inactive”. Some of these temperament traits are good “fits” for individuals working with children daily: positive quality of mood, and higher activity levels for example.

Reflection

What do you think are some traits that are necessary “goodness of fit” for working with children and families?

Generally speaking, traits are seen as a “goodness of fit” when a person’s temperaments aligns with the tasks necessary in a job or career. That is not to say that if you don’t possess certain traits for a career, that the career might not be for you! It is a starting point for thinking about the implication of how your personality fits into the field of early learning.

Attitudes about Diversity and Inclusion

Messages we get as young children about groups of people whose culture, language, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, appearance, ability, or religion that differs from ours as well as the experiences from our own lives influence our attitudes as adults. We develop expectations about people, and it is important to recognize this within yourself and the community where you work. A **bias** is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone (Psychology Today, 2020). Some biases are positive and helpful (like choosing to eat foods that are considered healthy). However, bias is often based on stereotypes, rather than actual knowledge of an individual or circumstance and this can often lead to prejudgment or discriminatory practice.

Many people struggle to recognize their own biases, and it is important to note that everyone has some bias as our brains attempt to categorize people and things “like” us and people and things “unlike” us. If taken to the extreme, this type of categorization can bring about feelings of an “us *versus* them” mentality which can lead to harmful prejudice. Bias is a universal human condition and even the most dedicated and well-meaning teachers hold beliefs that may affect their students. Sometimes, these beliefs can be harmful—if they are left unexamined. Identifying your own biases will help you to resist having a negative effect on the children and families that you work with. When you recognize a bias; it might help you to dispel feelings you have that could lead to negative reactions.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor once said, “Personal experiences affect the facts that judges choose to see”. This recognition of bias holds true in the field of early childhood education as well.

Reflection

How do you feel that your personal values and goals might be reflected in your classroom and teaching each day?

Is there a particular age of child that you are interested in working with? Or maybe an age group that you would be challenged by?

Inclusion is the “act or practice of including; the state of being included” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Sometimes in the field of Education, the term inclusion is reserved for conversations around special needs children and the importance of included all children in work and play. Inclusion can also be seen in day-to-day practice when children might leave a child behind in play or say something like “you’re not invited to my birthday party” in an attempt to exclude a particular child. It is important that teachers support all children in helping them to understand that they are an important part of their school community. Our job is to foster a development of belonging that will prepare them for life in their community as they grow.

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1.3: The Teacher as a Professional

In a bold strategic initiative called *Power to the Profession*, NAEYC made the statement that “positive relationships are at the core of quality, investing specifically in early childhood educators is the best thing we can do to improve early childhood education” (NAEYC, 2019). Because you are enrolled in this course, it is safe to say that you are interested in becoming a professional within the field of early learning and recognize that positive relationships are at the core of our work. The Power to the Profession initiative is attempting to recognize that the work we do in classrooms each day is recognized as a very important profession within our society. It is critically important that the behavior we engage in each day reflects the professional ideals of the field.

Being recognized as a professional goes beyond the personal traits discussed earlier in this chapter. It also requires the typical “soft skills” a good employee might need (being to work on time, having a positive attitude, communicating well, keeping personal grievances outside of the workplace among others) and also includes following the values and ethics outlined by the profession itself.

Early childhood professionals are diverse with different perspectives. This is why we turn to the NAEYC Code of Ethics to provide an understanding of professional behavior. The code can also serve as a guide to help resolve ethical dilemmas.



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Code of Ethics

The NAEYC code of ethics provides the field with a set of professional beliefs and commitments. As previously mentioned, this code can guide our daily work, as well as assist as a reference when faced with ethical dilemmas in the workplace.

The code is comprised of Ideals and Principles, but at the very foundation of the code is a set of core values. These core values express central beliefs, commitments to society and the common purpose of our profession. Figure 1.1 illustrates the core values as published in the code of ethics.

Figure 1.2 NAEYC Core Values

NAEYC Core Values
• Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle • Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn • Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family • Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, *community, and society • Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague) • Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues • Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

Most people within the field of early learning find themselves in agreement with the core values set forth in the code. As you grow within the profession, you might begin to see alignment of your own personal values reflected in your daily work. Chapter 2 of this text will provide a deep dive into the code of ethics published by NAEYC.

Advocacy

Many people believe that the smartest investment a country could make to their society is to **advocate** for quality early childhood education, and an **advocate** for early learning is a person that would support the cause of early learning. A recent UNICEF report indicates that “children enrolled in early childhood education programs are more likely to stay in school and attain minimum reading and math competencies extending beyond elementary education” (July 2019). That makes it seem as though advocating for early childhood education becomes not only an investment in our future as a society in general, but an easy decision at that! However, according to UNICEF 175 million children are currently not engaged in any type of early childhood education programs. In low-income countries, nearly 8 out of 10 children are missing out on early childhood classrooms.

In Washington State, there are many groups that advocate for quality early learning to support children, families, and programs where children are enrolled. Agencies such as Child Care Aware, Children’s Alliance, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, Washington State Family Child Care Association, and Washington Association for the Education of Young Children are just a few.

Advocating for all children is very much a part of the fabric of what we do. Advocacy work doesn’t have to be national, sweeping movements, but rather, it can be showing that early investments in children are important to the healthy growth and development of all children. Working together as a profession in our individual communities to share the important work that we do provides the support that all children should be able to access the early education they deserve. How to create advocacy opportunities will be discussed broadly in chapter 2 of this text. When thinking about advocacy, many people have images of talking with politicians trying to convince them of the importance of a passion, or some people might think that advocacy involves lengthy letter writing campaigns. But advocacy doesn’t have to be that difficult and can be as simple as talking with friends, families, neighbors and others in your community about your passion for working with young children and families. Often, this begins by telling your own story of why you chose to be in this profession. Advocacy also includes keeping up with what is happening in the field, both in terms of current trends, and the ties to historical perspective.

Working with Families

Just like each child is unique, every family is unique and the child(ren) you are working with comes to you each day wrapped in a blanket of family values, culture, attitudes and beliefs. Building positive and good working relationships with families is a very important part of the work early childhood educator’s role. Partnering with parents allows the children that you teach to see that the important adults in their life are working together and can help both them and the family to be comfortable in your classroom environment.



Image 1.5 [Reading Together](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

Just like any relationship the family-teacher relationship can be complex and can include many people. This could include the child’s family, the teacher, the staff at the child’s program, and the community that they child lives within. By working together, you can build a rich environment that supports both the child and their family which will serve as models for creating positive relationships within the community.

Sometimes early childhood teachers become representatives for resources for families. You may find yourself in the role of bridging resources within the community to the families you serve. This may involve employing a variety of communication techniques to support families. Whether it is a classroom app or other social media, a newsletter or bulletin board, representing all families and including all family members is vital to building healthy relationships.

Some programs, particularly Head Start programs, incorporate a portion of their programming devoted to Home Visits. This allows the teacher to become acquainted with the family in the child's familiar home environment. In some cases, this can strengthen the relationship with the family, while other families may feel vulnerable when a "teacher comes calling". Whatever the communication may be, it is important to remember that building positive trusting relationships with the family of children is a core value of the profession.

Reflection

What do you believe you will bring into the field of early learning in terms of your own professional values?

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1.4: The Structure of the Field of Early Learning

When looking at an overview of the field of early learning, it can be overwhelming to consider the huge variety of program approaches, settings, and models found within the field. This chapter will focus on the more common programs for children pre-birth to age 8 found currently in the United States that might be interesting to students beginning the journey to become a teacher of young children. In future chapters of this text, program philosophies (sometimes called approaches or curriculum approaches) will be addressed.

NAEYC has also presented a document from the Power to the Profession work entitled *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*. This document recognized that the field in general includes a very diverse range of individuals and settings that contribute to the field. The document attempts to unify the field and discusses how the United States can make significant and sustained investments in high quality early learning programs. Consideration of this document is the foundation for the discussion regarding how the field is structured.

Programs for children pre-brith to age 5

The majority of programs caring for children birth to age 5 are small private, tuition based childcare centers that offer either part day or full day programs. Licensed childcare centers in the state of Washington obtain their license from the Department of Youth, Children and Families. The number of children that a center can be licensed for depends on the space and ages of the children they serve. Families can use tools found on the DCYF website to search for care in their community as well as review any licensing infractions or concerns the department has about a center.

One framework in place to assure quality of care in Washington State is through the Early Achievers program. This program provides a rating system for childcare providers based on observable elements of quality indicators. In addition, some centers might seek accreditation through NAEYC. This optional accreditation is an independent study of a center focusing on many aspects of a center including the curriculum, environment, education of the teachers as well as many other quality indicators.

Family childcare centers (located in the operator's home) are the least visible, yet most prevalent form of childcare in many communities. In Washington state, Family Childcare Homes are licensed and can apply to be Early Achievers sites as well.

Family, Friends and Neighbor care (FFN) differs from family childcare in that this type of care might include unlicensed grandparents, aunts/uncles, elders, older siblings, friends or neighbors who support families by providing childcare. FFN is the most common type of childcare for infants, toddlers and school-age children before and after school hours. FFN are not regulated by the state, although some FFN providers can receive childcare subsidies for childcare if they are willing to follow DCYF guidelines.



Image 1.6 [FFN provider](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

Preschool (sometimes called part day programs and can also include cooperative preschools or nursery schools) are unlicensed education programs that generally offer a school ready curriculum to support children. In many communities, preschools can be housed in community centers, churches, or even outdoors! These programs are not monitored by DCYF and to date, there are no education requirements for teachers working in preschools.

Other types of childcare available in Washington State include:

- crisis nurseries that provide care for families in crisis such as domestic violence, homelessness, employment, or other crisis situations,
- developmental preschools available to some children with special needs often housed at local school districts,
- private preschools offering curriculum for no more than four hours per day.

Programs for children age 5 to 8

There are several types of program options for children age 5 to 8 including kindergarten (found in both public and private schools), elementary or homeschool or school age childcare.

Most children will enroll in kindergarten at age 5, or shortly after their fifth birthday, depending on the community school district calendar for the community in which the family lives. Historically, kindergarten (a German word translation for “a child’s garden”) was meant to be a bridge between the home and elementary school environment and most kindergartens were housed in local elementary schools. The first public kindergarten in the United States was housed in a St. Louis Missouri elementary school and over the 20th century, kindergarten has changed and been innovated into full day programs with rigorous testing and curriculum. Today, kindergarten looks startlingly like what first grade used to be, and the need for high quality early childhood education prior to kindergarten has been the focus of several studies and summarized by the Alliance for Childhood’s report entitled “Crisis in Kindergarten” (2009).

Elementary school age children can enroll in either their local community public school in their communities that are funded by federal tax dollars or a private school in which parents pay tuition for their children to attend. In addition to both of those programs, children can be homeschooled. The number of children being homeschooled grew 28.9% between 1999 and 2003, 37.6% between 2003 and 2007, 17.4% between 2007 and 2012. As of 2015-16, around 1,690,000 children were being homeschooled (responsiblehomeschooling.org).



Image 1.7 School Age Care is licensed under CC by 1.0

Reflection

What type of program do you see yourself working in, or are currently working in? What are the benefits for you?

Is there a type of program that you would not be comfortable working in?

School-age care refers to programs that operate before and after school and during the summer and holiday breaks. School Age programs often include a structured routine and allows children a space to complete homework, build relationships with children that attend schools different than their own, and can be offered through community groups, the YMCA or other parks and recreation programs or private homes. Not all school age programs require licenses.

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1.5: Historical Roots

Many of our current ideas in educational philosophy are built on ideas and theories of the past. The roots of early childhood education go as far back Plato (428-348 BC) who was a Greek philosopher that believed that the teacher's role was to direct children through play towards "their final aim in life". Dr. David Elkind believes that the field of early childhood education is "the most holistic and least differentiated of any level of education" due to the solid grounding in philosophy, theory, and research. What theorists most noted in the field have in common is that what makes early childhood education unique is that it starts with the child, and not with the subject matter (Elkind, 2010).

The Origins of Early Childhood Education

The philosophical foundations of early education includes the early work of many individuals including Czech philosopher John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), British philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) and Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in addition to many other European and American philosophers that will be discussed in chapter 3. Alongside these philosophical applications, the field is grounded in research through education figures such as Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980), German American psychologist Erik Erikson (1902-1994) and German educator Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) as well as European theorists and educators all of whom have contributed to Western approaches in early learning.

It wasn't until after World War II that early childhood education came to be seen as an important foundation to every child's educational pathway, the roots of which are based in **humanism**. This thought process has the concern for the well-being of all humans which eventually contributed to what we know now as developmentally appropriate practice, a concept discussed in chapter 4 of this text.

The infographic in figure 1.3 illustrates the progression of thought from some notable theorists that have contributed to the field of early childhood education from Ancient Greece to the first Kindergarten funded in the United States. As you look at the timeline, think about how the philosophies of each time period have influenced current thinking.

FIGURE 1.3 NOTABLE HISTORICAL THOUGHTS ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

428 BC Plato: the early years shape a child's future
1546 Martin Luther: boys and girls should be taught to read
1778 Jean Jacques Rousseau: the child is inherently good
1670 Johann Amos Comenius believed education helped to shape society
1704 John Locke: the child is born a blank slate
1827 Johann Pestalozzi: all children have the right to an education
1858 Robert Owen: the environment should be one of mutual consideration
1873 Publicly funded Kindergarten arrives in the United States

The Origins of Child Care in the United States

In the United States today, most women with young children are employed outside of the home. The necessity (or choice) to work outside of the home has created a need for care for young children during working hours. The term "day care" was used historically to refer to the working hours teachers were in classrooms. Today, professionals prefer the term childcare as it is more inclusive and reflects the important work of nurturing the child.

Childcare can be traced to starting in New York in 1893 when the National Federation of Day Nurseries, the first nationwide organization devoted to childcare, began. The care at that time was hardly labeled "quality" and so a set of progressive women began the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912 to set policy for quality childcare (Michaels, 2019).

The Depression had an impact on childcare as unemployment rose. During Roosevelt's New Deal, a program of Emergency Nursery Schools (ENS) grew but were open for only part of the day. By the end of the 1930's high staff turnover rates forced the closure of many of the ENS. With the approach of World War II, the unemployment crisis dropped, and many women went to work for the government to support war efforts. However, it was not until 1943 that support for childcare financially entered into government conversations and Congress allocated \$6 million dollars to reopen ENS (Michaels, 2019). In 1944, only 3,000 childcare centers were operating, yet the capacity for 130,000 children was needed. This lack of care during the day began the

spread of the “latchkey child” and often children were found sleeping in locked cars in company parking lots while mothers worked (Michaels, 2019).

In 1954, The childcare tax deduction allowed low to moderate income families to deduct expenses for childcare from their income taxes and a program entitled New York Women (led by Elinor Guggenheimer) helped to establish a licensing system for childcare in that city that eventually grew across the U.S.

In the 60’s, federal support for childcare was tied to policies designed to encourage poor and low-income women to enter the workforce until a group of labor leaders, civil rights leaders and early childhood advocates worked with Congress to legislate universal childcare policy. These efforts failed under President Nixon and as a result, direct federal support for childcare was limited to low-income families.



Image 1.8 [A Historical Moment](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

In the 80’s President Reagan shifted funding and the passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant allocated funds to support individual states. The issue with this was that even though there were increased funds for childcare, problems with supply and quality for lower income families became difficult, and middle-income families faced childcare centers with high turnover rates of childcare employees due to low pay and poor benefits.

In the late 1990s, funding through welfare reform initiatives such as the Family Medical Leave Act provided some childcare relief dollars for families, but existing federal childcare policies have gone largely unchanged since the 50s and do not meet the needs of the working families of today.

There are hundreds of private advocacy groups in the United States that are interested in early childhood education and the policies that support quality and equity for all families today, but most research agrees that the system of childcare is a fragmented system. In the next section of this chapter, we will explore how the government has supported early learning.

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1.6: Government Funding that Supports Early Learning

For more than 80 years, the federal government has invested in childcare and early childhood education programs to support parents and children and help them to succeed. Over time, as society has changed, so has the amount of funding and the names of the funding programs. There is no doubt that as our society continues to change, so will the need for funding children and families across the United States.

From a historical point of view, the United States is in the middle of a childcare revolution of sorts, as more and more children under the age of six are cared for by someone other than their parents. Historians have known for at least two centuries that the well-being of all children depends on the quality of care received in the early years. Some people believe that as a system, we have failed to act boldly on that knowledge within the government arena and money to support all children is inequitable.

During the 19th (and early 20th) centuries, a two-tiered system of early childhood education types of programs evolved in the United States. One tier had roots in social welfare systems while other was rooted in the education system providing “preschool” education for middle- and upper-class children (Cahan, 1989). During the last century, the federal government has vastly expanded its role in early childhood education (Yarrow, 2009). In this chapter, we will focus on government involvement in terms of funding.

As previously mentioned, in 1933 the first federal investment in childcare was made in response to the Great Depression. The Emergency Nursery School program provided childcare for the children of people working government paid jobs and by 1935, the Aid to Dependent Children program was included in part of the President Roosevelt’s New Deal. During this time, many childcare centers were open seven days a week for 12 months a year and even provided infirmaries for sick children and hot meals for families to take home after work. This all sounds wonderful, but one must remember that it took two wars and demands on the workforce for the government to make such meaningful resources for working families.



Image 1.9 [Mrs. Schroeder goes to work](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

After World War II, expansion of public kindergarten began, and the government funded programs for low-income children through Head Start funding and federal childcare subsidies. The goals for the funding was to prepare children living in low income households for elementary school, and now Head Start offers a range of comprehensive services to strengthen families. In 1994, Early Head Start was created to support pregnant women, infants, and toddlers through age three.

In 1974, Federal dollars helped to create the Social Services Block Grant, to support parents in the workforce by supporting childcare services and in 1990 this program was extended to families with incomes that did not qualify under previous income guidelines. President Bill Clinton signed a law that brought welfare reform to working families in 1996 under a program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Over the past two decades, as we learn more about children’s brain development and research into quality early learning experiences filter into the government scene, Congress is increasing funding for already existing programs. Head Start has had an increase from 6.8 to 10.6 billion dollars to serve over 1 million children from birth to age 5 and the Child Care and Development

Fund (CCDF) program saw an increase to 8.1 billion dollars to serve 1.3 million children and 769,000 families each month (bipartisanpolicy.org).

The role that an individual state plays in childcare comes from state involvement in both federally funded and state-initiated programs. For example, not all states match federal funds allocated to some federally funded programs and states can determine the eligibility criteria for participation in federally funded programs.

Every state regulates childcare in some form and all states license childcare centers. In Washington State, the Department of Children, Youth and Families is responsible for licensing and monitoring of licenses for childcare and family childcare centers.



Washington State Involvement in Setting Standards for the Field

In Washington State, the Department of Children, Youth and Families is the agency that supports adult educators who care for and teach young children. The mission of the agency is to “provide a comprehensive framework and delivering of services for professional development that includes adult learning and workforce development to ensure improved outcomes for children, youth and the adults who provide education and services” (DCYF, 2020).

The agency supports state approved training through in-service known as STARS recorded in a registry program entitled MERIT. The guiding framework for providing training is found in a document called the Core Competencies. More about this system can be found in chapter 2.

What the state recognizes is that child outcomes can improve when children attend quality early learning programs and when teacher’s skills and education levels are supported. To that end, Washington State offers a career planning portal (www.ececareers.del.wa.gov) to assist students as they begin to plan their career in early learning. Each community college in the state offers the Early Childhood Stackable Certificates, of which this class is a part, within the initial ECE certificate. Assistance to go to school is provided at most community colleges through the Early Achievers program which can often fund tuition, books and other costs for students working in the field at an Early Achiever’s rated childcare site. In addition, financial assistance can be given to students pursuing a bachelor’s degree through Child Care Aware. In addition, DCYF works with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to support professionals working with school age children.

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1.7: Today's Trends Bound to History

Some of the historical trends discussed in this chapter apply to early learning today: the field still believes in the importance of play (Plato), that early learning is the foundation for all education moving forward, and that children grow best in environments that are nurturing and supportive. In some cases, the financial aspects that impact the field are yet to be known. New governmental regulations will most likely come into play as society shifts in 2021 after surviving a global pandemic.

Looking back historically can also help us to predict what lies ahead. The remainder of this chapter will focus on trends of the past influencing the field today.



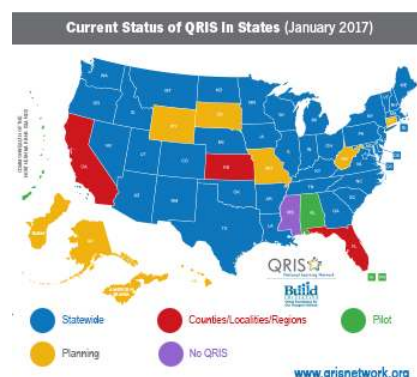
Image 1.10 [Playing on a Fence](#) is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

Educational Trends that Have Influenced Early Childhood Education

In the 2013 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama stated “in states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children . . . studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So, let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind” (White House Archives, 2013). This public address started a conversation about what the United States values in terms of early learning initiatives as it was the first time that early learning was specifically called out in a presidential address.

If you were to do an internet search for “trends in early learning”, the results would be long and varied with a variety of opinions from an assortment of resources both inside and outside of the field of early learning. In addition, it is likely that you would see lists of initiatives that will shape the future of early learning, as well as trends that impact children directly and those that are in place to support families. Keeping that in mind, it becomes a difficult task to sort out how today’s decisions will impact tomorrow’s children. When looking at trends, however, two things become very clear: it is necessary that a unifying message that includes all children is essential, and that advocacy for this movement is critical.

One way that the United States has moved toward improving consistency and trying to create quality in childcare is through a quality rating improvement system, also called QRIS. This state-by-state initiative attempts to address the priorities that former President Obama spoke about in his state of the union address. In Washington State the QRIS system is referred to as *Early Achievers*. The QRIS national learning network has reported this state-by-state map current as of January 2017.



Power to the Profession

Turning to the professional organization NAEYC, the document *Unifying the Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession* provides insight to the difficult current realities of the field and the pathway to unification by taking steps to professionalize the field. Within the document, a clear message about the need to align professional preparation for students studying early childhood education, compensation for teachers working in classrooms, and making the clear distinction that advocating for “the good of our country’s children, families, educators, businesses, and economy” is the message that so many in the field believe will lead to public investment in early learning.

The goal of the Power to the Profession initiative is clear: to establish unity and clarity around the career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards, accountability, supports, and compensation to define the early childhood profession across all states and settings. Much more about the initiative is in chapter 2 of this text.

Societal Changes

As society changes and as we learn more, so do the issues and trends being discussed within the field of early childhood education. Often, the concerns professionals have in the field historically have been reflective mirrors of those societal changes and sometimes these changes have positive or negative impact. For example, in response to rapidly growing global awareness and the increase of culturally responsive and anti-bias curriculum, teachers are becoming more aware of how their classrooms must reflect the communities in which they work. Certainly, the historical nod to play based learning will again become a focus of our work as more and more young children are exposed to technology at an early age. And we certainly have yet to see the impact of the current global pandemic and the impact it will have on children and families as we move to a nation that becomes healthy and safe again.

But the largest focus for the past few years in the field has been the diverse communities in which we work and live and how those communities need to be supported. NAEYC released an equity position statement in 2019 that clearly communicates that all children have the right to equitable learning opportunities. Many people within the field agree that we must respond to the changing societal landscape and the funding for early learning should support this work. In Washington State, DCYF has spent the past year (2019) studying how the early learning system can provide strategies to help all children and families thrive while eliminating inequities in outcomes for children. In a recent statement published throughout the state, DCYF has reminded us of our vision: “Washington State is a place where each child will start life with a solid foundation for success based on strong families, culturally relevant early learning practices, services and supports that lead to racial equity and the well-being of all children and families”.

Reflection

What societal changes have occurred over the past 10 or 15 years that you feel have influenced the field of early childhood education?

Final Thoughts

The field of early childhood education and the profession of working with young children is a rewarding career with a rich history of teaching, nurturing, and caring for young children. As teachers, our skills, knowledge as well as personal beliefs and morality shape how we interact with children and families.

Our field is one with historical roots that tie to modern day concepts that is supported both within our state and nationally through efforts to professionalize the field.

One thing is certain: change is all around us in the field, and the profession must respond to the trends. This means we will always strive to do what is best for the children and families we serve and continue to move with the wave of change.

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Websites you may want to explore further

Department of Children, Youth and Families: www.dcyf.wa.gov

Child Care Aware of Washington: www.childcareaware.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org

NAEYC Equity Statement: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity>

Unifying the Framework Executive Summary: <http://powertotheprofession.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Power-to-Profession-Framework-exec-summary-03082020.pdf>

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 2: Professionalism in Early Childhood Education

- 2.1: Introduction to Chapter 2
- 2.2: Defining terms - A vocabulary for discussing professionalism
- 2.3: NAEYC's efforts - Power to the Profession and the Unifying Framework
- 2.4: Other Standards Defining Professional Performance
- 2.5: Advocacy
- 2.6: Chapter 2 Appendix
- 2.7: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

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2.1: Introduction to Chapter 2



Image 2.1 "game" by Barbara Eckstein is licensed under CC BY 2.0

This chapter aligns with SLO #7: apply the professional code of ethics for early care and education to resolve dilemmas.

In chapter 1 we introduced the practice of teaching and referred to the “field” of early childhood education (ECE). In the last two decades, there has been much attention paid to the difference between a “field” and a profession of ECE (e.g., Goffin & Washington, 2007). While the intensity of attention about defining ECE as a profession has increased considerably, this attention is far from new. As early as the mid-1960’s Bettye Caldwell wrote about the relatively little concern for defining the field apparent in discussion about how early childhood education should operate (Caldwell, 1967). In this chapter, you will explore the definition of “profession” and consider whether ECE fits that definition. You will learn about a recent effort to move to finally position ECE to be recognized as a profession. You will also become aware of the currently used and various systems of standards and codes that define professional behavior and conduct of the ECE practitioner. The goal of this chapter is for you to understand the expectations of a professional early childhood educator as you prepare to move into that role.

Key points from this chapter

- A profession is defined by criteria that guide professional practice.
- Current thinking suggests early childhood education does not fully meet the definition of a profession.
- While ECE may not yet fully meet professional criteria, many systems of standards exist to guide practice.

Terminology found throughout this chapter

1. **ECE Field:** All programs, services and occupations that currently reside within the boundary of what we call ECE.
2. **Field of Practice:** Specialization or a defined scope of work undertaken by an identified group of practitioners.
3. **Profession:** An occupation that serves the public welfare and that requires specialized educational training in some branch of learning or science.
4. **Professional:** The inhabitant of a role in that occupation—the person who does the work of the profession.
5. **Early Childhood Education:** The title of the profession chosen by the Power to the Profession Task Force.
6. **Early Childhood Educator:** The title of the professionals chosen by the Power to the Profession Task force; those who provide direct service to children, birth to age 8.
7. **Unifying Framework:** The final product of the Power to the Profession Task Force. Reports on recommendations made by the Task Force to define the profession and create infrastructure to support implementation of the recommendations.
8. **Scope of Practice:** The responsibilities and authority granted to an ECE professional.
9. **WAC:** Washington Administrative Code. Sets regulations for licensed childcare.

10. **Stackable Certificates:** 3 credentials granted by community and technical colleges in Washington. They build on one another and set the foundation for acquiring an associate degree.
11. **NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children. Prominent professional organization for early childhood educators.
12. **Ethical conduct:** Behavior following moral and right principles.
13. **Ethical Ideals:** Aspirational statements guiding behavior.
14. **Ethical Principles:** Rules for practice dividing ethical from unethical behavior.
15. **Ethical Dilemma:** Moral conflict that requires choosing between two conflicting values and responsibilities.
16. **Ethical Responsibility:** A clear cut rule regarding moral decisions.
17. **Ethical Finesse:** Finding a way to resolve a problem that is acceptable to everyone involved.
18. **Advocacy:** Action that argues for an issue or course of action; support or defense of a group.

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2.2: Defining terms - A vocabulary for discussing professionalism

Understanding terminology is a helpful way to start an investigation of professionalism in ECE. The terms *profession* and *professional* are used frequently in our everyday conversations. But our common usage of the term does not ensure that we understand what these terms mean as we apply them to our work as educators.

In our work life, we may use the term *professional* to refer to the fact that we are committed to doing our jobs well, that we are good employees (punctual, respectful to colleagues, dress appropriately), that we provide reliable and competent service, or it may simply mean that we get paid for what we do (Feeney, 2012). You might use the term *professional* as a compliment, indicating that you see that person as being good at their job.

While we may use the term professional as a verb to describe how we behave at our jobs, it is important to note that a body of scholarly literature exists in which academics from various disciplines have discussed the meaning of these terms.

In this section, we will further define terms that assist in understanding the conversation about ECE becoming a profession.

Field

You have likely heard reference to the “field of ECE”. In fact, we use that phrase in chapter 1 of this book. Calling ECE a field allows us to create a boundary around what we mean by ECE; it allows for defining what fits into this category. Similarly, you have probably heard mention of those who work in the business field, the medical field, etc. As Goffin and Washington (2019) suggest, the term **ECE field** describes all of the programs, services and occupations that currently reside within the boundary of what we call ECE—childcare, either in centers or family childcare homes; preschool; and care for infants and toddlers, for example.

Field of Practice

A **field of practice** refers to a specialization or a defined scope of work undertaken by an identified group of practitioners. It is a term often used in defining specialties in medicine or social work. Stacie Goffin has also applied the term “field of practice” to ECE (Goffin & Washington, 2019; Goffin, 2015). A field of practice, according to Goffin, indicates the roles that directly focus on the learning and development of children. In other words, the ECE field of practice refers to those who do the work of educating and facilitating development. Calling ECE a field of practice allows for defining the focus—the learning and development of young children. Naming it as a field of practice also highlights that the field’s main objective is competent practice and suggests that we understand what it means to competently educate young children. In sum, the ECE field of practice is populated by those who do the work of direct service to children, which also assumes a level of competent practice to be successful.

Profession

The term **profession** is commonly accepted to mean an “occupation that serves the public welfare and that requires specialized educational training in some branch of learning or science” (Feeney, 2012, p. 6). Thus, a profession requires specialized education not held by others, and serves a public good, as opposed to serving one’s self-interest alone (i.e., simply getting a paycheck).

Professionals

If a profession is an occupation that serves a public good, and requires education, a **professional** is the inhabitant of a role in that occupation—the person who does the work of the profession. Applying the definition of profession just shared, a professional is the person who has made a commitment to serve the public good related to that field and has achieved the educational requirement necessary to play that role. In the field of ECE, it is common to hear about efforts to *professionalize* the field. This often refers to incremental efforts to improve the practice of individuals, rather than being about system wide efforts to meet the full definition of a profession.

A large body of academic literature has identified the defining features of a profession. Although there is not complete agreement on these features, some appear frequently and are accepted as critical markers. Feeney (2012) identifies 8 criteria that are common in the literature about professions. Table 1 describes them.

Table 1 Criteria for Defining a Profession

Criteria	Details of Criteria

Criteria	Details of Criteria
Specialized body of knowledge and expertise	• Evidence-based knowledge (grounded in research and scholarship) • Skillful application of knowledge • Obligation to stay informed about new information
Prolonged training	• Acquisition of evidence-based knowledge through training/education that occurs over time • Includes study and practical experience
Rigorous requirements for entry to training and eligibility to practice	• Admission to training programs is competitive • Graduation from training may be followed by an exam • Go through background screening required for licensure
Standards of practice	• Follow standards to ensure competent practice • Make decisions on the basis of standards (practice is not “cookie cutter”)
Commitment to serving a significant social value	• Dedicated to public interest • Altruistic and service oriented
Recognition as the only group in the society who can perform a function	• No other group can perform this function • Only those with credentials, training, licensure can play this role
Autonomy	• Self-governed • Internal control over quality of services provided—national organization provides
Code of ethics	• Obligations to society spelled out • Moral behavior for practice codified • Instills confidence that public good will be prioritized

Reflection

How do you use the terms *profession* and *professional*? Do they mean different things to you? Do you see yourself as a professional in your work with young children? Why is that?

Reviewing the list of criteria, consider if ECE meets enough of these criteria to be labeled a profession. If you are not sure if ECE meets enough of them, imagine what ECE would look like if it met all or many of these criteria.

ECE as a Profession

In recent years, many have questioned whether ECE meets the definition of a profession (e.g., Feeney, 2012; Goffin, 2013, 2015). There seems to be a consensus that it currently does not, and review of the list in Table 1 provides evidence that this conclusion is accurate. While ECE has developed some of the characteristics above, not all are currently in place. For example, a Code of **Ethical Conduct**, put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2011), has been in existence for several years, though there is no universal requirement that ECE practitioners are aware of or abide by this code. Similarly, in terms of standards of practice, many states have adopted a set of guidelines defining the skills and knowledge necessary to provide quality childcare. However, each state can define these guidelines as they see fit, and a wide variety of licensing requirements can be found across the US. As guidelines, they carry no authority over the continued practice of a practitioner who chooses not to follow them.

Moreover, these competencies are often set by the state legislature and defined by the state agency responsible for childcare licensing, rather than being defined and agreed to by the profession. This fact points to the absence of autonomy. Having autonomy is another marker of a profession. Licensed childcare, a central mode of delivery in ECE, is heavily regulated by the state, rather than by the profession, providing notable evidence for the lack of autonomy in ECE, another critical feature in a profession.

Further, prolonged training with rigorous entry requirements are not required for entry into ECE with any consistency. Similarly, too many in the general public still view childcare as “glorified babysitting” to all us to say that ECE is recognized as being based on specialized knowledge, or that there exists a particular set of practitioners who alone can do the work of ECE.

This analysis should make it clear that ECE has work to do before it can claim the title of **profession** and before those engaged in this work can claim to be **professionals**. Identifying this reality has not, however, made it easy for ECE to move toward the status of profession. While numerous efforts have aimed to solve the problem, no large-scale success has been achieved. Early childhood educators remain unrecognized for the significance of their work, remain undercompensated, the field of early childhood education remains fragmented and siloed with no clear definition of its boundaries, and little specialized knowledge is required for entry (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

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2.3: NAEYC's efforts - Power to the Profession and the Unifying Framework

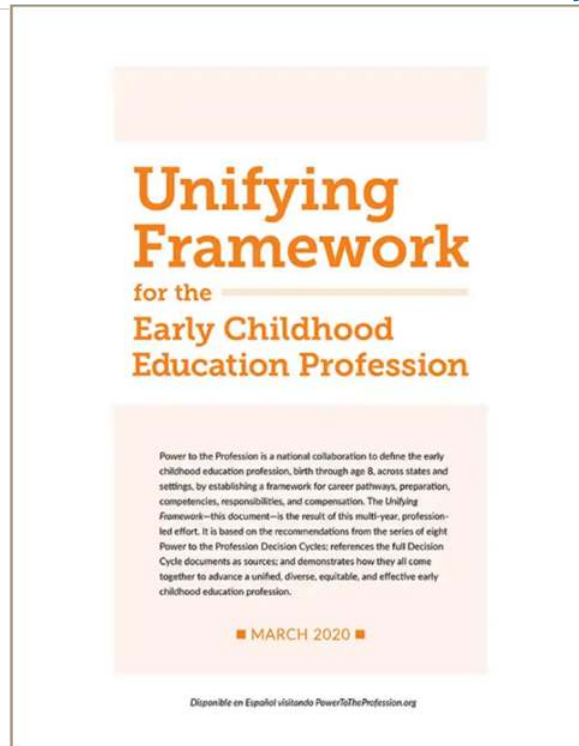


IMAGE 2.2 UNIFYING FRAMEWORK FOR ECE PROFESSION (NAEYC, 2020)

A hopeful initiative has, however, recently emerged. Beginning in 2017, **NAEYC** (the National Association for the Education of Young Children), the leading professional association for those engaged in the work of ECE, made a significant investment in achieving this goal. This initiative, titled *Power to the Profession* and carried out by a task force representing 15 national ECE-related organizations created a *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*. According to the *Power to the Profession Task Force* (n.d.), the framework is designed to “...set a vision for how to drive the significant and sustained public investment that will allow all children, birth through age 8, to benefit from high-quality early childhood education provided by well-prepared, diverse, supported and compensated professionals” (para. 3). The title of the framework, including the term profession, as well as the focus on preparation and support of the professionals illustrate the focus of moving ECE to this status, while also recognizing the need for public funding to achieve this long-standing goal.

Power to the Profession was a multi-year process that involved 8 “decision cycles” in which decisions on the defining issues of the field were presented to stakeholders for feedback. At each cycle, practitioners in the field responded in writing to the proposal, engaged in focus groups, and other means of providing feedback. After this process, each proposal was revised and ultimately finalized. In March of 2020, the results of the 8 decision cycles were presented in the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*. The recommendations in the framework are summarized in the table found in the appendix to this chapter. In addition to summarizing the recommendations, the table includes how they address the 8 criteria of a profession identified earlier in this chapter.

The recommendations that make up the Framework are notable in their effort to address at one time as many of the issues facing ECE as possible.

Naming and Defining the Profession

The first issue addressed by the Task Force was what to call the profession. This is a long existent problem with ECE (which you will note we have been calling early childhood education all along—but many do not accept this and use other names such as early care and education or early learning, and so on). The difficulty was not just about agreeing to a single name but determining which practitioners working with young children were part of the profession. A long-held aversion to exclusion has made it difficult to draw a boundary around who is “in” and who is “out” of the profession. But this decision is necessary to define a field as a profession. After much deliberation, the Task Force chose to call the profession **Early Childhood Education** and the professionals

are called **Early Childhood Educators**. Further, a boundary between the profession and the larger field of early childhood was drawn, delineating the professionals from other allied practitioners who, while still engaged in work that support children and families, are not early childhood educators and not part of the profession.



IMAGE 2.3 UNIFYING FRAMEWORK ECE FIELD AND PROFESSION (NAEYC, 2020)

Image 2.3 presents the illustration from the Unifying Framework (Power to the Profession Task Force, 2020) that depicts the relationship between the *field* of ECE--everything outside of the *profession*--and the profession designated by the orange section at the top of the circle. The profession as proposed, includes three roles:

- Early Childhood Educators who provide direct service to children birth to age 8 and on whom the Unifying Framework is largely focused
- Professional Preparation Faculty and Trainers who instruct, observe, and monitor the practice of aspiring ECEs
- Pedagogical and Instructional Administrators who guide the practice of ECEs

In addition to defining the profession and the professionals, the Framework identifies three designations of early childhood educators (Early Childhood Educator I, II and III) as presented in Table 2. Creating these designations addresses a confusing jumble of titles and roles in the current field, creating a uniform approach to defining responsibilities (**scope of practice**) and preparation. The Task Force also recognized the current reality that the **scope of practice** attached to a specific level of professional preparation differs by setting. For example, in Birth to age 5 settings, a practitioner with an associate degree may hold the position of lead teacher in a classroom. That same level of education would commonly be tied to an assistant teacher position in a K-Grade 3 setting.

Table 2 Designations of ECEs proposed in Unifying Framework

Title	Setting	Scope of Practice—Role in Development and Delivery of Educational Programming	Educational Requirement
ECE I	Birth-3 rd grade	Assist	120 clock hours of professional preparation

Title	Setting	Scope of Practice—Role in Development and Delivery of Educational Programming	Educational Requirement
ECE II	Birth-Age 5 K-Grade 3	Lead Guide ECE I's Assist Guide ECE I's	ECE Associate Degree
ECE III	Birth-Grade 3	Lead Guide ECE I's and II's	ECE Bachelor's Degree OR ECE Master's Degree

Defined Professional Standards and Professional Preparation Delivery

The Unifying Framework (Power to the Profession Task Force, 2020) also addressed the need for a unified system of professional preparation for EC Educators. The Framework recognizes the role of higher education in professions, both in informing the content of professional preparation, and delivering high quality preparation that successfully graduates competent professionals. The Task Force selected the updated and revised NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies as the standards for professional preparation. Given that a profession is defined partially by the existence of standards for practice set and defined by the profession, choosing standards developed by **NAEYC** rather than a state licensing entity is appropriate. These revised standards were released at the same time as the Unifying Framework and include a “leveling” of the standards, further illuminating the distinction between the 3 designations. This “leveling” guides professional preparation programs to pitch the content of coursework appropriately to the different designations and further underscores the differences in **scope of practice**. To some extent, this approach was used to address the current reality that many practitioners have worked in the field for many years with no college coursework and are not willing to undertake a college education but wish to remain employed in the newly named profession. These designations recognize the contribution of all professionals regardless of **scope of practice**. The Framework additionally recommends that all early childhood educators must first complete a general early childhood education program before specializing in, for example, a focus on an age group such as preschool or toddler aged children.

In addition to adopting professional preparation standards, the Framework calls on institutions of higher education to be accountable through accreditation by a governing body to ensure delivery of competently prepared early childhood educators. Moreover, the Framework calls on higher education to work to ensure seamless transition across educational systems, access to higher education by an ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse population and diversity in faculty that prepare early childhood educators.

Finally, the framework recommends that once all the requirements just described are in place (i.e., higher education access to all who seek it, effective higher education that produces competent educators, utilizing a uniform set of standards) then early childhood educators should be licensed upon completion of a program of professional preparation.

Professional Compensation

The Framework also addressed the requirement for increased compensation for the current and future ECE professionals. Using public school salary scales as a minimum benchmark for comparable compensation is recommended. That is, assuming comparable qualifications, experience and job responsibilities, the compensation for an Early Childhood Educator should be comparable regardless of setting (i.e. private childcare, state funded preschool, public school kindergarten). The Framework also calls out the importance of a benefits package for all EC educators regardless of setting. The Task Force was clear that without increased compensation as described above, the other requirements outlined for early childhood educators in the Framework could not be instituted. In other words, any increase in education or responsibility resulting from the Unifying Framework would necessitate a matched increase in salary. The Task Force also recognized that employers that hire Early Childhood Educators should be accountable for providing comparable compensation (salary and benefits). The Task Force indicates that such accountability would be impossible without a financial investment from the federal government, which requires a recognition of ECE as a public good that serves all society.

Purpose of the Unifying Framework

As described here, the point of developing the Unifying Framework was to address the issues that have kept Early Childhood Education for claiming its status as a true profession. By formalizing ECE as a profession, those who do this work will be well-prepared and well-compensated, finally receiving the status and recognition they have long deserved. While this is accurate, it does not explain why doing so is important.

Those who have argued for defining ECE as a profession have claimed effectively that the well-being of children is what is at stake. If ECE remains a fragmented, unrecognized, under-compensated occupation, many children will not have access to the early education that research has consistently shown improves each child's developmental and learning outcomes. **NAEYC**, the association that originally called the 15 representative entities that made up the Task Force has a vision. This vision, sometimes called an audacious one, is to unify as a profession to argue for ECE as a public good which should be supported by our tax dollars. The goal of these efforts is to ultimately have ECE be recognized as a profession so that those that do that work are well-prepared, well-compensated and supported so that the children who receive their efforts will be set on a positive trajectory for their futures.

Reflection

Review the summary of the recommendations made in the Unifying Framework (found in the appendix to this chapter). What seems most beneficial about these recommendations? What will be hardest to implement, in your opinion? How would implementation of these recommendations affect your current work in ECE? Is the Unifying Framework going to improve the lives of early childhood educators? The children they serve?

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2.4: Other Standards Defining Professional Performance

The work of the Power to the Profession Task Force is impressive and would dramatically change the face of ECE if the Unifying Framework is adopted across the country. This audacious vision would serve to address many, perhaps even all, of the defining issues that the field has grappled with, especially in recent years. However, the aspirational nature of the Framework should not lead you to believe that early childhood education as it we know it today has no established standards which could nudge it in the direction of professionalizing. In this section of the chapter, you will be introduced to systems of standards that define and regulate the work of early childhood educators in the US and specifically in Washington state.

Washington Administrative Code

Early Childhood Education is not made up only of licensed childcare. However, it does represent a large portion of early childhood education programs across the country and in Washington state. The term, “licensed childcare” should hint at the fact that these programs are regulated (licensed to operate) by a state agency. Each state has its own administrative agency that oversees childcare and in Washington state it is the **Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)**. After laws are passed by the legislature, they become part of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), a compilation of all permanent laws now in force. But in the case of something as complicated as childcare, the laws cannot be specific enough to guide practice. Thus, an administrative agency, in this case DCYF, writes administrative code or regulations that specify what is allowed in the operation of a licensed childcare program. One chapter of the **Washington Administrative Code (WAC)** addresses the requirements for operation of licensed childcare programs--Title 110, Chapter 300--which was recently renumbered and retitled “Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs” (Washington State Legislature, n.d.). Note that these regulations reflect foundational (or base) quality (sometimes referred to as minimal quality) and that programs being licensed are called Early Learning Programs, not Early Childhood Education as NAEYC recommends. This chapter in WAC is made up of several sections including the following:

Intent & Authority	Child Outcomes	Professional Development, Training and Requirements
Environment Space and Furnishings Activities Safety Food & Nutrition Health Practices Cleaning & Sanitation Sleep & Rest Infant & Toddler	Interactions and Curriculum Learning Supports Emotional Support and Classroom Organization Program Structure & Organization	Program Administration & Oversight Licensing Processes Records, Policies Reporting & Posting

Note that 3 of the sections have multiple subsections, making for a total of over 100 subsections of regulations, many which are broken down even further into numerous smaller subsections. This is a complicated document!

All sections provide guidance for the practice of childcare according to the state of Washington and as such could be considered professional standards. We could conversely argue that a profession is viewed as an autonomous body that self-governs and provides internal control of quality and thus does not need this level of detailed regulation by an entity external to the profession.

Given the focus of this chapter on Professionalism in ECE, of special note is the section on Professional Development, Training and Requirements. This section of the Chapter addresses the qualifications of staff in licensed childcare programs, both center based and family home programs. In 2019 the General Staff Requirements for center lead teachers were revised and are listed below:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have a high school diploma or the equivalent
- Preservice requirements
 - DCYF Portable Background Check
 - Negative TB test
- ECE Initial Certificate within 5 years of hire or promotion (or from time of this section becoming effective)

- ECE Short Certificate within 2 years of receiving ECE Initial Certificate
- Document completion of annual professional development

The ECE certificates referenced here are part of the Washington State **Stackable Certificates**. These are certificates offered by many community and technical colleges in Washington and provide a cumulative pathway with courses building on one another. These **stackable certificates** are meant to provide a manageable set of steps in moving to the goal of a degree, initially at the associate level, and if a student continues in their education, at the bachelor's level. The three **stackable certificates** are described below:

Table 3 Washington Stackable Certificates

Initial ECE Certificate 12 quarter credits	Short ECE Certificate of Specialization 8 Credits	ECE State Certificate 27-32 credits	Total Credits--47-52
3 courses: • Intro to ECE • Health, safety & Nutrition Practicum	Choose one specialization: • ECE-General • Infant/Toddler Care • School-age Care • Family Child to Care Administration	• 10 Credits of General Ed (Math and English) • 17-22 Credits of ECE	• Builds foundation for Associate Degree

Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals

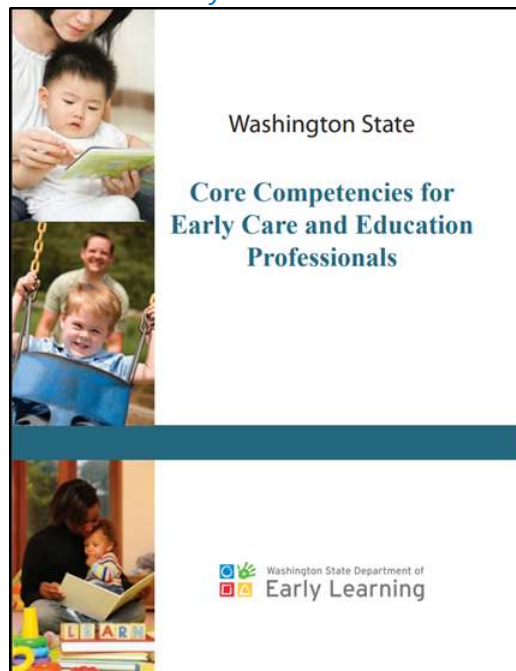


Image 2.4 Cover of Core Competences for Early Care and Education Professionals

In 2009 the former Department of Early Learning, at the direction of the state legislature, published the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (DEL, 2009), developed out of a multi-year process that engaged a broad consortium of professionals from across the state. The competencies are meant to provide a framework of knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality care for children.

The competencies are viewed as a tool that can be used in a variety of ways including,

- By individual practitioners to assess their own knowledge and skill and to plan for professional development (PD)
- By directors to develop PD plans, or build job descriptions
- By trainers to plan and organize PD
- By higher education faculty and administration, to guide course and program development

The competencies are divided into 8 content areas:

1. Child Growth and Development
2. Curriculum and Learning Environment
3. Ongoing Measurement of Child Progress
4. Families and Community Partnerships
5. Health, Safety, and Nutrition
6. Interactions
7. Program Planning and Development
8. Professional Development and Leadership

Each content area contains statements that present a skill or knowledge. The statements are organized by levels. The levels represent a continuum of skill/knowledge from entry level to an advanced level of preparation. All but the first level is associated with a level of professional development or college certificate or degree.

- Level 1
 - Basic knowledge and skills expected at entry level
 - No specialized training or education required
- Level 2
 - Level 1 + knowledge and skills comparable to a CDA
- Level 3
 - Level 1 + Level 2 + knowledge and skills commensurate with an associate degree in ECE/child development
- Level 4
 - Level 1 + Level 2 + Level 3 + knowledge and skills commensurate with a bachelor's degree in ECE/child development
- Level 5
 - Level 1 + Level 2 + Level 3 + Level 4 + knowledge and skills commensurate with an advanced degree in ECE/child development

Each of the 8 content areas have between 2 and 17 skill/knowledge statements representing an individual competency. The total number of competencies identified in this system is over 650, making for a very complicated system of standards.

NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies

As described in the previous section of this chapter on the Unifying Framework, a new set of professional standards (Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators; NAEYC, 2020) have been adopted by **NAEYC** and are proposed as the unifying standards of practice in the profession of childhood education. This newly adopted position statement represents the core body of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and values that early childhood educators must demonstrate to be effective teachers of young children. The previous professional standards set by **NAEYC** were written as expectations for higher education programs—what they must teach to successfully prepare early childhood educators. The revised Professional Standards and Competencies are written as expectations for the individual professional—what he/she/they must know and be able to do as an effective educator.

The standards are organized into 6 core standards:

1. Child Development and Learning in Context
2. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections
3. Child Observation, Documentation and Assessment
4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices
5. Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum
6. Professionalism

Each standard contains 3 to 5 key competencies that clarify the core with a total of 22 key competencies.

Each of the standards has also been “leveled” to correspond with the three ECE designations described in the Unifying Frame (ECE I, II & III). The leveling documentation is presented as a first attempt to identify the differences in the breadth and depth of content in the programs that prepare professionals with differing scopes of practice. A sampling of the leveling descriptions for one of the

key competencies (1a—Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social/emotional, and linguistic domains including bilingual/multilingual development) is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Leveling of Key Concept 1a (Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social, and emotional, and linguistic domains including bilingual/multilingual development) by 3 levels of ECE Scope of Practice

ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
Identify critical aspects of brain development including executive function, learning motivation, and life skills	Describe brain development in young children including executive function, learning motivation, and life skills	Describe brain development in young children including executive function, learning motivation, and life skills
	Describe ways to learn about children (e.g. through observation, play, etc.)	Evaluate, make decisions about, and communicate effective ways to learn about children (e.g. through observation, play, etc.)

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct



Image 2.5 Code of Ethics Statement of Commitment NAEYC

A common characteristic of professions is that they have a document spelling out the moral responsibilities to society and guiding principles for professional behavior. Because a profession is viewed as the group that can uniquely perform an important social need, and because often the service is provided to a vulnerable population, it is critical that there is a clear statement about how ethical behavior is defined. Without that, the power that resides with the professional role has the potential for exploitation of the population being served.

Although the field of early childhood education is still striving to be viewed as a profession, it has had a code of ethics since 1989, but began the work to develop a code at least 10 years prior to that (Feeney & Freeman, 2018). Beginning in the mid-70's, NAEYC leadership was advancing efforts to develop a code, with a code of **ethical conduct** adopted in 1989. The code was updated in 2005 and most recently reaffirmed and updated in 2011. The code exists as one of several *position statements* that NAEYC has adopted as guides to assist early childhood educators in making informed decisions on issues facing the field/profession and promote

dialogue on the issues using a common language provided by the statement. All NAEYC position statements, including the Code of **Ethical Conduct** in its entirety, are available on the association's website, naeyc.org. The code is focused on early childhood educators—those working directly with children and families. Supplements have been written to apply the code to the work of Early Childhood Program Administrators and Early Childhood Adult Educators as well. Multiple articles in NAEYC's publication *Young Children* have addressed the use of the code, providing professionals with numerous opportunities to practice applying the code to real situations faced in the work of early childhood education.

Structure of the Code of Ethical Conduct

- The NAEYC Code is organized by several components:
 - Core Values
 - Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable state of the human life cycle
 - Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
 - Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
 - Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
 - Respect the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
 - Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
 - Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect
- Conceptual Framework
 - The framework is an organizing structure for the code. It is divided into four sections that address an area of professional relationships: with children, with families, among colleagues, and with the community and society. Each section includes an introduction to the primary responsibilities of the professional in that setting. Each section also lists a set of ideals and principles.
 - **Ideals** are aspirational. They represent what we strive for as we do our work with children and families; they are our goals. **Principles** are more concrete—they could be considered the objectives that allow us to achieve our goals or aspirations (ideals). The principles guide conduct and help professionals resolve **ethical dilemmas**. **Ethical dilemmas** are “moral conflicts that involves determining how to act when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities” (Feeney & Freeman, 2018, p. 19).
- The four professional relationship areas
 - Ethical Responsibilities to Children
 - The first section focuses on the profession's beliefs about the unique and valuable nature of childhood and the vulnerability of this stage of development. Consequently, early childhood educators have responsibility to ensure the safety, health, and emotional well-being of children. Moreover, this section of the code addresses the profession's commitment to respecting individual differences, to helping children learn to cooperate with peers and to the promotion of children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth resiliency and physical well-being.
 - The first section contains 12 ideals and 11 principles (note there is not a 1 to 1 correspondence of ideals to principles). The first principle is identified as taking precedence over all the others in the Code:
 - “Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitive, or intimidating to children” (NAEYC, 2011).
 - Ethical Responsibilities to Families
 - The second section addresses the responsibility to the families served by early childhood educators. Given the belief that the family is of primary importance, and that the family and the teacher have a common interest in the child's well-being, educators have a responsibility to communicate, cooperate and collaborate with the child's family. The second section contains 9 ideals and 15 principles.
 - Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues
 - The third section of the code addresses responsibilities to colleagues. This section is divided into two subsections, one focused on responsibilities to co-workers and one related to responsibilities to employers. The responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain relationships that support productive work and professional needs. The focus here is on trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and respect for the dignity of each human. It also includes responsibility for holding co-workers and employers accountable for their own professional **ethical conduct**. The first subsection contains 3 ideas and 4 principles and the second contains 2 ideals and 5 principles.

- Ethical responsibility to Community and Society
 - The final section of the code recognizes the responsibility of the educator to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to assist families in getting access to needed services, to work together with other agencies and professionals and to help with developing programs needed, but not available. This section contains 7 ideals and 11 principles.

Using the Code of Ethical Conduct

The Code of Ethical Conduct provides a tool to use in a variety of ways to ensure **ethical conduct** and to resolve **ethical dilemmas** that arise as a part of the complexity of early childhood education. While the code of ethics is a guide, it is not a recipe for specific behaviors to be enacted in any particular situation. However, the Code does identify a number of specific responsibilities. These **ethical responsibilities** are either things we should not do, or things that we are required to do. Some of the responsibilities are presented as ideals, (I) some as principles (P) and include the following:

- I 1.1 To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education and to keep current through continuing education an in-service training.
- P 2.9 [To]...maintain confidentiality and...[to] respect the family's right to privacy...
- I 3 A.1 To establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, and cooperation with co-workers
- I 4.1 To provide the community with high-quality (age and individually appropriate, and culturally and socially sensitive) education/care programs
- P 4.7 [To]... be familiar with laws and regulations that serve to protect the children in our programs.
- P 1.1 [To] not harm children. [To]...not participate in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally damaging, or physically harmful to children.
- P 2.1 [To]...not deny family members access to their child's classroom or program setting.
- P 3C.8 In hiring, promotion, and provision of training...[to] not participate in any form of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, culture, disability, age, or sexual preference....

These ethical responsibilities are clear cut. They communicate what must and must not be done. So, one way the code serves your work is to provide clear cut guidelines for how to behave. In addition, the code is meant to help in navigating **ethical dilemmas**. In this case, the professional is faced with two equally justifiable actions but often includes a conflict between the interests of two involved parties. For example, it may require placing the needs of the child above that of the parents or of a group over an individual. The code can help sort out the best course of action in a situation, but the process requires thoughtful consideration of the various interests, needs, and priorities of one person or group over the interests, needs and priorities of another.

Reflection

Consider this ethical dilemma (from Feeney & Freeman, 2018, pg. 52). Think about how you might resolve this ethical dilemma, considering your professional obligations and conflicting needs.

Kali, the mother of 4-year-old Chase, has asked his teacher, Sondra to keep him from napping in the afternoon. She tells Sondra, "Whenever Chase naps during the day, he stays up until past 10:00 at night. I have to get up at 5:00 in the morning to go to work, and I am not getting enough sleep." Along with all the other children, Chase takes a one-hour nap almost every day. Sondra feels that he needs it to engage in activities and stay in good spirits through the afternoon.

The authors of the Code suggest a process for applying the code to ethical issues and dilemmas (Feeney & Freeman, 2018). As you consider the steps, think about the situation described in the reflection above. The steps they suggest are described here:

1. Determine if your issue/problem even involves ethics. Does it involve concerns about right and wrong, rights and responsibilities, human welfare, or an individual's best interests? If so, it is an ethical issue.
2. Determine if your issue involves legal responsibility. If so, you must follow the law. Issues involving child abuse are examples involving legal responsibilities.
3. Next determine if the issue involves an **ethical responsibility**. Recall that ethical responsibilities are clear cut expectations about how a professional early childhood educator behaves. There is no question about what must be done (or not done).

4. Determine if your issue is a true ethical dilemma requiring hard choices between conflicting moral obligations. Consider the needs of all involved and your professional obligations to each. Are there conflicting obligations requiring you to prioritize one over another? Are core values in conflict? If so, you have an ethical dilemma to resolve. Here are some steps to decision making about an ethical dilemma:
- Identify the conflicting responsibilities.** Consider the people involved and determine their needs and your obligations to them. Then turn to the Code for guidance. Review the Core Values and Ideals in the related section of the Code. You may need to get more information if you decide you do not have the full picture. It may also be helpful to refer to program policies or community laws.
 - Brainstorm possible resolutions.** Now that you fully understand the issue and the conflicting values, needs and obligations you can think about how to solve the problem. Do not yet reject any ideas but generate as many ideas as possible. Then go back and consider the equity and feasibility of your ideas.
 - Consider ethical finesse.** In some situations, it may be possible to solve the problem without having to choose between two options. This approach is known as **ethical finesse** and is characterized by the ability to amicably resolve the situation, delicately maneuvering without anyone feeling like they did not have their needs addressed. For example, in the scenario in the reflection box above, is it possible to resolve the dilemma in a way that both the needs of the child and the parent could be addressed? Could the teacher work with the parent to develop more effective bedtime routines, or could they experiment with having the child go down for nap a little later, sleeping less time in the afternoon to see if this made a difference? **Ethical finesse** should be used sparingly (Kipnis, 1987). If we rely too often on **ethical finesse**, it is possible we are avoiding **ethical responsibility** and not meeting our obligations.
 - Look for guidance in the NAEYC Code.** If **ethical finesse** does not result in a satisfactory resolution, utilize the Code to determine the action you can defend morally and prepare to act. Look to the Core values for guidance. Then review the Ideals and Principles to clarify your responsibilities. Make sure you feel you have all the necessary information. It may also be helpful to review your program's policies or discuss the issue with a trusted colleague.
 - Decide on a justifiable course of action.** The next step is to make the choice between the alternatives, basing your decision on the ethics presented in the Code. In the previous nap-time example, if the attempts to help the parent with bedtime routines and/or a shorter nap did not solve the problem (i.e. the child became sleepy at nap time and was grumpy in the afternoon without a full nap) then the decision to reinstitute the nap procedure for this child is necessary. The responsibility to meet the physical needs of the child outweighs the need of the parent to get more sleep. It can be difficult to take such a stand, but having the Code, and your knowledge of child development on your side of the decision can be reassuring and affirming.
 - Implement your resolution and reflect.** After making the decision and putting it into play, it is important to reflect on the process to determine what you have learned. Did you learn something about how you communicate with families? Did you learn something about how program policies are set and shared with parents? Or did you mostly learn about your own comfort level with these kinds of decisions?

Clearly, the process of applying the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct is not an easy one. Nonetheless, this important marker of a profession is critical in the work of early childhood education. Given the vulnerability of our “clients” and the inherent power we wield in that relationship, it is incumbent upon us to be aware of our ethical obligations and become proficient in the use of tools to assist with carrying out our **ethical responsibility**. Numerous resources for practicing the use of the Code are available from NAEYC.

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