
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EARLY
EDUCATION AND CARE

CATEGORIES OF STUDY CONTENT GUIDANCE

UPDATED NOVEMBER 3, 2021



CATEGORY OF STUDY 1: CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, BIRTH THROUGH EIGHT YEARS

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Recognize and understand the stages, principles, and major theorists of early childhood development.
- II. Understand the domains of child development.
 - A. Social – Educators should know how children develop social skills and how children develop relationships with peers and adults.
 - B. Cognitive – Educators should understand how children develop memory, reasoning, decision-making, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills.
 - C. Linguistic – Educators should know how children develop language, how to communicate effectively verbally and nonverbally, and how to foster appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication in children.
 - D. Physical – Educators should understand the importance of play for child development; recognize milestones in gross motor, fine motor, and sensory development; and recognize the importance of engaging all senses.
 - E. Emotional – Educators should know how to support a child’s emotional development, including their self-awareness, independence, self-control, and self-help skills.
 - F. Ethical – Educators should understand ethical behavior and know how to encourage respectful, ethical behavior in children.
- III. Recognize and understand how to teach to children’s various learning styles.
 - A. Recognize cultural, linguistic, hereditary, nutritional, parental, home-life, and socio-economic factors, and understand how they affect child growth and development.
 - B. Recognize both typical and atypical development as well as the signs of possible developmental delays or disabilities.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 2: PLANNING PROGRAMS AND ENVIRONMENTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Recognize the current and historical research and theories in different models of early childhood education and understand how to incorporate the major theories of learning when planning programs.
- II. Know how to apply knowledge of curriculum development to planning and scheduling activities.
- III. Know how to design indoor and outdoor spaces that are healthy, safe, accessible, diverse, and developmentally appropriate; engage all of a child's senses; support and promote children's growth, development, and curiosity; and provide opportunities for children to solve problems and make decisions.
 - A. Understand the role of play and structure opportunities for play.
- IV. Be aware of available materials and resources that are safe, accessible, diverse, developmentally appropriate, and multisensory, and how to integrate them effectively into the classroom.
 - A. Know how to integrate technology for children accessibly and effectively.
- V. Know of technology available to educators and how to use technology to aid in instruction.
- VI. Understand how to create a positive social and emotional climate through encouraging and supporting positive interactions between children and their peers and between children and educators.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 3: CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand the underlying research and theories that support curriculum models.
 - A. Know how to design curriculum that develops children’s skills, knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge.
 - B. Know how to design curriculum that supports children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical health, development, and growth.
 1. Know how to scaffold instruction for all children to keep learning achievable but challenging.
 2. Be aware of the curriculum being taught both below and above the grade level of the children served.
 - C. Know how to develop and implement individualized education programs (IEPs) and individualized family service plans (IFSPs) as appropriate.
 - D. Know how to utilize play and the environment to support instruction and increase children’s interactions.
 - E. Understand local, state, and national curriculum and learning standards, and how to use them.
- II. Understand the fundamental content and theories that underlie pre-reading/literacy, writing, ELA, mathematics, science, social studies and history, the arts, physical education, and health.
 - A. Understand the progression of knowledge and skills for children in each subject taught.
 - B. Know how to design and use developmentally appropriate activities and content that are inclusive and reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the children served.
 - C. Be aware of and use developmentally appropriate, accessible, and diverse materials to support curriculum.
- III. Be aware of and know how to use developmentally appropriate activities and content that reflect the diversity of the program’s children and are accessible to all.
 - A. Be aware of achievement gaps and know strategies for mitigating these gaps.
 - B. Know how to help children learn about and value diversity, including differences in ability, age, socioeconomic status, culture, ethnicity, family composition, gender, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation.
 - C. Understand how to develop interdisciplinary approaches to teaching content areas.
 - D. Know how to mix hands-on/child-directed activities with teacher-directed activities, and structured activities with spontaneous activities in developmentally appropriate and inclusive ways.
 - E. Know how to implement both peer-to-peer and individual learning opportunities.
 - F. Know how to work collaboratively with colleagues to build a supportive program.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 4: CHILD AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand how to promote fairness, equity, accessibility, diversity, belonging, security, and independence in the classroom.
 - A. Know how to support children’s interactions with each other so that children gradually move from reliance on adults to self-reliance and reliance on peers.
 - B. Know how to guide play so that it remains safe and reasonable.
 - C. Understand how to model ethical behavior and promote ethical behavior in children.
- II. Know how to support a positive classroom climate that recognizes and respects the diversity and abilities of all children.
- III. Understand how to analyze children’s behavior while prioritizing the social and emotional context of each child.
 - A. Recognize signs of stress in children and effectively support children through periods of stress, separation, transition, abuse, or other crises.
 - B. Understand how the classroom climate, environment, curriculum, and materials affect children’s behavior.
- IV. Recognize and establish developmentally appropriate rules and routines that are consistent, clear, and develop children’s self-discipline.
 - A. Understand how to act as a positive role model, model meaningful interactions, develop positive relationships with all children, and actively listen and respond to children’s needs, ideas, and questions.
- V. Know how to guide adherence through positive reinforcement, and logical and graduated consequences.
 - A. Understand how to collaborate with parents or guardians, colleagues, and administrators to develop consistent approaches to positive guidance.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 5: ADVANCED OR SPECIALIZED CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OR DEVELOPMENT

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY:

Expand educators' content knowledge in or exposure to focused topics, such as teaching in specific content areas, strategies for teaching specific populations of students, or using specific tools or technology.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 6: CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, BIRTH THROUGH SIXTEEN YEARS

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand and recognize disabilities.
 - A. Know current issues, theories, and advances in special education.
 - B. Be familiar with different types of disabilities that may affect children: visual impairment, hearing loss, communication disabilities, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, neurological disorders, special health care needs.
 - C. Know typical and atypical patterns of development for all developmental domains (social, cognitive, linguistic, physical, emotional, and ethical).
 - D. Know the difference between general learning difficulties versus specific learning disabilities.
 - E. Understand how to identify children who may have special needs early.
 - F. Know local, state, and federal laws and regulations for the care of children with special needs.
- II. Know how to manage the environment and learning of children with disabilities.
 - A. Know proper accommodations for different special needs.
 - B. Understand how to design an environment and challenging activities that accommodate and include children with disabilities, and further their individual growth and development.
 1. Know inclusion strategies.
 2. Know how to develop the ability to observe and document children's skills, abilities, strengths, needs, interests, learning styles, participation in the program, and progress without personal bias or judgment.
 3. Know how to modify learning goals and objectives to accommodate children with special needs.
 - C. Know of and use assistive technologies to ensure an inclusive environment.
 - D. Know how to screen/assess and refer children with potential special needs.
 - E. Know how to work with specialists.
 - F. Know community resources for children with special needs and their families.
- III. Understand the effect of special needs categorization on a child, and the effect of a special needs child on others.
 - A. Differentiate between issues associated with dual language learning and special needs.
 - B. Understand the consequences of labeling a child as having a learning disability.
 - C. Understand the impact on family and peers of a child with special needs.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 7: INFANT AND TODDLER DEVELOPMENT, CARE, AND PROGRAM PLANNING

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand theory and research relating to the first three years of life, including physical, sensory, motor, language, emotional, and cognitive development.
 - A. Know early brain development, including that of infants and toddlers, and how to design and implement appropriate methods to facilitate that development.
 - B. Know the role of attachment in learning.
- II. Know how to design and equip spaces that are developmentally appropriate for infants and toddlers.
- III. Know how infants and toddlers learn.
 - A. Recognize characteristics of infants and toddlers who may be at risk and make appropriate referrals.
 - B. Understand different approaches to infant and toddler caregiving that best meet the needs of the individual child.
 1. Know infant- and toddler-specific instructional practices, including language-based interaction and language-rich play.
- IV. Understand the importance of health, nutrition, and feeding practices in an early education and care setting.
- V. Understand the importance of families and caregivers to the growth and development of infants and toddlers.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 8: HEALTH AND SAFETY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:*

- I. Know about nutrition (and how children’s nutritional needs change as they grow), physical activity, and active play.
 - A. Understand nutritional requirements for the healthy growth and development of children.
 - B. Understand the handling and serving of food.
 - C. Understand how to implement a healthy meal/food plan.
 - D. Be aware of allergy issues and dietary restrictions.
 - E. Know about obesity prevention.
- II. Know about individualized health plans.
 - A. Understand how to access community resources for children with special health needs.
 - B. Know how to administer medication.
- III. Know about health policy.
 - A. Know health exclusion policies.
 1. Know how to write an exclusion policy.
 - B. Know immunization requirements.
- IV. Understand safe and healthy personal care routines.
 - A. Know how to design a safe and healthy environment for young children.
 1. Know how to monitor the childcare environment.
 2. Know how to identify and remove potential hazards.
 3. Know how to access information on inappropriate, banned, or recalled products that could harm children from state and federal consumer product safety agencies.
 - B. Know preventative health care measures.
 1. Know how to develop basic health skills.
 2. Know how to work with families regarding healthy habits.
 - C. Understand the importance of stable and supportive relationships.
 - D. Know potential stressors on children and the biological effects of stress.
 - E. Know about infectious disease prevention and infection control.
 - F. Know about poison prevention and safety.
 - G. Know about dental care and oral health.
- V. Know about behavioral health.
 - A. Know about social/emotional development.
- VI. Understand safety policy, regulations, and practices.
 - A. Know license-related safety standards.

- B. Know emergency planning.
 - 1. Know when to contact parents.
 - 2. Know when to seek medical attention.
 - 3. Know when to report child abuse.
- C. Know safety issues associated with both indoor and outdoor environments.
- D. Know appropriate staffing ratios for different age groups, settings, and activities.

***Note:** Because basic first aid and CPR are required in-service trainings, knowledge of these is not a requirement of college coursework or professional development. See 7.09(15)(e) of EEC regulations 606 CMR.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 9: FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand how family, school, and community influence a child's life and learning.
 - A. Recognize parents or guardians as their child's first teachers and involve them in their child's education in order to provide consistency and encouragement for children. Value parents/guardians as children's primary teachers.
 - B. Understand how relationships between parents/guardians and teachers affect a child and the importance of effective and ethical communication.
 1. Know how to show sensitivity and understanding regarding child/family stressors and challenges.
 2. Know how to constructively inform parents/guardians/families regarding changes in schedules, routines, or other operational aspects of the classroom.
 3. Know how to communicate with families and community members in a positive and constructive manner, including about child development issues and the program.
 - C. Recognize the importance of respecting all families and all family types regardless of ability, age, culture, ethnicity, family composition, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.
 1. Recognize the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in working with young children and their families.
 2. Know how to develop socially, linguistically, and culturally responsive policies and procedures.
 3. Know how second languages are acquired and how to help home language development.
 4. Understand and be accepting of different child rearing practices.
 5. Know how to support and help families articulate their ambitions, expectations, and goals regarding their child's education and development. Be able to constructively communicate issues associated with progress and development of their child.
 - D. Know how to help children and parents/guardians/families with the transition between home and school, as well as between other places/programs.
- II. Understand how to use the community as a resource with knowledge of social service, government, and child advocacy agencies that can provide children and families with information or support. Be aware of community resources that might help families or their children.
 - A. Know how to design, organize, and implement events that include families or community members.
 1. Know how to recruit, train, supervise, and use volunteers.
 - B. Recognize the importance of welcoming and including families and community members in program activities and maintaining a welcoming environment that promotes family and community involvement.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 10: CHILD CARE POLICY

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Know the history and evolution of early education and care.
 - A. Understand issues affecting the availability and affordability of early education and care for a family.
 - B. Know about local, state, and national services available to children.
- II. Understand the broader societal issues raised by early education and care.
- II. Know federal, state, and local structure, policies, and involvement in early education and care.
 - A. Understand the subsidized early education and care system in Massachusetts.
 - B. Understand local, state, and national curriculum and learning standards, and how to use them.
- III. Understand the regulation of early education and care, including official early education and care regulations.
- IV. Understand how to connect policy and practice and translate policy into practice.
 - A. Know how to develop effective policies.
 - B. Understand the role of the early educator as a policy agent.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 11: SUPERVISION OR STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Know how to supervise staff effectively.
 - A. Understand and use knowledge of early childhood education to inform decisions on hiring, supervising, and evaluating educators.
 - B. Know how to collect and use data.
 1. Understand how to help educators evaluate and effectively make adjustments to their instruction, curriculum, learning experiences, materials, and classroom environment.
 2. Understand how to inform training opportunities, as well as other program-level decisions.
 - C. Know how to provide consultative services to educators, including observations, coaching, mentoring, and constructive feedback.
 - D. Understand and be able to support personnel issues, including awareness of resources that can help educators manage stress and skills with conflict resolution.
- II. Understand and promote reflective practice.
- III. Know how to support professional development of staff.
 - A. Know how to develop and implement thorough and ongoing professional development that reflects current knowledge of child development and early learning.
 - B. Know how to formulate a training plan for continuous improvement at the program level that also addresses the needs of individual educators.
 - C. Know how to access advances in early childhood education research and use current research to introduce new topics in professional development, if necessary.
- IV. Understand the importance of positive relationships with the board of directors, staff, families, and community to the operation of a successful early education and care program.
 - A. Understand how to build positive relationships and effectively communicate with educators and program personnel, the board of directors, families, the community, and other stakeholders.
 - B. Appreciate and value the perspectives of a diverse group of stakeholders.
 - C. Understand group processes and be able to apply these skills accordingly.
- V. Know how to identify and access community resources, such as Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and Community Partnerships for Children, for educator development, training, and support, and overall program success.
 - A. Know how to collaborate effectively with professionals at such agencies.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 12: CHILD OBSERVATION, DOCUMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment (e.g., observation, documentation, and formative assessment), including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies.
- II. Know how to use technology available for observation, documentation, and assessment.
- III. Understand and practice responsible assessment to promote outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities.
 - A. Understand the intended purposes of various assessment tools and strategies.
 - B. Understand the possible ramifications of various assessment tools and strategies.
- IV. Understand how to use observation and documentation techniques.
 - A. Know how to select, administer, and interpret a variety of observation and documentation techniques.
 1. Increase knowledge of accurate observations.
 2. Understand effective documentation strategies.
 3. Know how to use an observation documentation system/tool to use child data effectively.
 4. Observe and document children's skills, abilities, strengths, needs, interests, learning styles, participation in the program, and progress without personal bias or judgment.
- V. Understand and utilize (when appropriate) screening competencies, including knowledge to help ensure that developmental screenings are being administered using appropriate and valid screening tools and at the right stages.
- VI. Understand how to select, administer, and interpret formative assessment.
- VII. Understand how to use the results of observation, documentation, and formative assessment to connect to practice.
 - A. Understand how to use the results to understand children's developmental progression.
 - B. Understand how to use the results to inform intentional curriculum planning.
 - C. Understand how to use the results to individualize instruction or modify or adapt the curriculum or the environment to meet an individual child's needs.
- VIII. Understand how to design the classroom environment so assessment is part of ongoing practice.
- IX. Understand assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues to build effective learning environments.
 - A. Know how to constructively share information gathered from assessments (including identified strengths) to inform parents and professional colleagues about children's progress, both verbally and in writing.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 13: CHILD CARE ADMINISTRATION

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Know how to comply with laws and regulations.
- II. Understand licensing standards and practices in the early education and care industry, as well the MA Early Learning Standards.
- III. Understand health and safety standards.
- IV. Understand administrative responsibilities in a successful early education and care program.
 - A. Know the principles of business management.
 - B. Understand administrative and fiscal management.
- V. Know how to develop and maintain an appropriate business infrastructure.
 - A. Know how to recruit and retain staff.
 1. Understand the competencies educators in different roles should possess.
 2. Understand how to use understanding of educator competencies to make informed decisions about hiring and placement of educators.
 - B. Understand and select appropriate curricula, assessment tools, and other program materials.
 - C. Know how to develop and maintain an appropriate work environment that supports quality practice and children's development.
 - D. Know how to supervise and develop staff.
 - E. Know how to evaluate programs.
 1. Know how to utilize data (gathered with clear and effective protocols) for decision-making.
 - F. Understand the value of family involvement and know parental rights.
 1. Know how to collaborate with families in support of healthy student development.
 2. Know how to support staff to work effectively with families.
 - G. Know the services and resources available within the community to support educators, the program, and children's families.
 1. Know how to develop and disseminate the protocols for accessing such resources.
 2. Know how to continuously track community resources as they change and new resources become available.
 - H. Know of and use available technology to support program management and administration.
- VI. Understand the role of an early education and care program within the community.
- VII. Understand the Strengthening Families Protective Factors and know how to use the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment for program improvement.

CATEGORY OF STUDY 14: TOPICS SPECIFIC TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST)

INCLUDES GENERAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION, SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDIES, AND STUDIES RELATED TO POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

COURSES IN THIS CATEGORY MUST TEACH EDUCATORS TO:

- I. Build positive youth development skills.
 - A. Intentionally build positive youth development outcomes customized for each child, including: behavior in the program/classroom, initiative, engagement in learning, relations with adults, relations with peers, problem solving, conflict management, decision-making, goal setting, communication, critical thinking, perseverance, self-regulation, leadership.
 - B. Incorporate skill-building into all parts of the schedule: transition from school, snack, free time, activity, homework time, dismissal.
 - C. Encourage children to take ownership of their own learning, helps children identify, plan, and pursue their own interests and talents.
 - D. Provide opportunities for children to experience success and then encourage them to see and acknowledge their own progress and successes.
 - E. Encourage children and youth to try new activities.
 - F. Provide children and youth with opportunities that serve others.
 - G. Develop capacity for self-reflection, communication, empathy, and appreciation of diverse opinions and cultures.
- II. Create an environment that promotes positive youth development.
 - A. Creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment for all.
 - B. Staff are energetic, enthusiastic, and/or upbeat. Staff uses a warm tone of voice and respectful language. Staff greets children as they arrive.
 - C. Use space, relationships, materials, and routines as resources for constructing an interesting, secure, and enjoyable environment that encourages play, exploration, and learning.
 - D. Encourage children to take ownership over all parts of the program day.
 - E. Balance children's academic needs with their needs to relax, have snacks, learn new skills, get exercise, and develop social skills.
 - F. Build a sense of community among children and staff.
 - G. Create an environment that encourages children's creativity.
 - H. Embed open-ended questions to all parts of the day to encourage children to think and express their ideas.
 - I. Incorporate cultural diversity into the daily program.
 - J. Foster expression (without fear of social repercussions) and acceptance (bullying situations are addressed immediately).
 - K. Use positive problem solving and problem prevention methods.
- III. Develop OST curriculum and activities/curriculum.

- A. Plan, organize, and provide programming that builds positive youth development skills; consider each child's developmental level, interests, age, abilities, and skill levels.
 - B. Incorporate project-based learning into activities/curriculum.
 - C. Provide hands-on experiences, to learn by doing.
 - D. Promote and support child-initiated and youth-led learning and activities (voice and choice).
 - E. Debrief each activity with children and staff and apply lessons learned.
- IV. Work with families, communities, and schools to support positive youth development.
- A. Partner with families and schools to identify and work toward children's positive youth development goals.
 - B. Communicate with family members about program activities and developmental goals and share appropriate services and resources.
 - C. Understand youth culture within the larger community context in which children, youth, and families live.
 - D. Build relationships with community partners to support children's positive youth development goals.
 - E. Understand academic standards and has strategies to work with appropriate school staff to better meet the individual needs of children.
- V. Measure positive youth development.
- A. Continuously collect data to measure each child's positive youth developmental goals. Sources of data can include anecdotal information, test scores (with family permission), observations by staff, surveys by classroom teachers, families, children themselves.
 - B. Plan and implement activities that support each child's positive youth development goals.
 - C. Use this measurement system to recommend appropriate referrals and resources.
- VI. Implement administrative practices that promote positive youth development.
- A. Align daily practices with the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures.
 - B. Participate in strategic planning and goal setting for program improvement.
 - C. Engage in continuous quality improvement planning measuring progress toward children's positive youth development goals in the aggregate, satisfaction from families, success relationships with families, schools, and partners. Work with staff to develop new goals based on this discussion.