

#### 4.01 Early Childhood Education (Ages Birth-8)

To be endorsed in early childhood education (ECE), an applicant shall hold an earned bachelor's or higher degree from an accepted institution of higher education; have completed an approved teacher preparation program including prescribed field experience and student teaching requirements; have completed an approved program in early childhood education; have demonstrated competency in literacy instruction as outlined in rule 4.02(5) – 4.02(13) and; have demonstrated the competencies specified below:

4.01(1) Child growth and development: Understanding a child's growth, development and learning is paramount in providing experiences that foster each child's predictable steps and sequences of development. Knowing how children typically grow, develop and learn allows early childhood educators to plan, guide and monitor learning experiences that address the integration of developmental domains for each and every child. Developmentally appropriate learning experiences consider a child's developmental abilities, temperament, language and cultural background, needs and learning styles while recognizing factors such as family characteristics and community influences. Fully understanding the importance of child growth, development and learning means all children are valued individually and inclusivity is expected and respected.

4.01(1)(a) Knowledge of developmental domains, changes and milestones: ECE professionals are expected to understand, analyze and implement strategies that reflect current child-development pedagogy, theory and research. Primarily, ECE professionals use this knowledge to plan and implement developmentally appropriate environments and experiences to meet the diverse needs of children and families. The diverse needs include but are not limited to culture, language, economic and ability. In order for ECE professionals to provide pedagogically sound experiences for children and families, they need to identify and address children's diverse developmental abilities and collaborate with community partners to assess children's strengths and challenges.

4.01(1)(b) Individual needs and differences: ECE professionals identify children's and families' risk and protective factors and accordingly plan interventions to support children's growth and development. ECE professionals use evidence-based practices to assess and address children's individual needs with respect to culturally responsive curricula and environments.

4.01(1)(c) Special needs: ECE professionals understand and apply inclusive practices for children with diverse developmental abilities. ECE professionals create inclusive environments that respect the individual abilities of children and incorporate individual goals/outcomes into daily routines and practices.

4.01(1)(d) Fostering healthy attachment and relationships: ECE professionals apply knowledge of healthy caregiver/parent/child attachments to support individual child growth, development and learning. ECE professionals understand the importance of positive relationships and their foundation in social-emotional development and learning.

4.01(2) Child observation and assessment: Child observation and assessment enables ECE professionals to use reliable and valid procedures and practices to gather information on an individual child's growth and development. Through gathering information on growth, achievement, learning styles, interests, experiences, challenges and understandings of individual children, the curriculum can be enriched to support children through the developmental stages. Observation and assessment policies, procedures and practices should be sensitive to individual children's needs, culture, language and abilities. Policies, procedures and practices must incorporate ethical standards around confidentiality and unbiased documentation. Allocated time to share results with families and others involved with the child is a critical component to child observation and assessment.

- 4.01(2)(a) Principles: ECE professionals use a continuous authentic assessment process to ask questions, collect information (i.e., data), interpret the information and then make instructional decisions that are individualized and culturally responsive.
- 4.01(2)(b) Gathering and documenting: ECE professionals use a body of evidence from a variety of sources to systematically collect authentic assessment data. ECE professionals collaborate with specialized teams to use the assessment data to recognize and respond to children's developmental concerns through a multi-tiered system of supports.
- 4.01(2)(c) Summarizing and interpreting: ECE professionals link assessment data to the instructional needs of individual children, recognizing many influential factors.
- 4.01(2)(d) Data sharing and reporting: ECE professionals share assessment information to families and other professionals in a culturally sensitive, strength-based manner, using the families' home language.
- 4.01(3) Family and community partnerships: Recognizing that families are their child's first teachers and caregivers is the cornerstone of developing strong partnerships between families and early childhood educators. Children's lives are rooted in their families and communities, so valuing families in the context of their culture, language, home and community is paramount in building strong connections with children and their families. Celebrating and respecting diversity in terms of ability, language, values, customs, traditions, expectations and attitudes is essential for ECE professionals to understand in order to offer developmentally and culturally appropriate learning opportunities that will help children grow, develop and learn. Understanding that children develop in the context of different family structures and dynamics helps ECE professionals to honor the interests, needs, strengths and challenges of developing children as well. When ECE professionals work collaboratively with community organizations and agencies to meet children's needs and to encourage community involvement, children's development is enhanced. Collaborative, reciprocal family and community partnerships help to optimize a child's growth, development and learning.
- 4.01(3)(a) Valuing families: ECE professionals recognize, value and include families' preferences and perspectives when planning and implementing curricular decisions.
- 4.01(3)(b) Respect for diversity: ECE professionals implement culturally responsive practices and acknowledge diversity including cultural, language, economic, religious, family structure and ability level.
- 4.01(3)(c) Effective communication: ECE professionals communicate effectively with families using a variety of effective strategies that respect families' home language and individual communicative needs and preferences.
- 4.01(3)(d) Building reciprocal relationships with families: ECE professionals support families by building meaningful relationships with them so that families have the ability to engage in their children's development and learning experiences.
- 4.01(3)(e) Resources that support children and families: ECE professionals support and provide opportunities to families to engage with their children in meaningful ways. Resources are embedded within the community and reflect the diversity of the families.
- 4.01(4) Guidance: Incorporating responsive guidance strategies into an early childhood program provides opportunities for establishing secure, interpersonal peer-to-peer, adult-to-child and adult-to-adult relationships. Developmentally appropriate guidance strategies help children to better understand themselves as individuals and as members of a group. A warm and caring, culturally and linguistically responsive environment in which staff consistently use a variety of evidence-based

guidance strategies helps children and families feel respected, valued and accepted. Creating an inclusive and supportive culture is fostered through providing both individual and group guidance strategies.

- 4.01(4)(a) Positive interactions and relationships with individual children: ECE professionals provide responsive, caring environments for children and implement positive guidance strategies based on individualized needs and developmental characteristics.
  - 4.01(4)(b) Child guidance and discipline – promoting social and emotional: ECE professionals implement evidence-based social-emotional practices that promote children’s development of self-regulation that contributes to the foundation for future learning and emotional health.
  - 4.01(4)(c) Communication: ECE professionals work collaboratively with families and specialists to assess and support children with challenging behaviors. Communication between families and professionals will be responsive and strength-based.
  - 4.01(4)(d) Guidance and the role of staff and other adults: ECE Professionals will maintain a supportive environment for staff and families so that they can engage in effective communication, problem-solving and teaming.
- 4.01(5) Health, safety and nutrition: Optimal child development is enhanced if young children are safe from physical and emotional harm. In designing learning environments and experiences for young children, meeting the health, safety and nutritional needs are critical to child growth, development and learning. Environments for young children should be safe from hazards and potential injuries to enable them to explore and learn. Programs should ensure that children are protected from infectious diseases through the implementation of appropriate health, safety and sanitation policies, procedures and daily practices. ECE professionals should work in partnership with families and communities to create healthy, safe and nutritionally sound environments, while honoring family preferences for their children. ECE professionals establish a foundation for future healthy lifestyles and a pathway for lifelong health and well-being.
- 4.01(6) Professional development and leadership: ECE professionals who identify and conduct themselves as professionals play an important role in the growth, development and learning of children. ECE professionals see themselves as members of the larger community of specialized care and education professionals and have a full understanding of the context in which the early childhood profession originated. Those working in the field adopt professional responsibilities, which include adherence to ethical codes of conduct, advocacy and the effective communication of the importance of high-quality early childhood programming. The knowledge achieved in the profession is based on a foundation of research-based practices that is then implemented in all aspects of child, family, colleagues and community involvement. ECE professionals equipped with specialized education, training and coaching/mentoring are better able to provide environments and experiences that support every aspect of a child’s growth, development and learning, including aspects related to a child’s and family’s diverse needs. Participation in advocacy efforts on behalf of children, families and the profession are critical to advancing the knowledge regarding the importance of high-quality early childhood education.
- 4.01(7) Program planning and development: Strong leadership is vital to high-quality early childhood programs. Leaders who administer early childhood programs must have a solid foundation in organizational, personnel and financial management. Sustaining a philosophical base with clear goals and objectives while striving for continuous quality improvement helps to ensure high-quality programming for children and their families. An important responsibility of an early childhood program leader is to know and uphold rules, regulations and high-quality standards within the daily operations of the program. The ability to supervise and guide all staff in providing

the best practices outlined within high-quality standards is the stepping stone to quality. Leaders also work on developing strategic plans that consider aspects of program financing and collaborate with colleagues, community resources and specialists who can lend support to ensure that aspects of the strategic plan are administered and successful.

- 4.01(8) Teaching practices: ECE educators are responsible for planning, implementing and supporting intentional experiences that promote children's growth, development and learning in all developmental and academic domains as defined by the Colorado academic standards. Understanding that children learn from a supportive physical, social and temporal environment, it is important that ECE professionals create opportunities where all children can play interactively, communicate, create, explore and construct knowledge and skills to better understand their world. Establishing a learning environment with regard for student perspectives and that honors all children's individual cultures, strengths, languages, needs and interests and reflects diversity also helps to build a responsive early childhood setting. Planning and implementing a curriculum that responds to the developmental needs of each child and allows children to construct knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and dispositions through intentional experiences enhances the learning environment. Teaching practices reflect Colorado Teacher Quality Standards for effective teaching.
- 4.01(8)(a) Planning framework for curricula and learning environment: ECE professionals will plan, implement and evaluate intentional and differentiated instruction that supports the holistic development of all children while adhering to children's strengths, challenges, learning preferences and diversity. Curricula and learning will be embedded within the daily routines and natural environments so that learning is authentic, functional and meaningful to the child and family.
- 4.01(8)(b) Physical health development: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt activities that promote physical development that is appropriate for children of all ability levels and include indoor and outdoor play experiences that are embedded within the daily routines and developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- 4.01(8)(c) Physical proximity and engagement: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt activities that promote social engagement that is culturally appropriate for the children and families in their care.
- 4.01(8)(d) Language and literacy development: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt curricula through meaningful interactions and daily routines to encourage children of all ability levels to use their home language to understand language, various forms of literacy, interact with others and express themselves through verbal, nonverbal and written forms of communication.
- 4.01(8)(e) Cognitive development: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt developmentally appropriate curricula throughout daily routines so that children of all ability levels are engaged in learning new concepts, completing tasks and adapting information through meaningful experiences and materials.
- 4.01(8)(f) Social-emotional development: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt meaningful activities that focus on the promotion of self-regulation, pro-social interactions and emotional expression. Children who are socially and emotionally ready for learning and engagement understand and effectively express their feelings, cooperate with adults and peers and resolve conflicts with support.
- 4.01(8)(g) Fostering creativity: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt curricula that provide children an opportunity to express themselves through a variety of creative means regardless of their individual abilities, language or culture.

- 4.01(8)(h) Knowledge of productivity: ECE professionals plan and implement a balance of experiences for children that address various levels of play, interactions and activity levels, in addition to responding to the diverse needs of the children in their care.
- 4.01(8)(i) How children learn and approaches to learning: ECE professionals plan, implement and adapt activities that promote all children's creativity, innovation, curiosity, exploration and problem-solving in learning environments and daily routines.