

# MONTANA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE BASE

A workbook to guide self-reflection and professional growth  
in early care and education (Birth to Age 8)



Professionalism • Child Development • Family and Community Partnerships • Observation, Documentation, and Assessment • Teaching and Engagement • Curriculum and Learning Environment • Personal Dispositions





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# Introduction to the Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base

## What is it?

The Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base (2022) represents a core body of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions all early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively support the development, learning and well-being of all young children and their families. The Knowledge Base is a workbook to guide self-reflection and professional growth by describing what early childhood educators need to know, understand, and be able to do at all levels of professional practice. The Knowledge Base is also used to guide program planning in early childhood teacher education at Montana's tribal, community, and four-year institutions of higher education.

## Who is it for?

The Knowledge Base's primary audience is early childhood teachers, although over time it has proven to be valuable in guiding professional development in the form of trainings, mentoring, coaching, and supervision for early childhood professionals in schools and early care and education programs, resource and referral agencies, quality improvement systems, and higher education.

## Why is it important?

The purpose of the Knowledge Base is to provide consistency in standards and expectations for all early childhood educators in Montana, whether in private or public settings. Self-reflection is meant to provide guidance and clarity for educators to formulate and achieve their professional goals by helping them select key areas for professional growth and development and to develop action plans to achieve these goals. The Knowledge Base provides a common language for caregivers, teachers, early childhood program

administrators or directors, school principals, coaches, mentors, supervisors, teacher-educators, policy makers, and advocates.

*The Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base is meant to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. When used with careful attention to the most current childcare regulations and state laws regarding early care and education and public-school programs, Montana's early childhood educators can demonstrate their commitment to excellence to support all of Montana's young children and their families.*





# Summary of Revisions

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The Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base (2022) incorporates the most current understanding of child development and reflects the powerful influence the early childhood workforce has on outcomes for young children and their families. Personal dispositions are at the core of the six Knowledge Base content areas, aligned to the Child Development Associate standards and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) professional preparation standards:

1

Child  
Development

2

Family and  
Community  
Partnerships

3

Observation,  
Documentation,  
and Assessment

4

Teaching and  
Engagement

5

Curriculum  
and Learning  
Environment

6

Professionalism

The Knowledge Base includes the knowledge, understanding, abilities, and skills of every member of Montana's early childhood education workforce. This revision does not include health and safety guidelines, as these are best presented in Montana's childcare licensing regulations. It also does not include content or practices about program management or administration that are available through resource and referral agency professional develop-

ment. The revision does include themes of social justice, diversity, and equity that have importantly been added to reflect the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council's 2015 *Transforming the Workforce* report. Attention to the strengths and needs of American Indian children and families are also importantly included in this revision.

The previous editions of the Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base (1997, 2004, 2008, 2013) used a self-rated scoring system to help early childhood professionals identify their skills and competencies and to select areas for growth. The 2022 revision moves from measurement to reflection by including a progression of skills for each professional standard area.

Rather than selecting skills and behaviors from a checklist, early childhood educators can use the Knowledge Base to reflect on and write about the ways they demonstrate each standard and competency on a continuum of development, choosing from the following "I can" statements:

- Identify and describe
- Use and apply
- Reflect on and enhance teaching

Reflection encourages intentional, deliberate, thoughtful action rather than perpetuating impulsive, traditional, or guesswork decision making. Reflective educators continually review their actions and beliefs with respect for the children and families they serve.

# Getting Started

Personal dispositions are the foundation of the Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base and guide every aspect of the work of early childhood educators. Using the Knowledge Base begins with making a commitment to the early childhood profession by reflecting on personal dispositions and experiences and is followed by setting professional development goals.



## Making a commitment to the early childhood profession

The National Association for the Education of Young Children offers several recommendations to early childhood educators in its Advancing Equity in Early Childhood position statement that serve as a commitment to the early childhood profession. These recommendations include:

- Creating a caring, equitable community of engaged learners
- Establishing reciprocal relationships with families
- Using a strengths-based approach to observe, document, and assess children's learning and development
- Advocating on behalf of young children, families, and the early childhood profession

## Becoming a reflective early childhood educator

One of the primary purposes of the Knowledge Base is to serve as a workbook and self-reflection tool at all levels of professional practice. Reflection enables the early childhood educator to act in an intentional, deliberate, thoughtful manner rather than acting solely based on impulse, tradition, or guesswork. Reflective educators continually review their actions and beliefs with consideration for the children and families they serve.

## Setting professional development goals

By reflecting on each Knowledge Base content area and corresponding practices, early childhood educators can determine areas of strength as well as areas needing further learning and growth. As areas needing improvement are identified during self-reflection, educators are encouraged to create a Professional Development Plan that includes specific goals, strategies, and timelines to identify, apply, and reflect on specific content areas and practices. The plan helps educators and their coaches and mentors engage in a systematic way to continue to learn and grow in the profession. A Professional Development Plan is included on page 37.





# Professional commitment

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The commitment to the early childhood profession includes recognizing our ethical responsibilities to children, families, our colleagues, and the community. By honoring these responsibilities, we commit ourselves to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

## To the best of my ability, I will:

- Never harm children
- Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Are open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

Name / Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAEYC (2011). Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/Ethics%20Position%20Statement2011\\_09202013update.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/Ethics%20Position%20Statement2011_09202013update.pdf)

*To deepen their understanding of and ability to navigate complex situations, early childhood educators develop a habit of reflective practice, including integrating their knowledge and practices across all six standards in order to create optimal learning environments, design and implement curricula, use and refine instructional strategies, and interact with children and families whose language, race, ethnicity, culture, and social and economic status may be very different from educators' own backgrounds. It is this knowledge and practice that will allow teachers to transform a new group of babies in the infant room or a group of second graders on the first day of school into a caring community of learners.*

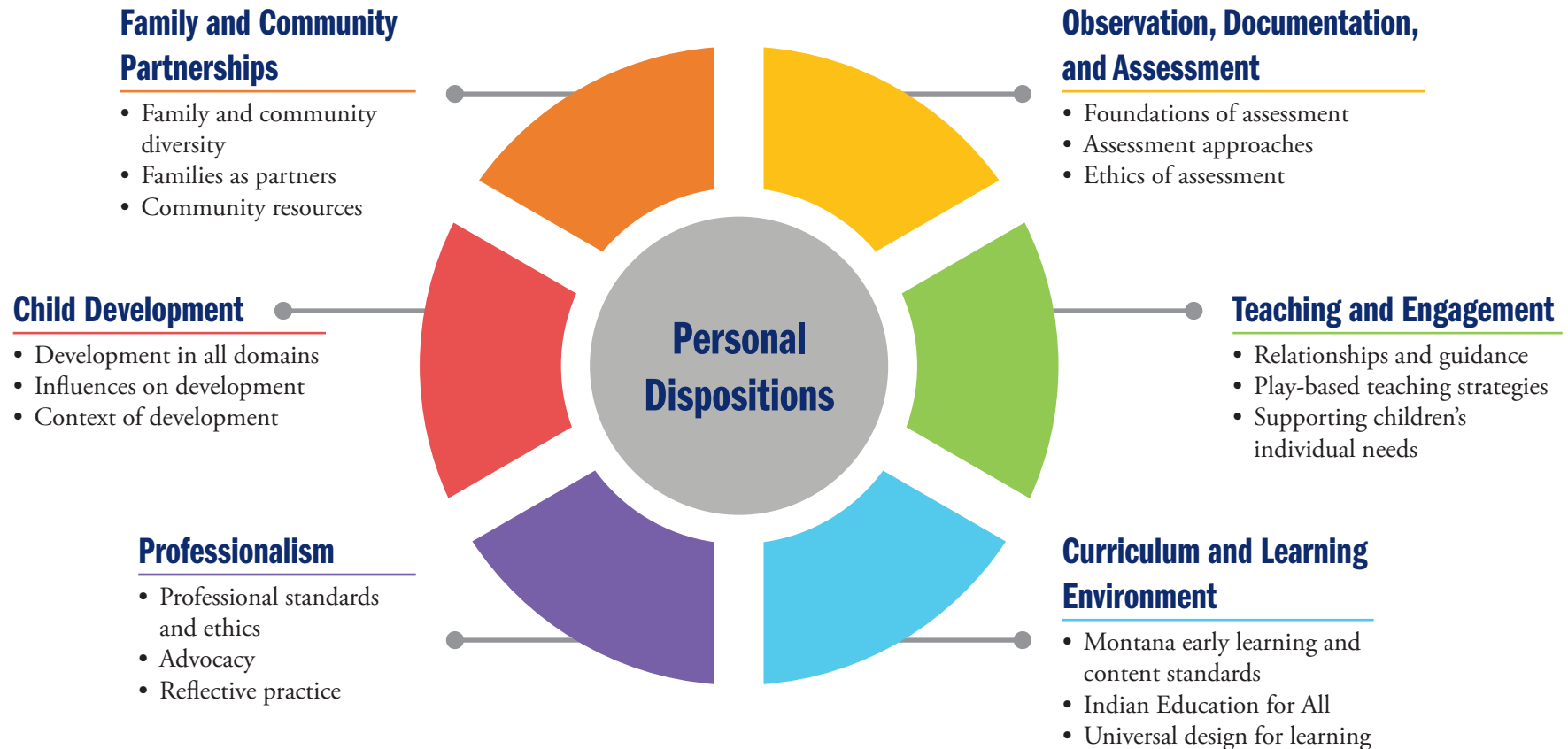
(NAEYC, 2019, p. 11)





# Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base

## Content areas and practices Personal dispositions





## Personal dispositions

Disposition	Description	I Can...		
		Identify and Describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
Authenticity	Having self-awareness; knowing who you are and what you stand for			
Creativity	Using imagination and innovation, especially in unexpected or challenging situations			
Flexibility	Dealing with change and making decisions to adapt to the situation			
Inclusion	Practicing and upholding legal requirements to include children with additional support needs by making accommodations and adaptations to teaching practices			
Love of learning	Showing a commitment to lifelong learning and recognizing teaching and learning as dynamic practices			
Passion	Embracing the idea that what you are doing is making a difference and displaying enthusiasm and interest in children			
Patience	Maintaining composure during challenging situations with children, families, and colleagues			
Perseverance	Demonstrating dedication, tenacity, and perseverance to advocate for children, families, and the early childhood profession			
Pragmatism	Being practical and realistic; cooperative and collaborative; willing to compromise to make progress toward a higher goal			
Respect and anti-bias behavior	Having an appreciation for all people, including their backgrounds and lived experiences, including social identities, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin			
Sense of humor	Promoting fun and laughter			
Willingness to take risks	Showing willingness to try new things and step outside a comfort zone			



# Content Area 1: Child Development

Early childhood educators are grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across developmental domains. They understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations. Early childhood educators understand that children learn and develop within relationships and within multiple contexts, including families, cultures, languages, communities, and society. They use this multidimensional knowledge to make evidence-based decisions about how to carry out their responsibilities. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9)

## Practices:

- 1a** Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across all domains: emotional, social, physical, communication, and cognition
- 1b** Understand the multiple influences on child development, including the importance of play and relationships, and the impact of stress and trauma
- 1c** Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur within multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning settings as well as within a larger societal context that includes structural inequities

## 1a. Development in all domains: emotional, social, physical, communication, and cognition

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the profession's current understanding of young children's developmental stages, progressions, and trajectories. They are familiar with current research and theories about child development in each interrelated and overlapping domain and understand and value each child as an individual. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 12)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
	1. Milestones of children's emotional development		
	2. Milestones of children's social development		
	3. Milestones of children's physical development		
	4. Milestones of children's communication, language, and literacy development, including linguistic and bilingual language development		
5. Milestones of children's cognitive and brain development			

## Notes:



## 1b. Influences on child development

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the role of biology and the environment on child development and recognize that developmental variations among children are normal. They understand the importance of relationships and interactions as well as the critical role of play in nurturing young children's development and recognize that some children will need individualized supports. Early educators also understand the impact of trauma, stress, and adversity on development, and the positive influence of protective factors. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 12)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Role of biology and the environment on child development (nature vs. nurture)			
2. Developmental variations and individualized supports for developmental delays or disabilities			
3. Importance of relationships, interactions, and attachments to peers and adults			
4. Critical role of play in children's learning and development			
5. Impact of trauma, stress, adversity and using protective factors to build resilience			

**Notes:**



## 1c. Context of child development: family, culture, language, and community

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the important contexts of family, culture, and language to make decisions and meet young children’s needs. They understand the impact of societal inequalities related to race, language, gender, social and economic class, immigration status, and other characteristics on children’s learning and development. They also recognize the role of early childhood education on short- and long-term physical, social, emotional, and mental health. (NAEYC, 2019, pp. 12 - 13)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Importance of fostering trust and safety by meeting basic and unique needs of all children and recognizing children as individuals			
2. Influence of family relationships and attachment			
3. Impact of families’ cultural identity on child development and learning, including language, values, and traditions			
4. Importance of race, multilingualism and home language, culture, class, and gender on social identity formation			
5. Impact of societal inequities related to race, language, gender, social and economic class, immigration status and other characteristics on child development and learning			

**Notes:**



## Content Area 2: Family and Community Partnerships

*Early childhood educators understand that successful early childhood education depends upon educators' partnerships with the families of the young children they serve. They know about, understand, and value the diversity in family characteristics. Early childhood educators use this understanding to create respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships with families and to engage with them as partners in their young children's development and learning. They use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support children's families, and they build connections between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9)*

### Practices:

- 2a** Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families and communities
- 2b** Create respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships with families and engage as partners in young children's development and learning
- 2c** Use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support children's families and build connections between early learning settings, schools, and community organizations and agencies

### 2a. Family and community diversity

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the diversity of families and communities. They understand the many influences on families and communities, including social and economic conditions; diverse family structures, cultures, and relationships; strengths and needs; and home language and cultural values. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 14)	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Meaning of "family" and identification of all members of a child's family			
2. Family preferences, values, childrearing practices, and goals			
3. Diverse characteristics of parents, families, and communities:			
a. Qualities of rural and urban communities			
b. Social and economic conditions			
c. Family structures, cultures, and relationships			
d. Family strengths and assets			
e. Family needs and stressors			
f. Home language and cultural values			

### Notes:



## 2b. Families as partners

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their responsibility to initiate and sustain respectful and reciprocal relationships with children’s families and caregivers. They share information with families about their children in ways that families can understand and use at home, using families’ preferred communication methods and home languages as much as possible. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 14)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Respectful and reciprocal relationships with families and caregivers			
2. Importance of trust, understanding, and mutual respect			
3. Methods of oral communication including informal and formal conversations (i.e. at pick up and drop off, during teacher-family conferences, and in technology mediated communication – phone call, text, email)			
4. Methods of written communication (i.e. family handbook, newsletters, email)			

**Notes:**



## 2b. Families as partners (continued)

<p>Early educators learn with and from families by honoring preferences, values, child rearing practices, and goals. They support families during children's transitions at home and with transitions into and out of services, programs, classrooms, and schools. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 14)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
5. Learning from and with families for insight into curriculum planning, program development, and child assessment			
6. Connection and consistency between home and school setting			
7. Support during transition and change (i.e. welcoming a new sibling, moving into a new program or school)			
8. Support during stress and adversity			
9. Challenges to working with families including hard to reach parents (i.e. incarcerated parents, non-custodial parents, military parents, hospitalized parents, parents with additional support needs and disabilities, etc.)			

**Notes:**



## 2c. Community resources and connections

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of building collaborative relationships with community organizations to support positive outcomes for young children and their families. They share information about or organize visits to parks, museums, libraries, etc. to help children learn about and get involved in their communities. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 14)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Community resources and services:			
a. Childcare resource and referral agencies (R&Rs)			
b. Mental health services and health care organizations			
c. Early childhood special education and early intervention services			
d. Housing and economic assistance resources			
e. Adult education and English as a second language resources			
f. Public safety, police, and sheriff's departments			
2. Community connections:			
a. Schools and libraries			
b. Neighborhood parks			
c. Museums			

**Notes:**





# Content Area 3: Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

Early childhood educators understand that the primary purpose of assessments is to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings. They know how to use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools. Early childhood educators use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, ability, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. In partnership with families and professional colleagues, early childhood educators use assessments to document individual children’s progress and, based on the findings, to plan learning experiences. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9)

## Practices:

- 3a** Understanding the foundations of assessment and the assessment cycle, including working with families and professional colleagues in culturally relevant and respectful ways
- 3b** Knowing a wide range of assessment approaches, including the types, purposes, and methods of assessment
- 3c** Practicing assessment that is ethically grounded and developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child

## 3a. Foundations of assessment

	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of working with families and professional colleagues in culturally relevant and respectful ways as part of the assessment cycle.			
1. Importance of partnering with families to assess and gather information about children and use assessment information to plan curriculum, design the learning environment, and individualize goals for children			
2. Importance of working with professional colleagues to understand the types, purposes, and methods of assessment in early childhood			
3. Stages of the assessment cycle:			
a. Selecting age-appropriate assessment tools			
b. Administration of assessment			
c. Interpretation of assessment data			
d. Sharing assessment data (with families, teaching teams, colleagues from other disciplines, specialists, etc.) in formal (IFSP and IEP meetings) and informal meetings (conferences and conversations)			
4. Role of screening in the assessment cycle			

## Notes:



### 3a. Foundations of assessment (continued)

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of working with families and professional colleagues in culturally relevant and respectful ways to use assessment data and technology as part of the assessment cycle.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
5. Using assessment data to:			
a. Document each child's learning progress, qualities, strengths, interests and needs			
b. Set appropriate learning and development goals for individual children			
c. Choose curricula			
d. use effective teaching strategies			
e. make referrals for more in-depth professional assessment			
6. Using technology to implement and track data for individual children and sets of children			

**Notes:**



## 3b. Assessment approaches

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the types and methods of authentic, informal, and formal assessment approaches to make informed decisions about instruction and planning in early learning settings. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9).	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Authentic and strengths-based assessment as positive tools to build continuity in young children's development and learning			
2. Informal assessment approaches, such as observation and documentation			
a. Observation as an assessment of children in authentic home and school contexts, including planned and spontaneous activities			
b. Observation techniques, such as time sampling, running records			
c. Documentation strategies, including anecdotal records, photo, and video recordings			
3. Formal assessment approaches, including valid, reliable, and standardized assessments			
4. Differences between formative and summative assessments			

**Notes:**



### 3b. Assessment approaches (continued)

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the purposes of authentic, informal, and formal assessment approaches to make informed decisions about instruction and planning in early learning settings. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9).</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
5. Purposes of assessment:			
a. measuring child progress and monitoring outcomes			
b. goal setting for individual children, including scaffolding learning experiences			
c. planning a developmentally appropriate curriculum			
d. preparing the learning environment to enhance children's growth and learning in all domains of development			
6. Using observation, authentic assessment, individualization, data collection and evaluation that leads to the development of or adjustment to a developmentally appropriate plan and individualized plan			

**Notes:**



### 3c. Ethics of assessment

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of using screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9).</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Legal and ethical issues of assessment, including confidentiality and equity			
2. Cultural relevance and respect in assessment with regard to:			
a. selecting and implementing assessments			
b. interpreting and sharing assessment data			
3. Responsibility to identify, but not diagnose, children who have the potential for a developmental delay or disability or for advanced learning			
4. Importance of embedding assessment-related activities in the curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice			

**Notes:**



### 3c. Ethics of assessment (continued)

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of using screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 9).</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
5. Issues and resources related to identifying and supporting all children (i.e. additional support needs, advanced learners, bilingual, multilingual)			
a. who to reach out to when unsure of how to assess a child			
b. limitations of assessment tools			
c. adverse effect on children when autonomy is not given to create or select developmentally appropriate, authentic assessments			
6. Importance of advocating for children and families to ensure asset- and strengths-based assessment approaches			
7. Potential for implicit bias in assessment			

**Notes:**



# Content Area 4: Teaching and Engagement

Early childhood educators understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children’s ages and characteristics and on the settings in which teaching and learning occur. They understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. They understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child. Early childhood educators use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, and evidence-based teaching approaches that reflect the principles of universal design for learning. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10)

## Practices:

- Understanding positive, caring, supportive relationships and positive child guidance as the foundation of early childhood educators’ work with young children
- Implementing play-based teaching strategies to accept, support, and empower all children
- Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias and evidence-based teaching skills and strategies to support children’s individual needs, including bilingual children and children with developmental delays or disabilities

## Notes:

## 4a. Relationships and guidance

	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their understanding of positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of their work. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10). They recognize the importance of modeling and demonstrating respect with children, families, and colleagues.			
1. Importance of respectful and supportive relationships			
2. Respect for children and families’ diverse values, culture, language, individual temperament, and learning styles			
3. Respect for other’s feelings			
4. Fostering feelings of empathy and compassion			
5. Promoting positive relationships, a sense of community, and interdependence among children in the group			
6. Including children in the formation of group guidelines for acceptable and appropriate behavior as soon as they are developmentally able			



## 4a. Relationships and guidance (continued)

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their understanding of positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of their work. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10). They recognize the importance of modeling and demonstrating respect with children, families, and colleagues.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
7. Characteristics of positive interactions			
a. Being present and self-aware while working with children			
b. Engaging in meaningful and genuine conversations based on children's interests			
c. Using open-ended questions to acknowledge, validate, and extend children's thinking			
8. Using encouragement 1:1 rather than praise to support children's self-awareness, self-concept, and the development of internal / intrinsic motivation for appropriate behavior			
9. Expectations of children's behavior based on knowledge of child development and knowledge of individual children			

### Notes:





## 4a. Relationships and guidance (continued)

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their understanding of a positive child guidance approach based on: what to expect from children, how to assess their behavior, how to redirect challenging behavior, and how to get children more involved in controlling their own actions.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
10. Characteristics and causes of children's challenging behavior			
11. Strategies to gather information about children with challenging behavior, including observation and interview			
12. Strategies to respond to and redirect children's challenging behavior, including finding outlets for expressing and communicating strong emotions			
13. Strategies to support the development of children's self-regulation, including problem-solving, empathy, and peer conflict resolution			
14. Signs of children's stress, anxiety, or trauma			
15. Strategies to respond to children's stress, adversity, and trauma, including using calming techniques to prevent overstimulation and escalation			

**Notes:**



## 4b. Play-based teaching strategies

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their understanding of play as an essential strategy for teaching and learning. They understand that children learn about the world around them and attempt to make sense of what they see and experience through play.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Developmental stages of play, including imitative play and social referencing in babies; solitary, parallel, social, cooperative, onlooker, fantasy, physical, and constructive play in toddlers, with increasing complexity and skills in preschool and early grades			
2. Types of play including sensory, mastery, dramatic, rough and tumble, etc.			
3. Differences between simple, chaotic, and complex play			
4. Adult's play roles, including manager, observer, mediator, participant, and coach			
5. Strategies to enter into, sustain, and exit play to support all children			
6. Importance of self-directed and teacher-guided play to help children develop symbolic and imaginative thinking, peer relationships, social skills, language, creative movement, and problem-solving skills			
7. Individualized strategies to support children's play, including verbal and non-verbal prompting, visual supports, modeling, asking questions, and engaging other peers as play partners			

**Notes:**



## 4c. Supporting children’s individual needs

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10). They use knowledge and information about each child to plan meaningful learning experiences to support development in all domains.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Children’s individual characteristics, including strengths, capacity, temperament, child abuse and neglect, disability, as well as family, language, culture and community influences on development			
2. Differentiating instructional practices to respond to the individual strengths, needs, abilities, social identity, home culture, home language, interests, motivations, temperament, and positive and adverse experiences of each child			
3. Resources and information on the impact of special needs on families and children, the characteristics of specific disabilities, and how to best accommodate learning and development for individual children with disabilities			
4. Setting challenging and achievable goals for each child across physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains; helping children set their own goals, as appropriate; and adjusting support to scaffold and/or extend young children’s learning			

**Notes:**



## 4c. Supporting children’s individual needs (continued)

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of establishing a consistent and predictable daily routine to support every child. They structure and modify learning experiences based on the strengths, needs and interests of individual children. They recognize the importance of scaffolding and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all children.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Age and developmentally appropriate schedules and routines, such as individualized schedules for infants, no required group times for toddlers			
2. Meaningful transitions between activities to minimize wait times			
3. Balance between large and small group and individual activities			
4. Individual children's interests, language, family culture, abilities, and goals to plan appropriate learning experiences			
5. Using goals and objectives for children with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plans (IEP)			

**Notes:**



# Content Area 5: Curriculum and the Learning Environment

Early childhood educators have knowledge of the content of the academic disciplines (e.g., language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, social studies, science, technology and engineering, physical education) and of the pedagogical methods for teaching each discipline. They understand the central concepts, the methods and tools of inquiry, and the structures in each academic discipline. Educators understand pedagogy, including how young children learn and process information in each discipline, the learning trajectories for each discipline, and how teachers use this knowledge to inform their practice. They apply this knowledge using early learning standards and other resources to make decisions about spontaneous and planned learning experiences and about curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that learning will be stimulating, challenging, and meaningful to each child. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10)

## Practices:

- Using Montana early learning and content standards to plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Incorporating Indian Education for All into learning experiences
- Using universal design for learning to prepare the classroom environment

## 5a. Early learning standards (birth – age 8): Foundations

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the foundations of early learning standards and curriculum development in each developmental domain and content area. The core knowledge and skills found in the curriculum area include features that are common across all content areas.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Developmentally appropriate daily scheduling with:			
a. Uninterrupted play, open-ended questioning, group discussion, hands-on activities, problem solving, cooperative learning, and inquiry			
b. Blocks of uninterrupted time (at least one hour) for children to persist in self-chosen activities both indoors and out			
c. Individual, small, and large group activities, allowing a balance of self-directed and guided learning			
d. Planned and spontaneous experiences that are meaningful and intentional for all children			

## Notes:



## 5a. Early learning standards (birth – age 8) (continued)

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the foundations of early learning standards and curriculum development in each developmental domain and content area. The core knowledge and skills found in the curriculum area include features that are common across all content areas.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
2. Individual children's interests, language, family culture, abilities, and goals to plan developmentally appropriate learning experiences and provide developmentally appropriate materials			
3. Importance of adapting curriculum to meet the needs of each child, including embedding goals and objectives for children with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plans (IEP)			
4. Resources to support each child's culture, family structure, and support needs			

### Notes:



## 5a. Early learning standards (birth – age 8) (continued)

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on early learning standards in each developmental domain and content area. They understand the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, structure, and resources for each area. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10).	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Language and literacy			
2. Arts			
3. Mathematics			
4. Social studies			
5. Science			
6. Technology and engineering			
7. Physical education, health, and safety			

**Notes:**



## 5b. Indian Education for All

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of incorporating unique perspectives of Montana’s American Indians into early childhood curriculum. They recognize the constitutional mandate that every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Indian Education for All (IEFA) purpose and mission			
2. Essential understandings in IEFA: diversity of tribal nations, diversity among individual American Indians, traditional beliefs and spirituality persist in modern life, reservation lands are permanent homelands, federal policies impacted American Indians, American Indian history might differ from mainstream history, tribal nations are sovereign nations			
3. Land acknowledgement: All education takes place on Indigenous lands. Many Indigenous Peoples—including the Apsáalooke (Crow), Niimiipuu (Nez Perce), Očhéthi Šakówin (Lakota), Piikani (Blackfeet), Seliš (Salish), Sosori’ Newe (Shoshone) and Tsétséhéstâhese (Northern Cheyenne)—have claims to these lands. American Indian histories and perspectives are valued and considered in my work as an educator			

**Notes:**





## 5c. Universal design for learning and classroom environment

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of establishing safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor learning spaces for all children. They implement an interest area approach to provide access to toys, equipment, and play materials that reflect individual children's interests in all areas of the curriculum.</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Aesthetics and dimensions of the indoor and outdoor environment: organization, color and lighting, hard and soft surfaces, texture, opportunity for movement			
2. Interest areas and the learning center approach in the indoor and outdoor environment			
3. Developmentally appropriate furniture and seating in indoor and outdoor environment			
4. Importance of involving children to personalize the indoor and outdoor environment by incorporating culture, families, interests, abilities, geographic location, race, ethnicity			

**Notes:**



## Content Area 6: Professionalism

Early childhood educators identify and participate as members of the early childhood profession. They serve as informed advocates for young children, for the families of the children in their care, and for the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other early childhood professional guidelines. They have professional communication skills that effectively support their relationships and work young children, families, and colleagues. Early childhood educators are continuous, collaborative learners who develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession. (NAEYC, 2019, p. 10)

### Practices:

- Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines
- Advocating for young children, families, colleagues, and the early childhood profession
- Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning and intentional, reflective practice

### 6a. Professional standards and ethics

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their ethical responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, and the community. They are guided by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment to the early childhood profession.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct			
2. Confidentiality, including sensitivity and respect for: young children, their families, and colleagues			
3. Diverse perspectives about and approaches to early childhood education, including an appreciation for linguistic, cultural, and developmental diversity and recognition of stereotypes and bias			
4. Relevant laws such as reporting child abuse and neglect, health and safety practices, and the rights of children with developmental delays and disabilities			
5. Federal and state policies regarding early care and education			

### Notes:



## 6b. Advocacy

Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on their role as informed advocates for young children, families, and the early childhood profession.	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. Early childhood education, including the distinctive history, knowledge base, and mission of the profession			
2. The ways the professional knowledge base, research, and practice is constantly evolving and being strengthened			
3. How to engage in dialogue with colleagues with attention to differences and diversity in perspectives and values in early childhood education			
4. The role and responsibility as a member of the early childhood profession including making professional contributions and sharing knowledge with others within and outside the profession about issues that impact young children and their families			
5. Resources and policies that support young children and their families			
6. Resources and policies that support early childhood educators, within early learning settings as well as in broader contexts such as at the local, state, federal or national levels			
7. Policy issues and current trends in the early childhood profession, including compensation and financing of the early education system; value of the profession; turnover and continuity of care; early learning standards (i.e. MELS, HSELOF) and assessment; and issues of equity, bias and social justice that affect young children, families, communities and colleagues			

**Notes:**



## 6c. Reflective practice

<p>Early educators can identify, apply, and reflect on the importance of regularly thinking about and analyzing their work. They engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform their practice and also develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.(NAEYC, 2019, p. 10)</p>	I can...		
	Identify and describe	Use and apply	Reflect on and enhance teaching
1. The commitment to continuous learning that directly influences the quality of the work with young children, including participation with local and national early childhood organizations, and completion of annual professional development			
2. A personal philosophy of early childhood education that includes knowledge, assumptions, values, and beliefs about children's active learning, play, developmentally appropriate practices, and inclusion			
3. Opportunities to engage with colleagues and professionals from other disciplines through social media and national organizations			
4. The various theoretical perspectives related to continuous and collaborative learning, including those identified in professional journals			
5. The various evidence-based perspectives related to effective communication and team leadership			
6. Leadership and collaboration in learning communities and teaching teams in a variety of settings (infant and toddler, preschool and kindergarten, early primary grades)			

**Notes:**



# Professional Development Plan

Knowledge Base content area	Practice target area, skill, or competency	Goal I want to be able to...	Resource training event, technical assistance, etc.	Date
Child development				
Family and community partnerships				
Observation, documentation and assessment				
Teaching and engagement				
Curriculum and learning environment				
Professionalism				

**Notes:**



# NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

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Excerpted from the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, 2011. For a complete copy, contact NAEYC at 1-800-424-2460 or [naeyc.org](http://naeyc.org)

## Section 1: Ethical responsibilities to children

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.

### Ideals

- To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education and to stay informed through continuing education and training
- To base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child
- To recognize and respect the unique qualities, abilities, and potential of each child
- To appreciate the vulnerability of children and their dependence on adults
- To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions
- To use assessment instruments and strategies that are appropriate for the children to be assessed, that are used only for the purposes for which they were designed, and that have the potential to benefit children
- To use assessment information to understand and support children's development and learning, to support instruction, and to identify children who may need additional services
- To support the right of each child to play and learn in an inclusive environment that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities
- To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the support services needed to be successful
- To ensure that each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program
- To provide all children with experience in a language that they know, as well as support children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English
- To work with families to provide a safe and smooth transition as children and families move from one program to the next

## Supplemental Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2019). Professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

There are literally thousands of professional resources available to help you improve or update your knowledge and skills in any of the content areas of the Montana Knowledge Base. The following list of agencies, web sites, and publications may be helpful in your initial search for further information and professional development opportunities. Contact the Professional Development Specialist(s) at your area Child Care Resource and Referral Agency or the Montana Early Childhood Project at 1.800.213.6310 for additional recommendations.

### Montana Resources

#### **Child Care plus+: The Center on Inclusion in Early Childhood [www.ccplus.org](http://www.ccplus.org)**

The Child Care plus+ mission is to share knowledge, foster skills, and encourage attitudes that promote inclusion as a core component of excellence in early childhood.

#### **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) [www.montanachildcare.org](http://www.montanachildcare.org)**

CCR&R programs are located strategically in eleven districts around Montana. They provide technical assistance, training, and coaching to early childhood programs and serve as a local resource for early childhood practitioners and parents. Each agency has its own web site.

#### **Early Childhood Project (ECP) [www.mtecp.org](http://www.mtecp.org)**

The ECP is dedicated to improving and enhancing the quality and availability of services to young children and families by providing an integrated professional development system to build a knowledgeable, competent, and stable early childhood workforce.





**Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) [www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov](http://www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov)**

The mission of the ECSB is to improve the quality, affordability, and accessibility of child care in Montana, with focused efforts on coordinated systems to best meet the needs of young children, their families, and professionals who work on behalf of young children and families. ECSB programs include Child Care Scholarships (assistance to low-income families), Quality Improvement (start-up, expansion, and training), Child and Adult Care Food Program, Head Start Collaboration, and School Readiness.

**Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC) [www.mtaeyc.org](http://www.mtaeyc.org)**

MtAEYC is a collaborative professional organization intent on impacting local, state, and national issues affecting children, families, and early care and education.

**Montana Head Start Association (MHSA) [www.headstartmt.org](http://www.headstartmt.org)**

The MHSA brings together families, staff, directors, and friends of all Head Start and Early Head Start to provide leadership, education, information, and advocacy on behalf of young children, pregnant women, and families throughout Montana.

**Office of Public Instruction [www.opi.mt.gov](http://www.opi.mt.gov)**

The OPI administers public education from Kindergarten through Grade 12 for Montana's children. The OPI is committed to equal opportunity and non-discriminatory access to all of their programs and services.



## Acknowledgements

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The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is an early childhood education professional organization dedicated to Early Childhood Education practice, policy, and research. In Montana, we have a state affiliate, mtAEYC (<https://mtaeyc.org/>), and many local chapters to support NAEYC's vision that all young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

In addition to professional preparation standards developed by NAEYC and NAEYC program accreditation, the competencies described in this document align with other important professional standards and guidelines for quality early childhood programming, including the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation standards, Head Start Program Performance Standards, Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices,

Environment Rating Scales (ERS), and Program and Business Administration Scales (PAS/BAS).

Consultation with professional and stakeholder groups with vested interest in Montana's young children and their families have also assisted in the creation of this Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base. The revision was led by the Montana Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB), the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP), and the Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (MECHEC). Special thanks to MECHEC co-chairs Dr. Christine Lux and Dr. Nanci Red Bird for conceptualizing the revision and to stakeholder review team members Meghan Ballenger, Taylor Boylan, Collette Box, Ann Klaas, Lee Musgjerd, Ashley Pena, Brandi Thomas, and Marjorie Vegoren.





# History of the Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base

The Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base has served as the foundation of Montana's early childhood career development system since its first publication in 1997. Revisions were made in 2004, 2008, 2013, and 2022. Below, key events in our state affecting the revision, implementation, and impact of the Knowledge Base are summarized to further highlight its importance and use in the early childhood profession.

- 1985** The Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP) is established at Montana State University. The ECP is dedicated to improving the quality of programs and services for Montana's young children and their families by establishing and implementing a state plan for early care and education career development. The ECP is funded through the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services Bureau from the federal Child Care and Development Fund. On a national level, the ECP is actively involved in The National Workforce Registry Alliance and other organizations to promote a knowledgeable and skilled early childhood workforce.
- 1997** The ECP published its first Early Care and Education Knowledge Base and adopted its first Career Path in early childhood education. The ECP also established the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) approved the Early Childhood Special Permissive Competency to recognize specialized knowledge for licensed and endorsed teacher candidates in the early primary grades.
- 1998** The ECP launches the Practitioner Registry and training approval system, requiring that each professional development offering must be aligned to a knowledge base area.
- 2001** The Montana Department of Labor & Industry and Early Childhood Services Bureau launches the Montana Apprenticeship Program that requires higher education coursework. A guide to coursework in higher education was published by the ECP.
- 2004** Knowledge base revised. Montana Early Learning Guidelines for children ages 3 – 5 was published. Resource & Referral agencies were expected to implement the learning guidelines into trainings.
- 2008** Knowledge base revised. Career Opportunities in Early Care and Education booklet was published jointly by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the ECP.
- 2013** Knowledge Base revised to reflect the 2010 NAEYC professional preparation standards. The NAEYC standards are the framework for each institute of higher education (IHE) in Montana, including tribal, community, and four-year institutes of higher education.
- 2014** Montana Early Learning Standards were revised to represent the continuum of development between birth and entry to kindergarten.
- 2015** The Montana ECE:P-3 Endorsement was approved for teacher licensure and the state's Preschool Program Guidelines were written into administrative rule.
- 2020** Revisions began on the knowledge base to align with the revised and updated NAEYC professional preparation standards and the NAEYC Power to the Profession movement. The Montana Early Childhood Education Knowledge Base is focused to the skills and competencies that effective early childhood educators must have to successfully support all children and families in early care and education settings, including family, group, center, and public-school programs.
- 2022** The Knowledge Base Pilot group is launched to review the draft knowledge base revisions.



[www.mtecp.org](http://www.mtecp.org)



[www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov](http://www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov)



[www.montana.edu](http://www.montana.edu)

