

The Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Teacher Assistants

Who Work With Children Age Birth Through 5 and Their Families

Last Updated 10/4/2013

Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Teacher Assistants. This document defines early childhood teacher assistants (TA) as those who work with children ages birth through 5 and with their families¹. The Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Teacher Assistants articulate the essential skills and knowledge that TAs who work with young children need to know, understand, and be able to do to promote young children's healthy development and learning. They are designed for many purposes including, but not limited to: 1) supporting an teacher assistant's individual professional development efforts, 2) helping program administrators articulate job expectations and design evaluation processes for teacher assistants and 3) guiding higher education and professional development providers on the creation of curricula for college courses and educator training offered in the community. This publication is a practical and living document and will be revised as research further illuminates what teacher assistants must know and be able to do. We hope that you find it useful and that you will contribute to the ongoing refinement of core knowledge and competencies for early childhood educators in our state.

Rationale and Purpose

Research shows that high-quality early childhood education produces substantial long-term educational, social, and economic benefits with the largest benefits for children occurring when teachers are professionally prepared, implementing the practices and strategies they have learned, and adequately compensated². Furthermore, the knowledge and skills required of an effective early childhood educator have increased as science has revealed more about the capabilities of young children, how they learn best, and the importance of early learning for later school success³. Therefore, it is essential that a core component of Rhode Island's efforts to build a high quality early learning system is a highly qualified workforce with access to a high quality professional development system.

At the foundation of this system is the knowledge base of theory and research that underlies practice, *often referred to as core knowledge and competencies*. In the United States, over 30 states have published core knowledge and competencies as a foundation of their professional development systems. Rhode Island's early education leaders recognize that our workforce must have access to a professional development system designed to build competencies that are linked to improved child outcomes.

¹ Please note that the field defines early childhood as birth to age eight. However, this document is articulating competencies for classroom-based early childhood educators working with children from birth to age five.

² For a comprehensive explanation of research related to this, please see: Whitebook, M. (2003) Early education quality: Higher teacher qualifications for better learning environments—A review of the literature. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California at Berkeley.

³ Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications Issue 2 / Revised December 2004, W. Steven Barnett, National Institute for Early Education Research.

The Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Teacher Assistants are intended to be used by a variety of stakeholders. They will:

- be used by Rhode Island’s early education leaders as a framework for developing a state-wide professional development system.
- help teacher assistants focus on critical areas of professional development and recognize their own areas of exceptional skill and expertise.
- help teacher assistants with the creation and implementation of their own individual professional development plans.
- help program administrators articulate job expectations for teacher assistants including developing performance-based job descriptions and designing evaluation processes.
- Guide higher education and professional development providers with the creation of curricula for college courses and professional development opportunities offered in the community.
- Help families identify best practices and select high-quality programming for their children.
- Serve as a tool for advocates and policy makers to develop initiatives, communications, and allocate funding based on what best supports early childhood professionals.

Organization

Rhode Island’s workforce knowledge and competencies for early childhood teacher assistants are organized into six domains important to the profession. Each domain has a number of sub-headings. Although the domains are presented individually, all domains are intrinsically interrelated and interdependent. The competencies are worded so they can be measured or demonstrated. These domains include:

1. Physical and Mental Health, Safety, and Wellness
2. Family Engagement
3. Development and Learning
4. Curriculum
5. Assessment
6. Professionalism

Each of the six domains contains several skill levels that progress from the beginning practitioner to the more advanced skills and knowledge possessed by a master teacher. This progression is organized into four levels that reflect the increasing complexity of what the individual should know and be able to do at each corresponding level. Level 1 includes the most basic requirements, while Level 3 is the most advanced. The core competency levels are also cumulative for each category; someone working at a Level 3 in any given competency area is presumed to possess the knowledge and competencies identified at all previous levels.

The Teacher Assistant Career Pathway

In addition, the teacher assistant core knowledge and competencies were aligned with the career pathway. The career pathway specifies the benchmark that corresponds with the formal education, experience, professional development, and professional activities that correspond with an educator who is at each level. For the purposes of this document, “teacher assistant” is defined as an individual who assists the teacher in planning and implementing the

educational program in an early childhood classroom. Teacher assistants progress from one level to another through a combination of formal study, experience, and professional development. Some individuals will chose to focus solely on the teacher assistant career pathway, while others may choose to move from teacher assistant to teacher; the career pathway is designed to allow for both of these options. Level 1 of the career pathway corresponds with Rhode Island's initial benchmark for teacher assistants. **The teacher assistant career pathway can be found on page 1.**

Background, History and Process

In 2001-2002 there was a comprehensive, grass-roots effort, with broad representation from all areas of early childhood and youth development (YD) that created the June 2003 draft version of Rhode Island's core competencies. In the fall of 2007, a committee was brought together by the R.I. Department of Human Services/Childspan to revise the June 2003 draft in light of changes in the field such as new trends, new regulations, and ongoing development of state initiatives, e.g., the 2002 Rhode Island Early Learning Standards (RIELS), BrightStars, and NAEYC Developmental Appropriate Practice (DAP) guidelines. The committee composition was recommended by DHS and was comprised of representatives from major stakeholders such as the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE), higher education, the R.I. Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), the R.I. Department of Health (DOH), ECE providers including Center-based and Family Child Care, BrightStars, and representatives from the Afterschool and Youth Development field. This group began that work by making several significant design changes including:

- Separating out knowledge and competencies for center-based, family child care, and school age workforces.
- Separating out knowledge and competencies for teachers, teacher assistants, education coordinators, and administrators.
- Shifting the teacher knowledge and competencies levels from six levels to four.
- Creating a theoretical framework to ensure knowledge and competencies are aligned to the resulting framework.

With this new approach, the group developed a four level career pathway for center-based teachers and drafted several domains for center-based teachers including, physical and mental health, safety and wellness; child development and learning; and curriculum. The newly revised competencies were then released to the community, including teachers, directors, and other stakeholders, through public feedback forums to garner public feedback to inform revisions to the document. In 2010, DHS received CCDBG ARRA funding which it allocated to completing the core knowledge and competencies. Under RIDE leadership, a new work group was established in May 2010 and was comprised of state agency leaders, professional development providers, higher education, and early childhood providers (see Appendix A for a list of work group members). This team developed a final draft of the core knowledge and competencies for both teachers and teacher assistants.

In December 2011, Rhode Island was notified that it was one of nine states to win a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant. These additional resources allowed Rhode Island to finalize the core knowledge and competencies for teachers and teacher assistants and supported the development of an addendum for Early Intervention and Special Education. In 2013, the work group began finalization of the core knowledge and competencies. The competencies were reviewed national experts with the foremost expertise in creating early childhood workforce knowledge and competencies (see Appendix B for a list of local and national experts). The work group incorporated the experts' feedback into the document and decided to extract the teacher assistant section of the core knowledge and competencies in order to create a separate document for and acknowledge the unique role of teacher assistants to produce the final document presented here.

Rhode Island Core Competencies for Classroom-Based Early Childhood Teacher Assistants

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The Teacher Assistant Career Pathway

The career pathway for the teacher assistant role specifies the formal education, experience, professional development, and professional activities that correspond with a teacher assistant who is at each level. This document defines **teacher assistant** as an individual who assists the teacher in planning and implementing the educational program in an early childhood classroom. Teacher assistants progress from one level to another through a combination of formal study, experience and professional development. Level I corresponds with Rhode Island’s minimal expectations for teacher assistants.

	Level I	Level II	Level III
Formal Education	High School Diploma or GED.	Minimum of 6 college credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE). OR A Child Development Associate Certificate (CDA) plus 3 credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE).	12 college credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE). OR A CDA plus 9 credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE).
Experience	Minimum of 1 year of relevant experience.	Minimum of 1 year of supervised experience ⁴ .	Minimum of 3 year of supervised experience.
Relevant Professional Development/ Credentials	Minimum of 20 hours/year of professional development related to the workforce core knowledge and competencies. OR Comparable credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE).	Minimum of 20 hours/year of professional development related to the workforce core knowledge and competencies. OR Comparable credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE).	Minimum of 20 hours/year of professional development related to the workforce core knowledge and competencies. OR Comparable credit hours in Early Childhood Education (ECE).
Professional Activities			Membership in professional organization related to Early Childhood Education (ECE).

⁴ Supervised experience refers to employment as a teacher assistant in a classroom under the supervision of an Education Coordinator, Head Teacher or other educational administrator.

Teacher Assistant Skill and Knowledge Progression

As a guide for how knowledge and skill should deepen over the levels, the Core Competency team used the following framework:

- At Level 1, a teaching assistant is generally expected to have a basic understanding of key concepts and be able to carry out specific instructions;
- At Level II, a teaching assistant is expected to be able to independently apply their knowledge and take initiative in collaboration with the teacher, and;
- Finally, a Level III teaching assistant demonstrates a deeper understanding of concepts that are more complex and uses a more nuanced application of that knowledge in collaboration with the teacher.

Rhode Island's Framework for Competency Development



ACTIONS / BEHAVIORS

- Applies essential knowledge and skills in classroom
- Names, recognizes, recalls, and understands static content
- Begins to apply context content knowledge
- Applies content knowledge and information in the classroom setting
- Develops a personal understanding of content
- Applies content knowledge and information in increasingly nuanced ways
- Begins to compare, contrast, and experiment with teaching practices
- Autonomously applies content knowledge in nuanced ways
- Critically reflects on knowledge and application, bringing the two together in new combinations
- Thinks creatively about own knowledge and application to solve new problems
- Advocates for changes in program policies and practices, and in state policies that are not aligned with best practice

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 1: Physical and Mental Health, Safety, and Wellness

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Young children's physical and mental health and safety is vital for fostering competence in all developmental areas. Early childhood teacher assistants must have a sound knowledge of state and federal regulations related to safety and health. They must also be able to ensure children's safety and be competent in preparing for and handling emergencies. Finally, they promote sound health, dental and nutrition practices.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 1: HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLNESS

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
HSW 1: Compliance with State and Federal Regulations	<p>Understands the purpose of and follows current state and federal regulations including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care Licensing Regulations • IDEA • ADA • RI Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities 	<p>Understands the purpose of and follows current state and federal regulations and alerts appropriate individuals when they are not met.</p>	
HSW 2: Safety and Emergency Procedures	<p>Actively supervises children to ensure safety both indoors and outdoors.</p> <p>Monitors and maintains safety in all areas, both indoors and outdoors, including the condition of equipment and materials, and the identification and removal of potential hazards.</p> <p>Assists teacher in practicing emergency plans and drills (e.g. fire, weather-related, and lock-down) including safety procedures for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Follows recommended guidelines to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).</p>	<p>Partners with teacher to teach age appropriate precautions and rules to children to ensure safety both indoors and out.</p>	

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 1: HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLNESS (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
HSW 3: Health	<p>Understands program policies and practices regarding children’s health status.</p> <p>Models, supports, and assists children in developing appropriate hygiene practices including hand washing, teeth brushing, and toileting and follows appropriate diapering practices, when applicable.</p> <p>Understands indicators of child maltreatment, follows program policies regarding documentation and notification, and performs responsibly as mandated reporter for child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Understands the signs and symptoms of common childhood illnesses and notifies appropriate program personnel and/or families as appropriate while ensuring the comfort and care of the child and other children.</p> <p>Follows policies and procedures for infection control and universal precautions.</p> <p>Knows individual children’s allergies and other health needs and takes appropriate precautions to ensure the health and safety of each child.</p> <p>Follows established program rules regarding rest time policies/procedures to create an environment where children can sleep without disturbance.</p>	<p>In collaboration with the teacher, monitors compliance with health requirements indicated by parents or medical professionals.</p>	<p>In collaboration with the teacher, communicates with families about program policies and practices regarding health and individual health status.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 1: HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLNESS (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
HSW 4: Food and Nutrition	<p>Follows rules established by the program regarding food provided to the children.</p> <p>Ensures that policies regarding food allergies and family food restrictions are followed.</p> <p>Joins children for meals and snacks and models healthy eating habits with children.</p> <p>Recognizes potential health hazards in meals (choking, allergies, etc.) and takes steps to avoid them.</p> <p>Practices safe food handling, follows general sanitation practices, and maintains sanitary environments.</p> <p>Demonstrates respect for family preferences and cultural influences on food and eating habits.</p>	<p>In collaboration with the teacher, maintains appropriate communication with families regarding eating habits and food intake.</p>	<p>Understands and utilizes developmentally appropriate practices that support healthy eating habits for all infant, toddlers, and preschoolers.</p>

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 2: Family Engagement

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Early childhood teacher assistants understand the role that family members and others play in the lives of children and the importance of engaging them in their child's education. They are welcoming to all families, demonstrate respect for the family role as the primary educator, and advocate for the child.

Early childhood teacher assistants respect each family's values, attitudes, and expectations, and respect and celebrate the diversity of languages, customs, and traditions in the family of each child. They strive to utilize a range of techniques to communicate effectively with all families and collaborate with the teacher to create meaningful opportunities for families to be actively engaged in their children's education.

Finally, early childhood teacher assistants begin to develop an awareness of resources within the program and surrounding community that are available to families and work with the teacher to help connect children and their families with needed resources.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 2: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
FE 1: Creating Respectful, Reciprocal Relationships with Families	<p>Is welcoming to all families.</p> <p>Understands the characteristics of appropriate relationships with families.</p> <p>Recognizes and values the varying structures, practices, languages, cultures, and traditions of children’s families.</p> <p>Communicates respectfully with and about families and uses this communication to build positive relationships with families.</p>	<p>Demonstrates respect for the family role as the primary educator and advocate.</p>	<p>Respects and supports the structures, practices, languages, cultures, and traditions of children’s families.</p>
FE 2: Engaging Families in Their Children’s Development and Learning	<p>Communicates with families about general daily activities as a means of building relationships.</p>	<p>In collaboration with teacher, begins to take responsibility for exchanging information with families about their child’s daily activities and experiences.</p> <p>Collaborates with teacher to create and maintain a welcoming environment for families.</p> <p>Understands that integrating children with special needs benefits all children.</p>	<p>Collaborates with teacher to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share knowledge about the program and general child development with families. • Regularly exchange information with families regarding their child’s learning and development. • Develops meaningful opportunities for family engagement. • Help all families recognize that integrating children with special needs benefits all children.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 2: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
FE 3: Utilizing Community Resources to Support Families		Develops an awareness of resources within the program and surrounding community that are available to families.	Works with teacher to identify program and community resources to strengthen families and to support positive child outcomes.

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 3: Development and Learning

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Early childhood teacher assistants recognize the major developmental milestones of children and understand the importance of the first five years of life on children's development. They know that each child's development and early learning typically proceeds in a predictable and recognizable sequence and they understand that children progress differently within and across each developmental domain. As they become more experienced, they are able to use that knowledge to collaborate with the teacher to plan developmentally appropriate and engaging experiences and interactions with children.

In addition, teacher assistants understand that each child has unique characteristics that influence development and they are able to use their knowledge of the unique characteristics of the children in their classroom to contribute relevant ideas when collaboratively planning with the teacher. They also have a beginning understanding of the concept of attachment and how it relates to children's growth, development, and early learning. Finally, early childhood teacher assistants believe that an inclusive environment benefits both children with and without special needs and they embrace an inclusive philosophy, where all children are valued as individuals.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 3: DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
DL 1: Child Development			
<i>DL 1a: General Knowledge of Domains, Stages, and Milestones</i>	<p>Recognizes the major developmental milestones of children.</p> <p>Recognizes the importance of the first five years of life on children’s development.</p>	<p>Understands that each child’s development and learning typically proceeds in a predictable and recognizable sequence.</p> <p>Understands that children progress differently within and across each developmental domain.</p> <p>Understands that children learn at differing and varying rates.</p>	<p>Uses knowledge of child development and early learning to collaborate with teacher to plan appropriate and engaging experiences and interactions with children.</p> <p>Understands that children’s development includes several inter-related domains (physical, cognitive, social/emotional) that influence each other and develop simultaneously.</p> <p>Comprehends and begins to apply major child development theories.</p>
<i>DL 1b: Fostering Healthy Attachment and Relationships</i>	<p>Recognizes that positive adult-child relationships are a foundation for all healthy development and learning.</p>	<p>Has a beginning understanding of the concept of attachment as it relates to children’s growth and development.</p>	<p>Recognizes the importance of and understands the concept of attachment and begins to apply it in interactions with children.</p> <p>Uses knowledge of attachment to contribute ideas when collaboratively planning with teacher.</p>
DL 2: Influences on Development and Learning			
<i>DL 2a: Individual Needs and Differences</i>	<p>Understands and values that each child has unique characteristics including developmental levels, learning styles, temperament, and interests.</p> <p>Follows classroom schedules and routines as they are adapted for individual children.</p>		<p>Uses knowledge of individual children’s development and unique characteristics to contribute ideas when collaboratively planning with teacher.</p> <p>Recognizes that children’s development and learning can be impacted by a myriad of short and long-term risk factors such as poverty, illness, changes in family structure, crises within families, etc.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 3: DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
<i>DL 2b: Identified Special Needs</i>	<p>Understands and values that an inclusive environment benefits children with and without special needs.</p> <p>Under the direction of the teacher, follows specific requirements for children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs).</p>		<p>Understands that there is a wide range of identified special needs.</p> <p>Understands that risk factors, developmental delays, or disabilities may indicate a need for early intervention or special education.</p> <p>Understands that there is a process of accessing special education services for children with developmental delays or disabilities.</p>

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 4: Curriculum

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Early childhood teacher assistants collaborate with teachers to develop meaningful curriculum that promotes positive development and learning for each child. They understand that classroom curriculum is influenced by a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the children, their families, and the community and that meaningful curriculum is developed through a collaborative process that integrates information about children, families, and the community.

In addition, early childhood teacher assistants understand the learning goals within each of the nine domains for early learning including physical health and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, literacy, cognitive development, mathematics, science, social studies, and creative arts. They know that each domain has various components that are important to curriculum as reflected in current literature.

Early childhood teacher assistants also think about how young children learn as they collaboratively plan with the teacher. They understand that each child is unique and learns in a distinctive way and they know that play is a primary vehicle for learning in all domains. They also understand that positive relationships with children, families and teachers are a foundation for healthy development and learning. Early childhood teacher assistants are able to assist the teacher in preparing and organizing the classroom environment, materials and daily schedule so that it supports children's development and learning in all domains.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Content			
<i>A 1a: Physical Health and Motor Development</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for physical health and development is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children’s learning goals in the domain of physical health and development.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children’s learning in the domain of physical health and development.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of physical health and development important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of physical health and development is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of physical health and development as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>
<i>A 1b: Social/Emotional Development</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for social/emotional development is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children’s learning goals in the domain of social/emotional development.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children’s learning in the domain of social/emotional development</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of social/emotional development important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of social/emotional development is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of social/emotional development as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Content (cont'd)			
<i>A 1c: Language Development</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for language development is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of language development.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of language development.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of language development important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of language development is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of language development as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Understands that Dual Language Learners must have opportunities to progress in their home language as they are learning English.</p>
<i>A 1d: Literacy</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for literacy is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of literacy.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of literacy.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of literacy important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of literacy is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of literacy as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Content (cont'd)			
<i>A 1e: Cognitive Development</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for cognitive development is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of cognitive development.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of cognitive development.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of cognitive development important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of cognitive development is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of cognitive development as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>
<i>A 1f: Mathematics</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for mathematics is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of mathematics.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of mathematics.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of mathematics important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of mathematics is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of mathematics as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Content (cont'd)			
<i>A 1e: Science</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for science is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of science.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of science.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of science important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of science is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of science as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>
<i>A 1f: Social Studies</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for social studies is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p>Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of social studies.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of social studies.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of social studies important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p> <p>Understands that development in the domain of social studies is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences.</p> <p>Understands the learning goals and definitions of social studies as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>
<i>A 1g: Creative Arts</i>	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum for creative arts is organized around the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.</p>	<p>Begins to independently recognize opportunities to support children's learning in the domain of creative arts.</p>	<p>Understands the various components (scope) of creative arts important to infant, toddler and preschool curriculum as reflected in current literature.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Content (cont'd)			
A 1g: Creative Arts (cont'd)	Follows teacher direction to support children's learning goals in the domain of creative arts .		Understands that development in the domain of creative arts is sequential and is dependent on infant, toddler, and preschooler experiences. Understands the learning goals and definitions of creative arts as outlined in the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards.
A 2: Process	Understands that play is a primary vehicle for learning in all domains. Understands that learning is enhanced by interactions with others. Begins to understand that children learn through interaction with materials as they explore, problem-solve, and discover. Begins to understand that each child is unique and learns in a distinctive way.	Facilitates children's play as a vehicle for learning in all domains. Facilitates peer interactions to support learning.	Applies knowledge of how children learn to individualize interactions with children. Is able to apply knowledge of how children learn to collaboratively plan with teacher.
A 3: Teaching and Facilitating	Understands that positive interactions and relationships with children, families, and teachers are a foundation for healthy development and learning and development.	Develops and maintains relationships with children through consistent and responsive interactions. Understands that various instructional approaches should be used to meet individual children's needs.	Understands and utilizes a variety of instructional approaches including, but not limited to, modeling, facilitating, scaffolding, and co-constructing. Has a beginning awareness or understanding of current theoretical perspectives and research specific to teaching and facilitating.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 4: CURRICULUM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 4: Context	Begins to understand how the environment, materials, and daily schedules support children’s learning and development in all domains.	Assists teacher to prepare and organize the environment including materials, schedule, and implementation of curriculum.	Utilizes information from the environment, materials, and daily schedules to collaboratively plan with teacher and prepare and organize the environment.
A 5: Building Meaningful Curriculum	<p>Understands that classroom curriculum is influenced by a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the children, their families, and the community.</p> <p>Understands that meaningful curriculum is developed through a collaborative process and integrates information about children, families, and the community.</p>	Supports the development of a meaningful curriculum by communicating relevant information to the teacher about children, families, and the community.	Collaborates with the teacher to develop meaningful curriculum.

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 5: Assessment

Last Updated 10/4/2013

Early childhood teacher assistants understand that a comprehensive system of assessment is a critical component of an effective program that supports children's development and learning. They know that assessment data is used to inform curriculum planning, monitor a child's growth and development, share information with families and others, and identify children that might benefit from special services. They also understand that assessment data is collected from a variety of sources, using multiple strategies, while children are engaged in meaningful activities in natural settings.

Early childhood teacher assistants understand the difference between subjective and objective observations and under the direction of the teacher they can 1) collect and document child assessment data with increasing objectivity and 2) share information with the teacher about children's classroom experiences using objective language. With teacher direction, they can also begin to modify interactions with children based on assessment data and take responsibility for collecting child assessment data according to the classroom assessment plan.

Finally, they understand that ethical practices and sound professional standards guide assessment practices and they are vigilant about maintaining the confidentiality of children's assessment information.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 5: ASSESSMENT

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
A 1: Knowledge of Early Childhood Assessment	Begins to understand that assessment is used in early childhood classrooms to inform practice.	Understands that assessment data is used to inform curriculum planning, monitor a child’s growth and development, share information with families and others, and identify children who might benefit from special services. Understands that assessment data is collected from a variety of sources, using multiple strategies, while children are engaged in meaningful activities in natural settings.	Understands that responsible assessment is ethically grounded and guided by sound professional standards. Understands that observation, documentation and other appropriate assessment tools and strategies are used to guide individualized instructional planning.
A 2: Contributing to Classroom Assessment	Maintains confidentiality of children’s assessment data. Begins to understand the difference between subjective and objective observations.	Under the direction of the teacher, collects and documents child assessment information with increasing objectivity.	In partnership with teacher, begins to take responsibility for collecting child assessment data according to the classroom assessment plan.
A 3: Using Assessment Data to Inform Interactions with Children and Contribute to Curriculum Planning	Begins to share information with the teacher about children’s classroom experiences using objective language.	Under the direction of the teacher, begins to modify interactions with children based on assessment data.	

Teacher Assistant Core Competency Domain 6: Professionalism

Last Updated 10/4/2013

Early childhood teacher assistants identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession inclusive of all settings serving children birth through age eight⁵. They understand that a research-based body of core knowledge and competencies serve as a foundation for the profession and that this knowledge and the associated competencies are used in all aspects of professional involvement with children, families, and colleagues. They understand that children learn and develop best in environments with positive relationships between teachers and children as well as between adults in the classroom demonstrated through respectful communication.

There are also certain expectations for behavior. Early childhood teacher assistants must know and use ethical guidelines such as the NAEYC Code of Ethics and other professional standards related to early childhood as they implement strategies in a program, and work closely with children, families, colleagues, and the community. They also value the diversity of lifestyles, languages, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds that can be found in all aspects of our society and actively work to reduce bias in the classroom.

Early childhood teacher assistants show a commitment to ongoing professional development and learning by engaging in and utilizing a wide variety of professional development resources to improve their practice. This includes participating in collaborative learning experiences and receiving support from or mentoring by others in the field.

⁵ Please note that the field defines early childhood as birth to age eight. However, this document is articulating competencies for classroom-based early childhood educators working with children from birth to age five.

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 6: PROFESSIONALISM

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
P 1: Ethical Standards and Professional Guidelines	<p>Is aware of and complies with program policies and ethical standards that pertain to professional conduct.</p> <p>Knows and obeys relevant laws such as those pertaining to child abuse.</p> <p>Establishes and maintains appropriate professional boundaries.</p> <p>Understands that ethical and professional guidelines apply to all adults in the classroom.</p>	<p>Utilizes a professional code of ethics in making professional decisions.</p> <p>Identifies potential conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas and proactively seeks support in resolving issues.</p> <p>Ensures that ethical and professional guidelines are followed by all adults in the classroom.</p>	<p>Serves as a role model and promotes compliance with ethical standards and professional guidelines in the workplace.</p>
P 2: Valuing Diversity	<p>Acknowledges that bias exists and begins to reflect on one’s own biases.</p>	<p>Is aware of and models respect for differences in family structure, languages, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds among children, family, and colleagues.</p>	<p>Identifies ways diversity is a valuable asset to the classroom and program.</p> <p>Actively works to reduce bias in the classroom by challenging own bias; and children’s assumptions.</p>
P 3: Commitment to Ongoing Professional Development	<p>Understands the importance of ongoing professional development.</p> <p>Develops and carries out a personal professional development plan in collaboration with a supervisor.</p> <p>Responds to feedback provided.</p>	<p>Develops and carries out a professional development plan that includes goals and strategies based on available time and resources with increasing autonomy.</p> <p>Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of supervisor/mentor.</p> <p>Utilizes a variety of resources and relationships to improve practice (e.g., constructive criticism).</p>	<p>Values reflection as a tool for professional development and begins to reflect on own performance to modify and improve work with children, families and colleagues.</p> <p>Accesses resources and participates in activities offered by professional organizations.</p> <p>Initiates and advocates for own professional development activities.</p>

TEACHER ASSISTANT DOMAIN 6: PROFESSIONALISM (CONT'D)

	Level 1	Level 2 (All skills in Level 1 plus)	Level 3 (All skills in Level 1 and 2 plus)
P 4: Fostering Respectful, Collaborative Relationships with Other Professionals	<p>Establishes and maintains relationships of respect, trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and cooperation with colleagues.</p> <p>Communicates in a respectful manner with classroom teacher through the day.</p>		<p>Recognizes the professional achievements of colleagues.</p> <p>Addresses conflict and/or concerns in a collegial and confidential manner.</p>

APPENDIX A: Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX B: Glossary of Terms

Attachment Theory – A theory that describes the dynamics of long-term relationships between humans and emphasizes the important tenet that an infant needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for healthy development to occur.

Authentic Assessment – The process of observing, recording and otherwise documenting the work children do and how they do it as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child. Authentic assessment is grounded in accurate, valid, information obtained in a variety of ways in the actual situations in which a child plays, works, and learns and is continuous and integrated into the ongoing life of the classroom (NAEYC).

Career Pathway - A Career Pathway is a framework for how an individual can advance in a specific occupation over time through a combination of formal education, work experience and professional development.

Co-constructing – Learning or working collaboratively with another person on a problem or task.

Core Knowledge and Competencies – The essential skills and knowledge that educators who work with young children in a classroom setting need to know, understand, and be able to do to promote young children's healthy development and learning.

Cultural Competence – Awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of children and their families (National Education Association).

Developmentally appropriate – Programs, activities, and environments that are designed on the basis of: knowledge of how children develop and learn; knowledge of the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children; and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Developmental Milestones - A developmental milestone is an ability that is achieved by most children by a certain age. Developmental milestones can involve physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication skills such as walking, sharing with others, expressing emotions, recognizing familiar sounds and talking. There are four basic categories for developmental milestones: 1) physical milestones, 2) cognitive milestones, 3) social and emotional milestones, and 4) communication milestones. While most of these milestones typically take place during a certain window of time, each child is unique. These developmental abilities also tend to build on one another. More advanced skills such as walking usually occur after simpler abilities such as crawling and sitting up have already been achieved.

Early Intervention – Comprehensive educational programs for young children birth to age 3 who are at risk or who have been identified as having a disability.

Early Learning and Development Standards – Expectations for the learning and development of young children.

Emergency Plans – All plans designed or undertaken to minimize the effects of a hazard upon people, to deal with the immediate emergency conditions that would be caused by the hazard, and to repair or restore vital utilities or facilities destroyed or damaged by the hazard.

Ethical Dilemma – A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.

Facilitating – Offer short term assistance to help a child achieve the next level of functioning.

Family – Members of a unit who see themselves as a family, including individuals related by blood or marriage as well as those who have made a commitment to share their lives.

Family Engagement – A meaningful family-program partnership that is reciprocal, strengths-based, and actively supports children’s development and learning across settings.

Family Systems Theory - A framework that emphasizes the notion that everything that happens to any family member affects all other family members.

Formal Assessment – Assessment strategies which meet established criteria for reliability and validity and are characterized by administration under controlled conditions by trained examiners. Standardized tests are one type of formal assessment.

IEP – Individualized Education Plan. An IEP should incorporate effective practices and focus on families’ priorities and concerns, as well as children’s development and interests.

IFSP – Individualized Family Service Plan. An IFSP should incorporate effective practices and focus on families’ priorities and concerns, children’s and families’ individual needs, and address the support services, nutrition services, and case management needs.

Intentional Learning Experiences - A learning experience designed with knowledge and purpose to ensure that young children acquire the knowledge and skills (content) they need to succeed in school and life. Intentional learning experiences integrate and promote learning in all domains using both child-guided and adult-guided experiences.

Learning Environment – All of the physical surroundings and social and cultural conditions that physically and/or emotionally affect children and their ability to learn, grow, develop and survive.

Mandated Reporter – Anyone who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. A report is required when: A person has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or a physician or nurse practitioner has cause to suspect that a child brought to them for treatment is an abused or neglected child, or he or she determines that a child under age 12 is suffering from any sexually transmitted disease.

Mentor – A knowledgeable and experienced individual who provides guidance to beginning and experienced professionals to develop skills and reflection of practice. Various strategies of the mentor may include observation and feedback, demonstration of skills, conferencing, and resource provider.

Mentoring – The guiding and nurturing of a less experienced individual by a knowledgeable and experienced individual. Mentoring may occur in a variety of settings, including between professionals in a program, across programs, and with teacher candidates or interns within one’s classroom.

Modeling – Displaying for children a skill or desirable way of behaving in the classroom, through actions only or with cues, prompts, or other forms of coaching.

Objective Assessment – Assessment that is uninfluenced by emotions or personal biases.

Observation – Gathering information through one or more of the five senses for the basic purpose of determining a child’s developmental level, interests and learning style.

Open-ended materials – Materials that can be used in multiple ways and allow for children’s construction, concrete solving of problems, imagination and creativity.

Role Model – any person who serves as an example and whose behavior is emulated by other.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome – is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history. (*Willinger et al, 1991*).

Screening – A brief procedure to determine whether a child requires further and more comprehensive evaluation.

Separation Anxiety – The process of a young child’s sensory interpretation of noticing a prime care giver or parent’s leaving or is out of sight, causing the child to experience anxiety and insecurity.

Special Health Needs – Children with special health care needs are defined by the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) as “those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.

Standardized Tests – Standardized tests are tests with high levels of reliability and validity that have prescribed methods for administration where scoring is based on comparisons with other children or groups of children. This standard administration is necessary to obtain valid results; therefore, the skill of the examiner is of particular importance when using this type of assessment. Standardized test scores allow for fair comparisons among individual or groups of test takers.

Universal Precautions – Universal precautions is the term used for the guidelines that were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the 1980s to reduce the spread of infection to health care providers and patients in health care settings.

APPENDIX C: Additional Resources

2010 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Initial & Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, <http://www.naeyc.org/ncate/standards>

2011 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment, http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ethical_conduct

Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorCertification/BecominganEducator.aspx/>

Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/EarlyLearningStandards.aspx/>

Rhode Island Child Care Licensing Standards, <http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/licensing.php>

Rhode Island Department of Education Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Approval, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx>