Foundations of the Teaching-Learning Process

This first part of your course consists of nine assignments and provides background and theory to students entering the field of early childhood education. In this lesson, you’ll learn some of the best practices for working with children.

Children’s personalities are formed primarily by their families. That’s one reason why every child is different. Children reflect their family values in the way they live and the customs they observe. Teachers must always remember that children are part of a family.

ASSIGNMENT 1

First, read this introduction to Assignment 1. Next, read the Preface on pages xvii–xxvii in the Foundations of Early Childhood Education textbook. Then, read pages 4–18 of Chapter 1, “Early Childhood Education as a Profession.”

In this first assignment, you’ll learn about the importance of early childhood education and the different types of programs. The need for programs is increasing. Extensive research indicates that there are multiple benefits to early childhood education. One benefit is that children with challenging lives are able to receive learning opportunities that they wouldn’t normally get at home.

Another purpose served by child care programs is compensation, which is seen mainly in publicly funded programs. Compensatory programs are designed to provide crucial experiences that are missing from the lives of some children. Head Start, a federally funded program designed for children of low-income families, is a good example of such a program. The goal of a compensatory program is to provide experiences that will increase a child’s opportunity for success and achievement in society. Head Start also provides nutritional and health services.
Early childhood education programs serve children from birth to age eight. These ages include infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and schoolchildren. These programs are either home- or center-based. The main purpose of most child care programs is to give children safe and loving care in an atmosphere that’s developmentally appropriate. The term *developmentally appropriate* means that the program has learning activities that are suitable for a child’s age, stage of development, and interests.

Early childhood education programs can be categorized in several ways. However, they don’t always fit neatly into just one category. Programs can be separated into full- and half-day programs. They can also be separated by where they’re located, whom they service, or how they’re funded.

Early childhood education is getting much public attention at the present time. Early childhood education is a common topic of discussion in the media because of *child advocates*, who speak out to educate the public about children’s issues. These advocates let both the public and the lawmakers know when families and children are in need. Organizations such as the Children’s Defense Fund and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have successfully fought for improvements in child care, such as mandatory child care for children with disabilities, Head Start, and health care for poor children.

**After you’ve carefully read the assigned pages in *Foundations of Early Childhood Education*, complete **Self-Check 1. When you’re sure that you understand the material from Assignment 1, move on to Assignment 2.**
Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education, you’ll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you’ve just read by completing a “Self-Check” exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you’ve studied so far. Please complete Self-Check 1 now.

1. How is the dominant culture in a group traditionally viewed?

2. What age range of children do early childhood educators specifically deal with?

3. Name three child advocacy groups.

4. List the three knowledge bases used in NAEYC’s statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice to guide professionals in making decisions regarding the best way to educate young children.

5. Name the two types of early childhood program that are classified by where they actually take place.

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ASSIGNMENT 2

Read this introduction to Assignment 2. Then, read pages 18–37, beginning with “Child Development History,” in Chapter 1.

Early childhood education is a profession that has strong leadership, a proud history, a code of ethics, and regulatory organizations. To become an early childhood professional, you’ll need education and training to provide you with knowledge about best practices in early childhood education, or the best way to help children learn. You need to understand professionalism and adopt the professional code of ethics for early childhood educators. To understand the role that early childhood educators play in the development of young children today, you’ll also need to know something about the history of early childhood education.