

Working Definitions for Professional Development in the Early Childhood Workforce

Unless otherwise noted, definitions are taken from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. Multiple sources have been included to facilitate a collaborative understanding for all elements of a professional development system.

Children with High Needs means children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from Low-Income families or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on “Indian lands” as that term is defined by section 8013(6) of the ESEA; who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.

Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group.¹

Comprehensive Assessment System means a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments, each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used, that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development in order to help Early Childhood Educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions and that conforms to the recommendations of the National Research Council reports on early childhood.

A Comprehensive Assessment System includes, at a minimum--

- (a) Screening Measures;
- (b) Formative Assessments;
- (c) Measures of Environmental Quality; and
- (d) Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions.

Consultation is a collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning knowledge and skills and an individual or group from one program or organization. Consultation facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern—a program-/organizational-, staff-, or child-/family-related issue—or addresses a specific topic.¹

¹NAEYC and NACCRRRA ECE Prof. Dev. Training and TA Glossary 2011
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/NAEYC_NACCRRRA_TrainingTAGlossary.pdf

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Curriculum or Curricula - Planned, sequenced program of study and daily activity/opportunity based on what is age appropriate, the skill levels of children, and what is deemed important by *Louisiana's Continuum of Early Learning and Developmental Standards*. For infants and toddlers, the curriculum should use a routines-based approach and emerges from the children's interest.²

Early Childhood Education Professional Development is a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses education, training, and technical assistance.

Some of the early childhood workforce have college degrees in early education, some have degrees in closely related fields, some are enrolled in degree programs, some are taking college courses, some are graduates of technical high schools or technical school programs, some have no previous related education-and almost all of them are engaged in training every year.

An individual may engage in all types of PD (education, training, and TA) over the course of a career. Professional development helps early childhood professionals in all roles progress along diverse career pathways that build and reward increasing knowledge and skills.

All professional development (education, training, and TA) should

Over 36 states have professional development systems for the early childhood field. Wheelock College describes these common elements of professional development systems:³

1. A defined core body of knowledge and competencies.
2. A career lattice that defines levels of training and education for various roles, and that makes pathways visible.
3. Practitioner registries that verify qualifications.
4. Training delivery systems that support articulation, and that link community-based training with higher education.
5. Formal training and trainer approval process to ensure consistency and quality of training.
6. Centralized information systems to coordinate regional training notices.
7. Specialized credentials and certificates, such as Infant/Toddler, Director, and School Age Professional.
8. Leadership development and mentoring programs.
9. Compensation and benefits initiatives that are linked to education and training accomplishments.

² Improving Infant and Toddler Child Care: A Strategic Plan for Louisiana 2010-2011
<http://www.brightstartla.org/resources>

³ Ohio's Professional Development Network website www.OPDN.org and Wheelock College, Boston, Massachusetts

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Early Childhood Educator means any professional working in an Early Learning and Development Program, including but not limited to center-based and family child care providers; infant and toddler specialists; early intervention specialists and early childhood special educators; home visitors; related services providers; administrators such as directors, supervisors, and other early learning and development leaders; Head Start teachers; Early Head Start teachers; preschool and other teachers; teacher assistants; family service staff; and health coordinators.

Early Learning and Development Program means any (a) State-licensed or State-regulated program or provider, regardless of setting or funding source, that provides early care and education for children from birth to kindergarten entry, including, but not limited to, any program operated by a child care center or in a family child care home; (b) preschool program funded by the Federal Government or State or local educational agencies (including any IDEA-funded program); (c) Early Head Start and Head Start program; and (d) a non-relative child care provider who is not otherwise regulated by the State and who regularly cares for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting. A State should include in this definition other programs that may deliver early learning and development services in a child's home, such as the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting; Early Head Start; and part C of IDEA⁴.

Early Learning and Development Standards means a set of expectations, guidelines, or developmental milestones that:

- (a) Describe what all children from birth to kindergarten entry should know and be able to do and their disposition toward learning;
- (b) Are appropriate for each age group (e.g., infants, toddlers, and preschoolers); for English learners; and for children with disabilities or developmental delays;
- (c) Cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness; and
- (d) Are universally designed and developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

Louisiana has developed these standards as a continuum with each part addressing specific issues for each age group, yet in total alignment along essential domains of school readiness and child development.

Louisiana's Continuum of Early Learning and Development Standards:

<http://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=356>

Louisiana's Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Three (Revised September 2011)
Louisiana's Guidelines for Working with Three Year Olds
Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children

⁴ Note: Such home-based programs and services will most likely not participate in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System unless the State has developed a set of Tiered Program Standards specifically for home-based programs and services.

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Early Learning Intermediary Organization means a national, statewide, regional, or community-based organization that represents one or more networks of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State and that has influence or authority over them. Such Early Learning Intermediary Organizations include, but are not limited to, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; State Head Start Associations; Family Child Care Associations; State affiliates of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; State affiliates of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Early Childhood; statewide or regional union affiliates that represent Early Childhood Educators; affiliates of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association; the National Tribal, American Indian, and Alaskan Native Head Start Association; and the National Indian Child Care Association.

Essential Data Elements means the critical child, program, and workforce data elements of a coordinated early learning data system, including--

- (a) A unique statewide child identifier or another highly accurate, proven method to link data on that child, including Kindergarten Entry Assessment data, to and from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and the coordinated early learning data system (if applicable);
- (b) A unique statewide Early Childhood Educator identifier;
- (c) A unique program site identifier;
- (d) Child and family demographic information;
- (e) Early Childhood Educator demographic information, including data on educational attainment and State credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information;
- (f) Program-level data on the program's structure, quality, child suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, work environment, and all applicable data reported as part of the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
- (g) Child-level program participation and attendance data.

Essential Domains of School Readiness means the domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills), and social and emotional development.

These domains are in alignment with the accepted domains of child development and with all parts of Louisiana's Continuum of Early Learning and Development Standards, as well as the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. For more information on alignment of all documents in the continuum, please see that section in Louisiana's Early Learning Guidelines.

Evidence Based Practice is defined as "A decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values."⁵

⁵ Buysse, V. and Wesley, P.W. (Eds.). (2006). *Evidence-based practice in the early childhood field*. Washington, DC: ZERO to THREE Press.

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Formative Assessment (also known as a classroom-based or ongoing assessment) means assessment questions, tools, and processes that are

- (1) Specifically designed to monitor children's progress in meeting the Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) Valid and reliable for their intended purposes and their target populations;
- (3) Linked directly to the curriculum.

The results of these assessments are used to guide and improve instructional practices.

In Louisiana's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, in the content area of *Child Observation and Assessment*, the following definitions can be found:

Observation - Gathering information through one or more of the five senses for the basic purpose of determining a child's individual needs and learning style.

Assessment – The process of gathering information through the use of multiple tools and resources for the purpose of making decisions.⁶

Kindergarten Entry Assessment means an assessment that--

- (a) Is administered to children during the first few months of their admission into kindergarten;
- (b) Covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (c) Is used in conformance with the recommendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood; and
- (d) Is valid and reliable for its intended purposes and for the target populations and aligned to the Early Learning and Development Standards.

Results of the assessment should be used to inform efforts to close the school readiness gap at kindergarten entry and to inform instruction in the early elementary school grades. This assessment *should not* be used to prevent children's entry into kindergarten.

Measures of Environmental Quality means valid and reliable indicators of the overall quality of the early learning environment.

Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions means the measures obtained through valid and reliable processes for observing how teachers and caregivers interact with children, where such processes are designed to promote child learning and to identify strengths and areas for improvement for early learning professionals.

Mentoring is a relationship-based process between colleagues in similar professional roles, with a more-experienced individual with adult learning knowledge and skills, the mentor, providing guidance and example to the less-experienced protégé or mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness.⁷

Peer-to-peer Technical Assistance fosters the development of relationship-based

⁶ Louisiana's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, currently in draft form, February 2012

⁷ NAEYC and NACCRRRA ECE Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary 2011 http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/NAEYC_NACCRRRA_TrainingTAGlossary.pdf

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learning and support communities among colleagues, often in like roles. Peer-to-peer TA is based on the premise that a significant expert knowledge base exists in the field and that peers who have solved challenges on the ground have developed tools and strategies that can be shared with their colleagues.⁷

Professional Development Advising (sometimes referred to as career or PD counseling) is a one-on-one process through which an advisor offers information, guidance, and advice to an individual about professional growth, career options, and pathways to obtain or meet required qualifications.⁷

Program Standards means the standards that serve as the basis for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and define differentiated levels of quality for Early Learning and Development Programs. Program Standards are expressed, at a minimum, by the extent to which--

- (a) Early Learning and Development Standards are implemented through evidence-based activities, interventions, or curricula that are appropriate for each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers;
- (b) Comprehensive Assessment Systems are used routinely and appropriately to improve instruction and enhance program quality by providing robust and coherent evidence of--
 - (1) Children's learning and development outcomes; and
 - (2) program performance;
- (c) A qualified workforce improves young children's health, social, emotional, and educational outcomes;
- (d) Strategies are successfully used to engage families in supporting their children's development and learning. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and adult and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development;
- (e) Health promotion practices include health and safety requirements; developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow up; and the promotion of physical activity, healthy eating habits, oral health and behavioral health, and health literacy among parents; and
- (f) Effective data practices include gathering Essential Data Elements and entering them into the State's Statewide Longitudinal Data System or other early learning data system, using these data to guide instruction and program improvement, and making this information readily available to families.

⁷ NAEYC and NACCRRA ECE Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary 2011 http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/NAEYC_NACCRRA_TrainingTAGlossary.pdf

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School Readiness Preparing children for academic learning begins in infancy and is based on all aspects of child development. Readiness for school includes a foundation of social and emotional competence and a curiosity to continually seek out “what, why, and how.” True readiness is not a measurable set of criteria but a foundation for later learning built on rich experiences in high-quality, relationship-based settings.⁸

In response to House Resolution 179 (2010), The Department of Education and the Department of Social Services, now DCFS, provided a report on School Readiness that includes the following:

School readiness describes the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities that best promote student success in kindergarten and beyond. Each component – children, families, schools, and communities – plays an essential role in the development of school readiness. No one component can stand on its own.⁹

As children approach the entrance of Kindergarten, expectations are aligned more closely with the content areas in the K-12 curriculum and as identified in Louisiana’s Kindergarten Readiness definition:¹⁰

LOUISIANA’S KINDERGARTEN READINESS DEFINITION

To ensure that all Louisiana’s children enter kindergarten ready to learn, this definition focuses on “readiness of the child” across the domains of child development, as identified in the *Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children*.

At the beginning of kindergarten, it is expected that children will demonstrate:

- › Cognitive abilities, which include knowledge and skills in:
 - early literacy, such as phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabetic understanding, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and emergent writing
 - basic numeracy concepts, such as rote counting and number awareness, sorting, classifying, comparing, patterning, and spatial relationships
- › Basic science concepts, such as making observations, exploring the world using their senses, and using appropriate scientific vocabulary related to topics
- › Basic social studies concepts, such as self-awareness and their relationship to family and community, and an awareness of money and time
- › Response to and participation in music, movement, visual and dramatic arts experiences and activities
- › Abilities, either assisted or unassisted, that show an awareness of health, hygiene, and environmental hazards, in addition to gross and fine motor skills
- › Social and emotional competencies, including self-regulation, self-identity, self-reliance, respect for others, and interpersonal skills
- › Approaches to learning, such as reasoning and problem-solving, engagement, persistence, and eagerness to learn

⁸ Adapted from Louisiana’s Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Three

http://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/ChildDevEarlyLearning/Louisiana%20Continuum/20120203_BirthToThree.pdf

⁹ For the full report, visit

http://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/OFS/CCAP/22511_school_readiness_report.pdf

¹⁰ For the full Readiness brochure, visit <http://doe.louisiana.gov/ide/uploads/18418.pdf>

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Screening Measures means age and developmentally appropriate, valid, and reliable instruments that are used to identify children who may need follow-up services to address developmental, learning, or health needs in, at a minimum, the areas of physical health, behavioral health, oral health, child development, vision, and hearing.

Technical Assistance (TA) is the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients.¹¹

Training is a learning experience, or series of experiences, specific to an area of inquiry and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills. A planned sequence of training sessions comprises a training program.¹²

The term **Universal Design for Learning**¹³ means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that:

- (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and
- (b) reduces barriers, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient. (Higher Education Opportunity Act.)

Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework means a set of expectations that describes what Early Childhood Educators (including those working with children with disabilities and English learners) should know and be able to do. The Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, at a minimum,

- (a) is evidence-based;
- (b) incorporates knowledge and application of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, child development, health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families;
- (c) includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children;
- (d) incorporates effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement;
- (e) includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors; and
- (f) incorporates feedback from experts at the State's postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators.

¹¹ NAEYC and NACCRRA ECE Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary 2011

http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/NAEYC_NACCRRA_TrainingTAGlossary.pdf

¹² NAEYC and NACCRRA ECE Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary 2011

¹³ Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) - What is UDL? (<http://www.cast.org/research/udl>)