PROF102- Elements of Professionalism in Early Childhood Education - Handout

Welcome to PROF102

The goal of this course is to provide teachers and directors with a greater understanding of what constitutes professionalism in the early childhood industry and how professionalism affects program quality.

Course Objectives:

By taking notes on the handout and successfully answering assessment questions, participants will meet the following objectives as a result of taking this course:

- Define professionalism
- Identify NAEYC Core Values and other important character traits related to professionalism
- Identify the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness
- Identify training requirements and possible educational goals for ECE professionals
- Identify the relationship between center policies and professionalism
- Define Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Identify the importance of emotional intelligence
- Identify recommended practices for developing strong teacher-family partnerships
- Identify roles of a child advocate

During this course, participants are expected to reflect and write about topics related to their own learning and teaching experiences in relation to course content.

References:


Profession, Professional, Professionalism: What does it all mean?

Profession:

Professional:

Professionalism:

The Elements of Professionalism

Here are four key elements of professionalism that every ECE professional should address:

1. Personal Element
2. Education Element
3. Practice Element
4. Public Element

The Personal Element

Use the space provided to record important information from this section of the course.

Character

The Core Values outlined in NAEYC’s position statement are:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

Statement of Commitment

- As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself 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.
- 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.
- Be 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.
- Integrity:

**Workplace Culture**

**The Mark of a True ECE Professional**

**Self-Reflection**

How is it that you get to know yourself? Deb Curtis, author of the article “A Thinking Lens for Reflective Teaching,” encourages you to ask yourself these questions:

- How am I reacting to this situation and why?
- What in my background and values is influencing my response to this situation and why?
- What adult perspectives (i.e., standards, health and safety, time, goals) are on my mind?
- What values, philosophy and goals do I want to influence my response?
- How can I build on previous experiences of individuals and the group?
- Which learning goals could be focused on here?
- What action should I take from my teaching repertoire and why?
- What other perspective could enhance my understanding of the meaning of this situation (perspectives of families, coworkers, colleagues)?
- What theoretical perspectives and child development principles could inform my understandings and actions?
- As you continue to reflect, think about these questions in relationship to examining the physical, social, and emotional environment:
  - How is the organization and use of the physical space and materials impacting this situation?
  - In what ways are the routines, adult behaviors and language undermining or strengthening the children’s (or staff’s) ability to demonstrate their competence?
  - How could we strengthen relationships here?

Furthermore, you should seek the child’s point of view by reflecting on these questions:

- How do I understand the child’s point of view in this situation?
- What might the child be trying to accomplish?
- What developmental themes, ideas, or theories might the child be exploring?
In addition, Weaver recommended the following practice for coping with emotionally charged situations:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The Educational Element

Use the space provided to record important information from this section of the course.

Knowledge

Specialized Training

Ongoing Professional Development

Professional development experiences can be based on developing knowledge or skills.

Knowledge:
Skills:

The following seven steps are necessary to ensure effective forward progress:

1. Expect all early childhood educators to be lifelong learners. Research reports that children’s optimal development and educational outcomes are positively correlated with their teachers having specialized early childhood pre-service and in-service training.
2. Understand the resistance to change. Some administrators are afraid that once the teachers are supported in improving their professional credentials that they will have a hard time retaining them once they have earned them.
3. Partner with teachers to persevere toward credentialing. Supporting teachers sends a message that this is an important endeavor.
4. Plan systematic, multi-stage orientation for new teachers. Start with need to know basics and deepen over time as the new employee gains knowledge and requires more information.
5. Align professional development with nationally recognized standards. The NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation function as benchmarks to guide professional development.
6. Integrate individual and program-wide professional development. Administrators can help teachers see the relationship between their individual goals and the program-wide goals by meeting to discuss goals.
7. Provide sustained, in depth consultation and continuous professional development. Supervision sessions, teacher meetings, and team discussions can foster a climate of collaboration and innovation.

Try This!

Action Plan

No matter how professional development is achieved, creating an action plan is one way of using new information in a positive and personally meaningful way. To create an action plan you need to do the following:

1. Personalize: write down one or two ideas that are the most meaningful to you.
2. Make realistic commitments: set goals to put these new thoughts into action.
3. Document your plan: write down your goals and the steps you will need to take to achieve them, along with deadlines.
4. Build in accountability: swap your goals with a colleague and contact each other to discuss your progress.
5. Assess your progress: set a date every month to do a progress check on your goals and make adjustments to action steps if need be.
6. Celebrate your success: acknowledge and celebrate the completion of each step.

The Practice Element

Use the space provided to record important information from this section of the course.

Philosophy and Mission

- Vision

- The mission statement
Developmentally Appropriate Practices

NAEYC defines *developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)* as follows:

*Developmentally appropriate practice, often shortened to DAP, is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development.*

*DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are (by stage of development), both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.*

In its position statement on DAP, NAEYC outlines practices that promote young children’s optimal learning and development. The position includes guidelines that address decisions that early childhood professionals make in five key (and interrelated) areas of practice:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

For more information, NAEYC’s 2009 Position Statement on DAP is available free for download at www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf.

Emotional Intelligence

**So exactly what is emotional intelligence?**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability...
Goleman’s model focuses on EI as a set of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. He outlines the following five main components of EI:

1. **Self-awareness:**

2. **Self-regulation:**

3. **Social Skills:**

4. **Empathy:**

5. **Motivation:**

**Five Skills for Building Emotional Intelligence**

1. **Learn to reduce stress quickly.** Quickly calming yourself relieves stress and helps you stay balanced, focused, and in control. Realize when you are stressed, identify your specific stress response (for example, you get angry or depressed), and discover stress busting techniques that work for you (for example, focus on your breathing, listen to music or a waterfall, or look at uplifting images).

2. **Recognize your emotions and keep them from overwhelming you.** Connect to your emotions by being aware of them from moment to moment and realizing how you typically react.

3. **Connect emotionally with others by using nonverbal communication.** Sometimes what you say verbally is not as important as how you say it with your body language (for example, how you sit, how close you stand, how loud your voice is, eye contact, facial expression). You also need to accurately read and respond to the nonverbal cues other people send to you.

4. **Use humor and play to stay connected in challenging situations.** Humor, laughter, and play are natural ways to diffuse a situation and keep things in perspective. They also help reduce stress and lighten the mood.

5. **Resolve conflicts positively and with confidence.** There will always be conflict and differences of opinion in every relationship, but resolving the conflict in constructive ways can strengthen trust between people.

**Family Partnerships**

In her book *From Parents to Partners*, Janis Keyser suggests the following tips for building two-way communication:

**Be curious:**

Start conversations with a question.

Use open-ended questions.

Consider answering questions with a question.
Share information about yourself.

Observe families’ preferred styles and modes of communication.

Let parents know you appreciate their input, personally and publicly.

Involve parents and families.

Try This!

Here are some ideas that you could use to enrich your communication area:

- A small couch or bench for parent and child to transition into the classroom or to sit and talk at the end of the day.
- A Parent Lending Library with parenting books, family magazines, educational videos or DVD’s, children’s books that relate to the theme, books on tape, etc.
- A photo album with pictures of children involved in learning and playing together.
- A small bulletin board with a short synopsis of what the children did each day and a question for the parent to ask the child about on the way home.
- A basket with articles, activity ideas, and newsletters. This could also be a plastic holder attached to the wall or a pocket folder hung on the bulletin board.
- An easel located near the classroom door with announcements or pictures of the children so parents can see it when entering and exiting.
- A bulletin board for parents to post information about their travels, their business, and their culture to share with other families.
- A media center which could include a computer or DVD player for parents to view educational and parenting videos in this area.
- Video tape classroom activities and send video clips to parents through email with a caption of what their child is learning.

The Public Element

Use the space provided to record important information from this section of the course.

Child Advocate

But opportunities for child advocacy extend well beyond your typical job responsibilities. As an ECE, you can:

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If you want to make a difference at the policy level, keep these tips in mind:

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**Early Childhood Expert**