



Performance at its Core

A key component to any professional development system is the identification of what professionals should know and be able to do at various levels of education, training and role responsibilities within the early care and education, school-age and youth development fields.

Content Areas & Core Knowledge

After careful review of initiatives and systems from other states, a task force of the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC), has identified seven content areas of focus for professional growth and development:

- Human Growth and Development
- Health, Safety and Well Being
- Observation and Assessment
- Curriculum or Program Design
- Interactions, Relationships and Environments
- Family and Community Relationships
- Personal and Professional Development

While there are seven main content areas, three strands are woven throughout each. They include:

- Children with special needs
- Culture and diversity
- Individual and group guidance

PDAC is developing a set of professional knowledge, skills and disposition competencies that will be used as a framework for professional development at different levels of education, training and role responsibilities in the early care and education, school-age and youth fields in Illinois.

All children and their families will benefit from this work as Gateways to Opportunity continues its goal of creating a highly qualified work force in Illinois.

Why Identifying Core Knowledge Is Important

Practitioners or students are able to:

- Evaluate current levels of knowledge, skills and dispositions
- Identify areas of need for professional development
- Determine what training or courses meet specific needs

Directors or administrators are able to:

- Specify levels of training/education for individual jobs
- Assist staff in developing professional development plans
- Plan educational or training opportunities that will best serve the needs of staff
- Establish a salary scale based upon levels of competency

Higher education faculty members or administrators are able to:

- Design courses to ensure that students completing programs are competent
- Coordinate content of courses to facilitate transfer and articulation

Trainers or training organizations are able to:

- Understand the knowledge, skills and dispositions
- Evaluate audiences to determine levels of knowledge, skills and dispositions and plan training accordingly
- Build an evaluative component into trainings so that participants are able to demonstrate their competency upon completion

Parents are able to:

- Ask about the qualifications of caregivers, providers, teachers and administrators when seeking care for their children
- Let legislators know they care about the quality of practitioners who care for their children

Advisors are able to:

- Assist in developing professional goals and objectives based on needed competency
- Assist in locating courses or trainings to obtain or meet certain levels of competency
- Assist in keeping professionals up to date on current credentials and their requirements

The seven content areas and their related indicators of professional competence are directly aligned with the following:

- The Illinois Early Childhood Education Content-Area Standards
- The Illinois Professional Teaching Standards
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children's Standard for Early Childhood Professional Preparation
- The Illinois Director Credential competencies
- The Illinois Birth to Three Standards
- The Early Intervention Developmental specialist requirements
- The Child Development Association requirement
- The Head Start Performance Standards
- The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children Personnel Standard for Early Education and Early Intervention
- The NAA Standards

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