

Paradise Valley Community College's Early Childhood Education Conceptual Framework

MISSION

To collaborate, generate, and innovate.

The mission of the Paradise Valley Community College Early Childhood Education (ECE) program is to create a learning community dedicated to changing the landscape of early childhood education through collaborations that generate new understandings and theories that in turn create innovative practice.

Collaborate-We've developed collaborative processes for constructing program experiences. Shifting the focus of control to the participants develops deeper understandings and results in the development of new strategies, techniques, and initiatives (Allen & Blythe, 2004, p. 27.). The collaborative process is practiced with Early Childhood Education students as well as in interdisciplinary work with colleagues and community members.

Generate- This model embraces experiences that identifies the knowledge of practitioners, the knowledge from theory, research, and best practice, and creates new knowledge through collaborative work. It is a generative model that informs the field, rather than a restrictive model that limits knowledge to what is currently known or thought to be known. In this generative spirit we've found this anonymous quote a useful guide, "Collaboration is not about gluing together existing egos. It's about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room."

Innovate-Given the generative nature of collaboration, new strategies, thinking, and processes are created. It is our desire to create and offer the community an alternative narrative or possibility for early childhood education.

Early Childhood Education Program Characteristics

- Flexible, reflective, and intentional practices
- Contextual awareness
- Variety of experiences
- Grounded in research and theory, but not static

We strive to provide all Early Childhood Education Associate Applied Science (AAS) graduates with opportunities to construct the knowledge and applicable skills necessary to articulate and implement the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 2010 AAS Standards for Initial & Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs

1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. Building Family and Community Relationships
3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families
4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families
5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum
6. Becoming a Professional
7. Engaging in meaningful field experiences

WHO WE ARE

We are vibrant, committed, experienced, and energized by our work. We are actively engaged in professional development and study. We serve on local, state, and national early childhood education advisory panels and professional development committees. We are members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and state and local affiliates. We live and work in the community we serve. Our current research interests include studying the intersection of Early Childhood Education and the Fine and Performing Arts, bilingualism/bi-literacy, the work of the educators of Reggio Emilia, the language of materials, the nature of learning, the development of theories, and organizing for social justice.

Our Context

We live in a state that is currently ranked 45th in the nation in outcomes for children including children living in poverty, educational, health, and family well-being. (The Kids Count Data Book, 2018). We experience daily encounters with the struggles of young children and families, educators and administrators, programs and policies, budgets and funding streams. Nevertheless, we are committed to changing the early childhood landscape in our community and beyond by providing opportunities for observing, discussing, and reflecting upon current conditions. It is our belief that providing opportunities that provoke our thinking will enable us to become powerful advocates for children, families, and programs. Our goal is to provide a transformative educational experience and offer opportunities to construct knowledge and secure the resources needed to become effective leaders in the field of early childhood education. We look forward to teaching and learning with diverse populations. Our students join our courses with differences in educational experience, cultural perspectives, range of interests, and individual talents. We strive to create and maintain a learning community dedicated to improving the status, the strength, and the skills of students, faculty, and the larger local community of early childhood educators. We are hopeful and positive due to the successes of past work.

Our Philosophical Foundations

The philosophical foundation of our program has both breadth and depth. Each faculty member has extensive, discipline-specific knowledge and has been influenced and inspired by theorists and practitioners in his or her own specialized area of expertise. Collectively, we are in our heart and practice, social constructivists. We develop knowledge and understanding through our own experiences in relationship with others. Therefore, we work to construct transformative learning experiences in a social context.

A review of our course competencies and supporting materials reveal the names of Bronfenbrenner, Dewey, Erikson, Piaget, Malaguzzi, Maslow, Montessori, and Vygotsky. We also look to the works of Sue Bredekamp, Jerome Bruner, Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, Paulo Freire, Howard Gardner, Lella Gandini, Ken and Yetta Goodman, Elizabeth Jones, Lilian Katz, Malcolm Knowles, Sam Meisels, Peter Moss, Sonia Nieto, Vivian Gussin Paley, Carla Rinaldi, Louise Derman-Sparks, Diane Trister Dodge, Veia Vecchi, Sylvia Ashton Warner, and David Weikart for slightly more contemporary early childhood educational ideas, insights, and inspirations. We hold a high image of all learners as capable and competent. Our philosophy of adult learning is rooted in liberatory, progressive education.

OUR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Authenticity

Definition: Being genuine in relationships, intentions, and in actions to support our image of children, educators, and families. “An unimpeded operation of our true identity in everyday life experiences and resistance to social pressures to function in an unauthentic way.” (Conceptual framework group definition.)

Actions

- Continuous self-reflection
- Co-construction
- Innovation
- Continuous program evaluation
- Revisiting vision and values
- Intentionality in our decisions
- Searching for origins and original thinking

Transparency

Definition: Clear and concise, honest and open, making visible.

Actions

- Making work and thinking visible via websites, print materials, with consideration of elements of design
- Dialogue to find and identify voice
- Structuring collaborations and communities of learners to make the intent and the work open

Inclusiveness

Definition: Hearing all voices, understanding other perspectives or experiences, reaching out and being responsive.

Actions

- Ensuring all members of the community are aware of possibilities
- Making resources available and accessible
- Actively seek and welcome multiple perspectives
- Ensuring learning experiences are accessible
- Ensuring the opportunity to declare the right for accommodations
- Ensuring the opportunity to give and receive an opinion

Stewardship

Definition: Respectful and responsible use of all resources; people and people's knowledge, and utilizing what is available.

Actions

- Emphasize that education is more than training and practice for employment
- Establish full participation in our communities where future graduates explore their profession, social issues, and engage in meaningful curriculum
- Teach skills and knowledge and foster dispositions needed for self-reflection on practice, the profession, engagement, and continuous learning
- Better utilize existing college and community resources
- Reduce printing and provide resources in a digital format

Collaboration

Definition: Practicing dialogues with each other, with materials, and with our community. Seeking different strengths and belief in the co-construction of knowledge.

Actions

- Coming and being prepared
- Working with others to develop stronger relationships, clarity, and perspective to the ECE community
- Bringing in external expertise and perspectives to inform the community
- Adopting and embracing technologies for enhancing creativity, accessibility, sharing, and dialogue
- Researching additional resources in the north Phoenix area that are potential collaborators
- Presenting for other organizations

Sustainability

Definition: A culmination of the previous values and remaining relevant and responsible to the community, progressive in the vision, adaptable to the concrete and abstract, and engaging in advocacy

Actions

- Utilize Communities of Practice as the center of our work
- Understand funding
- Continue the good work
- Serve as pedagogical leaders
- Develop pedagogical leadership

Significant informative and influential resources

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