



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING CORE KNOWLEDGE AREAS

The core knowledge areas (CKAs), as defined by the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) Division of Early Learning (DEL), outline the 13 areas of specific knowledge and skills professionals need to work effectively with all young children and families. They are aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation,¹ the Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards² and the Federal Head Start Program Early Learning Outcomes Framework.³

The CKAs are listed below with *some examples of topics* within each area:

1. Child Growth and Development
 - a. Principles of child growth and development
 - b. Domains and stages of development (physical, language, cognitive, social-emotional)
 - c. Links between various aspects of development and learning

2. Observing, Documenting and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families
 - a. Observation and assessment of children’s behavior
 - b. Screening instruments for all domains (physical, language, cognitive, social-emotional)
 - c. Use of observations and assessments effectively to support children and families
 - d. Recognition of the types and signs of children’s mental health issues

3. Health, Safety and Nutrition
 - a. Physical development, health and safety
 - b. Nutrition
 - c. Types and signs of abuse, neglect, stress and trauma
 - d. Developmental consequences of abuse, neglect, stress and trauma
 - e. Responsibilities and procedures for reporting abuse and neglect

¹ The NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation may be found at naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/standards-professional-preparation.

² The CDA Competency Standards should not be confused with the CDA Subject Areas. A good visual differentiating the two may be found in OSSE’s “Obtaining Your Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential Using Quorum: A Guidebook,” found at osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/OSSE%20Quorum%20CDA%20Guidebook.pdf.

³ The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework may be found at eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework.

4. Curriculum
 - a. Planning and implementation of a developmentally appropriate curriculum that advances all areas of children's learning and development
 - b. Approaches to learning/logic and reasoning; communication and language; literacy; mathematics; science and engineering; social studies; the arts; social and emotional development; and physical development, health and safety
 - c. Consideration of culturally valued content and home experiences
 - d. Strategies that offer choices and foster curiosity, problem solving and decision-making
 - e. Planning and implementation of a curriculum that is aligned with the DC ELS

5. Inclusive Practices
 - a. Characteristics of children with varying developmental delays and disabilities
 - b. Adaptation/differentiation of curricula to include children with developmental delays and disabilities in all classroom activities
 - c. Interventions to enhance the growth and development of children with developmental delays and disabilities and development of the Individualized Family Service Plan or the Individualized Education Plan

6. Learning Environments
 - a. Creation of learning environments that are responsive to the diverse needs, abilities and interests of young children
 - b. Strategies to implement learning environments that support developmentally appropriate practices (infants, toddlers, twos, preschoolers, school age)
 - c. Adaptation/differentiation to fully include children with special needs

7. Building Family and Community Relationships
 - a. Principles and strategies that view families as functional and resilient with diverse values, cultures, unique temperaments and learning styles
 - b. Establishment of relationships and communication with families and other community systems that are productive, supportive and proactive
 - c. Recognition that a child's family is the child's first teacher/educator
 - d. Issues, challenges and services regarding mental health

8. Diversity: Family, Language, Culture and Society
 - a. Culture, language and ethnicity as a positive influence on a child's development
 - b. Helping young children understand and appreciate different cultural traditions
 - c. Science of language acquisition, research-based language acquisition models and best practices in teaching dual-language learners

9. Program Management, Operation and Evaluation
 - a. Approaches and techniques to plan, organize and use available resources
 - b. Effective strategies for working productively with staff and community resource individuals and agencies
 - c. Techniques to conduct program evaluation and to implement program improvements
 - d. Interpersonal development and communication including team building, collaboration and conflict management principles and skills
 - e. Fiscal planning and management

10. Professionalism and Advocacy
 - a. Scope of the ECE profession
 - b. Impact of federal, state and local standards, policies, regulations and laws which govern and impact children, programs and ECE professionals
 - c. Approaches to evaluate one's professional skills and need for PD
 - d. Responsibility to work with other ECE professionals, parents and the community to discuss and improve policies, laws, standards and practices that impact children, programs and the profession

11. Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health
 - a. Communication techniques for guiding young children toward self-direction and confidence
 - b. Guidance and management strategies that support developmentally appropriate practices in fostering social-emotional development
 - c. Approaches to providing supportive relationships with children and to foster positive peer-to-peer interactions
 - d. Approaches to meeting the mental health needs of all children

12. Personal Development and Self-Care
 - a. Strategies for self-reflection, self-care and whole-person development
 - b. The benefits of mindfulness in both one's personal and professional life
 - c. Approaches to work-life balance
 - d. Stress management and managing difficult times and trauma
 - e. Developing and improving emotional intelligence

13. Financial Literacy
 - a. Understanding personal saving, investing, budgeting and borrowing
 - b. Understanding and navigating health insurance coverage
 - c. Retirement planning for one's own future