Theme – Preparing Inquiring Educators: Knowledge, Understanding, Application

1. **TITLE AND NUMBER OF CREDITS:** ELEC 636/CIEC 636 Foundations in Early Childhood Education: Learning Environments and Authentic Assessment (3 graduate credits)

2. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course focuses on preparing and maintaining the early childhood learning environment. Arranging space and materials, ensuring safety and health, and scheduling and organization of time within the context of developmentally appropriate curriculum are the components of the classroom climate. Students will explore ways in which to ensure that the environment reflects and supports the child’s home environment, diversity, languages spoken, special needs, constructivism, cooperative learning, emergent literacy, play, and various learning styles. Students will examine strategies for enhancing social and emotional development in a psychologically supportive environment. Additionally, students will examine formal and informal tools for observing and assessing children’s learning and development.

3. **PREREQUISITES:** None

4. **COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The graduate early childhood teacher will:
   1. Demonstrate an understanding of how to plan and set up preschool and kindergarten learning environments and centers, and primary (grade one-three) classrooms that support developmentally appropriate practice, integrate content areas, and foster active learning.
   2. Identify and describe how to plan and set up classrooms that reflect multicultural perspectives, anti-bias materials, non-native English language learners, special needs, and family involvement.
   3. Demonstrate an understanding of scheduling in order to meet the diverse needs of children at various ages and stages of development, including children with special needs, and those from LEP and ESL backgrounds.
   4. Design and use strategies to integrate curriculum, materials, and room arrangement to allow for independence; quiet and active spaces; technology; display of children’s work; and a variety of individual, small group, and whole group, child centered activities in a print rich environment.
   5. Identify, describe and exhibit an understanding of classroom strategies to support social-emotional development and to create a physically and psychologically safe and healthy classroom environment.
   6. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of safety and health issues as they relate to the environment, schedule and good practices.
   7. Utilize appropriate informal and formal practices for observation and authentic assessment.

5. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The student will:
   1. Engage in reflective inquiry about developmentally appropriate practices and apply that knowledge and understanding by observing and assessing a classroom environment, and making recommendations for improvement.
   2. Demonstrate knowledge of current professional standards and trends by examining classroom materials and equipment and developing a prop box for a particular learning center or project.
   3. Construct a child portfolio using observations, anecdotes, and work samples.
4. Complete a group research project exploring diversity with teaching implications including fostering social-emotional development.

6. COURSE CONTENT:

A. The developmentally appropriate classroom - understanding children’s stages of development and what classroom activities and practices are appropriate for different ages and individual needs including children with special needs and those from LEP and ESL backgrounds.

   Learning Theories: Montessori, Dewey, Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky, Gardner, Maslow

B. Organizing space and materials in developmentally appropriate classrooms (for three and four year olds, kindergartens, and grades one-three).
   1. Floor plan – permanent structures, furniture, play units, labeling, storage, shelves, etc.
   2. Interest areas – library, sand/water, dramatic play, blocks, art, writing, manipulatives, math, science, music, computers
   3. Whole group, small group, and individual areas
   4. Spaces for large constructions
   5. Materials, books, and supplies
   6. Outdoor spaces
   7. Displaying children’s work

C. Selecting appropriate materials
   1. Multicultural perspectives and anti-bias materials
   2. Natural materials that engage our senses
   3. Flexible and open-ended materials
   4. Supporting curiosity and intellectual engagement
   5. Supporting symbolic representation
   6. Durability, variety, and change

D. Integrating curriculum and room arrangement: Curriculum Models
   1. Project approach
   2. High/Scope
   3. Reggio Emilia
   4. Creative Curriculum
   5. Direct Instruction: Curiosity Corner/Success For All
   6. Developmental-Interaction: Bank Street Approach
   7. Montessori method
   8. Head Start

E. Social-emotional development
   1. Setting limits
   2. Rules and consequences
   3. Self confidence and self direction
   4. Competence and self-esteem
   5. Identifying and expressing feelings

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6. Initiative vs. guilt
7. Community and positive interactions
8. Pro-social behaviors and group routines

F. Daily schedule
1. Arrivals
2. Transitions
3. Snacks and eating
4. Rest time
5. Group meetings
6. Active/passive times
7. Story time
8. Balance of free choice activity time vs. teacher facilitated activities
9. Integrating literacy, math, social studies, and science into daily activities

G. Integrating children with special needs, children at risk, and non-native English language learners
1. Who are the children with special needs?
2. Inclusion
4. Adapting the environment
5. Individualized Education Plan
6. ESL and LEP students
7. Issues of children at-risk

H. Working with families
1. Ongoing communications (newsletters, calendars, notes, etc.)
2. Back-to-school night
3. Family conferences
4. Cultural and language diversity
5. School/home activity packs
6. Book exchanges
7. Holiday celebrations
8. Informal communications (breakfasts, movie nights, dinner-discussions, etc.)
9. Family bulletin boards

I. Safety and Health Issues
1. Safety concerns indoors and out
2. Establishing rules and routines
3. Nutrition
4. Child Abuse & Neglect
5. Sanitation & Health Practices
6. Safety & Health Education

7. TEACHING/LEARNING METHODS:
1. Lecture and discussion
2. Cooperative learning discussions
3. Individual and small group projects
4. Observations and evaluations of learning environments videotapes and multimedia presentations

8. EVALUATION METHODS:
1. SLO #1 – Modified ECERS Classroom observation and evaluation and recommending changes for improvement.
2. SLO #2 – In-class evaluations and discussions of classroom materials. Develop a prop box for use in an individual learning center or to support a project.
3. SLO #3 – Child study report
4. SLO #4 – Group research project linking diversity and social-emotional development
5. Attendance and participation in discussions and readings
9. RECOMMENDED TEXTS/READINGS:

10. PREPARED BY: Dr. Holly Seplocha 11/04

11. DEPARTMENT APPROVAL DATE: 11/30/04

12. BIBLIOGRAPHY:


