Gateways to Opportunity Content Areas

**Human Growth and Development**
Knowledge of human development and growth is at the core of professional practice. Professionals understand emerging principles, theories and knowledge of growth and development as a foundation for all aspects of their work with children, youth and families. They understand the mutual influences among different domains of development and the contexts in which individuals develop. These understandings provide the foundation for interactions with children, youth and families and for implementation of appropriate practices in programs.

**Health, Safety and Well-Being**
Physical health, mental health and safety are the foundations for development and learning in children and youth. Professionals collaborate with families, health and other professionals to provide safe, healthy environments to foster the physical, cognitive, language and social-emotional development of children and youth. They take responsibility for providing multiple opportunities for children, youth and families to learn positive habits and decision-making skills that will ensure their health, safety and well being.

**Observation and Assessment**
Knowledge gained from informal and formal observations and assessments provide an understanding about children, youth and families, as well as the means for program development, evaluation and accountability. Professionals follow ethical practices when using a variety of age, developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate formal and informal research-based assessments to gather and share information about an individual's skills, abilities, interests and needs and to monitor an individual's progress. They use information gathered through assessments and knowledge to continually evaluate, reflect on and inform their approaches and program practices.

**Curriculum or Program Design**
Program design and curriculum development are a collaborative and dynamic professional endeavor. Professionals have broad knowledge of appropriate program design, curriculum and/or goals for children, youth and families. They plan and implement bias-sensitive, integrated programs that build on the abilities and interests of children, youth and families and support their learning and development in all areas.

**Interactions, Relationships and Environments**
Professional relationships with children, youth and families are built on thoughtful interactions across a broad range of environments. These environments are designed to be sensitive to bias and to individual and cultural differences, to support learning and development and to intellectually stimulate children, youth and families. Through appropriate strategies and interactions, professionals build appropriate relationships with each child and youth along with the families. The strategies professionals use actively engage all individuals in their development and learning and support positive interactions and relationships among children, youth and families.

**Family and Community Relationships**
Positive, collaborative partnerships with families, colleagues, and community play a critical role in the development, learning and well being of children and youth. Professionals apply their knowledge of family and social systems to create reciprocal relationships that recognize and enhance the contributions of all participants. They respect multiple perspectives and demonstrate integrity in conveying their own personal and professional perspectives and values.

**Personal and Professional Development**
Personal and professional development provides the foundation for best practices when working with children, youth and families. Professionals are committed to ongoing development and continually reflect on and take responsibility for their own values, choices and actions. They honor diversity in cultures, beliefs and practices and advocate for children, youth and families. They demonstrate the highest standard of individual conduct, personal accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, consideration of the rights of others and the highest principles of good business practices and relationships.

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The seven core courses in early childhood education are designed to create a fully blended curriculum that prepares practitioners to support the development and learning of children who are culturally, linguistically and ability-diverse.

Why were the Seven Core Courses designed?
- To provide continuity of course offerings and quality across the community college system.
- To provide intentional alignment to the Gateways to Opportunity® Seven Content Areas, the basis for Gateways Credentials.
- To simplify community college processes to become entitled to offer Gateways to Opportunity Credentials.
- To ensure that practitioners have the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to support each and every child and their family, inclusive of diversity in culture, language and ability.

Who developed the Seven Core Courses?
- These courses represent the efforts of early childhood general, special, and bilingual two- and four-year faculty throughout the state of Illinois.

What is the pedagogical foundation behind the Seven Core Courses?
- They reflect current evidence-based practices and research.
- They align with the Gateways to Opportunity Seven Content Areas, which are aligned with the following:
  - Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS)
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation
  - Standards for Early Childhood Special Education Council for Exceptional Children—Division of Early Childhood Education
  - Additional program quality guidelines, program outcomes, and professional standards include, but are not limited to:
    - Illinois Birth to Three Program Standards
    - Head Start Program Outcomes
    - Illinois' Early Intervention Credential
    - National Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

- The Seven Core Courses are based on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, NAEYC Standards for Professional Preparation, and the DEC Professional Preparation Standards.

Heartland Equity and Inclusion Project (HEIP) Outline

Introduction to Early Childhood Education
This survey course provides an overview of early childhood care and education including historical and cultural perspectives, organization, structure, programming, and evidence-based practices. Professional and evidence-based practices of highly-qualified early childhood educators are outlined with an emphasis on their ability to enhance development and learning of each and every child between the ages of birth and eight. Considerations for diversity of culture, language, race, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and ability will be included. Students will spend a minimum of 15 hours of observation in diverse early childhood settings.

Child Growth and Development
This course provides an overview of the theory and principles of human growth and development from conception through adolescence. Content includes an in-depth study of the interrelatedness of physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects of development. Development is studied in the context of family, gender, culture, language, ability, socioeconomic, diversity, and society. Special emphasis will be on the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, and Gardner. Field experiences are required.

Early Childhood Curriculum Development
This course focuses on relationships among developmental theory, philosophy, practice, and development of curriculum based on the needs and interests of young children including those who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse. The principles involved in planning, implementing and evaluating developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curriculum for young children are studied. The analysis of a wide range of early childhood curriculum models is emphasized. Field experiences are required.

Observation and Assessment of Young Children
This course is designed to demonstrate to the student how to do authentic, alternative, classroom based assessment on young children and how to appropriately use standardized test information. It will further provide the student with the knowledge and skills to interpret and use the information gained to plan curriculum that is responsive and supportive of children's learning and development. Students will have the opportunity to engage in assessment processes through means of classroom observations, providing each student with a stronger understanding of child development skills. Students learn about and explore a variety of age, individually, linguistically and culturally appropriate formal and informal assessments to gather and share information on each child's skills, abilities, interests and needs, birth through age 8. Includes field experiences.

Child Development Practicum I
This course deals with the practical application of evidence-based practices based on early childhood education principles and theories. Students work with diverse young children and families in high-quality, culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse early childhood settings under the supervision of a site supervisor and a college course work supervisor. Field experiences are required.

Health, Safety & Nutrition for the Young Child
This course provides an overview of the health, safety and nutritional needs of young children and early childhood practices to ensure the health and well-being of each child in a group setting. Content includes roles and responsibilities of adults in meeting children's diverse needs, the promotion of healthy lifestyle practices, understanding common childhood illnesses and injuries, meeting health, nutrition and safety standards, and planning nutritious meals that are appropriate for each child.

Child, Family and Community
This course focuses on the diverse needs of the child within the context of family, school and community. It will examine the interplay of diverse cultures, lifestyles, abilities, language and communication with the role of the early childhood environment and other community institutions. Students will gain an understanding of their professional role in supporting evidence-based practices that strengthen respectful, collaborative family/child partnerships through effective use of community and family resources.

Heartland Equity and Inclusion Project (HEIP) Outline provided by Heartland Community College