

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is seeking public comment on **proposed revisions** to the *Workforce Knowledge and Competencies* (WKC) for early childhood professionals. The WKC help guide the development of training, course content, and professional learning plans statewide.

The proposed revisions were created by a work group that included trainers, center-based staff, technical college and university faculty, child care resource and referral agency staff, and representatives from other state agencies and organizations. Work group members were experts in areas such as child development, working with children with disabilities, adult learning, best practices using early learning standards, afterschool and youth development, assessment, and working with dual language learners. Representatives from the National Association for Young Children and the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children have reviewed the proposed revisions to ensure alignment with their organization's teacher preparation standards.

Comments on the content of proposed revisions should be emailed to proflearning@decals.ga.gov by July 14, 2017.

Questions can also be emailed to proflearning@decals.ga.gov.

Guiding Principles

Georgia's Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Revision Team developed a set of guiding principles to inform WKC revisions. Their goal was to create competencies that:

1. Recognize the needs of children and families as the primary consideration
2. Recognize that children are born ready to learn
3. Recognize the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) as the framework for guiding learning in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms
4. Apply to early childhood and school-age professionals who provide care and education in a variety of settings
5. Respect and honor the important contribution of early childhood and school-age professionals to children's growth and development
6. Respect and honor the important impact families have on children's growth and development
7. Recognize that early childhood and school-age professionals enter the workforce with a variety of educational experiences and skills
8. Are based upon evidence-based practices on the developmental and learning needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children
9. Include core competencies, skills, and observable behaviors needed for professionals in a variety of roles and take into account the continuous development of skills from novice to expert professionals
10. Encompass the skills necessary for early childhood and school-age professionals to work with children with disabilities in an inclusive and meaningful way
11. Are culturally responsive and respectful as well as linguistically appropriate and relevant
12. Include health and safety skills and practices for early childhood and school-age professionals, recognizing the importance of health and safety as an integral component of learning
13. Are designed to be reader-friendly and useful to a broad audience

Competency 1: Promoting Child Development and Learning

The work of early childhood and school-age professionals is grounded in child development. These professionals use their understanding of young children's developmental characteristics to create environments and interactions that are healthy, respectful, and stimulating for each and every child.

School-age professionals should also refer to Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards Element 3: Environment and Climate

1.1: Using knowledge of young children's characteristics, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and needs to plan appropriate and responsive learning experiences

- a. Applies knowledge of developmental milestones to support children in all developmental domains
- b. Plans hands-on learning experiences and activities that provide each and every child with opportunities to learn through play; movement; and their own interests, cultures, and abilities
- c. Creates a universally designed environment that intentionally supports and is responsive to the needs of each and every child, including dual language learners, children with disabilities, and children experiencing chronic stress or adversity
- d. Demonstrates an understanding of child development theories that support continuity of care, brain development, and foundations for learning
- e. Utilizes technology, including assistive technology, and media for young children appropriately
- f. Identifies, plans for, and supports the appropriate stages of bilingual development in young dual language learners
- g. Integrates children's cultural contexts and everyday life experiences into plans and programming

1.2: Using knowledge of the multiple influences on development and learning to create inclusive and responsive learning environments

- a. Supports children's learning by fostering responsive relationships with adults and peers
- b. Demonstrates an awareness that children's behavior and ability to learn are impacted by culture; language; health status; disabilities; economic conditions; and exposure to chronic stress, adversity, and trauma
- c. Uses universal design principles to plan for individualization based on children's developmental variations and learning needs
- d. Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness in teaching practices, with the understanding that family settings, choices, and community characteristics impact children's learning

1.3: Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and stimulating learning environments and relationships

- a. Develops a sense of security within the classroom environment that creates connectedness, fosters individual expression, and encourages independence
- b. Reflects on and addresses personal biases to ensure an anti-bias approach to development and learning, as well as to relationships with children and families
- c. Designs a program and environment that uses home language maintenance strategies and is inclusive of home language and culture

- d. Creates a flexible environment that allows for child-driven questioning and exploration
- e. Maintains appropriate ratios and adequate supervision of the classroom environment in a way that meets children's individual needs
- f. Recognizes that all children can learn and that each and every child is capable of success

1.4: Creating emotionally and physically safe environments for children

- a. Recognizes the importance of children's physical and emotional well-being as a basic and necessary foundations for all growth, development, and learning
- b. Adheres to state licensing rules and regulations that address health, nutrition, physical safety, child abuse prevention and intervention, infectious disease control, hazardous materials, medication administration, and emergency preparation
- c. Provides physical activity for each and every child that aligns with recommended best practices in early education and school-age programs
- d. Creates an environment in which children feel safe to express their emotions and where teachers are emotionally responsive and model empathy
- e. Implements clear expectations and limits that create safe spaces for children, both physically and emotionally
- f. Provides resources to families for necessary early intervention for social and emotional and/or mental health services
- g. Creates a classroom environment that reflects knowledge of lighting, noise level, safe sleep practices, and a balance of soothing and stimulating spaces

Competency 2: Building Family and Community Relationships

Children's growth and development is heavily influenced by family and community. The term *family* means different things to different people and families can be formed through birth, adoption, marriage, fostering, or choice. Early childhood and school-age professionals respect various family structures, encouraging family and community involvement in the learning of each and every child.

School-age professionals should also refer to Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards Element 9: Family and Community Partnerships

2.1: Fostering family engagement in the child's educational experiences

- a. Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of family life on the development of the child and the implications for learning and teaching
- b. Establishes and maintains frequent and ongoing contact with families through the exchange of relevant information on the child's development and learning in culturally respectful ways
- c. Maintains a welcoming environment and creates opportunities to engage families in classroom activities
- d. Ensures that communication with families takes place in both verbal and written formats as appropriate
- e. Communicates with families in ways that are responsive to the family's needs and respectful of language and communication preferences

2.2: Developing partnerships with families

- a. Engages in family-centered practices that encourage family involvement in the learning experience in a manner that respects family preferences, cultural experiences, and views on education
- b. Empowers families as active partners in the decision-making process and ensures the program values families in a non-judgmental way
- c. Respects and continues to learn about cross-cultural differences as they relate to family structure and configurations, language, expectations, values, ways to communicate, child-rearing practices, interpersonal relationships, and socioeconomic realities
- d. Involves families and community members in contributing to the learning environment, such as sharing talents, skills, interests, cultural experiences, and field trips
- e. Employs practices that support networking between families and adjusts practices as needed to support networking
- f. Researches and collaborates to find new strategies for working with families in order to support children's learning and development
- g. Respects the family's right to accept or decline services
- h. Maintains and honors confidentiality of private family matters

2.3: Utilizing community resources

- a. Actively seeks out and uses community resources to enhance the curriculum and interactions with children and families
- b. Demonstrates knowledge of community assets and resources, actively assisting each family in seeking and accessing those community resources and support services as needed
- c. Actively seeks out community resources and information in support of dual language learners
- d. Actively seeks out resources and information on the impact of disabilities on families and children, the characteristics of specific disabilities, and how to best accommodate learning and development for individual children with disabilities
- e. Evaluates resources needed to address family strengths, stressors, concerns, and potential conflicts
- f. Maintains a collaborative relationship with relevant community and social support systems

Competency 3: Observation, Assessment, and Developmental Screening

The use of evidence-based, developmentally responsive assessments and screening tools are crucial to providing appropriate environments and experiences for children. Effective early childhood and school-age professionals understand both formal and informal assessments, how to use assessment data to inform development of learning experiences, and when to make recommendations for further evaluation for children who need additional intervention and support.

3.1: Using observations and assessments to plan learning experiences

- a. Uses observation data to inform planning and provide appropriate learning experiences for each and every child
- b. Assesses across all domains of learning, for example Physical Development and Motor Skills; Social and Emotional Development; Approaches to Play and Learning; Communication, Language, and Literacy; and Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
- c. Uses assessment and observation tools or strategies that are developmentally responsive in regards to the age and developmental needs of each and every child

- d. Uses ongoing assessment and observations to regularly monitor children’s progress, to identify children’s strengths and needs, and to adjust learning experiences accordingly
- e. Recognizes the unique qualities of young dual language learners and uses that knowledge to select and use appropriate assessment and observation strategies and tools, assessing in the child’s home language when possible

3.2: Using developmental screenings to support development and learning

- a. Uses developmental screening instruments and tools appropriately
- b. Uses data from evidence-based developmental screeners to make referrals for further evaluation for children who may need additional intervention and support

3.3: Sharing, reporting, and communicating assessment, observation, or developmental screening data while maintaining supportive and respectful family partnerships

- a. Includes families and relevant others in the assessment and/or developmental screening process and identifies and includes their preferences for assessment/screening processes
- b. Gathers information or input from relevant others in the child’s life to understand the child’s abilities and skills in daily activities, routines, and environments such as home, center, and community
- c. Regularly shares assessment and/or developmental screening outcomes with families and relevant others in clear, meaningful, respectful, and supportive ways while also inviting feedback and input from families and relevant others
- d. Partners with families to make referrals to appropriate agencies in a timely manner when needed
- e. Maintains confidentiality in regards to observation, developmental screening, and assessment

Competency 4: Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children

By using developmentally effective approaches to connect with children, early childhood and school-age professionals are able to better support both cognitive and social/emotional growth and development. Children’s learning is supported when early childhood and school-age professionals are intentional and responsive in ways that reflect knowledge of and respect for the individual child as well as knowledge of the developmental progression of skills and concepts as represented in applicable learning and development standards (e.g., Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards for birth to five).

School-age professionals should also refer to Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards Element 4: Relationships

4.1: Developing positive relationships with each and every child

- a. Notices, acknowledges, and responds to children in a consistent, supportive, and culturally and linguistically responsive manner, based on an understanding of each and every child’s unique development, needs, cues, and signals
- b. Supports children in developing interpersonal relationships with peers and adults
- c. Creates a warm, supportive, inclusive, and culturally responsive learning climate by modeling and encouraging pro-social behaviors and by valuing and appropriately incorporating each and every child’s home culture and language into the shared culture of the group

- d. Uses everyday routines and interactions, including caregiving activities such as diapering, toileting, feeding, and mealtimes, as opportunities to develop relationships with children and to support curricular goals
- e. Teaches social and emotional skills to promote child engagement and learning

4.2: Using a broad repertoire of developmentally responsive teaching and learning approaches, guided by applicable learning and development standards and individualized for each and every child

- a. Intentionally and systematically implements an integrated approach that addresses all developmental domains and content areas; is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive; and is based on children's characteristics, needs, interests, and ideas
- b. Reflects on assessment data and upon individual professional learning, education, and practice to adapt activities and learning experiences as needed to meet each and every child's outcomes or goals
- c. Uses systematic instructional strategies to promote child engagement and learning
- d. Implements the frequency, intensity, and duration of learning experiences needed to provide the level of support required to achieve the child's individual outcomes or goals, including implementing Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and other individual intervention plans as needed
- e. Obtains support and resources to improve teaching practices to meet the needs of each and every child
- f. Uses discussions, activities, and play experiences to promote higher order thinking skills, oral language development, creative exploration, and concept development
- g. Understands the value of play in children's learning and creates an environment that supports opportunities for meaningful play experiences
- h. Supports children's learning and understanding by intentionally linking concepts and activities to one another, to previous learning, and to children's lives outside the learning environment

4.3: Intentionally planning and preparing a learning environment that nurtures each and every child's initiative, encourages active exploration of materials, supports engagement with activities, and encourages interactions with others

- a. Creates and maintains a learning environment that reflects the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and individual diversity of children and families
- b. Creates and maintains learning environments (both indoor and outdoor) that support each and every child's learning and developmental needs
- c. Chooses and arranges materials and equipment based on each and every child's learning and developmental needs
- d. Selects technology, including assistive technology, and media that are appropriate for each and every child and her/his learning goals
- e. Designs and implements a balanced, developmentally responsive learning environment (e.g., balance of structured and unstructured time, child-initiated and teacher-directed experiences, and active and quiet activities)
- f. Provides open-ended activities that foster curiosity, exploration, and problem solving appropriate to children's developmental levels
- g. Manages care routines, play time, transitions, and instructional time effectively
- h. Communicates expectations for behavior clearly and consistently

- i. Monitors the learning environment and uses proactive strategies to promote social/emotional competence and prevent challenging behaviors from developing or escalating
- j. Uses appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to effectively support children with challenging behaviors
- k. Understands the impact of language delays on behavior and provides a supportive environment that effectively promotes social/emotional competence for children who need more language support
- l. Encourages and supports children to communicate and actively participate in activities and learning experiences throughout the day

Competency 5: Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Learning Experiences

Early childhood and school-age professionals ensure children's learning experiences are high-quality through careful planning and intentional implementation of activities and experiences. Planning and implementation involves the ability to provide a balance of adult- and child-initiated activities; indoor and outdoor experiences; individual, small, and large group activities; blocks of uninterrupted time for children to engage in self-chosen activities; and meaningful and relevant interaction with a variety of materials, children, and adults.

School-age professionals should also refer to Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards Element 1: Programming and Youth Development and Element 2: Linkages with the School Day

5.1: Utilizing the GELDS as a framework for growth and development

- a. Utilizes the GELDS as a mechanism for understanding average growth and development as well as expected child outcomes in each domain
- b. Uses the GELDS as a guide to inform adoption and use of age-appropriate curricula and/or instructional strategies
- c. Uses the GELDS as a framework for planning intentional and thoughtful activities and lessons that are reflective of children's needs, ages, and developmental levels

5.2: Utilizing content knowledge in the GELDS Physical Development and Motor Skills domain; selects, implements, and evaluates developmentally appropriate activities for each and every child, taking into consideration cultural context, home language, and individual needs

- a. Encourages healthy habits in eating, exercise, and hygiene
- b. Provides opportunities for children to develop gross motor skills such as running, jumping, hopping, skipping, and balancing
- c. Provides opportunities for active outdoor exploration
- d. Provides opportunities, using materials and manipulatives, for children to develop small muscle strength and control (fine motor skills)
- e. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to physical and motor development and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

5.3: Utilizing content knowledge in the GELDS Social and Emotional Development domain; selects, implements, and evaluates developmentally appropriate activities for each and every child, taking into consideration cultural context, home language, and individual needs

- a. Develops and models authentic supportive relationships
- b. Creates a predictable environment that promotes positive social interactions and learning
- c. Provides experiences to promote self-regulation and to prevent challenging behaviors
- d. Provides experiences to help children express emotions effectively and manage frustration
- e. Provides experiences to help children build positive relationships with peers and adults
- f. Provides predictable routines for children to manage transitions and adapt to changes
- g. Encourages children's independence and supports them in making choices and solving problems
- h. Encourages multilingual children to express themselves in all known languages to benefit social, emotional, and academic development
- f. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to social and emotional development and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

5.4: Utilizing content knowledge in the GELDS Approaches to Play and Learning domain; selects, implements, and evaluates developmentally appropriate activities for each and every child, taking into consideration cultural context, home language, and individual needs

- a. Promotes curiosity and encourages children to ask questions in order to learn new information
- b. Provides opportunities for children to work collaboratively in large and small group activities
- c. Encourages and provides a variety of materials in support of child-initiated play
- d. Provides extended blocks of time for uninterrupted play to promote problem solving, cooperation, and hands-on learning
- e. Ensures materials and learning centers are accessible throughout the day
- f. Plans teacher-directed experiences and facilitates child-initiated experiences that are developmentally appropriate, challenging, and based on children's interests and abilities
- g. Responds intentionally to a child's play and exploration to expand learning
- g. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to approaches to play and learning and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

5.5: Utilizing content knowledge in the GELDS Communication, Language, and Literacy domain; selects, implements, and evaluates developmentally appropriate activities for each and every child, taking into consideration cultural context, home language, and individual needs.

- a. Provides children with opportunities to engage in listening activities (receptive language) in order to build a strong foundation for language and literacy
- b. Demonstrates an understanding of the developmental progression of non-verbal and spoken language (expressive language), including bilingual development in dual language learners, as the foundation for language and literacy development
- c. Consistently engages children in conversation for the purposes of building vocabulary, critical thinking, and oral language skills
- d. Recognizes and honors all attempts to communicate (e.g., eye gaze or babbling, one-or two-word sentences, use of home language for dual language learners)

- e. Provides age-appropriate learning areas that directly support language and literacy development
- f. Provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support children’s development of phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet, and concepts about print
- g. Provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support children’s receptive and expressive language skills
- h. Supports the development of dual language learners’ home languages while assisting them to learn a new language
- i. Reads and makes available a variety of media, including print materials, to children daily that reflect children’s cultures and languages
- h. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to communication, language, and literacy development and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

5.6: Utilizing content knowledge in the GELDS Cognitive Processes and General Knowledge domain, as well as all sub-domains; selects, implements, and evaluates developmentally appropriate activities for each and every child, taking into consideration cultural context, home language, and individual needs.

Math

- a. Plans lessons and activities that support progression along the developmental continuum of math skills
- b. Plans hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities to intentionally teach math concepts and embeds math concepts into daily routines and learning centers
- c. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to math and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

Science

- d. Demonstrates an understanding of scientific knowledge and uses this knowledge to take advantage of teachable moments
- e. Provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support children in developing scientific inquiry, knowledge of earth and space, living creatures, physical science, and awareness of the environment
- f. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to science and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

Social Studies

- g. Integrates concepts of family, community, and culture into all areas of the classroom to support each and every child
- h. Plans hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities to intentionally teach concepts about family and an emerging awareness of each and every child’s own culture and ethnicity
- i. Models and teaches respect for others, including those who differ in race, gender, ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic status; assists children in recognizing and respecting differences between themselves and others

- j. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to social studies and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

Creative Development

- k. Demonstrates an understanding of the educational and cultural importance of the arts (e.g., art, dance, drama, dramatic play, and music)
- l. Provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support children's creative expression
- m. Provides a variety of experiences that expose children to singing, playing instruments, and listening and moving to a variety of music from different cultures
- n. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to creative development and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

Cognitive Processes

- o. Provides daily access to a variety of materials, both inside and outdoors, that support development and learning in math, science, social studies, creative activities, and cognitive processes
- p. During interactions, emphasizes developmentally appropriate methods, such as problem solving, open-ended questioning, and critical thinking
- q. Identifies, supports, and uses academic language related to cognitive processes and general knowledge and related experiences for young dual language learners, supplementing in the home language when possible

Competency 6: Professionalism

Early childhood and school-age professionals demonstrate effective application of developmentally, linguistically, and culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of all children. These professionals have the ability to integrate knowledge through reflection and critical analysis of theory, research, and individual practice. Early childhood and school-age professionals demonstrate commitment to continuous growth, both individually and collaboratively; are conscious of the early care and education as well as afterschool needs of the community; and understand the critical impact they have on young children and youth.

School-age professionals should also refer to Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards Element 6: Staffing and Professional Development

6.1: Engaging in professional and ethical behavior

- a. Demonstrates professionalism in all matters, including work habits, oral and written communication, attitude, and appearance
- b. Exhibits sincerity in the field by being a dependable and reliable early childhood or school-age practitioner
- c. Advocates for young children and families in a variety of ways, including legislation, providing additional resources, and educating others

- d. Adheres to Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and National After School Association (NAA) ethical standards with regard to children, families, co-workers, and the community
- e. Demonstrates awareness of professional resources, organizations, and networking opportunities to learn and share ethical practices
- f. Exemplifies honesty and integrity by providing true and accurate evidence of career information, including, but not limited to background checks, degrees, teaching certificates, early childhood credentials, exam results, participation in professional learning opportunities, information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel, information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation, and/or information submitted in the course of professional practice
- g. Enrolls and maintains documentation of professional learning in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)

6.2: Demonstrating a commitment to ongoing professional learning

- a. Selects appropriate professional learning opportunities based on assessed knowledge, skills, and interests
- b. Continuously seeks out and participates in opportunities to grow professionally, including, but not limited to earning an early childhood education credential, degree, or teacher certification
- c. Reflects on own practice and child learning for the purposes of continuous improvement
- d. Applies new knowledge and skills gained from professional learning experiences and reflection

6.3: Building collaborative relationships

- a. Collaborates with others in the early childhood and school-age professions, or related fields, to effectively support children and their families
- b. Takes advantage of opportunities to mentor/coach and be mentored/coached in order to bridge knowledge and practice
- c. Works collaboratively with early childhood and school-age professionals serving all age groups to ensure alignment of learning experiences and to support smooth transitions for children
- d. Builds collaborative relationships with families that ensure they are active, equal partners in guiding the educational experiences of their children

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