

Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline Competency Model for Child Care Occupation: Early Childhood Educator

Employer Requirements

Occupation-Specific Competencies*

Teach early childhood curriculum
 Create developmentally appropriate learning experiences
 Establish positive relationships with children, their caregivers and families
 Provide assessment, evaluation and individualization
 Practice standards of professionalism
 Ensure health, safety, and good nutrition
 Practice trauma informed care
 Address needs of multilingual children and their families
 Practice culturally responsive teaching
 Advocate for children
 Practice positive behavior management

Industry-Sector Technical Competencies*

Foundations of language, literacy and numeracy learning	Classroom management	CPR and first aid	Individualization
	Creative activities and environment Children with differing abilities Educational psychology		
	Child development Early childhood special education Early childhood education fundamentals		
	Children's mental health	Curriculum planning	Behavior guidance

Working with diverse families and children | Health, wellness, safety and nutrition | Assessment and observation

Industry-Wide Technical Competencies

Early childhood learning and development	Diversity, equity and inclusion	Learning environments		
Child care ethics	Value of human relationships	Assessment	Safety systems	Instruction
Importance of play in child development Laws and regulations Commitment to professional development				

Workplace Competencies

Business fundamentals	Teamwork	Customer focus	Planning and organizing	Problem solving and decision making	Working with tools and technology	Checking, examining and recording	Scheduling and coordinating
Creative thinking	Health and safety	Sustainable practices					

Academic Competencies

Reading	Science and technology	Mathematics	Basic computer skills	Communication	Critical and analytical thinking	Writing
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Personal Effectiveness Competencies

Interpersonal skills	Integrity	Professionalism	Initiative	Dependability and reliability	Adaptability and flexibility	Lifelong learning	Compassion and empathy	Cultural competency
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Based on: Building Blocks for Competency Models – Foundational Competencies, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor, February 2025. For more detailed information about competency model creation and sources, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/child-care.

Competency Model for Early Childhood Educator

Early Childhood Educator – An individual who has primary responsibility for providing and overseeing instructional and emotional support to children in a child care setting. The person in this role leads the interactions with children in the child care setting that promote the child’s social, physical, and intellectual growth. The individual in this role must be leading the education of children who are infants, toddlers, and/or pre-kindergarteners.

This occupation includes job titles of Early Childhood Teacher, Infant Teacher, Montessori Preschool Teacher, Pre-school teacher, Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Teacher, Toddler Teacher, Head Start Teacher, and Family Child Care Provider.

This competency model is not intended for early childhood special education teacher as that is a different occupation and requires a different teacher’s license.

An individual in this role must follow all applicable training requirements. Requirements will vary based on the setting. For more specific information, follow and consult with the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families; the Minnesota Department of Education; and/or the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.

*Pipeline recommends the Industry-Sector Technical Competencies as formal training opportunities (provided through related instruction) and the Occupation-Specific Competencies as on-the-job (OJT) training opportunities.

Industry-Sector Technical Competencies

Related Instruction for dual training means the organized and systematic form of education resulting in the enhancement of skills and competencies related to the dual trainee’s current or intended occupation.

- **Foundations of language, literacy, and numeracy learning** – Understand the use of language learning, theories, and developmental stages. Use teaching strategies to design play activities that embed literacy and numeracy experiences for children of different abilities and diverse backgrounds.
- **Classroom management** – Able to execute best practices to prevent or manage disruptive behavior and maximize student engagement and learning. Setting and communicating high expectations, consistently nurturing positive relationships, and providing a high level of guidance and support.

- **CPR and first aid** – Know how to perform pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid to children.
- **Individualization** – Know how to recognize that each child learns in their best way possible and be able to create learning models that can meet the unique individual needs of the student.
- **Creative activities and environment** – Know how to create developmentally appropriate cognitive, creative, social-emotional, and sensory-motor learning experiences recognizing each child's strengths, interest and needs.
- **Children with differing abilities** – Able to integrate strategies that support diversity and anti-bias perspectives; provide inclusive programs; apply legal and ethical requirements including, but not limited to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA); differentiate between typical and exceptional development; analyze the differing abilities of children with physical, cognitive, health/medical, communication, and/or emotional/behavioral disorders; work collaboratively with community and professional resources; utilize an individual education plan; adapt curriculum to meet the needs of children with developmental differences and their families.
- **Educational psychology** – Understand the principles of cognitive, linguistic, personal, social, and moral development of children as it relates to learning and educational outcomes.
- **Child development** – Understand typical and atypical child development and child development theories from birth through age 12 years. Examination of developmental domains, including physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and creative within the context of gender, socioeconomic, and culture.
- **Early childhood special education** – Understand and be able to exercise the tools to address the educational considerations for learners with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, autism, low incidence disabilities and/or gifts and talents.
- **Early childhood education fundamentals** – Understand the profession's history, program types, regulations, roles, responsibilities, developmentally appropriate practice, play, home-school connections, diversity, community resources, reflective practices, and ethics.
- **Children's mental health** – Able to integrate knowledge of child development, learning environments, and teaching methods to promote emotional development, moral development, self-concept, self-esteem, social skills, diversity awareness, and social studies.
- **Curriculum planning** – Understand how to organize, implement, and evaluate developmentally appropriate curriculum for early learners.

- **Behavior guidance** – Understand the impact of child development, relationships, culture, and the environment on positive behavioral guidance in early-childhood settings. Learn strategies for interacting with individual children, small or large groups, and developing caring social communities with a focus on developmental approaches that consider self-discipline as an emerging skill and acknowledges collaboration between school and home settings.
- **Working with diverse families and children** – Understand the importance of family/school partnerships, study methods of effectively communicating with families, and identify community organizations and networks that support families.
- **Health, wellness, safety, and nutrition** – Understand the interrelationship of health, safety, and nutrition for the child’s overall wellness. Able to describe signs of emotional distress, child abuse, neglect in children and know mandated reporting responsibility and procedures.
- **Assessment and observation** – Able to use observation and assessment strategies to document development, growth, play and learning in conjunction with families and professionals in promoting children’s success.

Occupation-Specific Competencies

On-the-Job Training is hands-on instruction completed at work to learn the core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation. Common types of OJT include job shadowing, mentorship, cohort-based training, assignment-based project evaluation and discussion-based training.

- **Teach early childhood curriculum** – Understand how to effectively teach children the planned curriculum with a responsiveness to the knowledge and skill of the student so that the instruction meets early learners where they are at and adjusted accordingly.
- **Create developmentally appropriate learning experiences** – Understand that all children need a rich, engaging environment that is physically and emotionally secure. Predictable routines, high academic standards, following a schedule, promotion of curiosity, a strong foundation in language and vocabulary, mathematical and scientific concepts through exploration, learning to behave and play through interacting with their peers.
- **Establish positive relationships with children, their caregivers, and families** – Able to build a positive, respectful relationship with children’s caregivers and families to support healthy development.
- **Provide assessment, evaluation, and individualization** – Understand that careful observation of a young child’s play, interactions, and how the child explores their surroundings help teachers offer learning activities and experiences that will be the most meaningful to each child.

- **Advocate for children** – Understand the individual needs of children, listen effectively, know children’s rights, focus on long term goals, and strive to gain the support of others to make life and learning optimal for each child.
- **Practice standards of professionalism** – Able to interact professionally and participate in professional development and in organizations that increase knowledge and improve skills.
- **Ensure health, safety, and good nutrition** – Understand that adult supervision, nutritious food, and physical activities are needed to meet basic health needs of children. Also, knowledge of environmental safety including classroom hazards, playground, and field trip safety.
- **Practice trauma informed care** – Understand the impact of trauma on young children’s development and develop capacity for interpreting behavior and responding in ways to promote healing for children, families, and themselves.
- **Address needs of multilingual children and their families** – Able to consider personal beliefs about language and culture and develop skills to promote a strength based, language focused environment for children and strategies for family engagement.
- **Practice culturally responsive teaching** – Understand the importance of including each family’s culture in all aspects of learning and use teaching strategies that address those cultural differences.
- **Practice positive behavior management** – Understand how to address behavior issues within the child care setting and to do so in a manner that ensures child safety and wellbeing.

Updated December 2025