

Building a Great Early Childhood Workforce

Fact Sheet

Colorado's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant strengthens the effectiveness of the early childhood workforce by adopting an aligned, tiered set of performance-based competencies, collecting and analyzing data about Colorado's early learning professionals and creating mechanisms of support.

Early Childhood Competencies Framework

Competencies are a foundational element of a professional development system. *Colorado's Early Childhood Educator and Administrator Competencies* identify what professionals providing early care and education experiences need to know, and be able to do, in order to facilitate child learning and development for children from birth to age eight. The Competencies are designed to take place within a larger, aligned and supported system that embodies continuous improvement, and opportunities for meaningful feedback, through professional development.

The 8 Competency Domains:

- Child Growth, Development and Learning
- Child Observation and Assessment
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Guidance
- Health, Safety, & Nutrition
- Professional Development and Leadership
- Program Planning and Development
- Teaching Practices

Competencies supporting social/emotional development, cultural competence and children with special needs are present in all eight domain areas.

The Four Levels:

The Competencies are built on a framework of four levels. They begin with the basic knowledge and skills needed to enter the field and progress, according to degree of mastery, to advanced levels of academic preparation and a wide range of experiences. The four levels are cumulative, meaning that early childhood educators at the top level have the skills and knowledge to meet all the competencies in the lower levels. The levels are as follows:

Level 1 – Demonstrates the basic skills and knowledge to best support quality early childhood care and education.

Level 2 – Demonstrates the skills and knowledge at the previous level plus: Applies skills and knowledge to implement effective early childhood environments and experiences for young children.

Milestones

KEY MILESTONES:

- Colorado Core Knowledge and Standards – *A Guide for Early Childhood Professional Development* (2008)
- Colorado's Early Learning Professional System Plan (2010)
- Colorado's Early Childhood Educator and Administrator Competencies (May, 2013)

THE WORK AHEAD:

- Alignment, adoption and full implementation of the EC Competencies Framework
- Building and implementing Colorado's Professional Development Information System
- Distribution of incentives to Early Childhood Professionals based on the EC Competencies Framework
- Creating a statewide Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory

Level 3 – Demonstrates the skills and knowledge at previous levels plus: Designs, plans and analyzes policies, procedures and practices that are optimal for young children.

Level 4 – Demonstrates the skills and knowledge at previous levels plus: Advances the field of early childhood education through advocacy, leadership, teaching, coaching and mentoring.

The four Levels are less about roles and more about degree of mastery. It is very likely that an early childhood professional will find that their knowledge and skills fall in a variety of levels throughout the competency framework.

Professional Development Information System

Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Development Information System has two parts, a database and a course management system. The database will be a centralized, coordinated system for tracking early childhood professionals' demographics, contact information, experience, education, credentials and training. The course management system will be a place where early learning professionals can register for, participate in, and track online professional development.

Benefits of a Professional Development Information System:

- **Centralized information** – Professional development information is stored in one place and can be accessed by the early childhood professional at any time
- **Portability** – Professional development information can be accessed regardless of changes in employment
- **Track and plan** – Professionals will be able to track, plan and find professional development by competency
- **Capacity** – Individuals, programs and communities will be able to see strengths and areas of growth by competency
- **Efficiency** – Licensing Specialists and Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System Raters will be able to review information before the site visit
- **Access** – Early childhood professionals will be able to access high quality professional development opportunities online and resources to support career development
- **Data** – Basic information about Colorado's early childhood workforce will be available
- **Connectivity** – Link with QRIS data system and child assessment data systems to further understand the connection between professional development and other parts of the early childhood system

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For more information
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