

Maine Core Knowledge Areas and Practitioner Competencies



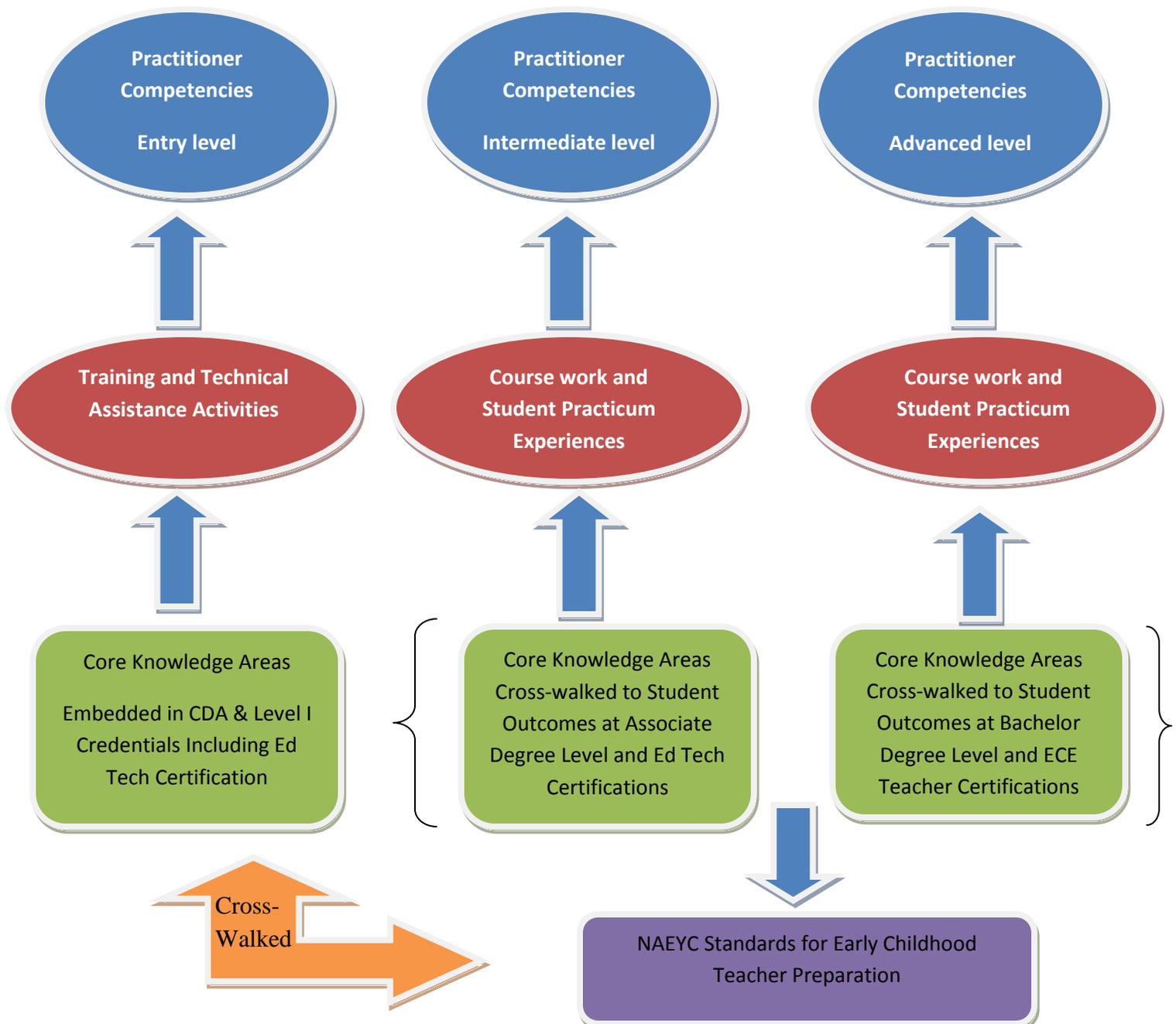
**For Early Childhood Practitioners completing the 180 hours of Core
Knowledge Training**



Early Childhood Division,
Office of Child & Family Services,
Maine Department of Health &
Human Services

Maine Core Knowledge Areas and Practitioner Competencies

Core Knowledge and Competencies define what it is the teachers of young children need to know and understand about working with children and their families, as well as how to demonstrate competency and skill in such areas. Core Knowledge Areas and Competencies provide the field with a common set of standards upon which training, technical assistance, and post-secondary coursework can be designed and articulated toward a common approach to the education and professionalism of the early childhood field. Whether one is creating a professional development plan toward an entry level credential, or toward full teacher certification, the Core Knowledge Areas and Practitioner Competencies guide the practitioner and those advising her/him toward reaching their career goals in the field.



History of the Core Knowledge Areas

Maine Roads to Quality's core knowledge areas were established by a group of early childhood stakeholders who framed a set of recommendations for a comprehensive career development system in Maine in 1984. This group recommended including a common core of learning, consisting of eight NAEYC common core knowledge areas (*Young Children*, March 1994, p. 72) which define what all early childhood professionals need to know and be able to do in order to practice effectively. The recommendations can be found in *Pathways to Quality: Toward The Development of a Comprehensive Training Plan for Child Care Practitioners in Maine*, published in June, 1984. In keeping with the recommendation, Maine Roads to Quality incorporated into the Maine Roads Core Knowledge Training Program the following best practice guidelines:

- demonstrate an understanding of **child development** and apply this knowledge in practice;
- **observe and assess children's behavior** in planning and individualizing teaching practices and curriculum;
- establish and maintain a **safe and healthy environment** for children;
- **plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum** that advances all areas of children's learning and development, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical competence;
- establish supportive relationships with children and implement developmentally appropriate techniques of **guidance and group management**;
- establish and maintain positive and productive **relationships with families**;
- support the development and learning of individual children, recognizing that children are best understood in the context of **family, culture, and society**; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the early childhood profession and make a commitment to **professionalism**.

The Maine Roads Core Knowledge Training Program was then created to provide early care and education providers 180 hours of approved training in the above eight core knowledge areas. The approved core knowledge training assures a consistent body of knowledge in early care and education for new and experienced providers. It nurtures professionalism by providing an organized, articulated pathway to enter higher education.

The need to further Define Competencies

Since the MRTQ Core Knowledge Areas were established in 1984, much has changed in the field of early childhood professional development. Not only have the NAEYC common core knowledge areas been revised, but a focus on measurable outcomes for professionals engaging in educational and training opportunities has emerged. The need to evaluate the transfer of learning that occurs as practitioners assimilate and apply theoretical knowledge mastered in coursework and training, as well as a realization that application in practice, with support from a supervisor or mentor helps to solidify that transfer, has led many states to align their Core Knowledge Content Areas with specific practitioner outcomes that demonstrate mastery of such content.

Maine has moved forward on this front as well, establishing workforce competencies for practitioners working with infants and toddlers (Maine DHHS, 2007) and most recently for youth development workers (Maine DHHS, 2011) and Child Care Directors (Maine DHHS, 2011). In keeping with this momentum, and in response to a national trend to define and align workforce competencies across sectors and through a full continuum of professional development from training through post secondary course work, Maine has begun to draft Preschool Caregiver Competencies that align with our established Core Knowledge Areas as well as NAEYC's *Standards for Early Childhood Teacher Preparation*.

Preschool Caregiver Competencies -Level I

The Maine Preschool Competencies- Level 1 were drafted to assist preschool age caregivers and their supervisors in understanding the many skills and dispositions needed to work as an entry level caregiver with 3-5 year old children. The competencies were developed by an advisory committee consisting of five early childhood education professionals in the field, with a wide range of experience. These included: a lead head start teacher, an Early Childhood Education (ECE) instructor in the technical high school representing the Department of Education, a Director of a private preschool in a nursing home, one community college instructor and one university college professor, who teaches early childhood education. This diverse group offered many ideas to cover all areas of concerns in regard to entry level caregivers with this age group. The task was to take existing documents from each of our respective organizations, refer to competency document samples from other age groups, and gel them with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards for ECE professionals. The challenge was getting at the entry level skills and tasks that these caregivers would need to become proficient. This draft document is a result of those efforts.

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<i>1. Promoting Child Development and Learning for 3-5 year olds</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Is aware of young children's characteristics and needs from 3-5 years of age	Lists some physical, cognitive, social/emotional, and language characteristics of 3-5 year old children
Demonstrates some understanding of connections between children's development and the learning environment	Supports a leaning environment that offers levels of challenge, risk taking, respect, and allows children to work independently
Helps children to follow a predictable but flexible schedule and assists children with transitions and changes	Post a daily schedule in pictures and words, at a child's level
Recognizes and responds to the needs of individual children	Enhances children's thinking and reasoning abilities by encouraging exploration & problem-solving and by asking open ended questions
Appreciates and fosters productive play opportunities	Designs a individual and small group activity that will incorporate three or more of the Maine Learning Guidelines for preschool children

<i>2. Health, Wellness, Nutrition and Safety</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Understands and follows licensing regulations regarding health and safety	Helps in implementing the state licensing regulations
Provides a clean, safe & healthy environment, modeling health, safety and wellness.	<p>Provider is an appropriate model for children</p> <p>Provider models and supervises appropriate hand washing with children</p> <p>Provider participates in sanitation and cleaning of the preschool materials and environment</p> <p>Working towards first aid and CPR certificates</p>

Checklist for health and safety concerns	Uses a health and safety check list each day before the children arrive
Understands common health and wellness issues of children ages 3-5 years of age	Common illness of children and the recommended treatment, posted in teacher lounge or parent bulletin board Is aware of the polices and procedures for dealing with health concerns at their home or center
Observes and communicates health, safety, wellness and nutrition for 3-5 year olds, with parents and other staff	Models and participates in healthy habits and eating with children and families Is aware of signs that indicate possible abuse or neglect of children

<i>3. Building Family and Community Relationships</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Is aware of the importance of parent/child relationship, family structure and interactions as primary influences in a child's development.	Seeks knowledge of each family make-up. Shows respect for each family unit. Shows communication skills in listening to and relating information to family members.
Is aware of the need to build trusting relationships with families.	Greets adult and child warmly. Engages in informal conversation with parent. Understands and maintains confidentiality Identifies own biases in relation to family functioning, make-up, and values.
Has general knowledge about the surrounding community(s) in which the children live.	Is able to engage with child about community. Is able to add to child's understanding of own community.
Is aware of the State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines in the domain of Social Studies – Families and Communities.	Shows basic knowledge of guidelines content Ability to implement , through a play based curriculum, social studies and family related activities

<i>4.Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and their Families</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Understands and maintains confidentiality regarding observation and documentation of children	Discusses guidelines for observing children
Is aware of basic observational skills, documentation and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches, including the use of technology, to assess children’s needs	Regularly records observations of children, individual child and/or group of children, using a variety of methods
Begins to demonstrate an understanding of the goals, benefits and uses of assessment-including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children	Assists in using formal and informal assessments and observations to determine the skills, interests and learning styles of individual children and incorporates this information into planning activities for children
Is aware of the importance of assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues to build effective learning environments	Explores ways to involve parents in assessing and planning for individual children, including those with special learning needs
Developing an understanding and begins practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities	Assists in completing a developmental assessment on a child

<i>5. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Understands that Developmentally Appropriate Practice, is informed knowledge of how children grow and develop, this includes positive relationships and supportive interactions with children.	Define Developmentally Appropriate Practice, in their own words and the link to best practice in the care and education of 3-5 year old children.
Be aware that children develop at their own speed and will require caregivers to provide and promote optimal leaning on their developmental level, through opportunities and activities offered in the curriculum.	Provide an individual activity for a child based on observed development.
Knowing and understanding effective strategies and tools for early education.	Evident in the curriculum, the caregiver engages in conversations, thought –provoking questions, provision of materials, and spontaneous and intentional activities

	to meet children's needs.
Supports play as a vehicle for learning.	Explains the value of play and gives evidence of play that promotes learning in all interest areas.
Understands the importance of transitions and daily routines.	Performs at least 5 transition techniques from memory. Posts a daily routine.
Demonstrates ability to develop positive and respectful relationships with a diverse classroom.	Responds with warmth and responsiveness to all children.

<i>6. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>
Is aware of the importance of teacher/child relationship/interaction as an important teaching tool/strategy in the classroom	Bends low when interacting with children. Smiles, and laughs with children. Makes eye contact with children. Uses child's name, talks with children often.
Is aware of the content knowledge for preschool children, language & literacy, creative arts (music, movement, dance, drama, visual arts), mathematics, science, health & physical activity, safety, and social studies	Understands that each center in the classroom and outside allows for activities that can cover all content areas Identify a content area of your interest and include it in a curriculum plan for children
Is aware of the importance of developmentally appropriate toys, materials, and environmental arrangement to promote preschool learning development	Can identify some developmentally appropriate materials and some that are not.
Is aware of the State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines as well as other resources to assist in the design and implementation of developmentally meaningful curriculum for preschool age children	Asks questions about resources linked to curriculum design and building meaningful curriculum for preschool children.

<i>7. Becoming a Professional</i>	<i>Supporting Evidence</i>

<p>Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field</p>	<p>Membership in the Maine Roads To Quality Professional Registry</p> <p>Membership in the National Association for the Education of Young Children or connection with other relevant local or statewide professional networks or organizations</p> <p>Familiarity with basic vocabulary of the profession (e.g., “developmentally appropriate practice”, “learning guidelines”, “integrated curriculum”, etc.</p> <p>Displays basic professional dispositions in the classroom, e.g., responsiveness, initiative, confidentiality, co-cooperativeness, appropriate language and dress, recognition and respect for diversity</p>
<p>Knowing about and upholding ethical standards</p>	<p>Possesses a copy or has access to the National Association for the Education of Young Children Code of Ethics</p> <p>Possesses a copy of employer-related expectations for ethical conduct and can explain them.</p> <p>If a self-employed FCC provider, can present a statement of family-teacher relationship expectations.</p>
<p>Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice</p>	<p>Attends and participates fully in staff orientation, workshops and trainings</p>

	<p>Attend a training or workshop, to begin to create a personal plan for a professional portfolio and philosophy statement</p> <p>Maintains open communication and positive relationships with colleagues and Supervisors</p> <p>Understands roles of collaborating professionals (e.g., special educators, therapists, ed techs, etc.)</p> <p>Seeks out opportunities for training, reflection or feedback based on own specific needs for professional development</p> <p>If a Family Child Care provider, builds a library of articles useful to discuss current issues with parents</p>
<p>Integrating knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives</p>	<p>Accesses and reads professional articles in print or online about current topics in Early Childhood Education</p> <p>Responds to center-based evaluation methods with self-reflection, suggestions and discussion with supervisor and /or colleagues</p> <p>If a Family Child Care provider, seeks out another area provider or network to share knowledge and insight about important issues</p> <p>Creates and maintains a personal library of relevant articles about current issues</p>

	<p>Suggests topics for parent and/or staff meetings</p> <p>Distinguishes professional from personal needs and perceptions re: classroom activities and behavior</p>
<p>Informed advocacy</p>	<p>Coherently explains a stance on a relevant curriculum issue such as play or direct instruction in the classroom</p> <p>Indicates an awareness of some relevant policy issues in early childhood education, e.g., standards, quality, Pre-K settings, etc.</p>

Uses of the Core Knowledge Areas and Competencies

National

MRTQ Core Knowledge Training program is accepted by the Council for Professional Recognition to meet the 120 hours of training. CDA Candidates are also required to write six competencies standards.

Maine

Maine Roads to Quality maintains articulation agreements with the community colleges for completion of the core 180 hour training program. Students are required to submit a portfolio based on the eight core knowledge areas to document understanding of each one.

Maine Infant/Toddler Level 1 Credential required Core Knowledge Training, a portfolio and onsite observation to demonstrate competency.

Maine Youth Development Credential is currently being piloted and follows the model developed for the Maine Infant/Toddler Level 1 Credential.

Maine Director Credential Level 1 is under development and also models the above credentials.