Child Development in Education
EPSY 255

The purpose of this course is to assist future teachers in understanding children's competence, self-determination, and affiliation needs and learning to help children meet their needs. Participants will be introduced to theories of child development that explain age-related differences in cognition, affect, and behavior. They will explore questions of how the features of home and school affect learning and development. They will also construct positive ways of coordinating children's needs and societal expectations.

Identifying and Assessing Learners’ Needs

Competence Needs

Physical Processes (e.g., brain functioning, perception, maturationist theories)
Constructivist Theories (e.g., equilibration-based and semiotics-based theories)
Information Processing Theories (e.g., attention, memory, automaticity)
Attribution Theories (e.g., reasoning about success and failure)
Intentional Theories (e.g., motivational orientations and goal setting)

Self-Determination Needs

Problem-solving (analogical, formal, and scientific reasoning)
Theories of mind (meta-cognition)
Autonomy Theories (e.g., choice and identity theories)
Self-Regulation Theories (e.g., self-efficacy and strategy-based theories)

Affiliation Needs

The Social-Emotional Self (e.g., issues of the self-system, identity, and interests)
Social Cognition (e.g., reasoning about groups, values, the self in relation to others)
Theories of Peer Relations (e.g., exchange theories)
Theories of Friendship (e.g., intimacy theories)
Theories of Moral Development (e.g., theories of moral problem-solving and personality)

Meeting Learners’ Needs in Home and School Environments

Features of Home

Variation in Family Structures and Expectations
Economic Disparities
Violence (e.g., issues of risk-taking and safety)
Forms of Prejudice (e.g., based on gender, ethnicity, disabilities)

Features of School

Classroom Structures (e.g., cooperative learning, direct instruction, multi-task classrooms)
Teachers' Expectations
Peer Expectations
Administrative Expectations
Designing Inclusive Norms and Practices (e.g., respecting diverse genders, ethnic groups, abilities/disabilities)

Coordinating Learners’ Needs and Societal Values

Teacher/Student Collaboration
Home/School Collaboration
School/Neighborhood Collaboration
Sample Readings


Child Development Project (1994). *At home in our schools: A guide to schoolwide activities that build community*. Oakland, CA: Developmental Studies Center. (has a “collegial study package” designed to “involve parents and staff in designing and implementing community-building schoolwide activities” … that “focus on inclusive, non-competitive activities and building relationships.” The package includes a video and study guide).

Dalton, J., & Watson, M. (1997). *Among friends: Classrooms where caring and learning prevail*. Oakland, CA: Developmental Studies Center. (Also available are a teacher educator guide, a collegial study guide, and a set of 4 videos: Tape 1: Building relationships; Tape 2: Fostering humane values; Tape 3: Honoring intrinsic motivation; and Tape 4: Teaching for understanding. The videos “document unscripted, unrehearsed classroom interactions in kindergarten through grade six, where students and teachers are working to build classroom community. The videos can be used to show positive images of practice and to trigger teachers’ reflections on their own practice, whether for teacher education, staff development, or collegial study settings.”)


