

# **Early Childhood Education**

## **Nashville State Community College**

### **Mission Statement and Goals**

The mission of the Early Childhood Education Program (ECED) at Nashville State Community College (NSCC) is to develop knowledgeable, responsive, and innovative professionals who accomplish positive changes in the lives of the children, families, and communities we serve.

We believe graduates of our program should have a knowledge of child development, be able to use developmentally appropriate practices, build and maintain strong family and community partnerships, rely on assessment data to guide decision making, use evidence-based early childhood education tools and strategies, and have a growth mindset as early childhood professionals.

The program goals are:

1. Produce graduates with a Technical Certificate or Associate of Applied Science Degree in Early Childhood Education who are prepared to work and serve as educators in a variety of diverse early childhood settings and programs
2. Produce graduates with an Associate of Science Degree who are prepared to transfer to 4-year universities to earn a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, PK – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade educator license, or Child Development and Family Relationships
3. Provide college-level coursework to meet the training requirements for the Child Development Credential (CDA), Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credential, and other state credentials
4. Connect students to the early education community by participating in initiatives and programs led by community partners and inviting community partners to participate in our program
5. Provide professional development for the greater early childhood profession

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for the Early Childhood Education program (ECED) at Nashville State Community College is a statement of philosophy and core values related to five major components: community, students, curriculum, instruction, and program assessment. This statement is a result of collaborative input from students, faculty, administrators, and community stakeholders and is a living, dynamic document that will be revisited and revised in response to inevitable changes in these core components.

### ***Community Connection and Support***

The ECED program is committed to meeting the needs of the early education community. In addition, the programs of study support organizations and individuals whose goals are to provide quality care and education services to children and families. NSCC supports the initiatives and programs developed by community partners and state agencies with quality enhancement as a primary goal.

### ***Student Learning and Success***

The ECED program is committed to providing a diverse population of students' access to equitable early childhood education coursework. The program establishes policies and practices designed to facilitate rather than hinder access to and success in higher education. The program strives to provide a seamless movement through levels of professional development---from Early Childhood Education Career programs starting at the high school level to the CDA Credential to the Technical Certificate to the Associate to the Baccalaureate degree. The primary focus is on student success through achieving student learning outcomes. In addition, emphasis is placed on connecting students to supportive services at the college and in the community and advising students about career options and further educational opportunities beyond the associate degree.

### ***Meaningful Curriculum***

The program's curriculum is aligned with the standards identified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children for associate degree programs. The ECED program is designed to guide early childhood education students in acquiring the knowledge and skills to be effective educators of all young children, birth through age eight, in diverse settings. The program embraces the belief that both care and education are integral parts of any high-quality program and that the core knowledge and skills in early care and education should be equitable regardless of provider, sponsorship, or funding. Field experiences in diverse settings and with varying age groups are integrated throughout the curriculum to support students in connecting classroom concepts and theory to application in early childhood programs.

The NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards are used as the framework for the following ECED core beliefs:

- Positive educator-child relationships, supportive interactions, and a well-prepared indoor and outdoor learning environment are the foundation of quality early education.
- Effective educators develop reciprocal relationships and partnerships with families of the children they serve.
- Educators need to know, understand, and uphold the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- A professional educator engages in ongoing professional development, collaboration with colleagues, advocacy, and lifelong learning.
- Research on child development and best practices with young children is to be respected, valued, and evaluated for real-world application.
- Children's play is scaffolded through educator interactions in a well-prepared environment using active, engaged, meaningful, and socially interactive learning that supports the development of the whole child.
- Effective educators are reflective and intentional in their planning and implementation of learning opportunities to promote inquiry in the curriculum.
- The role of the educator is to use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning approaches to promote equitable learning opportunities for each child.
- Educator reflection and critical thinking are essential teaching practices.
- Observation and documentation provide data to be used in making decisions for a developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Educators use culturally and linguistically responsive practices and continuously seek out training and support to work effectively with linguistically and culturally diverse children and families.
- Developmentally appropriate classroom curriculum is key to meeting the needs of each child and providing an equitable learning environment.
- Educators need to understand content knowledge and resources in academic disciplines.

- Educators should demonstrate skills in utilizing technology with young children, with peers, and as a professional resource.
- Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards serve as a resource for educators to support alignment of curriculum to learning outcomes based on the developmental continuum from birth to age five.
- Use of diverse, high-quality children's literature is an essential part of teaching and learning.
- Educators need ongoing support in promoting social and emotional competence in children by using effective positive guidance and discipline approaches.

### ***Caring, Supportive, Effective Instruction***

Faculty emphasizes knowledge and skill building to support student learning outcomes. Faculty members create strong communities of learners through caring, supportive interactions and relationships with students. Faculty use a variety of approaches and strategies to support the varied learning styles of students, establish clear expectations of performance, and employ varying assessment methods with an emphasis on authentic assessment. The faculty qualifications include real-life, practical experience working with families and children in early childhood settings, in addition to academic preparation in the discipline. Through ongoing professional development, faculty make every effort to stay current in the field of early care and education. The faculty strives to create an equitable learning environment for each student.

### **On-going Program Assessment and Improvement**

Adjustments and improvements to the program involve a continuing process as the college seeks to provide a quality early childhood education program. The program undergoes ongoing assessment and evaluation using both formal and informal approaches and methods. Faculty, administrators, students, and community partners all participate in assessing program effectiveness and help to establish goals for improvement. The AAS Degree program seeks to maintain NAEYC Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation.