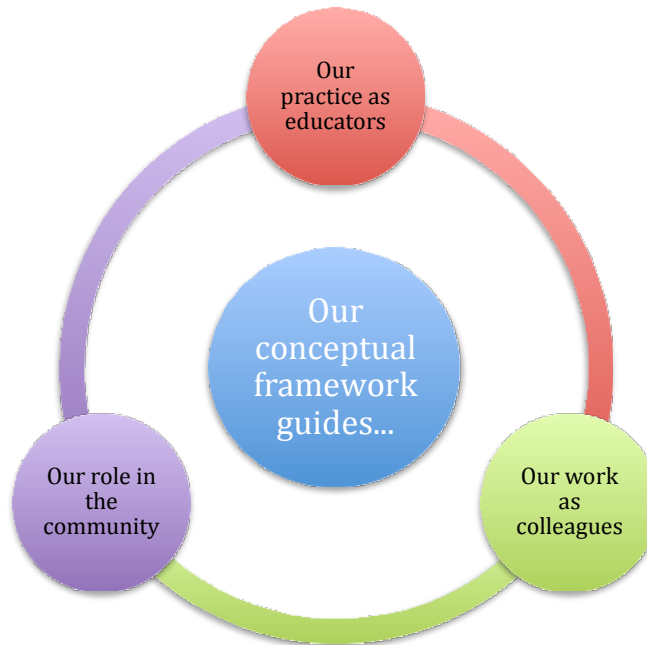


# Austin Community College District Child Development Department Conceptual Framework



**The ACC Child Development Department’s Conceptual Framework guides our practice as educators, our practice as colleagues, and our role in the community.**

One core belief forms the base for all our other guiding principles—respect for the inherent value of each person’s unique perspective, culture, developmental stage and experiences. Mutual respect among all groups—the teacher and child, the faculty and college student, colleagues in the department and the college, and the child development department and the greater Austin early care and education community—creates the sense of belonging, trust and depth of relationship that we believe is essential to fulfill our mission in our work as educators, as a faculty, and as members of the early care and education community.

## **Our Mission:**

*The Child Development Department’s purpose is to prepare knowledgeable and competent professionals who work with young children and their families in a variety of roles in early care and education settings. Child Development college credit and alternative credit courses, reflecting the best of current practices, are the foundation of this preparation.*

*We realize that in order to accomplish this mission we must create a learning environment which eliminates barriers to learning, offers educational opportunities for both current and future early care and*

*education professionals, accepts diversity in culture and in learning styles, fosters completion of degree plans and uses a wide variety of instructional methods to help students achieve their highest understanding of child development theory and implementation of developmentally appropriate practice.*

### **Beliefs that Guide Our Practice as Educators:**

Important theorists, influential practitioners and our own life experiences have informed our beliefs about teaching and learning. As a faculty, we credit Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Erikson, and Dewey for our understanding about the active, social, and contextual nature of play and learning and its importance in a democratic society. Great practitioners like Feeney, Katz, Jones, Derman-Sparks, Gandini, Gerber, Carter, and Curtis guide our thinking about ethics, adult learners, reflective practice, cultural competence and best practices with children. Our personal experiences in both early childhood and college settings have deepened our understanding.

We believe learning for both children and adult learners:

- Is developmental, building upon prior knowledge in all domains—physical, cognitive, social, and emotional.
- Requires strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Ethical practice and responsiveness are the cornerstones of relationships.
- Results from active engagement, play, using the senses to interact, explore and experiment with materials, concepts and other environmental stimuli.
- Is lifelong and based on play, fed by curiosity and a willingness to take risks.

Based on these beliefs about learning, we agree that the role of faculty is to:

- Design a coherent, comprehensive curriculum that uses NAEYC standards as a foundation and that prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and understanding of dispositions needed to work effectively in diverse, inclusive early childhood settings.
- Inspire students to realize the tremendous impact of their work with children and families and to aspire to a high level of professionalism, ethics, advocacy and community involvement.
- Facilitate deeper learning by providing opportunities to put theory into practice and to reflect upon these experiences.
- Promote retention and nurture student success by establishing a learning environment that
  - Builds a caring community of learners.

- Offers the support and resources to meet the unique needs of students.
- Sees students as active creators of knowledge and provides opportunities for them to learn from each other.
- Scaffolds learning based on our assessments of individual needs, using a variety of methods to meet individual learning styles.

### **Beliefs that Guide Our Work as Colleagues**

We believe in the importance of **collaboration, respect, shared decision-making, and service** as the foundation for our work as a department, within the college, and with our colleagues across the country.

- **Collaboration:** We accomplish our best work through **collaborative** efforts:
  - In teaching through mentoring, sharing of ideas and resources, and collaborative problem solving.
  - In partnerships between the lab school staff, faculty and the community to strengthen our fieldwork experiences.
  - With other ACC departments, such as Nursing and the Office for Students with Disabilities, to enhance student learning and promote student success.
  - With our community college peers across the state and throughout the country to improve our practices and better serve our students.
  
- **Respect:** We value and **respect** each person's contribution, culture, and perspective which guides our work with:
  - Adjuncts who are an integral part of the Child Development Department.
  - Lab school teachers and staff in their dual role as teachers of young children and our adult students.
  - ACC faculty and staff for their contributions to the accomplishment of our mandate to prepare knowledgeable and competent early care and education professionals as we seek to support student success and improve our college.
  - Our early childhood colleagues across the state and country in advocacy efforts to improve the profession and preparation of early childhood professionals.
  
- **Shared decision-making:** Open dialogue and deliberation form the basis for **shared decision-making**:
  - In our department as we grapple with important ideas and issues related to our students and curricula.
  - In the shared governance processes of the college, as we serve on college-wide committees and councils.

- **Service:** The cornerstone of our work as professionals is ***servicing others:***
  - Our students as we seek to provide a meaningful, valuable educational experience.
  - Our department as we contribute our personal strengths and gifts for the betterment of all.
  - Our college in support of its mission and vision.
  - Our community as important partners in the field of early care and education.

### **Beliefs that Guide Our Role in the Community**

The Child Development Department is an active and collaborative partner in our community. We believe that a strong connection to the community is an essential aspect of our work. The core beliefs that guide our work in the community include:

- Everyone deserves access to a high quality education. We work to ensure accessibility, affordability, and quality of both early care and education for the children and families of our community and of higher education for the early childhood workforce.
- Our primary role in the community is to provide the highest quality of education, training, support, and mentoring.
- We have a professional responsibility to provide leadership and advocacy to create positive change in the community.
- Collaboration with all community partners and integration into the work of the community is vital to improve the field of early care and education. Collaborative problem solving with our many early childhood partners is the best way to address the many needs of the children, families, and early childhood workforce in our community. This requires our department to be responsive, adapting programs and services to meet community needs.