

Tunxis Community College

Early Childhood Education Program

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The Tunxis Community College Early Childhood Education program's conceptual framework represents the collective expression of College and Early Childhood faculty, students, alumni, the Advisory Committee, and community stakeholders.

VISION: *The Tunxis Community College Early Childhood Education program will be a leading resource for high-quality teacher preparation and professional development opportunities preparing educators to meet the needs of children and families in a diverse and ever-changing society.*

MISSION: *The Tunxis Community College Early Childhood Education program prepares students to be competent early childhood educators capable of integrating theory with best practices for teaching within diverse and inclusive early childhood settings. The program prepares life-long learners and leaders in education who work collaboratively with families and communities for the success of all children.*

In keeping with the mission of the College, open enrollment in the Early Childhood Education Program provides all students the opportunity for success as early childhood educators. Embedded within the Program are learning opportunities aligned with Program, State, and National teaching competencies required for working with young children in diverse and inclusive settings. Simultaneously, the Program prepares students to participate in society as responsible, literate, reflective community members who are conscious of their role as learners and educators.

PHILOSOPHY: Over 100 years ago Dewey wrote in *The School and Society*, "The obvious fact is that our social life has undergone a thorough and radical change. If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation" (p. 28). These words hold true today. To meet the needs of teachers in today's society, the philosophy of the Early Childhood Education Program establishes these core beliefs:

- All children and families are to be valued and respected.
- All children are capable of learning and developing at their own pace and within their unique modalities.
- All children are entitled to high quality care and education relevant to their social context.
- All educators should have the knowledge and ability to engage every child and to be an influential force in the development of these children.
- All educators are bound by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

CURRICULUM: Grounded in the College's model of abilities-based education, the Early Childhood Education curriculum embeds a core of general education abilities within the early childhood coursework. Students in the Early Childhood Education Program learn both how to teach as well as the critical content knowledge necessary to provide young children with learning environments based on developmentally appropriate practices. This model of integrated learning allows students to scaffold their understanding of child development and teaching pedagogy through the integration and synthesis of course content into their field experiences. Students are able to provide learning opportunities that are part of a cycle of intentional teaching involving observing children, planning and implementing curriculum, and assessing children's development. All of this is accomplished through appropriate early childhood classroom guidance that is reflective and respectful of cultural and individual differences.

FIELD EXPERIENCE: Students' extensive field experience for observation and practice in at least two of the three early childhood age groups and two of the three main types of early education settings connect relevant content knowledge and early childhood pedagogy with opportunities to demonstrate teaching competencies and general education abilities.

FACULTY: The rich professional backgrounds of the Early Childhood Education teaching faculty at the College allow for unique learning opportunities for the students. Faculty experiences include teaching and directing in private and public early childhood education programs, teaching special needs populations, parent educating, and coordinating Pre-K to Three literacy and ESL programs in public schools. The collaboration between teaching faculty and the faculty of the Tunxis Early Childhood Center further enriches the learning opportunities for students.

COMMUNITY: The Early Childhood Education Program and Pathway to Teaching Careers Advisory Committee is comprised of Tunxis Community College faculty and directors, public preschool and readiness coordinators, private preschool directors, a family resource center coordinator, four-year college representatives, and Tunxis early childhood alumni. The President and/or Academic Dean of the College attend most Advisory Committee meetings. Collectively, the members provide a high level of expertise and connections to all aspects of early childhood programming in local communities and agencies. Communication and discussion about student expectations is frequent and on-going. All faculty provide a model of life-long learning for students through their continuous pursuit of professional development to remain current in the field of Early Childhood Education.