EDEC 1010.002: Learning with and from Young Children

Fall 2025

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Note on email:	**When you email, include EDEC 1010 in the subject line.

Course Description

This introductory course invites you into the dynamic, relational world of early childhood education and care, centering young children as capable, curious, relational, and meaning-making individuals. It is designed to examine and broaden the ways we see and understand young children. Instead of positioning yourself as a "teacher," you are invited to learn *with and from young children.*

The course focuses on children's play, experiences, knowledge'making, and identities, emphasizing keen observation and a pedagogy of listening as ways of knowing, rather than methods of evaluation. Students explore children's play, relationships, and knowledge-making across social, educational, and natural worlds. Through readings, multimedia, discussions, reflections, and inquiry, students examine how physical, social, cultural, material, natural, and ecological environments—including schools—shape, support, or constrain children's knowledge-making. The course highlights recognizing and honoring multiple and intersecting childhoods. Students learn how children engage collaboratively with human and more-than-human others and critically analyze dominant cultural narratives about childhood(s) and young children. Students develop skills to design learning provocations that nurture curiosity and creativity rooted in children's experiences.

The course spans 15 weeks, with each module including readings, discussions, reflections, collaborative inquiry, and assignments. Thoughtful engagement with all materials is essential for participation.

Course Structure

This course is designed to expand and complicate the ways we see, understand, and engage with young children and their learning. Rather than positioning yourself solely as a "teacher," you are invited to engage as a co-learner—someone who is learning with and from young children by embracing curiosity, humility, and critical reflection. The course is structured into 15 weekly modules, each focused on a different aspect of learning in relationship with young children. Every module includes a carefully curated sequence of readings, videos, activities, discussions, and assignments to guide and deepen your inquiry. Because our discussions, activities, and assignments build directly from the assigned materials, it is essential that you

complete all readings, watch the videos, and review any supplemental resources before participating in discussions or turning in your work. Your engagement with the materials is foundational to your learning and to our shared exploration as a community.

Course Objectives

As we progress through this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize how young children learn through play, as well as through their bodies, lived experiences, relationships, and interactions with both human, and more-than-human others (e.g., technology, nature, materials).
- Identify and describe children's capabilities, inquiries, and meaning-making as they emerge through play and everyday experiences.
- Recognize that childhoods are diverse and multiple, shaped by cultural, social, and environmental contexts as well as by children's own agency and ways of knowing.
- Engage in a pedagogy of listening by keenly observing children with openness and curiosity as they exist, engage, and learn in the world — not to evaluate, but to understand.
- Document children's play, relationships, and collaborative inquiry through active (close, intentional attention to what children are doing) and reflective (making sense of what you saw) observation practices.
- Examine how physical, social, cultural, material, and ecological environments, including schools, can shape, support, or inhibit children's knowledge-making and exploration.
- Critically examine dominant cultural narratives — such as adult-centered, monocultural perspectives — that categorize children's play and engagement as 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate,' and 'good' or 'bad.'
- Design learning provocations that sparks children's curiosity and invites deeper thinking, creativity, and engagement.

How to Succeed in this Course

Communication practices: Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow-up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

*Academic success resource*s: UNT strives to offer you a high-quality education and a supportive environment, so you learn and grow. As a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can be successful at UNT, go to unt.edu/success and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

ADA Accommodations: The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your instructor a letter of

reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course. You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your instructor as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the Office of Disability Access website (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access).

Technical difficulties: If you have any technical issues submitting your assignments in Canvas, please do the following:
- Check that you are using a compatible browser, like Google Chrome.
- Contact the Help Desk for technology support.
- Email your instructor your assignment along with a screenshot of your chat with the Help Desk if they are unable to assist you with the submission issue. This will show me that you did complete it on time. Then, resubmit to Canvas once you are able (occasionally, there are temporary glitches).

Our Learning Community

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding (Code of Student Conduct) ttps://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012). We are all learning together.

Materials You Need

All texts and videos will be uploaded to Canvas by the instructor using online links and electronic copies.

Course Schedule

Below is a list of topics and assignments we will be working on together throughout the course.

The readings and assignments on this calendar are subject to revisions.

IMPORTANT DATES

Date	Inquiry Question	Readings	Assignment
PART I: DECONSTRUCTING & RECONSTRUCTING OUR IMAGES AND DISCOURSES OF YOUNG CHILDREN			
Week 1	Orientation towards children: What's so great about young children?	Chenfield (2002)	Weekly Reflection (In class)

Week 2	Discourses and imagery of children and childhood: How are children seen, represented and treated in society and media? What is your conception of a child?	Grady (2024)	Weekly Reflection
Week 3	Rethinking our images of children-taking young children seriously: How can we learn with and from children?	Malaguzzi (1994)	Weekly Reflection
PART II: HOW DO YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN?: HONORING PLAY AND INQUIRY			
Week 4	Play- as a fundamental way of being for children: What do children gain through play?	Jones (2003)	Weekly Reflection
Week 5	Culture and play: How does culture impact children's play?	Gaunt (2020)	Weekly Reflection Assignment # 1
Week 6	Environment and play: How does the environment impact children's play?	Louv (2008)	Weekly Reflection
Week 7	Play and knowledge-making: What is the role of play in the lives and learning of children?	Watch Balmès (2010)	Weekly Reflection Observation: Notes from Babies film
Week 8	Play and inquiry: How does play invite inquiry?	Bentley (2012)	Weekly Reflection
PART III: ENVIRONMENTS OF EARLY CARE and EDUCATION			
Week 9	Rethinking children's spaces: How can environments honor and support play and inquiry?	Kuh et al. (2014) Pelo (2016)	Weekly Reflection Assignment #2
Week 10	Defining children's environments: How can the environments we create support children's curiosity, agency, and expression?	Paley (1986)	Weekly Reflection
Week 11	What is the aim of schooling?: Unpacking your schooling/learning experiences: Why might schools need to be deconstructed and reconstructed?	Christakis (2016)	Weekly Reflection
Week 12	Models of schooling and care for young children: What else does school look and feel like?	Kuh & Rivard (2014)	Weekly Reflection
Week 13	Teachers as facilitators of children's environments: Teachers' role in children's learning and inquiry	Schaefer (2016) Seitz (2006)	Weekly Reflection Assignment #3
Week 14	What are provocations, and how do we design them to invite and provoke learning?	Wien (2008)	Weekly Reflection
Thanksgiving Break			
Week 15	Final reflection: What are our commitments to young children?		Assignment #4

08/18 – First day of Class
08/22 – Last Day to Add a Class or Swap Sections
08/29 – Last day to drop a Class without a W
08/30 – Drop with a Grade of W Begins
09/26 – Last day to change to pass/no pass grade option
11/07 – Last day for a student to drop a course or all courses with a grade of W
11/24 - 11/30 – Thanksgiving Break
12/04 – Last class meeting day

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class and describe that the calendar is subject to change, citing the Campus Closures Policy

Assignments and Grades

More information will be provided on each assignment a few weeks before the deadlines:

1. Attendance & Participation (150 pts):

   Your attendance and active participation are essential to your success in this course and to gaining the most from the learning experience. Participation goes beyond simply being present—it includes coming to class prepared, having completed the assigned readings, and engaging thoughtfully in class activities. You are expected to contribute meaningfully to both small and large group discussions, listening actively and sharing your insights respectfully. Cognitive flexibility and respect for diverse perspectives are core expectations in this course. Engagement happens through questioning, discussion, and exploration of course materials and ideas. It is normal—and encouraged—for questions and moments of uncertainty to arise as part of the learning process. Students are expected to be self-reflective and to engage with others with thoughtfulness and diplomacy. To maintain a focused and respectful learning environment, please refrain from using electronic devices unless they are being used for specific class activities. Staying present and minimizing distractions supports your learning and the learning of those around you.

2. Weekly Reading Reflections (150 points total):

   Engaging with the readings and multimedia texts assigned each week prior to class is essential as they are our foundation for our work and discussions in class. Each week you will submit notes/reflections on the readings. We will discuss in class what are some possible formats (e.g., sketch notes, audio/video recordings of notes). Please submit this by every Monday, 9 P.M.

3. Autobiography of Play – Introducing Yourself as a "Player" (150 pts):

   In this visual reflection, you'll explore sociocultural factors and identities that shaped your childhood play (e.g., family, culture, language, geography). You'll incorporate images and short written reflections that connect your experiences to broader ideas about play and learning. This assignment invites you to consider how your childhood contexts, identities, relationships, and history inform how you see, understand, and engage with young children.

4. Environment Redesign (150 pts):

You will apply the concepts we explored in the first phase of this class focused on our image of the child, curiosity, play, embodied learning, and the environment as a third teacher. You will reimagine a space to reflect children. You will find a space you'd like to redesign (a waiting room, a pond, a car middle seat, a swimming hole, a sidewalk, a hallway, an airplane seat, a playground, etc.). You will capture that space somehow (sketch, take a picture, make a model) and make 3 to 5 changes to it to allow for play. You will write a paragraph for each change made, explaining how these changes support play.

5. Observing Young Children and Documenting their Capabilities (150 pts):

   You will watch the documentary Babies (2010), which follows four infants growing up in different cultural settings. You will closely observe each child and take detailed, non-judgmental notes about their play, interactions, environment, and developing capabilities. Then, you will create a written or visual response analyzing how culture and context shape children's early experiences, learning, and development. This assignment builds your observation skills and encourages reflection on global approaches to caregiving and early childhood.

6. Creating Provocations (150 pts):

   In this assignment, you will apply your learning about inquiry, play, and the role of the environment in supporting children's thinking by designing two open-ended, inquiry-based provocations. These provocations should reflect a deep understanding of how to honor children's innate curiosity, sense-making processes, and agency in their own learning.
   A provocation is an intentional setup—often involving materials, questions, or experiences—that invites children to explore, wonder, investigate, create, and collaborate. It does not direct children toward a single outcome, but instead opens up possibilities for multiple interpretations, discoveries, and narratives.

Assignments	Points
Attendance & Participation	150
Weekly Reflections	150
Reflecting on Play experiences	150
Environment Redesign	150
Observing and Documenting Children's Capabilities	150
Creating provocations	150
TOTAL:	900

A = 810-900 points (90%-100%)
B = 720-809 points   (80%-89%)
C = 630-719 points   (70%-79%)
D =540-639 points   (60%-69%)
F = <539 points   (<60%)

Assignment Deadlines: All discussion responses, tasks, and assignments must be completed in APA style and turned in on time via Canvas. Deadlines are 11:59 p.m. All assignments must be

completed in full before they are submitted. Grades will not be given for incomplete submissions.

Late Work: I understand that situations will arise occasionally causing you to need an extension on an assignment. If you are unable to turn in your assignment beyond the deadline, please make arrangements with me ahead of time (not on the due date). *If you turn assignments in late, I reserve the right to only provide a grade and zero to few comments.* Without prior arrangements, ten points will be deducted for each day late beyond the due date. No assignments will be accepted after one week.

Looking at assignments ahead of time and redoing assignments: With a large class, I cannot look at your work ahead of time to make sure you are "on track" or allow assignments to be redone for a higher grade. I will provide you with examples for all of the assignments so be sure to use them as guides for your own. If you use them and the rubric, as well as edit your work for clarity, you should be okay!

Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty: Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Academic Dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with university policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of "F" in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. The policy and procedures are available at: Academic Integrity Policy (PDF) (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003).

AI: In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003).

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: This course is designed and organized to be highly collaborative and interactive. Our sessions will involve small and whole group activities and discussions. Therefore, your attendance and participation are essential to the learning of everyone in our course. It is very difficult to be enriched by discussions and collaborations if you are not physically present or prepared for class. University policy 06.039 will be followed for attendance problems. If necessary, students may miss one class with a valid excuse (see university policy for excused absences) and not face penalties related to their grade (yet students are encouraged to save this absence for illness or emergencies that may arise). Students must let the instructor know as soon as possible if they will be missing class. It is the students' responsibility to obtain all notes and handouts missed during their absence. All assignments are due on dates indicated on the syllabus regardless of student absences. A second absence will result in a loss of points from the total grade. In the event that a student misses eight or more classes, they will receive a failing grade. Students who miss more than one hour of class will be considered absent from that class meeting. Chronic tardiness or early departure will result in the lowering of a final grade at the instructor's discretion (arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early). Please note: it is the student's responsibility to drop this course, if necessary.

Technology: Some class activities and assignments will require a tablet or laptop during class. Outside of these times, refrain from using your electronic devices unless needed for accommodations. I know that having your phone, computer, or tablet open can be challenging as it can be distracting when there is so much at your fingertips—please try to refrain from distracting yourself and your peers. Using devices outside of class activity will result in a decrease or a zero on your engaged attendance grade for that day.

Additional UNT Policies and Resources

[Student Support Services and Policies](#)
There are many resources available on this site that may be worth bookmarking.

Educator Preparation Standards

The UNT Educator Preparation Program curriculum includes alignment to standards identified by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) for beginning educators. These standards are addressed throughout your preparation and assessed through the TExES Certification exams required for your teaching certificate. Additionally, the Commissioner of TEA has adopted these rules pertaining to Texas teaching standards:

Texas Administrative Code Requirements for Teacher Certification
The [Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Part 7, Subchapter 235](#) Educator Preparation Standards address the discipline that deals with the theory and practice of teaching to inform skill-based training and development. The standards inform proper teaching techniques, strategies, teacher actions, teacher judgements, and decisions by taking into consideration theories of learning, understandings of students and their needs, and the backgrounds and interests of individual students for candidates pursuing the EC-6 certification.

Instructional Planning and Delivery. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers demonstrate understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students and makes learning relevant for today's learners. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

> 1) develop lessons that build coherently toward objectives based on course content, curriculum scope and sequence, and expected student outcomes;
> 2) effectively communicate goals, expectations, and objectives to help all students reach high levels of achievement;
> 3) connect students' prior understanding and real-world experiences to new content and contexts, maximizing learning opportunities;
> 4) plan instruction that is developmentally appropriate, is standards driven, and motivates students to learn;
> 5) use a range of instructional strategies, appropriate to the content area, to make subject matter accessible to all students;
> 6) differentiate instruction, aligning methods and techniques to diverse student needs, including acceleration, remediation, and implementation of individual education plans;
> 7) plan student groupings, including pairings and individualized and small-group instruction, to facilitate student learning;
> 8) integrate the use of oral, written, graphic, kinesthetic, and/or tactile methods to teach key concepts;

9) ensure that the learning environment features a high degree of student engagement by facilitating discussion and student-centered activities as well as leading direct instruction;
10) encourage all students to overcome obstacles and remain persistent in the face of challenges, providing them with support in achieving their goals;
11) set high expectations and create challenging learning experiences for students, encouraging them to apply disciplinary and cross-disciplinary knowledge to real-world problems;
12) provide opportunities for students to engage in individual and collaborative critical thinking and problem solving;
13) monitor and assess students' progress to ensure that their lessons meet students' needs;
14) provide immediate feedback to students in order to reinforce their learning and ensure that they understand key concepts; and
15) adjust content delivery in response to student progress through the use of developmentally appropriate strategies that maximize student engagement.

Knowledge of Student and Student Learning. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

1) create a community of learners in an inclusive environment that views differences in learning and background as educational assets;
2) connect learning, content, and expectations to students' prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests in meaningful contexts;
3) understand the unique qualities of students with exceptional needs, including disabilities and giftedness, and know how to effectively address these needs through instructional strategies and resources;
4) understand the role of language and culture in learning and know how to modify their practice to support language acquisition so that language is comprehensible and instruction is fully accessible;
5) understand how learning occurs and how learners develop, construct meaning, and acquire knowledge and skills; and
6) identify readiness for learning and understand how development in one area may affect students' performance in other areas.

Content Knowledge and Expertise. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers exhibit an understanding of content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and the ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

1) have expertise in how their content vertically and horizontally aligns with the grade-level/subject area continuum, leading to an integrated curriculum across grade levels and content areas;
2) identify gaps in students' knowledge of subject matter and communicate with their leaders and colleagues to ensure that these gaps are adequately addressed across grade levels and subject areas;
3) keep current with developments, new content, new approaches, and changing methods of instructional delivery within their discipline;

4) organize curriculum to facilitate student understanding of the subject matter;
5) understand, actively anticipate, and adapt instruction to address common misunderstandings and preconceptions;
6) promote literacy and the academic language within the discipline and make discipline-specific language accessible to all learners;
7) teach both the key content knowledge and the key skills of the discipline; and
8) make appropriate and authentic connections across disciplines, subjects, and students' real-world experiences.

Learning Environment. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

1) embrace students' backgrounds and experiences as an asset in their learning;
2) maintain and facilitate respectful, supportive, positive, and productive interactions with and among students;
3) establish and sustain learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and respond to students' needs, strengths, and personal experiences;
4) create a physical classroom set-up that is flexible and accommodates the different learning needs of students;
5) implement behavior management systems to maintain an environment where all students can learn effectively;
6) maintain a culture that is based on high expectations for student performance and encourages students to be self-motivated, taking responsibility for their own learning;
7) maximize instructional time, including managing transitions;
8) manage and facilitate groupings in order to maximize student collaboration, participation, and achievement; and
9) communicate regularly, clearly, and appropriately with parents and families about student progress, providing detailed and constructive feedback and partnering with families in furthering their students' achievement goals.

Data-Driven Practices. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

1) gauge student progress and ensure mastery of content knowledge and skills by providing assessments aligned to instructional objectives and outcomes that are accurate measures of student learning;
2) analyze and review data in a timely, thorough, accurate, and appropriate manner, both individually and with colleagues, to monitor student learning; and
3) design instruction, change strategies, and differentiate their teaching practices to improve student learning based on assessment outcomes.

Professional Practices and Responsibilities. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain

professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity. Early Childhood-Grade 6 classroom teachers must:

1) reflect on their own strengths and professional learning needs, using this information to develop action plans for improvement;
2) seek out feedback from supervisor, coaches, and peers and take advantage of opportunities for job-embedded professional development;
3) adhere to the educators' code of ethics in §247.2 of this title (relating to Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators), including following policies and procedures at their specific school placement(s);
4) communicate consistently, clearly, and respectfully with all members of the campus community, administrators, and staff; and
5) serve as advocates for their students, focusing attention on students' needs and concerns and maintaining thorough and accurate student records.