



EDEC 1010.001: Learning with and from Young Children

Fall 2026

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

Course Description

Learning with and from Young Children is an introductory course that invites you into the dynamic, relational world of early childhood education and care, centering young children as capable, curious, creative, and relational meaning-makers. Rather than positioning yourself as a “teacher,” you are invited to learn alongside young children, examining and expanding how we see and understand them and, in turn, shaping the learning experiences we offer and the ways we teach.

The course explores children’s embodied experiences, play, relationships, multiple identities, and capabilities, emphasizing how these shape their sense-making and knowledge-making. Through keen observation and a pedagogy of listening, you will develop ways of coming to know children as educators rather than evaluating them. You will examine how physical, social, cultural, material, natural, and ecological environments, including schools, support or constrain children’s learning, engagement, and well-being.

You will critically examine dominant cultural and adult-centered narratives about childhood while recognizing and honoring multiple and intersecting childhoods. The course also explores how children engage collaboratively with human and more-than-human others, such as technology, the natural world, and material objects. You will consider pedagogical approaches that nurture curiosity, creativity, inquiry, and relational learning grounded in children’s experiences.

Course Structure

This course is designed to expand and complicate the ways we see, understand, and engage with young children and their learning. Through readings, videos, activities, discussions, and assignments, you will engage with diverse perspectives on childhood, learning, and early childhood education while developing your capacity for inquiry, reflection, and critical analysis.

The course spans 16 weeks, with each module including a carefully curated sequence of learning experiences designed to guide and deepen your understanding. Across the semester, you will build foundational understandings of young children and their learning, examine the

contexts and relationships that shape children's experiences, and critically analyze educational practices, environments, and systems.

Because discussions, activities, and assignments build directly from the assigned materials, it is essential that you complete all readings, watch assigned videos and review any supplemental resources before participating in discussions or submitting your work. Your engagement with the course materials is foundational to your learning and to our shared exploration as a learning community.

Course Objectives

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

- Identify and describe children's diverse capabilities, questions, interests, and ways of making sense of the world.
- Recognize how children learn through play, their bodies, relationships, lived experiences, and interactions with nature, technology, and materials.
- Practice a pedagogy of listening through careful observation of children's play, relationships, and inquiries with openness and curiosity.
- Examine how learning occurs through children's experiences, relationships, and interactions with both human and more-than-human others.
- Analyze how children's play, identities, and cultural, social, and environmental contexts shape learning and diverse childhood experiences.
- Critically examine dominant cultural and adult-centered ideas about childhood and their influence on educational practices.
- Reflect on your own experiences, beliefs, identities, and perspectives in relation to children, families, and early childhood education.
- Explain how learning spaces and environments influence children's learning, relationships, and engagement.
- Describe pedagogical approaches that support children's curiosity, inquiry, relationships, 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 resources: 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](#)) <https://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 IMAGE OF CHILDREN Beliefs, discourses, identities, and relational understandings of childhood			
Week 1	Rethinking our beliefs about learning with young children	Chenfield (2002)	Weekly Reflection (In class)
Week 2	Understanding multiple	Grady (2024)	Weekly Reflection

	childhoods		
Week 3	Reconstructing our images of children	Malaguzzi (1994)	Weekly Reflection
Week 4	Taking children's voices seriously	Paley (2007)	Weekly Reflection
PART II: HONORING PLAY, CULTURE, AND INQUIRY Supporting children's learning, relationships, wellbeing, inquiry, and ways of knowing			
Week 5	Play- as a fundamental way of being for children: What do children gain through play?	Jones (2003)	Weekly Reflection Assignment # 1
Week 6	Culture and play: How does culture impact children's play?	Nyota & Mapara (2008)	Weekly Reflection
Week 7	Nature and the Outdoors: How does Nature and Outdoor Play impact play and development?	Miller et al., (2013)	Weekly Reflection
Week 8	Play and inquiry: How do play and contexts invite inquiry?	Bentley (2012)	Weekly Reflection
Week 9	Observing children's play and capabilities	Pelo (2016)	Weekly Reflection Assignment #2
PART III: RE-ENVISIONING SCHOOLING, CURRICULUM, AND ENVIRONMENTS Examining how environments and pedagogies shape children's possibilities			
Week 10	The aim of schooling	Campbell (2008)	Weekly Reflection
Week 11	(Re)defining children's environments	Kuh (2014)	Weekly Reflection
Week 12	Models of schooling and care for young children	Kuh et al. (2014)	Weekly Reflection
Week 13	Teachers as facilitators of children's environments	Blinkoff et al. (2023) Wien (2008)	Weekly Reflection Assignment #3
Week 14	Nurturing children's curiosity and inquiry	Schaefer (2016)	Weekly Reflection
THANKSGIVING BREAK			
Week 16	Reconstructing spaces for children		Weekly Reflection Assignment #4

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 total):

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. **Reimagining the Image of the Child (150 pts):**

This assignment invites you to critically re-examine and reconstruct your understandings of children and childhood. Through a creative representation (e.g., poem or alternative form) and an accompanying reflection, you will analyze how your thinking has been shaped and shifted through course concepts such as beliefs, discourse, relationships, and the pedagogy of listening.

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

This assignment invites you to reflect on your own childhood play experiences and create a visual autobiography that tells the story of your play. By examining how your identity, culture, and context shaped your experiences, you will deepen your understanding of how children's learning, relationships, and meaning-making are influenced by the worlds they inhabit.

5. **Critical Examination of Early Education Approaches (150 pts):**

You'll compare three distinct approaches to early childhood education (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Te Whāriki, Anji Play) and analyze how each reflects different values and beliefs about children and learning. This assignment invites you to think critically about how environments, teacher roles, and cultural contexts shape children's agency and creativity—and how these insights can inform your own vision for early learning spaces.

6. **Designing Learning Environments for Play, Inquiry, Relationships, and Multiple Ways of Knowing (150 pts):**

This assignment invites you to design a learning environment for young children that supports play, inquiry, relationships, and multiple ways of knowing. Drawing on course concepts, you will make intentional decisions about materials, spatial arrangement, and possibilities for interaction, examining how environments can support or constrain

children's sense-making, relationships, and agency. You will also reflect on how your design choices express your image of the child and inform your emerging approach to learning with and from young children.

7. Opening Activity: Pair/Group Presentation (100 points):

Students will prepare one 20 minute opening presentation that relates to the topic/readings we will be discussing that week. The activity can be and is not limited to a game, activity, project video clip, discussion questions, etc. reflecting/embodying the ideas in the assigned reading. Be creative! Students will sign up for a session on the first week of class. Each student will also complete a self and peer evaluation form.

Assignments	Points
Attendance & Participation	150
Weekly Reflections	150
Opening Activity	100
Reimagining the Image of the Child	150
Autobiography of Play – Introducing Yourself as a "Player"	150
Critical Examination of Early Education Approaches	150
Designing Playful Learning Spaces for Agency, Inquiry, and Emergent Curiosity	150
TOTAL:	1000

A = 900-1000 points (90%-100%)

B = 800-899 points (80%-89%)

C = 700-799 points (70%-79%)

D = 600-699 points (60%-69%)

F = <599 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>).

A/: 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.