



EDEC 1010.400: Learning with and from Young Children

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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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 Format

This is a fully online asynchronous course delivered through Canvas over a 16-week semester. There are no required class meeting times. Instead, learning takes place through weekly modules that include readings, videos, inquiry reflections, peer responses, assignments, and other learning activities.

Each week, students will engage with course materials, complete inquiry-based reflections and peer responses, participate in online learning activities, and work toward major assignments that build throughout the semester. Because course activities and assignments build directly from the assigned readings and media, students are expected to complete all course materials before participating in weekly discussions and activities.

The course is organized into 15 instructional modules followed by a final submission period for the culminating assignment. Throughout the semester, modules are designed to progressively deepen students' understandings of young children, childhood, play, inquiry, observation, learning environments, and early childhood education.

Course Structure

The course is organized into three units that progressively explore images of children and childhood, children's play and inquiry, and the role of environments and pedagogies in supporting learning. Through readings, media, inquiry reflections, peer dialogue, module activities, and major assignments, students will examine diverse perspectives on childhood while developing their capacity for inquiry, reflection, and critical analysis.

Course Objectives

As we proceed through this course together, I expect 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 accommodation statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You

may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

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).

F-1 Visa Requirements

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for [F-1 Visa \(DOC\)](#) holders. Full-time status for F-1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

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 welcome, 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 reach out via email or stop by my office and let me know. I also invite you to review UNT's Code of Student Conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline understanding of civility: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>. We are all learning together and from one another.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All texts will be uploaded to Canvas, corresponding with each week. Supplemental readings provided by the instructor using online links, electronic copies, and/or handouts.

Course Library Guide:

<https://guides.library.unt.edu/c.php?g=1545342&p=11585386>

The course library guide serves as a central location for weekly readings, videos, supplemental resources, and research support materials used throughout the semester.

Technology Requirements

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on Canvas and the course library guide, as well as:

- A computer, laptop, or tablet capable of accessing course materials
- A microphone and/or device capable of recording audio
- A camera or device capable of recording video (phone, tablet, or webcam)

- Software or applications necessary to create and upload video, audio, written, and visual assignments

If circumstances change, students will be informed of any additional technical needs required to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere: <https://online.unt.edu/learn>

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 revision.*

Date	Inquiry Question	Readings	Assignment
PART I: DECONSTRUCTING & RECONSTRUCTING OUR IMAGE OF CHILDREN Beliefs, discourses, identities, and relational understandings of childhood			
Week 1 Aug. 17-23	Rethinking our beliefs about learning with young children	Chenfield (2002)	Module assignment(s)
Week 2 Aug. 24-30	Understanding multiple childhoods	Grady (2024)	Module assignment(s)
Week 3 Aug. 31-Sept. 6	Reconstructing our images of children	Malaguzzi (1994)	Module assignment(s)
Week 4 Sept. 7-13	Taking children's voices seriously	Paley (2011)	Assignment #1
PART II: HONORING PLAY, CULTURE, AND INQUIRY Supporting children's learning, relationships, wellbeing, inquiry, and ways of knowing			
Week 5 Sept. 14-20	Play- as a fundamental way of being for children	Jones (2003)	Module assignment(s)
Week 6 Sept. 21-27	Play as cultural practice	Nyota & Mapara (2008)	Module assignment(s)
Week 7 Sept. 28-Oct. 4	Nature and the outdoors	Miller et al. (2013)	Module assignment(s)
Week 8 Oct. 5-11	Play and inquiry: How do play and contexts invite inquiry?	Bentley (2012)	Module assignment(s)
Week 9 Oct. 12-18	Observing children's play and capabilities	Pelo (2016)	Assignment #2
PART III: RE-ENVISIONING SCHOOLING, CURRICULUM, AND ENVIRONMENTS Examining how environments and pedagogies shape children's possibilities			
Week 10 Oct. 19-25	The aim of schooling	Campbell (2008)	Module assignment(s)
Week 11	(Re)defining children's environments:	Kuh (2014)	Module assignment(s)

Oct. 26-Nov. 1			
Week 12 Nov. 2-8	Models of schooling and care for young children	Kuh et al. (2014)	Module assignment(s)
Week 13 Nov. 9-15	Teachers as facilitators of children's environments	Blinkoff et al. (2023) Wien (2008)	Module assignment(s)
Week 14 Nov. 16-22	Nurturing children's curiosity and inquiry	Schaefer (2016)	Assignment #3
THANKSGIVING BREAK			
Week 16 Nov. 30-Dec. 6	Reconstructing spaces for children		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](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006>).

Course Evaluation

Assignments: You will have the following assignments during the course. More information will be provided closer to the deadlines, but these assignments include:

1. **Weekly Module Assignments:** This course is designed and organized to be highly collaborative and interactive. Weekly module assignment (50 pts for each module) requires you to actively engage with your professor and classmates through the completion of module readings and written assignments, shared discussion of what you've learned from them, and demonstrated understanding and application of the concepts present in different texts.
2. **Reimagining the Image of the Child:** 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.
3. **Autobiography of Play – Introducing Yourself as a "Player":** 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.
4. **Critical Examination of Early Education Approaches:** 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.

5. **Designing Learning Environments for Play, Inquiry, Relationships, and Multiple Ways of Knowing:** 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.

Assignment	Points
Weekly module assignments (50 each)	550
Reimagining the Image of the Child	100
Autobiography of Play – Introducing Yourself as a "Player"	100
Critical Examination of Early Education Approaches	100
Designing Playful Learning Spaces for Agency, Inquiry, and Emergent Curiosity	100
TOTAL:	950

A = 855-950 points (90%-100%)
B = 760-854 points (80%-89%)
C = 665-759 points (70%-79%)
D = 570-664 points (60%-69%)
F = <569 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. Central Time on the date listed. 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!

Integrity: Students who submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating, or misrepresentation of academic records will be subject to charges. Any infraction of this nature, whether it be a phrase or more, can result in a grade of a 0 (zero) for the assignment. Please also see the UNT policies below for more on this.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: The content of this course is divided into 15 weeks. Each module contains a sequenced collection of readings, information, discussion, and assignments designed to teach a specific aspect related to learning with and from young children. Discussion prompts and assignments are heavily dependent on course readings, videos, and other shared resources; therefore, it is crucial that you complete the readings, watch the assigned videos, and read any additional information before you post a response or complete an assignment.

Technology: You may use your tablet or laptop during class. However, at the same time, I know that having your computer or tablet open can be challenging as it can be distracting when there is so much at your fingertips—but please try to refrain from distracting yourself and your peers.

Additional UNT Policies and Resources

[Student Academic Integrity](#) policy. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of guidelines for your academic success. An academic integrity violation could result in loss of points, a failing grade for the assignment or course, suspension or even expulsion depending on the severity. It's not worth a chance, so do your own work and ask for an extension if you need more time on an assignment.

[Important Dates](#). It may be helpful to make note of important drop/add deadlines, etc.

[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.