

**Decision Making for Planning, Teaching, and Organizing Early  
Childhood Classrooms**

**EDEC 4020/EDEC 4020L**



**Foram Bhukhanwala**

**Spring 2007**

Decision Making for Planning, Teaching, and Organizing Early Childhood  
Classrooms  
EDEC 4020/EDEC 4020L  
Spring 2007  
**Monday / Wednesday 1:25 – 3:20 p.m.**  
**430 Aderhold Hall**

**Instructor**

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The essence of good teaching is in the arena of human relationships. Teaching is good when a class becomes a community of nurturant, honest, and mutually respectful people. Experienced teachers treasure the moments and the memories of times when laughter, compassion, and surprise described their day or year. (Christopher M. Clark, *Thoughtful Teaching*, Teachers College Press, 1995). According to the conceptual framework of the professional education unit of the University of Georgia....exemplary professionals have both a deep knowledge of the subject matter they are expected to teach and the pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are required to make subject matter developmentally accessible, meaningful, and useful for students.  
(<http://ncate.coe.uga.edu/programs/earlychildhood/framework/>)

**Overview**

Welcome to EDEC 4020! This course is intended to help future teachers develop as reflective decision makers by understanding and incorporating the major themes, concepts, and skills involved in organizing, planning, and developing instruction in early childhood classrooms. Through this course we will begin to construct our vision of teaching by taking an inquiry stance.

The course topics will be considered within the socio-cultural, psychological, and political issues of schooling, with consideration of diversity and learning. We will work towards articulating our beliefs about teaching and learning as we consider these issues through reading, discussions, field experiences, and class projects.

**Goals**

Through this course we will

- ❖ Considering how the past shapes the present, investigating the beliefs we bring into our work with young children by examining our own stories as learners and teachers.
- ❖ Formulating understandings of young children's learning and development by considering our experiences, field experiences, engaging in class readings, and

critically examining the educational philosophies and practices in both the past and the present.

- ❖ Learning the importance of students' perspectives and exploring ways in which the students' voices can be included in our thinking about teaching and learning. Learning skills in observing and assessing children, classroom environments, and teaching approaches from the child's perspective.
- ❖ Developing an understanding of the various curriculum approaches used in early childhood classrooms.
- ❖ Developing a community of learners and teachers, collaborating to expand meaningful understandings of what it means to be a learner and teacher. In addition, we will collaborate to support each other and refine our procedures and products as a community.
- ❖ Examining our experiences as learners and teachers by recognizing the importance of diversity and we will work towards developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help ALL students.
- ❖ Developing creative and related teaching materials to accompany teaching strategies.

### **GSTEP Framework**

The GSTEP Framework is a replicable statewide induction tool that identifies the knowledge, skills, dispositions, understandings, and other attributes of accomplished teaching. It provides a structure through which novices and their mentors are able to assess and analyze teaching practice.

#### **GSTEP Framework Guiding Principles**

The following principles guided the development of the GSTEP Framework:

- ❖ **The Process Principle:** Learning to teach is a career-long process.
- ❖ **The Support Principle:** Successful engagement in the process of learning to teach requires support from multiple partners.
- ❖ **The Ownership Principle:** Professional teachers have ownership of their careers, which they create and design.
- ❖ **The Impact Principle:** Effective teaching yields evidence of student learning.
- ❖ **The Equity Principle:** All teachers deserve high expectations and support.
- ❖ **The Dispositions Principle:** Productive dispositions affect student learning, teacher growth, and school climate positively.
- ❖ **The Technology Principle:** Technology facilitates teaching, learning, community building, and resource acquisition

#### **■ Content & Curriculum**

Teachers demonstrate a strong knowledge of content area(s) appropriate for their certification levels.

##### **Accomplished teachers:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of content, major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that are central to the subject(s) they teach.

- Understand and use subject-specific content and pedagogical content knowledge (how to teach their subjects) that is appropriate for diverse learners they teach.
- Stay current in their subject areas as engaged learners and/or performers in their fields.
- Relate content area(s) to other subject areas and see connections to everyday life.
- Carefully select and use a wide variety of resources, including available technology, to deepen their own knowledge in the content area(s).
- Interpret and construct school curriculum that reflects state and national content area standards.

### ■ Knowledge of Students & Their Learning

Teachers support the intellectual, social, physical, and personal development of all students.

#### Accomplished teachers:

- Believe that all children can learn at high levels and hold high expectations for all.
- Understand how learning occurs in general and in the content areas (e.g., how diverse learners construct knowledge, acquire skills, and develop habits of mind).
- Are sensitive, alert, and responsive to all aspects of a child's well-being.
- Understand how factors in environments inside and outside of school may influence students' lives and learning.
- Are informed about and adapt their work based on students' stages of development, multiple intelligences, learning styles, and areas of exceptionality.
- Establish respectful and productive relationships with families and seek to develop cooperative partnerships in support of student learning and well-being.

### ■ Learning Environments

Teachers create learning environments that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

#### Accomplished teachers:

- Create a learning community, in which students assume responsibility, participate in decision-making, and work both collaboratively and independently.
- Organize, allocate, and manage time, space, activities, technology and other resources to provide active and equitable engagement of diverse students in productive tasks.
- Understand and implement effective classroom management.
- Recognize the value of and use knowledge about human motivation and behavior to develop strategies for organizing and supporting student learning.
- Are sensitive to and use knowledge of students' unique cultures, experiences, and communities to sustain a culturally responsive classroom.
- Access school, district, and community resources in order to foster students' learning and wellbeing.
- Use effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

### ■ Assessment

Teachers understand and use a range of formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous development of all learners.

#### **Accomplished teachers:**

- Understand measurement theory and the characteristics, uses, and issues of different types of assessment.
- Use pre-assessment data to select or design clear, significant, varied and appropriate student learning goals.
- Choose, develop, and use classroom-based assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
- Involve learners in self-assessment, helping them become aware of their strengths and needs and encouraging them to set personal goals for learning.
- Develop and use valid, equitable grading procedures based on student learning.
- Use assessment data to communicate student progress knowledgeably and responsibly to students, parents, and other school personnel.
- Use resources, including available technology, to keep accurate and up-to-date records of student work, behavior, and accomplishments.
- Are committed to using assessment to identify student strengths and needs and promote student growth.

### ■ Planning & Instruction

Teachers design and create instructional experiences based on their knowledge of content and curriculum, students, learning environments, and assessment.

#### **Accomplished teachers:**

- Articulate clear and defensible rationales for their choices of curriculum materials and instructional strategies.
- Plan and carry out instruction based upon knowledge of content standards, curriculum, students, learning environments, and assessment.
- Understand and use a variety of instructional strategies appropriately to maintain student engagement and support the learning of all students.
- Monitor and adjust strategies in response to learner feedback.
- Vary their roles in the instructional process (e.g. instructor, facilitator, coach, audience) in relation to the content and purposes of instruction and the needs of students.
- Use appropriate resources, materials, and technology to enhance instruction for diverse learners.
- Value and engage in planning as a collegial activity.

### ■ Professionalism

Teachers recognize, participate in, and contribute to teaching as a profession.

#### **Accomplished teachers:**

- Continually examine and extend their knowledge of the history, ethics, politics, knowledge of the history, ethics, politics, organization, and practices of education.
- Understand and implement laws related to rights and responsibilities of students, educators, and families.

- Follow established codes of professional conduct, including school and district policies.
- Systematically reflect on teaching and learning to improve their own practice.
- Seek opportunities to learn based upon reflection, input from others, and career goals.
- Advocate for curriculum, instruction, learning environments, and opportunities that support the diverse needs of and high expectations for all students.
- Assume leadership and support roles as part of a school team.

### **Required Texts**

Bel-Jean Packet (163 E. Broad St., 706-548-3648)

### **Texts for Book Club (Select any ONE)**

- ❖ Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: The journey of a teacher* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College.
- ❖ Baldacci, L. (2004). *Inside Mrs. B's classroom: Courage, hope, and learning on Chicago's south side*. New York: McGraw Hills.
- ❖ Glickman, C. (2004). *Letters to the next president*. New York: Teachers College.
- ❖ Kuroyanagi, T. (1982). *Totto-chan: The little girl at the window*. New York: Kodansha International.

Other suggestions?

### **Course Expectations**

- Notify me **BEFORE** class if you cannot attend a class. Be punctual for class.
- Remember to turn off your cell phone.
- Lap tops can be used for taking class notes but not used for checking e-mails or doing other work during class time.
- Complete all readings and other preparations for each class in a timely manner.
- Participate thoughtfully and constructively in class discussions and activities. Active participation is essential to your learning in the course. Please be sensitive to turn-taking issues.
- "Take charge" of your own learning through pursuing projects which meet personal educational needs and interests.
- Be familiar with UGA Academic Honesty Policy and be consistently fair and honest in representing your work to others.

### **Honor Code**

“Students at The University of Georgia are responsible for maintaining and adhering to the strictest standards of honesty and integrity in every aspect of their lives. Honesty in academic matters is a large part of this obligation. Specific regulations governing student academic conduct are contained in the Student Handbook and these should avoid misunderstanding.” – Undergraduate Bulletin

## Requirements for 4020

### **Attendance and punctuality:**

You are required to attend all sessions. Class begins promptly at 1:25 p.m. and ends at 3:20 p.m. Students who have 3 unexcused absences will receive a grade lower than what is expected from a total graded requirements. Students who miss 4 or more classes with unexcused absences will receive a failing grade.

### **Establishing a respectful learning community:**

We are a community of learners where every one is a teacher and a student. A meaningful learning community is built on trust, respect, care, appreciation, and support. Within a caring and an ethical environment, we will engage in a collaborative exchange of ideas and understandings. We will work towards creating a psychologically safe space where members of the learning community can feel free to express their perspectives and at the same time feel safe to be challenged and stretched. There are no right or wrong perspectives; our goal will be to understand the perspectives and not to judge others based on their views. Therefore, remember to be sensitive, appreciative, and respectful as we participate in shared conversations.

*Please Note:* Turn off cell phones or pagers during class. Laptops are permitted for class purposes only. Do not check emails during class time!

### **Web CT:**

We will often use electronic methods for communication. We will use web CT to post messages, extend conversations outside of class, write reflections, and inform each other of important events in the field of education. Be sure to check Web CT regularly.

From February 12, we will use Web CT for Book Club discussions. Each student will have the opportunity to lead the discussion at least once during the semester. The remaining group members will respond to build upon a meaningful discussion about the weekly reading.

### **Participation:**

We will be actively participating in all class discussions and activities. Come to each class prepared to participate thoughtfully and critically.

### **Assessment**

The primary purpose of the assessment system is to support the quality of your work as you strive to become the best teacher you can be. I strongly believe that an education student's primary goal should not be on grades but on professional and personal growth. My purpose of assessment is to enable you to demonstrate what you know and inspire you to continue

being a learner. I hope you will value the process of learning and carry this disposition in your own classroom with children

Through out the semester you will receive a qualitative feedback and a check, check plus or check minus on your products. You will also receive feedback from your classmates in class and I encourage you to share and seek feedback outside of class.

### **Important dates to remember**

- January 8: Classes begin
- January 15: MLK Holiday
- January 24: Letter to Mentor Teacher and Letter to Parents (peer review)
- January 29: Letter to Mentor Teacher and Letter to Parents (Final draft)
- January 31: Due: Educational Philosophy Statement
- February 21: Due: Curriculum Approach Paper
- February 26: Field Experience begins
- March 30: Field Experience ends
- April 23: Community Building Project Presentation
- April 25: Book Club
- April 30: Last day of class  
Self Assessment
- May 3: Due: Portfolio

### **Assignments for 4020**

#### **Assignments:**

This course has class assignments and field assignments. All the assignments should be typed (double-spaced, 1 inch margin, Times New Roman, font size 12). No cover page is necessary.

#### Class Assignments

#### **❖ (January 31) Educational Philosophy Statement**

During Segment I, you will read and discuss some educational thinkers and women leaders who have influenced the field of early childhood education. Choose 1-2 educational thinkers or women leaders whose ideas affect your views of early childhood education most. Write a 3-page statement about

their impact on your developing teaching philosophy. Your statement should include the following information:

- Whose ideas have influenced you most?
- Specifically what aspects of her (their) ideas have you found significant, insightful, touching, or challenging?
- What were your views of early childhood education like before knowing her (them)?
- How have her (their) ideas changed your perspectives of early childhood education and its mission?

❖ **(January 24(peer review), 29(due)) Letter to Mentor Teacher and Parents**

You will write letters to your mentor teacher and another to students' parents for introducing yourself. In these letters you might describe your background, special talent or interests, and your hopes and dreams for your experience in your field experience and/or what you hope to offer the children during your time in the field. The content of this letter needs to be of the highest quality, with perfect grammar and spelling.

❖ **(February 21) Curriculum Approach Paper**

During Segment II of this course, you will learn about 5 curriculum models, including Montessori, High Scope, Creative Curriculum, Reggio Emilia, and the Project Approach. For this assignment, select 3 curriculum models that you have found most attractive and discuss the followings (no more than 5 pages):

- ❖ What are commonalities and differences of the 3 curriculum models that you have chosen?
- ❖ What are functions or characteristics of the 3 curriculum models that fit your educational philosophy and that you would like to implement in your future classrooms?
- ❖ What are some contemporary issues discussed in class that particularly draw your attention and that you would like to incorporate in your future practices?

❖ **(April 25) Book Club**

Select one book from the book list. We will form six groups of five students each who will be reading the same book. We will begin discussing the readings on Web CT by February 12. On April 23, we will come together as a class to share our Web CT discussions.

❖ **(April 30) Self-Assessment:**

Looking at the course goals assess your growth over the semester. This is a requirement but will not be graded.

❖ **(May 3) Portfolio**

You will turn in a class project with self assessment

Include the following artifacts with papers

- Educational Philosophy Statement

- Curriculum Approach Paper
- Integrated Lesson and Assessment Report
- Critical Incidence
- Self assessment (How would you assess the quality of ideas represented in your paper? How would you assess the quality of your writing? Think about style as well as organization and mechanics. What have you learned in the process of writing these assignments)?

Field Assignment:

❖ **April 23) Classroom Management/Community Building Project**

1. Conduct two 20-minute observations during the 4 week portion of your field assignment focusing on classroom management, community building, and student behavior. Use a 2-column format of note-taking and note-making. At the end of each observation, write a brief reflection in response to questions a and b:
  - a. What does this observation tell you about a classroom management and community-building approach used by your mentor teacher and how students respond to the approach?
  - b. What are you learning from your observations and interactions in this classroom about effective and ineffective approaches to building a learning community and to managing children of this age? What questions do you have about building learning communities and classroom management with pre-kindergarten through fifth grade children?
2. You will outline a community building and classroom management plan detailing how you hope to provide the optimal learning environment for your students. We will develop guidelines for the plan in class.

❖ **(May 3) Integrated Lesson and Assessment Report**

Develop a thematic lesson that integrates at least two content areas and that includes a method of assessment discussed in class. This should be a lesson that you can teach for 20-30 minutes per day for 3-5 days—Days of your lesson, however, do not have to be successive (i.e., two afternoon sessions per week for 2 weeks). Teach this lesson in a small group(s) or in the large group. The lesson must be formally approved by your cooperating teacher before its implementation. Your report should be 5-pages and include the following information:

- ❖ Title of the activity
- ❖ Philosophical grounding (Referring to the curricular models, explain your philosophical stance you are using to guide your planning and implementing)

- ❖ Goals (explain how this connects with the lives of the students)
- ❖ Grade level
- ❖ Time (e.g., calendar) and group format (e.g., the large group) used for the lesson
- ❖ Brief descriptions of each day's lesson procedure
- ❖ Materials used
- ❖ Assessment method utilized
- ❖ Reflection: How do you think the children and you achieved instructional objectives? How meaningful do you think the activity was for the children's learning and life? How would you like to modify the topic or procedures of the lesson for your future implementation and why? How would you like to modify the assessment method and why?
- ❖ Signature and 1-2 sentence comments of your cooperating teacher

❖ **(May 3) Critical Incidences**

During your time in the field, note **3** critical incidences that portray the tensions and challenges you felt during teaching (for example: establishing authority, handling student resistance, working with student with low motivation, students fights, etc). Write a detailed narrative of this experience highlighting the following:

- ❖ The context
- ❖ The trigger(s)
- ❖ The responses of the involved student(s), other students, mentor teacher, self.
- ❖ The outcomes (feelings, thoughts, actions).
- ❖ Your questions.

Bring these incidences to class on April 2, 4, 16, and 18. Using theater activities we will engage in critical reflective practice to gain a deeper understanding of the context and collectively generate alternative possibilities that we can make available for ourselves in future.

\*\* This syllabus contains a proposed agenda. Modifications may be made throughout the semester.

### Course Schedule and Topical Outline

#### Monday, January 8

Introductions  
Course overview

#### Wednesday, January 10

Revisiting and beginning to articulate our purposes of teaching  
Readings:

*Nieto, S. (Ed.). Why we teach? New York: Teachers College Press. (Ch. 1 and 23).*

#### Monday, January 15 - Martin Luther King Holiday (No Class)

#### Wednesday, January 17

Teaching in U.S. Context  
Readings:

Nourot, P. M. (2005). Historical perspectives on early childhood education, In J. L. Roopnarine & J. E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to early childhood education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 3-43). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

#### Monday, January 22

Educational thinkers' influence on ECE  
Readings:

Morrison, G. S. (2004). *Early childhood education today*. (9<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 81-107). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

#### Wednesday, January 24

Patty Smith Hill  
Reading:

Wolfe, J. (2000). *Learning from the past: Historical voices in early childhood education*. Alberta: Piney Branch Press. (pp. 225-247).

**Due:** Letter to mentor teacher and Letter to parents (peer review)

#### Monday, January 29

Lucy Sprague Mitchell  
Readings:

Wolfe, J. (2000). *Learning from the past: Historical voices in early childhood education*. Alberta: Piney Branch Press. (pp. 351-390).

**Due:** Letter to mentor teacher and Letter to parents (final draft)

**Wednesday, January 31**

Maria Montessori

Readings:

Wolfe, J. (2000). *Learning from the past: Historical voices in early childhood education*. Alberta: Piney Branch Press. (pp. 249-300).

Due: Educational Philosophy Statement

**Monday, February 5**

Montessori Methods:

School visit to Waseca Learning Environments, 580 Tallassee Rd, Athens, GA 30606.

Readings:

Torrence, M. & Chattin-McNichols (2005). Montessori education today. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to early childhood education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 363-393). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Meet Your Teacher Day**

**Wednesday, February 7**

Jean Piaget

Readings:

Berk, L. E. (2000). Cognitive development: Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives. In Author, *Child development* (pp.221-223, 235-253, 257-259). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

**Friday, February 9**

Full day in field

**Monday, February 12**

High Scope & Creative Curriculum

Visit to McPhaul Center

Readings:

Dodge, D.T. & Colker, L. (1992). *The creative curriculum for early childhood* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Teaching strategies.

Weikart, D. & Schweinhart, L. (2005). The high/scope curriculum for early childhood care and education. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to early childhood education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 235-249). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Wednesday, February 14**

Dewey, Piaget, Lev Vygotsky & Loris Malaguzzi

Readings:

Berk, L. E. (2000). Cognitive development: Piagetian and Vygotskian

perspectives. In Author, *Child development* (pp.221-223, 235-253, 257-259). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Rankin, B. (2003). Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky: Connections with Malaguzzi and Reggio approach. In Hendrick, J. (Ed.). *Next steps towards teaching the Reggio way: Accepting the challenges to change*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pp. 27-35). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Friday, February 16**

Full day in field

**Monday, February 19**

The Reggio Emilia & Project Approach

Guest Speaker: Dr. Julia Atilas

Readings:

New, R. (2005). The Reggio Emilia approach. Provocations and partnerships with U.S. early childhood educators. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to early childhood education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 313-335). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Katz, L., & Chard, S. (2005). The project approach: An overview. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to early childhood education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 235-249). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Wednesday, February 21**

Insights Gained from the Curriculum Models

Bloom's Taxonomy

Summarizing and synthesizing the curriculum models

Group work on conceptualizing lessons guided by curriculum models

Due: Curriculum Approach Paper

**Friday, February 23**

Full day in the field

**Monday, February 26 – March 30: Field Experience**

**Monday, April 2**

Reflection on the field experience

**Wednesday, April 4**

Engaging in critical reflections using theater.

**Monday, April 9**

To be determined

**Wednesday, April 11**

To be determined

**Monday, April 16**

Engaging in critical reflections using theater

**Wednesday, April 18**

Engaging in critical reflections using theater

**Monday, April 23**

Sharing community building projects

Due: Community Building Project

**Wednesday, April 25**

Book Club

**Monday, April 30**

Group sharing, course evaluations

Due: Self Assessment

**Thursday May 3: Finals: Portfolio due**