

A Brief Guide to the Pennsylvania Early Childhood Course Syllabus Rubric¹

The rubric is a tool to guide the review and documentation of key content and areas of knowledge/practice that are explicit and documentable in a course syllabus. It provides a snapshot of the depth and breadth to which specific indicators are present and the extent to which those indicators are incorporated in documentable course expectations.

THE RUBRIC

The rubric was designed to capture the extent to which a set of indicators are explicit in a syllabus. The indicators were drawn from state, national, and federal frameworks and documents that have been associated with high-quality early education and care. The rubric may be used to provide a descriptive overview of the content that is present or absent. Additionally, the rubric may be used in a pre/post fashion to show change.

USING THE RUBRIC TO EXAMINE A SYLLABUS

- 1 Read the rubric and become familiar with all the key terms.
- 2 Gather these syllabus components:
 - Course description
 - Course outcomes or objectives
 - Texts, readings, and resources
 - Course content (e.g., a course calendar that lists topics or areas of emphasis, required observations, videos, guest speakers, lab experiences)
 - Assignments (e.g., lists of required assignments, research, or projects to be completed, reflection or discussion topics, etc.)

For an online course, this may require retrieving materials from the platform on which the course is taught (e.g., Blackboard), as the components may appear in different locations.

Review the syllabus to get the general gist of the course. If a component is not available, note that at the bottom of the first page (e.g., no course calendar available).

- 3 For each component of the syllabus, go through the following process.

Course Description: Read the course description. With the course description in front of you, scan the list of indicators. Which indicators did you see reflected in the course description? Place a small check mark or notation in the box beside each indicator that explicitly matches content in the course description.

Outcomes/Objectives: Repeat the process for the course description. If the outcomes/objectives are numbered, write the number(s) in the box(es) opposite the indicators that are present.

Texts, Readings, Resources: Repeat the process for the course description. If a text is listed for the course, it may be possible to search online for the Table of Contents (TOC). A scan of the TOC will provide information about topics addressed in the text.

Course Content: Read all information related to how the course is taught. Look for information about the sequence of topics addressed, discussion topics, videos, reflection topics, etc. Look for matches between the instructional experiences described in the syllabus and the indicators. When you see a match, note it in the appropriate box with a small check mark. It can also be helpful to note the page number of the syllabus on which you saw the match. For example, if the syllabus mentions that there will be a guest speaker on infant mental health, you would put a check in the box opposite Indicator 8 and write “guest speaker.”

¹ This document was created by Camille Catlett.

Assignments²: Read all information about the assignments, including directions, rubrics, and forms. Look for matches between the assignments described in the syllabus and the indicators. When you see a match, note it in the appropriate box with a small check mark. It can also be helpful to note the page number of the syllabus on which you saw the match. For example, if the syllabus mentions that students need to research evidence-based practices for supporting preschool children with disabilities to develop STEM concepts, you would put a check in the box opposite Indicator 5 labelled knowledge acquisition. If the syllabus mentions that students need to use those evidence-based practices as the basis for designing a STEM learning center for all the children in the preschool classroom, you would put checks for Indicator 3 in both the box labelled knowledge acquisition AND the box labelled knowledge application. And if the assignment also requires discussion of specific adaptations for children in the classroom who are dual language learners, put a check for Indicator 14 as well.

Indicators 18, 19, and 20 are included for two reasons. In a syllabus that is intended to address the birth through Grade 4 age range, it is a mechanism for documenting whether that is explicit or not. In addition, for programs that have or are seeking national accreditation from an organization like NAEYC that requires emphasis on birth-8, this feature can be helpful in looking at the extent to which that is true across courses.

As you get familiar with using the rubric, you may find it helpful to make notes that would be useful when reflecting on ways in which to enhance the syllabus (e.g., if a specific activity or assignment could be easily tweaked to include application of knowledge as well as acquisition). It may also be helpful to note the page on which information is found.

USING THE RUBRIC TO SUPPORT ENHANCEMENTS

A completed rubric paints a picture of what is and what isn't explicitly mentioned in a course syllabus. A visual scan can reveal what's present, what's absent, and what to do about it. For example, if an indicator is found mostly in the basic syllabus components, it may be important to address that indicator as part of the course content and/or assignments. If indicators are found mostly in knowledge acquisition assignments, it might be important to require more emphasis on how to apply that knowledge. Ideas for making strategic changes may be captured in the Notes column for future reference. The rubric may be used in a pre/post fashion. For example, use one color for initial scoring and a different color for a re-scoring.

TIPS FOR USING THE RUBRIC EFFECTIVELY

- Remember the words **explicit** and **intentional**. If emphasis is not explicit, it should not be scored. Be fair, but not generous.
- For the most thorough review, go through the syllabus both visually and electronically. An electronic search (e.g., CTRL F) may be conducted by key word searching by the terms in each indicator.
- The purpose of the rubric **is not** to incorporate all 20 indicators in each syllabus. Indicator 17, for example, aligns with knowledge of effective practices for leading a program (e.g., staffing, budget, policies and procedures). That content is not relevant in most early childhood courses so alignment with that indicator would not be expected. At the same time, there are some rubrics that should be addressed in any course (e.g., 9, 12-15). Some programs opt to add indicators that are unique to their programs (e.g., play as a vehicle for supporting learning and development).
- For the most accurate snapshot using the rubric, the syllabus should be assessed by someone who does not use the syllabus (i.e., not the author or a faculty member who teaches that course).
- The small amount of time it will take to capture notes will pay off generously in rescoring.

² This section of the rubric builds from a definition of professional development in early childhood found in What do we mean by professional development in the early childhood field? (http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/sites/npdci.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NPDCI_ProfessionalDevelopmentInEC_03-04-08_0.pdf) "Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the **acquisition** of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the **application** of this knowledge in practice" (page3)

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

This sample syllabus was created for use in learning how to use the Pennsylvania rubric. Using the information below, go through the process described in Step 3 (on pages 1-2).

Title: Child Growth and Development

Description: This course covers theories of child development, developmental sequences, and factors that influence children's development, from birth through middle childhood for all children. Emphasis is placed on sequences in physical/motor, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development and the multiple influences on the development and learning of the whole child. Upon completion, students should be able to identify typical and atypical developmental characteristics, plan experiences to enhance development, and describe appropriate interaction techniques and environments.

Course Objectives:

1. Discuss ways in which biological and environmental factors influence all children's development and learning from preschool to middle childhood.
2. Identify theories, research, principles of child development, growth, and learning in all domains.
3. Describe stages of development, developmental milestones, and characteristic behaviors in all domains from conception to middle childhood.
4. Identify appropriate observation techniques for assessing developmental levels and skills of all children.
5. Plan developmentally appropriate experiences, interaction techniques and environments that are sensitive to and meet the individual needs of all children and families with differing backgrounds, i.e. linguistic, culture, geographic, ethnic, and socioeconomic.

Textbook: *Childhood and Adolescence Voyages in Development* by Spencer A. Rathus, Delmar Publishers

Units of Instruction

- I. What Is Child Development?
 - A. History, Theories, and Methods
- II. Beginnings
 - A. Heredity and Conception
 - B. Prenatal Development
 - C. Birth and the Newborn Baby: In the New World
- III. Infancy
 - A. Infancy: Physical Development
 - B. Infancy: Cognitive Development
 - C. Infancy: Social and Emotional Development
- IV. Toddlerhood
 - A. Toddler Physical Development
 - B. Toddler Social and Emotional Development
 - C. Toddler Cognitive Development

Grading/Evaluation: Tests will cover the text, plus films, handouts and lectures to be announced. Missed tests must be made up as soon as possible, preferably the following morning. Grades on make-up tests may be reduced. Each test is worth 100 points.

Video Experience: *Babies*

Watch the film *Babies*. It will visually convey the ways in which adults support the development of four babies, Mari (Tokyo, Japan), Hattie (San Francisco, USA), Ponijao (Namibia), and Bayarjargal (Mongolia). As you watch the film, think about and be prepared to discuss the following questions: 1) What were the most striking similarities among these children and their experiences? 2) What were the most striking differences among these children

and their experiences? To what extent do you see emphasis on language? Literacy? Social-emotional development? STEM development?

Course Assignments:

Assignment #1: Journal Articles Summary

Read 10 professional journal articles relating to Infant Growth and Development. These articles will be submitted with a typed paragraph for each article summarizing the key points and the link to the article online.

Assignment #2: Beyond Babies

Imagine this: You are a teacher in a high-quality childcare program. Ponijao's family is about to relocate and he will be placed in your class. What will you do to ensure that you provide high-quality, culturally-responsive services and supports for Ponijao and his family? Drawing on your textbook, things we've discussed in class, and handouts you've received about evidence-based practices, write 2-3 paragraphs about each of the following topics.

- How will you engage, build respectful partnerships, and communicate with Ponijao's family?
- How will you support Ponijao as a young dual language learner?
- How will you build Ponijao's resilience in adapting to a completely new learning environment with new children and a new language of instruction?

At the end of each section, cite the source of the evidence-based practices from which you drew information.

Assignment #3: Child Rearing Practices in Other Cultures

Prepare a brief research paper investigating child-rearing situations in another country. Choose a country other than the United States. Focus your research on practices that impact social-emotional development.

Assignment #4: Read All About It

For this assignment you will need to identify and read four articles on aspects of child growth and development.

- You have been provided with List A of early childhood journals (e.g., *Young Children*) and List B of early childhood special education/early intervention journals (e.g., *Young Exceptional Children*, *Exceptional Parent*). At least one of your articles must come from a journal in List B.
- The articles should address some aspect(s) of growth and development for children of different ages (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten, primary).
- There are five priority topics for this assignment.
 1. Young children who have experienced trauma, maltreatment, or other adverse experiences
 2. Young children with disabilities
 3. Young children who are racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse
 4. Young children with challenging behavior
 5. Young children who are dual language learners (DLLs)

At least two of your articles must address one or more of the priority topics.

- For each article, please write the following.
 - Title, author, journal title, journal issue, pages (use APA style for this citation)
 - Priority topic(s) addressed
 - Identify one or more evidence-based practices that were mentioned in the article. Describe the practice(s).
 - Describe whether the practice was selected, implemented, evaluated, and adjusted in ways that are consistent with progress monitoring. If this did not occur, please comment on how you would have incorporated components of progress monitoring in using the practice(s).