This course supports the assessment for Professional Practice in ECE. The course covers 5 competencies and represents 5 competency units.

Introduction

Overview
This course will guide you through learning resources and activities that will help you develop and refine your professional skills. You may find that you can also draw on many of your own experiences and insights as you become an increasingly reflective practitioner. As you move through this course, remember to relate your reading and activities to your own plans and goals. Make certain that you are keeping your journal.

Teaching Dispositions Statement
Please review the WGU Statement of Teaching Dispositions.

Course Instructor Assistance
As you prepare to demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course instructors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success. Course instructors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you're studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies and troubleshoot areas of deficiency. Even if things don't work out on your first try, course instructors act as a support system to guide you through the revision process. You should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, so you are welcome to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors are fully committed to your success!

Preparing for Success

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you complete this course.

Learning Resources

The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to manually enroll in or independently acquire other resources. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

Purchase Learning Resources
Listed below are the learning resource materials you will need to obtain.

**Textbooks**
Purchase the following textbook:


You may purchase this text from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). After accessing the NAEYC website, click on the "Learn More" link for this book to order. NAEYC members receive a discount on this purchase. It is recommended that you join NAEYC as you work through your program.

*Note: This text will be used in multiple Early Childhood Education courses. Be certain to purchase the 3rd edition of this text that includes the free CD. You will be using the CD as a learning resource.*

**Automatically Enrolled Resources**
You will be automatically enrolled at the activity level for the following learning resources. Simply click on the links provided in the activities to access the learning materials.

**VitalSourceE-Texts**
The following textbooks are available to you as an e-text within this course. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the activities that follow.


*Note: These e-texts are available to you as part of your program tuition and fees, but you may purchase hard copies at your own expense through a retailer of your choice. If you choose to do so, please use the ISBN listed to ensure that you receive the correct edition.*

**Other Learning Resources**
You will use the following learning resources for this course.

**WGU Library E-Reserves**
This course utilizes resources located in the WGU Library E-Reserves, with articles available for you to download. For instructions on how to access WGU Library E-Reserves, see the "Accessing WGU Library E-Reserves” page
The following e-reserve materials will be used in this course:


**Pacing Guide**

The pacing guide suggests a weekly structure to pace your completion of learning activities. It is provided as a suggestion and does not represent a mandatory schedule. Follow the pacing guide carefully to complete the course in the suggested timeframe.

- [Pacing Guide: Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education](#)

*Note: This pacing guide does not replace the course. Please continue to refer to the course for a comprehensive list of the resources and activities.*

**Ethical Practice**

Recent national and international events have focused the world's attention on ethics and the ethical (or unethical) practices of government, industry, and corporate leaders. Many have lamented the demise of ethical behavior in the general population.

However, educators have always been held to a higher standard of ethical conduct. Working with a vulnerable population (i.e., infants, toddlers, and young children) places an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of any person who works in such a field.

WGU's Teachers College Code of Ethics captures the essence of ethical practice when it states that:

"Graduates of WGU's licensure programs will demonstrate the following dispositions:

- Competent and caring
- Respectful and embracing of diversity
- Reflective practitioners
- Equitable and fair
- Professional practice consistent with the belief that all students can learn
- Collaborative professionals
- Professional leaders and change agents"

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has also published a [Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment](#) that serves to guide early childhood practitioners.

**Commitment to Ethical Practice as an Early Childhood Professional**
You will consider the role of ethics both in the broad field of early childhood education and in the narrower path of your own personal and professional practice. The readings and activities in this course will lead you through a variety of experiences exploring the theoretical and practical implications of ethics, ethical decision-making, and ethical behavior. This is a particularly important subject for taking notes and writing down your reflections. Be certain to participate in the community discussions and chats in order to expand your knowledge and awareness of the multiple manifestations of ethics.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 607.2.4: Ethical Standards and Continuous Learning**
  The graduate employs ethical standards and other professional guidelines to guide professional practice; and engages in continuous, collaborative learning to inform and improve practice.

**Reflection**

Take a minute to reflect on those personal core values to which you hold fast in your daily life, jot down your thoughts and responses to the following questions in your study notes or reflection journal.

- How do you make decisions that involve the well-being of others?
- How do you measure the rightness or wrongness of a situation?
- How do your personality traits support or hinder you when you find it difficult to be kind, warm, caring, or compassionate (e.g., Do you withdraw, get angry or sarcastic, use humor, become anxious or stressed, seek advice or support, justify your feelings?)
- What personal values led you to choose a career in the field of early childhood education?
- Is there a person who has been a hero or role model for you? If so, what core values did that person’s actions reveal?

**Rate Yourself**

Feeney and Freeman (1999) state that there are several additional steps involved in moving beyond being an ethical person to becoming an ethical professional early childhood educator. They name the following steps:

- awareness of the values and ideals of the field of early childhood education
- primary commitment to the welfare of young children
- understanding of the ethical responsibilities an early childhood educator holds
- use of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct to assist in resolving ethical dilemmas
- ability to talk about ethical issues and to justify ethical responses
- knowing and acting upon the core values shared by all early childhood educators in all interactions with children, families, colleagues, and the community
Read through these aspects again. This time, rate yourself according to your development in each aspect. Use the following rating scale:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am completely unfamiliar with this aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am somewhat unfamiliar with this aspect. I need more information/experience with this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel pretty comfortable with my knowledge or ability in regard to this aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This is a particularly strong aspect for me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you progress through the ethics section of this course of study, give special consideration to those activities that will help you develop in the areas you rated lowest.

**Reading**

Next, you will read both the NAEYC Code of Conduct and WGU’s Code of Ethics for students in teacher education programs. These are two distinct ethical codes.

As you carefully read each document, consider how each one can help guide your decision-making process in difficult professional situations. One of your goals in reading these two codes is to familiarize yourself with the ethical standards of your profession. Continually ask yourself what it will be like (e.g., feel like, look like, act like) to implement these standards.

**NAEYC Code of Conduct**

First read and become familiar with the NAEYC Code of Conduct. This can also be found in either the CD-ROM that accompanies the Copple and Bredekamp text or appendix A of in *Home, School and Community Collaboration*.

To access the NAEYC Code of Conduct via the Copple and Bredekamp text, use the following directions:

1. Insert the CD into a computer and open the CD.
2. If needed, click to go to the main menu.
3. Click on "By Subject/Topic."
4. Click on "Position Statements."
5. Select number 12 ("Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment").
WGU Teachers College Code of Ethics

Now read WGU Teachers College Code of Ethics. To find this, follow these instructions:

2. Search for "WGU Teachers College Code of Ethics."

As you read through these two documents, pay attention to how there are really two types of ethical standards.

- ethical responsibilities (NAEYC calls these principles): things that a person must or must not do
- ethical ideals: things that a person aspires to but may not do perfectly.

As you read these codes, also make note of any that seem like they have the potential of posing a problem for you or for your colleagues at some point. As you move into the next section of this course of study, consider how you might work through those problems.

Understanding and Using the Ethical Decision-Making Process

In addition to reading, knowing, and understanding the codes of ethics that will guide your professional practice, it is necessary to know how to use these codes to make ethical decisions when faced with real-life dilemmas or difficult choices.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 607.2.4: Ethical Standards and Continuous Learning**
  The graduate employs ethical standards and other professional guidelines to guide professional practice; and engages in continuous, collaborative learning to inform and improve practice.

Using the Decision-Making Process

Read the following chapter in the *Feeney and Freeman* text. This chapter is on reserve in the WGU Library.

- chapter 3 "Addressing Ethical Issues"

Take a theoretical look at how you might engage in the ethical decision-making process using both the NAEYC Code of Conduct and your personal standards of ethical behavior (in relation to the field of early childhood education). Using the information in chapter 3 and the flowchart on page 25 of the Feeney and Freeman text, consider how you might ethically address the following situations:

You observe a parent harshly slap the parent’s 3-year-old child as they enter the classroom.

Your administrator has asked that you single-handedly supervise two second grade classes (your
class and another teacher's class) in the gym during a morning class time so the other teacher can attend to some undisclosed business.

One of your colleagues is overtly flirting with the married parent of one of the children at the school.

You overhear another teacher speaking abusively to the children in the teacher's class.

You have a child in your class whom you believe is showing strong evidence of learning disorders, developmental delays, and other potential disorders. The parents have explicitly stated that they do not believe there are any significant concerns that the child will not "grow out of."

For each issue, answer the following questions:

- Does this situation involve ethics?
- Can it be solved with ethical finesse (e.g., tact, resources, and compassion)?
- Is there a legal dimension?

Use the NAEYC Code of Ethics to help determine or justify a course of action. Summarize in writing at least one ethical and appropriate course of action for each situation including a response to these additional questions:

- Is the decision justifiable to the community at large?
- Is it best for the early childhood profession as a whole?
- Is it respectful of all individuals and relationships involved?

After having completed the above exercise, participate in the learning community discussion on ethics.

**Interview a Teacher**

Make an appointment to interview a classroom teachers or early childhood professionals. When you make the appointment, let your contact know that you will be asking about difficult situations the professional may have come across in working with children, families, or colleagues, such as extreme behavior problems, unusual requests from parents, or questionable actions of colleagues.

This activity can take place in person, by telephone, or via video conferencing (e.g., using a service like Skype), but it should be in a synchronous setting so that you can easily ask follow-up questions. It is not as effective to conduct the interview asynchronously (e.g. through voicemail, email, other written correspondence). Let the individual know that you would like to take about 20 minutes if possible. Be certain to honor that time commitment.

When you interview the early childhood professional, remember to do the following:

- Ask the early childhood professional to describe a situation that the professional struggled to solve
- Ask if the outcome was positive (i.e., successful)
• Ask if experiences such as the one discussed have changed the way this professional faces ethical dilemmas in the work place
• Ask if this person has found that education or training has helped to develop skills that make it easier to make difficult decisions
• Ask how this professional would advise new teachers to address ethical dilemmas Note: You may want to ask about the situations listed in the previous activity ("Using the Decision-Making Process") of this topic section.

Thank the professional for the professional's time.

Based on your interview, would you change any of the answers or decisions you made in regard to the situations listed in the previous activity ("Using the Decision-making Process") of this topic section?

Write a summary of your experience.

**Theories and Attributes in Support of Ethical Decision Making**

As in most philosophical fields, there are various ideas and theories that support the ethical decision-making process in different ways (Velasquez, et al, 1996). This helps to explain, in part, how people can make completely contrasting yet equally ethical decisions. Some of these are based on the following ideas:

• utilitarian philosophy
• rights
• fairness and justice
• the common good
• virtue
• theological approaches
• care ethics
• cultural sensitivity to non-Western contexts and ethics

Consider the following questions:

• Can you define each of these ethical theoretical approaches or models
• Which ones more closely reflect your ethical decision-making processes?
• Which ones do you think would be the most important for an early childhood educator to use in professional practice?

If some of these theories or models are unfamiliar to you, take 20 to 30 minutes to engage in Internet research on these ethical philosophies. In place of an Internet search, you could also refer to an ethics book for an overview that will support your own development in the area of ethical decision making.

In your study notes, write a brief definition or description of each approach and keep the descriptions nearby as you consider the case study in the next activity.
Case Study: Approaches to Ethics

Consider the following hypothetical situation:

You are a first-year teacher in a first grade classroom. You have several special-needs students.

One child in particular requires an extreme amount of additional time and effort on your part, and you are not certain that you can meet the child’s needs or the needs of the class. In addition, the child has angry outbursts that intimidate you and frighten other children.

While you do have a classroom assistant in the mornings and a special education teacher in the classroom for two and a half hours a week, this does not seem to be anywhere near enough help. You want to ask if this one child could be transferred to a class with a more experienced teacher, but you are unsure if this would be an ethical decision. You wonder if there might be other options that would be better. You asked your administrator for advice, but the administrator is also new in that position and extremely overwhelmed. The administrator asked that you make a recommendation, which the administrator has promised to consider.

In your study notes, create a chart in which you make a recommendation based on each of the approaches to ethics that were covered in the previous activity (“Theories and Attributes in Support of Ethical Decision-Making”) in this topic section:

- From a utilitarian perspective I would recommend...
- From a rights perspective I would recommend...
- From a fairness and justice perspective I would recommend...
- From a common good perspective I would recommend...
- From a virtue perspective I would recommend...
- From a theological perspective I would recommend...

Reflection

Take a few minutes before you continue your studies or other activities to allow the ideas surrounding ethics to really sink in. In your reflection journal, consider the following questions:

- Did your recommendations vary according to the different perspectives?
- Which perspective(s) did you find it easiest to work with?
- What recommendation would you personally make in a similar situation?
- Is it possible that some decisions can be both ethical and unethical at the same time?
- After completing this exercise do you find it easier or harder to make a personal recommendation?
- Has this activity changed the way you will address an ethical dilemma as an early childhood professional?

Young Children and Ethics

Consider the following video clip produced by TVO Parents:
• "Preschoolers and Ethics"

In light of the video clip, reflect on your observations of young children in the classroom. What evidences can you identify that demonstrate young children’s emerging sense of values and moral ethics?

Share your thoughts with other students on the course of study message boards by participating in the discussion about young children and ethics. Support your thoughts with specific examples.

**Working With the Families of Infants, Toddlers, and Young Children**

Working with the Families of Infants, Toddlers, and Young Children American families come in many different sizes and types. Aspects of culture, religion, race, language, socioeconomic status, religion, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, and education are only some of the diversities that provide the context in which any given child will learn and grow.

The early childhood professional has the responsibility of working well with the complete spectrum of families in order to provide the greatest potential and opportunity for children. This portion of the course of study will guide you in considering the American family from multiple perspectives.

**Family Systems**

A child is dynamic part of a family from before birth. In order to understand how to best support any child, it is necessary to know, appreciate, and connect with the child’s family.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics**
  The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.

- **Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities**
  The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

- **Competency 607.2.4: Ethical Standards and Continuous Learning**
  The graduate employs ethical standards and other professional guidelines to guide professional practice; and engages in continuous, collaborative learning to inform and improve practice.

**Case Study: In the Classroom**

Read the case study on the following page of the Grant and Ray's *Home, School, and Community Collaboration* text:
Keep the scenario in mind as you complete the following activities.

• How is the Chandler family operating as a "system"?
• What family system characteristics do you see in their situation?
• Analyze the Chandler family in terms of one of the theoretical models you will study. How does this help you better understand the Chandler family? Using the Epstein model, what types of family involvement are being implemented at Kennedy Elementary School?
• What recommendations would you make?

Family Systems Reading, Part I

Read further in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*:

• "Current Trends in Family Demographics" pages 11-19 and 24-25 in *chapter 2 ("Theories and Models for Family Involvement in Schools")*

Answer the following questions:

• Compare the reading with your own experience. Does your community seem to reflect the same trends in family demographics?
• What do you believe will be the greatest obstacle you might face in working with the families of students in your care, now or in your future profession?
• What are, or will be, the greatest assets you will draw on from the families of children in your care?

Comparison Chart

Read the following pages in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*. This section begins by describing characteristics of a family system.

• pages 27-34 in *chapter 2 ("Theories and Models for Family Involvement in Schools")*

Access the "Family Systems Table." As you read these descriptions on pages 27-34, jot down examples from your own family of origin, then think of examples from families you know that are different in each characteristic from your own family. You will see that this chart includes some items that are not included in the textbook reading. Please continue to add examples for these additional areas as well. Your observations in this area can be an excellent topic of discussion to approach with friends and colleagues.

Family Systems Reading, Part II

Read the following in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*:

• pages 34-46 in *chapter 2 ("Theories and Models for Family Involvement in Schools")*
This final section of the chapter provides several theories that can support your efforts to partner with families as you care for and teach infants, toddlers, and young children.

**Family Systems Activity**
After reading chapter 2, create a compare-and-contrast chart to analyze the family systems included in the text. Compare the theories along the following lines:

- the model's perspective of the child and the family
- the model's idea of how the family impacts the child's development and learning
- the primary emphasis of the model

**Self-Check Flash Cards and Quiz**
To determine how well you understand the theories that support family involvement in the education of young children, use the resources connected to *Home, School, and Community Collaboration* at the following website:

- "Study Site for Home, School and Community Collaboration".

First, review the flashcards by clicking on the "Flashcards" link.

When you are familiar with the terms and concepts in the flashcards, click the "Quiz" link to take the quiz.

Do not hesitate to use your text as a resource if you find that you are not fully familiar with the terms or the answers to any of the questions.

**Appreciating Families**
Now that you understand the theories that support family involvement in the education of young children, it is time to turn your attention to the families themselves.

As you work through this next section, consider the ways that the concept of family goes beyond your own familial experiences or expectations. In this section, you will have the opportunity to consider many of the influences that impact parent-child relations and teaching styles and to determine how you can use this knowledge to positively impact children and their families.

**Families in Today's Society**
Parenting styles, attachment, and temperament all have an impact on family relationships. These relationships can be positive when there is "goodness of fit" (i.e., when parent and child mesh well) and can be challenging when styles clash. Understanding and respecting parenting styles will help you be more successful in working with students by building positive relationships with their families rather than being critical of the families' parenting beliefs and practices.
This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics**
  The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.

- **Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities**
  The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

**Reading**

Read the following chapter in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*, paying close attention to the differences in support needed from families as children grow and develop.

- **chapter 4 ("Parenting Today's Children")**

Then turn your attention to the concepts of attachment and temperament and how they can interact with parenting styles.

In your notes, answer the following questions:

- Consider your family of origin. Which parenting style did you grow up with?
- Consider yourself as a parent (now or in the future). Which parenting style seems to match your beliefs about parenting?
- Are there similarities between parenting styles and teaching styles?

**Influences on Teaching**

As with all learning, prior experiences play a big role in how people behave in given situations.

Consider how your experiences with parenting may influence your teaching style by completing the table on page 78 of *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*.

In your notes, list some snapshots or specific images from your memory:

- What are some of your strongest memories from your childhood?
- What do you remember about your family's parenting styles?
- What were the different characteristics of parenting, such as rules, discipline practices, and levels of affection?
- How do you think that these childhood experiences will influence you as a teacher?

**Today's Diverse Families**
There is a wide range of diversity that exists among families in terms of structure and culture. Getting to know and value each family for its unique qualities and contributions will enable you to support family involvement as a part of healthy child development and learning and will benefit your entire classroom.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics**
  The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.
- **Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities**
  The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

**Reading and Viewing**

Read the following chapters in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*:

- chapter 5 ("Structurally Diverse Families")
- chapter 6 ("Culturally Diverse Families")

As you read, make note of your responses to the following prompts:

- What unexamined attitudes or preconceived notions (habitudes) do I have about family structures that differ from my own?
- What can I do to avoid labeling families, getting to know them as individuals instead?

With this background in mind, visit the children's section of the local library. Ask a librarian (or use the recommended book lists in the Grant and Ray text) to help you find children's literature that represents diverse families. (You may also browse the Internet for other recommendations. Read several examples. Survey books that depict diverse family structures, such as the following:

- families in different countries
- families of differing cultures
- divorced families
- blended families
- single-parent households
- adoptive families
- foster care families
- orphanages
- families in shelters
- multigenerational families
- extended families
- gay, lesbian, or transgendered families
- polygamist families
• families with members with special needs
• homeless families
• migrant working families
• religious traditions of families

Find a book that portrays a diverse family structure in a positive way (e.g., families learning together, playing together, overcoming obstacles, building traditions).

Post a summary of the book on the message board and share an idea of how you might use this book in the classroom to support the families and development of young children.

**Media Portrayals of Families**

The media plays a large role in many American families. But what messages do the media send about families?

Spend some time observing television shows that depict families; try to divide your time between shows for children and shows for adults.

Consider the following questions:

• What was the structure of the family?
• Was there any cultural diversity represented?
• What are the relationships like among the different members of the TV family?
• What is their communication style?
• What types of problems did this TV family have? How did they resolve the problems?
• How are the children portrayed in the TV family? Do they have more power than the adults? How were decisions made in the family? (These questions are very interesting to compare, depending on the target audience)
• Do you think this portrayal of a family is typical of real-life families? Why or why not?
• What does this TV show teach today’s children about families?

Share your observations on the message board.

**Understanding and Supporting Families**

This section will guide you to seek out family and community issues, concerns, and resources to better bring the roles of family, school, and community together.

**Challenges Families Face**

A quick Internet search of the issues in early childhood education reveals a startling number of challenges facing young children and their families, as well as the early childhood professionals who work with them. Consider the following questions as you work through this section:
What issues stand out to you?

Do the families of the children you know face challenges of everyday stress such as juggling schedules, finding child care, balancing the budget, and not having enough space for a growing family?

Do you work with children whose families deal with even greater concerns such as poverty, unemployment, disabling health concerns, immigration difficulties, military deployment, loss of a home, and other life-altering challenges?

Do you sense that a family of a child you know or teach is suffering through crises silently and you do not know how to provide support?

This section may not have the answers for all these problems, but it will challenge you to consider your role in creating an environment that provides continuing support for the learning and positive growth of children and their families.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics**
  The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.

- **Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities**
  The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

- **Competency 607.2.3: Advocacy**
  The graduate identifies current trends and issues in early childhood advocacy, is actively involved as a professional, and remains up to date on local and national issues and policies that may impact the early childhood field and the infants, toddlers, young children, and families it serves.

**Reading**

The following chapters in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration* discuss some of the many challenges faced by families today, from difficult transitions such as military deployment or foster care, obstacles such as poverty, and situations of abuse and neglect.

- chapter 7 ("Students of Families in Transition")
- chapter 8 ("Families Overcoming Obstacles")
- chapter 9 ("Families in Abusive Situations")
- chapter 12 ("Working with Families of Children with Special Needs")

In your study notes, respond to the following prompts:

- name three ways families can provide continuing nurturance for their young children when faced with significant obstacles
• note four or five strategies you would employ as a teacher to respond to these challenges in a supportive way
• consider the challenges your family of origin or your current family have faced

How will these experiences shape your responses to the families you will be working with as an early childhood professional?

Locate a copy of your state’s regulations regarding child abuse and neglect. Create an itemized step-by-step list of the reporting process for suspected abuse.

**Self-Check**

To determine how well you understand family diversity and challenges, use the resources connected to *Home, School, and Community Collaboration* at the "Study Site for Home, School and Community Collaboration" website.

Click on the "Chapter Resources" tab, and then select the appropriate chapter.

First review the flashcards by clicking on the "Flashcards" link.

When you are familiar with the terms and concepts in the flashcards, click the "Quiz" link to take the quiz.

Do not hesitate to use your text as a resource if you find that you are not fully familiar with the terms or the answers to any of the questions.

**Task 1**

Complete EMT Task 1 in your course by selecting the Assessment tab.

• 607.2 - Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education Application

**Family Involvement in Education**

As you participate in this section, consider the many ways family life can provide a rich and important living curriculum. How can you support families in creating optimal learning environments for their growing children?

**Families and Communities**

Children whose families are involved in their education tend to be more successful in school, have higher graduation rates, and attend college. With those kinds of results, educators would certainly want to tap into the powerful resource of the family as they work with young children.

This topic addresses the following competencies:
Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics
The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.

Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities
The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

Listen to a Podcast

Family involvement in education is an ongoing concern in education. Read the following chapter in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*:

- chapter 10 ("Teacher as Classroom Family Involvement Practitioner")

Visit The WholeChild Podcast: Changing the Conversation About Education, a podcast produced by ASCD. Watch the following two podcasts:

- "Partnerships Between Home and School: The Real Missing Link?"
- "Partnering to Transform the Conditions of Learning: Families and Educators Together"

After listening to a podcast, reflect on what you learned from the perspective of a national organization. How does it compare to other information you have learned from this course or from your own experiences?

Parent-Teacher Communication

Skim through the following chapter in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*:

- chapter 11 ("Teacher as Family Communication Facilitator")

Read the case study "On the Frontlines: Connecting with Families" and respond to the activity questions. (The case study can be accessed by clicking the "Family/Parent Involvement" link > "Activities and Applications" > "Case Studies.")

Browse the web links provided in the Family/Parent Involvement. Which websites are the most helpful? Why? Make note of the websites you find most useful, and any other sites you come across.

Technology and Communication

Contribute to the discussion thread in the message board on using technology to communicate with families and communities.

Do you feel podcasts, websites, social networking sites and the like are an effective way to foster communication between school, home, and the community?
What are some of the positive aspects of communicating in this fashion? What are some of the drawbacks?

**Collaboration With Community Partners**

You previously studied the family context in which young children learn and grow. Now you will look at the communities in which families are embedded to determine how you can connect families with the resources that each community provides. You will reflect on your emerging professionalism in terms of advocacy and ethics.

- As you delve into these ideas, continually note your own biases, perspectives, and beliefs.
- How do these impact your ability to help the children in your care currently or in the future?
- What is required of the ethical early childhood educator in terms of building relations with families and the community?
- How can you draw on the broad resources of the community to serve the children with whom you work?
- How will your beliefs and experience make you a better educator?
- How do you intend to integrate your knowledge into your work with children?

**Community Resources**

Grant and Ray suggest that beginning teachers ask themselves the following questions to determine community connections and explore possible partnerships:

- **Support Community**: Who are the people or organizations you would like to connect with? Who represents the "support community" for the families in your classroom?
- **Physical Neighborhood**: Where does learning take place outside the school? Where do children and families tend to congregate? How could community learning settings contribute to academic learning in the classroom?
- **Communicative Networks**: What forms of communication do children and families use to connect with extended family members and other community members?
- **Academic Connections**: How can the formation of community partnerships enhance your students' growth, learning and motivation? How can you ensure that your community collaborations support involvement of all families from diverse backgrounds?

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.1: Family and Community Characteristics**
  The graduate identifies family and community characteristics and applies family theory and research to professional practice.
- **Competency 607.2.2: Empowering Families and Communities**
  The graduate supports respectful, reciprocal relationships that empower families and communities.

**Family Education**
The following chapters in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration* offer many ideas for engaging families in school-wide events. Skim the following chapters:

- **chapter 14** ("Preparing for Family Events")
- **chapter 15** ("Schoolwide Family Involvement Activities")

Using the exploratory questions listed in this topic's description, as well as the information in chapters 14 and 15, what other ideas can you think of that would help build the partnerships between home, school, and community in your neighborhood?

**Task 2**

Complete Task 2 in your course by selecting the Assessment tab.

- 607.2 -Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education Application

### Advocating for Children and Families

A central message of this section concerns the responsibilities that all members of society hold in protecting and advocating for the needs, safety, well-being, and educational opportunities of young children. Now that you have spent some time identifying the issues and challenges facing young children and their families, it is time to take the next step.

As you work through this section, ask yourself what issues resonate most with you. Where can your talents best serve the children with whom you work or will work?

### Advocacy

When you hear the term *advocate*, who do you think of? What activities do you associate with the act of advocacy? If the definition of advocacy is "to engage in the process or action of influencing outcomes," it would seem that advocacy can happen in many ways, large and small.

Can you recall an incident when you advocated for something? Did you advocate with passion? With diplomacy? If you can recall such an incident, you might already be able to identify yourself as an advocate. If not, think of an issue or situation in which you believe you can have an influence for good.

Keep these thoughts in mind as you work through this section of the course.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 607.2.3: Advocacy**
  The graduate identifies current trends and issues in early childhood advocacy, is actively
involved as a professional, and remains up to date on local and national issues and policies that may impact the early childhood field and the infants, toddlers, young children, and families it serves.

- **Competency 607.2.4: Ethical Standards and Continuous Learning**
  The graduate employs ethical standards and other professional guidelines to guide professional practice; and engages in continuous, collaborative learning to inform and improve practice.

**Understanding Advocacy**

Download and view the NAEYC presentation on advocacy:

- "Raising Your Voice for Children: An Advocacy Training"

Read "Advocating for Policies to Improve Practice" by Christopher P. Brown from the CD-ROM that accompanies the Copple and Bredekamp text. Use the following instructions to access this resource:

1. Insert the CD into a computer and open the CD.
2. If needed, click to go to the main menu.
3. Click on "Print Readings."
4. Select the option, "By Title."
5. Select number 3 ("Advocating for Policies to Improve Practice").

Skim the following chapter in *Home, School, and Community Collaboration*, which addresses the teacher's role in connecting families with community resources:

- chapter 13 ("Teacher as a Family Resource and Advocate")

Read the following chapter *Informed Advocacy in Early Childhood Care and Education*:

- chapter 1 ("Building a Case for Advocacy")

Reflect on the characteristics of effective advocates. Consider the following questions:

- Which do you feel are most important? Why?
- How can you go about developing these characteristics?

**Stepping Up to Advocate**

Skim the following chapters in *Informed Advocacy in Early Childhood Care and Education*. Identify the steps in becoming an effective advocate.

- chapter 6 ("Becoming Informed")
- chapter 7 ("Choosing Strategies")
- chapter 8 ("Getting Connected - Staying the Course")
Review the reflection questions and "Advocacy in Action" activities at the end of each chapter. Then, use the advocacy planning worksheet found in the appendix to create a strategic plan for an issue you would like to tackle as an early childhood educator.

**Task 3**

Complete EMT Task 3 in your course by selecting the Assessment tab.

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**Reflection and Reflective Practice**

You have already experienced and practiced the art of reflection in your WGU experience. This section of the course will take your understanding and practice of reflection to another level.

**Reflection**

Discussing the concept of reflection and stating that it is critical for effective teaching is a widespread practice in the field of education. However, reflection is a common term and has many definitions. Are all the differing definitions correct? Does each form a piece of the puzzle, or are some more accurate than others?

In this section, you will begin to hone in on a definition that will guide your own personal practice as an early childhood educator.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 607.2.5: Reflection**
  The graduate identifies and describes knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on early childhood education, and incorporates reflection into professional practice.

**Understanding the Reflective Process and Its Role in Learning**

Jot down your definition of reflection in your notes.

Many theorists have contributed to the understanding of reflection. Read the following article about how Dewey, Boud, Schon, and other pioneers in education philosophy have helped broaden the understanding of reflection:

- "Reflection"

**David Kolb**

David Kolb is well-known for his emphasis on the process of reflection as part of the learning cycle.
Do an Internet search for Kolb's famous experiential learning model. You should easily find his four-step model, which has reflection as the second step (although he would note that the four steps can start at any point, so step 2 is not always the second step).

*Note: If you get lost, you can look at his model:*

- "David Kolb on Experiential Learning"

**Methods**

Each of the following is a way of making the reflective process conscious and explicit. As you read through the various methods, make certain you understand how the method can be used for reflection.

- journal
- reflective essay
- discussion group
- sharing with a confidant
- photo reflection
- blog
- role playing
- peer assessment
- problem-based learning
- personal development plan
- presentation
- action research guided by a question or concern

Write a description of each of these methods listed above in your study notes. If you are unclear on one or more of the methods, make certain you define it before moving on. You could do an online search to define the methods, or you could post a question on the message boards and get insight from your peers. Learning Community: Reflection Proceed to the Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education Learning Community. You will find a thread connected to "Understanding Reflection, using movies as opportunities for reflection." Please contribute to this thread.

**Engaging in Personal Reflection**

Now that you have considered the meaning and forms of reflection and reflective practice, please think about the ways you might engage in reflection.

The purpose of this next section is to guide you through the reflective process on a personal level. Use the experience you gained in the previous section to help you take your reflective process to a deeper level. Complete this task in your study notes or reflective journal.
1. Think back to a situation as an early childhood professional on which you would like to reflect. **This is step 1 of Kolb's experiential model's cycle.** If you cannot think of a situation, choose an event or interaction with a young child (or children) you experienced or observed that did not go as well as could be hoped.

Select three of the reflective methods listed in the "Methods" section of the previous activity ("Understanding the Reflective Process and Its Role in Learning").

For each of the three methods (i.e., journaling, blogging, role playing), select a guiding question or set of questions on which to focus your reflection.

Keep your guiding questions in mind as you purposefully engage in each of the methods you have chosen. This is step 2 of Kolb's experiential model's cycle, the step that involves the actual reflective process.

As you reflect on the questions you have selected to guide your reflection, remember that, while reflection is an essential tool for improving our ability to work effectively with young children, it often leads to more questions and only occasionally provides immediate and complete answers or solutions.

At this point, stop and complete your reflection with all three methods before moving on.

According to Kolb, in order for your reflection to move to the level of actual learning, you need to complete steps 3 and 4 of the cycle. Based on your reflection, answer the following questions:

- Did you have thoughts emerge that provided deeper understanding, additional ideas, a different direction for your actions, or creative or richer abstract concepts? **These would represent step three of Kolb's experiential model's cycle.**
- How might you move forward and test your ideas, insights, abstract concepts, etc. in a new situation? (This involves engaging in step 4 of Kolb's experiential model's cycle.) Once you did so, this would become your new experience (step 1), which could lead to reflection (step 2), and thus the cycle would continue leading to increasingly improved understanding, skill, and professional practice.

Now that you have participated in a range of activities concerning reflection, return to your original definition of reflection. Change or refine your definition to better capture your increased understanding and new insights.

Post this definition on the message board or in your notes.

**Task 4**

Complete EMT Task 4 in your course by selecting the Assessment tab.

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Final Steps

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! This course has prepared you to complete the assessments associated with this course. If you have not already been directed to complete the assessments, schedule and complete your assessments now.

The WGU Library

The WGU Library
The WGU Library is available online to WGU students 24 hours a day.

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Searching the WGU library

*Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose "Save as...": [download video]*

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- [Course Feedback]