**Assignment Makeovers**

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| **Before** | **After** |
| **Early Childhood Quality –** List10 characteristics of a high quality early childhood program | * Ask students to create a one-page, formatted handout that lists at least five reasons why supporting quality for young children is a good investment. * Require evidence sources for each of the reasons that document the difference each feature makes for children and families. * Make a “pitch” to an older voter about why they should, as a taxpayer, pay to support quality for young children. Provide extra credit if the person is grouchy! |
| **Article Summary-** Conduct a search of articles in early childhood journals related to family structure today and/or experiences of parenting. Read and summarize four of the articles that you found. Include the following points in your summary for each article:   * title, author, and publication date * main points of the article * your reaction to the article | * Provide students with a list of early childhood and early childhood special education/early intervention journals (e.g., *Journal of Early Intervention, Young Exceptional Children, Exceptional Parent, Infants and Young Children)*. Require students to select readings from both lists. * Assign articles that present diverse perspectives on family-professional collaboration, like Nikia Parker’s We Were A Hard-to-Reach Family ([**http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/we-were-a-hard-to-reach-family**](http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/we-were-a-hard-to-reach-family)). Based on what they read, ask them to identify the family’s concerns, priorities, and resources. Ask each student to think about what else they might like to ask each family in order to be well prepared to support their child. Pair students up to compare their responses. * Familiarize students with the Family Practices section of DEC Recommended Practices ([**http://ectacenter.org/decrp/**](http://ectacenter.org/decrp/)). Require students to: 1) identify two or more evidence-based practices that were mentioned in the article and 2) describe how those practices might be effective in a setting with which students are familiar. |
| **Parent-Teacher Conference Plan -** Develop an outline for an effective and productive parent-teacher conference. | * Share and discuss examples of effective family-professional interactions. Some to consider are   + Finley’s Parent Teacher Conference [**http://www2.cde.state.co.us/media/resultsmatter/RMSeries/FinleysParent-TeacherConference\_SA.asp**](http://www2.cde.state.co.us/media/resultsmatter/RMSeries/FinleysParent-TeacherConference_SA.asp)   + Starting a Relationship (home-based) from CONNECT Module 4 [**http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/resources/videos/video-4-4**](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/resources/videos/video-4-4)   + CONNECT Module 4 Videos 4.5 – 4.10 [**http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners/module-4**](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners/module-4) * Share and discuss the Families are Full Team Members checklist ([**http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/TC-1\_Families\_Are\_Full\_Team\_Members.pdf**](http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/TC-1_Families_Are_Full_Team_Members.pdf)) or other list of recommended practices * Develop an outline that reflects the recommended practices. * Extra credit: Share a draft with the family of a young child for input. Describe edits that were incorporated as a result of the family’s advice. |

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| **Parent Involvement Policy-** Develop a policy that addresses parent involvement in an early childhood program. Address parent parent visits, volunteering, and advisory roles of parents. | * Share and discuss evidence-based practices for **family** engagement, using resources like the DEC recommended family practices ([**http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-family.asp**](http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-family.asp)). The Global Family Research Project also has some excellent resources ([**https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Welcome-to-the-Global-Family-Research-Project**](https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Welcome-to-the-Global-Family-Research-Project)). * Use the assignment directions and rubric to be specific about components of the assignment that students might otherwise miss. This can include a summary of the evidence for the difference family engagement can make in student achievement and outcomes, specific strategies for supporting families who may be culturally, linguistically, or socio-economically diverse, or considerations for supporting families whose children are differently abled. |
| **Community Resource Assignment –** Complete an inventory of community resources to support families (e.g., health clinics, WIC offices, etc.) | * Review components of the assignment to ensure that it will help students discover resources for supporting families who are diverse in terms of culture, language, socio-economic status and the needs of their child. * Add a knowledge application component by requiring students to identify a family who has a child or children in the birth – 8 age range. Require them, through face-to-face interactions or phone calls if necessary, to gather information about family goals, values, and priorities for the learning and development of their child. At the end of the interaction, require students to ask each family to identify something they would like to know. It may be a question about a service (“*Can you get the food stamps folks to return my call?*”), a skill (“*My child really likes to draw. What are some effective ways to build on that talent?*”), or a challenge (“*How can I get my child to play outside instead of sitting at the computer?*”). An additional benefit to making this shift is that it focuses the student’s creativity and evidence-based resources on what the family wants instead of what the student thinks the family needs. |
| **Caregiver Handout** - Create a simple handout that you could post in an infant, toddler, or two-year-old classroom listing at least ten suggestions the teachers or caregivers could use to increase appropriate interactions and/or support the development of very young children | Incorporate more specific requirements in the assignment, including   * documentation of the evidence base for each suggestion * suggestions that would support children who are dual language learners * suggestions that would support children who have a very brief attention span * suggestions that would support children who may have some developmental delays * adaptations for each suggestion that would support different kinds of learners |

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| **Infant-Toddler Classroom Design Assignment -** Design a high-quality, developmentally appropriate indoor learning environment for an assigned group of infants or toddlers. You will create the floor plan, a materials list, and a PowerPoint that explains your vision of a high quality DAP environment. | * Early in the semester, ask students to submit an initial design for a classroom. * Later mention that * several of the infants/toddlers/twos have home languages other than English * Several come from families with very few financial resources * One has an IFSP and is receiving speech therapy for significantly delayed speech and language. * Ask students to revise their original design (e.g., space for both small group and whole group work; images, labels, music that reflect the language/cultures of the families) to support these children. * **OR** mention that the program will be adopting a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to all classrooms. Ask students to revise their original design to support a UDL approach. * **OR** consider asking teachers or caregivers about topics that they would like more information about (e.g., something that is an ongoing challenge in their classroom OR an area that they would like to learn more about). Require to students to identify evidence-based approaches to addressing the challenge that has been identified, and then ask students to present their ideas to the teachers/caregivers for feedback on the approaches identified. |
| **Children’s Book Assignment –** Select a domain of development from the state early learning guidelines/standards. Find three children’s books (one for toddlers, one for 3-4 year olds, one for 5-6 year olds) that could be used to support development in that domain of development. | * Discuss the audience is (who are the children with whom you will be sharing these books). Consider using a resource like *Friends at School* to provide an audience that is diverse in terms of culture, language, and ability. * Share and discuss parameters for selecting books for children. * Consider asking students to develop a Book Nook ([**http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html**](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html)) that would support addressing that domain of development throughout the daily schedule |

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| **Scavenger Hunt –** Either shadow a family new to early intervention (EI), use the experience of a family you have worked with in the past, or create a family’s situation to use.   * Describe how the family experienced the diagnosis * Provide a detailed description of how the family found out about EI services in the community where they live * Describe the experience the family went through to receive/obtain services. * Go to two different locations a family with a disability might attend (e.g., a hospital, a play/support group for children with disabilities, a park, a therapy appointment, library story time, etc. * Interview the family to find out what they like about the services they are receiving/what they would change | * Eliminate the option of making up a child/family. If working with a family is not possible, use videos like *Team Lydia Rose* ([**https://vimeo.com/118072510**](https://vimeo.com/118072510)), which includes a family’s responses to several of the questions posed in the assignment * The information being sought through this assignment is very tender and involves posing questions that many families might consider intimate or painful. An alternative would be to recruit a cadre of families for a family practicum experience. These families would be prepared to share their experiences and to respond to student inquiries each semester/quarter. Partnering with early intervention programs in the community might yield information about families whose children have “aged out” of early intervention. Often these families are willing to help early childhood students to develop their skills at partnering effectively with other families. * Rather than going to a location that may be specific to children with disabilities, go to community locations with the family to see what the challenges of inclusion are. |
| **Environment Observations –** Watch videos of four different childcare settings (preschool, 3-year old child care, infant classroom, Reggio-inspired preschool) and evaluate the extent to which each environment does/does not reflect the following components:   * Healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging elements * Colors used to set the tone/impact emotions * Activity/interest centers – clearly defined; quiet areas separate from louder areas; spaces designated for specific activities * Physical layout – how does it make you feel? Are there long, open run-ways that may encourage running? * Goals evident within the environment – how are goals for each domain of development portrayed? * Appropriate equipment, furnishings and materials * Aesthetics – natural light? Displays engage children’s curiosity and wonder? Displays at children’s eye level? | * Be clear about the aspects of environment students are to tune in to. Physical environment exclusively? What about social environment? * If the focus is physical environments, be clear about the components that students can reasonably be expected to observe from a video clip and stick to those (e.g., space, equipment, materials). * The activity is identified as supporting students to List the major criteria that are used in creating developmentally appropriate learning environments. *If that truly is an objective, the assignment should incorporate an emphasis on culturally/*   *linguistically appropriate and individually appropriate practices. How does the environment reflect the principles of universal design for learning and support accessibility for children with disabilities? How could the environment be modified to support physical and sensory access for children of diverse abilities?*   * Incorporate checklists of recommended practices to look at learning opportunities and environmental modifications ([**http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-environment.asp**](http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-environment.asp)) * Incorporate How Can You Create a Learning Environment that Respects Diversity? [**http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/How-Can-You-Create-a-Learning-Environment-That-Respects-Diversity.pdf**](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/How-Can-You-Create-a-Learning-Environment-That-Respects-Diversity.pdf)to bring an emphasis on diversity * Incorporate knowledge application by asking students to identify enhancements to the environment based on what they observe |

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| **Child-Centered Curriculum Project -** Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate child-centered curriculum specific to the developmental needs of a child for a content area of your choice.  **First**, choose a child upon whom to focus your curriculum. **Second**, identify a developmental need or a developmental "theme" for this child. **Third**, choose a curriculum content area (dramatic play, art, blocks, manipulatives, science, math, sensory table, language and literacy, music and movement, social-emotional development, gross motor development) that seems especially suited to this child’s interests and development. **Fourth**, research best practice regarding this curriculum content area using reliable sources (textbooks, accreditation standards, ECERS-R--not Pinterest :-0). **Fifth,** decide which strategy(ies) will be best suited for the curriculum content area you have chosen and the child. When you are confident that you know the best practice standards for this content area and you have selected an appropriate strategy, begin planning your curriculum project.  Plan a child-centered curriculum activity in the curriculum content area you chose above, based on the interests and developmental needs/theme of the child upon whom you are focusing. Write the plan into your lesson plan, including the strategies and prepare/gather needed materials. Implement the plan and take some photos and/or collect artifacts to document how the child responds to your activity.  Create 1) a written report to turn in and 2) a Power Point-type presentation to share in class with your classmates. Both the report and the presentation should answer the following questions.   1. What was the developmental need or theme for the child? How do you know?  2. What was the curriculum content area you chose? What are the best practice standards for this curriculum content area? Cite your source and include a reference page.  3. What activity did you plan? How did you intend for this plan to address the developmental need/theme of the child?  4. What strategy(ies) did you choose for this activity and the child? Why did you choose this strategy?  5. What happened in the classroom? How did the child respond to your plan?  6. What is your evaluation of this project? What went well? What might you do differently if you could do it over?  7. How will you use what you learned from this project in your future work with children?  8. Include photos or other documentation to support your written/oral report. | * Consider starting with observations of the child to learn about interests, preferences, learning style and challenges, and possible peer supports. One checklist that could support this is the Identifying Child’s Strengths Checklist from the *DEC Recommended Practices* ([**http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/ASM-4\_Identifying\_Child\_Strengths.pdf**](http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/ASM-4_Identifying_Child_Strengths.pdf)) * Observe the child in different areas, inside and out, to see what the child can do. Start with the strengths, then take a hard look at the challenges (e.g., areas the child may be avoiding, does not participate in) * Use state early learning guidelines/standards as the basis for identifying an aspect of development to support * Consider requiring the student to identify several strategies for supporting the aspect of development. For example, how could you incorporate an emphasis on social-emotional development in language and literacy, music and movement, etc. * Consider identifying one goal for the child, then developing ways to address that goal in all aspects of the daily schedule (e.g., large group, small group, free play. A helpful resource is a child activity matrix (e.g., [**http://community.fpg.unc.edu/sites/community.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/Handout/CONNECT-Handout-1-12.pdf**](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/sites/community.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/Handout/CONNECT-Handout-1-12.pdf) * Consider the role that the other children might play in supporting the success of these strategies. * Consider how you might scaffold up or down based on how successful the child is at the activity. |

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| **Child Case Study Portfolio Assignment**  Choose ONE child age 3-4 years old to observe all semester. Child MUST be in a group setting, preferably a licensed child care center, Pre-K, or Head Start program during the observations.  Must observe a minimum of 5 different times throughout the semester to develop a portfolio of that child. The portfolio must include observation notes (running records, anecdotal notes, choice record), photos of the child with notes, and samples of the child’s work with notes.  All developmental domains MUST be addressed in documentation and summary, and linked to the [state] Early Learning Standards Framework. The summary report compiling all the information in the child’s portfolio must be written (typed) to share successes, challenges and goals with the child’s family. Be sure to use family friendly language.  Using the terminology discussed in class, you will develop a minimum of 4 unrelated (well-written, measurable) goals for the child. Provide at least one activity you will do to address each of these goals in the classroom setting.  Portfolio needs to be presented in a logical & professional manner. Include handwritten notes, forms and checklists used to develop the summary, in the back of the notebook. | * Observe the child in different areas, inside and out, to see what the child can do. Start with the strengths, then take a hard look at the challenges (e.g., areas the child may be avoiding, does not participate in) * Use state early learning guidelines/standards as the basis for identifying an aspect of development to support * Consider requiring students to observe the same thing each time and to speak to how the child’s development has progressed over time * Consider asking students to also observe from a different point of view on each visit. Some examples might include: evidence of play in the curriculum, social emotional development, physical, experiential and interactional components of the environments, etc. * Consider using this assignment as an opportunity to help students try out different observation techniques. Using a resource like Common Observation Strategies from the Heartland Equity and Inclusion Project   ([**http://www.heartland.edu/documents/heip/faculty2/CHLD101/Handouts/CommonObservationStrategies.pdf**](http://www.heartland.edu/documents/heip/faculty2/CHLD101/Handouts/CommonObservationStrategies.pdf)) introduce students to methodologies from time sampling to running records.   * Incorporate an emphasis on scaffolding and individualizing by asking students to address the following aspects of the goals for each child: how would you adjust the activity if it was too easy for the child? How would you adjust the activity if it was too hard for the child? How will you determine when a child has achieved the goal? And what would come next? |