

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CERTIFICATE (727)

About Our Program

The Early Care and Education certificate provides students with an emphasis on the unique strengths and needs of children from birth through age 5 with particular focus to children and families that are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse. Students will study the comprehensive development of the young child, birth to five years, with a focus on understanding current brain research and best caregiving practices. The program is available for dual credit high school students, early childhood educators, parents, administrators, and health care professionals. The certificate is 14 credit hours, with all of the credit hours applying to the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. This certificate leads to an ECE Level 2 Credential. The Illinois Gateways to Opportunity ECE Level 2 Credential is designed to support movement through the state of Illinois Career Lattice. Gateways credentials are awarded and recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development. Gateways credentials are symbols of professional achievement and are embedded in the new quality rating and improvement system, ExceleRate Illinois. The ECE Level 2 Credential expands on foundational professional knowledge and supports progression to the Level 3 Credential or direct exit into the field.

Nature of Work and Employment

Early Care and Education Certificate holders work in licensed child care programs as assistant teachers. Family care providers are encouraged to use this program to upgrade their own training and preparation. Our state and nation are currently facing a critical need for well-prepared early childhood practitioners. Employment is projected to grow 10% from 2016 to 2026 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook).

Special Considerations

Certificate students must demonstrate good physical and emotional health and submit to and pass a criminal background check. Students must take either Introduction to Early Childhood Education (ECE 121 Intro to Early Childhood Ed) or Child Growth and Development (ECE 122 Child Growth & Development) and earn a grade of "C" or better to proceed through the early childhood program. They must maintain a "C" or better

in all early childhood courses to complete the certificate. A workplace experience is required.

Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Required ECE Courses		
ECE 121	Intro to Early Childhood Ed	3
ECE 122	Child Growth & Development	3
ECE 123	Hlth,Safety,Nutrition Yng Chil ¹	3
ECE 203	Home,Scl,ComRelations ECE ¹	3
ECE 128	Practicum ¹	2
Total Hours		14

¹ Course has a prerequisite. See course description.

Program Outcomes

- Evaluate children's unique developmental patterns, utilize assessments to inform instruction, and identify appropriate resources for those who may require further support.
- Develop and implement teaching strategies, materials, and content to support varied learning styles and abilities, incorporating evidence-based practices such as universal design and children's interests.
- Create and maintain safe, healthy, and engaging environments that promote each child's learning and development through inclusive practices and high-quality, responsive interactions that support their sense of belonging and well-being.
- Interpret and utilize assessment data to guide instructional planning, adapt environments, and individualize learning experiences.
- Demonstrate ethical standards, professional conduct, and effectively collaborate with colleagues, families, and community partners.
- Advocate for the early childhood education profession and actively support families—including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds—through informed, respectful engagement and community-focused advocacy.
- Implement high-quality, responsive learning experiences that align with children's needs, feedback, and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards.

Program Contacts

Call Highland at 815-235-6121 for the following program contacts:

- Rae Schupbach-Roe, Dean, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Fine Arts
- Melissa Johnson, Coordinator of Early Childhood Education
- Vicki Schulz, Student Advisor/Transfer Coordinator