

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, LEVEL 3 ECE CREDENTIAL CERTIFICATE (713)

About Our Program

This program is for students who wish to qualify as an early childhood teacher or school-age worker (as defined by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services) in a DCFS-licensed program. In order to work as a state-licensed Early Childhood Educator in a school district, students must obtain a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Persons desiring child care teaching positions must also have at least 1,560 clock hours of child development experience in a child care program licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Some of the required hours can be met in the Practicum offered at HCC.

At Highland Community College, we have a variety of pathways designed to support your professional growth. Whether you are interested in earning a Gateways Credential (<http://www.ilgateways.com/en/credentials>) or are planning to transfer to a four-year program, we have the courses and opportunities to meet your education and career needs. Our courses are designed around the following three Pathways: Direct Exit, Credential Continuing, and Credential Transfer.

The Credential Transfer Pathway is designed for students who are planning to transfer to a four-year university. This sequence of courses supports the attainment of the Level 3 Gateways Credential and the AA degree and maximizes the number of courses that will directly transfer to a partnering four-year institution.

Each of our pathways is designed to support the attainment of Gateways Credentials. The Gateways Credential is recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development. Credentials are required for varied Circles of Quality in ExceleRate Illinois and can be used as a prerequisite for employment within early learning programs. To earn your Level 3 ECE Credential at Highland Community College, you are required to follow a prescribed course of study. Please be sure to contact the Coordinator of the ECE Program for further information about these credentials and required courses.

Nature of Work and Employment

Typical job positions that program graduates may enter into include family child care provider, child care worker, child care assistant, nanny positions, and other programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Graduates plan and present learning activities for small children, observe and document children's behavior, and work closely with teachers, directors, and parents to promote the growth and development of children. 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). The certificate program is NOT recommended for those seeking leadership positions in early childhood programs, such as director, assistant director, and senior teacher.

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 encouraged and may be made available.

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 125	Assessment in EC Settings ¹	3
ECE 202	Curriculum in EC Settings ¹	3
ECE 203	Home,Scl,ComRelations ECE ¹	3
ECE 128	Practicum ¹	2-3
or ECE 204	Exceptional Child ECE	
Related Required Courses		
SPCH 191	Fund of Speech Communication	3
Select one of the following communication courses:		3
BUSN 141	Business Communications	
ENGL 121	Rhetoric and Composition I	
Select one of the following:		3
BUSN 125	Math of Business ¹	
College Level Math		
Total Hours		29-30

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.

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

Program Contacts

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

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