School of Education

Early Childhood Education Educator Preparation Handbook

Track I – Field Experience
EEC1960 Field Experience I: Knowledge
EEC1961 Field Experience II: Planning
EEC1962 Field Experience III: Exploration

Track II – Explorations
EEC1970 ECE Exploration I: Knowledge
EEC1971 ECE Exploration II: Planning
EEC1972 ECE Exploration III: Exploration

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# Table of Contents

Welcome 3-4  
Mission Statement and Conceptual Framework  
Curriculum Framework  
Definition of Terms 5  
Educator Preparation Track Enrollment 5-6  

Educator Preparation Track I - Field Experience 6-11  
- Purpose and Definition 6  
- Hours in Field Requirement 6  
- Securing a Field Experience Site 7  
- Criteria for Field Experience Site 7  
- How do I find a site for my Field Experience? 8  
- What if I need to change my Field Experience site? 8  
- Field Experience Partnership: Student-Faculty-Site Director 9  
- Professionalism 10  
- NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct 10-11  
- Additional Requirements 11  

Educator Preparation Track II – Explorations 11-12  
- Purpose and Definition 11  
- Volunteering 12
Welcome to Rasmussen College Early Childhood Education!

The goal of the Early Childhood Program is to prepare *high quality early childhood education professionals* who exhibit best practices in the care and education of young children and their families.

This manual is designed to be a guide for students as they participate in Educator Preparation components of the Associate’s Degree in Early Childhood Education.

**Mission Statement**

Rasmussen College's Early Childhood Education Program prepares early childhood educators to serve young children, their families, and their communities.

- We foster and advocate developmentally and culturally appropriate practices among early childhood professionals.
- We value diversity, professionalism, collaboration, and research-based practice.
- We strive to provide young children with meaningful experiences that provide a foundation for a productive life.

**Conceptual Framework**

The Early Childhood Education program at Rasmussen College prepares skilled educators with a strong theoretical foundation and an understanding of the relationship between theory, teaching, learning, and professionalism.
Students receive rich opportunities for practical application in educator preparation experiences. Rasmussen College is committed to teaching and using positive interpersonal communication skills in a diverse environment.

**Curriculum Framework**

The curriculum is based on the following approaches and standards:

**NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children & NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs**

The NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation sets standards for education programs that prepare early childhood professionals. The Rasmussen College Early Childhood Education Associate’s degree program is not accredited by the NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation, but the College strives to operate under similar standards required for accreditation.

**DAP- Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

In their decision making, effective early childhood educators keep in mind the desired outcomes for children's learning and development, and they understand that:

- Knowledge must inform decision making
- Goals must be challenging and achievable
- Teaching must be intentional to be effective

Rasmussen College School of Education has integrated the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practices throughout the courses and program as a foundation of all curriculum and understanding.
**Definition of Terms**

For purposes of this document, the following terms will be used to represent several meanings:

a. **Student/Early Childhood Educator:** The terms early childhood educator and student will be used interchangeably throughout this handbook. An early childhood educator may care for and educate young children and families in a variety of capacities. Examples of an early childhood educator include, but are not limited to: Family Child Care Provider, Center Based Teacher, Youth Mentor, Family Advocate, Family Literacy Tutor, Children’s Museum Activity Leader.

b. **Faculty:** Rasmussen College Instructors

c. **Site Director/Supervisor:** An individual in the field who agrees to partner with the student and Faculty to develop the student as a professional. A Site Director/Supervisor may also be called Mentor, Assistant Director, Program Manager, Cooperating Teacher, or Master Teacher.

d. **Field Experience Site:** A place organized for the care and education of young children and families. Examples of Field Experience sites include, but are not limited to: recreation centers, non-profit organizations, Youth and Family programs, Healthy Families programs, enrichment camps (swimming, drama, food, language), Community Education programs, family homes, churches, preschools, elementary schools, Before and After School programs, parks, nature centers, private child care, family child care, Performing Arts programs, museums.

e. **Field Experience Coordinator:** Designated faculty at Rasmussen College who works with students to ensure their sites have submitted the proper paperwork for college records and supports students throughout the Field Experience courses. The Field Experience Coordinator communicates with sites supporting student and site success.

**Educator Preparation Track Enrollment**

a. Students who enroll through the National Online Campus are only eligible to enroll in the Exploration Track, regardless of their state of residence.

b. Students who live in states outside of FL, IL, KS, MN, ND and WI must enroll in the Exploration Track due to state regulations.

c. Students who live in FL, KS, IL, MN, ND and WI, and who enroll through a campus located in one of these states, can enroll in either Track based on the following conditions:

1. Students who have a Field Experience site identified at the time of enrollment may choose to enroll in the Field Experience Track.
2. Students who are certain they will secure a site prior to the close of business a minimum of 10 days prior to the start date of the quarter may choose to enroll in the Field Experience Track.
3. Students who do not have a Field Experience site identified at the time of enrollment will enroll in the Exploration Track. If a site is secured prior to the close of business a minimum of 10 days prior to the start date of the quarter, then students may switch to the Field Experience Track before the start of the quarter.
4. Students who are uncertain about their ability to locate and secure the Field Experience site prior to the close of business, a minimum of 10 days prior to the start date of the quarter, should enroll in the Exploration Track. This will include students who may already work full time outside of the early childhood education field and are
concerned about being able to meet the Field Experience hour requirement around their current work hours.

5. Field Experience sites identified to meet the requirements of the Field Experience Track must be located in FL, KS, IL, MN, ND, or WI.

**Educator Preparation Track I - Field Experience**

**Field Experience: Online Course and Field Experience**

For this Track, students will enroll in an intensive Field Experience (in-field experience and online course). The student’s work with young children and families, as coached by faculty in the online course and by the site director/supervisor, gives the best indication of the student’s ability to apply what the student has learned in the college classroom. The Field Experience is an opportunity for the student to grow professionally, from wherever they begin, in the early childhood setting.

**Purpose of Field Experience** - The purpose of the Field Experience is for students to apply knowledge gained from college coursework, faculty, cooperating teacher, and colleagues. The combination of theory and practice will help the student develop skills as an early childhood professional.

The Field Experience Track consists of three required courses: Field Experience I, Field Experience II, and Field Experience III. Each Field Experience course consists of:

- 4 credits
- Field Hours: 30 hours requirement of work with young children and families
  - Required hours must be completed within the 5.5 week course with the expectation of applying what you learn in the college classroom to your work in the field.
- Online Course: Assignments, Discussions, and Time Sheets
- Live Classroom sessions for faculty mentoring and support

The successful completion of both online course and in-field hours are required to complete the requirements of the Field Experience Track.

**In the event that the student does not complete the required 30 Field Experience hours within the quarter, the student does not meet the course requirements. Students who complete the required Field Experience hours but fail to pass the online component do not meet the course requirements. Not meeting the course requirements may result in course failure and require the student to repeat the course in the following quarter.**

**Field Experience Hour Requirement**

Each quarter students are required to fulfill 30 hours observing, caring for, and educating children in the field. In order to complete each Field Experience course, the student must complete the total required hours in each quarter. In the online course, a weekly time record will assist the student in tracking required hours. The student will be responsible for maintaining an accurate record of hours. At the end of quarter, the student will be required to submit one final time record indicating the total number of completed Field Experience hours. **Students are strongly encouraged to complete Field Experience hours each week in order to apply principles learned in the course work and to complete assignments.**
Securing a Field Experience Site

A Field Experience site must be secured prior to the close of business a minimum of 10 days prior to the start date of the quarter. If not, the student will be required to complete the Educator Preparation Explorations Track.

Students may work with the Field Experience Coordinator to secure a site prior to starting the first course in the Track. However, if one is not secured at least 10 days prior to the start of the quarter, the student must be enrolled into the Explorations Track.

Criteria for Field Experience Site

A high quality early childhood program is the ideal setting for the student’s Field Experience. Field Experience sites MUST be state licensed programs and MUST be located in FL, KS, IL, MN, ND, or WI. High quality may be defined differently in various states; however, NAEYC accreditation is the national recognition of high quality. Other marks of high quality may include:

- Quality Rating Systems (will vary by state)
- Gold Seal Accreditation
- American Montessori Society
- Program Policy and Procedure that reflect best practices (DAP)

To learn more about high quality rankings or accreditation in your state, students may call or email their local child care organizations. Organizations may include Child Care Resource and Referral, Child Care Aware, or The Early Learning Coalition, for example. The organizations will either be able to tell the student about quality rankings or direct the student where to find additional information.

NOTE: In the event that a Field Experience site does not reflect standards of quality, students may be placed in other or additional models/experiences to ensure they experience a high quality setting.

*Field Experience sites must have a current Field Experience Agreement signed by both the site and Rasmussen College before a student can begin counting hours toward their Field Experience hour requirement.*
Q: How do I find a site for my Field Experience?

Field Experience sites can be any site where you will be supervising children between the ages of birth through 8 years of age. This includes any of the following types of programs/positions:

i. Child Care Centers - licensed
ii. Preschools (part-time or full-time) - licensed
iii. Home (Family) Child Care Programs - licensed
iv. Nanny/ Regular and Scheduled Hours
v. Fitness center/ Drop in Child Care Programs
vi. Church-based programs - licensed or licensed exempt
vii. Other… (sites approved by your Field Experience Coordinator)

Field Experiences can be PAID or UNPAID.

viii. If you already have a job in teaching children in a program, as a nanny, or in a family child care setting, you will be able to conduct your Field Experience at that site.
ix. If you currently do not have a job already working with children, you will most likely need to find an UNPAID Field Experience or look for a job working with children BEFORE the start of the quarter.
x. If you are looking for a PAID Field Experience site, you may have to start in an UNPAID Field Experience until you find a job working at a site.
xi. Consider this your JOB even if you are not paid. Treat it as a professional experience which may lead to further opportunities.

Q: What if I need to change my Field Experience site?

A change in Field Experience site by a student is not recommended. However, if the student needs to change a Field Experience site, the student must notify the course instructor before a change takes place.

- **Field Experience sites must have a current Field Experience Agreement signed by both the site and Rasmussen College before a student can begin counting hours toward their Field Experience hour requirement.**
- Students should consider the impact on children and families in their care before changing Field Experience sites, since high quality early childhood programs ensure teacher continuity.
- Regardless of a change in early childhood setting, the student will remain responsible for the required Field Experience hours within each quarter.
- The student will not be allowed to advance to the next Field Experience course if the student has not fulfilled the Field Experience requirements of the current Field Experience course.
Field Experience Partnership: Student-Faculty-Site Director

During the course of the Field Experience, the student will be supported and guided by the instructors through the online course. In addition, students will be mentored and coached in the field by their site director-supervisor. The site director-supervisor may be the Director, Mentor, Assistant Director, Cooperating Teacher, or Master Teacher. In the absence of a site director-supervisor, such as in a Family Child Care or Nanny setting, faculty will serve as mentor.

a. **Student Responsibility:**
   - a. Find a Field Experience site. The site needs to have the signed Field Experience Agreement on file.
   - b. Submit a current Field Experience Student Biography with each Field Experience course.
   - c. Submit hours weekly within the course assignment and one final time at the end of each quarter. Total the number of hours earned over the entire quarter.
   - d. Complete online assignments and discussions as assigned.
   - e. Submit an evaluation of their field experiences.

b. **Faculty Responsibility (ECE Instructor):**
   - a. Coach and support the student within the course through content, feedback on assignments, in discussion and during Live Classroom sessions, and as needed for each student.

c. **Site Director Responsibility:**
   - a. Provide written feedback at the culmination of the quarter via electronic survey on the Field Experience course and site experience.
   - b. Model and coach students in applying best practices in their early childhood setting by answering questions, supporting student assignments, and providing additional resources as needed.
Professionalism:

Field Experience Professional Expectations:

Students are required to present a professional attitude and demeanor while in the Field Experience sites and in their personal lives.

- Appearance of students should represent cleanliness, organization, and pride in the way students represent themselves to parents and others. Students must abide by the dress code of the site at all times.
- Conduct should always remain in accordance with the site policies and procedures with extra attention paid to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in all interactions.
- Communication should be respectful and follow site procedures and policies.
- If a student must be absent from a site for any reason, the student is responsible to contact the cooperating teacher to give notice of the absence. If a student is employed at the site, the student must abide by the site’s personnel policies.
- If a student must discontinue their Field Experience with a site, the student must communicate with the site in advance and agree to a procedure for leaving and communicate with all necessary parties. If a student is employed at the site, the student must abide by the site’s personnel policies.
- Accountability is critical to being an intentional teacher. Students are to be held responsible for their actions, promises, conduct and communication. Holding students to a high standard is also reflected through the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Professionalism is expected within the online learning environment. Students will use respectful communication with all colleagues and faculty.

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, sets the standards for behavior of early childhood educators. The Rasmussen College Early Childhood Education program promotes these standards. As an early childhood professional, students are required to demonstrate the highest expectation of behavior while working in an early childhood setting.

Core Values

Standards of Ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on a commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. The Rasmussen College Early Childhood Education Program has made a commitment to the following NAEYC core values:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community and society
- Respect the dignity and worth of each individual (child, family member and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families and colleagues
• Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect.  
  (www.naeyc.org)

**Additional Requirements:**

• Students may be required by the Field Experience site to complete additional steps not mandated by Rasmussen College.
  
  o Steps may include, but are not limited to an additional background check, physical exam, immunizations, and/or TB test prior to starting at the Field Experience site.
  
  o Students are required to check with their Field Experience site and state regulations for additional requirements prior to beginning the scheduled quarter.
  
  o Additional steps may delay the start at a Field Experience site until complete. Therefore, please allow for additional time prior to the start of the Field Experience course.

• Reimbursement policies are available in some states.

**Educator Preparation Track II - Explorations**

**Explorations: Online Course only**

For the Explorations Track, students will enroll in an intense online course consisting of weekly assignments, discussions, and a course project preparing them for working with and teaching young children in groups in the early childhood education field. Each course will provide the students opportunities to tie their educational experiences to their future work with children through case studies, scenarios, videos, online resources, and authentic assessments in the form of course projects. If a student is working in the field already, then the student will be encouraged to apply their educational experiences directly to their current work with children. **Note:** Students in this track may be currently employed outside of the early childhood education field or are not eligible for Field Experience Track due to their enrolling campus. (See Educator Preparation Track Enrollment section above.)

**Purpose of Explorations** - The purpose of the Explorations courses is for students to apply knowledge gained from college coursework, faculty, and colleagues. Connecting theory to future practice will help the student develop skills as an early childhood professional.

The Explorations Track consists of three required courses: Explorations I, Explorations II, Explorations III, and I. **Each** Explorations course consists of:

- 4 credits
- Online Course: Assignments, Discussions, and Course Projects
- Extensive use of videos, scenarios, and case studies
- Live Classroom sessions
Volunteering:
If not already employed in the early childhood education field, students in the Explorations Track are encouraged to seek volunteer work or employment in the field to build their experience with children. Students will be guided to the Career Services team, Job Connect, and Optimal Resume for support and guidance in locating job opportunities. Optimal Resume and Job Connect can be located in the Resources section of each course.