R.E.A.C.H.

Middlesex Community College Education Department
Conceptual Framework

The Education Department's R.E.A.C.H. Conceptual Framework provides an overarching set of principles, grounded in guiding ideology, which serves as the foundation for our academic programs. The Framework synthesizes the nine Principles of Child Development and Learning* from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) into five central themes that reflect MCC's mission, vision, and values and NAEYC's Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. The Education department strives for students to understand, apply, and embrace these principles and integrate them into their work with children and families, in concert with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Each of the acronym's principles applies not only to work with children and families, but also to the department's work with students and its professional preparation of Early Childhood Education candidates. The five principles are:

Research

Children learn in an integrated fashion that cuts across academic disciplines or subject areas. Because the foundations of subject area knowledge are established in early childhood, educators need subject-area knowledge, an understanding of the learning progressions within each subject area, and pedagogical knowledge about teaching each subject area's content effectively. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery and when they have many opportunities to reflect on and practice newly acquired skills. Additionally, when used responsibly and intentionally, technology and interactive media can be valuable tools for supporting children's development and learning. **(DAP Principles*: 7, 8, 9)**

Engagement

Children's motivation to learn is increased when their learning environment fosters their sense of belonging, purpose, and agency. Curricula and teaching methods build on children's assets by connecting their experiences in learning environments to their home and community settings. **(DAP Principle*: 6)**

Active Learning

Children are active learners from birth, constantly taking in and organizing information to create meaning through their relationships, their interactions with their environment, and their overall experiences. Further, play promotes joyful learning that fosters self-regulation, language, cognitive and social competencies as well as content knowledge across disciplines. Play is essential for all children, birth through age eight. **(DAP Principles*: 5, 3)**

Context

Development and learning are dynamic processes that reflect the complex interplay between a child's biological characteristics and the environment, each shaping the other as well as future patterns of growth. Although general progressions of development and learning can be identified, variations due to cultural contexts, experiences, and individual differences must also be considered. **(DAP Principles*: 1, 4)**

Holistic Practice

All domains of child development—physical development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and linguistic development (including bilingual or multilingual development), as well as approaches to learning—are important; each domain both supports and is supported by the others. **(DAP Principle*: 2)**