Early Childhood Education Program
Conceptual Framework

Capital Community College is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The Early Childhood Education at Capital Community College is one of twelve in the Connecticut Community College System. Like its sister colleges, Capital Community College is an open admission college. While there are numerous programs within each region, each has its own unique characteristics. This section of the self-study will discuss Capital Community Colleges’ program philosophy, curriculum and key features of the program as they are related to our mission and vision statements.

Program Philosophy
Diversity is a central value of Capital Community College’s Early Childhood Education Program. The college intentionally has a diverse faculty, provides access to a diverse population of students and prepares graduates to work in early childhood settings that serve children and families of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The Early Childhood Education Program at Capital Community College provides the academic preparation for the Early Childhood Education Certificate and the Associate of Science degree in Early Childhood Education serving and being responsive to the educational, cultural, and economic development needs of the community, the state and the region. The Certificate Program and the Associate of Science degree provide theoretical knowledge and field experiences that prepare students for multiple roles within the field of early education.

The Early Childhood Education Program at Capital Community College is committed to providing a quality educational program based on the developmentally appropriate practices for children birth to age eight as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Program commitments:

- Provide students with a well-designed program of study that includes the advancements of both theory (major theorists and approaches to early childhood introduced and reinforced within the program include Vygotsky, Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, Bloom, Gardner, Erikson, Montessori and Reggio) and practice in the field of early education.
- Provide students with an educational program that maintains the highest standards of student performance.
- Provide students with a student-centered program of study that focuses on the development of the whole child.
- Provide students with an educational environment that emphasizes critical and reflective thinking, problem solving, creativity, and practical reasoning skills.
- Provide students with an educational environment that is culturally sensitive; and celebrates diversity.
- Provide students with observation and learning opportunities at a NAEYC accredited on-site preschool.

Program outcomes:

- Prepare students to provide quality, developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant curriculum that reflects on the active role of children, families, schools and the community in learning.
- Prepare ethical and responsible educators.
- Prepare students to be lifelong learners, to practice effective early childhood education methods and to grow as early childhood educators.
- Prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate programs at four year colleges and universities.
- Prepare students to develop their own personal philosophy of education.

Curriculum
The Early Childhood Education Program curriculum focuses on the developmental needs of young children. Specifically, the curriculum emphasizes a practical approach to supporting and enhancing the growth and development of children. The curriculum bridges theory and pedagogy. The major theorists and approaches to early childhood introduced and reinforced within the program include Vygotsky, Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, Bloom, Gardner, Erikson, Montessori and Reggio. Pedagogical methods present in our curriculum include observation, project learning, lecture, field experience, technology, discussion/reflection, group and individual learning opportunities, and hands-on experiences. The modes of delivery for our courses include day, evening, site-based contract, bilingual and Saturday courses.

Key Program Features
Our program focus is tied to our mission and vision statement. We have identified key features as primary components in the early childhood education program.

Community Connections
Capital Community College is proud of the close relationships students have with faculty and staff. Our faculty and staff care about each and every student.

Capital Community College has a long history of helping students achieve their dreams. Our supportive faculty and staff are in large part how that happens, and why most students report that “it feels like home” here. In addition to helping students achieve their dreams while at Capital Community College, our students transfer to the University of Connecticut, the four year universities within the State of Connecticut system, the University of Hartford, St. Joseph College, Trinity College, Charter Oak State College, Goodwin College and other colleges both within and outside Connecticut to continue the pursuit of degrees.

The Capital program has deep connections in the community. The central location of Capital Community College and the variety of early childhood educational programs offered within the greater Hartford area provide students with opportunities to engage in observations and field work including but not limited to urban early care and education centers, Head Start programs, public school classrooms, and several other options.

Many students who undertake studies in early childhood education at Capital Community College are already working in the field of early childhood and have earned their CDA through Capital. Some work in small programs and some in very large programs. Some of those programs have partnerships with Capital to help provide courses for their care providers that are delivered at times that will work for them. In the past, this partnership has lead to Capital Community College’s Continuing Education division offering classes on-site at some of the area’s larger early childhood education centers. In addition, the modes of delivery for our courses include day, evening, site-based contracts, bilingual and Saturday courses designed to meet the needs of working adults.

An annual bilingual conference that is open to educators and the community is hosted by the Early Childhood Education Department in collaboration with the City of Hartford Office for Young Children during the NAEYC Week of the Young Child. This conference helps to establish a connection between parents, students and providers of early childhood programs. It promotes professional excellence for
students and educators in the greater Hartford community and presents topics relevant in the field of education. A student run Early Childhood Education Club, sponsored by a staff member from our onsite preschool and a faculty member, is active at the college. The purpose of the club is to promote the field of early childhood education and to provide students with the opportunity for additional community outreach.

Diversity

Capital Community College is one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in New England. Capital Community College is a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). Research and discussion on diversity and the importance of preparing students for an evolving global society are numerous. At Capital, diversity across the board is the norm, and students from different backgrounds all over Greater Hartford attain a truly global perspective of the world as they share classes with each other and students from dozens of nations around the globe. Capital’s downtown location and partnerships with business, cultural and historical institutions also create a multi-cultural learning experience that is uniquely stimulating, with classes and internship opportunities not found elsewhere. Nearly 60 percent of Capital students are African American and Latino. In the Early Childhood Program, some introductory level courses are offered in Spanish to encourage Latino student attendance and matriculation at the college.