

# Professional Development Planning Tool

Primary Competencies for Early Childhood Educators:  
*A Practitioner's Companion to the Core Body of Knowledge*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	3	<b>Primary Competency #6:</b> Plan for and implement engaging and effective teaching and learning	14
<b>Professional Development Planning Tool</b>	4		
<b>Primary Competency Self-Assessment</b>			
<b>Primary Competency #1:</b> Understand children and how they learn	6	<b>Primary Competency #7:</b> Partner with families to support development and learning	17
<b>Primary Competency #2:</b> Understand academic content and how to teach it	8	<b>Primary Competency #8:</b> Cooperate and collaborate with professional teams and colleagues	18
<b>Primary Competency #3:</b> Create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment	10	<b>Primary Competency #9:</b> Commit to reflection and improving practice	19
<b>Primary Competency #4:</b> Effectively manage physical space, time, routines, and transitions	11	<b>Self-Assessment Summary</b>	20
<b>Primary Competency #5:</b> Assess, monitor development and learning, and make effective decisions	12	<b>Goal Planning</b>	21

## INTRODUCTION

### Reflective Inquiry

As an early childhood educator, you are a lifelong learner. You build knowledge and skills over time. You demonstrate your competence in more advanced ways as you learn on the job, gain experience, and participate in professional development.

To do your best work for children, you need to think often about what you are doing well and what you might improve. This is called reflective practice. Reflective practice includes:

- Learning new skills and knowledge
- Thinking about your current practice
- Adjusting your strategies, approaches, or behavior
- Asking for feedback
- Collaborating with colleagues to help you consider multiple perspectives
- Recognizing when you might need more support or resources from supervisors, colleagues, or other professionals

Using a cycle of inquiry helps you turn reflection into purposeful action that leads to improvement. Even though the cycle can be shown in different ways, all versions include the same basic steps: observing and listening, asking questions, thinking carefully about what things mean, bringing together different ideas and information, and using what you learn to change your practice.

This process is part of the Cycle of Intentional Teaching described in the New York State Early Learning Guidelines and is shown in the figure below.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Professional Development Planning Tool

Planning your professional development, which you should do at least once a year, helps you stay focused on your growth and continue building your skills. Use this **Professional Development Planning Tool**, which includes a self-assessment, to set goals and map out your learning. It is designed to be used alongside the **Primary Competencies for Early Childhood Educators**.

Program leaders can also use this tool to support reflective supervision, performance appraisals, and to encourage educators' commitment to ongoing professional growth and learning.

### 1. Reflect

Think about what you would like to learn more about or get better at. You might consider one or more of these prompts:

- I would like to learn more about how children...
- I would like to learn how to...
- My job would feel easier if I knew how to...
- I would feel more confident/happier at work if I could get better at...



---

## 2. Assess

Work through one primary competency at a time. You will want to allot enough time to consider each one. You may also choose to focus on just one or two primary competencies.

Whether you choose to reflect on all of the primary competencies or a select few, use the practice examples, the reflection questions, as well as “Things to Know,” “Skills to Build,” and “Habits of Mind and Dispositions” to think about your work with children and families.

Consider your current skills along a scale from “Emerging” to “Leading.” Use the following prompts to help you indicate where you fall on the scale. As you reflect, decide whether each focus area is a low, medium, or high priority (L/M/H) or not applicable (N/A) for your professional development.



Emerging	Beginning	Developing	Strengthening	Leading
I am building awareness and understanding in this area. I have limited or no experience applying these practices.	I am beginning to use some practices in this area. I am building confidence and need support to apply them.	I use a range of practices in this area in familiar contexts. I am growing my independence in this area.	I consistently use a wide range of practices in this area. I integrate these practices into my regular routines and decisions.	This area is fully embedded across my practice. I support others, contribute ideas, or help strengthen practice across a team or program.

## 3. Summarize

After reflecting on your practice with the self-assessment, record what you learned on the Summary Page.

## 4. Set goals and plan

Use the prompts in the **Goal Planning** section to identify learning or practice goals and plan for professional development.

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #1**

**Understand children and how they learn**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>1A. Informed Decision-Making</b> Use knowledge of children and child development to make thoughtful decisions that support development and learning.</p>		
<p><b>1B. Cognitive Development</b> Promote children’s cognitive development.</p>		
<p><b>1C. Language Development</b> Promote children’s language development.</p>		
<p><b>1D. Social and Emotional Development</b> Promote children’s social and emotional development.</p>		
<p><b>1E. Physical Development</b> Promote children’s physical development.</p>		
<p><b>1F. Emergent Multilingual Learners</b> Support emergent multilingual learners to develop their home languages and English proficiency.</p>		

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #1**

**Understand children and how they learn**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>1G. Cognitive Processes and Learning Dispositions</b>                  Promote the cognitive processes of attention, memory, perception, language, flexibility, and reasoning needed for children to learn and develop positive approaches to learning.</p>		
<p><b>1H. Trauma-Informed Practices and Holistic Well-Being</b>                  Implement trauma-informed approaches that support children experiencing chronic stress, adversity, and/or trauma, and support the holistic well-being of all children.</p>		

*\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A*

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #2**

**Understand academic content and how to teach it**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>2A. Promoting Literacy</b> Use knowledge of child development and an understanding of literacy learning trajectories to support children’s literacy development.</p>		
<p><b>2B. Promoting Math Development</b> Use knowledge of child development and an understanding of math learning trajectories to support children’s math development.</p>		
<p><b>2C. Promoting Learning in Science</b> Plan and implement learning experiences that engage children in scientific practices and develop their scientific understanding.</p>		
<p><b>2D. Promoting Learning in Social Studies</b> Plan experiences in social studies that help children form and voice their opinions, identify and solve problems, work collaboratively, and recognize the consequences of their behaviors and decisions on others.</p>		

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #2**

**Understand academic content and how to teach it**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>2E. Promoting Children’s Use of Technology</b> Support children to learn to use technology as a tool and to be critical consumers of technology.</p>		
<p><b>2F. Promoting Visual Arts</b> Integrate visual arts across the curriculum and support children’s development of concepts and skills in the visual arts.</p>		
<p><b>2G. Promoting Performing Arts</b> Integrate music and drama across the curriculum and support children’s development of concepts and skills in music and drama.</p>		
<p><b>2H. Promoting Learning in Engineering</b> Plan learning experiences that engage children in engineering practices and explore design principles.</p>		

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #3**

**Create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>3A. Health, Safety, and Nutrition</b>                  Create a protective environment to prevent children’s injury, illness, and emergencies, and promote physical and mental safety, development, and well-being.</p>		
<p><b>3B. Positive Relationships and Affirming Climate</b>                  Create an environment where all children are seen, valued, and experience a sense of belonging.</p>		
<p><b>3C. Social-Emotional Learning</b>                  Use social-emotional learning strategies and teaching to build community and help children interact, develop friendships, play and learn productively, and foster positive mindsets for learning.</p>		
<p><b>3D. Positive Guidance</b>                  Use age- and developmentally appropriate positive guidance and behavior management strategies to promote cooperation and social interaction, and to address challenging behavior.</p>		

*\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A*

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #4**

**Effectively manage physical space, time, routines, and transitions**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>4A. Schedules</b> Develop and implement schedules that are predictable, responsive to children’s needs, and that promote cooperation, social interaction, and learning.</p>		
<p><b>4B. Routines and Transitions</b> Effectively guide children through routines and transitions, including those for arrival and departure.</p>		
<p><b>4C. Physical Space</b> Arrange physical space and materials to promote safety and accessibility, and promote all children’s learning, reflection, self-management, and social interaction.</p>		
<p><b>4D. Technology</b> Use technology in the learning environment in developmentally appropriate ways and to enhance teaching.</p>		

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A




**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #5**

**Assess, monitor development and learning, and make effective decisions**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>5A. Developmental Monitoring and Screening</b> Use developmental monitoring to track children’s milestones, and screening tools to identify when a child may need extra support with development or learning.</p>		
<p><b>5B. Authentic Assessment</b> Gather information using multiple methods, like work samples, observations, portfolios, interviews, and curriculum-based assessments; and document children’s skills and competencies through written descriptions, visual artifacts, photographs, video or audio recordings, counts, or tallies.</p>		
<p><b>5C. Using Assessment to Plan</b> Use assessment information to determine what, where, and how to teach/care for the whole group, small groups, and individual children.</p>		

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #4**

**Assess, monitor development and learning, and make effective decisions**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

**5D. Sharing Assessment Information**

Continuously share objective information about children’s progress with families and use a mixture of methods (e.g., pictures, providing written notes, graphs) to share information about children’s strengths, skills, and areas for support.



**5E. Responsible Formal Assessment**

Select and use formal assessment tools that are culturally and developmentally appropriate, can be used to make decisions about caring for and teaching children, and are relevant for daily planning and curriculum development. Use formal assessment tools for the purposes for which they were intended and validated, and demonstrate basic skills for conventional assessment.



*\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A*

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #6**

**Plan for and implement engaging and effective teaching and learning**

How am I doing?

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

**6A. Curriculum Implementation Responsibilities**

Fulfill essential responsibilities when planning and implementing curriculum for young children.



**6B. Using a Multitiered Curriculum Framework**

Use a multitiered instruction system as the curriculum framework to meet diverse learners' needs.



**6C. Integrated Teaching and Learning Approaches**

Combine child-directed play, adult-led learning, and guided play to encourage all children to explore, solve problems, communicate, construct ideas and understandings, create, build friendships, and learn from and with peers.



**6D. Learning Through Play**

Intentionally promote play to engage children in learning.



**6E. Conversations and Interactions**

Use back-and-forth conversation and intentional interactions to show interest and enjoyment in children's efforts, and to extend language development and learning.



**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #6**

**Plan for and implement engaging and effective teaching and learning**

**How am I doing?**

	Emerging	Beginning	Developing	Strengthening	Leading	PD Priority*
<p><b>6F. Planning and Designing Learning Experiences</b> Plan learning experiences that deepen and extend children’s knowledge, understanding, and skills.</p>	←-----→					
<p><b>6G. Materials, Resources, and Technology</b> Intentionally use instructional materials, resources, and technology to support children’s development, learning, and positive approaches to learning.</p>	←-----→					
<p><b>6H. Strategies to Support Motivation and Engagement</b> Use teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning to support children’s motivation and keep them engaged in learning.</p>	←-----→					
<p><b>6I. Strategies to Ensure Access and Participation</b> Use teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning to present information in different ways so all children can access and take part in meaningful, challenging learning experiences.</p>	←-----→					

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #6**

**Plan for and implement engaging and effective teaching and learning**

**How am I doing?**

	Emerging	Beginning	Developing	Strengthening	Leading	PD Priority*
<p><b>6J. Strategies to Promote Children’s Understanding</b> Use teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning to help children actively understand and use new information.</p>	←-----→					
<p><b>6K. Strategies to Support Children’s Expression</b> Use teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning to provide multiple means for children to demonstrate what they know.</p>	←-----→					
<p><b>6L. Strategies to Support Children’s Executive Function</b> Use teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning to support children’s executive function throughout learning experiences.</p>	←-----→					

\*Low/Medium/High (L/M/H) or N/A

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #7**

**Partner with families to support children’s development and learning**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

**7A. Relationships with Families**

Initiate and maintain positive, reciprocal relationships with families.



**7B. Collaboration and Support**

Collaborate with and support families to promote children’s development and learning.



**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #8**

**Cooperate and collaborate with professional teams and colleagues**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

<p><b>8A. Professional Responsibility and Ethics</b> Take care of personal health and well-being, fulfill professional responsibilities, and adhere to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct.</p>		
<p><b>8B. Self-Awareness and Communication</b> Demonstrate self-awareness, build strong relationships, and effectively use communication skills to collaborate.</p>		
<p><b>8C. Professional Collaboration, Community, and Contributions</b> Participate actively in opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and families, and contribute positively to the program’s community and culture.</p>		

**Notes**

**PRIMARY COMPETENCY #9**

**Commit to reflection and improving practice**

**How am I doing?**

Emerging    Beginning    Developing    Strengthening    Leading    PD Priority\*

**9A. Professional Identity and Reflection**

Take time to consider professional identity, relationships, and practice.



**9B. Ongoing Professional Learning**

Engage in ongoing professional learning to improve the quality of practice.



**Notes**

## SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

After reflecting on your practice with the self-assessment, consider the following questions.

### Strengths

When creating professional development goals, it is a good idea to begin by considering what you already do well. What in your teaching or caregiving practice do you feel most proud of? What strengths did you identify after completing the Primary Competency Self-Assessment?

### Areas of Opportunity

#### Primary Competencies

Which Primary Competency or competencies would you like to focus on to build more knowledge and skills?

#### Focus Areas

Which Focus Area or areas did you identify as a priority for professional development?

### Specific Targets

What specifically (knowledge, skills, behavior) would you like to concentrate on in professional development?

## GOAL PLANNING

Creating clear, manageable goals focused on just one or two practices at a time will help you make steady progress and feel more successful. Updating your Professional Development Plan at least once a year can keep you on track and support your continued learning and growth.

You might set short-term goals (to reach in about three months), medium-term goals (4-9 months), or long-term goals (up to a year). Think of two or three goals you'd like to work toward.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal Type**

- Short-term (less than 3 months)
- Medium-term (4-9 months)
- Long-term (up to 12 months)

**Primary Competency Goal**

- 1. Understand children and how they learn
- 2. Understand academic content and how to teach it
- 3. Create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment
- 4. Effectively manage physical space, time, routines, and transitions
- 5. Assess, monitor development and learning, and make effective decisions
- 6. Plan for and implement engaging and effective teaching and learning
- 7. Partner with families to support children’s development and learning
- 8. Cooperate and collaborate with professional teams and colleagues
- 9. Commit to reflection and improving practice

**Goal Statement**

*I will...*

### **Indicators of Progress**

How will I know I am making progress toward my goal? What changes will I see in my work?

### **Connection to Work with Children and Families**

Why is this goal important to me? How do I hope reaching it will affect my work with children, families, or coworkers?

### **Type of Professional Development**

What kind of professional development would help me meet this goal (i.e., workshop, credit-bearing coursework, coaching, community of practice, etc.)?

**Professional Development Focus**

What topics or areas would I like my professional development to focus on?

**Finding Professional Development**

Where can I find this PD? Who can I go to for help finding this PD?

**Additional Support**

Who or what will help me apply or use what I learn?

	<b>Action Steps</b> What steps will help me achieve my goal?	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

## Review

### Review Date #1:

- Goal achieved
- Making progress
- Modified or changed my goal

### Notes:

### Review Date #2:

- Goal achieved
- Making progress
- Modified or changed my goal

### Notes:

### Review Date #3:

- Goal achieved
- Making progress
- Modified or changed my goal

### Notes: