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Strengthening the Preparation of Early Childhood Teacher Candidates

Through Performance-Based Assessments

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### Abstract

Performance-based assessments require teacher candidates to demonstrate proficiency on specific teaching tasks and apply knowledge in authentic settings. This article describes the development and use of performance-based assessments (PBAs) for advancing the learning and evaluation of teacher candidates in an early childhood special education teacher preparation program. Teacher candidates completed PBAs under supervision during culminating practica experiences at three age levels (infant/toddler, preschool, and primary practicum). Methods for determining proficiency on national (Council for Exceptional Children) and state (Colorado teacher licensure) standards are described along with the challenges and opportunities presented by the use of PBAs. Performance-based assessment data over a five year period indicate teacher candidate performance meeting and exceeding national standards and state licensure requirements.

## Strengthening the Preparation of Early Childhood Teacher Candidates Through Performance-Based Assessments

Early childhood education teachers' professional development is a critical component in the education of young children (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000). Early childhood teachers' level of education affects the quality of early childhood classrooms and predicts developmental outcomes for children. Early childhood classrooms rated at higher levels of quality have teachers with higher levels of education, experience, and positive attitudes and knowledge about early childhood education (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

The purpose of this article is to describe a model for advancing the learning and evaluation of early childhood teacher candidates through performance-based assessments—assessments that require the teacher candidate to demonstrate the application of knowledge rather than just the knowledge itself. Traditionally, completion of a degree program at accredited institutions of higher education was considered sufficient evidence that a graduate is prepared to be an effective teacher. Today the focus is on evidence of teacher candidate knowledge and demonstrated competencies (Pettus & Smith, 2001; Ramey & Ramey, 2006). Performance-based assessments provide a more effective way of evaluating what prospective teachers know and can do than can be ascertained from examining course syllabi and transcripts (Quatroche, Duarte, Huffman-Joley, & Watkins, 2002; Wise, 2000).

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) reviews the standards and curricula of university programs that grant teaching licenses. In the early 1990s, NCATE required that all its specialty associations, including the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), revise standards to be performance-based (CEC, 2007; NAEYC, 2006; NCATE, 2006). These

knowledge and competencies standards form the focus for program design, delivery, and evaluation within institutions preparing early childhood teacher candidates. In 2000, NCATE mandated the use of performance-based assessments to provide evidence that teacher candidates have mastered the content knowledge in their fields and to demonstrate that they can teach it effectively (NCATE, 2006).

### Early Childhood Education Program Description

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) program at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center (UCDHSC) is part of the School of Education and Human Development. UCDHSC is a research university located in an urban setting with twelve schools and colleges spread across three downtown campuses. The student body of twenty-eight thousand is roughly split between undergraduates and graduates, with twenty percent ethnic minority. The ECE program presently has 142 active candidates. Latest enrollment data indicate that 14.5% of the candidates are from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

### *Program Structure*

The mission of the ECE program is to prepare early childhood professional leaders with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of young children and their families within a rapidly changing and diverse society. Our program aims to promote leaders who share a commitment to equity and excellence and an understanding of the strengths and needs of a diverse student population in order to optimize developmental, academic, and behavioral outcomes for children from birth to age eight. The ECE program mission and goals are consistent with the mission of the School of Education and Human Development: Leadership for equity through learning, research, and professional practice in urban and diverse communities.

The ECE Program offers a professional course sequence for persons who are preparing to become leaders in professional practice in one of two alternative career patterns: (1) early childhood accomplished teacher—the Master’s degree in ECE, and (2) specialist working with children with disabilities and their families—the license in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE Specialist).

The competency-based ECSE Specialist program is composed of 12 courses and three practica for a total of 40 credit hours. Students who also elect to earn the Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education complete an additional 9 credit hours. Field experiences are an integral part of the ECSE candidate’s experience. ECSE candidates complete 290 clock hours of fieldwork associated with course assignments, providing an opportunity for the candidate to gain knowledge, skills, and dispositions while interacting with children, families, program staff, and community agencies. Learning becomes a reflective process as candidates and faculty share their observations and projects with each other.

The practica for our graduate candidates provide culminating professional preparation experiences. Practicum requirements are designed to allow candidates to apply and synthesize knowledge and skills they have previously learned (connecting theory and practice) and to acquire and practice new skills in a closely supervised environment. The teacher candidate gradually takes on more direct teaching/early intervention responsibility but continues to practice with instruction under close supervision. Candidates in Early Childhood Special Education complete 6 credit hours (510 clock hours), divided between an infant/toddler setting, a preschool setting, and primary setting. ECSE candidates may complete one of the three practica at their work site.

In Colorado, young children with disabilities are placed in community and private infant, child care, and preschool settings as well as in public schools. Practicum sites are approved based on adherence to several criteria: the program follows recommended practices in both ECE and ECSE, is socially inclusive, is culturally diverse, is family-centered, monitors quality, and has a site supervisor who is licensed or credentialed in the appropriate field.

### *Theoretical and Philosophical Foundation*

The ECE Program is grounded in a sound theoretical basis and a commitment to developmentally appropriate practices. The theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner form a fundamental foundation and provide teacher candidates with a firm understanding of constructivism and the conviction that children construct their own knowledge through active exploration and interaction with the environment (Piaget, 1952, 1959). This cognitive construction is socially mediated—influenced by the child’s social interactions and the social-cultural context of family, school, community, and culture (Vygotsky, 1978). Multiple settings and institutions interact with one another and the individual child and affect child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Early educators support or scaffold the child’s learning within the “zone of proximal development”—described as the difference between what the child can do independently and what the child can do with assistance (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

An understanding of developmentally appropriate practices guides teacher candidates in their decisions about the well-being and education of young children. Early educators must know the principles of child development and appropriate expectations for the ages of the children with whom they work. They consider the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children and recognize the importance of understanding the social and cultural backgrounds of the children in

order to create meaningful early childhood environments and learning experiences (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2007).

Several philosophical assumptions about recommended practice with young children and families guide our teacher preparation program for early childhood special educators:

1. Early childhood education and intervention must be viewed from an ecological perspective. The child is an individual developing within a broad ecology including families, professionals, educational settings, and communities. This view means that early childhood professionals need collaborative and interpersonal skills for working on transdisciplinary teams with families, school and community personnel.
2. Early childhood services should be inclusive. All children (with and without developmental disabilities) should be placed in community settings that are as natural as possible based on family choice. The same range of care and education options should be available to all children (family child care, center care, preschool, play groups, private schools, and public schools).
3. Early childhood education and intervention should be family centered. Families are acknowledged as the experts regarding their children, and intervention planning must be inclusive of and responsive to the family's unique priorities, resources, and concerns. The early childhood professional's role is to strengthen and support families as they facilitate and nurture their young children's development.
4. Early childhood services should be culturally responsive. Early childhood professionals must possess the awareness, knowledge, and skills to promote early intervention practices that are sensitive and respectful to children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Educators*

As an extension of our mission and philosophy, graduates of the ECE Program must demonstrate the knowledge and skills to meet the standards of professional training as articulated in the Colorado Department of Education ECSE Specialist standards, Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers, as well as standards from early childhood professional organizations—the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Students encounter professional and state standards throughout the program—these standards are included in syllabi, course assignments, and Performance-Based Assessments completed in culminating practica experiences.

For purposes of this article, we will focus on the *CEC Content Standards for Beginning Special Education Teachers* (including standards for beginning special education teachers of early childhood students) summarized in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 here]

*Performance-Based Assessments*

Over the last several years, the ECSE program at UCDHSC has made many changes in the ways in which we assess and monitor the development of candidate competency. We have always had rigorous assignments corresponding with each course and comprehensive exams provided an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to synthesize and apply knowledge to situations typical of professional practice. Practica provided an opportunity for candidates to evaluate themselves according to the early childhood special education professional knowledge base and standards. Candidates identified their strengths and areas of need in collaboration with their advisor and university practicum supervisor and chose knowledge and skills on which to

base practicum projects. Practica experiences therefore tended to be varied and individualized for each candidate.

In response to feedback from practicum supervisors and employers of program graduates, and in recognition of the trend towards performance-based assessments as a requirement by NCATE, NAEYC, CEC, and the state of Colorado, the ECSE program developed assessments designed to meet CEC Content Standards and demonstrate teacher candidate knowledge, skills and dispositions. Program assessments were designed by a team comprised of ECE Program faculty, exemplary program graduates working in a variety of settings and professional roles, practicum supervisors, and employers of program graduates. Candidates admitted to the program in the summer of 2001 were introduced to performance-based assessments (PBAs) during courses and first completed them during practica in the fall of 2002.

Of the 14 program assessments, nine are true performance-based assessments that require the teacher candidate to demonstrate proficiency on specific teaching tasks and the application of knowledge in authentic settings. Proficiency on each PBA is determined by:

- observation and rating of teacher candidate practice by site supervisors during authentic performance opportunities in practicum experiences, and
- review of portfolio documentation which serves as supporting evidence of the attainment of national and state standards (unit and lesson plans; student work samples; photographs of classroom environments and activities; formal and informal assessment instruments; intervention and positive behavior support plans; logs of contact hours with students, teaching teams, and families; and teacher candidate reflections on their own performance).

Table 2 lists and describes the Performance-Based Assessments for ECSE teacher candidates. Specific elements upon which candidates are rated and sample portfolio products are illustrated.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Five program assessments are exams or papers completed during coursework or as a culminating event at the conclusion of a student's program:

- course exam covering knowledge of historical and philosophical foundations of services for young children, trends and issues in ECSE, and law and policies that affect young children, families, and programs for young children;
- course exam covering knowledge of young children's medical conditions and medications, and their possible effects on children and families;
- philosophy of education paper;
- comprehensive exam after completion of all required coursework covering knowledge related to all CEC Content Standards; and
- Colorado state educator licensure content-area test in ECSE (PLACE: Program for Licensing Assessments for Colorado Educators).

Table 3 presents the alignment of ECE Program performance-based assessments with CEC Standards. Each CEC Standard is listed along with the program assessment designed to demonstrate proficiency in the competencies and knowledge associated with that standard.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Performance-based assessments are completed under supervision during the culminating practica experiences (infant/toddler, preschool, and primary practicum). Before that, each PBA is introduced and discussed during one or more courses. Course fieldwork assignments are designed to mirror essential experiences in the PBAs and provide candidates guided practice in

the competencies contained within. For example, during the Curriculum and Program Development course, teacher candidates create a preschool curriculum plan for one week which includes lesson plans for content/developmental areas (motor, social/emotional, math, science/health/nutrition and art) plus five language/literacy activities, each covering a different literacy component (oral language and vocabulary development, phonological/phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, story comprehension, and writing skills). During preschool practicum, teacher candidates develop and *implement* a curriculum plan and document student progress.

Several program activities support teacher candidate success in completing performance-based assessments. Students may access an ECSE Practicum Handbook online; a mid-program student advising session orients candidates to the fieldwork and PBA requirements; and a team of University faculty, practicum site supervisors, and University practicum faculty supervise and mentor teacher candidates during their fieldwork and practicum experiences.

Rubrics guide the assessment of teacher candidates related to each element on each performance-based assessment. Performance-based assessments are rated on a 4-point scale:

Basic (1): Student acquiring background knowledge through university coursework and fieldwork;

Developing (2): Student making progress but does not yet meet expectations for a beginning teacher; needs improvement or demonstrates inconsistent mastery across many areas of the category;

Proficient (3): Student meets all of the expectations for a beginning teacher; demonstrates consistent mastery in all key areas of the category; and

Advanced (4): Student exceeds expectations for a beginning teacher and demonstrates insight and leadership (rarely given in an initial teacher licensure program).

After two years of collecting data on PBA performance, it was discovered that no teacher candidates were rated at the Basic level. Therefore, that category description was eliminated from the scoring rubrics. However, for purposes of consistency in terms of scores aggregated across multiple years, the numerical system for rating PBAs was not altered.

Teacher candidates must receive a rating of Proficient or Advanced to pass each PBA. Proficiency on each PBA is scored initially by a practicum site supervisor based upon review of portfolio products and observation of practice in authentic settings during practicum. During a second tier review, initial ratings and candidate portfolios are reviewed by the university practicum faculty assigned to each teacher candidate and the final PBA ratings for teacher candidates are entered into a database at the end of each semester. Inter-rater reliability for ratings of portfolio products is established at periodic ECE faculty meetings where individual portfolio products are rated independently by each faculty member and the ratings are compared. Inter-rater reliability for observed performance is established by comparison and agreement on standards used to judge the performance of the indicators listed under each PBA section.

Appendices A, B, and C summarize three selected performance-based assessments. Required teacher candidate activities and their corresponding portfolio documentation are described along with the scoring rubrics for each PBA.

#### Findings Related to Teacher Candidate Performance

Table 4 presents data on all ECSE candidates completing the Curriculum, Challenging Behavior, and Intervention PBAs over five calendar years. All teacher candidates were rated as Proficient or Advanced on all elements of each PBA. (Per state

law, and our program policies, teacher candidates must be rated as proficient to complete practica. Our students continue to work on practicum experiences until they have achieved proficiency, or they are discontinued from the ECSE program. Only one student in the past six years was unable to achieve proficiency and failed to complete licensure requirements.) Analysis of the scoring data summarized in Table 4, along with observational comments made by supervisors and a review of portfolio documentation, provide evidence that ECSE candidates met the CEC Content Standards associated with the three performance-based assessments.

Overall, performance on the Curriculum PBA by the 86 candidates completing it so far indicates proficiency related to curriculum unit planning, preparing and implementing lesson plans, use of assessment for planning, and individualizing instruction to meet the varied needs of children. Candidates demonstrated the ability to design appropriate classroom environments that are healthy, respectful of child and family culture and experience, and promote a sense of safety and security. Some connection to families was included in each curriculum unit—either special activities at school to which families were invited, or providing a means for family members to extend learning into the home. Lesson plans and environmental changes addressed Colorado Model Content Standards and/or district standards.

To accommodate children with exceptional learning needs, lesson plans and environmental changes mentioned accommodations to the environmental design, adapting materials, and variation in presentation of activities. Modifications to lesson plans included variation in expectations of individual children on an individual basis—adjusting the length or difficulty of the task or type of response required by the child. Candidates used a variety of types

of documentation (anecdotal records, checklists, verbal language samples, or work samples) to record child progress.

ECSE candidates completing the Challenging Behavior PBA were able to apply sound disciplinary practices in the classroom, interpret functional behavior observation data to create and implement a positive behavior support plan, create learning environments and classroom communities that promote children's social and emotional development, and consult with other professionals and family members in the creation of positive behavior support plan.

Analysis of the Intervention PBA rating data and synthesis of the intervention plans developed by ECSE candidates reveal that they were able to use intervention strategies with young children and their families that affirm and respect family, cultural, and linguistic diversity; select, adapt, and use intervention strategies according to characteristics of the child with exceptional learning needs; and plan in collaboration with other professionals and family members. Candidates were able to demonstrate child progress on the objectives in the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individualized Education Plan), using a variety of types of documentation (behavior frequency chart, anecdotal records, checklists, verbal language samples, work samples, etc.). Candidates were adept at embedding learning opportunities into the natural routines and activities of the classroom or home environment, providing opportunities for children to practice skills across settings, materials, cues, and people. When needed to enhance the child's ability to learn or interact with peers, candidates explicitly modeled and facilitated appropriate play and social interactions and incorporated the use of assistive technology.

## Discussion

The first few years of implementing performance-based assessments with our teacher candidates resulted in several “lessons learned.” Their use required more time and effort on the part of the university practicum supervisors, site supervisors, and the teacher candidates themselves. However, this effort was compensated for by the fact that the activities and documentation required in the PBAs provided a wealth of information about the teacher candidate skills and abilities than more traditional assessment methods.

#### *Challenges and Opportunities Presented by Use of PBAs*

After the first semester of use during practica, several performance-based assessments were revised. Candidates and practicum supervisors were concerned that they were too long and involved. For example, the original Curriculum PBA gave little guidance as to how candidates were to structure their practica experiences to demonstrate and document proficiency on the standards associated with this PBA. Many practicum candidates attempted to create a separate practicum project for each of the standards associated with the Curriculum PBA, and ended up duplicating and fragmenting their efforts. The revision of the Curriculum PBA was designed to present “essential experiences,” the performance of which would include the necessary activities and actions to demonstrate the associated competencies. This revision also included specific directions for portfolio documentation, with boxes for candidates to check off upon completion. Similar “essential experiences” changes were made in the Intervention and Assessment PBAs. As a result of these changes, subsequent candidates were more efficient at structuring their practica to provide the necessary experiences for practicing and demonstrating specific competencies, as indicated by their self-reports and the observation of their site supervisors.

Based upon feedback for our ECE Advisory Board, the Working with Children with Challenging Behaviors PBA was added to the ECSE practicum requirements beginning the summer of 2003. Given the increasing number of young children in their programs with emotional and behavioral concerns, employers of graduates expressed the critical need for our ECSE graduates to be able to use effective and varied behavior management strategies, and to assist classroom teachers in classroom management and creation of behavior support plans. The Challenging Behaviors PBA requires candidates to design and implement functional behavior plans and activities to support social and emotional development.

After several years of use, we expanded and improved the PBA scoring rubrics to clarify expectations for rating candidate performance in practice and portfolio documentation. This was particularly essential as our program expanded (our number of active students has doubled since 2002), requiring the training of new practicum site supervisors and university practicum supervisors (part-time faculty) in the use of PBAs and the scoring of candidate portfolios.

#### *Modifications Made to ECE Program Stimulated by PBA Data*

The major programmatic response to improve candidate performance on various PBAs has been to include more course assignments and fieldwork that mirror PBA experiences and the competencies associated with them.

On a bi-annual basis, the ECE faculty seeks guidance from an ECE Advisory Board, composed of exemplary graduates of our program working in a variety of settings and professional roles, practicum site supervisors, and employers of program graduates. Our last Advisory Board meeting focused on the following topics:

- skills/abilities which our practicum students perform well,
- skills/abilities which appear to need more emphasis in our ECSE program to enhance the performance of our practicum students and graduates, and
- performance-based assessments and their ability to measure knowledge and skills required for role of Early Childhood Special Educator.

In general, the consensus of the Advisory Board was that the combination of our program PBAs enhanced the professional development of our students and provided a consistent way to measure critical professional knowledge and skills required for role of Early Childhood Special Educator. The most frequently cited suggestion for modifications to our ECE program was providing more opportunities for students to practice administration of a variety of assessment tools and communicating assessment information with families.

#### Summary

Given the trend towards a “pushed-down” curriculum from the primary grades into kindergarten and preschool that is found in some school districts in our state, it is critical that our graduates are capable of assuming leadership positions in early childhood special education and to advocate and practice developmentally-appropriate teaching in early childhood that does not focus on whole-class instruction, teacher-centered activities, and use of workbooks.

Performance-based assessment results over the past five years suggest teacher candidate performance which is consistent with the graduate student learning outcomes identified for our ECE program and CEC Content Standards. Candidate portfolio documentation includes lesson plans and environmental changes that support the importance of child-initiated activity and play as a vehicle for learning. Candidates use a balance of direct and indirect instruction to promote children’s learning of critical emergent literacy and mathematics skills. IEP goals and objectives

focus on skills necessary for young children with disabilities to function successfully in early childhood classrooms in which developmentally appropriate practice guides children's learning.

Overall, the use of performance-based assessments has been well-received by ECE faculty, students, and practicum site supervisors. Our ECE graduates have touted the effectiveness of presenting their portfolios when seeking employment, as portfolios provide concrete evidence of their skills and competencies. Our partnerships with school districts and community program practicum placement sites have been strengthened. As sites become more familiar with the performance-based assessments and elect to accept ECSE practicum students on a regular basis, the site supervisors become more adept at meeting the needs of students and better at taking advantage of the time, knowledge, and skills students bring to the practicum site. Program personnel report that over time, supervising ECSE students has actually made their job easier and their program benefits from the time and assistance provided by students. Several practicum sites have signed an informal partnership, agreeing to provide practicum placements for ECSE students on a regular basis (an agreed-upon number of infant/toddler and/or preschool level students each semester).

The use of performance-based assessments enables teacher educators to enhance the preparation of high quality teachers serving young children and their families. Performance-based assessments organized around state and national teaching standards link theoretical learning to classroom practice. Teacher candidates construct and present evidence of their mastery of learning to teach during authentic performance opportunities, which ideally improves teaching skills and supports beginning teachers during the challenging first years of their careers.

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Appendix A  
Curriculum PBA

Table A1

*Curriculum PBA Required Activities and Portfolio Documentation*

Activities	Portfolio documentation
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider context: children, family, culture, and classroom community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a descriptive overview of your classroom community which includes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Use an ongoing assessment with at least 2 children in the classroom.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of children and teachers</li> <li>2. Age range of children</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/> Use assessment information for planning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Linguistic and ethnic diversity</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/> Select a topic, theme, activities or provocations (Reggio Approach) based on child documentation and developmentally appropriate practice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Level of parent classroom involvement</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify relevant Colorado Model Content Standards and/or district standards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe how you chose the curriculum theme—justify how it is developmentally appropriate for the age group and individual children for which you are planning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Define individual learning objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Include the results of the ongoing
<input type="checkbox"/> Design a curriculum plan for a week.	assessment of at least 2 children in the classroom.
<input type="checkbox"/> Include 10 lesson plans covering a range of content areas and developmental domains.	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe how you used assessment
<p>The ten activities must include one</p>	information for planning in a one-page

activity for each of the following areas: motor, social/emotional, math, science, and art.

Five language/literacy activities are required, each covering a different literacy component: oral language/vocabulary development, phonological/phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, story comprehension, and writing skills.

- Implement the curriculum plan for a week.
- Document child progress.
- Describe adaptations/modifications for 1-2 target children in the classroom (children with an IEP<sup>a</sup>).

typed summary with supporting documentation (such as Creative Curriculum Classroom Summary Worksheet and Individual Child Profile for 1-2 target children).

- Include the curriculum plan for one week and 10 lesson plans with Colorado Model Content Standards and individual learning objectives identified.
- Include a reflection/self-evaluation for each lesson, written after implementation.
- Describe how you documented child progress during the week. Include photographs of children, documentation panels, child work samples, and/or checklists for at least 5 out of 10 lessons to illustrate and document child learning.
- Describe differentiated adaptations/modifications for 1-2 target children in the classroom. Include a copy of their IEP (blacking out identifying information except for first name and age).

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<sup>a</sup>Individualized Education Plan.

Table A2

*Rubric for Scoring Curriculum PBA*

	Developing	Proficient	Advanced <sup>a</sup>
1. Plan and implement developmentally and individually appropriate curriculum unit based upon the context of children, family, culture, and classroom community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develops lesson plans that contain goals, objectives that specify learner outcomes, activities, materials, and evaluation methods</li> <li>▪ May not sufficiently respond to child, family, cultural, and language differences</li> <li>▪ Curriculum unit is not developmentally and individually appropriate</li> <li>▪ Curriculum unit does not sufficiently address</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develops, implements and evaluates integrated units of study that address the individual needs, interests, learning styles, and cultural/linguistic diversity of a total class</li> <li>▪ Plans and implements developmentally and individually appropriate curriculum unit that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develops, implements, and critically evaluates comprehensive curriculum units that result in highly diverse students demonstrating success and improved achievement</li> <li>▪ Planning and implementation of curriculum unit shows particular insight and creativity</li> </ul>

a wide range of content and developmental areas

- Curriculum design may not adequately address Colorado

includes literacy and language, math, science (includes health and safety), art, social-emotional, and motor.

Model Content Standards and/or district standards

- Implements effective instructional practices to meet Colorado Model Content Standards and/or district standards

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| 2. Use assessment information to support instructional planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Instructional planning and teaching are not adequately informed by use of assessment data</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Able to interpret and use formal and informal assessment data to guide instructional planning and teaching based on the needs of individual students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analyzes students assessment data from a variety of assessment sources and uses results to adapt the curriculum to facilitate maximum student growth</li> </ul> |
| 3. Make   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Needs improvement to</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Selects, implements,</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides effective</li> </ul>   |

<p>appropriate adaptations and modifications for individual children in the classroom, including children with IEPs<sup>b</sup></p>	<p>sufficiently address individual learning needs</p>	<p>and evaluates instructional strategies and materials to address individual needs of children (including those with exceptional learning needs) within a variety of small and whole group settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plans differentiated adaptations appropriate for children with IEPs</li> </ul>	<p>and individualized instruction for all learners in creative ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Purposefully develops and consistently utilizes a wide range of appropriate strategies to address the individual needs of each student within the classroom</li> </ul>
<p>4. Assess and document child progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficiently collects data on individual children to assess and document child progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses ongoing and periodic assessment methods to monitor continuous progress in student learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develops innovative methods to assess, document, and summarize child progress</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup>Advanced category also includes indicators under Proficient.

<sup>b</sup>Individualized Education Plan.

Appendix B

Challenging Behaviors PBA

Table B1

*Challenging Behavior PBA Required Activities and Portfolio Documentation*

Activities	Portfolio documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Select a child with challenging behavior.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a functional behavior assessment of targeted child.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Utilize at least 3 other methods for obtaining information about the child and the family’s priorities and concerns.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe the child in detail including developmental, medical, and intervention history.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a positive behavior support plan which includes preventions, replacement skills and how to teach them, and new adult responses when problem behaviors occur.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take baseline data for at least 1 week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe the child in detail including birth, health, developmental, and educational history.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include the functional behavior assessment forms and behavior observations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include the three methods of obtaining information about the child with a discussion of the results.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include the positive behavior support plan with all strategies described in detail.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include data for monitoring effectiveness of behavior support plan (data tracking system with baseline data for one week (minimum of 5 days) and analysis of results following 2 or more weeks of implementation (minimum</li> </ul>

- Implement the plan for at least 2 weeks. of 10 days) of positive behavior support
  - Monitor effectiveness of behavior support plan.
    - Lesson plan for classroom or home activity to promote social/emotional development and reflection.
    - Describe who you collaborated with at all levels.
  - plan (in collaboration with the team and family) using one week of baseline data and at least two weeks of data tracking after implementing the behavior support plan.
  - In preschool or primary setting, plan and implement a small group or classroom activity that promotes social and emotional development of children.
  - For infant/toddler, plan an activity that promotes social and emotional development. Implement the activity in collaboration with the family.
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Table B2

*Rubric for Scoring Challenging Behavior PBA*

	Developing	Proficient	Advanced <sup>a</sup>
1. Design, implement, and evaluate functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support plan in coordination with colleagues and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identifies but is unable to apply a range of sound disciplinary practices in the classroom</li> <li>▪ Understands process of conducting a functional behavior assessment but is unable to meaningfully interpret resulting data to create</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Able to apply sound disciplinary practices in the classroom using a range of strategies</li> <li>▪ Conducts and appropriately interprets functional behavior assessment</li> <li>▪ Positive behavior support plan includes modifications to the environment to prevent challenging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Takes leadership role in developing and implementing effective positive behavior support plans</li> <li>▪ Critically evaluates own effectiveness in order to guide and improve subsequent functional behavior assessments and positive behavior support plans</li> </ul>

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| positive behavior   | behavior, teaching   |
| support plan        | of replacement       |
| ▪ Positive behavior | skills that are      |
| support plan lacks  | consistent with the  |
| sufficient          | child's natural      |
| prevention          | routines, and        |
| strategies,         | appropriate new      |
| teaching of         | adult responses to   |
| replacement skills, | problem behavior     |
| or new adult        | ▪ Uses data tracking |
| responses to        | system to monitor    |
| problem behavior    | and evaluate         |
| ▪ Data tracking     | effectiveness of     |
| system does not     | behavior support     |
| provide sufficient  | plan                 |
| information to      | ▪ Appropriately      |
| monitor or          | coordinates with     |
| evaluate            | other colleagues     |
| effectiveness of    | and family           |
| behavior support    | members in           |
| plan                | creation and         |
| ▪ Insufficient      | implementation of    |
| coordination with   | positive behavior    |

	colleagues and family members in creation and implementation of positive behavior support plan	support plan	
2. Plan and implement activity that promotes social and emotional development (classroom or home setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social/emotional activity is not appropriate to needs of target child and classmates or is not optimally implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plans and skillfully implements appropriate activity to promote social and emotional development of target child and classmates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creates learning environment and classroom community that optimally promotes children’s social and emotional development and acceptable student behavior</li> </ul>

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<sup>a</sup>Advanced category also includes indicators under Proficient.

Appendix C

Intervention PBA

Table C1

*Intervention PBA Required Activities and Portfolio Documentation*

Activities	Portfolio documentation
<input type="checkbox"/> Observe and collect information on a child with an identified disability.	<input type="checkbox"/> Summarize (1) your observations; (2) medical, health, birth, developmental, and
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect information on IFSP, IEP <sup>a</sup> , medical history, and possibly effects of medication.	educational history; and (3) information on the particular disability.
<input type="checkbox"/> Collect information on the particular type of disability (if applicable).	<input type="checkbox"/> Summarize (1) the child’s strengths and interests, (2) next developmental steps, (3) concerns and priorities of the family.
<input type="checkbox"/> Assess child’s strengths, interests, and next developmental steps and summarize family’s identified priorities and concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Include intervention plan with an explanation of why strategies were chosen with consideration for the family’s concerns and priorities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Design an intervention plan for one objective on the IFSP or IEP (with the ECE teacher, ECSE team and the family) using specific intervention strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Include a completed data tracking system with baseline data and an analysis of the results following 2 or more weeks of
<input type="checkbox"/> Describe why the particular strategies	intervention.

- were chosen based on the intellectual, emotional, social level, motor, adaptive and academic strengths and needs of the child.
- Implement the intervention plan in collaboration with the ECE teacher/home visitor and family.
  - Collect data on child progress and support ECE teacher in collecting data.
  - Revise the intervention plan based on assessment data with all who developed the plan.
  - Analyze the process based on recommended practices.
  - Reflect on your collaboration with the ECE teacher, the ECSE team, and the family. Make references to research/writings on collaboration and teaming
  - Describe any revisions, adaptations, and modifications to the plan based on the data collected.
  - Include reflections on your collaboration with the ECE teacher, the ECSE team, and the family.
  - Analyze the process based on recommended practices with references to research and readings.
  - For the infant/toddler practicum, describe how interventions were provided in natural environments.

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<sup>a</sup> Individualized Family Service Plan; Individualized Education Plan.

Table C2

*Rubric for Scoring Intervention PBA*

	Developing	Proficient	Advanced <sup>a</sup>
1. Access and summarize background information in relation to child’s development which includes family’s identified priorities and concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Description of child’s background information includes a general summary but understanding of family’s concerns and priorities is not sufficiently evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accesses background information about child and family to plan intervention strategies that affirm and respect family, cultural, and linguistic diversity</li> <li>▪ Accesses information from child’s medical, health, birth, and educational history, and researches any relevant disability</li> <li>▪ Ascertains family’s concerns and priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consistently applies knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity and the significance of socio-cultural contexts for learning and development</li> </ul>

<p>2. Design intervention plan addressing child's interests, strengths, and next development al steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intervention plan does not fully integrate child's interests, strengths, and next developmental steps</li> <li>▪ Intervention plan does not adequately address specific IFSP or IEP<sup>b</sup> objectives</li> <li>▪ Intervention planning may lack sufficient collaboration with colleagues and family members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Selects, adapts, and uses intervention strategies individualized for child's learning needs</li> <li>▪ Uses assessment data and incorporates child's interests, strengths, and next developmental steps into intervention plan</li> <li>▪ Intervention plan addresses specific IFSP or IEP objectives</li> <li>▪ Plans in collaboration with colleagues and family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intervention strategies are articulated in a manner that draws from a variety of data sources and represent logical interactions among those data</li> <li>▪ Takes leadership role developing and explaining intervention plans</li> </ul>
<p>3. Implement intervention plan and collect data on child progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data tracking system lacks adequate information to establish baseline and monitor progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implements intervention plan in collaboration with the teacher/early interventionist and family</li> <li>▪ Develops and completes data tracking system to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intervention plan and data tracking system are particularly innovative and effective</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish baseline data</li> <li>and monitor</li> <li>effectiveness of results</li> <li>following two or more</li> <li>weeks of intervention</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Makes revisions to</li> <li>intervention plan based</li> <li>upon data collected</li> </ul>	
4. Reflect on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflections are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summarizes and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critically evaluates</li> </ul>
intervention	primarily grounded in	reflects on intervention	own effectiveness in
process and	personal conviction	process and	order to guide and
collaboration	with few references to	collaboration with	improve
with	professional literature	colleagues and family	intervention plans
colleagues		based on recommended	▪ Reflections are
and family		practices (references to	grounded in
		professional literature)	personal conviction
			and theory/research

<sup>a</sup>Advanced category also includes indicators under Proficient.

<sup>b</sup>Individualized Family Service Plan; Individualized Education Plan.

Table 1

*CEC Content Standards for Beginning Special Education Teachers*

CEC standard	Abbreviated description
1. Foundations	Special educators understand philosophies, evidence-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and human issues that influence the field of special education and the treatment of individuals with exceptional needs both in school and society.
2. Development and Characteristics of Learner	Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.
3. Individual Learning Differences	Special educators understand the effects that an exceptional condition can have on an individual’s learning in school and throughout life.
4. Instructional Strategies	Special educators possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
5. Learning Environments and	Special educators actively create learning environments for individuals with exceptional learning needs that foster cultural

Social Interactions	understanding, safety and emotional well being, positive social interactions, and active engagement of all individuals.
6. Language	Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language.
7. Instructional Planning	Special educators develop long-range individualized instructional plans anchored in both general and special curricula.
8. Assessment	Special educators use multiple types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions.
9. Professional and Ethical Practice	Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards.
10. Collaboration	Special educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways.

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Table 2

*Performance-Based Assessments for ECSE*

PBA title	Example elements upon which candidates are rated	Example portfolio product
Assessment	Participate with a Child Find team Participate as a team member in the development of IFSPs and IEPs <sup>a</sup> Administer and interpret formal and informal Report assessment results to families and colleagues	Documentation of screening, evaluation, and IFSP or IEP process and analysis based on DEC Recommended Practices and IDEA laws Interview protocol and analysis of family interview Self-evaluation of performance during staffing
Challenging Behavior	Design and implement positive behavior support plan Plan and implement activity that promotes social and emotional development	Functional behavior assessment forms Positive behavior support plan Data for monitoring effectiveness of plan Lesson plan or home activity
Curriculum	Plan and implement developmentally-and individually-	Descriptive overview of classroom community

	<p>appropriate curriculum plan based upon the context of children, family, culture, and classroom community</p> <p>Use assessment information to support planning</p> <p>Make appropriate adaptations for individual children in the classroom, including children with IEP or IFSP</p> <p>Document child progress</p>	<p>Results of ongoing assessment</p> <p>Curriculum plan for 1-2 weeks and 10 lesson plans with Colorado Model Content Standards and learning objectives identified</p> <p>Reflection/self-evaluation of each lesson</p> <p>Documentation of child progress through photos, child work samples, and/or checklists</p>
Intervention	<p>Access and summarize background information</p> <p>Design and explain intervention plan</p> <p>Implement intervention plan and collect data on child progress</p> <p>Reflect on process and collaboration with colleagues and family</p>	<p>Summary of child’s background, strengths and interests, next developmental steps, and family priorities</p> <p>Intervention plan for home or classroom setting</p> <p>Data tracking system</p> <p>Critical analysis of process</p>
Literacy	<p>Literacy assessment</p> <p>Plan and implement language and literacy experiences</p>	<p>Examples of assessments utilized and summary of how they were used to plan instruction</p>

	<p>Knowledge of current intervention strategies and accommodations to support language and literacy development in all children</p>	<p>Lesson plans with photographs or student work samples to document student achievement</p> <p>Paper articulating recommended practices in emergent literacy instruction</p>
Mathematics	<p>Mathematics assessment</p> <p>Plan and implement math experiences</p> <p>Knowledge of current intervention strategies and accommodations to support all children to become successful at math</p>	<p>Examples of assessments utilized and summary of how they were used to plan instruction</p> <p>Lesson plans with photographs or student work samples to document student achievement</p> <p>Paper articulating recommended practices in mathematics instruction</p>
Primary Literacy	<p>Create a classroom environment that nurtures literacy</p> <p>Collaborate with families, teachers and special services</p> <p>Assessment of reading and writing</p> <p>Literacy planning and instruction</p>	<p>Captioned photographs of classroom materials, centers, and bulletin boards</p> <p>Newsletters, suggestions for home activities, weekly progress reports</p> <p>Examples of assessments utilized and summary of how they were used to plan instruction</p>

		Lesson plans with photographs or student work samples to document student achievement
Primary Mathematics	Create a classroom environment that nurtures mathematics development	Captioned photographs of classroom materials, centers, and bulletin boards
	Math assessment	Examples of assessments utilized and summary of how they were used to plan instruction
	Mathematics planning and instruction	Lesson plans with photographs or student work samples to document student achievement
Professional Practice	Develop and implement professional plan relevant to work with young children	Professional plan
	Demonstrate an awareness and commitment to the profession's code of ethical conduct	

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<sup>a</sup>Individualized Family Service Plan; Individualized Education Plan.

Table 3

*CEC Standards: Alignment with Assessments in ECSE*

CEC standard	Assessment in which proficiency is demonstrated
1. Foundations	Philosophy of Education paper Law and Disabilities exam
2. Development and Characteristics of Learner	Intervention PBA Medication exam
3. Individual Learning Differences	Curriculum PBA Intervention PBA
4. Instructional Strategies	Intervention PBA Curriculum PBA Literacy PBA <sup>a</sup> Mathematics PBA <sup>a</sup>
5. Learning Environments and Social Interactions	Curriculum PBA Intervention PBA Challenging Behaviors PBA
6. Language	Literacy PBA Curriculum PBA
7. Instructional Planning	Curriculum PBA Literacy PBA Mathematics PBA

8. Assessment

Intervention PBA

Challenging Behaviors PBA

Assessment PBA

Curriculum PBA

Literacy PBA

Mathematics PBA

9. Professional and Ethical Practice

Professional Practice PBA

10. Collaboration

Professional Practice PBA

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Note. Comprehensive examination at culmination of ECSE coursework and the Colorado state educator licensure content-area test in ECSE (PLACE test) also address CEC Standards.

<sup>a</sup>Teacher candidates complete Literacy and Mathematics PBAs at the early childhood (birth to five) and primary (K-2) levels.

Table 4

*Average Candidate PBA Scores Aggregated Across Practica for 2002-2006*

PBA element	Average PBA score
Curriculum PBA (N=86)	
Plan and implement developmentally and individually appropriate curriculum plan based upon the context of children, family, culture, and classroom community	3.43
Use assessment information to support the planning	3.29
Make appropriate adaptations or modifications for individual children in the classroom, including children with IEP or IFSP	3.38
Document child progress	3.30
Challenging Behavior PBA (N=72)	
Design, implement, and evaluate functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support plan in coordination with colleagues and families	3.32
Plan and implement activity that promotes social and emotional development (classroom or home setting)	3.50
Intervention PBA (N=76)	
Access and summarize background information in relation to child's development which includes family's identified priorities and concerns	3.29

Design intervention plan addressing child's interests and next developmental steps	3.33
Implement intervention plan and collect data on child progress	3.25
Reflect on intervention process and collaboration with colleagues and family	3.27

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Note. Average PBA scores are based on the following rating scale:

- 1 = Basic: Acquiring background knowledge through university coursework and fieldwork
- 2 = Developing: Student making progress but does not yet meet expectations for a beginning teacher; needs improvement or demonstrates inconsistent mastery across many areas of the category
- 3 = Proficient: Student meets all of the expectations for a beginning teacher; consistent mastery in all key areas of the category
- 4 = Advanced: Student exceeds expectations for a beginning teacher and demonstrates insight and leadership