

Early Childhood Studies Fieldwork/Practicum Handbook

**Preparing Professional for
Service in Our Communities**



**School of Education
Central Connecticut State University**

Updated Spring 2026

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Welcome

Welcome to the Early Childhood Studies program at Central Connecticut State University! We are glad that you have joined our learning community.

Introduction

The program offices are housed within Henry Barnard Hall, Rm. 310. This degree program is held with the Literacy, Elementary & Early Childhood Education (LEECE) Department. The Literacy, Elementary & Early Childhood Education Department and its faculty are committed to strengthening educational programs and course offerings. As a departmental goal, we continue to strive toward diversity with an eye toward maintaining a mixture of courses which are intellectually challenging, enriching, and rewarding.



CENTRAL

CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

CCSU Mission Statement

Central Connecticut State University is the largest university within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system. Founded in 1849, CCSU is also the state's oldest publicly funded university. The University welcomed its 13th president, Dr. Zulma R. Toro, in January of 2017. She is the university's first female president and its first Hispanic chief executive.

The University comprises four academic schools — the School of Business, the School of Engineering, Science, & Technology, the School of Graduate Studies, and the School of Education & Professional Studies — and the Carol A. Ammon College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. As a comprehensive public university, we provide broad access to quality degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels.

CCSU is a driving force of the economic, social, cultural, and intellectual development of Connecticut, an enabler of social mobility, and a committed community partner. The integration of the liberal arts into the University's professional programs provides the foundation needed to prepare a flexible, engaged, and adaptable workforce. More than 85 percent of our graduates remain in Connecticut; as such, Central is a vital pipeline for an array of professions in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, including engineering, social services, health care, law enforcement, education, business, and industry, among others.

Central is one of few universities in Connecticut to be designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a Community Engagement University. To earn and maintain this designation, CCSU must make a commitment to partner with the communities it serves to lend them its resources and expertise in solving their most pressing challenges.

This connection to community is a fundamental part of a CCSU education. It distinguishes our university from our sister institutions; it sets our students apart from their peers; and it builds upon our legacy of academic excellence and equity in education.

Guiding Documents for Our Program

In Early Childhood Education, we are guided by our National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) foundational documents & position statements.

Our core values are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. As such, those of us in the field and embarking on a career in the field should make a commitment to

- 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 the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness 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

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/code-of-ethics>

NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Statement

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents>

NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity>

NAEYC Professional Standards & Competencies

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/professional-standards-competencies>

Early Childhood Studies Program Information:

Program Mission

The Early Childhood Studies program (birth through age 8) prepares professionals who are reflective practitioners that will be able to provide and design a child-centered developmentally appropriate learning environment for children that is safe and nurturing; promotes and stimulates each child's social/emotional, physical, cognitive and aesthetic development; develops high-quality early learning programs that are informed by policy, research, and practice; and prepares students to become teacher leaders, dedicated to serve as advocates for and work in a trusting, respectful, reciprocal relationship with diverse children, families, and communities.

Program Description

Graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Studies will be qualified to assume a variety of roles within the field of early childhood education and will be positioned well for continued studies in early childhood or related fields of study. Graduates will be eligible to apply for a LEVEL I (Infant Family Associate) Endorsement to the Connecticut Infant Mental Health Association (CT-AIMH), become an Early Childhood professional and a Quality Staff Member (Lead Teacher) in a state-funded early learning program, and will be positioned to enter graduate degree programs in early childhood or closely related fields.

This is an unofficial description for this program. For official information check the [Academic Catalog](#).

Conceptual Framework

The Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Studies at Central Connecticut State University is a comprehensive program designed to prepare students to assume various roles within the field of early childhood (and closely related fields), as well as to prepare students to meet the rigorous requirements of graduate studies. The program is grounded in the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) and designed through the lens of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework. Aligned with the university's mission to provide innovative and experiential education, this program prepares future early childhood professionals to engage in reflective, research-informed, and ethical practice, working to create inclusive environments that respect and honor all children and their families.

Using Understanding by Design principles, as well as other influential educational models such as Experiential Learning, Communities of Practice, and adult learning theories, the coursework encourages student voice while emphasizing essential questions, age appropriate learning goals, play as children's academic work, authentic assessments, and genuine connections with families that connect theory to action, support long-term academic learning for the student, and builds the foundation for lifelong learning.

The program is intentionally aligned with the NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, ensuring that candidates develop deep knowledge and skills across six core areas: child development and learning; family and community relationships; observation, documentation, and assessment; developmentally effective approaches; content knowledge; and professionalism as members of the early childhood field. These competencies are woven throughout the curriculum in ways that are recursive, experiential, and scaffolded, allowing students to integrate theory with practice in increasingly complex and responsive ways.

The program creates learning experiences that are rooted in social interactions, where students' knowledge is deepened and enhanced through collaboration, shared inquiry, and ongoing dialogue. Students are seen as active and valuable contributors to a growing professional community. They engage in peer learning and field-based experiences (with mentor teachers and faculty). Honoring the value of student voice, the program invites students to create meaning, ask critical questions, and shape their own learning paths. This emphasis on agency and reflection nurtures not only professional competence but also a deep sense of purpose and belonging.

Together with Central's mission, these fundamental concepts—developmentally appropriate practice, intentional curriculum design, the NAEYC professional standards and competencies, collaborative learning communities, and student voice—create a program that prepares graduates to be compassionate, knowledgeable, and equitable-oriented leaders in early childhood education. They emerge ready to foster inclusive learning environments, partner with families and communities, and contribute to the profession through innovation, care, and advocacy.

Program Learning Outcomes

The graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Studies will be:

1. Knowledgeable and competent in child development and learning in multiple contexts, graduates will be grounded in an understanding of the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across developmental domains and will understand each child as an individual with unique developmental variations and contexts
2. Knowledgeable and competent in understanding family–teacher partnerships and community connections, graduates will understand that successful early childhood education depends upon educators' partnerships with the diverse families of the young children they serve and with the community resources that support young children's learning, development and their families.
3. Knowledgeable and competent in child observation, documentation, and various assessment strategies and tools, graduates will understand that the primary purposes of assessments are to inform instruction and planning and in doing so to partner with families and professionals.
4. Knowledgeable and competent in developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, graduates will understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children's ages and characteristics and on the settings in which teaching and learning occur.
5. Knowledgeable and competent in the application, and integration of academic content in the early childhood curriculum, graduates will have knowledge of and implementational skills in the content of the academic disciplines (e.g., language and literacy, the arts, mathematics, social studies, science, technology and engineering, physical education) and of the pedagogical methods for teaching each discipline.
6. Knowledgeable and competent in professionalism as an early childhood educator and will identify and participate as members of the early childhood profession, graduates will be ready to practice reflectively and ethically and to serve as informed advocates for young children, for the families of the children in their care, and for the early childhood profession.

Academic Advising

As you continue your academic journey in the School of Education and Professional Studies, you are being assigned a second advisor. This additional advisor is a faculty member from the Literacy, Elementary, and Early Childhood Education Department and they are now your *Primary Advisor*. This advisor will assist you as you plan to complete your field experience and will be able to give you valuable advice about your courses and help you plan for your career. You should make a point to meet with your advisor at least once a semester to make sure you are on track with your academic plan.

An advisor within the School of Education and Professional Studies is now considered your *Secondary Advisor*. You are certainly welcome to meet with both advisors since they have different areas of expertise.

Courses that Require Field Experience

Course	Number of Hours	Semester
EDEC 200	30	4th
EDEC 204	30	6th
EDEC 300	30	5th
EDEC 403	150-200	7th
EDEC 404	150-200	8th

Below is a field experience schedule table. Here, you can see which classes have fieldwork/practicum hours, the type of placement, and age of children for the placement. You can use the final column to track where you have completed your placements.

Field Experience Schedule

All fieldwork/practicum experiences must be approved with the Early Childhood Studies Program.

Course	Number of Hours	Age of Children for the placement	Type of setting for the placement	Record here where you completed your hours	Mentor teacher (and/or administrator) & email
EDEC 200 (3 cr) Spring, 4 th semester	30	Infant/Toddler	Center-based, home-based, or comprehensive service-based		
EDEC 204 (3 cr) Spring, 6 th semester	30	Preschool/Kindergarten	Center-based, home-based, or comprehensive service-based		
EDEC 300 (3 cr) Fall, 5 th semester	30	Preschool/Kindergarten	Center-based, home-based, or comprehensive service-based		
EDEC 403 (3-6 cr) Fall, 7 th semester	150-200	Preschool or Kindergarten	Public school-based (depending on student prior experience, the setting could change)		
EDEC 404 (3-6 cr) Spring, 8 th semester	150-200	Infant/Toddler	Center-based, home-based, or comprehensive service-based (depending on student prior experience, the setting could change)		

Process for getting placed in a field experience

- All course field experience placements must be approved by your early childhood advisor.
- You **MUST** meet with your advisor **during the advising period** in the semester prior to registering for a course with field experience hours to ensure a timely placement. This initiates your placement with the early childhood program and our Office of School and Community Partnerships.
- You may *request* to complete your field experience hours at a particular site (including your worksite). At your advising meeting, you will discuss this with your advisor and the process for

approval will be initiated. You will be notified of the decision regarding your request and at that time will discuss the appropriate next steps.

Some of the criteria considered for site approval are:

- o The center/school/program employs a play-based curriculum;
 - o The center/school/program is NAEYC accredited;
 - o Your mentor has a bachelor degree or higher & is willing to complete needed tasks for your placement;
 - o You will be placed in one classroom in the needed age group;
 - o The site does not have any state infractions/is not under disciplinary action.
- Once we have a commitment from the placement site, you will be informed by our Office of School and Community Partnerships of your placement site name/location, site administrator, and contact information.
 - Upon this notification, you need to reach out to the site administrator to begin the onboarding process. Each site is a bit different in their onboarding process. You should contact the site as soon as you receive confirmation in order to have a smooth onboarding process. *ALL* sites will review a background check. *Some* sites will also require medical forms.
 - If at any time you have concerns regarding your site placement (prior to being placed OR while actively completing hours), we encourage you to reach out to *BOTH* your course professor AND our Office of School and Community Partnerships. *We are here for you* and to support you in having a positive learning experience.
 - *Students are expected to arrange for their own transportation to their fieldwork/practicum sites.*

To do at the onset of your experience

Once you are successfully placed at a site and have completed the required onboarding paperwork, your next steps should be:

- Introduce yourself to the mentor teacher if you haven't met them yet
- Share an introduction letter with the mentor and other staff as appropriate
- Share your course syllabus with your mentor and discuss your assignments. Develop an initial plan for assignment completion and share when you'll be seeking time with your mentor for discussions/observations/feedback, etc.
- Develop your semester schedule with the mentor teacher and/or administrator on site (the days of the week and times you will be at the center completing your required hours as well as an anticipated completion of hours date) and upload this to the Blackboard for your class as indicated by your professor/instructor.

Professional Behavior in Field Experiences

Attendance

Your host field experience site and the students in the classroom are counting on you. If you are sick and unable to attend your field experience, it is expected that you will make appropriate contact with your

host site. Please discuss the procedures your host site would like to follow at the beginning of the semester.

You are expected to make up the time you missed due to calling out. In addition, please follow the procedures that are in place from your course instructor regarding notification of an absence from your field experience. It is unacceptable to miss field experience days in order to complete homework from other classes, work, etc. Non-CCSU break vacation plans are unacceptable and will reflect poorly on your overall performance in the class. Exceptions for extraordinary circumstances due to serious health issues or death in the family may be granted with official documentation.

If the site location is closed for a holiday/break, then you do not go in. Please refrain from scheduling hours at your site during known program closings. If your site is closed due to snow (or has a late opening/early dismissal), please follow their schedule. If your site has a late opening/early dismissal on a day you are scheduled, you should make arrangements to arrive/leave accordingly and count your hours as regularly scheduled. Please account for this time variation on your hours log. If your program is closed due to weather, you do not need to make up those hours.

If CCSU is closed due to weather but your site is open, you may attend. However, if you feel unsafe driving, please call to let them know you will make up that day. Additionally, if CCSU is closed due to holidays/vacations, you may continue your placement hours if you prefer.

Appearance

An early learning setting is a professional environment. Every site has expectations regarding the appearance of its staff. As a student participating in field experience, you are representing Central and as such, you are expected to meet or exceed the sites' expectation of appearance. You are expected to always dress professionally in the schools. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the sites' expectations for staff appearance and dress appropriately during the field experience. You want to be comfortable and able to move easily to work with the children, but look professional. A great option is a pair pants and a Central shirt.

Personal hygiene is very important when working closely with young children and with site employees. Naturally, you should avoid strong or excessive odors (such as types of smoke, perfumes, and fragrances) due to allergies and aversions.

Below are some specific examples of appropriate and inappropriate clothing.

Appropriate Clothing

- Clean, neat, and un-torn attire.
- For women, dresses, skirts, pants, pantsuits, skorts, shirts, and blouses are suitable. All clothing should be modest and should not be excessively short, tight or revealing. Any shirt, blouse, or dress that covers the back and midriff and does not have a plunging neckline and is not see-through is acceptable. Footwear (shoes, boots, and sandals) should complement professional attire. It is recommended to wear closed-toes shoes to protect yourself. Some sites prohibit sandals, please check with your site supervisor.

- Suitable attire for men includes pants, collared shirts, shoes/boots, and socks. Ties are optional. Shirts are to be tucked and buttoned. All clothing should be modest and not be excessively tight or revealing.

Inappropriate Clothing

- Clothing or jewelry that disrupts the educational process or endangers children, including, but not limited to those items which include messages, language, or logos that advocate sex, drugs, violence, bigotry, hate, profanity, alcohol, tobacco, or gang activity.
- Any excessively tight or form-fitting articles of clothing.
- Tank tops, shorts, cut-offs, fatigues, spandex, spaghetti straps, crop tops, halter-tops, low-cut garments, short shirts, and flip-flops.
- Excessively low tops or pants should be avoided.
- Transparent, translucent, or sheer clothing.
- Clothing associated with gang activities including athletic jerseys and headgear which may be associated with gang affiliation.
- Clothing that reveals any part of the mid-section, even if the mid-section is bare unintentionally.
- Any visible portion of your underwear or under-garments.
- Tattoos on the face or body not covered by clothing.
- Fingernails should be at a safe length to be able to work with young children. Students should be mindful not only of how fingernails can scratch or impede on their work but also can break easily in early learning environments.
- Hair styles should be secured so that you are able to work with young children. Young children are small. You will often be bending down and working in close proximity with children. Hair can get in your line of sight, pulled, tugged, and/or caught easily.

REMEMBER: *Even if the staff wear some of the items listed above as not appropriate, remember you are a guest in their environment and you are representing CCSU. This is OUR policy for your attire and must be adhered to.*

Personal Phone, Email Communication and Social Media

Our expectations for field experience students' appearance and behavior extend to voicemail messages, email usernames, Facebook and similar social networking sites and other image-creating communication media.

- Voicemail message: please be sure your outgoing message is professional and succinct.
- Email usernames: the name you choose may give a different impression of you than you would like. What is appropriate for a college student may not be appropriate for a beginning professional.
- Social Networks (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.): be careful what you post, and check other user's comments about you. Be aware that the parents/legal guardians of the sites' children are likely surfing these sites; many potential employers are also now reviewing social networking sites in performing background checks.
- Your phone should be on silent or off and placed away during your hours on site.

- ***NO PICTURES of children or NAMES of children should be placed on ANY social media pages.***

Use of School/Site Electronic Items

- Do not make personal calls during the day. This includes the use of cell phones. Cell phones must be turned off prior to entering the building. (If you are a parent, you may receive special permission to have your cell phone on vibrate. Please discuss this with your host site.)
- Copiers should only be used to copy instructional materials for the students or information that will be sent home to parents. Please discuss the rules that are in place for the copier in your building. In some schools, specific school personnel are the only ones who may use the copier. If you are able to use the copier, please make sure you know how it works and what procedures should be followed in case of a paper jam.
- Students should not use the copy machine to copy curriculum or other materials for their files or personal use.
- If your building has a laminator, it may be used only for school related purposes. Please consult your host teacher regarding its use.

Safety and Security

For the safety of the students, all buildings follow security procedures. Ask to read the school's safety/emergency plan. Typically, buildings keep all doors locked during the day except for the main door by the driveway. In some instances, the main door is also locked. In these situations, a buzzer is located near the door. The office staff will need to let you in the building.

Each time you visit your school site, please do the following:

- Report to the office and sign in upon arrival;
- Wear an appropriate visitor's badge while in the school;
- Return the badge (if appropriate) and sign out.

Videotaping

If you must videotape a lesson as part of a university assignment, you must check with your site and potentially obtain written permission from the parents in advance. In either case, you will either need written permission from your site's supervisor and/or from the child's (children's) parents. Please consult your host teacher as well as your instructor for more information on school and classroom policies.

Onboarding Information

Your upcoming field experience site may require onboarding requirements, such as application, background check, interview, fingerprinting or on-site visit. Once you have been assigned to a field experience placement, you are responsible to complete all necessary requests from the site.

- Check your CCSU email (including SPAM folder)
- Respond to your assigned site contact within 24 hours
- Follow all instructions

As of January 1, 2018, any school/school district placing students for field experience or any school-based placement will determine their own background check/fingerprinting requirement. Students will follow the policy of the school district where they are completing their field experience. When notified by the district, students must complete the district's requirements. All additional fees associated with completing the background check/fingerprinting requirement are the sole responsibility of the student. The background check requirement that a student completes for one school district, may not meet the requirement for a subsequent school district.

In addition, each site will require medical clearance and as such will have paperwork to be completed in order to finish onboarding. Your site will work with you to determine what is needed.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and require reasonable accommodations, you should secure a letter of accommodation from the Office of Student Disability Services as you would for any other course. You must be registered with Student Disability Services to receive reasonable accommodations. Student Disability Services, <http://www.ccsu.edu/sds/>. It is important that your instructor receive your letter of accommodation in a timely manner, as the arrangements for field placements are complex and require a great deal of advanced work on the part of the instructors.

Helpful Hints

- Be enthusiastic and sincere.
- Be perceptive of the students' feelings.
- Know the community and cultural, religious, etc. background of your students so you can show respect and understanding.
- Be cooperative with your supervising teacher.
- Be consistent yet flexible and accept direction from your host site.
- Be dependable.
- Have high expectations for students.
- Maintain a helpful attitude toward the cooperating teacher.
- Show kindness to site personnel and students.
- Offer assistance: "What can I do to help?"
- Be a stellar representative and ambassador of the University and the School of Education and Professional Studies.

School of Education Contact List

Literacy, Elementary, & Early Childhood Education (LEECE) Barnard Hall Rm. 310	
Dr. Candace Barriteau Phaire, Associate Professor	cbarriteauphaire@ccsu.edu
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Dr. Julia Kara-Soteriou, Department Chair	karaiou@ccsu.edu

The Office of School – Community Partnerships
Barnard Hall Rm. 327

School of Education – Dean’s Office
Barnard Hall Rm. 327

School of Education– Advising Center
Barnard Hall Rm. 420