

ECE 3313  
Play, Creativity & Learning EC-4  
Lorrie Schindler  
M.A. Early Childhood Education  
Email: [lorraine.schindler@utsa.edu](mailto:lorraine.schindler@utsa.edu)  
Office hours: by appointment

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

3 Hours Credit

A study of the current knowledge of play and creativity and the relationship between children's play and cognitive, social, and affective development. Will provide early childhood and primary educators with knowledge and skills necessary to promote and guide children's play behaviors as the child's primary learning mechanism. Emphasis on effective strategies, equipment, materials and activities that support and encourage children's play and creativity at the early childhood and primary levels. Field-based experiences are required

## PEDAGOGY AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (EC-4) STANDARDS

**Standard I. The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.**

**Teacher Knowledge: What Teachers Know**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-4 Students*

**Students**

The beginning teacher knows and understands:

1.1k the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional developmental characteristics of students in early childhood through grade 4

Including:

- The stages of play development (i.e., from solitary to cooperative (and the important role of play in young children's learning and development)

1.2k the implications of students' developmental characteristics for planning appropriate instruction

Including:

- The importance of helping students in early childhood through grade 4 apply decision-making organization, and goal-setting skills (e.g., selecting learning centers to work in, putting materials away in the appropriate place, completing a self-initiated project)
- Young children's reliance on concrete thinking, motor and sensory input, and direct experience for development of skills and knowledge, and the implication of this understanding for instructional planning and assessment
- How to use knowledge of the developmental characteristics and needs of students in early childhood through grade 4 to plan meaningful, integrated, and active learning and play experiences that promote the development of the whole child;

1.3k characteristics and instructional needs of students with varied backgrounds, skills, interests, and learning needs;

1.4k different approaches to learning that students may exhibit and what motivates students to become active, engaged learners;

1.5k (*diversity*) cultural and socioeconomic differences and the significance of these differences for instructional planning; and

1.6k (*diversity*) appropriate strategies for instructing English language learners.

**Content and Pedagogy**

1.11k current research on best pedagogical practices that are designed to maximize the learning of students in early childhood through grade 4.

**Resources**

1.16k the use of appropriate materials and resources (e.g., appealing manipulative materials) for preparing instruction, presenting lessons, and assessing learning;

1.17k the importance of knowing when to integrate technology into instruction and assessment; and

1.18k the use of resources beyond the campus to help students meet academic and nonacademic needs.

**Application: What Teachers Can Do**

***Teachers of Students Grades EC-4***

**Students**

The beginning teacher is able to:

1.3s use effective approaches to address varied student learning needs and preferences

Including:

- Making use of spontaneous activities or observations to promote learning;

1.5s acknowledge and respect cultural and socioeconomic differences among students when planning instruction.

Content and Pedagogy

1.11s use a variety of pedagogical techniques to convey information and teach skills

Including:

- Hands-on exploration

**Resources**

1.16s use various types of materials and other resources to aid in preparing and implementing instruction;

Designing Coherent Instruction

1.23 provide students with opportunities to explore content from integrated and varied perspectives

Including:

- Exploring content by providing an integrated curriculum, employing play as one learning mode, permitting student choice of activities when appropriate, involving students in working on projects, designing instruction that supports students' growing ability to work cooperatively and to reflect upon other points of view.

***Standard II. The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence.***

***Teacher Knowledge: What Teachers Know***

**Teachers of students in Grades EC-4**

**Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport**

2.1k (*diversity*) the importance of creating a learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are respected;

2.2k ways to establish a positive classroom climate that fosters active engagement in learning among students

2.7k how young children function in groups and how to organize student groups to facilitate cooperation and productivity;

2.8k the importance of time management for effective classroom functioning

Including:

- The importance of creating a schedule for young children balances restful and active movement activities and that provides large blocks of time for play, projects, and learning centers

**Maintaining a Physical and Emotional Environment that is Safe and Productive**

2.19k features and characteristics of physical spaces (e.g., learning centers, play areas) that are safe and productive for learning;

**Application: What Teachers Can Do**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-4*

**Maintaining a Physical and Emotional Environment that is Safe and Productive**

2.18s organize the physical environment to facilitate learning;

**Standard III. The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, and time, high-quality feedback.**

**Teacher Knowledge: What Teachers Know**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-4*

**Engaging Students in Learning**

The beginning teacher knows and understands:

3.6k how to present content to students in relevant and meaningful ways

Including:

- Relating content to students' play activities or background experiences

**Application: What Teachers Can Do**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-4*

**Engaging Students in Learning**

The beginning teacher is able to:

3.13s engage students intellectually by teaching meaningful content in ways that promote all students' active and invested participation in the learning process

Including:

- Stimulating reflection, critical thinking, and inquiry among students (e.g., provide opportunities to manipulate materials and to test ideas and hypotheses, provide repetition for increased conceptual understanding, support the concept of play as a valid vehicle for learning);

**TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION STANDARDS**

**Standard I. All teachers use technology-related terms, concepts, data input strategies, and ethical practices to make informed decisions about current technologies and their applications.**

**Teacher Knowledge: What All Teachers Know**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12*

The beginning teacher knows and understands:

1.2k data input skills appropriate to the task; and

**Application: What All Teachers Can Do**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12*

The beginning teacher is able to:

1.5s use technology terminology appropriate to the task;

1.6s perform basic software application functions, including, but not limited to, opening an application program and creating, modifying, printing, and saving documents;

1.8s use appropriate terminology related to the Internet, including, but not limited to, electronic mail (e-mail), uniform resource locators (URLs), electronic bookmarks, local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs), World Wide Web (WWW) pages, and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML);

**Standard II: All teachers identify task requirements, apply search strategies, and use current technology to efficiently acquire, analyze, and evaluate a variety of electronic information.**

**Teacher Knowledge: What All Teachers Know**

*Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12*

The beginning teacher knows and understands:

2.1k a variety of strategies for acquiring information from electronic resources;

2.2k how to acquire electronic information in a variety of formats; and

**Application: What All Teachers Can Do**

***Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12***

The beginning teacher is able to:

2.1s use strategies to locate and acquire desired information from collaborative software and on networks, including the Internet and intranets;

**Standard IV: All teachers communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences.**

**Teacher Knowledge: What All Teachers Know**

***Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12***

The beginning teacher knows and understands:

4.2k how to deliver a product electronically in a variety of media; and

**Application: What All Teachers Can Do**

***Teachers of Students in Grades EC-12***

The beginning teacher is able to:

4.7s design and create interdisciplinary multimedia presentations that include audio, video, text, and graphics for defined audiences.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK**

Harris Helm, J., Katz, L. (2001). *Young investigators: The project approach in the early years*.

New York: Teachers College Press.

Johnson, J. E., Christie, J. F., Wardle, F. (2005). *Play, development, and early childhood*. Boston:

Pearson Allyn & Bacon.

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

Using a criterion reference point system, individual project and final grades will be calculated as follows:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>My Grade</b>
Exam #1	25		
Exam #2	25		
Exam #3 (no scantron needed)	25		
Exam #4	25		
Class Assignments	10		
<b>Assignment #1</b> <i>Traditional Children's Games</i>	10		
<b>Assignment #2</b> <i>Learning about Children through Play</i>	20		
<b>Assignment #3</b> <i>Review an article about Dramatic Play or Block Play</i>	20		
<b>Assignment #4</b> <i>Playground Evaluation</i>	20		
<b>Assignment #5</b> <i>The Science or Social Studies Literacy Play Project</i>	70		
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>250</b>		

**Grade Distribution**

A = 225 - 250

B = 200 - 224

C = 175 - 199

D = 150 - 174

F = 149 – below

## **REQUIREMENTS**

### Examinations

Four examinations will be given throughout the semester. Three of the exams will be multiple-choice and one will be short-answer essay. Students will take the multiple choice tests online. Tests will be given solely at the time indicated on the course schedule. Tests may not be given at any time other than when they are scheduled except under **EXTREME** circumstances as determined by the instructor. Each examination is worth 25 points.

### Field Experiences

Field assignments are required for the successful completion of this course. **In addition to scheduled classes, students will complete field experience hours at different sites for different assignments.** Students will be assigned to different schools.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance of scheduled classes is mandatory for the completion of this course. In-class activities cannot be replicated outside of class sessions. It is the student's responsibility to sign the class roster. In order to be considered present for the class, the student must arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late and leave more than 10 minutes before class is over are not allowed to sign the class roster and will be counted absent. Three absences are allowed in this course for the class that meets 3 days a week and 2 absences for the class which meets twice a week. After that for each unexcused absence of a student, the student will receive a reduction in the final grade by one (1) letter grade. Each additional absence will result in a subsequent reduction of the final grade by an additional letter grade. Note that travel plans or weddings are not considered an "emergency" ("emergency" is left to the discretion of the instructor). In addition, attendance (and participation) to group meetings is also required. Each group must work together to agree on the best time to meet to work on assignments. **If an absence is unavoidable, notify group members, the mentor teacher, and the university instructor.** Failure to do so will result in 5 points taken off (individually) from the group's assignment grade.

## **PROFESSIONALISM**

Students are expected to act professionally at all times including during class and at field experience sites. Students must dress appropriately when visiting field sites. Students must refrain from conversations during class. Please turn-off all cell phones and pagers since they cause distraction, particularly when you are working on the projects with the children. In addition, when working in groups, please make sure that you work out any disagreements that arise by communicating with each other. It is the responsibility of each group member to cooperate and collaborate in each activity that is planned for the project. If a major problem arises, do not wait until the end of the semester to talk with the university instructor, contact her/him immediately.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

### Quality of Work

A standard of written English appropriate for elementary teachers will be expected. All written work submitted must be of professional quality, neatly presented, grammatically correct, and free of spelling and punctuation errors. All written assignments should be prepared on a computer with appropriate word processing software. Facilities are available on campus for this purpose. To improve readability of papers, standard print styles should be used (e.g. Times, Geneva, New York). Font size must be 10 or 12 point. Do not use bold lettering. **Title pages**, including your name, course/section number and date are required for all written assignments. Pages should be stapled together. *Full credit cannot be earned for work that does not meet these standards.*

### Submission of Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on or before the specified due date. No late work will be accepted unless delay is unavoidable and the student has discussed the situation with the instructor prior to the due date (at least 10 points may be deducted). If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you should make arrangements to submit the assignment on time to avoid the loss of points for late submission. Assignments must be complete upon submission. No incomplete assignments will be accepted. No resubmissions will be allowed unless requested by the instructor.

### Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students are expected to demonstrate professional conduct during class sessions. In order to minimize distractions, students should not leave the room during class unless an emergency arises. Students should also refrain from engaging in individual conversations and from working on other assignments during lectures or class discussions. Any other discipline issues will be managed as the UTSA Faculty Handbook specifies. Students are expected to be above reproach in scholastic activities. Students who violate rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, any incidence of student dishonesty will be managed as outlined in the UTSA Student Guide.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (MS 2.03.18, telephone 458-4157(Voice), 458-4981 TTY, UTSA Downtown BV 1.302 458-2816) in order to receive support services. If you need accommodation for a disability, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Class Assignments**

The style of the course is lecture together with hands-on participation. There will be some graded class assignments and some that will not be graded. There will be no make up opportunity for class assignments. Students are expected to prepare for classroom discussions and activities by completing assigned readings prior to coming to class. Class assignments may include the completion of questions with or without the book. Such preparation will help them understand and internalize the content matter more effectively as well as actively participate in class discussions, activities, and group work.

### ***Assignment #1***

#### **Traditional Children's Games**

Purpose: This assignment is designed to help the preservice teacher emphasize the importance of allotting time for movement activities that promote language and literacy learning as well as the inclusion of diversity in play.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Select two children's games. The first one should be a traditional children's game such as "*Duck Duck Goose*" or "*London Bridge is Falling Down*". The second games should be from a different culture (could be a different culture within the US) or country. You do not need props but the games must include movement.
2. As a group we are going to play selected games during class.
3. You will have the opportunity to explain the point of the games, give directions and indicate how this game enhances children's learning/development. To be sure, check the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines at

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html> or TEKS grades K-4<sup>th</sup> at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/>

4. On a one page paper, write the name of both games, instructions, any songs or rhymes that go with the game, **AND** the TEKS or PK Guidelines that you feel are targeted through such games (***you will need to turn this in to your university instructor***).

### ***Assignment #2***

#### **Learning about Children through Play**

Purpose: This assignment is designed to help the preservice teacher better understand the way children play in diverse settings.

##### **Procedure:**

1. You will attend the UTSA Child Development Center at a time specified by the instructor.
2. Observe what the children do; do not get involved-just write down exactly what you see happening. On a piece of paper write down what you see happening. What are the children playing with? What are the words that they're using? Who are they playing with? How are they resolving conflicts? How does play begin and how does it end? What are the stages of play development?
3. Use the Social/Cognitive Play Scale found on p. 81 in your textbook to record the play that is observed. You can find the definitions on p. 80 to help you complete the play scale.
4. Using the information you gathered for the Social/Cognitive Play Scale, write a **2-page narrative report** about children's play. The report should include:
  - a) Description of the setting;
  - b) Description of children including ethnic, language, gender, age, developmental differences and/or exceptionalities;
  - c) Description of the classroom and draw a classroom map (must be turned in with your paper)
  - d) Your personal reflection about why you need to know about children's play as a future teacher and how the setting allows (or doesn't) children to engage in play activities that will help them with their academic development in the future.
  - e) Cite reference to class notes and readings.
  - f) Make sure to include a COVER PAGE and the Social/Cognitive Play Scale on p. 81 in your textbook with your paper.

### **Assignment #3**

#### **Article Review on Dramatic or Block Play**

Purpose: This assignment is designed to assist the preservice teacher synthesize research regarding dramatic play and block play.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Select a research article that describes a study conducted about dramatic play or block (constructive play). Select from the following peer-reviewed journals: *Young Children*, *Dimensions of Early Childhood Education*, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *Childhood Education*, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *Early Education and Development*, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *Journal of Early Literacy*, *The Reading Teacher*. (Do not use *Scholastic Today* or *Education Week*).
2. At the top of the page write the citation in the following APA Style:

#### **Example:**

de Groot Kim, S. (2006). Kevin: "I gotta get to the market": The development of peer relationships in inclusive early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(3), 163-169.

Then begin the two-page summary of the article including the following headings and single-spaced:

Introduction: what will you be writing about on the paper

Summary: what is the article about, how did they conduct the study, who were the participants, where did the study take place, what were the results?

Reflection: what is your opinion of the article

Conclusion: summarize your paper.

### **Assignment #4**

#### **Playground Evaluation**

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to practice evaluating playgrounds for safety and for play value using the principles you have read about and discussed in class.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Choose 1 playground to evaluate. The playground may be located at private preschool and daycare facilities or public elementary schools and parks in **a different community from where you live**.
2. Rate the playground using a photocopy of the Playground Rating System. Remember to take a ruler or measuring tape with you to the site. You must take pictures of your site to include in the **power point presentation you that will be required to present during class**. We will divide the class into different "community" groups (Downtown, West Side, South Side, North Side, etc.). After each group member evaluates a different playground from the same area create a power point presentation in which you discuss the community and the strengths and weaknesses of the playground.
3. Individually, prepare a three-page narrative paper describing the playground based on information collected using the Rating System. The name and location of the playground should appear at the top of the Ratings sheet and at the top of the narrative. The narrative should be broken into three headings:
  - a. (1) **Description of playground** including playground equipment and measurements;

- b. (2) **Playground Strengths:** cover playground contents including type of equipment and measurements, safety, accessibility for children with special physical needs, and play value in your narrative;
  - c. (3) **Playground weaknesses:** what are the major problems/concerns of the playground
  - d. (4) **Playground use:** discuss the *different types of play* you observed and how the children used the equipment; **Improvement:** specific in recommending improvements;
  - e. (5) **Recommendations:** what will you recommend for improvement for the playground?
4. You will be graded on your ability to apply information from the text and class discussions to recommend improvements for the playground, and the completeness of the Playground Rating System. Attach your playground rating scale to your 3 page paper. Your grade will also include the power point presentation.

### ***Assignment #5***

#### **The Science or Social Studies Literacy Play Project**

Purpose: The preservice teachers will develop an understanding about the academic benefits of play for young children. Preservice teachers, working in groups, will help young children engage in science or social studies literacy projects using the project approach. The project will follow the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html> OR the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for kindergarten <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/>

#### **Procedure:**

1. Using the Project Planning Journal in your textbook, follow the guidelines and record data accordingly. Make sure that you use all the forms provided in the textbook. You will need a three-ring binder to keep all of your data including forms, reflections, samples of children's work, and photographs. You will turn this in at the end of the project..
2. Phase I—Selecting Topics (must be related to science or social studies)
3. Phase II—Investigations (expert visitors, dramatic play—must have a dramatic play prop box, writing, drawing, constructing, dancing, examine artifacts, art activities, etc.). The dramatic play prop box will be donated to the school at which the UTSA students were assigned.
4. Phase III—Complete the culminating event or activities and evaluate.
5. You will need to take pictures of each phase of the project and of each activity you do with the students. Children are not to be photographed without permission.
6. UTSA students will be completing individual and group journals. For the individual journals students should write a description of what happened with the children that day and a short reflection. Each journal should be one page long. Students should answer the questions on the Project Planning Journal (see Helm and Katz text) for the group journal. This should be answered as a group and NOT by one individual student.
7. The play projects will be presented in class as well as the dramatic play prop box. Students should plan a 5 minute slide show or power point presentation (with very little or no text) using pictures. The presentation should be divided into the 3 Phases of the play project.
8. The binder should be divided into the following sections:
  - a. Cover Page with topic or theme and group members' names

- b. Table of contents
- c. Prekindergarten guidelines or TEKS used
- d. Phase I
- e. Phase II
- f. Phase III
- g. Journals (include individual name and date)
- h. Completed dramatic play prop box narrative form (given in class)
- i. One page final thoughts regarding the project.

### **PREPARING A PROP BOX**

1. Using the theme selected for the play project, collect assorted materials that relate to the theme, and that are suitable for young children to use in dramatic play. These may be articles of clothing, costumes, household articles, items made from recycled materials, real items, etc. Thrift stores are treasure-troves of dramatic play materials. When there is a choice, choose the real article over a toy or replica of one. Use your imagination and creativity. Try not to purchase any items look through your garage etc. and see what you can find.
2. Think about the goals for children as they use these materials. What concepts do you hope they will acquire? What vocabulary might they use while playing? In what ways would you like to see their play extended? Think about how you could introduce a dramatic play center using materials in your prop box. Think of resource people or field trips that could reinforce or extend the thematic concepts that the materials in your box promote.
3. Put your materials in a sturdy box with a lid. Legal or document boxes or those that contain photocopy paper are best. On one side, label the outside of the box with the following information:
  - Names of students contributing to the box
  - Theme:
  - Materials in Box
  - On the opposite side of the box, draw or paste a picture that would help a child identify the theme or contents of the box.
4. On the inside lid of the box, tape a copy of the sheet that has the goals, vocabulary, etc. If you have more than one sheet, use a plastic sheet protector, tape that to the inside lid, and slide the sheets into the protector.
5. Decorate the box to make it attractive to a child. The idea is to encourage the child to use the contents of the box.

### **PROP BOX CHECK LIST**

- Are all the items in your prop box safe?  
Do some items need to have sharp edges taped, or items adapted for a young child's use?
- Have you considered hygiene and maintenance of your box?  
You need to consider the time required to maintain proper cleanliness of brushes curlers, and hair ornaments found in a beauty shop prop box, for example, and items must be easily replaced when lost or damaged.
- Have you provided enough items for many children to participate at one time?  
When enough items are not provided conflicts may arise. Be sure to provide several spatulas, for example, in a cooking prop box.

- Are items of clothing included in your prop box?  
Clothing can be as simple as old shoes or hats, or as elaborate as uniforms.
- Have you considered the durability of your prop box and the items in it?  
Start with a sturdy box and laminate all items that may be easily torn.
- Is your box colorful, attractive and inviting to a young child?  
Through the use of bright paint and thematic pictures, attractively arranged, a child will be invited to play dramatically.
- Are there opportunities for elaborate language development?  
If you have provided the chance for many children to interact, language will be a large part of the experience.
- Is the theme relevant to the child's age and environment?  
For example, a child may never have been to a dentist and could have difficulty in extending play around this theme.
- Do the children have adequate background experiences to use the prop box effectively?  
Field trips, guest speakers, films and books are excellent ways to introduce new concepts.
- Is the box adaptable for use with various developmental levels or needs?  
Can items be removed or added to make it usable for four-year-olds and eight-year-olds?
- Have you included as many real objects related to the theme of your box as you possibly could collect?  
Mixing real flour, salt, and water could be just the extra items needed for a baking prop box.
- Is your prop box gender fair?  
Be sure that there are materials to attract both boys and girls to use the prop box. Materials should be gender neutral as much as possible.
- Is your prop box culture sensitive?  
Do the materials in the box portray a true picture of a particular culture or ethnicity, or are they stereotypical in their representations?