Harcum College Early Childhood Department Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the Harcum College Early Childhood Department revolves around our primary goal of preparing informed, knowledgeable early childhood professionals to leave our program ready and able to make a difference in their community.

Our conceptual framework encompasses and values the following key principles:

- Professionalism
- Lifelong learning
- Building community
- Knowledge of child development and Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Culturally Responsive
The Early Childhood Department creates key assessments, learning opportunities and field experiences that help students gain knowledge to meet and understand child development. Students gain an understanding of the social, emotional and physical development of children. Students examine and analyze child development theories and trends and issues affecting child development.

Students understand the importance of building community with families and the community. Students learn how to observe and assess young children and also how to accommodate and meet the needs of diverse learners. Students will become effective teachers who understand the importance of using the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards to guide their lesson planning. Most importantly, students learn and become leaders and professionals throughout their program at Harcum College.

All students become members of NAEYC (National Association for the Early Childhood Education) upon acceptance into our program. This membership allows students to immediately identify as early childhood professionals and is one of their first steps to becoming professional educators. Throughout the early childhood program, students develop into leaders and professionals. Students can become members of HAEYC (Harcum Association for the Education of Young Children). HAEYC members hold fundraisers and advocate for the early childhood field and for all young children.

The Early Childhood Department strives to prepare educators to be culturally responsive educators. Students apply knowledge of differences in development, learning styles and cultural backgrounds by developing and adapting strategies and modifying environments to meet the developmental, learning and social and cultural needs of all children. Students value differences in self and others and formulate their own philosophy of an inclusive classroom through their participation in class discussions, small group work, assignments, and field experiences. Students practice self-reflection and demonstrate an understanding of being aware of their own biases and values.

Our engaging, and passionate instructors are fully experienced in the Early Childhood field and come with a variety of backgrounds and positions. Our instructors teach in accordance with state and
national early learning initiatives. Through the Harcum College ECE program, students are able to reach a variety of goals; including but not limited to the following: meeting state requirements for careers in a variety of early learning settings – private, public; transfer to a four-year institution; obtain a strong foundational knowledge to enter a career that involves young children, and become a professional educator.

The Early Childhood Department values education and believes that education is lifelong. While we are helping our students meet the goal of obtaining an associate’s degree, we stress the importance of continually developing and growing. Our students come from different backgrounds and many of our students are adult learners. We ensure that our faculty understands the importance of adult learning strategies and the importance of valuing the knowledge and background of our adult students.