

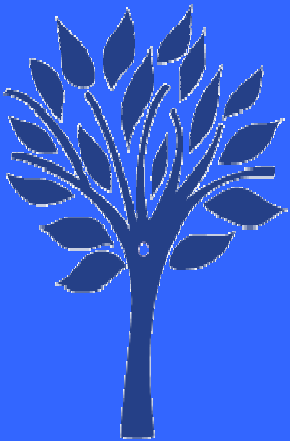
# Excellence in Teaching

*Excellence in Teaching* (EIT) courses enrich young children's learning experiences by exposing early childhood teachers and their supervisors to research-based practices in topic areas such as: children's challenging behavior; early literacy; cognitively-challenging curriculum; science learning; inclusion; and supervision. A comprehensive, credit-bearing professional development program designed by the Center for Children & Families (CC&F) at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), EIT courses actively engage supervisors in supporting their staff in transforming their teaching practices.

Over the past seven years, more than 1,100 early childhood teachers and supervisors have completed EIT courses. Participants report that EIT has a profound impact on their teaching and supervisory practices. In the words of one EIT graduate, *"It is by far the most effective training our program has ever experienced."* EIT participants gain:

- Confidence in and mastery of the subjects they teach
- Fresh ideas of how to keep young children engaged in active learning
- A new repertoire of teaching and supervisory skills rooted in current research
- Richer, fuller insights into children's development and the learning process
- New approaches to creating learning environments that meet the needs of all children
- Enhanced listening, observation, and communication skills
- Undergraduate or graduate credit upon successful completion of the course

EIT stems from over two decades of CC&F's training, technical assistance (TA), research, and teacher assessment work. Drawing on our extensive work in developing performance assessments for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, assignments scaffold participants' reflections and document their practice.



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## ***Excellence in Teaching Course System***

In our four-credit courses, participants meet in three, two-day sessions over a five-month period; complete four assignments; and read substantive texts that complement the concepts explored in class. All participants complete an assignment prior to the first session, giving instructors vital data about their current levels of practice and reflection.

Teachers and supervisors cover much of the same content, with EIT instructors tailoring course assignments to fit the unique needs of each group. To foster peer sharing, instructors periodically divide participants into affinity groups. During these sessions, teachers delve more deeply into classroom practice while their supervisors explore new ways to provide support and feedback. When participants return to their programs, EIT instructors conduct site visits, providing technical assistance (TA) that helps supervisors sustain teachers' efforts to adopt new practices. Onsite TA is supplemented with cluster meetings in which supervisors hone their observation skills, and enhance their ability to provide effective, content-based feedback, by viewing videotapes of teachers' classrooms.

### **OUR CURRENT COURSES**

#### ***Children's Challenging Behavior and the Ecology of the Classroom (4 credits)***

Participants develop an understanding of three key factors that affect children's behavior: teacher-child and child-child relationships, the environment, and curriculum. Exploring how expectations and culture, physical environment, and classroom climate influence children's responses and behavior, enables participants to identify strategies to promote productive classroom interaction. Participants then apply these strategies to develop engaging curriculum that will meet the needs of the most vulnerable child.

#### ***Constructing Cognitively Challenging Curriculum (4 credits)***

Using a conceptual framework designed to provide children with richer, cognitive challenges, participants learn to facilitate play that results in in-depth science investigations. In real classroom settings, participants build their understanding of the course content and try out new approaches to challenge children to problem-solve, imagine, hypothesize, and represent their thinking.

#### ***Literacy Environment Enrichment Program (LEEP) (4 credits)***

Participants gain the information and support they need to apply the most current research to promote children's language and literacy development, comprising early writing, book reading, and oral language including phonological awareness. As they become competent observers and assessors of children's language and literacy development, participants also learn to evaluate and refine their own language and literacy-related practices.

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### **LEEP Online (3 credits)**

LEEP is also offered as an online course. After an eight-hour face-to-face session, students participate in six online sessions. Readings, application activities, online discussion, and performance-based assignments build students' understanding of children's language and literacy development and key instructional strategies. Sessions focus on early writing, literacy-rich environments, oral language, phonological awareness, book reading, and literacy rich curriculum. Students learn to assess children's learning to refine their own literacy-related practices.

### ***Science Explorations: Facilitating Science Inquiry with Young Children* (4 credits)**

Through hands-on explorations, examination of work from other classrooms, and application activities, participants come to understand how young children learn science and the role of the teacher as a guide in the process. Participants develop fluency with the science concepts essential to conducting content-rich scientific investigations with young children.

### ***Responsive Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families* (4 credits)**

This course aims to improve the quality of infant/toddler care and education in center-based settings. Together, teachers and supervisors deepen their knowledge of early development and infant/toddler curriculum through interactive learning. Supervisors also learn how to support teachers' application of new classroom strategies.

### ***Foundations of Supervision in Early Childhood Programs* (2 credits)**

Participants receive an overview of the developmental approach to supervision and explore how they can use their role to improve early childhood education in their programs. Content focuses on opportunities that supervisors can use to support staff performance. Participants will be introduced to new techniques that they will apply in their work. If a supervisor has successfully completed one of the four-credit courses currently being offered and other teachers from her/his program want to attend that course, the supervisor can enroll in *Foundations* and meet the requirement for a teacher-supervisor team.

### ***Supporting Preschoolers with Language Differences* (2 credits)**

Participants build their skills in identifying the developmental milestones of English language learners and the signs of language delay in all children. They will also learn to use classroom-based strategies that provide optimal support for both groups of children to promote their language development. Participants will gain an understanding of the social/emotional implication for these children and will apply specific strategies to fully involve them in the learning community.

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# Comments from Participants

*"Sometimes you go into these kind of courses and people have great ideas but they've never worked in an early childhood classroom. EIT, though, was really geared toward teachers in the classroom, so you could try out what you were learning."*

— Anne Tucker, a teacher at Mansfield Discovery Depot

*"I found that because the teacher and I were taking in the same information, we were in sync with one another. When I spoke about literacy and young children she knew what I was talking about. We both learned. We both discussed. We were colleagues and we were able to become more reflective about our work."*

—Sandra Lamb, a supervisor and School Readiness Coach for the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative

*"My supervisor's enthusiasm about the course helped me stay enthusiastic about it. And now, I know she has expectations of me to incorporate what we have learned into my everyday practice."*

—Carmen Morales, a teacher at Central Baptist Preschool

*"LEEP provokes changes in practice, reflection of outcomes, and refinement of strategies in the teachers' classroom practice, as well as my own supervisory methods. It is by far the most effective training our program has ever experienced!"*

—Pat Meattley, Education Manager from Stratford County Community Action, Inc.

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