

Child Growth and Development Course Syllabus

Course Overview

Child Growth and Development is a Level 3 Education pathway course designed to prepare students for careers working with children and teaching. This 18-week course explores human development from conception through adolescence, examining the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that occur across developmental stages. Students will investigate developmental theories, analyze biological and environmental influences on growth, and explore guidance strategies used by parents and educators. The course includes examination of contemporary issues affecting children, including mental health, family structures, and societal factors. Students will complete 25 hours of field experience observing children in educational settings and develop career readiness skills for education-related professions. This course aligns with the Pre-Educator pathway and supports Ed Rising/FCCLA student organization participation.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the five areas of development and trace developmental milestones from prenatal through adolescence stages
- Explain major child development theories and apply theorist perspectives to observing and understanding children
- Analyze how hereditary and environmental factors influence child growth and development
- Evaluate the impact of family structure, culture, socioeconomic status, and societal trends on child development
- Design age-appropriate activities and guidance strategies that promote positive development across all domains
- Identify signs of mental health challenges and locate community resources for children and families
- Compare parenting and teaching styles and their effects on child behavior and learning
- Research education-related careers, complete field experience hours, and develop professional materials for employment

Week-by-Week Breakdown

Week 1: Introduction to Child Development and Areas of Development

Topics Covered:

- Course overview, field experience requirements, and Ed Rising/FCCLA opportunities
- Five areas of development: physical, cognitive/intellectual, emotional, social, and moral (1.1.1)
- Reasons for studying child growth and development (2.1.1)

Key Activities:

- Create a visual representation of the five developmental areas
- Discuss personal experiences with children and career interests
- Review field experience placement options and requirements

Assignments:

- Complete interest inventory for education careers
- Begin field experience journal (ongoing throughout semester)

Week 2: Reasons for Studying Children and Historical Perspectives**Topics Covered:**

- Rights and responsibilities of children (2.1.2)
- Evolution of child development regarding discipline, guidance, and parenting (2.1.3)
- Historical views of childhood across cultures and time periods

Key Activities:

- Timeline activity showing changes in childhood treatment and education
- Analyze primary source documents about children's rights
- Guest speaker: local child advocate or social worker

Assignments:

- Research paper on children's rights in different countries (2-3 pages)

Resources:

- UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child website
- PBS documentary clips on history of childhood

Week 3: Child Development Theorists Part 1**Topics Covered:**

- Introduction to major theorists and their contributions (2.2.2)
- Piaget's cognitive development theory (2.2.3)
- Erikson's psychosocial development theory (2.2.3)

Key Activities:

- Create theorist profile cards with key concepts
- Watch video examples of children at different Piaget stages
- Compare and contrast Piaget and Erikson's stage theories

Assignments:

- Theorist comparison chart
- Quiz on Piaget and Erikson

Resources:

- Simply Psychology website theorist summaries
- Video: "Piaget's Stages of Development" (YouTube)

Week 4: Child Development Theorists Part 2 and Observation Methods

Topics Covered:

- Additional theorists: Vygotsky, Bandura, Maslow (2.2.3)
- Methods for studying children: objective vs. subjective observations (2.2.1)
- Creating observation guidelines based on theorist views (2.2.4)

Key Activities:

- Practice objective vs. subjective observation writing
- Develop observation checklist for field experience
- Role-play scenarios demonstrating different theories

Assignments:

- Complete first field experience observation (3 hours)
- Observation report using objective language

Resources:

- Observation templates and rubrics
- Article: "How to Conduct Child Observations"

Week 5: Heredity and Environment

Topics Covered:

- Hereditary influences on development (3.1.1)
- Environmental influences on development (3.1.1)
- Nature vs. nurture debate (3.1.2)
- Personal reflection on hereditary and environmental influences (3.1.2)

Key Activities:

- Genetics simulation activity (traits inheritance)
- Case studies analyzing nature vs. nurture scenarios
- Create family tree identifying inherited traits

Assignments:

- Personal development reflection essay
- Heredity and environment Venn diagram

Resources:

- PBS NOVA "Ghost in Your Genes" video clips
- Interactive genetics websites (Punnett square generators)

Week 6: Reproductive System and Conception

Topics Covered:

- Male and female reproductive systems (1.1.2)
- Changes during pregnancy (1.1.2)
- Conception and fertility
- Early signs of pregnancy (1.1.3)

Key Activities:

- Reproductive system diagram labeling
- Timeline of pregnancy changes
- Analyze pregnancy test accuracy and timing

Assignments:

- Reproductive system quiz
- Research project on fertility awareness

Resources:

- Anatomical diagrams and models
- March of Dimes pregnancy information
- American Pregnancy Association website

Week 7: Prenatal Development

Topics Covered:

- Three stages of prenatal development: germinal, embryonic, fetal (1.1.4)
- Fetal development week-by-week
- Importance of prenatal care

Key Activities:

- Create 3D model or visual timeline of prenatal development
- Calculate due dates and gestational age
- Watch ultrasound videos showing fetal development

Assignments:

- Prenatal development poster or digital presentation

- Field experience observation (3 hours)

Resources:

- The Visible Embryo website
- Video: "In the Womb" documentary clips
- Prenatal development apps and interactive tools

Week 8: Environmental Factors During Pregnancy and Birth Defects

Topics Covered:

- Potential complications during pregnancy (3.3.1)
- Prenatal testing: importance and risks (3.3.2)
- Genetic vs. environmental birth defects (3.3.3)
- Effects of STD/STIs on mother and baby (3.3.4)
- Teratogens and harmful environmental factors (3.3.5)

Key Activities:

- Research presentation on specific teratogens (alcohol, drugs, medications, environmental toxins)
- Analyze prenatal testing options and ethical considerations
- Case study discussions on pregnancy complications

Assignments:

- Teratogen research presentation
- Prenatal health and safety brochure

Resources:

- CDC pregnancy information and warnings
- March of Dimes birth defects database
- Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)

Week 9: Childbirth and Newborn Characteristics

Topics Covered:

- Types of childbirth and characteristics (1.1.5)
- Stages of labor (1.1.6)
- Characteristics of newborns (1.1.7)
- Meeting basic needs of newborns (1.1.8)

Key Activities:

- Watch childbirth education video
- Practice swaddling and diapering with dolls
- Guest speaker: labor and delivery nurse or doula
- Newborn reflexes demonstration

Assignments:

- Newborn care plan project (1.1.8)
- Childbirth methods comparison chart

Resources:

- Lamaze International resources
- Hospital childbirth education materials
- Newborn care videos and demonstrations

Assessment Checkpoint: Unit 1 Exam (Prenatal Development and Birth)

Week 10: Infant Development (0-18 Months)**Topics Covered:**

- Physical development milestones (1.2.1)
- Cognitive/intellectual development (1.2.1)
- Emotional development and attachment (1.2.1)
- Social development (1.2.1)
- Daily care routines, health, and safety (1.2.5)

Key Activities:

- Create developmental milestone chart
- Analyze infant toys for developmental appropriateness
- Watch videos of infants at different ages
- Design safe infant environment floor plan

Assignments:

- Infant activity plan promoting all areas of development
- Field experience observation focusing on infants (3 hours)

Resources:

- CDC developmental milestones tracker
- Zero to Three website resources
- Consumer Product Safety Commission infant safety guidelines

Week 11: Toddler Development (19-36 Months)**Topics Covered:**

- Physical development and motor skills (1.2.2)
- Cognitive/intellectual development and language explosion (1.2.2)
- Emotional development and autonomy (1.2.2)
- Social development and parallel play (1.2.2)
- Daily care routines, health, and safety concerns (1.2.5)

Key Activities:

- Toddler-proof a classroom area
- Create language-rich activity plans
- Analyze toddler behavior through developmental lens
- Practice positive guidance techniques for common toddler challenges

Assignments:

- Toddler development case study analysis
- Design age-appropriate learning center

Resources:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) resources
- Toddler development videos
- Positive discipline resources

Week 12: Preschool and Early School Age Development (3-8 Years)**Topics Covered:**

- Physical development ages 3-5 years (1.2.3)
- Cognitive/intellectual development ages 3-5 years (1.2.3)
- Emotional and social development ages 3-5 years (1.2.3)
- Development ages 5-8 years across all domains (1.2.4)
- Daily care routines, health, and safety (1.2.5)
- Beginning school transitions (5.2.4)

Key Activities:

- Plan developmentally appropriate preschool activities
- Analyze kindergarten readiness skills
- Create school transition support strategies
- Observe preschool or kindergarten classroom (field experience)

Assignments:

- Preschool lesson plan incorporating all developmental areas
- Field experience observation (4 hours)

Resources:

- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework
- Kindergarten readiness checklists
- PBS Kids educational resources

Week 13: Middle Childhood Development (9-12 Years)**Topics Covered:**

- Physical development during middle childhood (1.3.1)
- Cognitive/intellectual development (1.3.2)
- Emotional development and self-concept (1.3.3)
- Social development and peer relationships (1.3.4)
- Daily care routines, health, and safety concerns (1.3.5)

Key Activities:

- Analyze how schools support middle childhood development
- Create strategies for promoting positive self-concept (3.2.1)
- Discuss bullying prevention and intervention
- Design activities promoting healthy peer relationships

Assignments:

- Middle childhood development presentation
- Self-concept promotion activity plan (3.2.1)
- Field experience observation in elementary school (3 hours)

Resources:

- Character education curricula
- Anti-bullying resources (stopbullying.gov)
- Middle childhood development research articles

Assessment Checkpoint: Unit 2 Exam (Early and Middle Childhood Development)

Week 14: Adolescent Development (13-18 Years)

Topics Covered:

- Physical development and puberty (1.4.1)
- Cognitive/intellectual development and abstract thinking (1.4.2)
- Emotional development and identity formation (1.4.3)
- Social development and peer influence (1.4.4)
- Health and safety concerns during adolescence (1.4.5)
- Teen pregnancy risks and impacts (4.1.1, 4.4.1)

Key Activities:

- Compare teen and adult pregnancy risks (4.1.1)
- Research teen pregnancy costs in Arkansas (4.1.2)
- Analyze adolescent brain development research
- Discuss identity development and peer pressure scenarios

Assignments:

- Teen pregnancy research report (4.1.2)
- Adolescent development resource guide
- Field experience observation in middle or high school (3 hours)

Resources:

- Arkansas Department of Health teen pregnancy statistics
- Adolescent brain development research (NIH)
- Teen health websites (TeensHealth, CDC)

Week 15: Mental Health and Social-Emotional Development

Topics Covered:

- Mental health across individuals and cultures (3.4.1)
- Prevalence of mental health challenges in youth (3.4.2)
- Signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, including depression (3.4.3)
- Available mental health resources (3.4.4)
- Impact of mental health on child development (4.2.1)

Key Activities:

- Mental health awareness presentations
- Identify warning signs in case studies
- Create resource directory for local mental health services (3.4.4)
- Guest speaker: school counselor or mental health professional

Assignments:

- Mental health resource guide (3.4.4)
- Reflection on reducing mental health stigma

Resources:

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) resources
- Mental Health America youth resources
- Arkansas crisis hotlines and support services
- School-based mental health programs information

Week 16: Family Structures, Culture, and Societal Factors

Topics Covered:

- Different family structures in society (4.3.3)
- Risk and protective factors of families (4.3.1)
- Rights and responsibilities of parents (4.3.2)
- Impact of socioeconomic status on development (4.2.3)
- Abuse and neglect impacts (4.2.2)
- Societal factors influencing development (4.4.2)
- Foster care and child welfare systems (4.4.4)
- Social services and support systems (4.4.3)

Key Activities:

- Family structure comparison project
- Analyze protective factors that build resilience
- Research local social services and create community resource map (4.4.3)
- Discuss mandated reporter responsibilities

Assignments:

- Family and community support systems presentation
- Protective factors action plan
- Field experience observation (3 hours)

Resources:

- Child Welfare Information Gateway
- Arkansas Department of Human Services resources
- Strengthening Families framework
- Local family support organizations

Week 17: Parenting and Teaching Styles, Guidance Strategies

Topics Covered:

- Factors in making parenthood decisions (5.1.1)
- Importance of family planning (5.1.2)
- Concerns of parents and guardians (5.1.3)
- Different parenting styles (5.1.4)
- Different teaching styles (5.2.1)
- Guidance strategies for promoting positive behavior (5.2.2)
- Effective guidance strategies for various age groups (5.2.3)
- Relationship between nurturing and fulfillment of potential (3.2.2)

Key Activities:

- Parenting and teaching styles comparison activity
- Role-play guidance scenarios for different ages
- Analyze discipline vs. punishment approaches
- Create positive behavior support plans

Assignments:

- Guidance strategy toolkit for specific age group (5.2.3)
- Parenting/teaching style reflection paper

Resources:

- Positive Discipline resources
- Conscious Discipline materials
- Love and Logic parenting resources
- Responsive Classroom teaching approach

Week 18: Careers in Child Development and Course Wrap-Up

Topics Covered:

- Roles and functions of individuals working with children (6.1.1)
- Rights and responsibilities related to working with children (6.1.2)
- Education and training for child-related occupations (6.1.3)
- Job opportunities and sources of information (6.1.4, 6.2.2)
- Specific careers and required skills (6.2.1)
- Roles of child educators (5.2.5)
- Current and emerging research in child development (2.2.5)

Key Activities:

- Career exploration presentations
- Mock interviews for education positions
- Review current research in child development journals (2.2.5)
- Complete field experience hours (final 3 hours)
- Course reflection and portfolio review

Assignments:

- Current resume and cover letter (6.2.3)
- Career research project (6.2.1)
- Submit certification materials if applicable (6.2.4)
- Final field experience reflection (25 hours total)
- Course portfolio with key artifacts

Resources:

- Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook
- Indeed, LinkedIn, and education job boards
- University education program websites
- Professional organizations (NAEYC, CDA Council)

Assessment Checkpoint: Final Exam (Comprehensive) and Career Portfolio Presentation

Grading Policy and Assessment Approach

Grade Distribution:

Category	Percentage
Field Experience and Observations	25%
Unit Exams (3 exams)	25%
Projects and Presentations	20%

Weekly Assignments and Activities	15%
Final Exam	10%
Career Portfolio	5

% |

Grading Scale:

- A: 90-100%
- B: 80-89%
- C: 70-79%
- D: 60-69%
- F: Below 60%

Assessment Approach:

This course uses varied assessment methods to evaluate student understanding and skill development. Field experience observations require students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings and demonstrate professional observation skills. Unit exams assess content knowledge at key transition points. Projects and presentations allow students to demonstrate deeper understanding through research, analysis, and creative application. Weekly assignments provide ongoing practice and formative feedback. The career portfolio showcases growth throughout the semester and readiness for education-related careers.

Field Experience Requirements:

Students must complete a minimum of 25 hours of supervised field experience in approved settings working with children (preschools, elementary schools, after-school programs, etc.). Field experience hours must be documented with supervisor signatures and accompanied by written observation reports. Failure to complete field experience hours will result in course failure regardless of other grades.

Late Work Policy:

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Late work will be accepted up to one week after the due date with a 10% deduction per day. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted without prior arrangement due to documented extenuating circumstances. Field experience observations must be completed on schedule to maintain placement relationships.

Classroom Expectations

Behavior and Participation:

Students are expected to arrive on time, come prepared with required materials, and actively participate in class discussions and activities. This course involves sensitive topics related to child development, family structures, and personal experiences. Students must demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives, maintain confidentiality when discussing field experiences, and create a supportive learning environment for all classmates.

Appropriate classroom behavior includes:

- Listening attentively when others are speaking
- Contributing thoughtfully to discussions
- Completing assigned readings before class
- Asking questions when clarification is needed
- Working collaboratively in group activities
- Using technology appropriately for learning purposes only

Academic Conduct:

Students are expected to complete their own work and properly cite sources in all assignments. Plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment and possible course failure depending on severity. Field experience observations must reflect authentic experiences and original writing.

Confidentiality:

Students will observe children in various settings and may learn sensitive information about families. All information learned during field experiences must remain confidential. Students should not use real names of children or families in written assignments or class discussions. Violations of confidentiality may result in removal from field placement and course failure.

Professionalism:

As future educators and child development professionals, students must demonstrate professional behavior in all course activities, especially during field experiences. This includes appropriate dress, punctuality, respectful communication, and adherence to placement site rules and expectations. Unprofessional behavior may result in removal from field placement.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is essential for success in this course. Students are responsible for all material covered during absences and must make arrangements to complete missed work. Excessive absences (more than 5) may result in course failure. Field experience hours cannot be made up if appointments are missed without prior notification to the placement site.

Required and Recommended Materials

Required Materials:

- Three-ring binder or folder for organizing handouts and notes
- Notebook or digital device for field experience observations
- Access to internet and word processing software for assignments
- Professional attire appropriate for field experience placements

Required Textbook/Resources:

- Course materials and readings will be provided through the learning management system or as handouts
- Access to online resources and videos (links provided throughout course)

Recommended Resources:***Websites:***

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Developmental Milestones
- Zero to Three - Infant and toddler development
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway
- Arkansas Department of Education
- Arkansas Department of Health

Books (optional supplementary reading):

- *The Whole-Brain Child* by Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* by NAEYC

Organizations:

- Ed Rising (student organization for future educators)
- FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America)

Technology:

- Learning management system for accessing assignments, resources, and grades
- Email for communication with instructor and field experience supervisors
- Presentation software for projects (PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva)

Field Experience:

- Transportation to and from field experience sites (student responsibility)
- Background check may be required by some placement sites
- Proof of immunizations may be required by some placement sites