Early Childhood Education

Associate in Applied Science Degree

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Early childhood educators nurture and teach young children—from infancy to the age of five—in childcare centers, nursery schools, preschools, public schools and family childcare homes. They play an important role in a child's development by caring for children when parents are at work or away for other reasons. Today, with two income families being the norm instead of the exception, the demand for top-notch early childhood educators is at an all time high.

In addition to meeting children's basic needs, early childhood educators organize activities that stimulate children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. They help children explore their interests, develop their talents and independence, build self-esteem and learn how to behave with others.

Two specialized fields of study are available in the Harper College program: *A teacher option* and a *director option*. Students must choose a specific area of study and complete the required general education courses, required core courses and 32 credit hours from the specialized field of study. Seven certificate options are also available.

Upon completion of courses for the specialized area of director, and in order to qualify for the Illinois Director Credential, Level 1, students will need to provide proof of First Aid/CPR certification and verification of 1200 hours of management experience.

A full-time student may complete this 60 credit-hour program in two years. Part-time options for completion are offered, as well. Classes are offered during the fall, spring and summer semesters. Certain courses are offered only once each year.

The Early Childhood Education program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 1313 L. Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005-4101, 202.232.8777.

Through Gateways to Opportunity, Harper College is entitled to award the following credentials as students progress through the curriculum. The *early childhood credential* Levels 2-4 is based on education through coursework and teaching experience with children ages birth through eight. The *infant toddler credential* Levels 2-4 focuses on specialized coursework and teaching experience with infants and toddlers. The *Illinois director credential* Level 1 is awarded on completion of additional coursework and practical experience in early care and education administration. For more information about this credentialing opportunity, please contact the program coordinator.

**Program Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this program will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of young children's development to create learning environments that are appropriate for all children. (NAEYC standard 1).
- create relationships that support and empower families and community. (NAEYC standard 2).
- use assessment strategies to positively influence children's development and learning. (NAEYC standard 3).
- design, implement and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all young children. (NAEYC standard 4).
- identify and conduct themselves as informed, ethical and collaborative members of the early childhood profession. (NAEYC standard 5).

**Career Opportunities**

**Teacher**

Career opportunities available to graduates of this program include positions as a teacher for half-day and full-day early childhood centers, including infant and toddler classrooms; a teacher's assistant in academic at-risk special needs and public school classrooms; resource and referral agencies; before/after school care programs and recreational programs and family childcare.

**Director**

Career opportunities available to graduates of this program include positions as a director or assistant director in a childcare center.


**Did You Know?**

Throughout history influential people have made significant contributions to education, including Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who believed that each child is born with a unique potential to be revealed, rather than a “blank slate” to be written upon; that learning requires a stimulating environment which engages all the senses; and that the teacher’s role is primarily in organizing materials and establishing a general classroom culture.