

# ATC Essential Skills Package Early Childhood Educator



**Instructional Methods:** Classroom Lectures, In-Class Activities, Group Work/Discussions, Student Presentations and Work Experience

**Course Format:** Classroom: Individual and group work

Mandatory Work Experience: 2 days a week at a licensed day care centre (arranged by the program teacher)

## Thinking about a career working with children?

Early Childhood Educators work with children ages 0-12 years in a variety of age groupings, including infant and toddler care, preschool-aged care and school-aged care. They are responsible for the planning, delivery and evaluation of inclusive play-based learning programs that promote the well-being and development of children.

To become a trained ECE you must obtain a post-secondary diploma or degree in a child care program approved by the Department of Advanced Education and Training, or an approved equivalent. Child Care Assistants can find employment in centres working under the supervision of ECEs and must complete a minimum 40-hour course in child development within their first year of employment. ECEs and CCAs participate in at least 24 hours of professional development each year to learn about well-researched best practices.

The Early Childhood Educator program introduces students to the early learning and child care community. Students learn observation techniques, human development, how to use positive communication and guidance techniques and how to plan and implement play opportunities for children. Participation in work experience at a licensed day care centre throughout each semester is a mandatory component of each course. The program is articulated with Red River College and allows students wishing to pursue post-secondary the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school.

**Essential Skills:** Workplace Education Manitoba has listed 9 Essential Skills to be successful in any work place. All nine Essential Skills are used in different combinations, in different applications, in every occupation. They are the foundational skills you use to carry out your work tasks and they're the building blocks you use to learn new ones. The importance of - and need for - employees to have appropriate levels of workplace Essential Skills is clear and strong.

Early childhood educators (ECEs) plan and supervise children of all ages. Experience in the early childhood educator program will focus primarily on children between the ages of 2 to 5 years in a day care centre environment Working daily with children, their families and co-workers requires strong essential skills such as oral communication, problem solving and decision making, reading and document use, writing, numeracy, and critical thinking.

## **What specifically are the Essential Skills needed in the workplace?**

This booklet was designed to

- provide an introduction to the essential skills required for an early childhood educator.
- assess the skills you will need to begin studying to become an early childhood educator

Following are brief descriptions of some of the essential skills required to work in the field of early childhood. They are followed by sample exercises to help you determine if ECE would be a good fit for you.

### **Reading**

ECEs must read instructions and product labels to ensure proper use within the day care centre. They become familiar with what is happening by read information written about children and staff that are recorded in the centres daily log book and they read letters or memos from supervisors that may include information about staff meetings or inspections that took place.

### **Document Use**

To keep children healthy and safe ECEs must locate data on labels, for example on medication bottles and food items. ECEs are responsible for recording information in daily log books for other staff or government officials to read and review. They must also locate information in lists, scanning for contact information or names of people authorized to pick-up children, and for daily review of allergies and medications.

### **Writing**

Writing occurs on a daily basis beginning with the correct printing of children's names. ECEs write notes to parents informing them about their child's day or describing an accident that may have occurred. During curriculum planning, ECEs record learning activities, scribe stories that are told to them by children and create bulletin boards that display the activities that children have been involved with.

### **Numeracy**

Measuring ingredients for cooking and making play dough, measuring dosages of children's medication, mixing sanitizing solution and estimating the amount of snack to prepare are just a few ways that numeracy is used by an ECE. What is essential is the ability to keep track of the number of children and whether the staff child ratios are being met.

### **Oral Communication**

It is important to have strong listening skills and to be able understand and decipher messages that may be left by parents. Just as essential is the ability of ECEs to comfort and guide children in a positive way, teaching concepts, singing songs and providing positive directions to children using inclusive language.

## **Thinking**

ECEs must be able to logically think through situations to quickly make decisions when children's health and safety is at risk. It is essential to develop problem solving skills that can be used not only with co-workers but also when assisting children in creating amicable solutions to challenges they face. ECEs are also instrumental in helping children with appropriate choices when they offer options that are developmentally appropriate and monitor children's comprehension of language and their understanding of questions and tasks they are given.

## **Digital Technology**

Over the past 10 years there has been exciting changes in the way ECEs document observations of children. To complement their objective notes ECEs are using photos and videos to record and document the development of each child and the activities that children are participating in. With the use of personal computers and tablets in the centre, ECEs are able to research and access online information with children extending their learning opportunities and promoting development

## **Working with Others**

ECEs that find employment in a group setting work in partnership with parents, other staff and community professionals that support children in the centre. ECEs plan the children's curriculum as a team setting goals and organizing learning activities. Most programs have monthly staff meetings and communicate frequently to ensure a quality environment is provided.

## **Continuous Learning**

ECEs in Manitoba are continuously learning from their interactions with co-workers, from researching resources and new activities and by participating in workshops and conferences. This is supported with government's recommendation that all ECEs participate in a minimum of 24 hours of professional development each year to keep them current in curriculum approaches, theories of development and the changing climate of early childhood in our province and across Canada.

## Task #1 Digital Technology, Reading, and Document Use

Unsure if working with young children is for you? In addition to the essential skills required by an early childhood educator, there are many personal characteristics that make an individual suitable for working with children. Visit [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) to view the career profiles of two ECEs. What are the personal characteristics described by Harriette and Sheldon?

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## Task #2 Reading, Numeracy, Thinking, and Digital Technology

The Province of Manitoba licenses and regulates day care centres and has determined the number of qualified or trained staff (ECE II or ECE III) that must be counted in the staff to child ratio for programs. Visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/elccmanual> to access the Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres. Locate Section V: Staff Qualifications.

- a) To meet the licensing regulation, what is the percentage of staff in a full time child care centre that must be qualified to be counted in ratio?

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- b) If a centre had 8 staff, how many qualified ECE IIs or ECE IIIs would they need to employ?

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### **Task #3 Digital Technology, Continuous Learning, and Reading**

You are a recent graduate of ATC's early childhood educator program. The director at the centre where you were completing your work experience has offered you a summer job. The only condition is that you attend the Provincial child care conference that is held in Manitoba every May. What is the name of the organization the hosts the child care conference?

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### **Task #4 Reading, Document Use, Thinking, and Oral Communication**

For the safety of children, centres have policies that require parents to provide the names of all people authorized to pick-up children from the day care.

Today, an elderly woman arrives at the day care. Bethany one of the four year olds sees the woman at the door and begins to squeal with excitement. "Grandma's here, my grandma is picking me up today"

This is the first time you have seen this woman, so in following policy you ask for her name and cross check the list of authorized people that mom has provided. Her name is not on the list, but Bethany clearly recognizes her as her grandmother. What do you do? Do you release Bethany into the care of her grandmother? Explain your answer.

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### **Task #5 Numeracy, Document Use, Reading, and Writing**

Centres use a solution of household bleach and water to sanitize toys and equipment in the day care. To prepare the bleach solution, mix 1 part bleach to 100 parts water. Calculate how much bleach would be needed in 500 ml of water.

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### **Task #6 Numeracy, Document Use, Reading, and Thinking**

You have been asked to make a double batch of “Gak” or silly putty for one of the children’s activities this afternoon.

Gak

Mix 1 cup of water with 1 cup of white glue

Add a couple of drops of food colouring

Mix 1 1/3 cups of warm water with 4 Tbsp of Borax.

Mix until the Borax is dissolved.

Pour the glue mixture into the Borax mixture and fold gently until

Remove from bowl onto a hard surface and knead for several minutes

Pour out remaining water solution.

a) Using the recipe above, calculate the total amount of each ingredient that will be required.

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b) The children have requested purple Gak. What colours will you mix to make purple?

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**Task #7 Digital Technology, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication, Thinking, Continuous Learning, Working with Others**

You work at a centre in rural Manitoba. Recently the children have spotted a Bald Eagle that is nesting in a treed area not far from the playground. They have been asking many questions about why the bird sits in the tree, what it eats and how big it is. Last week your director purchased a tablet for you to use to do research with the children at the centre.

Taking their lead, and following their interest in learning more about eagles, make a list of all the things that children could learn from this investigation.

Find 2 websites that you could use as resources to help teach children about eagles.

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**Task #8 Numeracy, Thinking, Working with Others**

The child to staff ratio for a mixed age group of preschool children is 1 staff for every 8 children. Regulations state that centres must maintain ratios to ensure the safety of children.

At your centre you work in a room with one other staff and a group of 16 children. Usually half the group is gone by 3:45 and you have the opportunity to help do some of the clean up before your shift ends at 4:30 leaving your co-worker to close up the centre. Today, due to weather conditions, parents are later than usual picking up their children. It is now 4:30 and your shift is over, however there are still 11 children at the day care.

Do you leave? Explain your answer. If you choose to stay, how many children would have to be picked up before you could leave?

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### Task #9 Numeracy, Document Use and Writing

When children arrive at the centre they must be signed in with the correct time.

Circle the correct time

- a. 8:00
- b. 8:47
- c. 12:08
- d. 12:40



### Task #10 Oral Communication, Thinking and Working with Others

When working with children it is important to give positive directions. We want to tell children “what to do” and provide them with logical, positive reasons for the direction.

We are trying to eliminate negative language such as “No”, “Don’t” and “Shouldn’t” from our vocabulary when guiding children’s actions.

Change the following “Negative” Directions to a positive one and provide a reason that is logical and accurate.

Example

Negative Direction    Don’t spill your juice

Rewritten:                    Hold your cup with both hands    So your juice will stay in the cup

1. Don’t talk with your mouth full

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2. You shouldn’t stand on chairs

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3. Don’t rip the pages in the book

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### **Task #11 Numeracy, Thinking and Working with Others**

You are the ECE that has opened the day care centre this morning. It is 8:15 and you have just had the 8<sup>th</sup> child signed in to the centre. Just as the last parent leaves, Colin and his dad arrive. If Colin is signed in, it will mean you are over the staff child ratio of 1:8. The next staff person is not scheduled to start their shift until 8:30. How long will Colin's dad have to wait at the centre before he can leave Colin in the care of the ECEs and go to work?

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### **Task # 12 Oral Communication and Thinking**

In early childhood it is important to use open-ended questions. This is a technique that allows children to give their opinions or share their ideas without having one "right" answer. Come up with two open-ended questions you could use in the following situation.

A group of children are at the water table with an assortment of materials that include measuring cups, and spoons, containers and bottles of different sizes and shapes, funnels, corks, sponges.

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### **Task #13 Numeracy and Thinking**

You are planning a field trip for the school age children you are working with. It will cost a total of \$150.00 to rent a school bus to transport the children to a farm just outside the city. Your plan is to expose the children to working on a farm. They will spend the day bottle feeding the new baby lambs, will help sheer sheep and collect eggs from the chickens. The day will end with a wagon ride through the trails on the farm. The owners of the farm have offered to feed the children lunch. Parents have decided rather than take the money out of the centre's program budget; they would contribute money towards the cost of the bus rental. You will be taking 20 children and 3 staff. How much will you need to collect from each family to cover the cost of the school bus?

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## **Task #14 Writing, Thinking, Digital Technology and Working with Others**

It's October, there is snow on the ground and the temperature continues to get colder. The Provincial regulations require day care centre staff to take children outside daily weather permitting.

Write a message that you will post on the parent bulletin board reminding families to bring suitable outdoor clothing. Be specific about the clothing items that they should send for their child. You can be visually creative in how you present the information to parents. (Drawing pictures or using clip art is an acceptable way to help reinforce your message)

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## **Task #15 Numeracy, Reading and Thinking Skills**

There are 32 children at day care today. Because there is a wind chill factor of -42, and it is too cold to go outside to play, the staff have decided to divide the children into smaller groups and separate them into other spaces.

1 staff takes 8 children to the gym area

2 children are sent to spend time in the toddler room

1 staff takes 8 children to spend time in the Before & After School room.

How many children will that leave in the preschool room with you?

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## Task #16 Reading, Document Use, Thinking

Below is a food label.

Two of the children at your centre have either a food allergy or food intolerance. Baily is allergic to nuts and eggs, and Caleb has an intolerance to cow's milk.

Read the food label. Can Baily and Caleb eat this food?

**INGREDIENTS: WATER, CHICKEN STOCK, ENRICHED PASTA (SEMOLINA WHEAT FLOUR, EGG WHITE SOLIDS, NIACIN, IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE [VITAMIN B1], RIBOFLAVIN [VITAMIN B2] AND FOLIC ACID), CREAM (DERIVED FROM MILK), CHICKEN, CONTAINS LESS THAN 2% OF: CHEESES (GRANULAR, PARMESAN AND ROMANO PASTE (PASTEURIZED COW'S MILK, CULTURES, SALT, ENZYMES), WATER, SALT, LACTIC ACID, CITRIC ACID AND DISODIUM PHOSPHATE), BUTTER (PASTEURIZED SWEET CREAM [DERIVED FROM MILK] AND SALT), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, SALT, WHOLE EGG SOLIDS, SUGAR, DATEM, RICE STARCH, GARLIC, SPICE, XANTHAN GUM, CHEESE FLAVOR (PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN OIL, FLAVORINGS AND SMOKE FLAVORING), MUSTARD FLOUR, ISOLATED SOY PROTEIN AND SODIUM PHOSPHATE.**

Circle Yes you would feed them this food, or No it is not safe for them to eat.

Baily            Yes            No

Caleb            Yes            No

## Answers

### Task #1

Flexible, good communicator (speaking and listening), organized, creative, imaginative, patient, dedicated

### Task #2

a) Two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of all staff who care for children in a full-time child care centre and are included in the staff to child ratio, shall meet the requirements of an ECE II or III.

b) two thirds would be 5.3. The centre would need to round up to 6 qualified ECEs.

### Task #3

Manitoba Child Care Association

### Task #4

You cannot release Bethany without consent of one of her parents.

You should explain to grandma that you will try to contact mom or dad by phone to get approval and explain that it is to keep children safe while in your care.

When you successfully reach mom or dad by phone, ask for the name of grandma and a description of her, and ask for permission to release Bethany to her.

Have mom/dad repeat the name to a second staff person.

Check the identification of grandma.

### Task #5

To prepare the bleach solution, mix 5 ml of bleach with 500 ml of water

### Task #6

a)  $4\frac{2}{3}$  cups of water

2 cups White Glue

8 Tbsp Borax

b) Blue and Red

Task #7

<http://www.hancockwildlife.org/index.php?topic=cam-sites>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/birds/info/Eagle.shtml>

Bald Eagles

Habitat – where they live, what their nest is made of

Body Parts – Wings, feathers, talons, beak, and eyes (sense of sight)

Flight – how fast

Swim?

Prey – what they eat, how they find food

Life span – how long they live

Task #8

No, leaving the centre would make the remaining staff over ratio with children. You will have to stay until at least 3 more children are picked up to go home.

Task #9

a) 8:00

Task #10

1. Swallow what's in your mouth so I can understand what you are saying.
2. Sit on the chair, I worry you could fall and hurt yourself.
3. Turn the pages gently so other people will be able to enjoy the book.

Task #11

Colin's dad will have to wait 15 minutes before he can leave for work.

Task #12

Open ended questions should start with an invitation for children to not only speak

What do you think will happen if you fill the pail with corks?

What are the different ways you could fill the bottle with water?

Why doesn't the sponge sink when it is full of water?

Task #13

\$150.00 divided by 20 children \$7.50 collected for each child.

Parents would cover the cost of the 3 staff that will be supervising the field trip.

Task #14

Your message should be positive, informative and include the specific items of outdoor clothing children will need to stay warm while playing in the snow.

It's getting colder outside!

Please bring warm outdoor clothing so your child can enjoy the change of seasons.



Remember: Snow pants and jacket, warm boots, 2 pairs of mittens, a hat or balaclava and a scarf or neck warmer.

Thank you

Task #15

14 children will remain in the preschool room.

Task #16

Baily No

Caleb No