

CEC ASSESSMENT #1: CONTENT BASED ASSESSMENT
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

a. A brief description of the assessment and its use in the program

Rhode Island does not require a universal assessment specific to content in special education.

b. A description of how this assessment specifically aligns with CEC Standards.

Candidates enrolled in the M.Ed. in Early Childhood demonstrate the culmination of learning in their last semester of coursework through their comprehensive examination. The examination consists of five questions that focus on different aspects of professional practice in educating students with severe disabilities. Candidates are provided four hours to complete the assessment.

The Comprehensive Examination in Early Childhood Special Education addresses the CEC standards presented below.

Comprehensive Examination
Early Childhood Special Education
Rhode Island College

- 1. An extensive literature exists on the efficacy of providing early intervention and preschool education for young children with disabilities and vulnerabilities and their families. Present a summary of key studies (i.e. specific references) conducted within the last 20 years that have focused on vulnerable children and their families with particular attention to environmentally at risk and low birth weight children. Conclude your presentation with identifying and describing those features of programs that repeatedly have been proven to be associated with favorable outcomes in young children.**
- 2. The concepts of risk and resiliency are essential to understanding the developmental pathway of infants and preschool children. Identify and describe factors that have been reported in numerous studies to either elevate or modulate a child's risk for poor developmental and school outcomes. Discuss the implications of these factors for both the assessment and program planning processes.**
- 3. Contemporary practice in early childhood special education suggests that the assessment process should include multiple and varied sources of information gathered from both from children and their families. Identify alternative sources of information, both quantitative and qualitative, that should be represented in a comprehensive evaluation process that ensures valid, meaningful, useful information.**
- 4. The concept of family-centeredness represents a continuum of values, beliefs, and practices that influence how early childhood programs are designed and implemented. Identify four varying points on this continuum and describe how each position affects decision making and engagement of families in the process of early childhood education.**
- 5. Organizing and implementing a preschool classroom for children with and without disabilities is a multi-dimensional challenge. Identify the critical elements that must be attended to in creating a responsive program for young children and their families. Factors that should be included in your presentation are: assessment components and process; formulation of IEPs that integrate ELS and parent views; organization of the classroom environment; integration of therapists; options and opportunities for families; child progress monitoring strategies; and planning for transitions.**

CEC Standard #1: Foundations.

The written comprehensive exam requires the student to integrate knowledge derived from all academic courses to respond to practical, field-based challenges in early childhood special education. More specifically, students need to document and describe models and philosophies that form the basis of special education practice (ICC1K1) and the evolution of services and programs for children with disabilities and vulnerabilities and their families (ECSEK1). Students are also required to present a coherent description of the issues in the definition and identification of children with disabilities and vulnerabilities (ICC1K5). Finally, documentation must be provided pertaining to the essential role of families in the special education process (ICC1K7) and the potential impact of cultural differences and beliefs between professionals and families (ICC1K10).

Question #1 in the exam corresponds with the above Standards.

CEC Standard #2: Development and Characteristics of Learners.**CEC STANDARD #3: Individual Learning Differences.**

Students must present information on the biological and environmental factors that affect pre-, peri-, and post-natal development (ECSE2K2) and the impact of medical conditions that affect both a child and the family (ECSE2K4 and ECSE2K5). In creating valid assessment and intervention systems, students must present information that describes the factors that affect the mental health and social/emotional development of young children (ECSE2K6). In their presentation, students are required to identify specific disabilities including their etiology, characteristics, and implications for development and learning (ECSE2K3). A common theme that must be expressed in all of the student's responses include the critical role that families assume in supporting development (ICC2K4) and unique characteristics of the family that affect the development of children and the formulation of service plans (ICC2K3). For Individual Learning Differences (Standard #3), the impact of social and physical environments for learning must be addressed (ECSE3K2) as well as the influence of varying cultural perspectives and their influence on both child development and family service plans (ICC3K4).

Questions # 1, 2 and 3 in the exam corresponds to the above Standards.

CEC Standard #4: Instructional Strategies.**CEC Standard #5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions.**

Students are requested in the comprehensive exam to present and describe the organization and implementation of an inclusive classroom that is founded on solid research knowledge (ICC4K1). In responding, students must describe how they will plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum for both children and families (ECSE4S1) and facilitate child-initiated development and learning (ECSE4S2). In their response, a description of methods of adaptation and accommodation to suit individual child needs must be presented ((ICC4S3). A common theme that must also be address pertains to social skills development and the acquisition of conflict resolution and emotions management skills (ECSE4S5 and ECSE4S8).

With respect to Learning Environments and Social Interactions (standard #5), again, social skills development must be documented (ICC5K5). Moreover, students must present a detailed plan for the design of learning environments that are child- centered (ICC5S4), include the selection of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences (ECSE5S1), and provide a stimulus rich environment that is adapted to individual child needs (ECSE5S5). Finally, to support the theme of inclusion and meaningful participation, students are expected to describe the creation of learning environments that use peer models and proximity to promote appropriate social interactional skills (ECSE5S4).

Questions # 4 and 5 correspond to the above Standards.

CEC Standard #7: Instructional Planning.

CEC Standard #8: Assessment.

In responding to the comprehensive exam questions, students must demonstrate knowledge of the connection between assessment data and education and service plans (ECSE7K3). Data derived from functional assessments must be presented (ICC7S4). Moreover, students must describe the process used to apply and translate assessment data to create individualized, developmentally appropriate curriculum (ECSE7 S2) that also include provisions to engage and influence caregiver behaviors (ECSE7S6).

With respect to Standard #8, the student must describe the uses and limitations of formal measures (ICC8K4), reflect an understanding of the psychometric properties of formal measures (ICC8S2), present a decision making process that translate data into meaningful goals (ICC8S5), and ensures that decision making actively engages families and primary caretakers (ECSE8K1). Students must also demonstrate their understanding and commitment o actively engage families in the assessment process, use family priorities and needs in decision making and plan formulation, and gather information from multiple sources and informants (ECSE8S2 and ECSE8S6). Finally, students must demonstrate and describe their commitment to using child and family strengths as the basis for service plan development (ECSE8S1, ECSE8S9 and ECSE8S2).

Questions # 3, 4 and 5 correspond to the above Standards.

c. Brief analysis of data findings.

Thirteen teacher candidates completed the M.Ed. in Early Childhood Special Education program within the last three academic years (2007-2009). Overall, students demonstrated a solid foundation of knowledge, and their ability to apply this knowledge, in the areas of assessment, program development and management, and family-centeredness.

d. Interpretation of how data provides evidence for meeting standards.

Questions on the written comprehensive examination coincide perfectly with the referenced CEC Standards. More precisely, the question on assessment methods and strategies (#3) measures a student's knowledge of not only Assessment (CEC 8) but also Individual Differences (CEC 3) and Child Development (CEC2). Exam Question #5 on organizing and implementing programs maps onto CEC Standards 4 (Instructional Strategies), 5 (Environment/ Social Interaction, and 7 (Instructional Planning). Exam Question #4 on family centeredness coincides with CEC Standards 4 (Instructional Strategies), 5 (Environment/ Social Interaction), 7 (Instructional Planning) and 8 (Assessment). Exam Question #1 requires the student to demonstrate knowledge of current research on child identification and program efficacy, and as such, establishes the student's core knowledge foundation (CEC 1: Foundations).

Grading Rubric for Comprehensive Examination in Early Childhood Special Education

1. Program Efficacy Literature		Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
CEC 1: Foundations		Description is vague and provides information from limited perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description is clearly presented Information is provided from a variety of perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of is clearly presented and detailed Impact on families, service delivery, schools, and the community are included. Information is provided from a variety of perspectives Description supported by legislation and research supporting evidence-based practice
2. Factors in Child Development				
CEC 2: Child Development CEC 3: Individual Differences		Description is vague and provides information from limited perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive list of factors is partially described Both biological and ecological factors are partially included 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors are thoroughly described (both biological and ecological) Many examples are provided that address the importance of both child risk and resiliency
3. Assessment				
CEC 2: Child Development CEC 3: Individual Differences CEC 7: Instructional Planning CEC 8: Assessment		Description is vague and provides information from limited perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description is clearly presented Description presents most key principles of effective educational programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instruction is based on individual needs/strengths, guided by student progress, and involves the family in the process Incorporates social skill development Families are involved and considered equal partners in decisions
4. Family-Centeredness		Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
CEC 4: Instructional Strategies CEC 5: Environment/Social Interaction CEC 7: Instructional Planning CEC 8: Assessment		Description is vague and provides information from limited perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of concepts is clearly presented Evidence of student's ability to translate concepts into practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student discloses thorough understanding of family-centeredness concepts with illustrations Student presents alternative ideas for translating concepts into options and opportunities for families
5. Organizing/Implementing Programs		Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
CEC 4: Instructional Strategies CEC 5: Environment/Social Interaction CEC 7: Instructional Planning CEC 8: Assessment		Description is vague and provides information from limited perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of inclusion is included. Rationale is included but may lack depth or strategies are superficial without detailed strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion is defined for students consistent with current professional practice and policy A rationale/philosophy for including students with disabilities in regular education settings is described fully with respect to many perspectives (peers, legislation, culture, policy, personal right) A rationale for using the general curriculum as a basis for education is described fully Practical strategies are described with examples that demonstrate reasonable, functional, and useful ways to implement inclusion. Detailed analysis of personal effectiveness in implementing inclusion is provided with clear strategies for "next steps"

Data Table
M.Ed. in Special Education: Early Childhood Special Education
Assessment #1: Content Based Assessment
Comprehensive Examination in Early Childhood Special Education

	Spring 2007 N=2			Fall 2007 N=4			Spring 2008 N=2			Fall 2008 N=1			Spring 2009 N=1		
	U	A	T	U	A	T	U	A	T	U	A	T	U	A	T
Question 1: Program Efficacy Literature		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		3 (75%)	1 (25%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		1 (100%)			1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Question 2: Factors in Child Development		1 (33%)	1 (33%)		2 (50%)	2 (50%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		1 (100%)			1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Question 3: Assessment		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		2 (50%)	2 (50%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		1 (100%)			1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Question 4: Family Centeredness		2 (100%)			3 (75%)	1 (25%)		2 (100%)				1 (100%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Question 5: Organizing/ Implementing Programs		1 (50%)	1 (50%)		2 (50%)	2 (50%)			2 (100%)			1 (100%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)

U = Unacceptable A=Acceptable T=Target