Pedagogical Experts

In order for teachers to become pedagogical experts they need to develop the following: 1) a deep understanding for the subject matter knowledge involved in early childhood instruction, 2) an ability to utilize a variety of effective and equitable teaching approaches in the classroom, and 3) teachers must be able to utilize these understandings to adapt instruction to best meet the academic needs of their students.

The notion of “pedagogical content knowledge” (PCK) articles the difficult terrain that teachers must negotiate between their content understanding and their pedagogical approach (Shulman, 1987). This construct of PCK speaks directly to the complexity of expert teaching in that it is not enough to merely have a strong grasp of content or pedagogy, rather “the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy” (Shulman, 1987, p. 15). PCK is steeped in the practices of the classroom teacher and includes a variety of both theoretical and practical approaches, which are designed to meet the needs of all children. Furthermore, teachers must be able to utilize these understandings to equitably assess and evaluate the learning and growth of their students within particular subject areas.

In addition, our pre-service teachers are engaged in inquiry-based coursework so that their lesson planning, across the content areas, evidences inquiry-based involvements for young children that:

- are inviting, motivating and creative
- invite exploration, inquiry, hands-on and minds-on investigations
- promote thinking, problem-solving and theory building
- encourage communication and sharing
- provide multiple modes of representation
- evidence current thinking in each content area.