

Guide to Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Administrators

This document is a guide to *Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Administrators*. The framework is based on the core leadership competencies for Minnesota administrative licenses, which is part of Minnesota Rule 3512.0510. Also included in the framework are standards from the publication, *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015* (National Policy Board for Educational Administration). This guide contains additional resources and information that may be beneficial to early childhood administrators.

The quality of an early childhood education program is largely dependent on an often overlooked group of professionals: school or program leaders. After teachers, research shows that school leaders are the greatest in-school factor impacting student achievement.

- Lieberman, p. 5

Why is this guide needed?

Research and anecdotal evidence tell us that school leaders play a critical role influencing school quality and student outcomes. However, when it comes to the administration of early childhood programs, there is no formal training or professional development required. Due to the recognized importance and impact of high-quality early childhood programs and services, it is imperative that the preparation, development, and support of early childhood administrators and leaders is prioritized.

Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Administrators describes what administrators need to know and do in order to effectively lead and administer programs and services for young children, parents, and families. It is intended to help administrators understand their roles and responsibilities, while also providing a resource to help administrators assess their work and plan areas of growth and improvement.

For whom is the companion guide written?

This guide is for all adults who lead and/or administer early childhood programs and services. The competencies apply to administrators and leaders at all levels. This initial version will be better suited for administrators of school-based programs, but future versions are planned that will better address the responsibilities of administrators of other early childhood programs, like child care centers, Head Start programs.

Who are administrators of early childhood programs?

Administrators may hold titles like coordinators, directors, or managers and they may work in a variety of settings and programs. Moreover, they may serve a primary role or a supporting role (e.g., Principal, Director of Teaching and Learning, etc.). Rather than focusing on titles, it is recommended that districts focus on the roles and responsibilities of all of those involved, directly and indirectly, in administering early childhood programs and services.

Early childhood administrators are responsible for the overall operation of their programs and services. The roles and responsibilities of early childhood administrators are diverse, ranging from complete responsibility for program operations to shared responsibilities of specific operations or programs. Administrative roles may include managing the school/program, providing instructional and program leadership, and human resources. Among many other things, administrators are responsible for budgets, the safety of children, compliance to federal and state regulations, staffing, parent and family involvement, and collaborating with and involving community partners.

What competencies are needed to administer high-quality early childhood programs?

This section provides an overview of the organization of this guide. There are three key things to know about the organization of this guide. First, it is divided into the same areas as the core leadership competencies for Minnesota administrative licenses. Below are the thirteen core leadership competencies and the three specific leadership competencies:

Core Leadership Competencies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Leadership B. Organizational Management C. Diversity Leadership D. Policy and Law E. Political Influence and Governance F. Communication G. Community Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. Curriculum Planning and Development for the Success of All Learners I. Instructional Management for the Success of All Learners J. Human Resource Management K. Values and Ethics of Leadership L. Judgment and Problem Analysis M. Safety and Security
In addition to demonstrating all core competencies listed above, a person who serves as an early childhood administrator should demonstrate competence in the following specific areas:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Instructional Leadership B. Monitor Student and Participant Learning C. Early Childhood and Family Programs Leadership 	

Second, to show progression in each competency, three levels are used: 1) Explores, 2) Implements, and 3) Designs, Evaluates, and Leads. Competency levels are described in the next section.

Third, the ten domains of the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015* are used to supplement the content areas of the core leadership competencies. Below are the ten domains:

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

Descriptions of Competency Levels

Each of the three competency levels are described below. Refer to these to help generate your content for the competencies.

Explores

Administrators at this level are relatively new to early childhood program administration. At this level, people observe or learn from other district staff and colleagues as they strive to learn the responsibilities of their work. They rely on previous experiences to help develop an understanding of their role as an administrator. These administrators are exploring concepts and beginning to recognize the elements and demands of program administration as well as the competencies they need to effectively manage and lead both staff and programs.

Administrators at this level typically rely on prescribed procedures and routines much like a technician. They need support and direction as they learn to handle daily challenges, to reflect on what is being experienced and to learn to connect their experiences and knowledge to current understandings and best practices.

Implements*

Administrators at level two know what to expect of program administration and how to engage others in the process. They are beginning to focus on needs at different levels (e.g., staff, programs, community, etc.). They are beginning to understand program and system needs and the human resources needed to meet those needs. They do more problem solving at this level than at the first level. These administrators reflect on their own experiences and performance in order to improve their practices and programs.

At this level, administrators articulate their role and responsibilities. They share information with stakeholders about program assessment and how it is connected to program and district goals and priorities. These administrators establish programs that ensure children and families are safe, healthy, culturally and linguistically responsive, and that programs are in compliance with statutes, rules, and mandates. They also ensure

all staff participate in professional development activities relevant to their needs as a learner and program needs. nThese administrators see the parts to all the programs and services they administer and how they comprise the whole. They recognize individual differences in staff and respond appropriately. These administrators are beginning to see the parts to all the programs and services they administer or coordinate.

* In almost all of the competencies, the Implements level description is a copy of the core leadership competencies for Minnesota administrative licenses.

Designs, Evaluates, and Improves

Administrators at this level are highly involved in professional practice and decision making. They, along with staff, design learning environments and experiences. They inform and respond to federal, state, and local initiatives. They collaborate with others to create or adapt programming to meet the needs of all children and families.

They are able to articulate their philosophy and vision and demonstrate how it influences and guides their knowledge and practice as an administrator. They often mentor others who have taken on leadership roles in the district and/or new administrators in other districts. They take responsibility for keeping up-to-date on research, linking and aligning their reading and practice to best practices and K-12. These administrators continue to set goals for themselves in their professional development plan (CEU's, credential, certificates, etc.).

These administrators communicate and collaborate with families. They are knowledgeable of community partners and how to coordinate services for children and families as needed. They use formal and informal means to assess and improve the program.

These administrators see the educational system as a coherent whole and understand the role and impact of numerous parts, especially the programs and services they administer. They recognize individual differences in staff, how to foster teamwork, and how to best develop each staff member as well as their staff as a whole.

How to Use the Framework

Each section of the Framework includes five parts:

1. Competency (from the core leadership competencies) with competency levels.
2. Standard (if relevant to the Competency) from the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015*.
3. Questions to prompt consideration of the competency.
4. Self-Assessment or Goals
5. Goals and Resources

Below is an example of a competency and standard in the Framework. The examples serve to demonstrate how one may complete the Early Childhood Knowledge and Competency Framework for Administrators Plan. Individuals, working alone or with others, should determine which competencies they want to complete. Also, consider whether you are self-assessing or setting goals, or a combination of both.

Content Area 1.A: Leadership

A person shall demonstrate competency in leadership by:

Code	Explores	Implements	Designs, Evaluates, and Improves
1.A.1	Learning about ways to assess and improve school and program culture and climate.	Assessing school and program culture and climate.	Collaboratively assessing and improving culture and climate.
Q:	<i>What is the difference between culture and climate? What are some strategies for understanding and assessing the climate and culture of a school? What are some strategies for improving school culture? How do you know if strategies and plans have been successful?</i>		
S-A or Goals	<i>Met with building principal to see how she assesses school culture and climate. Reviewed relevant literature and reading book about school culture and climate.</i>		
1.A.2	Learning about ways to provide purpose and direction for individuals and groups.	Providing purpose and direction for individuals and groups.	Evaluating and enhancing ways of providing purpose and direction for individuals and groups.
Q:	<i>What purpose and direction do you, or should you, provide to individuals and groups? Why? What are some ways to provide purpose and direction for individuals and groups? How do you know if you are effective at providing purpose and direction?</i>		
S-A or Goals		<i>We currently have a program handbook for staff. I meet with each staff member and with groups periodically to discuss purpose and direction to ensure alignment with program purpose and goals.</i>	
1.A.3	Exploring shared leadership and decision-making strategies.	Understanding and modeling shared leadership and decision-making strategies.	Evaluating and enhancing shared leadership and decision-making strategies.
Q:	<i>What is shared leadership and decision-making? What are the advantages and disadvantages of shared leadership and decision-making? What are some strategies for shared leadership and decision-making? How do you determine effectiveness?</i>		
S-A or Goals			<i>We currently have established leadership teams, which include processes for shared decision making. This year we are evaluating the function and performance of each leadership team. In addition to evaluating efficiency and effectiveness, we want to ensure that key stakeholders are involved, that there are no gaps, and that priorities are focused on.</i>

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

From the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015*.

- a) Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.
- b) In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success.
- c) Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the school's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.
- d) Strategically develop, implement, and evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the school.
- e) Review the school's mission and vision and adjust them to changing expectations and opportunities for the school, and changing needs and situations of students.
- f) Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the school and the community.
- g) Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership.

In the example above, the responses were an assessment of how one is demonstrating the competency. If professional development goals are not described in the competency section, they should be listed in the last section, "Goals and Resources."

Goals and Resources

The Goals and Resources section is where goals and resources should be described. Goals can be based on the competencies or the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*. List resources (e.g., human resources, literature, funds, etc.) needed or beneficial to the goal. Lastly, any relevant resources from professional literature or the Minnesota Department of Education is included in this section. Below is an example:

Goals and Resources for Competency A: Leadership

Resources

QUICK GUIDE: Administration and Supervision of Early Childhood Programs
School Culture Rewired

Goals

This year I will learn ways to assess and improve school culture. I plan on reading *School Culture Rewired* by Steve Gruenert and Todd Whitaker, and discussing it with our elementary principal. I will also articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define our school's culture.

Lastly, you should address how you will achieve your goal, including evaluation.

Content Area 6 – directors of early childhood and family programs.

In addition to the core competencies, administrators of early childhood and family programs should demonstrate competency in specific areas. In Minnesota Rule, subpart 1 is the core competencies for all administrative licenses. Subpart 2 is competencies in specific areas for superintendents, subpart 3 is principals, subpart 4 is directors of special education, and subpart 5 is directors of community education. A subpart 6 was added to the framework to include administrators of early childhood and family programs. Below is a competency from content area 6.C with examples of self-assessment.

Code	Explores	Implements	Designs, Evaluates, and Improves
6.C.1	Learning about program finance, including sources of revenue; expenditure classifications; generally acceptable accounting principles; and local, state, and federal finance calculations	Demonstrating knowledge of factors that affect program finance, including sources of revenue; expenditure classifications; generally acceptable accounting principles; and local, state, and federal finance calculations	Evaluating factors that affect program finance and making adjustments, revisions, and/or improvements.
Q:	<i>Learn about all sources of revenue, including federal, state, and local revenue. Learn about UFARS. What is your role in the components of program finance? What are your district procedures and policies for submitting and revising budgets? What are your district policies and procedures for purchasing and coding? How do you blend and braid funds? How do you evaluate and make improvements?</i>		
S-A or Goals	<i>Meeting with Community Education Director to learn how budgets work. Learning how to access funding reports and determine all funding sources and amounts. Learning about UFARS and processes for coding and reporting expenditures. Procurement process.</i>	<i>Access funding reports for all programs through MDE website. Know how to code and track expenditures through SMART Finance. Understand UFARS as it relates to program and object codes.</i>	<i>Evaluate all funding sources to ensure policies and procedures for blending and braiding funds are being met.</i>

Additional Resources and Information for Early Childhood Administrators

Below are some additional resources and information relevant to the work of early childhood administrators

1. LaRue Allen and Bridget B. Kelly, eds., *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (Washington, DC: National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, April 2015), 344-345.

Knowledge and Competencies for Leadership in Settings with Children Birth through Age 8

Practices to Help Children Learn

- Understanding the implications of child development and early learning for interactions between care and education professionals and children, instructional and other practices, and learning environments.
- Ability to keep current with how advances in the research on child development and early learning and on instructional and other practices inform changes in professional practices and learning environments.

Assessment of Children

- Knowledge of assessment principles and methods to monitor children's progress and ability to adjust practice accordingly.
- Ability to select assessment tools for use by the professionals in their setting.

Fostering a Professional Workforce

- Knowledge and understanding of the competencies needed to work with children in the professional setting they lead.
- Ability to use knowledge of these competencies to make informed decisions about hiring and placement of practitioners.
- Ability to formulate and implement policies that create an environment that enhances and supports quality practice and children's development and early learning.
- Ability to formulate and implement supportive and rigorous ongoing professional learning opportunities and quality improvement programs that reflect current knowledge of child development and of effective, high-quality instructional and other practices.
- Ability to foster the health and well-being of their staff and to seek out and provide resources that can help staff manage stress.

Assessment of Educators

- Ability to assess the quality of instruction and interactions, to recognize high quality, and to identify and address poor quality through evaluation systems, observations, coaching, and other professional learning opportunities.
- Ability to use data from assessments of care and education professionals appropriately and effectively to make adjustments to improve outcomes for children and to inform professional learning and other decisions and policies.

Developing and Fostering Partnerships

- Ability to support collaboration among the different kinds of providers under their leadership.
- Ability to enable interprofessional opportunities for themselves and their staff to facilitate linkages among health, education, social services, and other disciplines not under their direct leadership.
- Ability to work with families and support their staff to work with families.

Organizational Development and Management

- Knowledge and ability in administrative and fiscal management, compliance with laws and regulations, and the development and maintenance of infrastructure and an appropriate work environment.

2. Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Teachers

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/early/know/>

Six things every administrator should know about child development

1. Knowing ourselves is part of educating young children.

All adults have personal, family and cultural experiences and knowledge about young children. Educators build on what they already know and believe as they add experience and education. Education, experience and interactions with families and co-workers may challenge some early values and beliefs. Working with young children and their families can also bring up many emotions. Educators need to reflect on their own feelings, reactions and pay attention to underlying feelings as they decide how to connect old information with new.

2. Relationships are the heart of early learning experiences.

Relationships are critical to working effectively with young children and their families. Educators build relationships with children when they get to know each individual's likes and dislikes, needs and personality. Educators create a welcoming place where all children feel they belong and learn to welcome and include one another. When adults treat children with respect, they learn to respect themselves and one another. Building relationships with families takes time and planning. It is important to build a true partnership with families; one in which families and educators bring equal value to the relationship and respect one another's beliefs and practices.

3. All children need a rich, engaging environment that is physically and emotionally secure.

Nurturing and responsive care and education helps children develop secure and trusting relationships which support exploration and development. Interesting environments with clear boundaries help children explore and learn. Engaging environments nurture children of all ability levels as well as those with special needs. Consistent, nurturing routines help children build trust and independence, encourage secure attachments and support development and learning.

4. Young children develop in the context of their families, cultures and communities.

Young children learn by observing the important people in their lives. Their families' home cultures shape children's understanding of which emotions to express and how and when to express them, the rate at which they develop motor skills, the way they learn and process new information and the ways in which they use verbal language, facial expressions, gestures and silence to communicate. Culturally responsive educators honor children's cultural identities throughout daily practice, interactions and routines. Educators must make this effort with families from all cultural backgrounds (including their own) because each family expresses their culture in unique ways. Children's relationships with others impact their development.

5. Early childhood represents a period of rapid growth and development that is critical to the foundation of a healthy human being.

Young children are both competent and vulnerable. The care children receive during this critical period will have a powerful impact on how they view the world, relate to others and succeed as learners. Educators have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of

young children and their families. Children who receive nurturing, consistent care are more likely to thrive and become sociable, capable children who get along with others, demonstrate self-control and love learning. Development can be at risk not only by delay or disability, but also by a number of traumatic or stressful experiences. Nurturing and responsive care and education for children whose development may be at risk can help a child develop resilience and skills needed for success in school and in life.

6. Multiple abilities and skills are developing simultaneously in a child's early years.

Development is the result of the interaction between genes and experiences. Experiences and interactions make a difference in early brain development. Educators make many daily decisions about how and when to talk to children, which experiences to offer and when children are ready to take a new step in their development. Educators who know what is taking place during this time of change and growth are better equipped to support that growth. [Find more information about early brain development at the Center for the Developing Child.](#)

3. Abbie Lieberman (2017). *A Tale of Two Pre-K Leaders: How State Policies for Center Directors and Principals Leading Pre-K Programs Differ, and Why They Shouldn't.* New America

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/tale-two-pre-k-leaders/>