

Childcare Career Pathway Classes: 5 Free Student Activities for Your Program

Use the activities in this guide to introduce students to education and training, human growth and development, fundamentals of education professionals, and more.



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With about 56,821 jobs for childcare educators currently available¹, this is an in-demand career path that students should consider when thinking about their future job. We created this guide to help educators engage students in core childcare career pathway concepts.

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**Childcare
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Realityworks**

For additional lesson plans, free classroom guides, and more visit www.realityworks.com/resources/classroom-ideas

¹Early Childhood Teacher Trends." Zippia, www.zippia.com/early-childhood-teacher-jobs/trends/. Accessed 12 June 2024.

Education and Training Scenarios

Here are several free education and training scenarios you can use in to help build your students' soft skills and give them an idea of what careers in education and training are like. Use the scenarios as brief icebreaker or journaling activities, or choose one to read aloud to the class.



Interviewing

Scenario:

You are a preschool teacher. A student reports that another student hit her with a pencil and told her she was ugly. The student reporting this behavior tends to exaggerate the truth. Last week she said that someone shoved her in the hallway. After reviewing the video footage in the hallway, you see that the incident never occurred.

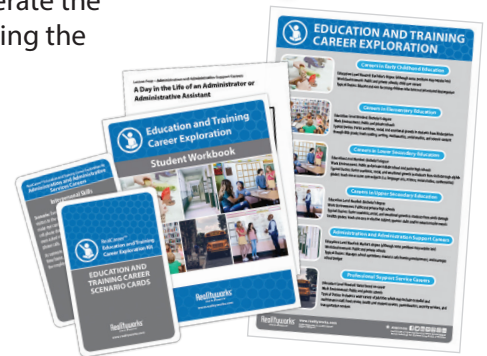
The student she is accusing is only three and is not as verbal as the reporting student. At this point, it's important to get the other student's story.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Accused student
- Reporting student
- Parents

Key questions

1. How can you interview a student who is less verbal?
2. How does the accusing student's past relate to this situation?
3. How should the parents be included in this discussion?



Using Technology

Scenario:

Your first-grade students typically use pencil and paper to complete their assignments. You have an evaluation coming up. From previous faculty meetings and conversations with your colleagues, it has become apparent that higher evaluations are only for teachers using technology to assess student learning.

The last time you tried to use technology to assess your students, they became frustrated. The assessment remained incomplete, and you feel that you wasted a lot of instructional time trying to teach students how to use the technology.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Students
- Evaluating supervisor

Key questions

1. Should you design an online assessment to use during your evaluation?
2. How should you explain your decision to use or not use technology with your first-grade students to your supervisor?
3. Would you recommend using technology with your students? Why or why not?

Education and Training Career Exploration



Presentation Skills

Scenario:

The local 4H organization asked you to help students prepare speeches for the upcoming competition. After discussing the competition with your students, many seventh- and eighth-grade students feel like they do not have the presentation skills to create an appropriate speech. Some students expressed that they would like to participate, but do not know how to begin.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Students
- The 4H organization

Key questions

1. How should you help prepare your students to present a speech?
2. Why are presentation skills important to include in your curriculum?
3. Is this request reasonable for a community organization to ask of a teacher?



Networking

Scenario:

As a member of the administrative team, you are asked to improve the positive news about the school district. To do this, you work with a public relations team to report school and community events via various media sources. In the past, it was mentioned that too many news stories focused on select students and staff members.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Other administrative service professionals
- Appropriate school staff and community members

Key questions

1. How should networking be used to cover events that include a wide variety of students and faculty members?
2. How might networking decrease the problems previously encountered via public relations news stories?
3. What tools will be the most beneficial in the networking process?

Learn more about our *Education and Training Career Exploration Kit* by visiting www.realityworks.com/product/education-and-training-career-exploration-kit

Human Growth and Development

Human growth and development classes are essential to future childcare workers. Activities that utilize visual, hands-on resources, like models and kits, can help engage students in key concepts.



Fetus Size Each Month

The following activity is designed to help students better understand fetal development stages and monthly development.

Try to find everyday objects that are the same size as an unborn infant at each month (approximate sizes listed below). Bring in one of each of the smallest items and place them in a plastic bag, one for each participant. If you have the Fetal Development Kit, display it along with the items. Sizes are approximate; measurements for months one through five are from crown (top of head) to rump (bottom), and measurements for months six through nine are from crown to heel.

- **Month 1:** ¼ inch (pea, one Red Hots candy, one round aspirin)
- **Month 2:** Almost 1 inch (large jelly bean, quarter, large grape)
- **Month 3:** A little over 2 inches (car key, a ¼ of a graham cracker)
- **Month 4:** 4 ½ inches (toilet paper tube)
- **Month 5:** 6 ½ inches (standard stapler, tape dispenser)
- **Month 6:** Almost 12 inches (1-foot ruler)
- **Month 7:** Almost 15 inches (loaf of standard, store-bought bread)
- **Month 8:** A little over 16 ½ inches (toy doll)
- **Month 9:** 19-13 inches (RealCare Baby® or similarly sized doll)

*Activity from
Realityworks'
Fetal
Development
Kit*



Have participants find and observe the objects that represent the embryo in each month. Give participants the Fetus Monthly Development information. Go through what is happening in each month, referring back to the size of the everyday objects to get an idea of what size it is when these developments are happening.

Learn more about our Fetal Development Kit by visiting
www.realityworks.com/product/fetal-development-kit

Instructor Information

Newborns need a lot of care, and most do not respond to the parent with big smiles and giggles until they are a couple of months old. Many young and especially teenage parents believe that an infant will love them back right away. An infant does bond with their parent, but a newborn is going to take much more than it gives back.



Brain development in infants

Most brain development happens after an infant is born. An infant has 100 billion brain cells at birth. Some of those cells already have pathways to each other to regulate breathing, heartbeat, and other life-sustaining functions. Other pathways that determine behavior, mental capacity, and emotional development must be made after birth.

A small child's brain is twice as active as an adult's. The pathways the young brain cells make with each other are formed primarily during the first three years of life. The experiences that an infant has every day help develop these pathways. The brain keeps track of which pathways are used most. If certain experiences are repeated many times, those pathways are more likely to remain strong throughout life.

If a pathway is not used regularly, the brain cells not used will deteriorate and disappear. This process is called "pruning."

Communication and language

To learn language, an infant must hear language. Many people think that talking to infants is not important since the infants cannot understand the words. Words and sounds heard during the first three years of life largely determine the adult vocabulary. Parents who read and talk to their infants are helping to develop very important language pathways in the brain.

After a while, the child will start to participate in the sharing of language – these initial "conversations" are very important. Even when infants are "babbling," they are repeating the sounds and syllables of words they hear. A caregiver's verbal response to babbling helps establish brain pathways about conversation and language.



Fetal Monthly Development

3rd Month

- Nostrils, mouth, lips, teeth buds, and eyelids form
- Fingers and toes are almost complete
- Biological gender is evident
- Heartbeat can be heard with a stethoscope
- All organs are present, though immature

4th Month

- Skin is less transparent
- Fine hair covers the entire body
- The fetus can suck its thumb, swallow, hiccup, and move around
- Facial features become clearer

5th Month

- Hair, eyelashes, and eyebrows appear
- Teeth continue to develop
- Organs are maturing
- Hands are able to grip
- The fetus becomes more active

6th Month

- Eyes open and close
- Muscles in the arms and legs strengthen
- Fat deposits begin to appear beneath wrinkly skin
- Breath movement begins

7th Month

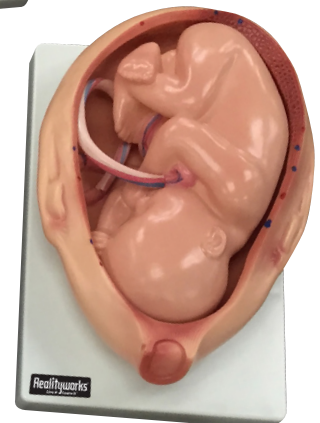
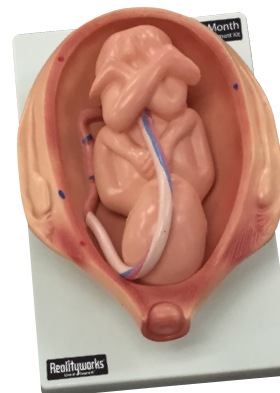
- A thick, white, protective coating called vernix covers the fetus
- Nervous, circulatory, and other systems mature
- Periods of fetal activities are followed by periods of rest and quiet

8th Month

- The fetus hears sounds and may be startled by sudden noise
- The fetus usually moves into a head- down position

9th Month

- Increase of fat under the skin makes the fetus look less wrinkled
- Fetal movement decreases with less room to move
- The fetus gains disease-fighting antibodies from the mother's blood
- The fetus descends lower into the pelvis, ready for birth



Fundamentals of Education Professions

Classes covering fundamental knowledge for childcare and education professionals are key to a successful childcare career pathway program. The goal of these classes is to teach important foundational skills relevant to childcare, including teaching pedagogy, learning environments, and legal issues.



Guidelines and Best Practices for Classroom Design

Knowing classroom design best practices helps participants understand the complexities involved in designing classrooms for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Give the Classroom Design with Learning Centers chart (next page) to each participant. Encourage participants to take notes as they research learning centers online. Suggest keyword searches such as “learning centers.”

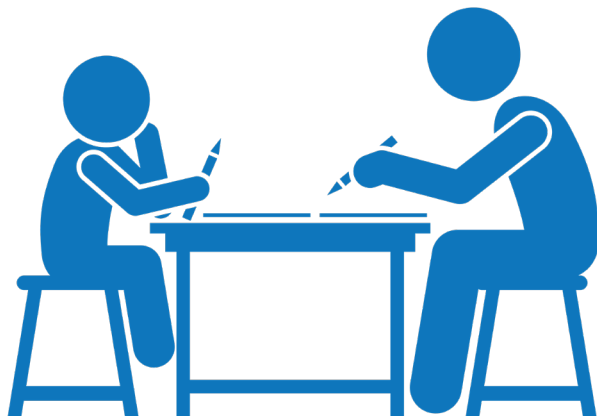
Have participants write the age group they are researching on their learning centers chart. Participants should identify as many different learning centers as they can. Share the following information with students:

Best Practices for Classroom Design

- Know child development milestones
- Use developmentally appropriate practices
- Observe, assess, and adapt
- Guide/model appropriate and positive behaviors
- Create an inclusive environment
- Stay up to date with research and practices

Successful Learning Centers...

- Organize the childcare space
- Increase exposure to different experiences
- Help ease transitions between activities
- Put decision-making in the hands of the child



Choosing Appropriate Learning Centers

- Creative art
- Dramatic play
- Science
- Manipulatives
- Constructive play
- Sand and water
- Math
- Language arts

Learn more about our Child Care Center Design Kit by visiting www.realityworks.com/product/child-care-center-design-kit

Name: _____ Class: _____

Class: _____

Age Group: _____

Classroom Design with Learning Centers

Instructions: Use the chart to record information that you would use to create your classroom design. There may be more boxes than you need for learning centers, depending on the age of the children in the classroom.

[illegible]

Child Development

Child development classes provide fundamental information for childcare professionals. Hands-on learning can help students understand key concepts, make learning more fun and assist in information retention.



The Developing Infant and Toddler

In this activity, participants learn about the various stages of infant and toddler development, and consider the various care needs, play ideas, and behavior appropriate for each stage of development. Explain to participants that child development is generally broken down into four different areas: physical, intellectual, emotional, and social.

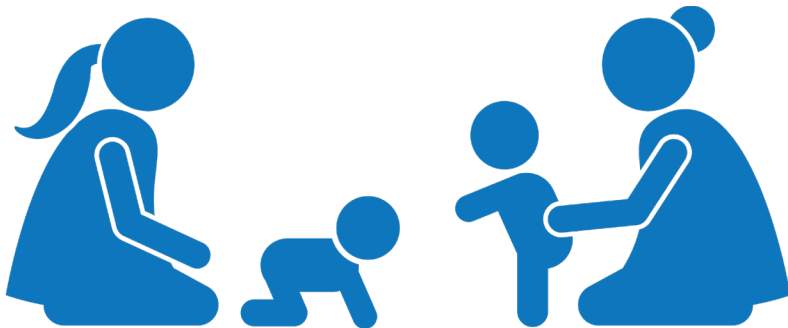
For this activity, we will look at development of infants and toddlers as they relate to those four areas. Also, when we consider ages and stages of child development, it is easier to group them according to a specific timeframe, such as infant or toddler. Pair participants up and give each participant a copy of the Ages and Needs worksheet (next page).

**Activity from
Realityworks'
RealCare
Baby 3**

Explain that for each age, students should provide:

- A fact for each area of development
- Two related care issues/needs, such as an infant must be carried from one location to another since they cannot walk
- Two ideas for play
- One or two ideas for helping improve behavior, if needed

Provide a few examples to help groups get started. Allow 10 minutes to complete the worksheet, then lead a class discussion, asking groups to share their ideas.



Learn more about our RealCare Baby
by visiting
www.realityworks.com/product/realcare-baby-3-simulator-with-storage-accessories

Name: _____

Class: _____

Age Group: _____

Ages and Needs

Instructions: For each of the following ages, list one fact for each area of development; two related care issues/needs; two ideas for play; and one or two ideas to help improve behavior, if needed.

Infant (0-12 months)

	Development	Care	Play
Physical			
Intellectual			
Emotional			
Social			

Toddler (12-36 months)

	Development	Care	Play
Physical			
Intellectual			
Emotional			
Social			

Application of Education Professions

It's important for our future childcare educators get hands-on opportunities to apply their skills. At this point, they've explored the career pathway and learned all the foundational knowledge. It's time for your students to show you what they can do and work on more advanced leadership soft skills.



Dreaming of a Childcare Center

In this activity, participants begin to formulate their ideas for a childcare center. Distribute the Childcare Center Dream Sheet (next page) to participants and read through the introduction together. Encourage and support the Big Questions brainstorming discussion to begin the activity. Allow participants work time and ask for volunteers to share their responses.

Activity from
Realityworks'
Child Care
Experience™
Program



Learn more about our Child Care Experience program by visiting
www.realityworks.com/product/child-care-experience

Name: _____

Class: _____

Age Group: _____

Childcare Center Dream Sheet

Big Question: Brainstorm with your classmates.

What does it take to open a childcare center?

Interview Questions: This can be done independently or as a partner activity. Imagine that you are thinking about opening your own childcare center. If you are working with a partner, use the questions to interview them. If you are working independently, interview yourself. Read each question and thoughtfully respond.

1. What would you name your childcare center? And why?

2. Where would it be located? (City, state, and where within the city)

3. What skills do think are necessary for the successful operation of a childcare center?

4. What skills do you have that would make you a great childcare professional?

5. What would your overall goal be for your childcare center?

6. What goals/expectations would you have for yourself?

7. What goals/expectations would you have for your staff?

8. What goals/expectations would you have for the children who will attend your childcare center?

More Resources from Realityworks

Free classroom posters:

Use our downloadable posters and infographics to generate discussions about a variety of career topics, including childcare and early childhood education.

Get your posters by visiting www.realityworks.com/resources/realityworks-interactive-posters

Childcare program implementation:

Use these resources to learn how our hands-on childcare teaching tools are engaging students, teaching foundational skills, and helping them discover childcare careers.

Learn more by visiting www.realityworks.com/childcare-programs-implementation



For pricing and ordering information, visit www.realityworks.com/product-category/fcs/childcare-education

