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To: Hillary Risler, Esq. Legislative Analyst, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis
Maine State Legislature

From: Dr. Janet Sortor, Vice President and Chief Academic Officer

RE: Physical Activity and Education Information for Educators

Date: December 20, 2019

A letter was sent by the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to the Maine Community College System as a result of LD 1343, *An Act To Improve Health Education and Physical Education in Schools*. While the bill itself was not passed into law, your committee felt that the lack of time children have historically been allowed for physical activity in schools to be an important issue that should be addressed. The Maine Community College System agrees, as does the accrediting agency for our Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Although we primarily focus on the early care and education setting, we also have programs that train Ed Techs and prepare students for transfer to K-12 baccalaureate education programs. Courses offered in the ECE program also serve as electives in the Education programs.

While only the ECE program at SMCC is accredited by NAEYC, all of the ECE programs offered across the System follow NAEYC's Five Standards for Initial Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs. Standard 5 addresses the content knowledge and resources in academic disciplines that must be included in ECE programs of study, including language and literacy; the arts – music, **creative movement, dance**, drama, visual arts; mathematics; science, **physical activity, physical education, health and safety**; and social studies. The campuses that offer K-12 education programs also include in them curriculum that addresses the importance of a healthy lifestyle and physical activity throughout the day.

I have included a representative sampling of the courses in the curriculum to illustrate how health and physical education are addressed and our commitment to the health of the children our graduates will educate.

Southern Maine Community College:

“The early childhood years include ages 0-8 years. Since physical development is essential to children's overall development and well-being, the ECE at SMCC program integrates physical development as well as pathways to good health into many courses.”—Rachel Parse, PhD. Chair, Education, Early Care and Education

ECED-100 Intro to Early Childhood Education

- This course is a survey of early childhood education. As such it integrates physical development as one of the four essential areas of development within the field. The other areas are cognitive, social-emotional, and language. Physical development includes the health and welfare of children including healthy eating habits and physical activity.

ECED-110 Child Development

- This course provides an overview of development for children 0-12 years of age. For each of the age ranges included in the course, students study physical development. Students learn about physical development and what is needed to promote healthy development. Topics of study include healthy eating, the need for physical activity, and impediments to healthy lifestyle choices.

ECED-150 Infant & Toddler Caregiving

- This course specifically focuses on supporting healthy development for infants and toddlers. Since physical development is one of the essential areas of development, students study how to support it through daily interactions and planned experiences.

ECED-250 Developing Curriculum for Young Children

- In this course, students learn how to plan appropriate and engaging curriculum for young children. While physical development is not a focus of the course, students are encouraged to think about how to integrate physical movement into all areas of curriculum to support children physical development as well as other areas of development.

ECED-225 Student Teaching Practicum I

- In this course, students put into practice their understanding of how to support children's healthy development and learning. Students develop an activity specifically to support healthy physical development.

Eastern Maine Community College:

“We are aware that many K-12 schools have reduced the amount of time devoted to physical activity, either in physical education or in recess time. We believe that regular physical activity is essential to healthy development and the absence of such activity can negatively impact all areas of learning. As a result, the importance of physical activity and how to incorporate that into educational plans and practice is highlighted in several courses we include in the teacher preparation program at EMCC.” –Jane Loxtercamp, Co-Chair, Education Department

ECE 110- Child and Adolescent Development

- The scope and sequence of physical development is taught and how physical development interacts with the other developmental domains and learning is emphasized. The role of nutrition in growth and development is discussed for all age groups.

ECE 117 Observing and recording

- Students complete focused observations on all areas of development, including physical activity. They write a developmental profile of the student they chose to observe and include information on the physical/motor domain and physical activity.

ECE 131 – Infant-Toddler Curriculum

- The concept of how to support physical activity in the infant-toddler classroom is integrated into many topics covered in the class. When high-quality environments are discussed we review specifically how they should be arranged and what types of toys and equipment should be available to support physical growth and activity. When students complete a classroom evaluation they address these areas.

- Best practices relative to nutrition, safety, and health are taught. Student work centers on translating this information into parent friendly language so they are prepared to support parents as their child's most important teacher.

ECE 220- Numeracy, Environments and Integrated Curriculum

- The same concepts of supporting physical activity in the classroom through planning the environment is covered for the preschool age child. Students demonstrate competence by completing a classroom design project. They also submit a weekly menu that demonstrates competence in planning nutritious meals for school settings
- An entire chapter is devoted to physical motor activities and how to integrate them into all classroom areas and subjects. In addition to this chapter we discuss resources such as Go Noodle.
- Students locate and teach their classmates a game that use large motor muscles to the class.

EDB 204- The Teaching Process

- Students are required to complete interest inventories with the students in their field placements and use this information to integrate their interests with active learning and lesson planning.
- Students explore instructional strategies that involve active learning. These include Inquiry Based Learning, Project Based Learning and Cooperative Learning to name a few. They are encouraged to use active learning when planning and presenting lessons.

EDB 221- Educational Psychology

- Students are required to identify strategies for encouraging the achievement of all students. We review programs such as Brain Gym and Brain Breaks as methods for increasing students' attention, behavior, and motivation all leading to increased academic achievement. I use several resources from the CDC when teaching this information.
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/classroom-pa.htm>

Kennebec Valley Community College:

“When I began my position here at KVCC my task was to bring the Family Learning and Nature Exploration Center to life. Part of its mission was to provide families an opportunity to come together with their children and participate in active experiences within nature that promote physical and nutritional well-being. Since its inception we have served over 150 families who come back each time excited about what outside, nature-based fun will come next. Alongside the creation of Discovery Groups, I edited the ECE courses to include more about the importance of nature-based play, physical health and well-being. I did not outline the underlying tone in each course that resonates the programs belief around these topics due to how lengthy the attachment would end up being. I did, however, highlight the major discussions, assignments and reflections that touch on specific touchpoints of physical movement and development.

Lastly, the annual symposium echoes the programs advocacy for nature-based play and physical movement. In the attachment you will find a list of presentation descriptions that were well attended and received wonderful feedback.” –Jessica Powell, Chair, Early Care and Education

ECE 131 – Introduction to Early Childhood Education

- Discussions of the history of early childhood theory and varying theorists who believe physical growth plays a role in how children understand the world around them.

- It is discussed how physical movement impacts brain development.
- Completion of assignments about developmental domains (including physical health and development) as it relates to the:
 - State of Maine Infant Toddler Guidelines
 - Maine Early Learning Development Standards
 - Maine Learning Results

ECE 134 – Health, Safety and Nutrition

- Assignments and discussions about the importance of physical activity and how to create safe indoor and outdoor environments to do so.
- Discussions and reflections on risk vs. danger when allowing big body play
- Discussion and assignments on how physical movement is important for healthy development and prevention of issues related to obesity and/or low muscle tone
- Discussion and assignments about how the relation between nutrition and physical movement.

ECE 145 – Fostering Growth and Development: Preschool and Primary Ages

- An in-depth assignment is completed in which students must create five lesson plans for children grades PreK-3 (grade of their choice). They must choose 2 or 3 out of EACH area below (*TOTAL OF FIVE*). Each lesson plan identifies the specific nomenclature of where it can be found in the Maine Early Learning Development Standards or Common Core.
 - Movement Skills:
 - Locomotor
 - Stability
 - Manipulative
 - Movement Concepts:
 - Space awareness
 - Effort awareness
 - Body awareness
- Review of the consequences for lack of physical movement and discuss strategies on how to incorporate it throughout the day to maximize brain development and focus.

ECE 156 – The use of Observing and Recording in the Field

- Students complete an observation and assessment in their field placement as it relates to physical development. The observation and assessment is tied to the Maine Early Learning Development Standards or Common Core as appropriate and discussions with their mentor is used to create a deeper understanding from their hands on experience.

ECE 210 – Classroom Management

- Discussions and reflections on how physical movement reduces challenging behaviors in the classroom and can be used for prevention of behaviors or a strategy to reduce behaviors.

Of Note –

Each year the ECE program holds an annual symposium. We have had three successful events and the following are workshop descriptions that we have offered. The two years we held

this on a Friday we had sending CTE schools (MMTC, SCTC, Region 9 and Westbrook). Each year there are ten plus ECE students as well as ECE alumni who are now working in the field.

- The Science Of Exercise - Preparing Children For Learning – presented by Dr. Corey
This workshop will discuss how physical activity and outside play prepares the brain for learning across all ages. It will also address how daily exposure to outside physical activity has a positive impact in reducing stress, anxiety, and attention deficit: something we all know affects our youth within our learning environments.
- Active Play! presented by Baylee Doughty, Inland Hospital
Are you looking for new, fun, exciting ways to get your kids physically active and having fun in the classroom? This is a fun, interactive workshop on Active Play! Active Play is a program developed by Dr. Diane H. Craft; all activities in this program are super fun and geared toward children 18months to 6 years old. All materials and equipment are inexpensive and are easily obtained. Each activity is organized to be easy to lead, in both small and large areas, indoors and out. lastly, Active Play is a way for children to have fun together with countless hours of healthy fun!
- Inside Out / Outside In: Bringing Outside In- presented by Stacy Shaffer
Outside In/Inside Out will provide participants with easy to implement ideas on how to bring traditional inside activities outside and how to bring nature inside. This workshop will lay the foundation for why it is so crucially important for children to spend time outside and the benefits across ALL developmental domains.
What would it look like to bring literacy, blocks, dramatic play and art outside and how would you structure that for success?
- Yoga, Kids, Connection- presented by Abby Brennan
In this workshop, Abby will talk about just some of the benefits yoga has for children- in fostering the relationship they have with themselves, others, and our planet. Though we often think of them mostly as exercise, postures aid in the development of coping skills, self-control, and persistence. Breathwork is a great way for children to explore their emotions and develop their ability to self-regulate. Thinking about these skills as tools for a toolbox, and the practice of yoga as just that, a practice- also gives freedom for them to decide what works best. Movement? Stillness? Breath? Some combination of it all? Yoga provides an experience that is social yet independent, active yet slow, and structured yet not confining. Plus, who doesn't want to stand on their hands?!
- Using What You Have to Make a Nature-Based Play Space-Presented by Sashie Misner and Laura Newman
Join us to learn how you can make your existing outdoor environment be a more effective place for children to play/learn utilizing basic design ideas and integrating the kinds of natural features that are multi-function and springboards for a wide range of self-directed play and child-centered learning. We will talk about not only what to have in the space but how to lay things out in a way that encourages movement and offers a range of choices from day to day for each child.
- Natural Playgrounds: Why They Matter & Practical Steps Towards Creating Great Outdoor Spaces
Why 'Natural' Playground? What does this mean and how does it work? This 2-hour workshop will explain why richer outdoor play environments provide richer learning

opportunities. Well-designed spaces support the many many ways children play and learn and can be integral to the children's growth and development - but "rich" doesn't need to mean expensive!

We will discuss the role of the outdoor environment in children's lives and introduce the design principles and development needs that shape effective outdoor learning / play spaces. We will share compelling research findings on play environments and show recent examples of both local and international innovative early childhood play space designs.

- Mud Pies and Mountains: Supporting Learning Through Nature Play

Join us to learn how to integrate nature play into your teaching practice in a traditional preschool environment. This workshop will include practical tips& tricks, share a bit of research behind why this is so critical to children's development, and help you build a collection of activities to use year-round with your students, as well as their parents.

As you can see from the sampling above, the Early Care and Education programs at the Maine Community College System are committed to assuring that Maine's youngest residents are given the chance at a healthy lifestyle. It is our sincere hope that the habits they learn at this early age will continue through and be supported in their K-12 education. Once these students reach post-secondary education, our colleges are committed to offering options for physical activity and healthy eating at our residential campuses. We all need to work together to assure that Maine's children, workforce, and retirees are offered multiple options to create and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Thank you.