

It is our strong belief that advocacy cannot be taught in one class session, but rather must be presented as a strand throughout the entire early childhood curriculum. It is only in this manner that students can fully integrate advocacy into their career definition. It is common to think of advocacy and social change in terms of child care's social and economic contexts. However, early childhood staff will experience the need for change at many levels—in dealings with parents and other staff, in their own paycheck and working conditions, in public policies and media portrayals. As early childhood students progress in their professional development, they should gain skills to work for change at all these levels—moving from the immediate and interpersonal to the more abstract and societal.

The framework of the curriculum we have developed is based on the following six concepts which we feel students need to understand in order to become effective advocates.

1. The Process of Social Change

- historical perspective
- possibility of change
- routes to change

2. Social and Economic Organization of Society

- impact on families and children
- understanding of students' own lives and families
- implications of race, class, technology and power

3. Multi-Cultural Perspectives

- children's and family services around the world
- alternative visions of family/community life
- children as a protected class

4. The Value and Image of Child Care

- the effect of child care on children and families
- the public image of child care
- child care workers' self image
- comparisons with other occupations

5. The Nature, Economics and Organization of Child Care

- the positive and negative aspects of child care work
- financial aspects of child care
- rights and legal requirements; professional ethics
- power structures in the workplace
- parents: partners, clients, adversaries

6. Child Care's Link with Other Social Services

- locating and using community and professional resources
- support networks

The curriculum guide will assist you in your efforts to provide the necessary ideas and experiences for students to emerge as the early childhood teacher advocates so desperately needed in our field. In order to fully understand these concepts students need more than data. They also need *practical experience*. They must have opportunities to:

- voice their own values and opinions in ever enlarging arenas
- listen to opposing viewpoints
- achieve a sense of membership in a group
- work in small groups toward consensus
- recognize and represent different issues
- challenge negative stereotypes
- utilize resources

And, beyond experience, they also need positive models—they need to observe and talk with people engaged in advocacy efforts!