



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPIC AREAS (PD TOPICS) FOR STEP UP TO QUALITY

Step Up To Quality professional development standard requirements were revised July 1, 2024. The annual 10 hours of OA training must include two hours in specific topic areas, with at least one hour in each of two different topics. This revised standard will be verified beginning July 1, 2026, for Ohio Approved (OA) training that was completed on or after July 1, 2025. This allows flexibility for a professional to complete training based on individual needs, while also ensuring that foundational topics in early care and education are incorporated. The topic areas are:

- Behavior/Classroom Management
- Critical Conversations
- Curriculum and Assessment
- Developmental Milestones
- Family Engagement
- Inclusion
- Science of Reading
- Trauma

Instructors that wish to have their OA training designated as including content on an approved SUTQ topic area will need to assign a topic area to each 60-minute learner objective, which will then be reviewed and approved by OCCRRA. This document provides additional information on examples of content that could be incorporated within each topic area.

Behavior/Classroom Management

The foundation for training in behavior/classroom management is understanding typical behaviors for young children based on age and developmental level. In addition, it may include strategies for planning, organizing, and structuring the environment and activities to maximize children's learning and development.

Training may include:

- The importance of maintaining routines, appropriate boundaries, and setting clear and consistent expectations



- Understanding the root cause of children’s behavior
- The need for ongoing communication between the provider and the family
- Use of positive language and reinforcement
- Building self-regulation skills
- The differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Using consistent age and developmentally appropriate consequences
- Specific environmental strategies, such as providing visual or auditory cues, incorporating transition activities, designing schedules and spaces, etc.
- Understanding when additional resources are needed and where to access them (e.g., early childhood mental health consultants)

Critical Conversations

Critical conversation training includes strategies to support communication when having important conversations with other adults. These conversations may be challenging, but essential. Training may include preparing for a conversation, using reflective practices, and implementing de-escalation techniques. Training topics could include:

- Effective communication strategies
- Active listening
- Empathy and understanding another person’s perspective
- The role of one’s own emotions, values, and personal experiences
- Creating a collaborative approach to problem solving
- Conflict resolution skills
- Building trust and rapport
- Setting goals and objectives for conversations

Curriculum & Assessment

Training in curriculum and assessment should ensure that early care and education professionals are well-equipped to create and implement effective, developmentally appropriate learning experiences as well as be intentional about how they are supporting children’s development. Curriculum training could include strategies for planning and implementing activities or experiences, setting up the environment, and interacting with children. A curriculum company or vendor may also have specific training around how to use their curriculum. Training around assessment practices could include types of assessment, how to monitor and evaluate a child’s progress, using assessment data to inform instruction, and communicating assessment results with families.



Training in curriculum and assessment may include:

- Strategies for providing enriching environments and activities to support learning and development
- How to modify teaching strategies to better support individual growth
- Designing the environment to support play and learning
- Planning weekly lessons or activities
- Whole group, small group, and individual planning
- Aligning activities to the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards
- Informal and formal assessment practices
- How to utilize assessment data in planning
- Creating systems to support the assessment process
- Communicating children’s strengths and needs with families

Developmental Milestones

Developmental milestones are signs of a child’s physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional growth and development. Milestones include how children play, learn, speak, act, and move. Training in developmental milestones* may include:

- Overview of child development and developmental stages
- Knowledge and skills to monitor and track children’s developmental milestones
- Understanding how to utilize a valid developmental screening tool (e.g., ASQ or ASQ:SE) to identify children’s current level of development and any potential delays
- Guidance on discussing developmental milestones and potential concerns with families, including how to make a referral
- Scope and sequence of children’s development (how children grow and change over time)

*Training in this area should align with the Early Learning Development Standards.

Family Engagement

Training in family engagement highlights why involving families is crucial for a child’s success, development, well-being, and school readiness. It may include ways to partner with families and encourage their involvement. It may also incorporate strategies to create and maintain an effective communication system with families.



Training may include the following:

- The importance of understanding families' beliefs, values, and priorities, respecting differences, and building trust
- Creating opportunities for families to participate in activities and work together on mutual goals
- Coordination with other professional service providers (speech therapists, mental health consultants)
- Helping the family identify and connect to additional resources
- How to build relationships and collaborate to support children's development
- Creating inclusive environments that respect diverse backgrounds, cultures, and family structures
- Supporting learning at home and recognizing the family's role in children's development

Inclusion

Training in Inclusion should be based on the idea that all children are capable learners and valuable contributors. It may include the value of inclusion, steps to create an inclusive environment, laws regarding inclusion of children with disabilities, benefits to everyone involved, and the importance of teamwork with families. It can describe ways to engage in safe and responsive relationships with each child to support development and learning considering the child's background, home environment and family values.

Training may include the following:

- Creating a sense of belonging
- Building social relationships
- Valuing each child's individual characteristics
- Providing individualized support
- Partnering with families
- Building a high-quality inclusive program
- Understanding IFSPs and IEPs and how to collaborate with support teams
- Modifying activities, materials, and the environment to promote participation



Science of Reading

The science of reading refers to a comprehensive body of research that informs evidence-based practices in literacy instruction. Training in the science of reading would focus on language development and emergent literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, content knowledge development, and comprehension. **Currently, only [science of reading professional development provided by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#) is accepted for this topic area.**

Trauma

Training in trauma focuses on the needs of children and families who have experienced trauma and how to meet those needs in a trauma sensitive manner. Training topics may include:

- Understanding various types of traumas
- Understanding how trauma affects brain development and behavior in young children
- Identifying signs of trauma (including behavior, emotional regulation, and/or developmental delays)
- Creating a safe environment
- Trauma-informed practices
- Supporting the child and family
- Self-care for professionals
- Identifying events that can cause trauma
- Recognizing and responding to secondary trauma