

Educator Interview Protocol

Overview

What is it?

The Educator Interview Protocol is a structured, evidence-based guide designed to support child care center directors in conducting thorough and equitable interviews with early childhood educator candidates. Aligned with the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, this protocol includes a curated set of questions that assess a candidate's qualifications, teaching philosophy, and professional competencies across key domains of early childhood education. It ensures consistent evaluation and helps inform placement on a salary scale using a scoring rubric. Adaptable for Lead, Associate, and Assistant Teacher roles, the guide allows interviewers to tailor questions while maintaining fairness, relevance, and alignment with program values and standards.



Why is it valuable?

This interview protocol is valuable because it promotes a high-quality, equitable hiring process that supports both organizational excellence and educator well-being. By aligning questions with professional standards, it ensures candidates are evaluated on the skills and dispositions most critical for early learning success. It also strengthens hiring decisions by providing structured guidance for assessing experience, instructional approaches, and cultural responsiveness. Importantly, the tool ties interview results directly to compensation decisions, supporting transparency and equity through the salary scale. Ultimately, this process helps build a strong, mission-aligned teaching team committed to delivering exceptional care and education for young children.

How do I use it?

Click here for the **Educator Interview Protocol**

Click here for the **Educator Interview Rubric**

Where can I learn more?

Click here for the **CCI at NCMC**

Click here for the **MI's ECE Professional Standards and Competencies**

Who can I talk to?

A CCI team member is available to consult with you on your customization.

Contact us at **ECE@ncmich.edu**

Educator Interview Protocol

Aligned with the Michigan Professional Standards
& Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

Introduction

Hiring high-quality early childhood educators is essential to providing exceptional care and education for young children. This interview protocol is designed to guide you through a structured and thorough interview process as a child care center director. The goal is to ensure that you gather comprehensive and relevant information about each candidate’s qualifications, experience, teaching philosophy, and competencies.

This interview guide is structured to help you assess candidates consistently and fairly. Each question is aligned with key indicators of teacher effectiveness, professional experience, and educational background. The responses to these questions will ultimately inform how the candidate is scored using the designated rubric, determining their placement on the Living Wage Salary Scale. Conducting a detailed and intentional interview is critical to deciding where a candidate falls within this scale.

This protocol aligns with the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, ensuring that interview questions reflect the key skills and knowledge required for excellence in early childhood education. Additionally, it can be used to interview Lead Teachers, Associate Teachers, and Assistant Teachers.

The interviewer should adjust the depth of questioning based on the specific position.

For example:

For a Lead Teacher, all questions may be relevant.

For an Associate or Assistant Teacher, selecting one or two key questions per category may be sufficient.

By previewing the questions and highlighting those most relevant to your center, the position, and the interviewee, you can tailor the interview guide to gather pertinent information while maintaining consistency and fairness.

As you proceed with the interview, use this guide to:

Ensure a comprehensive evaluation of each candidate.

Maintain equity and consistency in the hiring process.

Gather sufficient evidence to support salary placement decisions.

Following this protocol will help uphold your program’s standards while ensuring that educators are fairly compensated based on their demonstrated competency, experience, and qualifications. Your careful assessment will also build a strong team of dedicated early childhood professionals valued and supported in their roles.

Directions for Conducting the Interview

1. Prepare for the Interview

- Review the candidate's resume, cover letter, and any relevant credentials before the interview.
- Familiarize yourself with the Living Wage Salary Scale and scoring rubric to understand the key criteria used for placement.

2. Structure of the Interview

- Begin with a brief introduction of yourself, the program, and the purpose of the interview.
- Use the provided interview questions to maintain consistency across all candidates.
- Ask follow-up questions as needed to clarify responses or gather additional details.
- Take detailed notes to reflect the candidate's responses accurately.

3. Evaluation and Scoring

- After the interview, review your notes and compare them against the rubric to determine a preliminary placement on the Living Wage Salary Scale.
- Discuss and calibrate scores together to ensure fairness if multiple interviewers are present.

Following these directions will ensure a thorough, fair, and structured interview process that allows for consistent evaluation and equitable salary placement.

Interview Questions & Guidance for Evaluation

Each question below assesses the critical skills and competencies necessary for success in early childhood education. Take detailed notes on the candidate's responses, and use the provided guidance to evaluate their answers in alignment with the scoring rubric.

1. Child Development and Learning in Context

Can you describe your experience working with young children and how it has shaped your teaching approach?

Evaluate: Years of experience, types of settings (center-based, home-based, etc.), and understanding of developmental needs of young children.

What ages have you worked with, and what do you enjoy most about teaching those age groups?

Look for: Understanding of developmental milestones, enthusiasm for early childhood education, and ability to tailor teaching to developmental needs.

How do you adapt your teaching strategies to meet the needs of children at different developmental stages?

Look for: Ability to differentiate instruction, awareness of developmental variations, and strategies for individualized support.

2. Developmentally, Culturally, & Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

What is your philosophy on early childhood education, and how does it inform your daily interactions with children?

Assess: Alignment with play-based learning, child-centered approaches, and developmentally appropriate practices.

How do you create an engaging and inclusive classroom environment?

Evaluate: Use of materials, classroom setup, and ability to support diverse learners.

Can you describe a time when you had to adjust your teaching approach to meet the needs of a particular child?

Look for: Flexibility in teaching strategies and responsiveness to individual learning trajectories.

3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

How do you assess and document children's learning and development?

Look for: Knowledge of observation methods, assessment tools, and practices in monitoring and supporting children's progress.

Can you provide an example of how you've used assessment data to inform your teaching?

Assess: Ability to use assessments to tailor instruction and meet individual learners' needs.

4. Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content

How do you integrate literacy, math, science, and the arts into the daily curriculum?

Assess: Understanding of academic content and pedagogical methods for early learning.

Can you describe how you use planned and spontaneous learning experiences to support children's development?

Look for: Use of early learning standards, adaptability, and intentional teaching.

How do you foster curiosity and critical thinking in young learners?

Evaluate: Ability to design meaningful, inquiry-based activities.

5. Promoting Children's Health and Wellness

How do you support children's social-emotional development through daily interactions?

Assess: Strategies for building relationships, emotional regulation, and self-care skills.

How do you ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for young children?

Consider: Knowledge of safety precautions, licensing requirements, nutrition guidelines, and the ability to identify signs of emotional distress or abuse.

What strategies do you use to promote healthy habits among children?

Look for: Understanding of hygiene practices, physical activity, and fostering overall well-being in young children.

6. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

How do you build strong relationships with families to support children's development and learning?

Evaluate: Strategies for fostering trust, ongoing communication methods, and responsiveness to family needs.

How do you create a welcoming, inclusive environment that reflects diverse family structures and cultures?

Look for: Respect for diversity, inclusive practices, and efforts to create a representative learning space.

Can you share an example of how you have helped connect families with community resources or support services?

Assess: Understanding of family and community partnerships, resourcefulness, and ability to advocate for families.

7. Leading High-Quality Early Childhood Programs

How do you prioritize tasks and manage your classroom effectively?

Assess: Time management, organizational skills, and ability to meet licensing regulations and quality standards.

Can you describe a time when you had to adapt to an unexpected challenge in the classroom?

Look for: Problem-solving skills, flexibility, and leadership abilities.

How do you support colleagues and contribute to a positive work environment?

Evaluate: Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills..

8. Promoting the Well-Being of Early Childhood Professionals

How do you engage in reflective practice to continuously improve your teaching?

Look for: Awareness of personal growth, feedback integration, and collaborative learning.

How do you maintain a healthy work-life balance and manage stress in a demanding early childhood environment?

Assess: Awareness of self-care and resilience strategies.

9. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

What professional development opportunities have you pursued recently, and how have they impacted your teaching?

Consider: Commitment to lifelong learning, willingness to adapt and grow, and adherence to professional standards.

Why do you want to work at this center, and how do you see yourself contributing to our team?

Evaluate: Understanding of the program's mission, enthusiasm for the role, and commitment to professional conduct and advocacy for the field.

10. Final Questions

Before we conclude, we'd like you to share anything else that may not have been covered during the interview.

Would you like us to know anything else about you, your experience, or your approach to early childhood education?

Do you have any questions about the role, our program, or the next steps in the hiring process?

These questions allow candidates to highlight additional strengths, clarify any aspects of their background, and demonstrate their enthusiasm for the position. Additionally, they can offer insight into what they value in a workplace and their level of preparedness for the role.

After addressing any questions from the candidate, thank them for their time and explain the next steps in the hiring process, including the expected timeline for follow-up.

Educator Interview Rubric

1. Child Development and Learning in Context

Interview Questions for Child Development and Learning in Context

Can you describe your experience working with young children and how it has shaped your teaching approach?

What ages have you worked with, and what do you enjoy most about teaching those age groups?

How do you adapt your teaching strategies to meet the needs of children at different developmental stages?

1. Child Development and Learning in Context

1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age eight across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.

1b: Understand and value each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and with the capacity to make choices.

1c: Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur within multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning settings as well as within a larger societal context that includes structural inequities.

1d: Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

2. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

Interview Questions for Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

How do you build strong relationships with families to support children's development and learning?

How do you create a welcoming and inclusive environment that reflects diverse family structures and cultures?

Can you share an example of how you have helped connect families with community resources or support services?

2. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections

2a: Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.

2b: Collaborate as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.

2c: Use community resources to support young children's learning and development and to support families, and build partnerships between early learning settings, schools and community organizations and agencies.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

○	B	Beginning	Requires information/education to build knowledge.
○	ECE I	Developing	Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge.
○	ECE II	Achieving	Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives.
○	ECE III	Extending	Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research.

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

Interview Questions for Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

How do you assess and document children's learning and development?

Can you provide an example of how you've used assessment data to inform your teaching?



3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment

3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.

3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes and their associated methods and tools.

3c: Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.

3d: Build assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

Interview Questions for Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

What is your philosophy on early childhood education, and how does it inform your daily interactions with children?

How do you create an engaging and inclusive classroom environment?

Can you describe a time when you had to adjust your teaching approach to meet the needs of a particular child?

4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices

4a: Understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of early childhood educators' work with young children.

4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectory of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills is critical for young children.

4c: Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias and evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

5. Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum

Interview Questions for Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content

How do you integrate literacy, math, science, and the arts into the daily curriculum?

Can you describe how you use both planned and spontaneous learning experiences to support children's development?

How do you foster curiosity and critical thinking in young learners?

5. Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content

5a: Understand content knowledge and resources—the central concepts, methods and tools of inquiry, and structure —, and resources for the academic disciplines in an early education curriculum.

5b: Understand pedagogical content knowledge—how young children learn in each discipline—and how to use the teacher knowledge and practices described in Standards 1 through 4 to support young children's learning in each content area.

5c: Modify teaching practices by applying, expanding, integrating and updating their content knowledge in the disciplines, their knowledge of curriculum content resources, and their pedagogical content knowledge.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional Notes:

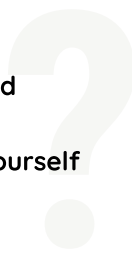
Educator Interview Rubric

6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Interview Questions for Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

What professional development opportunities have you pursued recently, and how have they impacted your teaching?

Why do you want to work at this center, and how do you see yourself contributing to our team?



6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

6a: Identify and involve oneself with the early childhood field and serve as an informed advocate for young children, families, and the profession.

6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.

6c: Use professional communication skills, including technology-mediated strategies, to effectively support young children’s learning and development and work with families and colleagues.

6d: Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice.

6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily practice with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

○	B	Beginning	Requires information/education to build knowledge.
○	ECE I	Developing	Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge.
○	ECE II	Achieving	Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives.
○	ECE III	Extending	Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research.

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

7. Promoting Children's Health and Wellness

Interview Questions for Promoting Children's Health and Wellness

How do you support children's social-emotional development through daily interactions?

How do you ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for young children?

What strategies do you use to promote healthy habits among children?

7. Promoting Children's Health and Wellness

7a: Promote the health and safety of young children at home and in early learning and development setting.

7b: Exhibit an understanding of young children's nutritional needs and support the development of healthy eating habits, including assisting children in identifying their hunger and fullness cues to prevent obesity.

7c: Recognize signs of child abuse and neglect and the role of early childhood educators as mandated reporters.

7d: Create and maintain a safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environment that promotes children's emotional security and mental well-being.

7e: Understand and support the connection between child and family mental health and positive learning experiences and environments.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

8. Leading High Quality Early Childhood Programs

Interview Questions for Leading High- Quality Early Childhood Programs

How do you prioritize tasks and manage your classroom effectively?

Can you describe a time when you had to adapt to an unexpected challenge in the classroom?

How do you support colleagues and contribute to a positive work environment?

8. Leading High-Quality Early Childhood Programs

8a: Apply a deep understanding of organizational structure to effectively implement its mission, policies, and procedures while providing strong leadership in program management to ensure alignment with a unified vision.

8b: Ensure compliance with all licensing regulations while striving to meet and uphold professional quality standards, using a structured approach to program evaluation to enhance and sustain ongoing quality improvement.

8c: Demonstrate strong communication, organization, record-keeping, and technology skills to support efficient program operations.

8d: Demonstrate proficiency in financial management and planning while maintaining knowledge of current systems, tools, and resources available to support program sustainability.

8e: Foster a strong, inclusive team by embracing diverse perspectives, advocating for equity, and ensuring all voices are valued and heard.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--|
| ○ | B | Beginning | Requires information/education to build knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE I | Developing | Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge. |
| ○ | ECE II | Achieving | Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives. |
| ○ | ECE III | Extending | Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research. |

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview Rubric

9. Promoting the Well-Being of Early Childhood Professionals

Interview Questions for Promoting the Well-Being of Early Childhood Professionals

How do you engage in reflective practice to continuously improve your teaching?

How do you maintain a healthy work-life balance and manage stress in a demanding early childhood environment?

9. Promoting the Well-Being of Early Childhood Professionals

9a: Recognize the vital role each professional plays in shaping the future and creating lasting, positive outcomes for young children.

9b: Gain a comprehensive understanding of systems and resources that support the early childhood workforce while utilizing local, state, and national initiatives to enhance staff well-being and maximize performance.

9c: Identify and address challenges in the early childhood profession by staying informed, adapting to changing needs, and implementing proactive solutions to support its growth and advancement.

9d: Understand and support the connection between staff mental health and effective teaching practice.

Identifying the Leveling for Child Development and Learning in Context (CDLC)

○	B	Beginning	Requires information/education to build knowledge.
○	ECE I	Developing	Identifies/demonstrates some knowledge.
○	ECE II	Achieving	Describes/articulates knowledge and theoretical perspectives.
○	ECE III	Extending	Analyzes/synthesizes theoretical perspectives/core research.

Strengths:

Challenges:

Additional
Notes:

Educator Interview

Rubric

Directions for Scoring

1. Transfer all leveling from the standards 1-9 to the first table.
2. Count the total number of Beginning, ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III leveling determinations and add to the second table.
3. Select the level with the highest number of determinations (Beginning, ECE I, ECE II, ECE III) and the role that you are hiring for (Assistant Teacher, Associate Teacher, Lead Teacher, or Administrator) to find the starting hourly wage/salary range for the professional.

Standards	Leveling
1. Child Development and Learning in Context	_____
2. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections	_____
3. Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment	_____
4. Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices	_____
5. Knowledge, Application, and Integration of Academic Content in the Early Childhood Curriculum	_____
6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator	_____
7. Promoting Children's Health and Wellness	_____
8. Leading High Quality Early Childhood Programs	_____
9. Promoting the Well-Being of Early Childhood Professionals	_____

Leveling	Beginning	ECE I	ECE II	ECE III
Totals	_____	_____	_____	_____
LWSS Placement	_____	_____	_____	_____
Professional Pathway	High School Diploma	CDA or ECE/CD Associate	CDA or ECE/CD Associate - ECE/CD/ED Bachelor or Master	ECE/CD/ED Bachelor or Master
Assistant Teacher	\$18-\$20/hr	\$20-22/hr	-	-
Associate Teacher	-	\$45,760-\$54,080	\$52,000-\$58,240	-
Lead Teacher	-	\$45,760-\$54,080	\$56,160-\$62,400	\$62,400-\$70,720
Administrator	-	-	\$60,320-\$66,560	\$66,560-\$74,880