



From September 17-19, 2010, the biennial educator's conference of the American Youth Circus Organization (AYCO) convened at the New England Center for Circus Arts in Brattleboro, Vermont. Under the facilitation of Jackie Davis, a two-part meeting was held in which twenty-five youth circus program directors, teachers, and practitioners identified, discussed, drafted, and subsequently recommended eight core competencies to the AYCO board of directors.

AYCO enthusiastically endorses these core competencies as tools to shape policy, practice, professional development, research, and evaluation in youth circus programs, and it acknowledges the autonomy and authority of each member organization to operationalize the core competencies according to the culture, customs, and practices of each organization. The recommended core competencies address: 1) stages of development; 2) activities, program, and curriculum; 3) professionalism; 4) cultural competence and diversity; 5) youth voice (involvement and empowerment); 6) caring relationships and behaviors; 7) physical and emotional safety; 8) community partnerships: families, schools, and civic organizations.

The rationale for identifying core competencies for youth circus practitioners is articulated in the paper *Toward best practices in youth worker training for developmental circus arts programs*, by Jacqueline Davis, EdM (2009): <http://www.americanyouthcircus.org/Default.aspx?pageId=903731>.

AYCO thanks its members who contributed to drafting the core competencies for youth circus practitioners:

AYCO Member	Program Location	Affiliation
1. Agans, Jen	NH	<i>Silver Lining Circus Camp</i>
2. Alford, Jesse	CA	<i>Great All American Youth Circus</i>
3. Boyles, Sam	NY	<i>I Circus (Ithaca College Circus)</i>
4. Cripps, Jennifer	AL	<i>Alabama Waldorf School</i>
5. Davis, Jackie	NH	<i>Hilltop Circus, Pine Hill Waldorf School; Silver Lining Circus Camp; Flying Gravity Circus</i>
6. Davis, Rick	VT	<i>Circus Smirkus</i>
7. Deull, Sara	Washington DC	<i>Zip Zap Circus USA</i>
8. Euler, Laurie	VT	Independent educator
9. Everett Ball	NY	Independent educator
10. Gallagher, Treacy	PA	<i>Philadelphia School of Circus Arts</i>
11. Gorigoitia, Christy	PA	<i>Philadelphia School of Circus Arts; Aerial Mind</i>
12. Greenberg, Judy	VT	<i>New England Center for Circus Arts</i>
13. Hentoff, Jessica	MO	<i>Circus Harmony</i>
14. Hislop, Megan	Washington DC	<i>Zip Zap Circus USA</i>
15. Leonard, Joan	FL	<i>PAL Sailor Circus</i>
16. Maile O'Keefe, Erin	NY/VT	<i>Circus Yoga</i>
17. Maile O'Keefe, Kevin	NY/VT	<i>Circus Yoga; AYCO founder</i>
18. McIntee, Colleen	MI	<i>Cirque du K (Kalamazoo College Circus); Starfish Circus; Aerial Angels</i>
19. Montgomery, Jo	WA	<i>School of Acrobatics and New Circus Arts</i>
20. Pellegrini, Carlo	NY	<i>Amazing! Grace Circus</i>
21. Rappaport, Suzanne	VT	<i>New England Center for Circus Arts</i>
22. Ricci, Laura	CA	AYCO journal editor
23. Roenker, Steven	KY	<i>My Nose Turns Red</i>
24. Wheeler, Dic	CT	<i>Artfarm/Connecticut School of Circus Arts</i>
25. Wright, Caroline	VT	<i>New England Center for Circus Arts</i>

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Core Competency #1: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

A youth circus practitioner takes the stages of child and youth development into consideration when implementing circus arts programs to enable the acquisition of skills and performance experiences in age-appropriate ways.

Core Competency #2: ACTIVITIES, PROGRAM, AND CURRICULUM

A youth circus practitioner designs and implements programs with the goal of meeting the needs of students of varying abilities with a wide variety of activities taught through incremental skill progressions that promote life skills and enhance physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Core Competency #3: PROFESSIONALISM

A youth circus practitioner: defines and communicates behavior expectations of youth, trainers, and board members during and outside of program hours; participates in professional development for self-care and life-long learning; demonstrates respectful representation for self and organization within “local-to-global” communities; and respects interpersonal boundaries.

Core Competency #4: CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND DIVERSITY

Because circus historically has been created by and appealed to people across a wide spectrum of backgrounds and abilities, a youth circus practitioner will understand and support this cultural and human diversity.

Core Competency #5: YOUTH VOICE: Involvement & Empowerment

A youth circus practitioner: creates an environment in which age-appropriate decision-making opportunities are recognized and facilitated for, by, and with youth; is willing to listen to, and incorporate, contributions from youth; creates opportunities for self-advocacy; and respects the ability of young people to express their views in shaping decisions that impact themselves, their organizations, and their communities.

Core Competency #6: CARING RELATIONSHIPS & BEHAVIORS

A youth circus practitioner nurtures caring relationships and behaviors with self, other, and community through healthy modeling and kinesthetic practices that embody trust, communication, respect, empathy, co-authorship, and accountability.

Core Competency #7: SAFETY: PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL

A youth circus practitioner possesses sufficient knowledge of, and can apply techniques for, ensuring the physical and emotional health and safety of youth and staff.

Core Competency #8: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Families, Schools, & Civic Organizations

A youth circus practitioner creates family, school, and community collaborations for funding, volunteerism, and service engagement.

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