

Preschool Appropriate Practice

Participant's Guide





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Preschool Appropriate Practices Participant's Guide

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To access the course resources, scan the QR code with the camera on your mobile device or visit the following link:

<http://fcim-dcf.fcim.org/dcf/dcfcourseresources/#PSPR>

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- Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Infant and Toddler Appropriate Practices
- Preschool Appropriate Practices
- School-Age Appropriate Practices

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Project Advisory Team

Barbara Backus	Tara Huls	Yvonne Ramroopsingh
Dian Baldock	Elizabeth A. Jenkins	Suzanne Riccaboni
Noelle Bee	Judie Kellough	Marielena Aguilar
Penny Bernath	Glenda Kelley	Rodríguez, B.S.E
Anne Bouhebert	Dorreen Kennedy	Keicah Rouse
Michele Cabrera	Grace Kolbe	Heather Sargent
Marge Campany	Susan Leibee	Michelle Sizemore
Kay Carmack	Tom Logan	Ann Skellenger
Karla Carnes	Angela Loring	Kim Stearns
Sabine Claybrook	Beverly Manda	Glenda Stone
Rutha Corley	Jennifer McMahon	Rebecca Taylor
Amy Doby-Adams	Matt Moore	Tammy Tener
Venise Duchesne	Antrica Morgan	Lynne Watters
Marsha Gowan	Arlene Morris	Susan Weber
Karen Greeson	Laurie H. Nelesen	Jean Young
Tanya Hall	Jennifer Ohlsen	
Patricia Hock	Tina Parsons	

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Lakeidra Baynard	Lisa C Tuten
Jamia J Bradley	Leslie D Vullo
Latisha Siplin	Voncyle Wilson

Training Coordinators Team

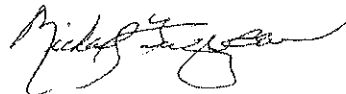
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Lucia Adrian, Palm Beach State College	Marta Lopez-Harrison, Hillsborough County Public Schools
Dian Baldock, Education Center, Child Care Services	Josie Maymi, Nova Southeastern University
Patricia Guth, Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc.	Darlene F. McNeal, Indian River State College
Chantelle Hrubes, Polk State College	Sam Ore, Miami Dade College – Kendall Campus
Shatasha Jones, Childhood Development Services, Inc.	Millie Tizol, Early Education and Care, Inc.
Cheryl R. Kuykendall, Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc.	Susan Weber, Pinellas County Schools
Susan Leibee, Daytona State College	Vanessa Williams, Florida State College – Jacksonville

The Florida Department of Children and Families conducts courses and competency exams to fulfill its mission to “ensure the health, safety and well-being of the children of the state” as mandated by the Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code. The Florida Center for Interactive Media is pleased to join the Department of Children and Families in presenting these materials, and hopes this project will further the physical, intellectual and emotional welfare of the thousands of children enrolled in child care each year.



Deborah Russo, Director
Child Care Program Office
Department of Children and Families
Tallahassee, Florida



Michael Ferguson, Executive Director
Florida Center for Interactive Media
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 1: Introduction

Overview

This module introduces some general information about developmentally appropriate practice and explains how developmentally appropriate practice applies to young children. The goal of the course is to provide caregivers with the tools they need to ensure Florida's children are happy, healthy and safe while in care.

Module Goal

Participants will gain a general understanding about developmentally appropriate practice for children ages 3-5 years old.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify how developmentally appropriate practice applies to children between the ages of 3-5 years old.
- Participants will demonstrate how to apply developmentally appropriate practice for young children in the learning environment.





Module 1 Introduction

This module is designed to provide caregivers with general information about developmentally appropriate practice based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement and standards. In this module you will understand how developmentally appropriate practice applies to young children ages three to five.



Activity: Course Expectations

Use the space provided to record your expectations.



How Does Developmentally Appropriate Practice Apply to Young Children (3-5)?

Developmentally appropriate practice, or DAP, is a concept developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). It stems from years of good research in early childhood. Many educators have embraced the concept and are using it as the framework around which their programs are designed and developed. These guidelines have been widely accepted by practitioners, policymakers and teachers alike.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice focuses on children birth to eight years old and is made up of three principle components: age appropriateness, individual appropriateness and cultural appropriateness.

So how does developmentally appropriate practice apply to children in this age group? Children between the ages of 3 and 5 need to be exposed to as many different types of learning experiences as possible to make it easier for them to transition into kindergarten. There are many ways to accomplish this: reading to children, providing hands-on play opportunities, introducing new words daily, and allowing the children to play and socialize with each other.



General Information About Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Young Children

Young children are at a developmental stage where everything they experience is brand new and they are excited to try new things. Because children love to explore and discover, they absorb new information quickly and easily. This provides caregivers with a unique opportunity to motivate children by preparing and planning exciting educational experiences. Young children ages 3-5 also require a wide variety of experiences to optimize their learning. Caregivers should provide learning experiences that are fun, stimulating and that offer hands-on opportunities for learning that are challenging and achievable.



Key Point: Caregivers should plan and prepare experiences that are fun, stimulating and offer hands-on opportunities for learning that are challenging and achievable.

Language development is one of the most important aspects of a child's learning at this age. It is important to expand a child's vocabulary by introducing as many new words as possible during this stage. There are a variety of ways to help children learn new words, including:

- Poems – Poems are a great way to introduce children to new words because they are typically short and feature rhyming and repetition of words. There is a vast variety of literature that contains poems specifically tailored to young children.
- Songs – Music has a general appeal to children of all ages and also features rhyming and repetition of words. Helping children learn the words to age appropriate music is a great way to ensure that they will absorb and retain new words. Songs are also a great way to introduce onomatopoeia, which are words that make sounds like "Pop," "Bang," "Plunk" and "Snap." Songs can also be used to expand on concepts, for example, "Old MacDonald" introduces farm animals and the sounds they make.
- Stories – Stories are a great way to encourage discussion with children and to use open-ended questions to encourage children to talk and use their vocabulary. You can introduce new words and concepts through stories and engage the children with questions about the plots, characters and settings of the stories. Parents should be encouraged to read to their children daily.
- Parent Involvement – Parents can and should engage their children in meaningful conversations everyday by asking relevant questions about what is going on in the home environment.



Key Point: Language development is one of the most important aspects of a child's learning during the ages of 3-5 years.



Module 1 Summary

Module 1 introduced:

- How developmentally appropriate practice is applied to young children.
- How to apply developmentally appropriate practice in the learning environment.

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 2: Learning and Development Theories and Stages for Young Children

Overview

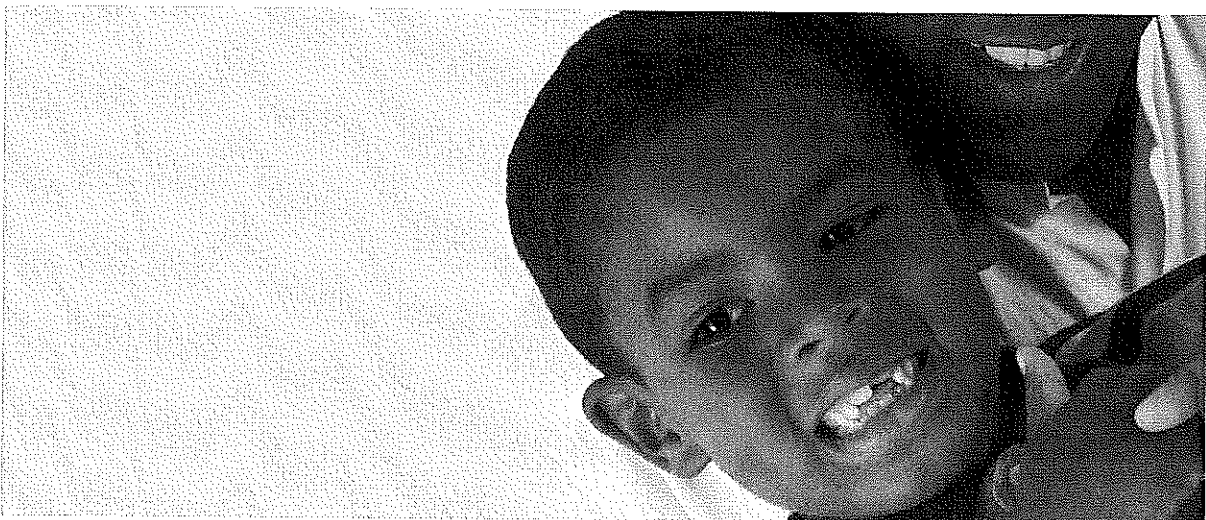
This module introduces the child development theories of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson. Each of these authorities developed and advanced a theory about how children learn and grow.

Module Goal

The participants will understand the main ideas from the child development theories of Piaget and Erikson. The participants will understand the application of these theories to developmentally appropriate practice for young children.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will describe each of Piaget's and Erikson's theories and how they apply to the development of young children.
- Participants will recognize milestones for young children under each developmental domain.
- Participants will identify developmental alerts for children ages 3-5.





Jean Piaget: The Four Stages of Cognitive Development

According to Piaget, the four stages of cognitive development are:

- Sensorimotor – 0-2 years old
- Preoperational – 2-7 years old
- Concrete-Operational – 7-11 years old
- Formal Operations – 11 years old and older

Preoperational Stage

The preoperational stage takes place from 2 to 7 years old. During this stage, young children learn about their world through their actions. This is one reason that hands-on learning is crucial during this stage of development. As a caregiver, you must provide children with as many opportunities for hands-on learning as possible. This includes making sure that plenty of toys and materials are accessible and available throughout the day. One way to help children build their own understanding of the world is to give them a copy of the book you are reading during story time so that they can hold the book, look at the pictures, and turn the pages, even if they are unable to read along. This helps to reinforce the development of language and of the concepts that are developing during this stage.

- During the preoperational stage, children tend to think illogically, as they will begin to develop logic in the next stage, concrete-operational. A child may think, for example, that a parent has arrived at the program to pick them up because they want to go home, not understanding that the parent has arrived because their work day is over.
- Their thinking process is non-sequential, such as not understanding that a small puddle was once an ice cube.
- Children at this age are egocentric, meaning that they do not perceive the consequences of their actions upon others. For example, a child may stand in front of a television and not realize that they are blocking the view for the people behind them.
- They are beginning to understand simple concepts, e.g., to classify large and small stackable plastic bowls or to understand the sequence of their daily schedule.



Key Point: According to Piaget, the Preoperational stage is from ages 2-7 and is most relevant to young children. During this stage, young children learn about their world through their actions.

As a caregiver, it is important to allow children to freely explore the environment and play materials as they learn and grow according to the stages that Piaget describes. Use the space provided to record some ways you can implement developmentally appropriate practice to support the growth of young children during this stage.



Key Point: Piaget's theory explains how children interact with their environment to construct knowledge.



Erik Erikson and the 8 Conflicts in Emotional Development

Erik Erikson developed the theory that emotional development occurs through 8 stages in a person's lifetime. He proposes that individuals must go through each of the 8 stages in a sequential order. Each stage presents a conflict that must be resolved before a person can progress to the next stage. Further, Erikson proposes that each conflict is best resolved during a specific stage of life. People who successfully resolve each conflict are better able to lead a healthy, socially and emotionally connected life.

Erikson's 8 stages span the lifetime of an individual from birth through late adulthood.

Age	Conflict	Meaning
Infant	Trust vs. Mistrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust is developed over time by providing an infant with a consistent, comforting environment. When needs are met, trust is established. Trust builds an emotional foundation. A lack of trust can result in poor emotional stability.
Toddler	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toddlers need to explore their own bodies and environment in order to become confident about themselves. When autonomy is allowed, a person can become comfortable with his/her choices. A lack of autonomy can result in a feeling of shame or insecurity.
Preschool	Initiative vs. Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four- or five-year olds begin to develop an interest in exploring beyond themselves. Children who are not allowed to pursue their natural curiosity will be prone to feel guilt for their actions. When initiative is encouraged, a person experiments within one's environment. A lack of encouragement for initiative can result in a feeling of guilt for acting on one's natural curiosity.
Grade School	Industry vs. Inferiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the ages of 6 to 12, children show the ability to develop competencies. Children who are inhibited in developing these skills and abilities will experience inferiority. When children experience success, they attain a sense of adequacy and pride. A lack of industry can result in a feeling of low self-worth.
High School	Identity vs. Role Confusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the ages of 12 to 18, children are attempting to define who they are and where they are going. When children are given the opportunity to develop their own ideas and opinions, they can form their own identity. A lack of identify will lead to confusion about who they are.
Early Adult	Intimacy vs. Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the ages of 18 to 35, young adults are exploring the development of relationships. Young adults need the opportunity to develop close relationships with family, friends, and partners. A lack of intimate relationships can lead to individuals feeling isolated and alone.
Middle Adult	Generativity vs. Stagnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the ages of 35 to 64, adults are seeking a sense of accomplishment in life through family and career. Adults need to see progress in their careers or success in their contributions to society. A lack of accomplishment often leads to feelings of resentment and regret.
Late Adult	Integrity vs. Despair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the age of 65, adults seek meaning in their lives. Adults are reflecting on their accomplishments and fulfillment in life. A lack of achievement may lead to despair in the final years.

Since this course focuses on young children, the focus will be on stage 3 and its conflict, initiative vs. guilt, which takes place during the age of 3-5 years.

Stage 3 of Erikson's social theory is based on the conflict between initiative and guilt. Between the ages of 3-5 years old, children will develop an interest in exploring beyond themselves. This interest in exploring must be nurtured in a safe environment, or children may develop a sense of guilt about their actions. Whenever possible, children at this age should be allowed to explore their environment when and where it is safe for them to do so. Encouraging a young child's initiative to explore will result in their experimentation within the environment, and will help them feel comfortable about the world around them. When children are not encouraged to explore and experiment in their environment, they can begin to feel guilty about acting on their natural curiosity. This can become detrimental to their development at later levels and can hinder progress throughout their lifetime until this conflict becomes resolved. As a consequence, the development of problem-solving skills may suffer.

Use the space provided to record some ways that you can support children while overcoming the initiative vs. guilt conflict during the ages of 3-5 years old.



Key Point: Erikson's theory on social development states that children at this age must be nurtured while they develop an interest in exploring beyond themselves.



Developmental Domains for Young Children

As a caregiver, it is important to know what to look for in the development of young children so that you can identify if there are any developmental delays that need to be addressed. In this section, the eight areas of development are:

- Physical Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematical Thinking
- Scientific Inquiry
- Social Studies
- Creative Expression Through the Arts

For more information, take the Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning's courses *Implementing the Florida Standards in the Early Childhood Classrooms: Birth through Kindergarten* and *Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten*.

Physical Development

Physical development refers to the ways that children's bodies grow and change. It involves growing larger, having an increased appetite, and improving physical ability. There are many ways that children change physically between the ages of 3 and 5 including:

- Growing taller and leaner than toddlers. Because young children's legs and torso grow at a faster pace than their head, they will begin to appear physically taller and leaner.
- Smaller appetite. Children during this stage will experience a slow decline in appetite when compared to infants and toddlers.
- Weight gain. During this stage, children will gain about 3 pounds per year.
- Height gain. Children typically grow around 2 ½ inches between the ages of 3 - 5.
- Lower center of balance. As children grow and their center of balance becomes lower, they will experience and exhibit an increase in the stability of their balance and movement.
- Improved spatial ability. Spatial ability refers to the way children perceive objects in space. Children at this age will begin to experience an improvement in their spatial ability, which will allow them to show increased performance in activities such as completing puzzles, stacking blocks, and balancing objects.

Gross motor skills are the skills used to perform physical tasks with the large muscles in the body. Some areas where you will notice improvement in the gross motor skills of young children are:

- Walking. Children will begin to walk more confidently with their feet closer together, and eventually with one foot in front of the other.
- Running. Partly due to a change in their center of balance, children will become better runners and will begin to run with both feet off the ground.
- Jumping. By the age of four, children are able to move their arms forward and upward to aid their balance while jumping.
- Climbing. Children will begin alternating their feet while going up stairs, which will help increase their speed. At this age, children may climb up more easily but have difficulty getting back down.
- Throwing. Children will begin to throw with more coordination and speed, which will eventually give way to more accuracy.

Fine motor skills are actions performed by using the fingers in coordination with the eyes. Fine motor skills begin with simply holding an object and progress to tasks such as writing, and eventually, threading a needle. Some fine motor skills you should see developing in young children are:

- Coloring. Holding pencils, crayons and markers and using them to scribble, color and draw.
- Modeling. Children will work with clay and play dough and begin to mold snakes, balls and other shapes.
- Cutting. Using safety scissors to cut paper, eventually cutting specific shapes.
- Stringing. Threading string through beads or macaroni with large holes.
- Self-help skills. As fine motor skills continue to develop, children will begin to perform tasks for themselves such as using buttons, zippers and snaps to dress themselves, eventually gaining the ability to completely dress themselves without assistance.

Approaches to Learning

It is very important to approach learning from a positive viewpoint. The child's curiosity and natural ability to develop new skills should be the teachers' main focus when they are planning learning activities. Learning activities should be challenging, engaging and also attainable. Make sure that your comments are always believable, encouraging and that they recognize the child's effort. A teacher should be very careful to stay away from non-specific praise, for example, "Good job," or "That's great." It is more appropriate to be specific, such as "I like the red circles you drew on your paper" – this lets the child know that you are looking at their specific picture. You should also avoid the technique of rewarding behavior with material rewards such as candy or stickers, children should not be "bribed" into behaving a certain way. Children can sometimes become motivated to please a teacher with their behavior and effort, try to encourage children to enjoy the learning experience and process, and discourage children from simply trying to please you with their behavior.

Copple, Carol and Bredekamp, Sue. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. Washington, DC. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009.

Social and Emotional Development

During this stage, children will advance from parallel play to associative or collaborative play, which includes interacting and sharing toys and materials with other children. Young children at this stage are beginning to:

- Between the ages of 3-5 years young children are beginning to understand rules and limits.
- They are learning how to interact socially with their peers and adults in various ways.
- They will begin to imitate the actions of both adults and other children
- They will begin to explore different actions in an attempt to understand what types of behaviors are acceptable.
- Children will begin to adapt to different settings and their conversational skills are beginning to develop.
- They will ask many questions while they try to make sense of various situations.

Language and Literacy

Language development in young children is happening at a rapid pace. It is crucial during this stage that children are exposed to new words and encouraged to elaborate when they speak. Children tend to speak in very short sentences at this age and it is important that caregivers encourage and extend conversations. Some characteristics to look for in language development at this age:

- Improvement in understanding of speech. Even though children at this age tend to speak in one to three word sentences, they understand many words. Be sure to speak to children in full sentences and constantly introduce new words.
- Children at this age often make language mistakes, for example saying, "I goed" instead of "I went"; or applying one speech rule to all words, for example "toothes" instead of "teeth" and "foots" instead of "feet."
- Be sure to encourage correct language usage. Instead of telling a child they are wrong, model the appropriate language back to them.

While children between the ages of 3-5 are experiencing a rapid increase in their verbal skills, they are just beginning to develop their written language skills. Children will have spent many hours scribbling and coloring with pencils, markers and crayons, but they are just beginning to understand the concepts of letters and words. Young children at this stage are beginning to:

- Understand print. Providing a print rich environment is one of the best ways to reinforce development in this area. Labeling learning centers, supplies and personal cubbies is a great way to expose children to letters and words.
- Distinguish writing from non-writing. Children at this age are beginning to recognize that letters are different from pictures and symbols.
- Recognize letters and words. In the early stages, children begin to realize letters stand for something and will eventually learn that a group of letters makes a word.
- Write letters followed by mock letters. For example, a child named Lynn might write big Ls all over a piece of paper. As she realizes that letters are put together to make words, she will write an L followed by a string of mock letters.
- Recognize how words and sentences are organized. Children are beginning to understand the concept that writing goes from left to right and top to bottom. As a caregiver, you can reinforce this concept by pointing to words as you read. This helps children understand how words are organized.

In 1998 a bill was passed that requires children ages birth to 5 years old in state funded programs be read to for at least 30 minutes each day (Florida Statute 402.25). Caregivers are not required to read for the thirty minutes at one time, this should be broken up throughout the day based on the age and attention span of the children.

Mathematical Thinking

Mathematical Thinking refers to number knowledge; pattern, size, and shape awareness; and the relationship between objects and space. Math concepts can be integrated into most subjects, such as music, social studies, literacy, art, etc. Caregivers support mathematical thinking by creating opportunities for children to count, sort, and explore objects and shapes.

3 – 4 Years

- Counting in order
- Duplicating an auditory pattern modeled by an adult

4 Years – Kindergarten

- Counting aloud through at least 31 with assistance
- Throwing a number cube or dice during a board game and moving the correct number of spaces

Scientific Inquiry

Scientific Inquiry is children using their natural investigative curiosities to explore and investigate their world. Caregivers foster scientific inquiry by creating opportunities for children to explore, investigate, observe, and record changes in their environment, such as the weather.

3 – 4 Years

- Noticing when something tastes sweet
- Taking objects apart and trying to put them back together
- Exploring a tree using a plastic magnifying glass

4 Years – Kindergarten

- Taking things apart and using parts to invent new structures
- Discussing favorite colors or foods

Social Studies

Social Studies refers to children's basic social understanding, beginning with themselves and family members, and then expanding to their peers. Social studies assists children with social-emotional growth and integrity.

3 – 4 Years

- Talking about food, objects, and customs from their own family or culture
- Asking questions about differences they have with their peers such as skin, hair, etc.

4 Years – Kindergarten

- Talking about family traditions during story time
- Playing games or instruments from other countries

Social interactions are important for developing children's self-awareness and relationships with family members, caregivers, and peers. Caregivers support social studies by providing a nurturing and respectful environment that promotes social learning.

Creative Expression Through the Arts

Creative Expression Through the Arts helps children to express their ideas and feelings, and to learn to solve problems using words, tools, and media. Children learn to appreciate other people's contributions, which gives them a better understanding of the different ways to be creative.

3 – 4 Years

- Creating a collage with various fabrics
- Exploring musical instruments
- Using ribbons, scarves, and other props while spinning and moving to music

4 Years – Kindergarten

- Creating a three-dimensional collage using one material or a variety of materials
- Playing various instruments and discovering different types of sounds that each instrument can make
- Imitating animal movements

Allowing and creating opportunities for children to express themselves creatively is important for healthy development. Children need to stretch their imaginations and experience sensory arts, music, and creative movement to communicate their feelings and ideas.



Activity: Identifying Developmental Milestones for Young Children

You will be presented with three developmental milestones from one of the developmental domains discussed earlier in this module. Each milestone will apply to infants and toddlers, young children, or school-age children. Read each of the milestones and identify which one applies to young children.

Which of these milestones from the Physical Development domain applies to young children?

- a. Rolling over back to front
- b. Jumping, hopping, running
- c. Bike riding, leaping, balancing

Which of these milestones from the Physical Development domain applies to young children?

- a. Writes legibly
- b. Drinks from a cup with help
- c. Putting beads or pasta onto a string

Which of these milestones from the Mathematical Thinking domain applies to young children?

- a. Matching sounds to pictures
- b. Can sort objects into subgroups that vary by one attribute
- c. Laughs out loud when someone makes funny noises

Which of these milestones from the Language and Literacy domain applies to young children?

- a. Beginning to coo and babble
- b. Can copy information from a blackboard
- c. Pays attention to a story read in a small group

Which of these milestones from the Social and Emotional domain applies to young children?

- a. Expresses appropriate feelings for characters in a story
- b. Can work as a group leader and as team member
- c. Smiles and claps hands

Which of these milestones from the Social and Emotional domain applies to young children?

- a. Reaching for and preferring to be held by parents
- b. Completes a favorite puzzle over and over again
- c. Pointing to and naming several of their own body parts



Developmental Alerts

While all children are not expected to develop at the same rate, there are some warning signs that may indicate that a child has a developmental delay. These warning signs are described as behaviors or activities that a child is not able to perform by a certain age. If you think that a child may be exhibiting warning signs of a developmental delay, inform your director of your concerns immediately.

Indications of developmental delay in a three-year-old:

- Consistently unintelligible speech
- Failure to understand and follow simple directions
- Unable to tell you their own name
- Does not enjoy playing near other children
- Sentences never exceed 3 to 4 words
- Child never asks questions

Indications of developmental delay in a four-year-old:

- Does not recognize simple shapes such as circles, squares and triangles
- Unable to catch a large ball
- Does not have good control of posture and movement
- Unable to hop on one foot
- Does not respond to statements without constantly asking to have them repeated
- Unable to dress with minimal adult assistance
- Frequent toileting accidents
- Does not acknowledge the presence of other children in the environment

Indications of developmental delay in a five-year-old:

- Does not alternate feet while walking (Child brings feet together before taking the next step)
- Unable to speak in a moderate voice
- Unable to follow a series of directions (Stop, pick up the cup, bring it here)
- Sentences never exceed 4 to 5 words
- Unable to use scissors to cut on a line
- Unable to sit still and listen for 5 minutes
- Does not play well with other children
- Uninterested in playing with other children
- Unable to perform self-grooming tasks (washing hands, combing hair)

It is important to remember that these are warning signs and the earlier they are observed and reported the better. If a child does have a developmental delay, he or she will have an easier time overcoming the delay through early intervention. Don't be afraid to mention your observations to your program director and ask for a second opinion.



Module 2 Summary

Module 2 introduced:

- The theories of Piaget and Erikson.
- The milestones of young children in each of the developmental domains.
- Developmental alerts for children ages 3-5.

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 3: Enhanced Development and Learning

Overview

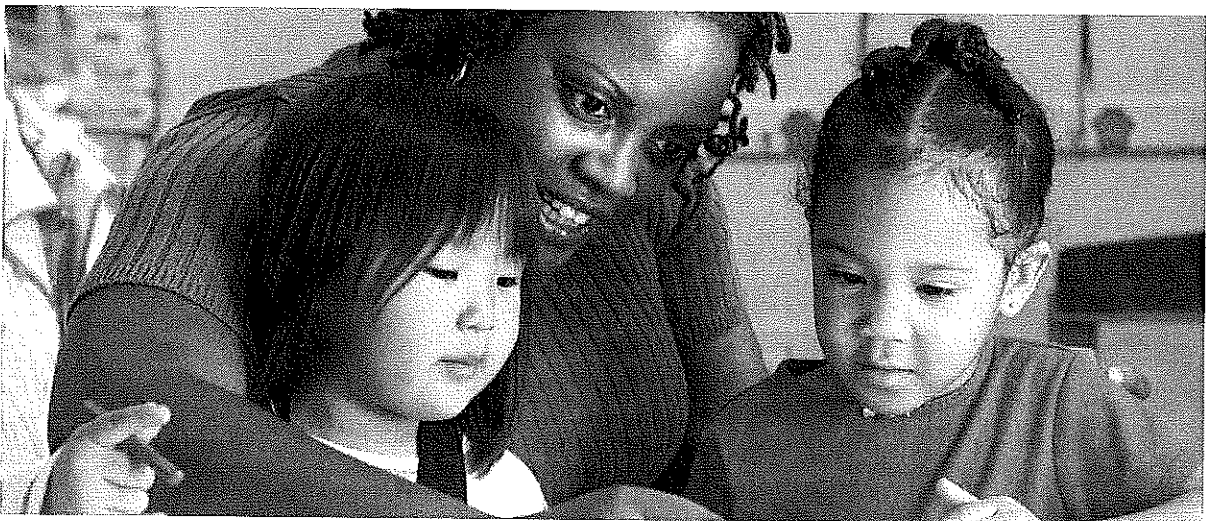
This module introduces the importance of play in encouraging learning in a young child's development. The concept, importance, and the stages of play will be described throughout this module.

Module Goal

The participants will understand the concept of play and the importance of play in a young child's learning and development.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will create activities and experiences designed to enhance the learning opportunities provided through play.
- Participants will define play and identify reasons for play.
- Participants will identify the stages of play development.
- Participants will define the concepts of active learning and active listening.





Description and Reasons for Play

In order to help you understand play, here are the four indicators of play presented by theorist Catherine Garvey in her book *Play*¹:

1. Play provides pleasure to the player
2. Play focuses more on the player's enjoyment of the process than the acquisition of some particular product
3. Play is voluntary and freely chosen by the player
4. Play involves active engagement by the player

Children benefit from play in numerous ways. It enhances their well-being as they release frustration and negative emotions, and although it is not a substitute for physical exercise, it does work off excess energy.

Garvey, C. *Play*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977.



Key Point: Children's language, physical and social development improves through play, as well as their problem-solving skills.

"In play, children make choices, solve problems, converse, and negotiate. They create make-believe events and practice physical, social, and cognitive skills. As they play, children are able to express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences and events they find disturbing. Through playing together and taking different roles, children also grow in their ability to see something from another person's point of view and to engage in leading and following behaviors..."

Copple, Caron and Bredekamp, Sue. *Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction for Teachers of Children 3 to 6*. Washington, DC. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006.

Quality early childhood programming should provide opportunities for children to participate in purposeful play. Play should not be thought of as "free play" or random, with no point, goal or learning in mind. Teachers should keep in mind how children learn and thoughtfully plan activities that support development in a fun and engaging way.

Stages of Play Development

Mildred Parten defined four stages of play:

- Solitary play (playing alone)
- Parallel play (playing beside other children, but not interacting with them)
- Associative play (sharing toys and materials during unorganized play)
- Cooperative play (playing together in groups and making up rules and goals during play)

The stages of play defined by Mildred Parten that apply to preschool children are:

- Associative play - children play together with materials and some talking (3-5 years old).
- Cooperative play - children play together by planning and working toward a common goal (5 years old through adolescence).

During the ages of 3-5 years old, children will be progressing from solitary and parallel play into associative play and eventually cooperative play. The main form of play that can be observed in children of this age is associative play. (Though it is still common at this age for children to engage in both solitary and parallel play; cooperative play also is common for four year olds.) Associative play is characterized by participation in group activities without defined rules or goals. Children may exchange and share toys and materials with each other, and they may copy the behaviors of one another, with each child playing independently. You can expect to see them talking and interacting during associative play, but there will not be any organization to the activity or cooperation in accomplishing a shared outcome. Some examples of associative play might be riding tricycles around on a paved surface or playing on a piece of playground equipment. As they grow and mature, you should see children progress into associative play as they begin to share toys and communicate with other children during play rather than playing next to or parallel to other children.



Activity: Stages of Play

Use the space provided to record your answers to the following questions.

- What are some examples of play you have seen in young children?

- Do young children ever engage in cooperative play?

- Do young children ever engage in solitary play?



Active Learning



Activity: Describing Apples

Use the space provided to record your answers to the following questions.

- How does this activity demonstrate the need for materials, manipulation, choice, language, and adult support?

- How does this activity demonstrate the benefits of hands-on activities?

- What activities that you currently do with children can be changed to a more hands-on approach using this approach?

Many caregivers believe that as long as children are handling materials, they are engaged in active learning. Manipulation of materials is essential, but by itself it does not constitute active learning. Active learning occurs when all of the following ingredients are present:

- Materials for each child. This means having a supply of materials that the child can use to create or play with. (Example: variety of different sized boxes and paper tubes to make a sculpture)
- Manipulation of those materials. This includes working with the materials like cutting with scissors, folding and pasting paper, coloring, etc. Children should be encouraged to use the developmentally appropriate materials and supplies that are available in the classroom. Having materials on the shelf is not the same as children actively engaging with materials.
- Choice by the child of what to try with the materials. Choice requires having enough available materials, but it also means not telling the child what to use or giving them too much instruction. (Example: allowing a child to paint, choosing their own colors and subject matter)
- Language chosen and used by the child to depict what he or she is doing. (Say to the child: "Tell me about what you have made." and "What did you do first?")
- Support by the adults or peers in the form of recognition or questions that help the child think about his/her actions. Be sure to be positive with the child and ask questions or make statements that encourage the child to talk about what they are doing.
- Make the dialogue meaningful; do not just tell children "that's nice" or "I like that."

Use the space provided to record your answers to the following questions.

- Can you tell by this activity how children and adults learn?

- How will this affect the way you set up your classroom and the activities you provide?

- How can the special needs of children affect learning? For example, what if you could not see the apple? How else might you learn what an apple is?

Example of Active Learning:

Clarice is painting at the easel. She has chosen five colors and selected a brush for each color. She starts with red and very carefully paints a line from top to bottom on the left-hand side of the paper. Next to it she very carefully paints a blue line, and so on, until she has five colored lines next to each other. She starts over again with the blue brush and continues until the whole paper is filled with colored lines. The teacher tells Clarice that she likes her painting and asks her, "Can you tell me about your colors?" Clarice responds, "Red, orange, yellow, green and blue." The teacher then tells Clarice that the stripes in her painting are like the stripes in her dress.

High/Scope Approach

One method of enhancing learning through play is called the High/Scope Approach. This approach to active learning through play was developed in 1962 by Dr. David P. Weikart and is based on the theories of Piaget. The term High/Scope represents high expectations for children and the scope of the entire child. The basic focus of this approach is that children learn through active involvement with people, materials, events and ideas. This child-directed, adult-supported approach enhances development through careful observations by caregivers who plan experiences for children based on the child's individual needs and interests.



Key Point: Manipulation of materials by itself does not constitute active learning. Children must have choices, use language, and be supported by adults.

Creative Curriculum

Creative Curriculum was founded by Diane Trister Dodge in 1988 and the philosophy is based on Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory and Erik Erikson's Social-Emotional Development Theory. This framework proposes that interest areas, or learning centers, offer children clear choices. It also proposes that children work best in small groups. The Creative Curriculum approach describes and demonstrates how to plan a developmentally appropriate classroom based on 10 well-organized interest areas:

1. Art area
2. Block area
3. Computer center*
4. Cooking area
5. House center
6. Library
7. Music and movement
8. Outdoors
9. Sand and water
10. Table toys

**For more information about integrating a computer center into your program, please take the Department of Children and Families' course Early Childhood Computer Learning Centers.*



Key Point: It is important to have a wide variety of learning centers that offer diverse, challenging and achievable opportunities for play.



Active Listening

Active listening is the process of taking an active role in hearing and responding to what children have to say. To correctly use active listening skills, a caregiver must be truly interested in what the child has to say. This does not mean that you should give a child excess praise, because it can influence a child to say things they think you want to hear, which puts the caregiver in complete control of the conversation. Instead, take an active listening approach and comment on what you see the child doing. For example: "Johnny, I see you're using a lot of different colors and shapes." This kind of feedback gives the child an opportunity to discuss what he feels is important.

Active listening also uses open-ended questions to stimulate a child's thinking. Using open-ended questions involves asking a question that allows for many different answers. Using open-ended questions allows children to express their feelings and practice their language skills. For example, you might ask a child, "Why did you choose to use that color?" This type of question will allow a child to express himself/herself. If you had asked, "What color is that?" The child is only left with one appropriate response.

When using active listening in your classroom, be sure to wait for a response from the child. It is also important that you concentrate on listening to the child; it is very easy to become distracted forming a follow-up question instead of actually listening to the child's response.



Key Point: Using active listening with children encourages them to talk.



Activity: Using Open-Ended Questions

Use the space provided to rewrite each question so that it is open-ended and encourages more than a one-word answer.

1. What did you have for breakfast?

2. What color is your shirt?

3. How many legs does a dog have?

4. Is this towel soft?

5. Does a bird fly?



Teacher Interaction

As a caregiver in the preschool learning environment, you should be actively identifying connections between the learning activities you create and the areas of learning you are stimulating in children. Be sure to design learning activities that intentionally provide opportunities for learning in specific areas of development. For example, you might create a learning activity that encourages the use of markers, crayons and pencils in a way that encourages the development of motor skills (holding the writing utensils) and progresses towards language development (writing with a utensil). Identifying these connections between the activities you create and the developmental domains, you can specifically design opportunities for learning that maximize children's development within those domains.



Thematic Curriculum

Using themes while creating curriculum is a great way to keep children engaged and interested in the concepts you are teaching in the classroom. Use current events to create themes for your curriculum, for example if spring is coming up, an earth day theme could be incorporated into classroom activities. Have kids play in different types of soil. Learn about bugs. Name the trees in your neighborhood. Add a recycling center in the dramatic play area. Read books about earth and nature. Plant a container garden. Make a rock collection. Using local attractions and current events, you can get children excited about learning by integrating fun thematic elements into your curriculum.



Module 3 Summary

Module 3 introduced:

- The concept of enhancing learning opportunities through play.
- The description and reasons for play.
- The stages of play development.
- The concepts of active learning and active listening.

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 4: Quality Learning Environments

Overview

This module focuses on techniques to design and create effective learning environments within the classroom.

Module Goal

The participants will describe the elements of a quality learning environment including room arrangement, toys, activities, safety concerns and daily routines.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify the elements of a quality learning environment.
- Participants will recognize the methods used to plan learning centers and create effective traffic flow.
- Participants will identify developmentally appropriate toys and materials for young children.





Quality Learning Environments

The learning environment is the physical space that is used while you are caring for children. It includes inside areas such as learning centers, and also outside areas such as the playground. The learning environment encompasses learning centers such as the reading center, art center, and computer center, but also includes outside areas and can extend as far as field trip destinations.

Theory and research supports the need for predictable and well-organized environments, both in home and school. Some children grow up in environments that are cluttered and confusing. They do not know where they are going, what or when they will eat, or who to trust. For young children, the lack of organization can cause great confusion and can have devastating effects on their ability to establish healthy relationships. Over time, this inconsistency affects a child's ability to find meaning in events and concepts that are necessary for development and success in school.

What does this mean to us? We must recognize that we can help children acquire the skills they need by intentionally planning environments that focus on the arrangement of space, placement of furnishings and the organization of play materials.



Key Point: Developmentally appropriate environments must be safe, comfortable and support children's play through hands-on learning experiences.

There are four areas you should focus on to ensure that your classroom will be a quality learning environment that supports developmentally appropriate practice:

- Learning centers
- Room arrangement
- Developmentally appropriate toys and activities
- Daily routines



Learning Centers

Most child care programs have an environment that consists of many different learning centers. There are art centers, block centers, reading centers, computer centers, dramatic play centers and more.

Use the space provided to name some other learning centers that allow children to engage in hands-on play.

It is important to remember when creating your learning centers that all furniture should be child sized. This makes it easily accessible for children and promotes self-esteem by allowing children to use it without needing help. Adaptive furniture and equipment should be used when necessary. Shelves, baskets and cubbies containing materials for children should be low, so that children can easily reach them, but also so that materials do not fall on children and cause injuries. Shelves, baskets, cubbies and even the learning centers should be clearly labeled to promote reading skills. The learning centers themselves should also be "print-rich" environments, containing lots of printed words at a level where children can easily see them. Children's art should also be displayed all around the classroom at the children's eye level.



Activity: Evaluating Learning Centers

Let's examine some photographs of actual learning centers and discuss the purpose of each learning center and the types of materials that are used. Use the space provided to take notes during this activity.



Room Arrangement

Planning an arrangement for young children should be considered part of your teaching strategy. Arrangements should be made with safety in mind and should also support children's play and hands-on learning. Be sure to keep exits clearly marked and free from clutter. Eliminate blind spots and make sure you can see all the children at all times. Allow for smooth traffic flow through different areas while providing room for children to play without interruption. Keep toys and supplies on low, open shelves with identifying labels. Be sure that all children who are old enough are familiar with safety and emergency procedures. Children can be sensitive to loud noises such as fire and smoke alarms, and may panic or hide if they are not familiar with the sound, so you need to ensure that they are familiar with fire drills, hurricane drills and the lockdown procedure. For more information on safety and emergency procedures, please take the Department of Children and Families' course Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness in Florida's Child Care Programs.

While designing your room arrangement, keep the children's comfort in mind. An atmosphere that reminds them of home and incorporates the different backgrounds of the children in your care will help them relax and relieve tension. Good lighting is important, especially for children that may have visual impairments. Be sure to separate learning centers that may be noisy from learning centers that are quiet. Rising noise levels can increase stress and anxiety in children. Find a balance between learning centers that are messy and learning centers that are clean. For example, you might not want to put the art center where children paint next to the reading center where books are kept. You also need to accommodate for traffic that may be passing through the area. You don't want children that are simply walking through to disrupt the activity of children engaging in hands-on learning.



Key Point: When arranging your classroom, you need to first plan for safety, but also find a balance that ensures children are comfortable and feel welcome.



Video: "Room Arrangement"

Pay attention during the video for tips and advice on how to properly plan the arrangement of your classroom. The video includes six key points about the environment:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



Activity: Outside Learning Centers

Discuss how this center could be set-up outside and where it should be located. Also, think about specific needs for each center, for example materials, does the center need electricity? Does the center need to be near water?



Developmentally Appropriate Toys and Activities

When providing toys and materials to children, it is your responsibility to ensure that the toys are clean and do not pose any potential threats to children. Wash toys often and inspect them for small or loose pieces that can be swallowed, sharp edges that can poke or scrape, and splinters or screws that can cause injuries.

Toys and activities for 3 - 4 year old children

- Wood puzzles with 4 - 20 pieces
- Pegboards, sewing cards, stacking toys, picture lotto, dominoes
- Picture/story books, poems about familiar things
- Classical, folk, children's music
- Finger or tempera paint, blunt scissors, glue
- Approximately 50 - 100 unit blocks/per child
- Hammer and wood
- Sound matching games
- Wagon or wheelbarrow, large rubber balls, riding toys
- Washable doll with clothes, doll bed
- Dress-up clothes

Toys and activities for 4 - 5 year old children

- Puzzles with 20+ pieces, simple card or board games
- Smaller beads, parquetry blocks, small objects to sort
- Flannel board with pictures, letters
- More detailed books
- Sturdy tape/record player, book and record sets
- Potter's clay, easel, brushes, crayons, chalk, paste, tape, collage materials
- Unit blocks, realistic vehicle models
- Construction set with smaller pieces
- Approximately 100 - 150 unit blocks/per child
- Wood working bench, saw, sand paper
- Sand and water play, egg beaters, muffin tins
- Xylophone, maracas, tambourine
- Plastic bat and balls, balance board
- Bowling pins, ring toss, bean bags and target
- Planks, boxes, old tires



Key Point: Using age-appropriate toys and materials encourages children to engage in hands-on learning. Be sure that all toys and materials are clean and safe.



Activity: Where Do Learning Materials Belong?

Decide which learning center is most appropriate for each item or learning material. Be sure to record the answers in the spaces provided. Materials may be selected for more than one center.

(Example: D dress-up clothes, because dress-up clothes are found in the dramatic play center.)

Art / Creative Expression Center

Block / Constructive Center

Computer Center

Manipulatives / Table Toys Center

Dramatic Play / Home
Living Center

Exploratory / Science /
Sensory / Center

Library / Book / Language Center

Music / Movement Center

1. ____ play food	14. ____ computer
2. ____ counting bears	15. ____ lacing cards
3. ____ sensory table	16. ____ nurse/doctor kit
4. ____ books, books, books	17. ____ magnifying glass
5. ____ modeling compound	18. ____ flannel board
6. ____ tools	19. ____ musical instruments
7. ____ mirrors	20. ____ sequencing cards
8. ____ miniature people/cars/animals	21. ____ wooden unit blocks
9. ____ printer	22. ____ CD player
10. ____ briefcase	23. ____ different types of paint
11. ____ drums	24. ____ appropriate software
12. ____ easels	25. ____ puzzles
13. ____ dollhouse and props	26. ____ crayons



Daily Routines

Another important aspect of a quality learning environment is the establishment of daily routines and schedules. Children need to know what to expect and what is expected of them. Creating and adhering to a daily routine assures children that their environment is predictable and consistent. This instills a sense of order, familiarity, and security that all children need, especially those with differing abilities or challenging behaviors. Daily activities and routines need to be flexible but consistent. This means you must plan for daily activities and transitions in advance, so that you can anticipate how children typically react during various times in the day.

- There needs to be a daily schedule both written and illustrated with pictures. This schedule should be posted in your classroom at the children's eye level. It consists of blocks of time that include arrival, large-group time (sometimes called circle time or morning meeting,) small group time, center time, outdoor time, meals, nap and departure.
- The daily schedule provides structure and sequence for the events and activities of the day. Be sure to consider the development and individual needs of the children in the classroom when you are planning your activities.
- Children at this age cannot read the written schedule, but they should be able to tell a visitor what is expected to happen next if you have been consistent in following your plan.



Key Point: Successful transitions are the key to effectively carrying out your daily routine and maintaining order.

Transitions



Module 4 Summary

Module 4 introduced:

- The elements of a quality learning environment.
- How to plan learning centers and create effective traffic flow.
- Developmentally appropriate toys and materials.

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 5: Positive Guidance Strategies

Overview

This module introduces techniques for addressing difficult behaviors in the classroom. Prevention techniques are described and disciplinary models are introduced.

Module Goal

The participants will understand the need to prevent difficult behaviors in the classroom and the appropriate disciplinary techniques to address problem behaviors.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify methods for preventing difficult and challenging behaviors.
- Participants will recognize the characteristics of a role model for good behavior in the classroom.
- Participants will define appropriate disciplinary practices that comply with state and federal law.





Positive Guidance Strategies

You will learn how to model appropriate behaviors for children, and how to stop undesirable problem behaviors before they start.



Practice and Feedback: Challenging Behaviors

Working with young children can be rewarding and frustrating. I am sure each of you has had some frustrating experiences with young children. Use the space provided to describe the worst behavior you have encountered in a young child and also describe the background of the situation. Do not tell how the behavior was handled, the focus of this exercise is on challenging behaviors and their causes.

Everyone who has worked in child care for a while has certainly had a difficult experience with a child's behavior. Sometimes a child's behavior can be surprising, both in positive and negative ways, so it is important to remember the stages and needs of young children to help identify the best methods of guidance. It is important to look at how teachers impact the situation, including room arrangement, schedule, change in routine, etc. Use the space provided to answer the following questions about some of the positive and negative aspects of children's behavior during the age of 3-5 years.

What are some of the positive behaviors that we see in young children on a day-to-day basis?

What are some negative behaviors that are seen in young children?

What are some of the things that may cause children to behave this way?



Promoting Positive Behavior

One of the best methods for dealing with difficult behavior is to prevent the occurrence of the behavior before it happens. Learning techniques to prevent difficult behaviors will drastically reduce the amount of discipline you will need to use in the classroom. Careful observation on your part can help you identify a situation where a problem may arise. Use these general guidelines to help to prevent situations that can lead to difficult behavior:

- Make certain the children in your care understand what is expected of them. Explain the rules simply and clearly. The rules should not be extensive and you should reinforce them as often as possible. These rules are also called limits.
- Use pictures of desirable actions so children can see what appropriate behavior looks like.
- The more motivated a child is to do an activity, the higher their chances are of staying focused on a learning activity.
- Keep directions simple. Perform a demonstration if children don't seem to understand the instructions. Use pictures if necessary.
- Consider the social mix in your classroom. Do not group highly excitable children together.
- Do not allow children to become over-stimulated. Maintain a calm atmosphere in the classroom and use a slower pace during activities when you sense the children are becoming too excited.
- Keep the volume of the classroom at a controllable level. Do not play music or video too loudly and encourage children to speak at a reasonable level while indoors.
- Teach children to respect the personal space of others. Do not invade the children's personal space and encourage them to avoid rough play.
- Be careful of distracting activities that will cause confusion and excitement. For example, do not have children playing outdoor games while they are indoors.
- Be aware of cultural differences in child-rearing practices among the children in your care. Culture influences the way families view and tolerate different behaviors, but while the child is at the program he or she must follow the rules of the program.
- Remember to correct children's behavior by telling them what you want them to do. Using positive guidance techniques will help children gain the skills required to manage their own behavior. For example, telling children to use walking feet instead of saying, "Don't run."



Key Point: Ensure that children understand what is expected of them. Children cannot be expected to adhere to unclear rules and expectations about conduct and behavior.



Creating Developmentally Appropriate Classroom Rules

Establishing rules in a preschool learning environment should be kept as simple as possible. It is recommended to keep the number of rules to a minimum, 3-5 rules should be enough. Create rules that are simple and easy for young children to understand, but general enough that they can be applied to many situations. For example, one of your rules might be "Be safe." This rule can be applied to running indoors, hitting or kicking, or not using scissors safely. Discuss the rules with the children in your care early in the year and talk about different situations where the rules might apply. Be sure to post the rules somewhere in the classroom that is visible from all areas and refer to them periodically throughout the day.

Classroom rules can be used as positive reinforcement; be sure that you reinforce the rules when children are obeying them, not just when they are being broken. For example, if Johnny is being quiet and politely listening during story time, you can acknowledge Johnny's positive behavior by saying, "Johnny, you're being a very good listener today, thank you for following our classroom rules!"



Key Point: Classroom rules are the foundation of a stable learning environment. Reinforce the classroom rules whenever possible to ensure that all children fully understand them.



Be a Role Model

Another great way that you can help to maintain control and prevent difficult behaviors in your classroom is to be a model of good behavior for the children in your care. Use these guidelines to set a good example for children:

- Show respect for everyone in the classroom, including both children and adults.
- Try to remain calm at all times; children can often sense when you are under stress and it can negatively affect their mood.
- Practice stress management techniques and share these techniques with your children. There is a video demonstration of the Brain Gym Exercise on YouTube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U44mPXEBdA>.
- Never raise your voice when you are angry; always maintain your composure.
- When children are misbehaving, explain to children the effect they have on others and on the classroom environment. Young children in their egocentric phase often do not realize their effect on others.
- Do not lie to children; it will have a negative impact on your credibility.
- Never threaten children, even if in a joking manner. (For example, "I'll turn you into a ginger snap!")



Warning Signs

Although prevention is the best technique for managing difficult behavior, there will come a time when things begin to grow out of control in the classroom. Knowing the warning signs of a situation that is spiraling out of control is your first line of defense in maintaining charge in your classroom. Use these warning signs as an indication that you need to intervene and redirect the children's energy.

- Look at children's body language. Are they tense? Do they look tired or sick? Are they over-excited?
- Are their voices growing louder and louder?
- Is there any inappropriate physical contact? poking, pushing, pinching, hitting, biting, etc.
- Are there too many children in a certain area?
- Are there conflicting personalities interacting?
- Are there enough learning materials for everyone?



Intervention Techniques

Despite being as prepared as you can be, there will be times when a child or a group of children still manages to misbehave in the classroom. What can you do to regain control and enforce good behavior? Use these techniques to encourage children to resume their good behavior.

- Move closer to a child or children who seem to be on the verge of losing it. Your presence may be enough to correct the problem.
- Use your eyes and body language. You can use non-verbal communication such as smiles, nods, and quizzical looks.
- Rather than raising your voice at a child, lower your voice. It encourages a child to pay more attention in order to hear you and helps them calm down while they listen.
- If a child is acting out in a group setting, distract the child by asking questions. Use the active listening technique described in Module 3.
- During circle time, simply say "Thank you for sitting so quietly" to the child next to the one that is misbehaving.
- If a child is not playing appropriately, redirect them to another area or activity.
- Encourage children to use words to talk about how they feel. Initiate a conversation between the children.



Key Point: When intervening with children, you must remember to maintain the child's self-esteem and set a good example by controlling your anger.



Redirection

One useful intervention technique for dealing with difficult behaviors once they have occurred is redirection. When children are arguing, fighting or being generally disruptive in the learning environment, it is often helpful to distract the children from the current situation and redirect them onto something else in order to disrupt the difficult behavior. For example, if two children are fighting over a toy, you could distract the two children by talking to them for a few moments and then redirecting each child to a different learning center.

Use the space provided to describe some other ways that you can distract children engaged in difficult behaviors and redirect their attention.

Use the space provided to describe some inappropriate ways of dealing with difficult behaviors.



Bullying

Bullying is a common behavior in children of all ages and can take on many forms. Bullying can include physical acts such as hitting and pushing, but it can also take on a less physical form when it includes alienating someone from a group or spreading mean rumors about them. While bullying can take on many forms, its main characteristic is that it is intentionally meant to cause someone harm.

It may seem unlikely, but bullying happens in young children even before the age of five. Prevention is one of the best techniques to avoid bullying in your program, but this requires intense supervision of all the children in the program. Bullying often takes place when adult supervision is at its lowest, such as in bathrooms, cafeterias or anywhere else that adult supervision may be at a temporary minimum. Be sure to let children know of your presence in all situations and at all times. Never let a group of children stray to where you cannot see them. This includes simply moving behind a group of trees or bushes where you can see them, but you cannot determine what they are doing.

When bullying occurs, you need to make sure to stop the bullying immediately and encourage positive communication among the children involved.



Key Point: Bullying can cause emotional damage to children when they are bullied either physically or emotionally. There should be a no tolerance policy for bullying in your program.



Module 5 Summary

Module 5 introduced:

- Methods for preventing difficult and challenging behaviors.
- How to be a role model of good behavior in the classroom.
- Appropriate disciplinary practices and compliance with state and federal law.

Preschool Appropriate Practices

Module 6: Create a Caring Community in the Classroom

Overview

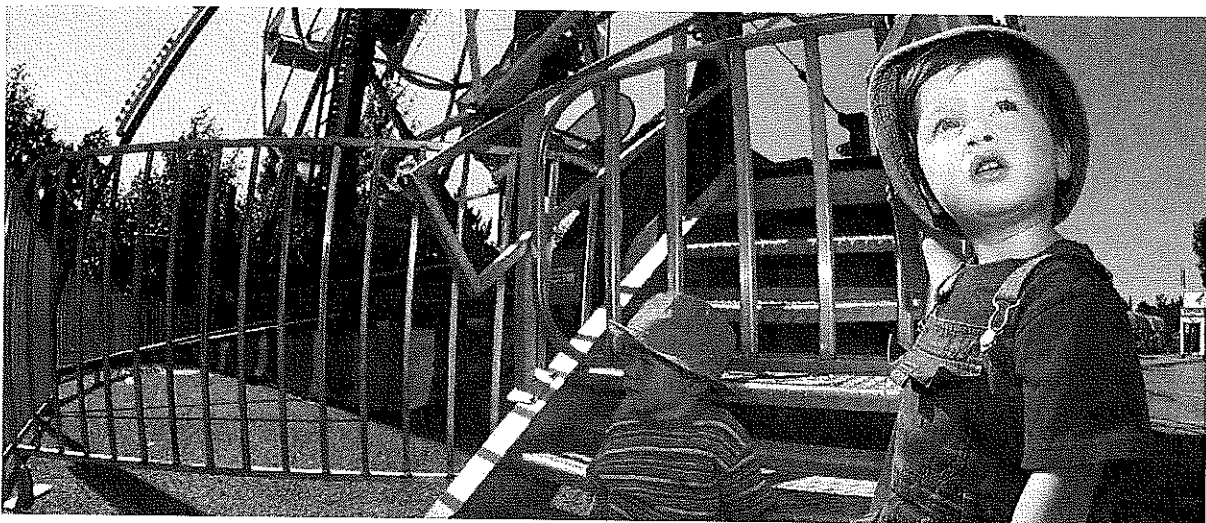
This module introduces the concept of building a classroom community that supports the social/emotional development of all children in the classroom. The benefits of building a community include raising children's awareness of the feelings and opinions of others, encouraging a sense of empathy and caring in children, and creating a sense of belonging within the group.

Module Goal

The participants will understand the elements of building a positive community in the classroom learning environment.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify the benefits of building a classroom community.
- Participants will describe methods for encouraging positive social and emotional development in young children.
- Participants will define techniques for fostering empathy and creating awareness and a sense of belonging.





Create a Caring Community in the Classroom

The Elements of Community Building

Building on the developmental theories of Erik Erikson and Lev Vygotsky, we know that children learn best in the context of social interaction and nurturing relationships. Your role as a teacher is to help foster this sense of well-being in order to enhance their learning and development.



Key Point: The development of positive social and emotional skills at this age leads to greater success in all areas later in life.

Encouraging Socialization and Extending Play

As a caregiver, it is not enough to simply provide learning centers and materials for children to play with. Implement all of the techniques you have learned, such as asking open-ended questions and active listening.



Key Point: Encouraging children to stay engaged in play helps them learn appropriate ways to maintain social interactions and overcome conflict.



Nurturing Emotional Development

As a caregiver, you can nurture the emotional development of the children in your care by discussing different emotions and finding words for feelings. By helping children use language to define and express their feelings, you are enabling them to become familiar with their emotions. You can also help children develop their emotions in a positive way by helping them express their feelings through talking, drawing and pretending.

Empathy is the ability to understand how someone is feeling. Even toddlers experience empathy and have the ability to act on it. Young children are largely egocentric, but they do have the ability to act on feelings of empathy, especially when they know another child or caregiver is hurt or in need of help. If and how they act on their empathy mainly depends on their prior experiences. This is another area where you can act as a positive role model for the children in your care and try to show empathy for the people around you when it is appropriate.



Key Point: Emotional development occurs in young children when they are able to identify, understand and express their feelings.

Use the space provided to record some ways that you can promote pro-social behaviors, like empathy and the willingness to help others, in children.

Model the type of behavior you want the children in your care to adopt. Children look up to you for examples of appropriate emotional behavior. Be polite. Model behaviors like saying "please" and "thank you." Show empathy for the people around you and smile often at children and use facial expressions, maintain good eye contact and use affectionate touches.

Class projects and meetings help children to establish a sense of belonging in the group. Rituals, such as circle time with group discussions, create an awareness of the class in a setting that allows children to experience what it is like to be accepted as part of a group.

Helping foster a sense of caring and sensitivity in children will create a positive nurturing environment in the classroom. The more a child is aware of other children's feelings, the greater the chance of success at having a sympathetic classroom community. One way you can establish this in your program is by helping children discuss their feelings about both fun activities and after an argument or altercation. Help the children talk through the experience and ask them to try to imagine how other people are affected by the situation. Understanding the other person's point of view is the first step in helping children foster their own sense of empathy and caring.



Key Point: Be a role model of kindness and empathy. Set an example of how to show kindness to the people around you.



Activity: Fostering Empathy in Young Children

In each scenario we will review a situation that presents an opportunity to foster a sense of empathy, caring, and helping others in children. After each scenario use the space provided to record ways to help children understand how other people are feeling and to exercise their sense of empathy.

Scenario 1: Susie is upset because her dog was hit by a car. She is very withdrawn during play activities and is not showing interest during dramatic play time.

Scenario 2: Billy is new to your program and this is his first day, he is not yet familiar with the daily routine. He is having a hard time socializing with the other children because the other children are so familiar with each other and they do not know Billy.

Scenario 3: Timmy fell down and skinned his knee on the playground today. After his knee is bandaged, it is still too sore for him to return to the playground, so you allow him to paint at an easel for the remaining time during outside play. Some of the children ask why Timmy didn't return to outside play. Other children feel jealous that they are not allowed to paint during outside play also.

Another way that you can foster a community spirit in the classroom is to make children aware of everyone in the classroom and that each person has feelings, thoughts and opinions that may be similar to or different from their own. One way to establish this is to engage children individually during group time. Ask a child a question about what is going on at the moment, such as "How high can you stack these blocks?" or "What is your favorite food?" And then repeat the question to each child one at a time. Children should be encouraged to pay attention to what others are saying, to wait their turn, and to not interrupt. This activity helps children feel like they are a part of a group. It also makes them aware of the other members in the group and reinforces the concept that people may have different opinions or experiences, and that these differences are okay.



Key Point: Children learn empathy and caring by becoming a part of a community in your classroom.



Cultural Appropriateness

No discussion about developmentally appropriate practice is complete without acknowledging our role in facilitating learning within the context of culture and the inclusion of children with special needs in typical childcare settings. In the United States, there is an ever-increasing need to provide care for children who come from various experiences and backgrounds. The increased demand to provide quality-learning experiences for children who are culturally and linguistically different will continue to rise dramatically over the next decade. It is crucial that we understand how to become aware of and respond to children in a way that supports them as individuals while at the same time supporting the family as well.

We must move toward becoming more *culturally responsive* to the needs and issues of the children in our care and their families. This means that we, by our behavior, respectfully acknowledge cultural differences and strive to create developmentally appropriate programming that meets the needs of all the children.

Points:

- Working with parents and children of different cultures can be difficult if not dealt with respectfully
- Everyone has their own culture and that culture affects everything we do and say
- Ask clarifying questions
- Actively listen to others and their perspectives
- Know that values, beliefs and attitudes govern our own actions
- Culture is learned from families and caregivers
- Caregivers and parents can learn to resolve conflicts if they are open and honest
- There are no "right" or "wrong" ways to do things
- Care must be individualized for the child
- We must acknowledge our own feelings, beliefs and biases

Quality early childhood environments promote the acceptance of diversity. Children should be made to feel that differences are good and that everyone should be included, valued and that their contributions matter.



Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs should be included in the classroom as much as possible. All children should be given the same opportunities to participate whenever possible. An environment in which all children are able to be involved and contribute as full members is called an "inclusive environment." Children, both typical and with special needs, will benefit greatly from an environment which is as inclusive as possible. It is important that curriculum is individualized to meet the needs of all children. Ensuring that all children are included in all aspects benefits not only children with special needs, but all the children in the program. Creating an inclusive environment helps children learn to accept and appreciate the differences in people.

Down Syndrome

According to the National Institute of Health, "Down syndrome is the most frequent genetic cause of mild to moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities and associated medical problems and occurs in one out of 800 live births, in all races and economic groups."

Down syndrome is caused by the presence of all or part of an extra 21st chromosome and is associated with some impairment of cognitive ability and physical growth, and a particular set of facial characteristics. Down syndrome can be diagnosed during pregnancy, or after birth.

While there are identifiable traits associated with Down syndrome, the effect that it will have on a particular child is not predictable. While a child with Down syndrome can be expected to exhibit some developmental delays, there is no method to determine which areas might be affected, or to what degree. When caring for a child with Down syndrome, developmentally appropriate practice is a great way to foster the development of the child across all developmental domains. Remember to consider the child as an individual and concentrate on their strengths to help them develop and succeed in areas where they might show some delay. Create activities and challenges that are individually appropriate for the specific child and try not to compare them with other typically developing children in the program. It is also important to design age appropriate activities for children with Down syndrome, but be sure to take into consideration that you need to be prepared for, and ready to deal with, developmental delays across multiple domains.

Autism

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke website, "Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a range of complex neurodevelopment disorders, characterized by social impairments, communication difficulties, and restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior."

There are various forms of autism spectrum disorder, which include:

- Autism
- Asperger Syndrome
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified
- Rett Syndrome
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

There is no cure for autism, children diagnosed with ASD receive treatment through medication and therapy.



Module 6 Summary

Module 6 introduced:

- The benefits of building a classroom community.
- Methods for encouraging positive social and emotional development in young children.
- Techniques for fostering empathy, creating awareness of others and creating a sense of belonging to a group.

For more information about including children with special needs, you can take additional courses offered by the Department of Children and Families.



Key Point: The development of emotional security in children at this age begins with a nurturing, predictable and caring relationship with parents and caregivers.



Activity: Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Growth in Young Children

Use the space provided to take notes during this activity.
