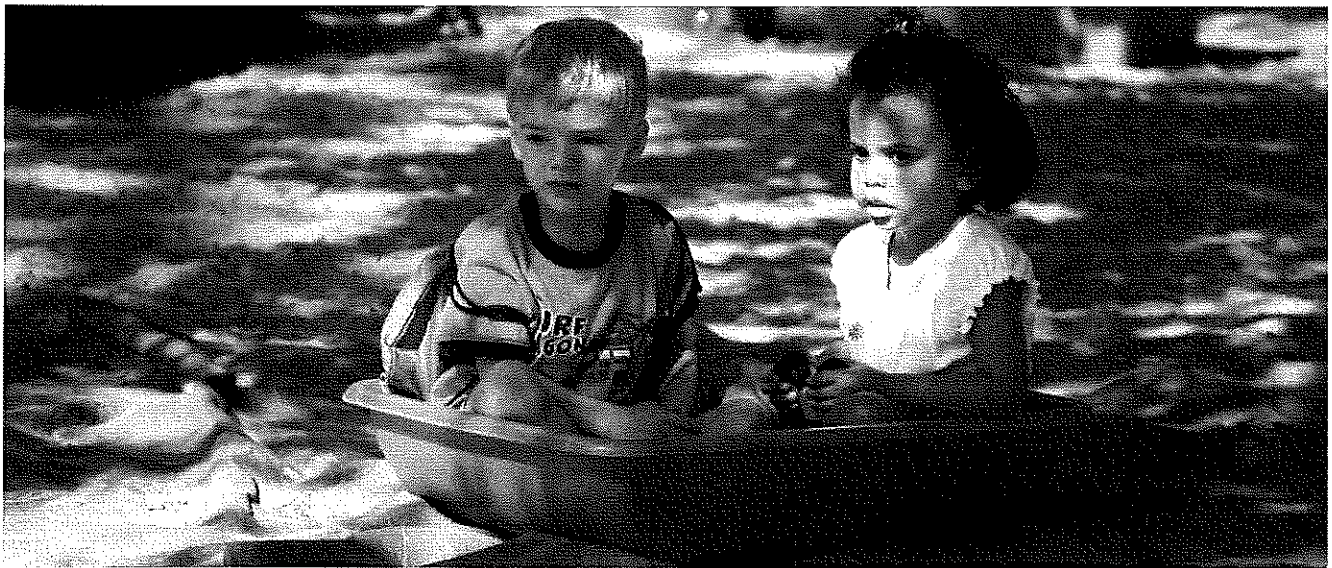


# **Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices**

## **Participant's Guide**



Revised 07/01/19



# Understanding Developmentally 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/#UDAP>

## Acknowledgements

Dear Training Participant,

This course is the result of months of work by many dedicated individuals. Although the work they contributed was very diverse, they united for a single purpose: to improve the lives of children and child care professionals throughout the State of Florida. Toward this goal, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Florida State University's Florida Center for Interactive Media (FCIM) became partners to revise the materials used in these courses:

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

The Department of Children and Families would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to the teams of people who played a key role in improving course materials and competency exams offered to child care professionals in Florida. They are:

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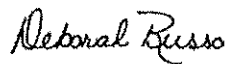
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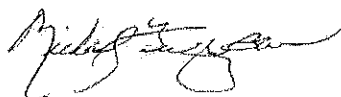
*The Training Coordinators Team, responsible for training child care trainers throughout the State, offered their expert opinion throughout the project on the content of courses and exams.*

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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.



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# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 1: What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

### Overview

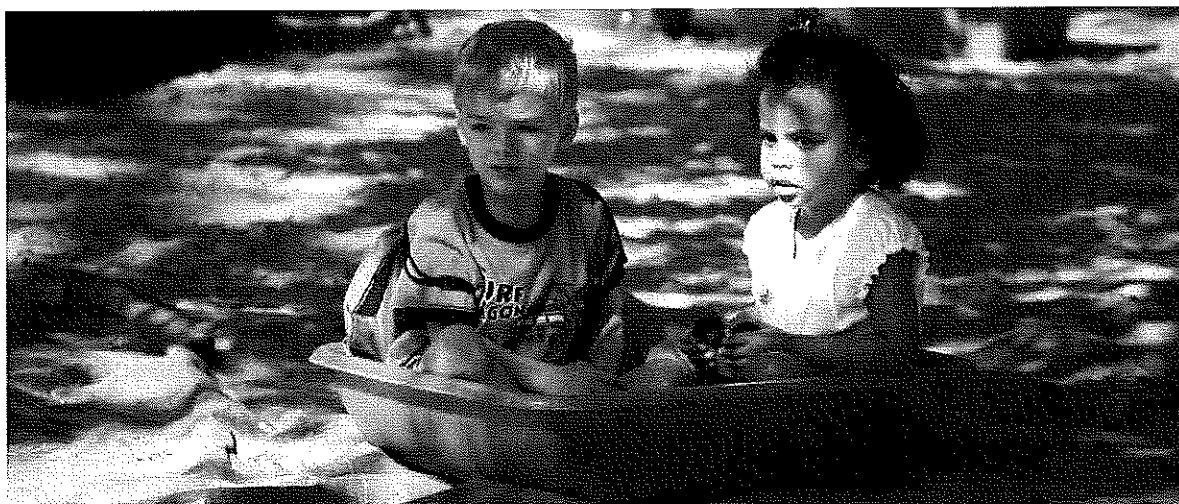
This module introduces the concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in early childhood programs and provides a general explanation of how it applies to children. For more than 20 years, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has been committed to improving the quality of care and education of our nation's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. In doing so, they have revisited and revised their current understanding by incorporating new terminology, knowledge and considerations into their guidelines for practices and discussions surrounding Developmentally Appropriate Practice. The goal of the course is to provide caregivers with an overview of what Developmentally Appropriate Practice is and why it is important to practitioners in the field.

### Module Goal

Participants will gain a general understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will define the three principle components associated with Developmentally Appropriate Practice.
- Participants will evaluate and demonstrate how teacher intentionality promotes development and enhances learning for children birth - age 8.
- Participants will identify three critical challenges currently impacting early childhood practices.





## What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

On May 14, 2010, MSNBC ran a story showcasing the lasting academic benefits high-quality care has for children. The article claims children who are placed in high-quality care see academic benefits that last into their teenage years and are also a little better behaved as a result. The article states, "...children who have high-quality care see academic benefits lasting into high school."



### **Activity: Course Expectations**

This activity will identify everyone's expectations for this course. Use the space provided to record your expectations as well as the expectations of others. These will be revisited at the end of the course.

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**Key Point:** Developmentally Appropriate Practice focuses on children birth through eight years old and is made up of three principle components: age appropriateness, individual appropriateness, and social/cultural appropriateness.

- \_\_\_\_\_ **appropriateness** means considering what is typical for a child within a given age group. Caregivers should be knowledgeable about the general pattern of growth that children follow and the behaviors that they exhibit. Knowing the typical behaviors and growth patterns for a certain age group is necessary to plan the most appropriate environments and activities to optimize the learning experience for the children in care.



**Key Point:** Knowing the typical behaviors and growth patterns for a certain age group is necessary to plan the most appropriate environments and activities to optimize the learning experience for children in your care.

Think about the typical behaviors and growth patterns of the children you have in care. What do the children in this age range typically know? What are most of them able to do without much interference? Once you answer these general questions, you will have a good starting place for planning experiences that will be most effective for children within the age range.

**Example**

This morning, 18-month-old Dominique enjoyed the watercolor activity so much she painted the paper, herself, and the table! When Ms. Alyssa noticed the mess, she quickly took her paper away and placed it on the counter to dry. After she washed up Dominique, she led her to another area to wait while everyone else finished. When the paint was dry, Ms. Alyssa cut Dominique's picture into a whale shape for her to take home that afternoon. Her mother was excited to see what her daughter had made and to hear all about whales and the sea animals they talked that day.

Is this an age-appropriate activity? Why or why not? What would make it a more developmentally appropriate experience?

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**Practice & Feedback: In Your Own Words**


Take a few minutes to write down and share an example of “age appropriateness” from your experience as a child care professional. Remember to keep your program’s name and the names of other people and caregivers confidential.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ **appropriateness** means considering the needs of each child as a unique individual. Caregivers must be aware that all children are different. Although a child is a certain age, his/her temperament, personality, and family history are all factors that affect his/her development.

	<b>Key Point:</b> A child's age, temperament, personality, and family history are all factors that affect his or her development.
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To be truly effective, teachers must also recognize that all children are unique and each has varying rates and levels of development. Caregivers who know where each child is developmentally can modify their teaching strategies and approaches to better support the needs of the child.

**Example**

Nate is 2 years and 9 months old and has just transitioned into the preschool classroom. His preschool teachers do not allow pacifiers in the classroom, because preschoolers are “big kids” now. Nate however still needs to take his pacifier, but only at naptime. Over the past week, they have noticed that he is cranky and having behavior issues, especially in the afternoons.

Is this example individually appropriate for Nate? Why or why not? What would make it a more developmentally appropriate experience?

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**Practice & Feedback: In Your Own Words**


Take a few minutes to write down and share an example of “individual appropriateness” from your experience as a child care professional. Remember to keep your program’s name and the names of other people and caregivers confidential.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ **appropriateness** means considering the social and cultural contexts in which children grow and live. Caregivers should respect the values, expectations, and home languages of the children and their families when designing and implementing quality early childhood programming.

 <b>Key Point:</b> Children’s learning experiences are enhanced when caregivers are aware of and support the social and cultural contexts in which they live.
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Many aspects of a child’s learning and development are affected by family, friends and the community in which they live. Caregivers should consider the values, expectations and home languages of the children and their families when designing and implementing quality early childhood programming. NAEYC, in their definition of *culture* found in their Code of Ethical Conduct, states that ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs each profoundly influence a child’s development and his/her relationship to the world.

**Example**

Mei was in the cafeteria making a peanut butter and bird seed feeder when her mother arrived to pick her up. Ms. Ling was clearly upset when she approached Mr. Jamel, the afterschool caregiver, about this activity. In their country, playing with food is not allowed. Often, food is scarce and every little bit is used for the good of the family or group.

Is this a culturally appropriate activity? Why or why not? What would make it a more developmentally appropriate experience?

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As a parent, would you want to know that your child's cultural preferences have been considered? By now, you should begin to see that there is no "one size fits all" answer to providing developmentally appropriate activities. There needs to be a healthy balance of age, individual, and culturally appropriate experiences blended into every classroom, every time, every day.



**Practice & Feedback: In Your Own Words**

Take a few minutes to think about and record, in your participant's guide, an example of "cultural appropriateness" from your experience as an early childhood education professional. Remember to keep your program's name and the names of other people and caregivers confidential.

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**Activity: Integrating the Three Components of Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

Use the space below to record how you would provide Developmentally Appropriate Practice learning experiences for the child in your scenario.

Age:

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Individual:

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Social and Cultural:

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## The Role of the Teacher Intentionality

Most early childhood professionals believe early childhood is a time when children think every experience is new and exciting. Children are naturally curious, and this excitement and enthusiasm makes it seem like everything is playful and fun. Sometimes, what happens in the classroom does not feel playful or fun to a teacher who is tired, frustrated or not prepared.

The reality is that good teachers know *teaching* is not occasional or accidental. It is intentional. Everything a teacher says and does should be thoughtful, paying close attention to what is said and done to promote learning.

Since 1986, early childhood practitioners have dedicated themselves to defining, and redefining, the term Developmentally Appropriate Practice, in order to help teachers promote optimal learning and development. At the heart of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice methodology is the concept of *intentionality*. Studies show, highly effective teachers have clearly defined goals for children and they thoughtfully prepare environments, experiences and activities to meet those goals. As a result of using this intentional teaching strategy, caregivers are becoming more confident and effective. This competence enables them to observe, assess and discuss children's progress with parents, staff and administrators.

Fundamental to Developmentally Appropriate Practice is the understanding that all teachers make important decisions every day. These decisions impact the children's safety, health and developmental opportunities. In developmentally appropriate classrooms, children actively explore their environment and materials under the watchful eye and guiding words of a responsive, caring adult. The adult must be consciously aware of the decisions they make about:

- Varying their teaching strategies to be more appropriate for the group and individual children.
- Preplanning and organizing the environment with learning goals and objectives in mind.
- Meeting children where they are and helping them reach challenging and achievable goals.

Take a few minutes to think about some of the decisions you make every day. What influences most of your decisions? Turn to your neighbor and share some of your ideas.

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Developmentally appropriate programs have clearly defined learning goals and outcomes for each child. Teachers track their progress and if children are not making gains, it may be because the classroom and/or the practices are not really developmentally appropriate. The goals we have for children must be achievable, yet challenging enough that they include a healthy stretch a little beyond what they already know and can do. If materials and activities are too hard the child may become frustrated. If they are too easy, children can become bored and end up disturbing the others. Effective teaching strategies for extending the learning experience may include: conversations, using questioning techniques and large blocks of time to practice newly acquired skills. There needs to be a blend of playful teacher-directed, teacher-initiated activities as well as child-initiated, child-driven activities throughout the day.



**Video: Examples of Teacher Intentionality**

Use the space below to take notes on the video and record examples of intentionality strategies.

1. Was the experience planned in advance? How do you know?

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2. Were the teacher's actions purposeful? Did the teacher extend the child's understanding of the situation as it emerged?

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3. Was each child successful in his or her own way?

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4. Did the teacher do the same thing in the same way for all children? Why or why not?

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5. Were the teacher and the environment prepared?

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6. Was there a natural exchange of information? Mealtimes are great times to have conversations and extend language and understanding in a social context.

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7. Were you able to identify the sequence of skill development as it unfolded?

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8. Was the experience appropriate for small groups of children?

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9. Was this an everyday activity used to take the children to the next level, based on their current knowledge and skills?

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10. Were the teaching practices responsive to the children's cultures? How do you know?

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**Key Point:** Caregivers should be intentional about planning learning experiences that are purposeful, challenging, and achievable.



**Activity: What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?**

Discuss whether each statement is true or false and use the space provided to take additional notes.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice is a curriculum.

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When we use Developmentally Appropriate Practice, it means there is only one right way to teach a skill.

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Developmentally Appropriate Practice means waiting until a child is ready to acquire new skills.

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Developmentally Appropriate Practice means doing the same thing for all children in the classroom.

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Using everyday routines and activities to enhance learning is Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

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Developmentally appropriate classrooms are largely unstructured to encourage free exploration.

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Teachers should have an understanding of child growth and development.

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The classroom must be a welcome environment for everyone's cultural background.

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Developmentally Appropriate Practice activities should be intentional, challenging, and achievable.

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Recognizing and adapting practices based on the cultural background of each child is a Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

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A child's age, personality, temperament, and family history are all factors that affect his/her development.

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## Three Critical Challenges

Three critical challenges impacting early childhood practices are:

1. Addressing differences in school success and achievement
2. Integrating and aligning preschool and elementary school programming
3. Improving teacher preparation, professional development and on-site support

### 1. The first challenge is to reduce the achievement gap.

In the United States, there is growing evidence that many children do not enter school ready to learn. Disparities in a child's ability to succeed in school often stem from the lack of opportunity early in life. This inequity exists, not because children are lacking, but because their opportunity to learn is lacking. These gaps in achievement are often influenced by family income, education, ethnicity and language. What we do know is that children who live in poverty and use English as a second language often enter school with lower foundational skills than more affluent children and children whose first language is English. What makes it worse is the fact that the children who start school behind, stay behind.

This achievement gap is most pronounced in the areas of language, literacy and math (although social, emotional and behavioral adjustment is also a contributing factor for school success). One of the best predictors of school (and life) success is the ability to communicate. Language and vocabulary development is critical for children.

What does this mean? Educators must DO something. What can we do? Be proactive. We need to be intentional about giving children the words and experiences that will help build their vocabularies and oral language. How? Read! Read and talk to them every day in multiple settings. This includes whole group, small groups and individually. Extended conversations need to be thoughtful, rich in meaning and connected to the context in which they take place. For more information about language and literacy teaching strategies, activities and ideas please take the Department of Children and Families' course, *Early Literacy: Birth through 3* and the Department of Education's course *Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors*.

### 2. The second challenge is to align and integrate children's learning experiences across the early childhood years, ideally from birth through age 8.

Creating curricular connection, communication and collaboration between preschools and elementary schools would greatly enhance educational quality and improve child outcomes. Research shows that children (especially preschoolers) need educational experiences that support development across all domains, with each skill building on one another, AND teachers who recognize their progress (or lack thereof). To date there are no national standards for early learning. Some states, such as Florida, have taken steps to create a more comprehensive approach to aligning standards to learning and developmental goals. These standards identify what is important for children to know and what they need to be able to do. What does that mean to us? The real challenge is not to get elementary schools to "push down" their curriculum and academic expectations, but to be more available and open to discussing what quality learning environments should include on all levels.

**3. The third challenge is recognizing that teachers are professional decision makers who are often inadequately prepared and minimally supported.**

It is no secret that effective teachers know *what* they are doing and *why* they are doing it. As stated before, they are professional decision makers often pressured to make decisions they may or may not know how to make. In the age of increasing accountability, teachers who have been prepared to teach using Developmentally Appropriate Practice sometimes feel the need to produce positive outcomes for children. These outcomes force educators to teach skills more directly. This drive to show student achievement creates a mismatch in philosophy and understanding that results in conflicting expectations for the children and teachers alike. The use of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the child care program will help to prepare children for school.

Ideally, teachers need specific information about early childhood development, they need to participate in on-going professional development and they need the freedom to make decisions about curricular activities based on the age, individual and cultural needs of the children in the classroom.



**Key Point:** Three critical challenges impacting early childhood practices are: addressing disparities in school success and achievement, integrating and aligning preschool and elementary school programming and improving teacher preparation, professional development and on-going support.



## Module 1 Summary

Module 1 introduced:

- The three core components associated with Developmentally Appropriate Practice.
- How teacher intentionality promotes development and enhances learning for children birth - age 8.
- Three critical challenges currently impacting early childhood practices.

# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 2: Why is Developmentally Appropriate Practice Important?

### Overview

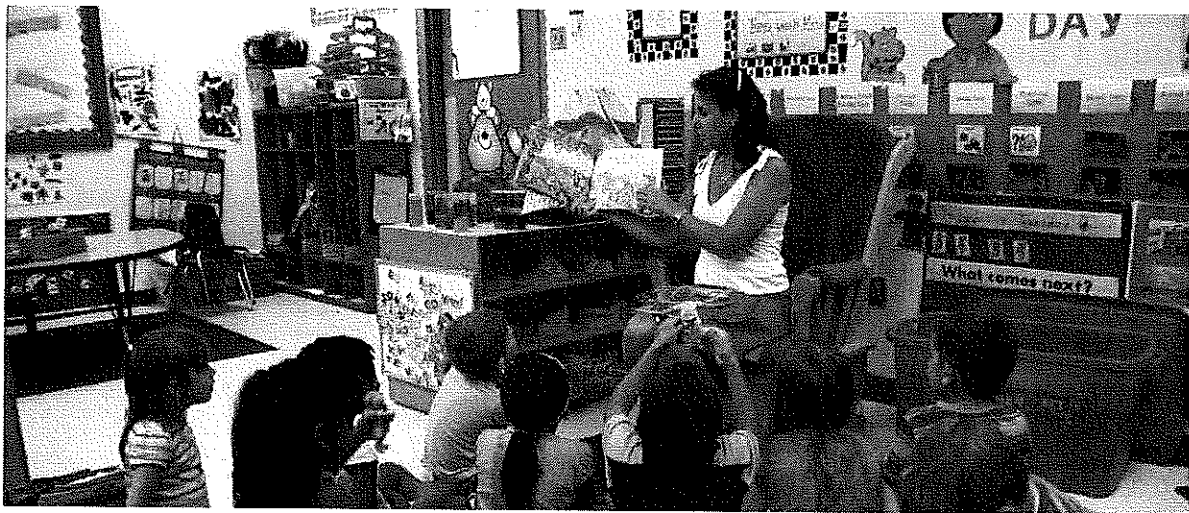
This module defines and discusses common aspects of high-quality early care and education and the reasons why we need Developmentally Appropriate Practice. It builds on definitions and information presented in the previous module about what Developmentally Appropriate Practice is and how it applies to children.

### Module Goal

Participants will gain a general understanding of why quality care is important to the growth and development of children.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will describe the need for quality child care for children.
- Participants will identify structural and process indicators of quality child care.
- Participants will analyze data from professional studies to determine the importance of quality care as it relates to outcomes for children.
- Participants will recognize the effects of quality child care.





## Why is Developmentally Appropriate Practice Important?

### Defining Quality Child Care

Extensive research in early care and education conducted over the past twenty years has clearly demonstrated the need to understand the impact of quality care on children and their development. As mentioned in the previous module, there is growing evidence that many children do not receive the same level of quality experiences early in life, and therefore, they do not enter school with the skills they need, nor are they ready to learn. Disparities in a child's ability to succeed in school often stem from the lack of opportunity, and again, the children who start school behind stay behind. The quality of care, good or bad, children receive in the first five years has a lasting effect on them and their ability to succeed.



### Activity: What is Quality Child Care?

List quality components of child care. Then categorize each quality component as a structural indicator or process indicator.

**Structural indicators** are things that are "regulable," meaning they can be monitored and are important for providing consistent care.

**Process indicators** are what programs "do" to help promote development through specific activities and intentional practices. Process indicators are observable interactions.

#### Examples of structural indicators:

- Licensure
- Lower ratios
- Smaller group size
- Caregiver qualifications
- Professional development for staff
- Health and safety regulations
- Inclusive environment

#### Examples of process indicators:

- Curriculum and established routines
- Language and reasoning activities
- Sensitive, responsive interactions
- Collaboration and provisions for parents and families
- Parent, teacher, and child interactions
- Child-sized furnishings
- Well defined and equipped space that meets the needs of all children



**Key Point:** Indicators of quality include both structural and process measures. Quality child care programs consistently maintain licensing standards and demonstrate responsive caregiving practices.

Does quality matter? Now that we have an idea of what quality is, we must move on and explore *why* the need for quality care is so important to children. There is mounting evidence that suggests child care quality impacts a child's ability to grow intellectually and socially. In the United States, educators basically believe that in order to become a productive citizen, adults need to be literate and academically successful. With this increased pressure to succeed, parents are relying on child care professionals to dedicate an even greater amount of time to, and place a stronger emphasis on, providing an "educational foundation" than ever before.

Research shows early experiences have long-term effects on children's success in school, and later in life. Studies suggest quality experiences early in life lead to better outcomes for children. These experiences lead to:

- Lower delinquency rates
- Increased graduation rates
- Adults who earn higher salaries
- Increased home ownership
- Better cognitive and language skills
- Adults who spend less time participating in social programs or on welfare

What this means to society is that investing in quality early childhood programming leads to saving money later. In one study, the benefits were a savings of \$7.14 for every dollar spent in a preschool program. (The Chicago Child-Parent Centers: A Longitudinal Study of Extended Early Childhood Interventions). Other studies have produced similar results.

#### **Perry Preschool Study**

It would be hard to imagine that a society could find a higher yield for a dollar of investment than that found in preschool programs for its at-risk children. (Committee for Economic Development Investing in our Children, 1985)

Three and four year olds (economically disadvantaged) were studied – ½ attended a quality preschool, ½ did not attend a preschool at all.

#### **Quality Preschool**

- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Developmentally appropriate assessment procedures
- Continuous staff training
- Administrative support
- Low teacher/student ratio
- Systematic effort to involve parents

#### **Educational outcomes for preschool group (versus control group):**

At age 27 follow-up

- Completed an average of almost 1 full year more of schooling (11.9 years vs. 11 years)
- Spent an average of 1.3 fewer years in special education services — e.g. for mental, emotional, speech, or learning impairment (3.9 years vs. 5.2 years)
- 44 percent higher high school graduation rate (65 percent vs. 45 percent)

**Pregnancy outcomes for preschool group (versus control group):**

At age 27 follow-up

- Much lower proportion of out-of-wedlock births (57 percent vs. 83 percent)
- 50 percent fewer teen pregnancies on average (0.6 pregnancies/woman vs. 1.2 pregnancies/woman)

**Lifetime criminal activity for preschool group (versus control group):**

At age 40 follow-up

- 46 percent less likely to have served time in jail or prison (28% vs. 52%)
- 33 percent lower arrest rate for violent crimes (32% vs. 48%)

**Economic outcomes for preschool group (versus control group):**

At age 40 follow-up

- 42 percent higher median monthly income (\$1,856 vs. \$1,308)
- 26 percent less likely to have received government assistance (e.g. welfare, food stamps) in the past ten years (59% vs. 80%)

"Social Programs That Work – Perry Preschool Project." *Social Programs That Work*.  
Web. 31 Dec. 2010. [http://evidencebasedprograms.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=65](http://evidencebasedprograms.org/wordpress/?page_id=65)



**Key Point:** Quality Early Care + Quality Education = Quality Outcomes for Children



**Activity: Defining Quality Care**

How would you define quality child care?

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**Key Point:** Quality child care lays the foundation for a lifetime of success.

**Think about this...**

- According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 62% of working mothers have children under the age of 6. ( Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. *Child Health USA 2004*. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004.)
- Across the nation, more than 11 million children under the age of 5 are in some type of child care each week, averaging nearly 36 hours per week. With these numbers, children can easily spend more hours each week with their caregivers than they do with their own families.
- 57% of mothers with children under the age of 1 have their children in some type of care. (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies)
- Early childhood research indicates the majority of children in child care today are in programs of poor to mediocre quality. According to the Cost Quality and Child Outcomes Study, only 8% of infant classrooms and 24% of preschool classrooms were of good or excellent quality (1995). What is worse is 40% of infant programs and 10% of preschool programs were rated as poor.
- A poorly operated program can be an environment that is actually damaging or harmful to the development of children.



**Key Point:** A lack of quality care has negative effects on children's school readiness and development.

**What does this mean to us?**

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**Activity: Favorite Store**

Write down five reasons why you enjoy shopping at your favorite store, and five reasons why you don't enjoy shopping at another store. Be prepared to discuss your reasons with the group.

Favorite Store	Another Store
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.



**Key Point:** High-quality care means children are getting the solid foundation they need to be healthy, happy, and successful throughout life.



## Written Discipline Policy

Although disciplinary practices can vary from program to program, there are a few laws that dictate prohibited disciplinary practices. According to the Florida Statutes:

- Children shall not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening.
- Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest, or toileting.
- Spanking, or any other form of physical punishment, is prohibited.



**Key Point:** The disciplinary practices of your program must obey state and federal laws at all times and should promote social and emotional health for the children in care.



## Module 2 Summary

Module 2 introduced:

- The need for quality child care for children.
- The structural and process indicators of quality child care.
- The importance of quality care as it relates to outcomes for children.
- The changing role child care plays in American family life.

# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 3: Who Does Developmentally Appropriate Practice Impact?

### Overview

This module introduces some of the ways and reasons “why” we need to understand the importance of building collaborative relationships with parents.

### Module Goal

Participants will gain a general understanding about the need to establish a reciprocal relationship with parents and children.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify ways to intentionally include families in the childcare setting.
- Participants will explain the need to establish a collaborative relationship with parents.
- Participants will illustrate the importance of connecting parents to resources in their community.
- Participants will create parent involvement strategies, which illustrate why culture is important to the changing classroom community.





## Who Does Developmentally Appropriate Practice Impact?

The purpose of this module is to understand the importance of building collaborative relationships with parents. Most caregivers enter the field of early childhood because they want to work with children. While this may be true, we also realize family engagement has a profound effect on what we do and how we feel about the work we do. Forming partnerships with parents is one of the ways we support healthy growth and development in children.

We must also understand child care environments look very different than they did in the past. Today's classroom is very diverse and rich. It is essential we are intentional about the way we partner with families in order to raise healthy, competent children.



**Key Point:** High-quality care helps parents to be better employees and it helps employers to retain a stable workforce, which in turn helps the entire community.



### Activity: Think, Pair, Share

Discuss the challenges that parents and families face when it comes to raising children. Discuss with your group some of the main concerns and record them in the space provided.

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**Key Point:** Forming partnerships with parents is one of the ways we support healthy growth and development in children.



## Separation and Trust

- Just as children go through separation anxiety, so do parents.
- Trust is established over time.
- Remember, a caregiver's role is not the same as a parent's. Parents need to know you respect them as the child's *first* teacher.
- If you are a new teacher or in a new program, parents probably won't know you and yet you will be taking care of their children five days a week!
- Put yourself in their place and pass on all the information you can about their children.

The key is teamwork!

One way to make parents feel at ease when leaving their young children with you is to make sure their children are at ease.

- Create a brief separation plan for anyone who is in need (new or second time parents).
- Make the parent's departure routine predictable.
- Apply the lesson consistently.
- Ask parents about their own separation feelings.

Parents need to know that their children are being well cared for and their anxieties are understood. Often, when parents place their children in group care, they are feeling very vulnerable and need reassurance the caregiver is competent, caring, and honest when it comes to caring for their children. Caregivers, in turn, need to understand that they too have feelings about children and their families, and those feelings may not always be positive. Knowing relationships are complex, both caregivers and parents need to have a safe, secure environment that allows them to express and explore their own feelings and the feelings and viewpoints of others. One way for caregivers to address these feelings constructively is to participate in a process that helps them develop a plan for dealing with challenging situations and circumstances.

Responsive caregiving also includes helping children form secure relationships. Emotional stability begins with children's abilities to bond and attach to people who care about them and their world. We will explore ways to help children and their families fulfill this critical need in the next section.



**Key Point:** Working with children and families transitioning into group care requires patience, understanding, and reassurance.



## Bonding and Attachment

- Attachment is an emotional tie to a specific person.
- Children are likely to bond with their mothers, fathers, and you - the caregiver. It is believed that children come equipped with the ability to form strong relationships. They attach to those who respond to their needs in the most sensitive manner.

Experiments suggest that even though a person may feed a young child, it doesn't necessarily mean that the child will become attached to them. Children attach to people who are responsive and provide comfort and reassurance through quality interactions!

One interesting experiment was carried out by Abraham Maslow and Harry Harlow, who, with the help of several monkeys, illustrated how attachments can be very powerful. Each monkey was placed in a cage with two displays made of wire that resembled monkeys. One provided food through a bottle and the other was wrapped with a soft terry cloth. Overall, the monkeys spent more time on the cloth monkey. When they were subjected to a frightening situation, the monkeys clung to the terry cloth monkey for protection.

A fundamental part of bonding and attachment begins when you become "tuned-in" to the child. This allows you to form the social-emotional foundation from which he or she can feel secure. Children who form secure attachments with adults have a better chance of becoming secure adults. As a caregiver, you play a critical role in making sure children form secure attachments to you and their parents. Secure attachments are more easily formed when a child and his/her family has the same person caring for him/her every day. This consistency helps the bonding process and builds trust in you and your program, which in turn helps parents to become actively involved. Parent involvement strategies will be covered later in the module.



**Key Point:** Children who form secure attachments with adults have a better chance of becoming secure adults.



## Guilt Factor

Another factor to consider in the caregiver-parent relationship building process is the perceived role you now play. It is important to realize that every day you are the primary caregiver for the children in your care for a great many hours. When both parents work, often times they feel tremendous guilt for having to place their child in out-of-home care. Parents feel more comfortable about having to leave them in child care when their child is treated respectfully, like a person rather than a number. Parents want to feel as though you love and care for their child as you would your own.

Use the space provided to record some common concerns parents may have about leaving their child in child care.

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### **Activity: Think, Pair, Share**

Use the space provided to record some ways that you can help make every parent and child look forward to coming into your classroom each day.

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**Key Point:** The best way to deal with parents' worries is to show them you understand and are informed, honest, and available.



## Essential Partnerships with Families

Forming partnerships with parents doesn't just happen by chance. It is the result of deliberate effort put forth by both caregivers and parents. Each person has something to contribute to the relationship. The process is guided by a philosophy that recognizes the importance of the parent-caregiver relationships and their respective roles. This is critical to providing quality care. The goal for all early childhood programs is to find a healthy balance. Parents and caregivers can learn to work together without interfering with each other's primary role. The parent is the child's first teacher; your role is to provide support and complement his/her efforts. Remember, you are not in competition with each other. Children need you both to carry out your respective roles to help them become the best they can be.

Practice open communication and focus on the parents' strengths and goals for their child. Remember, the child is at the center of the parent-caregiver relationship. It is up to you to find ways to help the parent feel you value his/her input, respect his/her thoughts, and consider his/her ideas.

Families will appreciate hearing about their child's school life and daily experiences. When you are consistent, respectful, and open, you communicate a spirit of willingness to partner and negotiate more effectively. A daily note helps ensure this communication, but there are many ways to keep the lines of communication open between you and parents and to share the child's progress.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice encourages caregivers to be "intentional" about creating partnerships with parents.

Use the space below to record some things that you can intentionally do to help establish a positive, reciprocal relationship with families.

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As professionals, we must acknowledge how we act, react, and behave toward children and families, directly and indirectly impacts our ability to communicate effectively. Our attitudes, beliefs and values influence our relationships with them in many ways. Becoming aware of the messages we "send" is one way to open the lines of communication.





**Activity: Communication Between Parents and Caregivers**

Use the space provided to record the types of information a parent needs from a caregiver, and the types of information a caregiver needs from a parent.

**Information Parents Can Provide to Caregivers:**

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**Information Caregivers Can Provide to Parents:**

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Sample Parent Note:

 <b>SUNNY DAY CHILD CARE</b>  Daily Note Today's Date: _____
• CHILD'S NAME: _____
• Diaper changes / potty times: _____ _____
• What was eaten and how much: _____ _____
• Nap time: _____ _____
• Mood: _____ _____
• Reminders (extra clothes, diapers, medication, etc): _____ _____
• Today, we learned about: _____ _____ _____ _____

	<p><b>Key Point:</b> Establishing a partnership with parents requires consistent communication. Caregivers and parents need to acknowledge and deal with differences in child-rearing beliefs and practices in a constructive way. The common goal should be the development of the child!</p>
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## Including All Families

Developmentally Appropriate Practice emphasizes the need for teachers to become more intentional about what they do. This includes building a positive relationship with each child and family within the context of their culture and through the inclusion of children with special needs. As communities become more diverse culturally and linguistically, so will the “community” within your classroom. Sometimes there are many barriers to family engagement. In order to understand how to get parents involved, we must identify some of the issues that may keep us from collaborating. Keeping an open mind about different perspectives helps us to identify issues that need further understanding or explanation.

Building strong home/school partnerships with families takes effort on our part. Working with families requires us to respond in a way that is flexible so we can individualize our actions to best meet the needs of every child. Unfortunately, there is no *one* way to do this. When differing values, attitudes and behaviors are viewed as wrong, our ability to form strong partnerships becomes next to impossible. Try to listen and understand their point of view; be patient and involve them in their child’s experiences.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you work to get to know or involve parents in their child’s education, some will still not participate in your program. To partner effectively with families, you need to use unique ways to get them interested and involved. Parent involvement is sometimes a real challenge. Most parents work full time; they may even have two jobs. Caregivers need to think of creative ways to include them in their program’s activities. Ask parents if you may send home things for them to do, such as typing, creating newsletters, cutting out bulletin board, etc. But, don’t give up.

Use the space provided to take notes about the types of barriers that affect a parent’s ability to become involved or effectively communicate with caregivers.

### Language/Custom Barriers

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### Single Parent/Foster Parent/Grandparents as Primary Caregiver

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### Special Needs

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**Activity: Super Caregivers**

Read the following scenarios and create a parent involvement strategy for each situation. Be prepared to discuss your strategies with the group.

**Scenario 1**

Miguel Rosa is a 3-year-old in your class. He has been with you for about 6 months and his mother, Carmen, has never participated in any parent involvement activities. You have tried to talk to her about this, but she doesn't speak English well and you don't speak Spanish. Super caregiver, what can you do?

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**Scenario 2**

Ali Mohammed is a 4-year-old in your room. You very rarely see the mother because Ali's 18-year-old brother comes to pick him up every day. Whenever you see Ms. Mohammed, she is dressed in beautiful flowing dresses and seems very nice, but quiet. You can't understand why she won't come in and spend time with the baby! Super caregiver, what can you do?

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**Scenario 3**

Mr. Shank is a single father of one of your preschoolers, but he also has a toddler and school-age child in the facility. He is so nice and friendly, but when you asked if he was attending the parent support session he remarked, "I can't afford to hire a baby sitter and I don't have the time! Super caregiver, what can you do?"

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**Scenario 4**

Ronnie is a child with special needs who has two working parents. He is in your preschool class all day, every day. You rarely see the parents because they bring Ronnie in so early and pick him up so late your schedules don't meet. Lately, Ronnie has had more difficulties than usual. Super caregiver, what can you do?!

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**Scenario 5:**

The Jensen children, Jess and Jake, have been enrolled in your afterschool program for several months now and they still seem to be unusually distant with the teachers and your staff. You feel they are having a hard time getting involved with the program and the other children. You wanted to discuss this with their father when he came by to pick them up last Friday, but somehow you missed him. Super caregiver, what do you do?

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 **Key Point:** Developmentally Appropriate Practice emphasizes the need for teachers to become more intentional about what they do. This includes building a positive relationship with each child and family within the context of their culture and through the inclusion of children with special needs.



**Activity: Relationship Challenges**

Use the space provided to record information about challenging parent-caregiver relationships and some solutions for each challenge.

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## Ways to Educate

In your efforts to partner with families and their children, keep in mind the role you play as a professional. You are the expert in child development and learning, but they are the expert in their child and their child's abilities. Together, you can make a great team helping the child reach his or her full potential. There are many ways you can effectively educate and engage families.

One way is to model appropriate behavior.

Since you are an expert in the field of early childhood development, many parents will watch how you interact with children. Sometimes, you will be their only role model. Modeling appropriate interactions with children will help demonstrate appropriate ways to handle behavior.

- Many times, parents will simply ask you "What do you do when Johnny does \_\_\_\_?"
- Other times, you may be asking the parent "What do you do when Johnny does \_?"
- Both situations are perfect for a discussion on what is appropriate for an age and stage of development and how to handle a behavior.
- Educating parents through verbal and written means can happen in a variety of ways.
- Many of the parent involvement strategies discussed earlier can be used to educate parents.

Each parent is different and will require information and community resources on a variety of topics.

Part of being a professional is to practice what you preach. Competent caregivers keep themselves informed and current on relevant issues and services. Just as we discussed ways to model behaviors, we need to help educate parents. This means seeking new information by helping them find answers to their questions and accessing services they may need.



### **Activity: Using Your Community Resources**

Use the space provided to record information about organizations, businesses or resources in the community that are related to children.

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**Key Point:** Respecting families and sharing information promotes positive relationships among all families and strengthens their sense of belonging in the community.



## Module 3 Summary

Module 3 introduced:

- Ways to intentionally include families in the childcare setting
- The need to establish a collaborative relationship with parents
- The importance of connecting parents to resources in their community
- Parent involvement strategies, which illustrate why culture is important to the changing classroom community



# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 4: When Should a Caregiver Use Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

### Overview

This module is designed to provide caregivers with general information about when Developmentally Appropriate Practice should be used, based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement and standards.

### Module Goal

Participants will gain a general understanding of early childhood theory, brain development, and stages of development and how they apply to the development of children.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify each theorist, their theory and how it applies to the development of children.
- Participants will explain common terms and concepts related to brain development and the formation of neuronal connections.
- Participants will explain the ways that children develop within the domains of development.





## When Should a Caregiver Use Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

The purpose of this module is to introduce some of the major ideas of how children develop and learn. We will review the theories of Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. Since these theorists and their theories are covered in detail in the Department of Children and Families' course *Child Growth and Development*, we will review how each theory broadly applies to children. If you have not already taken the course, *Child Growth and Development*, you are encouraged to do so.

We will also discuss basic brain development and concepts commonly associated with building neuronal connections.

Lastly, we will review concepts related to growth and development in the learning domains.



## Child Growth and Development Theories

Understanding child development theory and the stages of development can help caregivers create appropriate expectations for children. Many teachers and directors want to know more about early childhood development, but it can be a complex and sometimes confusing arena. Professionals have dedicated their lives to studying and researching children; they have spent hours upon hours observing, interacting with, and assessing children. From this, new ideas and thoughts are formulated about how to best support children as they grow and develop.

- A. **Motivational theories** focus on the belief that humans are controlled by many factors. They place more emphasis on personal motivation and desires than on what is happening in the environment. Based on these theories, you might consider what motivates children to act the way they do.
- B. **Social development theories** focus on emotional and personality development. Psychosocial development helps children shape their personalities by strengthening their ability to successfully negotiate conflict during various stages. Each stage of development lays foundational patterns that influence a person's ability to resolve conflict throughout life.
- C. **Intellectual/Cognitive development theories** focus on children developing an intellectual understanding of their world. Children interact with materials and people in the environment to construct knowledge. Children are naturally curious about the world around them and they learn best when they are stimulated and interested in what they are doing.

Understanding these theories is important to understanding how a child develops, grows and learns.



## Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One prominent motivational theory often associated with child growth and development is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This theory suggests children move through stages as certain needs are met. If basic needs are not met, children do not progress in development. Basic physical needs must be met, like having food and shelter available, before children or adults can move towards a higher level. If a child is tired or in pain, he/she cannot be motivated to move towards higher understanding until those needs are satisfied.

This theory helps explain why children cannot learn when they are tired or hungry or feel unsafe. Children who come from low socioeconomic levels may spend much of the time trying to get their basic needs met.

### Abraham Maslow: Hierarchy of Needs

LEVEL	HUMAN NEED	EXAMPLES
1	<b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air to Breathe</li> <li>• Shelter to protect</li> <li>• Water to drink</li> <li>• Food to eat</li> <li>• Clothes to wear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest, Sleep</li> <li>• Food, water, formula</li> <li>• Shelter, Heat, Beds</li> <li>• Health Care</li> <li>• Employment or income</li> <li>• Clothes</li> </ul>
2	<b>Comfort and Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Neighborhood</li> <li>• Safe relationships (not domestic violence or abuse)</li> <li>• Child care</li> </ul>
3	<b>Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Love and Attention</li> <li>• Acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of belonging, of being connected</li> <li>• Adult-adult affiliation</li> <li>• Parent-child relationship</li> <li>• Positive relationships with extended family</li> <li>• Positive informal social support network</li> <li>• Positive formal social support network</li> </ul>
4	<b>Self-Esteem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequacy</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of competency as parent, worker, significant other</li> <li>• Sense of efficacy, capability</li> <li>• Sense of resiliency, hopefulness</li> <li>• Ability to cope and problem solve</li> <li>• Sense of well-being (individual to family levels)</li> <li>• Opportunities for enjoyment</li> </ul>
5	<b>Self-Actualizing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill one's life with purpose and meaning</li> <li>• Being all that one is able to be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spirituality</li> <li>• Personal emotional response</li> <li>• Refinement of interpersonal skills (empathy, communication, relating)</li> <li>• Enhancements of understanding of relationships with child(ren), family, community, self</li> </ul>



**Key Point:** Providing for the physical needs of children while also establishing their comfort and safety is the foundation for their achievement of social and emotional development, achieving self-esteem and satisfaction, and realizing family actualization.



**Activity: Emotional and Physical Needs**

Each statement in the following list relates to a child's emotional or physical needs. Use the space provided to indicate which need is fulfilled by the statement.

Statement	Emotional	Physical
Giving water to a thirsty child.		
Spending time with children on an individual level, such as holding or rocking an infant.		
Singing quiet songs before naptime.		
Talking to toddlers about favorite foods during mealtime.		
Sitting on the floor with a toddler who is playing.		
Comforting a crying infant.		
Changing an infant's diaper.		
Providing cribs that meet Florida's safety standards for infants to nap in.		
Teaching toddlers to wash their hands.		
Comforting a crying child while you clean and bandage a scrape or scratch.		





## Erik Erikson's Social Theory

Erikson's theory explores what a person learns when development proceeds successfully throughout life, from birth to old age. This theory suggests the way adults interact with children in the initial stages determines how the children will develop, because each stage is built upon the previous stage.

Erikson's eight stages are defined as:

- Trust vs. Mistrust (birth to 1 year) – "I am all right."
- Autonomy vs. Doubt/Shame (1 to 3 years) – "I can make choices."
- Initiative vs. Guilt (4 to 5 years) – "I can do and I can make."
- Industry vs. Inferiority (6 to 12 years) – "I can join with others in doing and making things."
- Identity vs. Role Confusion (adolescence) – "I can be to others what I am to myself."
- Intimacy vs. Isolation (later adolescence) – "I can risk offering myself to another."
- Generativity vs. Stagnation (adulthood) – "I am concerned for others."
- Integrity vs. Despair (older adult) – "I can accept my life."

If trust is never developed, children can't fully develop autonomy.



### **Activity: Exploring Erikson's Stages of Social Development**

Discuss the conflict assigned to your group and identify Developmentally Appropriate Practice that caregivers can use to support children's development during the particular conflict. Use the space provided to record your ideas.

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## Jean Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget asserts that humans go through certain stages of intellectual development. The first two stages are the most relevant to development in early childhood.

1. Sensorimotor (birth to approx. 2 years) - Children learn through sensory perception and motor activity.
2. Preoperational (2 years to 7 years) - Children are bound by what they experience directly and not by what they think. Children begin to use symbols (one thing that represents another). For example, using sand to make a cake. Children are egocentric; their thinking centers on themselves. They can't see things from another point of view or from another perspective. For example, they do not realize that when they stand in front of the TV, no one else can see it.
3. Concrete-Operational (7 years to 11 years) - Children become more rational in their thinking. For example, realizing that Santa Claus probably doesn't exist.
4. Formal Operations (11 years and beyond) – The final stage of cognitive development, in which thinking becomes very abstract. Children think beyond the present and think about ideal situations.

According to Piaget, the greatest role of the caregiver is to help the child reach an understanding by providing the child with appropriate activities that stimulate thinking. Piaget believed children build knowledge and understanding through their physical development and through their interactions with the environment.



## Lev Vygotsky

Piaget thought children create their own knowledge individually by interacting with their environment. Vygotsky extended this thought by stating children create knowledge by interacting with their environment AND through social interactions, their culture and the use of language. One of the most important concepts of Vygotsky's theory is that there are varying developmental levels of ability.

Two developmental levels of ability:

1. The ability to do something with help or assistance
2. The ability to do something without help or assistance

The distance between these two levels is called the "Zone of Proximal Development."

The role of the caregiver is to foster the child's learning and development by knowing each child's developmental level and helping them to achieve the next level. First, a great deal of assistance is given, and then less and less as the child becomes more able. The assistance a teacher or more skilled peer provides is called *scaffolding*.

Language is an important tool for learning and remembering experiences. Caregivers need to help children observe, question, and use language as they encourage children in their attempts to discover new knowledge and gain independence. An example of using language to scaffold is: At first the caregiver says, "I squeeze a little toothpaste on the toothbrush. You open your mouth and I brush each tooth around and around." Next time, the child is encouraged to squeeze the toothpaste and the caregiver simply observes and makes suggestions, such as "Don't forget your back teeth."

You can also support intellectual development by engaging children in extended conversations. When you ask questions that encourage them to explain their answers, you gain a better understanding of their thought processes.

### The Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development

The sociocultural theory, or social development theory, of learning is based on the idea that children are molded by their culture, their society and their environment. Vygotsky proposes that culture is the main determiner of cognitive development. This means children acquire knowledge through culture, and culture influences what and how children think. Like Piaget, Vygotsky believed children learn best through play. As children learn new concepts, they try out their ideas based on the interactions and conversations they have with adults and peers. During the infant and toddler stages, children are testing behaviors and attitudes by how adults and caregivers react to them. They are learning which behaviors and actions are acceptable, and the caregiver's role during this stage is to encourage appropriate behavior by providing age-appropriate activities and experiences for children.



**Key Point:** Developmentally Appropriate Practice is influenced and enhanced by sound early childhood theories focused on young children's developmental stages.

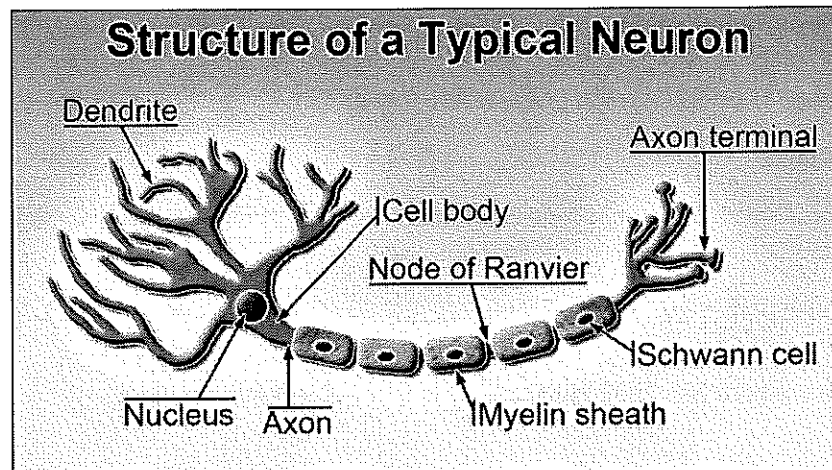




## Brain Development

It is an exciting time to be in the field of early childhood. With recent advances in technology and research, specialists are beginning to understand and agree upon the impact of high-quality care and the positive effects we can have on the children in our care.

Before we get into the research, let's take some time to discuss basic brain development.



The three main components of the brain used in learning are:

- \_\_\_\_\_ - specialized nerve cells that make up the central nervous system
- \_\_\_\_\_ - Each neuron has one axon. An axon is a fiber that sends messages "away" to other neurons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ - Each neuron has many dendrites. Dendrites accept incoming messages from the axons.

Neurons are made up of axons and dendrites. The axon sends messages to other neurons, and each neuron has only one axon. Dendrites accept messages from the axons, and each axon has many dendrites. When axons repeatedly send messages that are received by dendrites, they form a connection called a synapse. The creation of synapses is how the brain learns and develops, enabling a person to learn new words, skills and abilities.

When a child is born, there are already nearly 100 billion neurons in the child's brain. Most of these neurons are not yet connected, but the brain tries to form and reinforce connections as infants and toddlers are stimulated by events, experiences and attachments. In a child's brain there are many more neurons than are actually needed. If the synapses are used repeatedly, they become permanent in the brain. If a child is not stimulated through events and experiences, the synapses are lost and do not form connections.

With infants and toddlers, almost all experiences are new and unfamiliar. Not many synapses have been created in the brain of infants, since they do not have much experience with the world. For this reason, infants and toddlers must experience events and situations in order to develop the synapses that will allow them to progress on to more complicated skills. For example, a child must experience touching a crayon before learning to grasp and hold onto it. They must then experience using that crayon to make marks on a piece of paper, before eventually learning to write letters and numbers. Without these basic experiences early in the lives of infants and toddlers, it will become more difficult to learn the crucial skills necessary to progress later in life.



### **Activity: Brain Twisters**

Answer the following True or False questions before discussing them as a group. Use the space provided to record additional information about each statement.

- T / F 1. Listening to any kind of music improves math skills later in life.
- T / F 2. We are born with 100 billion brain cells and will not grow anymore.
- T / F 3. Young children are not able to learn a second language, but teenagers can. That is why foreign language is taught in high school.
- T / F 4. A three-year-old's brain is less active than your brain.
- T / F 5. Skills may be acquired at any time in life, so it is not important to concentrate on growth and development in child care.



**Key Point:** Brain connections are stimulated by events, experiences, and attachments. These connections, formed through repetition, shape the way a child feels, thinks, and acts.



## Developmental Domains

Early childhood professionals need to have a general understanding of how children typically grow and develop. Development takes place over time and across many domains. Although development proceeds in a predictable pattern or progression, there are often wide variations in rate and pace. Development in one area affects and influences development in another. The domains of development are: Physical Development, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Inquiry, Social Studies, and Creative Expression Through the Arts.



**Key Point:** Children progress through multiple developmental domains, which are interconnected.

### Physical Development

Physical development refers to the development of large and small muscles as they gradually develop. It involves typical growth patterns, changes in weight and height, and general health and safety. When considering the physical development of children it is important to remember:

- Children grow and develop at individual rates.
- You may find some children are able to do more with their bodies at an earlier age than others.
- You may also notice a great variance within an individual child between areas of physical development.

Fine motor skills are used for tasks that require precision, such as writing, while gross motor skills are used for tasks that require strength, such as running. Fine motor development progresses slowly over time. Development is best supported when children have enough time, appropriate materials, and adult support when practicing and refining skills.

Pushing children too early into fine motor tasks can be frustrating and may leave children feeling stressed and unsuccessful (NAEYC). Caregivers can support development by introducing and offering age-appropriate activities that match a child's current skill level and then gradually increasing them. Remember, you should be intentional about planning learning experiences that are purposeful, challenging and achievable.

### 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 your comments are always believable and encouraging, and 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." You should also avoid the technique of rewarding behavior with material rewards, such as candy or stickers, as 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*. (2009) Washington, DC. National Association for the Education of Young Children

## **Social and Emotional Development**

Social and emotional development refers to the way children think and feel about themselves and others. Children who learn to regulate their emotions and appropriately express their feelings are better able to build lasting relationships. Relationships are the cornerstone for success in life and it is necessary that caregivers understand how to support this development in children.

Adults can help children become confident and competent by helping them to interact in positive ways. Children who are socially and emotionally ready for school are able to develop friendships with peers and are able to demonstrate their emerging abilities. They are able to develop a sense of self and accomplishment, and behave in socially acceptable ways.

Throughout their childhood, children will also develop behaviors that pose unique challenges for caregivers. These challenging behaviors are often typical for the age and developmental stage of a child. Challenging behaviors will be discussed further in the age-specific Developmentally Appropriate Practice courses, and for more information about addressing challenging behaviors, you can take the Department of Children and Families' course *Basic Guidance and Discipline*.

## **Language and Literacy**

Language acquisition is one of the most important aspects of children's development in the early years. From the time a child is born, they must learn to communicate their needs. Because infants and toddlers begin to develop language by imitating what is said to and around them, it is important to talk to them, interact with them, and be a good role model. In the beginning, children understand much more than they can express. As they mature, language becomes increasingly necessary for communicating their feelings and needs.

Another way to foster language development in children is to read to them daily. Reading should be a relaxed experience that is done individually, in small groups, and depending on the age of the child, in short whole group sessions. In 1998, Florida Statute 402.25 was passed, which requires children ages birth to 5 years in state-funded programs be read to for at least 30 minutes a day. Caregivers are not required to read for thirty minutes at one time; this should be broken up throughout the day, based on the age and attention span of the children.

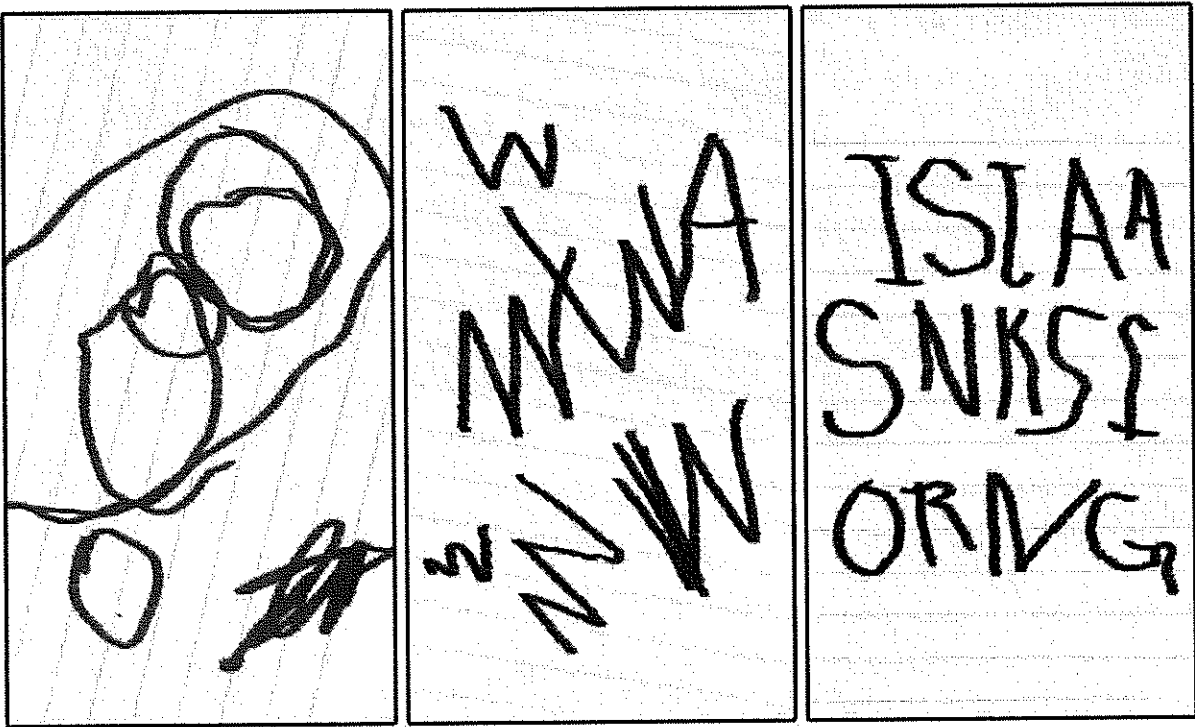
Caregivers recognize all children, especially those who have had less experience and opportunity, need to be bathed in sounds and rich language activities all the time. Intense, extended conversations help build vocabulary, comprehension and understanding necessary for success in school and later in life.

## Stages of Writing

In quality developmentally appropriate environments, early literacy experiences are embedded throughout the program day in all areas. Young children benefit from a variety of rich experiences that include books, music, gross and fine motor activities. Interest in writing will emerge as fine motor skills are developed. Children who are offered the opportunity to participate in activities such as, drawing, painting, cutting, and sculpting are often eager to express themselves on paper. All attempts at writing and drawing should be met with enthusiasm and appreciation.

The first letters that children are interested in and recognize are the letters in their own name. Children will begin to recognize and remember letters and words that are important to them.

Writing begins to emerge as random scribbling and progresses to invented spelling in the kindergarten years.



## **Mathematical Thinking**

Mathematical Thinking refers to number knowledge; pattern, size, and shape awareness; and the relationship between objects and space. Children are naturally interested in numbers and mathematical concepts. They learn through observation and interactions with the environment.

Children begin developing mathematical understanding from the first few months of their lives. 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.

For more information on mathematical thinking, take the Department of Children and Families' course *Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners*.

## **Scientific Inquiry**

Scientific Inquiry is an area of development that refers to children's exploration and discovery about the world around them including nature, objects, earth, space, engineering, and technology. Children have natural investigative curiosities, desiring to explore, discover, and learn through their senses and reflexes.

Caregivers foster scientific inquiry by creating opportunities for children to explore, investigate, observe, and record changes in their environment, such as the weather.

## **Social Studies**

Social Studies is an area of development that begins with children's basic understanding about themselves and their family members, and then expanding to their peers and other people in their environment. Social studies assists children with social-emotional growth and integrity.

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**

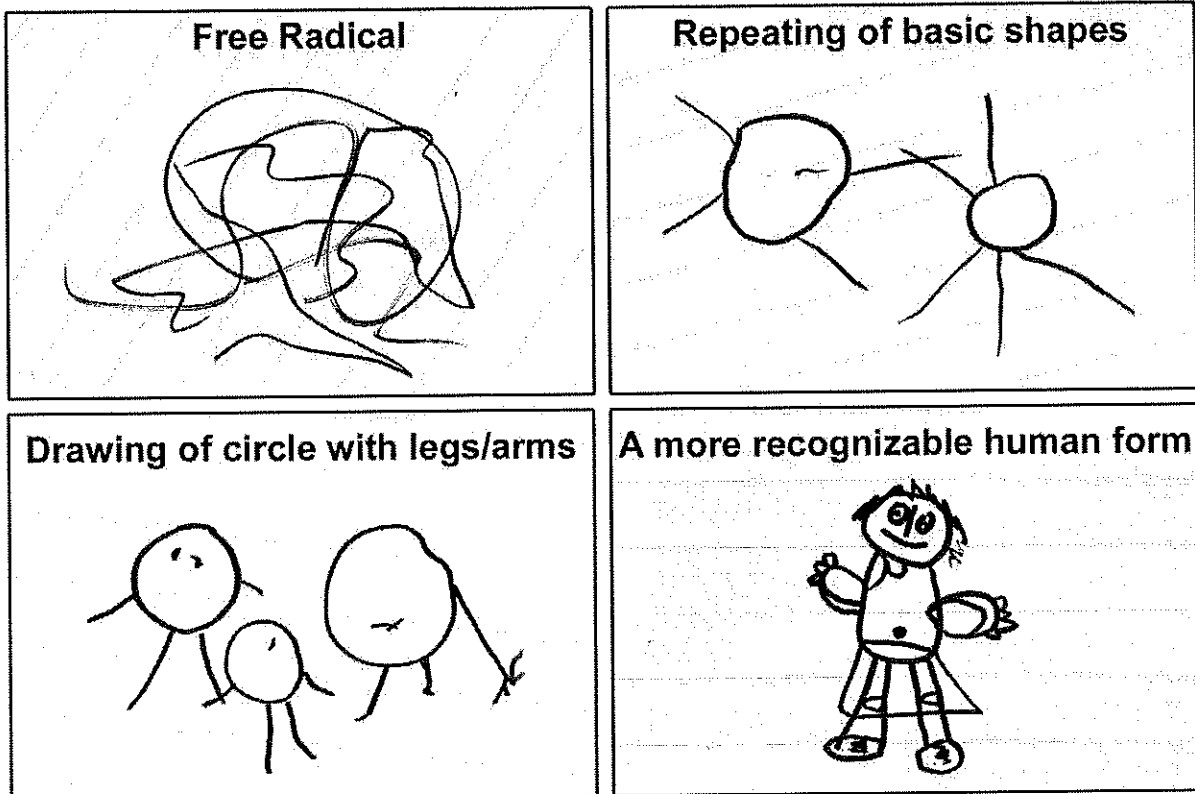
Creative Expression Through the Arts is an area of development that helps children learn to use art, music, movement, and imaginative play to communicate their feelings, ideas, and solutions to problems. Children also learn to appreciate other people's contributions, which gives them a better understanding of the different ways to be creative.

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.

## Stages of Art

Children will typically progress from drawing free radicals into drawing basic shapes, such as circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles, then eventually drawing representations of people, places and ideas. When referring to children's art, a free radical is a jumble of straight or curved lines that is freely floating on the paper. By the age of three, children should begin to draw their first representations of the human form using basic shapes. Typically, a child will use a circle for the head and a few lines to represent the arms and/or legs. As children reach the age of four, the objects in their drawings will become more recognizable. New symbols and concepts will be added as the complexity of combinations of shapes develops. Eventually, children will begin to draw easily recognizable representations of objects in two-dimensional spaces. These drawings typically have a baseline at the bottom and may also have a skyline at the top. Houses and people will be represented on the baseline, with clouds or the sun near the skyline, representing that some objects are above or below each other. School-age children begin to draw size relationships, such as a person being smaller than a car, or a house being larger than a person.

### Examples of artwork by young children:



## Stages of Play

Mildred Parten defined four types of play:

- **Solitary play** - playing alone
- **Parallel play** - playing beside other children, but not interacting with them
- **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)

Solitary play is the first type of play children will engage in, since they are egocentric and unaware of much of the environment surrounding them. Children may progress from parallel play into associative play, and eventually cooperative play, throughout their preschool years. You should begin to see children sharing and borrowing toys and materials, but they will probably not play together in an organized fashion until they reach age four or five. During cooperative play, children will begin to talk about the toys they are playing with and can describe what they are doing. They will also begin to show purpose in their play by establishing rules and goals.

It is important to note children will typically progress through each of these stages in the order shown. As children grow older, however, they will still periodically participate in the earlier stages of play. School-age children, for example, can be observed in each of the four types of play throughout an average day.

For more information on developmental domains, take the Department of Education, Office of Early Learning's course *Implementing the Florida Standards in the Early Childhood Classrooms: Birth through Kindergarten*.





## Suspect a Developmental Delay?

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

For more information about warning behaviors or concerns about children with special needs, you can take the Department of Children and Families' course *Special Needs Appropriate Practices*.

### Long Term Effects on Development

Abuse, neglect and trauma in early years can have a long-term, negative effect on children's development. Neurotransmitters tend to be more "corrosive" and may be damaged by any of these factors.

As we read some of the most recent statistics regarding abuse, neglect and trauma, please think about the specific ways these factors affect children's development.

A study called the "Minnesota Parent Child Project," by Byron Egeland, Alan Sroufe and the University of Minnesota, in 1995, was based on 180 at-risk children. It found:

- Abuse, neglect and trauma in the early years have long-term, adverse effects on children's development.
- The negative effects of poverty are cumulative and increase with age.
- At-risk infants who experience warm, responsive caregiving are more empathetic with peers later in life.
- The best way to make children resilient to high-risk situations is to reduce the stress in their lives and provide support to families.



## Module 4 Summary

Module 4 introduced:

- The theories of Vygotsky, Maslow, Piaget and Erikson and how their theories apply to the development of children
- Common terms and concepts related to brain development and the formation of neuronal connections
- Ways that children progress within the developmental domains

# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 5: Where Should We See Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action?

### Overview

This module is designed to provide caregivers with general information about quality learning environments.

### Module Goal

Participants will understand how to create quality learning environments by setting up learning centers and selecting appropriate equipment and play materials to include children with special needs and reflect diverse cultures. Participants will also understand how daily routines and schedules help provide structure and sequence for the events and activities of the day.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify elements of a quality learning environment.
- Participants will describe four key elements of the learning environment: learning centers, room arrangement, toys and materials, and daily routines.
- Participants will describe how daily routines and schedules provide structure needed for consistent programming.





## Where Should We See Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action?

In this module, we will discuss how to design quality learning environments to enhance learning and development in children. We will consider the physical space and furnishings used in designing early childhood environments, both inside and outdoors. Common elements of the learning environment include learning centers, or interest areas, such as the book center, art center, block center and home living center. Environments that are thoughtfully prepared and pre-planned allow teachers and caregivers the time they need to individualize teaching strategies to best suit the learning styles and developmental needs of all children in care.

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 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.

Caregivers must recognize they 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. Another important part of the learning environment is thoughtful planning for activities, routines and transitions. Children are better able to adapt to the demands of formal schooling when they have been provided opportunities to explore and practice within an environment that is consistent and predictable, yet flexible and inviting.



### Activity: Favorite Places to Play and Learn

Discuss with your group a favorite place you liked to play as a child. Describe the physical environment of the place and why you enjoyed it. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the whole group. Use the space provided to record information about your favorite place to play as a child.

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**Key Point:** Quality learning environments support all aspects of development for young children.



## Learning Centers

Bringing order and organization to any environment - home, work, or child care - seems to make sense to most of us. We know from experts in the field that in early childhood, learning centers, or interest areas, should be clearly defined well-equipped activity areas. These spaces should be organized so they actually enhance a child's ability to learn. When children have access to materials, they are better able to engage in age-appropriate play experiences with others.

Furniture:

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Access to materials:

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Children need to be exposed to a variety of experiences daily. One way to make sure they get what they need is to set up interactive learning centers. Centers/areas for engagement typically include:

**1. Dramatic Play/Home Living:**

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**2. Library:**

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**3. Discovery/Sensory/Science:**

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**4. Blocks/Construction:**

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**5. Art/Creative Expression:**

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**6. Music/Movement:**

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**7. Manipulatives:**

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**8. Wood Working:**

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**9. Feeding Area:**

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**10. Sleeping Area:**

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**11. Writing Center:**

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In addition to these areas, you should consider a parent communication area/board. Place this inside the classroom to encourage parents to come in and become engaged in their child's activities.



## Room Arrangement

Safety:

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Positive Relationships and Interactions:

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Location:

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Traffic Patterns:

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Wall Decorations:

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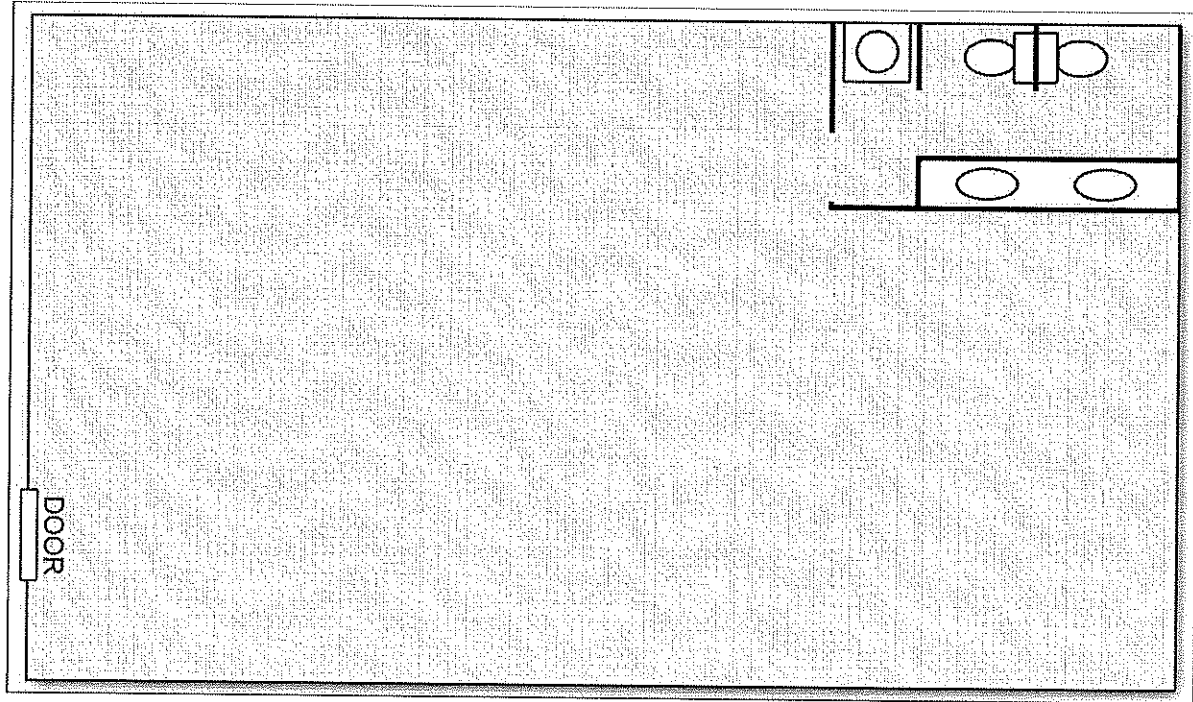
**Key Point:** Early childhood classrooms should be welcoming, warm, and inviting for young children. Adults can encourage involvement and support independence by carefully arranging the environment to facilitate learning.



**Activity: Classroom Rearrangement/Learning Center Development**

During this activity, you will examine the floor plan of a classroom and analyze and discuss the arrangement of learning centers within the learning environment. Use the following activity sheet to design an effective arrangement of learning centers.

**Rearrangement of Classroom**







## Outdoor Classroom



**Key Point:** Outdoor play is a great way caregivers can help fight the growing childhood obesity epidemic.



**Key Point:** The same considerations should be made for the playground as the indoor classroom. Learning centers and defined play spaces should be planned and prepared for inside and outdoors.



## Developmentally Appropriate Equipment and Play Materials

What are some basic things to keep in mind when you are selecting toys and materials for your classroom?

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Among the many play opportunities offered each day, some children may need some adaptation to make it relevant and meaningful for them. Children with special needs may require some adaptations to the environment or to the activity. Many simple modifications can make everyday learning experiences easier for these children.

- For children with limited fine motor development, you might try applying masking tape to brush handles and crayons, so they get a firm grip. Or, you could slit a rubber ball and slide the paint brush or crayon through, so that children can grab it better.
- You could also cut out fabric to paste on a storybook to make it more tactile (textured, stimulating.)
- For children who are in a wheelchair, you could lower the painting easels or sand and water tables to make them more accessible.
- Children who may have hearing problems or challenging behaviors often benefit from signs with pictures to help them navigate daily routines or activities.

Pay particular attention to children who may have allergies. Do not allow classroom pets or plants in the center if children have allergies that are triggered by them.

The key to making learning centers appropriate for *all* children is to ensure their safety without being overprotective.

## Cultural Considerations



### Activity: Non-Bias Checklist

This activity is designed to focus attention on the ways caregivers can support children by assessing the environment to avoid using developmentally inappropriate toys and materials. We must learn to be more intentional about the ways we support and represent children.

Take a few minutes to complete the Non-bias checklist with a partner. If you are not currently working in a child care program at this time, make sure to find a partner who is currently working in a center-based program. Discuss ways you might promote inclusion and cultural diversity in your own program.

### **Non-bias Checklist for Your Learning Environment**

1. Does your classroom have a variety of multi-cultural, non-biased materials:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dolls                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters and pictures   | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing, hats, accessories, fabrics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin boards        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking utensils and playfood        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puppets                | <input type="checkbox"/> Left-handed scissors                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzles                | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheel chair accessible               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tapes, records and CDs | <input type="checkbox"/> Braille books                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical instruments    |   |

2. List other positive, non-biased aspects of your learning environment:

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3. Describe one change you will try to implement in your classroom as a result of your non-bias checklist:

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4. Describe accommodations needed in your classroom for children with special needs.

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Developmentally appropriate environments that are purposefully planned and arranged also include ongoing evaluation and play extension. This helps facilitate all aspects of development in ways that are interesting and appealing to children. Keep in mind the age and developmental level of the children who will be using the room. Think of ways to enrich your learning centers by including a variety of interesting toys and materials. For example:

- **Cooking Center:**

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- **Dramatic Play Center:**

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- **Art/Creative Expression Center:**

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- **Discovery/Sensory/Science Center:**

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- **Music and Movement Center:**

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- **Computer Center:**

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**Key Point:** Developmentally appropriate toys and materials should be safe, appealing, age appropriate, avoid stereotypes, and reflect the needs and ethnic diversity of the children in the classroom.

## Recycling and Resources

### Resources for inexpensive craft/toy items:

- Carpet store for samples
- Parent's workplaces for scrap/recycled paper to draw on
- Dress shop for material scraps (bean bags)
- Any store where everything is only one dollar!
- Appliance stores for large boxes
- Milk delivery company for plastic crates
- Bottled water company for empty plastic bottles (fill with dirt and plants for a great terrarium)
- Lumber company to donate scraps for wood working
- Framing store for mat board
- Tile store for broken tile mosaics
- Nurseries for inexpensive plants
- Canvas/awning makers for heavy scrap material
- Repair shops for realistic home living props (i.e., toaster, television, video camera)
- Camera shop for film containers
- Junk yard for steering wheels
- Wall paper store for art scraps
- Parents can donate dramatic play clothes and food containers (egg cartons, food boxes, kitchen utensils)
- Print shops for assorted colors/size of scrap paper
- Florists for foam and ribbon scraps

Two great resources for finding inexpensive, creative ideas are *Beautiful Junk Creative Classroom Uses for Recyclable Materials* by Karen Brackett and Rosie Manley and *Beautiful Stuff! Learning with Found Materials* by Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini.



## Daily Routines

Children need to know what to expect and what is expected of them. Creating and adhering to a daily routine assures children their environment is predictable and consistent. Daily activities and routines need to be flexible but consistent. This instills a sense of order and familiarity all children need, especially those with differing abilities or challenging behaviors. Daily activities and routines need to be flexible but consistent. Every child care program will be different, but as required in child care rules and regulations, each must have a daily plan of activities and daily schedule posted in an accessible place.

- There needs to be a daily schedule written and posted in your classroom. The schedule should contain words and pictures for preschool children. 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 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.
- Ask yourself if there is a “balance” in your daily plans. Are there opportunities for children to be engaged in loud and quiet activities? Are there times when they are active and passive? Are there opportunities for children to participate in play individually and with others?
- The daily schedule should contain at least one hour of center time, so children can fully engage in activities.

### Mealtimes

Another area that can be quite challenging for caregivers is mealtime. During mealtimes, you should focus on the positive to reduce stress and confusion. There are many skills that can be reinforced during mealtimes. Teachers can help children learn math and language concepts and developmentally appropriate table manners. You can reduce wait time by letting children assist in the setup, service and cleanup of each meal. Use this time to practice useful daily living skills and model quiet conversation. Encourage children to talk about their food and the meal by asking them how something tastes, looks or feels. Encourage self-help skills by having children serve and pour the foods and drinks themselves.

### Transitions

- Transitions take place all day long, whenever one activity stops and another starts
- Some transitions are more difficult because of the number of steps involved (lunch to nap)
- It is easier to move from quiet to loud/active than from loud/active to quiet activities

The following ideas will help you ease chaos during transition times:

- Encourage children to clean up after play so you can supervise rather than clean.
- Plan daily schedule so there are as few transitions as possible.
- Have materials ready so one activity can end and another can begin without having the children wait.
- Use methods like music or a movement activity to hold children's attention during the transition.
- Offer choices to the children. For example, "You can sit at the table until we finish or you can listen to the story."
- Help children become familiar with the routine, so they know what to expect.
- Give children a warning just before the transition to help them prepare and get ready for what is coming next.



**Activity: Identifying Transitions**

Evaluate the following schedules and identify all of the transitions that take place during the day. Discuss ways you can reduce the number of transitions by eliminating unnecessary activities and combining activities that are similar in nature.

Original Schedule	Revised Schedule
8:00 – 8:15 Morning arrival	
8:15 – 8:45 Inside play	
8:45 – 9:15 Table toys	
9:15 – 9:45 Puzzles	
9:45 – 10:15 Breakfast	
10:15 – 10:30 Coloring	
10:30 – 10:45 Play dough	
10:45 – 11:00 Circle time	
11:00 – 11:30 Art project time	
11:30 – 11:45 Learning time	
11:45 – 12:00 Outside play	
12:00 – 12:05 Hand washing	
12:05 – 12:30 Lunch	
12:30 – 12:45 Interactive songs	
12:45 – 1:15 Story time	
1:15 – 1:30 Outside play	
1:30 – 2:00 Nap time	
2:00 – 2:15 Snack time	
2:15 – 2:30 Free play	
2:30 – 2:45 Play dough	
2:45 – 3:00 Coloring	
3:00 – 3:15 Cutting	
3:15 – 3:30 Table toys	
3:30 – 4:00 Outside play	
4:00 – Afternoon pickup	

## Transition Ideas

Singing songs during classroom transitions is a great way to keep children engaged in an activity and focused on the task they should be doing. You can use old favorites like, "Whistle While You Work" during clean up time or "Rock-a-Bye Baby" before naptime, or you can research new songs to use during transitions.

Another method to ease transitions is to use attributes to sort a large group of children into smaller groups. For example, when allowing children to choose which learning center they want to play in, you could begin by saying, "If you are a girl and are wearing red, you can choose the center you want to play in now." Another example is, "If you are a boy and are wearing glasses and something blue, you can choose the center you want to play in now." You can then continue in this method until all children have chosen a learning center. By using this method, you can continue to engage children while also encouraging them to be aware of themselves and the other children around them, and to identify and recognize the similarities and differences in their peers.



**Key Point:** Children need daily routines and schedules that are flexible, yet consistent and predictable. This instills a sense of order and helps children learn new skills and appropriate behaviors.



## Module 5 Summary

Module 5 introduced:

- The elements of a quality learning environment.
- Four key elements of the learning environment: learning centers, room arrangement, toys and materials, and daily routines.
- How daily routines and schedules provide structure needed for consistent programming.



# Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Module 6: How Can Caregivers Implement Developmentally Appropriate Practice Concepts and Practices in a Professional Manner?

### Overview

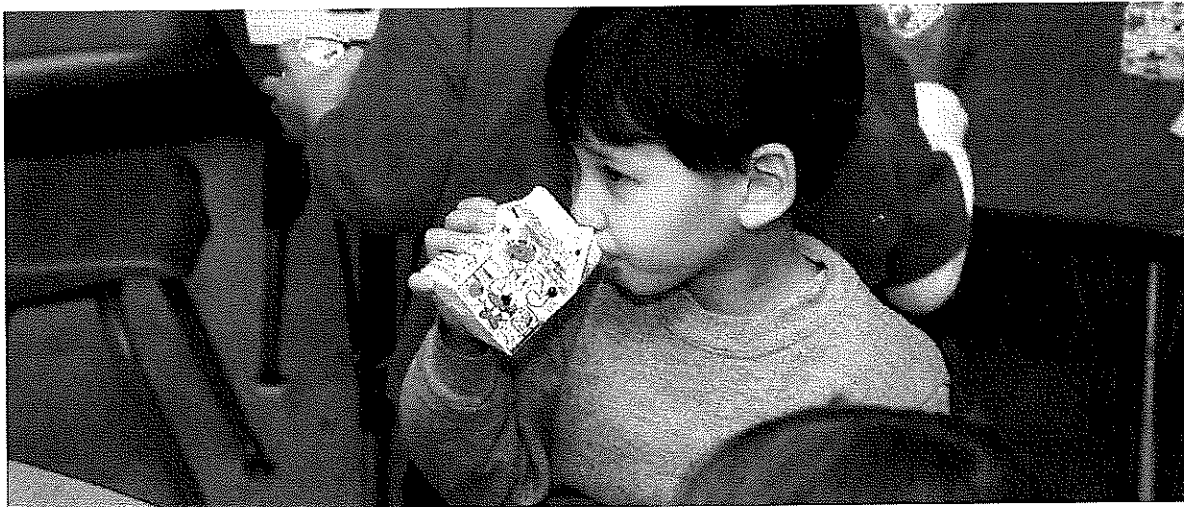
This module is designed to provide general information about quality professional caregiving practices.

### Module Goal

Participants will understand the importance of establishing and maintaining professional caregiving practices.

### Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify the personal and professional characteristics of a quality caregiver for young children.
- Participants will explore the various roles commonly associated with caregiving.
- Participants will develop a professional development plan to improve caregiving skills.
- Participants will summarize the NAEYC guidelines for effective teaching practices.





## How Can Caregivers Implement Developmentally Appropriate Practice Concepts and Practices in a Professional Manner?

This module is designed to help you identify some of the key elements that a quality caregiver possesses. Sometimes it feels like you may be pulled in so many directions that it is hard to remember exactly which “hat” you are wearing at any given time. As we go through this section, think about what it means to be a professional in any field, and then apply it to providing quality early childhood programming. As a caregiver, you are responsible for how well the day will go and what the children will be able to accomplish during the time they spend with you. Remember, accomplishment is not about what the children will “produce”; it is more about the way you interact and intentionally plan for meaningful experiences throughout the day. We will also reflect on some of the ways you can identify where you are in your own professional development and provide resources to help you reach personal and professional goals.



### **Activity: Represent Yourself As a Caregiver**

If you were to describe the “ultimate” caregiver, what would he or she be like?

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## **Roles of Caregivers**

As a caregiver you must fill many roles, including:

### **Observer**

The role of the observer is to be aware of the social interactions and skill development of each child. This information is used to assess and develop appropriate plans and activities to enhance their experiences and opportunities. Every group is made up of individuals who have different strengths, weaknesses and developmental needs. To be truly effective, observers must recognize that all children are unique and each has varying rates and levels of development. Children within any age group will be the same in some ways and very different in others. Careful observation helps staff and providers learn about the children they have in care. This information can also help evaluate program effectiveness and can be used to measure a child's progress over time.

### **Programmer**

The programmer helps implement Developmentally Appropriate Practice by making critical decisions when it comes to selecting materials, supporting interactions, designing curriculum and adjusting instruction. This means that you develop plans and activities that foster and facilitate the positive development of children. Meaningful curriculum emerges from the daily interactions and real events of the children and families enrolled in your program. Your program should be a reflection and an integration of best practices and individual interests.

### **Teacher**

The teacher is the facilitator of social interaction and skill development. The teacher helps children learn by establishing limits and boundaries and by helping children develop a sense of community. The teacher's role is to pre-plan and prepare intentional experiences for all children. Teachers continuously use their knowledge and judgment to select materials, guide interactions and plan experiences that match the needs of the group and each individual child. It is important to structure your program day using a variety of teaching approaches that include a mix of whole group, small group and individual activities. Effective teachers promote learning throughout the day by keeping the three Developmentally Appropriate Practice principle components (age appropriateness, individual appropriateness and cultural appropriateness) in mind.

### **Discipliner**

The discipliner is the guide/builder of responsibility and internal focus of control. Using effective strategies that include natural and logical consequences and positive guidance helps children begin to see how they are responsible for their own actions. Interventions that work in one situation may not work in another, so well-designed programs use a variety of strategies to help children learn appropriate behaviors and meet behavioral expectations. The intent of the discipliner is to teach a child the skills or behaviors they may not have mastered yet, without embarrassing or belittling them, especially in front of their peers or other adults.

### **Nurturer**

A nurturer is someone who fosters a child's sense of self through encouragement. This role ensures that children have their physical needs met while also supporting their social-emotional well-being. The nurturer knows that children learn best when they feel like they belong and that they are in an environment that welcomes and respects them for who they are. The nurturer helps each child feel accepted and appreciated. Nurturers believe that all children are capable, competent learners and they provide a safe, healthy environment so that children can learn and explore. The classroom should be a positive place to be for all children, including those with special needs and varying abilities.

### **Administrator**

From this viewpoint, you begin to think about the overall fitness of the entire center, each classroom, and the children individually. When you are in the administrator role, you help to connect and ensure that the overall goals and conceptual framework are all working together and communicated clearly. As the administrator, you will try to find visionary ideas that can enhance or improve the program in multiple ways. The administrator's role often includes a business mind-set. This can include everything from creating and balancing the budget, leading staff, including and involving parents and community members, and harvesting valued resources.

### **Community Networker**

A networker is one who reaches beyond the walls of the child care program to connect to the neighborhood and beyond. This person's role is to collaborate and to bring everyone in the community together, whether it is through arts, sports, community service projects, advocacy, networking or public presentations. The community networker helps to bring others together to provide new perspectives and broadened awareness.



**Key Point:** Every day, caregivers take on many roles, from being an observer in the classroom to being a community liaison.



**Activity: Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

Complete the following questionnaire. You should revisit this questionnaire at least once a year so you can see what you have accomplished.

I am a super human caregiver when it comes to:

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In the classroom, I like to:

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I can share my interests and skills with the children and families by:

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If I had 3 wishes to improve myself as a caregiver, they would be:

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Professionally, where would I like to be 6 months from now? A year?

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If I knew I could not fail as a caregiver, what would I do?

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What types of things prevent me from becoming my ideal vision of myself?

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What are some benefits of improving myself professionally?

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**Key Point:** Being professional increases the quality of child care.



## The Next Step in Professional Development

The next step, after completing this introductory course, is to select one of the other courses designed to complete the Developmentally Appropriate Practice series. The additional course will give you a general understanding about Developmentally Appropriate Practice for a specific age group. You should choose the course that addresses the ages and stages of the children you are (or will be) working with. The courses are:

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

These courses will help you identify typical behaviors and growth patterns for a certain age group and will help you plan appropriate environments and activities to optimize the learning experience for children in your care. You will also learn about the various factors that affect development.

It is important for child care professionals to stay current on state rules and regulations and know the requirements for participating in the voluntary pre-kindergarten program and school readiness program.

After you complete your Department of Children and Families' mandated child care training requirement, you may wish to earn a Staff Credential. There are four methods of earning a Staff Credential.



## NAEYC Guidelines for Effective Teaching

1. **Create a community** - Children learn best when they feel like they belong and that they are in an environment that welcomes and respects them for who they are. Creating a community of learners is critical for establishing a positive place to be for ALL children, including those with varying abilities. At a minimum, it is a safe, healthy place to grow and learn in a spirit of collaboration. Teachers who embrace this philosophy work hard to build a strong sense of group identity within a well organized, consistent classroom.
2. **Teach to enhance development and learning** - Effective teachers seem to know *what* to do and *when* to do it. They continuously use their knowledge and judgment to select materials, guide interactions and plan experiences that match the needs of the group and each individual child. By using multiple teaching strategies, caregivers enhance learning when they respond in a way that is most useful in a particular situation. Skilled teachers are able to adapt to current circumstances, enabling them to choose the best strategy at any given moment. These decisions are dependent on the learning objective, situation and the needs of the child at the time. Teachers must be able to meet each child where they are and then "scaffold" them. Scaffolding means that you know what the children already know and can do, and then introduce new activities, materials and experiences that cause them to stretch toward something they do not yet know or cannot yet do. As we talked about in the first module, Developmentally Appropriate Practice works best when caregivers really take to time to get to know each of the children in their classroom, identify where they are in all areas of development, and plan for and engage them in activities that are challenging and achievable.
3. **Plan curriculum to achieve identified goals** - All early childhood programs should have and use an identified, written plan for guiding children's learning and development. This curriculum, or framework, is the plan that outlines *what* content the program intends to target. These plans describe the experiences and activities that are tied to specific goals and learning outcomes in all areas of development. Curriculum is not just a collection of written and posted activities. It is much more. Good curriculum is connected, meaningful and comprehensive. Many states and programs are choosing curriculum that aligns with specific learning outcomes for each child in the classroom. Essential areas that are now defined and targeted for enhancing school success by early childhood researchers include: language and literacy, mathematics and social-emotional development.
4. **Assess children's development** - In order to meet the children "where they are," you need to know where they are. This is done by carefully observing and documenting the development of each child. Developmentally Appropriate Practice programming uses child and program assessment to guide curriculum toward the desired outcomes. This attention to developmental detail enables teachers to monitor progress, identify red flag behaviors that might be signaling a delay, and create reports for parents and administrators. It allows the caregiver to collect information and make decisions about each child over a period of time. By using a systematic assessment process, teachers make important decisions about whether the environment and teaching strategies are appropriate for the age group, as well as the individual and cultural differences present among the children.
5. **Establish relationships with families** - Communicating and building a two-way relationship with parents is critical for establishing a partnership with families. As discussed earlier, teachers often have valuable insight into a child's development, and families appreciate hearing about their child's school life and experiences. When you are consistent, respectful and open, you communicate a spirit of willingness to partner more effectively.





**Activity: Guidelines for Effective Teaching**

Using the following "Each One-Teach One" chart, mingle around the classroom finding others who will sign and fill in the "Why is this guideline important" column next to one of the guidelines listed. Make sure each item is filled in by a different person.

**Each One-Teach One  
Guidelines for Effective Teaching**

<b>Guideline</b>	<b>Why is this guideline important?</b>	
<b>Create a community</b>		<b>Signed by:</b>
<b>Teach to enhance development and learning</b>		<b>Signed by:</b>
<b>Plan curriculum to achieve identified goals</b>		<b>Signed by:</b>
<b>Assess children's development</b>		<b>Signed by:</b>
<b>Establish relationships with families</b>		<b>Signed by:</b>



### **Activity: Key Practices in Early Childhood Programming**

Take a few minutes to reflect on some of the key practices that are integral to quality early childhood programming and professional caregiving. How will you use your knowledge about Developmentally Appropriate Practice in your teaching?

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**Key Point:** Professional caregivers understand and value the role they play in the lives of young children.



### **Module 6 Summary**

Module 6 introduced:

- The key elements that are fundamental to quality caregiving practices.
- The various roles commonly associated with caregiving.
- How to access professional development opportunities and resources.
- What the NAEYC guidelines for effective teaching practices are.