FOUNDATIONS IN ACTION: EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICUM AND FIELD EXPERIENCE



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Foundations in Action: Early Childhood Practicum and Field Experience

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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Theory to Practice

Many of you will now be entering a classroom as an educator for the first time. It is now time to take everything you have been learning about theories and put it into practice. What do the theories you have studied look like in an early childhood classroom?

1.1: Models and Theories of Practice

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.1: Models and Theories of Practice

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Review the study of reflective practice by examining theories and reflective models.

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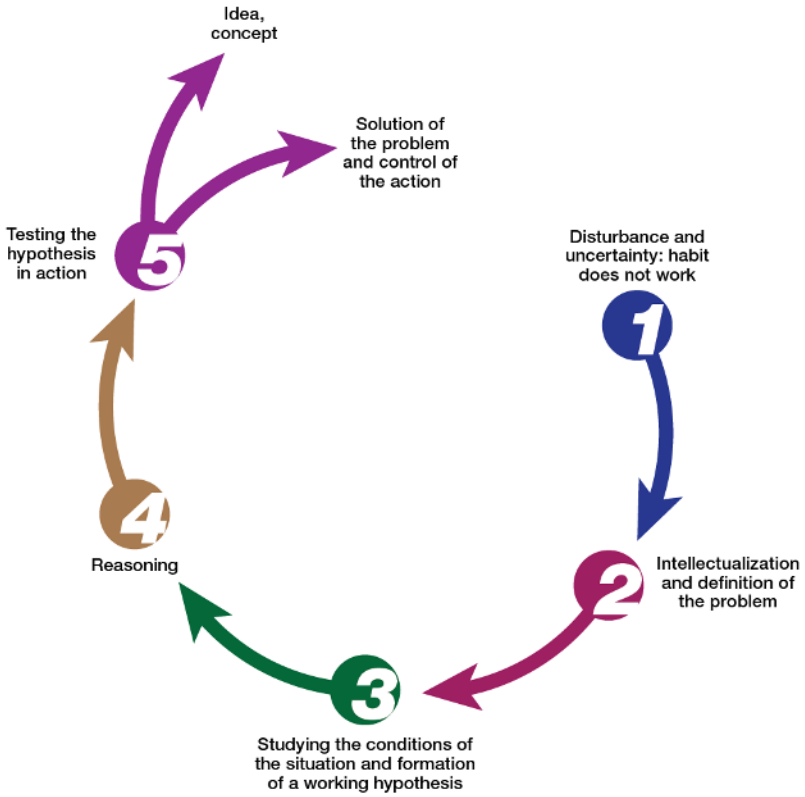
1.1.1: The Beginning of Theories and Models of Reflective Practice - John Dewey



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> *"We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience."*
>
> *– John Dewey (1933)*

The fundamental theories and models of reflection and reflective practice were initially born from the work of Dewey and Schön. A century ago, John Dewey emphasized the importance of involving the learner in reflection. He believed that our experiences shape us, and when reflective practice is part of learning, meaning and relevance are created, which initiates growth and change (Dewey, 1933).



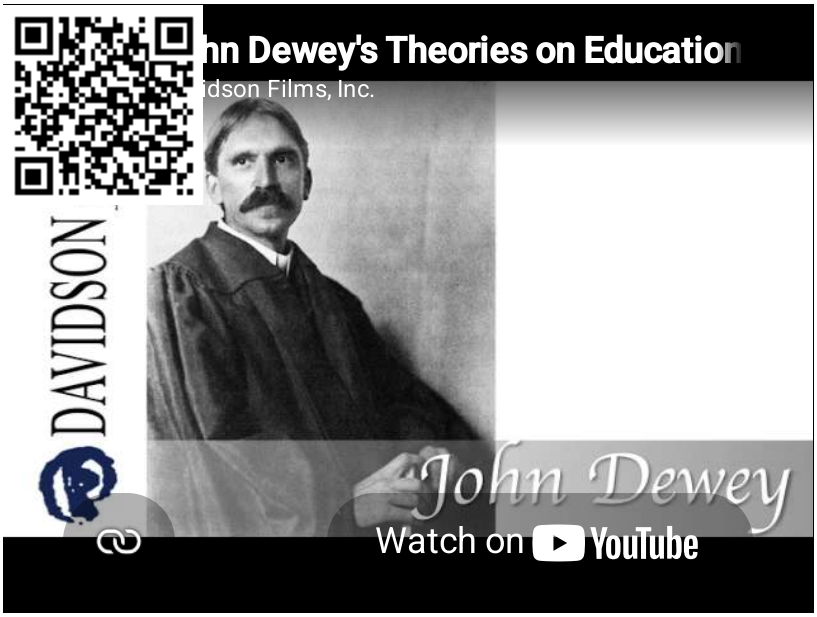
Dewey's Learner in Reflection by Fanshawe College CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 (click to enlarge)

Text Description: The Concept of Experiential Learning starts with disturbance or uncertainty then to definition of the problem then to formulation of a thesis to reasoning and testing and lastly idea concept.

The Concept of Experiential Learning starts with disturbance or uncertainty then to definition of the problem then to formulation of a thesis to reasoning and testing and lastly idea concept.

Video: John Dewey

Learn more about John Dewey's theories on education and learning by watching this video below.



Video: "John Dewey's Theories on Education and Learning: An Introduction to His Life and Work, a preview" by Davidson Films, Inc. [3:57] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.1.2: Observation and Documentation - The Key to Intentional Teaching

To provide children with a safe and nurturing learning environment and to maintain program effectiveness, teachers must incorporate observation, documentation and assessment into their daily routines. To truly be effective, teachers must develop skills and strategies that are grounded in best practices. In this chapter you will be presented with information that highlights how observation and documentation can be used as a key strategy to ensure intentional teaching. You will examine the initial steps to take to becoming a skilled observer, and you will reflect on how to objectively document the interactions that you see and the conversations that you hear. It is important to note that becoming a skilled observer takes time and practice, and that learning how to incorporate observation, documentation and assessment into your regular routines and daily duties requires some thoughtful consideration.

1.1.2.1: The Role of Observation

1.1.2.2: Becoming a Skilled Observer

1.1.2.3: Observations can be Spontaneous or Planned

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1.1.2.1: The Role of Observation

Observations are conducted every day in early childhood classroom environments. Teachers are constantly surveying the environment and completing safety checks to make sure the equipment and materials are safe for the children to use. Teachers also perform daily health screenings to ensure their children are healthy enough to participate in program activities. Beyond the standard safety check and health screening, teachers have many other important tasks and duties that they must do in order to maintain a copacetic classroom environment. Intentional teachers use their observations to plan and implement curriculum, set up engaging learning environments, monitor the children's social interactions, track behaviors, communicate with families, and assess each child's progress and development. Essentially, observations help teachers be more accountable. By conducting regular observations intentional teachers can:

1. Evaluate program effectiveness
2. Evaluate teacher effectiveness
3. Make improvements to ensure quality practices
4. Plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum
5. Measure and assess a child's development
6. Develop respectful family partnerships
7. Understand the cultural practices and family structure
8. Select effective learning strategies to support and accommodate the diverse needs of children
9. Ensure ethical conduct and professional standards of practice
10. Teach with confidence

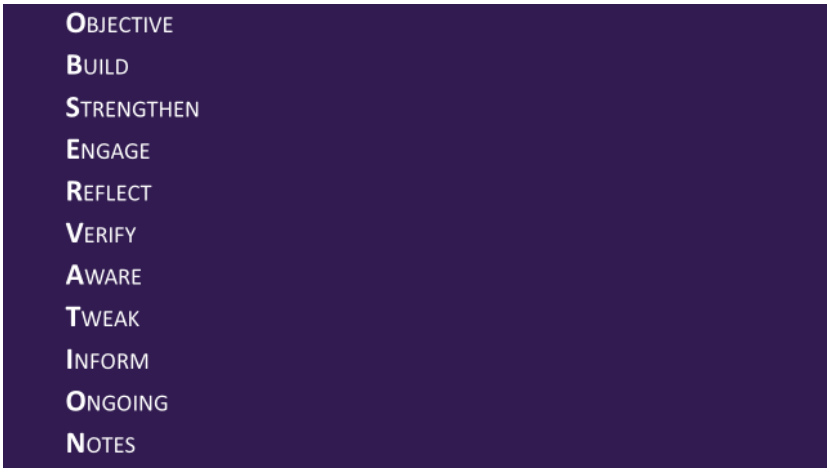


Figure 1.1: COC OER [1]

Pin It! Observation

Observation is defined as "the process of gathering information about objects and events using senses of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste, noticing specific details or phenomena that ordinarily might be overlooked" (CDE, 2016 p. 64).[2]

If we want to understand children, we must first watch them and listen to them. Then, we must try to make sense of what we observed and give it meaning. The role of observation is to provide teachers with information and evidence that they will need to make informed decisions on how to best support the children in their care. With each observation, you will get a glimpse into a child's developing mind. Not only will you see a child's personality emerge, you will be able to see what a child can do. As you watch your children, you will see how they problem solve when conflicts arise and how they cope with the stress from being in a group setting. You will learn about their individual needs and their cultural practices. When you watch children closely, their interests and abilities are revealed. With each observation, you will gain useful insight that will help you become an intentional teacher.

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1.1.2.2: Becoming a Skilled Observer

To truly observe a child, you must be present, knowledgeable, inquisitive and intentional. With every observation, you will sharpen your skills as you learn how to effectively gather objective evidence and detailed data.

Be present: To capture all the individual mannerisms, subtle social nuances, non-verbal body language and dynamic conversations that occur throughout the day you must be attentive, focused and ready to go at any given moment. Children move fast. When we blink, we are bound to miss some little detail or precious moment, that's a given. Being present takes considerable effort and careful planning.

Be knowledgeable: Understanding the core concepts of early childhood education is extremely important if you are to set reasonable expectations and plan developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Familiarizing yourself with child development theories will help you understand and appreciate why children do what they do. Learning about the key principles in early care and education will provide you with a solid foundation and a wide range of instructional strategies to support a child's development.

Be inquisitive: Think of yourself as a researcher. Your primary mission is to investigate the children in your care by routinely gathering evidence, using a variety of observation methods and tools. As a good researcher you will need to ask some thoughtful questions. These questions will guide you as you plan purposeful observations and as you select your method of observation. Here are some sample questions you may ask yourself: What activities interest Max? How many times did Stevie hit today? What skills did Hazel master today with this activity, and what skills need further support? How long did Zoey stay engaged while playing in the sandbox? What milestones will this activity support? By a sking thoughtful questions, you will learn more about the children in your care and you will do a better job at supporting each child's individual needs. Rather than fixating on a child's behavior, in time you will begin using focused observations to try and figure out the reasons why a child acts the way they do.

Be intentional: As you organize learning experiences, set up the classroom and outside environment, assess children's developmental progress, engage in activities, and interact with your children and families – you must have a thoughtful plan of action in place. "Intentional teaching means that everything you do as a teacher has a specific goal and purpose" (Gordon & Browne, 2016 p. 103). Even as spontaneous situations arise, intentional teachers must make the most of teachable moments. Intentional teachers conduct regular observations and gather objective documentation data to be accountable for the actions they take, the plans they generate and the assessments they make.

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1.1.2.3: Observations can be Spontaneous or Planned

Spontaneous observations occur all the time. Whether teachers are actively engaged with their children during an activity or in the background cleaning up after an activity, teachers have numerous opportunities to see and hear some wonderful developments as they randomly occur. According to Piaget, children require long uninterrupted periods of play and exploration so that they can discover things for themselves. If we truly believe that children are capable of socializing, problem solving, and creating complex systems with rules, then we can successfully use spontaneous observations to capture a child's development as it unfolds naturally.

As intentional teachers, we can also appreciate when teachable moments arise unexpectedly. These golden moments are noteworthy as well. For example, as we witness a child attempting to master a milestone, we may provide some verbal support or guidance to scaffold the child's learning. For example, when Abraham is becoming frustrated with not being able to get a piece of his puzzle to fit, a teacher might ask, "What happens when you turn the piece around?" During spontaneous situations, we must remember to simultaneously make mental notes so that we can later write down and reflect on a more formal plan of action that can be later used to help the child achieve their developmental goals.

Let's review the advantages and disadvantages associated with spontaneous observations**.**

- ***Advantages:*** Being in the moment allows you to enjoy your children, and children appreciate your presence. When you are present, you can celebrate a child's success or provide positive reinforcements to help them master major milestones. While being spontaneous, you can focus on the child's interests and pose thoughtful questions to extend and enrich their learning experience. When a teacher keeps a low profile, a child is less likely to be self-conscious or nervous.
- **Disadvantages**: The longer you wait to document your spontaneous observation evidence, the harder it will be to remain objective and recall the vital details which is important when tracking behaviors or assessing development. Also, the more time that passes, the more difficult it will be to access accurate data. For example, by not documenting the children's dialogue or capturing their key quotes in a timely manner, you may find it difficult to remember their actual word choices and use of vocabulary which is essential for assessing a child's expressive language development.

Let's now discuss focused or **planned observations**. Becoming a skilled observer takes practice. At first you may be slightly overwhelmed with trying to incorporate an official observation time into your already busy schedule. You may struggle with finding that delicate balance between knowing when to interact with your children and realizing when to step back and observe. Once you do observe, you might be surprised by the amount of evidence you have collected on each child. What's more, you will have to sift through all the evidence, and that can be both time consuming and exhausting. Since your time is limited and you cannot possibly observe everything, incorporating a planned observation will help you navigate through your busy day and you will be able to gather more specific evidence (Grouland & James, 2013).

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1.1.2.4: Questions you may want to ask yourself as you plan your next observation

When should I observe?

From the moment a child walks into their classroom until the time they leave, opportunities to learn are occurring. Some observations will happen spontaneously, while others will be scheduled. To see a child's full potential, you will need to observe at various times throughout the day. For example, some children are slow-to-warm and it may take them some time to get acclimated before they can fully engage and interact with others. If a child is slow -to-warm, the morning drop-off may not be the best time to document their social development. You will want to track them throughout the day, at various times (including transition times and snack/meal times), to get a full picture of who they are and what they can do.

Where should I observe?

Many times, observations are centered around structured, teacher-directed activities. This is, in fact, a perfect time to witness what major milestones a child has mastered. However, observing a child while they are exploring in the dramatic play area (*inside*) or while they are in the sandbox area (*outside*) can prove to be just as enlightening. During child-directed play or open exploration, you will no doubt be able to document many of the developmental skills as suggested in the DRDP or Rating Scales, especially how they communicate, cooperate, solve dilemmas and create. Because children can play and learn differently while they are inside as compared to when they are outside, it is necessary to observe in both environments. Likewise, it is important to observe in all activity areas and play spaces.

What observation method should I use?

Use a variety of methods to record and document your children. You will want to "try out" several tools and techniques to find your "go to" method. Because each tool has a specific purpose or focus, using a variety of methods will provide you with sound documentation data to better understand the whole child's development. Note: In the next chapter, you will examine the various tools and techniques more closely.

Who should I observe?

You will want to observe each child as individuals, and you will want to track group interactions. Becoming aware of who is in your class is necessary if you are going to create a caring classroom community and respectful learning environment. Look for those who are the leaders in your group; find out who needs more one-to-one support and who are your helpers; watch for who plays with who. This insight can help you organize peer scaffolding opportunities which can free up some of your time. As a gentle reminder, sometimes we connect with certain children for one reason or another, and other times a child may challenge us. Either way we need to regularly observe each child with an open mind and an open heart, and we need to look at children with a clear lens that is free of bias. Each child needs your attention; each child has unique gifts; and each child needs your support.

What is the focus of my observation, what am I looking for?

With focused observations, there usually is a specific goal in mind. For example, you might want to know what milestones a child has mastered. For that, you would use a developmental checklist to "check-off" all the skills the child was observed doing. Maybe you want to learn what the child's interests are and what they like to play with. For that, you can use a frequency count to tally up all the areas and activities the child used during that observation. Keep in mind that you can observe several skills and competencies across multiple domains during one observation. For example, one day you might set out a math activity and the children are expected to create patterns using colorful beads and pipe cleaners, While they work and play, you can listen to the children's conversations as they describe the patterns they are making; and you can note their fine motor development based on how well they string the beads onto the pipe cleaner; you can also see how they shared space and materials with their peers. Although this was a math activity, many other areas of development can be observed.

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1.1.2.5: The Role of Documentation

One of the cornerstones of a high-quality early care and education program is the practice of observing, documenting and assessing children's development. According to NAEYC (2009), in order to make formative decisions that will guide what goes on in the classroom, there needs to be an organized system in place to collect information. When we record our observations and collect data, we "hold in memory the actions, nonverbal communication, or comments that seem to be significant to children's thinking" (California Preschool Program Guidelines, 2015 p. 46). When we document children's learning and collect key artifacts, we create tangible evidence that we can share with the children and their families, along with administrators and stakeholders. There are many ways you can record and document children's learning. In fact, you should attempt to utilize several methods as part of your regular observation routines.

To collect and record data you can use the following methods :

- running records
- anecdotal notes
- checklists
- frequency counts
- learning stories
- time or event samples
- work samples
- taking photos, videotaping, or audio recordings

To store your documentation

To safely store your collected data, you will need to have an organized system in place. Portfolios are a popular strategy used by intentional teachers. To create a portfolio, you can use a binder or notebook, a file or accordion-style folder, or a cardboard box. As you collect observation evidence for each child, it is vital that you date everything so you can organize it chronologically. This will help you track each child's progress throughout the school year more efficiently. Portfolios help you construct a well-rounded and authentic picture of each child in your class. Knowing the "whole child" you are better equipped to build on each child's individual interests, and you are more apt to plan developmentally appropriate activities.

Each child should have their own portfolio. A well-organized portfolio will contain observations and artifacts of children's work that are collected at different time periods throughout the school year. It is recommended that you include some type of documentation that highlights each developmental domain. For example:

- **Gross Motor**: Take photographs of your child while they are engaged in outside activities like running, jumping, climbing, riding a bike or playing in the sandbox.
- **Fine Motor**: Keep a checklist of when your child learns to button, zip, and tie his shoes. Include work samples of their cutting, coloring, painting, and samples of emergent writing
- **Social-Emotional**: Write anecdotal notes when your child engages in open-ended, child-directed play. Take note of how they share and cooperate with others. Do a frequency count to see which centers your child chooses to spend their time in and tally their play patterns to see if they prefer to play alone or with others.
- **Cognitive**: Chart a science experiment and take photos. Photograph a completed puzzle. Use a video camera to record a child as she builds a block bridge. And, as she explains her process and she had to figure out all the steps to take so that the bridge wouldn't fall down – be sure to record that too.
- **Literacy and Oral language**: Save writing examples to track how the child writes her name. Include illustrations of stories they love and the stories they write themselves. Write down quotes in your running record or make audiotapes of conversations during circle time.
- **Creative expression**: Videotape your child while playing in the dramatic play area or while performing a dance during music and movement. Photograph a clay creation, painting or block tower.

To be clear, it isn't the amount of documentation you collect for each portfolio that matters, it's the quality of information you gather. Portfolios tell a story of the whole child. There should be a beginning, middle, and an end. Each work sample, anecdotal

note, checklist, frequency count and learning story should be used to showcase how a child processes information, develops relationships, and learns while playing.

To document children's learning

Whether you collect evidence through spontaneous or planned observations, you will use your documentation to ultimately assess a child's learning, growth, and development. With well-organized documentation, intentional teachers can effectively communicate with a child's family, using the evidence and artifacts they have collected over time. Families appreciate being able to see their child's progression and how they interact with others. Families also enjoy seeing the types of activities their child engages in during a typical day at school. Here are a few ways documentation can be used to showcase a child's learning, growth and development:

- rating scales and formal developmental assessments
- daily progress reports
- documentation boards

Pin It! Ten Teacher Tips When Gathering your Documentation

1. Date – this is key in tracking development over time
2. Time – start time and end time
3. Setting – note the location (indoor or outdoor; center or play area)
4. Purpose – what is the intended goal
5. Note the child (or children) who are involved in the activity
6. Record only the facts – Write down exactly what you see and hear
7. Be as concise (to the point) as you can
8. Record the facts in the order as they occur
9. Be descriptive and provide vivid details -create a visual picture so others can "see" what is happening
10. Be specific and avoid vague or general terms – this is helpful when you go back to review your dat

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1.1.2.6: Objective versus Subjective Observation Evidence

Intentional teachers must learn how to write objective observations. As you observe, it is best to write down all that you see and hear, and report just the facts. It takes practice to learn how to separate facts from opinions. Here are some helpful tips for you to review:

Table 1.1.2.6.1: Objective Observations vs. Subjective Observations

Objective Observations	Subjective Observations
Objective observations are based on what we observed using our senses, we record exactly what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell	Subjective observations are often influenced by our past events, personal experiences and opinions, and can be biased based on our cultural backgrounds
Objective information is based on the facts we gather. If we don't see it, we don't report it. We report only details and provide vivid descriptions	Subjective information is based on our opinions, assumptions, personal beliefs, prejudice feelings or can be based on suspicions, rumors and guesses
Results are more likely to be valid and reliable from child to child	Results are often inconsistent and vary from child to child
Objective Terms that can be Used: Seems to be; Appears to	Subjective Words to Avoid: Just; because; but; always, never; can't; I think; happy, smart, helpful, pretty, angry, shy, likes, loves, hates, sad

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1.1.2.7: Recognizing Your Biases

Google the word bias and this is what pops up: “prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.”

Biases, we all have them. Biases stem from our upbringing. Every interaction and every experience we have had has shaped who we are. To some degree, our biases influence our beliefs and behaviors, they sway our attitudes, and they affect our personalities. Because our biases are so ingrained into who we are, it would be unrealistic to simply say “ignore your bias.” Therefore, a valuable exercise might be to do a self-check and examine your own biases. Look for those biases that are “triggers.” More specifically, think about the behaviors, temperamental traits, and moods that make you feel uncomfortable, frustrated, or annoyed.

It is important to note, that we might not be fully aware of all our biases. For example, when a child says, “give me some milk!” Our first response might be “Ummm, how do you ask?” We might not realize that manners (or lack of them) can make us react in a judgmental way. What’s important to recognize is that how we feel about the child’s behavior can taint how we see them. What’s more, our biases can influence how we gather our observation evidence. As intentional teachers we have to recognize our biases so we can treat all children with the respect that they deserve. According to NAEYC’s Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment (2011),

> P-1.3—We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities on the basis of their sex, race, national origin, immigration status, preferred home language, religious beliefs, medical condition, disability, or the marital status/family structure, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs or other affiliations of their families (p. 3).

So as not to lose our objectivity, it is important to keep an open heart, an open mind, and a clear lens. Rather than letting a child’s behavior trigger you, look beyond their behavior, look beyond your bias. Focus on collecting objective observation evidence and use that data to reflect on what might be causing that behavior. Consider ways that you can support the child through redirection, modeling, scaffolding or positive reinforcements. As intentional teachers, one of our primary roles is to empower children, and to build meaningful relationships by creating warm, caring environments (Epstein, 2007).

Pin It! Common Mistakes to Avoid When Writing Observation Evidence

- Making Conclusions : Billie can’t do anything by himself because he is the youngest in a large family and they do everything for him; Sharon’s parents are getting a divorce, so she is sad
- Making Assumptions : Annie never shares; Denise always hits Thomas
- Labeling : Rosie is mean ; Jeff is such a good boy
- Comparing : Tommy can’t ride the bike as well as Sam; Zoey was the best listener at circle time
- Focusing on Feelings or Emotions : Max looks so sad today; Jax looks so happy as he slides down the slide
- Adding Opinions : Martha really likes playing dress up, she is in the dramatic play area every day; Suki is shy and never says anything during circle time.

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1.1.2.8: Ethical Guidelines when Observing Children

Every day, teachers observe, record and capture essential moments in a child's development. The evidence and artifacts that are gathered are then used to plan curriculum and assess development. Although we have highlighted the importance of gathering work samples and observation evidence as a key element to be an intentional teacher, we must also consider the perspective of the child. In the article "Who is Watching? Thinking Ethically about Observing Children" the authors highlight some of the ethical tensions that can arise within early childhood settings when trying to balance the rights of children, the responsibilities of teachers and the role of a student who is training to be a future teacher.

In most classrooms, a typical day includes teachers grabbing their cameras to take snapshots of the children in their care so that they will have ample documentation. Consider this - does the teacher's presence change the context of the child's experience? Does the thought of being monitored make the child behave any differently? How does the child feel about having their picture taken? Are teachers becoming overly concerned about capturing children in precious moments, rather than being engaged in teachable moments? As a "student" who is learning to observe and document a child's development it is important for you to consider the following guidelines when observing children:

- Take every precaution to maintain confidentiality and to ensure privacy
- Remember to ask if it is OK to take photographs of children and their work
- Understand that children have the right not to take part in activities
- Be respectful and keep a reasonable amount of space between you and the child so as not to interfere with their play and learning
- Be attuned to children's body language, temperament and styles of communication
- See each child as a unique individual who has their own perspective, set of feelings, interests, and way of socializing, along with their own cultural context, belief system, and values
- Be upfront and inform children about the purpose of your observation visit if you are approached
- Share information with the child about what you have observed when appropriate
- Write quotes down just as they were said without adding context, or trying to rationalize what the child may have meant
- Be aware that photos and observation data should be collected in a non-intrusive manner
- Ensure that observation evidence and photos are used only for the purposes intended
- Handle photos and data with care and sensitivity, and always store information securely
- Realize that a child's reactions, behaviors and conversations may not be what you expect and therefore you should refrain from being judgmental or tainted by your cultural biases

By following these guidelines, you are providing the children you observe with the respect they deserve while ensuring their dignity and safety. The centers and programs where you are observing are trusting you to act with integrity while you are at their site observing their children. Lastly, families will appreciate that you have their child's best interest at heart.



Figure **1.1.2.8.1**: Observing the world through a different lens. (Public Domain; Andrew Seaman on Unsplash)

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1.1.2.9: Observation and Documentation Dos and Don’ts

Whether performing a planned or spontaneous observation here are some helpful tips to ensure you are recording quality evidence:

Table 1.1.2.9.1: Observation and Documentation Do’s and Don’ts

Observation and Documentation DOs:	Observation and Documentation DON’Ts
1. Note the date, time, setting, 2. Note the child (or children) involved 3. Record only the facts – in a concise (to the point) manner 4. Record the facts in the order as they occur and exactly as you see it 5. Collect vivid details and quotes 6. Use a variety of Observation Methods 7. Observe with an open heart, an open mind and a clear lens, free of bias 8. Be attentive and alert, and use all your senses 9. Note what the child CAN DO rather than what he cannot do 10. Keep a low profile and respect the children’s space while they are playing	1. Do not interfere or pressure the children to perform 2. Do not assume or state your opinion while recording evidence 3. Do not record anything you do not see 4. Do not label behaviors, actions or feelings 5. Avoid using subjective, bias or judgmental terms 6. Avoid using exaggerations and conditional words 7. Do not summarize information 8. Avoid using generalizations or vague terms

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1.1.2.10: Conclusion and References

To become a skilled observer takes time and practice (Gronlund & James, 2013). You will need to figure out your rhythm so that you can incorporate observation and documentation into your regular routine. As an intentional teacher, you will want to plan systematic observations so that you can document each child's unique qualities, interests, developmental strengths and needs, as well as uncover their cultural practices, approaches to learning and play preferences throughout the school year. As you gather evidence you will want to be as objective as you can be, and you will have to recognize your biases. As you collect your documentation on each child, you will want to organize it in a chronological manner and store it safely. Lastly, be sure to observe every child in your class, be aware that some children may catch your attention more than others for one reason or another. In the next chapter, we will examine several observation tools and techniques that you will want to use as part of your regular observation routine to ensure high-quality practices.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Theories and Program Approaches

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2.1: Theories



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Theories

The best early childhood programs are informed by sound theory. This ensures that the aims of the program are effective and the practices have a positive impact on every child. What is a theory in the context of early childhood education? A **theory** is a set of ideas that are supported by a substantial amount of evidence and are based on repeated testing of the same concepts. Theories have been repeatedly tested using scientific inquiry. This differs from a philosophy, which is also a useful way to organize knowledge about children's development but is not based on empirical evidence. Theories provide an explanation on a specific phenomenon, and as such, developmental theories explain different aspects of how children develop.

In early childhood education, theories about child development are used to decide how to carry out program approaches. This is one way that early childhood educators can ensure high quality programs for children and families. High-quality ECE programs turn to child development theory to create effective learning environments for children. For example, child development theory indicates that children learn best through action, engaging in a concept using their five senses. Adults on the other hand, have the ability to learn from reading a text or watching a video. Because of child development theory, we know for sure that the very best way for young children to learn is with hands-on methods. If a person designs a program with this in mind, then that program is rooted in child development theory. That means that if a teacher wants children to learn about the parts of a pumpkin, then she will give the children pumpkins, cut them up, and let the children explore the parts rather than showing them a video about pumpkins. The teacher does it this way because the program has committed to basing their practice on theory.

There are several theories about child development that are used to inform ECE programs. This section will cover the seven most prominent theories that have stood the test of time. Those are: cognitive developmental, behaviorism, social learning theory, sociocultural, psychosocial theory, attachment, and ecological systems theory.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive developmental theory focuses on how children think, learn, and acquire new knowledge. It was developed by a Swiss scientist named Jean Piaget. According to cognitive developmental theory, children move through childhood in a series of stages. These stages determine what behaviors adults can expect from a child as well as what capabilities a child has at a given stage. There are four stages through which children progress: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. The features of these stages are outlined in Table 3.1. Between the ages of birth and two years, a child is in the sensorimotor stage. In this stage, children explore objects using their hands and mouth and coordinate sensory experiences through physical movement. If an object is hidden from view, they believe it to have disappeared for good. When a child begins to understand that the object

still exists even if they can't see where it went, this is referred to as **object permanence,** which is one of the main understandings constructed during this stage. Between the ages of two to seven years, a child is in the preoperational stage. During this stage, a child is able to engage in symbolic reasoning which leads to pretend play. For example, a child might use a stick as a spoon during this stage. The concrete operations stage takes place between the ages of seven to twelve years. During this stage, children begin to use logical reasoning, but it is usually limited to real objects that can be seen or touched. During this stage, children might be able to add and subtract using manipulatives. The formal operations stage starts at age twelve and continues through adulthood. During this stage, children can begin to engage in abstract and logical reasoning in multiple situations. This might take the form of solving complex puzzles and games.

Piaget's stages are a useful way to consider how children develop in thinking, learning, and acquiring new knowledge. One consideration for all stage theories is that there is variability in how children move through stages. The stages are not rigid; for example, just as a child turns two years old, they may not immediately begin pretend play. Some children might do it a bit sooner and some do it a bit later. Children are living, breathing, beings after all! Another consideration is that the transition between stages is not sudden. Just because a two-year-old engages in pretend play does not mean that she is now finished exploring toys and objects with her mouth. Children often have behaviors of two stages when they are transitioning from one to the other.

Table 3.1. Piaget Stage Definitions

Stage	Sensorimotor	Preoperational	Concrete Operations	Formal Operations
Age	Birth to 2 years	2 to 7 years	7 to 12 years	12 years and beyond
Behaviors	Learns about the world through interacting with objects using the five senses	Begins to engage in symbolic and pretend play, but cannot engage in abstract or logical reasoning	Begins use of logical reasoning, however, reasoning is limited to objects that can be held or seen	Engages is abstract and logical reasoning and can apply this type of thinking across contexts

Cognitive developmental theory also includes an explanation for how children acquire new knowledge. This is known as constructivism. **Constructivism** is the idea that children create (or construct) their own knowledge through experiences with the world. Children must use their five senses to interact with objects in their environment in order to gain new information. In this way, they build a conceptual understanding about the world around them. Further, the stage that a child is in determines how a child constructs knowledge. If an infant is in the sensorimotor stage, then they might gain new knowledge about an object by putting it in their mouth. If they take an adult's keys and start to play with them, they will learn that keys feel cold and hard when placed in the mouth. The next time they see something made of metal, for example a spoon, they will expect that is cold when placed in the mouth, because they learned this from a direct experience with the keys. Reading a book or watching a video about keys will never give the infant this same knowledge because children need tangible, concrete items to help them learn about the world.

Constructivism also dictates that new knowledge builds upon previous knowledge. As children build concepts about their world, they start to organize that information into categories. These categories are called **schemas**. **Schemas** are categories of information about a concept or thing. For example, two-year old Zhe might have a schema about dogs. He might conceptualize dogs as furry, four-legged creatures who have tails. Every time he sees a new kind dog, he will mentally place it into that category of dogs. This process is referred to as **assimilation**, fitting in new information into what is already known. When Zhe goes on a walk and sees a black lab, a corgi, and a German Shepard, he assimilates these different types of dogs into his schema for dogs. But what happens when he sees a Great Dane? It has four legs and a tail, but due to its size, resembles a horse more than a dog. Zhe must then **accommodate** this information, therefore changing his previously held ideas about dogs, so that his schema for dogs now includes larger dogs as well. Consider also the first time Zhe sees a cat. It is furry, it has four legs and a tail, but it says "meow" instead of "woof". Zhe must once again accommodate, this time creating a new schema about cats which he now knows are in a different group than dogs. This process continues throughout childhood as children learn and organize new information.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism is a theory based on the work of several researchers including John Watson, B.F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov which focuses on children's observable behaviors and actions. This theory indicates that children's behaviors can be shaped through external cues called reinforcers. **Reinforcers** are actions taken by adults to encourage or discourage certain behaviors. This process

is called **conditioning**. When a child has been conditioned, their behavior has been shaped in response to the cues from the teacher to guide the child to the behaviors desired by the adult. An example of conditioning in a classroom might look like this: A teacher wants all children to sit down for circle time. She may announce that circle time is about to begin, and as each child sits, she gives a sticker to each one. The sticker acts as the reinforcement for desired behavior. After this process has been repeated over a few weeks, the children will come to sit as soon as the teacher announces circle time.

In recent years, there has been some criticism of behaviorism in classroom settings. Critics assert that reinforcements, like stickers, deter intrinsic motivation. **Intrinsic motivation** is a desire to do things based on one's own wishes and goals. Many believe that children should engage in acceptable behavior simply because it is desirable and interesting. In practice, this means that to get children to sit for circle time, they must *want* to do it. How to make them want to do it? Make it interesting and fun! Sing engaging songs, smile, use shakers and instruments to find a way to draw the children in.

A further criticism of behaviorism is that it does not help children learn acceptable behavior in the long term. That is, what happens when there is no sticker? In the absence of reinforcement, the desired behavior can diminish. What happens when children transition to a class where no reinforcers are given for sitting down?

Despite its shortcomings, behaviorism is still used in many classrooms and can be a successful method for guiding children's behavior. Reinforcers can be seen as rewards for children and can contribute to higher class morale. Many teachers appreciate even the short-term effectiveness that behaviorism provides in guiding children toward acceptable behavior.

A final note on behaviorism: some teachers may be tempted to use snacks or treats as reinforcers. This practice is strongly discouraged, as it can interfere with healthy eating habits and raise issues for children who are experiencing food insecurity. Indeed, nothing edible should be used to direct children's behavior.

Social Learning Theory



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Social learning theory is based on the research of Albert Bandura about how children learn particular behaviors based on watching the actions of those around them. The individuals in a child's environment are referred to as **models**. According to social learning theory, children observe the behaviors of others around them and use that as a model for their own behavior. For example, if a teacher commonly uses words like please and thank you with children, the children will begin to use those words as well. Children usually model the important adults in their life but may also model behavior from media sources. As such, social learning theory calls into question violent content seen in media because it may have an effect on child behavior. Social learning theory expands upon behaviorism in that children's behaviors are not just a matter of behavior and reinforcement but are also interwoven with the social context as well. In this way, children learn about consequences of actions in a more organic way rather than through prescribed reinforcers, leading to more long-term behaviors. Consider an example of a toddler observing an adult opening a jar to find a hidden toy. The adult models the hand coordination involved in the action and expresses delight at the contents. This encourages similar attempts by the child who begins to practice the skill of opening a jar.



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Sociocultural development theory addresses how children learn new skills through social interactions. It is related to cognitive developmental theory in that both are focused on how children think and learn. It was developed by the psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Instead of focusing on how children interact with objects and concepts in the environment, social cognitive theory focuses on how children interact with other individuals in their environment. These individuals are referred to as the **more knowledgeable other**, as they have more skills and knowledge about a particular area than the child. The more knowledgeable other can be an older peer or an adult. According to social learning theory, when children are learning a new skill, they best accomplish it by operating on the upper edge of their abilities. This is referred to as the **zone of proximal development**, or **ZPD**. ZPD is the difference between what a child can do alone and what a child can do with help from a more knowledgeable other. For example, if 6-year-old Shruti cannot ride a bike alone but can ride it with help from her mother, then this activity is in her ZPD. How does her mother help her learn to ride? She might hold onto the back of the bike seat, steadying Shruti as she pedals. She may hold onto the handlebars, helping her daughter navigate turns. She may give verbal cues, alerting Shruti when she needs to apply the brakes. Whatever help Shruti's mother gives is dependent on her daughter's skill. This is referred to as scaffolding. **Scaffolding** is the assistance given by the more knowledgeable other that changes in response to the child's ability. The best way to support a child's learning is to give them just the specific help that they need in order to allow them to complete the skill. If Shruti has no trouble balancing and steering, then holding onto the seat and handlebars will do her no good in learning. Verbal cues on when to apply the brakes are what she needs. On the other hand, if it is her first time on the bike, verbal cues on how to brake will not be very useful as she wobbles around and falls. To engage in optimal learning, a child must be guided within their zone of proximal development. If a task is too easy, then then it may become boring. If it is too difficult, the child may become frustrated and give up. Through scaffolding, a more knowledgeable other can help support a child to learn things that they could not do alone. Then the more knowledge other will slowly reduce the support until the child can complete the task alone.

Psychosocial

Another theory that focuses on the development of the child as they move through stages is psychosocial theory. Developed by Erik Erikson, Psychosocial theory posits that human development is characterized by a series of stages. Each stage represents a transition time for learning and development and is marked by a specific aspect of development. Beginning at birth and ending in late adulthood, this theory encompasses the lifespan. As an individual enters into each stage, they are faced with a psychological conflict, known as a **life crisis**. A **life crisis** is when two conflicting aspects of development must be navigated by an individual. The stages are listed in table 3.2. To illustrate how a child might move through a life crisis, consider the following example of the stage "initiative vs guilt". Three-year-old Leandro has used his crayons to color a lovely picture for his daddy and hangs it on the wall using tape. Daddy praises Leandro at his good idea to hang artwork on the wall using tape. Next time, Leandro decides to color directly on the wall, which leads to a scolding from daddy instead. Leandro has shown initiative, taking independent action for hanging a picture on the wall all by himself. He also experiences guilt for his initiative gone wrong when he colors on the wall. As he moves through this process, he learns to take initiative in the appropriate way and gains pride from his accomplishments.

Table 3.2

Age	Life Crisis
0-18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust
18 months-3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
3-5 years	Initiative vs. Guilt
5-13 years	Industry vs. Inferiority
13-21 years	Identity vs. Confusion
21-39 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation
40-65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation
65 years and beyond	Integrity vs. Despair

Attachment Theory



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Attachment theory was developed on the premise that infants need physical and emotional support from a primary caregiver early in life in order to become emotionally well-adjusted in early childhood and beyond. Developed by Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby, this theory is grounded in the mother-child bond but can be applied to the father or other primary caregiver. Attachment theory proposes four different types of bonds or attachment patterns, that a child can have with the mother (or primary caregiver). An **attachment pattern** is a description of the relationship between mother and child based on the behavior of the child. Attachment patterns were measured using a lab test called the "Strange Situation". In the Strange Situation, the mother and baby played in a playroom along with a friendly stranger. The mother leaves for a brief time, leaving the child to play with the stranger. When the mother returns, the baby's behavior upon this "reunion" is observed and coded as a type of attachment pattern. There are four main types of attachment patterns which are outlined in table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Attachment pattern	Child's behavior upon reunion	Caregiver's responsiveness to child's needs
Secure	Seeks proximity to caregiver; positive response; is calmed by caregiver's attempts to soothe	Sensitive to child's needs; consistent
Insecure avoidant	Does not seek proximity to caregiver; does not seem distressed at caregiver's absence	Not sensitive to child's needs; distant
Insecure resistant	Is not calmed by caregiver's attempts to soothe; resists proximity	Inconsistent in response to child's needs; sometimes sensitive, sometimes distant
Insecure disorganized	Does not fall into a reliable attachment pattern	Emotionally distant

There has been some recognition in recent years as to the lack of cross-cultural validity of the strange situation as a measure of attachment, meaning attachment might not look the same for everyone. The strange situation was developed using a mostly western, middle-class sample. Because adult interactions with infants can vary by culture, the reactions of infants during the strange situation might not always look the same. While there are some other ways to measure attachment, more research is needed to uncover ways to measure attachment across a variety of cultures.

Secure attachment leads to positive outcomes for children. Securely attached children are more likely to have positive social relationships and are more successful in school. On the other hand, insecurely attached children have trouble forming and maintaining social relationships and tend to have behavior and academic problems in school.

What do mothers and other primary caregivers do to form a secure attachment? It mostly relies on sensitivity. Sensitivity in this sense refers to a responsiveness to an infant's emotions. If baby cries, the mother soothes her. If baby laughs, mother laughs along. In this way, the infant builds a reliable bond with the mother that sets them up for stable emotional connection. Additionally, it helps a child develop an internal working model for how relationships should function in general. An **internal working model** is a conceptual understanding of how the relationship between an individual and a loved one should be. With a securely attached child, their internal working model might be something like "the adults in my life are people who love me and take care of me. My needs are met by them". This is later transferred to form trusting relationships with others like grandparents, teachers, and later, romantic partners.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, focuses on the child in the context of their environment. The premise of this theory is that the child develops in response to the multiple systems that influence them. For example, a child is influenced by their immediate household family, extended family, neighbors, schools, and society at large. These systems are organized into categories based on their immediate contact with the child and how directly or indirectly they influence the child. The systems also influence one another. For example, the language a family speaks at home is influenced by the society in which the family live. These systems each have names. The system that refers to the child's immediate environment is the **Microsystem**. The child's immediate family, school or childcare, and friends are in the microsystem. The **Mesosystem** refers to the connections between the entities in the microsystem. The interactions of parents and the teachers at school are an example of the mesosystem. The next layer is the **Exosystem**, or the social influences that are more removed from the child. Parent's workplace, healthcare services, and local politics are examples of the exosystem. The **Macrosystem** represents attitudes of the larger culture. Examples of entities within the macrosystem are society's acceptance of women working outside policies in place to hinder it, is an example of the chronosystem. Let us take a look at an example of 3-year-old Maria. She lives with her parents and older sister and they speak Spanish at home. Her parents emigrated from Mexico to the United States seven years ago. Her microsystem includes her mother, father, sister, her best friend Lucia, and the childcare they attend at the local community center. Her mesosystem is when her parents volunteer at the community center where her childcare center is and when she has a playdate at Lucia's house. Her exosystem includes the marketing firm where her parents work, the healthcare provided by the parents' employers, and the state funding that runs her community-based childcare center. Her macrosystem contains the attitudes of society about her family's

native language and her parent's immigration status. Her chronosystem reflects the changing status of women of color – as Maria has more and more role models in the media who represent her culture. As this example illustrates, the ecological systems model represents the dynamic environments that shape how a child develops. It is not just the parents, extended family, peers, or teachers, but rather all the parts of society working together.

Reflection

What are some ways in which you could use child development theories in your work with children?

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2.2: Program Approaches



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Early childhood programs use child development theories to inform their practice. High-quality programs know that grounding program practices in sound theory leads to better outcomes for children. When programs use real, hands-on experiences to teach children about their world, it is due to the influence of the cognitive developmental model. Likewise, when programs include family involvement or community connections, we can thank the influence of the ecological systems theory. The next section will take a look at some programmatic approaches which are combinations of theory and practice which create specific curriculum choices.

High Scope

High scope is a program model that is child-centered and provides children with hands-on experiences. Its roots are unique – it originated from a research-based preschool program in Michigan in the 1960s called the Perry Preschool Project. The goal of the Perry Preschool Project was to enroll low-income children in high quality preschool experiences to see if it would improve their life outcomes. The researcher David Weikart followed the children's progress for decades to measure the results. Weikart chose to include low-income children because, in comparison to middle-income children, children in low-income households are at greater risk for lowered academic achievement, have lower rates of high school graduation, higher rates of crime, and a higher likelihood of poverty later in life. The goal of the Perry Preschool project was to counter the effects of poverty early in life. This was one of the first and most published pieces of scientific research to investigate how economic investments in early childhood education could have long-term benefits to the child, the family, and to society. The idea was that if you give a child a strong start early on, it will pay off when they become adolescents and adults. What the researchers hoped for came true. Children who participated in the Perry Preschool Project had greater academic achievement, greater high school graduation rates, lower rates of crime, and higher adult earnings than their low-income peers who were not in the preschool project. This study showed that access to high-quality preschool programs in the first few years of life can have long-term benefits for the child. This research highlighted the importance of the early years of a child's life in influencing the course of their future.

So, what was the magic formula of the Perry Preschool Project? There were several components, but two main pieces stand out. The classroom system of plan-do-review and family involvement. **Plan-Do-Review** is a system that helps children organize their play activities. Children gather in a circle and the teacher asks them what activity center they plan to play in during the morning free play time. The choices range from blocks and art to dramatic play or puzzles. Children make their choice to the group, such as "I plan to play with Jakeem in the blocks area. We are going to build a really big bridge!". After the children make their plans, they go and do the activity of their choice. It is okay if kids switch activities or change their plans during this time. After free play, the children return to the circle and report back on how their plans went. Did Jakeem and his friend build a successful bridge? What went well? Did anything unexpected happen? The teacher will ask these types of probing questions to get the children to think about their activities. This method supports cognitive development because it involves planning. Children are able to explore their world and engage in hands-on activities. The plan-do-review helps to support their memory development and helps them to

develop concentration, attention, and focus, all skills which are related to the academics they will engage in when they enter elementary school.

The second main component of the Perry Preschool Project was family involvement. Families were visited in their homes by teachers to create connections between what was happening in the classroom and at home. When a child learns a concept in class, it should not stay in class. Having families participate in learning at home can help create layers of learning for the child. It also provides an opportunity for parent support and education. This approach aligns with the ecological model in that the family and community are integrated into a child's early childhood education setting, supporting development using the multiple contexts involved in a child's life.

The High Scope model follows the findings from the Perry Preschool Project. It has taken those evidence-based strategies and created a program model to serve children in early learning settings. It is the embodiment of the philosophy that family income need not be the sole determining factor in children's academic and life outcomes.

A similar program to the Perry Preschool Project is Head Start. Head Start is a preschool program which also has its roots in researching ways to improve the lives of children in poverty. Head Start research has found similar results to the Perry Preschool, and with comparable methods. Head Start has become a long-term, nationwide program that still exists today. Indeed, many Head Start programs even follow the High Scope method. These programs demonstrate the need and effectiveness of high-quality preschool programs.

Developmental Interaction

The Developmental Interaction approach was founded by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, an education reformer who developed innovate ideas for educating children and helped to professionalize teaching for women. Mitchell also founded the Bank Street College of Education in New York. The developmental interaction approach, sometimes called the Bank Street approach, focuses on developing the child in all areas – physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. Teachers in the Developmental Interaction approach see learning as a holistic process and consider developmental domains (physical, intellectual, social, and emotional) as inherently interconnected. It emphasizes meeting children where they are and providing opportunities for making choices. It is play-based, so children have lots of free time to explore on their own terms. It also emphasizes the child's role in society – another nod to the ecological model of child development.

Montessori

The Montessori approach to education was developed by Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator who was interested in reforming the way children learn in group settings. The Montessori method has distinct key features that make it stand out from other approaches. One such feature is mixed-age groups in a single class. Children in Montessori classrooms can range from 2.5 to 5 years old. This means that there is a great deal of peer learning happening. Older children can model behavior for younger children, which can help facilitate learning better than direct instruction from a teacher.

Another feature of Montessori classroom is the concept of constructivism. Montessori classrooms rely on a carefully structured classroom with materials that children can use to discover new concepts on their own using real life materials. Items are often made from natural materials to give the child a realistic concept of the weight of an object based on its size. In order to deeply engage with materials, children are given a large block of free play time – usually about 2.5 to 3 hours. During this time, teachers will help children on an individual or small group level with materials. The materials have an emphasis on child development. Some may involve fine motor skills, like threading beads on a string, and some may promote problem solving, a part of cognitive development, such ordering pegs into holes by size and shape. Many activities are related to practical life: washing dishes, placing flowers in a vase, and cleaning up after oneself. Materials for practical life are always child-sized so that the child can feel that she can master the activity without unnecessary impediments. There is a strong emphasis on completion. Children will not be interrupted by a teacher when they are in the middle of a task, as this is thought to disrupt learning. Independence is also emphasized. Children are encouraged to learn how to use buttons and zippers in order to dress themselves at an early age. Teachers without a Montessori background are often surprised to see the abilities of a two-and-a-half-year-old getting a jacket on and zipping it alone.

Mealtimes in Montessori centers can often differ from those of traditional classrooms. When a meal is served, children will be invited to the table and asked to join when they are ready. There is no large-scale, formal transition from playtime to lunchtime. If a

child is still working on an activity, then he may complete it in as much time as he wishes. Typically, children gather around the table more or less at the same time, but it happens organically. Children are drawn to the smell of food and a chance to visit with playmates at the table. Children serve themselves and pour their own milk using child-sized utensils and milk pitchers. At the end of the meal, children clear their own dishes and place them on a cart after removing unfinished food.

With such a free environment, how do teachers encourage classroom harmony in a Montessori classroom? Teachers use guidance strategies that are similar to other approaches, but children often learn from observing older peers. If a 3-year-old is approaching the art easel for the first time, she may watch a 5-year-old first. She may observe her peer carefully dipping the brush into the cup, keeping paint on the paper, and wiping up any spills with a cloth. Sometimes, this way of learning how to use and respect classroom materials can resonate more with a young child than when a teacher outlines strict rules for how to properly use paint.

Waldorf

Waldorf schools originated in Germany and were developed by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920s. Waldorf programs have a strong emphasis on everyday practical activities and centers are designed to resemble a home in order to facilitate this. Cooking, cleaning, sewing, and building are all activities that children engage in in a Waldorf program. There is a strong emphasis on oral storytelling, creative arts, and music. Historically, Waldorf programs included mystical and religious elements, but most modern programs typically do not. Children are encouraged to engage in free play using toys and activities made of natural materials. Like in Montessori programs, the belief is that children are more connected to toys and tools that are made of wood rather than plastic, as it is more aesthetically pleasing and facilitates a connection to nature. In that spirit, Waldorf classrooms include organic materials such as acorns, shells and wool that are used for counting games, art, and storytelling. Academic subjects are integrated with one another – math is taught through storytelling, combining mathematical problem solving with language development. This helps promote cognitive development in a holistic way. Teachers facilitate early math activities using small wool dolls and other natural, tangible materials. However, formal learning of letters and numbers are not pushed upon young children in Waldorf schools. It is the belief that children will come around to letter and number identification when they are ready, and that is usually not until the age of 6 or 7 years, which is when it is formally introduced in Waldorf schools. Interestingly, this coincides with most modern European educational systems as well. Preschools in the United States on the other hand, typically begin letter and number identification well before age 5 (although this is beginning to change). This variation is a valuable lesson in cultural differences in developmentally appropriate practice.

Another key feature of Waldorf program is the daily rhythm. While many preschools follow a daily schedule with specific hour or minute intervals, Waldorf programs follow a rhythm instead. What matters here is the order of the day, not how long each activity takes. So daily activities always follow the same sequence but may not be at the same time every day. In the morning, for example, the teacher may invite the children to help bake bread or make soup for the lunch. Children gather around kneading dough or chopping vegetables (children are encouraged to learn knife safety at an early age), and as they finish, they may disperse into other activities like sewing, building with blocks, or dancing with scarves. Another teacher might gather a group of students to invite them to hear a story that she is telling using puppets and props to act out the plot. Children may naturally come and go from the story based on what they are interested in playing with at that time. When the lunch is ready, the teacher will invite children to the table with a song and, often times, by lighting a candle (children are also taught safety around the candle). There is no set time, but meals are typically served at about the same time each day. Children rely on the order of events to help them predict their environment. A difference of 15 or 20 minutes makes no difference to them, however. This focus on rhythm is also reflected in the practice of honoring the changing of seasons. Waldorf programs also include rituals that celebrate the rhythms of nature. This gives the children a connection to the larger system of which they are a part.



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The Reggio Emilia approach takes its name from the Italian city where it originated. A constructivist approach, the Reggio method provides encouragement that children should explore their world using hands-on methods that are child-directed. The approach was developed by Loris Malaguzzi following WWII. It was his belief that children should be able to freely express themselves. In that vein, Reggio programs encourage arts and music. One core belief in the Reggio approach is the **Hundred Languages of Children**, or the ability of children to express their thoughts and feelings through arts such as painting, sculpting, and drawing. Indeed, Reggio programs are known for their emphasis on beautiful artwork. Children's art is displayed on the wall at the child's eye level, often with a description of the work written by the teacher in the child's own words. This honors the child's creative spirit and helps promote healthy emotional development. Another feature of the original Reggio school in Italy is the connection to community. The children there learn directly from members of the community, and the community members feel responsible for taking part in children's education. American programs emulate this goal with strong parental involvement. US programs are referred to as "Reggio inspired" because the true Reggio schools in Italy have the connection to community that is unique to that location. The Reggio approach believes that children learn from adults, peers, and the environment. The environment is thought to be the "third teacher" and is set up so that children can explore independently as their interests guide them. Spaces are set up with natural light, living plants, and materials that encourage creativity.

Forest Schools

Forest schools originated in Sweden and other European countries and their popularity has spread to the United States in recent years. The concept of forest schools is that children spend their whole day outdoors, in all weather. All activities take place outside – stories, art, construction, and even meals. Children are dressed in appropriate clothing for all weather so that they are comfortable and safe while outside. Many of the same activities that take place in indoor preschools also happen in forest preschools. Children create art, often using natural materials, but also use paint, clay, and crayons. Science activities are well-suited to a forest environment, as children can collect leaves and rocks to sort and categorize, or examine bugs using a microscope. An outdoor environment lends itself well to construction projects, which may include building a tower with blocks or building a giant fort out of sticks, branches, and rope. Forest schools often have a covered shelter or area where materials are kept in bins and teachers can take out the materials at the start of each day so that children have access to all the things they need for free play. Teachers do circle time, read books, and sing songs, the same as in a typical preschool. Mealtimes take place at outdoor tables and children wash hands using an outdoor hand washing station. Usually children do not sleep outdoors, so forest schools are typically either half-day programs or include only children who are old enough to not need naptime. Children in forest schools have a strong connection to nature and it is believed to provide many health and developmental benefits.

On a related note, in July 2021 Washington State became the first state to permanently license outdoor, nature-based childcare for preschool and school-age children under a new Senate Bill 5151. This comes after a four-year outdoor preschool pilot program and gave DCYF the ability to set the precedent as the first state in the nation to develop licensing requirements for outdoor education.

Reflection

How can a child's individual culture be reflected in program approaches?

Final Thoughts

Theories give us insight about how children develop. There are seven major theories on child development, and each one is useful in understanding children's needs at a given age. It is important that teachers have a deep knowledge of children in order to create learning experiences that support development. High-quality early childhood programs must be informed by theory. There are a variety of approaches and philosophies in early childhood program models, and each has its own unique benefits. One thing that all program models have in common is the connection to theory that supports children's optimal development.

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2.3: Not all Preschool Programs are Alike

As more and more children need childcare, families are faced with a tremendous task of finding “the right preschool program.” When choosing a center, some families may contemplate certain factors like cost and affordability, hours of operation and availability, and location. Some families, on the other hand, may consider the school philosophy, the education and experience of teachers, the environment and daily activities, as well as the curriculum model and guidance policies. As you can see, there are numerous possibilities to consider. Families must also decide on whether to send their child to a state-funded or faith-based program, a family childcare or a traditional preschool setting. No matter what type of program a family chooses, in the state of California all childcare centers must be licensed by the California Department of Social Services and comply with Community Care Licensing Title 22 regulations. For the purpose of this text, in order to demonstrate that all preschools are not alike, we will refer to “ standard industry practice ” as any state licensed childcare program and we will refer to “ high-quality practice ” as any childcare center that undergoes regular assessments using tools and techniques that are above and beyond the standard industry practice .

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2.4: A Look at High-Quality Practices

One of the hallmarks of high-quality practices is the practice of continuously monitoring and evaluating a program's overall effectiveness for the purpose of accountability. Therefore, in addition to complying with state licensing regulations, high-quality programs may utilize noted assessment tools and resources (e.g. ECERS, CLASS, QRIS, NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice) to evaluate their center and staff. To guide high-quality practices, early childhood educators often look to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to provide ethical pedagogy. NAEYC is a recognized professional organization committed to promoting quality early learning experiences for children, birth through age 8. Grounded by research and theory principles, NAEYC promotes best practices for children, families, teachers, administrators, stakeholders and policy makers. To ensure quality practices are being implemented, it is suggested that teachers follow NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Framework:

- Teachers encourage children to be active participants in their own learning
- Teachers set reasonable expectations based on what they know about a child's age and stage of development
- Teachers build on what children know using a variety of learning strategies, materials, meaningful experiences
- Teachers plan activities to support all aspects of development: social, emotional, physical and cognitive
- Teachers value each child's family, language, and cultural practices
- Teachers are aware of each child's interests, strengths, abilities and individual needs
- Teachers recognize play as a primary context in which young children learn
- Teachers establish warm, caring and respectful relationships with children, families and colleagues
- Teachers regularly assess the children's development and the environment, and they self-reflect on their own practices (Gordon and Browne, 2016, Beginning Essentials in early childhood education 3e)

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2.5: The Teaching Cycle

Plan Your Lessons Using the Teaching Cycle

The teaching cycle involves observation and assessment which we explored in Chapter 5. The teaching cycle shown below is similar to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Teaching Cycle. Both cycles start with observation. Teachers want to know the skill levels and interests of the children to plan their curriculum. Teachers observe and document interests and skill levels. Teachers then review their observation data to intentionally plan learning experiences that meet the developmental needs and interests of the children. Once they have planned and developed the learning experiences, they implement the activities with the children and the entire cycle begins again. As teachers implement the learning experience with the children, they observe and document to see how the children are developing and what they may need extra experience or practice in. Teachers use their observations to plan additional learning experiences to meet the needs of the children.

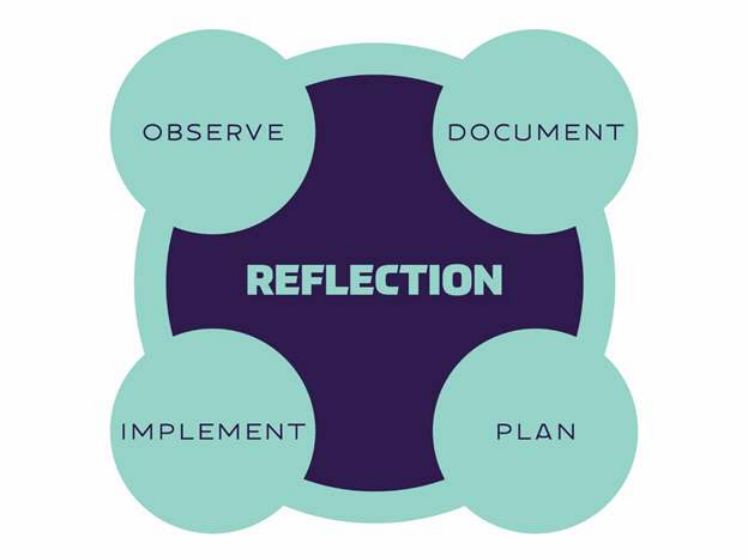


Figure **2.5.1** : The California Curriculum Planning Cycle.[4]

Let's explore each part of the cycle.

Observe

Observation means being present with children and attentive as they play and interact with others and the environment. This mindful kind of presence is different from participating in children's play or directing their play. Whether for one minute or five, an attentive, mindful presence means waiting to see what unfolds in order to gain a complete picture of children's play. A teacher who observes children as a first step in supporting learning discovers small scientists at work—experimenting, comparing, making assumptions, evaluating assumptions through their actions. Over time, children build mastery of a wide range of concepts and skills. The vignette about the snail exploration illustrates the role of the teacher as observer:

During small-group time with the snails, the teacher noticed a child who had been reluctant to hold a snail. This child had a visual impairment. As the teacher gently placed a snail on this child's hand, two children watched and listened as the teacher commented, "He's sticking his head out now, and he's turned toward your fingers. Can you feel him crawling toward your fingers?" The other children who had been watching intently began to repeat the teacher's encouraging words, saying, "He's sticking his head out. He's going toward your fingers!"

The teacher wrote down her observations and added an interpretive note that the children's behavior may be a growing sign of empathy as measured by the DRDP, and the other child's willingness to hold the snail, a growing sign of curiosity and initiative, also a DRDP measure.[5]

Observation Happens Through Lenses

It takes practice to become a good observer. An important aspect of being a good observer involves becoming aware of what is noticed and how observations are interpreted. Children may be influenced by many things. Culture, temperament, personal experiences, professional knowledge, and even community values and messages in the media affect how teachers see and experience children. These “lenses” through which teachers observe and interpret are at work even though they may not always be conscious of them.[6]

The Importance of Accuracy

Observations about children should be factual and objective to be useful and meaningful. Teachers should document only what they see and hear (the facts) and avoid using words that communicate judgment about a child’s feelings, intentions, and motivations; are ambiguous and open to interpretation; or describe an opinion. One way teachers may think about their own objectivity is to ask themselves: Am I describing this child’s behaviors and interactions in the same or a similar way that someone else observing this child would describe them?

Interpreting the meaning of children’s behaviors and interactions is important, and impressions, feelings, and insights about children are extremely valuable to the individualizing process. However, teachers first need accurate, factual information in order to draw conclusions later on about children’s skills, behavior, interests, and needs.[7]

Pause to Reflect

Think about yourself as an observer. What do you think will come most easily to you? What do you think will be more challenging?

Document

Documenting means gathering and holding evidence of children’s play and interests for future use. A common form of documentation in early childhood settings is a written note, often referred to as an observation anecdote. Anecdotal notes, along with other forms of documentation, in particular photos, video recordings, and work samples, serve a dual purpose. First, they preserve a teacher’s observations of children’s expressions of feelings, their thinking, and their learning. These documentations are guides to the next steps in day-to-day curriculum planning. And second, anecdotal notes and other evidence can be used to support a teacher’s periodic assessment of a child’s progress. An episode during "Animals in Our Neighborhood" lesson highlights the dual purpose of documentation:

Observation:

During morning circle time, Juan was highly engaged in the "Animals in Our Neighborhood" storybook activity. As I read the book aloud in both English and Spanish, Juan showed great enthusiasm when he recognized familiar words in Spanish. He eagerly pointed to the picture of a dog and proudly exclaimed, "Perro!" Juan's face lit up with excitement when I acknowledged his contribution and encouraged him to teach the word to his classmates. This interaction boosted his confidence, and he continued to participate actively throughout the reading session.

After the story, Juan transitioned smoothly to the art project. He chose to draw a picture of a bird, using crayons to create a colorful image. When I asked him to write the word "bird," he first said "pájaro" in Spanish and then successfully copied the word "bird" from the model I provided. Juan appeared focused and determined as he carefully traced each letter, pausing occasionally to compare his work with the example. He completed the task with minimal assistance, displaying significant progress in his fine motor skills and early literacy development.

Interpretation:

Juan demonstrated strong language skills in both English and Spanish, showing confidence in using his home language and a willingness to engage with new English vocabulary. His ability to connect the story to his personal experiences and share his knowledge with peers highlights his growing linguistic and social abilities. The activity was appropriately challenging for Juan, as he successfully completed the task of writing in English while also reinforcing his understanding of the Spanish equivalent. His enthusiasm and focus suggest that the activity was meaningful and relevant to his interests.

Next Steps:

- Continue to incorporate bilingual activities that allow Juan to use and expand both his English and Spanish language skills.
- Provide more opportunities for Juan to teach his peers words in Spanish, fostering his confidence and leadership abilities.
- Encourage Juan to practice writing both English and Spanish words in future activities, gradually increasing the complexity of the words and sentences he works with.

Notes:

Juan's engagement and success in this activity demonstrate his readiness for more complex literacy tasks. He benefits from bilingual instruction and positive reinforcement, which should be consistently included in his learning experiences.

Documenting What is Observed

Teachers must be intentional about capturing and recording what children do and say by setting up a system for carrying out observations. There is no one right way to do this. Systems will look different from program to program, and even classroom to classroom. Additionally, observation systems are not static; they should be revisited as teachers become more proficient in observing children and as children grow and develop. However, there are some general strategies that should be considered when developing a system.

- Plan times to observe each child regularly and over time. This should include observing children
  - Across settings (e.g., indoor and outdoor) and times of the day (morning, afternoon)
  - During routines (e.g., mealtimes, naptime, arrival/departure, transitions)
  - As they engage in spontaneous play experiences and planned activities and experiences
  - As they interact with other children and adults.
- Plan for spontaneous observation opportunities, too.
- Have materials at hand to capture unexpected, but valuable observations of children.
- Decide how to organize and store observations with the system that works best for the individual teacher or teaching team. For example:
  - A file folder for each child kept in hanging files in file cabinet, large box, or crate
  - Index cards in file box with a section for each child
  - A 3-ring binder notebook for each child
  - An accordion folder for each child

    - Hanging shoe bag, with pockets labeled for each child
- Decide how often to review observations. A system for using the valuable date from observations is an important part of the curriculum cycle. Some curriculum planning may be easy to implement based on just casual observation. But deeper analysis of observation of individual and groups of children will likely lend valuable insight in what teachers can plan to support optimal development.
- Include families in this process. Invite them to share what they observe about their children verbally, through pictures and photographs, or in writing.

Reflect & Plan

As teachers reflect on children's play, they discover possibilities for designing curriculum to sustain, extend, and help children's play to be more complex and, consequently, support the children's continuing learning.[13]

Teachers ask themselves questions about what the information they have documented in observations of children says about the children's development, interests, and needs. The answers to these questions lead to individualizing care and learning. There are many questions that teachers may ask themselves. For example:

- What developmental skill or activity does the child appear to be working on?
- What strategies does the child use to play with different toys?
- Does the child engage with objects or people differently than a month ago? What has changed? What has not changed?
- Do my actions/the actions of other adults who interact with the child affect the outcomes of the child's experience? How so?
- How does the information relate to goals for the child? The family's goals? The program's school readiness goals?
- What other information do I need?
- What questions do I have for the child's family?

It is during the reflective process that interpreting the meaning of children's behaviors and interactions becomes important. These interpretations and insights give rise to each child's story. Each child's story informs responsive practice.

Teachers use what they know about each child to

- Adapt the environment
- Modify the daily schedule and/or routines
- Make decisions about how to guide the children's learning based on what the child knows and can do as well as what the child is ready to try.[14]

That process of reflections then informs possible next steps in the curriculum. Possible steps might include adding materials to interest areas, books to read with large or small groups, activities to do in small groups, or a topic to investigate over time with the children. With clear ideas or objectives in mind, teachers plan curriculum that includes strategies to enhance the learning of all children in a group, as well as strategies to support the learning of individual children. Here is how reflection, discussion, and planning worked in the snail exploration:

While the children were exploring snails, teachers met each week to reflect and plan for the next steps in the children's explorations. They decided to schedule time for small groups of children to explore the snails in a more focused way, hoping to extend the children's learning and add complexity. The teachers planned a series of walks that would allow all the children to find snails in natural habitats.[15]

Pause to Reflect

Think back to something in your childhood that you were passionately interested or engaged in that someone observing you could have documented. What questions could your teachers have asked themselves about your experiences? How could they have planned?

(If it's easier or more relevant, you can think of a child you know and consider what you can ask yourself and plan around what you know about that child.)

Implement

Once a plan is written, teachers implement it. While implementing a plan, teachers observe, reflect, and document. The curriculum-planning cycle begins again (or continues) as teachers watch to discover how children respond to the planned curriculum and how children show evidence of their development during the planned learning encounters. Teachers often approach this step with a sense of wonder, for they may be surprised and amazed by the children's responses.

To hold the responses in memory, teachers may record notes, take a photo, or label, date, and keep a work sample, all of which they can later review to assess the impact of the curriculum plans. The evidence collected will help teachers to come up with ideas for supporting and assessing the children's learning. Teachers might ponder the following questions:

- Are children responding as predicted, or were there surprises?
- What do the children's responses tell us? How might we name the children's interest(s) or intention(s)? What concepts and ideas are the children forming within their play?
- How might children who are English learners and children who speak English collaborate in small groups to learn from one another?
- Are children showing evidence of progress on any of the measures of the DRDP?

Here is what happened when the teachers implemented their idea of going on walks with the children to find snails in natural habitats:

Before going on their snail hunt, a small group of children gathered on a blanket with the teacher. Each child was provided with a clipboard with paper for taking "notes" while the teacher explained how the walk would be a way to find snails that lived outside their classroom. Some children pretended to write while the teacher talked, while others drew pictures of snails. In this group, teachers included two children who were fluent in Spanish and learning English. The teachers anticipated much conversation among children during the search for the snails and wanted to give these children a chance to converse in their home language as well as to share experiences with peers who spoke only English.

Before heading off on the hunt, the teacher suggested, "Let's estimate. How many snails do you think we will find? Each of you can guess." On a large sheet of paper that the children could easily see, she wrote each child's name, saying each letter as she did so, and next to each name, the number guessed by that child.

Armed with magnifying glasses, the children went off to collect snails. There were many discoveries along the walk, not just snails. As children found snails, they carried them to a large examination tray set up on a table. Some children took a break from their snail search to examine, touch, and draw the snails already collected. At the end of the hunt, the children lined up the snails on a small log and counted them. The teacher suggested that they compare the number they counted with their estimates.

Before returning to their classroom, the children put the snails back into their natural habitats. The children were excited about sharing their experiences with other teachers and peers when they returned.

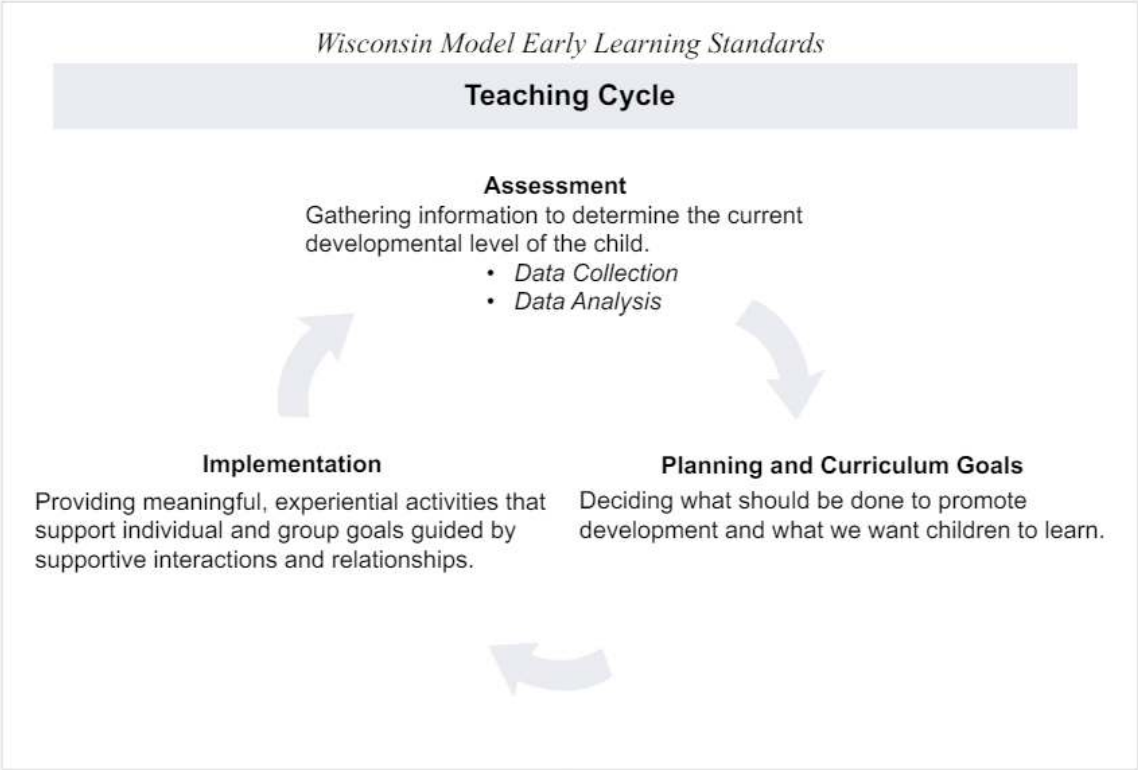
The teachers examined and reflected on what they saw in the children's writings and drawings on the clipboards. They decided that some of the work samples were significant in showing how individual children were developing an idea, concept, or skill. They filed those samples in the children's portfolios as evidence of developmental progress.[18]

Pause to Reflect

What happens when implementation goes differently than expected? What would have happened if the children had discovered and become fascinated with dandelions on their hunt for snails (and subsequently lost interest in the snails)? Does curriculum have to go as planned? Why or why not?

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Teaching Cycle

The lessons in your plan should follow the WMELS Teaching Cycle. (See the image below.) Use the assessment data you collect on students in your field experience site or your workplace to plan your unit activities. Then implement the activities and assess the implementation of the activities and the unit.



You will notice that the WMELS Teaching Cycle is similar, however, it only has three parts: Assessment, Planning and Curriculum Goals, and Implementation.

The first stage of the WMELS Teaching Cycle, **ASSESSMENT**, correlates to the first two stages of the California Curriculum Teaching Cycle: Observe and Document.

The second stage of the WMELS Teaching Cycle, **Planning and Curriculum Goals**, correlates to the third stage of the California Curriculum Teaching Cycle: Plan.

The third stage of the WMELS Teaching Cycle, **Implementation**, correlates to the fourth stage of the California Curriculum Teaching Cycle: Implement

See page 9 of WMELS for more information

References

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2.6: Balance Teacher-Directed and Child-Initiated Experiences

Pause to Reflect

When you hear the word “curriculum” what comes to mind?

As we have learned in previous chapters, developing relationships, as well as understanding the developmental stages and individual interests and skills of children are crucial to effective teaching. This is accomplished through interactions and both informal and formal observations with the children in our care. This information will form the cornerstone of what is called “curriculum”, which includes both the planned and unplanned experiences that occur throughout the day.

Development and Learning

“**Development**” and “**learning**” are two integrated concepts that we promote as teachers. As children are “learning” new concepts and skills, they are fostering their “development”. Our goal is to encourage the development of the “whole child” (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual) by providing learning experiences based on children’s interests and abilities, a concept known as “**intentional teaching**”.

Although children learn in an **integrated** manner (blending all areas of development together) these areas are often broken down for planning purposes. The image below shows the integrated manner of development.

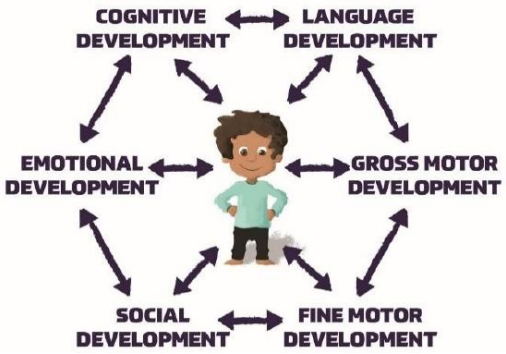


Figure **2.6.1**: All areas of development affect and are affected by each other[lxix]

Play: The Vehicle for Development and Learning

Below you will explore the concept that children learn through “play”, and how it relates to curriculum.



Figure **2.6.2**: Play[lxxi]

Children are born observers and are active participants in their own learning and understanding of the world around them from the very beginning of their existence. This means they are not just recipients of a teacher’s knowledge. Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) challenges early childhood professionals to be intentional in their interactions and environments to create optimal experiences to maximize children’s growth and development. Under this umbrella of DAP, knowledge is based upon discovery and discovery occurs through active learning and abundant opportunities for exploration. Through a “hands-on” approach and using play as a vehicle, children will develop the skills necessary for growth and development and maximize their learning.

Teachers play a pivotal role in children’s active construction of knowledge. They intentionally provide the environments, interactions, and experiences that support children in actively building concepts, skills, and overall development. The role of the teacher who works with young children in early childhood is to support children’s active construction of knowledge. In a sense,

early childhood teachers serve as research supports as the children sense, discover, and construct meaning about the world around them.

Early childhood teachers are responsible for:

- offering children well-stocked play spaces where they can construct concepts and ideas, preferably in the company of peers
- designing daily routines that invite children to be active participants and to use emerging skills and concepts
- supporting children's learning through interactions and conversations that prompt using language and ideas in new ways

Things to Remember About How Children Develop and Learn:

- Actively exploring, experimenting, gathering data, making sense of it.
- Exploration is a continual process that takes time and repetition.
- Begins with concrete, "real life" experiences before abstract concepts.
- Takes place in a social context.
- Encompasses a broad range of developmental domains.
- Development typically occurs in a sequence or continuum.

There are many Individual differences to consider:

- Interests and Abilities
- Learning styles
- Temperaments
- Family and Cultural Experiences
- Communities

As we think about play, it is important to remember that there are different **types of play** that children engage in. Chapter 2 (Developmental & Learning Theories) introduced you to a list of 12 different types (also included in the appendix for easy reference). Quality teachers incorporate plans for each of these types of play throughout the day. They set up activities and plan experiences that will allow children to make sense of their world through each of these play modalities. While teachers keep all 12 in mind, they often combine some of them to narrow down the areas and experiences they provide and chapter 7 (Learning Environments) will look at this in more detail. A common framework used by teachers as they define areas and activities is as follows:

Socio-Dramatic Play: Acting out experiences and taking on roles they are familiar with. Often incorporates Symbolic Play where children use materials and actions to represent something else.

Creative Play: Trying out new ideas and using imagination, with a focus on the process rather than the product.

Exploratory Play: Using senses to explore and discover the properties and function of things.

Constructive Play: Using materials to build, construct, and create.

Loco-motor Play: Moving for movement's sake, just because it is fun. [lxxii]





Figure **2.6.3** – Constructive Play Figure **2.6.4** – Creative Play





Figure 2.6.5 – Exploratory Play Figure 2.6.6– Socio-dramatic Figure 2.6.7– Locomotor

As with most things, the way that children play will go through developmental stages. As teachers plan, they keep in mind the stages of play relevant to the children they are planning for. Originally described by Parten (1932), this list, explains how children's play changes by age as they grow and develop social skills.

Unoccupied Play (Birth-3 Months): At this stage, a baby is making many movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.

Solitary Play (Birth-2 Years): This is the stage when a child plays alone. They are not interested in playing with others quite yet.

Spectator/Onlooker Behavior (2 Years): During this stage, a child begins to watch other children playing but does not play with them.

Parallel Play (2+Years): When a child plays alongside or near others but does not play with them.

Associate Play (3-4 Years): When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not a large amount of interaction at this stage.

Cooperative Play (4+ years): When a child plays together with others and has an interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing.[lxxiii]

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Why might these stages be important to consider?
>
> How would you use this information in your planning?

What Children Learn Through Play

Just like the "whole child" is often broken down into developmental domains for studying, so too is learning. Many aspects of learning occur simultaneously; it is integrated and connected. To define learning we often break it into categories. Because the connection between play and learning is so important, the way it is broken down exists in many forms, including assessments, planning resources, and the frameworks and foundations mentioned above. Table 2.6.1 is a compilation of such skills, compiled by Eyrich (2016) tying development into learning.

Table 1: Developmental Skills into Learning

PHYSICAL **PERSONAL CARE (**hygiene, feeding, dressing,) **NUTRITION** **SAFETY** **MOTOR (MOVEMENT) SKILLS** Active physical play Perceptual-motor (senses, effort, direction,) Gross (large) motor (running, throwing, …) Fine (small) motor (hands, fingers, feet, toes)	**CREATIVITY** Flexibility (shifting from 1 idea to another) Fluency (producing many ideas) Sensitivity (awareness (moods, textures, senses,) Imagination / Originality Risk Taking / Elaboration (pushing boundaries) Self as a resource (awareness, confidence in ability) Experience (to build mastery to build upon) Visual and Performing Arts
COGNITIVE **APPROACHES TO LEARNING & SELF REGULATION** Maintain attention Self-comfort Curiosity and initiative Self-control of feelings and behavior Engagement and persistence **SKILLS OF INQUIRY** Observe, investigate, document, communicate **KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURAL/PHYSICAL WORLD** Understanding properties and events **CAUSE AND EFFECT** Understanding the relationship between cause/effect	**SOCIAL** **SKILLS LEARNED WITH ADULTS** Can stay at school without parent Can respond/enjoy adults other than parents Adults will help in times of need Adults will not always solve problems **SKILLS LEARNED WITH PEERS** Different approaches work for different peers Cooperation and turn taking Lead and follow Sustain relationships and help peers Share materials, equipment, people, ideas Asserting rights and self-defense Negotiating skills and solving conflicts Anticipate and avoid problems Realistic expectations and value differences
CLASSIFICATION Learning the attributes of objects by exploring Compare, match, sort, categorize Finding similarities and differences Symbol **NUMBER** Understanding quantity (amount, degree) Assigning a numerical symbol to quantity Counting **MEASUREMENT** Awareness of differences in properties (size, length, weight, capacity, volume) Seriation (order 3 or more by comparison) (small/medium/large, loud/louder/loudest) Time (sequence of events, rhythm, yesterday/ tomorrow) **PATTERNING** Recognize, reproduce, repeating sequences **SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS** Experiences an object’s position in relation to others	**SKILLS LEARNED IN A GROUP** Respect Responsibility Compassion Tolerance Group identity Follow and adapt to routines and expectations How to enter and exit situations Deal with delay of gratification (patience) **SKILLS LEARNED AS AN INDIVIDUAL** Self-help and self-care Make choices and initiate own activities Cope with rejection, hurt feelings, disappointment Take responsibility **EMOTIONAL** **ABILITY TO DEAL WITH FEELINGS** Notice, label, and accept feelings Express feelings in appropriate ways Deal with feelings of others Resolve inner fears, conflicts

LANGUAGE	ABILITY TO EXERCISE JUDGEMENT
SYMBOL / SYMBOLIC REASONING	Notice, label, and make choices
Sounds and letters are put together to represent things	Think through consequences
RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE	Evaluate effectiveness of choices
Listening, understanding, responding	Learn to take another viewpoint
EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	**ENJOYING ONE'S SELF AND ONE'S POWER**
Speaking, communicating, conversation	Acquire a sense of self
GRAPHIC (WRITTEN) LANGUAGE/ LITERACY	Develop self-confidence and self-esteem
Interest in print & books, phonology, prereading, reading	Build trust in self and others
Symbol, letter, print knowledge, prewriting, writing	Reveal own personality
	Learn to take risks & learn from mistakes
	Become competent in several areas

Interactions




Figure **2.6.8**– Teachers will interact with Figure **2.6.9** – And teachers will interact groups of children[lxxv] with children one-on-one[lxxvi]

It cannot be repeated enough that human beings are social creatures that thrive on relationships. In order to maximize a child's interests, willingness to take risks, try again when initial attempts have not gone as planned, and learn to their fullest, we must establish and maintain relationships with children that foster trust and encourage autonomy and initiative.

Interactions should be as much of what we plan for as the materials and experiences themselves. Built into every curriculum plan should be thoughts about how the teacher will:

- Create a sense of safety and trust
- Acknowledge children's autonomy
- Foster a growth mindset
- Extend learning through open-ended statements and conversations
- Reflect back on Chapter 3 – The Teacher's Role and the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships to foster brain development. The concept of a "NeuroRelational approach" will be present in the curriculum that we plan for young children.
- Quality interactions will include:
- Valuing each child for who they are
- Finding something special and positive about each child
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Finding time each day to interact and make a connection with every child
- Respecting children's opinions and ideas
- Being present for children
- Reflecting back what they say and do
- Listening to listen. Hear rather than respond
- Creating a warm and welcoming environment
- Being consistent as a means of establishing trust
- Focusing on the process
- Focusing on what children CAN do rather than what they can't do YET
- Including families as valuable team members (for more information refer to Chapter 8 – Relating to Families)
- Understanding and respecting each child's individual and group culture

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Do these make sense to you? Are there others? Which will be easiest for you? Most difficult? Why?

Communication goes hand in hand with interaction. Being aware of what we are saying and how we are saying it is crucial in establishing and maintaining relationships. Positive communication includes:

Nonverbal:

- Get down to children's level
- Observe
- Be present
- Listen
- Understand
- Use positive facial expressions
- Look interested
- Smile

Verbal:

- Be aware of the tone and volume of your voice
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use facial expressions and body movements that match your words
- Give choices and share control
- Focus on the positive
- Describe what you are doing as children are watching
- Model appropriate language
- Reflect back what children are saying
- Have conversations with multiple exchanges
- Consider close vs. open-ended questions and statements

The type of questions you ask will elicit different responses. Sometimes we want a direct answer while most of the time we want to generate deeper thinking to promote learning. Consider each of the questions below regarding the color blue:

- "Are you wearing blue today"?
- "What color are your pants"?
- "Tell me all the things you see that are blue"

Each will point out that the child's pants are blue, but in very different ways.

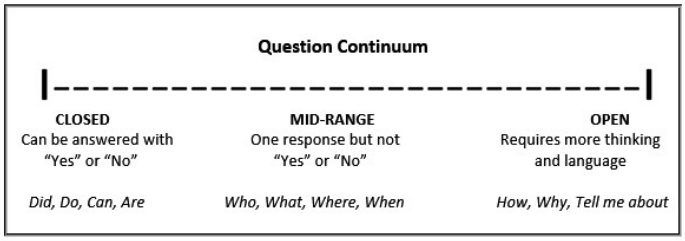


Figure **2.6.10** – The question continuum[lxxvii]

Considering what **type of thinking** we want to promote enables us to create questions and statements that spark that knowledge. Thinking is often broken down into two types:

Convergent thinking – emphasizes coming up with one correct response; "converging" on the "right" answer.

Divergent thinking – emphasized generating multiple responses, brainstorming and "thinking outside the box"; "diverging" into different ways of thinking and answering.

Both can be valuable as children develop and learn. Often starting with divergent questions and then following up with convergent questions allows for broad thinking that can then be narrowed down.

Vignette

Teacher Odom sets up a play dough table with ingredients to make dough and materials to use after it is made. He lets the children know that he will be there if anyone wants to join him. Three children hurry over and he greets each of them and says, “I’m so happy you decided to join. Let’s get started”. He shows them the recipe and encourages them to decide how to proceed. They take turns adding the ingredients and he shows patience and interest as they take the lead, asking open-ended questions along the way, “What will we do next?” “What do you think will happen?” and facilitating conversations. He points out each of their contributions along the way and focuses on the processes they are using rather than the finished product. He encourages them to interact with each other, “Wow, look at how B did that” and “Isn’t it interesting how you both added flour but you did it so differently”. Other children come to join and he encourages the original three to find ways to include them. When the dough is complete, the children use a variety of rolling pins, cookie cutters, and dull plastic knives to play with it. He continues expressing his interest, by commenting on how each child is using the materials and asks open-ended questions to foster deeper learning.

Pause to Reflect

What are some ways the teacher fostered interactions with children to enhance their trust, encourage their autonomy and initiative, and foster thinking and learning?

Pause to Reflect

Going back to Table 1 on Development and Learning, can you find skills from each of the categories that the children would be enhancing? How do interactions help foster these skills?

Planning

As with most endeavors, we are more effective when we plan curriculum ahead of time. This helps us to be prepared and to adjust our ideas to be flexible as the children engage with what we have planned.

Reasons to plan:

- Make sure our plans meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the children
- Make sure we understand the learning and development that will occur
- Make sure we have all the materials we will need
- Make sure we know where in the environment to set up
- Make sure we know how to set up
- Make sure we know how to encourage children to participate
- Make sure we have thought through behavioral issues that might arise and how to handle them
- Make sure we have thought through the interactions that will take place
- Make sure we know how we will encourage the children to clean up
- Make sure we know how we might gather observational notes
- Make sure we have thought through how we might document and share this experience with parents or others.

Pause to Reflect

Do these make sense to you? Are there others?

If we have planned thoroughly and thoughtfully, it allows us to implement our plans and to reflect on them afterward, using that information for future planning.

Often referred to as the Plan – Do (implement) – Review (evaluate) cycle, this type of approach allows us to continuously provide the most effective curriculum to the young children in our care.

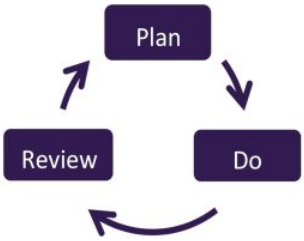


Figure **2.6.11** – Plan Do Review Cycle

Let us consider that most programs are broken down into segments of the day, beginning with the arrival of the children and ending with their departure. Teachers will plan for all segments of the day, both inside and outside, which might include:

Arrival and Departure

- Small group time
- Large group time
- Centers
- Child initiated play
- Nutrition (snack, lunch,…)
- Self-help (washing hands, toileting, napping,…)
- Transitions between all segments of the day
- Others as each program dictates

One of the best planning strategies is to use a written format. Sometimes we plan one activity or experience on a single form. Other times we plan for multiple experiences on the same form. New teachers are often encouraged to plan each activity separately at first until they feel comfortable with the process.

Reasons for a written plan:

- Keeps things in order
- Assures everything is thought through and not forgotten
- Can be referred to as needed throughout the process
- Can be shared with others
- Documents planning for record-keeping purposes
- Can be saved to be repeated or modified without having to start from scratch

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Do these make sense to you? Are there others?

When planning it can be helpful to know that certain terms are used in a variety of ways by various programs. Because this chapter is written for a diverse group of future early childhood educators, we will use these terms interchangeably so that you are ready for the vocabulary used wherever you may work.

Some of the terms most frequently used to represent the “goings-on” you will plan for are:

- Lesson
- Activity
- Learning Experience
- Curriculum
- Teaching Moment

While they may have slightly different “official” meanings, they overlap in our field and can all be found to begin with a **plan** based on children’s interests and needs, i**mplemented** according to the plan (with modifications as they occur), and **reviewed/evaluated** afterward through reflection to assess and build upon for the future.

Below are examples of generic planning forms (Bucks County Community College has a lesson plan form that you will see in many of your courses). You will see planning for a specific activity and planning for the entire day. For each, there will be a blank version and a sample version. The programs you work in will each have their own unique method and planning forms, but most will include some, if not all, of the information included here.

Blank Example Planning Form for Specific Activity

CURRICULUM / ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Title / Description:

Resources *(Where did you learn about this activity)*:

Reason(s) for Curriculum Plan *(justify by considering developmental milestones, learning domains, observations in your assigned children’s classroom, and your knowledge of child development, milestones, word picture handout & DAP that guided your decision to implement this particular activity)*

Ages of Children: Number of Children:

Location:

Segment of Daily Routine:

Materials Needed *(be specific: quantities, color, book and song titles, etc.)*

Implementation / Directions *(List step-by-step as if the implementation could be replicated without you; include set up and clean up, involving children whenever possible. A step-by-step description of learning activities with specific detail.) Describe step-by-step what the children will be doing.*

Now describe your role. *Your guidance supports a maximum learning environment. Flexibility and supporting the child’s process are vital. Questions to ask yourself: How will you introduce the activity? How will you engage the children? What will you be doing/saying? What is your role during the activity*? *What open-ended questions will you be using? Please include a minimum of 3 open-ended questions for your activity.*

Specific ways this activity will facilitate development:

Physical:

1.
2.

Cognitive:

1.
2.

Language:

1.
2.

Social/Emotional:

1.
2.

Creative:

1.
2.

Behavioral Considerations *(Plan ahead…what issues might arise/what strategies might help)*:

1.
2.
3.

Documentation *How will you collect and display the development listed above? (documentation board, classroom book, PowerPoint, Prezi, creative ideas, etc.):*

Webbing Ideas (*List at least 5 activities to extend the learning into other areas; try to include one appropriate use of technology):*

Modifications to include ALL children *(developmental delays, disabilities, cultural and linguistic diversities, etc.):*

1.
2.
3.

Inclusion of Parents/Families:

Other Notes / Considerations:

✔ Sample Planning Form for Specific Activity

CURRICULUM / ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Developed by: *Suzie Student*

Title / Description: Nature Scavenger Hung

Resources *(Where did you learn about this activity)*

Mr.Bossman, my mentor teacher implemented this activity with his class. Book Resource: Nature Fun Curriculum Guide, by I.B. Squirrly, Acorn Press, 2019

Reason(s) for Curriculum Plan *(justify by considering developmental milestones, learning domains, observations in your assigned children's classroom, and your knowledge of child development, milestones, word picture handout & DAP that guided your decision to implement this particular activity)*

As the season is changing, several children have commented on observations they are making in nature (leaves are falling, colors are changing, weather,…). They have been showing a lot of interest in books related to nature. They are also bringing in items they are finding on the ground in their homes or community (pinecones, sticks, leaves…)

Ages of Children: 4

Number of Children: 20 (entire class)

Location: outside in the yard

Segment of Daily Routine: outside time

Materials Needed *(be specific: quantities, color, book and song titles, etc.) (**NAEYC Standard 1c**)*:

list of items (pics & words)

items on list

pen and paper for recording responses

nature chart or book for researching items

bags to put items in if requested

Implementation / Directions *(List step-by-step as if the implementation could be replicated without you; include set up and clean up, involving children whenever possible. A step-by-step description of learning activities with specific detail.) Describe step-by-step what the children will be doing.*

Begin by welcoming the group and letting them know how happy we are they have joined us. Invite children to assist in finding some objects. Divide children into small groups and give each group 1 scavenger hunt list. Encourage the children to find the objects on the list. Remind children of the behavioral expectations for the activity.

Now describe your role. Your guidance supports a maximum learning environment. Flexibility and supporting the child's process is vital. Questions to ask yourself: How will you introduce the activity? How will you engage the children? What will you be doing/saying? What is your role during the activity? *What open-ended questions will you be using? Please include a minimum of 3 open-ended questions for your activity.*

Encourage children to explore colors, shapes, textures, sizes,…. Encourage children to discuss among themselves how items are the same and how they are different and why they fit into a chosen category. As children engage in the activity, write down their statements for future documentation. Use open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and reflect children's statements and ideas to other children. For clean up encourage each group to put their collections inside for a future art activity. **Specific ways this activity will facilitate development:*(NAEYC Standard 5a)***

Physical:

fine motor as they pick up objects

gross motor as they bend, reach, walk,…

Cognitive:

classification as they sort by size, texture, color,…

number as they count their items

Language:

listening (receptive) as they listen to each other

talking (expressive) as they discuss their items with each other

Social/Emotional:

group skills such as taking turns, waiting, listening to others

sense of accomplishment as they find items and solve problems that arise

Creative:

flexibility and fluency as they stretch thinking and shift from one idea to another

using self as a resource as they tap into themselves to find objects and define them

Behavioral Considerations *(Plan ahead…what issues might arise/what strategies might help)*

not wanting to participate – observation is a form of participation so if they would rather do something else and just watch, that is fine. If we make it fun, enough they will want to join in.

frustration about not finding items – when setting up, go through the list and make sure that all items are available and visible. If not, place items there. This should accommodate the issue, but it is also all right for children to be frustrated and work through it, so if it happens I would encourage them to breathe, tell me why they are frustrated, and then problem-solve ways to feel better.

children not sharing or participating as a group – be prepared to help facilitate group interactions and the "give and take" of relationships. All children should have opportunities to lead and to follow**.**

Documentation *How will you collect and display the development listed above? (documentation board, classroom book, PowerPoint, Prezi, creative ideas, etc.)*

Using the pen and paper (and photos if possible), I will write down what the children said and did. I will place a clipboard with those notes on the parent board, along with the following:

Today we went on a Nature Scavenger Hunt on the yard. Several children had been expressing an interest in the changes, they are noticing in nature so we built upon this interest. As they explored they developed the following skills:

Other Notes / Considerations:

Consider the weather, as an alternative, set up inside or wait

Extend the activity with a nature collage activity later in the day on a large piece of contact paper that can be added to over the next few days.

Blank Example Daily Planning Form for:

Daily Lesson Plan					
Date:			**Class:**		
Segment/Time	**Activity with Brief Description**	**Materials & Purpose**	**Learning Considerations Development**	**Intentional Interactions & Conversations**	**Notes / Other**

Add additional rows as needed

Sample Daily Planning Form

Daily Lesson Plan					
Date:			**Class:**		
Segment / Time	**Activity with Brief Description**	**Materials & Purpose**	**Learning Considerations Development**	**Intentional Interactions & Conversations**	**Notes / Other**
ARRIVAL 9:00 am	• Greet parents and children • Health check	• Familiarity with families	• Positive start to day -Smooth transition from home to school • Connecting with families • Sense of belonging • Basic health check	• Get down to children's level • Watch non-verbal language • Be present • "welcome", "So glad to see you", "You look…"	• Check with teacher to see how parents should be addressed
GREETING CIRCLE 9:10 am	• Sing a good morning song • Discuss activities for the day	• CD • CD Player – cue up song ahead of time & check it is working • Carpet squares for children to sit on, placed in a semi-circle as they arrive • samples or pictures of activities • be sure to know activities ahead of time	• Listening and speaking skills • Social skills (waiting, learning about peers,…) • Spatial relations (staying on carpet) • Problem-solving (making choices)	• Be sure each child can see • Sit at their level • Give children time to respond • Validate each child's comments • Notice positive behavior • Encourage children to correct inaccurate words or tunes	• Discuss behavior strategies with the teacher prior • Know activities • Know words to the song
CENTERS 9:20 10:15	ART: Bingo marker painting SCIENCE: Oobleck	ART: colored bingo markers, large coffee filters…place on the table and encourage children to create SCIENCE: mix cornstarch and water in the tub. Encourage children to wash their hands and then join in the exploration. Add spoons, small rocks, and food color to the mixture as desired.	• Foster creativity • Sense of self • Curiosity & problem solving • Fine motor skills • Social skills • Spatial relations (on, in, …)	• Allow children to do their own work • "tell me about", "you are working really hard on that" • Refer children to other children • "How does that feel?" • "What are some ideas?" • "How could you solve that?" "Interesting"	Keep in mind E's sensory issues and provide rubber gloves or place materials in a baggie if needed.

CLEAN UP 10:15	Transition warning and cleaning up the classroom	Transition warning: 5 minutes until clean up time, 2 minutes until clean up time Finish up what you are doing Sing clean-up song	• Self-help skills • Fine & gross motor • Cognitive – time, matching, spatial, • Sense of pride • Sense of collaboration & community	"What will you clean up first" "Do you want to put away this or this" "You do one and then I will do one" "When we are done we can have snack	• Be sure to watch clock • Speak loudly • Follow through • Discuss strategies withteacher prior
SNACK 10:20	• Wash hands and sit at the table • Fruit Kabobs	• Place "skewers" (skinny straws) and fruit on the table on platters • Encourage children to make kabobs and then eat them	• Health & Nutrition • Fine motor skills • Language skills (listen and discuss) • Cognitive(categorize, label,…)	• Sit with children • Informally extend discussions on fruit, colors, textures,…	• Check for allergies
OUTSIDE 10: 40 – 11:30	• After snack transition outside • OBSTACLE COURSE • STORY STATION • at end transition inside	Encourage children to participate if desired (if not, regular yard setup is available): OBSTACLE COURSE: Balls, bean bags, targets, rope balance beam, chalk-drawn path, hula hoop STORY STATION: Books spread out on blanket under tree	• Gross motor skills • Fine motor skills • Eye-hand coordination • Balance • Literacy • Social with peers and adults	• Encourage collaboration • Can you do it together" • "Who would you like to do it with" • Sharing – "how will you decide who will have it first?' • "You tried hard" • "Let's do it together" • "Are there other ways to do it?' • "How should we put them away?"	• Be sure the teacher is outside at all times. • Encourage children to use the restroom before going out • Have a plan for obstacle course but be flexible based on children's interests • Create a cozy area for stories • Clean up transition at 11:30
CIRCLE 11:40	• Sit on carpet squares • CLASS BOOK • 3 BEARS RAP • FAREWELL SONG	• Encourage children to sit on the carpet • CLASS BOOK: The adult starts "once upon a time" and then each child adds a sentence. Record on phone or chart paper and then transcribe later and add to book area	• Literacy skills • Taking turns • Sequencing • Gross and fine motor • Keeping a steady beat • Counting • Transitioning	• Make sure everyone can see • Speak clearly • Show joy in their sentences • Clarify before writing words down • Notice and appreciate patience • "you are waiting so nicely for your turn"	• Ask the teacher or another team member to record the story • Know words and movements to songs • Record the teacher singing a farewell song and practice

		• 3 BEARS RAP – encourage children to participate in songs and movements (use CD if needed) • Take 5 calming breaths • FAREWELL SONG (use CD if needed)		• "it's hard to wait isn't it?' • "Feel your body getting calmer with your breaths". • "Think of your favorite thing today" (Recap)	
DEPARTURE 12:00	• Open door for parents • Share highlights of the day • Debrief with teacher	• Check cubbies	• Transition from school to home • Connecting with families • Closure	• Smile and greet parents • Encourage children to share their favorite parts of the day.	• Be sure to let the teacher know of any issues • Reflect on the day with the team & celebrate!

Planning Considerations

Adaptations: [Include what adaptations could be made for students who do not have all the skills necessary for success in the activity or need more challenge. Provide remediation AND enrichment activities using this lesson's objective].

Evaluation: How will you know that learning took place? The outcome of your lesson should correlate to your behavioral objective above. Evaluation might include a finished product, an observation you made, or perhaps you will interview the student to ensure learning has occurred.

***Reflection**: After you have presented, you should always reflect on your lesson. What worked? What didn't? What will you change the next time?*

What to Plan

There are many resource websites and books with ideas to spark your initial planning. The best way to consider what to plan comes from the children. Always take into account WHO you are planning for and WHY you are planning. The rest will follow. For now, the following is a general list to follow:

Considerations for planning:

- Consider both the group and individual children; be inclusive of all
- Know their interests
- Know their ability levels
- Focus on what they CAN do; start with where they are
- Understand your resources (time, materials, location,…)
- Understand the development of the ages and stages you are planning for
- Plan for the "whole" child
- Know your goals and objectives
- Integrate curriculum and plan for all types of play
- Consider the families, communities, and cultures represented
- Include others in the planning process when possible (colleagues, families, children)
- Plan ahead of time how to transition to the next segment of the day
- Jot down quick notes to refer to later when you reflect
- Don't worry if it doesn't go exactly as you planned, that's expected

- Enjoy yourself and the children, remember “this is the fun part”

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Do these implementation suggestions make sense to you? What might you add or delete from the suggestions? Why?

Another consideration will be ***how*** you will implement the activities you plan. There are several different teaching methods to think about and most teachers will balance various strategies throughout the day:

Child Directed – child introduces and directs activity

Child Demonstrated – child demonstrates while the teacher observes

Assist – child explores and the teacher provides minimal assistance

Scaffold – child attempts and teacher provides guided support as needed

Co-Construct – child and teacher or child and child work collaboratively

Teacher Demonstrated – teacher demonstrates while child observes **Teacher Directed** – teacher introduces and directs activity

There is also a variety of experiences to consider:

Structured – planned, organized lesson following steps

Informal – planned and introduced and then takes shape as children participate

Naturalistic – emerges organically from the children with no formal plan

Again, teachers balance these types of experiences throughout the day, based on the children they work with, the environment, and the activities themselves.

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Which teaching strategies do you feel most comfortable with? Why?
>
> Can you see times when you might use each of them?

Review/Evaluation

The third part of the Plan-Do-Review cycle involves reflecting on what was planned and implemented. Remember the section in Chapter 3 (The Early Childhood Teaching Profession), regarding the importance of reflection in all aspects of our teaching?

Curriculum planning is one of the primary duties teachers engage in, and as such requires a great deal of reflection and review. Some of this will be done informally as you go about your day. Other times it may be helpful to more formally reflect, in order to capture strengths and areas of growth, both in yourself, the children, and the curriculum that you are planning for them. As a form of “assessment”, this feedback proves extremely valuable for teachers and programs. Below are examples of two types of forms teachers might use in their reviews. These may be used in future ECE courses.

Curriculum Implementation Evaluation / Reflection

- Overall impression/comments about your activity *(Be specific):*
- What went well?
- What did not?
- What type of interactions took place during the implementation of your activity? *(child – child, child-adult, …)*
- How did individual children respond to your implementation? Did they respond the way you anticipated? (Please be specific and use examples whenever possible)
- If you were to implement this activity again, how would you modify it?
- *Think about: Encouraging more participation from the children*
- *Meeting the needs of the wide range of developmental levels in the room*

- *Implementing the plan more successfully*
- *Additional activities to enhance the same concept(s) / webbing*

Daily Curriculum Reflection

- I am the proudest of:
- I wish the following had been done differently:
- The learning experiences I provided for the children:
- The interactions, conversations, and approaches I used:
- The biggest thing I learned about myself is:
- Learning lessons about my teaching and goals I might set for myself:
- Learning lessons about ethics and professionalism are:
- Other

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Do these reviews/reflections make sense to you?
>
> What might you add or delete from the blank forms? Why?

Some programs will set up areas of the indoor and outdoor classrooms with a variety of materials for children to choose from. Others will set up stations for children to participate in. Some portions of the day will include individual, small, and large group experiences. All should be carefully planned with intention and meaning for the children that will be engaging in them.

Integrated Curriculum/Themes

It is common for many programs to integrate many aspects of learning with the use of "themes" as a way to weave learning together for children. For some learners, the connection of several learning experiences all related to a common concept can support deeper learning. The most successful themes are those that emerge out of the children's interest (often called "**emergent curriculum"**).

Common themes include:

- My family
- Friendship and caring
- Community Helpers
- Animals
- Activities (camping, …)
- Transportation
- Locations (oceans, mountains, farms,…)

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> What other themes can you think of?

Often when planning a theme, teachers will use the concept of a curriculum "web" to begin to plan their ideas. Like a list, but in a different format, a web allows teachers to brainstorm related ideas and then choose the ones that make the most sense to more thoroughly plan for. This process uses both a teacher's divergent and convergent thinking skills.

A basic web diagram will look like this:



Figure 6.14 – basic web diagram

Here is a sample of a curriculum web using this format. Can you think of activities to add?



Figure **2.6.12** – Sample curriculum web

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> What advantages can you find in creating a planning web? How might you incorporate children into helping your web ideas?

The Behavioral Side of Curriculum

Rather than thinking of children's behavior as occurring separately from everything else that goes on in the classroom, it can be helpful to recognize that it is a **part of** everything else. As we plan interactions and experiences that are meaningful, we take into account a variety of factors that affect behavior. Part of every plan should be an understanding of who children are and intentionally planning for them. Just as with other skills that children are learning, they are learning to control their bodies, use their words, self-regulate, wait their turn, be patient, and a host of other social and emotional skills that will help them be able to manage themselves in social situations. Learning these life skills is no different from any other concept they will learn by exploring, repeated exposure, and having it make sense to them. As will other concepts, they need teachers who develop relationships with them, focus on what they CAN do, and maintain a positive attitude.

There is no magic approach to helping children learn to manage their behavior and no secret book with all of the answers. Instead, there are a variety of factors to consider and approaches to try to guide behaviors in the ways we prefer. This will be expanded upon in subsequent Education coursework, so what follows here is an abridged version of considerations as we plan for the children in our programs.

As early childhood professionals, we have an ethical obligation to understand how behavior is affected by the following factors and to plan accordingly. Just as we started Chapter 4 (Observation and Assessment) by looking at the "why", understanding why a child might be behaving in a certain way can assist in planning appropriately:

The "whys" of children's behavior teachers should consider:

Development – what to expect at various ages and stages for the "whole" child

Environment – the physical space, routine, and interpersonal tone

Family & Cultural Influences – influences and variations in expectations

Temperament – individual personality styles, approaches, and ways of interpreting events

Motivation – purpose (communicating, relating, attention, control, revenge, inadequacy, fear of failure,…)

Often teachers will use a web like the one previously described to consider the "why" of a behavior. They place the behavior in the center and then web out the various factors to consider.



Figure 2.6.12 – Teachers should examine the "why" behind a behavior

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> How might you use the information above when planning interactions and experiences for children?

Once we have an understanding of the "whys" of behavior, we can plan interactions that foster the behavior we desire. Here we have highlighted the following Interactive Strategies to consider.

Useful teacher interactions when planning for children's behavior (in addition to the interactive considerations posed earlier):

- Consistency
- Clarity
- Realistic limits and expectations
- Calmness
- Focus on the behavior, not the child
- Focus on what the child can do and is doing appropriately
- Positive direction (for example instead of "don't run" say "use walking feet")
- Reflection and logic rather than immediate response and emotion

Some strategies to try include:

- ***Ignore*** – can be effective if a behavior is annoying rather than dangerous. *"If you choose to continue using a whining voice I will choose not to listen. As soon as you use your talking voice, I would like to hear what you have to say"*
- ***Redirect*** – directing the child to a more positive way of using that behavior. *"Inside we use our walking feet, when you go outside you can run"* or *"We don't throw things at other people, if you would like to throw let's find the target and beanbags"*

- ***Active Listening to understand*** – validating what the child is saying. *"I hear you saying that you want a turn, you sound very sad" or "you worked very hard on that block structure and you are angry it got knocked over"*
- ***Give Choices*** – state what needs to be done and then give 2 options for how it can be done. *"It's time to clean up now, will you clean up the paintbrushes or the paints first?" or "It's time to come inside now, do you want to come in like a mouse or a dinosaur?"*
- ***Logical Consequences*** – as children behave in certain ways (both "positively" and "negatively") consequences will logically happen. *"If you talk to your friends in that tone, they may continue not to want to play with you. If you want to play with them, what can you do differently?" or "We are having a snack now; if you choose not to eat you will probably be very hungry by lunchtime"*
- ***Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution*** – helping children to solve their own issues with support as needed. *"What can you do about that?" or "How might you solve that problem" or "it sounds like you both want to play with the same toy, I wonder how you will work that out?"*
- ***Short removal with reflection and return*** – taking a moment to leave a situation to gain composure and return more successfully. *"It seems to be hard for you to keep the sand in the sandbox right now. I'm going to ask you to leave the sandbox for a few moments and think about how you can be respectful to the others that are sharing this space with you. Where will you go to think?")A very brief time later) "what can you do differently next time you enter the sandbox? Great, would you like to try out your solution? Come on back and show me". "You did it!"*[lxxix]

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> How might you use the information above when planning interactions and experiences for children?
>
> What makes sense? What feels comfortable to try?

Types of Programs

Many high-quality programs using the tenants of Developmentally Appropriate Practices exist today. Most have integrated this information into an eclectic format, providing active learning, quality interactions and environments, and activities based on their observations of children's interests and abilities. They included families as partners and extend to value the communities and cultures of which they are a part. Below is a list of program and curriculum names that encompass the above tenants. They are all similar at their core, but if you would like to research them further you may find some unique components of interest to you. They are listed alphabetically for convenience:

- **Culturally Appropriate Curriculum** – curriculum that helps children understand how they are similar to, yet different than each other based on individual histories, families, and culture.
- **Emergent Curriculum** – curriculum planning based on teacher observations of children's interests. Usually, a spontaneous approach where experiences evolve and change as the process unfolds.
- **Faith-Based** – programs that include the teaching of the religious beliefs of the sponsoring organization.
- **Family Child Care** – a program that takes place in a home setting.
- **Head Start** – A comprehensive program, that provides learning programs; nutrition; medical, dental, and mental health care, and parent education and vocational training.
- **High-Scope** – named for a program High in Quality, Broad in Scope, this curriculum emphasizes active learning and higher-level thinking. It includes a Plan-Do-Review cycle where children learn to make plans, carry them out, and then evaluate those plans; important life skills.
- **Inclusion** – programs designed to include children with a wide variety of abilities and needs.
- **Inclusive Curriculum** – the aspect of a program that reflects sensitivity to culture, home language, gender, religion, and abilities.
- **Intergenerational Programs** – programs designed for both young children and the elderly, where the two populations interact throughout the day in similar activities.
- **Laboratory Schools –** early childhood programs taking place on college campuses, usually with a supervised training component for college students learning to work with young children.
- **Looping** – the practice of keeping a group of children and their teacher together for more than one year.

- **Montessori –** True Montessori schools are based on the works of Maria Montessori including self-correcting materials, independent learning experiences, and an emphasis on life skills. Because her name was not trademarked, many programs that have Montessori in the title do not meet all of the criteria of a true Montessori program, which can be very confusing indeed.
- **Mixed Age Grouping** – also called "family grouping"' placing children of different ages in the same classroom.
- **Outdoor Classroom** – outdoor spaces created to enhance the quantity, quality, and benefit of outdoor experiences. Often brings the inside classroom outside, incorporating interest centers and materials usually found indoors.
- **Parent Cooperative (Co-op)** – a program designed and run by a group of parents for their young children. Parents will usually hire a teacher to facilitate learning and perform all other duties themselves. More recently called "Learning Pods".
- **Play based –** focuses on the value of play in fostering development in young children, planning interactions and experiences focused on the many types of play.
- **Reggio-Emilia –** this approach is a student-centered and constructive self-guided curriculum that uses self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments, often through a "project approach".
- **RIE (Resources for Infant Educarers)** – based on Magda Gerber's work with babies, emphasizes the unique stage of infants and toddlers. The curriculum for this age ***is*** caring for them, with the belief that caring educates infants about themselves.[lxxx]

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Which of the programs just mentioned sparked your interest? Why?

In Closing

As can be seen, there is much to consider when planning, implementing, and evaluating curricula for early childhood programs. At the core of quality curriculum is the notion of Developmentally Appropriate Practices, including observing and understanding the individual children in your care, developing and maintaining positive relationships and interactions, effectively communicating, valuing the role of play in learning, and understanding that children's behavior is a part of the learning process.

We will explore how the environment sets the stage for children and families to feel engaged and supported in their early learning classroom.

> **Pause to Reflect**
>
> Thinking back over this section, what are 3 main concepts that stand out for you? Why?
>
> How will you use them?

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2.6.1: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Learning Experiences

In this chapter, we will look at the components of planning an **Interdisciplinary Unit of Connected Learning Experiences**. You will review developmentally appropriate practice, developmental domains, individual and cultural appropriateness, the use of effective transitions, the WMELS Framework and the Teaching Cycle.

First, let's review developmentally appropriate practice.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice is Informed by 3 Areas of Knowledge

When planning curriculum for children we must be sure the activities are developmentally appropriate. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Position Statement, "The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in… intentionality, in the knowledge that practitioners consider when they are making decisions, and in their always aiming for goals that are both challenging and achievable for children." To do this they must use developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). DAP includes three areas of knowledge:

1. **Age-Appropriateness**

2. **Individual-Appropriateness**

3. **Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness**

In this section of the chapter we will look specifically at DAP Area of Knowledge #3:

Social-and Cultural-Appropriateness – using what is known about the social and cultural context in which children live[1]. This means: Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live: [Necessary] to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, 8–9)

The **Head Start Guiding Principles** reflect developmentally appropriate practice by an intentional teacher. The principles are listed below.

1. Each child is unique and can succeed
2. Learning occurs with the context of relationships.
3. Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.
4. Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.
5. Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.
6. Teaching must be intentional and focus on how children learn and grow.
7. Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.[2

Social-and Cultural-Appropriateness aligns with the following **Head Start Guiding Principles:**

> **3. Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.**
>
> **7. Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.**[2

Curriculum in Multicultural Classrooms

The term culturally responsive practices has been used to refer to the implementation of effective teaching practices in diverse early education settings. Culturally responsive practices are teaching to the individual needs of children who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. This term implies the integration of assessment and curriculum practices: program staff must learn about the individual abilities and preferences of each of the children enrolled in their program, and then find ways to plan and implement a curriculum that is based upon each individual child's needs and interests. For example, teachers can use home visits to learn about the child, to observe ways that families interact with their child, and to begin a dialogue with families about their goals for the child.

Classroom Materials

In her 1995 book, The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8, Martha Bronson offers detailed suggestions for selecting play materials that are safe, appropriate, and supportive of play and development. It is relevant to note here that classroom materials can potentially depict people in stereotypical ways or only contain simplified or inaccurate images of culturally diverse people. Therefore, the challenge is to provide classroom materials that reflect all children, families, and adults in the program, and to eliminate stereotypical or inaccurate materials from daily use. For example, books and dramatic play materials should reflect diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, special needs and abilities, and a range of occupations and ages. Books and environmental print should also represent the different languages of children in the classroom.



Figure **2.6.1.1** : What diversity is represented in this image of children and dolls? [50]

The challenge for programs is to establish systems and procedures that take the cultural and linguistic contexts of the children into account. Once in place, these classroom materials should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the classrooms reflect all enrolled children without stereotyping. Programs are encouraged to seek information from families and knowledgeable members of the community for their input in equipping classrooms to reflect cultures and languages in respectful ways.

Finally, encouraging children's language and cognitive growth does not preclude the responsibility to support each child's sense of wellbeing, the formation of his or her identity, and feelings of security. A consensus within the research is that effective environments for children support all domains of development, and that environments associated with learning outcomes should also provide strong support for social–emotional development (Hart & Risley 1995, 1999; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998).

With this in mind, the developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate environment mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the children it serves (Gestwicki 1995). The following are some specific strategies suggested by Derman Sparks (1989):

Suggested Strategies

1. Use images in abundance that represent all children, families, and staff in your program.
2. Use images of children and adults from the major ethnic groups in your community and in U.S. society.
3. Use images that accurately reflect people's current daily lives in the U.S. during work and recreational activities.
4. Offer a balance among different cultural and ethnic groups.
5. Provide a fair balance of images of women and men doing "jobs at home" and "jobs outside home." Provide images of older people of various backgrounds doing different activities.
6. Provide images of differently abled people of various backgrounds at work and with their families.
7. Use images of diversity in family styles, such as single mothers and fathers, and extended families that are multiracial and multiethnic.
8. Use images of important individuals, past and present, and that reflect diversity.
9. Exhibit artwork—prints, sculpture, and textiles—by artists of various background

Vignette

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Read-Aloud in Preschool – "Animals in Our Neighborhood"

Setting: A preschool classroom in a multicultural neighborhood where children come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Context: It's storytime, and Mr. Kim, the preschool teacher, has chosen a book called "Animals in Our Neighborhood." The book features illustrations of different animals commonly found in urban, suburban, and rural areas, along with descriptions in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Korean.

Activity: Mr. Kim gathers the children on the rug, holding up the book so everyone can see the cover. "Today, we're going to read about the animals we might see around where we live," he begins. "But this book is special because it includes words in different languages, just like how we all speak different languages at home."

He opens the book to the first page, which features a squirrel sitting on a tree branch. The text reads, "This is a squirrel. It's called 'ardilla' in Spanish and '다람쥐' (daramjwi) in Korean." Mr. Kim reads the English text first, then pauses and repeats the words in Spanish and Korean.

"Does anyone here know what we call a squirrel in another language?" he asks. A boy named Mateo raises his hand and says, "In Spanish, we say 'ardilla'!" Mr. Kim nods approvingly, "That's right, Mateo! And in Korean, it's '다람쥐' (daramjwi). Let's all try saying these words together."

The children repeat the words after Mr. Kim, some giggling as they practice pronouncing "daramjwi." Mr. Kim smiles and encourages them, saying, "It's fun to learn new words, isn't it?"

As they move on to the next animal, a raccoon, Mr. Kim points out that raccoons are common in many neighborhoods, and he asks if anyone has ever seen one. A girl named Amara shares, "I saw one in my backyard last night!" Mr. Kim asks if anyone knows another name for a raccoon, and Amara adds, "My grandma calls it 'mapache' in Spanish."

Mr. Kim reads the description in the book, highlighting that "mapache" is the Spanish word for raccoon. He then asks if anyone knows what it's called in another language. A child named Jisoo says, "In Korean, it's '너구리' (neoguri)."

Throughout the read-aloud, Mr. Kim integrates these multilingual connections, inviting children to share the names of animals in their home languages. When they come across a deer in the book, a child named Fatima eagerly shares that in Arabic, it's called "غزال" (ghazal). Mr. Kim appreciates each contribution, helping the children feel proud of their linguistic heritage.

Reflection: After finishing the book, Mr. Kim leads a discussion about the animals in their own neighborhoods. He asks, "Which animals have you seen near your home? What do you call them in your language?"

The children take turns sharing their experiences, with Mr. Kim making sure to include and validate each child's language. He also encourages the children to ask their families about more animal names in their home languages and bring them back to share with the class.

Outcome: The read-aloud not only helps the children learn about the animals in their neighborhood but also celebrates the linguistic diversity in the classroom. By incorporating multiple languages and encouraging children to share their own, Mr. Kim fosters an inclusive environment where every child's culture and language are valued. The children leave storytime with a sense of belonging and excitement to learn more about their peers' languages and experiences.

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Chapter Attribution

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Websites you may want to explore further

Summary of child development theorists: https://sielearning.tafensw.edu.au/MCS/CHCFC301A/12048/chcfc301a/lo/12020/index.htm

Summary of program approaches: https://www.niche.com/blog/7-popular-types-of-preschool-which-one-fits-your-child/

DCYF Outdoor Preschool Licensing Announcement:

https://dcyf.wa.gov/news/washington-becomes-first-nation-license-outdoor-nature-based-child-care

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.8: The Value of Play

2.8.1: What is Play?

2.8.2: Play and Children's Development

2.8.3: Play in the Early Childhood Classroom

2.8.4: Chapter Attribution, References and Websites

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2.8.1: What is Play?

Play is common in childhood, especially for young children, yet it is difficult to describe (Mardel, 2019; Piaget, 1962; Sutton-Smith, 1997). Nevertheless, the presence of play for young children and as part of early childhood education (ECE) has persisted over time (Piaget, 1973; Smilansky & Shefatay, 1990; Sutton-Smith, 1997). Play is also considered an aspect of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (National Association for the Education of Young Children, [NAEYC], 2020). Before you read further, take a moment to write down your description of play. In a few sentences or bullet points, how would you describe play? Save your notes so you can compare them with what is described in this chapter.

One reason play is difficult to describe is that it is creative and fluid. As they are playing children try things out and develop ideas. It is not planned. The children act, talk, and do. Play is also personal—the player engages based on their own knowledge, understanding, and experiences. Play is a series or set of behaviors and actions (Piaget, 1962). It involves all domains of development, social/emotional, cognitive, and physical. Play is also **extrinsic**—outside of and external to a person and observable and it is **intrinsic**—within and inside a person and not observable. This means there are aspects that are external and can be seen and some that are internal and difficult to see (Parton, 1932; Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Vygostky, 1978).

Children make choices about what to play with, how to use the materials (toys), and whether or not there will be others involved. They make these decisions based on who and what is in the environment. For example, when he arrives and enters the classroom, four-year-old Joey plays with puzzles every day. When he gets to the program on Wednesday, he goes directly to the puzzle shelf and pulls down a puzzle. He glances over at three peers who are building a boat with blocks. Joey looks back and forth at the puzzle and the block building several times. Hesitantly, he sets the puzzle back on the shelf and goes over to the block area and says, “I am going to build a very big ship” and starts to build next to his peers’ boat. In this example, Joey is originally interested in working a puzzle, but the boat building also captured his attention. He pauses before he starts the puzzle and seems to think about what he wants to do. The behavior, playing with puzzles or blocks, is observable and extrinsic. The decision-making is intrinsic, an internal cognitive and social/emotional process of making a decision about what he will do. A careful observer who has a relationship with Joey and knows him well could comment on Joeys’ motivation (Erikson, 1963), interests (Dewey, 1913, and thinking (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978), however these comments are only a hypothesis and Joey’s actions may change at any moment. This is the creative and fluid part of play—young children’s actions change due to shifts in interests, developmental levels, and various other reasons that are unseen. Play is complex and when you think about these things, you can see how it is difficult to describe.

Description of Play

Although play is complex, there are key components that can be used to describe it. Three words that have been used to describe play are: choice, wonder, and delight (Mardell, 2019). Play, even for infants and toddlers, includes choices such as deciding what to play, how to play it, and for how long they want to play. It also includes imagination and making up the things that may be different from reality (Luckenbill, Subramaniam, & Thompson, 2019).

Joey, from the example in the previous section, makes his own decision about what to play. Wonder relates to curiosity—Joey is curious about what his peers are doing. The story of Joey’s play continues: Joey starts building his big ship and while doing so talks with his peers. They discuss how they are using blocks to build their ships and begin to discuss trips. Joey says, “If we are going on a long trip, we will need food!” He runs to the dramatic play area and brings back plastic food. Two more children join the play, and the ships are redesigned and enlarged so that the children can get on the ship, take a trip, and eat food. One person says, “Let’s go to dinosaur land!” The other children agree, and the journey begins. The children are focused, talking, and laughing at different ideas. The second part of the story shows delight. In this example, the laughter is an obvious sign of delight, however enjoyment and joy can be experienced in many ways and it is not always with laughter. The example also shows that the children are using their imaginations and making up ideas.

Reflection

Review your description of play and consider the three components of choice, wonder, and delight.

How does your description include (or not) these components?

> Think of a time you saw child(ren) playing. How did you see choice, wonder, and delight?

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2.8.2: Play and Children's Development

Play and Children's Development

Play, with the opportunities for choice, wonder, and delight (Mardell, 2019), can be thought of as an experience rather than an activity. Experience and activity are not the same. Experiences involve personal connections and are defined as "something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through" (Meriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2005, p. 440). The various definitions of activity include action and "being active" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2005, p. 13). Although play is active, it is also personal and involves children bringing their own knowledge of the world to build upon it either alone or with others during play experiences (Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1962; Smilanky & Sheftaya, 1990; Smith, 2010, Sutton-Smith, 1997, Vygotsky, 1978). A well-designed environment can be used by a skillful teacher for play experiences as a priority for supporting children's learning. Chapter 8 of this book will address the environment.

Play, as an experience, can result in benefits for children as it creates conditions conducive to growth and development (Dewey, 1938/1997; NAEYC, 2020; Piaget, 1973). Despite the benefits, academic instruction (such as learning the names of letters and numbers) is valued over play in some early learning programs (Almon & Miller, 2011). This is creating a reduction in opportunities for children to play. Because it is important for children's development, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a report to guide doctors with information needed to talk with families about play, including writing a prescription for it (Yogman, et al., 2018).

Katz (2010) wrote about "standards of experience" and described how instead of emphasizing performance standards (such as identifying letters and numbers), teachers and other early learning professionals can think about types of experiences offered for children. Rather than academic activities, children can engage in play, which allows them to pursue what is of interest to them and to do so at their own developmental level. In the video below, Carlsson-Paige (2013) explains play, children's learning, her concerns regarding academic activities versus play experiences.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZzFM1MHz_M

As you saw in the video, play experiences create opportunities for children to engage in all areas of development and it promotes creative thought and expression (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Carlson, 2011; Dewey, 1913, 1916/1944, 1938/1997; Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016; Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1962, 1973; Smilansky & Sheftaya, 1990; Smith, 2010; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Yogman et al., 2018). Additionally, play is valuable because it can result in practice that builds various skills (Sutton-Smith, 1997). As you read about in Chapter 5, the domains of development are cognitive, physical, social, and emotional. These areas overlap and intersect with one another and this can be seen during play. For the purposes of understanding how play supports each developmental domain, the domains will be described separately but keep in mind that all developmental domains are used when children are playing.

Play is intellectual; it requires thinking. When playing, children represent their thinking symbolically and through the use of physical and mental tools (Dewey, 1916/1944; Piaget, 1962, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). During play children not only represent their ideas, but they also construct knowledge of the physical and social world (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Play requires self-

regulation, which builds executive function (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Yogman, et al., 2018). You read about executive function in Chapter 5. As described by Yogman et al. (2018), play helps children develop 21st Century skills such as creative thinking and problem solving, and these skills use executive functioning.



Image 7.2 Concentration is licensed under CC by 1.0

Equally important to cognition is physical and social/emotional development. As you read about in Chapter 5, physical development includes fine and gross motor skills as well as movement. When children use materials and toys in play, they use fine and gross motor skills and in some forms of play engage in movement and physical activity. Physical development begins before birth as babies move their bodies in the womb and continues throughout childhood (Carlson, 2011). Infants engage in sensorimotor activity, such as waving a rattle and watching it. This type of play is physical and interrelated to cognition and future development (Dewey, 1913; Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Sensorimotor play continues in toddlers with increased mobility as children learn to walk and are continually in motion (Carlson, 2011). There is interest and motivation to move oneself and objects (Dewey, 1913) and at times it can take a lot of effort and/or is sustained for a length of time. This can be observed when watching a one-year-old move objects around the room such as pushing a chair or box, and the primary interest in this play is to move. Preschoolers gain coordination and increasing competence with physical activity (Carlson, 2011). As fine and gross motor skills are refined, it is demonstrated in the way they play with toys that connect, sensory materials such as play dough and clay, and writing/drawing materials. They also use large motor skills such as running, jumping, and climbing. As children get older, they have the motor ability to build with materials such as Legos and can play games like hopscotch.

Social/emotional development is also important for children. Children play with adults and with each other, therefore they engage in social interaction. There is an **intrinsic,** emotional aspect to play. The previous description of play as involving choice, wonder, and delight (Mardell, 2019) provides a summary of the emotional aspects of play. Each word—choice, wonder, and delight—involves emotions. Children choose based on interests and motivation (Dewey, 1913). Wonder involves curiosity and is usually related to positive emotional interest. Delight is a word to describe pleasure and joy. Imagine three children playing outside where there are rocks that are large enough to stay in place but small enough for a child to move. One child turns a rock over. The children find bugs and worms that were underneath the rock and one exclaimed “Wow, look at that! Another said: “He is moving, look, he is crawling really fast!” The third said: “Where is he going?” A debate starts about whether or not the bug is scared, hungry, or looking for a new home. In this example, the children decided to play with the rock and move it, were excited about what they found under it, and wondered about what the creatures were doing. Take a minute to think about your emotions when you can make choices, in what you wonder about, and how you feel when you hear the word delight.

Play involves all of the developmental domains. There is a developmental aspect to play. The play of very young children—infants—is quite different from the play of older children. These differences are a result of development and life experiences. Developmental progression is a basis for some theories and authors, such as Piaget (1962, 1973) and Parten (1932). Play is complex and there are many ways in which to examine children’s play, the benefits of it, and it can be helpful to use the domains as a framework for understanding play and development. Reading about the types of play bring further clarification of play and its role in children’s development and early learning.

Reflection

After reading this section and watching the Carlsson-Paige video, what are your thoughts about how children benefit from play?

Types of Play

As established at the beginning of this chapter, play is complex. For the purposes of studying and understanding play, it is often divided into types of play (Luckenbill et al., 2019; Smith, 2010). Similar to describing play, the categories are complex and they overlap (Smith, 2010). Nevertheless, categorizing play into differing types aids in understanding it. This section is categorized into six types: sensorimotor, physical, exploratory, constructive, dramatic, and outdoor/nature play. Risky play, which could be classified as its own type of play, is included with nature play because outdoor experiences create good opportunities for risk-taking.

Sensorimotor play begins early in life (Luckenbill et al., 2019; Piaget, 1962, 1973; Smith, 2010). In sensorimotor play children engage with physical movement and input from the senses. The play actions can include materials, the child's own body, other people, and sensory action and exploration. Actions may be repetitive. They also can build and expand from the repetitions (Piaget, 1962). Sensorimotor play is common in Infants and toddlers.

Infants and toddlers often engage in exploratory play, although older children will explore new materials (Smith, 2010). Exploratory play is exploration. When engaged in exploratory play, children are learning about the materials. Think about when you get a new item, such a new stove, car, type of yarn, sewing machine, or power tool. You take time to get to know the new features and if appropriate, how it feels to use the new item. You explore the new item. Similarly, in exploratory play, that is what children do to get to know the materials. Exploratory play may be referred to as practice play (Piaget, 1962) or functional play (Smilansky and Sheftaya, 1990). In this chapter the term exploratory is used because it is descriptive of what children do when engaged in this type of play. The video link below is example of a baby engaging in exploratory play.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xyGprVxAKI

When children have an understanding of materials, they can use them in a purposeful manner. If they are not familiar with the materials, they explore and learn about the materials work rather than intentionally create. Constructive play can be described as using open-ended materials to create things (Luckenbill, et al., 2019; Smith, 2010). Think about children playing with blocks. They use the blocks with purpose to build roads, ships, airplanes, castles, beds, etc. Through exploratory play they learned they can stack the blocks and this knowledge leads to purposeful use of the materials to create. Another example is with sticks. Exploration may include waving and breaking sticks. Some sticks are not as easy to wave or break. Such sticks might be used to build or stir.

Constructive play can lead to and be used with dramatic play. Dramatic play is known by other names such as pretend and fantasy play. In the video from the Play and Children's Learning section above, Carlsson-Paige (2013) described a dramatic play (she used the word fantasy) episode in which her son became a firefighter. In dramatic play, children take on roles and act out scenarios. Imitation, such as with the child acting as a firefighter, can be a part of dramatic play (Piaget, 1962; Erikson, 1963). Children may build a fire station with blocks and other materials, perhaps sticks as hoses, and once built it emerges into dramatic play because they become firefighters.

When dramatic play involves others, it is socio-dramatic play (Smilansky & Sheftaya, 1990). Socio-dramatic play most often begins when children are three. Toddlers usually engage in dramatic play alone. Older children, even beyond preschool years, engage in socio-dramatic play, although it is not inappropriate for them to play alone, in any type of play. The following video shows both dramatic and socio-dramatic play.

https://illinoisearlylearning.org/videos/videos-parenting/boxespretend/

Children engage in dramatic play in differing ways. Parten (1932) identified six ways children participate in socio-dramatic play, which can be called engagement strategies. The six engagement strategies are on a continuum ranging from not involved to active participation. The engagement strategies are as follows: unoccupied, solitary, onlooker, parallel, associative, cooperative (Parten, 1932). Unoccupied play is not playing or doing anything in particular; solitary is playing alone; onlooker is watching others play, usually showing interest but not getting involved; parallel is playing next to another but not together; associative is playing next to, at times talking and/or looking at the other person, but not playing the same thing; and cooperative is children playing together, doing the same thing, and creating one storyline (Parten, 1932).

Unoccupied and solitary can be classified under dramatic play, onlooker, parallel, associative, and cooperative fit into socio-dramatic play. Furthermore, Parten's (1932) study revealed that the engagement strategies can be considered as progressive stages because the findings indicated that older preschoolers used cooperative play, but younger children did not. My observations as a preschool teacher for over 20 years, as an on-site trainer for early childhood programs, and as a college instructor have been consistent with Parten's (1932) findings that the stages show a developmental continuum. Children will engage in "earlier" stages but until ready to not use later stages such as cooperative play. It may be helpful to add that I found socio-dramatic play to be fascinating, informative, and complex to observe as well as useful in the teaching and learning process.

An example of constructive play used in conjunction with dramatic/socio-dramatic play may illustrate the complexity and value of play as part of the teaching and learning. It is possible that a child may be involved in a socio-dramatic play situation but primarily engaging in constructive play, such as in building a boat or an airplane for others to use in the cooperative play story line. Nevertheless, the social involvement is significant because the child is participating with others and must construct in accordance with the play topic. If the play topic is taking a trip and traveling on an airplane, it would not be appropriate to construct a boat. If the builder has built boats and has no experiences with airplanes but is interested in play with the others, an airplane must be constructed. A boat will not work for air travel. The builder must now expand thinking and self-regulate to stay on task to build an airplane. The builder may or may not have information about airplanes. Lack of information adds another layer of complexity and opportunity for learning.



Image 7.3 Building Together is licensed under CC by 1.0

This example illustrates that there are implicit (not stated) rules in socio-dramatic play (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). It also brings to light Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978). The ZPD is a range in which can function alone and with assistance. A child can function at a higher level with assistance from others. In this case, if the builder has minimal information about airplanes and has never been on one, the peers can provide the needed information for constructing the plane that includes the inside accommodations for travelers.

Additionally, according to Vygotsky's theory (1978), preschool children function at their highest level when engaged in socio-dramatic play. Socio-dramatic play requires self-regulation and executive functioning (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). It is also important to note that children's interests can provide motivation for trying new things (Dewey, 1913).

Children also engage in physical play. Physical play is active and robust in which children are engaged in gross motor movement (Smith, 2010; Pellegrini, 2011). Children of all ages engage in physical play, but it looks different in infants and usually involves such actions as kicking legs and waving arms (Pellegrini, 2011). Physical play has also been referred to as big body play (Carlson, 2011). Although adults can be uncomfortable with this type of play, it is beneficial for children's physical development (Carlson, 2011).

Rough and tumble play is a form of physical play that is done with others (Carlson, 2011; Smith, 2010). Rough and tumble play is different from fighting. In rough and tumble play the goal is to play together rather than to harm or work against one another (Carlson, 2011). It occurs at all ages. It may be hard to imagine infants in rough and tumble play, but the examples given by Luckenbill et al. (2019) provide a good illustration: "infants crawling over other infants" and "pulling opposite each other on a length of fabric" (p. 9).

Physical play often occurs outdoors. Outdoor and nature play has been gaining attention in recent years and it has been shown that children's outdoor experiences, especially with nature, have been decreasing, which may be contributing to developmental issues (Louv, 2005). In this chapter outdoor and nature play are considered one category. Nature is present outdoors, including places such as sidewalks, manufactured playgrounds, or concrete surfaces such as parking lots which seem to be devoid of natural elements. Weather, worms, insects, leaves, trees, weeds, etc. are part of nature and these are just a few examples of things that can be found in most any outdoor environment that children visit on a regular basis.



Image 7.4 Water Play is licensed under CC by 1.0

One way to think about outdoor/nature play is through thinking about outdoor spaces in early childhood programs as outdoor learning environments (OLE) (Cooper, 2015; Falk, 2018; Nature Explore Program, 2019). The OLE affords opportunities that are different from what is found indoors. It is not surprising that children's play is different outdoors (Engelen et al., 2018). Nature provides loose parts (Nicholson, 1971) such as sticks, rocks, and logs that can be moved around and used in many differing ways. Children tend to be active in the OLE because there is more space for running and other large motor activities such as playing on manufactured playground equipment or using natural elements. A log or tree, if permitted, can promote physical play, including climbing. Additionally, early childhood teachers allow more physical activity outdoors (Storli & Sandseter, 2015). The OLE also affords opportunities for risky play. Risky play is children taking on risks. This often causes adults concerns over safety even though children have the capability to negotiate risks (Keeler, 2020). Children may see a risky situation and do one of the following: engage, change it so it is less risky, or choose not to engage (Lavrysen et al., 2017). A child may see a large rock and choose to try to climb it, get a block to stand on to assist with climbing, or do nothing with the rock. Engaging with risk, with or without changing it, is beneficial for children's physical, social/emotional, and cognitive development (Bento & Costa, 2018; Keeler, 2020; Lavrysen et al., 2017; McClain & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2016).

The six categories of play provide a framework for understanding play. All types of play are a part of DAP (NAEYC, 2020). Each play type has been described separately but is not exclusive. The play types can be combined and often overlap when children are playing.

Reflection

What type of play do you think you are most comfortable with? Least comfortable with? Why?

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2.8.3: Play in the Early Childhood Classroom

Play in the Early Childhood Classroom

Thus far in this chapter, play and its value for children has been described. Developmentally appropriate classrooms contain physical spaces with daily schedules that incorporate blocks of time for play (NAEYC, 2020). This includes time for indoor and outdoor play. Chapter 8 will address the environment but a few key aspects that relate to play are described in this section.

Indoors, children need time to get involved and fully engage in play, a minimum of 45 minutes. In a well-run classroom, children can engage in free play for up to one and half hours. This gives children time to choose what they want to do and fully engage in play. It also allows for the opportunity for children to create through constructive play and use the creation in dramatic play. Imagine how disappointing it would be to create an elaborate castle but not have time to dress up and play in it! Additionally, children need the materials and space to create the castle. Lack of open-ended materials and not enough space can result in missed opportunities for creative play, which also means they are not benefiting from such experiences.

As previously mentioned, the OLE provides opportunities for differing types of play, especially vigorous physical activity (Engelen et al., 2018) and risky play (Keeler, 2020; Storli & Sandseter, 2015. Outside time is typically not considered recess and a “break” because young children are learning all the time. Instead of recess, play and engagement in the OLE can be considered additional opportunities and enhancement of indoor learning (Mustapa, et al., 2015).



Image 7.5 Outdoor Play is licensed under CC by 1.0

Weather is often given as a reason for not playing outdoors. Not going outside when it is raining or snowing can contribute to missed opportunities, similar to what happened with the castle example above. Although at first it can appear as a daunting task to get children to put on outdoor gear such raincoats, hats, mittens, and boots, it becomes part of the routine as well as presents opportunities for practicing fine motor and self-help skills. The rain that is often present here in the Pacific Northwest is a wonderful resource for play! Water makes mud which can be used in making pies and soups, and especially for children who enjoy sensory and pretend play.

Allowing children to use the environment, especially outdoors, is also a challenge for teachers. This can relate to weather, such as playing in puddles, as well as with using items from the environment. Loose parts such as sticks, rocks, wood chips can be added to soups and pies (perhaps made with water and mud) and can be used in other ways. Children use items in the environment for dramatic play. One teacher described the children using wood chips as food for playing restaurant, specifically Happy Meals at the McDonald’s drive-through. The outdoor playhouse was the building; children served the woodchips to other children (and teachers) as they walked or rode bikes to the drive through (M. Naw, personal communication, January 15, 2021). Another teacher described how the children would organize themselves to re-enact the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff using a log as a bridge for the troll (T. Sy, personal communication, December 28, 2020). Both teachers said the children played these storylines many times and each

time the play included more than one child and was done outdoors, but not indoors. Additionally, stationary items such as large rocks and logs can be used for physical and risky play.

The early childhood classroom, indoors and out, should be an environment that is rich with opportunities for play. Chapter 8 will address the environment. As you read the chapter you can think about how environmental design creates opportunities for the different types of play.

Issues & Challenges with Play

Although children all over the world play (Carlsson-Paige, 2013), some face challenges in doing so. Take a moment to think about what play involves, especially constructive and dramatic/socio-dramatic play. To construct, children need to know about the materials and how to put them together, have the physical development to work with the materials, use creative thinking, and stay on task. To engage in dramatic play, they need to have a topic to play (cooking, airplane, boat, family, etc.), use creative thinking, and if socio-dramatic they need to be able to follow the storyline, self-regulate, and sometimes the skills need to enter a group. An additional type of play that has been gaining attention is risky play involves understanding one's own skills and the emotional willingness to try something challenging (Keeler, 2020). This list of skills and abilities is a general list, and it is lengthy! You can imagine what it takes to engage in play and that some children face challenges.

Some of the common challenges and issues children face with play can be grouped into three categories: materials, language, and other. These categories were created as a way of explaining the challenges. The descriptions in each category are not comprehensive. The purpose is to give the reader a general idea of reasons children may struggle with play, especially in an early childhood classroom.



Image 7.6 Creative Play is licensed under CC by 1.0

Often children use materials and toys when they play. As you have read about in this chapter, during exploratory play children explore and gain an understanding of materials and in constructive play the materials are used purposefully. As infants and toddlers, they look at, move around, and try to work the materials. One issue that can arise is when infants and toddlers do not take initiative and explore with materials.

Sometimes older children have difficulty using materials. This may be because they have limited experience with the materials, therefore they need time to engage in exploratory play. It also could be that a child needs support to learn to use the materials purposefully. Most children gain a sense of using materials through exploratory play, but some do not. An example is a four-year-old who would touch pieces together, but never connect or build. He did this with duplos and any other type of toy that connected together. His "play" with the materials lasted about two minutes and then he'd throw the toys. This frustrated his peers. Often, this child would engage in inappropriate behaviors to gain attention. The situation was resolved when the teachers took time to play with him and show him how to work the materials. Once he knew what to do with the materials, he could purposefully engage. He needed the support of the teachers to gain an understanding of the skill for using the materials.

Language, the second category listed above, may not be as easy to see as the challenges with materials. When children play with peers, in constructive or socio-dramatic play, they communicate and most often do so through words. Children need to be able to talk to and understand what peers are saying. **Expressive language** is talking so a person knows what is said being and saying it in a manner that makes sense. **Receptive language** is understanding what is being said. Both expressive and receptive language are a part of play with others, especially socio-dramatic play.

Children usually start to engage in cooperative play (Parten, 1932) at about three years and have the speech and language to communicate effectively. Some children do not have this level of speech and language. If a child struggles with saying words, doing so in a way that others can understand, and/or following what is being said, it makes it difficult and frustrating for the child. Children can be very accepting of one another, but the child who is struggling knows that peers are not understanding what is being said or feels confused by what is going on. This area is one of the more challenging areas for teachers because it can be difficult to intervene. When adults enter, children's play often changes. There is a fine line between interrupting and changing the play versus supporting it and a child who may be struggling. It is not within the scope of this chapter to address interventions, rather the point is to bring awareness that children can struggle with play and that teachers support is needed.



Image 7.7 Cooperative Play is licensed under CC by 1.0

In addition to materials and language, there is the "other" category. This category is broad and includes physical challenges, such as sitting in a wheelchair with limited access to the play area, not being able to see or hear, or other motor challenges that get in the way of playing. A child may not fit into an area or may have coordination difficulties and knock over what is being built. Some interventions for physical challenges can be addressed with environmental design. As you read Chapter 8 you can keep physical challenges in play in your mind. You may start to see the significance of intentionally designed environments and the complexities teachers face in doing so.

The other category also includes not playing for various reasons such as: wandering, flitting about rather than sustaining play, staying in the onlooker stage (Parten, 1932) rather than eventually joining, and being rejected from play. This is a list of common challenges and it is not comprehensive. With each of these reasons, teacher support targeted to help the child gain the needed skills, is beneficial. Once again, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully address challenges in play and how to foster and support children, rather this chapter will give the reader an idea of play in an early childhood classroom.

Rejection is worth a special mention because it happens and it can be overlooked in a busy early childhood classroom, especially at full-day program in which children are there for eight or more hours. In kindergarten through third grade classrooms where children go outside for recess and often play with peers, it can easily go unnoticed. Play, especially cooperative play (Parten, 1932), takes a lot of work. It can be quite difficult when there are more players, which means more roles and more ideas. It also means more personalities and more negotiation. A well-known author, Vivian Gussin Paley, regarding children's play pondered inclusion and specifically wrote "…the rejected children know who they are, whether or not they tell us" (p. 15). From years of experience, I have to agree. I have a vivid memory, from 17 years ago, of a mother reporting that her child was upset about peer moving to a new school. Her child rarely interacted with the one who moved, so she asked why he was so concerned. His reply "Because he is the mean kid, just like me. We both have no friends to play with." I think this underscores the importance of teacher observation, assessment, and support during children's play.

Rejection and the other challenges children face with play are a concern. Not only is it sad to hear about rejection, but the result is also—as with any other reason a child does not play—that a child is not fully participating in the classroom. Play is a part of the

curriculum (NAEYC, 2020) and all children need classrooms that allow for full participation and engagement.

Reflection

Think about a time you observed or heard about that indicated a child was struggling with play. What do you think was happening—what were the challenges the child was facing?

Final Thoughts

Play is a key aspect of the early years. There are differing types of play, some of which are very complex such as cooperative play. Many children progress through differing stages and types of play, including as exploratory to constructive, but some need support because they face challenges. Children's play may be entertaining and amusing, but an understanding of it allows teachers to see the value and role of it in the early childhood classroom. A well-designed environment allows for play and is the topic of the next chapter.

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"Pretend Play with Big Boxes" is a video by the Illinois Early Learning Project.

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Websites You May Want to Explore Further

Center for Inclusive Child Care (podcasts address play)

https://www.inclusivechildcare.org/

Building Babies Brains Through Play: Mini-Parenting Master Class (Center on Developing Child Harvard University)

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-babies-brains-through-play-mini-parenting-master-class/

Dr. Lillian Katz: What Should Children be Learning?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiZW0jIngc8

Exploring Playful Learning in Schools Around the World Video (Ben Mardell) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWHSewOTx6Q

Pedagogy of Play (Project Zero/Ben Mardell) http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/pedagogy-of-play

10 Things Every Parent Should Know About Play

https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-things-every-parent-play

30 Reasons Why Play is Important for Children with Disabilities (Playground Equipment)

https://www.playgroundequipment.com/30-reasons-why-play-is-important-for-children-with-disabilities/

Top 5 Benefits of Children Playing Outside (Sanford Health)

https://news.sanfordhealth.org/childrens/play-outside/

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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3.1: The Role of the Teacher in High-Quality Practices

As mentioned above, the teacher plays a vital role in orchestrating high-quality practices. In high-quality classrooms, not only must teachers create a safe and nurturing space, they must intentionally set up the environment to support children's interests and individuality. California childcare programs serve a diverse population, therefore, an intentional teacher must also consider the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic status of each family enrolled in her class. The highly- qualified teacher has a deep understanding of child development, and with that knowledge she will provide appropriate materials and experiences to challenge the children in her care. In the chart below, we can see how teachers maintain high-quality practices.

Table **3.1.1**: Classroom Environments

Physical environment	The overall design and layout of a classroom, including the learning centers and play spaces, the age appropriate materials, and the child size furnishings
Social environment	The interactions that occur within the classroom between teachers, children, family members, center staff and administration
Temporal environment	The routines and daily schedules, the timing, sequence, and length of play time, the time spent indoors and outdoors engaged in child-directed and teacher-directed activities

Here are some considerations to incorporate quality practices into your classroom to promote responsive caregiving while supporting the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of children:

Pin It! The Building Blocks of High Quality Early Childhood Education Programs [10]

1. Early learning standards and curricula that address the whole child, are developmentally appropriate, and are effectively implemented.
2. Assessments that consider children's academic, social-emotional, and physical progress and contribute to instructional and program planning.
3. Well-prepared teachers who provide engaging interactions and classroom environments that support learning.
4. Ongoing support for teachers, including coaching and mentoring.
5. Support for English learners and students with special needs.
6. Meaningful family engagement.
7. Sufficient learning time.
8. Small class sizes with low student-teacher ratios.
9. Program assessments that measure structural quality and classroom interactions.
10. A well-implemented state quality rating and improvement system.

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3.2: The Role and Responsibilities of the Student-Teacher

Students arrive at their early childhood education practicum experiences from a variety of pathways. Some have been working in classrooms for many years and others will now step foot in a classroom for the first time. However, all students are in an early childhood education practicum to grow and learn. The role and responsibilities, reflection cycle and decision making process will be unique to this career stage and will vary slightly from program to program. This chapter will highlight the unique role that student-teachers play during a practicum/fieldwork experience, including teaching and non-teaching activities. It will discuss the self-assessment and self-reflection cycles. Finally, it will tie in ethical practices, appropriate communication and interactions, and disposition.

The role and responsibilities of the student-teacher

The role of a practicum student in a classroom is a unique and essential stage in the career of an early childhood educator. The NAEYC has outlined indicators of a quality field experience (Ehrenberg et al., n.d.). Programs should have clearly defined roles and expectations for the student-teacher. Student-teachers should have hands-on opportunities to engage in their practice and receive frequent feedback from their mentors or supervisors. They should have the opportunity to observe classrooms and children from diverse backgrounds (Ehrenberg et al., n.d.).

The responsibility of the student-teacher begins before stepping into the classroom. All required applications, paperwork and any other requirements should be met. The student-teacher should dress in a manner that is professional, yet comfortable for interacting safely and effectively with young children. Enough time should be left to allow for delays in public transportation or parking. Student-teachers should ensure timely arrival each day. Once the student-teacher has arrived at the agreed upon time, they should inquire about sign-in policies, restrooms and storage of personal belongings.

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3.2.1: Typical Teaching and Non-Teaching Activities in Early Childhood Settings

Once in the classroom, the student-teacher should observe the classroom environment. How has the environment been set up in order to best support the needs of the children? Take mental notes to ask the mentor teacher about later. The first few days are often spent observing and getting to know the children. The student-teacher should introduce themselves to the children and start to slowly build relationships.

Student teachers will often start to take on more roles in the classroom. This will include set up of activities and snacks, clean up, reading stories, outdoor supervision, and participating in or running small or large groups. Student teachers should expect to design and implement developmentally appropriate, high-quality activities. This is an opportunity to practice and receive feedback to improve teaching practices.

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3.3: Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment

The cornerstone of an transformative practicum experience is utilizing self-reflection to improve teaching practices. This is accomplished through the pursuit of answering the questions of who you are as an educator and what strengths do you bring to your classroom, as well as, am I being as effective as I would like to be ((ANDREW J. STREMMEL, 2015). This requires one to engage in a cycle of self-reflection with the goal of evaluating their own practices with a critical eye. Becoming the educator you want to be is an ongoing process (Kolb, 2005).

In order to answer the question “Am I the ECE educator I want to be?,” one should break the question down into a series of incremental questions (ANDREW J. STREMMEL, 2015; Grossman, 2001).

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3.4: Reflecting on Your Teaching Practices

What is Reflective Practice?

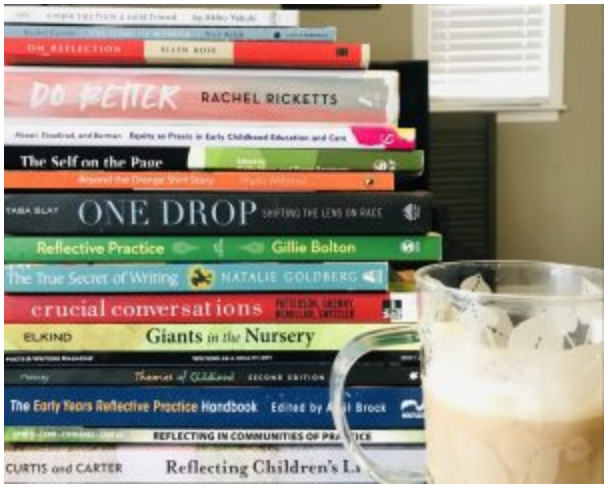


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> *"Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning" – Donald Schon*

Why Reflective Practice?

We all undertake activities to think about our experiences, learn from them and develop a plan for what we will do or continue to do. Can you think of a time when you came home at the end of a week where everything had gone wrong? Or maybe when everything had gone well? What are your next steps?. Are you able to answer the question "why am I doing what I am doing?" In order to continue to develop a reflective practice within our workplace with colleagues, children and families we need to examine and understand the reasons for our reactions, our feelings and our interactions with others, which in turn leads us to becoming a reflective practitioner.

Reflective practice is something which has developed across many disciplines such as teaching, to learn from our experiences. There was a time when reflective practice would have been considered an optional skill or a desired disposition but over the past few years, reflective practice is no longer considered an optional skill but a required disposition.

Reflective Practice has been defined by many including Bolton[1], Moon[2], Rogers[3] and Schön[4]. Reflective Practice is a systematic rigorous self-directed meaning-making process where a person moves from one experience to another through the development of insights and practice with the intention of coming to a deeper understanding of one's personal values and intellectual growth. Schön suggests that, in practice, reflection often begins when a routine response produces a surprise or an unexpected outcome. The surprise gets our attention, which may begin a process of reflection. Reflective practice is "a dialogue of thinking and doing through which one becomes more skillful".[5]

What is Reflective Practice?

An approach used by educators to analyze and think critically about their professional practice with the intention to better understand and improve their practice. Reflective practice is thoughtful, action-oriented and often, a collaborative effort. Educators use reflective practice to plan, evaluate their strengths and challenges, make decisions and create change, if necessary. Self-reflection, critical reflection and collaborative inquiry are all important elements of reflective practice.[6]

Although a definition of reflective practice has been included this is only one part of the reflective process.

Reflection is a very personal skill or disposition and different people will define it in different ways. It is important to remember that there is no one 'correct' way of defining what reflection is or how it should be done as a lot of this will depend on your own personal circumstances and work environment. For this reason this resource will explore elements of reflective practice that will help the practitioner develop their own practice. In describing reflective practice, I have interchangeably referred to it as a skill and

/ or a disposition . This is related to the current literature and discourse that suggests reflection is not a natural skill but rather a way of being or disposition . It involves an evaluation of our ethics, values and feelings around experiences.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

Let's look at some of the reasons reflective practice may be challenging. In exploring challenges you will be able to consider possible solutions to becoming more reflective.

For most of us, the # 1 challenge is finding the TIME or right time.

Whether you are studying, working or both it can be hard to find time to complete your existing to-do list so why add on more things? Doing intentional reflection takes time and as Ellen Rose (2013) suggests it is a form of deep thought, an opportunity to slow down that allows for original thought, perspective and insights to emerge. Anyone in education knows time is always at a premium. Having said that, we are often unconsciously evaluating things and so the goal here is to be more intentional in analyzing your pedagogical practice which requires the time to do so.

What if the organizational culture and environment doesn't support reflection?

Not everyone works in an environment which is open to the idea of being reflective – since it can be difficult to cultivate. If those in charge don't see reflective practice as a valuable activity , it can be hard to really cultivate a practice. If you believe reflection is a mind-set , it may require a specific place, or time to initially reflect and it may take some trial and error to find that perfect fit for you. Rose[8] also points out the decline in reflection may be due to the way we are consuming information. We consume small chunks or nuggets of information on social media and we move from one topic to another with little time to digest the information let alone reflect on what we're reading, hearing or thinking.

Finally, do I have the skills, motivation and disposition needed?

For many people who are unfamiliar with reflection it can seem a bit challenging, especially if they are looking for a recipe, a specific approach or checklist to follow. As described earlier, a lack of time and support can influence your ability to reflect. At this point we can examine whether reflection is a skill or disposition. Being reflective does take a certain level of insight which can for some be uncomfortable, especially if you are new to reflection. Seeing reflection as a disposition does not eliminate the possibility of you needing a certain level of practice to develop into a reflective practitioner, but knowing what it takes is helpful. What is needed is time to slow down, to be curious, motivation to improve, and the desire to know why you do what you do are some essential mind-sets if you hope to overcome any of the challenges and wish to lean into becoming a reflective practitioner.



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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.5: The Disposition, Values, Principles and Ethics of a Reflective Practitioner

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the values, principles and ethics related to being a reflective practitioner

3.5.1: A Reflective Mindset

3.5.2: Values, Principles and Ethics related to being a Reflective Practitioner

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3.5.1: A Reflective Mindset



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> *"Unless teachers develop the practice of critical reflection, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations. Approaching education as a reflective practitioner involves fusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity" (Larrivee, 2000, p.293 in Finlay, L, 2008).*

Disposition can mean many things to different people but according to Merriam-Webster (n.d.) disposition is defined as a "person's inherent qualities of mind and character, prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination, temperament or makeup."

So why is it essential to examine disposition as related to a reflective mindset? There is much debate about whether reflective practice is a technical skill that can be taught, or a way of being, an attitude or a personal quality that can be cultivated.

There is evidence that supports creating a culture of reflection, a disposition of thinking critically, and of valuing multiple perspectives as a context of one's own reflective pedagogy. Farrell (2014), Rose (2013), and others suggest there are main characteristics of a reflective educator, some of which include open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. Dewey (1933, 1986) has noted that all three of these attitudes are not only important in "order that the intention of thinking in a reflective way…they are traits of personal character that have to be cultivated" (p.139). Rose (2013) speaks to responsibility as stewardship, stating we must be stewards of the use of writing, of technology and of reflective practice. Reflection can be cultivated by a teacher for whom reflection is an ethical commitment (pg.105).

> *"Children do not experience our intentions, no matter how heartfelt. They experience what we manifest in tone and behaviour." Gordon Neufeld*

Video: A Reflective Mindset

To learn more about a reflective mindset watch the video: A Reflective Mindset – The Secret to a Better and Longer Life by Ali Fenwick [11:41].



Video: "A Reflective Mindset – The Secret to a Better and Longer Life | Ali Fenwick | TEDxHultAshridge" by TEDx Talks [11:42] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.

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3.5.2: Values, Principles and Ethics related to being a Reflective Practitioner

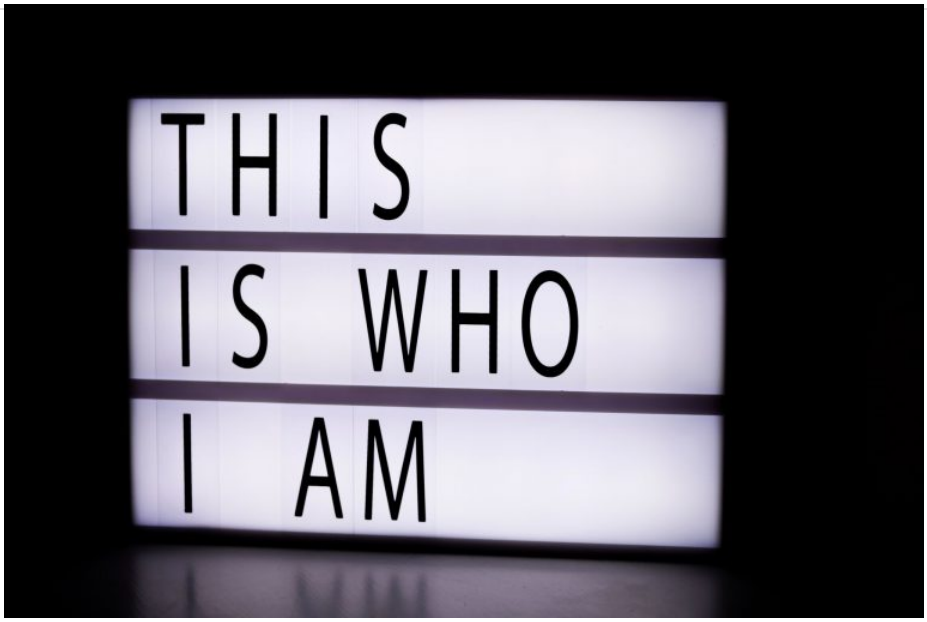


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Rachel Carson wrote the book A Sense of Wonder originally in 1956 and republished it in 1998 and 2017. In this book, Carson talks about the hope to inspire both children and adults to appreciate and hence value the spiritual, emotional and sensory experience of the living world. Dr. Hopi Marten shares Ojibwe worldviews in context for teaching. He explores spiritual, cultural, and land-based learning as a teacher through what has been coined a seasonal pedagogy. Both these examples demonstrate the power that disposition, culture, values, and beliefs have on our work. This is not a one-time conversation but a contextual concept around reflective practice that can be embedded in every interaction we have within our workplace.

Take some time to explore Dr. Hopi Marten's website The Edge of the Bush. Watch the videos, listen to the teachings, and feel Mother Earth all around you. What touches your heart?

Disposition of Reflective Practice

Read the list below of dispositions created over the years based on research, readings, and early educators' own thoughts on what a disposition of reflective practice is. Do you see yourself in these dispositions?

1. Are you optimistic?
2. Are you open-minded?
3. Are you appreciative?
4. Are you flexible?
5. Are you purposeful?
6. Are you curious and ask questions to challenge ideas?
7. Do you embrace change, seek new ways of doing things?
8. Do you seek collaboration?
9. Do you question your feelings?
10. Do you work from a value-based lens?

Are there others?

Listen: 173 – Early Learning Foundations with Carla Ward

173 – Beyond Bubble Baths: The Real Work of Self Care from The ECE Everything Podcast with Carla Ward [8:00]



Dig deeper

For more information on this topic, check out the resource links below:

- Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning[PDF]
- Relationship between Reflective Disposition toward Teaching and Effective Teaching[PDF]
- Developing a Disposition for Reflective Practice That Sustains Continuous Professional Learning[PDF]
- Beginnings Workshop on Dispositions by The Childcare Exchange[PDF]

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3.6: Positive Dispositions of Caring, Support, Acceptance, and Fairness

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4: Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Understanding terminology is a helpful way to start an investigation of professionalism in ECE. The terms ***profession*** and ***professional*** are used frequently in our everyday conversations. But, our common usage of the term does not ensure that we understand what these terms mean as we apply them to our work as educators.

In our work life, we may use the term ***professional*** to refer to the fact that we are committed to doing our jobs well, that we are good employees (punctual, respectful to colleagues, dress appropriately), that we provide reliable and competent service, or it may simply mean that we get paid for what we do (Feeney, 2012). You might use the term *professional* as a compliment, indicating that you see that person as being good at their job.

While we may use the term professional as a verb to describe how we behave at our jobs, it is important to note that a body of scholarly literature exists in which academics from various disciplines have discussed the meaning of these terms.

In this section, we will further define terms that assist in understanding the conversation about ECE becoming a profession.

Field

You have likely heard reference to the **"field of ECE"**. Calling ECE a field allows us to create a boundary around what we mean by ECE; it allows for defining what fits into this category. Similarly, you have probably heard mention of those who work in the business field, the medical field, etc. As Goffin and Washington (2019) suggest, the term **ECE field** describes all of the programs, services and occupations that currently reside within the boundary of what we call ECE—childcare, either in centers or family childcare homes; preschool; and care for infants and toddlers, for example.

Field of Practice

A **field of practice** refers to a specialization or a defined scope of work undertaken by an identified group of practitioners. It is a term often used in defining specialties in medicine or social work. Stacie Goffin has also applied the term "field of practice" to ECE (Goffin & Washington, 2019; Goffin, 2015). A field of practice, according to Goffin, indicates the roles that directly focus on the learning and development of children. In other words, the ECE field of practice refers to those who do the work of educating and facilitating development. Calling ECE a field of practice allows for defining the focus—the learning and development of young children. Naming it as a field of practice also highlights that the field's main objective is competent practice and suggests that we understand what it means to competently educate young children. In sum, the ECE field of practice is populated by those who do the work of direct service to children, which also assumes a level of competent practice to be successful.

Profession

The term **profession** is commonly accepted to mean an "occupation that serves the public welfare and that requires specialized educational training in some branch of learning or science" (Feeney, 2012, p. 6). Thus, a profession requires specialized education not held by others**,** and serves a public good, as opposed to serving one's self-interest alone (i.e., simply getting a paycheck).

Professionals

If a profession is an occupation that serves a public good, and requires education, a **professional** is the inhabitant of a role in that occupation—the person who does the work of the profession. Applying the definition of profession just shared, a professional is the person who has made a commitment to serve the public good related to that field and has achieved the educational requirement necessary to play that role. In the field of ECE, it is common to hear about efforts to *professionalize* the field. This often refers to incremental efforts to improve the practice of individuals, rather than being about system wide efforts to meet the full definition of a profession.

A large body of academic literature has identified the defining features of a profession. Although there is not complete agreement on these features, some appear frequently and are accepted as critical markers. Feeney (2012) identifies 8 criteria that are common in the literature about professions. Table 1 describes them.

Table 1 Criteria for Defining a Profession

Criteria	Details of Criteria
Specialized body of knowledge and expertise	• Evidence-based knowledge (grounded in research and scholarship) • Skillful application of knowledge • Obligation to stay informed about new information
Prolonged training	• Acquisition of evidence-based knowledge through training/education that occurs over time • Includes study and practical experience
Rigorous requirements for entry to training and eligibility to practice	• Admission to training programs is competitive • Graduation from training may be followed by an exam • Go through background screening required for licensure
Standards of practice	• Follow standards to ensure competent practice • Make decisions on the basis of standards (practice is not "cookie cutter")
Commitment to serving a significant social value	• Dedicated to public interest • Altruistic and service oriented
Recognition as the only group in the society who can perform a function	• No other group can perform this function • Only those with credentials, training, licensure can play this role
Autonomy	• Self-governed • Internal control over quality of services provided—national organization provides
Code of ethics	• Obligations to society spelled out • Moral behavior for practice codified • Instills confidence that public good will be prioritized

Reflection

How do you use the terms *profession* and *professional*? Do they mean different things to you? Do you see yourself as a professional in your work with young children? Why is that?

Reviewing the list of criteria, consider if ECE meets enough of these criteria to be labeled a profession. If you are not sure if ECE meets enough of them, imagine what ECE would look like if it met all or many of these criteria.

ECE as a Profession

In recent years, many have questioned whether ECE meets the definition of a profession (e.g., Feeney, 2012; Goffin, 2013, 2015). There seems to be a consensus that it currently does not, and review of the list in Table 1 provides evidence that this conclusion is accurate. While ECE has developed some of the characteristics above, not all are currently in place. For example, a Code of **Ethical Conduct**, put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2011), has been in existence for several years, though there is no universal requirement that ECE practitioners are aware of or abide by this code. Similarly, in terms of standards of practice, many states have adopted a set of guidelines defining the skills and knowledge necessary to provide quality childcare. However, each state can define these guidelines as they see fit, and a wide variety of licensing requirements can be found across the US. As guidelines, they carry no authority over the continued practice of a practitioner who chooses not to funder-compensatedover, these competencies are often set by the state legislature and defined by the state agency responsible for childcare licensing, rather than being defined and agreed to by the profession. This fact points to the absence of autonomy. Having autonomy is another marker of a profession. Licensed childcare, a central mode of delivery in ECE, is heavily regulated by the state, rather than by the profession, providing notable evidence for the lack of autonomy in ECE, another critical feature in a profession.

Further, prolonged training with rigorous entry requirements is not required for entry into ECE with any consistency. Similarly, too many in the general public still view childcare as “glorified babysitting”, and do not recognize ECE as being based on specialized knowledge, or that there exists a particular set of practitioners who alone can do the work of ECE.

This analysis should make it clear that ECE has work to do before it can claim the title of **profession** and before those engaged in this work can claim to be **professionals**. Identifying this reality has not, however, made it easy for ECE to move toward the status of profession. While numerous efforts have aimed to solve the problem, no large-scale success has been achieved. Early childhood educators remain unrecognized for the significance of their work, remain undercompensated, the field of early childhood education remains fragmented and siloed with no clear definition of its boundaries, and little specialized knowledge is required for entry (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). We as early childhood professionals must work to change the perception of the ECE field!

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4.1: What are Ethics?

Learning Objectives

- Describe the ethical responsibilities that guide programs for early care and education and the professionals that work in them.
- Use the NAEYC code of ethical conduct to guide decision making.
- Recognize how culture, bias, and belief systems impact and influence ethical dilemmas.

Running an Ethical Program is Complex

What are ethics?

From a practical standpoint it can be difficult to connect to the concept because they are ideals and principles we aspire and work towards. Ethics can be easy to read about and then set aside as something you don't really need or might come back to some day. However, ethics are something you use everyday in decision making, relationships, and interactions with children, families, colleagues, and your community.

As an early care and education professional, we are frequently faced with any of the following ethical scenarios:

1. Responding to a parent when they ask to keep their 3-year-old from napping because they are not sleeping at night.
2. Unpacking a child's lunch that included a sandwich made out of chocolate chips, marshmallow crème and sprinkles—every day. Yes every day!
3. Overhearing a team member complaining about another team member.
4. Being asked by a supervisor to "just do this today because licensing is coming by."

How do you navigate these challenges? Sometimes not too well. But there iss a tool to use, the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct, will help you to be much better prepared to recognize and respond to ethical dilemmas when they occur! The NAEYC created the Code of Ethical Conduct to guide professionals in how to navigate ethical situations and dilemmas. Let's first dive into some definitions and foundational concepts.

Commonly Used Words

Ethics, ethical responsibilities, and ethical leadership are big topics that we will introduce in this module.

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity.

Ethical responsibilities is the ability to recognize, interpret, and act upon multiple principles and values according to the standards within a given field and/or context.

Ethical Leadership is defined as "leadership demonstrating and promoting 'normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relations'."

Is there a connection between values, morality, and ethics? Generally, the words are used interchangeably. There is, however, a difference:

- **Values** are the qualities we believe intrinsically to be desirable and that we prize for ourselves
- **Morality** is usually more theoretical; it is a philosophical concept that is about our beliefs about right and wrong
- **Ethics** are the practical application of morality in daily life. The term ethics refers to a conscious deliberation regarding moral choices.

The difference is that of theory and practice. If a person has a moral character, he or she will generally deal with other people in an ethical manner.

Example 4.1.1

I'm considering stealing a cookie. I value honesty, and morally I believe stealing is wrong. My personal ethics then guide me that because I value honesty, I decide not to steal the cookie. If I did steal the cookie, I would be acting outside of my values.

> Easy—right? Only if you are planning on stealing a cookie. Our personal values, ethics, and morality are developed based on our experiences as we grow. If each professional applied their personal code of ethics to their work with children and families it would be very difficult to navigate.

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4.1.1: NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

A code of ethics is adopted by a profession to assist the members in distinguishing right from wrong within the context of early childhood education and independent of personal values and belief systems. While it may seem that right and wrong or very concrete and easy concepts, in the work with children and families it is not always an easy choice to make. For leaders, the decisions can be even harder and often leads to a choice that makes someone unhappy. Remember, the Code of Ethical Conduct is based on our profession, not our personal values.

The ***National Association for the Education of Young Children*** (NAEYC) has created and shared the *Ethical Code of Conduct* and the *Ethical Code of Conduct for Administrators* to guide the decision making of ECE professionals. But what is our code of ethics? And why is it important to our profession? Great questions!

The ***Code of Ethical Conduct*** is sectioned by category of responsibility. Ethical responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, and community. As you work through this module, you will notice that each section is divided into Ideals and Principles to offer guidance in our work with children and families. Take a look at the Ethical Code of Conduct and familiarize yourself on how it is organized and what the profession has determined is important to know and understand.

Deeper dives can be found on the NAEYC website. There are many resources available and you are encouraged to see the resources at the end of the modules for further study.

NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code, but is a personal acknowledgement of an individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.

Many of the decisions you make on a daily basis are fairly easy or follow a specific program policy. Some decisions are tougher and can involve values and beliefs systems or cultural differences, which can lead to an ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas occur when it is not clear what the best solution is and choosing one solution violates the other.

Example 4.1.1.1

A parent may ask you to keep their 4-year-old awake during nap time because they are not going to bed until late in the evening. We have an ethical responsibility to support the development of children (allow them to sleep when they need to) and we also have an ethical responsibility to honor families as a child's first teachers and to listen and respect their input into how their children are raised. Tough decision! This is where the Code of Ethical Conduct can help you.

The Code of Ethical Conduct reads:

- P-1.1—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.
- P-2.4—We shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child.
- P-2.2—We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do—which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children.

In this example, the Code of Ethical Conduct would offer guidance as to how to communicate with the family about what is developmentally appropriate for the child and what your program policies are. You could empathize with the family and share your understanding about how difficult it can be when children don't sleep. You could share that your program policies state that children are offered rest time and if they fall asleep they are not to be woken up. You could discuss different options (if any) and select a choice that honors the family and adheres to the ethical code of conduct. One solution could be a family member picking up the child during nap time and returning them in the afternoon after nap is over.

Ethical situations are a challenge in every early care and education setting. This is why it is critical that professionals understand the different terms, how they connect, and how the Code of Ethical Conduct can support professionals in navigating ethical situations.

The Code of Ethical Conduct is not just about situations with children and families. It is also used to support leaders in understanding their ethical responsibilities. As a leader you have the opportunity to influence other people's behaviors and share your knowledge and experiences. This means that you must be careful and consider your actions through the lens of ethics.

Ethical Leadership

> *What do you think is important for a leader to be? What values do you hold for yourself and others in leadership positions?*

Leaders by their very nature wield power over others in some capacity. Even in a Collective Leadership Model, you are often able to make decisions, allocate resources, and behave in ways that greatly impact other people. This power can be tempting to use in ways that may not be ethical; e.g., to favor one person's needs over another or to demand compliance over a questionable policy.

Three key questions for ethical leadership include:

1. What is the relationship and balance of power between me as a leader and those I have influence over? Do I have too much power as a leader? Do others feel they have input in decisions I make that impact them?
2. Do I sometimes feel tempted to ignore a rule or offer an exception?
3. Am I trustworthy? Do I follow through on what I say and am I there to support my team members?

Key Takeaway

Trust is a critical responsibility for a leader. When you and your team members trust each other, there are fewer ethical situations. Why? Because you demonstrate behavior that is respectful, collaborative, and transparent. Your fellow team members reflect that behavior back in their interactions with you and others. Communication is open, honest, and authentic.

Communication is one of the areas where ethics and leadership can get caught up in culture, values and beliefs. In some cultures, it is a cultural norm to:

- To be untruthful, be vague or less than forthcoming with all of the truth to spare someone shame or embarrassment or be very direct and open.
- To appeal to another person's emotions to get what you want or to be factual and analytical with your request.
- To keep secrets or to share everything with others.

In the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators, there are a couple of key principles that can offer guidance in these situations:

- P-3.1—We shall provide staff members with safe and supportive working conditions that respect human dignity, honor confidences, and permit them to carry out their responsibilities through performance evaluation, written grievance procedures, constructive feedback, and opportunities for continuing professional development and advancement.
- P-3.2—We shall develop and maintain comprehensive written personnel policies that define program standards. These policies shall be given to new staff members and shall be easily accessible and available for review by all staff members.

In each case, leaders must carefully weigh the policies of the program with the individual skills and competencies of each team member. Educating other professionals about the Code of Ethical Conduct is a great place to start!

> *Think of different people you have worked with who demonstrate one or more of these cultural values and beliefs listed. How might you approach each situation differently as a result of learning about the Code of Ethical Conduct?*

Ethics and Confidentiality

Why is it important to maintain confidentiality when working with children and families? What type of information is important to keep confidential?

Confidentiality is critically important when working with children and families. Confidentiality is defined as keeping information secure and separate, only available for those who need to have it. There are several principles in the Code of Ethical Conduct that speak directly to confidentiality.

The following principles from the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct relate directly to confidentiality.

P-1.4–We shall use two-way communications to involve all those with relevant knowledge (including families and staff) in decisions concerning a child, as appropriate, ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information.

P-2.12–We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records. These policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

P-2.13 We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

P-2.14–In cases where family members are in conflict with one another, we shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions. We shall refrain from becoming an advocate for one party.

P-3A.2–When we have concerns about the professional behavior of a co-worker, we shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

As you can see, confidentiality encompasses your work with children, families, and coworkers. Most organizations have confidentiality policies that include written and verbal confidentiality. Those policies may include:

- Keeping children's files in a secure location.
- Keeping staff files in a secure location.
- Not posting sensitive information (such as medical info) in public view.
- Not providing children's last names on written labels.
- Directing staff to not have conversations about children or families within hearing of other staff, children or families.
- Directing staff to not have conversations about children or families with others who are not engaged with the family or child.

It is critically important to know what your organization's policies are regarding confidentiality!

> *Maintaining confidentiality can be challenging sometimes. It can be incredibly difficult for educators to avoid talking with their friends or partners about sensitive situations at work. We care about the children and our close relationships with them. Think about a time you had to maintain confidentiality for sensitive information. What actions did you take? How did these actions align with the Code Of Ethical Conduct?*

Ethics and Culture

Culture reflects the agreed-upon set of morals and beliefs that indicate how people within a specific group interact. As you interact with different groups, you bring your personal set of values and beliefs to these relationships. The more individuals engage, the more opportunities for values and ethics to come into conflict. Therefore, as a profession, it is critical that professionals adhere to the Code of Ethical Conduct.

But that is not always easy! Personal biases, beliefs, and experiences influence our judgement and how we interact. Portions of the Code of Ethical Conduct can be open to interpretation by individuals, making it challenging to know what is the "right" thing to do.

Questions you must ask yourself…

- Are you willing to ask questions to better understand cultural differences?
- Are you willing to educate yourself on the cultures of the families you serve?
- Are you willing to confront your personal biases and work towards resolving them?
- Are you willing to speak out when a policy or procedure seems unfair?

Understanding that an acceptable behavior in one culture may not be acceptable in another can go a long way toward untangling complex ethical challenges. It is up to you as a leader to commit to ethical behavior that is reflective and respectful.

How do culture and values impact ethical dilemmas? Great question! Let's dive deeper in a few examples.

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct Says

I-2.5—To respect the dignity and preferences of each family and to make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families.

Example 4.1.1.1

Let's say the cultural norms of one family were that children did not make eye contact with adults unless spoken to directly. Another family's culture promotes making eye contact and initiating conversation with adults. How would you honor the first family's culture while at the same time supporting the second family's culture? At first glance it may seem easy–simply allow each child to behave in a manner that suits them. Unfortunately, if you are teaching in a classroom that supports American culture, the first child may feel they are wrong for not making eye contact. They may not get the same level of attention and developmental support as the second child. Why? Because American culture tends to pay less attention to those who don't speak out. It is subtle, and often overlooked, but it is there. Is it ethical to provide the student who seems the most "engaged" with a higher level of engagement? Is it ethical to push away your doubts or uncomfortable feelings about teaching the student who seems "quiet?" Tough questions that must be answered if you are going to be an ethical leader.

> *What are the cultural norms that influence your communication with others? How do you feel about the examples? Do they resonate with you? Why or why not?*

Ethical leadership can look different from leader to leader and organization to organization. That is why it is so important to keep ethics as a constant guide and learning tool!

The following ethical leadership commitment statements can assist you in navigating this complex concept:

- I will advocate for truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- I will support freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and respect.
- I will strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- I will promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to contribute to the well-being of families, colleagues and communities.
- I will promote communication messages of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of those I work with and serve.
- I will condemn communication that degrades individuals through distortion, intimidation, and coercion, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- I will commit to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- I will advocate for sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- I will accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for my communication and expect the same of others.
- I will be trustworthy and offer and expect respect from those I work with and serve.

When we make a commitment to ethical leadership, we are acknowledging the complexity and "messiness" that comes with honoring diverse views, respecting each person, and doing the "right" thing. We know that we will make mistakes and learn about

ourselves and others in the process.

Citations

NAEYC. (2011). *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment.* https://www.naeyc.org/resources/posi...thical-conduct

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4.1.1.1: Ethical Responsibilities to Families

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct (May 2011) **"families are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration (the three C's) between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child's development."** [111]

The code consists of ideals and principles that we must adhere to as ethical professionals. The ideals (refer to the Code of Ethical Conduct) provide us with how we need to support, welcome, listen to, develop relationships with, respect, share knowledge with and help families as we work together in partnership with them to support their role as parents. The principles provide us with specific responsibilities to families in our role as early childhood professionals. These principles include what individuals must do as well as the programs that serve those families.



Pause to Reflect

After reviewing Section II – Ethical Responsibilities to Families in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, what stands out to you and why? What seems to make the most sense and why? What might be easy for you to uphold? What may be challenging? How can you use the code to shape your interactions with families?

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4.1.2: Professionalism in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

- Discuss ways to remain professional when you are feeling frustrated with others or a situation.

Behaving in a professional manner is a key to success in the workplace. Maintaining that demeanor, even in stressful times, can be a challenge. What does it mean to be “professional” at work? The definition varies, but usually includes possessing knowledge and expertise, being in a positive mood, meeting your obligations accurately and on time, respecting all with whom you interact, using proper language, operating ethically, having social and emotional intelligence and maintaining an appropriate appearance. Other terms describing professional conduct in the workplace are soft skills, protocol, business etiquette and polish.

Here is a video with some good advice on professional work characteristics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vFdQY1qSlM (View transcript on YouTube).



(A link to an interactive element can be found at the bottom of this page.)

At one point or another, we have all been subjected to negative circumstances and situations in the workplace that can test the patience of even the most professional of us. We are human beings. Our professional demeanor can temporarily be dented—engaging fight or flight mode, berating yourself, and lacking clear thinking can occur. The key is to rely on our emotional intelligence to gauge our thoughts and actions during these trying times.

Here are some techniques that can help you deal with emotional reactions to negative situations at work.

1. **Acceptance**. It is normal to get mad when things go awry. Our brains are hard-wired to react in certain ways. It is best to step back and acknowledge that your emotions are normal so that you can move on to problem solving.
2. **Displacement**. While you are experiencing a range of emotions that you may not initially control, it may be best for a change of scenery. Get up from your desk, walk out of your office and take some deep breaths outside. Imagine how you would like to see yourself react while you calm down.
3. **Articulation**. Once you have spent some time thinking things through, it may be time to talk it out with the source of the issue. Remember your basic communication skills: Remember who you are communicating with and what will be effective in reaching them with your point.
4. **Improvement**. After recognizing and dealing with your feelings, it is time to understand the true source of the issue so it can be solved going forward. So you were called out on some errors made in your analysis, but you know that you were not given adequate notice to properly prepare the report and double-check it. Address this with your manager and request an appropriate process in the future to allow for more careful work.[1]

? Practice Questions

Practice Questions interactive activity

1. https://www.forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2016/06/01/5-ways-to-stay-cool-when-work-is-making-you-angry/#3520ef557865 ↵

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4.1.2.1: Ethical Use of Technology with Families

Introduction

As teachers strive to build productive and positive relationships with their students, parents, and colleagues, they may employ different techniques to do so. The main reason behind developing effective relationships with these stakeholders is to put students at the forefront of authentic learning. It is recognized that strengthening relationships with parents, students, and even colleagues can be one way to support student learning (Alberta Government, 2018). One of the most critical ways to foster strong relationships is through effective communication (White, 2016).

Teachers are tasked with sharing a multitude of information from events, field trips, and student learning progress to professional learning opportunities and resources. Known as command communication (White, 2016), teachers communicate "in clearly prescribed ways" (p. 70) using tools such as email, websites, and newsletters. As White (2016) points out, "[w]ritten communication is probably the most efficient and effective way teachers provide clear information" (p. 70). Teacher communication is not limited to the command function, but also to a relational function, which is the "basis of effective learning relationships and enables the development of communities of practice, dialogues, and fusions of horizons" (White, 2016, p. 71). Teachers can communicate with both functions to "maximize sharing of information and understanding" (White, 2016, p. 70). This can be challenging to accomplish, but with the integration of technology, teachers build relationships and communities, encourage dialogue, share information, and overcome the barriers of time, distance, and even languages. **Social Network Sites (SNS's)**, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, lend themselves as a platform to achieve strong teacher communication to build and strengthen relationships.

Table 1 *Common social networking sites and their uses (SNSs).*

Facebook	Users connect and share various media, such as text and pictures, with followers, who are known as 'friends' online. Friends can comment on user posts.
Twitter	Users post 140-character messages (tweets) to followers. Tweets can be commented on and shared. Private messages are also available.
Instagram	Users share with followers photos and videos that can be commented on and shared. Altering or filtering is a common practice by users.

Ethical Considerations of Social Network Sites (SNSs) Use in K-12 Classrooms

This innovative use of SNS's creates ethical dilemmas for educators. From the lens of an Outcome or a Consequentialist approach, "teachers are in a difficult position of trying to innovate in their classroom using SNS's while at the same time being conscious of the risks" (Henderson, et al., 2014, p. 2). This chapter will navigate the ethical implications teachers face when using SNS's to communicate the learning that happens in their classrooms.

The framework for teachers using SNS's for communication, adapted from Farrow's (2016) OER Research Hub project, identifies the three normative ethical theories and highlights considerations for teachers who do engage with SNS's for communication purposes (Table 2.2). These ethical perspectives attempt to guide how teachers and students can and should behave, which rules and procedures they should adhere to, and which beliefs and values teachers should have (Farrow, 2016). SNS's used in the classroom context can be powerful, but what are the implications of balancing the pressure and desires to use social media for communication from our colleagues and parent community with the ethical expectations of the teaching profession?

Table 2 Completed framework for teachers using social media networking sites for communication, in relation to normative ethical theories based on Farrow's (2016) *Uncompleted Framework*

Principle	Duties & Responsibilities (deontological)	Outcome (consequentialist)	Personal Development (virtue)
Full disclosure	• Teachers have a responsibility to follow ATA Code of Conduct, FOIP, and their district's policies when sharing classroom and student information. • Teachers could share with parents and students the purpose, methods, and intended use of the social media platform.	• Parents may opt out of their child being displayed on social media. • Teachers should consider a student's and parent's perspective and allow them to have a voice when the teacher uses social media for classroom purposes.	• Teachers are accountable to be aware of current policies and legalities. • Teachers are responsible for providing a culture of care. • Develops a professional learning network for teachers, students and parents.
Privacy & data security	• There are legal implications for protecting student data. • Read and understand Privacy Policy and Terms of Service of chosen SNS. • When required, obtain consent.	• When interacting with SNSs, a digital footprint is created. • Whether SNS are used personally or professionally, users should consider all posts public.	• Teachers' digital presence is in line with the virtue of being a teacher. • Two options: ◦ One profile for personal and private life. ◦ Two profiles – one private and one public.
Informed consent	• Teachers have to ensure consent from students and parents before posting content that may be identifiable.	• Students & parents have the ability to request posts to be removed and request be honoured. • Due to the changing nature of SNS policies and cultural practices, teachers should consider asking for consent on a regular basis.	• When seeking consent, there is an opportunity to have more forethought before posting. • Students have the opportunity to create their own PLN.
Integrity	• All students have the opportunity to develop their online communication skills and not just for the students who can afford to access from home. • Consider context when communicating online, teachers, students and parents	• Teachers can model communication, digital citizenship and literacy skills. • Teachers should recognize that not all may be able to participate due to financial limitations of affording technology.	• Respect and allow for diverse experiences. • Teachers have in loco parentis.
Avoid harm/minimize risk	• Due to "in loco parentis" teachers have the same rights and responsibilities as the parent and should act accordingly. • Consider that any activity on social media is public.	• As teachers aim to maximize the benefits of using SNSs as a form of communication, they should also take measures to minimize the potential risk of harm to themselves and those they interact with.	• Consider that any activity on social media is public, so associate with groups/individuals that are suitable. • Professional 24-7. • Create and maintain expectations.

Principle	Duties & Responsibilities (deontological)	Outcome (consequentialist)	Personal Development (virtue)
		• Set and share expectations with parents and students.	
Respect for participant autonomy	• Teachers may be directed to use SNSs, but may have the choice of which platform. • Teachers ensure that parents and students can access communication via technology or not.	• Teachers ensure that they minimize the impact on student's digital footprint. • Teachers ensure that students and parents have opportunities to participate in posting content on SNSs.	• By using SNSs, users can connect, create and share knowledge with a larger community.
Independence	• Teachers can control what they post and how often. • Students can contribute to class SNSs content.	• Parents who don't want to communicate via social media may want the information in another modality. • Teachers should consider Equity of Access and how it creates and removes barriers.	• Students are exposed to digital literacy and citizenship skills that can be transferred out of the classroom experience. • Teachers influence online identities.

Full Disclosure

As teachers join the growing movement of using SNS's for their classroom communication (Auld & Henderson, 2014), there are expectations placed on them by their principal, districts, and professional bodies. Even though not explicitly defined, these expectations contain Nias' (1999) six components of a culture of care, which include: being affective, responsibility for learners, responsibility for relationships in the school, self-sacrifice and obedience, over-conscientiousness, and identity (Figure 7.1). Teachers who use SNS's should employ a due culture of care to ensure that they meet the professional expectations placed upon them. This culture of care should include an evaluation of the consequences of using SNS's, followed by the disclosure of the consequences and pertinent information to the parties involved, including parents, students, and colleagues.



Figure **4.1.2.1.1** Six components of culture of care, as described in Nias (1999).

Luckin et al. (2009), as cited in Howard (2013), suggest that "[t]o facilitate effective use of Web 2.0 technology in the classrooms, teachers are encouraged to be willing to embrace risk and to consider small ways of navigating existing cultures and reframing old contexts to incorporate new ones" (p. 44). As teachers transform the purpose of SNS's to fit their classroom contexts, they should consider the notion of full disclosure, which is when the teacher makes all information and facts known (Oxford University Press, 2019). The following section will examine two components to this disclosure: teacher communication expectations and the use of personal learning networks to share and co-construct knowledge.

Teacher Policies and Procedures

Regardless of whether or not a teacher participates in SNSs, there are policies and procedures to which they must adhere to as a member of a professional association, not only for their own professional protection but also for the protection of colleagues, students, and parents. By following the specified policies and procedures for communication, teachers meet the aspects of a culture of care.

Teachers in Alberta, for example, are required to follow the ATA Code of Conduct, the Teaching Quality Standards, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and their own district's Administrative Procedures. These guiding documents define what data and information teachers have access to, who can provide permission to use the platform, and how they can use it to support the learning that happens in their classrooms.

Due to the openness and highly connected nature of SNSs, teachers should communicate to parents, students, and colleagues (including administration) which SNSs they are using and their purpose for using those platforms. As well, teachers should notify stakeholders what they will be posting, before they post it. This will give parents and students opportunities to have input and the ability to give or refuse consent. As Henderson et al. (2014) point out, "teachers should be aware that this consent might need to be renegotiated at regular intervals" (p. 3). Auld and Henderson (2014) also argue that teachers have the responsibility to ensure that students (and parents) want their own virtual identities to be made public when using SNSs as a tool for communication. As students or parents comment on a post, they are at risk of exposing their online identity which they may not have considered.

Sharing and Co-Construction of Knowledge Through Personal Learning Networks (PLNs)

Many professionals have been adapting and adopting various emerging practices, such as using SNSs, to network, share, and co-create knowledge (Veletsianos, 2016). Teachers may find themselves using SNSs in the classroom for the same purposes, while guiding students in developing the skills to participate effectively in Personal Learning Networks (PLNs). “Research that suggests that such platforms can facilitate the shared construction of knowledge and peer interactions that support learning adds to the perception that SNSs, such as Facebook, could be a catalyst for classroom engagement and collaboration” (Howard, 2013, p. 43). Whether it is a teacher’s own PLN with other professionals or a student-based PLN, teachers should disclose what they, themselves, are gaining from integrating SNSs as a modality. As Auld and Henderson (2014) identify, “[t]eachers need to consider what the implications are for co-inhabiting spaces that are designed to connect people and share information” (p. 199); however, disclosure of benefits should not be limited to the teacher viewpoint. Emphasis should also be placed on the student viewpoint. What does the student have to gain or lose by participating in a PLN via SNSs? What opportunities and guidance will students (and parents for that matter) have to participate in PLNs? What opportunities exist to be part of a PLN if parents do not want to use SNSs? These are all aspects of full disclosure that teachers should consider and communicate.

As teachers disclose the purpose for using SNSs in their classroom practice, they should consider the six aspects of the culture of care. By keeping these practices student-centred, the argument could be made that the choices the teacher is making to build relationships and enhance communication are inherently good. By having an environment that is built on full disclosure, teachers will continue to build “a sense of community, people-making, and dialogue” which is foundational to school-family partnerships (White, 2016, p. 69).

It should be recognized that full disclosure should not be limited to the intent and should also include other considerations such as privacy and security. The next section will explore these elements and the ethical dilemmas they create.

Section 2: Privacy, Data Security, and Informed Consent

When it comes to the role of the teacher, and protection of privacy, evolving technology has created a need for privacy and security awareness. As mentioned in the previous section, teachers must follow various policies and procedures, such as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) [New Tab] (Alberta Teachers Association, 1999), which is a legally binding document and mandatory. In this particular act, “the privacy of students and parents is protected by rules that school [administrative procedures] must follow in the collection, use, protection and disclosure of personal information” (para. 4). While engaging on SNS platforms, teachers may expose themselves, students, and parents to breaches of privacy and careless consent to the collection of data. In their paper, Regan and Jesse (2019) explored the ethical concerns of privacy in 21st-century learning and identified six distinct ethical concerns. The following section will explore three of the six privacy and data security concerns when teachers post and share content on SNSs.

Information Privacy

When posting any content online, there is exposure and formation to one’s identity. Regardless of whether a teacher creates a digital identity to connect with PLCs, share lessons, or celebrate the connections in the classroom, there is a tension between confidentiality and transparency. Teachers may carelessly expose themselves, parents, and students to the collection of data.

Teachers can enlist proper attitudes that help limit exposure. Summarized by Regan and Jesse (2019) as, “notice, consent, choice and transparency” (p. 170), when posting any information online, teachers are responsibility to those parties involved (students, parents, colleagues, etc.) to communicate the purpose and content of the post, to seek consent, and to allow those involved to choose what is posted or to be removed from the post, and to be able to see the post after submission.

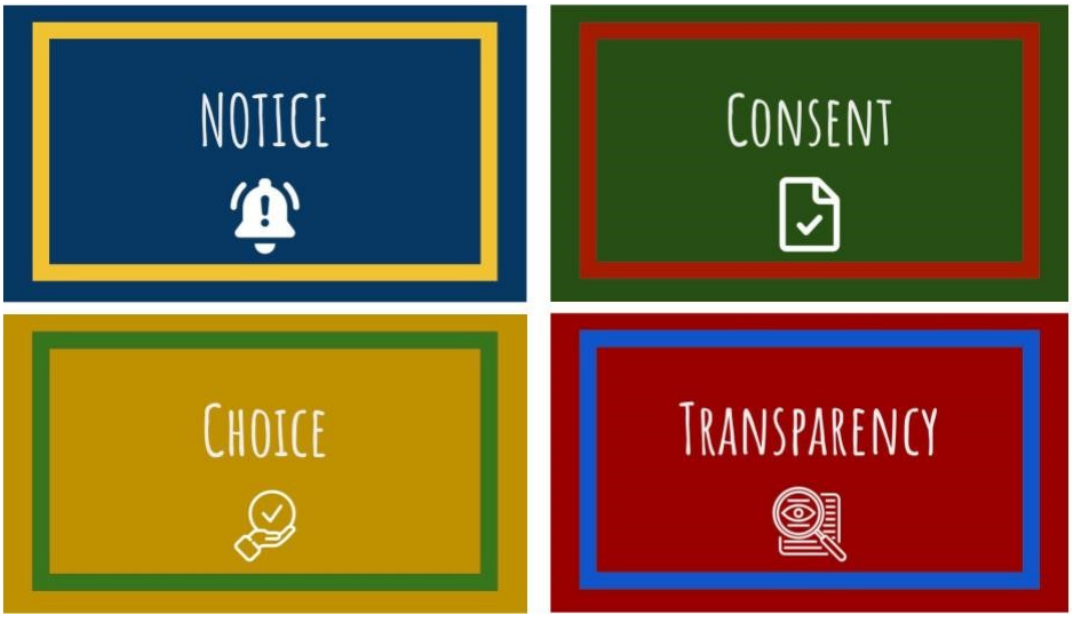


Figure 4.1.2.1.2 Attitudes to limit exposure of privacy, as described in Regan and Jesse (2019).

Ownership of Information

Once content is posted, who owns the post and its contents? The answer depends on the SNS platform and its privacy policy. When looking at a privacy policy, or reading the terms of service before clicking accept, one may notice that these are long and complex documents. Readers can become lost in jargon, and, as a result, users accept the agreements without becoming aware of critical information, such as data collection and ownership of information. For example, Facebook's Privacy Policy [New Tab], which also includes Instagram, explains ownership of information.

According to Facebook (2019), "you own the intellectual property rights (things such as copyright or trademarks) in any such content that you create and share on Facebook" ("Your commitments" section); they go on to identify that if users share, post, or upload content, Facebook is granted the permissions to use, distribute, modify, copy, and create derivative products of the content. If a teacher posts a picture of students working in the classroom, the teacher has given Facebook and Instagram the ability to "store, copy, and share it with others" (Facebook, 2019, "Your commitments" section) based on the privacy settings. Even when parents grant permission to use photos of their child, they may not understand that the child's photo may be used by third-party companies, based on the SNS platform. Students should be consulted when their work will be posted on SNSs, as they own the intellectual property rights to their content, and they may not want to give those platforms the ability to remix and reuse their work.

Part of learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. Engaging in digital environments can promote learning, teaching and collaboration for students, staff and parents. The very nature of SNSs introduces a potential lack of personal control of content and dissemination of content. Due care and attention is required to safeguard privacy. (Elk Island Catholic Schools, 2019, para. 1)

Understanding the agreements of SNS platforms is crucial to effective communication practices. Some may consider the practice of deleting the content after the school year is over, as those students move on to another classroom; however, teachers should be aware of the adage 'once online, always online.' Facebook identifies that if the content is deleted by the user, it will be removed from Facebook's systems, though it may exist elsewhere (2019). As Molnar and Boninger (2015) point out, "[e]ducators are obliged not only to learn how student data may be gathered and exploited but also to develop privacy policies that protect their students from such exploitation" (p. 8).

Surveillance – AI

It would be naive to believe that one's online presence is not tracked in some form or another. "Tracking software also records adult behaviour on the Internet, of course, although many adults may be unaware of it. Since educators are, however, responsible for the

children entrusted to their care, they cannot afford to be uninformed about potential threats to student privacy" (Molnar and Boninger, 2015, p. 8). As soon as a teacher engages with SNSs, there is surveillance of their activity and that of the users to whom they are connected. For example, as soon as the student does connect to the content posted on the teacher's SNS, marketers can track the student's online activity and direct ads to that student (Molnar and Boninger, 2015, p. 7).

Even as teachers consider information privacy, ownership of information, and surveillance, they may still fail to protect all invested parties' privacy. A common phenomenon exists known as the Privacy Paradox. First discussed by Barnes (2006), the Privacy Paradox identifies that there is a contradiction between online behaviour and privacy concerns (Table 2.3). The research conducted by Dienline and Trepte (2014) showed that people on SNSs "engage in self-disclosing behaviours that do not adequately reflect their concerns" (p. 285). "Despite privacy concerns, users, most of the time, fail to protect their privacy within SNSs, thus putting themselves and other users at risk" (Sideri, et al., 2017, p. 79).

Table 3 *Barnes (2006) observed 4 phenomena related to the Privacy Paradox.*

4 Privacy Paradox Phenomena of Social Network Sites
1. Large quantity of information disclosed online
2. The illusion of privacy
3. Discrepancy between context and behaviour (even when known to be public, act like SNSs are private)
4. Users' poor understanding of data processing actions by online businesses

Knowing the phenomena, teachers can act in an ethical manner that ensures the protection of privacy to the best of their ability. Prior to the first post, teachers should read the privacy policy and terms of service of their chosen platform. They can then act according to what they are comfortable with and what is best for all users involved in the communication. Also, informing parents and students of the terms and allowing them to create their own limitations of content to be posted, would reduce the breach in privacy and data collection from the post.

In the end, even with instilled practices to limit the accessibility of data or enable privacy features, these features may dissolve at any point, leading to the risk that the content become public (Auld & Henderson, 2014). It is this point that leads to the exploration of what the teacher can do to maintain educational integrity by avoiding harm and minimizing risk.

Educational Integrity by Avoiding Harm and Minimizing Risk

When parents send their children to school, they entrust educators to provide quality education while ensuring that their child is cared for and protected. Known as *in loco parentis*, the teacher is in place of a parent and is given the same rights and responsibilities (Law Now, 2019). In Alberta, according to the competencies in the Teaching Quality Standard (2018), teachers are expected to "recognize that the professional practice of a teacher is bound by standards of conduct expected of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult entrusted with the custody, care or education of students" (p. 3). When teachers engage in posting on SNSs, this care should still be practiced. As teachers aim to maximize the benefits of using SNSs as a form of communication, they should also take measures to minimize the potential risk of harm to themselves and those with whom they interact. This section will look at opportunities educators have to maintain educational integrity while avoiding harm and reducing risks when engaging in online communication.

Modeling Digital Communication

Teachers are held in high regard in society, and what they do in their personal lives will usually be viewed with a lens that relates to the profession. "The teacher acts in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession" (ATA, 2018, standard 18). This also applies to the teacher's interaction with SNSs. Whether being used to connect with other teachers in PLCs, with parents and students, or with friends and family, "teachers need to maintain a respectful and professional identity" (Planbook.com, 2018, Section 1, para. 4).

In 2012, George Couros, an educator and recognized keynote speaker for professional audiences, posted a blog titled "Personal and Professional vs. Public and Private" [New Tab]. He discussed the debate of teachers having a personal SNS account separate from a professional account. His argument is that whether teachers have separate accounts or not, there is the potential for anyone to see

the posted content. “What I am always aware of is that no matter who sees what I put out there, anyone can see it eventually, whether it is through me or someone else” (Couros, 2012, Section 1, para. 4). In fact, by combining the personal and professional accounts into one, teachers have a unique opportunity to model effective digital citizenship and digital literacy skills to their followers, which may include parents, students, and other teachers, rather than letting them figure it out on their own (Howard, 2013).

Setting Expectations

By communicating expectations for parents, students, colleagues, and themselves, teachers can reduce the risks that come with engaging in SNSs. “Even if we deem the benefits of SNSs worth the potential risks, a plan for managing those risks is warranted” (Howard, 2013, p. 44). It is interesting to note that due to the recent COVID-19 crisis (Spring 2020), educators have found themselves needing to turn to emerging technologies such as SNSs to communicate effectively with students and parents. If they do not set up expectations from the beginning of the school year, teachers may struggle with boundaries and guidelines for themselves, parents, and students. Teachers should look to their guiding policies and procedures to provide support for navigating this challenge. However, it is recognized that with the fast pace of technological change, these policies and procedures may need constant revision to remain current.

Many school districts have developed administrative procedures that identify the expectations of all parties involved with using SNSs. As Howard (2013) points out, “[p]olicies that prevent private one-to-one communication between teachers and students that do not generate a permanent record are extremely important to ensure the public’s trust that the users of these networks are operating above-board” (p. 50). For example, Elk Island Catholic Schools (2019) has Administrative Procedure 146, titled “Social Media”, which identifies expectations for division staff, students, and parents (Table 2.4).

Table 4 Excerpt from Elk Island Catholic Schools’ Administrative Procedure: 146 social media (2019).

Procedures
1. Principals shall:
1.1 Ensure students, parents, and staff are aware of the Division’s expectations for responsible use of Social Media.
1.2 Encourage parents to communicate to school personnel any concerns they may have about inappropriate use of Social Media.
1.3 Ensure students, parents, and staff are educated in the appropriate use of Social Media and the associated benefits and dangers of a public online presence.

When teachers do set guidelines for how SNSs will be used, they should include expectations for:

- Timeliness of posts
- Expectations and moderation of responses
- Procedures for one-to-one communication
- What will happen to content after the school year is over
- Limitations to having followers and following back

Teachers who model effective use and positive communication skills with SNSs remain consistent with the rights and responsibilities placed upon them as professionals. Each post should be considered an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills for teachers, students, and parents. By setting and following expectations, all stakeholders will reduce risk and the opportunity for harm. However, risk and harm are reduced not only by expectations, but also by understanding how using SNSs can impact autonomy and independence.

Respect for Participant Autonomy and Independence

Teachers may find themselves in situations where they are directed to engage with SNSs, such as when a school leader suggests that teachers can add a Twitter post about their weekly classroom events. When this occurs, teachers may feel obligated to use social media even if they do not feel comfortable with the digital tool. Alberta Education’s Learning and Technology Policy Framework (2013), Policy Direction 3 indicates that teachers are expected to “engage in professional growth opportunities that are broadened and diversified through technology, social media, and communities of practice” (Section 3, para. 1). Although some

teachers may struggle to give up autonomy over their professional learning choices, they may still have control over what technologies they use or how they use them. The student-centred goal, is that "teachers . . . develop, maintain, and apply the knowledge, skills, and attributes that enable them to use technology effectively, efficiently, and innovatively in support of learning and teaching" (Alberta Education, 2013, Section 3, para 1). Teachers need to consider the magnitude of this responsibility when they do engage with SNSs, as they are in a position in which they can create and shape their own online persona, while also shaping and influencing the identity of their students. In this final section, we will expand on the ethical examination of the teacher's role in shaping identity and equity of access.

(Re)Shaping Identity

When teachers use SNSs in their classroom, their motivation may be to build relationships, provide support, reduce the feeling of being isolated (for both student and teacher), build personal and professional learning environments, and to create and share knowledge (Forbes, 2018). SNSs are not limited to these opportunities and may provide other features and abilities, such as 'going live' to show parents the events in the classroom; however, the fact that teachers and students have the ability to use these features does not necessarily mean that they should.

As previously discussed, teachers and students who engage with SNSs may blur the lines between private and public identity. What teachers should consider is that as they post content such as pictures, student work, or discussions about what happened within the class, they create a digital footprint for themselves, as well as for their students, which may be accessed and retrieved by others (Auld & Henderson, 2014). As teachers move to a more digital learning environment, K-12 teachers are faced with the reality that their digital interactions influence identity, regardless of whether they take place on a private or public SNS account. *Forbes* (2018) eloquently points out that "what an individual does with social media does not occur in a vacuum and is likely to affect or influence others by virtue of the social character of the communications" (p.178). As teachers consider this influence, they are held ethically to the principle of responsible care, "where professionalism entails doing good and minimizing harm" (*Forbes*, 2018, p.178).

To build on this idea of doing good and minimizing harm, teachers should consider the power of their influence. By modelling positive digital citizenship and literacy skills, they can inadvertently shape their own and students' identities in a positive way. One example is practicing proper citations and copyright practices. As Auld and Henderson (2014) point out, the use of a picture of a celebrity or cartoon picture to create a social media avatar may seem harmless, but it is a breach of copyright and possible identity theft. This is an opportunity for a teachable moment that may have lasting effects on students' identities and on the identity of the original subject whose image was used.

Teachers' ability to model and shape identity is not just proximal. Auld and Henderson (2014) explain that "teachers can model how to respect the other even if they are not known to the students or the teacher" (p. 202). This removal of barriers is powerful, but the strength is limited by the opportunity for digital equity of access.

Equity of Access

Digital access and equity involve many components and ethical considerations that teachers should consider as they use SNSs. Rooted in social justice, there is a belief that emerging technologies, such as social media, will "level the playing field, effectively creating equal access to learning opportunities by democratizing information and instruction" (Bulger, 2016, p. 2). This is supported by the fact that creating an account on SNSs is most often free. As well, SNSs are ubiquitous communication platforms where, because they are digital, users can access assistive technologies such as speech to text, text to speech, and translation to participate in the discussion. By integrating SNSs in the classroom, teachers provide opportunities for all students to develop their online communication skills, not just the students who can afford to access the platforms from home (Howard, 2013).

The argument that SNSs are free is limited to the actual cost to participate on the site. In order to access SNSs, one needs technology and internet access in the first place. As well, parents may not want their children, or themselves, to communicate online. In order to respect the autonomy of parents and students, teachers may want to consider providing alternatives to online communication. By doing so, teachers follow the social justice principle of recognitive, which, as Lambert (2018) points out, involves recognition and respect for diverse views and experiences.

As teachers use SNSs for communication, their reach of influence is not limited to just their own identity, but beyond. In fact, the impact on identity is a community approach involving (but not limited to) teachers, parents, and students. To maintain the educational integrity that teachers are responsible for, teachers should also consider opportunities for autonomy when involving

technology-based practices in their classrooms. By allowing for voice and choice by parents and students, teachers can continue, with effective communication, to build the sense of community that is needed (White, 2016), which was the goal in the first place.

Conclusion

As teachers decide to integrate SNSs into their classroom practices, they should consider the ethical implications that this type of technological opportunity creates. According to Auld and Henderson (2014), “a professional SNS profile is a potentially valuable strategy but it still requires considerable thought and considerable maintenance” (p. 199). By focusing on four main areas of ethical exploration, this chapter examined the topics of full disclosure, privacy and security, educational integrity, and autonomy and independence, in order to address how teachers can tackle the complexity and unique opportunities of using SNSs to communicate in their classroom.

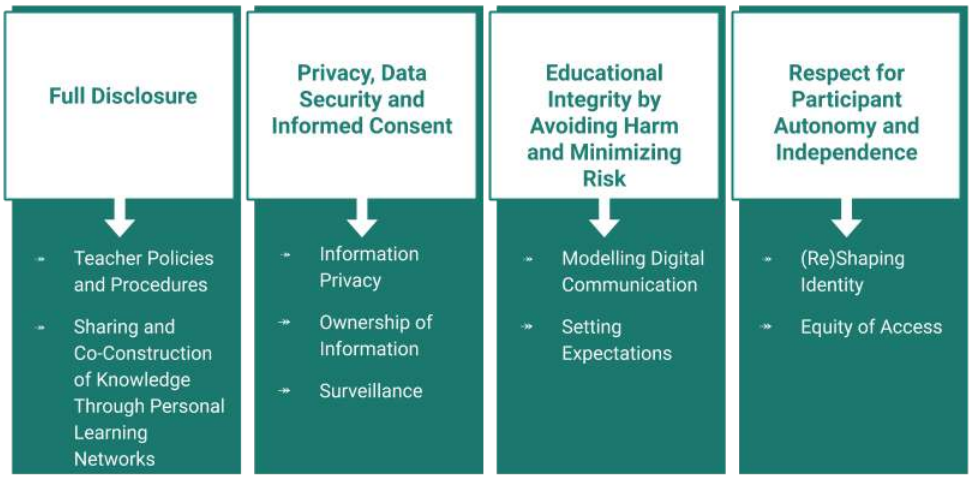


Figure 4.1.2.1.4 Four areas of ethical implications of using SNSs for communication by teachers.

No matter the tool, teachers should consider the magnitude of their responsibility when they do engage with SNS for communication. Part of the attraction of SNSs is the unique abilities to enhance communication, but one may want to have the mantra: just because you have the ability, doesn’t mean you should use it. By continually reflecting on the goal and ethical implications, teachers will have a strong foundation for the use of SNSs for communication.

Questions to Consider for Future Research

- Technology is always evolving, and with it, a teacher’s practice should evolve, too. COVID-19 has required teachers across the globe to move their classrooms to an online environment. Teachers who had never considered SNSs as a way to communicate are now adapting these platforms to fit their classroom needs. What impact will this mass uptake of using SNSs have on pedagogy?
- In what ways are teachers and students reshaping the role SNSs have in education?
- What ethical considerations should be considered when students who are under the age of consent use technology to support their learning?
- Lastly, as teachers model different competencies in their classroom, there are opportunities to embed digital literacies and citizenship while creating opportunities to develop PLNs online. What do students have to gain or lose by participating in a PLN via SNSs?
- What frameworks could teachers consider to scaffold students developing their own PLNs using SNS (refer to Appendix A)?

Author Note

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Appendix A

Table 2.5 Possible frameworks for scaffolding students in developing their own PLNs using SNS (adapted from Roberts, 2019).

Teacher-Led Walled Garden of Open Learning	Transition Between Teacher-Led Walled Garden & Independent Open Learning	Developing Personal Learning Networks
Up to age 11 AND/OR. Emerging open readiness learners	Ages 11-14 AND/OR. Low & medium open readiness learners	Ages 14+ AND/OR. High open readiness learners
Example: Teacher connects with their PLN to share classroom learning experience using classroom social media identity.	**Example:** Teacher co-designs for learning pathway that includes inside/outside experts & open/closed sharing of learning experiences.	**Example:** Teacher co-designs for learning pathway that encourages inside/outside classroom experts, nodes of learning, & perspectives in order to solve problem with choice open/closed sharing of learning.

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5: What is Curriculum?

In early care and education, we value how children process information, we recognize how important their feelings are, and we place great significance on how children learn to socialize with others. As intentional teachers, our primary goal is to incorporate curriculum that supports the “whole-child” in all domains of development including social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. The word “curriculum” can mean different things to different people. For some, curriculum can provide the framework for learning, for others it can be a variety of planned activities, still for others curriculum is a way to drive learning outcomes, goals and objectives. Curriculum can be developed by teachers, or it can be purchased as part of a prefabbed program. Curriculum can be child-directed, and it can be teacher-directed. According to a joint position paper by the National Association for the Education of Young Child (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Department of Education (NAECS-SDE), “Curriculum is an organized framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur” (2009). In other words, curriculum helps teachers organize the day to day activities, it outlines the learning goals and outcomes that teachers need to assess, and lastly, curriculum provides teachers with the guidance and structure that they need to teach. [52]

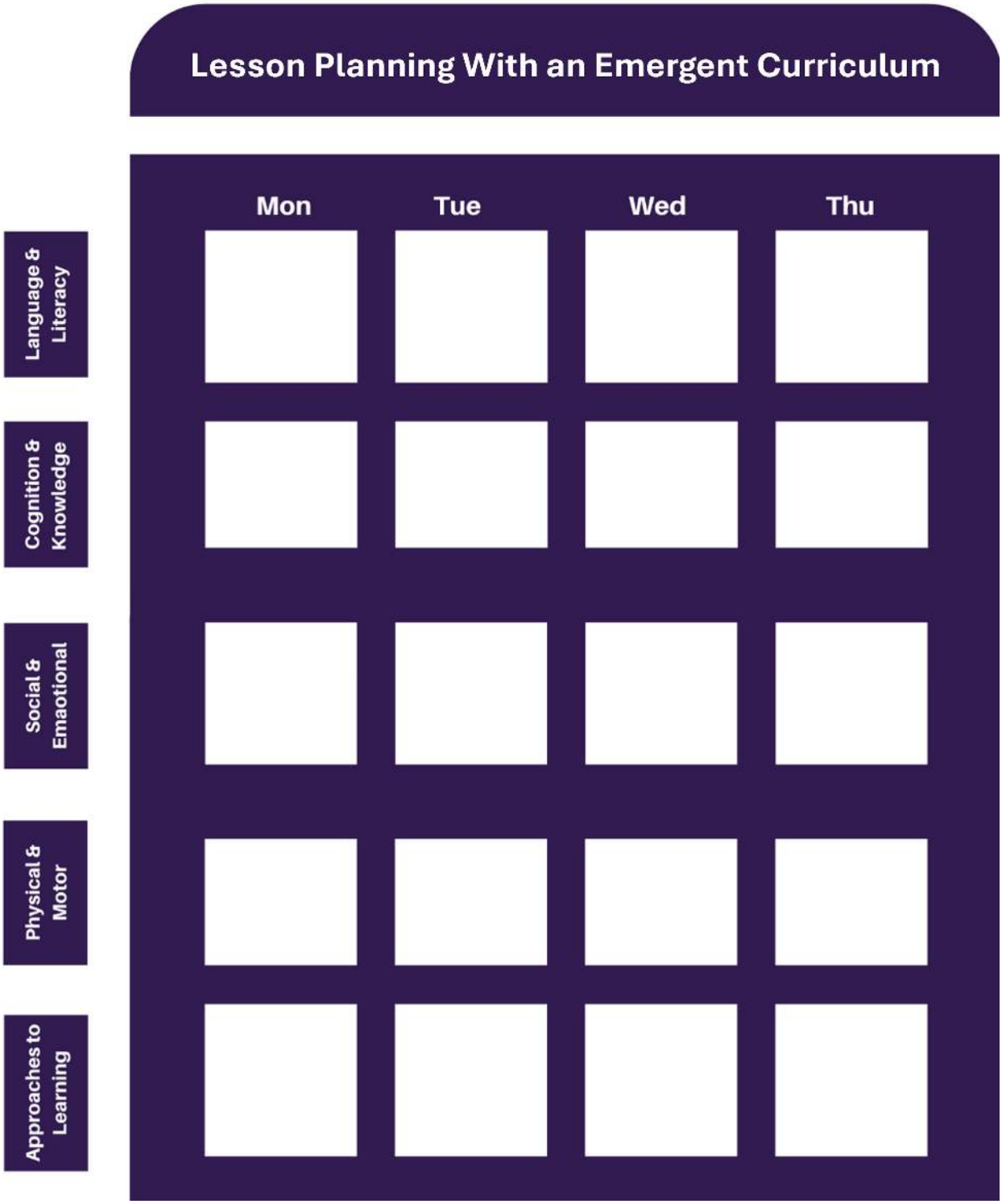


Figure 5.2 Lesson Planning with an Emergent Curriculum. [53]

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences

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6.1.2: What is Curriculum?

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6.1.4: A Teachers Role

6.1.5: The Curriculum Planning Cycle at a Glance

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6.1.7: Conclusion

6.1.8: Age and Individually Appropriate Learning Experiences

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6.1.1: Introduction

One of the highlights of being a preschool teacher was setting up my classroom environment at the beginning of each new school year. There was so much anticipation and excitement as I thoughtfully organized my classroom, stocked the learning centers with new materials, and planned curriculum activities. I especially enjoyed purchasing a new lesson plan book and writing up activity plans for each month. I gathered ideas from various teacher resource books that primarily focused on seasonal themes and kindergarten readiness skills – like language arts and math. As I carefully considered topics for each month, I planned for indoor and outdoor activities, music and movement activities, along with a variety of play opportunities. I thought about creative art projects and planned for engaging circle time discussions. I created quiet corners, learning centers, decorated the walls with store-bought posters, and strived to make the classroom environment safe and welcoming. Some twenty years later, as I write this text and reflect on my own experiences as a preschool teacher, there are a few questions that come to mind:

1. Who was I planning curriculum for – me, the children, their families or my program director?
2. How could I possibly have planned meaningful curriculum if I didn't even know the children who were being placed in my care?
3. How could I be intentional if I didn't even know the children's individual interests, abilities and needs?

In this chapter, we will examine how observation and documentation are used to develop effective curriculum. We will explore what curriculum is and we will discuss the benefits of planning developmentally appropriate curriculum. Additionally, the teacher's role will be examined. Lastly, we will discuss how to plan effective and meaningful curriculum using observation, documentation, interpretation, and reflection as best practices.

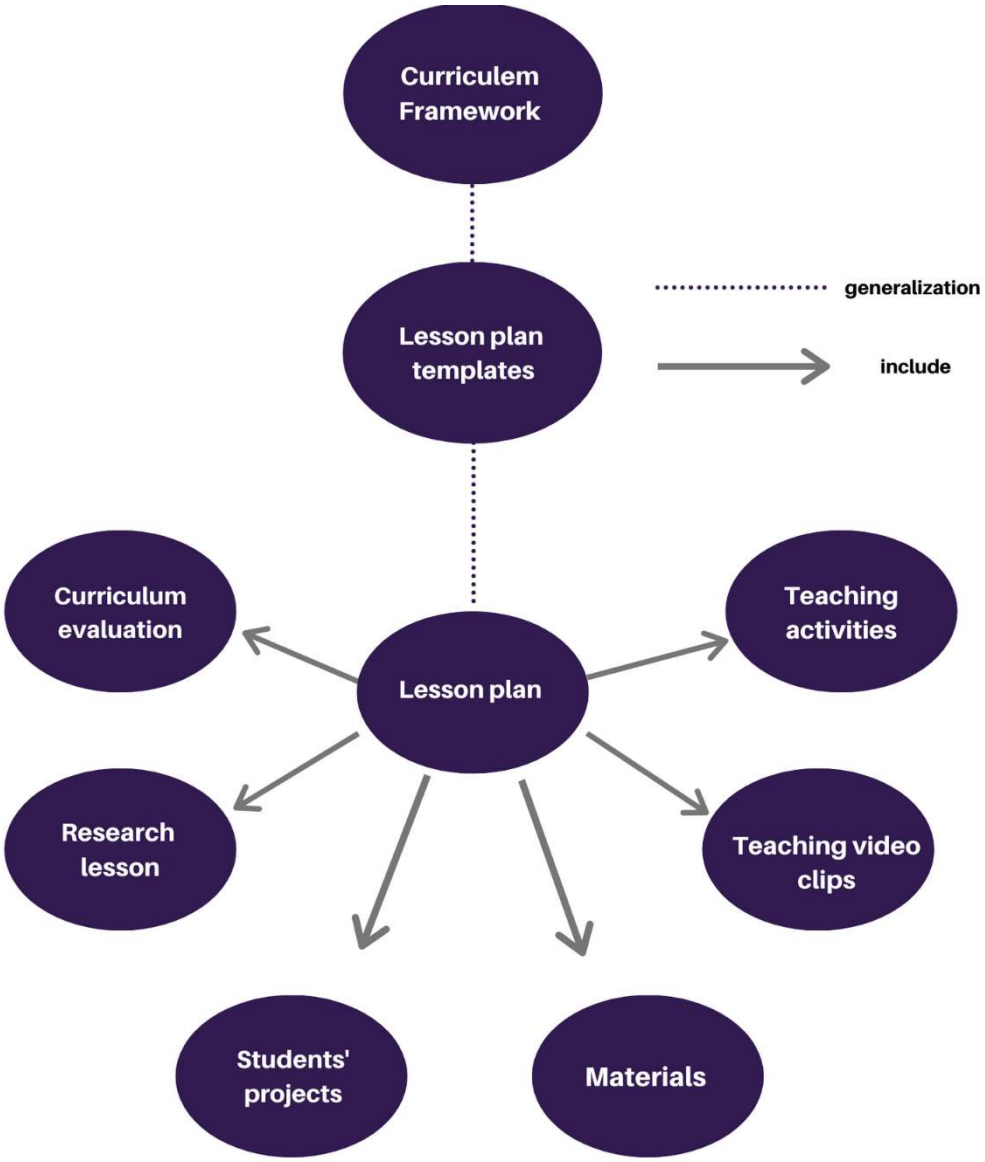


Figure 5.1 Lesson Plan Concept Mapping . [51]

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6.1.2: What is Curriculum?

In early care and education, we value how children process information, we recognize how important their feelings are, and we place great significance on how children learn to socialize with others. As intentional teachers, our primary goal is to incorporate curriculum that supports the “whole-child” in all domains of development including social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. The word “curriculum” can mean different things to different people. For some, curriculum can provide the framework for learning, for others it can be a variety of planned activities, still for others curriculum is a way to drive learning outcomes, goals and objectives. Curriculum can be developed by teachers, or it can be purchased as part of a prefabbed program. Curriculum can be child-directed, and it can be teacher-directed. According to a joint position paper by the National Association for the Education of Young Child (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Department of Education (NAECS-SDE), “Curriculum is an organized framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur” (2009). In other words, curriculum helps teachers organize the day to day activities, it outlines the learning goals and outcomes that teachers need to assess, and lastly, curriculum provides teachers with the guidance and structure that they need to teach. [52]

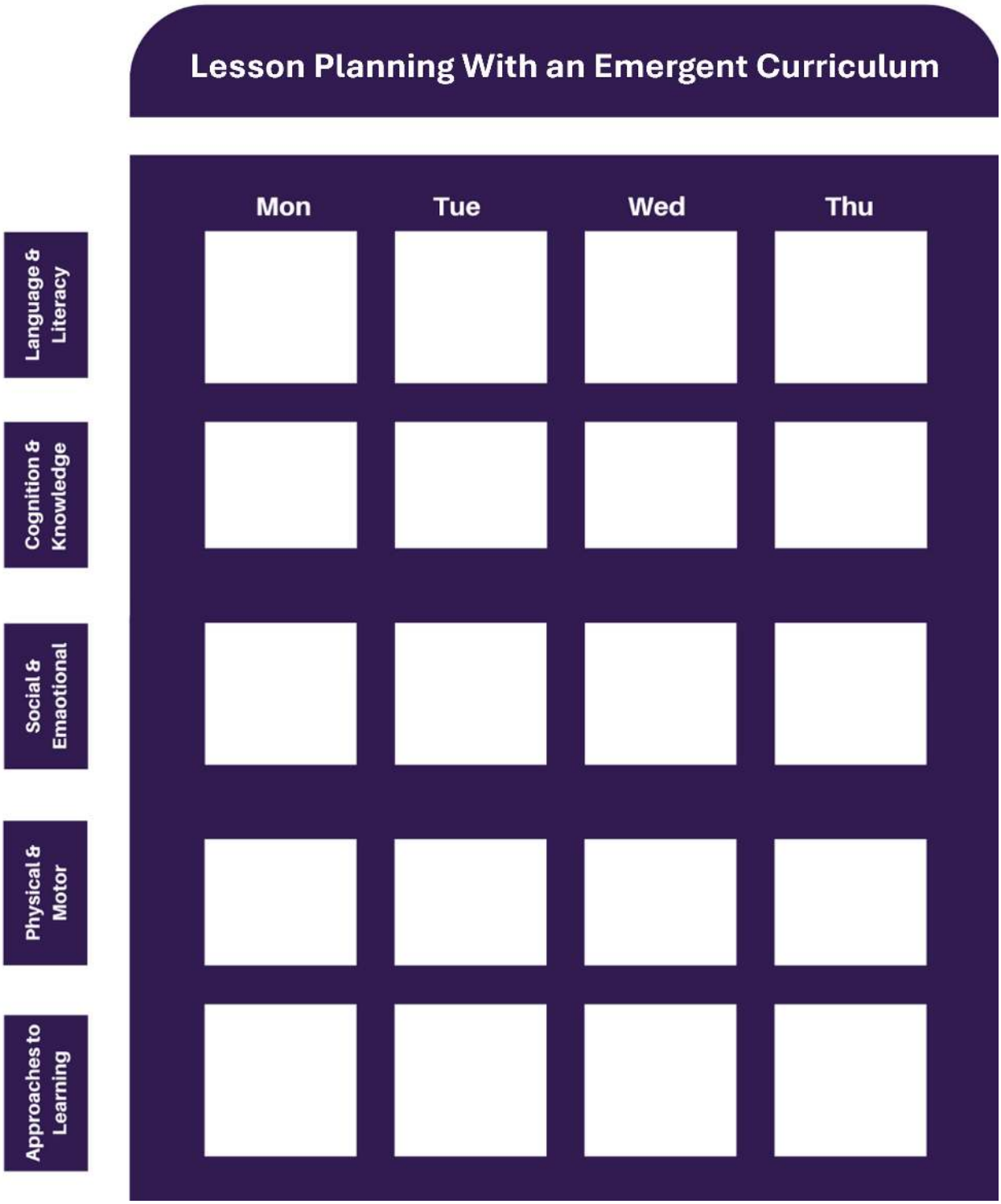


Figure 5.2 Lesson Planning with an Emergent Curriculum. [53]

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6.1.3: Benefits of Implementing Meaningful Curriculum

From the moment a child is born, each interaction and experience affects their brain development and lays the foundation for future success. Research on brain development shows that early experiences are essential. It is suggested that if children are not interested in what they are learning, and if it is not meaningful or connected to their cultural practices, they will not create new neural pathways in which to store new knowledge. Subsequently, children will not retain information or learn as intended. As suggested in the California Early Learning Foundations, well planned curriculum provides opportunities for children to use, build, and master skills. With every engaging activity, children are encouraged to investigate key concepts in mathematics, science, and literacy, explore their creativity, establish relationships with peers, and develop self-efficacy skills. [54]

It is important to note that thoughtful curriculum planning does not just impact children for that present moment. A high-quality program that incorporates meaningful curriculum can provide long-lasting benefits. As demonstrated with the Abecedarian Project, a vastly recognized longitudinal research study that followed a group of 111 children into adulthood, not only did the children who received high-quality child care outperform their peers in math and reading, 30 years later project participants continued to exhibit significant merits as compared to their counterparts in the control group. More specifically, children that participated in the Abecedarian Project were four times more likely to earn a college degree. Additionally, it was reported that “Twenty-three percent of the participants graduated from a four-year college or university compared to only 6 percent of the control group.” Other significant benefits included: participants were more likely to have been consistently employed (75 percent had worked full time for at least 16 of the previous 24 months, compared to 53 percent of the control group) and less likely to have used public assistance (only 4 percent received benefits for at least 10 percent of the previous seven years, compared to 20 percent of the control group). They also showed a tendency to delay parenthood by almost two years compared to the control group. Project participants also appeared to have done better in relation to several other social and economic measures (including higher incomes) but those results were not statistically significant. [55]



Figure 5.3 Robust Curriculum [56]

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6.1.4: A Teachers Role

With curriculum being the cornerstone for children's learning, how can we be certain that children are receiving reputable curriculum that reflects their varying academic abilities, learning styles, personalities, interests, background knowledge, cultural experiences and levels of motivation for learning ? Teachers are the linchpin. As stated in the article "Observing, Planning, Guiding: How an Intentional Teacher Meets Standards through Play" by Patricia McDonald, "teachers are researchers, observing children to decide how to extend their learning both in the moment and by planning new play environments" (p.3). [57] For all intents and purposes, teachers play a pivotal role in setting up the environment, providing the learning experiences and guiding children so they can construct concepts, develop new skill sets, and discover who they are. Additionally, teachers are active participants in a child's development as they watch, listen and think about what each child needs to thrive. As teachers monitor numerous situations throughout the day, they must consider when to step in and engage the children, and when to step aside and allow students to scaffold one another. At the center of it all, teachers who really know their children are better equipped to find the right balance of how to engage, motivate and challenge learners. So then, how do teachers learn about the intricate details of what each child needs? Let's take a closer look at how observation, documentation, interpretation, and reflection are used to support children's learning, growth, and development.

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6.1.5: The Curriculum Planning Cycle at a Glance

Observation: Looking and Listening

- May be Spontaneous or Planned
- Watch and listen to children while they explore, investigate, play, problem solve, interact and socialize
- Keep an open mind as you gather evidence and artifacts, and look for what children CAN DO

Observe children during daily routines, transition times, mealtimes, and while inside and outside

Documentation: Recording and Collecting Objective Evidence

- Record what you see and hear
- Include date, time, and location
- Include child's first name
- Include who else is engaged in the activity
- Document the purpose of the activity – highlighting what the child is supposed to do
- All recorded evidence should be concise, factual and have descriptive details
- Use a variety of observation and documentation methods and tools to collect evidence

Record actual evidence as you see it (avoid summarizing or assuming)

Interpretation: Analyzing Data

Ask questions: What is this action telling me?

- How did the child approach the activity and how long did the child stay engaged?
- Is this behavior typical for the child or unusual?
- Would this child benefit from peer scaffolding?
- Does this child need more individualized support?
- Does this child have more feisty, flexible or fearful temperament traits?
- How can I motivate this child?
- Were there any new play patterns or social interactions?
- Did the child master any new skills or milestones?
- Are there any skills or milestones that need further support?
- Were there any "red flags"?

When analyzing behavior, consider the ABCs: the Antecedent (What happened BEFORE), the Behavior (as it happens) and the Consequence (what happened AFTER)

Review previous observations to monitor progress over time

Reflection: Planning for the Next Step

- How can I set up the environment to incorporate the children's interests?
- What resources and materials will I need?
- What milestones, learning goals and objectives can I further support with this activity?
- How can I create a "good fit" for this child's temperament?
- Did I acknowledge children when they met expectations, and did I provide genuine praise to reinforce positive behaviors?
- Am I setting clear expectations?
- Do I need to change the routines or schedule?
- Have I incorporated all the developmental domains and considered the whole child?
- Did I plan for individual activities, small group, and larger group opportunities

Implementation: Applying Best Practices

- Create quiet and active spaces
- Plan for indoor and outdoor learning experiences
- Provide a variety of materials that will encourage open-ended play and exploration
- Follow a consistent routine and schedule
- Plan teacher-directed activities and create centers based on children's interest
- Consider the project approach and allow concepts to develop over time rather than a one and done
- Create a balance of play-based learning opportunities and skill-based learning opportunities?
- Plan to accommodate the diverse needs of each child
- Create a respectful and caring classroom environment that is supportive and nurturing to all learners

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6.1.6: A Closer Look at the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Children reveal who they are and how they think through their actions and behavior. How they play with others, how they use materials, and even the types of activities they choose to tell us a story. Each child has their own story to tell and it is up to us, as intentional teachers, to gather essential evidence and artifacts that can be used to inform our decisions on how to best support each child's learning, growth and development. Curriculum should be thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children. [58] To guide our decision making and to effectively implement meaningful curriculum we must utilize the Curriculum-Planning Process. Let's examine and discuss the 4 steps of the cycle.

Step 1: Observation – Looking and Listening

To develop effective curriculum, quality observations must be conducted. Whether spontaneous or planned, formal or informal, in-depth observations provide teachers with an advantage point. With each observation, teachers gain valuable insight that helps them gauge a child's zone of proximal development, and with that information, teachers can decide on how to best scaffold that child's learning. Likewise, teachers who conduct ongoing observations discover each child's baseline knowledge, and with that data, they can develop curriculum that supports children's play and learning in a developmentally appropriate manner. Furthermore, a teacher who regularly observes can track children's interests which in turn helps her to select materials and resources that will fascinate, intrigue, challenge and engage the children. Thus, when teachers take detailed notes and record objective facts, they recognize each child's individual pace, temperament, capabilities, interests and needs. It is with this vital data that they can ultimately meet children where they are at developmentally and map out where they need to go by intentionally setting reasonable expectations and goals.

To truly discover a child's intent, teachers need to be fully attentive to what children are doing and saying while they are playing and interacting with others. To be fully attentive requires a particular state of mind. Rather than being actively engaged with children or guiding their behavior or directing their play, teachers need to find moments where they can focus on looking and listening . Teachers need to approach each observation with an open mind - free of bias and preconceived notions, and they need to have an open lens to see what children are actually doing. Sometimes we can only look and listen for a brief moment; sometimes we can look and listen for a longer timeframe. Either way, we need to take in all that we are seeing and hearing so that we can discover a window into the child's thinking and find clues as to what they are capable of.

An observation is often prompted by a question. Here are a few questions that might guide your next observation:

- "In what ways are the children using the new materials in the block area?"
- "Which children can cut a zig-zag line with scissors?"
- "Who will recognize their name tag that is posted on the outside table?"
- "Will Sofia play with a peer today or keep to herself?"
- "I wonder how Jackson will do at drop-off today?"
- "I'm curious to see how the children will react to painting with fall leaves and who will try?
- "What activity area are the children using the most while outside?"

As teachers observe to find answers to questions like those mentioned above, they will need to record what children are doing and saying. No matter which tool, technique or method is used, teachers need to document what they are observing.

Step 2: Documentation – Recording Evidence and Gathering Artifacts

Documentation provides the vital evidence and visual artifacts that teachers need to accurately track each child's learning, growth and development in order to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum. Documentation helps teachers hold into memory the significant moments of play, exploration and learning. To gather data, teachers can opt to use several tools and techniques. Whether a teacher uses an anecdotal note, frequency count, or checklist to gather documentation, the goal is to have an extensive collection of factual evidence, along with work samples, that highlight each child's actions and behaviors, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, social interaction and intellectual abilities.

Let's take a moment to reiterate information that was discussed in a previous chapter about how to write effective evidence. First, all documentation needs to be factual. Teachers need to write down exactly what the children do and say. Second, it is suggested

that you record as many descriptive details as you can, while remaining as objective as possible. Third, document the whole child's development. More specifically,

1. Look for what children “can do” and note the milestones that have been mastered
2. Track language development by recording pertinent conversations
3. Track play patterns to see who engages in cooperative play and who prefers to play alone
4. Watch the interactions and social dynamics between peers
5. Next, in order to track a child’s development over time, remember to include the following information: date; time; location and setting; activity; and note the children that are engaged in the activity. Lastly, to plan meaningful curriculum, you will need to regularly review all the documentation you have collected so that you can ponder and interpret what was observed.

Pin It! Documentation Sample

Date: 2/10/19

Time: 9:30 -9:45

Location and Setting: Inside during Active Investigation Time. The following centers were open: Science – magnifying glass and leaves, Art – painting with pom poms, blocks with transportation vehicles, computer station – Clifford the Big Red Dog.

Activity : Science Area

Children Present: Hannah and Zoey

Hannah and Zoey were in the science area. They scooted their chairs up to the counter where the class pet gecko was perched. “Hello, Gex. How are you today? What are you eating? Asked Hannah. I love Gexy Gex don’t you? Zoey asked Hannah. “Yeaaah,” said Hannah. “I wish I had Gex,” said Zoey. “Me too!” Said Hannah. The 2 girls sat next to Gex the Gecko until it was clean up time (about 10 minutes). Hannah sat with her back to Zoey. Zoey played with Hannah’s hair (brushing it with her fingers maybe braiding it or putting it in a ponytail). They continued to chat back and forth to each other.

What are you able to interpret from this interaction?

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Step 3: Interpretation – Analyzing Observation Data

Before a teacher can reflect and plan developmentally appropriate curriculum, they must first interpret and analyze the documentation they have gathered. Ideally, as you observe and document, you are in the moment gathering snippets of detailed information and writing down objective facts. Once you have collected your data, only then will you begin to analyze “what does this all mean?”. As you review your documentation, you begin to think about each child’s individual actions, mannerisms, and behaviors, as well as ponder over peer interactions and group dynamics. Planning developmentally appropriate curriculum is somewhat like putting a puzzle together. As you wonder about the “why, who, what, when and how” you begin to put the pieces in place and generate potential curriculum ideas. First, you think about what the child can do on their own, and the milestones they have already mastered. Next, you think about if you are meeting each child where they are at developmentally. Then, you look for the areas of development that need further support. Lastly, you think about the zone of proximal development and how you might scaffold the children’s learning so they can reach their potential learning goals. Ultimately, your interpretations will guide your planning efforts. Let’s review the chart below: [59] The three zones of proximal development.



Figure **6.1.6.1**: Learning Zones. The Integrated Nature of Learning by CDE is used with permission.

Besides analyzing documentation on your own, you can share information with your co-teachers. With factual notes and work samples that document what a child does or says, teachers can collectively discuss what they think, and they can pose additional questions. For example, at some programs, one teacher works a morning shift and a co-teacher works in the afternoon. Although they each will have their own set of observations, having the opportunity to collaborate and share information about the children in their care will only enhance their effectiveness when planning curriculum. Here are some possible questions they can ask each other:

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Whether you analyze your data on your own or collectively with a co-teacher, it is the careful interpretation of observations and documentation that generates ideas for the next steps in planning curriculum. [62]

Step 4 Reflection: Planning for the Next Step

It is during the reflective process that interpreting the meaning of children's behaviors and interactions becomes important. These interpretations give us insight into each child's story. Each child's story informs our responsive practice. With this valuable insight, we can:

- Adapt the environment
- Modify the daily schedule and/or routines
- Make decisions about how to guide the children's learning based on what the child knows and can do as well as what the child is ready to try. [63]

Curriculum planning requires a considerable amount of time. Teachers need time to observe and collect documentation, they need time to interpret their data, and they need time to reflect on how to use that data to plan effective strategies that will foster a child's learning. High-quality preschool programs that support intentional teaching allocate time in teachers' schedules for them to reflect and plan curriculum individually and collectively as a team. [64]

As we reflect, we must ask ourselves a wide range of questions. The answers to these questions lead to individualized care and learning. Let's look at a few questions you may ask yourself as you begin to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum:

- What skill or activity does the child appear to be working on?
- What learning strategies is the child using to play with different toys?
- Does the child engage with objects or people differently than a month ago? What has changed? What has not changed?
- Do my actions affect the outcomes of the child's experience? How so?
- How does the information relate to goals for the child? The family's goals? The program's school readiness goals?

Once we have reviewed all our data we can plan meaningful curriculum. The most effective curriculum will:

- Motivate children to explore their environment
- Inspire children to investigate various centers and activities
- Encourage children to create with new materials
- Allow children to engage in conversations and prompt them to ask questions
- Prompt children to interact with peers
- Permit children to problem solve
- Celebrate diversity and embrace uniqueness
- Accommodate each child's learning styles and individual needs

As teachers reflect on children's play, they discover possibilities for designing curriculum to sustain, extend, and help children's play to be more complex and, consequently, support the children's continual learning. Teachers review ideas for possible next steps in the curriculum. Possible steps might include adding materials to interest areas, books to read with large or small groups, activities to do in small groups, or a topic to investigate over time with the children. With clear ideas or objectives in mind, teachers plan curriculum that includes strategies to enhance the learning of all children in a group, as well as strategies to support the learning of individual children.

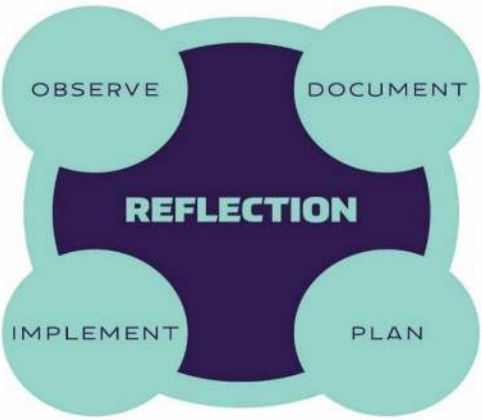


Figure **6.1.6.3**: Reflection is the center of curriculum planning . [65]

Pin It! Observation and Documentation

Date: 10/10/19

Time : 10:45 – 10:55 am

Location and Setting : Inside during open exploration the following centers were open – easel painting, blocks with fall materials, dramatic play with firefighter and homelife, math center with pumpkin cut outs for counting

Activity: Dramatic Play Area and Library Area

Children Present : Joey

- Joey played in the dramatic play area. He was dressed up in the firefighter outfit. He held the toilet paper roll in his left hand and pointed it towards a basket of stuffed animals. As he waived the toilet paper roll back and forth (side to side) he said “pssshhhhhhsssshhh.” After a minute or so, Joey dropped the toilet paper roll and picked up a stuffed doggie from the basket. He took the stuffed animal to the table. As he pet the doggie, he said “You’re ok, You’re ok aren’t ya.” He then kissed the doggie on the nose, picked it up and carried it over to the library area where he sat down on the carpet square. He put the dog in his lap and started to look through a book.

Interpretation:

- With the recent fires, I wonder if Joey saw firefighters on the news or working in his neighborhood?
- I wonder if Joey has family members that are firefighters?
- I wonder what other community helpers would be interesting to explore?
- Joey has not been observed reading before, I’m curious to see what milestones he has mastered? Can he turn the pages? Can he recognize letters or words? Can he recall information?
- Joey played by himself. In previous observations he played with Martin. I wonder if they had a disagreement with Martine. I wonder if Joey needed time to himself. Maybe Martin wasn’t interested in playing firefighters.

Reflection:

- What materials can I add to the dramatic play area to extend Joey’s interest in pretending to be a firefighter?
- Are there storybooks about community helpers that highlight firefighters?

Step 5: Implementation

Once a plan has been formally written, teachers will implement it accordingly. While implementing the plan, teachers watch and listen to determine if the curriculum was effective. They will watch how children respond to the activities, materials and resources, and how they interact with peers and the environment, and how they process new information. In essence, teachers are looking for “the light bulb to go off.” It is during the implementation step that the curriculum planning cycle begins again.

Think About It…Consider this Case Study

For the past few weeks, children in Miss Emily's class (ages 3-5 years) have been watching the crops across the preschool grow. During lunchtime, Miss Emily heard the children talking about what they had for lunch. Later in the day, the children watched the sprinklers water the yard and ask the teacher about how the water gets to the sprinklers to water the grass. While playing outside at the sensory table, four children are fascinated with pouring and dumping water into pipes and seeing how far it can travel.



Figure **6.1.6.3**: Public Domain; Nathan Lipscomb via Image)

Observation: Lucas is somewhat cautious in joining others in play. He stands to the side and watches others as they play.

Interpretation: Lucas appears to want to join the play, but may need just a little bit of support. I plan to watch for moments when he is on the sidelines of play, and find ways to invite him into the social play, and stay with him to support him in his encounters with the other children.

Questions to Consider

What can you infer about the children's interests?

What can you infer about their knowledge base?

It would be safe to say that these children understand that for plants to grow, you need to water them. It would also be safe to infer that the children are most likely interested in how water travels, as you observed their actions at the water table and their questions of where and how water gets to sprinkler systems. As an intentional teacher, with your observations, you would maybe consider doing your next unit on water systems where you can incorporate all developmental domains, based on the children's interests

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6.1.7: Conclusion

While some planned curriculum activities might be based on a teacher's knowledge of age-appropriate developmental milestones, other activities might be prompted by children's interests or ideas, while other activities might be suggested by the children's families. To plan meaningful curriculum teachers are encouraged to utilize the curriculum planning cycle. Through careful observation, documentation and interpretation teachers collect evidence and gather artifacts that prompt inquiry as to what children know and need. With that information teachers can reflect, plan and implement effective curriculum so that children can thrive as they master the major developmental milestones and meet school readiness goals and objectives.

To ensure high-quality practice, teachers should consider incorporating daily routines, structured and unstructured activities, as well as space for self-discovery. Curriculum should be designed to encourage children to explore their classroom environment, socialize with others, and challenge themselves to reach new levels. As suggested by NAEYC, when planning curriculum teachers should consider using an assortment of materials that are appropriate to each child's age and stage of development. Well -planned curriculum considers each child's individual needs and includes adaptations for children with special needs and disabilities. Lastly, for curriculum to be truly meaningful and engaging it should be reflective of each child's cultural background and home-life practices. [67]

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6.1.8: Age and Individually Appropriate Learning Experiences

A Further Look at DAP Areas of Knowledge

In the previous section, you explored the DAP Areas of Knowledge, specifically cultural appropriateness. As we look further at planning interdisciplinary units, we will explore Areas 1 and 2: Age and Individual Appropriateness.

1. **Age-Appropriateness** – using what is known about child development and learning in general. More specifically this means: What is known about child development and learning: Knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and challenging to children.
2. **Individual-Appropriateness** – using what is known about each child as an individual to be responsive to each child. More specific examples of this include: What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group: [Necessary] to be able to adapt and be responsive to inevitable individual variation.

Age and Individual Appropriateness align with the Head Start Guiding Principles of:

1. Each child is unique and can succeed

5. Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.

6. Teaching must be intentional and focus on how children learn and grow.

7. Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs

Early Learning Standards

Early Learning Standards can help teachers provide learning experiences that are age and individual-appropriate. By knowing what children should know and be able to do at certain ages, yet understanding all children develop at various rates teachers can plan developmentally appropriate experiences. In Wisconsin, see the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and the Guiding Principles.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Reflect 5 Domains of Learning.

II. Social and Emotional Development

III. Language Development and Communication

IV. Approaches to Learning

V. Cognition and General Knowledge

Observing the children in our care and looking at the developmental continuum and sample behaviors in the WMELS book will help teachers to be sure they are planning learning experiences and activities that are age-appropriate, individual-appropriate, and social- and cultural-appropriate. When planning your interdisciplinary unit be sure to plan activities to provide learning in all domains.

References

[1] National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009) Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/PSDAP.pdf

[2] Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is in the public domain

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7: The Curriculum Planning Cycle at a Glance

Observation: Looking and Listening

- May be Spontaneous or Planned
- Watch and listen to children while they explore, investigate, play, problem solve, interact and socialize
- Keep an open mind as you gather evidence and artifacts, and look for what children CAN DO

Observe children during daily routines, transition times, mealtimes, and while inside and outside

Documentation: Recording and Collecting Objective Evidence

- Record what you see and hear
- Include date, time, and location
- Include child's first name
- Include who else is engaged in the activity
- Document the purpose of the activity – highlighting what the child is supposed to do
- All recorded evidence should be concise, factual and have descriptive details
- Use a variety of observation and documentation methods and tools to collect evidence

Record actual evidence as you see it (avoid summarizing or assuming)

Interpretation: Analyzing Data

Ask questions: What is this action telling me?

- How did the child approach the activity and how long did the child stay engaged?
- Is this behavior typical for the child or unusual?
- Would this child benefit from peer scaffolding?
- Does this child need more individualized support?
- Does this child have more feisty, flexible or fearful temperament traits?
- How can I motivate this child?
- Were there any new play patterns or social interactions?
- Did the child master any new skills or milestones?
- Are there any skills or milestones that need further support?
- Were there any "red flags"?

When analyzing behavior, consider the ABCs: the Antecedent (What happened BEFORE), the Behavior (as it happens) and the Consequence (what happened AFTER)

Review previous observations to monitor progress over time

Reflection: Planning for the Next Step

- How can I set up the environment to incorporate the children's interests?
- What resources and materials will I need?
- What milestones, learning goals and objectives can I further support with this activity?
- How can I create a "good fit" for this child's temperament?
- Did I acknowledge children when they met expectations, and did I provide genuine praise to reinforce positive behaviors?
- Am I setting clear expectations?
- Do I need to change the routines or schedule?
- Have I incorporated all the developmental domains and considered the whole child?
- Did I plan for individual activities, small group, and larger group opportunities

Implementation: Applying Best Practices

- Create quiet and active spaces
- Plan for indoor and outdoor learning experiences
- Provide a variety of materials that will encourage open-ended play and exploration
- Follow a consistent routine and schedule
- Plan teacher-directed activities and create centers based on children's interest
- Consider the project approach and allow concepts to develop over time rather than a one and done
- Create a balance of play-based learning opportunities and skill-based learning opportunities?
- Plan to accommodate the diverse needs of each child
- Create a respectful and caring classroom environment that is supportive and nurturing to all learners

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7.1: A Closer Look at the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Children reveal who they are and how they think through their actions and behavior. How they play with others, how they use materials, and even the types of activities they choose to tell us a story. Each child has their own story to tell and it is up to us, as intentional teachers, to gather essential evidence and artifacts that can be used to inform our decisions on how to best support each child's learning, growth and development. Curriculum should be thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children. [58] To guide our decision making and to effectively implement meaningful curriculum we must utilize the Curriculum-Planning Process. Let's examine and discuss the 4 steps of the cycle.

Step 1: Observation – Looking and Listening

To develop effective curriculum, quality observations must be conducted. Whether spontaneous or planned, formal or informal, in-depth observations provide teachers with an advantage point. With each observation, teachers gain valuable insight that helps them gauge a child's zone of proximal development, and with that information, teachers can decide on how to best scaffold that child's learning. Likewise, teachers who conduct ongoing observations discover each child's baseline knowledge, and with that data, they can develop curriculum that supports children's play and learning in a developmentally appropriate manner. Furthermore, a teacher who regularly observes can track children's interests which in turn helps her to select materials and resources that will fascinate, intrigue, challenge and engage the children. Thus, when teachers take detailed notes and record objective facts, they recognize each child's individual pace, temperament, capabilities, interests and needs. It is with this vital data that they can ultimately meet children where they are at developmentally and map out where they need to go by intentionally setting reasonable expectations and goals.

To truly discover a child's intent, teachers need to be fully attentive to what children are doing and saying while they are playing and interacting with others. To be fully attentive requires a particular state of mind. Rather than being actively engaged with children or guiding their behavior or directing their play, teachers need to find moments where they can focus on looking and listening . Teachers need to approach each observation with an open mind - free of bias and preconceived notions, and they need to have an open lens to see what children are actually doing. Sometimes we can only look and listen for a brief moment; sometimes we can look and listen for a longer timeframe. Either way, we need to take in all that we are seeing and hearing so that we can discover a window into the child's thinking and find clues as to what they are capable of.

An observation is often prompted by a question. Here are a few questions that might guide your next observation:

- "In what ways are the children using the new materials in the block area?"
- "Which children can cut a zig-zag line with scissors?"
- "Who will recognize their name tag that is posted on the outside table?"
- "Will Sofia play with a peer today or keep to herself?"
- "I wonder how Jackson will do at drop-off today?"
- "I'm curious to see how the children will react to painting with fall leaves and who will try?
- "What activity area are the children using the most while outside?"

As teachers observe to find answers to questions like those mentioned above, they will need to record what children are doing and saying. No matter which tool, technique or method is used, teachers need to document what they are observing.

Step 2: Documentation – Recording Evidence and Gathering Artifacts

Documentation provides the vital evidence and visual artifacts that teachers need to accurately track each child's learning, growth and development in order to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum. Documentation helps teachers hold into memory the significant moments of play, exploration and learning. To gather data, teachers can opt to use several tools and techniques. Whether a teacher uses an anecdotal note, frequency count, or checklist to gather documentation, the goal is to have an extensive collection of factual evidence, along with work samples, that highlight each child's actions and behaviors, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, social interaction and intellectual abilities.

Let's take a moment to reiterate information that was discussed in a previous chapter about how to write effective evidence. First, all documentation needs to be factual. Teachers need to write down exactly what the children do and say. Second, it is suggested

that you record as many descriptive details as you can, while remaining as objective as possible. Third, document the whole child's development. More specifically,

1. Look for what children “can do” and note the milestones that have been mastered
2. Track language development by recording pertinent conversations
3. Track play patterns to see who engages in cooperative play and who prefers to play alone
4. Watch the interactions and social dynamics between peers
5. Next, in order to track a child’s development over time, remember to include the following information: date; time; location and setting; activity; and note the children that are engaged in the activity. Lastly, to plan meaningful curriculum, you will need to regularly review all the documentation you have collected so that you can ponder and interpret what was observed.

Pin It! Documentation Sample

Date: 2/10/19

Time: 9:30 -9:45

Location and Setting: Inside during Active Investigation Time. The following centers were open: Science – magnifying glass and leaves, Art – painting with pom poms, blocks with transportation vehicles, computer station – Clifford the Big Red Dog.

Activity : Science Area

Children Present: Hannah and Zoey

Hannah and Zoey were in the science area. They scooted their chairs up to the counter where the class pet gecko was perched. “Hello, Gex. How are you today? What are you eating? Asked Hannah. I love Gexy Gex don’t you? Zoey asked Hannah. “Yeaaah,” said Hannah. “I wish I had Gex,” said Zoey. “Me too!” Said Hannah. The 2 girls sat next to Gex the Gecko until it was clean up time (about 10 minutes). Hannah sat with her back to Zoey. Zoey played with Hannah’s hair (brushing it with her fingers maybe braiding it or putting it in a ponytail). They continued to chat back and forth to each other.

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- "What growth do you see?"
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- Make decisions about how to guide the children's learning based on what the child knows and can do as well as what the child is ready to try. [63]

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- What skill or activity does the child appear to be working on?
- What learning strategies is the child using to play with different toys?
- Does the child engage with objects or people differently than a month ago? What has changed? What has not changed?
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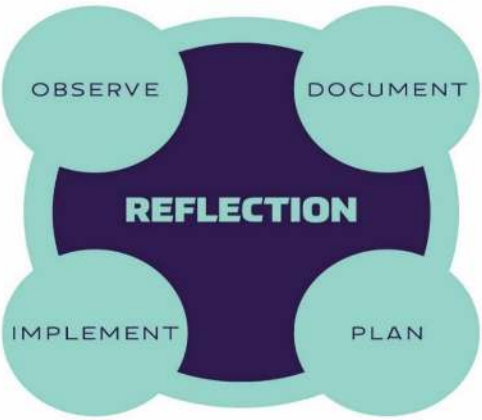


Figure **7.1.3**: Reflection is the center of curriculum planning . [65]

Pin It! Observation and Documentation

Date: 10/10/19

Time : 10:45 – 10:55 am

Location and Setting : Inside during open exploration the following centers were open – easel painting, blocks with fall materials, dramatic play with firefighter and homelife, math center with pumpkin cut outs for counting

Activity: Dramatic Play Area and Library Area

Children Present : Joey

- Joey played in the dramatic play area. He was dressed up in the firefighter outfit. He held the toilet paper roll in his left hand and pointed it towards a basket of stuffed animals. As he waived the toilet paper roll back and forth (side to side) he said “pssshhhhhssshhh.” After a minute or so, Joey dropped the toilet paper roll and picked up a stuffed doggie from the basket. He took the stuffed animal to the table. As he pet the doggie, he said “You’re ok, You’re ok aren’t ya.” He then kissed the doggie on the nose, picked it up and carried it over to the library area where he sat down on the carpet square. He put the dog in his lap and started to look through a book.

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Figure **7.1.3**: Public Domain; Nathan Lipscomb via Image)

Observation: Lucas is somewhat cautious in joining others in play. He stands to the side and watches others as they play.

Interpretation: Lucas appears to want to join the play, but may need just a little bit of support. I plan to watch for moments when he is on the sidelines of play, and find ways to invite him into the social play, and stay with him to support him in his encounters with the other children.

Questions to Consider

What can you infer about the children's interests?

What can you infer about their knowledge base?

It would be safe to say that these children understand that for plants to grow, you need to water them. It would also be safe to infer that the children are most likely interested in how water travels, as you observed their actions at the water table and their questions of where and how water gets to sprinkler systems. As an intentional teacher, with your observations, you would maybe consider doing your next unit on water systems where you can incorporate all developmental domains, based on the children's interests

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7.2: Benefits of Implementing Meaningful Curriculum

From the moment a child is born, each interaction and experience affects their brain development and lays the foundation for future success. Research on brain development shows that early experiences are essential. It is suggested that if children are not interested in what they are learning, and if it is not meaningful or connected to their cultural practices, they will not create new neural pathways in which to store new knowledge. Subsequently, children will not retain information or learn as intended. As suggested in the California Early Learning Foundations, well planned curriculum provides opportunities for children to use, build, and master skills. With every engaging activity, children are encouraged to investigate key concepts in mathematics, science, and literacy, explore their creativity, establish relationships with peers, and develop self-efficacy skills. [54]

It is important to note that thoughtful curriculum planning does not just impact children for that present moment. A high-quality program that incorporates meaningful curriculum can provide long-lasting benefits. As demonstrated with the Abecedarian Project, a vastly recognized longitudinal research study that followed a group of 111 children into adulthood, not only did the children who received high-quality child care outperform their peers in math and reading, 30 years later project participants continued to exhibit significant merits as compared to their counterparts in the control group. More specifically, children that participated in the Abecedarian Project were four times more likely to earn a college degree. Additionally, it was reported that “Twenty-three percent of the participants graduated from a four-year college or university compared to only 6 percent of the control group.” Other significant benefits included: participants were more likely to have been consistently employed (75 percent had worked full time for at least 16 of the previous 24 months, compared to 53 percent of the control group) and less likely to have used public assistance (only 4 percent received benefits for at least 10 percent of the previous seven years, compared to 20 percent of the control group). They also showed a tendency to delay parenthood by almost two years compared to the control group. Project participants also appeared to have done better in relation to several other social and economic measures (including higher incomes) but those results were not statistically significant. [55]



Figure 5.3 Robust Curriculum [56]

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Communities of Practice and the Reflective Process

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify your community of practice and pedagogical friends.

8.1: What is a Community of Practice
8.2: Cultivating a Commitment to being Reflective

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8.1: What is a Community of Practice



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> *"It is only through a give and take with others and by confronting the challenges they pose that critical reflection can be promoted" (Boud, 2001 p.14-15)*

Video: Where Good Ideas Come From

To learn about where good ideas come from watch the video below by Steve Johnson at Riverhead Books [4:06].



Video: "WHERE GOOD IDEAS COME FROM by Steven Johnson" by RiverheadBooks [4:07] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.

Read

Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger and communities of practice by infed.org

After watching and reading the above content, it is important to have a shared understanding of what we mean when we refer to a community of practice. The College of Early Childhood Educators references the communities of practice definition by Wenger et al. (2002) as “a group of professionals who share a common concern or passion about a practice topic and who wish to learn how to improve this area of practice by communicating and collaborating with each other regularly over time.” (2018, p. 2). Wenger (1999) states there are three main elements that make a community of practice different from other groups: the domain is the connection between the group, and there is some commitment to a shared competence that makes it different than a club or group of friends. This community is the second element. This means the group is engaging in a relationship to help learn from one another, and finally, the third element is the practice. This is the practitioner looking to share their experience around a sustained problem or seeking solutions. Communities of practice often are more formalized but not necessarily formal. They provide a time and space and a protocol for coming together. A community of practice can have members who come in and out of the group, but usually a core group exists to help move the interests of the group forward through solutions and practice.

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8.2: Cultivating a Commitment to being Reflective



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Boud (2001) reinforces the benefit of reflection in a social context for educators: These reflective processes can be undertaken in isolation from others, but doing so often leads to a reinforcement of existing views and perceptions. Working in pairs or with a group for which learning is a reason for being can begin to transform perspectives and challenge old patterns of learning. It is only through a give and take with others and by confronting the challenges they pose that critical reflection can be promoted.

As educators embark on the practice of reflection, the elements that Taylor (2007) describes support the process of reflection and create concreteness to what, for some, might feel quite abstract. The notion of reflecting individually, with a critical friend or mentor, is noted as the educator moves through the stage of conscious competence. Rather than becoming complacent or habitual, Taylor (2007) suggests moving into reflective consciousness, which he describes as mature practice. Skattebol (2010), suggests “engagement in this type of reflection propels educators to examine the dimensions of the teaching or learning that popular discourse regards as interior, and how non-conscious (often collective) habits operate in tandem with our conscious and cognitively driven interactions” (p.89).

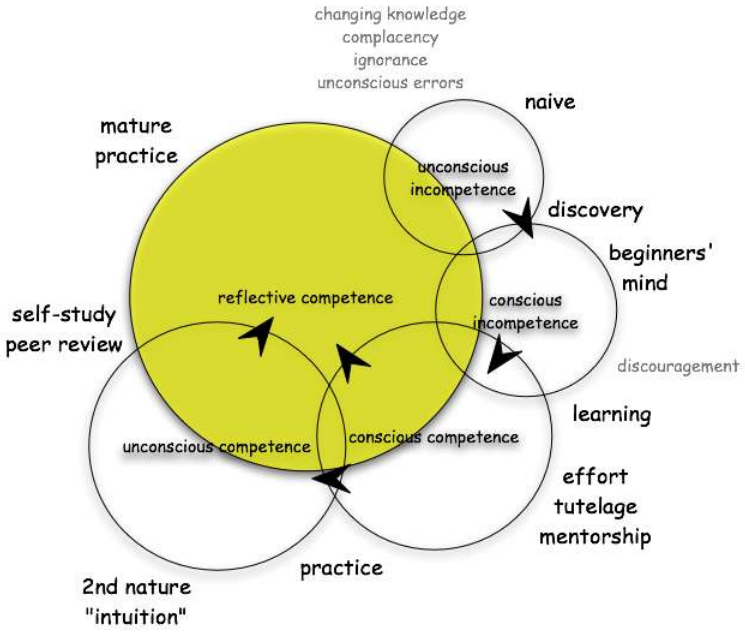


Figure 1- Conscious Competence Learning Model. Courtesy of Will Taylor, Department of Homeopathic Medicine, National College of Natural Medicine, Portland, Oregon, USA, March 2007.

This context of reflection takes our thinking from a habit to an intention or reflective consciousness, and this is the essence of reflective practice.

Dig Deeper

For more information on this topic check out the resource links below:

- Communities of Practice[PDF] (The College of ECE)
- Frontiers | Reflective Practice: A Method to Improve Teachers' Well-Being. A Longitudinal Training in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers | Psychology (Research Article)
- Creating Conditions for Reflective Practice in Early Childhood Education (Journal Article)
- Key Concept: Learning Communities

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Environments for Teaching and Learning

9.1: Learning Environments

9.1.1: Measuring Quality with Environmental Rating Scales

9.1.2: Indoor Learning Environments

9.1.3: Outdoor Learning Environments

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SECTION OVERVIEW

9.1: Learning Environments

9.1.1: Measuring Quality with Environmental Rating Scales

9.1.2: Indoor Learning Environments

9.1.3: Outdoor Learning Environments

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9.1.1: Measuring Quality with Environmental Rating Scales

One of the characteristics of a **high-quality** early childhood program is the practice of continuously monitoring children's development, along with the environmental setting and teacher interactions. By evaluating the overall performance in these key areas, teachers, administrators and families can reflect, make necessary changes and improvements to support all students and families. There are numerous tools on the market that evaluate program quality. For the purpose of this text we will focus on just a few tools that are highly recognized to monitor quality practices in preschool programs.

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

The **Environment Rating Scale** is a standardized assessment tool that can help caregivers, teachers, and administrators improve the quality of their program. The **ERS** measure process quality.

Process quality consists of the various interactions that go on in a classroom between staff and children, staff, parents, and other adults, among the children themselves, and the interactions children have with the many materials and activities in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, schedule and materials that support these interactions. Process quality is assessed primarily through observation and has been found to be more predictive of child outcomes than structural indicators such as staff-to-child ratio, group size, cost of care, and even type of care, for example child care center or family child care home. [11]

There are 4 Environment Rating Scales:

1. The Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale **(ITERS**) for programs serving young learners aged 6 weeks to 30 months
2. The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (**ECERS**) for preschool programs serving children aged 3-5 years
3. The School-Age Child Environmental Rating Scale (**SACERS**) for afterschool programs serving children aged 5-12 years
4. The Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (**FCCERS**) for family childcare programs serving children aged 6 weeks to 12 years.

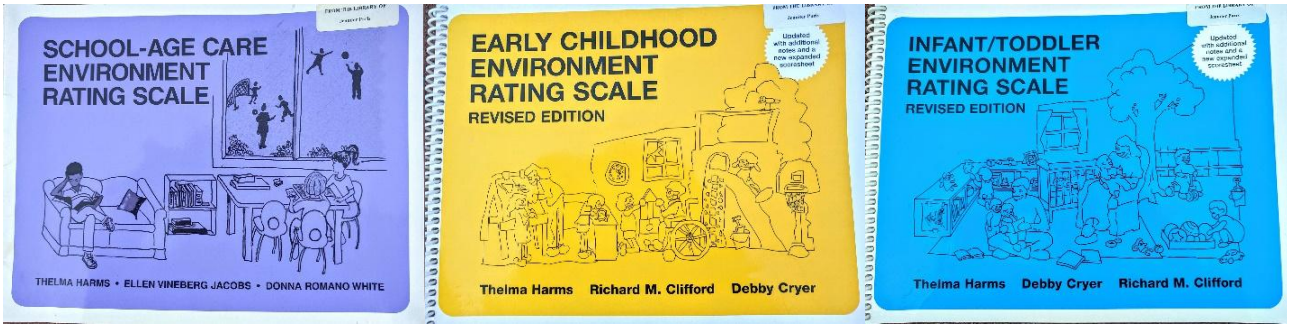


Figure **9.1.1.1**: Rating Scale Texts [12]

Why Use Environment Rating Scales

The scales are used in a variety of ways including for self-assessment by center staff, preparation for accreditation, and voluntary improvement efforts by licensing or other agencies. For example, in the United States:

- Several states, including California , Massachusetts, Montana, Mississippi, Kansas, Oregon, Kentucky, New Mexico, Georgia, Florida, Wisconsin, and Nebraska have also initiated quality evaluation and improvement programs using our scales. Each state is tailoring its use of the scales to its individual needs and resources.
- The state of Arkansas has trained personnel, who do assessments and provide training and technical assistance so that childcare centers and homes can increase their quality of care. Another innovative feature of the Arkansas program is that parents who select childcare facilities with an average of 4.5 or higher on our scales are eligible for two times the state childcare tax exemption. Thus, both parents and providers are being rewarded for quality improvements that benefit the children.
- The state of Colorado uses the scales in a variety of program improvement and evaluation projects. For example, Denver has a quality improvement program that uses on site consultation and training based on scale scores. Many of the centers participating in this program serve poor and minority children and their families. The state of Colorado is currently considering a tiered reimbursement system using the scales.

- North Carolina also currently uses scale scores as part of their 5-star rated license system. Centers and family childcare homes are awarded either one or two stars based on compliance with licensing standards. Programs may voluntarily apply for an additional three stars based on a set of quality measures including the licensing compliance record, teacher and director education, and the levels of process quality as measured by the appropriate environmental scale. Only the lowest level of licensing is mandatory. However, an additional fee is paid to the provider of subsidized care for each additional star earned voluntarily.
- The Oklahoma 3-star tiered license incorporates an evaluation with the scales in the second tier as a basis for quality improvement, and provides technical assistance based on scores for meeting accreditation standards. Tiered reimbursement is a part of this system.
- Tennessee is now initiating a rated license system, based on North Carolina's experience. In their system, however, program evaluation is not voluntary, but is required yearly to create a "Report Card" that must be posted with the license so childcare consumers have access to reliable information on the quality of childcare they are using for their children. Tiered reimbursement will also be tied to scores on the scale.
- All the US military services have been using the scales routinely in their center and family childcare homes for program improvement and monitoring. The military child development system was recognized by Executive Order in 1998 for its high quality.
- Our environmental rating scales are widely used by programs as they prepare for accreditation . This is due to the fact that our scales use a format with detailed levels of quality that provides a blueprint for gradual change. The content of our scales is completely supportive of the various credentialing and accreditation programs.

The ERS Tool

As suggested by ERS, in order to provide high-quality care and education experiences to all children and their families, a childcare program must provide for the three basic needs all children have:

- **Protection of their health and safety**
- **Building positive relationships**
- **Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience**

Let’s take a closer look at how to use the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3) for preschool programs serving children aged 3-5 years.

The Scale consists of 35 items organized into 6 subscales: [13]

- Space and Furnishings
- Personal Care Routines
- Language and Literacy
- Learning Activities
- Interaction
- Program Structure

Within each subscale there are indicators that are arranged in a hierarchical order with basic needs at low levels and the more educational and interactional aspects at higher levels. The requirements for each indicator must be met before the next indicator is measured. If a requirement is not met, scoring then comes to a stop.

Scoring:

- 1 = inadequate
- 3 = minimal
- 5 = good
- 7 = excellent

Empirical Research

Empirical studies using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) tool have generally found positive associations between the quality of early childhood programs and child development.

The ECERS-R (1998) is the revised edition of the original ECERS (1980). It is currently being used in several major studies, including the Early Head Start Study (Mathematica Corporation), and Welfare, Children and Families: A Three City Study (Columbia University, University of Chicago, and Harvard University). The original ECERS was used in the Head Start FACES study, in which over 400 classrooms are included nationwide. The preliminary results in all these studies show that the ECERS and the ECERS-R are performing very well.

Additionally, it should be noted that the ECERS and ITERS were used as the comprehensive quality measures in the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989) and the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study (1995), the major studies of their time. The FDCRS was used in The Study of Children in Family Child Care and Relative Care (Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn, 1994). In all of these studies, a relationship was found between higher scores on the ECERS and more positive child development outcomes in areas that are considered important for later school success. The effects of higher quality early childhood experiences have now been shown to last at least through the second grade of elementary school (Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Byler, Rustici, & Zelazo, 1999). Research is continuing to evaluate longer-lasting effects. [14]

ERS Strengths

The instrument has good test-retest reliability, high inter-rater reliability (Clifford et al., 2010), and many studies have demonstrated its predictive validity (Burchinal et al., 2008; Montes et al., 2005; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001). Furthermore, the results show that ECERS-R is a significant predictor of child development in two domains: physical health and well-being, and social competence.

ERS Limitation

While the ECERS-R is a useful tool to measure the quality of early childhood programs across various settings, there are some limitations. Because the Environmental Rating Scales were developed in the United States, the relevance to non-American cultural settings has been questioned (Dickinson,2006; Mathers, Singler,& Karemaker, 2012). Some have criticized that the ITERS-R scale places too much emphasis on the structural aspects of childcare (Sanders & Howes, 2013;Vermeer et al., 2008, while others are concerned that the Rating Scales fail to measure the interactions between the teacher and children and families, which is considered to be key quality factors in childcare (Bisceglia, Perlman, Schaack,& Jenkins, 2009; Helmerhorst et al., 2014).

Although the Environment Rating Scales are highly regarded, there has also been some considerable criticism. For example, a closer look at the items in the ECERS-R reveals that some items may be less relevant than others in our study's setting—poor, rural villages in Indonesia. Item 27 outlines the provision of TV, video or computers for classroom activities. Item 3 describes the provision of soft furnishings such as carpeted space and cushions for children's relaxation and comfort. While all of these provisions would be great to have, they are often unfeasible in rural, resource-constrained environments. In over 3 weeks of field observation, we rarely saw soft furnishings—sitting on the floor for children and adults alike is the norm in rural Indonesia – even when soft furnishings are available. We did encounter one center with a computer lab during piloting of the ECERS-R but this was a state-of- the-art center where not one but three international donors had channeled funding. [15]

ECERS FAQ Find:

- When was the first ECERS tool published?
- Who typically uses the ECERS tool?
- Who administers the assessment tool?
- How can teachers prepare for an assessment?
- When was the last time the ECERS tool was updated?
- How many measures are there in the ECERS?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

Research shows that all children benefit from high-quality instruction and classroom interactions, regardless of language status, race/ethnicity, or special needs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). When teachers provide individualized support and guidance to the children in their classrooms, they contribute to each child's social and emotional development, which has been linked to their overall physical development and academic achievement. The CLASS tool showcases

various strategies that teachers can implement to promote quality interactions. It is important to note that class does not favor any curriculum model over another.

The CLASS tool differs from other measurement tools that may address the content of the physical environment, available materials, or a specific curriculum. Although the physical environment materials and curriculum are important, the CLASS tool focuses more on the context of how teachers directly interact, engage and communicate with the children in their classroom environment. CLASS measures cooperative and creative learning experiences and focuses on the teacher's role in allowing children to be active participants in their own learning. More specifically, CLASS promotes social justice and equity, and has "indicators" to assess how a teacher develops a sense of community and empathy for others. Not only must the teacher consider the tangible environmental elements, they must consciously incorporate quality interactions. Teachers must ask questions and engage in thoughtful conversations that emphasize back and forth dialogue rather than one and done responses. Teachers must extend the children's vocabulary and create opportunities where children can use their expressive language skills. Lastly, teachers must provide positive feedback to children throughout the day and allow children to make choices.

Why Use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

As advocates and educators, we know that engaging interactions and well-designed environments form the foundation for optimal learning to occur. High-quality preschool programs should strive to incorporate the following:

- well-managed and well-organized classrooms with clearly defined spaces
- support systems to enhance children's social and emotional development
- a variety of instructional materials that stimulate children's thinking and curiosity
- opportunities for authentic interactions and meaningful conversations
- a balance of teacher-directed activities and child-directed activities
- enhanced language and literacy implemented throughout the day
- opportunities for movement and classroom spaces that support kinesthetic learning

Research findings from over 3,000 classrooms found that children who were in classrooms that received higher CLASS ratings showed greater gains in social skill, language, early literacy, and math development. Furthermore, after a decade of research, crucial conclusions were made that suggest using the CLASS tool can not only improve the effectiveness of an individual classroom, it can also improve the program as well. Let's look at some reasons as to why you might want to use the CLASS tool:

1. Effective teacher–child interactions are an active and crucial ingredient for children's social and academic development.
2. Children in ECE settings are not consistently exposed to effective teacher–child interactions.
3. Initial evidence suggests thresholds for effective teacher–child interactions, as measured by CLASS, in promoting children's learning and development.
4. Quality improvement efforts that focus explicitly on teacher–child interactions maximize impacts for children.
5. Carefully designed and implemented professional development support can improve the quality of teacher–child interactions

The CLASS Tool

The CLASS Tool is divided into 3 Domains: Emotional Support; Classroom Organization; and Instructional Support. Each Domain has several Dimensions (see the chart below), and each Dimension has several Indicators that provide detailed descriptors of how a teacher should interact (Note: the indicators for each dimension are not listed in the chart below.)

Table **9.1.1.2**: CLASS Tool Domains

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
1. Positive Climate 2. Negative Climate 3. Teacher Sensitivity 4. Regard for Student Perspective	1. Behavior Management 2. Productivity 3. Instructional Learning Formats	1. Concept Development 2. Quality of Feedback 3. Language Modeling 4. 4. Literacy (optional)

Scoring

Scoring is based on a 7-point scale, with the "low range" being a score of 1 to 2, the "middle range" a score of 3 to 5, and the "high range" a score of 6 to 7. The higher the range in each dimension the better.

CLASS Strengths

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool is a systematic observation tool that can be used to measure the interactions between teachers and their children in typical classroom settings. The CLASS tool has also been used to assess classroom quality across diverse populations, including dual language learners (DLLs), children from migrant families, tribal populations, in addition to children with special needs and children with diverse cultural backgrounds (Downer et al., 2011). The CLASS tool is deemed both reliable and valid, and it provides preschool programs and individual classroom teachers with an opportunity to regularly monitor and evaluate themselves.

Formal assessments can be made by certified CLASS evaluators and the results are shared with the teacher and program with the intent of finding strategies on how to improve interactions. The tool can also be used informally. Teachers can review each domain, dimension and indicator, and then reflect on their own practices to find ways they can incorporate more intentional interactions.

CLASS Limitations

Even though every CLASS observer is formally certified, there will be small, systematic differences in their scoring. Some observers may tend to give slightly higher scores, while others may tend to be slightly more critical. Although slight differences fall within the threshold for "reliability," inaccurate results have been noted. One other limitation is that there is little emphasis on structural quality . More specifically, CLASS does not assess the physical environment or materials, and it is not designed to review program safety.

Additional Methods, Tools and Techniques to Ensure High-Quality Practices

Program Accreditation

Both the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (link: https://www.naeyc.org/) and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) [16] (link: https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation) are nationally recognized agencies that set a standard of excellence for overall program quality. Programs that pursue accreditation must meet key criteria expectations in areas such as "the learning environment, teacher and child interactions, staff qualifications, professional development, and family engagement" (Center for America, 2017, p. 6). Both NAEYC and NECPA offer training, technical assistance, and consulting services to support early care and education programs that not only want to meet but exceed standard industry practices. Accreditation is a voluntary endeavor that requires programs to undergo a self-study as they prepare for the validation process. Programs that achieve accreditation status must be re-assessed every three years to demonstrate a continued commitment to high-quality practices.

The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and school-age care programs. [17] The main purpose of the QRIS is to improve and standardize the quality of care in all facilities in the state, and to make childcare more accessible and affordable for families. In Wisconsin, the QRIS used is YoungStar. Quality rating systems can:

- Assess program quality comparably across provider types (publicly and privately funded, centers and family childcare homes) throughout the state
- Align program standards with early learning and practitioner standards
- Support continuous quality improvement for participating programs and their staff
- Provide families with information about program quality to assist them in making informed choices. [18]

The Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS)

In the late 80's, Arnett released the Caregiver Interaction Scale (1989) to assess a global rating of caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness in both early care and education settings and family childcare environments. The tool focuses on caregiver / teacher emotional interactions and measures several items including sensitivity, harshness, detachment, and permissiveness. Items are rated on a 4-point scale. The scale has limitations as it captures only one aspect of process quality, and thus it is suggested that additional assessments be used to measure more structural dimensions.

NAEYC Position Statement on Importance of Environmental Assessments

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education take the position that policy-makers, the early childhood profession, and other stakeholders in young children's lives have a shared responsibility to:

- Construct comprehensive systems of curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation guided by sound early childhood practices, effective early learning standards and program standards, and a set of core principles and values: belief in civic and democratic values; commitment to ethical behavior on behalf of children; use of important goals as guides to action; coordinated systems; support for children as individuals and members of families, cultures, and communities; partnerships with families; respect for evidence; and shared accountability.
- Implement curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children.
- Make ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment a central part of all early childhood programs. To assess young children's strengths, progress, and needs, use assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children's daily activities, supported by Professional development, inclusive of families, and connected to specific, beneficial purposes: (1) making sound decisions about teaching and learning, (2) identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and (3) helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions.
- Regularly engage in program evaluation guided by program goals and using varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended as well as unintended results.
- Provide the support, Professional development, and other resources to allow staff in early childhood programs to implement high-quality curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation practices and to connect those practices with well-defined early learning standards and program standards. [19]



Figure 9.1.1.2: In the right environment children thrive [20]

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9.1.2: Indoor Learning Environments

The indoor learning environment teachers establish should reflect the teacher's thoughts about children and how they will learn and play in the environment as well as the reflect the values of the program and the community. In addition, children should see *themselves* reflected in the environment. Do they see pictures of their families, books with children that look like them, places to feel safe and places they can explore and be loud? The more a child has ownership in the environment, the more they will value and respect the space. It should be their class/space as much as it is the teacher's. This section of the chapter will discuss components of the indoor learning environment.

Jim Greenman (2005) has written that there are nine aspects of a good early childhood learning environment. They are places:

- to live, where children feel welcomed, competent, and relaxed with a sense of familiarity and order,
- of beauty that engage all of the senses
- that promote strong diverse families
- with spaces for gathering and ways to see from palace to place in the program
- with spaces for working independently and with others
- for exploration and discover indoors and out with room to move
- that develop responsibility, compassion, and community by giving children access to resources and encouraging them to work together
- to connect to the natural world, the larger community, and the world beyond and
- for staff to learn and work with space, internet access, professional journals, and books.

This first section of the chapter will discuss components of the indoor learning environment.

Activity Zones

An activity zone, sometimes also referred to as learning centers or interest areas, are areas within a learning environment with a targeted activity purpose. Typical activity zones might include art, blocks, dramatic play, math (manipulative, table toys), sensory, science, language arts (literacy), library (quiet corner, books). Activity areas should be open to children during free choice time during the day or whenever a teacher designates time for specific small group activities. Sometimes children will explore an activity zone on their own, or in small groups. Sometimes children will need the scaffolding of a teacher or peers to extend their learning. These areas should be equipped with items that support children's natural tendency to play and learn in an experiential manner and should always take into consideration developmental appropriateness for the children in the classroom.

When children are engaged in free choice play throughout the day in activity areas, these are opportunities for teachers to conduct observations and assessments of children in authentic ways (discussed in chapter 6). This also provides teachers with the opportunity to plan curriculum and meaningful activities for the daily schedule.

Some of the more common activity zones found in early learning environments include:

Art: Encouraging children's creative thinking is essential throughout the early years. Art is also a tool for thinking and inquiry, allowing children to make their theories and ideas visible, take new perspective, represent, and explore emotions, and to study properties of the physical world. Art is open ended, child directed and process oriented. Art is not a craft, product oriented with a correct way of making something, or step by step directions. Materials may include different kinds of paint, paint brushes, easels, collage materials, scissors, clay and playdough, colored paper, magazines, popsicle sticks, cotton balls and a large selection of loose parts. The area is best supported with plenty of light, close to hand washing sinks, and easy to clean floors. Art zones can help children to development coordination and fine motor skills which are needed for emergent writing.

Blocks: blocks are wonderful open-ended learning materials with no closely defined boundaries, no right or wrong way to represent children's ideas. Many skills and concepts are developed and enhanced through block play. Children think critically, explore, manipulate, experiment, represent, problem-solve, and make decisions in the block area. The block area is best in an area of the room where the noise level is increased and away from traffic, so structures are not disturbed. This area can include wooden, cardboard or foam blocks as well as small figures and architectural items that will promote creative

building. This is where children can learn about sizes and shapes, spatial relationships and math concepts as well as learn how to make decisions and solve problems.



Image **9.1.2.1** Playing with Blocks is licensed under CC by 1.0

Dramatic Play: In this area children's thought becomes visible through play. Children may operate at more advanced cognitive levels than they do in non-pretend situations, including staying on task for extended lengths of time. Is not just as an activity, but as an expression of thinking. This area provides opportunities for children to pretend and use their imagination, role play, and act out real and imaginary experiences in a playful context. Although "housekeeping" is a common theme for the dramatic play area, other themes can be explored in this area such as grocery stores, doctor offices, restaurants, veterinary clinics, and more. Through this type of play, children will practice social skills, learn to solve problems, and work cooperatively.

Language arts (literacy): Literacy skills are critical in laying the foundation for current and future success in oral and written language. Literacy skills often play a crucial role in learning content in other areas. The space should be well lit and clearly defined. Comfortable seating and tables with plenty of paper and writing utensils. Puppets and props are also ideal for this area. Many teachers chose to create unique writing centers in literacy areas where children can explore print materials as well as create their own.



Image **9.1.2.2** Manipulative Table is licensed under CC by 1.0

Library (quiet corner, books): library areas support children in a lifelong habit that promotes literacy and a love for the written word. The space should be a comfortable area where children are encouraged to read books. Create an enticing area that is well stalked with a variety of books that support diversity, culture, and life. Literacy and library can be next to each other but should be separate areas, it is best to not have distractions when children want to read alone. Through the literacy and library activity zones in the classroom, children will begin to recognize the connection between spoken language and the written word.



Image 9.1.2.3 Reading together is licensed under CC by 1.0

Math (manipulative, table toys): This space can also be referred to as manipulatives or table toys. The ideal location has accessible materials, shelves near tables, in a medium traffic area. As the adult, step back and let the child direct. While observing play in this area assess the level items are used, self-control, perseverance, pride, creativity, classification, number concepts, emergent reading, fine/gross motor, eye-hand coordination, visual discrimination, and refine sense of touch. You will want to rotate toys often and keep the area organized.

Music and Movement: Help children synthesize experiences, transition into new activities, calm down, share culture, build self-esteem, and build a sense of community. There are also academic benefits to music and movement like boosting memory, improving spatial-perception, and cognitive development. For setting up the music and movement area, location should be away from quite areas and it is best to alleviate the clutter, so children have space to move. Include a variety of authentic instruments and this is the perfect time to introduce a variety of music to children.

Sensory: When children are engaged in sensory related activities they are,

- Developing **questions** throughout the sensory experience.
- **Investigating** - by grabbing, smelling, rubbing, staring, licking, and so on
- They are collecting **data** through their senses.
- Leaning to **communicate** their findings.
- Participating in a valid exercise in scientific **inquiry.**

It is important to remember that sensory activities should include more than a sand and water table. After all, there are 5 senses that should be supported. This is where life can get messy (but not always) relax and have fun!

When it comes to the sensory environment there are a few critical elements to think about. Make sure sensory tables are by a sink: for best hygiene practices, children should wash before and after interacting with materials in the sensory table. Depending on what is included in the sensory area, an easy clean floor is best. However, if the floor is not easy to clean having access to a tarp that can be placed on the floor will also work. Watch for allergies and other hazards. These can include scent jars or items in sensory that trigger allergies, items that are small and pose a choking risk, or even whisper tubes used improperly can hurt ears.

Water tables are great areas to learn scientific concepts such as “will it sink, or will it float?” as well as mathematical concepts through the use of measuring cups, funnels, tubes or shovels. The water in water tables should be cleaned out daily or more often if needed.

Science: Children are scientists who are naturally curious and biologically primed to learn about the world around them. They use information they gain through their everyday experiences to develop theories about how the world works. The science area should support “what if” statements, be enticing and inviting, and have adequate workspace. The area is best in a quiet area of the class that is uninterrupted so children can work and concentrate. This is a good place to include natural elements such as leaves, sticks, rocks, pinecones, magnets, kaleidoscopes, oil and water bottles, seashells, magnifying glasses, flashlights, and color wants to peak children’s interests.

Room Arrangement

The design and layout of the indoor environment can have an impact on children’s learning and behavior and on the teacher’s ability to do their jobs effectively. Good indoor environments support children’s interactions with good organization around space,

materials and people. When a classroom is set up properly, children have the freedom to move around safely, engage in activity zones and learn to manage their peer relationships. These environments should also help both children and adults feel invited and welcomed.

Each space within a classroom should be defined and **boundaries** made clear. In addition, the children need to be visible to the teacher at all times. Thoughtful room arrangement help to keep order to the space, reduces the possibility of crowding in any given area, and can support children in their choice making. This can be achieved by using existing walls or furniture like toys shelves. Even an area rug or a cloth draped from the ceiling can give the illusion of separation. Image 8.6 Illustrates two examples of room arrangement. The first image shows a classroom with less defined space for activity zones, while the second image shows how a classroom can look when a teacher uses furniture to define a space.

Designating spaces where children can have quiet play such as puzzles or books can be made cozy with carpet or pillows that absorb sound. More active areas can be arranged that allow for more movement and give children the behavior cues that louder more active play can take place in that area. Furnishings also can be used to guide movement patterns throughout the room.

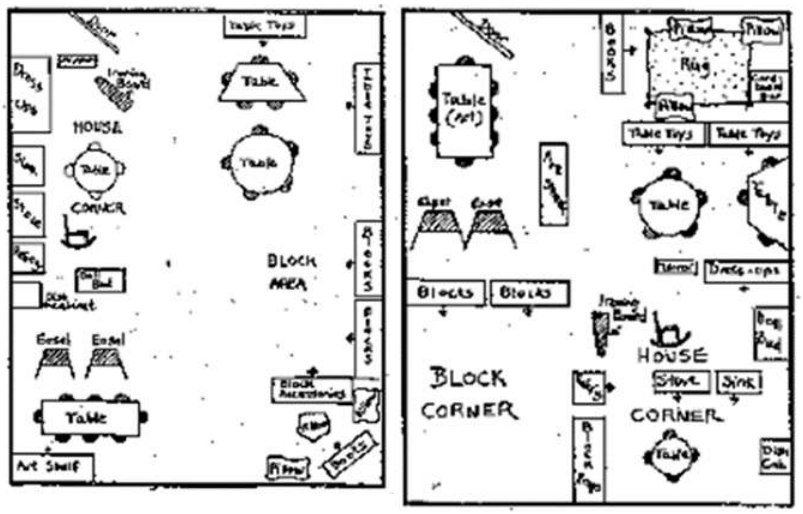


Image **9.1.2.4** Drawing of undefined and defined space Photo by S.Leek is licensed under CC by 1.0

Impact of Color and Plastic in a Classroom

Small changes to an environment can make a big impact. For example, think about the use of color in a classroom and the use of plastic. Often time when people think of a classroom space for children, they think of bright bold colors. However, these are not the ideal colors for an early learning space. Color impacts the brain and can trigger a chemical response. For example, shades of red may trigger excitement, resulting in behavior perceived as hyperactive or even angry. Shades of yellow trigger hunger. Many fast-food restaurants select these colors for logos or building colors to make one believe they are hungry and excited to eat. Using yellow heavily in a toddler room can leave a teacher with fussy, emotional children because their brains are telling them they are hungry. Shades of blue can be a depressant. This is not an ideal classroom color, especially if any of the children for have experienced trauma. Ideally, colors should be within the green, brown, and grey color families. These colors ground children and help them feel grounded in the world.

Plastic, often heavily used in early learning environments, can also have an adverse effect on behavior. It can be substituted with wicker baskets, and other more natural containers, to hold toys and materials. Every person absorbs and expels energy. Depending on the space, this exchange is done without a person knowing. We often have things in our space that we are naturally drawn to that help with the absorption of energy. These items are made of natural materials like glass, wood, cotton, and rock, to name a few. However, if we fill children's classrooms with material that will not absorb their natural energy, such as plastic, the result can be a room that feels electrified. The effort adults may spend to focus children and get them engaged can be futile. Simple changes like using baskets to hold toys, adding rugs, a plant, or wooden frames and adding other natural elements will not only have a positive impact on behavior. It will be far more aesthetically pleasing as well. If you work in a program that tends to use a lot of plastic, look for way you can balance that with some of the items listed in this section. If that is not possible, providing more frequent or longer periods of outside time will also be beneficial.

Selection and Placement of Materials

Part of the physical environment takes into consideration the selection and placement of materials. Having already discussed the overuse of plastics in classrooms, it is important to note that materials that are selected for classroom environments need to be developmentally appropriate as well as culturally relevant for the age of children using the classroom.

Teachers also need to keep in mind how the materials will be organized and accessed by the children. Keep in mind these tips when choosing appropriate materials for early learning classrooms:

- Organizing the materials should take into consideration the independent abilities of the children in the classroom.
- Keep appropriate materials in appropriate places (art materials in the art center, books in the library) but allow for the crossing of materials during play from one center into another.
- Provide enough materials for all children to be engaged in the activity.
- Place heavy items on lower shelves.
- Rotate materials to promote children's interests.
- Make sure to have personal storage areas (such as cubbies) for both children and teachers.

It is a basic practice in early learning that when a material is broken, missing pieces or is otherwise worn out, it is a good idea to eliminate those materials from the environment. In addition, all materials need to be clean and sanitized following licensing guidelines.

Labeling shelves with print and pictures where materials are to be placed will help children to become more self-sufficient and build print awareness. Some teachers will use color coding of materials to keep organized.



Image **9.1.2.5** Organized Space is licensed under CC by 1.0

Reflection

Looking at the image above, how could you remove the plastics and reorganize the materials into more natural based storage materials?

Environmental Aesthetics

When creating an early learning space that will foster learning, inspire creativity, and support social relationships; a professional will need to consider environmental characteristics such as lighting, color (as discussed at length earlier in this chapter), crowding, noise levels, clutter and more. When designing a space—any space, creating an attractive and pleasing environment includes thinking about the **aesthetics** of the space.

Creating supportive early learning environments is an art and a science and can seem overwhelming at times. Setting goals to make physical changes to the environment is helpful, but these can be costly. Setting small goals will bring positive change to the space over time.

Alleviating clutter is one goal that will make a huge impact on the environment and the teacher, and children who share the space. Clutter can distract from even the most attractive spaces. Clutter usually happens slowly and stems from:

- Undefined space for where items belong
- Taking time to put things in their place
- Lack of sufficient organization

A poorly organized space with too much clutter will prevent a classroom from functioning effectively. The best way to assess the level of clutter is to take pictures of the space while standing, sitting in a child chair, and sitting on the floor. If you would not want to show a parent or coworker the photo because of materials not put away properly or a stack of papers needing your attention, then you have a clutter issue to address.

Two other environmental characteristics that should not be overlooked are the impact of crowding and noise. Both have a significant influence on stress levels and learning opportunities. Sometimes less in a space is best. Less items keep children from being overwhelmed by the many choices and there is clear purpose with what is available to them. However, when limiting items in an activity area, it is best to swap out the items often so children have access to new education experiences. If items remain the same and children are not engaged in what is offered, behavior issues will soon arise. Noise if also often a distraction and can be improved by adding rugs, hanging tapestries or noise absorbing enhancements to the walls, and by placement of the activity centers.

Lighting is something to consider when creating an early learning space. Ideally, lots of natural light is preferred. When additional light is needed; lamps, string lights, or similar are advised. The large fluorescent lighting, often found in early childhood spaces, interact with the brain, and can cause problems like headaches and irritability.

Children are more likely to feel they can be themselves when their classroom environment feels home-like. Soft furnishings, nontoxic plans, natural or soft lighting, decorative touches such as area rugs, family photos of children and staff and neutral paint colors help to create a space that everyone in the environment can enjoy.

Reflection

What would you include in the various activity areas to spark interest and curiosity?

How can clutter be addressed in a space?



Image **9.1.2.6** Family Child Care Outdoor Mud Kitchen Photo by Sleek is licensed under CC by 1.0

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9.1.3: Outdoor Learning Environments

Children can have rich experiences in a thoughtful outdoor setting. No matter if the child is attending a large center or a family home setting, the outdoor environment should be responsive to each child's interests and needs. The natural environment is unique in its ability to respond to the depth with which children engage. The outdoor environment should offer exploration as well as meet physical needs of children. Often teachers think of a child's physical development and how to get them moving outdoors, however, children can also learn a great deal from a robust outdoor environment. Concepts learned outdoors include physics, biology, botany, and geology. Nevertheless, these are just the starting point to the enormous learning potential of the outdoor environment. As the adult in the space, be observant, engage and play along with children, relax, and educate families on the benefits. One of the biggest stressors in a teacher's day is outdoor play and not from the environment itself, but from parents not wanting children dirty, wet, or sick. As I always explained to parents, the nice thing about children is they are washable. If clothing was an issue, I offered changes of clothes that children could change into before going outside. Lastly, viruses and bacterial germs are what make us sick, not rain. If rain made us sick, no one would ever bathe. Additionally, the more children play outdoor the healthier they are, the germs that make us sick are not as concentrated as they are when we are indoors. In other words, get children outside!

Outdoor Activity Zones

Just like indoor environments have activity zones, outdoor environments have zones with distinct purposes for outdoor play.

Transition Zone: the transition zone is the area where children enter and exit the outdoor space. This allows children to see what is available to them in the space and begin to make choices about where they would like to play. This should also be an area where children can safely wait for the teacher or gather as a group together.

Active Play Zone: this is a space that allows children to run, jump, skip, throw balls and ride or pull wheeled toys and tricycles. This might also include big grassy areas if possible and equipment for sliding and swinging. Many places allow for climbing structures, tunnels, and ramps.

Natural Elements Zone: this area includes plants, dirt, rocks, trees, grass, water. You could also provide mud, dirt, and sand for digging. Some centers might also include garden areas, and this is the ideal place to put up a bird feeder for observation.



Image **9.1.3.1** Playing in the Sand is licensed under CC by 1.0

Creative Zone: this area is a place for children to create messy art that you may not want to do in the inside environment, or a place for children to gather to complete puzzles or use tabletop activities like puzzles, games, or books.

Social/Dramatic Zone: this area gives children the area to practice social and dramatic play and can include props. This area outdoors might also include stages or playhouses.

Materials for Outdoor Environments

Everything that is included in an indoor environment can also be included in an outdoor environment. Books can be brought out and space provided for sitting and reading in the fresh air, materials to enhance and support large motor movement and elements that encourage learning like magnifying glasses, pullies, ramps, and materials that are for balance, push, pull, and ride.

Additional items to include in an outdoor learning environment are materials for:

- **Art:** Art outside can be messy and spacious, like marble painting in a small pool with golf balls, or finger painting on the windows. Water spray bottles can create art projects.

- **Gardening:** tool for planting, maintaining, and caring for the garden area. Children are often times more likely to try or eat healthy food they have grown.
- **Woodworking:** While woodworking can be scary for some teachers, the value of including woodworking into a space is too valuable not to consider.
- Music with unconventional items, such as hanging pots and pans on a lower fence can give toddlers some music time—just at the right height.
- Bubbles are perfect for outdoors!

The Role of Licensing in Environments

The role of licensing is to ensure health and safety measures are in place and are followed. This does not mean we do not allow children much needed outdoor time or when we do provide outdoor time, we limit their activity. This is the time for children to expel all their pent-up energy, breathe deeply, and engage their large muscles. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) does have requirements for outdoor spaces. WAC 110-300-0145 outline 12 outdoor licensing rules including

- fencing requirements
- amount of space
- what the space should include
- and other safety rules.

The 12 leading causes of outdoor learning environment injuries are: inadequate fall zone, improper protective surfacing, protrusion and entanglements hazards, entrapment openings, trip hazards, insufficient equipment spacing, lack of supervision, age-appropriate activities, lack of maintenance, Pinch, crush, shearing and sharp edge hazards, platforms with no guardrails, and dangerously designed equipment.

It is important to do safety sweeps of your outdoor space frequently. Inspecting outdoor play areas for debris, standing water, snow or ice, natural objects that may have become unsafe in changing weather and other human factors such as tripping hazards or litter should be cleaned up properly.

Accessibility

It is imperative to provide chances for children of all ages to find an outlet for their need to move about in a meaningful context. What does it mean to be accessible? Making sure that entry openings are 11-24” and turn radius is 60”. Children have a reach range of 20-36” for a child 2-5 years old and 18-40” for a child 6-12 years old. If children have mobility aid devices, having a firm resilient surface supports their ability to move freely around the environment, and any outdoor paths, walkways and stairs should be clearly marked and free of obstruction. Also, consider that for every 2-4 elevated components of an outdoor space, there would be at least one at ground level entry and the ground level entry should prove at least one type of activity.

The size of large gross motor equipment should be developmentally appropriate for all children and be sure to have enough equipment that children can use it without long waiting times. Storage should take into consideration the amount of time it takes to clean-up outdoors and labeled clearly.

Loose Parts

While large climbing structures and equipment have developmental purposes, they are also not as engaging to children over time. There is not much for a child to do with a slide for 30 minutes. However, using **loose parts** can increase movement, interest in outdoor play, and educational opportunities. Some loose parts include balls, hula-hoops, magnifying glasses, bikes (helmets), books, blocks, dramatic play materials, and art materials. It might also include recyclables such as boxes, egg cartons, PVC pipes, milk cartons or crates that children can use for construction. While this list of loose parts could be pages long, the benefit of including a variety and quantity of loose parts in an outdoor learning environment is never ending. Some of those benefits include independence, self-regulation, and allows children to explore their world and make decisions.

Reflection

Do you feel the WAC prohibits play in any way?

What are some challenges for ensuring accessibility for all?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Physical Environment

In ECPK 420 you are observing in 6 different Birth-K settings across the mixed delivery system of early childhood education. As you observe you will write reports. The first 4 reports are about four of the NAEYC Accreditation Standards categories:

1. Physical Environment from the first observation site.
2. Positive Relationships from the second observation site
3. Learning Environment from the third observation site
4. Teaching from the fourth observation site

Please Note

Even though you are only writing the first four reports about one program, you want to evaluate all aspects of every program for the final presentation where you will compare and contrast all programs in all areas.

Learning Objectives

- For your first narrative, you will write about the physical environment and you will
- Identify and recognize national best practices in early childhood education in the area of physical environment.
- Compare differences and similarities in a variety of delivery models for programs serving diverse children from birth through kindergarten including children with special needs and dual language learners.

This week you will read and discuss quality physical environments focusing on identifying and recognizing national best practices in early childhood education. In the first observation, you are looking at the layout and the physical characteristics of the furnishings and climate. The physical environment differs from the Learning Environment which is the materials and equipment added to the room and organized for learning. The learning environment also includes the daily structure used to promote children's learning experiences, covering both learnable moments and intentional teaching experiences. Keep the difference between physical and the learning environment in mind as you begin writing Narrative 1.

As you read and watch can you make a connection to these comments and ideas that from students wondering how to apply the course content as they go out and observe the physical environment?

- Messes and mistakes help children learn and grow
- How do teachers and administrators decide how much space is needed for each child? Do they use a specific formula? **Sue's Reply to the question**: Did you or others read The Great 35 Square Foot Myth (2003)by Randy White & Vicki Stoecklin? Here are some key quotes from White and Stoecklin:

> *One of the great myths of early childhood education is the standard of 35 square foot of classroom space per child for the design of child care classrooms. No one is totally sure how the 35-square foot standard originally evolved. There is some speculation that it has its origins in health department studies that elementary school children need a minimum of 35 square feet per student to prevent the spread of communicable diseases in the classroom.*
>
> *Whatever the origins, the myth is perpetuated by state child care licensing standards, which almost universally, have adopted 35 square feet as their minimum standard. Unfortunately, most child care center developers and designers accept the 35 SF as an adequate and quality standard. The problem is that unlike other government codes and regulations, such as building codes where structural standards assure that roofs will be*

> *structurally sound and water systems will be safe, the classroom size standard has no foundation or relevance to the actual amount of space required to provide quality care for children*

Later in the article they share:

> *The research found that 54 square feet of accessible play space per child is required to minimize children's stress levels.*

- I have been in small rooms that work **because of the way they were organized**.
- Where I work we have mats if necessary for a child to rest if they're not well, but we don't have the space already set up.
- **Student reply to 3rd bullet:** Have you thought about making a removable wooden wall for a quiet space? Something that you could hang up with hooks up take down at the end of the day?

Now begin reading pages 78-92 of the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria & Guidance for Assessment (2016). In the Physical Environment Section, you will look at criteria for Indoor and Outdoor Equipment, Materials, and Furnishings, Outdoor Environmental Design, and Building and Physical Design. As you read the section about Environmental Health consider the relationship of environmental health to supervision (read pages 32-34), sanitation, nutrition, and safety practices (pages .

Supervision standards change with the age of the children in the classroom. What is expected in an infant toddler room will be different than observed in a kindergarten classroom. Make sure you are using the correct age level criteria on pages 32-34 when you observe, take notes, and then write the narrative draft.

To learn more about the requirements for sanitation, nutrition, and safety read pages 51- 65 the sections: 5.A.06-5. A.16; 5.B. *Ensuring Children's Nutritional Well-being;* and 5.C. *Maintaining a Healthful Environment*. Make sure to review the 2015 Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table. You may even want to print a copy for your workplace and to use when observing.

The technical assistance document from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care describes how to create effective physical environments. Creating a Child Care Environment for Success.

The first five pages are most relevant to the discussion of physical environment and the rest of the document is most helpful for the learning environment.

Finally, read the documents from Community Playthings: Infant and Toddler Spaces The photos illustrate effective and desirable design techniques. For those of you who prefer to watch and hear; you will enjoy the video

Watch "Preparation for Life: Montessori Infant-Toddler Communities" by EdVid is in the Public Domain (2009)

This is a 10-minute excerpt of a parent orientation DVD for Montessori Infant-Toddler programs. It is an update of the American Montessori Society DVD "In the Beginning: The First Years of Montessori" The schools featured include Hope Montessori Infant-Toddler Community in St. Louis, Seton Montessori Infant-Toddler House in Chicago and The Montessori Children's Center in White Plains, NY.



The segments from an EEC Webinar about physical environment are very helpful. When you open the link; you will be asked to register which requires typing in your first and last name and an email address. You can then advance the saved video to the first segment at 17:45. Watch these segments:

- Room Arrangement: 17:45 – 21:21
- Supervision: 21:22 – 28:50
- Indoor Gross Motor: 46:06 – 50:15
- Accessibility for Infants: 57:45 – 59:50

Challenge 1

After reading and watching; to prepare for discussing the physical environment either online or in person, I invite you to complete the reading reflection form:

Reading Reflection Form

Use the table below as you complete the readings and/or watch the videos as a note taking method. Using your notes as recorded on the table, write out 3 paragraphs to summarize your ideas. Make sure to use multiple examples to illustrate ideas and to ask an open-ended question to invite others to engage in your discussion.

Connections	Extensions	Curiosities
Relate ideas from the reading to learning in other courses or life experience.	How did ideas from the reading extend your thinking?	What are you curious about? What do you want to explore further? **Why?**

Challenge 2

Physical Environment Narrative Description

In the narrative, you will compare your observations to the NAEYC Standards:

- 3.C
- 5.A.06–16
- 5.B
- 5.C

- 9.A
- 9.B
- 9.C
- 9.D

Outline

1. Indoor Design. **RATING**: _____.
    i. Provide a description of indoor design elements, with enough detail and range that the rating is supported. Often your evidence is interpreted relative to NAEYC indicators of standards-based practice. To achieve a target score you will need to make sure to include rich, varied descriptions that give a detailed view of important indoor design elements. Explain your overall impressions of the program's unique features and its strengths and areas for improvement.
    ii. **CONCLUSIONS** where you restate and defend the rating. To achieve a target score, make sure the conclusions reached carefully consider impact of design decisions on quality, are fully supported by the evidence provided, and clearly linked to NAEYC standards of quality.
2. Outdoor Design. **RATING**: _____.
    i. Provide a description of outdoor design elements, with enough detail and range that the rating is supported. Often your evidence is interpreted relative to NAEYC indicators of standards-based practice that you list. To achieve a target score you will need to make sure to include rich, varied descriptions that give a detailed view of important outdoor design elements.
    ii. **CONCLUSIONS**.
3. Continuous Supervision. **RATING**: _____.
    i. To achieve a target score you will need to make sure to include rich, varied descriptions that give a detailed view of important indoor and outdoor design elements.
    ii. **CONCLUSIONS**.
4. Sanitation, Nutrition, and Safety Practices. **RATING**: _____.
    i. For this section, provide evidence only on aspects of the standard which were cause for concern. A rating of 7 and absence of further comment indicates you are satisfied these design elements were fully met.
    ii. **CONCLUSIONS**

1. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Uses NAEYC Standard 9 and 5) from your **first observation site**.
    - Indoor Design. ***RATING:*** _____.
    - Outdoor Design. *RATING:* _____.
    - Continuous Supervision. *RATING:* _____.
    - Sanitation, Nutrition, and Safety Practices. *(For this section, provide evidence only on aspects of the standard which were cause for concern. A rating of 7 and absence of further comment indicates you are satisfied these design elements were fully met) RATING:* _____.
    - **CONCLUSIONS** (Overall impressions of program's unique features and its strengths and weaknesses, done by stating an overall rating between 1 and 7 for each of the standards areas above and defending it).

Rating System:

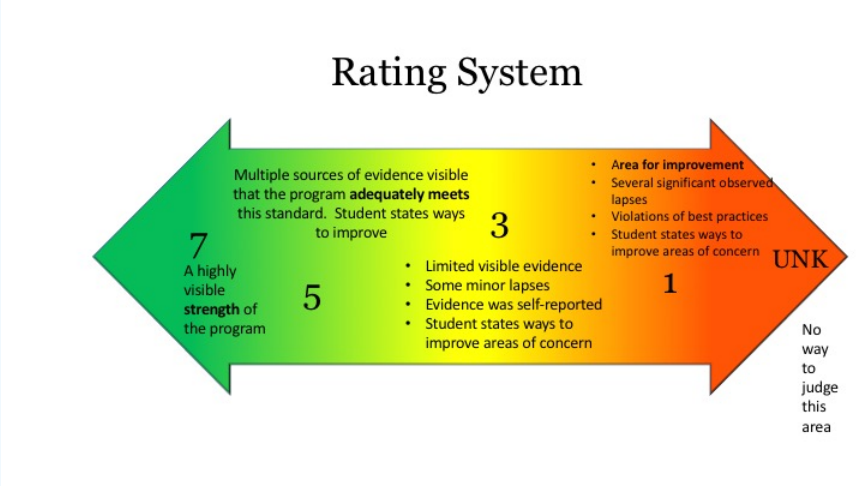
7….. A highly visible **strength** of the program.

5…. Multiple sources of evidence visible that the program **adequately meets** this standard. Ways in which program could do even better are stated.

3…. Limited visible evidence of program attention to this area. Possibly (a) some minor lapses or reasons for concern observed; (b) evidence only available through self-reports. Possibly an area for program improvement. Ways in which program falls short and could be improved are clearly articulated.

1….. A noticeable **area for improvement** of this program. Several significant observed lapses or violations of best practices noticed in this area. Ways in which program falls short and steps to take to improve in this area are provided.

UNK…. Unknown. No basis upon which to make a positive or negative judgment (Use only if there is no way for you to form a judgment in this area. Do not use this if there is no visible or anecdotal evidence that this is part of the program).



NARRATIVE 1 Example – Physical Environment

ABC Preschool [name changed for privacy] is an inner-city Head start and Community Center. The brick, three story building corners two main roads which are heavily populated with residential and commercial properties. The center houses two Early Head Start classrooms, one-part day Head Start classroom, one Head Start/daycare classroom and the local WIC offices. The center is neatly organized with references, supports and activities for families in multiple languages. Three of the four classrooms are located on the main floor and are separated from the main area by locked doors that only the receptionist has control of. The part day Head Start Program is located on the third floor and the WIC office, staff area and offices are all located on the bottom floor. All floors are accessible by elevator or stairs.

Indoor Design: (Rating 3)

Classroom 1, a Head Start classroom, serving three four and five-year old's, is located on the main floor tucked into the right corner of the building. There is one door located to the right of the classroom which is the only form of entrance. There are 6 large rectangular windows on the left and back walls of the classroom, which supplied an ample amount of natural lighting. (9.C.03-9.C.05) The classroom has carpeting that runs vertical throughout the room leaving half the classroom uncarpeted. The areas on the laminate floor are used for meal times, sensory play and art projects. Areas on the laminate floor such as Dramatic play and quiet area/library had large area rugs to make the space cozier.

Each child had their own individual cubby, labeled with their name and supplied with a plastic reusable shopping bag for all their belongings. (9.A.02) There are two sets of cubbies for the children, however they are located on opposite sides of the classroom. A plastic, over the door shoe holder was used as parent mailboxes and the only form of parent communication that was evident. The classroom was set up in a way to support independent center learning by using shelves to section off dramatic play from art areas and so on. While some areas had center signs and signs with the number of children able to play in that area, not all the centers did, making it hard to tell exactly what area was where and the number of children that the area could support.

The classroom had a variety of materials for children to explore and learn with. Each center had four or more options to choose from and each option had a sufficient number of items so that play would not be hindered by lack of materials. All materials were in good condition and promoted cultural diversity and disabilities through food in the dramatic play area, people in wheel chairs, on crutches and older generations in the block area and puzzles where community helpers are gender neutral. They also had materials for varying difficulties, such as larger markers, right and left handed scissors, puzzles with knobs and assorted manipulatives in different sizes.(9.A.09) Evidence of living things were supported by plants the children are growing and plants throughout the room. They had a large gold fish as a class pet however it was high on a shelf where it was difficult to see.

They also had a bathroom located within the classroom. (9.C.05) Set on the right side of the room is a wall with two large windows and a door cut out to provide supervision of the children but also to create a sense of privacy. The door to the bathroom had a curtain hanging down that hung about a foot off the floor. There are two toilets as well as a vanity for hand washing and extra supplies, as well as shelving attached to the wall to hold extra clothes and towels. Next to the bathroom is an adult sized counter and cabinets used for food service supplies cleaning supplies and first aid supplies. (9.A.01)

During my observation only two areas were occupied, blocks and dramatic play. One child had an accident on the dramatic play area rug and the teachers proceeded to close the area. Then the children scattered to sand table, water table, Playdough and the children from blocks moved into science to play a magnetic game that the teacher took out. There was also a large plastic children's computer which no longer worked and served as a magnetic board. However, children were dumping the bucket of letters into the storage bench then sticking them to the magnetic board. Teachers occasionally walked over and redirected the children by saying "I don't think those belong in their can you show me another way to use them?" The child would then clean up the magnets by putting them back into their bucket then walking away from the area.

In conclusion I feel that the lack of organization for parents and children in the classroom made this an un-welcoming environment that was visually over stimulating. Evidence of appreciation of the children's work was not evident as there were no pictures, or art work hung up. While children moved freely, lack of labeled shelves and buckets made it harder to clean up and promote independence. This would not support standards 9A of the NAEYC standards. The center did support the NAEYC standards for having a variety of materials that support differences in abilities, culture and gender. There are enough materials for all the children and while it was disorganized and cluttered required health and safety posting are hung up and practiced. Having labeled materials, specific area's for the parents, where they can read postings, policies, and curriculum information as well as posting the children's work would increase the classrooms score to the next level.

Outdoor Environment: (Rating 1)

The outdoor play area is surrounded by 10-foot-tall chain link fence and is accessible by emergency doors in the infant toddler rooms as well as by the stair well across the hall from the preschool classroom. (9.B.02) Once outside the building the path to the playground is fenced in to maintain the safety of the children because the walk way borders the parking lot of the postal office next door. Aside from the fence there is a small strip of grass that provides a barrier from one property line to the next. The gate to enter the playground is the same height as the fence with its latch five feet high so the children are unable to reach it.

The playground layout provided constant supervision by sight and sound. (9.B.03) Half of the playground area is covered by a large blue canopy to provide shade and shelter. The ground surface is made up of a rubber surface which covers the entire area. The playground is surrounded by parking lots on both sides, one being the center's parking lot and the other being the post office parking lot. Behind the playground was a community playground filled with debris and graffiti. There were no barriers between the community playground and center playground and there is also a car sized gap in between the 3 feet shrubs bordering the center's parking lot. In this gap there was a large dent in the fence insinuating that a person at one time may have driven up and hit the fence. (9.B.06)

The play area held very little materials for the children. There was an 8ft by 8ft sand box which had extremely low amount of sand. A dozen of tricycles in varying sizes but mostly toddler sizes, helmets which were not being used because they were too wet from the rain earlier in the week, assorted construction trucks, 1 basketball and a basketball hoop. They also had four large cylinders built in to the ground and a xylophone for children to make music. There were three plastic and mesh storage containers which held helmets, large foam blocks which were covered up and an empty storage container covered up that the teachers used to put their materials on. There was also a small area with extra rubber material pieces which held sand, chalk drawings and trucks. An interlocking plastic structure was leaning against the fence which after 30 minutes the children pulled out to build a house. However, lack of stools and time to play created a fight between multiple children. Children were observed yelling "hey that's my chair give it back" children crying and other children taking the other children's chair when they weren't looking. Teacher's just reminded the children to share. Once the infants come out side teachers said "it's the babies turn outside we need to clean this up right away." This direction resulted in tantrums, tears and children refusing to leave the playground because "I wasn't done" and "I didn't get a turn."

In conclusion the playground rating of a one holds true. Materials were not supplied to promote in-depth learning in all areas. Safety was maintained during my observation but the gap in the shrubs where families drive up, is not in compliance with the standards. As well as the concern of confidentiality having open access to view the playground from a public parking lot and playground. Having only one surface type for children also is not supported by NAEYC program standards. There are no natural materials to enjoy and the lack of sand in the sand box promoted play for only one. Staff stated that outdoor play is only 30 minute sessions, as to ensure every classroom has enough time to play, during my observation we were out for forty-five minutes. Leaving the infants and toddlers having to wait by the fence for preschoolers to get ready to leave.

Children remained engaged with teachers and other children however the center would have benefited from more materials, such as bubbles, sand, a small slide or climber and a privacy screen. Policies around First aid kits, water, cups, and daily attendance sheets as well as attention to the weather conditions for asthma children were followed an evident throughout my observation.

Continuous Supervision: (Rating 5)

The classroom area is set up to provide continuous supervision of all the children at all times. (9.A.04) There were four staff in the classroom the entire time of my observation and 14 preschool children. Staff reported this is standard and at 2:30 staff begin leaving with the children. The design of the classroom where low shelves were used as dividers, larger shelves placed up against the walls and secured created an open floor plan where children could always be seen.(9.A.07) During my observation multiple children had tantrums. Staff remained calm and collected as they sat with the child, used visual supports and supported them in calming down.

Staff was also very engaged in all aspects of my observation. During hand washing and transitions teachers and children were communicating expectations, number of children present and helping those in need. When multiple teachers were occupied with other children and activities one teacher surveyed the children and areas by walking around or standing in place scanning all the areas. Children were excited to see their teacher return from vacation and immediately wanted to show her their new skills (riding a bike, showing off chalk drawings and asking her to build in blocks with them.) They ran up to her and gave her a hug and said “we really missed you.”

Teaching staff used positive language through-out my observation, such as “walking feet,” “I am so proud of you,” “how do you think we can fix this” and “that is a great idea.” There were feeling cards and visual supports with techniques to calm their bodies, ways to solve problems and reminders of the rules hanging on each of the walls to ensure easy access to materials while maintaining supervision at all times.

Children were divided into two circle times based on age, however during my observation a 4-year-old went to sit in on the three-year-old circle, instead of redirecting this child they engaged him in the circle and gave him a job of helping the teacher to come up with ideas for the younger kids. This child also wanted to sit in a chair and not on the floor like his peers. This too was also accepted. The older children’s circle had the same set up where children had jobs and interacted in the story being read and songs being sung. There are two teachers placed in each circle so that if there is a behavior that needs to be addressed the teacher conducting circle time does not have to stop and correct the behavior. This supports children being able to learn in an uninterrupted environment. (9.A.12)

In Conclusion there were many ways in which continuous supervision was obtained through out my observation. Teachers engaging in transitions, having calm down techniques readily available, and communicating with children and staff made the team work really well together. No harsh judgment or punishment was evident, and children and teachers enjoyed each other’s company by laughing, talking and playing together. The classroom set up while lacking organization, supported supervision by having low shelving units, ensuring children were not able to find a place to hide, and by having a variety of inviting materials for children to be engaged with also supported the standards. I would recommend to better their supervision scores would be to remove the curtain hanging in the bathroom door, as well as using mirrors in the corners of the room. This would make supervision easier when engaging with children on their level.

Sanitation, Nutrition, and safety practices: (Rating 5)

The program followed all health and safety practices regarding health services such as asthma, allergies, physicals, dental exams and injury and illness concerns. (5.A.01) These practices were evident through postings about children’s asthma and

allergies next to the food serve and first aid areas. They were in compliance with having policies and procedures for fire and evacuation drills, medical emergencies as well as lock down and evacuation drills by having policy and procedures posted as well as visual postings such as maps of the building with clearly labeled exits and paths to exit the building. Evidence of cleaning and sanitation were evident through documentation and my observation. Staff wiped down table surfaces with a cleaning solution called “Steramine” and paper towels. Nutritious foods were provided through a catering company in conjunction with federal nutrition guidelines and prepared and served by trained staff. Disposable materials such as gloves, diapers, wipes, plastic utensils, napkins and paper towels were used throughout the day. All hazard materials are stored out of reach from the children in clearly labeled bottles. Staff also carried fully stocked first aid bags with them to the playground and had a specific labeled place to put the bag in the classroom. Children also had updated emergency cards that were kept in the emergency bags. (9.C.10)

In conclusion the center met NAEYC guidelines in the areas of health and safety. Postings about fire drills, evacuation drills and health and safety policies were posted around the room, however the center would have benefited from having a clear place for families to locate the information. Children with food allergies are provided an equally healthy meal that meets FDA guidelines. (5.B.05) Children washed hands regularly during transitions from indoors and outdoors, after sensory play activities and after using the bathroom or blowing their nose. (5.A.09) Staff wore gloves when cleaning up a urinary accident on the rug. She kept the area blocked off, to limit exposure to the chemical and urine while she cleaned it. After she finished cleaning she disposed of the gloves and washed her hands as well. (5.C.02) The center would benefit from teachers washing hands during transitions as well, having a clearly defined parent area and sanitizing sinks in between handwashing transitions and bath rooming.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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11.1: Developmentally Appropriate Expecations

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11.1.1: Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmental and Learning Theories, there is a section on Developmentally Appropriate Practices. What is important to note here is that identifying the developmental ages and stages of children helps us to plan learning environments (Chapter 9) and curriculum (Chapter 14) that are appropriate for their developmental age and stage. Below is a refresher from Chapter 5 as it is pertinent in this chapter. Understanding the importance of DAP sets the stage for identifying ways in which to support children in the early childhood learning environment.

There are three important aspects of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP):

1. What is known about child development and learning – referring to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.
2. What is known about each child as an individual – referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.
3. What is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live – referring to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children's lives at home and in their communities that practitioners must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family. [67]

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.2: Routines

11.2.1: The Importance of Schedules and Routines

11.2.2: Consistent Routines

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11.2.1: The Importance of Schedules and Routines

A typical day in an early learning classroom has a rhythm of ebb and flow to it that is part art and part science. Days should have routine and structure, but also have periods of time that are flexible and allow children to make choices: all sandwiched together with smooth transition times to keep the day running smoothly. A **schedule** for the classroom is the big idea of what is happening daily in the classroom environment while a **routine** is the pattern and predictability of the day within the schedule (Ostrosky, 2007).

Things to consider when planning the schedule include:

- how many opportunities during the day should children engage in free-choice activities?
- When will outdoor time occur and what do you need to consider when planning for outdoor time?
- What type of large group activities should be included for the age group you are teaching?
- When should teachers include small-group activities?
- How will transitions be managed in the environment?
- What will the routines be during the schedule?
- How is my schedule communicated to staff, children and families?

Children need many opportunities throughout the day to engage in play and follow their interests. The most effective way to meet this need is to include free-choice time in your schedule. According to research studies, children are more involved in activities that allow them independence and the opportunity to make choices. In free-choice time, children can also be engaged in social interactions with their peers (Vitiello, 2012). A substantial part of the day should be set aside for free-choice time and can be included in both indoor and outdoor environments.

Both large and small group activities should be considered when planning your schedule. Large group activities are generally initiated by a teacher and could include instructional pieces (such as learning how to tell time, talking about the weather, counting days of the month or week) but are also opportunities to read books to the entire group, sing songs with movement, encourage children to share about themselves, and build classroom community. The amount of time spent in large group activities is very dependent on the age of the children in the environment. Small group activities can allow a teacher and child to focus on a personal goal and gives children the personal attention of the teacher at that time.

Transitions occur in the day when children move from one area to another. For some age groups, transitions can be the most difficult part of the scheduled day. As a teacher, it is a good idea to have a plan in place to minimize the number of transitions and the stress that transitions have on both children and staff alike. Having a routine, song or chant that signals a transition can help to keep children focused during these inevitable times during the day.



Image 8.10 Eating Routine is licensed under CC by 1.0

Routines are a very important of the daily schedule. Routines can help to manage people and create a sense of comfort for children, families and staff. Planning is a very important part of designing routines and should take into consideration the developmental needs of the children in the environment. The best routines will have clear beginnings and endings. For example, for a mealtime routine, children should know a script of expectations. It might sound like this: “I wash my hands, sit at the table, sign a rhyme

with my friends, eat my food, clean up and brush my teeth". Having this routine that is followed consistently helps children build confidence, independence and minimizes frustrations for the teacher.

Some of the most important times of the day to have routines include arrival to the classroom as well as departure from the classroom, diapering and/or toileting times, mealtimes and snacks, cleanup, rest, or nap times. You might also consider using the same transition routines daily so that children get auditory signals about what comes next.

Communicating your schedule and routines should be clear to all staff working in the classroom, as well as the children and families in your classroom or program. A schedule is also something that (in Washington State) is required to be posted for licensed childcare facilities. Some teachers find that posting both a printed schedule along with a visual schedule is helpful for some children and can also encourage pre-literacy skills in young children.

Reflection

What are some transition ideas you have for preschoolers? Kindergarteners? School age children?

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- **8.4: Managing Time - Schedules and Routines** by Gayle Julian, Sharene Leek is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0.

11.2.2: Consistent Routines

Consistent routines help children **meet expectations** for interacting with each other and with the environment.

Students feel safe with predictable structures, which helps them remain in a regulated, related state and **ready to learn**.

Most teachers have routines, but there are a few specific qualities of routines within the Whole Child Model that make them more effective.

How to Do Consistent Routines Well

Children are capable of learning how to meet reasonable expectations for routines and procedures.

- Ensure that your expectations for procedures and routines are the **least restrictive possible** while maintaining emotional and physical safety.
- **Maintain** consistent, predictable routines as much as possible, and **inform** students when a change in the routine is necessary.
- Teach expectations for routines and procedures using **multiple methods** and incorporating visuals. Post **visuals** throughout the classroom & school to remind children of expectations.
- Have a growth mindset: not meeting expectations is a sign that more **practice**, not punishment, is needed.

Why Consistent Routines Work

Establishing consistent routines helps children feel **safe** because their environment is **predictable**. They are not left wondering what will happen next, whether they will be safe, or whether they will be prepared. This feeling of safety allows them to remain physiologically **regulated**, build trusting **relationships**, and focus their mental energy on **learning**.

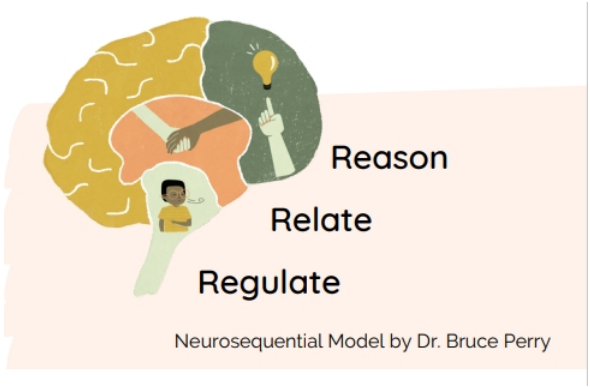


Figure 11.2.2.1: Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model of Regulate, Relate, and Reason

Teaching and trusting children to meet reasonable expectations helps them **build self-regulation** skills. When children are constantly externally controlled or held to rigid behavioral expectations, they miss out on this opportunity.

While 'equity' is a big idea, it lives concretely in the ways you expect children to interact throughout the day. Classrooms centered on equity prioritize students' **freedom of movement and expression**. Ensuring that your procedures, routines, and expectations are the least restrictive possible - while maintaining emotional and physical safety - will help children experience a classroom community of equal members.

Promoting freedom of movement and expression within safe limits helps children understand the **acceptable boundaries** of comportment in a classroom, which are not self-evident or obvious to children.

Establish a Daily Schedule

First, design your schedule, considering:

- Children need a **balance of group time and independent work time** so that they can develop a variety of skills, like paying attention and listening but also self-direction and persistence on a task.
- Children have physical needs for **frequent opportunities for movement**. This can be accomplished within individual activities, as transitions between activities, and as entire activities. Place movement opportunities strategically throughout the day.

- Children need a **balance of active time and quiet time** (think centers and outdoor time versus a read aloud).
- Integrating **components of Strong Start** at strategic points will help students remain ready for learning. Consider when students become antsy or highenergy and plan for Purposeful Partnering, Community Building, or Breathe & Focus rituals at these times.

Carefully construct a daily routine that meets students ' needs and sets them up for success.

Next, teach and use your schedule

- Create a **visual daily schedule**
- **Review** the schedule daily
- **Discuss any changes** that day
- **Refer to it** as you change blocks during the day, moving a clothespin or other marker to each new block.

These steps are especially important at the beginning of the year and for younger children.

Your daily schedule establishes the structures that will enable students to meet academic, social-emotional, and physical development outcomes.

Tips: Include main schedule blocks in **words and pictures**. You may use photos of students in each block to best show what happens. **Post the schedule** at a level that students can see it.



Figure **11.2.2.2**: A posted schedule showing each hour's activities.

Create Routines & Procedures

Create your routines, considering:

- Set a clear, specific vision for students' **movement, voice, and participation** during each routine and procedure.
- Ensure that your expectations are age-appropriate and **reasonable**.
- Structure procedures to be **efficient** but also maximize students' **autonomy**. In many cases this will also reduce your workload by sharing responsibility with students.
- **Embed learning** or purposeful activity whenever possible.

You will likely have procedures & routines for:

- Greetings & morning/entry routine
- Breakfast
- Carpet time
- Centers or stations

- Taking out and putting away materials
- Lining up
- Walking in the hallway
- Lunchtime
- Recess
- Transitioning to specials/electives or departmentalized team teacher's room
- Getting the teacher's attention, getting a tissue, and other needs during instruction
- Getting students' attention
- Using the restroom
- What to do when done with seatwork
- Dismissal

Teach Routines & Procedures

Use **social stories** to teach routines & procedures.

- Customize social stories to **show and tell** your precise expectations.
- **Read and re-read** as you introduce and practice routines and procedures.

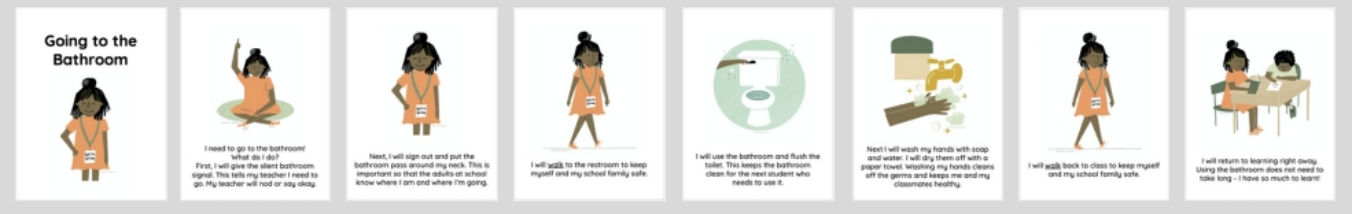


Figure **11.2.2.3**: A sample series of printed social stories.

Consistent procedures and routines help keep your classroom running efficiently and help students feel safe because they know what to do.

Add social stories to the classroom library for students to read independently!

Post Visual Expectations

How are visual expectations helpful?

- Visual expectations are useful for **communicating situation-specific guidelines** for behavior (movement, voice, participation).
- Providing visuals allows pre-readers and early readers to access this essential information and begin to **monitor & regulate their own behavior**.
- Teachers can **use these visuals to teach, re-teach, and redirect students**.

Visual expectations posters show behavior guidelines in words & pictures.



Figure **11.2.2.4**: A sample visual expectation poster

Tips for creating visual expectations posters

Post the expectations signs at a level where students can see them. It may be helpful to laminate or frame expectations signs for durability.

Provide one or two ways to meet the expectations and, if relevant, one nonexample showing a likely mistake.

Use photos of students, clip art, or other graphics. See www.wholechildmodel.org for printable expectations posters!

Post visual expectations wherever students complete a routine or procedure.



Figure 11.2.2.5: Examples of visual expectation posters

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11.2.3: Starting and Ending the Day

Strong Start & Close: Rituals to Begin and End the Day

Strong Start is a set of rituals and routines that get students **ready to learn** by fostering a sense of safety, belonging, community, and self-efficacy. The routines begin as students enter the classroom and continue through a morning meeting.

The Strong Close whole-group routine is the formal conclusion of your day. It provides a **sense of closure** to the day and a transition to something new.

Starting each day with a predictable routine helps students feel safe & connected to school, as well as creating time for explicitly teaching social-emotional skills.

Strategy Overview

The power of Strong Start & Close lies in implementing the entire routine.

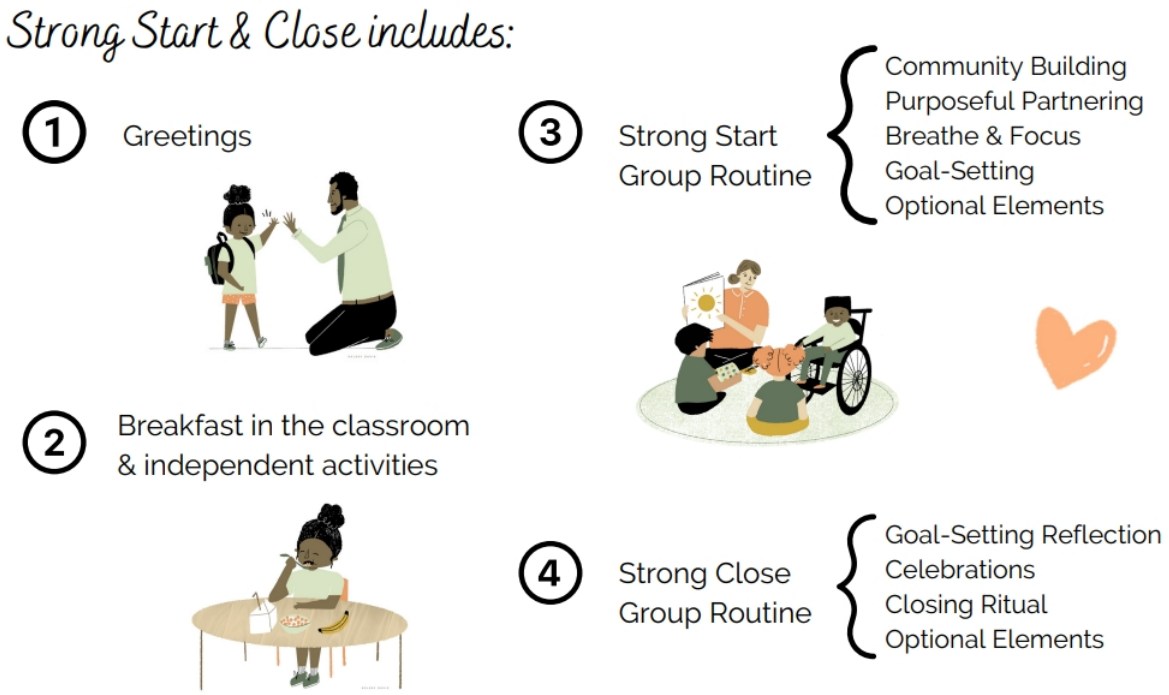


Figure **11.2.3.1**: The elements of a strong start and close.

Strong Start: Greetings

A warm welcome to the classroom reinforces with students that they are safe, loved, and part of a nurturing school community.

Teachers greet students individually at the door to the classroom.



Figure **11.2.3.2**: Visual menu of greetings options.

How to do this well:

- Post a student-friendly **visual menu of greetings options** at the classroom door. Include a variety of levels of touch for student comfort.
- Greet students at their **eye level** at the classroom door. Each child **chooses** their preferred greeting.
- Make a **personal connection** with each child, exchanging 2-3 conversational turns.

Strong Start: Breakfast in the Classroom

When students feel calm and composed during breakfast time, they are more likely to eat, which provides physical fuel for learning and prevents hunger-related upsets.

Students may choose to eat the provided breakfast.

How to do this well:

- Establish **school-wide procedures** for breakfast delivery to the classroom.
- Set up food on a designated table or counter. Students **serve themselves** and take their food to their seat.
- Provide **clear instructions** for students on how to serve and clean up after themselves.

During Greetings and Breakfast, students will also complete arrival tasks like hanging up coats, putting away backpacks, or turning in homework.

Strong Start: Independent Activities

If students choose not to eat, or when they are finished, students engage in independent activities. Students will have something productive to do when they finish breakfast, which helps them have a sense of direction.

How to do this well:

- To start with, independent work should be **easy** to take out and clean up, and not require any specific amount of time to complete.
- As you feel out your routine, you may try to integrate assignments like Lexia or small-group interventions.

Examples of Independent Work

- Journal writing
- Question of the day
- Independent reading
- Simple centers
- Relax quietly at your table
- Lexia minutes
- Partner teacher could be doing intervention or small-group mini lessons

Strong Start: Group Routine Overview

The whole-group routine is the formal start to the instructional day. It may take place on the carpet, at desks, or standing.

How to do this well:

- Use a **signal** like a chime or other attention-getter to alert children that it's time to come to the group.
- Allow children who have not yet finished breakfast to continue eating.
- The group routine should be no longer than **approximately 15 minutes** when it is running smoothly.

Remember: Students must be **taught** the routines at the start of the school year and provided with **extensive, supportive practice opportunities** for Strong Start to run smoothly.

Strong Start: Purposeful Partnering

Purposeful Partnering is a ritual that fosters peer connection between students through an engaging partner activity.

How to do this well:

- Choose activities that foster **peer-to-peer connection** through appropriate touch, tone of voice, eye contact, presence, and playfulness.
- Activities can include songs, movement, fingerplays, quick games, and partner shares.
- **Introduce and practice** a number of age/grade-appropriate rituals with your class.

Purposeful Partnering Examples

- Create a secret handshake with your partner
- Double Double
- Pat a Cake
- Let me See Your Move

Go to www.wholechildmodel.org for Strong Start activity decks!

Human connection, fostered by building a sense of attunement and synchronicity in movements, voice, and feeling, optimizes brain function through the release of oxytocin, a soothing brain chemical.

Strong Start: Community Building

Community Building is a whole class routine that says "we're all in this together" with a shared joyful experience.

How to do this well:

- Choose activities that promote a **sense of team** across all members of the classroom.
- Activities can include songs, movement, and quick games.
- **Introduce and practice** a number of age/grade-appropriate rituals with your class.

Community Building Examples

- We're Going on a Bear Hunt
- Freeze Dance
- Five Green and Speckled Frogs
- Hokey Pokey
- Tooty Ta
- Cha Cha Slide
- Choral singing & Movement (any type of song that students enjoy!)

A sense of belonging is a prerequisite to learning. These rituals give students an opportunity to participate in a collective activity, building trust and relationships as a group.

Strong Start: Breathe & Focus

Breathe & Focus teaches strategies for self-regulation, helping students become ready to learn in the moment and able to use strategies in future times of upset.

How to do this well:

- Use instructional strategies like modeling & practice, role play, social stories, and problemsolving scenarios to introduce and practice selfregulation strategies.
- Prioritize teaching **skills and tools** students will use frequently in the classroom, including how to use the Centering Space



Figure 11.2.3.3: Images of various leaves and acorns with faces and descriptions of feelings.

Breathe & Focus Examples

- Teach breathing strategies
- Teach Centering Space use
- Introduce Feelings Friends
- Mindful Kids cards
- Yoga
- Breathing GIFs
- GoNoodle Flow

Strong Start: Goal Setting

During Goal Setting, students set a daily goal for living out the classroom agreements.

How to do this well:

- During Greetings & Arrival: **Each child sets a goal** based on the classroom agreements. Students **verbally and/or symbolically** (e.g., with a token) identify their goal for the teacher.
- During the Group Routing: Students **recite** the classroom agreements. Prompt students to **share** what reaching their goal will look like:
  - Think of your goal and one action that will fulfull that promise.
  - I will show respect by actively listening and tracking the speaker.
  - I will be kind by using helpful words when other kids are upset.
- During Strong Close: Students **reflect** on how they did and move their token to “Yes, I did it” or “Not yet, I'll try again tomorrow.”

Strong Start: Optional Elements

You may want or need to include other elements in your morning routine, before or during group time.

Possible other elements:

- Sending wishes of love and kindness to others
- Arrival and unpacking routines
- Visual daily schedule review

- School-wide morning announcements
- Morning message or newsletter
- Reciting the school pledge or motto
- Completing Classroom Jobs

Things to avoid during Strong Start:

- Discussing current events that may be stressful to students without appropriate time or support to process
- Competitive games where some children lose or get "out"
- Prolonging group time when an activity isn't working

Strong Close: Group Routine

The Strong Close whole-group routine is the formal conclusion of your day. It may take place on the carpet, at desks, or standing.

How to do this well:

- After students pack up their materials, signal that it is time to begin the group closing routine.
- The group closing routine should be no longer than **approximately 10 minutes** when it is running smoothly.

Strong Close Elements

- Goal-Setting Reflection - Students reflect on how they did with meeting their goal.
- Celebrations - Students affirm one another's community-supporting actions.
- Closing Ritual - The group engages in a community-focused ritual.

Strong Close: Goal-Setting Reflection

Students revisit the goal they set at the start of the day and reflect on whether they fully met, almost met, or did not meet their goal.

How to do this well:

- Students **move a tangible object** indicating their progress toward their goal.
- In some classrooms, students **reflect verbally** with an accountability partner which serves as an opportunity to receive and share feedback. The teacher may also **confer with students** who need support in reflecting accurately or in understanding the impact of their behaviors throughout the day.



Figure **11.2.3.4**: Move a tangible object to show progress.

When we revisit goals set earlier in the day, we emphasize personal accountability for our actions.

Strong Close: Celebrations

Students celebrate each others' community-supporting behaviors.

How to do this well:

- At strategic times throughout the day, including before dismissal, students **acknowledge compassionate actions** shown by their peers.
- One student **describes** the kind action that they saw another student do, and then that student places a **symbolic object** into a Compassion Jar.
- The class may do a clap, snap, or other cheer to collectively **celebrate** the compassion shown.

Celebrating compassionate actions provides a natural boost of dopamine and serotonin.

For example, "When we were cleaning up, Kaleena helped me sweep the maker space even thought she wasn't working there. Let's give Kaleena three snaps for showing compassion."

Strong Close: Closing Ritual

Students engage in a closing ritual indicating “we are all in this together.

How to do this well:

- Establish a ritual similar to a Community Builder in Strong Start - an activity done in unison.
- Work with students to generate a meaningful ritual.

Examples:

- Sing a goodbye song
- Recite a goodbye chant
- Do a quick dance routine (Goodbye Otters, Goodbye Otters, Goodbye Otters, It's time to end your day!)

A community ritual done daily provides a sense of closure to the day and a transition to something new.

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11.2.4: Classroom Jobs

Students share responsibility for the care and maintenance of the **emotional climate and physical environment** through their jobs.

Every child has a job. Assignments are not determined by merit or used as rewards.

Classroom jobs create interdependence, the belief that we all have gifts to contribute and we all need each other.

How to Do this Well

Getting Started Checklist:

- Make a plan for jobs
- Teach students how to do jobs
- Support students as they do their jobs

Jobs encourage everyone to work together to take care of the community. Sharing power and responsibility communicates that we are all equal.

Make a Plan for Jobs

First, make a list of jobs:

- **List** the necessary chores, routines, and rituals that keep your classroom running smoothly.
- Consider which of these are **opportunities** for children to contribute to the community.
- Identify enough jobs for each child to have **at least one job**.

Job Ideas

- Kindness Recorder
- Goal-Setting Helpe
- Thinking of You/Absent Student Helper
- Feelings Friends Helper
- Problem-Solver
- Encourager
- First-Aid Helper
- Materials Manager
- Attendance Helper
- Light Switch Helper
- Door Holder
- Gardener (for plants)
- Zookeeper (for class pet)
- Librarian
- Technology Manager
- Line Leader
- Breathe & Focus Helper
- Binder Checker
- Pencil Helper
- Substitute

By sharing responsibility, we can strengthen community and make the day more efficient so that there's more time for learning.

Make a Plan for Jobs

Next, prep materials to support jobs:

- Write **job descriptions** for each job and create or obtain props if needed
- Create a **job board** to visually represent the jobs

Tips: Include the job title and a picture. Create a system to show which child has which job.



Figure 11.2.4.1: Job descriptions are helpful.



Figure 11.2.4.2: Create a job board.

Some jobs, such as attendance taker or kindness recorder, give children an opportunity to practice academic skills in a meaningful context.

Teach Jobs to Students

Use a variety of strategies to teach students how to do their jobs:

- Modeling & Demonstration
- Tour the School
- Social Stories & Class-Made Books
- Songs
- Books

Tip: Once jobs are established, outgoing job-holders can teach their jobs to classmates.

Giving children something specific to do every day builds the habit of being responsible. It also builds skill over time as children practice doing the same thing every day.

Support Students as They Do Their Jobs

Provide support depending on how students are doing:

- Provide **descriptive praise** to children as they successfully complete their jobs. For example "You did it! You cleaned the tables with the wipes until all the crumbs and spills were gone. That is helpful to our school community so that our work will not get food on it."
- **Coach** children who need more support completing their jobs - some ideas:
  - Provide detailed **verbal directions**
  - Show **pictures** of the desired outcome
  - **Demonstrate** the desired way to complete the job
  - **Reflect** (and have students reflect) on accomplishments relative to the goal

Having small successes throughout the day builds a sense of selfworth, and provides opportunities for the teacher to give positive recognition to children who need it most.

Implementation Tips

- **Rotate jobs** at a comfortable interval depending on the age and skills of your students. Students will likely keep the same jobs for at least a week to build their skills.
- **Vary the jobs** throughout the year to meet the changing needs of the classroom.

- **Assign jobs** to children based on the skills they need more practice with - not what they already do well. Some students may have more than one job!

Humans need to feel that they matter and that the world needs them. Making a difference in the community builds self-esteem for people of all ages.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.3: Positive Guidance Strategies

11.3.1: Factors Influencing Behavior

11.3.2: Redirecting Behavior

11.3.3: Providing Specific and Authentic Support

11.3.4: Addressing Challenging Behavior

11.3.5: Spaces for Emotional Regulation

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11.3.1: Factors Influencing Behavior

There are many factors that influence the behaviors of children. It's important for teachers to keep these in mind as they observe, interpret, and respond to children's behaviors.[1]

Developmental Factors by Age

While each child develops at their own rate and in their own time and may not match every listed item, here are some general descriptions of children by age:

1-2 Year Olds

- Like to explore their environment
- Like to open and take things apart
- Like to dump things over
- Can play alone for short periods of time
- Still in oral stage, may use biting, or hitting to express their feelings or ideas

2-3 Year Olds

- Need to run, climb, push and pull
- Are not capable of sharing, waiting or taking turns
- Want to do things on their own
- Work well with routine
- Like to follow adults around
- Prolong bedtime
- Say "no"
- Understand more than he/she can say

3-4 year Olds

- Like to run, jump, climb
- May grow out of naps
- Want approval from adults
- Want to be included "me too"
- Are curious about everything
- May have new fears and anxieties
- Have little patience, but can wait their turn
- Can take some responsibility
- Can clean up after themselves

4-5 Year Olds

- Are very active
- Start things but don't necessarily finish them
- Are bossy and boastful
- Tell stories, exaggerate
- Use "toilet" words in a "silly" way
- Have active imaginations

5-6 Year Olds

- Want everything to be fair
- Able to understand responsibility
- Able to solve problems on their own
- Try to negotiate[2]

Table 1: Positive Approaches for Developmental Factors[3]

Ages/Stages	Developmental Factors	Examples of a Positive Approach to Developmental Factors to Manage Behavior
Infant/Toddler	Children this age: • Actively explore environments • Like to take things apart • Have limited verbal ability, so biting or hitting to express feelings is common • Like to dump things over	Children in this stage tend to dump and run, so plan games to enhance this behavior in a positive way. Have large wide-mouth bins for children to practice "dumping items" into and out of. This strategy redirects the behavior of creating a mess into a structured activity to match the development.
Older Toddlers	Children this age: • Need to run, climb, push and pull • Are incapable of sharing; waiting or taking turns • Express beginning independence • Work well with routines • Say "no" often • Comprehend more than they can verbally express	Teachers of this age often find children trying to climb up on tables, chairs and shelves. Incorporate developmentally climbing equipment and create obstacle courses to redirect activity into positive behaviors. Avoid using the word "no" and create expressions that teach what to do instead of what not to do.
Young Preschool (3-4 years)	Children this age: • Like to be active • Are curious and ask many questions • Express new fears and anxieties • Have little patience • Can clean up after themselves • Can take some responsibility • Seek adult approval	Young preschoolers become curious and create many misconceptions as they create new schemas for understanding concepts. Listen to ideas sensitively address them quickly and honestly. Model exploration and engagement in new activities (especially ones they may be fearful of engaging in)
Older Preschool (4-5 years)	Children this age: • Are highly active • Can be "bossy" • Have an active imagination • Exaggerate stories • Often use "toilet words" in silly ways • Start things but don't always finish	Ask the children to create new silly, but appropriate words to represent emotions rather than focusing on the "bad" words they use.
Young School-Age	Children this age: • Are able to problem solve on their own • Begin to understand responsibility • Think in terms of fairness • Attempt to negotiate	Fairness is a big issue for this group so working with this age group, a teacher should sit with children to develop "rules" and "consequences" so they can take ownership of behavioral expectations

Environmental Factors

- Weather
- Adequate Play Space
- Room Arrangement
- Materials Available (not enough)
- Peers they interact with
- Parent/child relationship
- Sibling Relationship

- Relationships with friends
- Daily Routine (Rushed, busy, not enough time to play, run or exercise)
- T.V. Exposure (screen time- amount and quality)
- Lack of Sleep
- Nutrition[4]

Table 2: Positive Approaches for Environmental Factors[5]

Area	Approach
Weather	Plan for alternate gross motor experiences during inclement weather Provide flexibility in the daily routine to accommodate weather extremes
Adequate Play Space	Ensure the space provided for each center/learning area is adequate If there is crowding, look at the messages the space is giving the children about how many can play there Make sure you are using all the spaces of the classroom effectively (is the unused space in the center of the room?)
Room Arrangement	Separate active/boisterous spaces from those that are quiet Watch that you don't create "runways" and "islands" to run around Provide protection for children's creations (try to avoid creating walkways through spaces where children are engaged) Put messy spaces where it is easier to clean up (near sinks and on flooring that can be easily cleaned)
Materials	Especially for younger children, have duplicates of popular toys Make sure that there are enough materials to ensure that children always have new choices available (without waiting) Ensure that they are stored in an organized way Make them accessible to children to get out and put away independently
Relationships	Support children's relationships and attachment to their families/parents Support relationships between children in the classroom Build a strong sense of classroom community Facilitate problem-solving and conflict-resolution
Technology	Create a policy on the use of screen media in which technology is used as a learning tool (rather than entertainment)
Basic Needs (sleep, nutrition, etc.)	Schedule adequate rest time for children and create a peaceful environment for resting Serve nutritious snacks and meals for children that are offered every couple of hours Consider how to provide for children who are sleepy and hungry at other times of the day

Individual Factors/Personal Styles

- Temperament (Easy, Difficult, Slow to Warm)
- Learning styles/personal uniqueness

Social Emotional Needs

- To feel loved
- To be included
- To feel important
- To be heard
- To feel valued
- To feel safe
- To have friends[6]

Positive Approaches for Individual Factors, Personal Styles, and Social/Emotional Needs

Young children communicate their needs and wants through behaviors. Educators and parents can observe children's behavior and look for clues about what it means. Since families know their children best, early childhood educators can ask families about their children's behaviors and what they notice at home. Sometimes, the behavior's meaning is clear to adults. Other times, educators and parents need to try different responses and watch the child's reactions. Over time, adults will likely improve in responding effectively to a particular child's communications.[7]

Motivation behind Behavior

In order to respond effectively to children's behaviors and to extend positive relationships with children, it's important to understand the motivation behind children's behaviors and then match your approach.[8]

Table 3: Motivation[9]

Motivation	Approach
Attention - Positive or Negative	Provide positive attention
Power - To be the "boss"	Provide many opportunities for choice making (choices you can live with) and practice decision-making
Revenge - Children who are hurt want to hurt others to feel important	Acknowledge intense feelings and stay positive
Inadequacy - Children don't want others to expect anything from them for fear of failure	Provide opportunities for positive success

Having Appropriate Expectations for Behavior

It is really important that we realize that often what adults consider to be challenging behaviors are entirely age-appropriate responses from children. So it is important that teachers:

- Respond adaptively to individual children, considering each child's age, temperament, language, communication skills, culture, interests, and abilities.
- Examine their own expectations of "appropriate" and "safe" behavior, looking for potential bias toward gender or developmental We must realizecan often be addressed through prevention strategies. For children with disabilities who have challenging behavior, the process is the same as for all children, but the strategies might differ depending on children's Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and their specific needs and strengths. The following strategies can be individualized as needed.

Classroom schedules and routines:

- Have consistent schedules and routines
- Make sure the content and length of activities are developmentally appropriate
- Be intentional about using visuals to teach routines
- Give consistent feedback
- Provide more individualized support for children with disabilities who have challenging behavior during routines. They may need an individualized visual schedule or a peer buddy, for example.

Transitions:

- Try to minimize the number of transitions
- Teach expectations
- Model or provide visual examples of appropriate things to do while waiting (counting, singing a group song, playing Simon Says)
- Allow children to transition at separate times or in smaller groups as needed

Large Group Activities:

- Consider the length of the activity (especially circle time). Is it age appropriate?
- For children who are working on expanding their attention, shorten wait times and allow breaks.
- Use visuals to make rules clear and to break tasks into smaller steps
- Provide ongoing feedback to expand children's understanding, participation, and learning

Types of Supports

- **Visuals**
  - To help children communicate their needs
  - To break down tasks
  - To clarify expectations
- **Timer**
  - To provide a safety signal so children know when something is coming to an end
- **Adult Support**
  - To facilitate large group and small group activities
  - To model and provide examples, and help children who need more intensive support
  - To provide choices
- **Peer Support**
  - To model, think-pair-share, or be a buddy
- **Child Preferences**
  - To increase children's motivation and engagement in tasks that can trigger challenging behavior

Involving Children in Guidance Curriculum

It is a valuable learning experience to involve children in creating/defining the classroom rules. They become invested in those expectations. Teachers should use the following umbrella when creating classroom rules:

- Keep self safe: (walk inside, feet on the floor, etc…)
- Keep others safe: (keep hands to themselves)
- Keep materials/environment safe: (keep books on the shelf to prevent tearing, throw balls, dig with shovels, etc…)

[10]

Classroom Teaching Strategies for Positive Interactions and Prosocial Behavior[12]

Instruction is more effective when it is embedded in the meaningful activities and contexts that occur throughout a child's day (Katz & McClellan 1997). Here are suggestions and examples for teaching social skills within classroom activities.

Modeling. Demonstrate the skill while explaining what you are doing. As you pass a block to a child, say, "Look, I am sharing my blocks with my friend."

Modeling with puppets. Use puppets to model the skill while interacting with a child, an adult, or another puppet. A puppet can explain to the teacher and the class how she became angry and hit her brother to get a toy. You can ask the puppet to consider other solutions and then discuss what a child might do when he or she wants a toy that another child is using.

Preparing peer partners. Ask one child to show another child the skill or to help the child use the target skill. You can prompt the peer by saying, “Carmen, Justin is still learning how to wait and take turns. Since you know what to do, can you help him? Show him the line-up picture while you wait for a drink at the water fountain.”

Singing. Introduce a new skill through a song. To teach children to trade toys, pass out small toys during a large group activity, then sing the following song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” and practice trading:

I can be a problem solver, problem solver, problem solver, I can be a problem solver, let me show you how.
Maybe I can trade with you, trade with you, trade with you, Maybe I can trade with you; let me show you how.

Children then practice trading toys with each other.

Doing fingerplays. Introduce the skill with a finger- play, then follow up with a discussion or story. While showing fingers, have children recite this rhyme:

One little friend cried, “Boo-hoo”; a friend gives a hug and then there are two.

Two little friends share with me; we play together and that makes three.

Three little friends ask for more; they all say “Please,” and then comes four.

Four little friends take turns down the slide; another comes to play, and that makes five.

Five little friends have fun at school, because they follow every rule.

Using a flannel board. Introduce a new skill using flannel board activities and stories. For example, to teach turn taking you could have flannel pieces for Humpty Dumpty and change the rhyme so that “All the king’s horses and all the king’s friends / Work as a team to put Humpty together again.” As you say the rhyme, have the children take turns putting the pieces (castle, bricks, Humpty Dumpty pieces, horses, and friends) on the flannel board. When you finish the rhyme, extend the activity by talking about how Humpty felt when he sat on the wall; when he fell; and when his friends helped put him back together.

Using prompts. Give a child verbal, visual, or physical prompts to use a skill during interactions and activities. When a child who has difficulty with initiating play interactions moves toward a group playing together, you might say privately, “Remember to use your words and ask to play.”

Giving encouragement. Provide specific feedback when the child uses the skill. For example, describe what the child did: “You asked Joey for a turn. I saw that you two had a good time playing together.” Encouragement can be verbal or a signal (a thumbs-up or high five).

Using incidental teaching. Guide the child to use the skill during interactions and activities. Quietly say to the child, “Quan, I see that you are very angry that all the trucks are being used. What can you do when you are angry? Let’s go over the steps.”

Playing games. Use games to teach problem solving, words that express feelings, identification of others’ feelings, friendship skills, and so on. Place photographs of each child in a bag. Have the children take turns pulling a photo out of the bag and offering a compliment to the child in the photo.

Discussing children’s literature. Read books to help teach friendship skills, feeling words, problem solving, and so on. While reading a story, pause and ask the children how a character in the story might feel or ask them to suggest ideas for solving the character’s problem.

Stating Behavior Expectations

Behavioral expectations are the appropriate behaviors expected from children during specific activities and routines. By stating behavioral expectations in advance of activities, routines and transitions, we allow children more opportunities to be successful. When children clearly understand what we expect of them, they can more securely play and work within a set of parameters. Other benefits of teaching behavioral expectations are that it:

- Maximizes children’s learning time. When we tell children our expectations ahead of time, we spend less time playing catch-up during the activity.
- Builds a common language. When we outline behavioral expectations for activities, routines and transitions, we help build a common language among the teachers and children. Using the same phrases during the same activities, help children to

understand the meaning of the expectations (i.e., walking feet and putting breakfast dishes in the brown bucket).

- Provides a consistent message to children. Giving children mixed messages about what is okay and not okay detracts from learning and engagement over time. When we say, write, and model our message consistently to children, they are more likely to get it.
- Sets the stage for learning. Developing behavioral expectations before activities begin creates an atmosphere ripe for engagement and learning.
- Helps prevent behavior problems before they happen. When we tell children in positive ways what is expected of them before they act, we can more readily reinforce the behaviors we want to see, based on our stated expectations.[13]

Tips for Teachers – Stating Behavioral Expectations

Anticipate – Think through activities, routines, and expectations

Plan – Develop a plan to support appropriate behaviors by determining which behaviors you want children to use and which behaviors you do not want to see

Prepare children

- State expected behaviors in advance.
- Post expectations.
- Provide demonstrations.
- Use role play.
- Lead discussions.

Recognize appropriate behavior – give recognition and feedback

- Catch children following the expected behaviors.
- Make a statement about their effort.

Encourage them to keep it up![14]

State What Children Should Do

1. Tell a child what to do instead of what not to do.
2. Show the child by modeling or using a picture of the action.
3. Clearly and simply state what you expect the child to do.
4. Remember that young children may use inappropriate behavior because they do not understand the social rules and/or because they are unable to consistently apply what they are in the process of learning.
5. Talk to young children using language they understand. Young children may not understand a word like “don’t” because it is a short word for “do not” and he/she may not know what the “negation” of a word means.
6. Encourage the child in a way that lets him/her know that he/she is exhibiting the desired behavior. Use positive, descriptive acknowledgement while the child is making an effort or is doing the desired behavior.
7. Some children will respond better to more subdued expressions, and acknowledging them in a “matter of fact” way might be more effective.
8. For the most part, be enthusiastic and generous with encouragement. Most children can never get enough!

Here are some examples:

Table 4: Stating What Children Should Do[15]

Avoid	Say/Model	Positive Descriptive Acknowledgement
Don't run!	• Walk • Use walking feet • Stay with me • Hold my hand	• You're holding my hand. That is so respectful. • You walked across the classroom. You made a safe choice. • You are walking beside me and keeping me company. That is so friendly!
Stop climbing!	• Do you need something up high? Let's find a safe way to reach it.	• Wow! You have both feet on the floor! You are being safe. • You asked for help to get something, you are being careful.
Don't touch!	• Look with your eyes • Keep your hands down	• You were really listening; you are looking with your eyes! • You kept your hands down. That is respectful.
No yelling!	• Use a calm voice • Use an inside voice • Turn the volume down	• You are using a calm voice! You look happy. • You are using a soft voice inside the classroom. How respectful.
Stop whining!	• Use a calm voice • Talk so that I can understand you	• You are talking so clearly! That is so helpful. • You told me with your words what was wrong. That is respectful. • You used your words. How respectful!
Don't stand on the chair!	• Sit on the chair • Chairs are for sitting • Do you need something up high?	• Let's find a safe way to reach it. • You are sitting on the chair. What a careful girl. • You were responsible when you sat in the chair. • You stood on the ladder. You chose to be safe.
Don't hit!	• Gentle hands • Hands are for playing, eating, and hugging.	• When you used gentle hands you were being respectful. • You used your hands for clapping! You like being safe. • You are hugging her. What a friendly girl.
No coloring on the wall!!	• Color on the paper • Put the paper on the easel if you want to color standing up	• You put the paper on the easel. That is being responsible. • Wow. You are coloring so carefully. You are focused. • You are an artist standing at the easel.
Don't throw your toys!	• Play with the toys on the floor • Toys stay close to the ground • Please keep the toys on the table	• You are playing with the toys on the floor. So safe. • You decided to keep the toys on the table. You are respectful.
Stop playing with your food!	• Food goes on the spoon and then in your mouth	• You're using your spoon. You're being careful.

Avoid	Say/Model	Positive Descriptive Acknowledgement
	• Say “all done” when you are finished eating	• You said “all done.” That is helpful. • You are eating your food using your spoon and fork. That is practicing manners.
Don’t play in the water/sink!	• Wash your hands • If you’re finished washing your hands, please dry them	• You washed your hands. What a healthy guy! • You followed the hand washing steps! You try hard.

[16]

The concept of time is very abstract for young children thus stating, “Clean up in five minutes” is not meaningful in terms of time. Suggested alternatives for directing clean up actions can include statements, “When the lights go off it will be time to clean up, “When you hear the ringing of the timer, it will be time to…”

To further gain cooperation in transitioning from one activity to another consider,

- Talking individually to children at their level so they can hear you and know you are addressing them in particular
- Allow them a space to place unfinished work to revisit at a later time
- Provide choices for cleaning up areas

Assign jobs each day for clean-up (book collectors, snack helper, etc…)

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11.3.2: Redirecting Behavior

Redirecting is a proactive teaching strategy used to address challenging behavior (something that interferes with learning and engagement in prosocial interaction) BEFORE it escalates or continues. **Redirecting:**

- Allows a teacher to guide children to engage in alternative behaviors that are more acceptable.
- Consists of instruction and simple cues teachers can easily embed into teachable moments throughout the day.
- Is one of multiple proactive teaching strategies teachers use in combination with other strategies (e.g., creating classroom rules, clearly stating expectations for classroom behaviors).
- Stops a child from engaging in a challenging behavior before it escalates.
- Re-engages a child with appropriate activities which is key to maximizing learning time.
- Maximizes learning time for all children in the classroom as they will not be distracted by the challenging behavior.

Teachers **redirect challenging behavior** by:

- Minimizing attention to the challenging behavior.
- Providing a clear description of the behavior expected from the child (e.g., “You can ask for a turn nicely,” or “We play with the trucks by driving them on the carpet.”)
- Providing positive attention and/or feedback (e.g., “That’s playing with the trucks safely, Miguel! I see you are driving them on the carpet.”), or access to the desired material as soon as it is available.

Redirection can be used when a child:

- is off task to redirect attention to the task.
- uses materials inappropriately to provide a reminder of how to use the materials properly.
- talks out of turn to help the child wait for a turn.
- gets upset by a situation to guide the child away from that situation, to address the child’s feelings, and to engage the child in an alternate activity

Four types of redirecting are most commonly used in the preschool classroom:

- **Verbal redirecting**: A teacher gives an instruction which distracts the child from the challenging behavior and directs him to a more appropriate activity.
- **Physical redirecting**: A teacher physically prevents a child from engaging in a challenging behavior and redirects her to an alternative or new activity.
- **Redirecting with a cue** that is visual or gestural (e.g., a picture or gesture).
- **Redirecting attention** to a positive model in a child’s proximity (proximal attention): For example, a teacher draws attention to a nearby child who is engaged in an appropriate behavior.[1]

References

[1] Presenter Notes Redirecting Behavior by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is in the public domain

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11.3.3: Providing Specific and Authentic Support

The way teachers respond to positive behavior also has an impact. We can encourage children's efforts by providing specific acknowledgement rather than empty praise (which can either become meaningless or addictive for a child).

> *"The only lifelong, reliable motivations are those that come from within, and one of the strongest of those is the joy and pride that grow from knowing that you've just done something as well as you can do it." -Lloyd Dobens and Clare Crawford-Mason*

When a child has done something impressive, instead of saying, **"Good job,"** try one of the following:

1. Report what you see (narrating).

A short, objective statement such as, "You put your dishes in the tub," or "You figured out a solution to the problem," acknowledges children's efforts and allows them to judge for themselves the merits of their achievement. Elaborate on the details of their actions to provide more specific feedback. For example, "It looks like you used blue and green to make an ocean."

2. Connect it with a desired character trait, value, or expectation (PDA: Positive, Descriptive Acknowledgment).

When a child does something that is an example of a character trait, value or expectation, add the expectations language to the comment. For example, if a child has put away toys on the floor say, "You cleaned up the blocks. You are keeping the area safe." Or if they helped a friend you might say, "You gave Yoon Seo the fire truck. That's being friendly." Expectations language provides definitions for the character words, builds self-efficacy (belief that you have the ability to succeed at a task), and helps the child to internalize the behaviors.

3. Emphasize the impact on others.

If a child does something caring or something that benefits the community, acknowledge the positive impact. For example, if a child has put away toys on the floor say, "You cleaned up the blocks. Now someone else can have a turn." Or if they helped a friend you might say, "You gave Yoon Seo the fire truck. He looks really happy to have it." Such language builds a sense of agency (ability to intentionally make things happen through your actions) by drawing the child's attention to the impact his/her actions have on another child.

4. Ask open-ended questions.

Being curious encourages the child to reflect. "What do you like best about your tower?" or "How did you know to put the puzzle piece there?" Asking open-ended questions builds language and engages the children in abstract thinking.

5. Say nothing.

When children are playing, we often feel the need to continually comment on their actions. This can be disruptive and can create an extrinsic motivation to explore. Let children take joy in their own learning and allow them to experience the pride of their own accomplishments.[1]

Planning for Guiding Behavior

The plans for guiding behavior, although typically not seen on a daily or weekly plan posted for all to see, will likely be found in the program manual. In a program manual, teachers and administrators explain strategies for guiding children's behavior to support learning how to get along respectfully and cooperatively with others. Short written handouts on common issues like sharing, biting, hitting, or name-calling are also useful ways to make visible to families how teachers support young children in getting along respectfully and cooperatively with others. (The CA CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid Web site at https://cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/ is a resource that provides downloadable handouts on such topics in English, Chinese, and Spanish.) It is important that families see that such planning is part of the broad definition of curriculum. Families are integral to this planning, as they have their own perspectives on guiding learning and behavior. Collaborating with families opens up possibilities to help children learn expectations both at home and at school, because children are learning ways of being with others in both settings.

There will be times when social–emotional development and negotiating relationships between children take center stage in the written plan. For example, in a toddler classroom, several children might be learning the importance of not biting others when they are upset. This behavior might become a focus for teacher reflection and curriculum planning for the group at large for several weeks. Teachers might decide to read stories to the children about things to do when angry. Or schedules may be adjusted to allow a teacher to shadow a child who tends to bite when upset. Teachers might also document over the course of several days to see if biting tends to occur at particular times.

Another example comes from a classroom of three-year-olds who are all new to the program. The term “cleanup time” may not make sense to the children, so the teachers plan opportunities when children can experience and discuss what this term means. It becomes the topic of discussion during a large-group gathering. It also takes on a special look during the cleanup that happens before lunch, as a teacher adds a new routine in which each child gets to pull from a basket a sign that says, “I cleaned” and carries it into the meal area. The idea of cleanup also gets written into a story, dictated by several children who are dismayed that not everyone was helping with cleanup. The teachers make time during large-group gathering to read the story. Prompted by the teacher’s suggestions, several children illustrate the story, which becomes part of a homemade book that finds a home in the book/story area.[2]

References

[1] Moving From Praise to Acknowledgement by Supporting Inclusive Early Learning is used with permission;

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11.3.4: Addressing Challenging Behavior

Preschool children rely on guidance from their teachers to practice and eventually master the complex skills required to navigate social interactions with peers and adults. With guidance from caring adults in their environment, preschool children can develop a sense of competence, learn developmentally appropriate ways to socialize with peers, and resolve conflicts.[1]

Teacher's Role

As the adults that work with children on a daily basis and who form positive relationships with them, teachers have a critical role in addressing challenging behaviors. Teachers should:

- Observe and identify the emotions underlying challenging behaviors.
- Gather input from colleagues, other program staff members, and families
- to gain a greater understanding of the function or purpose behind children's challenging behaviors and to develop strategies—including self-reflection and peer-reflection—for addressing those behaviors.
- Share observations appropriately and respect confidentiality when discussions involve children and families.
- Implement strategies designed by colleagues, families, and other specialists to address children's challenging behaviors.
- Develop, modify, and adapt schedules, routines, and the program environment to positively affect challenging behaviors.[2]

Program's Role

Teachers also need support from their programs. Programs should:

- Provide support and professional development on the practices that are most likely to prevent challenging behaviors in young children, including strong relationships, supportive environments (including carefully planned transitions, schedules, and grouping), and teaching social–emotional skills to children.
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff and resources to families on the use of strategies to respond to challenging behaviors, including support from behavioral or developmental specialists, early interventionists, and mental-health professionals as necessary.[3]

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural part of social interactions. Teachers can help children navigate conflict successfully by facilitating conflict resolution. Teachers should:

- Support children in expressing their emotions and negotiating conflict in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Model appropriate behavior for resolving conflicts.
- Refine and implement developmentally appropriate strategies to help children learn how to express emotions, negotiate conflict, and solve problems.
- Work with coworkers to utilize a similar and consistent process with children in the same classroom or environment.
- Engage colleagues and other program staff, children, and families in discussions around conflict resolution.[4]

[5]

Include the children directly involved and use these steps

1. Acknowledge there is a problem or conflict: What happened? How do you feel?

- Approach children calmly, take deep breaths, and acknowledge feelings
- Ask what happened and how do you feel?; hear from both children. This is about listening to each other

2. Ask for solution ideas

- See if the children have ideas first
- Get a "solution kit" if needed

3. Give it a try

- Get the children to signal agreement: thumbs up, hand shake

- You can state the solution again if needed and provide PDA (**Positive, Descriptive Acknowledgment)** for being flexible, being good at solving problems, asking for help, staying calm

4. Follow up with children, use PDA (Positive, Descriptive Acknowledgment)

It's important to see that the issue is resolved or that the children move on.

The Teaching Pyramid

Challenging behavior often indicates that a child is experiencing stress from a number of factors: internal stress from fatigue, poor nutrition, illness, pain or discomfort; external stress from a mismatch in the classroom environment or expectations, poor relationships with the teachers or children, overly difficult or overly simple tasks, limited social skills, trauma in the home environment; or a combination of these factors. A consistent and supportive teacher or other important adult can provide support for the child during short periods of stress. If challenging behavior continues over longer periods of time, it may be necessary to examine possible contributors to the behavior in the classroom and from other sources. A tiered intervention framework such as the Teaching Pyramid may be an appropriate response to challenging behavior.

The teaching pyramid model (Fox et al. 2003) describes a primary level of universal practices—classroom preventive practices that promote the social and emotional development of all children built on a foundation of positive relationships; secondary interventions that address specific social and emotional learning needs of children at risk for challenging behavior; and development of individualized interventions (tertiary level) for children with persistent problem behavior (see the diagram "The Teaching Pyramid").[6]

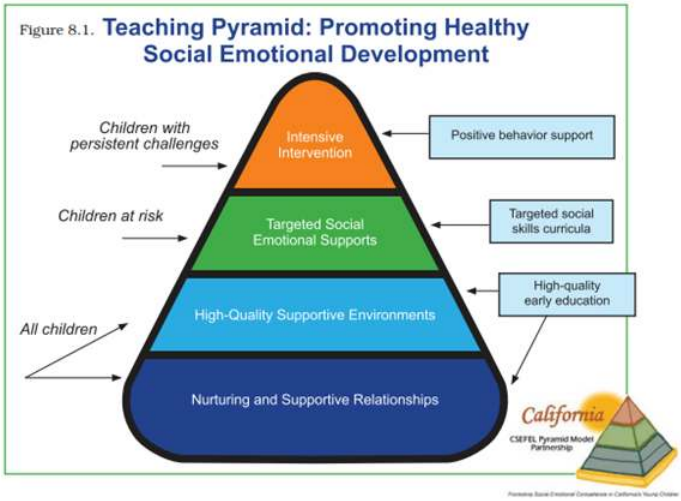


Figure **11.3.4.1** : Promoting Healthy Social Emotional Development.[7]

Universal classroom practices include developmentally appropriate, child-centered classroom environments that promote children's developing independence, successful interactions, and engagement in learning. While universal practices may be enough to promote the development of social competence in the majority of children in the classroom, teachers may find that there are children whose lack of social and emotional skills or whose challenging behavior requires more focused attention.

According to the California Collaborative on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL), fundamental to promoting social and emotional competence in young children is guiding children in their efforts to build positive relationships with adults and peers and creating supportive social and emotional learning environments for all children. For children at risk of developing behavior problems, targeted social and emotional strategies may be necessary, and for those children who display very persistent and severe challenging and behavior problems, individualized intensive interventions are required, when the children do not respond to typical preventive practices, child guidance procedures, or social–emotional teaching strategies that would normally work with most children (CA CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid, Promoting Social and Emotional Competence, Module 3a, 2013).

Table 5: Addressing Children's Challenging Behavior [8]

Old Way	New Way
General intervention for all behavior problems	Intervention matched to purpose of the behavior
Intervention is reactive	Intervention is proactive
Focus on behavior reduction	Focus on teaching the child new skills
Quick fix	Long-term interventions

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11.3.5: Spaces for Emotional Regulation

Centering Space

The Centering Space is a designated **area of the classroom** that students can access to support their emotional self-regulation. The area features cozy seating, resources to help students identify their feelings, and a variety of activities to **help students regulate their bodies**.

When students are dysregulated, they are not equipped to participate and benefit from class-wide activities. Taking a quick pause to regroup enables them to come back refocused.

The Neurosequential Model

Developed by Dr. Bruce Perry

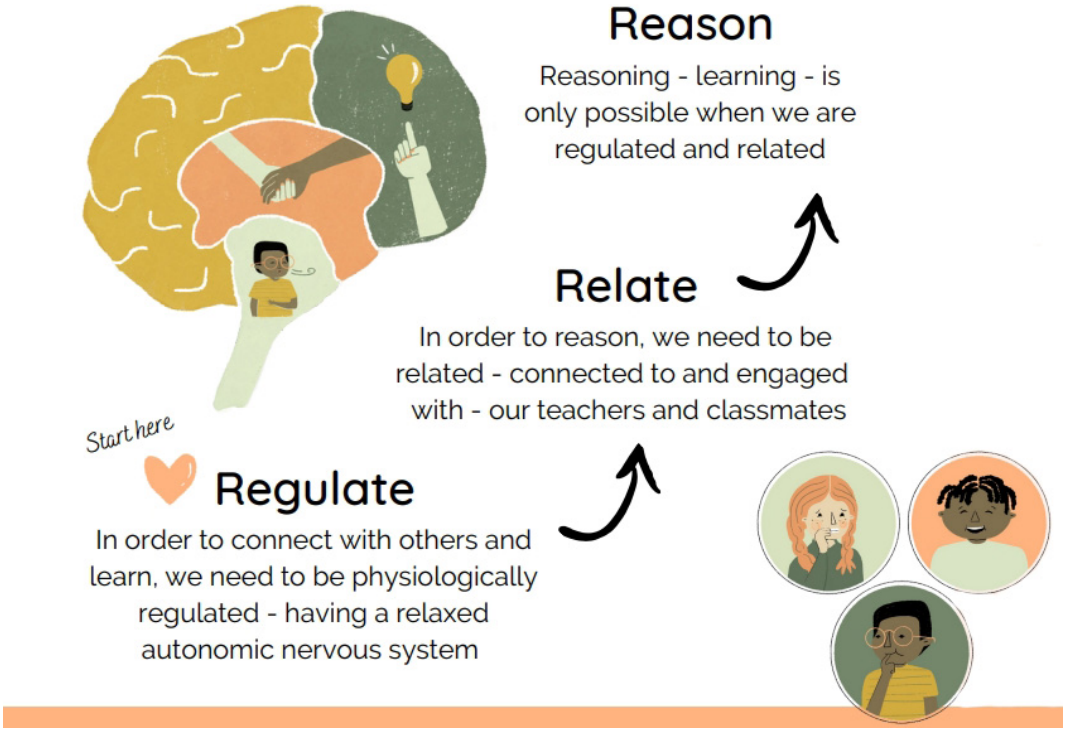


Figure 11.3.5.1: The Neurosequential Model of regulating, relating, and reasoning

The Centering Space is effective when it supports children in Regulating, Relating, and being ready to Reason.

The Centering Space must have:

- Cozy seating
- Breathing strategies visuals
- Visual representation of common feelings
- Self-regulation tools across the five senses
- Support with problem-solving



Figure **11.3.5.2**: Signs for a Centering Space

Cozy Seating - Place child-size, comfortable seating, such as:

- rug
- beanbag
- couch
- pillows

Breathing Strategies Visual - Post visual representations of strategies for deep breathing.

Visual Representation of Feelings - Hang a poster and/or incorporate Feelings Friends soft toys showing a range of common feelings. You may also add a mirror for students to see their own expressions.

Guidance for using the Centering Space - Hang a poster reminding students of how to use the space, with words and pictures. You could also put the social story in the area.

Self-Regulation Tools - Gather an assortment of tools appropriate to the age and needs of your students. Choose around 6-8 total tools for your class.

Supply items **across all 5 senses** to help students regulate their brain and body. Ideas include:

- **Sight:** pictures of family, nature photos, glitter jar, liquid motion timer
- **Hearing:** noise-canceling headphones, student-chosen music, nature sounds, recordings of family singing familiar songs or giving reassurance
- **Touch:** stuffed animals, dough, putty, squishies
- **Taste:** crunchy or chewy snacks, water
- **Smell:** aromatherapy sachets, lotion, unlit scented candles, scratch-n-sniff

Incorporating calm-down tools that support all five senses ensures that students have a variety of options and can choose what works best for them.

Additional Self-Regulation Tools

Active Calming posters can help students with body movements to promote physiological regulation.

Include additional tools to support students with **soothing their vagus nerve through breathing**: pinwheel, Hoberman sphere, etc.

Support for Problem-Solving

Include tools students use for problem-solving.

- Peace path steps (or similar process)

- Solution cards
- Class-made books with student-created solutions

Children will need support and practice with each step!

Teach and support children through the following process:

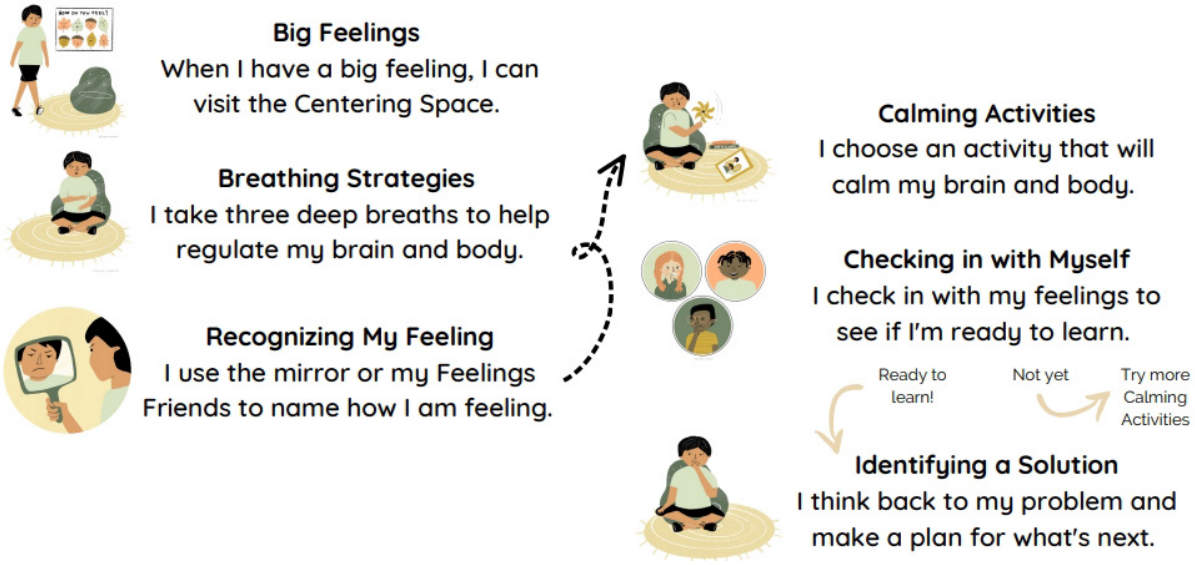


Figure **11.3.5.3**: Helping children learn how to use the Centering Space.

Teaching the Centering Space

Implement a gradual roll-out plan:

Weeks 1-2:

- Prioritize safety and connection through rituals and routines.
- Read a customized Centering Space social story.
- Teach breathing strategies in Strong Start.

Weeks 3-4:

- Use books to teach, practice, and review identifying feelings.
- Model identifying feelings with Feeling Friends.
- Teach one or two self-regulation tools.
- Continue to practice breathing strategies.

Practice recognizing feelings and choosing an activity to self regulate gives children support for understanding their feelings and moving into a regulated state, ready to learn.

Weeks 5-6:

- Brainstorm with the class for how to get help solving the initial problem, and introduce Solution Cards for students who need that support.
- Introduce and practice the Using the Centering Space steps.
- Consider making your Centering Space a center rotation for 2-3 weeks.
- Review social story as needed.
- Continue adding self-regulation tools one at a time, and model how to use each one.
- Continue to practice breathing strategies.

Children are still developing the executive functioning skills to recognize and manage their feelings until their early twenties.

Implementation Tips

Centering Space Helper or **Encourager** is a student job that may provide peer support as needed.

Do not use the Centering Space as time-out or a punishment. Encourage students to go to the Centering Space and use the tools when they are **having big feelings**.

If you are concerned about students spending an unnecessarily long time in the Centering Space, you can add a **sand timer** to the area to provide a sense of time. However, be aware that feelings don't run on a timer and some big feelings may take longer to resolve than the timer takes to tick down.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

12.1: Using Documentation and Assessment to Communicate with Families

12.1.1: Introduction

12.1.2: Documentation Boards - Not Just for Displaying Art

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12.1.1: Introduction

From the moment a child walks into their classroom, they are learning . They are learning from their peers, their teachers, their families and through their own trials, errors and explorations. How can we best communicate what children are learning to their families in a respectful and reassuring manner? How can we convey that a child's academic progress is just one aspect, as we strive to develop the whole child? In this chapter, we will discuss how intentional teachers use documentation and assessment to effectively communicate with families. The goal of this final chapter is to demonstrate how we connect observation, documentation and assessment all together to provide quality learning experiences for the children and families that we serve, and that there is value in everything we do as intentional teachers.

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12.1.2: Documentation Boards - Not Just for Displaying Art

When you walk into a classroom what do you typically see on the walls? Quite possibly you will see colorful posters, charts, family photos, and lots and lots of artwork. Have you ever wondered why we post things on our walls? Is it to make our classrooms more aesthetically pleasing? More colorful and eye-appealing? Do we want to motivate our children to do their best work because it will be posted for all to see? Are we trying to create a cozy space where our children can feel comfortable and feel like they belong? Are we hoping our parents see all the great work that we are doing? Everything that is posted on your classroom walls should communicate a message. Documentation Boards help us to convey important messages. A central message that I believe to be most important is that “Children Learn Through Play!”

When parents drop off and pick up their child, they may see their child playing with blocks, puzzles, playdough, or in the dramatic play area with their peers. To some, this type of open exploration or child-directed play (sometimes called free play) may look frivolous, inconsequential or perhaps trivial because it lacks formal instruction. The idea that learning can be playful, and fun may be difficult for some parents to understand. Many parents like to see some type of tangible evidence – for example, a finished worksheet or completed art project, to “know” that teaching and learning are happening. Thus, it is necessary for us as intentional teachers to convey the importance of play through formal documentation. We must provide parents with information that explains not only the end result,(or product) but the process of how curriculum activities are specifically designed to help children master milestones in all the developmental domains. More importantly, we must showcase that learning is a direct product of play.



Figure 6.1 Documentation Board . [68]

What are Documentation Boards

Documentation boards use observations and assessments to illustrate a child’s process of learning. When used effectively, documentation boards highlight the purpose of an activity and record the milestones that have been mastered (NAEYC , 2008). In order for parents to truly understand that children learn through play, documentation boards should include work samples or photos that highlight what the child did during the activity, along with several quotes to highlight the child’s thought process. When done correctly, teachers and families should be able to follow a child’s progress over time. Documentation Boards help teachers and families understand, without explanation, the child’s abilities and Interests. Documentation Boards provide clear evidence as to what children are learning throughout the school year in each of the developmental domains: Physical, Cognitive, Social, Emotional and Language.

What to Document

When I was a “young” teacher, I often felt obligated to post one piece of artwork for each child in the classroom so as to be “fair” that each child was represented. On my classroom walls, I mostly posted artwork and I didn’t provide any caption or describe the purpose of the activity. Not only did that take a lot of time, but it also took up a lot of wall space. As I became more intentional (and a more “seasoned” teacher, I learned that there was a more efficient way to showcase children’s learning. I began to use documentation boards to make learning more visible. Since learning is happening all day - every day in the classroom, there are a

variety of topics that can be presented. Documentation boards can illustrate something as simple as a child playing with sand and water for an hour, or something complex like a child learning how to tie their shoes over a long period of time. These boards can feature one child, a group of children, or the whole class. Here are some suggested topics to consider when creating a formal Documentation Board: daily routines, project-based activities, child-directed play and exploration, outdoor play experiences, circle-time conversations, developmental milestones, social relationships, and teacher-directed lesson plan activities. The topics are endless.

How to Make a Documentation Board

Posters, bulletin boards, and slide shows are all commonly used to create documentation boards. The format chosen to use for the documentation board should be reflective of the purpose, the audience, and the activity being presented. These boards can be simple, artistic, or even three dimensional. Before creating the board, consider the collaboration of additional teachers, children, and families. Having a team create the board adds a new level of depth, with various ideas and opinions. The first step is creating a title that invites families to approach the board. Next, mention the developmental milestones and goals for the activity (what the children are learning). Add photos and children's quotes (both parents and children enjoy this), Include the steps that were taken or the process, and work samples as the final product. An extra step would be to add a recipe card or take-home handout so parents can replicate the activity at home. While constructing the board ask yourself, is this showing the child's thought process, developmental growth, and both the child's and teacher's reflection. When creating your documentation boards remember that these boards respect all children's work. The board needs to value efficiency over cuteness, and engagement over entertainment. (The Compass School, 2018). Lastly, the Documentation Board replaces the concept there needs to be one piece of artwork for each child in the class. When you post several documentation boards, all with different themes and purposes, you will no doubt capture all of the children in your care.

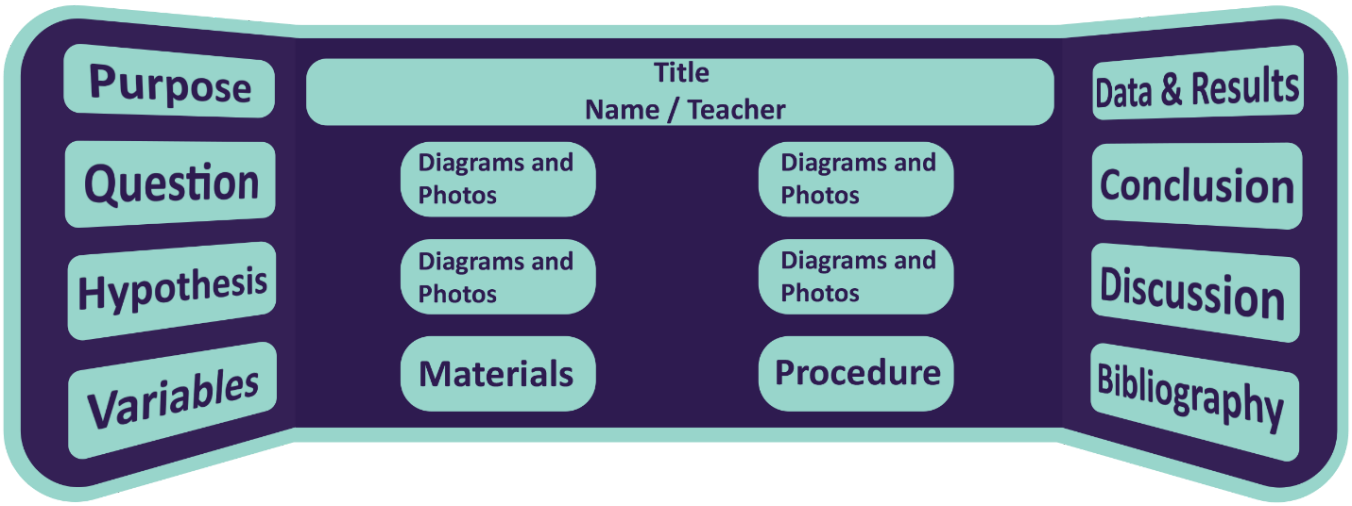


Figure 6.2 Documentation Board Template

Make a decision on what you want to communicate on the documentation board:

- Projects or themes
- Special events
- Specific curriculum areas
- Learning environments
- Skill acquisition
- Child development

Collect materials for the panel:

- Children's actual work or photocopies
- Observation notes / anecdotal records

- Information and quotes from books and journals
- Curriculum webs
- Quotes and dictation from children and teachers
- Photographs – various sizes (enlarge or shrink on a photocopier) – color, or black and white.

Select the best items that represent the idea or theme of your panel:

- Write an educational Caption for each piece
- Use a type size large enough to be read from a distance

Layout of panel:

- Determine where the panel will be displayed (on a table or wall?)
- Select a type of panel: poster board (best for wall) or three side3d board
- Title the panel
- Select a strong image as the focal point on the panel
- Aesthetics are important
- Matte work and photographs
- Use colored paper to support, not detract from, the images

The Perks of Using Portfolios

Another popular form of documentation is portfolios. Many programs use a portfolio system to record and store information about each child's learning, growth and development. Using both formal and informal observations, teachers begin collecting "evidence" within the first month of a child starting school. Throughout the school year, intentional teachers collect numerous work samples, anecdotal notes, learning stories, checklists, and frequency counts, and it is necessary to safely store everything in an organized manner. A portfolio is the most optimal way to do that. A portfolio helps teachers store observation notes, pieces of art, and photos that are needed to capture and highlight a child's individual strengths, interests and abilities. Portfolios can also store information about a child's thought process, behavior, social interactions, and needs. With all the stored documentation, teachers can assess a child's development.

Portfolios, like documentation boards, record and track a child's development. More specifically, a p ortfolio tells the unique story of each child's individual progress over time. Although portfolios are not designed to be an assessment tool, portfolios can be shared with families during a conference to showcase evidence of a child's learning throughout the school year. P ortfolios hold authentic samples and highlight a child's capabilities, achievements, and progress. During a conference, rather than receiving a handout with checked boxes that rate a child's level of learning, parents and family members will enjoy seeing first-hand what their child "can do." Having both a formal assessment and authentic work samples provides teachers and families a clear picture of the whole child's development.

Since learning and development are ongoing, portfolios have to be easy to use and accessible. Teachers will have to find a rhythm and medium that works best for their teaching style. Here are just a few examples of some portfolios:

- Electronic or e-portfolios stored on computers;
- Accordion files
- File folders,
- Three-ring binders,
- Creative memory photo albums

No matter which style of portfolio a teacher uses, it is important to label and date all pieces of evidence that you put into your portfolio.

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12.1.3: Assessing Children's Development

Assessment is "a systematic process which allows for understanding a child's competencies" [69] Every child in your class needs to be assessed. To properly assess children, we use observations and documentation to determine a child's abilities, interests, strengths, and areas of development that may need additional support. The information gathered during observations guides the classroom routines, curriculum planning, and implementation to ensure quality care. Over time, assessments record a child's learning, growth, development, and social behavior. Assessments also provide an opportunity to share information with families that will build a bridge from school to home.

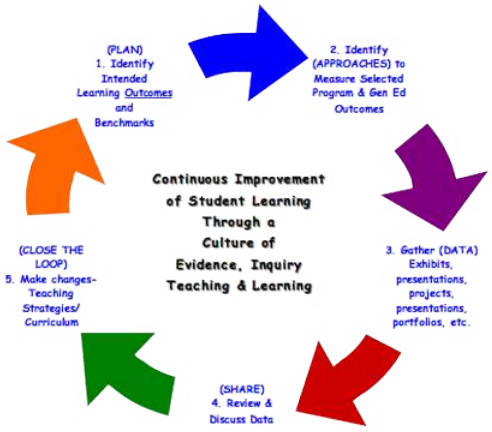


Figure 6.4 Assessment Cycle . [70]

Let's take a closer look at how we might use assessments in early childhood education. First, assessment is used to inform instruction and to guide teachers as they plan curriculum. With each observation a teacher can assess children's strengths and capabilities to determine an individualized plan of action with just the "right" balance of independent and group activities across all areas of development (e.g. social, emotional, creative, cognitive, language and physical). When teachers create meaningful curriculum based on the children's interest and abilities, research indicates that children will take greater strides in academic learning and are more likely to be successful throughout life.

For example, a teacher may notice that one of her students has difficulty joining in and socializing with classmates during group activities. A teacher will then consider activities that would encourage peer interactions while also considering opportunities to support their independence.

Second, assessment is designed for accountability and program evaluation. Assessments provide information that is needed to evaluate program practices and to inform program policies. One of the hallmark traits of a high-quality early childhood program is the practice of continuously monitoring children's development and responding to their learning needs. When administrators, teachers, and families reflect on program goals and outcomes they can determine specific areas that need improvement. Once areas are identified, they can focus on implementing professional development workshops and training in order to improve their ability in meeting the needs of children and families. For example, upon reviewing the math indicators for all of the kindergarten students in a school, the principal realizes that additional teacher training on math-related materials is needed to support math instruction and student learning across all of the kindergarten classrooms in the school.

Third, assessments are used to support school and family partnerships. Assessment helps teachers communicate important milestones in a child's development to families. More importantly, when teachers share their assessments with families, there is an opportunity for teachers and parents to work together to support children as they grow. Intentional teachers respect that parents are teachers on the "home front."

Additionally, families have valuable insight that they can contribute when assessing a child's needs. For example, a teacher may not observe a child's ability to identify colors but through a discussion with the parents, the teacher learns that the child identifies colors of fruit at the grocery store. In this way, parents and teachers collaborate to better understand what needs to happen in the curriculum or at home to support the child's learning and growth. [71]



Figure 6.5 Children learn by interacting with their environment . [72]

Let’s take a look at 4 Types of Assessments:

1. Screening tools
2. Diagnostic assessments
3. Formative assessments
4. Summative assessments



Figure 6.6 Workbooks assessment . [73]

Screening Tools

According to developmental theories, children may not reach developmental milestones at the same time. In early care and education, we recognize that there is an “acceptable range” for children to reach developmental milestones. That being said, we also recognize that when development does not happen within an expected time frame “red flags” can be raised and teachers may have concerns about developmental disorders, health conditions, or other factors that may negatively impact the child’s development. A developmental screening is the early identification of children at risk for cognitive, motor, communication, or social-emotional delays that may interfere with expected growth, learning, and development, and may warrant further diagnosis, assessment, and evaluation. Programs may conduct the following screenings:

1. Developmental screening tools include the domains of cognition, fine and gross motor skills, speech and language, and social-emotional development.
2. Social-emotional screening is a component of developmental screening of young children that focuses on the early identification of possible delays in the expected development of a child’s ability to express and regulate emotions, form close and secure relationships, and explore his/her environment and learn.

3. Mental health screening is the early identification of children at risk for possible mental health disorders that may interfere with expected growth, learning, or development that warrant further diagnosis, assessment, or evaluation.

It is recommended that young children receive screenings to help identify potential problems or areas needing further evaluation. By recognizing developmental issues early, children can be provided with treatment or intervention more effectively, and additional developmental delays may be prevented. Developmental screenings should begin early in a child's life and should be conducted through third grade. Practitioners should use reliable and valid screening tools that are age-appropriate, culturally inclusive and in the home child's language.

Developmental screenings are often universally performed on large groups of children. The results generated from this type of procedure most commonly are used by programs to identify those few children who may need to receive a more extensive or "diagnostic" assessment for determining developmental delays or special needs. Screenings are brief, and usually effective in catching the most severe cases of children who would need a follow-up evaluation. Screening tools can also be used to assess whether a child is developmentally ready to graduate or move into the next educational level, in other words - a child's school readiness. There is controversy around whether school districts should be permitted to use readiness tests since school districts are not permitted to deny children entry to kindergarten based on the results of a readiness test. One on side there are those that believe many children are often mislabeled. Because young children can demonstrate a wide range of results based on how comfortable they are at the time of the screening, screening results can be inaccurate and children, especially dual language learners, may be placed into remedial classes or special education programs. On the other hand, some proclaim that the screening process at this point will provide young children and their families with access to a wide variety of services early on.

Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic assessment tools are typically standardized for a large number of children. A score is given that reflects a child's performance related to other children of the same age (and less common gender and ethnic origin). A diagnostic assessment typically results in a diagnosis for a child. Some common diagnoses are related to intelligence, intellectual disability, autism, learning disabilities, sensory impairment (deaf, blind), or neurologic disorders. Persons administering diagnostic assessment tools must meet state and national standards, certification, or licensing requirements. Some diagnostic assessment tools used for determining or identifying developmental issues are The Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI), the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID), electroencephalogram (EEG), Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC), the Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI), and the Pre-Language Assessment Survey (PreLAS). Many other diagnostic assessment tools are available for early childhood. The Buros Institute of Mental Measurements at the University of Nebraska publishes the Buros Mental Maturity Yearbook which helps educators and other childcare professionals choose a tool that is reliable and highly regarded in the diagnostic assessment community.

Formative Assessments

The primary purpose of the formative assessment is to gather evidence that teachers can use to inform instruction, implement learning opportunities and measure a child's learning. As stated in previous chapters, through ongoing observations, evidence is collected and then used to measure the child's learning. To gather an accurate account of what children are learning and how they are learning, observations should occur during daily activities and routines, and should be conducted indoor as well as outdoor. With this information, teachers make instructional adjustments to close the gap between a child's current understanding and what the desired goals are for the child as recommended by formal assessment tools like the Desired Result Developmental Profile (DRDP).

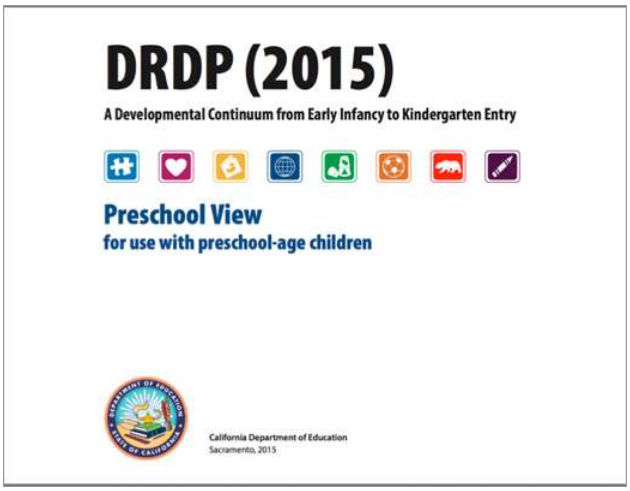


Figure 6.7 DRDP . [74]

Formative assessment can consist of formal assessments or informal assessments . Formal assessments are defined as highly valid and reliable and standardized tools that are administered in a similar manner each time for every child. These tools have standards of comparison (norm-referenced, standards-referenced, and criterion-referenced) to ensure equitable and consistent results. Such tools usually emerge from research studies published by a national company (e.g. Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) or Rating Scales that are based on the acquisition of age-appropriate developmental milestones). Informal assessments, on the other hand, usually may be published, but can also be developed by a teacher or program (i.e. a classroom checklist or frequency count chart). Informal assessments often utilize observable techniques such as anecdotal notes, work samples, and video recordings. Whether formal or informal tools and techniques are used, it is important to note that assessment is not a one-time event since it is difficult to gather valid and reliable information from just one observation technique or from one tool. Formative assessments are on-going.

For best results, intentional teachers are encouraged to assess children through authentic, naturalistic observations. Such observation should be collected throughout the school year, and not just when preparing for family conferences. Another best practice, early care educators are encouraged to actively involve young children with the assessment process. Informal observations and conversations are needed to purposefully plan intentional and individualized activities. Lastly, teachers are encouraged to share learning goals with both children and parents, as well as provide opportunities for children to monitor their ongoing progress. Learning Stories are a great technique to encourage joint collaboration between teachers, families, and children.

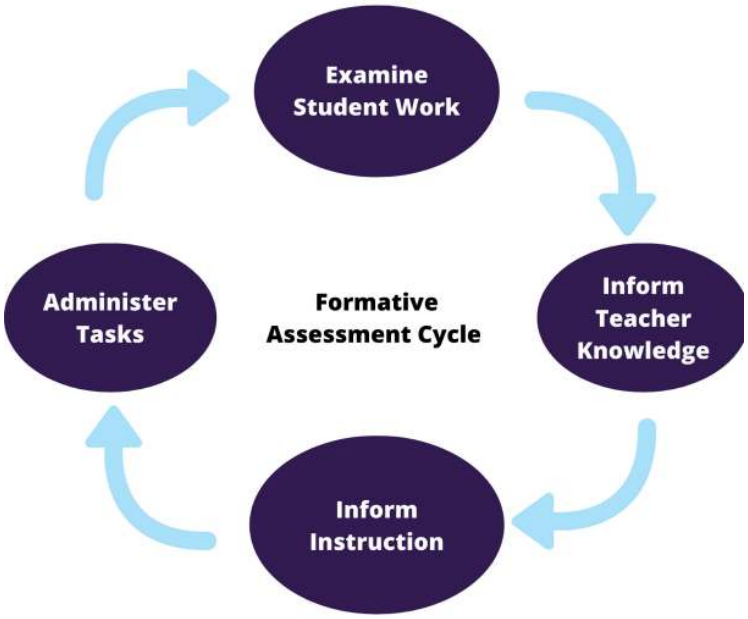


Figure 6.8 Formative Assessment Cycle . [75]

Summative Assessments

In primary grades, summative assessment, often called high-stakes assessments, are designed to measure a child's overall developmental progress at the end of a school year. These assessments can also be administered at certain grade levels for state or local accountability purposes (e.g. Blue-Ribbon Recognition). Summative assessments seek to measure a child's academic performance. Scores are published and parents are notified of their child's individual score along with their child's percentile ranking as compared to other children who are in the same grade. In early care and education however, summative assessments essentially look back to see how effective the teacher or program is at providing high-quality care. This is form of assessment allows families, teachers and administrators to evaluate instruction practices, curriculum, and whether a child is in need of intervention or teachers are in need of professional development. These assessments help recognize whether or not the child has fallen short of, met, or exceeded the expected standards. Although the results of formative assessments are primarily of interest to teachers, families are eager to know how their child is doing socially and academically. Administrators can utilize the assessment information to identify strengths and challenges of curriculum and instruction, in order to make improvements on the next year's program policies or procedures.

How are Assessments are Used

Planning Curriculum- Teachers use assessments to understand a child's capabilities and needs. By focusing on what a child can do, teachers then establish individualized goals for that child. By continuing to observe and document milestones, teachers can proactively assess a child's development and adjust the curriculum accordingly. For example, if a teacher determines that a child needs support in their fine motor development, activities that exercise the pincer grasp will be implemented.

Documentation on behavior should be considered when planning curriculum. If data shows reoccurring conflict taking place in a specific area, teachers should assess if there are enough materials and space in that area, and decide if the materials provided are age-appropriate. For example, after reviewing the data, the teachers concluded that conflict was occurring in the dramatic play area because there were not enough baby dolls for the number of children playing at the same time.

Ensuring School Readiness - Whether you use checklists or the DRDP, both assessments will collect data about milestones of development. Recording a child's progress for each domain of development will determine school readiness. School readiness refers to children having enough knowledge and experience to succeed in a kindergarten classroom.

Adjusting the Classroom - Assessments can also be used to adjust teaching styles, classroom setups, daily schedules, and routines. When observing children, teachers should document how the class responds to certain routines, transitions, and language. For

example, if the data collected shows that children are having a difficult time falling asleep during nap time, the daily schedule can be adjusted to allow more outdoor play before nap time.

Data can also show us why certain behaviors are occurring. When reviewing data, evaluate what happens before the behavior is observed, and assess what changes can be made to redirect the child. For example, if conflict and running in the classroom are occurring in the morning, the parent drop-off could be moved to the outdoor classroom to allow a large space for children to play and interact before going inside. [76]

Pin It!

Further Information on Authentic Observation and Assessment

- Read this article for more information on New Learnings in Early Care and Education : https://www.first5la.org/article/new-learnings-in-early-care-and-education/
- Watch this video to learn more about authentic assessment : https://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/whatisauthenticassessment-player
- Read this report from National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for more information on balanced preschool assessment :
- http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/7-1.pdf
- Watch this video to learn more about Organizing for Assessment in ECE : - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfHERCVabw

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12.1.4: Family Conferences

Conferences Building Family Partnerships

Once assessments have been completed, it is time to meet with a child's family. The purpose of the conference is to share information about the child and to build a vital partnership with the child's family. Some parents may not understand the connection between play and learning. Sharing information about play-based curriculum and how it supports development can allow parents to better understand your goals for learning and how the classroom functions. By including parents in discussion making about curriculum and assessments we can encourage support areas development outside of the classroom.

For example, if the individualized curriculum is supporting color recognition, we can suggest that families continue to support this skill by identifying produce colors at the grocery store and/or pointing to certain colors in their favorite books.

In a blog by Concordia University, Portland some key tips are suggested to ensure a successful and engaging family conference occurs: [77]

1. Offer a flexible conference schedule

Some parents have more than one child at different schools, some families may have limited transportation options and some parents may work multiple jobs which can limit their time and availability. In these cases, teachers may need to be flexible to accommodate special circumstances. Teachers can schedule conferences in the morning, later in the afternoon, or during recess breaks. If technology is available, meetings can be offered via Skype or FaceTime as an option for parents who cannot make it to school.

2. Prepare, prepare, prepare

Portfolios and assessments must be updated and organized for each child on a regular basis.

3. Arrange for a translator if needed, and find a way to connect

Parents who don't speak English require a translator. If schools cannot arrange for a translator, family members may need to sit in on the conference, for example an older sibling or an aunt or maybe even a neighbor) — ideally not a student.

When there is a language barrier, teachers should try to find a respectful way to communicate and connect with families. As a reminder, even though families cannot fluently speak the same language, they deserve your professional approach. Try learning a few phrases in their native language to show you're trying to connect; even "Hello," "How are you?" and "Thank you" can go a long way.

4. Be aware of your body language and how you verbally communicate

The classroom environment speaks volumes and so does your body language and how you talk with your families. Check out your body language. Are your arms typically crossed? Do you smile or glare? How is your tone when you speak? Are you calm and reassuring, or sounding like a robot? Do you pause and allow parents to ask questions, or are you hurried and rushing through information? Are you aware and considerate of cultural backgrounds and family practices? For example, did you know that eye contact and handshaking may not be a common practice with some families?

5. Sit side-by-side

Since teachers and parents are on the same team teachers are advised to sit next to parents rather than across from them behind a desk. By arranging the furniture in a friendly and non-threatening way, teachers express their desire to build a partnership with each parent, which can diffuse unnecessary tension on both sides.

6. Share real stories and student work

Even the best teachers can't remember all of the details they need to share with every parent. A portfolio with anecdotal notes and work samples provide parents with real insight into what's happening in their child's academic day.

7. Include the positive and focus on what the child CAN DO

Each student has positive traits and potential. Share at least one shining trait with parents at the beginning and another at the end of the conference. That trait could be an academic trait or a character trait, such as helpfulness, persistence, or hard work. Teachers can follow the “sandwich method” or the “glows and grows” method where you share a child’s positive achievements or traits that make them glow, in addition to providing two or more areas in which they can grow. Always end on a high note with another glowing detail or anecdote.

8. Create clear goals

Every student, even the gifted ones, can improve in some way. Write specific goals for each student. Along with those goals, create an action plan with steps for improvement, as well as a timeline. Your plan of action should include activities that will be done at school as well as activities that can be done at home. Sharing this with parents can increase buy-in since they will be able to see a clear path to success that has achievable benchmarks and goals that are part of a realistic, structured plan.

9. Avoid education jargon

Not everyone is familiar with DRDPs or diagnostic and summative assessments. Avoid overwhelming parents with education lingo . Speak in plain terms, explain what you mean, and make sure parents are clear about the information you have presented. Encourage parents to ask questions as needed for clarification.

10. Give parents responsibility

Early educators know that children do better in school when their parents are involved. A perfect way to get parents involved is to ask questions about family life and routines (a family questionnaire is ideal). Families should be encouraged to get involved throughout the school year. For example, they can be special guests, and talk about their jobs or they can read their favorite story to the children. Parents who are involved early on, will be more likely to follow through on their “plan of action” once it is presented at the conference.

11. Encourage questions

Approachable teachers build a lasting connection with parents and promote a positive learning experience with their children. Not only do you want your students to feel comfortable enough to ask questions, but you want your parents to feel they can approach you as well. Although your time may be limited during the school day, it is important to carve out some time and space to discuss important matters with parents. If parents cannot make the conference, offer your email address to allow for some time for a brief “q and a” any point during the school year. NOTE: Hitting parents up at the end of a long work day and rushing through important details regarding their child is NOT recommended.

12. Don’t make assumptions about parents or students

Avoid relying on stereotypes and allowing personal biases to cloud your judgment. View all parents as partners because, like it or not, they are. Work to make sure that even the most challenging students and parents feel like they are welcomed and a part of the team.

13. If a parent becomes hostile, don’t engage

No matter how prepared, pleasant and affirming you are, some parents may become hostile or upset while at the conference, especially if there are areas of concern or issues with a child’s challenging behavior that need to be addressed. Some parents may be used to hearing bad news, other parents don’t trust or have little regard for teachers, some parents feel a need to defend their child, while other parents may be upset about a personal matter and may take their frustration out on you. Remain calm! If possible, let the parent vent. Use active listening and really listen to the parent’s concerns. Discuss how both parties want what’s best for the child and reassure them that you have their child’s interest at heart. Look for a compromise or strategy that best supports the child and their family. Stay focused on the task at hand – the conference – and reemphasize the positive. Sometimes, a follow-up meeting may need to be scheduled.

14. Remain professional at all times

Teaching is a challenging job. Like parents, you may have an off day and you may be tempted to stray off into an unprofessional area. We also may cross some fine lines and become “friends” with our families. Here are some topics that should never be

discussed with families during a conference (or at any time):

- -Speaking negatively about school administrators or other teachers.
- -Comparing two or more students to each other.
- -Discussing another student's behavior, family, or performance.
- -Blaming parents for a child's academic performance or behavior.
- -Arguing or becoming hostile with parents.
- -Complaining about school policies or procedures.

15. Document, document, document

Because you will meet with several families in the course of a week, it is a good idea to make notes about the conversations and outcomes of the conference. You may need to refer to them at a later time when planning a follow-up meeting, or when planning additional curriculum activities. Once in a while, a parent may notify your administrator that they have concerns about the information that was shared during the conference and your notes can be shared with your administrator to help see both sides of the conversation.

16. Stay in contact with parents

Parents should be able to get in touch with you to follow up or address new concerns. Email is the most convenient way for you to receive messages and respond to parents, but phone calls or future conferences may be necessary, too. Set the guidelines and boundaries for future communications.

According to Seplocha, teachers have many important responsibilities, especially preparing for effective and engaging parent-teacher conferences. When teachers connect with family members and establish a respectful relationship, the positive outcome provides a lifeline that will ultimately support a child's overall development and learning.



Figure 6.9 Carol Mahn (right), a first grade teacher at the Hanscom Primary School, meets Melissa Weyand and her son, Maximas, during a "Meet and Greet". [78]

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12.2: Documentation Boards - Not Just for Displaying Art

When you walk into a classroom what do you typically see on the walls? Quite possibly you will see colorful posters, charts, family photos, and lots and lots of artwork. Have you ever wondered why we post things on our walls? Is it to make our classrooms more aesthetically pleasing? More colorful and eye-appealing? Do we want to motivate our children to do their best work because it will be posted for all to see? Are we trying to create a cozy space where our children can feel comfortable and feel like they belong? Are we hoping our parents see all the great work that we are doing? Everything that is posted on your classroom walls should communicate a message. Documentation Boards help us to convey important messages. A central message that I believe to be most important is that “Children Learn Through Play!”

When parents drop off and pick up their child, they may see their child playing with blocks, puzzles, playdough, or in the dramatic play area with their peers. To some, this type of open exploration or child-directed play (sometimes called free play) may look frivolous, inconsequential or perhaps trivial because it lacks formal instruction. The idea that learning can be playful, and fun may be difficult for some parents to understand. Many parents like to see some type of tangible evidence – for example, a finished worksheet or completed art project, to “know” that teaching and learning are happening. Thus, it is necessary for us as intentional teachers to convey the importance of play through formal documentation. We must provide parents with information that explains not only the end result,(or product) but the process of how curriculum activities are specifically designed to help children master milestones in all the developmental domains. More importantly, we must showcase that learning is a direct product of play.



Figure 6.1 Documentation Board . [68]

What are Documentation Boards

Documentation boards use observations and assessments to illustrate a child’s process of learning. When used effectively, documentation boards highlight the purpose of an activity and record the milestones that have been mastered (NAEYC , 2008). In order for parents to truly understand that children learn through play, documentation boards should include work samples or photos that highlight what the child did during the activity, along with several quotes to highlight the child’s thought process. When done correctly, teachers and families should be able to follow a child’s progress over time. Documentation Boards help teachers and families understand, without explanation, the child’s abilities and Interests. Documentation Boards provide clear evidence as to what children are learning throughout the school year in each of the developmental domains: Physical, Cognitive, Social, Emotional and Language.

What to Document

When I was a “young” teacher, I often felt obligated to post one piece of artwork for each child in the classroom so as to be “fair” that each child was represented. On my classroom walls, I mostly posted artwork and I didn’t provide any caption or describe the purpose of the activity. Not only did that take a lot of time, but it also took up a lot of wall space. As I became more intentional (and a more “seasoned” teacher, I learned that there was a more efficient way to showcase children’s learning. I began to use documentation boards to make learning more visible. Since learning is happening all day - every day in the classroom, there are a

variety of topics that can be presented. Documentation boards can illustrate something as simple as a child playing with sand and water for an hour, or something complex like a child learning how to tie their shoes over a long period of time. These boards can feature one child, a group of children, or the whole class. Here are some suggested topics to consider when creating a formal Documentation Board: daily routines, project-based activities, child-directed play and exploration, outdoor play experiences, circle-time conversations, developmental milestones, social relationships, and teacher-directed lesson plan activities. The topics are endless.

How to Make a Documentation Board

Posters, bulletin boards, and slide shows are all commonly used to create documentation boards. The format chosen to use for the documentation board should be reflective of the purpose, the audience, and the activity being presented. These boards can be simple, artistic, or even three dimensional. Before creating the board, consider the collaboration of additional teachers, children, and families. Having a team create the board adds a new level of depth, with various ideas and opinions. The first step is creating a title that invites families to approach the board. Next, mention the developmental milestones and goals for the activity (what the children are learning). Add photos and children's quotes (both parents and children enjoy this), Include the steps that were taken or the process, and work samples as the final product. An extra step would be to add a recipe card or take-home handout so parents can replicate the activity at home. While constructing the board ask yourself, is this showing the child's thought process, developmental growth, and both the child's and teacher's reflection. When creating your documentation boards remember that these boards respect all children's work. The board needs to value efficiency over cuteness, and engagement over entertainment. (The Compass School, 2018). Lastly, the Documentation Board replaces the concept there needs to be one piece of artwork for each child in the class. When you post several documentation boards, all with different themes and purposes, you will no doubt capture all of the children in your care.

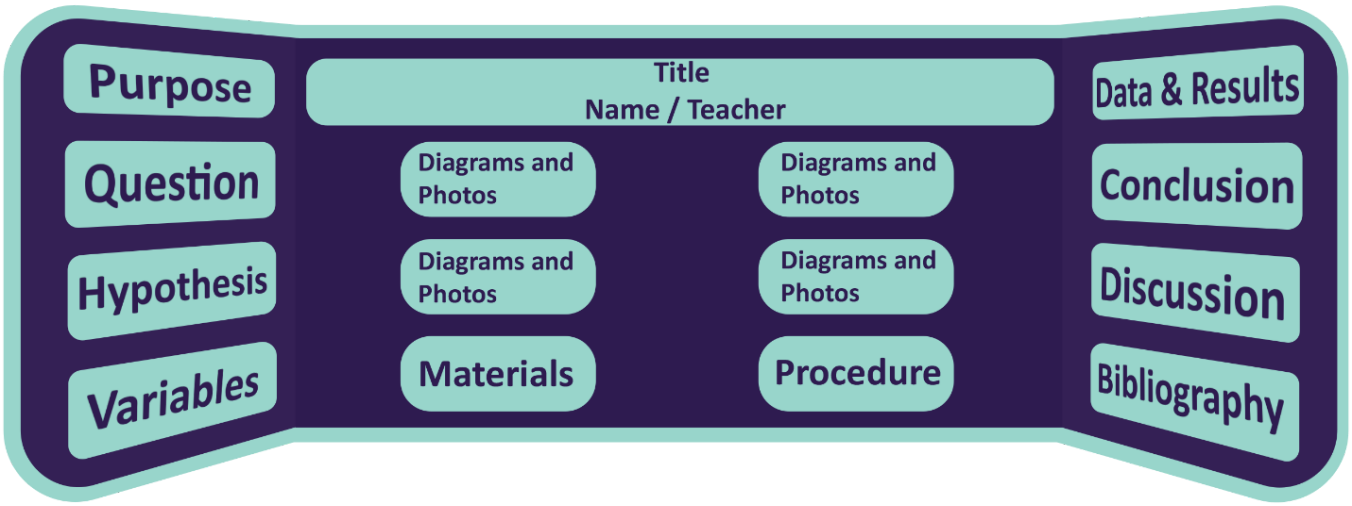


Figure 6.2 Documentation Board Template

Make a decision on what you want to communicate on the documentation board:

- Projects or themes
- Special events
- Specific curriculum areas
- Learning environments
- Skill acquisition
- Child development

Collect materials for the panel:

- Children's actual work or photocopies
- Observation notes / anecdotal records

- Information and quotes from books and journals
- Curriculum webs
- Quotes and dictation from children and teachers
- Photographs – various sizes (enlarge or shrink on a photocopier) – color, or black and white.

Select the best items that represent the idea or theme of your panel:

- Write an educational Caption for each piece
- Use a type size large enough to be read from a distance

Layout of panel:

- Determine where the panel will be displayed (on a table or wall?)
- Select a type of panel: poster board (best for wall) or three side3d board
- Title the panel
- Select a strong image as the focal point on the panel
- Aesthetics are important
- Matte work and photographs
- Use colored paper to support, not detract from, the images

The Perks of Using Portfolios

Another popular form of documentation is portfolios. Many programs use a portfolio system to record and store information about each child's learning, growth and development. Using both formal and informal observations, teachers begin collecting "evidence" within the first month of a child starting school. Throughout the school year, intentional teachers collect numerous work samples, anecdotal notes, learning stories, checklists, and frequency counts, and it is necessary to safely store everything in an organized manner. A portfolio is the most optimal way to do that. A portfolio helps teachers store observation notes, pieces of art, and photos that are needed to capture and highlight a child's individual strengths, interests and abilities. Portfolios can also store information about a child's thought process, behavior, social interactions, and needs. With all the stored documentation, teachers can assess a child's development.

Portfolios, like documentation boards, record and track a child's development. More specifically, a p ortfolio tells the unique story of each child's individual progress over time. Although portfolios are not designed to be an assessment tool, portfolios can be shared with families during a conference to showcase evidence of a child's learning throughout the school year. P ortfolios hold authentic samples and highlight a child's capabilities, achievements, and progress. During a conference, rather than receiving a handout with checked boxes that rate a child's level of learning, parents and family members will enjoy seeing first-hand what their child "can do." Having both a formal assessment and authentic work samples provides teachers and families a clear picture of the whole child's development.

Since learning and development are ongoing, portfolios have to be easy to use and accessible. Teachers will have to find a rhythm and medium that works best for their teaching style. Here are just a few examples of some portfolios:

- Electronic or e-portfolios stored on computers;
- Accordion files
- File folders,
- Three-ring binders,
- Creative memory photo albums

No matter which style of portfolio a teacher uses, it is important to label and date all pieces of evidence that you put into your portfolio.

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12.3: The Role of Relationships



Figure 12.3.1: Young boy stacking Jenga blocks is licensed under CC by 1.0

This section of the chapter will support you to explore and reflect on the connection between relationships, social development, emotional development, and behavior. Did you know that relationships with others may influence behavior either positively or negatively?

Reflect for a moment on this photo of the young boy playing Jenga. As he moves and/or removes the blocks the structure becomes unbalanced and even unpredictable. A child's behavior and the relationships in his or her life can mirror this game of Jenga. Social and emotional development are also important to the foundation as they help to inform how the child manages feelings and emotions and how he/she can socialize and cooperate with others within a relationship.

According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect practically every aspect of their development. Simply put, relationships are the "active ingredients" of the environment's influence on healthy human development. They incorporate the qualities that best promote competence and well-being – individualized responsiveness, mutual action-and-interaction, and an emotional connection to another human being such as a parent, peer, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, teacher, coach, or any other person who has an important impact on the child's early development. Relationships engage children in the human community in ways that help them define who they are, what they can become, and how and why they are important to other people (NSCDC, 2004).

When children have secure and stable relationships with caring adults, they are more able to develop warm and positive relationships with others. These children are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more self-confident, and have stronger skills getting along with others. (NSCDC, 2004). When relationships are secure and stable the child's social skills to support interactions are strengthened, along with the ability to express and manage feelings and emotions.

It is also important to understand that the relationships children have with other children also inform and influence their behavior. Young children learn from each other how to share, how to participate in shared interactions such as, taking turns, the reciprocal acts of giving, and receiving, how to respect and accept the needs and wants of others, and how to manage their own impulses.

Simply being around other children, however, is not enough to build the skills for positive behaviors. The development of friendships is critical, as children learn and play more competently in the bond created with friends rather than when they are dealing with the social challenges of interacting with casual acquaintances or unfamiliar peers. Positive relationships and positive behaviors all add to healthy brain development and depend upon the relationships with individuals in the child's close community as well as in the family. (Harvard, 2006).

It is within that context of family that we must remember that everything we think, say, and do is processed through our own individual lens and our unique cultural backgrounds. For teachers it is essential to see and understand your own culture to see and understand how the cultures of children and their families influence children's behavior. Only then can you give every child a fair chance to succeed (Kaiser, Raminsky, 2020).

According to Kaiser and Raminsky, your culture and the children's cultures are not the only cultures at work in your classroom. Every school and early childhood education program has a culture too. The cultures of most American schools are based on White

European American values. As the makeup of the US population becomes more diverse, there is more cultural dissonance—which impacts children's behavior.

White European American culture has an individual orientation that teaches children to function independently, stand out, talk about themselves, and view property as personal. In contrast, many other cultures value interdependence, fitting in, helping others, and being helped, being modest, and sharing property. In fact, some languages have no words for *I*, *me*, or *mine*.

Children who find themselves in an unfamiliar environment—such as a classroom that reflects a culture different from their home culture—are likely to feel confused, isolated, alienated, conflicted, and less competent because what they have learned so far in their home culture simply does not apply. They may not understand the rules, or they may be unable to communicate their needs in the school's language. (Kaiser, Rasminsky)

It is because the way you respond to children's behavior and conflict is bound to your own culture, it is common to get the wrong idea about a child's words or behaviors. When you observe a child's behavior that appears to be noncompliant, ask yourself if that behavior could be culturally influenced. Honest and open conversations with the family will help you understand and respect their cultural beliefs and practices regarding education and child development.

> ***Affirm the Child, Not the Behavior***
>
> *Dan Gartrell, 2020*

In terms of relationships, when you as the teacher are responsive to the children's culture you are better able to form genuine and caring relationships with the children and their families. You can scaffold on this to build on what the child already knows and can do and identify their next steps for learning. This information will help you choose and implement appropriate activities and strategies that honor children's cultures as well as life experiences and teach children what they need to know and do to be successful in the world today. (Kaiser, Rasminsky).

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) outlines the fundamental importance of positive relationships in an article by Drs. Gail Joseph and Phillip Strain. When adults invest time and effort to teaching proactively prior to behavior "events" children are more successful in achieving improved behavior change, even in situations that might lead to escalating challenging behavior. The key is communicating non-contingent affection and unquestioned valuing of children. The bottom line is that success is dependent on building a positive relationship first. Adults need to invest the time and attention with children as a precedent to the optimum use of sound behavior change strategies (CSEFEL).

The first step is to invest the time in relationship building, and the second is to understand that as your relationships with the child become stronger, so does your potential influence on their behavior. Children will "cue in" on the presence of you as a meaningful and caring adult and will attend differentially and selectively to what you say and do, continuing to seek out ways to ensure even more positive attention from the adult (Lally, Mangione, & Honig).

Review these strategies as you work to build relationships with children (adapted from work by Drs. Joseph and Strain (CSEFEL):

- Offer children a choice as much as possible vs. asking for compliance. Instead of saying "it's time to clean up", ask the child if she would like to put the blocks in the basket or the cars on the shelf.
- Take time to reflect to determine if you might ignore some forms of challenging behavior (for example a child's loud voice), which is simply a decision about where and when to intervene. Note that this is different "planned ignoring" for behavior designed to elicit attention.
- Be aware of your own behaviors and expectations. Set appropriate goals for behavior and determine a way (possibly a counter or visual reminder) to make and track multiple and ongoing relationship deposits.

There will be times that you should and will need to give feedback to children that is in the form of correction and reminders. This will not hinder your relationship building. The important take-away is that your positive interactions need to happen in a greater number and frequency. As you learn to do this you can begin to keep a tally of how many times you remind a child about an unwanted behavior. The goal is for you to find at least twice the number of positive things to comment on and tally those also (CSEFEL).

When children do not receive positive feedback, they are less likely to enter the positive cycle of motivation and learning. The conclusion here is that when children have positive interactions with teachers and other adults, they have fewer instances of challenging behavior. When children feel safe and understood they can use those positive interactions to help build positive relationships. This will build motivation and stimulates within the brain a cycle of repetition focused on motivation and learning.

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12.3.1: Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Families

Relationships with Families

Honest, caring, understanding, and respectful exchanges with family members lead to their sharing important information with teachers that help to inform how to care and support each child's learning and development. Taking the time to find out from family members about their child's unique characteristics and needs plays an important role in providing teachers with the information needed to set up developmentally appropriate learning environments, curriculum, and guidance strategies for individual children in their early learning programs. Establishing positive relationships with families helps to bridge children's experiences between the program and home, and it fosters children's sense of belonging in the early education setting.



Figure **12.3.1.1**: When there is a trusting relationship that values the family, it is easier for parents to trust the care of their children to early educators.[1]

Teachers view families as children's first teachers and seek their assessments of a child's needs, interests, and abilities. Different families and communities have different views and expectations of preschool aged children. The effective early childhood educator recognizes, understands, and respects the values of children's families and communities and attempts to make the environment as congruent with those values as possible. In high-quality early childhood programs, the teacher speaks frequently with family members and, whenever appropriate, strengthens the links between the home and program. Frequent communication between program staff and family members is important, especially in the case of children with disabilities or other special needs. Through collaboration with families, preschool teachers can gain insight into ways in which they can be important contributors to the child's learning and development. To support children's learning across home and school contexts, the program can encourage family participation in activities at the early care and education program.[2]

Quotable

"Family engagement with schools has been linked to important outcomes for children of all families, including families with children who are dual language learners . . . Numerous positive developmental child outcomes have been associated with family engagement, including early literacy skills, cognitive and language development skills . . . socio–emotional skills . . . and academic achievement."

Source: State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care 2013, Paper 4, Family Engagement, 121.

Programs and Teachers Build Relationships with Families

Programs convey an important message to families when they seek their views and collaborate with them in the care of their children. This message helps family members understand that their preferences and their concerns about the learning and development of their child are important to teachers and program leaders. When a teacher has open, honest, and understanding relationships with family members, the resulting links between home and the early care education setting often helps their child feel safe and comfortable.

Programs

- Support the participation of all family members, being responsive to their cultural, linguistic, and economic differences, as well as to any disabilities or special needs of the children or a family member.
- Involve family members in making decisions about the program and its' policies.
- Recognize and acknowledge that teen parents are still adolescents developmentally even though they are in an adult role as parents.

- Provide a way for families to give feedback to the program, such as regular evaluations or opportunities for informal discussion.
- Schedule regular meetings, social times, and other special events for families so that they can learn more about the program, get to know each other and staff members, and build a sense of community

Communication

- Seek and consider families' views when identifying and hiring new staff members.
- Create an area for posting information for families (daily notices, outside services, child development information, community events, employment, and educational opportunities).
- Encourage communication between teachers and family members at the beginning and end of each day.

Teachers

- Share a child's records with his or her family, including assessment information on the child's learning, experiences, and developmental progress.
- Learn about the different families in the program.

How to communicate

- Engage in a two-way exchange of ideas, preferences, and child-rearing philosophies during the first meetings with family members, setting the tone for future communication.
- Listen, reflect, and respond when family members communicate concerns and ideas about their child.
- Initiate discussions with families to understand and resolve issues when they arise.
- Engage in communication with family members at the beginning and end of each day about the child's care, activities, interests, and moods.
- Communicate to family members that they are always welcome to visit or call to check on their child.

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12.3.1.1: Respecting Families

Suggestions for Your Program and Classrooms

1. Respect the Uniqueness of Each Family System

Characteristics of the family system are often heavily influenced by a family's cultural values and beliefs. For example, researchers have found that, in some cultures, the family unit includes extended family members or clans composed of several households of relatives with a commitment to a family-based support network, while other families tend to focus on the immediate family and utilize external support networks. Knowledge and understanding of the variety of family structures and systems increase the professional's ability to respond to the family's needs. In turn, respect for the diverse systems of family organization enhances a professional's effectiveness.

2. Develop a Personalized Relationship with Families

Families are more likely to develop effective working relationships with professionals they trust. Yet, this relationship may be forged in different ways. Some families may prefer a more formal relationship with early education professionals, while others may prefer a more informal, friendly relationship. In some cultures, the father may be considered the head of the household and, therefore, may be responsible for making decisions for the rest of the family. In other cultures, the oldest female member of the household may hold the position of authority. Researchers in the early education field suggest that these issues need to be considered on a family-by-family basis, because intra-group differences are as great as inter-group differences. Awareness of these differences increases the likelihood of building effective relationships.



Figure 5.7: Including families in the classroom is one way to build relationships. [62]

3. Communicate in Culturally Appropriate Ways

Cross-cultural differences in communication may also affect professional
-family relationships. For example, researchers note that if professionals assume a dominant role in conversations, the submissive role in which the family is placed may be a source of tension and may result in family members withholding information. Communication of this type may be particularly offensive to some families from traditional Hispanic, Native American, and Asian backgrounds. As discussed in the literature, knowledge of issues related to the use of translators and interpreters is important for early education professionals because communicating with linguistically diverse families often requires individuals fluent in the family's primary language to explain or clarify information related to programs and services.

It is also critical to maintain open, ongoing communication with families from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This communication may take the form of home-program notebooks, oral exchanges, or other modes of communication based on each family's preferences.

4. Recruit Staff Who View Diversity as an Asset

Efforts should be made to hire bicultural and bilingual staff to increase an organization's ability to create trust between families and professionals. However, researchers note that what is even more essential is to hire staff who embrace diversity as an asset and demonstrate a willingness to learn about the experiences and traditions of individuals whose backgrounds are different from their own. By recruiting such individuals, early childhood programs will substantially enhance their ability to work with families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

5. Create Alliances with Cultural Guides

It is important to encourage the participation of community leaders as "cultural guides" to facilitate communication and understanding between professionals and families. The literature describes several roles these individuals can play:

- Provide professionals with insights concerning community beliefs, values, and communication style.
- Offer families information about programs and services in a culturally sensitive and responsive manner.
- Act as facilitators to bring families and professionals closer together to reach desired outcomes.

Examples of cultural guides include community leaders, members of the clergy, and business leaders who are from the family's cultural group or who speak the family's primary language.

6. Evaluate Process and Outcomes

The final strategy addresses the need for ongoing evaluation of early childhood programs that serve diverse families. Evaluation can take several forms, such as asking families to complete surveys or sharing information through face-to-face or phone interviews. Early education professionals may also participate in program improvement activities by conducting a needs assessment to identify areas for training and then self-evaluating their knowledge and skills in those areas. With collaboration from

bicultural/bilingual staff and cultural guides, information can be collected in ways that match families' preferences. In turn, early education professionals can use this information to improve their programs and their interactions with families. [63]

What about Holidays?

Talking and thinking about holidays in early childhood programs today is a "hot topic." Diversity among children, families, and staff who make up our programs is ever increasing. Many of us believe that holidays should be celebrated, while many others think celebrations do not belong in the classroom. These opposing views have created a divide and uncertainty on whether to celebrate. As an industry, (and even program by program) we need to discuss the decision and ramifications on whether 'to celebrate or not to celebrate'. [64]

The Southern Poverty Law Center notes on their Teaching Tolerance website that there are some things programs should avoid doing when it comes to celebrating:

- Having a December-only emphasis on the holidays. While there are some important holidays for many families that fall in December, there are holidays that are really important to some families that do not occur in December.
- Making some holidays exotic and others just part of regular life and using the "tourist approach" (of including many holidays, but only in stereotyped or superficial ways). These can happen unintentionally when trying to expose children to new holidays that you don't have as much information about or experience with or when you only recognize the culture on the specific holiday, rather than through the school year. [65]

And the National Association for the Education of Young Children reminds us to remember that

- Some holidays go against the values of families.
- The way holidays are celebrated is not always healthy and inclusive.
- Some holidays present a very lopsided perspective on history that can unintentionally lead to misinformation and stereotypes being passed on.
- Families may celebrate holidays the teacher and other children are not familiar with and may not fully understand or they may celebrate holidays in very different ways. [66]

Programs that choose to celebrate holidays should take care to make sure that what is celebrated represents all of the children and families their program serves. This requires meaningful conversations between staff and families. This should be done through respectful dialogue and requires staff to keep an open-mind about things beyond their personal experiences and beliefs and to trying new things and new ways of celebrating. [67]



Think About It…

One holiday that has evoked concerns about bias and equity is Thanksgiving. What are concerns that people have about Thanksgiving? How might a program navigate those concerns? How does this play a part in ensuring there is equity in what is celebrated and how it is celebrated?

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12.3.1.2: Family Conferences

Conferences Building Family Partnerships

Once assessments have been completed, it is time to meet with a child's family. The purpose of the conference is to share information about the child and to build a vital partnership with the child's family. Some parents may not understand the connection between play and learning. Sharing information about play-based curriculum and how it supports development can allow parents to better understand your goals for learning and how the classroom functions. By including parents in discussion making about curriculum and assessments we can encourage support areas development outside of the classroom.

For example, if the individualized curriculum is supporting color recognition, we can suggest that families continue to support this skill by identifying produce colors at the grocery store and/or pointing to certain colors in their favorite books.

In a blog by Concordia University, Portland some key tips are suggested to ensure a successful and engaging family conference occurs: [77]

1. Offer a flexible conference schedule

Some parents have more than one child at different schools, some families may have limited transportation options and some parents may work multiple jobs which can limit their time and availability. In these cases, teachers may need to be flexible to accommodate special circumstances. Teachers can schedule conferences in the morning, later in the afternoon, or during recess breaks. If technology is available, meetings can be offered via Skype or FaceTime as an option for parents who cannot make it to school.

2. Prepare, prepare, prepare

Portfolios and assessments must be updated and organized for each child on a regular basis.

3. Arrange for a translator if needed, and find a way to connect

Parents who don't speak English require a translator. If schools cannot arrange for a translator, family members may need to sit in on the conference, for example an older sibling or an aunt or maybe even a neighbor) — ideally not a student.

When there is a language barrier, teachers should try to find a respectful way to communicate and connect with families. As a reminder, even though families cannot fluently speak the same language, they deserve your professional approach. Try learning a few phrases in their native language to show you're trying to connect; even "Hello," "How are you?" and "Thank you" can go a long way.

4. Be aware of your body language and how you verbally communicate

The classroom environment speaks volumes and so does your body language and how you talk with your families. Check out your body language. Are your arms typically crossed? Do you smile or glare? How is your tone when you speak? Are you calm and reassuring, or sounding like a robot? Do you pause and allow parents to ask questions, or are you hurried and rushing through information? Are you aware and considerate of cultural backgrounds and family practices? For example, did you know that eye contact and handshaking may not be a common practice with some families?

5. Sit side-by-side

Since teachers and parents are on the same team teachers are advised to sit next to parents rather than across from them behind a desk. By arranging the furniture in a friendly and non-threatening way, teachers express their desire to build a partnership with each parent, which can diffuse unnecessary tension on both sides.

6. Share real stories and student work

Even the best teachers can't remember all of the details they need to share with every parent. A portfolio with anecdotal notes and work samples provide parents with real insight into what's happening in their child's academic day.

7. Include the positive and focus on what the child CAN DO

Each student has positive traits and potential. Share at least one shining trait with parents at the beginning and another at the end of the conference. That trait could be an academic trait or a character trait, such as helpfulness, persistence, or hard work. Teachers can follow the “sandwich method” or the “glows and grows” method where you share a child’s positive achievements or traits that make them glow, in addition to providing two or more areas in which they can grow. Always end on a high note with another glowing detail or anecdote.

8. Create clear goals

Every student, even the gifted ones, can improve in some way. Write specific goals for each student. Along with those goals, create an action plan with steps for improvement, as well as a timeline. Your plan of action should include activities that will be done at school as well as activities that can be done at home. Sharing this with parents can increase buy-in since they will be able to see a clear path to success that has achievable benchmarks and goals that are part of a realistic, structured plan.

9. Avoid education jargon

Not everyone is familiar with DRDPs or diagnostic and summative assessments. Avoid overwhelming parents with education lingo . Speak in plain terms, explain what you mean, and make sure parents are clear about the information you have presented. Encourage parents to ask questions as needed for clarification.

10. Give parents responsibility

Early educators know that children do better in school when their parents are involved. A perfect way to get parents involved is to ask questions about family life and routines (a family questionnaire is ideal). Families should be encouraged to get involved throughout the school year. For example, they can be special guests, and talk about their jobs or they can read their favorite story to the children. Parents who are involved early on, will be more likely to follow through on their “plan of action” once it is presented at the conference.

11. Encourage questions

Approachable teachers build a lasting connection with parents and promote a positive learning experience with their children. Not only do you want your students to feel comfortable enough to ask questions, but you want your parents to feel they can approach you as well. Although your time may be limited during the school day, it is important to carve out some time and space to discuss important matters with parents. If parents cannot make the conference, offer your email address to allow for some time for a brief “q and a” any point during the school year. NOTE: Hitting parents up at the end of a long work day and rushing through important details regarding their child is NOT recommended.

12. Don’t make assumptions about parents or students

Avoid relying on stereotypes and allowing personal biases to cloud your judgment. View all parents as partners because, like it or not, they are. Work to make sure that even the most challenging students and parents feel like they are welcomed and a part of the team.

13. If a parent becomes hostile, don’t engage

No matter how prepared, pleasant and affirming you are, some parents may become hostile or upset while at the conference, especially if there are areas of concern or issues with a child’s challenging behavior that need to be addressed. Some parents may be used to hearing bad news, other parents don’t trust or have little regard for teachers, some parents feel a need to defend their child, while other parents may be upset about a personal matter and may take their frustration out on you. Remain calm! If possible, let the parent vent. Use active listening and really listen to the parent’s concerns. Discuss how both parties want what’s best for the child and reassure them that you have their child’s interest at heart. Look for a compromise or strategy that best supports the child and their family. Stay focused on the task at hand – the conference – and reemphasize the positive. Sometimes, a follow-up meeting may need to be scheduled.

14. Remain professional at all times

Teaching is a challenging job. Like parents, you may have an off day and you may be tempted to stray off into an unprofessional area. We also may cross some fine lines and become “friends” with our families. Here are some topics that should never be

discussed with families during a conference (or at any time):

- -Speaking negatively about school administrators or other teachers.
- -Comparing two or more students to each other.
- -Discussing another student's behavior, family, or performance.
- -Blaming parents for a child's academic performance or behavior.
- -Arguing or becoming hostile with parents.
- -Complaining about school policies or procedures.

15. Document, document, document

Because you will meet with several families in the course of a week, it is a good idea to make notes about the conversations and outcomes of the conference. You may need to refer to them at a later time when planning a follow-up meeting, or when planning additional curriculum activities. Once in a while, a parent may notify your administrator that they have concerns about the information that was shared during the conference and your notes can be shared with your administrator to help see both sides of the conversation.

16. Stay in contact with parents

Parents should be able to get in touch with you to follow up or address new concerns. Email is the most convenient way for you to receive messages and respond to parents, but phone calls or future conferences may be necessary, too. Set the guidelines and boundaries for future communications.

According to Seplocha, teachers have many important responsibilities, especially preparing for effective and engaging parent-teacher conferences. When teachers connect with family members and establish a respectful relationship, the positive outcome provides a lifeline that will ultimately support a child's overall development and learning.



Figure 6.9 Carol Mahn (right), a first grade teacher at the Hanscom Primary School, meets Melissa Weyand and her son, Maximas, during a "Meet and Greet". [78]

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12.4: Communicating with Families about Challenging Behaviors

Many of our children have experienced trauma, and we may or may not be aware. For them, keeping themselves safe becomes the primary motivator of behavior. Children may appear manipulative or controlling when they may be attempting to just keep themselves safe. Safety is the most important goal of a child experiencing trauma (NCTSN.org).

Much like a tree and root system, we only see the small portion above the surface. Look below the surface of the behavior, and you will see the feelings and emotions driving the behavior. The unwanted or "misbehavior" we experience is often a child's attempt to solve another problem of which we are unaware.

Even minor stressors can act as triggers that fill children with emotion and can result in misbehavior. When teachers and caregivers do not understand why a child is acting out, they are more likely to focus on "managing" the behavior rather than meeting the child's needs. This is not an effective response to misbehavior and is very much like a doctor treating the symptoms of a disease without considering the cure. (NCTSN.org).

To understand unwanted or "misbehavior", it is important to understand the body's stress response. The **National Child Traumatic Stress Network** (NCTSN) shares that our bodies have a built-in alarm system that signals danger. Children who have experienced repeated trauma often have overactive alarms. They are powerfully attentive for danger and may label non-threatening things as dangerous. False alarms can happen when children hear, see, smell, or feel something that reminds them of frightening things from the past. These reminders are called triggers.

Some Common Triggers of Behavior include:

- Changes in the schedule, routine, or environment that are unexpected
- The sense a child feels of helplessness or fear
- Experiencing a situation that causes a child to feel threatened or attacked
- Overstimulation from the environment (can be many things including too many children/people in the room, noise, light, or activity).

What Does a Triggered Child Look Like?

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network shares that behaviors resulting from a stress response typically fall into one of three categories: flight, fight, or freeze. Flight looks like behaviors in which children move away from a person/situation they feel is a threat Fight looks like behaviors in which children move toward a person/situation they feel is a threat Freeze looks like behaviors in which children use their minds to move away from a person/situation they feel is a threat (holding still while "checking out").

Additionally,

- When the child is calm, talk about how to recognize triggers and what can be done to increase awareness of emotions to prevent being triggered, or what can be done to calm down and manage (or regulate) emotions.
- As difficult as it can be, try to remember that these behaviors are not a personal attack, and likely have little to do with you.

Children who have experienced trauma may appear nervous or jumpy. They may avoid physical contact. They may have difficulty sleeping/have nightmares. Children who have experienced trauma may be confused about what is dangerous and who to go to for protection, especially if the trauma was caused by a caregiver. They may have mood swings, for example, shifting quickly between being quiet and withdrawn to being aggressive. Additionally, they may demand lots of attention, have trouble paying attention to teachers at school and to parents at home, lose their appetite, go back to "younger" behaviors such as baby talk or wanting adults to feed or dress them. They may also re-enact the scary things they have experienced during play, withdraw from friends or activities they have enjoyed previously, and/or get into fights at school or fight with siblings at home.

What Can You Do?

- You, the adult must stay calm, regardless of the behaviors are demonstrated. An upset adult interacting with a triggered child can worsen the behavior.

- Remember the tree and root system…try to identify the need below the surface that is influencing the child's behavior. Shift your focus on meeting the child's need rather than on correcting the behavior.
- You might try the strategy of "belly breathing" or blowing bubbles to help the child breathe and calm.
- Wait until the child is no longer triggered to talk about what happened. While triggered, a child is not able to use the rational part of the brain, making reasoning ineffective.

We tend to think of trauma as the result of a single frightening and upsetting event, therefore we rarely consider unwanted behavior to be the result of trauma. Many children experience trauma through ongoing exposure, throughout their early development, to abuse, neglect, homelessness, domestic violence, or violence in their communities. And research has shown that chronic trauma can cause serious problems with learning and behavior (Miller).

Trauma is particularly challenging for educators to address because kids often do not express the distress they are feeling in a way that is easily recognizable — and they may hide their pain with behavior that is aggressive or off-putting. As Nancy Rappaport, MD, a child, and adolescent psychiatrist who focuses on mental health issues in schools, shares, "They are masters at making sure you do *not* see them bleed."

As educators we need to learn the symptoms of trauma in children to understand these confusing behaviors. Identification of symptoms of trauma can also help avoid misdiagnosis, as these symptoms can mimic other learning challenges, including ADHD and other behavior disorders (Rappaport).

Some of the barriers to learning that are experienced by children impacted by trauma include trouble forming relationships with teachers and other adults, poor self-regulation skills, negative thinking, hypervigilance, and challenges with executive function (NCTSN.org).

Children who have been neglected or abused often have problems forming relationships with teachers, a necessary first step in a successful classroom experience. They have learned to be wary of adults, even those who appear to be reliable, since they have been ignored or betrayed by those they have depended on. Often, these children do not have the experience that would support them to ask for help. There has been little or no adult modeling for recognizing and meeting their needs.

Many children who have experienced trauma have not been able to develop secure attachments to the adults in their lives. Children who have never developed that early attachment for trust and who have not learned that they are lovable, and that people will take care of them, need extra support to build those special relationships with their teachers and other staff (ChildMind.org).

The Child Mind Institute also shares that one of the challenges in giving that support is that when kids act out, our programs and schools often use disciplinary systems that involve withdrawing attention and support, rather than addressing their problems. We need to do the opposite and show extra patience for kids who provoke and push away adults who try to help them. Instead of punishing, this is our opportunity to teach a child what to do! We need to work with them on changing their behavior. When a child is acting up in class, we as teachers need to recognize the powerful feelings they are expressing, even though they are expressed inappropriately.

Rather than jumping to reprimands, a behavior plan, deducting points or withdrawing privileges or suspending the child, it is critical to acknowledge the child's emotion and trying to identify it. This is also where modeling plays a big role. By saying "I can see that you are really angry that Anja took the marker you wanted!". If that statement is not correctly connected to the feelings the child is experience, that child s/he is highly likely to correct you.

Materials and strategies for labeling feelings and emotions should be an ongoing part of the curriculum and be present in a "quiet corner" and in accessible parts of the classroom environment. Acknowledging and naming an emotion helps children be more able to express themselves in a more appropriate way. Communicating that understand the child is the essential first step to helping a child learn to express himself in ways that do not separate them and/or push away and people who can help him.

It is critical that we remember and respect that children who have experienced trauma (or are experiencing ongoing trauma) often have trouble managing strong emotions. As babies and toddlers, children learn to calm and soothe themselves by being calmed and soothed by the adults in their lives. If they haven't had that experience, because of neglect, the lack of a secure attachment system contributes to their chronic dysregulation (emotional dysregulation is when a child is unable to control or regulate their emotional responses to challenging input.) (ChildMind.org).

In the classroom, teachers need to support and coach children in ways to calm themselves and manage their emotions. This allows the adults to act as models and to be partners in helping children to learn skills for managing their behavior. Remember that co-regulation (warm and responsive interactions that a child needs to understand, express, and modulate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) comes before self-regulation. We need to help them learn how to get the control they need to change the output when they are upset. This also includes providing coaching and practice at de-escalating when they feel overwhelmed. (ChildMind.org).

Another challenge to children with trauma is that they develop the belief that they are bad, and what has happened to them is their fault. This leads to the expectation that people are not going to like them or treat them well. They may think “I’m a bad kid. Why would I do well in school? Bad kids don’t do well in school.”

Children with trauma may also tend to develop the idea that everyone is out to get them. They might hear directions and requests as exaggerated and angry and unfair. This leads the child to act out with quick response quickly and in an irritable manner. A mistake that might seem trivial to us becomes exaggerated if their experience has been that minor mistakes result in adult anger or punishment. For these children, it is important to build on small steps towards success in the classroom, and to help them see that in the classroom making a mistake is a necessary part of learning.

One of the classic symptoms of trauma is hyper-vigilance, which means being overly alert to danger. In the case of trauma, physiological hyper-arousal means that children are jumpy, they have an exaggerated startle response. They can have some big, out-of-control seeming behaviors, because their fight or flight response has gone off. Be mindful that this can look like hyperactivity, and lead to misdiagnosis for ADHD. Being chronically agitated can also lead to difficulty with sleeping and chronic irritability. (Miller).

For positive behaviors to grow and thrive in the classroom It is important that teachers learn strategies to support children to calm themselves when something in the classroom triggers an emotional outburst. When a child is escalating, the key is to match their affect, but in a controlled way. The goal is to connect to their big feeling. If you can connect with what they are trying to tell you, they may be able to regain their calm. It can work even if you just make a guess — you do not have to be right; they can correct you. (Garey, 2013).

Reflection

Highlight the topics presented in this chapter where information overlapped.

List strategies that you will implement in your curriculum to support positive behavior, social and emotional skills growth.

Record the changes can you make to your environment to support social and emotional skill development related to behavior.

Communication with families: sharing and reflecting mutual perspectives

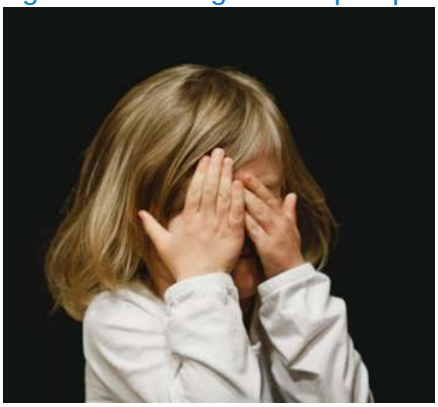


Figure 12.4.1: Young girl covering her face with her hands. is licensed under CC by 1.0

At this point in the chapter, we have built a shared definition of behavior, taken a deeper look at behavior and motivation, and established an understanding that all behavior is a form of communication. We have also reviewed how relationships (especially positive relationships) relate to behavior and are needed to support positively guiding the behavior of children. This foundation was built to support a mutual understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma. This critical piece of information is necessary to understand the whole child and not simply react to the behavior(s) that are seen. We are closing Chapter 10 with

information about how to have conversations with families about behaviors (challenging and/or unwanted). This communication requires an ability for you to be objective, positive, and culturally aware in the information you share and the method by which you communicate.

Successful work in the field of Early Learning depends on your ability to build positive, trusting, and respectful relationships with families. No child comes to us alone or isolated, they come to us within the context of a family. When we build and maintain trusting relationships with those families, we will be able to engage in more opportunities for open communication and dialogue about children.

We know from experience that having a conversation about a child's challenging behavior can be stressful for them and for ourselves. Did you know that you can reduce your stress and gain more positive results when you "invest" in relationships with families? You will need to be objective and stick to facts, while at the same time maintain a focus on solutions. It is important that we understand that in child development, there are cultural differences relating to beliefs about developmental milestones. When communicating with families it is important to be conscious of your own beliefs related to culture and your personal biases as you make choices about what and how to communicate with families.

You might even feel intimidated in having conversations with families about a child's behavior. A key strategy in having difficult conversations is to begin with the positive. We start with strengths, including describing what the child can do, and what he/she does well. Include positives about behavior and times when have you notices positive behaviors or interactions. We must always avoid the impulse to blame the family for the child's challenging behavior. This is an important interaction to have with the family and cannot be avoided out of our fear of potential (real or imagined) conflict. When we look at these extremes of blame and avoidance, we should realize that neither approach is helpful for the child, and both only add to your own stress. This added stress could even possibly increase the intensity of the behavioral situation of concern.

When the time comes to talk with a child's family about challenging behavior Dr. Webster-Stratton (2012) shares some strategies to help create a productive interaction. Remember above where "invest" in relationships was mentioned? Dr. Webster-Stratton talks about this process of relationship building as a metaphor for a "piggy bank". She believes that we need to make deposits regularly to this piggy bank, to have the ability to make withdrawals that support our difficult conversations. Try these three things in your relationship work with families:

- Make sure you have plenty of investments in the "relationship bank" with the family,
- Stick to data from your observations
- Offer possible solutions and support.



Piggy Bank Image **12.4.2** Piggy Bank is licensed under CC by 1.0

Dr. Webster-Stratton also discusses how to fill your relationship bank. Each of us (both children and adults) has an emotional **"piggy bank"**. It is built with positive relationships. Just like your real-life piggy bank, you must have money in the bank to successfully make withdrawals without a negative outcome.

We know from research (Incredible Years, 2012) that **children need 5 positives** such as:

- I see you using walking feet!
- High-5! You've got this!
- You are working SO hard!

Those 5 positives are needed for "balance", and to move forward in your positive relationship, for every negative such as:

- No! or Stop!
- Use of a child's name to call them out

- Please do not do that!

Reflection

Stop and think about that for a minute to let that ratio sink in; you need to say to a child 5 positives for every negative:

1. Five (5) positives
2. Provide balance for 1 negative
3. Resulting in a more positive relationship and allowing the child opportunities for success.

Stop and practice this "formula" related to a specific behavior you have observed or can imagine.

Time to do some math! Think about that child whose name you say 350 times a day. Imagine that child's name and multiply that 350 x 5. Did you calculate that answer to be 1750 positives? The child will need over 1700 positive comments just to break even emotionally! This deposit strategy is not only for the child, but also the same for families. That very first time you approach a family to discuss a child's challenging or "unwanted" behavior you are withdrawing a significant amount from the emotional piggy bank. Do you have "enough" positive interactions and a strong relationship already in place to avoid a negative balance? With sufficient balance in the piggy bank, you are ready to have challenging conversations and, as Dr. Webster-Stratton (2012) found, families will still have emotional "money-in-the-bank" to work with you on developing possible solutions.

The next point bulleted above was to stick to the facts. This is called being objective. We need to put aside the emotional aspect of challenging behaviors when you are communicating with the family. Taking this emotion-free, positive approach you could share with a family, "Today Michael had a very difficult time with sharing". This Is a much more useful statement that opens the possibility for a conversation about problem-solving. The opposite can be said for using statements such as "Michael was hitting ALL day". This statement is not helpful and is not helpful (it is also most likely not accurate). The positive approach will lead to the strategy to support Brandon learning a new skill, which he is. This also provides scaffolding to ask about behavior in the home, "Tell me about how Michael shares at home with his siblings. What methods have you tried that I might try here at school?" Remember that emotional piggy bank that was shared earlier? Our goal here is to build a positive relationship and partnership with the family. We want to work together to make positive connections between home-school. When we approach challenging behaviors in a fact-based manner, it will help to remove emotion and blame from the conversation and will be much more likely to help open doors rather than create walls (Webster-Stratton, 2012).

The last bullet is about problem solving. For every conversation, we as the ECE professionals need to be ready to share some solutions. At the same time, it is of benefit to the partnership to engage in give and take by asking for and offering ongoing partnership with the family. Always get ideas and input from the family. You will have an opportunity to share other strategies with the family after they communicate what they are currently doing at home to support their child. This partner-based communication will work to build a bridge between home and school that will support of the child's learning. You will also need to talk about going forward, and how you will continue to communicate about the child's skill building. This should include any information you will be collecting from your ongoing classroom observations. Remember the importance of sharing successes in all written and verbal conversations with the family to keep adding to the family's and child's emotional piggy bank.

Here are some guiding thoughts for your conversation with the family:

1. Begin with strengths: "let's talk about what Sarah is doing really well!" This will begin your conversation with the positive and will focus on what the child can do so that you can build from there.
2. Share your concern using facts: "I am concerned about Sarah and how she's doing with her frustration. Are you seeing similar challenges at home?" Remember that you are working to build that positive relationship with the family, and you should always bring up concerns with collaboration in your mind.
3. Together, define a clear and measurable goal. "I really want to work with you to help Sarah develop her social skills to support positive behavior".
4. Create a plan together. "What do you think we should include in the plan for Sarah, so that each of us has strategies to follow that develop new skills for success". Always focus on skill development, not on behavior. Use the image below as a check list for your plan. See appendix 10.1 for a template for reflection and action plan creation.



5. Finally, discuss next steps for moving forward. “The more we all work together, the more successful Sarah will be”. Remember that consistency between home and school will support the child to be more successful, and faster.



Children Image **12.4.3** Two young children holding hands and smiling is licensed under CC by 1.0

Final Thoughts

The information on child behavior in this chapter was shared with the intent of building the foundation for positive and intentional guidance within a developmentally appropriate framework. The information was presented in a strengths-based approach, to support your work to build on what a child knows and can do to build skills.

In defining behavior, we looked from two different perspectives: behavior that is seen and observed, and behavior that is “below the surface” and unseen. It is important to know every child with whom you work to be able to discover the “below the surface” experiences, skills and motivations that influence behavior. Along with the development and teaching of social and emotional skills, we must remember that all behavior is communication. Stop and ask yourself what a child is telling you through behavior next time you are challenged. The other question we must ask is about the well-being of the whole child and the possible presence of trauma in their life.

At the core of our work around behavior needs to be relationship building with the child’s family. Strong, respectful relationships that are founded in partnership will support your work with the children and model social skills for life.

As young children develop socially and emotionally, they learn self-control. At this time challenging behavior is common and can be expected. It is important to identify the meaning behind challenging behaviors and work together with families to set age-appropriate expectations for the child.

> *“**Every child deserves a champion- an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”***
>
> *Rita F. Pierson; Keystone Creations*

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12.5: Parent Engagement

Family Engagement as Parent Involvement

Parent involvement refers to parent participation in the systems and activities the early childhood education program in ways that support them as the primary educators, nurturers, and advocates for all children enrolled in the program. Parent involvement refers to opportunities for parent participation in a variety of program activities that support child and adult development, including policy and program decision-making.

Family engagement refers to ongoing, goal-directed relationships between staff and families that are mutual, culturally responsive, and that support what is best for children and families both individually and collectively. Staff and families share responsibility for the learning and development of children, the progress toward outcomes for children and families, and for parent involvement in the program. Parent involvement is a part of this larger construct of family engagement.

Table 1: Examples that Illustrate the Shift from Parent Involvement to Engagement[1]

Parent Involvement	Family Engagement
Parent Involvement is primarily the responsibility of family services staff (or parent involvement specialists, home visitors, or transition specialists).	Family engagement is embedded in the work of all staff members, management systems and leadership priorities.
Parent involvement might revolve around outputs—for example, the number of parents who show up at a meeting.	Family engagement focuses on evidence of positive, goal directed relationships, for example, that result in family progress in one (or more) of the seven outcome areas.
Parent involvement works with a small percentage of families involved in leadership opportunities (policy council, parent meetings, special events, etc.).	Through ongoing relationships, family members are engaged in a variety of goal directed ways related to Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes.
Programs that involve parents collect data from children and families—for example, information about parent participation.	Programs that engage families use child and family data to improve services. These programs help families understand and use child data to support their children's progress and development.

Engaging and Collaborating with Families

Programs

- Develop and implement program policies that give families and staff members opportunities to observe and discuss children's development and behavior.
- Support families by providing tools and resources that help them contribute to their children's learning.
- Invite families to participate formally and informally in the development, governance, and evaluation of program services and policies, as appropriate.

Teachers

- Recognize that working with families promotes children's development.
- Build relationships with families to ensure meaningful two-way collaboration, supporting the children's learning and development and helping families to understand child development.
- Attentively greet family members when they arrive and depart from the program setting, and use those opportunities to exchange information about the family's child.
- Contribute ideas and resources to promote each child's learning and development in the home and community.
- Collaborate formally and informally with families and colleagues to share observations, describe children's accomplishments, plan for children individually and as a group, and address concerns about children.
- Support families as decision makers for and educators of their children.
- Actively solicit and listen to families' goals, aspirations, and concerns about their children's development.



Figure **12.5.1**: Children thrive when their families are engaged and included in their early childhood education program.[2]

Home Language

Programs

- Create strategies to engage family members from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and invite family members to share goals and strategies for supporting children's home languages in the group or classroom. This may require the use of interpreters and translators.

Teachers

- Learn a few words in each child's home language, such as greetings, names of family members, words of comfort, and important objects or places. Parents and other family members can be good resources for learning their language.
- Seek and use resources to facilitate communication with family members in their home language, ensuring that all families are included. [3]

"Acknowledge, Ask, and Adapt" By putting into practice the following steps for culturally responsive caregiving, you will gain the information you need to support appropriately the growth of all the children in your care.

Step 1: Acknowledge -- The first step is a step of recognition in which you use your growing awareness of the existence of different cultural assumptions about child development. A willingness to be open with yourself is essential to the success of this step.

Step 2: Ask -- The second step is an information-gathering step. The goal is to get the information you need about the parents' and your cultural beliefs and values so that you can solve the problem together during the third step. Do not rush the second step.

Step 3: Adapt -- In this last problem-solving step, you use the information gathered in step two to resolve conflicts caused by cultural differences and find the most effective way to support each child's growth."

References

[1] Examples that Illustrate the Shift from Parent Involvement to Engagement

[2] Image from the California Department of Education is used with permission

[3] Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines by the California Department of Education is used with permission (pg. 59-60)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Developing as a Professional Educator

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13.3: Professional Development Plan
13.4: Teaching Statements
13.5: Creating a Resume
13.6: Professionalism in the Workplace
13.6.1: Reflecting on Your Teaching Practices
13.7: Professional Practice and the Critical Reflective Process
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13.7.2: Thinking with a Pedagogical Friend or Collaborative Group

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13.1: Career Goals

Who are the Other Professionals Supporting Children?

Some of you may think you want to work in some way with children and families, but may not be sure that "teaching" is the right fit for you. Many experts will recommend starting as a teacher assistant or teacher, regardless of your later plans. That is because this experience will prove a valuable addition to whatever career you pursue in the field.

Keep in mind that "teaching" may look very different with different age groups. While the forming of relationships will lie at the core of all quality teaching, the interactions, roles, and duties will vary tremendously. We encourage you to spend some time with different age levels to get a feel for your best "fit".

Whatever age group you are working with, we encourage you to give yourself some time to get comfortable before you decide it is not for you. Teachers go through stages and in the initial stage of survival, it is difficult to discern if it is the age group, the program, or just your limited experience that is feeling overwhelming and uncomfortable.

Below is a table of the stages you can expect to go through over the years on your teaching journey:

Table 1: Stages of Teaching Journey

Stage	Common Feelings	Common Needs	Advice fr
Survival	Fear, inadequacy, doubt, overwhelmed, exhaustion	Support, practical information and advice, understanding, a mentor or coach, resources	• Hang in there • We've all been there • It gets easier • Mistakes are learning opportunitie
Clarity	Clearer understanding, noticing individual children and needs, a little less fear, moments of adequacy	Continued support, continued resources, a mentor or coach, encouragement to try new things,	• You got this • We believe in you • Keep on trying • Focus on what you like to do • Enjoy the children
Growth	Knowledgeable, comfortable, take new risks, reflective	Support, encouragement to do things your way, reflection, team teaching	• Way to go • Keep growing • Know your strengths • Try new things • Step outside your comfort zone
Mastery	Accomplished, proud, invigorated, seeking new challenges,	Branching out, mentoring or coaching others, taking on new roles and responsibilities, community connections, professional organizations	• Time to support others • Share your strengths • Be a role model • Consider advocacy • Join the profession

Keep in mind that each time you begin a new endeavor (ie: teaching at a new location, new age group, new role) you will move back to survival and through the stages, although the timing may be shorter. Knowing this allows you to give yourself permission to feel the way you need to feel and seek the support you need throughout your career.

Who will be with me?

One of the wonderful aspects of our field is that you are rarely alone. In addition to the children and families, you will have colleagues who can support your journey. You may find yourself working with any or all of the following:

Table 2: Who Teachers May Work With

Role	Description
Director/Manager/ Principal	Usually runs the day to day operations, oversees teaching staff, involved in hiring, provides resources and support, budgeting.
Office Staff	Keep records, handle paperwork, phone calls, administrative support.
Team Teacher / Assistant/Aide	Additional person you will collaborate with in your classroom. It's common practice to provide support for each other, offer a variety of role models strengths.
Specialists	Sometimes a specialist works in the classroom with individual children or the group. Usually providing specialized services in Occupational Therapy Speech and Language, or Behavioral intervention they may be part of the teaching team all day or for brief segments throughout the week.
Other Staff Members	From time to time, you may work with custodians, food service providers, health specialists, and others performing duties related to the classroom.
Volunteers	Family or other community members working in a variety of capacities as part of the teaching team.
College Students	From time to time college students may work in the classroom as part of their training.

In addition to the above list, we encourage you to find a mentor or coach, someone you can turn to with questions or when you need support. In the field of early childhood, many of us "pay it forward". Someone provided support for us when we were new to the field with the understanding that we would do the same when our time came. Most early childhood teachers are kind, caring

professionals who want to see you succeed. Each time you succeed, our field succeeds and the children and families we work with receive the quality experiences they deserve. Ask your instructor or another resource if they know of any formal or informal mentor programs in your area.



New Teacher Comments
Letter from a Fieldwork Student
My experience is limited. I want to learn. Please don't expect perfection whenever I interact, guide behavior, lead a lesson, or do bulletin boards. Please be patient with me.
My eyes have not yet been trained to see all the students in the classroom most of the time.
Classroom responsibilities will always be there. I'm only with you for a short time. Please take time to explain things to me and do so willingly.
My feelings are real. Please be sensitive to my needs and don't get annoyed if I ask a lot of questions and am uncertain about what to do sometimes. Treat me as you would like to b
I am a unique individual, like each one of your students. Please treasure my being, holding me accountable for my actions, giving me guidelines to follow, and disciplining me in a p
I need your support and encouragement to grow. Pointing out what I am doing correctly and occasional praise can be reassuring and help me feel comfortable to take risks and grow
Please give me constructive feedback, focused on the things I do, without criticizing me.
Please give me the freedom to make decisions and test them out as long as they don't jeopardize the well-being and safety of the students. If I fail, I can learn from my mistal
decisions life requires of me.
Please invite me to appropriate faculty meetings, seminars, workshops, parent meetings and to join educational organizations, setting a good example for me to follow. I may not b
confidence in me as a future fellow professional.
Sincerely,
A New Fieldwork Student [31]

If you want to work with children and families, but are not sure teaching is for you, there are many other career options you are encouraged to explore.

Career Options in Early Childhood Education and Child Development

Area	Careers
Child Development Focus	• Teacher Aide • Assistant Teacher* • Associate Teacher* • Teacher* • Master Teacher* • Site Supervisor* • Program/Center Director* • Early Childhood Special Education Teacher** • Curriculum Coordinator** • Infant Specialist • School Age Specialist • Owner/Operator of an Early Childhood Program • Licensed Family Child Care Provider
Elementary Settings	• Instructional Aide • Credentialed Teacher** • Transitional Kindergarten Teacher** • Early Childhood Special Education Teacher** • Afterschool Program Staff • Afterschool Program Coordinator
Adult Education and Training	• Child Development Trainer** • Community College Instructor** • Infant/Toddler Certified Trainer** • Parent Educator** • Vocational Educational Instructor**
Community and Social Services	• Parks and Recreation Aide • Parks and Recreation Program Supervisor • School-age Enrichment Program Staff/Leader • Child Life Specialist** • Community Care Licensing Analyst • Family Services Advocate • Resource and Referral Specialist • Early Intervention Specialist** • Home Visitor • Project/Program Administrator in Child Related Agencies** • Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist** • City/County Child Care Coordinator**
Other Related Work Options	• Child Development Researcher** • Child Care and Development Consultant • Playground Designer • Sales/Marketing for Early Education Materials • Child and Family Public Policy Specialist • Pediatric Nurse** • Pediatrician** • Family Therapist**

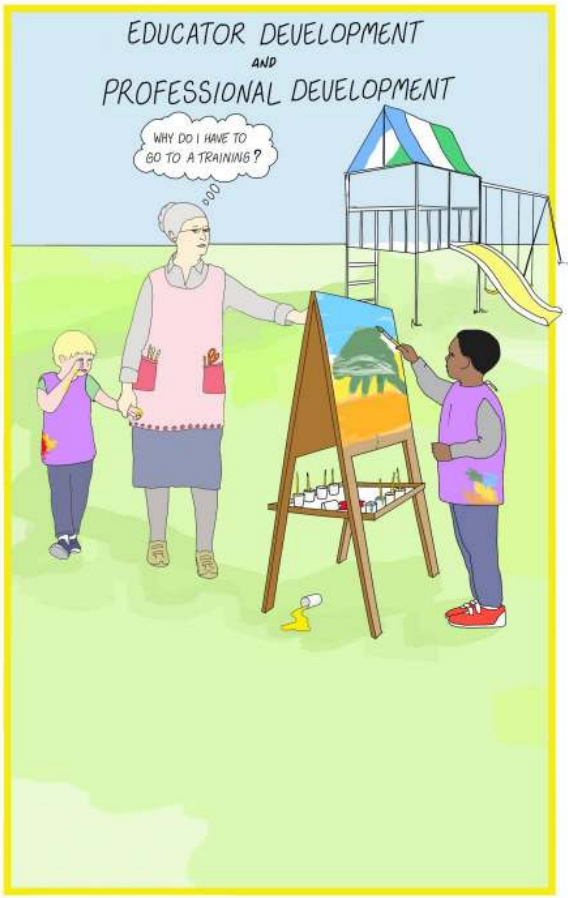
*Refers to the levels on the Child Development Permit Matrix

**These positions usually require a bachelor's degree and additional training.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

13.2: Educator Development and Professional Development



Learning Objectives

- Objective 1: Recognize the career stages of a professional in early care and education.
- Objective 2: Articulate the value of ongoing professional development

As a young professional I thought I had the best job ever! I was getting paid to play with children—how cool was that!? I would read stories and play dress up with preschool children in the morning, go to community college classes in the middle of the day, and end my day playing dodgeball in an afterschool program. BEST JOB EVER! And then my supervisor gave me a 6 month evaluation and said that I had a lot of great qualities but I needed to develop some key skills (classroom management, being seen as an authority figure, etc.). I was crushed! I thought things were going so well—after all, I and the children were having fun. So we created a plan to have me go to some professional development training, and after my first Saturday I was hooked! For the first time, I saw an opportunity to make early childhood education (ECE) my professional career. I immediately went into my counselor's office and changed my major from business to early childhood education. Then I really started having fun at college—as well as work!

Does my story sound familiar? Many of you probably felt as I did at some point in your professional journey. As educators, we understand the value of ongoing learning. We watch children practice, learn, and grow every day.

Key Takeaways

Just like there are stages and milestones of development for children, there are also stages that an educator experiences as they move through their professional career. These stages, along with the learning that occurs, are valuable for leaders to understand so they can support professionals throughout their career life cycle.

It is important to also note that not all educators will proceed through all stages. Some choose the role they love most and stay in that role throughout their career, while others move around, trying out different roles. The career of each professional can look very different from another. That is part of what makes working in the field such a diverse and amazing experience!

Before we start with the stages of an educator's growth, we think it is important to note that educators enter the field in a variety of ways. Here are some of the paths taken:

- 4-year college or 2-year degree or certificate program.
- Entering the field from another profession such as special education or classroom assistant in a K-12 setting.
- Opening your own business as a family child care provider in order to care for your own children and others in your community.
- Working at a Head Start.
- Babysitting or working with children in a high school program and getting a job or starting school after high school in the field and figuring out where you want to go next.

However you got here, you made choices along the way and here you are! Caring for and educating other people's children is a journey—not a destination. It is your journey and your choices that will propel you as you decide where you are and what next steps are best for you. Let's define career stages and offer some words of wisdom for you—wherever you are.

Your Call to Reflect

What started you on the path to working with children? What draws you to this career? What do you love about working with children? Where do you see yourself in five years?

Career Stages

Pre-service is the stage in an educator's career where they have not started working with children and families yet. In this stage you may be taking courses toward a degree or certificate, or you may be ready to walk into the classroom for the first time as an assistant. For many educators, the pre-service stage is a mix of working with children and pursuing a degree or participating in community-based training.

Characteristics of Pre-service Professionals:

- You are not quite sure if you are ready/what you got yourself into.
- You are enthusiastic and looking to have fun.
- You don't know what you don't know.
- You know what you don't know and you are ready to learn.
- You are ready to start applying the things that you know.

Educators in the Pre-service stage need external support to apply their knowledge and process what the "reality" of working with children really looks like. Pre-service educators need guidance for taking care of themselves so they don't burn out and may need help navigating building relationships with the adults that come with working with children.

The Survival stage is a roller coaster of emotions and behaviors. Educators in survival mode are beginning to apply what you know and have learned as you begin your work with children. Everything that you learned and thought you knew takes a backseat to the immediate actions needed to manage the children and tasks in front of you. You are still excited and realizing that working with children is hard and draining and exhilarating all at the same time.

Characteristics of Survival Professionals:

- Your fight or flight brain kicks in and demands to pay high alert attention to everything.
- You may feel like you are never going to “get” it or that this is NEVER going to “work”.
- You may feel overwhelmed at the “other” tasks that come with working with children.
- You may feel like you don’t have control of the children in your program.
- You may feel locked into struggles with children or other team members.
- You may not feel confident in your abilities; particularly when talking to families.
- You may struggle to see yourself as a professional

Educators in the Survival stage need reassurance and individualized supports. They need to see that they are progressing and that there is an “end” in sight for the survival stage. Pairing professionals in the Survival stage with a veteran team member who can provide one on one advice and coaching. You can also provide these professionals with extra breaks, opportunities to talk, and lots of chocolate.

Developing Skills is the stage where things start to come together. Educators in this stage are practicing, making mistakes, learning, and experimenting. They are understanding what their skills are and increasing their competency.

Characteristics of Developing Skills Professionals:

- You are looking for and participating in professional development that helps you solve problems.
- You are hands on and trying new things.
- You are confident.
- You are both sure and unsure of yourself.
- You think about the children in your care and your coworkers, even when you are not with them.
- You are setting routines and teaching others how to do what you need them to do.

Educators in the Developing Skills stage should be supported through opportunities to practice, make mistakes, and get coaching. They need recognition for their efforts and opportunities to participate in professional development. Support through one-on-one meetings, frequent check-ins, feedback, and coaching are very beneficial.

In the Mastery stage, educators have developed their competencies and may be looking for new challenges. For some that may mean administration positions, for others, mentoring or providing professional development.

Characteristics of Mastery Professionals:

- You know it is not about you (it never was, but you were inwardly focused for the first three stages).
- You feel confident in your skills.
- You feel like you have “arrived” and can take time off from further professional development.
- You seek professional development opportunities that are focused on theory, practice, or a very narrow topic (ex: supporting children with ADHD).
- You can get stuck in “the way I have always done it” and not look for opportunities to stay current on issues or child development.
- You may feel bored and are looking for a challenge.
- You may feel isolated.

Educators in the Mastery stage may need opportunities to share their knowledge and expertise. This could be through coaching or developing others, presenting training, or participating in contributing to the field outside of their work. Professionals in the Mastery stage should be supported through giving outlets for sharing, providing them with feedback or encouraging them to continue their professional growth.

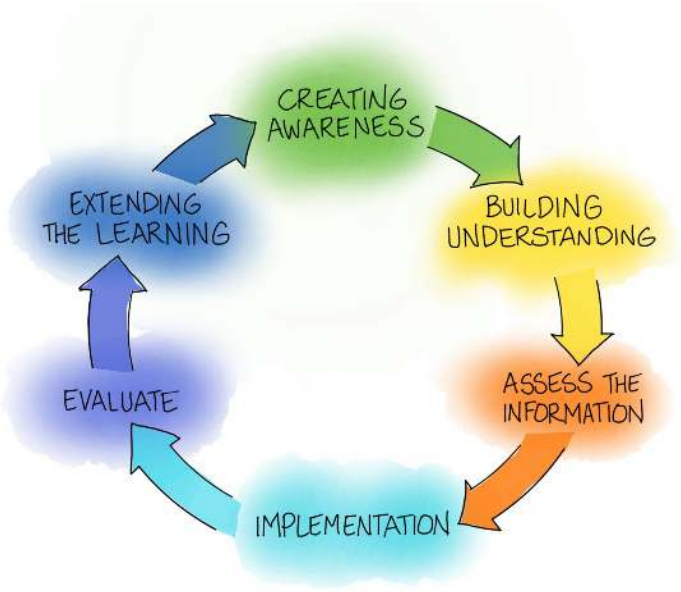
Your Call to Reflect

What stage would you say you are at in your career? What can you do to support your development to the next stage? What can others do to support you?

Professional Development Cycle

Whether you are new to education or have been working with children and families for many years, all educators go through the same cycle for professional development. This 6-part process includes:

1. Creating Awareness – what do you want to know more about? Where can you go to get training or information?
2. Building Understanding – expand your knowledge of the topic you are interested in and learn what the big ideas are.
3. Assess the Information – is this something that will help you in your practice? How will you implement it? What supports or resource might you need?
4. Implementation – plan, prepare and implement the new knowledge. Practice, refine, and practice some more.
5. Evaluate – Did your learning have a positive impact? Is there more information you need? Will you integrate the new learning into your habits and routines?
6. Extending the Learning – What else do you want to know about the topic? Are there other resources available? How can you further increase your knowledge? (See create awareness)



Successful ECCE professionals engage in a cycle of reflective practice that increases their awareness and continues their development. This development cycle can be seen in all career stages except Survival. The reason? Because when you are in survival mode you are unable to learn and retain new information. Your brain is quickly evaluating and deciding on the issue or problem it is currently facing.

Reflective Practice & Professional Development

Reflective practice and professional development go hand in hand! Reflective practices are when you think back on how a particular project, action, task, or day went and you identify what went well and what you might want to do differently in the future. Reflective actions can include:

- Taking time each day to reflect on something that worked really well or not so well.
- Sharing your experiences with others in the field.
- Keeping a journal or log of best practices in your classroom as well as challenges.
- Determining what you could have done differently.
- Seeking out a mentor or coach to help you sort through your reflections and identify areas for continued growth

Your Call to Reflect

Reflect on something that is going well for you right now. What evidence supports your thought that it is going well? How is this having a positive impact? What steps can you take to act with intention to continue success?

Responsibility for Learning

No matter how long you have worked in ECE or what your role may be in the classroom or program, as a professional you have a responsibility to ensure that you have the education needed to perform your job in the best way possible. This means participating in professional development that prepares you for the position you are or will be in. Engaging in ongoing professional development continues your education about topics relevant to your work with children and families.



Ongoing Professional Development

- Ensures you stay current with the latest research.
- Provides you with opportunities to create awareness about what you don't know.
- Assists you in achieving your career goals.
- Engages you with others in the field.
- Provides you with opportunities to learn and explore diverse topics, perspectives, and contexts.

Professional Development of Others

Your leadership role may involve supporting the professional development of someone else. From creating individual professional development plans to providing professional development for groups, there are different methods for supporting others' ongoing professional development.

The following are the most common forms of professional development:

Training is a learning experience specific to a topic and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a subject matter expert with adult learning knowledge and skills.

Technical Assistance (TA) is the targeted and customized support by a subject matter expert to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by professionals.

Mentoring is a relationship-based process between people in similar professional roles, the mentor, provides guidance and example to the less-experienced mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's professional capacity, resulting in greater effectiveness.

Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills. Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional skills and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group.

Professional Development Advising) is a process through which an advisor offers information, guidance, and advice about professional growth, career options, and pathways.

Peer-to-Peer TA fosters the development of relationship-based learning and support communities among individuals, often in like roles. Peers have developed tools and strategies that can be shared with their colleagues.

Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD) refers to educator learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning.

Reflective Supervision is the regular collaboration between staff member and supervisor where the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the staff member are the focus of improving skills and competencies.

In conclusion, you can see there is a wide range of professional development delivery methods. Each method provides the learner with specific supports and opportunities based on a number of factors including career stage of the learner, career stage of the leader, resources, context, and type of desired outcome.

Example

Let's revisit my story from the beginning of this module. I was a new assistant in the Survival stage. While I felt confident in my abilities to "play" with children, I did not understand the full scope of my responsibilities. I also did not see myself as a professional. I was offered training as a way to increase my knowledge and understanding of how to work effectively with children. In addition, because of the stage I was in, I also benefited from Job-embedded Professional Development. After the training, my lead teacher offered me guidance and opportunities to try my new skills. She gave me feedback when I attempted to lead circle time (it did not go well the first dozen times) and she provided me with coaching to understand the developmental stages of children.

As a leader, you will need to evaluate these factors to determine the best method for delivering learning for individual staff members as well as the team as a whole. While ongoing professional development hours are often a requirement for licensure or quality standards, they are not the only method for increasing knowledge and competency of staff.

Remember, the best methods for ensuring staff increase their skills/competencies through professional development is to work collaboratively for a mix of modalities that allow for knowledge transfer, practice, feedback, and behavior change. Learning needs to be supported on a regular basis and should become a regular part of your organization's culture. As a professional, it is up to you to continue your professional growth and development as you move through the stages of your career. Learning can be an ongoing journey full of joy and discovery that invigorates and increases the quality of your daily practice.

Resources

- (NAEYC) https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/glossarytraining_ta.pdf

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13.3: Professional Development Plan

What is a Professional Development Plan?

As an early childhood educator, it is important that you have a **Professional Development Plan** (PDP). Your **PDP** is a personal document that outlines your goals for yourself as an early childhood educator. Your goals are going to be based on your interests and experiences in the field; your **PDP** may include specific types of workshops that you want to participate in, furthering your post-secondary education, volunteering, or working with community partners to improve the life of the children and the families that you work with, to name a few. You may want to include advice and suggestions from your director or colleagues if you are unsure where you want to start.

A **PDP** will outline your professional goals, and the steps you need to take to achieve those goals, and include a list of resources you will need, and timelines for achieving each goal. As you progress through the steps of your goals or your career path changes, your **PDP** should be adjusted to reflect where you are at and what you want to achieve. No two **PDP**s will be the same; two people may have the same goal however their plan for achieving that goal and when they want to achieve that goal will vary based on their support systems, their commitments to family or community, and other life events.

Creating a Professional Development Plan

When creating goals for your **PDP** you want to use the **SMART** goal method you want your goals to be: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely. By using the smart method, you will break a large goal down into smaller pieces that are easier to achieve and help maintain your motivation as you work towards larger goals.



Figure **13.3.1**: SMART Goals image by Dungdm93 via Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY License.

There are many formats that a **PDP** may take some may choose a formal **PDP** while others may choose a more informal method of writing down their SMART goals. The goals you set in your **PDP** do not all need to be significant long-term goals; it is important to have a variety of career goals that fall into the short-term (can be completed within one year) or long-term (will take one to five years to complete) timeframes.

References

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Banton, C. (2022, April 11). *How to build a professional development plan for your employees.* Placement Holdings. https://www.placement.com/learn/build-a-professional-development-plan

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13.4: Teaching Statements

What is a Teaching Statement?

A Teaching Statement is a purposeful and reflective essay about the author's teaching beliefs and practices. It is an individual narrative that includes not only one's beliefs about the teaching and learning process, but also concrete examples of the ways in which he or she enacts these beliefs in the classroom. At its best, a Teaching Statement gives a clear and unique portrait of the author as a teacher, avoiding generic or empty philosophical statements about teaching.

What Purposes does the Teaching Statement Serve?

The Teaching Statement can be used for personal, professional, or pedagogical purposes. While Teaching Statements are becoming an increasingly important part of the hiring and tenure processes, they are also effective exercises in helping one clearly and coherently conceptualize his or her approaches to and experiences of teaching and learning. As Nancy Van Note Chism, Professor Emerita of Education at IUPUI observes, "The act of taking time to consider one's goals, actions, and vision provides an opportunity for development that can be personally and professionally enriching. Reviewing and revising former statements of teaching philosophy can help teachers to reflect on their growth and renew their dedication to the goals and values that they hold."

What does a Teaching Statement Include?

A Teaching Statement can address any or all of the following:

- Your conception of how learning occurs
- A description of how your teaching facilitates student learning
- A reflection of why you teach the way you do
- The goals you have for yourself and for your students
- How your teaching enacts your beliefs and goals
- What, for you, constitutes evidence of student learning
- The ways in which you create an inclusive learning environment
- Your interests in new techniques, activities, and types of learning

> *"If at all possible, your statement should enable the reader to imagine you in the classroom, teaching. You want to include sufficient information for picturing not only you in the process of teaching, but also your class in the process of learning."*
>
> *– Helen G. Grundman, Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement*

General Guidelines

- Make your Teaching Statement **brief** and **well written**. While Teaching Statements are probably longer at the tenure level (i.e. 3-5 pages or more), for hiring purposes they are typically **1-2 pages** in length.
- Use **narrative, first-person** approach. This allows the Teaching Statement to be both personal and reflective.
- Be **sincere** and unique. Avoid clichés, especially ones about how much passion you have for teaching.
- Make it **specific** rather than abstract. Ground your ideas in **1-2 concrete examples**, whether experienced or anticipated. This will help the reader to better visualize you in the classroom.
- Be **discipline specific**. Do not ignore your research. Explain how you advance your field through teaching.
- **Avoid jargon** and technical terms, as they can be off-putting to some readers. Try not to simply repeat what is in your CV. Teaching Statements are not exhaustive documents and should be used to complement other materials for the hiring or tenure processes.
- Be **humble**. Mention students in an enthusiastic, not condescending way, and illustrate your willingness to learn from your students and colleagues.
- **Revise.** Teaching is an evolving, reflective process, and Teaching Statements can be adapted and changed as necessary.

Reflection Questions to Help You Get Started:*

- Why do you teach the way you do?
- What should students expect of you as a teacher?
- What is a method of teaching you rely on frequently? Why don't you use a different method?
- What do you want students to learn? How do you know your goals for students are being met?
- What should your students be able to know or do as a result of taking your class?
- How can your teaching facilitate student learning?
- How do you as a teacher create an engaging or enriching learning environment?
- What specific activities or exercises do you use to engage your students? What do you want your students to learn from these activities?
- How has your thinking about teaching changed over time? Why?

**These questions and exercises are meant to be tools to help you begin reflecting on your beliefs and ideas as a teacher. No single Teaching Statement can contain the answers to all or most of these inquiries and activities.*

Exercises to Help You Get Started:*

- The Teaching Portfolio, including a section on teaching statements, Duquesne University Center for Teaching Excellence. *This website includes **five** effective exercises to help you begin the writing process.*
- Teaching Goals Inventory, by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross and their book *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. *This "quiz" helps you to identify or create your teaching and learning goals.*

**These questions and exercises are meant to be tools to help you begin reflecting on your beliefs and ideas as a teacher. No single Teaching Statement can contain the answers to all or most of these inquiries and activities.*

Evaluating Your Teaching Statement

Writing A Statement Of Teaching Philosophy For The Academic Job Search (opens as a PDF), The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan.

This report includes a useful rubric for evaluating teaching philosophy statements. The design of the rubric was informed by experience with hundreds of teaching philosophies, as well as surveys of search committees on what they considered successful and unsuccessful components of job applicants' teaching philosophies.

Further Resources:

General Information on and Guidelines for Writing Teaching Statements ·

- Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement, Faculty and TA Development at The Ohio State University. *This site provides an in-depth guide to teaching statements, including the definition of and purposes for a teaching statement, general formatting suggestions, and a self-reflective guide to writing a teaching statement.*
- Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Iowa State University. *This document looks at four major components of a teaching statement, which have been divided into questions—specifically, to what end? By what means? To what degree? And why? Each question is sufficiently elaborated, offering a sort of scaffolding for preparing one's own teaching statement.*

Articles about Teaching Statements

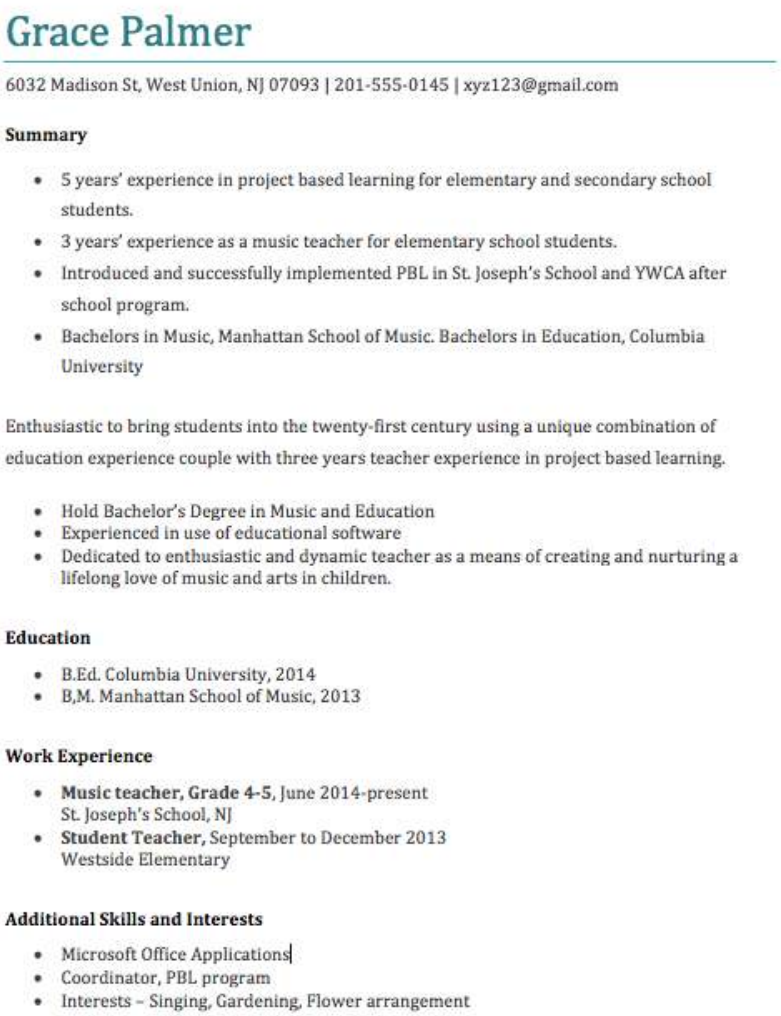
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- Montell, Gabriela (2003). How to Write a Statement of Teaching Philosophy, from the Chronicle Manage Your Career section of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Montell, Gabriela (2003). What's Your Philosophy on Teaching, and Does it Matter?, from the Chronicle Manage Your Career section of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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13.5: Creating a Resume

When you apply for a job, how will you showcase your skills, experience, and accomplishments to a prospective employer? One way is by creating a résumé. A résumé is a document that contains a summary of a person's work experience, skills, and education. In a business, the résumé is typically the first thing that a potential employer comes across regarding the applicant. It is used to screen applicants, and often followed by an interview.

Look at the following example:



Grace Palmer

6032 Madison St, West Union, NJ 07093 | 201-555-0145 | xyz123@gmail.com

Summary

- 5 years' experience in project based learning for elementary and secondary school students.
- 3 years' experience as a music teacher for elementary school students.
- Introduced and successfully implemented PBL in St. Joseph's School and YWCA after school program.
- Bachelors in Music, Manhattan School of Music. Bachelors in Education, Columbia University

Enthusiastic to bring students into the twenty-first century using a unique combination of education experience couple with three years teacher experience in project based learning.

- Hold Bachelor's Degree in Music and Education
- Experienced in use of educational software
- Dedicated to enthusiastic and dynamic teacher as a means of creating and nurturing a lifelong love of music and arts in children.

Education

- B.Ed. Columbia University, 2014
- B,M. Manhattan School of Music, 2013

Work Experience

- **Music teacher, Grade 4-5,** June 2014-present
  St. Joseph's School, NJ
- **Student Teacher,** September to December 2013
  Westside Elementary

Additional Skills and Interests

- Microsoft Office Applications
- Coordinator, PBL program
- Interests – Singing, Gardening, Flower arrangement

Figure **13.5.1**: Teacher Résumé Example

As in the example above, a Résumé created on the computer typically has:

- Personal information like name, address, contact number
- Summary of work experience
- Information about educational qualifications
- Information about current and past work experiences
- Information about additional skills and interests

- Names and contact details of references (if required)

Steps to Create a Résumé

Set Page Margins For Your Résumé

- Start the word processing software, and open a new, blank document.
- To help you size and position objects on the page, show the rulers and the document's grid. To help you move and size objects with greater precision, make sure that the snap to grid option is turned off.
- Type your first and last name. Press the Enter Key on the keyboard to move your cursor to the next line. Type your address, phone number, and email (if available) in separate lines.
- Save your work. Make sure you save your work after every couple of steps you complete.

Draw a line

- Draw a straight line across your page by selecting the "Insert" tab, selecting "Shape" and choosing the line option.
- Make your line thicker.
- Save your work.

Type Your Summary

- Press Enter once to leave some space between the line and your summary.
- Type a heading "SUMMARY." Then press Enter.
- Make the heading bold.
- In the first line, type the number of years that you have experience in your career/job. (For example, five years teaching experience)
- In the second line, type the major tasks achieved during your work experience. (For example, introduced technology aided learning.)
- In the third line, type your highest education degree. (For example, M.A. in History)
- You might want to change the amount of space between lines, indent the first line of each sentence, or even make a bulleted list of items.
- Save your work.

Type Your Education Qualification

- Press Enter on your keyboard to move the cursor to the next line.
- Type a heading "EDUCATION." Then press Enter
- Make the heading bold
- Type a list of degrees attained with the most recent one first. Mention the year of passing and the name of the institution from which you got the degree. (For example, M.A. History, Madison University, 2003)
- Save your work.

Type Your Work Experience

- Press Enter on your keyboard to move the cursor to the next line.
- Type a heading "WORK EXPERIENCE." Then press Enter.
- Make the heading bold.
- Include the following points when you type information about your work experience, such as:
- Your job title
- Start and end date
- Job responsibilities
- Company name
- Save your work.

Type Your Additional Skills and Interests

- Press Enter on your keyboard to move the cursor to the next line.
- Type a heading "ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND INTERESTS." Then press Enter.

- Make the heading bold.
- Type a list of additional skills, responsibilities, and interests. (For example, Computer skills, Coordinator of Drama club, gardening, and so forth.)
- Save your work.

Review Your Work

Look over your résumé. Make sure it has the following elements:

- Summary of work experience
- Information about your educational qualifications
- Information about your current and past work experiences
- Information about additional skills and interests

Optional: Print Your Résumé

- Preview your résumé before you print it. Set up the document so it prints sideways (landscape).
- To print your résumé, click File. Then, click Print. A Print window pops up.
- To select the printer you want to use, click the arrow in the Name or Printer list and select the printer.

  Note: You will notice that the box has a drop-down menu or a list which allows you to select one option from several printer choices. If there is a drop-down menu, just click on the down arrow and move your cursor to the option you would like to choose. If a list is displayed, scroll to the printer that you want. Highlight your choice, and then click on it.

- To select the page you want to print, place your cursor on that page and click Current Page. Or, click Pages, and then type the page number that you would like to print.

  Note: If your résumé covers only page 1, then by default, the page will be automatically selected for printing. You may skip this step and move to Step 5.

- To print more than one copy, click the up arrow in the Number of copies list.

  Note: By default, the number of copies to be printed is 1. Just click on the up arrow to print more than one copy. Click on the down arrow to print fewer copies.

- Click OK or click Print.

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13.6: Professionalism in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

- Discuss ways to remain professional when you are feeling frustrated with others or a situation.

Behaving in a professional manner is a key to success in the workplace. Maintaining that demeanor, even in stressful times, can be a challenge. What does it mean to be “professional” at work? The definition varies, but usually includes possessing knowledge and expertise, being in a positive mood, meeting your obligations accurately and on time, respecting all with whom you interact, using proper language, operating ethically, having social and emotional intelligence and maintaining an appropriate appearance. Other terms describing professional conduct in the workplace are soft skills, protocol, business etiquette and polish.

Here is a video with some good advice on professional work characteristics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vFdQY1qSlM (View transcript on YouTube).



(A link to an interactive element can be found at the bottom of this page.)

At one point or another, we have all been subjected to negative circumstances and situations in the workplace that can test the patience of even the most professional of us. We are human beings. Our professional demeanor can temporarily be dented—engaging fight or flight mode, berating yourself, and lacking clear thinking can occur. The key is to rely on our emotional intelligence to gauge our thoughts and actions during these trying times.

Here are some techniques that can help you deal with emotional reactions to negative situations at work.

1. **Acceptance**. It is normal to get mad when things go awry. Our brains are hard-wired to react in certain ways. It is best to step back and acknowledge that your emotions are normal so that you can move on to problem solving.
2. **Displacement**. While you are experiencing a range of emotions that you may not initially control, it may be best for a change of scenery. Get up from your desk, walk out of your office and take some deep breaths outside. Imagine how you would like to see yourself react while you calm down.
3. **Articulation**. Once you have spent some time thinking things through, it may be time to talk it out with the source of the issue. Remember your basic communication skills: Remember who you are communicating with and what will be effective in reaching them with your point.
4. **Improvement**. After recognizing and dealing with your feelings, it is time to understand the true source of the issue so it can be solved going forward. So you were called out on some errors made in your analysis, but you know that you were not given adequate notice to properly prepare the report and double-check it. Address this with your manager and request an appropriate process in the future to allow for more careful work.[1]

? Practice Questions

Practice Questions interactive activity

1. https://www.forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2016/06/01/5-ways-to-stay-cool-when-work-is-making-you-angry/#3520ef557865 ↵

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13.6.1: Reflecting on Your Teaching Practices

What is Reflective Practice?

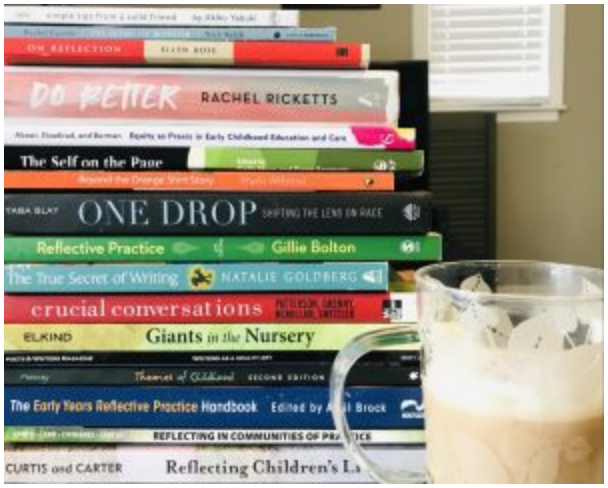


Photo by Sheryl Third CC-BY-NC-SA

> *"Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning" – Donald Schon*

Why Reflective Practice?

We all undertake activities to think about our experiences, learn from them and develop a plan for what we will do or continue to do. Can you think of a time when you came home at the end of a week where everything had gone wrong? Or maybe when everything had gone well? What are your next steps?. Are you able to answer the question "why am I doing what I am doing?" In order to continue to develop a reflective practice within our workplace with colleagues, children and families we need to examine and understand the reasons for our reactions, our feelings and our interactions with others, which in turn leads us to becoming a reflective practitioner.

Reflective practice is something which has developed across many disciplines such as teaching, to learn from our experiences. There was a time when reflective practice would have been considered an optional skill or a desired disposition but over the past few years, reflective practice is no longer considered an optional skill but a required disposition.

Reflective Practice has been defined by many including Bolton[1], Moon[2], Rogers[3] and Schön[4]. Reflective Practice is a systematic rigorous self-directed meaning-making process where a person moves from one experience to another through the development of insights and practice with the intention of coming to a deeper understanding of one's personal values and intellectual growth. Schön suggests that, in practice, reflection often begins when a routine response produces a surprise or an unexpected outcome. The surprise gets our attention, which may begin a process of reflection. Reflective practice is "a dialogue of thinking and doing through which one becomes more skillful".[5]

What is Reflective Practice?

An approach used by educators to analyze and think critically about their professional practice with the intention to better understand and improve their practice. Reflective practice is thoughtful, action-oriented and often, a collaborative effort. Educators use reflective practice to plan, evaluate their strengths and challenges, make decisions and create change, if necessary. Self-reflection, critical reflection and collaborative inquiry are all important elements of reflective practice.[6]

Although a definition of reflective practice has been included this is only one part of the reflective process.

Reflection is a very personal skill or disposition and different people will define it in different ways. It is important to remember that there is no one 'correct' way of defining what reflection is or how it should be done as a lot of this will depend on your own personal circumstances and work environment. For this reason this resource will explore elements of reflective practice that will help the practitioner develop their own practice. In describing reflective practice, I have interchangeably referred to it as a skill and

/ or a disposition . This is related to the current literature and discourse that suggests reflection is not a natural skill but rather a way of being or disposition . It involves an evaluation of our ethics, values and feelings around experiences.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

Let's look at some of the reasons reflective practice may be challenging. In exploring challenges you will be able to consider possible solutions to becoming more reflective.

For most of us, the # 1 challenge is finding the TIME or right time.

Whether you are studying, working or both it can be hard to find time to complete your existing to-do list so why add on more things? Doing intentional reflection takes time and as Ellen Rose (2013) suggests it is a form of deep thought, an opportunity to slow down that allows for original thought, perspective and insights to emerge. Anyone in education knows time is always at a premium. Having said that, we are often unconsciously evaluating things and so the goal here is to be more intentional in analyzing your pedagogical practice which requires the time to do so.

What if the organizational culture and environment doesn't support reflection?

Not everyone works in an environment which is open to the idea of being reflective – since it can be difficult to cultivate. If those in charge don't see reflective practice as a valuable activity , it can be hard to really cultivate a practice. If you believe reflection is a mind-set , it may require a specific place, or time to initially reflect and it may take some trial and error to find that perfect fit for you. Rose[8] also points out the decline in reflection may be due to the way we are consuming information. We consume small chunks or nuggets of information on social media and we move from one topic to another with little time to digest the information let alone reflect on what we're reading, hearing or thinking.

Finally, do I have the skills, motivation and disposition needed?

For many people who are unfamiliar with reflection it can seem a bit challenging, especially if they are looking for a recipe, a specific approach or checklist to follow. As described earlier, a lack of time and support can influence your ability to reflect. At this point we can examine whether reflection is a skill or disposition. Being reflective does take a certain level of insight which can for some be uncomfortable, especially if you are new to reflection. Seeing reflection as a disposition does not eliminate the possibility of you needing a certain level of practice to develop into a reflective practitioner, but knowing what it takes is helpful. What is needed is time to slow down, to be curious, motivation to improve, and the desire to know why you do what you do are some essential mind-sets if you hope to overcome any of the challenges and wish to lean into becoming a reflective practitioner.



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SECTION OVERVIEW

13.7: Professional Practice and the Critical Reflective Process

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Utilize critical reflection related to current professional practice.

13.7.1: The Critical Reflective Process

13.7.2: Thinking with a Pedagogical Friend or Collaborative Group

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13.7.1: The Critical Reflective Process



Photo by Nastuh Abootalebi, Unsplash License

> *"Reflection is turning a topic over in various aspects and in various lights so that nothing significant about it shall be overlooked — almost as one might turn a stone over to see what its hidden side is like or what is covered by it."*
>
> *– John Dewey (1910)*

A Taxonomy of Reflection – The Reflective School by Peter Pappas

Review this presentation by Peter Pappas on a Taxonomy of Reflection

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13.7.2: Thinking with a Pedagogical Friend or Collaborative Group



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Writing Activity

Instructions:

Repeating the process from 5.3, but this time with a friend or colleague. Choose one of the provocations below and one or more of the writing prompts and practice writing and thinking with your community of practice.

Provocations:

Take a look at one or more of the following:

Land as Teacher – Meeting at the Edge of the Bush

In this 8:17 video, the viewer hears Hopi Martin explain Land as Teacher

"Now Playing" Teaser

In this 9-minute video, the viewer will examine why play is valuable to all of us

Mindful Reflection with Dr Leigh Burrows – Edufolios

In this 23-minute podcast, the listener will explore how mindful reflection can lead to hearing your authentic voice

Louie Schwartzberg: Nature. Beauty. Gratitude. | TED Talk

In this 9-minute video, Loui,e through his stunning photographs and word,s has us consider gratefulness

Thinking About Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Impacts

This article by Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D. and David R. Williams, Ph.D., explore the racial disparities of the impact of COVID-19

Reflective Practice Building a Culturally [PDF]

This 18-page research paper explores a culturally responsive pedagogical framework

Blog | Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (blog-choose one post that resonates with you)

May I recommend What is Pedagogy? as a place to start

Early Years Study 4 | voicEd (podcasts-choose one)

Each podcast is worth listening to

Writing Prompts:

1. What do you notice about the child/ren? Their face, their demeanour, their competence. What captures your attention from viewing the photo, video or reading the article? How do your ideas differ from others?
2. How do you feel when you are looking at the photo, watching the video or reading? Compare your thoughts with one other person or a small group
3. What questions do you have about the content, considering the perspective of the child, their family, and desired learning outcomes?
4. What delights you as you examine the material, and how is this response related to your own values and background? Why is considering what touches your heart important to your practice as an educator?

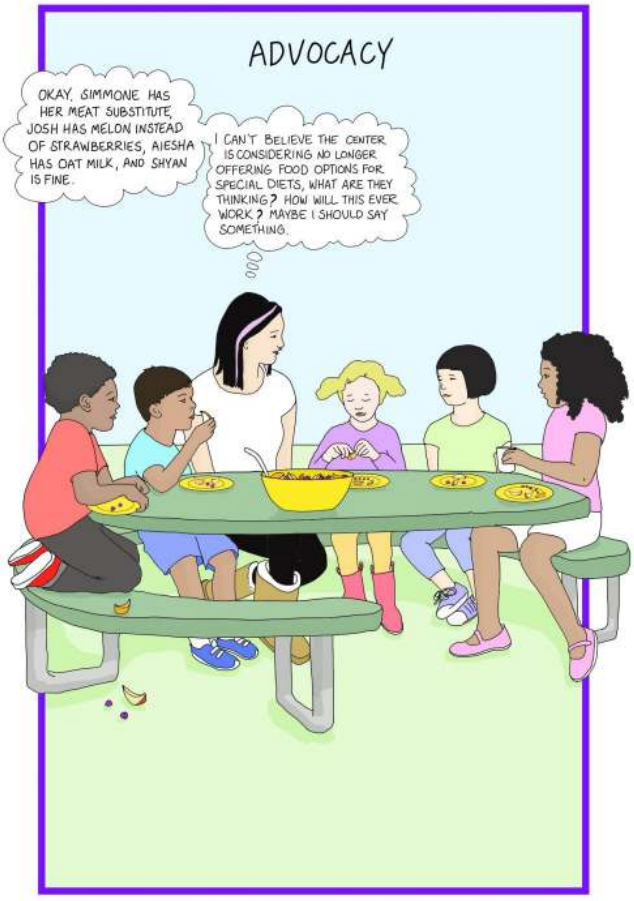
**Writing prompts adapted from A Thinking Lens for Reflective Teaching[PDF] by Deb Curtis & Margie Carter, in collaboration with Ann Pelo in Learning Together with Young Children, used under fair dealing for educational purposes.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Advocacy- Embracing the Work You are Already Doing and Taking it Further



Learning Objectives

- Objective 1: Describe role of an Advocate.
- Objective 2: Articulate the role of Advocacy in Early Childhood Care & Education (ECE).
- Objective 3: Identify the elements of culture, bias, and beliefs that need to be considered when creating an Advocacy Plan.
- Objective 4: Design an Advocacy Plan for an issue or topic in ECE.

What does it mean to be an advocate?

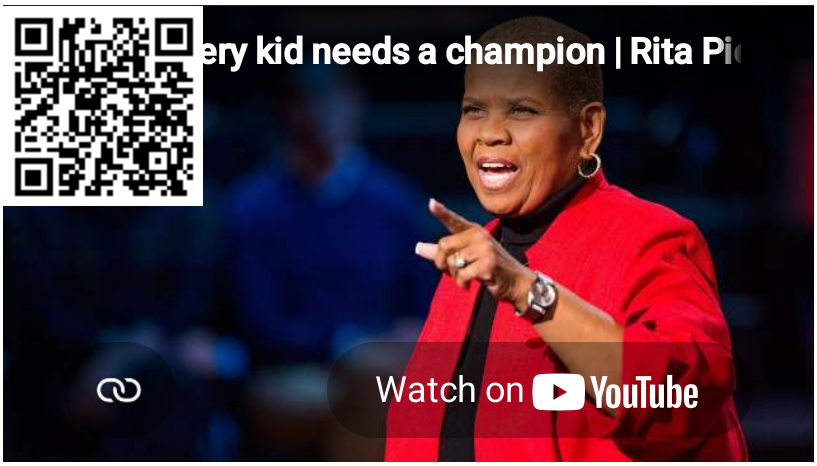
Simply defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, an advocate is “someone who publicly supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group.” The role of an advocate in early childhood care and education is to support or promote the interests of children, families, and community.

As an early childhood care and education (ECE) professional you are in a unique and powerful position in influencing the lives of children and families. You are also in a unique and powerful position in understanding the issues that affect many families and children. You see the day-to-day struggles that families face, the barriers that keep children for succeeding to their full potential,

and the missteps of policy creation that hold families back. You are an expert on these issues. Your thoughts, experiences and ideas are valuable, and your voice needs to be heard.

Don't believe me? Then watch the two following YouTube videos. The first is a TedTalk titled "Every Kid needs a Champion" given by Rita Pierson. Ms. Pierson passed away in 2013 but her message is still just as important today.

Every Kid needs a Champion



The second is a TedxPortland talk titled "The Power of Advocacy" given by Xiomara Torres, a Multnomah County judge who shares her journey which began with just one person who believed in her and stood beside her when she was just a child.

The Power of Advocacy

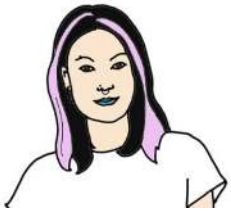


These videos show the positive power that one single person can have over the life of a child or an entire group of children. You can be that person—in fact, you probably already are.

The Big A and Little a of Advocacy

What comes to mind when you hear the word Advocacy? Does it make you think about sticking your foot in doors to keep them open? Protesting in the street? Standing in a courtroom, board meeting, or other stakeholder gathering to make your case known and speak your mind? How do these scenarios make you feel? Are you palms sweaty, your heart racing, or your temperature rising?

If so, you are not alone. Many people, especially those of us working in early childhood care and education, feel uncomfortable in situations in which we put ourselves out there or even considering putting ourselves out there.



When I think about advocacy in early childhood care and education, I like to think about “little a” advocacy and “Big A” advocacy. Advocacy can take many forms. It can be the heroic big-impact actions that we see in the movies and on television. Such as participating or planning and leading a protest about an issue that you care about, meeting with policy creators, or presenting at board meetings. The Big A’s are the thoughts many people have about advocacy that can make palms sweat and hearts race.

However, there is also the equally powerful “little a” advocacy. Little a advocacy consists of the actions you choose to do for children and their families every day. Such as speaking your mind about what you know, from your experiences and/or education in early childhood. This may be when:

- You partner with a family about the best way to support their child as they learn to use a toilet.
- When you talk to your program director or supervisor about a vegetarian option for families who do not eat meat.
- Perhaps you have questioned a policy or procedure that does not align with what you know to be culturally responsive best practice for the people who live in the community.

Each of these, along with many more, are examples of how you are already an advocate.

You may not have realized that you were an advocate in these situations. You might, even now, be thinking, “That isn’t advocacy, that is just doing my job.” Well, yes, it is part of your job. Part of your job in working with children is, in fact, the advocacy in which you are already taking action. This is true no matter what position of power you hold in your classroom, in the program where you work, or your participation in early childhood associations. You are already an advocate for children.

The fact that you are an advocate may feel uncomfortable to you, or perhaps you know you are an advocate but want to take your work forward to the next level. Perhaps you want to do more, and maybe feel a bit guilty for not being more involved, or you might just not know where to start. Maybe you have found yourself thinking “someone should do something about this situation” and wondering if that someone should be you.

No matter where you are in the advocacy part of your leadership journey, this module was created to support and empower you in your advocacy work and to help you organize a sustainable strategy for performing actions of advocacy that fuel your passions and keep you from feeling overwhelmed or burnt out.

✔ Your Call to Reflect

To take the first step, let’s do a reflection about the advocacy work you are already doing. Reflection is a key component to being an effective leader. Your ability to reflect on your experiences and beliefs has a direct effect on your capability to learn from these experiences and grow.

Throughout this module, you will be called to reflect on your experiences. Plan to spend 10-15 minutes on each reflection. Clear your mind of any distractions. Read the reflection prompt through to the end. Depending on your learning style, you can write, web, draw, or do any other means of expression for your reflection.

Think about a time when you felt the need to stand up for another person or idea. What was the issue? Why was it important to you? What steps, if any, did you take to prepare yourself? How did you do it? What was the end result? How did you feel before, during, and after the situation? Would you classify this as Big A advocacy or little a advocacy?

If you did not do anything, what were the reasons at the time that made you make that decision? If faced with a similar situation today, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?

Connecting your identities in advocacy. Why your voice matters in early childhood policy creation.

For most early childhood care and education professionals, our comfort and natural tendencies may be in little a advocacy. Those things we do each and every day that make a positive change in the lives of children and families. Your role as an ECE professional gives you a unique insight to the challenges being faced by teachers, children, and families in your community that make it necessary for you to step into the Big A advocacy role. Guyon, (2019) writes:

> The field of early childhood education is complex and varied. From outside of the tangled web of home based, commercial, corporate, and publicly funded early childhood education and care programs, it can seem chaotic, but it is within this complexity that we find the uniqueness of early childhood education. Not every early childhood education program works for every family in all communities. Many early childhood education programs offer unique aspects that support the children and families they serve, focusing on the ever-changing needs and rights of the community around them (p. 117).

This is why it is so important for you, no matter what your role is in the classroom or early childhood program, to see yourself as a leader and an advocate for the children and families in your community. You have relationships and an understanding of the children and families in your program that no one else can have. You know what works and you know what does not work. You have had times in your career when decision makers have got it completely wrong, and you have had to find ways in which to work around policy and required practice that does not support the children in the classroom.

> Stop for a moment and take a deep breath or two. Re-read this paragraph and let it sink into your heart. Do you believe these sentences to be true for you? If not, can you say why?

Let me share a short, yet true, story. While working at a very large early childhood program, I was attending a professional development in-service day with my colleagues. During one of the sessions, the presenter, who was a supervisor in the program, was sharing the different Boardmaker® tools that were available to support children's language development, and encouraging us to share resources if needed. During this presentation, he declared that all Boardmaker® tools should be laminated and have Velcro on the back so we could hang them where needed. In this declaration he stated, "I am just going to make an executive policy that the fuzzy side of the Velcro goes on the back of the laminated tools." Now, if you have ever worked in an early childhood care and education program, you are rolling your eyes as much as we were. Why? Because you know that felt boards, and the back of early childhood furniture are soft. Which means that for items to stick to them, they need the scratchy side of the Velcro stuck to the back.

This was not a huge issue, and after a week of having to peel off soft Velcro to re-stick scratchy Velcro someone finally spoke to him about his decision. However, it does show how policy and practice decisions can be easily made in ways that do not support the actual work we do. Nevertheless, it demonstrates why it is so important for each person working in a classroom to have a say in the policy that informs their practice.

✔ Your Call to Reflect

You may have noticed in the story above that it took a week before someone advocated on the behalf of the teachers and spoke up to the supervisor about their Velcro decision. Why do you think no one spoke up during the in-service session? What aspects might have been in play that gave someone the opportunity or the confidence to speak up to the supervisor? In a similar situation, would you feel comfortable speaking up to your own supervisor? Why or why not? What would the conditions need to be for you to be comfortable to speak up? What do you think would be the results of your advocacy?

At this point, you may have connected to this story and are seeing the ways in which you are doing little a advocacy every day. You may also be thinking that Big A advocacy is too scary, too hard, or maybe you feel you are in a unique situation that prevents you from doing more than the tasks assigned to you in your role or job. This can be understandable, and although both Big A and little a advocacy require that you take a chance, Big A advocacy is on a much larger scale. Taking chances on a larger stage can be scary:

- What if you make someone mad?
- What if you are wrong?
- Or even worse, what if you are right and expected to take the lead?

Participating in Big A advocacy does not have to feel scary or isolating. If we rethink our ideas about what Big A advocacy really is, can be, or how it is implemented, what changes could we make collectively? How might your role in Big A advocacy look if you were involved with a group of people rather than just being on your own?

Rethinking our idea of Big A advocacy—Collective Advocacy

> *"It's up to each of us to create a better world for our children."*
>
> *—Dr. Benjamin Spock*

Collective advocacy allows a group of people, and the wider community with shared interests, to represent their views, preferences, and experiences. A collective voice can be more powerful than a single voice and can help policy makers, strategic planners, and service providers know what is working well, where gaps are, and how best to target resources. Being part of a collective advocacy group can help to reduce an individual's sense of isolation when raising a difficult issue.

Collective advocacy rethinks the way advocacy can look in ECE. Instead of the traditional idea of funders, policy makers, and decision makers creating policy to be implemented into ECE programs and classrooms, Collective advocacy is a process of creating and connecting individuals and groups in the community that share common needs and concerns to learn from each other. In collective advocacy, these individuals and groups work together towards making positive long-lasting change.

Collective advocacy empowers a group of people to share their views, ideas, and experiences about shared interests. It offers opportunities for the voices and stakeholders who are often not at the table to be heard. It creates a platform in which all perspectives are considered, and a deeper sense of understanding is obtained. Collective advocacy can allow individuals who may be unsure or uncomfortable speaking up on their own a community of support in which to address an issue. In collective advocacy, leadership and decision making are shared by all.

Traditional advocacy is what most people know and see—think about figures in history who have led big change or called attention to big issues, such as Rosa Parks, Malala Yousafzai, and David Hogg. Traditional advocacy is led by a few and followed by many with those at the top making the decisions. It can be dependent on leadership and dissolve quickly when leadership falters or changes.

Traditional Advocacy vs Collective Advocacy

> *"Listening requires that you quiet your own experience to make room for another's." — Zikiea Gardner*

The table below serves as a quick reference to the differences of what might be seen as traditional advocacy and collective advocacy.

	Traditional Advocacy	Collective Advocacy
Structure	Charismatic Leader(s)	Stakeholders are at equal levels of power.
Dec. Making	Executive Committee / Leadership	Decision making involves working through problems, sharing ideas, & decision making with the community.
Assumptions	Leaders know best. Force/power makes change	Family & community engagement will create lasting change
Beliefs	Working for change to a community	Working with families & community for lasting change

Let us look at each of the elements of traditional and collective advocacy in turn:

Structure:

- Traditional advocacy structure usually has one or a few charismatic leaders at the top. They are the ones who begin the idea, set the goal, and have some sort of plan about what steps to take to get their idea out to others to make a change. They can get people fired up and their voices amplify their cause and get their ideas out.
- In collective advocacy structures, a number of people connect over an issue or an idea. They meet with each other to create a set of goals and a plan in which to move forward. In collective advocacy structures, many people take on many different leadership roles to amplify their cause and get their ideas out.

Decision Making:

- In traditional advocacy, decisions are made by the one or few charismatic leaders at the top. It is their idea, their goals, and their plans that others follow. Other members of the advocacy project may contribute ideas or thoughts, but ultimately the end decision falls on the shoulders of the leader, or on a larger stage, with an executive committee.
- In collective advocacy, decision making is a process of understanding and working through problems, sharing ideas, and involving the community affected in the decision-making process.

Assumptions:

- With traditional advocacy, it is assumed that the leaders know what is best for the community. Their perspectives, ideas, goals, and plans lead the force for change.
- With collective advocacy, the assumption is that all voices and perspectives will be heard to create ideas, goals, and plans that engage the community and make for lasting change.

Beliefs:

- In traditional advocacy models, change is being made for a community to support the community in a beneficial way.
- In collective advocacy models, change is being made with the community to better understand the needs and desires of the community and help the community accomplish their goals.

How Traditional & Collective Advocacy can look in ECE:

To consider how traditional and collective advocacy can play out in ECE, let us take a real-life issue that comes up in most ECE programs: special diets and food allergies.

Scenario

The program in which you work provides two snacks and a lunch for the children each day as part of the tuition families pay. There is a strict policy that children cannot bring food into the classroom from home. You have 20 children in your classroom with the following allergies and/or special diets:

- 3 children who are allergic to dairy
- 2 children who are gluten free
- 1 child that is vegan
- 1 child that is vegetarian
- 1 child that is allergic to melon
- 12 children who have no food allergies or special diets

Currently, your program caters to each child's dietary needs. However, doing so means following almost 50 different diet plans and has become too expensive to maintain. The program needs to find a way in which to support all children but keep costs down. The stakeholders in this decision are parents, children, administration/management, and teachers, each with their own ideas and wanting a voice of how to make this work. How would the decision-making process look using a traditional advocacy model?

	Traditional Advocacy	What it looks like:
Structure	A parent whose child has special dietary needs would advocate to meet with the director. (For this scenario let's say the family practices a vegetarian lifestyle.)	In this meeting the parent voices their beliefs about being a vegetarian and why having a vegetarian option is essential. The director listens and expresses the cost situation of the center to the parent. The director might extend an invitation to the parent to meet with the executive committee to be part of the decision making process.
Decision Making	The parent makes a suggestion to the executive committee, gives a strong argument in how the suggestion meets the needs of the center, and the suggestion is moved forward as the proposed change.	The suggestion is that all the food offered could be vegetarian. The parent offers to work with the committee to create well balanced vegetarian menus. The executive committee is excited about what seems like an easy solution and passes the suggestion.
Assumptions	It is assumed that the advocating parent's perspective is the only concern about the menu changes.	Everyone in the meeting thinks, "Yay! That was so much easier that we thought it would be!"
Beliefs	Decision makers believe that if other stakeholders cared, they would have said so.	"There will be no issues with the menu changes."
Likely Consequences	Not all of the needs of the community are heard and/or addressed. Many stakeholders are left out of the decision making process and do not feel heard.	The parents of children who are vegan, or have other special dietary needs and/or allergies are angry and frustrated with the changes. Chaos reigns.

Now let's take a look at how this might play out using a Collective Advocacy approach.

	Collective Advocacy	What it looks like:
Structure	A group of parents, administration members, teachers, children, and other stakeholders meet to discuss the upcoming menu changes.	A small group or individual reaches out to the director about building a committee to discuss the reason for the menu changes. An invitation is sent to all stakeholders to be part of the solution process. This includes parents, teachers, administration members, children, and others.
Decision Making	Each group is allowed an equal opportunity to share their needs and opinions. Each is discussed, problems are addressed, and possible solutions are offered. Solutions are voted on by the group.	After much consideration and debate, it is decided that the center would offer two menus, a vegan menu and a regular menu. Parents would choose to have their child eat one menu or another. It is also decided that children with special dietary needs would be allowed to bring in substitutions for items their children could not eat (such as berries for children allergic to melon, gluten free bread for children on a gluten free diet, etc.)
Assumptions	The group as a whole is working towards a solution that will benefit all involved.	“Our work has just begun.”
Beliefs	We will do our best to make this work for everyone.	“This is a good start, but needs to be continually addressed over time to make sure we are meeting the needs of our community as it changes and grows.”
Likely Consequences	The needs of the overall community are met, although they may look different for some families than for others.	Everyone feels as if their voices were heard and that they had the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process. They know that as issues come up, they will continue to have opportunities to work with the community to address the issues and make needed changes.

Pros & Cons of Each:

- Traditional advocacy models can start quickly, spark a fire, and draw attention around an issue. Charismatic leaders inspire others to join in and traditional advocacy models can become a nationwide focus very quickly. Having a single voice directing goals and plans makes it easy for others to join even if those goals do not always align with the larger needs of the community. Involvement in traditional advocacy models can be long or short term, people who join can move in and out of their roles easily. Traditional advocacy movements can fizzle out quickly, especially if the leaders who began the movement leave or are involved in a scandal of some type, or slowly once the initial goals are met.
- Collective advocacy models can be slower to start and take more time to get going. Collective advocacy models focus on bringing many different groups and many different perspectives that are concerned about a certain issue to the table. In collective advocacy models, each voice has an equal opportunity to be heard and is equally valued. Because of this, setting goals and plans takes time, commitment, and a willingness to understand and find common ground. Collective advocacy models focus on a series of both long-term and short-term goals that work with families and the community for long-lasting change.

Your Call to Reflect

Think of a time when something was done for you that did not quite meet your needs. This can be in your professional life, such as a policy that was implemented, or your personal life, such as someone doing something for you to be kind or helpful. How did their involvement help and hinder the issue? How did it make you feel? What was your response?

Now think of a time that you were involved in the decision-making process. Again, this can be either in your professional life or your personal life. What was it like for you to be involved in the process? How did it make you feel? How did this compare and contrast to when you were not involved in the decision-making process?

> *"I raise my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard."*
>
> *—Malala Yousafzai*

Think briefly about the reflection you just did in this module about the difference between when something was done for you and when you were involved in the decision making process. Which scenario created a better result? When creating an advocacy plan it is important to remember to have a focus of advocating with, rather than advocating for. Each of us carries our own thoughts, beliefs, values, and bias. These come from our experience, our education, from our culture, and the way in which we were raised. As humans, we all look for connections and can sometimes incorrectly assume that others have the same thoughts, beliefs, values, and bias as us.

Some questions for consideration are:

- How is my positionality affecting my perspective about this issue?
- How do I make sure the perspectives of all stakeholders are represented and have the opportunity to be involved in this advocacy plan?
- How can I keep my bias from silencing other voices?
- Who do I need to contact to hear other perspectives about this idea or issue?
- What am I missing?

Moving the Work You are Already Doing and Taking it Further.

"Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me." – Fred Rogers

Most of us want to see, and be a part of, positive change in our programs and communities for a variety of reasons. Taking the first steps can be intimidating, it may be difficult to know where to start. You may be wondering:

- How do I know what is important to me?
- What if I don't know enough?
- What if people think I am a trouble-maker?
- What if I offend someone?
- What if I make it worse than it already is?

These worries are common and worthy of addressing. When you take the first steps from little a advocacy to Big A advocacy it can be helpful to identify one or two people you can rely on to help you address your concerns. This can be anyone: a co-worker, supervisor, colleague, partner, teacher, classmate, etc.

There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed in the field of ECE and it can be hard to narrow down where to hone your focus. Remember you are not alone! Many associations focused on early childhood have wonderful links and resources in which you can connect and explore different levels and types of advocacy.

ZERO TO THREE https://www.zerotothree.org/policy-and-advocacy

ZERO TO THREE Mission Statement: Our mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. At ZERO TO THREE, we envision a society that has the knowledge and will to support all infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential.

National Association for the Education of Young Children https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy

NAEYC Mission Statement: NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age eight, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Let's get started!

> *"To take a first step forward, you have to lose your balance a little."*
>
> *—3-year-old child in Reggio Emilia, Italy*

There are also some wonderful tools to help you get started on your advocacy journey. For this module, we are going to use the You Have What It Takes! Zero to Three Advocacy tool. This tool was designed by ZERO TO THREE to help early childhood care & education professionals use their abilities, skills, knowledge and experience towards advocacy.

Let's walk through this tool together.

1. The first thing you will need to do is print the Advocacy Tool. You can use the link above or you can copy the pages out of this module.

Once you have copied or printed the Advocacy Tool pages, list out the ECE issues that you are interested in working as an advocate.

Your Call to Reflect

Take 10-15 minutes to free write about your thoughts around issues in ECE. If you have never done a free write, this is a good place to start. Simply place your pen or pencil on a piece of paper and write whatever comes to mind about this subject. Here are a couple of ideas to consider:

Think about the little a advocacy you do. What are the bigger issues connected to this work? Are you aware of any state or federal policies that are related to this in your classroom?

How would you imagine early childhood education and care at it's very best? What are the aspects you would see in classrooms, programs, or in your community? What are the barriers that might get in your way of achieving this image?

Once you have finished your free write, reread it and highlight three areas that mean the most to you, Write them down in the space provided on the Advocacy Tool Form.

1. For the next step, identify the skills that you already possess that make you a strong advocate. Consider each carefully, and rate yourself honestly. Remember that this form is to help you see where your advocacy skills can be put to use. Be honest, there are no wrong answers.
2. Now, use the Matching Skills chart to illustrate how your skills connect to different advocacy strategies. Fill in your scores on the Matching Skills to Advocacy Skills Chart.

When you have completed this chart, see where your strongest skills align with the Advocacy Strategies. You may be surprised at what you see, but don't let that intimidate you, you might have advocacy skills you haven't even considered yet!

> The first time I completed this section of the Advocacy Tool, I wrote the ratings on top of the boxes, then I looked at where I saw the highest percentages. As someone who considered themselves an introvert, I was surprised to see that many of my skills aligned with public speaking (Testifying, Organizing Meetings, Recruiting Others, etc.). I reflected on this with a few of my colleagues and discovered that they fully agreed with the Advocacy Skills that I had identified in using this tool and mentioned several times that I had done each of these things in little a advocacy ways. Both the tool and the conversations helped me to see myself a bit differently than I had before.

You are now ready for your next step.

1. Build your Advocacy Plan and identify some achievable goals! Use the Advocacy Strategies that you checked off on the Matching Skills sheet. In the first column, list three of the Advocacy Strategies in which you had a high rating.

2. Next, visit the ZERO TO THREE Policy & Advocacy page. Also take a look at the NAEYC Advocacy page. Browse through the different topics and tools. What do you see that align with the three issues you identified at the beginning of this assignment available on this page that align with those issues? Do not get worried if you have to dig around a bit. You want to make sure that both the issue and plan align with what you feel is valuable and you are passionate about. In the second column, write down the first step you will take to work towards your advocacy strategy.
3. Identify your resources. You do not have to do this work alone! This section of the Advocacy Tool helps you to identify who you can collaborate with, how you can get connected, and how it will help you grow in your Big A advocacy work. Let's break this section down to the three columns.



- **Individual or Organization**—Who do you know is already involved in this work? Who do you know is passionate about this issue? Consider different professional development sessions you have had around the issue, who led those sessions? Think about your break room or playground conversations: who has expressed similar hopes or frustrations? What organizations are leading this work?
- **Connecting to Resources**—How are you going to connect with the individuals and/or organizations that you have identified? For individuals, an email or phone call is a great place to start, followed by an invitation to meet either in person or virtually. Organizations often have a plethora of resources on their websites and connecting to organizations can be as simple as visiting the website and becoming a member or joining the email list.
- **How this resource can support your advocacy plan**—It is very easy to get lost in a conversation or go down the rabbit hole of information on a website and lose your focus on your original intent. Be sure to complete this third and final column of the Advocacy Tool and consider it as the beginning of your road map on your advocacy journey.

CONGRATULATIONS! You now have an Advocacy Plan!

Your Call to Reflect

Even with your plan, you may be still feeling a little nervous or not quite sure where to start. To learn how to begin your advocacy journey, watch the Tedx talk by Joseph R. Campbell as he describes five steps you can take to become an advocate.

Five Steps to becoming an Advocate



As you listen to his talk, write down how you might see yourself following these steps to support your own advocacy plan.

- Lock down your motivation—what is your sense of purpose?
- Establish role models or become one yourself—who else has done similar work?
- Understand your historical context and the histories of people around you—how do your intentions align with these contexts?
- Focus all those benefits, beliefs, and observations to push a way forward—are you looking at all the different perspectives? Who else do you need to connect with to learn more?
- Find a way forward—how can you take a step in, take a few steps back, and then step up?

Conclusion

As an early childhood care and education professional, you are in a unique and powerful position in influencing the lives of children and families. The work you do each day supports children in becoming healthy and happy adults. The way you speak to and speak about children can change the way families understand and support their children.

You are also in a unique and powerful position in understanding the issues that affect many families and children. You see the day-to-day struggles that families face, the barriers that keep children for succeeding to their full potential, and the missteps of policy creation that hold families back. You are an expert on these issues.

Embracing your role as both a “little a” advocate and a “Big A” advocate is an important part of the work you do with children and families. Hopefully, this module has provided you with tools, support, and motivation to continue and expand on this work. You do not have to do this alone. Partner with other ECE professionals in your program or center, connect with associations that support children and families, and find ways in which you can listen to the perspectives of the children and families in your care and invite them to get involved.

Most importantly, remember that your thoughts, experiences, and ideas are valuable, and your voice needs to be heard.

Citations

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14.1: Advocacy for High Quality Early Education

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SECTION OVERVIEW

14.1: Advocacy for High Quality Early Education

> *It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men. —Frederick Douglass*

I encourage you to be a Champion for Young Children. Improving conditions for families, caregivers and communities—living wages: quality, affordable housing; paid parental leave; high-quality childcare; flex time; social inclusion and desegregation; better transit—can improve young children's chances for growing into healthy, compassionate and responsible adults. Learn about elected officials and the issues in Massachusetts by following early education news. You can join the Strategies for Children e-mail list and read their Eye on Early Education blog. Another wonderful source to support advocacy is the Raising of America website and the toolkit they provide. See:

Our elected officials need to hear many voices delivering the same, clear message at the local, state and national level. The message is that the USA needs to prioritize young children and families and the early education and care workforce. We must work together to make our voices heard.

Do you know who represents you in Congress? If you don't know find out at http://www.whoismyrepresentative.com. Send a message to your US representative and Senators either a letter, hand written note or children's artwork. Offer to be a resource for early education and care in the district.

Include an invitation to come for a visit to your program. Do this at the state level as well.

In Massachusetts, each city and town is structured according to the rules and regulation it established and may have amended over the years. Some communities may have mayor or a board of selectmen and women and some might have a town manager. And, while most cities have mayors and city councilors, not all do. There are 39 cities, 312 towns in 14 counties in the commonwealth. Click here to see more about Community Readiness.

We must close the opportunity gap and ensure that all children, regardless of their family's means or the neighborhood they grow up in, enter school on a path for success. We must continue to build upon the strong foundation by prioritizing policies and effective investments that result in positive outcomes for children.

✔ Challenge 1

Engage candidates and your community. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about an issue that you feel passionate about

Professionalism

Ethics

Challenge 2: What do you know about ethics?

Term	Definition
Code of Ethics	
Core Values	
Ethical Dilemma	
Ethical Responsibilities	
Ethics	
Morality	
Professional Ethics	
Values	

Definitions:

1. A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.
2. Behaviors that one must or must not engage in. Ethical responsibilities are clear-cut and are spelled out in the Code of Ethical Conduct (for example, early childhood educators should never share confidential information about a child or family with a person who has no legitimate need for knowing).
3. Commitments held by a profession that are consciously and knowingly embraced by its practitioners because they make a contribution to society. There is a difference between personal values and these.
4. Defines the core values of the field and provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work.
5. Peoples' views of what is good, right, and proper; their beliefs about their obligations; and their ideas about how they should behave.
6. Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and that they prize for themselves, for others, and for the world in which they live.
7. The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends and enhances the personal morality practitioners bring to their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace, and that help individuals resolve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.
8. The study of right and wrong, or duty and obligation, that involves critical reflection on morality and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimensions of relationships.

See how to check your answers in the description of the assigned article for this chapter.

What is a Code of Ethics and why is it important?

The Code of Ethics provides guidelines for responsible behavior. The Code imparts a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early education & care. The best introduction is found in the 9 minute video: *Overview of the Code of Ethical Conduct* at: http://www.naeyc.org/ecp/resources/ethics and then watch the 7-minute video: *How to Use the Code: Day-To-Day Practice in Programs for Young Children.*

Now **read** the NAEYC (2005) Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment (Position Statement) which is organized into 4 sections plus supplemental matters.

- Section I: Ethical responsibilities to children
- Section II: Ethical responsibilities to families

- Section III: Ethical responsibilities to colleagues (coworkers, employers, employees)
- Section IV: Ethical responsibilities to community and society
- Glossary
- Statement of Commitment

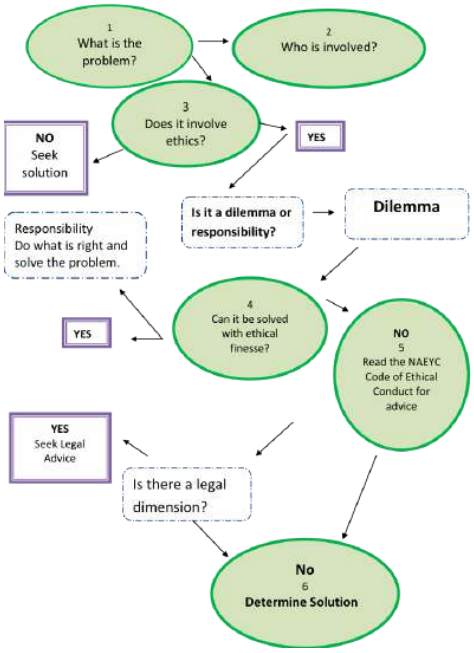
The Code allows early childhood professionals to determine if a situation is either a responsibility or a dilemma.

Key Takeaways

- **Ethical Responsibilities** Behaviors that one must or must not enact. Ethical responsibilities are clear-cut and are spelled out in the Code of Ethical Conduct (e.g., never share confidential info about a child or family…).
- **Ethical Dilemma** A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values & responsibilities.

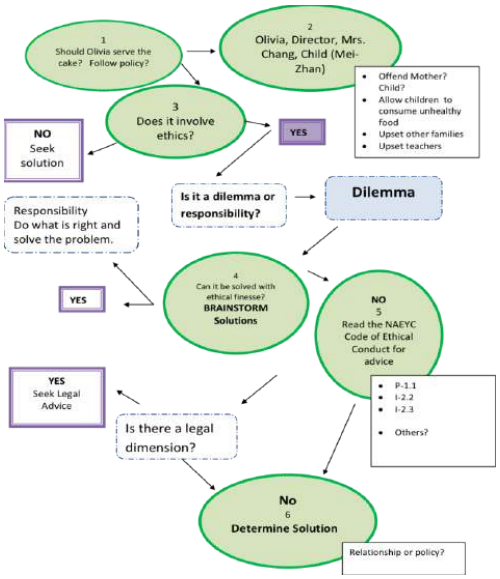
When presented with an ethical dilemma, ideally we should use **ethical finesse** to meet the needs of all involved without making a difficult decision. In other words, the goal is to create win-win situations.

Here is a flow chart to illustrate the decision making process. Now **read** Feeney, S. & Freeman, N.K. (2013, March) The Birthday Cake: Balancing Responsibilities to Children and Families *Young Children*. 96-99.



Ethical decision making chart

Here is the flow chart completed with the information from the dilemma where Olivia the director is committed to serving nutritious foods and healthy choices for children and to developing close relationships with all families. Her center does not regularly serve cookies, cake, or other foods full of sugar, fats and preservatives. The handbook states this policy including no birthday cakes allowed instead families are to send in sliced fruit, vegetables, or veggie pizza. Olivia warmly greets families & children daily. One morning, a new mother to the program, Mrs. Chang, who has been shy and speaks English as a second language, arrives with a large, elaborately decorated cake to celebrate her child's, Mei-Zhen's birthday.



Olivia's ethical decision making chart

Does Olivia follow the policy or strengthen her relationship with this mother?

Other examples of dilemmas and how to resolve them are found at:

Feeney, S. & Freeman, N.K. (2016, March) Ethical Issues Responsibilities and Dilemmas *Young Children*. 86-89.

Feeney, S. & Freeman, N.K. (2016, March) Misleading the State Inspector: The Response. *Young Children.* 68-69

Feeney, S. & Freeman, N.K. (2014, September) Reporting Classroom Behavior: Balancing Responsibilities to Children and Families. *Young Children.* 100-104

What is professional behavior?

#1 – I am showing respect for my colleagues when I

- Take responsibility for my own actions
- Avoid trying to transfer blame to others
- Refrain from comparing my unacceptable actions/behavior to that of a co-worker's
- Refrain from condemning a co-worker's life style that is different from my own
- Acknowledge their contributions to the program (be specific about the contribution and how it helps the program)
- Carry my share of the work load

#2 – I am helping to create a positive work place environment when I

- Keep my personal life/problems out of the work place
- Keep my comments to others positive rather than negative
- Share resources with co-workers
- Help a co-worker without being asked
- Plan with co-workers the program of activities for children
- Let a co-worker know in private about a concern I have about her actions
- Avoid conflict with co-worker in presence of children, other co-workers and families
- Attempt to resolve conflicts with co-worker in a confidential manner
- Involve Director as a mediator when conflict cannot be resolved by me and co-worker
- Avoid gossip about co-workers, children and families

#3 – I can feel good about my day at work if I

- Came in with a smile and leave with a smile
- Look forward to returning the next day

- Know I have focused on the children in my care
- Know that each child has felt welcomed and nurtured in my care
- Have greeted families and let them know I am happy to see them and their child
- Shared a new idea or information with a co-worker
- Heard a positive comment about something I have done that day

#4 – I am demonstrating that I am a responsible employee when I

- Am familiar with all program policies, especially personnel policies
- Am familiar with Minimum Licensing Requirements and understand my responsibility in complying with them
- Follow all program policies
- Accept verbal and written notices and consequences when I do not follow policies
- Participate in self-evaluation and evaluation by supervisor
- Can accept constructive suggestions for improvement by supervisor
- Keep confidential all information about my performance evaluations and salary
- Seek professional development opportunities

Challenge 3: My Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Directions:

- Read the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: Preamble, Core Values, and Section I. Ethical Responsibilities to Children: Ideals and Principles.
- List 3—5 very specific examples of what you do or can do to support the Principles listed.

Principle	**Examples of what I am doing or can do to support each of the principles**
P.1.1	Example: Let children know you are there to protect them; to keep them safe.
P.1.2	Example: Be available to greet children and family members as they arrive.
P.1.3	Example: Treat each family with respect.
P.1.8 P.1.9 P.1-10 P.1.11 (Consider these 4 principles together)	Example: Be familiar with signs of abuse and neglect.

Challenge 3: Ethical Dilemmas We Face

Directions:

- Read the situation and decide on ethical dilemma
- Decide on the ethical response to the situation. What should you do?
- Identify the Principle(s) that apply to the situation.

Situation #1 – When Beliefs Clash

Family photos are posted on the wall in my classroom. One photo is of a child and her two mothers. A parent tells you that you should take the photo down because she does not want her child exposed to this life style. In addition, she says that she certainly doesn't want her child to play with the child with two mothers.

Dilemma:

Ethical Response Based on Principle(s)

Situation #2 – Families are Different

At the beginning of each new school year my program requires that I include a Topic of Study about families. I usually ask children to bring in family photos and we do activities that focus on the members of a child's family. For the first time I have a child in my group whose mother is absent from the home. According to the grandmother who brings the child in each day, the mother has left the child and her three siblings with her. The grandmother does not know where the mother is or if she will ever return to her family.

Dilemma:

Ethical Response Based on Principle(s):

Situation #3 – Inclusive Classroom

The Director tells you that she has enrolled a new child in your preschool classroom and that the child has leg braces and uses a walker. You have never before had a child with a disability in your group.

Dilemma:

Ethical Response Based on Principles(s):

Challenge 5: Narrative 7: PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN ACTION

In Narrative 7: Professional Ethics In Action describe and explain using descriptive details, analysis, and clear references to *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*, **3** difficult professional decisions by educators or administrators in **observed settings**.

Explain **1** case of unethical conduct that clearly violates one or more of the ethics principles.

Then describe and explain **2** examples of ethical dilemmas, A dilemma is a situation with two possible resolutions, each of which can be morally justified. A dilemma requires a person to choose between two actions each having some benefits and some costs. In a dilemma, the needs and interests of one individual or group must give way to those of another individual or group.

Your writing should include rich descriptive details, a complete analysis, and **clear references** to NAEYC's *Code of Ethical Conduct.*

Outline

1. Example #1 (unethical conduct)
    i. Objective description in detail of the incident
    ii. Analysis
        a. Identify the problem and the people involved.
        b. Guidance from the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* based on Principle(s)

- Explain why the behavior is clearly unethical

2. Example #2 (ethical dilemma)
    i. Objective description in detail of the incident
    ii. Analysis
        a. Identify the problem and the people involved.
        b. What are possible resolutions? Who is making a decision between 2 options? What are the 2 options?

- How can you meet the needs of everyone involved without having to make a difficult decision (ethical finesse)?

1. Guidance from the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* based on Principle(s)
2. Explain how you selected the most ethically defensible course of action
3. Example #3 (ethical dilemma)
    i. Objective description in detail of the incident
    ii. Analysis

a. Identify the problem and the people involved.
b. What are possible resolutions? Who is making a decision between 2 options? What are the 2 options?

- How can you meet the needs of everyone involved without having to make a difficult decision (ethical finesse)?

1. Guidance from the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* based on Principle(s)
2. Explain how you selected the most ethically defensible course of action

Example of how you might brainstorm before writing the narrative:

"The Harsh Teacher"

Mary is a new assistant teacher sharing a toddler classroom with a lead teacher, Sam, who has been employed in the program longer. Sam snaps at the toddlers, saying "no" and "don't do that" and threatens them with "time out" if they don't do what she tells them to do. Some toddlers cry, some seem to be afraid of the teacher and some come to me for comfort.

Dilemma

- Mary is the assistant teacher
- Mary wants to be a cooperative co-worker
- Mary knows the teacher's behavior is harmful to children

Ethical Response based on Principle(s)

- She could discuss with the lead teacher her concerns about the emotional environment in the classroom (P-3A.2)
- The assistant teacher could provide examples of children's reaction to the things the lead teacher says to them (P-3A.3)
- The two of them might seek guidance in creating a more positive environment (P-3B.1)
- The assistant could ask the Director for resources (P-3C.1)
- The assistant teacher could discuss her concerns with Director if co-worker is not responsive to suggestions for improvement (P-3B.4)
- The assistant could request that the Director to come in and observe and offer suggestions (P-3C.1)

NARRATIVE 6 Example – Professional Ethics in Action

Example One: Unethical Conduct

I was outside on the playground with the toddlers. The playground floor was made from woodchips. The teachers placed the non-mobile toddlers in the woodchips and began talking to each other. I observed the toddlers that were non- mobile begin picking up woodchips and placing them in their mouths. I thought the teachers will see this and handle it but when I looked over neither teacher was paying attention to any of the children on the playground. I waited a couple of seconds then glanced at the teachers once more and still they were not paying attention. By this time one of the children had a handful of woodchips in their mouth.

The main people involved in this dilemma is myself and the teachers. The problem was the lack of supervision of the children.

Possible resolutions to this problem would be the director having a serious conversation about how the children need to be supervised always. Another solution could have been me running over and taking the woodchips out myself.

P-1.1- Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children.

I selected this as the most defensible course of action because the children's safety was at risk. The lack of supervision is dangerous for a toddler's well-being.

Example Two: Ethical Dilemma

It was the beginning of nap time and the aide was placing down the mats as I was sitting with the owner of the family child care center. The owner saw the aide moving a mat in a different spot than usual. When the owner asked her politely why she was doing the aide said rudely "because I want to move her there she distracts all the others and I'm not moving her back." The owner didn't respond to the aide. Instead she told me we should move to the kitchen so we could talk without waking the children. When we sat down the owner said "do you see the way she talks to me?" "she has no respect" "I wish I could fire her

but good help is hard to find at the moment" "She can be such a bitch sometimes". When I asked her if she ever talked to her about it the owner replied with "no I can barely stand to say two words to her plus I know it would end up in a fight".

The problem is that the owner and the aide are not communicating. Also, the owner has not addressed her problems with the aide and instead talks unkindly about the situation. The main people involved are the owner and the aide.

Possible resolutions would be having a conversation with the aide and let her know that you are the boss and being talked to rudely is not only unacceptable but unprofessional. Also, go over any other concerns you may have. Another resolution would be to actively look for someone to fill her position and then let her go.

P-3A.2- When we have concerns about the professional behavior of a co-worker, we shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

I selected this ethical course of action because this is what should have been done immediately. When having concerns about a person's professional behavior it is important you address those concerns in a respectful way and then attempt to resolve the issue because everyone should be working for the best interest of the children. Having pent up frustrations or letting the poor behaviors of both professionals happen is not good for the children to be observing.

Example Three: Ethical Dilemma

It was late in the afternoon and for the last hour of the day the children had choice time. During choice time the children could choose to play in the block area, dramatic play area or play with table toys. In the dramatic play center, there were three girls playing and one boy. The boy decided he wanted to dress up as a fairy so he put on a dress, fairy wings and dress up high heels. The girls also decided to dress up. The children were playing great together and took turns being the fairy leader. Everything was great until the boy's father stepped into the classroom for pick up. When the boys' father saw his son dressed up he yelled across the room "take that off right now!" "What did I tell you about dressing up like a girl!". The father then looked at the teacher and said "How dare you let my son dress up like a fagot!" The teacher stood frozen in place and before she could speak the father took his son by the hand and stormed out of the room saying "unbelievable".

1. The problem is that the father is upset and is using language that is inappropriate and offensive. The main people involved are the child, father and the teacher.
2. Possible resolutions would be the teacher asking the father to have a calm voice and try to use non-offensive language when an issue arises. Another possible resolution is letting the father calm down and talk to him privately the next day. You could explain to him that in the school policy it states that children are allowed to participate in all activities or something similar stated in the policy. Also, you could let him know that if there is an issue he can always talk with you privately away from the children.
3. I-1.5- To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.
4. The behavior was clearly unethical and applies to this ideal because the yelling made the children in class feel scared as well as the teacher. Also, the words that he used were offensive and could be damaging emotionally as well as cognitively.

Mandated reporting

The NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria & Guidance for Assessment includes criterion addressing child abuse and neglect. For example, criteria 10.D.03 states:

The program has a written policy for reporting child abuse and neglect as well as procedures in place that comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws. The policy includes requirements for staff to report all suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect, or both by families, staff, volunteers, or others to the appropriate local agencies. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious.

The Code of Ethics includes principles about our responsibilities for mandating reporting.

P-1.8—We shall be familiar with the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect. We shall know and follow state laws and

community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect.

P-1.9—When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, we shall report it to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When appropriate, parents or guardians will be informed that the referral will be or has been made.

P-1.10—When another person tells us of his or her suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action in order to protect the child.

P-4.7—When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/or others who can.

P-4.9—When we have evidence that an early childhood program is violating laws or regulations protecting children, we shall report the violation to appropriate authorities who can be expected to remedy the situation.

Under Massachusetts law, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency that receives all reports of suspected abuse and/or neglect of children under the age of 18. State law requires professionals whose work brings them in contact with children to notify DCF if they suspect that a child is being abused and/or neglected. DCF depends on reports from professionals and other concerned individuals to learn about children who may need protection, more than 75,000 reports are received on behalf of children each year. DCF seeks to ensure that each child has a safe, nurturing, permanent home and provides a range of services to support and strengthen families with children at risk of abuse and neglect.

✔ Challenge 6: Mandated Reporter Training

Complete the 51A Online Mandated Reporter Training: Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation. The self-paced training takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. You must proceed through the training in the order the lessons are presented.

Examining assumptions

> *The way to eradicate prejudice is to start with ourselves. We have to be role models for children. Hopefully that will make the difference.*
>
> *– Student quote*

When you challenge assumptions, you can increase your cultural competence which is about being confident in yourself and comfortable with others. The Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, (n. d.), explains the four stages in building cultural competence.

1. **Cultural knowledge** is when you know about some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another ethnic or cultural group.
2. **Cultural awareness** adds an understanding other groups and being open to the idea of changing cultural attitudes.
3. **Cultural sensitivity** is knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not assigning judgement to the differences.
4. **Cultural competence** is the action of working with many different behaviors, attitudes, and policies in cross-cultural settings to produce better outcomes.

Source: Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. (n.d.) Chapter 27. Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World see Section 7. Building Culturally Competent Organizations from the Community Tool Box website at: http://ctb.ku.edu/en

Why is it Important To Be Culturally Competent?

We live in a diverse and increasingly interconnected world. Changes in one part of the world affect people everywhere. We will likely see the composition of our workplaces and communities with more people of color and immigrants. There are many benefits to diversity, such as the access to rich resources of alternative ideas for how to do things, and the opportunity for contact with people from all cultures and nationalities. The benefits of increasing your cultural competence include:

- Increased respect and mutual understanding among those involved.

- Enhanced creativity in problem-solving through new perspectives, ideas, and strategies.
- Improved trust and cooperation.
- Assistance in overcoming the fear of mistakes, competition, or conflict because everyone is more likely to feel more comfortable in general and less likely to to look over their shoulders to be sure they are being “appropriate” in majority terms.
- Strengthened inclusion and equality.

How do I increase my cultural competence?

The Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas offers these 5 essential principles.

1. **Value diversity** means accepting and respecting differences between and within cultures. We often presume that a common culture is shared between members of racial, linguistic, and religious groups, but this may not be true. A group might share historical and geographical experiences, but individuals may share only physical appearance, language, or spiritual beliefs. Our cultural assumptions can lead us to wrong conclusions. As people move to new areas and meld with other cultures it creates a kaleidoscope of subcultures within racial groups. Gender, locale, and socioeconomic status can sometimes be more powerful than racial factors.
2. **Self-assess** your cultural knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity. Challenge your assumptions! **Watch** these short videos about bias:
    i. Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism from the New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004818663/peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism.html?playlistId=100000004821064
    ii. What Kind Of Asian Are You?
    iii. Unconscious Bias Basics:

How do these videos illustrate assumptions? Why do we prefer people like us? The problem of cultural incompetence lies in our need to learn more about others. How will you become aware of, knowledgeable about, and seek contact with people from diverse:

- Nationalities regional, or other geographical area
- Ethnic groups
- Race
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Social class
- Spiritual beliefs and practice
- Physical and mental ability
- Age
- Educational status
- Family status
- Health status
- Occupational status
- Socioeconomic status

3. **Understand the dynamics** of difference. For example, Native Americans and African Americans, among other groups, have experienced discrimination and unfair treatment from dominant cultures. Mistrust coming out of these experiences may be passed on to the next generations of these groups, but ignored within the dominant culture. Generational differences also impact working place dynamics.
4. **Institutionalize cultural knowledge**. Programs must provide professional development as well as reviewing policies for the degree of responsive to cultural diversity. Program materials should reflect positive images of all cultures.
5. **Adapt to diversity**. When you recognize, respect, and value all cultures and integrate those values into the system, culturally competent programs can meet the needs of diverse groups.

Online Resources for further reading

Brown University Training Materials: Cultural Competence and Community Studies: Concepts and Practices for Cultural Competence. The Northeast Education Partnership provides online access to PowerPoint training slides on topics in research ethics and cultural competence in environmental research. These have been created for professionals/students in environmental sciences, health, and policy; and community-based research. If you are interested in receiving an electronic copy of one the presentations, just download their Materials Request Form (found on the main Training Presentations page under "related files"), complete the form, and email it to NEEPethics@yahoo.com.

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice

The Center for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services collects and describes early childhood/early intervention resources and serves as point of exchange for users.

Culture Matters is a cross-cultural training workbook developed by the Peace Corps to help new volunteers acquire the knowledge and skills to work successfully and respectfully in other cultures.

The International & Cross-Cultural Evaluation Topical Interest Group, an organization that is affiliated with the American Evaluation Association, provides evaluators who are interested in cross-cultural issues with opportunities for professional development.

The Multicultural Pavilion offers resources and dialogue for educators, students and activists on all aspects of multicultural education.

The National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University increases the capacity of health care and mental health programs to design, implement and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems. Publications and web links available.

National Technical Assistance Center (Networks newsletter)

Ohio State University FactSheets (Working with Diverse Cultures)

Parents Helping Parents, Inc.(Indicators of Cultural Competence)

SIL International makes available "The Stranger's Eyes," an article that speaks to cultural sensitivity with questions that can be strong tools for discussion.

University of California — San Diego HR Diversity Education Program. (The Cultural Competence Model)

Some of my resources:

Invisibilia where the speakers explore the invisible forces that shape human behavior — things like ideas, beliefs, assumptions and emotions. The show is co-hosted by a trio of NPR's award-winning journalists — Alix Spiegel, Lulu Miller and Hanna Rosin — who have roots at This American Life, Radiolab and The Atlantic. I want to listen to the episode where the main character does the opposite of what their natural instinct is – and in this way, transforms a situation see: Flip the Script at http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/485603559/flip-the-script.

The podcast Code Switch created by a team of journalists fascinated by the overlapping themes of race, ethnicity and culture, how they play out in our lives and communities, and how all of this is shifting.

Student questions for further research

I left the class discussion with more questions than answers. For example, a student made me think more about the tourist approach and teaching multiculturalism..

Here are questions that are lingering with me:

How do you explain to someone who is not a teacher, that preschool is important?

Do you know of any trainings on improving multicultural competence?

How do we stop ourselves from making assumptions? How do you teach a adult about diversity?

How do parents or families portray us as the educators on first impressions?

Challenge 7 – Option A: Contemporary Issues Discussion

What?

Look for recent events or developments in the real world that are related to our readings and assignments about assumptions. Analyze the current affair to identify the connections to course materials in discussion postings, blog entries, or in small group class discussions.

So What?

This technique deepens your understanding of course related ideas and concepts and guides you to apply course ideas to your work with children and families. I hope to stimulate your curiosity and that you see the relevance of the materials we are reading. You will reflect upon your learning to deepen your understanding. The discussion forum will serve as evidence of your learning and how you connect course concepts to your life and the world around us.

Now What?

Create a response to the discussion forum with the following elements:

1. The citation of the news or journal article source written in APA format
2. Summary of the article including the who, what, where, when, why and how
3. Relationship of course principles, ideas, and concepts that the article reflects. Refer to specific readings or videos from the course.
4. Reflection where you relate the current issue to your life.
5. Given what you learned about assumptions in the course, what might you advise the people described in the article to do now that would help them to move forward most productively?

Adapted from Barkley, E. F. (2010). SET 29: Contemporary issues journal. In *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty* (pp.276-279). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Contemporary Issues Discussion Forum Grading Rubric

Adapted from Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and tools for Using Rubrics, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes. Copyright 2010 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities."

Level	Emerging Understanding	Acceptable	Target	
Point Value	**0-2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Critically evaluates information and the source ethically & legally	The source is primarily focused on a personal opinion. The relevance to the course concept is questionable. The information was published over a year ago. Student correctly uses **0-1** of the following strategies: 1. APA citations 2. APA references 3. Appropriate choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting. Distinguishes between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution.	Selects an appropriate source. The information is relevant and current. There is minimal analysis of the source of the information or content of the information. Student correctly uses **2** of the following strategies: 1. APA citations 2. APA references 3. Appropriate choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting. 4. Distinguishes between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution.	Selects an appropriate source. The information is relevant and current. There is some analysis of the source of the information or content of the information. Student correctly uses **3** of the following strategies: 1. APA citations 2. APA references 3. Appropriate choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting. 4. Distinguishes between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution.	Selects an appropriate source that is important to the concept. The information is relevant, current (within the past year) and the student critically and completely analyzed the expertise of the author and bias or point of view of the information. Student correctly uses APA citations and references. The student makes appropriate choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting. The student distinguishes between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution.
Connects to ECPK 480 content	Has difficulty determining key concepts. The type of information selected does not relate to concepts.	The reader has to guesses as to the relationship of course principles, ideas, and concepts. The student determines a few course concepts.	The relationship of course principles, ideas, and concepts that the news article reflects is clear. The student determines most key course concepts.	The relationship of course principles, ideas, and concepts that the news article reflects is clear and logical. The student effectively determines key course concepts.
Initial participation and effective communication	Did not participate in the Discussion forum until **Wednesday** or later in the week. Did not use examples to illustrate ideas or include an open-ended question with response. The writing was often choppy, with frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or other writing mechanics, such as imprecise or inappropriate language and vocabulary.	Responded to forum by **Tuesday** at 11:59PM. Used an example to illustrate ideas. Asked an open-ended question with response. The writing included problems with organization and meaning. The writing was generally clear and professional in tone. There were several spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.	Responded to forum by **Tuesday** at 11:59PM. Used an example to illustrate ideas. Asked an open-ended question with response. The writing was organized and generally clear and professional in tone. There were minimal spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar errors.	Responded to forum by **Monday** at 11:59PM. Used multiple examples to illustrate ideas. Asked an open-ended question with response. Polished writing, almost free of errors, with consistent professional tone and clarity of language.

Level	**Emerging Understanding**	**Acceptable**	**Target**	
Uses information to engage in conversation with colleagues	The reply includes information that is fragmented or used inappropriately such as misquoted, taken out of context, or incorrectly paraphrased. Replied to **1** peer (**a TOTAL of 1 posting this week)** Did not replied to peers.	Replied by communicating information from sources; to at least **2** peers **(a TOTAL of 3 postings for the week).** The student **forgot to include an open-ended question** with each reply.	Replied by logically communicating information from sources; to at least **3** peers **(a TOTAL of 4 postings for the week).** The student **forgot to include an open-ended question** with each reply	Replied in depth by communicating, organizing, and synthesizing information from sources; to at least **3** peers **(a TOTAL of 4 postings for the week).** To help stimulate further thinking and conversation, the student ends **each of the** replies **with an open-ended question.**

Challenge 7 – Option B: Reflection Questions

Discuss Assumptions by: answering and explaining using multiple examples:

- How do assumptions and past experiences influence your ratings?
- Identify an assumption you have about programs and explain how and why it exists.
- How have the readings, videos, and/or discussions changed your thinking? Why or Why not? Refer to at least 3 of the readings or videos.

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Glossary

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