

ECE FIELD EXPERIENCE 4 (NWTC)



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ECE: Field Experience 4 (NWTC)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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1.1: 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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- [2.2: Defining terms - A vocabulary for discussing professionalism](#) by Brenda Boyd, Linda Felch is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

1.2: Analyzing Your Teaching

Analyzing Instruction for the Purpose of Improving It

Learning to teach and continuing to improve requires regular analysis of instruction and its effectiveness. Teachers analyze their instruction to:

1. **Improve their teaching:** Teachers study their own teaching and that of their colleagues to improve their practice. Analyzing instruction may take place individually or with colleagues and involves identifying patterns, opportunities, and specific moves, and making hypotheses for how to improve.
2. **Improve equity and inclusion:** Reflective teachers recognize subtle, normalized patterns of oppression that undermine the learning of marginalized groups. They interrogate their underlying assumptions and seek to develop new instructional habits and strategies that support students to thrive. Teachers carry out countless moves and in-the-moment decisions every day. Their moves and decisions are often shaped by deeply held assumptions and dominant White notions about students, the content, and teaching. By analyzing instruction, teachers attend to subtle patterns and biases and learn about how they might impact children.
3. **Support student learning:** Analyzing instruction also provides opportunities to study students' work, which can support teachers to see students' strengths, deepen their content knowledge, and develop new strategies and approaches that can intervene in patterns that reproduce inequity.

Decomposition of Analyzing Instruction for the Purpose of Improving It

Identify a Focus	Collect Artifacts of Practice	Analyze Artifacts of Practice	Identify and Use Professional Resources	Determine and Implement Next Steps
- Identify specific areas of instruction to focus on - Develop questions for inquiry that create opportunities to challenge assumptions and biases about students, content, and teaching practices - Determine artifacts that will provide insight into the focus area such as: - Video records of instruction - Records of student work or formative assessments - Observation notes from others - Input from students and families	- Collect the artifacts in ways that guard against biases - Account for the limitations of a single observation or snapshot of teaching - Identify elements of teaching and learning that are not captured by a given set of artifacts	- Seek patterns or trends and form hypotheses about students, learning, classroom environment, and teachers - Be careful to avoid jumping to conclusions and seek additional evidence to support or challenge hypotheses	- Seek recommendations from colleagues or coaches - Draw on a wide range of resources, including those from other grades and content areas, and those developed by members of nondominant communities and cultures - Review materials from coursework or professional development - Consult materials recommended or published by professional or community organizations	- Identify concrete actions, strategies or techniques to try - Determine what to collect to document work on next steps

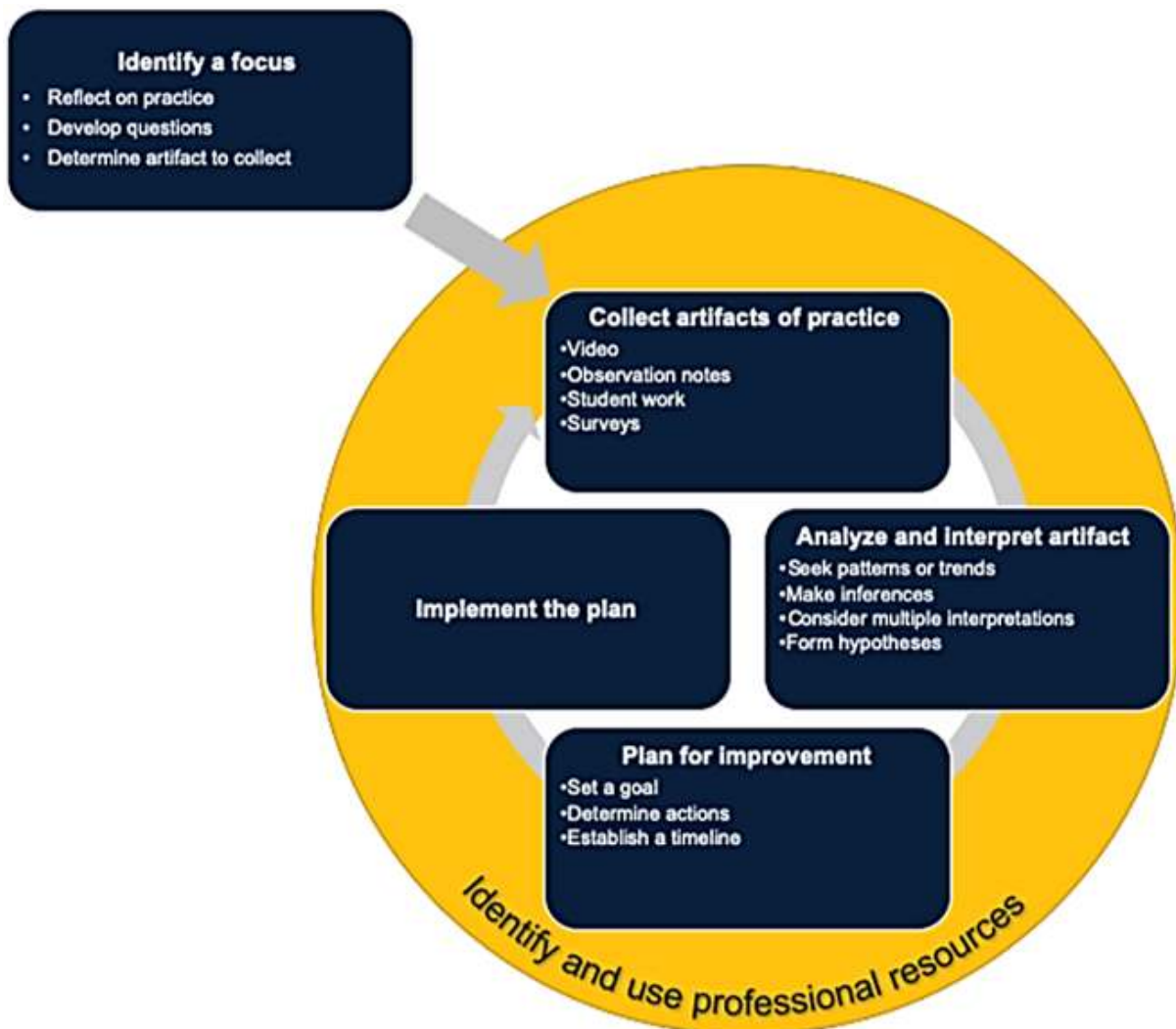


Figure 1.2.1: Visual representation of analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it.

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1.3: 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 is 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 1.3.1

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.

Adaptation Credit

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1.4: 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 1.4.1

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 1.4.1

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>

Adaptation Credit

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1.5: 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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1.6: The Role of Relationships



Figure 1.6.1: 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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1.7: Technology in Early Childhood

Considerations for Technology Use in Early Childhood

The rapid development of technological devices such as computers, smart-phones, tablets, and gaming systems has dramatically changed people's daily lives at home and at work. New technologies and electronic media provide tools for communication and social networking, for searching and documenting information, and for learning and entertainment. Young children are growing up surrounded by technology and electronic media. At least two-thirds of homes with children (birth to age six) have computers and Internet access (Gutnick et al. 2010; Roberts and Foehr 2008). Moreover, according to a national survey by Common Sense Media in 2011, 52 percent of young children (birth to age eight) have access to smartphones or tablets (Rideout 2011). Young children are active media users (Roberts and Foehr 2008). They acclimate with ease to digital devices and show confidence in using software (Clements and Sarama 2008). With the prevalence of technology and electronic media in their environment, young children are spending an increasing number of hours in front of screen technologies, particularly television, but also computers and other devices, with an average of 2.2 hours per day of screen time for children between the ages of two and five (Roberts and Foehr 2008).

Children from low-income families, families with less education, and black, Hispanic, and rural families are less likely to have access to the newest technologies and to broadband connections to the Internet (U.S. Department of Commerce 2011). Inequality in access to technology has narrowed over the years, but the “digital divide” still exists (Roberts and Foehr 2008).

The pervasiveness of electronic media in the lives of many young children makes educators, parents, and advocates question the value of technology in children's development. Some electronic media such as certain television programs, videos, and DVDs are non-interactive and involve passive viewing. Other forms of electronic media such as software programs, applications, the Internet, e-books, and certain television programs facilitate active and creative use by young children. These latter forms are referred to as interactive media (NAEYC and FRC 2012). There is limited research on the impact of newer technology, such as computer software, handheld devices, interactive applications for mobile devices, and wireless technology, on children's development. Most of the research on the impact of media on young children has focused on television and video. Studies of infants and toddlers suggest that videos have no language benefits for infant and toddlers.

Young children learn much better from real-life experiences than from watching videos. Moreover, excessive exposure to electronic media may have a negative effect on attention development, particularly for children younger than two (Kirkorian, Wartella, and Anderson 2008). Research indicates that the impact of electronic media on older children depends on the age of children, the context in which they use media, the content of the media, and the amount of time they spend with screens (Kirkorian, Wartella, and Anderson 2008; Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment 2012).

By age three, children can benefit from well-designed, age-appropriate electronic media, especially when a caring adult views the program with the child and is actively involved in the child's experience. Research emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate *content* being offered to children, whether on television or other interactive media software. Educational television programs that were designed around a curriculum with a specific goal to communicate academic or social skills were linked to various cognitive and academic enhancements, with potentially long-lasting effects (Fisch 2004). For example, research demonstrates a positive association between early exposure to *Sesame Street* television episodes and school readiness (Zill 2001). However, television and videos with entertainment content, particularly violent content, were associated with poor cognitive development and lower academic achievement (Kirkorian, Wartella, and Anderson 2008).

Studies of preschool children's computer play demonstrated that young children can use computers and software to support their learning. Children can understand, think about, and learn from their computer activity (Clements and Sarama 2008). Research has shown that in children's computer play with interactive media software there is a period of discovery, which is then followed by involvement, self-confidence, and creativity (Bergen 2008). Computer-play software can offer children various possibilities, including *practice* (self-directed repetition to achieve mastery), *pretense* (symbolic play in a “pretend to be” world), and *games* (challenge and competition, either with a peer, with oneself, or with an imaginary opponent) (Kafai 2006).

There is limited research on how educational computer software may enhance preschool children's academic-readiness skills. Some research suggests that software with an educational curriculum may have a positive influence on learning (Din and Calao 2001).

Overall, studies indicate that, when used appropriately, technology and media can enhance children's cognitive and social abilities (Kirkorian, Wartella, and Anderson 2008). Even so, additional research is needed to confirm the positive outcome of technology on children's language and vocabulary, understanding of math concepts, self-regulation, and social-skills development (NAEYC and FRC 2012).^[1]

Technology and Interactive Media in the Preschool Environment

Technology has many uses in early childhood settings. On any given day, teachers may use technology to support children's learning, to record and document children's development, to expand their own knowledge in different areas, to maintain ongoing communication with families, and to link homes with school. The focus in this chapter is on the use of technology and interactive media in pre school settings for the purpose of supporting and enhancing children's learning.

A growing number of early childhood educators use technology and interactive media in their programs as tools to support children's learning and development (Wartella et al. 2010). In a recent survey by the Fred Rogers Center (Wartella et al. 2010) about technology in the lives of teachers and classrooms, nearly 60 percent of early childhood teachers reported having a computer, and 45 percent have computers with Internet access in their classrooms. More than half of the early childhood teachers indicated that children should be introduced to technology in the classroom between ages three and four, and about one-third of the teachers reported using computers with children on a daily basis (Wartella et al. 2010). With the increasing interest and use of technology in preschool settings, early childhood educators need guidance on how to use technology and interactive media wisely and effectively. Several important questions come to mind:

- Which technology and media tools are effective tools for learning?
- In which domains of development can the use of technology be most effective?
- How do early childhood educators appropriately integrate technology and media into preschool settings?
- How can technology be used to support children's learning?



Figure 1.7.1: How programs will include technology in their curriculum is something that should be thoughtfully considered.^[2]

A joint position statement issued in 2012 by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Fred Rogers Center (FRC) offers guidance. Based on research, the statement addresses both the opportunities and the challenges related to using technology and interactive media in early childhood programs. The following section presents key messages from the NAEYC/FRC position statement on technology. A set of strategies consistent with the approach articulated in the position statement is provided to guide administrators and teachers in integrating technology and interactive media into preschool programs.^[3]

The Benefits and the Challenges of Using Technology and Interactive Media

Technology and interactive media have the potential to make many contributions to early childhood education. Technology can provide children with additional ways to explore, create, communicate, problem-solve, investigate, and learn. Computer technology, for example, offers young children a range of learning opportunities—from solving math problems to listening to interactive stories, taking a photo, recording a story, creating a digital book, making music, and engaging in other age-appropriate learning activities (Blagojevic et al. 2010). Many educational applications for young children are designed to help children develop skills and knowledge in specific domains, particularly in areas such as language, literacy, and mathematics (Buckleitner 2011). Such programs can provide individualized learning opportunities for children. In mathematics, computer programs present children with tasks, give feedback, and help young children develop concepts and skills in areas such as counting, number relationships and operations, sorting and patterning, measurement, and geometry (Clements and Sarama 2008; McCarthy, Li, and Tiu 2012). In

language and literacy, computer software can enhance vocabulary learning (Segers and Vermeer 2008) and support learning of listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills (Guernsey et al. 2012). Dual language learners can also use computers to enhance their home language and acquire English (Blagojevic et al. 2010; Nemeth 2009).

The use of technology can also enrich the science curriculum. Cameras and recording devices provide valuable educational experiences by allowing children to take photos and videos to document objects and events and track changes in objects and materials. Digital microscopes allow children to save images of objects they explore and to share and discuss such images with their peers. Robotics with manipulative motors and gears engage young children in designing their own robotic creations, providing them with opportunities both to be creative engineers and to explore abstract mathematical and science concepts in concrete ways (Bers 2008).

The use of technology in preschool settings also creates opportunities for equitable access to technology tools and interactive media experiences for children from different economic backgrounds, including children in families with few resources and little or no access to the latest technologies (NAEYC and FRC 2012). Furthermore, technology has many potential benefits in supporting inclusive practices for children with disabilities or other special needs (Mulligan 2003).

A variety of assistive and adaptive technologies (e.g., electronic communication boards, switch-activated toys, recordable devices) enhance children's participation and learning with peers. For example, a child who enjoys playing with bubbles can operate an electronic bubble-blower for other children to chase (Mistrett 2004). Another child can let a peer know which game she wants to play by indicating it on the electronic tablet that has photos taken by her teacher. By using assistive technology, early childhood educators can help children with disabilities or other special needs become more independent. Children with special needs can use technologies to support their ability to communicate and interact with others, move throughout the environment, manipulate objects, and participate in daily routines and educational activities.



Figure 1.7.2: Technology can help children with disabilities participate in the environment and communicate.[4]

Overall, effective uses of technology and interactive media can enhance and augment children's learning in different domains, extending children's access to new content. However, technology is effective only when used appropriately. Although the use of technology and interactive media provides programs with opportunities to enhance quality and optimize young children's development, early childhood educators should understand the limits of technology and be aware of the challenges of using technology and interactive media in the preschool environment. As stated in the NAEYC/FRC position statement, "Technology and interactive media are tools that can promote effective learning and development when they are used intentionally by early childhood educators, within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice, to support learning goals established for individual children" (NAEYC and FRC 2012, 5).

Technology and interactive media should only supplement, not replace, existing play-based materials and active play, engagement with other children, and face-to-face interactions with adults. Several professional and public health organizations have raised concerns about whether young children should have access to technology and screen media in early childhood programs (e.g., Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment 2012). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends avoiding any media other than video-chatting until 18 months, limiting 2 to 5-year-olds to one hour per day of high quality programming, and for ages 6 and older, placing consistent limits on time and types of media. These recommendations are focused on preventing media use from displacing physical activity, hands on exploration, and face-to-face social interaction in the real world, which are critical to learning.

This chapter follows the recommendations of the NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center (2012) and is aligned with the public health community in discouraging the use of screen media for children under the age of 24 months in early childhood programs. Such guidance for educators working with infants and toddlers may change in the future as more research on very young children's active use of interactive media and its effect on children's learning and development continues to emerge (e.g., Zack et al. 2013).

Monitoring the content of interactive media is as important as setting limits on the time young children spend with technology. Although there are valuable software, websites, and other forms of interactive media for young children, some have limited educational value or may include content that is not safe or appropriate for children. The challenge for early childhood educators is “to make informed choices that maximize learning opportunities for children while managing screen time and mediating the potential for misuse and overuse of screen media” (NAEYC and FRC 2012, 3). Educators should have the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to select and use technology tools and interactive media that suit the age and developmental level of children and can be integrated effectively in the environment (NAEYC and FRC 2012).

The following guidelines identify key considerations for programs and teachers selecting, evaluating, integrating, and using technology in preschool programs.[5]

Selecting Technology and Interactive Media to Enhance Children’s Learning

The rapid development of technology platforms, including computers, laptops, multi-touch tablets, and other handheld devices, and the growing selection of available educational applications, Web sites, and software present educators with many choices for integrating technology into the preschool environment. However, technology and media-based products may vary widely in quality. Intentionality is important. Thoughtful, advanced planning is essential for a responsible investment in technology in early childhood settings. Early childhood educators should apply their expertise and knowledge of child development in selecting appropriate technology and media for the classroom in the same way that they select any other instructional materials (NAEYC and FRC 2012). Educators should take the time to evaluate and select technology, to observe children’s use of the materials, and to make appropriate adoptions based on their observations. The Fred Rogers Center (2012) proposed a framework for quality in digital media (FRC 2012), recommending that educators take into account the *child*, the *content*, and the *context* in the selection of digital media for young children.

- **Consider children’s developmental level, interests, abilities, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.** Teachers must be intentional in selecting the technology and interactive media they offer children in their classroom. When selecting appropriate technology and interactive media, educators make decisions that are informed by developmentally appropriate teaching practices, which means that early childhood educators consider the age, developmental level, needs, interests, linguistic backgrounds, and abilities of individual children in the group (NAEYC and FRC 2012).
- **Ensure equitable access to technology and interactive media experiences.** In selecting technology and interactive media, educators provide opportunities for all children to participate and have access to these learning tools. Educators should consider the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children in their classrooms. Technology resources can provide access to children’s home language and culture, especially when there are no other ways to obtain such information (NAEYC and FRC 2012). For example, children can listen to electronic books in their home language, record songs and stories, and create digital stories in their home language and English (Blagojevic et al. 2010). Educators can collaborate with family members and colleagues who speak children’s home language to gain access to appropriate interactive media in children’s home language.

Materials and equipment selected for children with disabilities or other special needs should be evaluated. Adaptive and assistive technologies are available to support individual children in their classrooms. Programs should consider the level of technology necessary and the child’s individual needs to ensure that the technology is best suited to the child’s unique disabilities and to the demands of the environment (Mulligan 2003). Not all assistive devices are necessarily “high tech” or custom designed for a particular child. In fact, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines an assistive technology device as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability (Mistrett 2004).

- **Identify the underlying objectives of the technology.** Most electronic media targeted at preschoolers are intended to entertain rather than to teach. Technology in the preschool environment should be used only for educational activities. In evaluating any software programs, applications, or other forms of interactive media, educators should be able to identify the overall goals or purpose of the product: Is it to educate or to entertain? Is it interactive? Is it to develop particular skills, to introduce children to new information, or maybe a combination of these (FRC 2012; Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment 2012)? Understanding the intent of a digital program and the learning goals for different children in the program should guide educators’ intentional decisions in selecting materials of interactive media (FRC 2012).

- **Evaluate the quality of the content.** First and foremost, educators should evaluate the quality of the content to ensure that the use of such materials would not harm young children's overall development or well-being in any way (NAEYC and FRC 2012; FRC 2012). Interactive media products can be used as tools to fulfill the needs of individual children and to expand children's access to new content in areas of interest to them. In the selection process, program administrators and teachers should have information and resources regarding the nature of these tools and the implications for use with children. Program administrators and teachers should also have hands-on opportunities to explore and directly experience the technology that is being considered for use with children. Educators can apply their expertise and knowledge of child development to ensure that digital materials are developmentally and culturally appropriate for the children in the group. They should examine the educational content, format, and features and carefully consider any implicit messages communicated during the use of the software/application. Some undesirable messages (e.g., stereotypes, negative images or actions) may be biased and fail to promote social and emotional understanding in the early years (Tsantis, Bewick, and Thouvenelle 2003).
- **Select technology and interactive media that support children's creativity, exploration, and problem solving.** In selecting activities with technology and interactive media, early educators should ask themselves: *Does it encourage children to explore, to think, to experiment and predict, to be creative, and to problem solve? Does it offer a range of experiences and a high level of interactivity? Is it open-ended or focused on skills?* Experiences with technology and other media that engage children in redundant practice and rote learning or involve passive use by children are not desirable. Effective technology and media empower children by giving them control, offering challenges through "leveled" experiences, and providing them with feedback and adaptive scaffolds (Clements and Sarama 2008).
- **Use the best available evidence in the selection process.** More research is needed to understand what young children are able to do with different digital devices and to assess the short- and long-term effects of new technologies on children's learning. Educators are encouraged to make their decisions about the quality of interactive media products based on the best available evidence for any given product (FRC 2012).^[6]

Integrating and Using Technology in the Preschool Environment

Once the desired software or appropriate technology devices for the program are selected, educators should apply their expertise and knowledge of child development to make thoughtful decisions on how to introduce and integrate the selected forms of technology into the learning environment. The teacher's role is critical in ensuring that technology is implemented in ways that serve the teaching goals and support children's learning appropriately and effectively.

- **Technology and interactive media are used within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice.** Developmentally appropriate practice encourages hands-on exploration; empowers children to reflect, question, and create; and honors the value of relationships between children and the adults in their lives (NAEYC 2009). Professional knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice informs and guides decision making about how to introduce and integrate any form of technology and interactive media into early childhood programs. Technology and media should not replace preschool activities such as real-life exploration, physical activity, social interactions, outdoor and indoor play, and arts. Instead, they should be used as additional tools to encourage children's problem solving, exploration, and creativity. They can also support children's relationships with both adults and their peers and foster children's autonomy (NAEYC and FRC 2012; Donohue and Schomburg 2012; Nemeth and Simon 2012), particularly for some children with disabilities (Mistrett 2004).
- **Technology and interactive media are integrated into the environment, curriculum, and daily routines** (NAEYC and FRC 2012). True integration of technology and media into the preschool environment involves the use of different technology resources throughout the classroom. No period is set aside in the daily schedule for "computer time," when technology and media are used as isolated activities. Technology and interactive media are woven into the fabric of the day and are used as tools for learning, rather than as the focus or the goal of a learning activity. Technology is one of many ways to support curriculum goals and needs, and the program offers a balance of activities to support children's development in all domains of learning. In using a particular application or software, teachers should consider how it supports objectives for individual children in the group, how it fits into the classroom's current curriculum project or theme of study, and how it extends other activities in ways not possible otherwise (Nemeth and Simon 2012).
- **Time spent with technology and media is limited.** Setting limits on the time young children spend with technology and interactive media is important. As previously indicated, the public health community discourages the use of passive screen media for children under two years of age and recommends limited screen time daily for children older than two (American

Academy of Pediatrics 2011). Some of the public health concern is that the overuse of media takes time away from other activities that involve physical exercise. Sedentary activities are potentially a risk factor for childhood obesity (Wartella and Heintz 2007). The position statement by the NAEYC/FRC points to the following recommendation in the *Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies*: “child care [and preschool] settings limit screen time to fewer than 30 minutes per day for children in half day programs or less than one hour per day for those in full day programs (Birch, Parker, and Burns 2011).” Teachers play a critical role in establishing clear boundaries on the use of technology and screen time in the preschool setting. They are also encouraged to share information with families on how to promote children’s healthy use of technology at home (Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment 2012).

- **The use of technology and interactive media facilitates social interactions and relationship building.** Effective use of technology and interactive media in the classroom environment allows joint engagement, specifically viewing and participation by both children and adults and children and their peers (NAEYC and FRC 2012). Studies on the social dimension of preschool children’s computer play found that preschoolers observe each other while playing, comment on others’ actions, share and help with software-related problems, and have conflicts over turn-taking (Heft and Swaminathan 2002). The computer and other digital devices should be located in spaces that allow for joint engagement of a group of children. Some children may select technology such as the computer because it is familiar or even as a way of avoiding interaction. Careful observation is needed to monitor the use of technology and determine individual appropriate use. Effective use of technology and interactive media can promote communication and collaboration among children (Wright 1994). It often provides the context for information sharing, language development, and collaborative decision making (Tsantis, Bewick, and Thouvenelle 2003). Tech-savvy children may also become computer mentors for their peers (Blagojevic et al. 2010).



Figure 1.7.3: This teacher is monitoring children using the computer together.[7]

- **Teachers provide support while children use technology and interactive media.** As with any learning activities, teachers play an important role in facilitating children’s involvement with technology and media. The teachers introduce children to the computer or another device (e.g., digital camera, printer, touch-screen), and explain how it works. They observe what individual children do and learn about children’s ability to use technology. Children vary in the ability to use technology and interactive media. Teachers also give children time to freely explore new technology tools, model appropriate use of technology, and help children become familiar with any new software activity. They establish rules and routines with children to guide appropriate handling and use of computer and other technological devices (Blagojevic et al. 2010; Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment 2012). During technology-related activities, teachers carefully observe and document what children do and assess children’s learning. Teachers identify problems or opportunities for teachable moments, extending the media experience to other learning opportunities, and facilitating the experience through language-rich interactions. In addition, teachers determine when the child is ready to progress to the next level of knowledge or skill development (FRC 2012). They consider children’s varying abilities to control and operate technology and media and support children’s “technology-handling” skills, as needed. Teachers make appropriate adaptations, based on their observations, to promote positive outcomes for individual children.[8]

References

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American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.) Media and Children Communication Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx>
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1.8: 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 1.8.1: 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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1.9: 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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1.10: 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 1.10.1: 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](#)

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[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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1.11: 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 experiencing, 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 1.11.1:  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 1.11.2 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 350×5 . 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 1.11.3 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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1.12: 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 1.12.1 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 responsible 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.

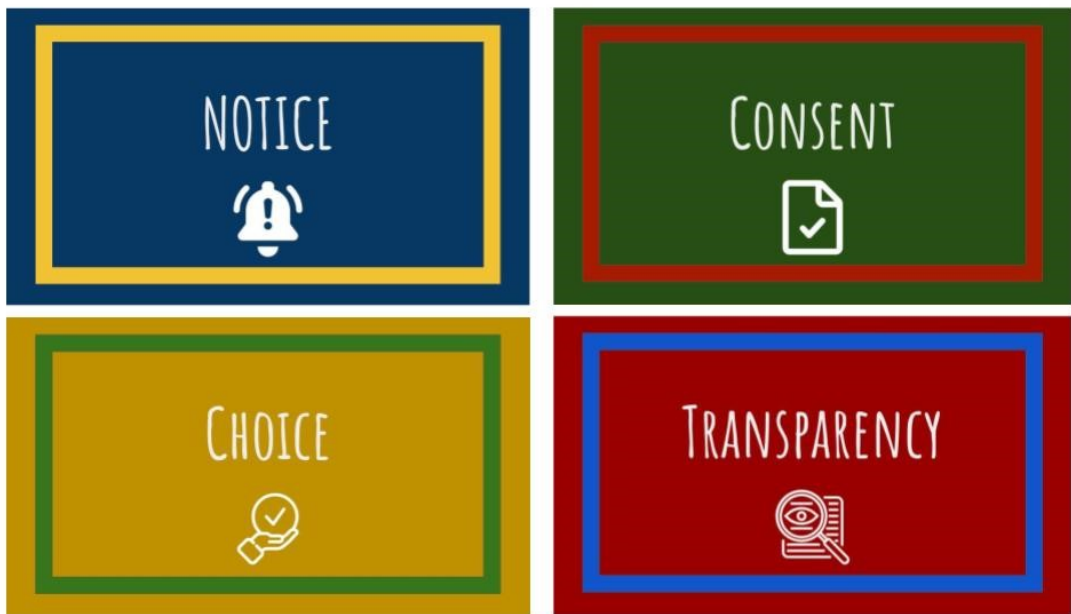


Figure 1.12.2 Attitudes to limit exposure of privacy, as described in Regan and Jesse (2019).

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 recognition, 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.

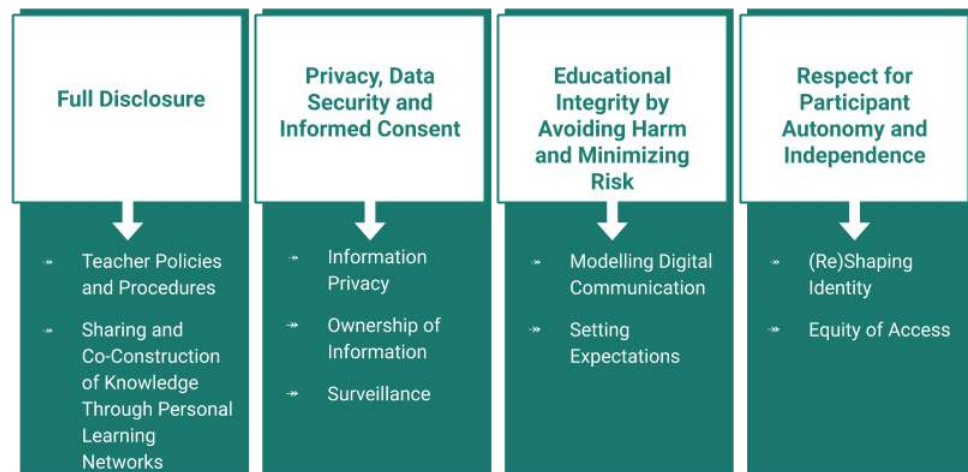


Figure 1.12.4 Four areas of ethical implications of using SNSs for communication by teachers.

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)?

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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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1.13: Ways to Maintain Composure

Maintaining Composure

Adults maintain composure in times of stress, especially when responding to students' challenging behavior or big feelings.

Maintaining composure takes effort in the moment and is an ongoing practice throughout one's life.

Emotional consistency proves to students that you are someone they can trust no matter the situation.

Compassion & Assertiveness: How Practices Fit Together

When students are regulated and feel related, they are ready to reason!

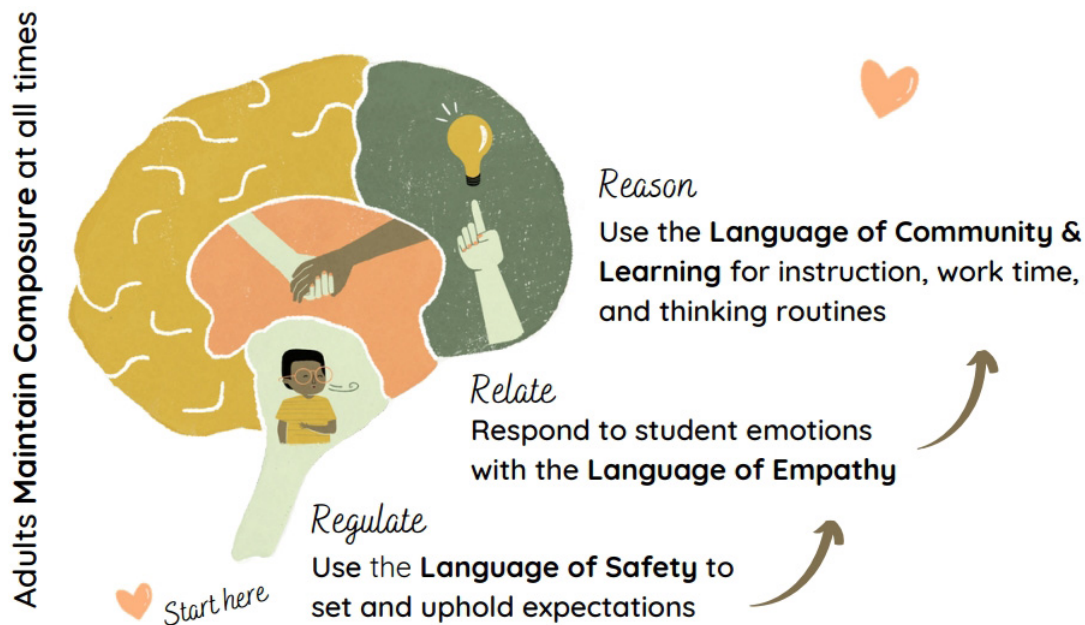


Figure 1.13.1: Adults maintain composure through regulating, relating, and reasoning with the languages of safety, empathy, community and learning.

Maintaining Composure: How to Do this Well

Overall approach to maintaining composure:

- Engage in **personal wellness behaviors** to establish a foundation of your emotional self-regulation, in support of maintaining your composure in the classroom.
- Develop your awareness of the **specific instances** (also known as triggers) in which you are most likely to lose composure so that you can identify strategies to use during these moments.
- Remember that this is an **ongoing practice**. We get better at maintaining composure through reflection, when we take time to check in with how we're doing, re-ground in taking care of ourselves and learn lessons from what's working or not yet working in how we're responding to stressful situations.

Maintaining composure is essential to remaining calm and assertive.

Foundations for Self-Regulation

Research-Supported Strategies for Wellness

Adults who feel safe and cared for are better able to create spaces where children feel safe and cared for.

As an ongoing commitment to your well-being, consider research-supported strategies such as:

- Adequate sleep, exercise, and nutrition
- Play (enjoyable activities that promote a flow state)

- Mindfulness
- Positive relationships
- Setting appropriate boundaries and managing commitments

While the responsibility for creating the adult climate rests with all of us, **school leaders** should take the lead in modeling positive wellness behaviors and structuring an environment that promotes well-being for all staff.

✓ Link to Learning

See the [Whole Child Approach to Adult Well-Being](#) for information about creating the adult climate

Maintaining Composure with Children

As much as students learn from what we say, they learn from what we do.

How to maintain composure in the moment:

- Learn your **triggers** so that you can be aware of them more quickly in the moment.
- Take a moment to compose yourself before speaking, if needed, so that you can **maintain a calm, neutral tone**.
- Connect with students' humanity through **empathy**; acknowledge their feelings and remind yourself that their upset does not need to become your upset. See the [Empathy Implementation Guide](#) for more support.
- Model using the student **breathing strategies**: rainbow, pretzel, squeezing lemons, flower & candle.
- Model **appropriate self-talk**, including naming your feelings (even if they are negative) and coaching yourself through calming down.

Cycle of a Trigger

We can work to interrupt the cycle of a trigger.

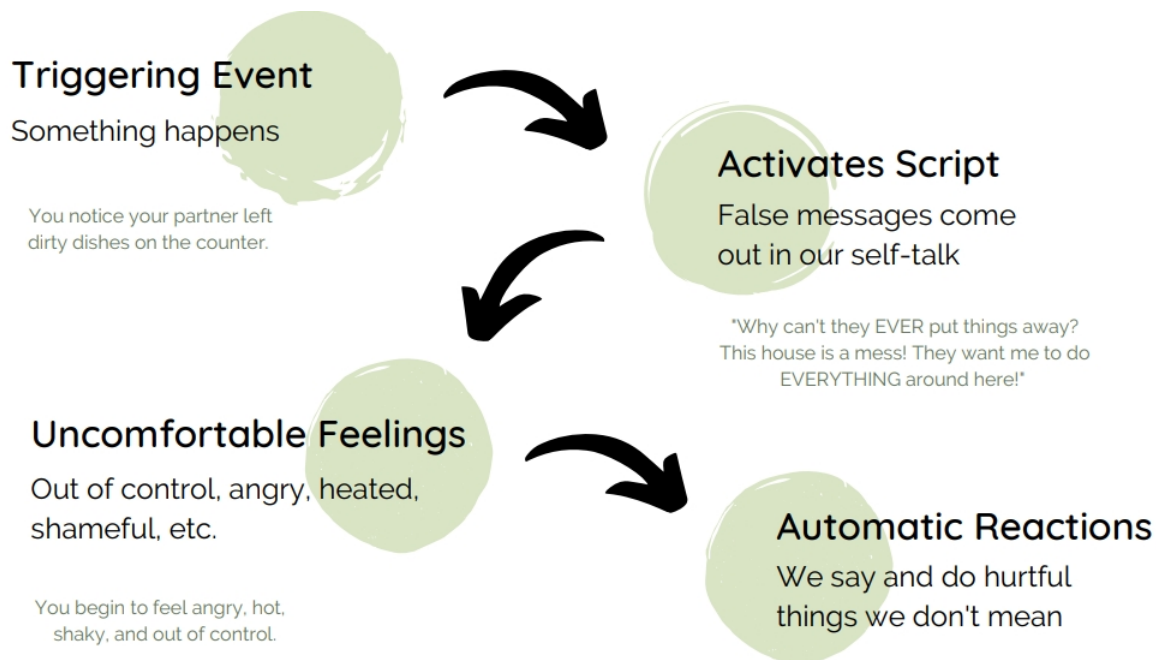


Figure 1.13.2: Triggering events lead to activating scripts with uncomfortable feelings and automatic reactions.

About Triggers

For children who have experienced trauma, being in the presence of a visibly angry adult may cause reactive behaviors and breach trust.

Why do we get triggered?

- Triggers are events that call up **automatic responses**. Without reflection, we might not recognize patterns in our triggering events.
- Triggers are often related to **events in our childhood**. They are commonly rooted in shame, fear, and lack of control.
- Triggers can be **exacerbated** by hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and physical discomfort.

Prevention and Reframing

- Some triggers can be **prevented**: eat healthy food, drink enough water, get enough rest.
- Other triggers need **reframing**: a key message you can repeat to yourself when a triggering event happens so that you don't launch right into your scripts. For example: "My partner has other lovely qualities besides putting dirty dishes into the dishwasher."
- Some triggers may benefit from the intervention of **professional counseling**.

Reflect: What events typically trigger your strong emotions? What prevention or reframing could you do around these triggers?

Student Breathing Strategies

Model using the breathing strategies we teach students.



Pretzel Breathing

- With arms extended in front of body, cross one wrist over the other, rotate palms down to face each other, and interlock fingers.
- Inhale and rotate arms/fist down and then up towards your chest, twisting into a pretzel.
- Exhale as you extend arms to the original position. Repeat three times.



Lemonade Breathing

- Pretend you are getting ready to make a big batch of cool lemonade. We need to squeeze the lemons to get the lemon juice out!
- Hold up two hands and curl them into fists. Pretend you have a lemon in each fist. Squeeze your fists tightly to squeeze the lemon and take a deep breath in. Then release your fists and breathe out to let the juice flow into the pitcher. Repeat three times.



Rainbow Breathing

- Sit tall, or stand up. Let your arms hang down at your sides. Open and close your hands a couple of times to warm up your body.

- Turn palms forward, stretch fingers long. Keeping arms straight, float them out to the sides and up to the top to create a rainbow. Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms. Exhale as arms come down and return to your sides. Repeat three times.



Flower and Candle Breathing

- Picture a flower on the floor. With two cupped hands, scoop up the flower, hold it to your face and breathe in the scent (deep breath in through the nose).
- Now hold 1 finger up, keeping your two hands together. Blow out the candle (breathe out through your mouth). Repeat three times.

Modeling Helpful Self-Talk

Model **appropriate self-talk**, including naming your feelings (even if they are negative) and coaching yourself through calming down.

Examples

- “I feel really frustrated right now. I am going to stop and take three deep breaths.”
- “Oops, I made a mistake. I will think of a way to fix it. Hmm, let’s try this...”
- “I feel a lot of stress in my shoulders. Let me do a couple of shoulder rolls with deep breaths to see if that helps.”

Non-Examples

- “I’m so stupid! I can’t believe I did that!”
- “I’m really mad at you! Why did you do that?!”
- “You kids are driving me crazy!”
- “When you yell, it makes me mad too! Calm down right now!”

Reflect: What key phrases can you use to model helpful self-talk?

CARE Practices

Our Beliefs: Students must feel safe and cared for in order to be ready to learn. We must actively care for each other so that we can actively care for our children. Strong relationships between students and teachers lessen the impact of stress on the brain. The brain is wired to mirror the skills it sees others use. Students learn what adults model. We learn best when we practice skills frequently, with focus, and across multiple contexts.

Compassion & Assertiveness

- Maintaining Composure
- Language of Safety
- Language of Empathy
- Language of Community & Learning

We are intentional about our own behavior. We build trusting relationships with students and consistently model, teach, and practice the skills that we most want them to learn.

Routines

- Strong Start Morning Routine
- Classroom Jobs
- Consistent Routines

We use consistent routines to foster safety through predictability, explicitly teach and practice SEL skills, give students greater ownership of the class, and free up mental energy to focus on learning.

Environment

- Classroom Design
- Centering Space

We design a physical environment that is warm and welcoming, meets students' physical, academic, social, and emotional needs, is owned by students, and minimizes stimuli that may overwhelm or trigger students.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

2.1: Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Education

2.2: Respecting Families

2.3: Social Justice in the Early Childhood Classroom

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2.1: Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Education

Diversity



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Diversity is “a variation among individuals, as well as within and across groups of individuals, in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences. These experiences are related to social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin” (NAEYC, 2019, 17).

The key to this definition of **diversity** is that it moves us away from simply thinking that **diversity** means being different from someone and appreciating those differences. This definition specifically highlights the experiences that people have based on those differences. Social identities are differences and categories that were and are socially constructed. This means that these categories were and are created and then agreed upon by society and have serious consequences for people’s lives (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Below are beginning definitions of the social identity groups listed in the definition.

- **Race** is a social-political construct that categorizes and ranks groups of human beings on the basis of skin color and other physical features (NAEYC, 2019).
- **Ethnicity** refers to “people bound by a common language, culture and spiritual traditions, and/or ancestry” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p.45)
- **Sex** is the biological or genetic markers that distinguish male and female bodies and refers to one’s genitals, body structure and is assigned at birth (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).
- **Gender** is the assigned sex given at birth that have prescribed roles and behaviors and expectations; gender identity is the development of one’s self as a male or female in relations to others; and gender expression is the gender that a person presents to the world (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017)
- **Sexual Orientation** is whom a person is sexually attracted to (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020).
- **Social and Economic Status** refers to the financial and social conditions of a person which determines their access to the institutions and resources of society (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020)
- **Religion** is a faith and worship into a particular system of beliefs.
- **Ability Status** includes the ability that children have to do something and acknowledge disabilities including a physical, cognitive, emotional, or neuro-divergent challenge that impacts a person’s abilities in some areas of daily living and learning (NAEYC, 2019 & Derman-Spark & Edwards, 2020).

These categories are binary. They are categories that we all belong to and are presented as an either/or to divide and differentiate people. For example, our sex assignment at birth is either male or female and the gender roles attached to our sex are framed around masculine or feminine characteristics. Our sexual orientation is either gay or straight. We are either able bodied or have a disability. Our race is either black or white. However, the 2020 census did collect race data from five groups: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other, Pacific Islander.

To address the binary nature of these categories that differentiate people, NAEYC’s Advancing Equity diversity definition noted that “the terms **diverse** and **diversity** are sometimes used as euphemisms for non- White and NAEYC specifically rejects this usage, which implies that Whiteness is the norm against which **diversity** is defined” (NAEYC, 2019, p.17). This specific

clarification is a response to the binary nature of and the social construction of social identity groups and meaning attached to them by society.

Advancing Equity Recommendations for Everyone

When we review the first recommendation from NAEYC's Advancing Equity statement we are asked to examine the impact and the influence of diversity on who we are as teachers and what and how we teach. We need to have awareness and understanding of our own culture, personal beliefs, values and biases. And in order to do that we have to reflect on our own lived experiences based on our social identities (NAEYC, 2019). As teachers of young children, we are teaching from a specific set of cultural values and beliefs. We have learned those beliefs and values through the cycle of socialization. Through this process we have also learned biases. We have also experienced privilege and oppression based on our social identity groups. To truly understand the impact of diversity on our teaching practices, we have to do some intrapersonal work and examine our own personal and social identity development.

Reflection

How would you describe your social identities as listed in the diversity definition? What are other identities that categorize and differentiate people that are not listed? Do you think our social identities influence how we interact and engage with other people whose identities are different than ours?

Culture, Social Identities & the Cycle of Socialization

Culture is something we all have and is something that we learn. **Culture** is the experiences, language, values and beliefs that people share at a given time and place. Our cultural ways of being can be as simple and visible as what we have learned to like to eat; what we don't like to eat; the words we use, language we speak; how we dress; and what music we like to listen too. Culture is also complex and invisible. It is the deeply held beliefs and values we have that influence the daily decisions we make. These beliefs can be about eye contact should look like; touching; relationships with our elders; the way we raise our children; and what role families should play in our lives. There is a lot under the surface that we have learned, and we don't see or are aware of and those cultural ways of being become automatic.

Ultimately culture shapes and frames how we understand, view, and interact with the world around us and what we learn depends on what cultural and social groups we belong too. We are born into or assigned them at birth, such as race, sex, class, or religion. And they can be cultural and social groups we join or become part of later in life. For example, it is possible to learn a new culture by moving to a new country or area, by a change in our economic status, or by becoming disabled. We all belong to many cultural and social groups. When we have similar cultural ways of being with others, we usually get along better with or feel more comfortable with.

Reflection

Think about the people who are important people in your life. What do you have in common with them? How does this commonality make you feel when you engage with people who have similar cultural ways of being as you? What about with those who are different then you? How do you feel when you engage with those who may not speak the same language as you or eat the same foods as you?

We are socialized into those cultural ways of knowing and being based on the various cultural and social identity groups we are a part of. We have been systemically socialized into those identities (Harro, 2018).

Socialization is the process where we internalize the cultural norms and ideologies of society that we have learned through the institution we interact with i.e. education, church, peers, family, laws, media, business etc. Harro (2018) notes that based on each of our social identities, we learn how to:

- Think about ourselves and others
- How to interact with others
- Understand what is expected of us based on a specific set of social identities we were born into

- Know what the consequences are, if we deviate from what is expected of us

What is important to understand is that these social identities that we are either assigned to, born into, or become a part of later in life predisposes us to unequal binary roles. We are socialized into those roles subtly as well as overtly by our family and institutions (teachers, schools, media, church, work). These roles are prescribed through systematic training that tell us the “appropriate and acceptable ways to be” that identity (Harro, 2018).

In the U.S. the “appropriate and acceptable ways to be” have come from the dominant social groups. We are either part of the dominant groups or marginalized groups. In the U.S. these dominant social groups are men, white people, able-bodied people, middle to upper class people, heterosexuals, and middle-aged people. Subordinate or marginalized groups are women; people of color specifically historically racially oppressed groups; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people; people with a disability; seniors and youth; and people living in poverty. Understanding the socialization process and the groups we belong to will help us better understand what we have learned to value and believe but also what we have learned about the groups we do not belong to.

An example of how this socialization process works can be demonstrated by thinking about sex, gender identity and expression. When someone is pregnant, we usually ask them what the sex of the baby is. Will it be a boy or a girl? Depending on what they tell us, we start thinking of names that would we consider boy or girl names. We may also start to think about what kind of toys and clothes to get depending on the sex. When the baby is born, we then begin to engage with the baby and consciously or unconsciously have expectation for them to act and look a certain way. For example, we may remind little girls to not talk loudly, or be too physical in their play and tell them how pretty they look in their new dress. We may tell boys to stop crying and to be strong physically and emotionally. For some children the sex assignment matches with how they identify and want to express themselves being that gender. For some children the sex and gender roles that are expected of them is not what they identify with and how they want to express themselves. However, through the cycle of socialization these roles are enforced by either the child’s family and school, church, and possibly their friends.

Reflection

What social identity groups do you belong to? How did you learn to be a that identity or part of that group? What role did your family, friends, community organizations play in this process of learning about who you were and are now? What role did your teachers play? What messages may we be sending to children about their social identity groups based on how we were socialized?

What is important to remember here is that we were born into or assigned these identities at birth and really have no control over that process and what we learned as children. The cultural norms and values and ways of being were already established. These rules, roles, assumptions were created by the dominant groups and marginalized or subordinate groups were essentially exploited, disenfranchised, and discriminated against (Harro, 2018). Through this cycle society has normalized the dominant groups cultural values, beliefs, and ways of being at the expense of the subordinate groups. This leads to implicit biases that we have learned about other social identity groups. It also leads to systemic bias towards the dominant groups who have unearned privileges and discrimination and oppression of marginalized groups.

Bias

Advancing Equity (2019) defines **bias** as the attitudes that favor one group over another. Explicit **biases** are conscious, openly aware of, beliefs and stereotypes that influence one’s understanding, actions, and decisions; implicit **bias** affects one’s understanding, actions, and decision but in an unconscious, not aware of, manner (NAEYC, 2019). We all have biases. They are learned from our cultural ways of being and through the process of socialization.

An example of explicit bias in the classroom may happen when we openly expect children from specific racial group to be good at sports or be quiet and shy. An example of implicit bias in a classroom would be where all but one or two books have illustrations with only white children and families in them. An example of systemic bias in the classroom may be where the lead teachers and supervisors are white, but the assistants and support staff are people of color or English language learners. Most of the biases we have we are not necessarily conscious of and we have learned to normalize the attitudes and actions of the dominant groups through our socialization process.

The first Advancing Equity (2019) recommendation suggest that we have to recognize that we all hold some type of bias based on our personal background and experiences and socialization. We need to “identify where our varied social identities have provided strengths and understandings based on your experiences of both injustices and privilege” (NAEYC, 2019, 6). Knowing which values, beliefs, and the cultural norms we hold that influence our teaching will help us begin to reflect on the impact we have on children and families that do not have the same values and beliefs.

Reflection

Consider how your values and beliefs influence your teaching decisions. Are those values and beliefs held by the children and families you work with? For example, do you always have the same expectations around sleeping, feeding, potty training children as your families? What biases do you think you may have of others who do not have the same values and beliefs you have? What biases may you have learned about other social identity groups?

Oppression and Privilege

When we reflect on which groups we belong to and learn more about ourselves and others, we will realize that the privileges and oppressions we experience are based on the social identity groups we belong to. **Privilege** is the unearned advantages that result from being a member of a dominant social identity group. This type of privilege is deeply embedded, and it is often invisible to those who experience it without ongoing deep self-reflection about diversity and equity. An example of this privilege can be the language we use in our programs. If your program is an English-speaking program, then if you speak English it will be easier for you to communicate. Because of your ability to speak English you have access to resources and services that others who do not speak it. If you do not speak English and there are no other languages spoken in the program, then you may struggle with communicating with others.

Oppression is the systematic and prolonged mistreatment of a group of people that results from systemic bias based on their social identity groups. For example, ableism is a systemic form of oppression deeply embedded in society that devalues disabilities through structures that are based on implicit assumptions about standards of physical, intellectual, and emotional normalcy (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020). If we are an able-bodied person, we might not think about making sure our classroom is set up for a child who uses a wheelchair, or a family member who uses a scooter. It may be harder to find tables for children that allow a wheelchair to slide under. When we have not experienced the challenges of a person with a physical disability, the changes needed to adjust our classroom do not come to us as quickly. Usually, they come to us when we have to make those changes because we have a child or family member who uses a wheelchair or scooter.

This is not to say that those of us who have privilege have never experienced challenges and those of us who have been oppressed have not experienced advantages. However, when we become more aware of our biases we have learned, the privileges and systemic oppressions we have experienced then we may be able to understand the experiences of others. We can empathize as well as resist and revise our teaching practices based on our understanding of how we have experienced privileges and/or oppressions.

Our early education system is a product of the dominant group's values and norms in the U.S. When we take the responsibility to become more aware and conscious of whose norms and values we have learned, internalized, and are teaching from, we can assess and evaluate our work with children. In order to be anti-bias we have to know our biases and actively fight against them. In order to be culturally responsive, we have to know what cultural values and beliefs we have that are different than others. Therefore, diversity is not just appreciating and acknowledging differences, it is actively reflecting on our own experiences and identities and how it influences how we are teaching.

Reflection

If biases, privilege and oppression are part of our education system then how can we ensure that all children have access to quality learning experiences?

Equity

When biases and systemic oppression go unexamined or unchecked it leads to harmful and discriminatory experiences for children from marginalized social identity groups. **Equity goes beyond “fairness”** and provides us with a framework to understand the

impact of our biases and oppression on children and families and how we can address them.

NAEYC's Advancing Equity (2019) statement defines equity as, "the state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic" (NAEYC, 2019, p.17). If we have been socialized into unequal roles based on our social identity groups, then we are not truly equal. Attempting to treat everyone the same is essentially not fair. We cannot have equality and fairness until we have equity where children have similar access to resources to support their learning, growth, and development.

The image below provides us with a visual of the difference between equality and equity. Giving everyone the same thing when they are starting from different places would not be equitable.

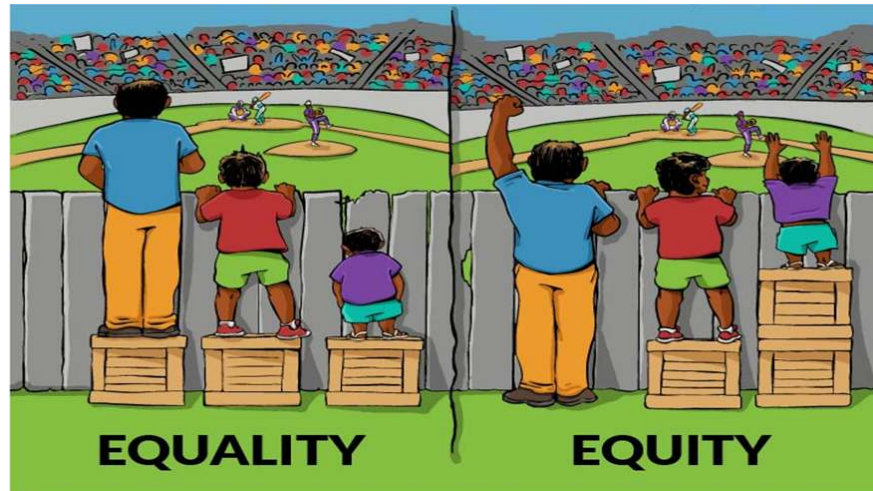


Image 2.1.2 *Interaction Institute for Social Change* | Artist: *Angus Maguire*

Reflection

The picture above represents the difference between equality and equity. What does this picture tell you about how we may be using the boxes/crates like in our classrooms and programs?

What supports (boxes/crates) are we providing for children in our classrooms?

Advancing Equity Recommendations for Everyone

Inequities, unfair advantages (privileged) and disadvantages (discrimination and oppression), are built into our systems, they are structural. Advancing Equity's fourth recommendation tasks us to acknowledge and seek to understand these structural inequities and their impact over time (NAEYC, 2019). As teachers we have to be sure that we do not place blame or fault on a child or family's character or abilities. Every single child has the potential to learn, thrive and be successful in life. Because of historical and current systemic structural inequities based on social identity groups, children from marginalized groups have been and are disproportionately impacted.

Demographics

The U.S. has always had diverse social and cultural groups. This wonderful and rich growth in diversity continues today. According to the Children's Defense Fund's "The State of America's Children®" 2020 report, 73.4 million children lived in the U.S. in 2018. 50 percent were children of color: 14 percent were Black; 26 percent were Hispanic; 5 percent were Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; and <1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native.

Reflect

Who are the children in your classroom?

What social identity groups do they belong too?

However, the statistics below provide a glimpse into what structural inequity look like for children in our country.

- 16 % of America's children were poor in 2018—a total of 11.9 million children—and children of color were disproportionately poor (Children's Defense Fund, 2020).
- Poverty is one of the biggest threats to children's healthy development. There are 11,752,892 children in the U.S. between the ages of 3 and 5.9% of them in deep poverty where families of these children have incomes below 50 percent of the federal poverty line, or less than \$10,289 for a family of one parent and two children (National Center for Children in Poverty, n.d.)
- \$88,200 was the median income for white families with children compared with \$40,100 for Black and \$46,400 for Hispanic families in 2017 (Children's Defense Fund, 2020).
- Children from families with higher socioeconomic status (economic status, education, occupation) were likely to enroll in higher education institutions then those from lower SES families (Long, 2007).

To help us better understand equity, we will specifically examine race and what racism looks like in early childhood education. NAEYC's Advancing Equity (2019) defines race as a social-political construct that categorizes and ranks groups of human beings on the basis of skin color and other physical features. As we learned earlier from the definition of diversity and from the cycle of socialization, race is a social identity that confers privilege to one group and discriminates against another. Racism is defined as a belief that some races are superior or inferior to others and it operates at a systemic level through deeply embedded structural and institutional policies that have favored Whiteness at the expense of other groups (NAEYC, 2019).

Throughout history of public and early childhood education children have been discriminated against because of their race. Children of slaves were not allowed to attend schools and indigenous children were removed from their homes and sent to boarding schools. Not all children are starting with the same resources or supports because of historical and current bias and oppression in our institutions. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) children and families are part of our classrooms and programs. Earlier we reflected on bias, privilege and oppression. Looking at data about preschool expulsion and suspension rates we can see how our implicit biases about a child's race are contributing to systemic oppression:

- Gilliam (2005) in his initial Yale study found that expulsion and suspension rates are higher in preschool programs then in K-12 schools.
- The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2016 a, b.) confirmed that these rates were disproportionately high for Black children where Black children make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children suspended more than once.
- Gilliam (2016) and Kunesh and Noltemeyer (2019) found that race and implicit bias seem to be contributing factors to the higher expulsion and suspension rates for black and brown children specifically boys.

Furthermore, here in Washington State, the Department of Children, Youth and Families found children of color are underrepresented in the percentage of children entering kindergarten with the skills they need to be successful. Children and youth of color enter and remain in the child welfare system at greater rates. Youth of color are also disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system (DCYF, n.d.). Teachers are a part of creating this data. We have to consistently be considering children's diverse identities and how our own biases may be contributing to these systemic issues.

Achievement and Opportunity

All children can achieve. All children have the capacity to learn and develop to their fullest potential when they have the opportunities to do so. But due to bias that exist in individual teachers, in our programming and educational system, not all children are set up for success. Milner (2012) identified this as an opportunity gap. It is important for us to understand this distinction. Structural inequities adversely impact BIPOC children; however, it is not something inherently in them or related to their ability and capacity to learn. Again, all children will achieve if the opportunity to do so exist. As teachers we have to be creating those opportunities.

The fourth Advancing Equity recommendation reminds us that we do this work by looking deeper at our own expectations, practices, and curriculums especially when outcomes vary significantly by social identities (NAEYC, 2019). Authentic observations and assessments can assist teachers in identifying aspects of their work that could be adjusted to create more equitable learning experiences, and family support. Teachers need to see each child as a capable learner and develop culturally responsive

curriculum and individualized learning experiences to create opportunities for growth and development. We have a responsibility to set the stage so that all children have opportunities to learn, grow and develop to their fullest potential.

We have learned and inherited our biases about race, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, ability and disability, language, national origin, indigenous heritage, religion, and other identities. Ongoing critical reflection on our biases and our social and cultural context and how we may be contributing to systemic inequities is necessary for achieving better outcomes for all children, especially for those who are from historically and systemically, marginalized, and oppressed groups.

Reflection

How are children and their families in your classroom impacted by bias and systematic oppression?

What are some things you are doing to ensure that all children feel they belong in your classroom?

What changes can you make in your classroom and curriculum to create equitable learning opportunities?

Inclusion

The study of **inclusion** involves how we can intentionally create equitable learning opportunities into our teaching, curriculum, and programs with a commitment to continuous learning. Inclusive teaching strategies engage each child to feel like they belong and help them to participate in the learning experiences with the rest of the group.



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NAEYC Advancing Equity defines inclusion as “the embodiment of the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and their family regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and context as full members of their families, communities and society” (NAEYC, 2019, p. 18). To be inclusive means to include everyone, and full inclusion seeks to promote justice by ensuring equitable participation of all children. To be inclusive we also need to know who we may be unconsciously excluding.

When early childhood educators take the time to truly get to know children, and their abilities, they can design learning environments that are welcoming to all children. It is important to consider aspects that include the children’s culture, linguistic background, and developmental ability when setting up an inclusive classroom. Effective and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies for inclusion involve building nurturing relationships, authentic observations, scaffolding learning experiences, adjusting support, and collaboration.

Advancing Equity Recommendation for Everyone

There are several recommendations that can support our ability and capacity to work towards inclusion where all children feel like they belong. The second NAEYC Advancing Equity recommendation for everyone tells us that we need to recognize the power and benefit of diversity and inclusivity and recommendation three asks us to take responsibility for biased actions, even if unintended, and actively work to repair harm (NAEYC, 2019, p. 6). In our classrooms, children are learning about the world around them. Developmental theories and brain research tell us that the first 8 years of a child's life is one of exponential growth. Children are curious and engaged in what we share during circle time. They are active and excited when they participate in our planned or spontaneous table activities. During this time of active cognitive learning, children are also learning about themselves and others as well. Children in our classrooms are not only working towards meeting developmental milestones but they are also being socialized by their families, teachers, and the communities they live in. They are beginning to learn about the cultural norms of their family as well as the social norms that we have in our classrooms and those of society. We are an intimate and integral part of a child's social and cultural growth and development. Whether we know it or not, we may be contributing to the deep inequities that exist for children and their families because of their social identities. It is imperative and necessary for us to consider ways that we can be more inclusive in our work.



Image 2.1.4 "Children Reading Pratham Books and Akshara" by Pratham Books is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Acknowledge, Discuss and Plan

Creating welcoming and inclusive classrooms requires educators to put forth an ongoing effort. When we become more comfortable with social diversity, we will become more comfortable talking to children about differences that children will notice. If we don't acknowledge a child's observation in a positive way, then it gives them the impression that the difference is a problem or something negative.

Think about taking the following steps when a child sees something that is different in another child or their families.

1. Don't ignore it. Our initial acknowledgement can be a simple positive affirming statement. For example, a child's may ask why their friend has two dad's and no mom's. A simple positive acknowledgment of this observation is to affirm that the child does have two dad's and that there are so many different kinds of families.
2. Continue the discussion. We should continue the discussion depending on our comfort level by using open ended questions and examples to share about affirming the differences and normalizing them to the child. If we are uncomfortable continuing anymore discussions, then we can revisit it at another time when we feel more prepared.
3. Plan for integration. This leads us to the third step where we can plan for a purposeful introduction or integration into our lesson planning and materials we have in our classroom.

Reflective practices that involve consideration about children's abilities, languages, culture, and temperaments will guide teachers to adjust their teaching approaches to create inclusive learning environments. This type of reflective approach focuses on the uniqueness of each child, and their individual needs and social diversity. Following are brief descriptions of inclusive practices and approaches you can apply to your teaching.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is required to help us assess our thinking, judgements, and actions in the classroom. Self-reflection is a strategy that teachers should use to stop, step back, pause and think about their work and assess to make changes or affirm what is working well. Sometimes self-reflection happens in the moment in the classroom after a planned activity or it may happen at a time when you are not in the classroom. Critical self-reflection is a process where we stop and consider why we did what we did, how we did and specifically ask if there were any biases in our decision making.

Culturally and socially, many of the developmental theories we have relied on were researched by white men with children and families who spoke the same language, lived in similar homes and with similar traditional family structures, who were part of the dominant (white) culture at that time. Having the ability to reflect on information that is current and culturally responsive will help us engage with diversity, equity, and inclusion in your work with children. Learning more about growth mindset, trauma informed care (ACES) and language development are places you can start to develop an understanding of current developmental needs and supports.

Anti-Bias Approach

Ultimately the goal of anti-bias education is to be conscious of and actively fight against biases we have about others and that exist in the institutions we work and live in. Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2020) explain the anti-bias approach as an approach in early childhood education that explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination towards children by those who care, teach, and guide them.

Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2020) outline four goals of anti-bias education that will nurture the development of the whole child so they can:

- demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities
- express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences and form deep, caring human connections across diverse backgrounds
- increasingly recognize and have language to describe unfairness (injustice) and understand that unfairness hurts
- and have the will and the skills to act, with others or along against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions

For us to meet these goals of identity, diversity, justice, and activism, we need to learn about the social, cultural, economic context of the child, their family and of ourselves. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, we all have biases that we learned through the cycle of socialization. We also have our own social, cultural, and economic context that influences how we work and teach. Becoming more conscious of our biases through critical reflective work will help us determine how we learned to know what we know and do what we do.

To better assess our awareness and knowledge below are some activities that can be done.

1. **Classrooms.** Look around your classroom and reflect on the materials you use to teach children. What social identities are represented in your books and dramatic play area? What kind of pictures are up in your classroom? Who is visible and who do we not see?
2. **Books for Children:** Assess your books for bias by using the Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books written (Derman-Sparks, n.d.).
3. **Self-Assessments:** Consider completing self-assessment about the own social identity groups you belong to. How were you socialized into those identities? What did you learn about groups that you belonged too and what did you learn about groups you did not belong too? Reflect on where you may have experienced privilege and/or discrimination (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020).
4. **Books for Teachers:** Read more! Start with NAEYC's Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement (NAEYC, 2019). Specifically look over the recommendations for early childhood educators. Derman-Sparks & Edwards, *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves (2020)* provides a thorough introduction to anti-bias education in early childhood education.
5. **Self-Education:** Take classes on Anti-Bias Education, Diversity & Equity, Inclusion to continue to learn and build your knowledge and awareness. Another thing to consider is finding ways to expand your knowledge of diverse experiences and perspectives without generalizing or stereotyping about others who are different from you (NAEYC, 2019). Ted Talks

are an excellent way to hear powerful and empowering authentic stories about systemic oppressions and bias. There are some suggestions in the website to review following the references at the end of this chapter.

6. **Intent vs Impact:** Remember good intent does not always lead to positive impact. When you commit a biased act, be ready and willing to be accountable and to take that opportunity to learn rather than being defensive (NAEYC, 2019).
7. **Book Clubs:** Think about starting a book club focusing on diversity and equity with your co-workers or with your friends and families. Or even with the children!

This is a journey and requires continuous learning for all of us. Take time to regularly reflect and revisit the aspects listed above, so you can create an equitable and inclusive early learning setting for children to thrive in. Invite your co-teachers to examine and discuss aspects with you. This type of collaborative work supports raising awareness of issues and developing an anti-bias approach.

Anti-Racist

If the stories we are learning from and teaching with are from the dominant white culture perspective, then we have to move beyond the anti-bias approach and also be anti-racist. Children are constantly internalizing the messages conveyed in their environments. As we previously discussed, BIPOC children are being disproportionately impacted by our education systems. A recent study found that children as young as 5 rated images of black boys less favorably than images of white boys and girls, with images of black girls falling in the middle (Perszyk et al, 2019). As teachers we are also socializing children into the dominant cultural norms and values. It is critical that we reflect on what we are teaching children that may not be visible to us.

Furthermore, Dr. Shulman (2020), President of the American Psychological Association, stated that we are living in a racism pandemic. This racism “pandemic” leads to a number of psychological, physical issues and historical trauma (Shulman, 2020). The impact of racism emphasizes the urgent need for each early childhood educator to engage in anti-racist work. This work will require us to examine our own racial biases we may have based on our own socialization process. Anti-racist work will look different for each person and teachers in each of our classrooms, and our teaching approaches. We all can actively fight against racism. Some educators might say that they do not see color, however we want to avoid this color-blind approach. When we see color, we truly see children, and welcome the diversity that each child brings.

We will have to actively engage in learning more about what it means to be an anti-racist as well. Dr. Kendi (2019) points out that the opposite of being a racist is not just being not racist, it is being an anti-racist, where we are actively fighting for racial equity. It means examining our own beliefs about what racial equity is. Through evaluation and reflection, we can dig deeper in our own socialization process and check for beliefs and ideas of others based on our and their race.

Working with Families

As we learn more about ourselves, we will begin to realize the social and cultural systems that our families lived and worked in influenced us as children and now as adults. This same process is something we are part of for the children and families we are working with. As teachers we have an opportunity to disrupt the socialization process that perpetuates the discrimination and marginalization of social identity groups.

It is important that we move away from the binary classification of social identities. We have learned to value and espouse the *either/or* way of thinking about others but why can't we be an *and/both*? When we begin to shift our thinking to an *and/both* perspective we allow for more space to integrate the diverse needs and supports our children and families need. We can use a child's home language in the classroom and use English to support their language development. Why can't we boys and girls wear dresses in our classroom and be able to rough and tumble and assertive in their play?

Home Environments

In early chapters, we learned how important home environments are for each child and how their home environments may be very different from early learning environments. Children may be living and thriving in a single parent household; a multi-generational household where other family members are an integral part of the home; or children may be homeless and living in transitional housing. This is just a few ways that diversity in family structure can look for the children in our classrooms.

Connecting with Families

Learning more about our families does not mean that we have to integrate or engage with all that they may do for their child. But we can begin to consider ways to support the child based on what they are learning from their family and what we are teaching them. Think about the ways you connect with families.

- How do we get to know our families, and how they raise their child at home? What are some ways that incorporate the cultural ways of being of the families into your program?
- How do we reflect or consider a child's home environments impact on the child's way of being in our classrooms?
- What networks of support does the family have outside of the home? How can we create a supportive network within the early learning program?
- How are we creating a sense of emotional and physical safety for the family? For example, if a family is undocumented then the way they engage with the school will depend on their level of safety they feel with the teachers and the school. This will be something that impacts the child.
- How are we integrating the funds of knowledge that children and families already have into our classroom?

Ultimately, to create responsive equitable learning opportunities we must fully understand the lived experiences of the family and the child outside of our classroom. When we reflect on how a child is influenced and impacted by the environments that their families have to navigate to function and survive, we can create equitable opportunities for the child and the family because we have a better understanding of the barriers that the family is experiencing.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

When we integrate culturally responsive teaching into practice we are moving to another level of critical reflection. We not only see how our social identities influence our decision-making we also acknowledge and find ways to teach using the cultural context of the children in our classroom. Culture is increasingly understood as inseparable from development (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, it is important to ensure cultural continuity, where the child's home culture is reflected in the classroom and is not invisible. Many marginalized social identity groups are invisible in our classrooms and teaching materials.



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Zaretta Hammond (2018) writes about the pliability of young children's brains. Her focus was mostly on older children, but it is a reminder again that we set the stage for how children see and feel about themselves and where they fit into the classroom environment. There are three strategies we can use right now with children and some of us are doing them already.

1. Culturally responsive teaching in practice can be as simple as making learning fun with **interactive games** that focus on social and verbal interactions, instead of just sitting and listening (Hammond, 2018).
 - a. Children learn by doing, so adding a game to the learning makes it more engaging. Teachers can facilitate group activities in which children work together to create a story, or mural together. We could create a guessing game using felt boards when teaching about body parts. Give children felt pieces that represent different parts of the body and have them guess what parts they use to smell something they cook at home.

2. Another strategy is to make it a **social experience** (Hammond, 2018). Think about how we lead circle time, do we allow children to share and talk during our reading of a story or teaching of a specific lesson?
 - a. Do we make time for children to talk with each other about what they are learning? Consider asking children to share their favorite smell, family activity, food they eat together at home, or play a song that they listen to at home.
3. A third strategy is to add **stories** (Hammond, 2018).
 - a. We can invite families to share or make up stories with their children about smells? Have elders come and tell stories in the classroom during circle. Instead of reading books listen to stories families have recorded. This also helps us see how using play could be a culturally responsive strategy.

Ultimately, culturally responsive teaching occurs when we integrate teaching strategies that are centered from the children and their family's culture. This does not mean we have to know about all the cultures of our families and how they live outside of the classroom. As the fifth NAEYC Advancing Equity (2019) recommendation mentions we just need to be willing to be open to learning and commit to learn based on our experiences with children and their families. When we are open to learning more about children and families, we will build connections and partnerships that will support children's development. These connections demonstrate that we welcome all families and strive to incorporate children's cultures into the learning experiences.

Final Thoughts

This chapter discussed aspects related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in early learning settings. The details within these topics included societal issues, identities, bias, and cultural identity development. The information presented influences that can impact our teaching and program practices, along with ways to engage in anti-bias work. Diversity is more than just being different from someone. It requires a commitment to learn about our own diversity and how it influences our teaching. Equity is more than trying to treat everyone fairly. We have a responsibility to understand that not everyone has had the same opportunities, so we have a responsibility to ensure that all children have access. Inclusion is not just making every feel welcome. It requires us to take an active role in engaging and integrating children and their families' diversity into our programs intentionally.

We hope that this chapter will motivate and inspire early childhood educators to learn more about the children and families in their programs and strive to work with them in a culturally responsive way. Every interaction we engage in with children can influence their memories, cultural and social development, and ideas about how they fit into this world. We have the responsibility to ensure that every single child feels welcomed as a valuable part of the learning community. In order to ensure that children meet their fullest potential, it is vital that we continue to study, reflect, and act to address diversity, equity and inclusion.

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2.2: 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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2.3: Social Justice in the Early Childhood Classroom

Social justice and bias (implicit and explicit) have recently become key terms in the field of early care and education, but have been researched for many years. Dissecting biases can often lead straight to imbalances in social justice which include inequity in education, access to resources including food and healthcare, and in areas early educators see as vital to development such as play.

The Disappearance of Play

In early education, we have been taught that play is a child's work. Children learn about the world through play, practice social norms including role-playing, learn how to negotiate, use their imagination and release stress, develop fine and gross motor skills and misdirected energy. Yet as we look at early education centers who are located in lower socioeconomic communities, play can be little to none. Often times it can be used as a reward and given, or a punishment and taken away. Schools that serve impoverished communities may mistakenly eliminate play and replace it with more formal, structured instructional time, believing this will help children learn. This ignores the facts that children are fully engaged when playing, developing self-regulation through movement and choice, social-emotional skills by negotiating and building ideas together, and practicing what works in language. (K. Esquivel, 2019)

"Free play should not be seen as a "reward" for young children's hard work - play is the work of a young child. Early childhood educators must use play as a tool for cognitive and social-emotional growth." Young children need play in order to develop full, healthy lives. It gives them a unique way to engage with language and build literacy skills. It builds their knowledge as they solve problems, interact with concepts, and test their hypotheses. "Children build resilience, confidence, physical abilities, and relational skills as they engage in play with meaning."

Play is increasingly being pushed out of children's daily lives, in spite of the advocacy for play from researchers, psychologists, and early childhood educators. "The issue of missing play in schools is essential for educators to address as children continue to grow in stressful situations, requiring the unique supports that development through play offers. Children who experience a play-based early education are empowered as confident people with tools for healthy development in every area of their lives. Play is a tool that educators must use to honor children's needs as they learn and grow." [82]

Inequitable Access to Play as Curriculum

As we discuss the types of curriculums used in more affluent schools, we will see the vast difference on how play is welcomed, nurtured, appreciated and viewed as a necessity. We also know children from more affluent communities tend to have less behavior related challenges, more impulse control, and greater use of language which shows a direct correlation to the increased play that is received and valued.

As the next generation of early care and education educators, there is a need to be cognizant of the social justice issue rooted in play, while also acknowledging the biases which may be linked to children playing. Some of these biases are:

- Play is a waste of time
- "Those" children are already too wild and get more wild when they play
- Children are to be seen and not heard
- "Those" children are already behind and need to be learning not playing

Understanding why a family or school pushes back on children's play is an important first step towards change and delivering information and moving towards changing imbalances. Diverse cultures place differing value on play. Not all families will understand or agree with the importance of play for young children in early childhood education programs.

A disparity in materials purchased can also be noted and rooted in the feelings of certain groups being less deserving and/or not taking care of nice materials. As professionals, we know fancy materials are not needed, rather the upkeep of an inviting, clean environment and quality interactions using materials that are in good repair and rotated frequently to maintain engagement. Additionally, providing the 'basics' are needed such as:

- Various building materials
- Various art materials including writing
- Various books that are culturally relevant to those in the class

- Outdoor space with ways to practice fine and gross motor skills

Appropriate classroom materials including how to design high quality environments can be found in Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) for preschoolers or Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) for infants and toddlers. Additionally, there are separate tools used for family child care centers, Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (FCCERS-R) and for programs that serve out-of-school programs, School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS).

Differences in Food and Mealtimes

Meal practices vary based not only on family culture, but differences can be seen based on the location of the early education center. Schools located in more affluent areas have a tendency to get more fresh foods and homemade meals by default vs the opposite in other communities who receive packaged or processed foods.

Many programs are understanding the value in children having access to fresh foods including fruits and vegetables and are adjusting their practices and budgets accordingly. Families are also understanding the negative effects on children's growth and development along with the immediate effects on their child's behavior due to various dyes found in many foods (K. Esquivel, 2019).

In addition to the food served, meal time practices also vary. Meal times are most beneficial when they are enjoyable, not rushed, and filled with back and forth conversations that allow for children to socialize and practice social norms. Having family style meals (where the food is on the table and children serve themselves) allows for children to practice their fine and gross motor skills and leads to children trying a variety of foods they may not typically be exposed to. Educators must consider the possibility of push back because of family traditions, food scarcity, socializing at the table only being for adults and eating all things given is a must.

As you work with families who exhibit meal time traits that do not align with best practice, strategies discussed in Chapter 14 may be helpful. One strategy is starting a conversation with the family, while encouraging the child to take a more active role in their meals is a useful tool. There is a fine line between respecting the family culture and their wishes, and perpetuating social injustices that can be linked to socioeconomic differences (K. Esquivel, 2019).

It is also important to note that the use of food as a play material is a topic that families and early child educators may have strong feelings about. For some, especially those who have experienced food insecurity (not knowing where their next meal was coming from), it may be considered wasteful to use food for play instead of nourishing people. Programs may choose to implement a policy to respect the views and the values behind them.

Biased Response to Children's Behavior

Developing a culturally responsive understanding of child development is imperative to ensure child behaviors are not categorized as negative when they are actually rooted in race, ethnicity, and/or gender. Educators must acknowledge that goals and beliefs about children's development vary across different cultural contexts (the cultural context of the many adults in the child's life: parents/caregivers, extended family, practitioners, teachers).

The behavior of children of color, particularly Black, Latino and Native American boys, is often mislabeled as challenging and negative. Boys from these groups are singled out more often for displaying the same behaviors as and withheld from more opportunities than their white peers. They are suspended at much higher rates, even from preschool and are more harshly labeled as being aggressive, loud and disrespectful.



Figure 6.4: Behaviors in boys of color are more harshly labeled. How might this picture be interpreted?

Boys of color are seen as much older than their actual age, thereby having expectations being placed on them well beyond their ability. Research has shown that implicit bias, the unconscious beliefs each of us possesses about specific groups, plays a large role in the negative connotation given to typical child behaviors. ^[83]

In his experimental study, Dr. Gilliam asked early educators to watch a video of children in a classroom and press a button each time they saw a “behavior that may become a potential challenge”. The video included four children- a black boy and girl and a white boy and girl engaged in a small group activity. In reality, the video had no challenging behaviors in it. Using an eye tracking device, the research team measured where teachers were looking on the screen. Findings revealed that teachers spent significantly more time looking at the Black boy in the video, than any other child.

This research may shed some light on the stubborn disparities we see in expulsion and suspension practices. If early educators are scrutinizing black boys more, looking at them more, expecting more challenging behavior from them- we may expect they may find it, or in some cases think they’ve found it, even if objectively it is not there.

When the federal government published its own data on preschool suspensions for the first time, the results were remarkably similar. Though black boys made up 18% of preschool enrollment, they made up 48% of preschoolers who had been suspended. New Federal data released just this year, again, show that the numbers haven’t moved. While black children make up 19% of enrollment, they make up 47% of suspensions. This year’s data also reveal that black girls make up 20% of the female preschool population, but 54% of all preschool girls suspended.

Of course, when we see such pervasive and long lasting disparities, many of us consider the possibility of bias in the system. Dr. Gilliam’s research is important because it provides us with data that explicitly finds implicit bias in the educators and directors who work in our early childhood programs. While it is exceedingly disturbing that bias, which is pervasive across all systems, is also present in our early childhood programs, it is not surprising.

All of us have biases- no matter what our profession, no matter where we live, or where we’re from. We are all exposed to a society that is full of implicit biases—biases of all kinds. In fact, research shows that while explicit bias has decreased in our country over time, implicit bias has remained stable. And it is instilled in us at very early ages. ^[84]

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Routines

3.1: The Importance of Schedules and Routines

3.2: Consistent Routines

3.3: Starting and Ending the Day

3.4: Classroom Jobs

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3.1: 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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3.2: 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**.

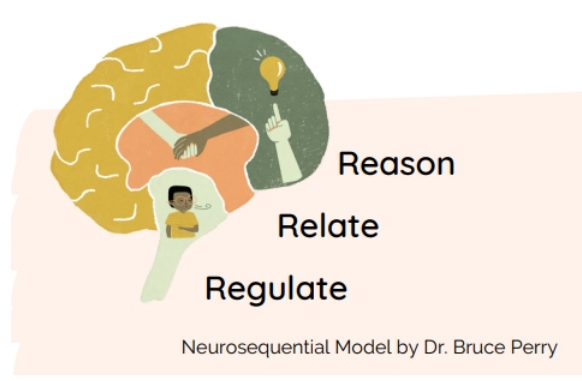


Figure 3.2.1: Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model of Regulate, Relate, and Reason

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.

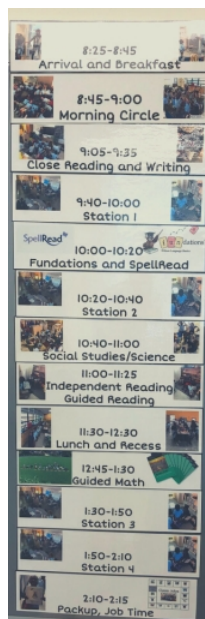


Figure 3.2.2: A posted schedule showing each hour's activities.

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.

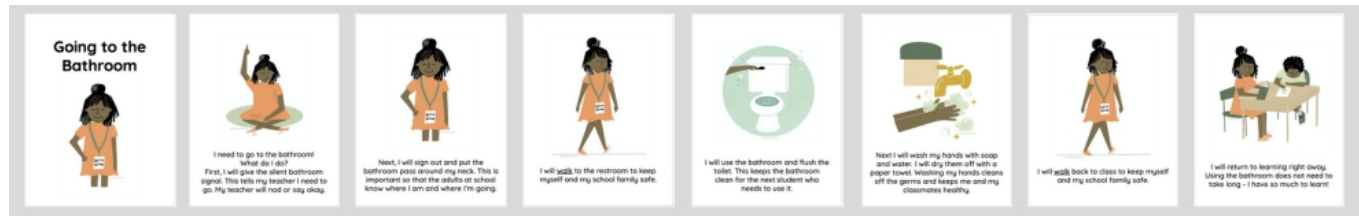


Figure 3.2.3: A sample series of printed social stories.

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.



Voice Level 0
Ears Listening

Figure 3.2.4: 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 3.2.5: Examples of visual expectation posters

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3.3: 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.

Strong Start & Close includes:

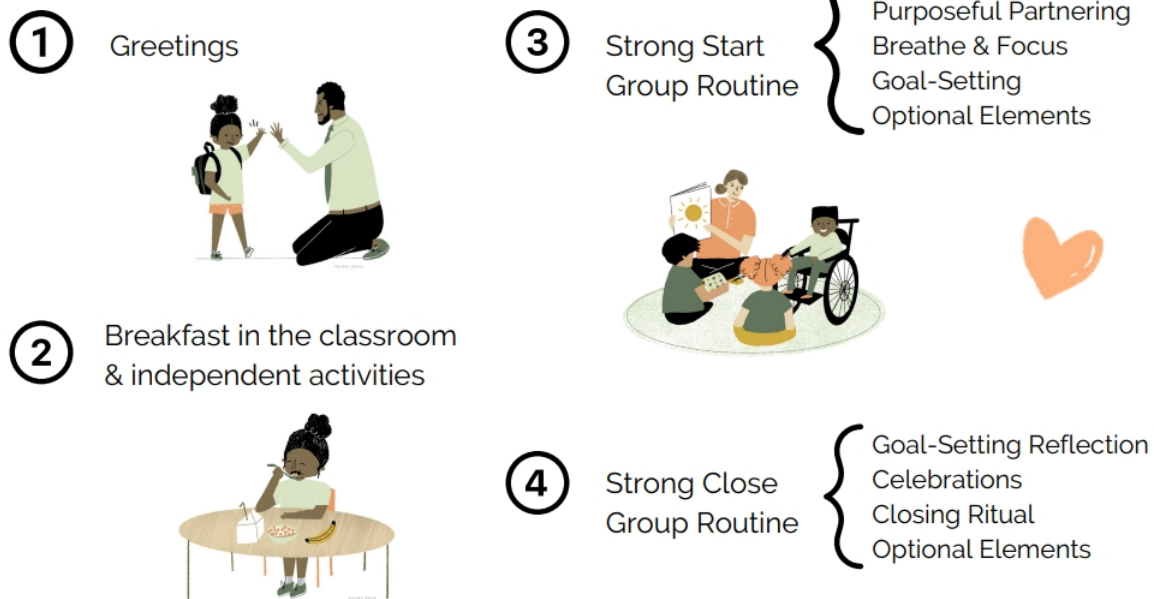


Figure 3.3.1: The elements of a strong start and close.

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.

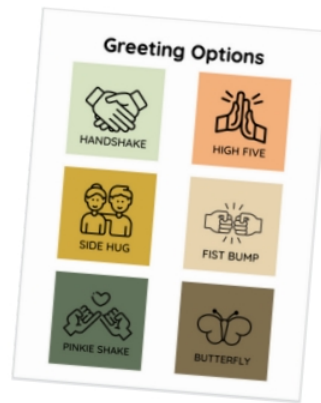


Figure 3.3.2: Visual menu of greetings options.

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 3.3.3: 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 fulfill 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 3.3.4: 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 though 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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3.4: 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 Helper
- 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 3.4.1: Job descriptions are helpful.



Figure 3.4.2: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Positive Guidance Strategies

- 4.1: Factors Influencing Behavior
- 4.2: Redirecting Behavior
- 4.3: Providing Specific and Authentic Support
- 4.4: Addressing Challenging Behavior
- 4.5: Spaces for Emotional Regulation

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4.1: 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 realize can 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!
<i>Don't stand on the chair!</i>	• 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...)

References

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4.2: 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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4.3: 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]

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4.4: 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]

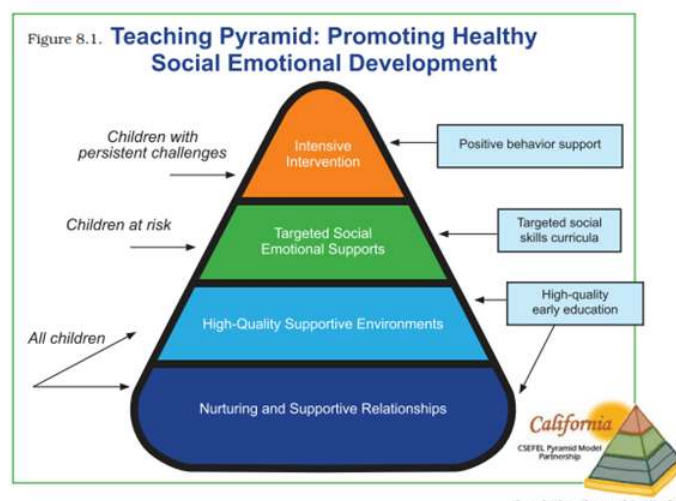


Figure 4.4.1 : Promoting Healthy Social Emotional Development.^[7]

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

References

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4.5: 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

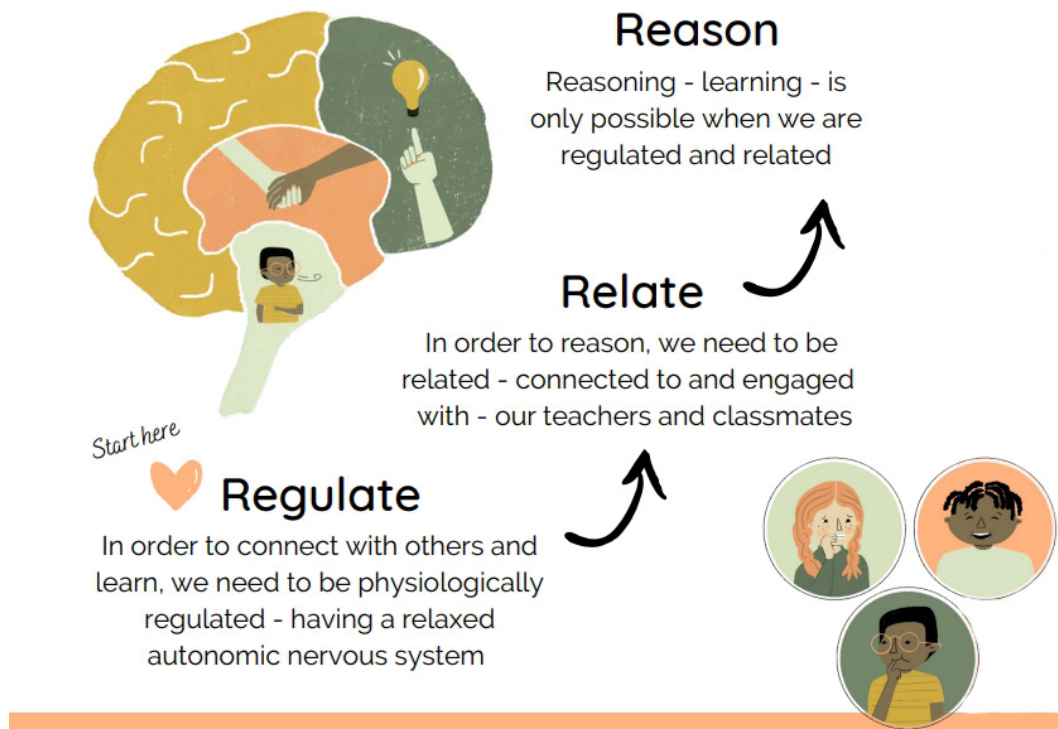


Figure 4.5.1: The Neurosequential Model of regulating, relating, and reasoning

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 4.5.2: 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:

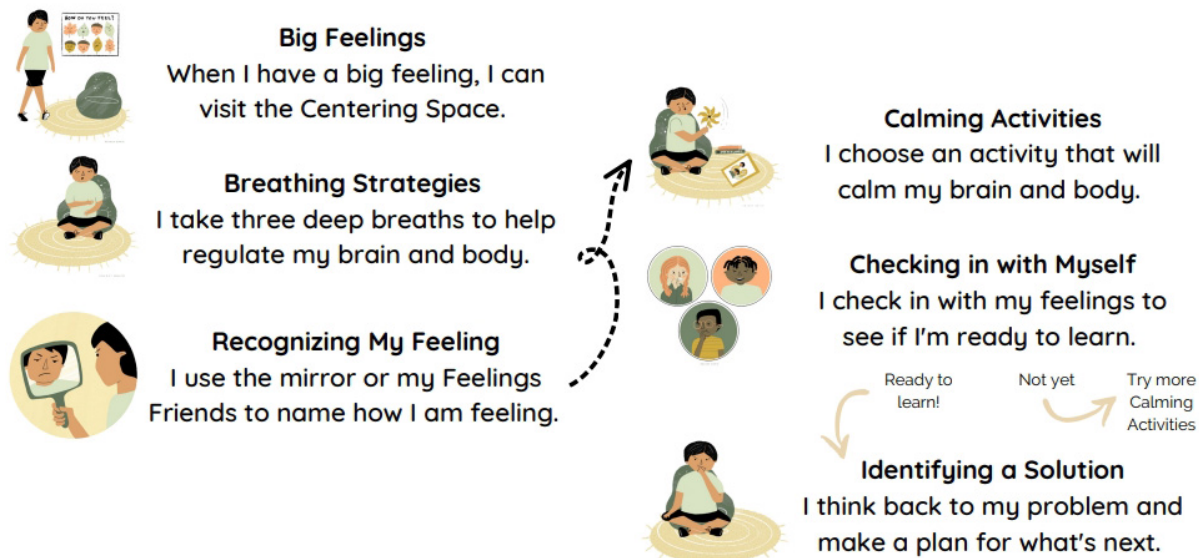


Figure 4.5.3: Helping children learn how to use the Centering Space.

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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Observation and Assessment

- 5.1: Observation
- 5.2: Recording and Analyzing Observations
- 5.3: Assessment
- 5.4: Sample Assessments
- 5.5: Ethical Guidelines for Observation
- 5.6: Observation Do's and Don'ts

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5.1: Observation

Observation is defined as the ability to watch someone or something from a non-biased, factual, and free from personal opinion for a period of time to gain purposeful information about that someone or something. Observations can be both formal and informal. Initially, one may think of observation as the act of watching someone or something. Nevertheless, a valid observation includes an additional actionable step of an analysis of what was observed and involves the practice of reflective thinking.

Not only is observing children a skill necessary for all teachers, but historically teachers have also believed that good observations conducted during the day can give them important information about a child's development, strengths or challenges and can inform curriculum and activity plans in the classroom. Learning how to be a skilled observer who objectively documents child learning interactions honors the uniqueness that each child brings to the learning environment.

The Role of Observations in ECE

Observations can be conducted continually throughout the day over an extended period of time. Teachers who are experienced observers can screen for many things in the classroom including the safety of the learning environment equipment, the health of the child, the developmental milestones or skills of each child, behaviors that occur both inside and outside of the classroom, and each child's learning experience. For example, teachers can use the simplicity of a morning greeting, and a casual conversation with a child playing with building blocks as a way to do a daily health screen to ensure that a child is well enough to interact throughout the day.

Through intentional observations, teachers can also take formal and informal observations that can assist with and ensure accountability for the effectiveness of interactions and inform curriculum. In addition, observations of children can be prepared to share information with co-teachers and the child's family. The effects of intentional observations also include impacting effective learning, improving child guidance skills, supporting child-to-child and adult-to-child social development. In addition, observations assist teachers to provide effective learning, improve teacher-child guidance skills, and support child-to-child and adult-to-child development in many domains.

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 random observations to capture a child's development as it unfolds naturally." (Peterson & Elam 2020) Observations during this free play time can yield important information that teachers can use to support the child to meet their potential.

It is important to remember that useful observation requires using the human senses by being able to watch, listen, and understand children in their learning environment from their perspective. Observations show an educator the fantastic milestones children meet as they grow in their abilities such as, but not limited to, their ability to use their **executive functions**, seek autonomy, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and more. Through observation, teachers can understand the child's unique needs and understand and honor each child's culture.

Reflection

Take a moment to think about your favorite restaurant. What are some of the observations you can make about the restaurant environment that make it your favorite? Could some of those same qualities (such as warm and inviting) apply to early learning classroom environments?

How Much Should Teachers Observe?

Although there is no industry "standard" about how often or how much teachers need to observe children, the average early childhood teacher spends about 45 minutes each day on documentation (www.Himama.com). There is no set amount of number of observations that teachers usually do. That will depend on the number of children enrolled in the childcare, the environment and the program philosophy and curriculum. The goal of observation should be to be sure that accurate documentation of each child is taken that prevents gaps in the records of that child. In other words, don't wait too long or allow too much time to lapse between

observations and the documentation of observations. Accurate progress should paint an accurate flowing story of each child's development.

Some ways that can help with this is continuous process of observing and documenting is to carry a pack of sticky notes with you in your pocket or apron and set up a specific place in the classroom where you can leave the notes for later documentation and interpretation. It is also a good tip to have plenty of paper and writing tools all around the classroom so that there are always materials handy for you to jot down notes.

Learning to observe

The first step in learning to carefully observe children is to learn how to separate your feelings and reactions from what you are seeing to objectively state what is actually happening. It is important to remain **objective** because everyone has biases and preconceived notions about what they *think* they might be observing. It is also important to remember to include enough information that records or paints a picture of the child or scenario and doesn't lack detail that may cause a reader to surmise or insert their own information. Just stick to the facts and think about the reader: they should be able to visually picture themselves in the classroom at that moment and "see" what you observed.

Thorough observations consist of three parts:

1. **Observing:** gathering information about what you see and hear through careful watching and listening.
2. **Recording:** documenting what you have observed.
3. **Interpreting:** reflecting on what you have observed and written.

Often the three parts are referred to as **the observation cycle**. Each of the steps, combined with reflection on behalf of the teacher informs the curriculum that a teacher plans for the classroom and shares with families. This is explained more thoroughly later in this chapter.

For now, let us explore each of the steps more in-depth by focusing first on the observer themselves and then each of the parts that comprise the observation cycle.



Figure 5.1.1: Playing Together is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

The observer themselves

The most important part of the observation is the teacher's ability to be and remain present, intentional, and an active observer. Being fully present in the moment of observation allows the teacher to see the uniqueness of each child and their development. For example, the teacher can observe mannerisms, social and emotional abilities, executive functioning, personal preferences, and dislikes. The teacher can also observe talents, specific interests, or areas of challenge in addition to seeing the overall developmental level of different domains. Being present as an active observer means having the ability to block out any distractions that may be present. To do this, a teacher may have to initiate the help of other teachers to ensure the proper supervision in the classroom and they should try to clear their mind of any other invasive thinking to properly focus on what they are experiencing with the children.

Next, it is important for observers to be knowledgeable about early childhood theory and child development. This knowledge will help the observer set measurable, attainable, relevant, and culturally responsive goals for the child. The observation outcome should be shared with the child's family which will also help teachers to inform practice. In understanding the theories of development, teachers can implement the knowledge of developmental sequence in their observations and assessments. This allows teachers to connect domains of development and communicate those strengths and any areas of concern to families. Teachers should be authentically curious during observations and become learning and growth detectives: “the documenter is a researcher first, collecting as much information as possible to paint a picture of progress and outcomes” (Sietz, 2008).

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5.2: Recording and Analyzing Observations



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Observations can occur from the first greeting of the day until the last goodbye. Observations should be planned and unplanned, while always being careful to ensure proper supervision in the classroom. It is essential to get holistic snapshots of the whole child throughout various times of the day. Additionally, observations should happen in both teacher-directed situations as well as child-directed situations. It is also important to observe during structured and unstructured learning periods both indoors and outdoors. Teachers can also observe relationships: those between children and staff, children and their families, and children engaged in play with children.

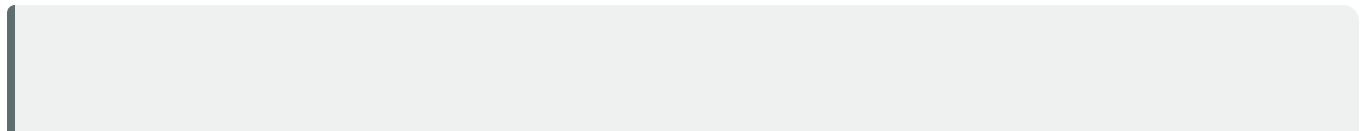
When planning for observations, the teacher or caregiver should be prepared to conduct informal and formal observations both at planned and unplanned times. In this way, the observer can experience authentic representations of the child's skills, knowledge, and behaviors. When conducting observations at varying times and different tools (such as running records, brief notes, anecdotal notes, video/photography, creation of portfolio pages) in natural and comfortable surroundings; the observer can better view authentic representation of the child's knowledge, skills and behaviors in an authentic manner. These tools will be discussed later in the chapter.

It is essential to use tools that provide useful rating scales and documentation methods to observe a child's development level and milestones. There are many methods that can be used to **document** (or record) your observations. In the next section of the chapter, we will explore some of the more common types of records used in early learning environments as well as the language to use when documenting observations.

Language

It is important to remember when writing any records of any kind to avoid “red flag” words or words that are **subjective** rather than **objective**. Subjective (or red flag) words are words that might have a strong emotional meaning to you but are not objectively written that describe the situation. An example of a subjective observation statement is “George and Joshua, two little stinkers in the class, were playing in the block area when George knocked over Joshua amazing tower that he had built”. The same scenario written more objectively is “George, four-years-old and Joshua, three years old were in the block area and George kicked over the tower Joshua had built that was five blocks high”. This type of descriptive language allows the reader to identify who the children were in the scenario, what they were doing, and gives some indication about the skills of the child building the tower. It is specific and non-biased.

Figure 6.1 illustrates some examples of objective vs. subjective statements.



Reflection

Can you identify the “**red flag**” words in these two sentences?

- “Sally seemed happy while she was playing because she had a beaming smile on her pretty face”
- “Antonia has on such a beautiful dress this morning that I noticed as she came into the classroom, however she is sad because she was frowning”.



Image 5.2.2 Building with Blocks is CC by 1.0

Table 1 Subjective vs. Objective is CC by 1.0

Subjective Observations	Objective Observations
Often influenced by personal past events, experiences or opinions. Can be biased based on our own cultural experiences	Based on what is observed using our senses. Recording what is seen, heard, tasted, touched or smelled.
Based on our opinions, assumptions, personal beliefs, feelings, rumors or guesses	Based on facts that are gathered. If it is not seen, don't document it. Only write details and provide vivid descriptions
Results are inconsistent and vary child to child	Results are likely to be valid and reliable child to child
Avoid words like: always, never, can't, happy, smart, helpful, pretty, angry, shy, likes, hates, loves, sad	Include phrases like “seems to be; “appears to”

Types of documentation

There are many reasons why teachers should document observations, and many uses for the documentation that is collected in early learning classrooms. Through documentation, teachers can not only show developmental growth, but they can also provide accountability to families, communities, and administrators extend the learning for children and become more confident in their own teaching. Just as there are many reasons why teachers document, there are many ways to record observations.

The most common way to record developmental milestones is done through anecdotal notes. **Anecdotal notes** are short notes taken by teachers capturing observations. They can be taken on a formal document or shortened form (such as post it notes or index cards). These types of observations can be written after an event and often focus on specific developmental domains. An example of an anecdotal note form is shown in the appendix to this chapter.

Another popular method of documenting development is using running records. A **running record** is a documentation method that has sequentially details of the child's behavior while the observation is taking place and is written in present tense. Running records often require periods of time where the teacher is primarily focused on the activity at hand and is not always an effective way to observe and document while managing groups of children. An example of a running record format can be found in the appendix to this chapter, and there are many ways teachers might choose to adapt or modify the form.

Another method is the use of samples of child work sometimes called a **portfolio**. Child work is a collection of the work samples of the child. These can be writing samples, paintings or other art projects, examples of fine motor work such as cutting samples, and can also include photos of the child at play, such as a child building in the block center, or engaged in a science activity. Many teachers believe that portfolios are the best type of authentic assessment displaying exactly what a child can do and is reflective of their development at a particular point in time. These can be shared with families and is a good way to document growth over time.



Image 5.2.3 Building a Tower for my Portfolio Picture is CC by 1.0

Types of documentation that support teachers in making decisions about a specific child or environment might include time or event sampling also known as structured observations. Deciding which type of sampling a teacher should do is dependent on what the teacher wants to learn about the child or classroom. For example, if a teacher wants to find out how often a particular behavior occurs such as biting or hitting, they might choose a **time sample**. However, if a teacher wants to understand the relationship between the biting behavior of a child and the context of the behavior, an **event sample** is a better documenting choice.

Checklists and **rating scales** are helpful when recording a child's skills and knowledge. A checklist is usually written in a sequential order and offers the teacher the opportunity to check when a behavior or skill is first observed. Many programs create their own checklists based on the curriculum they are following in the classroom. Rating scales can be written in the same way, but often offer a continuum for rating a particular skill or behavior. Examples of both can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

Another observation tool that has become popular with early education teachers to assist with better understanding of behavior is an **ABC Chart**. ABC charts include a column titled "A" for antecedent: the event that occurs before the "B" behavior happens. "C" is the consequence, or event that immediately follows the behavior. This type of documentation gives the teacher information about the relationships that may exist between environments, curriculum or children's peers that influence a behavior.

Lately, digital documentation has become very popular in early learning environments. Using a video or audio recording of a child can be valuable to interpreting observations and are especially useful when documenting language, interactions between children and/or children and staff as well as motor development. In addition, there are some electronic documentation programs that are used in early learning environments such as the tools offered by Teaching Strategies (www.teachingstrategies.com) and apps such as HiMama (<https://www.himama.com>), Seesaw (<https://web.seesaw.me>), ClassDogo (<https://www.classdojo.com/en-gb/?redirect=true>) and Google Classroom (<https://classroom.google.com/u/0/h>) to name a few.

Reflection

What are your thoughts about using electronic documentation in an early learning classroom?

Interpreting the Observation

The last part of the observation cycle is making interpretations of what you have observed and documented. This is when the skills of incorporating what teachers know about child development, developmentally appropriate practice, and the individuality of each child and family will intersect along with the reflective practice of teaching.

Part of what teachers consider when interpreting the information is taking into consideration the many factors that influence how a child acts including: the state of development, health of the child, culture and individual experiences that make each child unique. This is one of the reasons it is so important to use a variety of documentation for each child as well as varying the times, days and environments when gathering information. It is also helpful if a variety of individuals can not only provide documentation but also interpretation. What one teacher may observe, another teacher may not—we all notice different things and have different perspectives.

To illustrate this point, look at image 6.6 below. Some teachers might interpret the behavior one way, while another teacher may have an entirely different perspective or interpretation of the behaviors observed. Behavior is very complex and over time, teachers begin to develop skills interpreting what they see and making adjustments to the environment, the curriculum, or interactions.



Image 5.2.4 I want the book is CC by 1.0

After a teacher observes, documents, and interprets the observation, the final piece is to bring the information back to the parents and work with them to make sure that the child is supported at home and the connection between home and childcare is strengthened. Having meetings with families to discuss concerns and to plan together for the child can help the child to become successful in the classroom.

When Do Teachers Interpret Observations?

All teachers benefit from spending time to reflect on the observations and documentation that they have made in a classroom. However, many teachers question when they could possibly find time for this practice. One recommendation is to begin to find time that already exist within the day. This might include naptime, before families arrive for the day, after families depart, during staff meetings if allowed by administrators or during curriculum planning time. Reflection ties the entire process together and teachers need “a time to slow down, to see what can be learned and carefully look at and listen to ourselves, and those with whom we work” (Parlakian, 2001).

Ethics and Biases of Observations

To remain objective in documenting observations, teachers should always be aware of personal bias. This is done by self-reflecting on a person's implicit and explicit perspectives rooted in one's upbringing. Not being aware of bias, especially implicit bias, teachers can reflect their prejudice through their documentation. According to NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement:

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work. When they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental fairness and justice principles, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.

To effectively practice advancing equity in observation and documentation, an educator must "consider how your own biases (implicit and explicit) may be contributing to your interactions and the messages you are sending children.

To remain objective in documenting observations, educators must be aware of personal bias and strive to eliminate these in the observation and in the analysis of observations. (NAEYC, 2020)

Teachers need to practice responsible documentation that adheres to ethical practices. In doing so, teachers should keep in mind:

- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of both the child and family in the documentation is critical.
- Inform the family of the observations and documentation process and receive permission for any picture or video-based documentation.
- Never force or punish a child into participating in an observation process.
- Do not interfere with the child's natural learning.
- Never lie to a child about what the observer is doing or use rewards like food to get them to comply.
- Never share documentation in any other manner than it does not follow ethical guidelines.

Reflection

Do you think that there any ethical implications when using electronic documentation in an early learning classroom?

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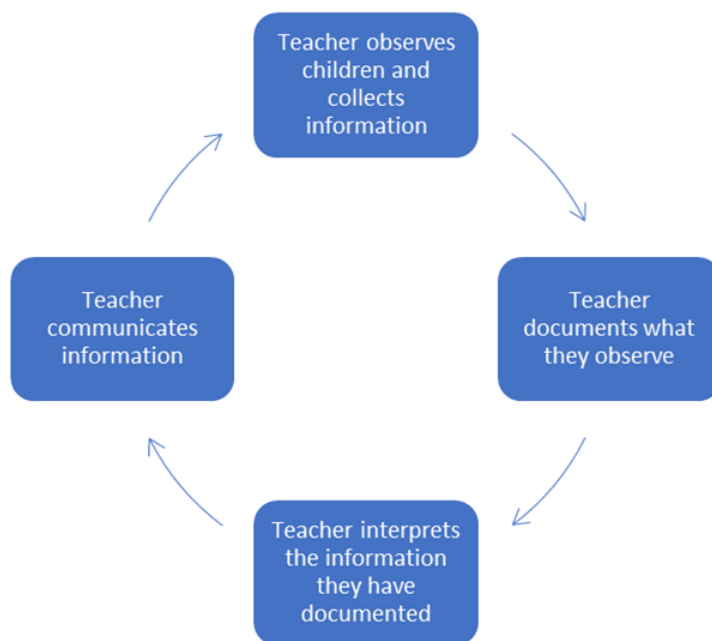
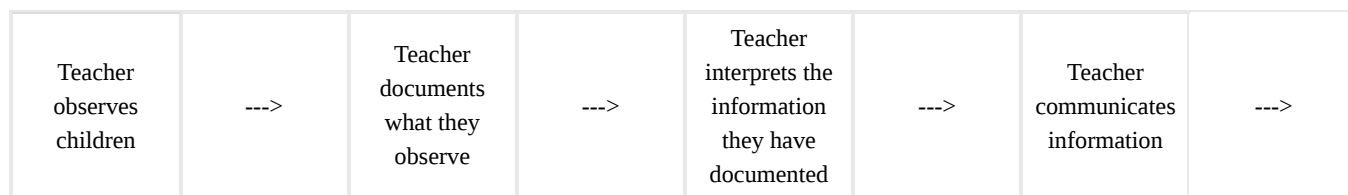
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5.3: Assessment

In the field of early childhood education, assessment of learning is a multipart process that is used to make decisions about the care and education of children. In other words, **assessment** is the evaluation of a child's ability conducted in a natural, culturally relevant learning environment combined with the process of determining the teaching process works in the classroom for both the children and the teacher. The ultimate goal of assessment is to better understand the children you are teaching and provide them with the programming that will meet their individual needs.

The Assessment Cycle

There are four parts to the assessment cycle, a cycle that is often used when building and evaluating curriculum as well as communicating the information a teacher has learned about a child to the family. Simply put into four “steps”, the cycle looks like a continuous loop:



What Does Assessment Look Like in Early Childhood?

Assessments can be done both as a formative and summative approach. The **formative assessment** approach follows the teaching cycle's critical steps, including planning, implementing teaching, assessing student work, informing teaching, and administering through adaptation. Formative assessments can take the form of an informal or formal assessment and in the field of early learning are often called **authentic assessment** and are often carried out while teaching.

Formal assessments maintain a standard of high validity and reliability in their tools. These assessments, in general, follow a predetermined standardized format and are typically administered to all children. Formal assessments are based on research-based development, not taking into consideration biases. Formal assessments follow a national rating scale or desired results developmental profile. Often this type of assessment is called **standardized assessment**. On the contrary, **informal assessment** can be done with a holistic approach. The educator can develop the assessment to address the individual needs of the children and the learning environment.



Image 5.3.1 Assessing Math Skills is CC by 1.0

Summative assessment is gathered usually at the end of the year or developmental people to review the overall development process and are usually taken in the form of some type of test.

In following unbiased and ethically sound observation and documentation practices, the assessment will reflect a central focus of child development. In assessing a child's growth and development, use various assessment tools to support developmentally appropriate, culturally, and linguistically responsive practices. Assessments should be observed and documented during children's daily activities, without disrupting the child's natural learning environment unnecessarily.

According to Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation, (which is a joint position statement of NAEYC and NAECS/SDE) it is important that teachers and early learning environments:

“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 developmentally appropriate assessment methods, 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”.

Assessments should be designed to fairly evaluate children regardless of age, cultural background, home language, economic status, or ability. NAEYC describes assessments as being "Derived from real-world classroom or family contexts that are consistent with children's culture, language, and experiences." (NAEYC, 2020) Additionally, assessments should adhere to professional criteria that are both valid and reliable and captured in a realistic setting.

The assessment process provides a vital part of the teaching and learning cycle that informs teaching practices and helps teachers plan effective curriculum. Through the proper observation and documentation, teachers can assess children's abilities to plan for supported teacher work and independent work in the classroom. Additionally, teachers can also capture a child's interest as part of their learning environment and foster better family partnerships. We will explore how observation and assessment inform curriculum in the last section of this chapter.

Keep in mind that the learning process may look and sound different for each child, and so it is important that teachers are responsive to the individual needs of children. **Authentic assessment** designed in observation-based documentation is an important part of knowing the interests of each child and their current stage of development. When making decisions about curriculum and activities to provide in early learning classrooms, teachers can feel confident that they are providing intentional experiences that support and respect each child's growth, development, and culture.

Any assessment or information that teachers gather about children is information that should be protected. Assessments are confidential and should be stored in ways that protect the privacy of the children and families. Sometimes, other professionals working with children (such as speech therapists, physicians, or other medical professionals) might have interest in assessments conducted by teachers. Generally speaking, sharing of any assessments conducted with children require written permission by the family.

Reflection

What types of child assessment have you conducted in the past?

Do you support standardized assessment of young children? Why or why not?

How Observation and Assessment ties to Curriculum

Effective teachers understand that observations and assessments are also important to help inform teaching practices and guide the learning activities for the children. Observations and assessments are a looking glass into not only the child's physical abilities but also their interests, strengths, and learning gaps.



Image 5.3.2 Learning the Letter E is CC by 1.0

Through observation of several children, a teacher is able to determine if the content planned for the children was absorbed, if a child is struggling developmentally in any areas, if the teaching strategies are effectively supporting students learning, and can provide information that can be shared with families about child growth and development.

Having well planned (and spontaneous) intentional activities throughout the day that are rooted in developmentally appropriate practice gives teachers solid information about how to scaffold and develop learning and curriculum for their classroom.

To illustrate how a teacher might use observations to impact curriculum choices for an individual child, consider this scenario:

Sitting at a moon-shaped table during work time, Jackson, a three-year-old boy, balances a small red dinosaur on the handle of a kitchen spatula. "I, 2, 3, blast off!" he counts as he smacks his hand down onto the blade of the spatula and laughs as the dinosaur flies toward a white mixing bowl on the other side of the table. "Yah! Pool party!" he cheers, pumping his fist in the air as the red dinosaur joins others, landing in the bowl of water with a splash. (Delgado, 2020)

This scenario, observed in a natural environment as children are engaged in play, provides the teacher with a wealth of information about the child's learning, development, and interests. This observation and authentic assessment provides a snapshot of what is happening in the classroom at the time and can provide the teacher with information about Jackson's language and physical development as well as his interests that could inform future activity plans for Jackson himself and the classroom in general.

Thinking about what was observed in the scenario above, let us assume that Jackson's teacher wrote an **anecdotal record** to add to his **portfolio** and share with his family. A sample of the anecdotal record could be:

2/2/20: Jackson, while playing at the table with spatulas and dinosaurs, said "I, 2, 3, blast off" while smacking his right hand on the blade of the spatula, laughing while it flew towards a white mixing bowl at the end of the table. He added "Yah! Pool party!" (physical domain, language).

Next, the teacher then used this observation to plan how to scaffold his learning. In Table 2, we see an example of a learning plan tied to the observation:

Table 2 Jackson's Plan is CC by 1.0

Identify children's interests:	Jackson has been using a spatula as a springboard to propel dinosaurs into his pool.
Identify curriculum or assessment content area:	Experimenting
Part of the Daily Routine:	Small-group time
Description of planned learning experience:	Children will experiment with the use of tongue depressor catapults and small pompoms.
Consider children's developmental levels:	While observing Jackson at play, I noticed he initially repeated the same actions, even when his dinosaurs were not landing int he bowl of water. He was using trial and error rather than drawing correlations between the placement of the spatula and the "landing zone."
Scaffolding strategy:	Begin by supporting Jackson's current level of development: • Imitate his actions • Have him describe his actions: "Tell me how you are using your catapult." • Use parallel talk to describe how his actions are impacting the trajectory of the pompom: "When you placed the catapult directly in front of the landing zone, it landed where you wanted." Gently extend Jackson's learning to the next developmental level: • Introduce new ideas; for example, "what might happen if we move the catapult to the left?" • Model a change in trajectory using your own materials.

It is important to remember when planning for children using observations that learning is a continuum of growth that occurs over time and at differing rates across the domains of development (Copple & Bradekamp, 2009). Keep in mind that a child may be observed to fall into one domain area earlier in their stage of development, and that same child may come into later stages of development in another domain.

Once a teacher has reviewed all of the information gathered from observations, the planning of curriculum can begin. The most effective curriculum in early learning classrooms will include the following:

- it will motivate the child to explore the environment
- inspire children to investigate various centers and activities
- encourage children to explore 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 individual needs

The process of curriculum planning should always have thoughtful reflection at the center of the planning.

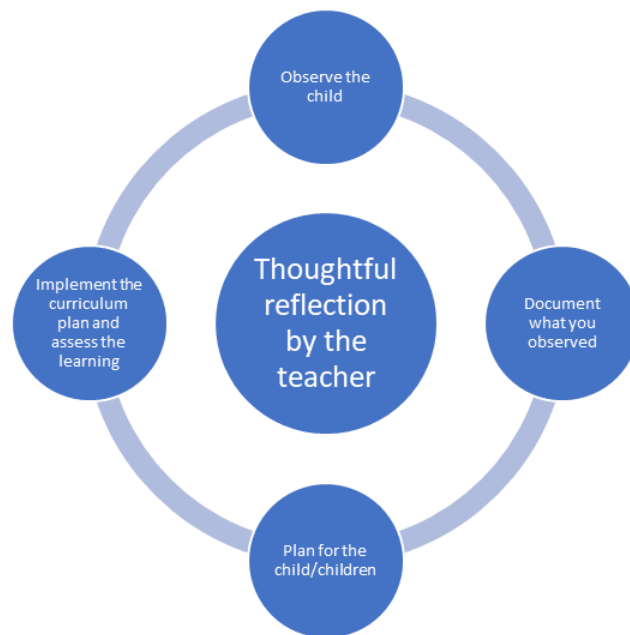


Figure 5.3.3 is CC by 1.0

To summarize briefly how assessment and curriculum are connected: curriculum involves learning concepts through strategies the teacher plans and assessment determines whether the skills or knowledge has been learned. In the scenario with Jackson, the plan the teacher wrote after observing his play becomes the curriculum. Assessment will occur through another observation after the plan is executed and the teacher can determine if the goal of experimenting with tongue depressors deepens and strengthens Jackson's learning.

Through careful observation, documentation, interpretation and reflection, teachers can plan and implement effective curriculum that that each child can thrive as they master major developmental milestones.

Final Thoughts

Teachers who are skilled in child observation become very thoughtful and purposeful in their techniques. As teachers use the combinations of various tools such as running record, anecdotal note, video recording, checklist, frequency counts, and work samples or portfolios, they are learning unique factors about children in order to better help support the child. Teachers are also able to use this information to examine the ecological system of the classroom and develop curriculum. This could range from knowing how to individually engage children as they are developing, how effective the teaching strategies support learning, and if the expectations and goals are at the appropriate level of development.

Lastly, thoughtful observation and assessment of children can provide teachers with the confidence in providing intentional teaching and learning experiences that support the unique needs of each child.

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5.4: Sample Assessments

The samples provided in the Appendix are student samples submitted to college faculty. The names have been changed and student permission was granted to share in this text.

Student Example of Anecdotal Records

Child: Maci, Age 2; 7

Date: 10/18/2019

Note taken: Jameson/arrival/friend

Maci (2; 7): When Jameson arrived and entered through the front door, Maci exclaimed “Jameo! I miss you!” and ran across the room to greet him. She reached out and held his hand. (Social)

Note taken: Maci/chickens/memory

Anecdotal Record: Maci (2; 7): Maci stated “Want to go see chickens again,” referring to the last time she was at the house and went to see the chickens in their coop. (Cognitive/memory)

Student Example of a Running Record

Center: Time: 10:50am

Date: Child/Age: Greyson/4 years, 4 months

Observer: Katie Teacher: Angela

Assistant: Ryleigh

Comments:

10:50am Greyson has red playdough and is sitting at the table in a chair. He stands up to push on the playdough. He picks up the playdough and says “Hey, Katie, look at it!” He made a hole in the playdough with his pointer finger. He says, “I am done with this one.” He puts his playdough back into the container, puts the lid on and climbs up the shelf to put the container away.

10:55am Angela asks Greyson to get down and asks Greyson if he wants another playdough. Greyson says “yes” and Angela hands Greyson an orange playdough. Angela brings out tools for playdough. Greyson says, “Hey Koa, would you like to make a flower?” Greyson rolls the playdough into a ball and hits the table about 10 times. Then he says, “Angela, look!” Angela says “ohhh did you get some red in your orange playdough?” Greyson says “Yes!”

11:00am Greyson gets up and looks for another color of playdough and asks Angela for help opening the purple playdough. He takes the playdough out and uses the roller pin to flatten the playdough. When it is flat, Greyson looks into the playdough tools and finds a flower. He makes a flower shape in his playdough. He pulls the flower out of the playdough and looks at it and immediately puts it back into the same spot where he pulled it out of the playdough and pushes it with his hands. He looks into the bin of playdough tools again and pulls out a dolphin. He pushes the dolphin shape into the playdough. He begins to pull the playdough dolphin out but it doesn’t come out so he squeezes the playdough and sets it on the table. He picks up the roller pin and flattens out the playdough. He pulls out a gingerbread guy from the tools and pushes it into the playdough. Then he picks up the playdough and forms it into a ball again.

11:05am (Missing Rolling pin)

Greyson stands up and says “Hey, where is it?!” He looks on the ground under the table and says again, “Hey, where did it go?” Angela says, “Here, do you want this one?” Greyson says “No! I want the one I had!” Angela finds the rolling pin that he had with another child, she trades the other child for the one in her hand, for the one Greyson was using and hands the roller pin back to Greyson. Greyson says, “he took it from me!” Angela tells Greyson that it probably just rolled over to the other child. Greyson stands up from the table and walks to where the other playdough tools go and says, “where are the other playdough toys?” Angela finds the toys he wants and hands Greyson the bag of toys. Greyson dumps out the bag of toys.

11:10am He finds a ghost shape and pushes into the flat playdough, he picks up the ghost and says, “ohhhhh ohhhhh” and looks me in the eyes and says, “it’s a ghost!” With a smile on his face. He continues to make 3 more playdough shapes. He makes his playdough flat and finds a long (approximately 5 inches long) and skinny (like a straw) green flower and he tries to stand it up in the playdough. Greyson says, “no no no” (approximately 10-15 times) when the green toy is falling. Then he picks up the green toy and says, “la la la” approximately 10-15 times in a weird, growly raspy voice. Then he picks up a letter “B” and hits it about 6 times into the playdough in front of him. He says, “Hey, look Miss Katie” and then he pushes on the B marks on the playdough.

11:15am Observation ends

Conclusion: Greyson enjoyed playing with playdough. He liked to try out the different colors and seems to have a good memory of what toys are normally offered. He liked to make the playdough shapes and then roll them into a ball and flatten them out again. He did this without struggling so it appears that his fine motor skills are appropriate for his age. He did seem to get upset when couldn’t find the roller pin but he did not lose his self-control and was able to continue his play when he had the roller pin returned to him. Greyson also likes to show his work to his teachers.

Preschool Skills

PHYSICAL:

FINE MOTOR:

- Uses fingers and hands
- Can use scissors
- Strings beads on a shoelace

GROSS MOTOR:

- Uses balance skills
- Traveling skills (running, skipping)
- Bounce a ball
- Throws a ball overhand

COGNITIVE:

- Follows directions (1-3 steps)
- Builds/creates and tells what it is
- Problem solves
- Can categorize by a physical feature (color, size)

Student Example of a Checklist

Skills	Almost Always	Often	Sometime	Almost Never
1. Can follow rules			X	
2. Share with others			X	
3. Manage bathroom needs	X			
4. Separate from parents easily	X			
5. Can put coat/jacket on/off	X			
6. Makes activity choices without teacher help	X			
7. Wash hands	X			
8. Use words/signs to state basic needs	X			
9. Asks for help when needed	X			
10. Help set up table	X			
11. Bounce a ball	X			
12. Runs without falling or tripping	X			
13. Climbs up and down without tripping	X			
14. Jumps with one or two feet	X			
15. Rides a tricycle	X			

Student Example of a (partial) Rating Scale

Literary Rating Scale

Child's Name: _____

Interest in Books			
No interest, avoids	Only if adult initiated	Rings books to adult to read	Looks at books as self-initiated activity
Listening to Books			
Wiggly, no attention	Intermediate attention	Listens in one-on-one situation	Listens as a part of a group, tuning out distractions
Involvement with books being read			
Little or no response	Emotional response, laugh, frown	Comments, asks questions	Joins in during reading

Student Example of a Time/Event Sampling Record

Time:	Manipulatives	Blocks	Dramatic Play	Art	Science	Library/writing	Puzzles
9:30	2	2	2	0	1	3	1
9:35	5	2	0	0	0	0	2
9:40	3	2	2	0	0	2	0
9:45	4	2	2	0	0	2	0
9:50	3	3	2	0	0	2	0

The children enjoyed playing at the manipulative center, and the block area. This sample shows that the art center was not used at all during the 20 minute observation sample. I believe that the manipulative center was the most populated because the children got to choose between the whole shelf of toy bins to find the one, they wanted to use, because they had more to choose from the kids stayed there longer and were more engaged in their activity. The block room was another area that was consistently full, the teachers in this class chose to only allow two children in that room at a time because the children would fight over the toys in that area.

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5.5: Ethical Guidelines for Observation

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 5.5.1: Observing the world through a different lens. (Public Domain; [Andrew Seaman](#) on [Unsplash](#))

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5.6: Observation Do's and Don'ts

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

Table 5.6.1: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Learning Environments

[6.1: Measuring Quality with Environmental Rating Scales](#)

[6.2: Indoor Learning Environments](#)

[6.3: Outdoor Learning Environments](#)

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6.1: 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.

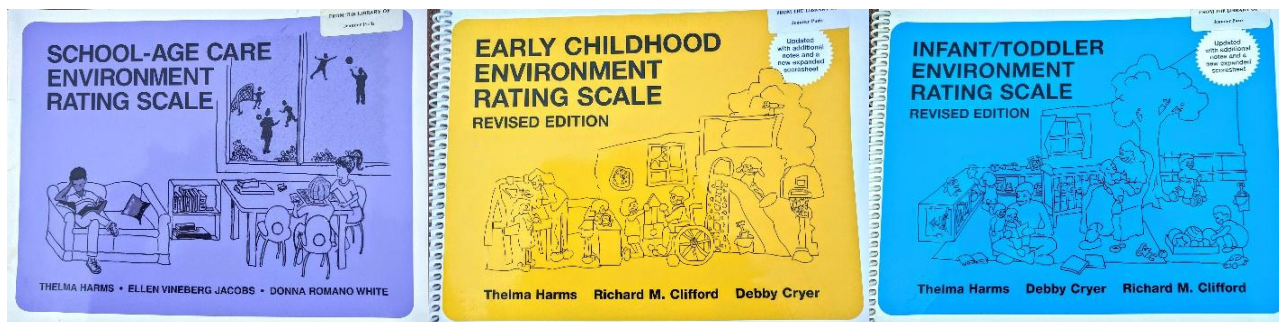


Figure 6.1.1: Rating Scale Texts ^[12]

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 6.1.2: 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. 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 \(NAEYC\)](https://www.naeyc.org/) (link: <https://www.naeyc.org/>) and the [National Early Childhood Program Accreditation \(NECPA\)](https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation) ^[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 6.1.2: In the right environment children thrive [20]

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6.2: 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 place 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 6.2.1 [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 6.2.2 [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 6.2.3 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 quiet 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.
- Learning 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 wheels 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.

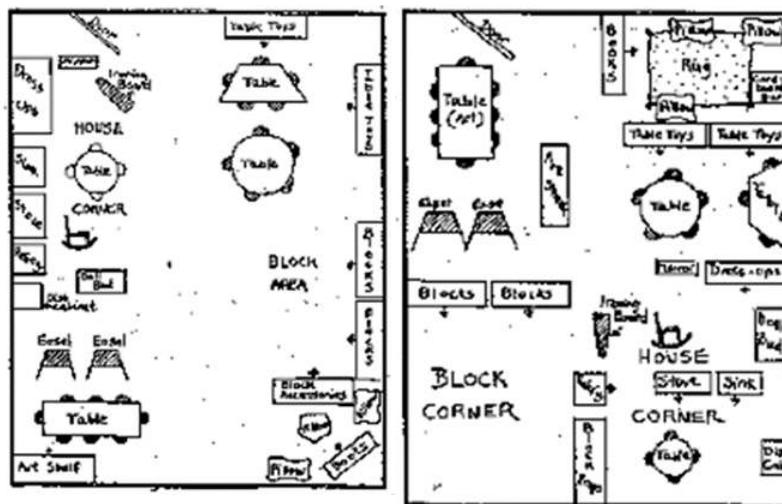


Image 6.2.4 Drawing of undefined and defined space Photo by S.Leek is licensed under [CC by 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/1.0/)

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 6.2.5 [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 is 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 plants, 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 6.2.6 Family Child Care Outdoor Mud Kitchen Photo by Sleek is licensed under [CC by 1.0](#)

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6.3: 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 6.3.1 [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

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7.1: 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 WMEELS 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 7.1.1 : 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.

OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com/c/09df4c43-f4d5-...1-8a828d822ff7>

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7.2: 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.

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- [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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7.3: 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.

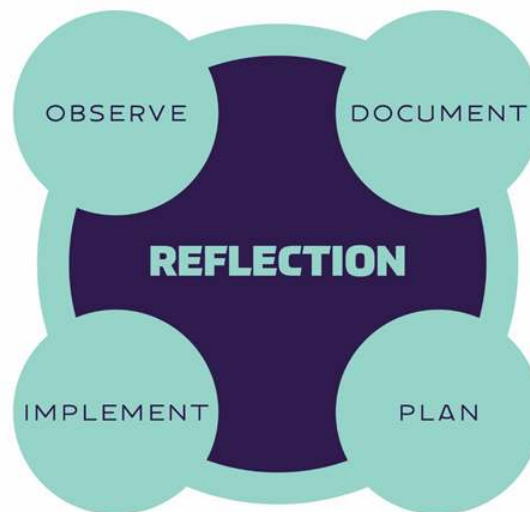


Figure 7.3.1 : The California Curriculum Planning Cycle.[4]

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 data 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.

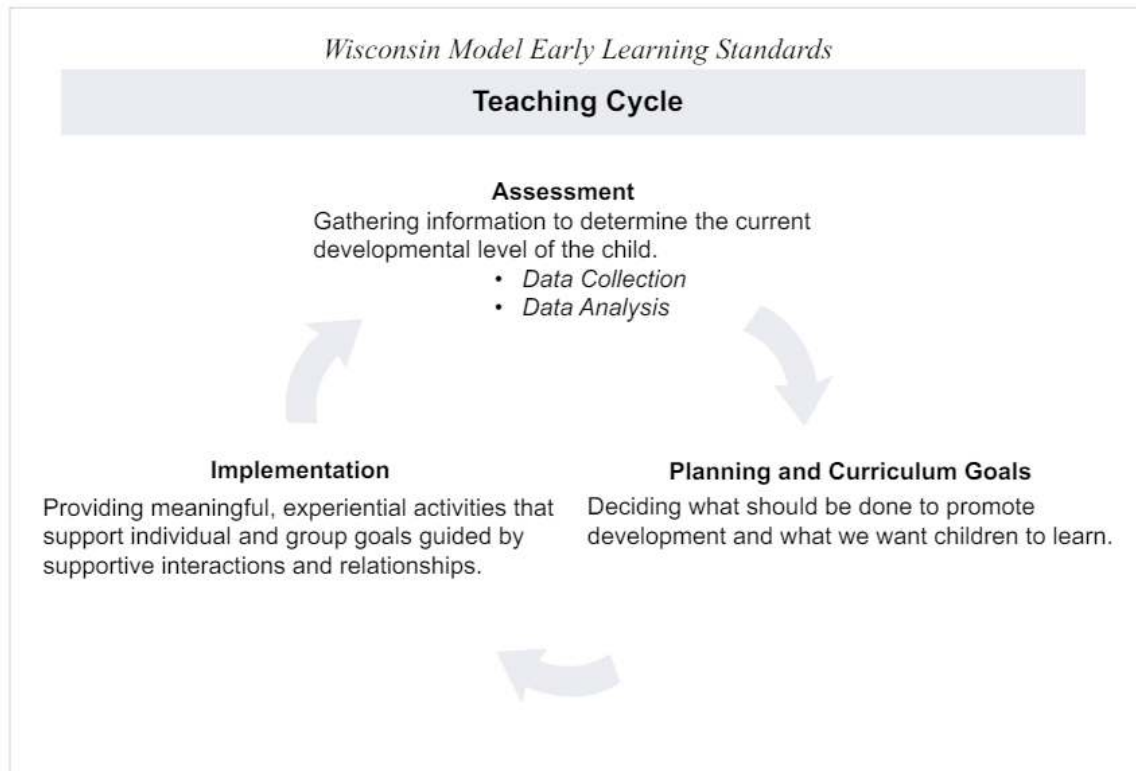
The teachers examined and reflected on what they saw in the children's writings and drawings on the clipboards. They decided that some of the work samples were significant in showing how individual children were developing an idea, concept, or skill. They filed those samples in the children's portfolios 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 WMEELS 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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7.4: 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.

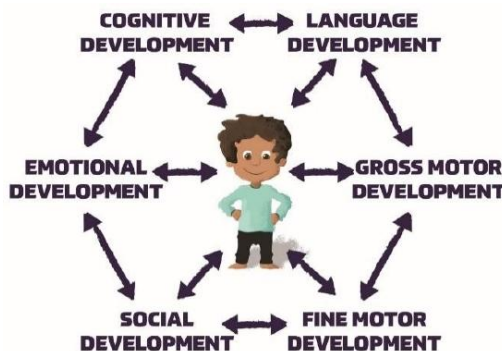


Figure 7.4.1: All areas of development affect and are affected by each other^{lxix}

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 7.4.2: 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 7.4.3 – Constructive Play Figure 7.4.4 – Creative Play



Figure 7.4.5 – Exploratory Play Figure 7.4.6– Socio-dramatic Figure 7.4.7– 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 7.4.1 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

SYMBOL / SYMBOLIC REASONING

Sounds and letters are put together to represent things

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

Listening, understanding, responding

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Speaking, communicating, conversation

GRAPHIC (WRITTEN) LANGUAGE/ LITERACY

Interest in print & books, phonology, prereading, reading

Symbol, letter, print knowledge, prewriting, writing

ABILITY TO EXERCISE JUDGEMENT

Notice, label, and make choices

Think through consequences

Evaluate effectiveness of choices

Learn to take another viewpoint

ENJOYING ONE'S SELF AND ONE'S POWER

Acquire a sense of self

Develop self-confidence and self-esteem

Build trust in self and others

Reveal own personality

Learn to take risks & learn from mistakes

Become competent in several areas

Interactions



Figure 7.4.8– Teachers will interact with 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.

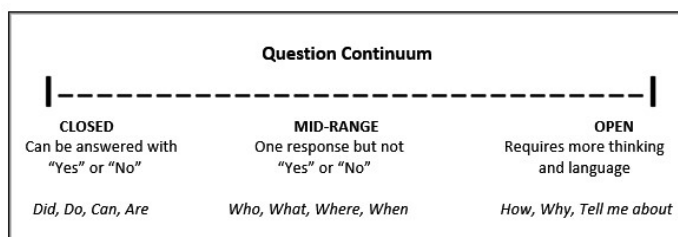


Figure 7.4.10 – The question continuum^{lxxvii}

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.

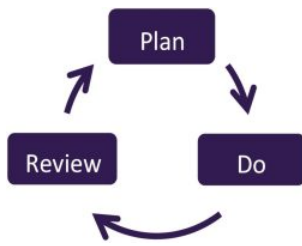


Figure 7.4.11 – Plan Do Review Cycle

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, **implemented** 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 with teacher 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 7.4.12 – 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 7.4.12 – 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 Educators)** – 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?

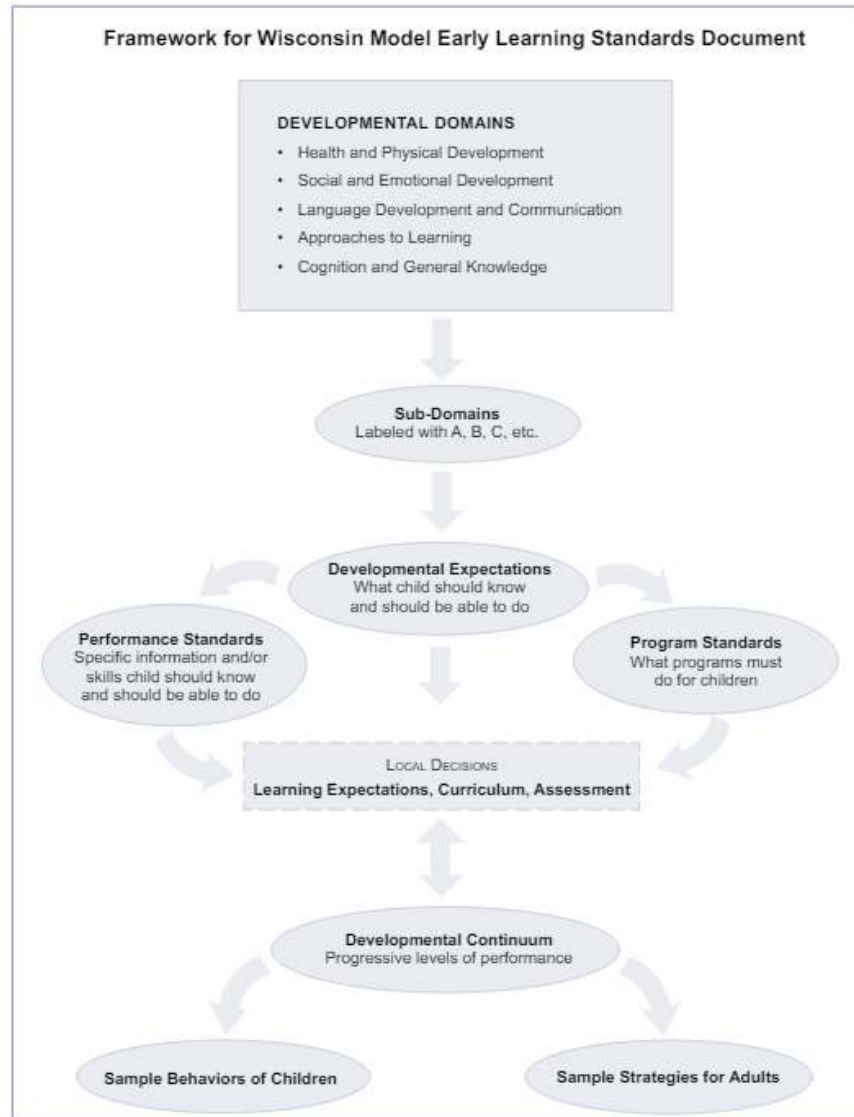
How will you use them?

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7.5: Incorporating Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Framework

WMELS Framework

Please see page 2-3 of the [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards](#) to learn more about the framework.



The WMELS Framework is built in to your lesson plan form for your learning experiences. You will be including:

1. The Domain
2. The Sub-Domain
3. The Performance Standard
4. The Developmental Continuum
5. Sample Behaviors of the Children and how they align or relate to your activity.

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7.6: Effective Transitions During Learning Experiences

Effective Transitions

Transitions that are effective will:

1. Make your day flow smoothly.
2. Gain the children's attention or interest.
3. Help you to give directions about what is coming next or how the children should do something.
4. Help you move the children from one activity to another in an orderly fashion.
5. Transitions can also help you to assess what they children have learned.

Types of Transitions for Your Learning Experience Plans

1. Gaining Attention and/or Interest: You will want to plan a transition for your introduction to your activities that will gain the children's attention and entice them to want to do the upcoming activity. Some ideas for this include songs or fingerplays related to the activity, surprise boxes or bags, puppets, drawing their attention to previous learning and helping them make a connection to the new learning that will occur in the activity.

An effective transition gains their attention and focus. It is interesting and helps the children to be excited about the upcoming activity. This is an example of what an effective transition is **NOT**. Telling the children "Ok, we are going to read a story", or "We are going to do this activity.", or "Who wants to...."

2. Dismissal Transition: You will be planning a dismissal transition from your activity to the next activity in the day or from the directions part of your activity to the area they will go next to complete the next part of the activity.

You can use this as a time to assess what the children have learned by asking them a question. You will ask the children a question, one at a time. Once the child answers, they are dismissed to the next activity.

Please be thoughtful and intentional in your transition activities. It is best when you can connect them to the learning or theme of the activities they are doing.

Transitions

It is important to focus on creating and managing smooth transitions between activities in the classroom. Reasons to address transitions between activities in early childhood classrooms include:

- Transitions take up a great deal of time in preschool classrooms.
- During transitions, children often spend a lot of time waiting (e.g., waiting until everyone has finished their snack, waiting for everyone to clean up before beginning large group time). All of this time waiting with nothing to do can lead to unrealistic expectations and challenging behaviors.
- Some children (and adults) have stressful and frustrating experiences during transitions between activities (e.g., children arguing over who took out what toys and who should put them away; children not knowing where to put certain toys when they are done with them; children not knowing what to do, children not knowing expectations for the transition).
- Many preschool teachers and other caregivers consider children's ability to independently make transitions between activities one of the essential skills needed in group contexts such as preschool and kindergarten.^[1]

Supporting Successful Transitions

There are numerous strategies that can be used to ensure well-organized transitions between activities. These include strategies you use before the transition, during the transition, and following the transition.

- **Before the Transition**
 - Plan your daily schedule to include the minimal number of transitions that occur over the course of the day. Minimize the number of transitions in which all children have to do the same thing at the same time (e.g., Do all children have to go to the

restroom at the same time? Can some children come over to the rug and sing a song or read a book, while other children finish an activity?).

- Plan for what adults will do during transition times (e.g., Which adult is responsible for greeting the children? Who will begin looking at books on the carpet with children?).
- Teach children the expectations for the transition routine. Teaching children how to clean up and how to line up will reduce the length of transition times. By reducing transition times, more time is available for children to spend in other learning activities. As children become familiar with the expectations, problem behaviors are less likely to occur.
- Provide verbal and nonverbal cues before transitions (e.g., “Five minutes ‘til snack. It’s almost time for clean-up,” show pictures of the next activity, beat a drum). Once a transition cue has been established, the cue should be used consistently to signal the transition.
- **During the Transition**
 - Engage children in transition activities (sing songs, play word or guessing games, recite rhymes, organize finger plays). Transition activities provide children with an activity to complete while other children are still transitioning. These activities also encourage children to finish their previous task, so that they can play the game or sing the song. During these activities, skills related to the transition can also be taught (e.g., setting the table for snack or lunch, sorting toys during clean-up time).
 - Allow children adequate time to finish projects or activities so they do not become frustrated by activities ending too soon. Give them a warning that it is about time to change activities.
 - Plan something to engage those children who finish an activity quickly, so they are not waiting without anything to do (e.g., if some children finish cleaning up and getting to large group quickly, they might look at books while waiting for other children to finish cleaning up).
 - Individualize support to accommodate individual children’s needs.
 - Photos to help anticipate what activity is next.
 - Directions given in a child’s home language or sign language.
 - An individual warning to a child that it will soon be time to clean up and begin a new activity.
- **Support may need to be individualized** (i.e., one child may need an adult to provide a five-minute, three-minute, and one-minute warning before clean up while the rest of the class might need only a three-minute warning).
- **After transitions**
 - Provide positive attention and feedback to children following transitions.
 - When children pick up toys without much prompting, share with them how this shows how well they take care of the classroom materials.
 - When children are working together to accomplish the task more quickly, let them know how much you appreciate their teamwork (e.g., “Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning together and moving to the carpet”).

You can also work to promote independence during transitions by

- Allowing children to move individually from one area to another area when they complete an activity (e.g., as children finish snack, they are encouraged to go to the carpet and choose a book; as children finish putting away their coats and backpacks, they are encouraged to get a puzzle).
- Teaching children to help others (e.g., have children move as partners from one activity to another, or ask one child to help another child gather his/her backpack).
- Helping children self-monitor during transitions (e.g., children can be asked to think about how quietly or quickly they moved from one activity to another).

The following vignette offers an opportunity to watch and listen for the learning that occurs during a transition routine and to reflect on the planning that had to occur in order for this experience to play out as it did.

Vignette

Ms. Cone had used the children’s name tags in transition activities for quite some time, at first pointing out and naming the first letter in each name as she called children to go wash hands or to get their jackets before going outside. Somewhat later, she held up each of the nametags and pointed to the first letter as she asked the child to name it. Today, she is using the first sounds

in names to send a few children at a time from the circle time area to wash hands for lunch: “If your name starts with /k/, you may go wash your hands. Yes, Connie and Carolina, you may go to the sink. Both of your names start with the /k/ sound.” Cindy sees Connie and Carolina stand up, and she stands up too. Ms. Cone explains that Cindy begins with the /s/, not /k/ sound, and that she’ll get a turn soon. Cindy says, “I’m a C too!” Ms. Cone says, “Oh, you are right. Your name begins with the letter c like Connie and Carolina, but it starts with a different sound. We hear /k/ at the beginning of Connie and Carolina—/k/ Connie, /k/ Carolina. We hear /s/ at the beginning of your name—/s/—Cindy. I’m going to say that sound next: ‘If your name starts with /s/, you may go wash your hands.’” Sabrina stood up, joined hands with Cindy, and they walked to the sink together.

[2]

Built into this large-group gathering is a dismissal ritual that takes full advantage of young children’s interest in their names and the names of their friends. As part of this dismissal ritual, the teacher invites children to use their emerging skills in distinguishing the distinct sounds of language, described in the language and literacy foundations as phonological awareness. She embeds this learning in the context of a game, one that inspires children to listen carefully to the sounds spoken in instructions for inviting small groups of children to wash hands. The transition from large group to the sink area goes much more smoothly as a result, and in the process, children get to use an important emerging skill.

References

[1] [Guide to Presenting Managing the Classroom: Classroom Transitions](#) by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) is in the public domain

[2] [The Integrated Nature of Learning](#) by the [California Department of Education](#) is used with permission

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7.7: Appropriately Challenging Learning Experiences

Appropriately Challenging Learning Experiences Aligns with the Following Head Start Guiding Principles:

1. Each child is unique and can succeed.
2. Learning occurs within the context of relationships.
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 focused on how children learn and grow.

For more information see the [Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five](#)

Once again, by observing the children in the group, teachers can plan learning experiences and activities that are individually appropriate for the group of children and individual children in the group by noticing their interests and developmental levels. Remember the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) from Vygotsky. Children learn best when the activities and learning experiences are just slightly above their current level of development and they have the guidance and support of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), meaning we don't want the activities to be too easy or boring for them or overly difficult or too challenging for them.

To begin to understand how to plan effective, developmentally appropriate curriculum for children, we must look at the context in which that planning should happen. Planning everything, from the flow of the day, to how teachers design and stock the classroom environment, to the way the spontaneous (unplanned) experiences of children are recognized and valued, to the experiences teachers thoughtfully plan and intentionally implement, happens in a continuous cycle. As we will discuss in this chapter that cycle begins with observing and continues through documenting what was observed, reflecting on what it means and how to plan to best support children, and then implementing those plans, before returning back to observing.^[1]

Planning curriculum for young children begins with teachers discovering, through careful listening and observation, each child's development. Observation is an essential skill for a teacher. When teachers mindfully observe, they discover how individual children make meaning in everyday moments of play and interactions and how to deepen their relationships with children. Observing for the purpose of assessing individual children's learning means carefully watching and listening, with thought and reflection. In doing so, teachers find the knowledge, awareness, and strategies that individual children have formed during their experiences. It may be evidence that pertains to individual children's emotional, social, cognitive, or physical development. If the evidence is clear and significant, teachers can preserve it through, for example, a note, a photo, or a sample of a child's work.

Consider this example in which a teacher plans a relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging language and literacy activity.

Vignette

Garden Theme Example

Below is an example of a unit that is appropriately challenging for preschool children.

Theme: Growing a Garden

The unit's central topic is plants and gardening, with connected experiences across disciplines. The activities are designed to be developmentally appropriate while also challenging enough to promote critical thinking and problem-solving.

1. Science: Observing Plant Growth

Activity: Plant seeds in small cups and observe their growth over time.

Challenge: Encourage children to predict what will happen to the seeds and why, fostering early scientific reasoning. Use magnifying glasses to observe the seeds, roots, and stems closely.

Support: Provide vocabulary words like roots, stems, leaves, and grow, introducing new terms in a meaningful context.

2. Math: Measuring Plants

Activity: Measure the plants' growth using non-standard units (blocks or string) and compare measurements over time.

Challenge: Ask the children to predict which plant might grow the fastest or tallest and why. Incorporate basic graphing activities to chart the growth.

Support: Offer visual aids, like charts, to help children understand the concept of measurement.

3. Literacy: Garden-Themed Story Time

Activity: Read books like **The Tiny Seed** by Eric Carle and discuss the journey of a seed.

Challenge: Engage the children in a dialogic reading by asking open-ended questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why do you think the seed needs sunlight?"

Support: Encourage the children to retell the story in their own words and introduce new vocabulary related to plants.

4. Art: Creating a Garden Mural

Activity: Create a large mural of a garden with different plants, flowers, and bugs. Each child can contribute by drawing or painting a part of the mural.

Challenge: Ask the children to include details they have learned about plants in their artwork (e.g., roots underground, flowers on stems).

Support: Provide pictures of plants and bugs to guide their work and assist with identifying different parts.



5. Music & Movement: Growing Like a Plant

Activity: Have the children engage in a movement activity where they pretend to grow from a small seed into a tall plant, moving through different stages of development.

Challenge: Guide them through the sequence of growth, introducing concepts like **sprouting** and **blossoming** through movement.

Support: Use a song or rhythmic clapping to help the children stay engaged and focused on each stage.

By connecting each experience to the central theme of gardening, children are encouraged to think critically and apply their knowledge across disciplines.

Play Center Examples for a Garden Theme

1. Dramatic Play Center: Garden Shop

- **Setup:** Transform the dramatic play area into a "garden shop" or farmers' market. Include props such as toy fruits and vegetables, gardening tools (kid-safe trowels, watering cans), baskets, seed packets, aprons, and cash registers.
- **Activities:** Children can role-play as gardeners, farmers, or customers buying plants and vegetables. They can plant and harvest pretend vegetables or flowers, "sell" their produce, and practice customer interactions.
- **Skills Developed:** Language development through role-play, social skills, early math skills (money exchange), and vocabulary related to gardening (e.g., plant names, tools).

2. Sensory Table: Planting Station

- **Setup:** Fill the sensory table with soil, small containers, real or fake plants, seeds, and child-sized gardening tools. Add watering cans and pretend worms or bugs for a tactile experience.
- **Activities:** Children can dig, plant seeds, water them, and watch their pretend garden grow. You can include flowers or plants they can stick into the soil for creative planting.
- **Skills Developed:** Fine motor skills (scooping, planting), sensory exploration, scientific inquiry, and vocabulary related to plant life.

3. Block Center: Garden Design

- **Setup:** Provide building blocks, toy trees, flowers, animals, fences, and other accessories that can be used to create a garden or farm. Include small toy people to act as gardeners or farmers.

- **Activities:** Encourage the children to design and build their own garden spaces, complete with plant beds, greenhouses, and garden paths. They can work together to construct larger structures, such as garden sheds or barns.
- **Skills Developed:** Spatial reasoning, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity.

4. Art Center: Nature-Inspired Crafts

- **Setup:** Set up an art area with materials like paper, paint, tissue paper, glue, natural materials (leaves, flowers), and flower stamps. Provide pictures of different flowers, trees, and plants for inspiration.
- **Activities:** Children can create flower collages, leaf rubbings, or paint their own garden scenes. Encourage them to use real leaves or flowers in their art. Another option is to create seed packets by decorating small envelopes and placing pretend or real seeds inside.
- **Skills Developed:** Fine motor skills, creativity, early literacy (if they "label" their seeds or plants), and artistic expression.



5. Science/Discovery Center: Growing Plants

- **Setup:** Include real plants, seeds, pots, magnifying glasses, measuring cups, and rulers. Set up clear containers for children to observe roots growing.
- **Activities:** Children can plant seeds in small cups and observe the growth process over time. Provide magnifying glasses to look closely at the parts of plants, and have rulers handy for measuring plant height. You could also display an ongoing experiment like growing beans in a plastic bag with wet cotton balls.
- **Skills Developed:** Observation, prediction, measuring, and an understanding of the plant life cycle.

6. Writing Center: Garden Journals

- **Setup:** Provide notebooks or journals, pencils, crayons, and stamps/stickers with plant or garden themes. Include pictures of plants, bugs, and flowers for reference.
- **Activities:** Encourage children to draw and write about their gardening experiences, either from real-life observations or pretend play. They can track the growth of plants they've planted in the discovery center or record what they "sell" in the garden shop.
- **Skills Developed:** Fine motor skills (writing, drawing), emergent literacy, and documentation skills.

7. Math Center: Counting and Sorting Seeds

- **Setup:** Provide seed packets with different types of seeds (real or pretend), small containers, tweezers, and counting mats. Include measuring cups and a balance scale.
- **Activities:** Children can count and sort seeds by type, size, or color. They can also use tweezers to place seeds in containers for a fine motor challenge. Another option is to set up a "seed store" where they "sell" seeds by counting specific amounts for each "customer."
- **Skills Developed:** Counting, sorting, patterning, fine motor control, and early math concepts.

8. Outdoor Center: Garden Exploration

- **Setup:** Create a small outdoor garden space with pots, soil, and real plants. Include a variety of child-friendly gardening tools.
- **Activities:** Children can help plant flowers or vegetables, water plants, and explore the life cycle of plants. They can take turns being the "gardener" and check on the growth of the plants daily.
- **Skills Developed:** Responsibility, sensory exploration, nature appreciation, and understanding of plant growth.

These garden-themed centers provide children with a rich, interdisciplinary experience while allowing them to explore the natural world, engage in pretend play, and develop essential early skills in literacy, math, science, and social development.

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7.8: Managing the Daily Schedule

One feature of a well-organized classroom is the use of a schedule and established routines. Schedules and established routines are important because they influence a child's social and emotional development. While referred to as the daily schedule, it is important to recognize that the flow, or the predictable order of the day, should be the focus (rather than abiding by rigid timelines for the different parts of the day). While there may be parts of the day that are at fixed times (for example meals or using a shared outdoor space), teachers should use flexibility to make the schedule meet the needs of the children. If an activity seems to be coming to a natural conclusion earlier, consider transitioning to the next part of the day. If children are really engaged in an activity, consider giving them additional time to wrap up their exploration. Flexibility also comes in handy when there are changes that affect the schedule that are beyond your control, such as bad weather preventing outdoor play.^[1]

Why Have a Daily Schedule?

Schedules are important because they:

- **Help children know what to expect:**
 - Schedules and routines help children understand the expectations of the classroom environment—which may be very different than in other settings.
 - Knowing expectations may lower behavior problems.
- **Enhance feelings of security:**
 - Predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable.
 - Those children who have difficulty with change especially need to feel secure.
 - Children who do not yet speak and understand English well also benefit from predictable and consistent classroom schedules and routines.
- **Influence a child's cognitive and social development:**
 - When periods of play are longer, children engage in more complex social and cognitive play.
- **Increase child engagement rates:**
 - Child engagement is defined as the amount of time a child spends interacting with his or her environment (adults, peers, or materials) in a developmentally and contextually appropriate manner, at different levels of competence.
 - Schedules that give children choices, balanced activities, planned activities, and individual activities result in a higher level of engagement.

Several factors influence child engagement:

- **Attention span of children:**
 - Plan activities to maximize children's engagement:
 - Use other adults to assist.
 - Use novel materials.
 - Limit duration to ensure children stay engaged throughout the activity.
- **Alertness level:**
 - Plan activities that require more child attention and listening skills during times when children are more alert.
 - Plan calming activities after active activities.
 - Note if some children may be tired or sick.
- **Adult availability:**
 - For a more active part of your day, you may want to have more adults to support the children's learning and the management of the classroom.
- **Time for children's needs**—allow enough time for children to fully engage and benefit from an activity. When children engage in longer periods of play they:
 - Show higher levels of exploration, experimentation, and persistence.
 - Utilize materials in more creative ways.

- Develop social relationships.[2]

Creating the Daily Schedule

The first component is “**blocks of time**,” -- the big chunks of time set aside for classroom activities. Preschool schedules typically include:

- Large group or circle time
- Child-initiated play time
- Snack time and meals
- Outdoor time
- Rest time

The next component is the **sequence**. Sequencing the blocks of time requires taking into consideration multiple factors including:

- Method of arrival/departure (bus or transportation provided by families)
- Schedules of other classrooms (e.g., which classroom goes outdoors at what times?)

Schedules include some of the daily routines such as meal times, but may not include others such as bathroom breaks or clean up routines.



Figure 5.11: This is a visual schedule that shows children images of the different parts of their day.[3]



Figure 5.12: Here is a schedule that combines visual cues, written times, and text descriptions.[4]

Finding Balance in the Schedule

When planning the schedule you want to provide balance. This includes:

- Alternating active with quiet activities to help children with self-control.
- Having a mix of small group and large group activities.
- Having activities that differ in noise level, pace, person leading (child vs. adult), and location (indoor vs. outdoor).
- Having a mix of teacher-guided and child-initiated activities.[5]

Child-Initiated Play and Teacher-Guided Activities

The daily schedule balances child-initiated play and teacher-guided activities. The latter involves teachers planning, introducing, and guiding specific activities to enhance children’s learning during small- and large-group times. In contrast, child-initiated play refers to children’s responses to ideas and materials introduced by teachers that the children are free to explore without teacher

guidance. Child-initiated play also includes those times when children create, organize, and engage in activities completely on their own.

A daily schedule that ensures ample time for children to initiate their own play in well-developed interest areas is critical to the teaching and learning. Young children need ample time to engage in play, in the company of peers, in order to build their ideas, to pose problems, to try out solutions, and to negotiate and exchange ideas. When children initiate, organize, and develop their own play in the interest areas, it is called child-initiated learning. At times, children choose to play alone, but frequently, child-initiated play takes place in small groups of their own choosing.

In a schedule with ample time for children to initiate play in well-stocked interest areas, there are times when teachers organize and guide specific activities for children. Such teacher-guided curriculum activities are clearly distinct from child-initiated curriculum activities. Teacher-guided activities occur in two contexts—small groups and large groups. A small group would consist of one teacher working with a group of four to eight children. A large group is typically a gathering of all the children in an early childhood setting. Each context serves a different purpose and requires different preparation and different teaching strategies.

For some aspects of the curriculum, teachers may choose to organize an activity with a small group of children. Although initiated and guided by the teacher, an effective small-group encounter of this nature should still be rich in possibilities for children to contribute and negotiate ideas with each other. Teacher-guided activities in small groups work best in quiet spaces away from distractions of the full group and provide a manageable context for children to discuss and explore ideas and experiences. The teacher listens to children's ideas, helps orchestrate the give-and-take of ideas among children, and poses ideas or problems for children to wonder about, explore together, or even solve. Away from the distractions of a large group, teachers can easily observe, listen, and converse with children in a small group, as well as note how individual children think, express ideas, relate with others, and use their emerging skills.

Such teacher-guided conversations can enrich children's learning in all domains, particularly the children's language and vocabulary development. In addition, teachers can intentionally guide the development of specific skills by planning small-group activities (e.g., songs, games, shared reading) for short periods of time that playfully engage children in using specific emerging skills.

Small-group activities have several advantages over large-group activities. With small groups of children, teachers can readily observe, listen, and document children's developmental progress. Teachers can also individualize the curriculum and use questions or prompts to scaffold each child's thinking in more complex ways.

Whether the activities are child-initiated or teacher-guided, children's use of materials in interest areas provide teachers with excellent opportunities to observe how they build concepts and skills and how they negotiate ideas with others. Moments of observed play and interactions also provide teachers with ideas on how to extend children's exploration and learning through future encounters with related materials that add novelty, challenge, and complexity in each domain.

Large groups provide another context for teacher-guided activities. The large group—typically a gathering of the entire class—works well for singing, acting out songs and stories, playing games, sharing experiences with each other, telling stories, building a sense of community, and organizing the daily schedule and activities. Storytelling is one of the more popular large-group experiences, one that has rich potential for adding to children's understanding about the world around them. Storytelling allows teachers, children, family members, as well as storytellers from the community to tap into and build children's knowledge and experiences in meaningful ways. Large-group time is also when teachers let the whole group of children know what new experiences will be available in the interest areas or what will happen in small groups that day. Large-group gatherings that occur at the end of the day provide opportunities to review noteworthy happenings and to anticipate what will be available the next day.^[6]

Here are some examples of daily schedules for preschool classrooms.

Table 5.1: Half-Day Program Sample

Time of Day	Routine/Activity	Description
8:00	Arrival/Greetings	Wash Hands, Sign-in, Get Name tags
8:05-8:20	Group Time	Welcome, Songs, Stories, Discussions
8:20-9:30	Open Choice Time Outdoors	Explore classroom areas
9:30	Clean-up	Wash Hands, transition to indoors
9:35-10:45	Snack/Open Choice Indoors	
10:45	Clean-up	
10:50-11	Closing Circle	

Table 5.2: Full Day Program Sample Daily Schedule^[7]

Time of Day	Routine/Activity	Description
8:00	Arrival/Greetings	Wash Hands, Sign-in, Get Name tags
8:05-8:20	Group Time	Welcome, Songs, Stories, Discussions
8:20-9:30	Open Choice Time Outdoors	Explore classroom areas
9:30	Clean-up	Wash Hands, transition to indoors
9:35-11:00	Snack/Open Choice Indoors	
11:00	Clean-up	
11:10-11:25	Story Time	Transition to wash hands for lunch
11:30-11:50	Lunch	
11:50	Explore books on rest Mats	
12:10-2:00	Rest Time	
2:00-3:15	Indoor Choice Time/Snack	
3:15	Clean-up	
3:20	Large Group Circle	Games, Songs, Stories
3:40	Explore Outdoors	
5:00	Clean-up	
5:05	Indoor Small Group/Choice Centers	Fewer areas open

Routines and Rituals

Schedules define the whole day, whereas routines are more specific sets of regularly occurring behaviors. Routines provide some security and a sense of what comes next; children are able to anticipate what will happen, and thus feel more secure.

Daily routines and rituals also provide a second context for curriculum. They offer possibilities for children to use their emerging skills and to apply emerging concepts and ideas. Early childhood daily routines include arrivals and departures, mealtimes, naptimes, diapering, toileting, dressing, handwashing, tooth-brushing, and transitions between one place and another. They also include rituals such as sign-in sheets, health checks, waiting lists, attendance counts, dictated stories, reminder notes, or voting.

Children sit down for a meal, wash their hands, and put jackets and shoes on hundreds of times in order to provide excellent opportunities for children to use and build emerging skills and concepts. In group care, the care routines during arrivals, departures,

meals, naps, diapering, toileting, and dressing provide excellent opportunities for children to use and challenge their emerging skills and concepts. When an infant whose diaper is about to be changed hears her teacher describe what it is she is about to do, the infant experiences a flood of words, which eventually become an anticipated phrase that gives meaning to a familiar experience. When this same infant hears a request to put his arm into the sleeve of a shirt, he is invited to demonstrate that he has understood this phrase and experiences the joy that comes with sharing meaning with the teacher. When a preschool child looks in anticipation each morning at the helper chart to see what job she gets to do that day, they are invited not only to cooperate in the care of the classroom, but also to build their emerging skills in understanding the meaning of print that accompanies the photo or drawing. Care routines are natural opportunities for children to engage in learning. Therefore, teachers plan the routines of care and the daily rituals that pepper the day in ways that invite children to be active participants and to use and build their emerging skills and concepts in meaningful situations.[8]

A vignette featuring toddlers shows the kind of learning that occurs in another routine:

Vignette

Four toddlers are seated at a low table for lunch. Their primary care teacher sits with them at the table. To his right, on a low bench, the primary care teacher has a bin that holds everything he needs for the meal. He pulls out bibs for each toddler and helps each toddler put one on. Each toddler finds a cube chair to sit in. The teacher puts an empty bowl in front of the toddler on his left. He offers this toddler a pair of small plastic tongs, holds a plate of small sandwiches, and asks, “Would you like to take a sandwich?” The toddler grabs the tongs and, after a few trials, manages to pick up one of the sandwiches and drop it onto his plate. Later, after each toddler has taken a sandwich, the teacher pulls from the bin a clear plastic measuring cup, on which a red line is drawn at the one-cup mark. He fills the measuring cup to the red line. He places an empty glass in front of a toddler and, offering the toddler the measuring cup, says, “Would you like to pour?” The toddler wraps his hand around the handle and tips the cup over his glass. He spills a bit at first, but adjusts his hand and manages to empty the measuring cup. He looks up at the teacher and smiles. The teacher smiles in response, saying, “You poured your milk, Stephan! You know how to do it!” The toddler seated next to Stephan reaches for the empty measuring cup. The teacher says, “And now you can pour milk into your glass, Alexi. I’ll put the milk in the measuring cup first.”[9]

[10]

► **Create a visual schedule. Use it consistently.**

Visuals support children by providing a reminder of the upcoming activities.

► **Keep your schedule simple.**

An effective visual schedule reflects only the major events of the day.

► **Balance activities throughout the day.**

Have a mix of active/quiet activities and teacher-directed/child-initiated activities.

► **Post your schedule.**

Make sure children and adults can see the schedule throughout the day.

► **Refer to your schedule often.**

Children need the predictability of a routine and schedule.

► **Provide individual schedules or schedules with activities.**

Breaking down the steps of a routine—such as hand washing—or the parts of an activity help children know what is expected of them.

► **Let children know when the schedule changes.**

Provide reminders and visual cues when something different than the usual routine occurs.

Encourage children when they follow the schedule!



Transitions

It is important to focus on creating and managing smooth transitions between activities in the classroom. Reasons to address transitions between activities in early childhood classrooms include:

- Transitions take up a great deal of time in preschool classrooms.
- During transitions, children often spend a lot of time waiting (e.g., waiting until everyone has finished their snack, waiting for everyone to clean up before beginning large group time). All of this time waiting with nothing to do can lead to unrealistic expectations and challenging behaviors.
- Some children (and adults) have stressful and frustrating experiences during transitions between activities (e.g., children arguing over who took out what toys and who should put them away; children not knowing where to put certain toys when they are done with them; children not knowing what to do, children not knowing expectations for the transition).
- Many preschool teachers and other caregivers consider children's ability to independently make transitions between activities one of the essential skills needed in group contexts such as preschool and kindergarten.[11]

Supporting Successful Transitions

There are numerous strategies that can be used to ensure well-organized transitions between activities. These include strategies you use before the transition, during the transition, and following the transition.

- Before the Transition
 - Plan your daily schedule to include the minimal number of transitions that occur over the course of the day. Minimize the number of transitions in which all children have to do the same thing at the same time (e.g., Do all children have to go to the restroom at the same time? Can some children come over to the rug and sing a song or read a book, while other children finish an activity?).
 - Plan for what adults will do during transition times (e.g., Which adult is responsible for greeting the children? Who will begin looking at books on the carpet with children?).
 - Teach children the expectations for the transition routine. Teaching children how to clean up and how to line up will reduce the length of transition times. By reducing transition times, more time is available for children to spend in other learning activities. As children become familiar with the expectations, problem behaviors are less likely to occur.
 - Provide verbal and nonverbal cues before transitions (e.g., "Five minutes 'til snack. It's almost time for clean-up," show pictures of the next activity, beat a drum). Once a transition cue has been established, the cue should be used consistently to signal the transition.
- During the Transition
 - Engage children in transition activities (sing songs, play word or guessing games, recite rhymes, organize finger plays). Transition activities provide children with an activity to complete while other children are still transitioning. These activities also encourage children to finish their previous task, so that they can play the game or sing the song. During these activities, skills related to the transition can also be taught (e.g., setting the table for snack or lunch, sorting toys during clean-up time).
 - Allow children adequate time to finish projects or activities so they do not become frustrated by activities ending too soon. Give them a warning that it is about time to change activities.
 - Plan something to engage those children who finish an activity quickly, so they are not waiting without anything to do (e.g., if some children finish cleaning up and getting to large group quickly, they might look at books while waiting for other children to finish cleaning up).
 - Individualize support to accommodate individual children's needs.
 - § Photos to help anticipate what activity is next.
 - § Directions given in a child's home language or sign language.
 - § An individual warning to a child that it will soon be time to clean up and begin a new activity.
- Support may need to be individualized (i.e., one child may need an adult to provide a five-minute, three-minute, and one-minute warning before clean up while the rest of the class might need only a three-minute warning).
- After transitions
 - Provide positive attention and feedback to children following transitions.
 - § When children pick up toys without much prompting, share with them how this shows how well they take care of the classroom materials.
 - § When children are working together to accomplish the task more quickly, let them know how much you appreciate their teamwork (e.g., "Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning together and moving to the carpet").

You can also work to promote independence during transitions by

- Allowing children to move individually from one area to another area when they complete an activity (e.g., as children finish snack, they are encouraged to go to the carpet and choose a book; as children finish putting away their coats and backpacks, they are encouraged to get a puzzle).
- Teaching children to help others (e.g., have children move as partners from one activity to another, or ask one child to help another child gather his/her backpack).
- Helping children self-monitor during transitions (e.g., children can be asked to think about how quietly or quickly they moved from one activity to another).

The following vignette offers an opportunity to watch and listen for the learning that occurs during a transition routine and to reflect on the planning that had to occur in order for this experience to play out as it did.

Vignette

Ms. Cone had used the children's name tags in transition activities for quite some time, at first pointing out and naming the first letter in each name as she called children to go wash hands or to get their jackets before going outside. Somewhat later, she held up each of the nametags and pointed to the first letter as she asked the child to name it. Today, she is using the first sounds in names to send a few children at a time from the circle time area to wash hands for lunch: "If your name starts with /k/, you may go wash your hands. Yes, Connie and Carolina, you may go to the sink. Both of your names start with the /k/ sound." Cindy sees Connie and Carolina stand up, and she stands up too. Ms. Cone explains that Cindy begins with the /s/, not /k/ sound, and that she'll get a turn soon. Cindy says, "I'm a C too!" Ms. Cone says, "Oh, you are right. Your name begins with the letter c like Connie and Carolina, but it starts with a different sound. We hear /k/ at the beginning of Connie and Carolina—/k/ Connie, /k/ Carolina. We hear /s/ at the beginning of your name—/s/—Cindy. I'm going to say that sound next: 'If your name starts with /s/, you may go wash your hands.'" Sabrina stood up, joined hands with Cindy, and they walked to the sink together.

[12]

Built into this large-group gathering is a dismissal ritual that takes full advantage of young children's interest in their names and the names of their friends. As part of this dismissal ritual, the teacher invites children to use their emerging skills in distinguishing the distinct sounds of language, described in the language and literacy foundations as phonological awareness. She embeds this learning in the context of a game, one that inspires children to listen carefully to the sounds spoken in instructions for inviting small groups of children to wash hands. The transition from large group to the sink area goes much more smoothly as a result, and in the process, children get to use an important emerging skill.

References

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7.9: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Career Planning

8.1: Advocacy

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8.3: Professional Development Plan

8.4: Teaching Statements

8.5: Creating a Resume

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8.1: Advocacy



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The role of advocate, both for the clientele professionals serve, and for the profession itself, was not included in the list of commonly accepted criteria of a profession presented at the beginning of this chapter. Nonetheless, **advocacy** is identified as an important obligation for many professions, including early childhood education. Note that both the NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies and the Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals include professionalism as a core standard area, and both include **advocacy** as a competency area.

Advocacy is generally defined as any action that supports or defends a specific cause or issue. The goal of advocacy is to cause change and can be accomplished through a variety of activities. Often those of us in the early childhood education field feel uncomfortable with the idea of advocacy. It may feel too political, too aggressive, or require one to be able to speak eloquently about an issue. None of those characterizations need be true about advocacy. There are many ways for an early childhood educator to become engaged in advocacy without experiencing any of this discomfort.

Advocating for Children and Families

Part of the advocacy obligation for early childhood educators is standing up for the rights of those we serve—young children and their families. As members of a profession, we have access to evidence-based information and have acquired first-hand knowledge about what children and their families need to successfully grow and develop. It is our professional responsibility to speak out against initiatives that are counter to this knowledge and are not good for children or families.

Advocating for the Profession

Speaking out on behalf of the workforce that does the work of early childhood education is another form of advocacy that early childhood educators are called to. Advocating for recognition, for compensation that is comparable to similar professions, for regulation that is not in opposition to what we know to be good for children and families are all ways of advocating for the profession. When advocating for the profession, it is important to recognize the difference between one’s personal interest and the best interest of the entire profession. Sometimes what is important for the profession may result in imposition of requirements that may create a hardship for the individual professional. For example, advocating that inclusion in the early childhood education profession should require a certain level of educational preparation may mean that one will need to pursue additional education. As a part of the profession, one is called to advocate for what is best for the profession, rather than what one wants to do as an individual.

Methods of Advocacy

One way of organizing the myriad methods of advocating is to divide it into personal and public advocacy (Feeney, 2012).

Personal Advocacy

Personal advocacy happens during your workday and includes speaking up about what you know to be best practice for young children. When you share information with parents, co-workers, or agencies you cooperate with, you are advocating for children’s rights. When you refer your families to reliable agencies within your community or provide them with written resources, you are

advocating. Too often early childhood educators feel reluctant to respond to calls for advocacy. Advocacy does not have to involve a public event; it can occur through the relationships you have already built as an educator.

Public Advocacy

Public advocacy takes place when you speak out to address issues of concern in the larger community. It might surprise you how compelling it can be to hear the story of those working directly in the field. Policy makers need data and statistics, but even more, they need to hear how real people are affected by the policies they set. They want to hear from the front-line workers about the reality of their days spent caring for and educating young children.

However, even public advocacy does not require a public display; it can include voting with early childhood education in mind or writing to your congressional representatives at the state or federal level. Public advocacy can, however, involve engagement that is more visible to others:

- Testifying at a legislative hearing
- Attending a public rally for an early childhood issue or during the state legislative session
- Participating in a community awareness event, such as Week of the Young Child
- Writing a letter to the editor of your local paper on some specific early childhood issue
- Visiting your state or federal representative or senator to share your perspective on the importance of early childhood education.

As early childhood practitioners, we can feel isolated and consequently limited in our ability to influence policy makers or the public at large. Luckily, at both the state and national level, advocacy groups exist to provide support individuals in their advocacy efforts. A list of such groups is listed below. Many of these agencies maintain email lists for individual professionals to stay informed of current issues.

- **Children's Alliance** <https://childrensalliance.org/>
 - Develops a legislative agenda each session with issues specifically related to early childhood education
 - Holds an annual advocacy camp to learn how to effectively engage in advocacy
- **League of Education Voters** <https://educationvoters.org/>
 - Convenes informational events, advocacy days, and sponsors fundraising events
- **Wisconsin State Association for Head Start and ECEAP** <https://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com/>
 - Advocates on behalf of Head Start and ECEAP programs
 - Provides information about current issues on web page
 - Supports professionals in advocacy efforts
- **MomsRising** <https://www.momsrising.org/>
 - Campaigns for early care and education
 - Provides information about current issues on web page
- **Childcare Aware of Wisconsin** <https://www.childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin-6/>
 - Advocates on behalf of childcare providers
 - Presents data to support advocacy efforts
 - Presents action plans for individuals
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children** <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy>
 - Mobilizes members and other early childhood educators and allies to advocate on behalf of professionals and the children they serve
 - Presents legislative agendas
 - Holds training events to empower educators to advocate on behalf of the profession
 - Gathers professionals annually to visit federal representatives and senators
- **Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)** <https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/>
 - Disseminates advocacy information from the NAEYC to membership and others
 - Sponsors advocacy training

Advocating on behalf of the profession and the children and families it serves is part of the role of the professional early childhood educator. There are numerous ways to become involved in advocacy efforts and opportunities abound for both the new professional and those with more experience. It is important to explore these opportunities and consider how you can begin or expand your advocacy engagement.

Reflection

Think about the way in which advocacy is described here. Were you surprised to discover that you have been engaged in advocacy without really calling it that? What were those advocacy efforts? Do you feel encouraged to investigate new ways you can engage in advocacy? What might more engagement look like for you?

Final Thoughts

The current field of early childhood education has a long history of striving for recognition as a profession. Your involvement in that ongoing effort requires you understand what is necessary to meet the definition of a profession and what that label means for your practice. Recognize that recent efforts involve some of the most assertive and comprehensive steps ever taken to claim the title of profession for the field of ECE. You can be a part of this effort, that when realized, will provide a bright future for the profession of early childhood education. This future offers new and exciting opportunities to change how the world understands the importance of early childhood and those that support the development and learning of all young children. We sincerely hope you want to be a part of that future.

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8.2: 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 for
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 opportunities
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 be.

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 way that 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 mistakes. My professional 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 be confident 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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8.3: 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 **PDPs** 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 8.3.1: 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

- Asana. (2022, June 15). *What is a professional development plan (PDP)? 6 steps to create one* [blog post]. <https://asana.com/resources/professional-development-plan>
- 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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8.4: 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

- Grundman, Helen (2006). [Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement](#) (opens as a PDF). *Notices of the AMS*, Vol. 53, No. 11, p. 1329.
- Montell, Gabriela (2003). [How to Write a Statement of Teaching Philosophy](#), from the Chronicle Manage Your Career section of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
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8.5: 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 8.5.1: 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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