



Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Planning Appropriate Curriculum

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Planning appropriate curriculum

Curriculum, simply stated, is what children should know and how it should be taught (Hyson, 2008). It is the plan for helping children reach the desired outcomes of your program. Those outcomes may be governed by state or local agencies, or may simply begin with this question: What should children coming out of this program know and be able to do?

Essential curriculum includes all multiple areas: social-emotional, literacy, language, math, technology, science, art, physical development, and an understanding of community and self. No one area is more important than another and they are all interrelated.

Learning something new is easier when it is attached to something we already know. An integrated curriculum that ties skills together is more effective and meaningful than content taught in small, unrelated chunks.

Using themes and projects can help children see how concepts and skills are related. Curriculum that allows sustained time to learn select sets of skills increases the engagement of the children along with the retention of those skills better than a curriculum that lightly skims over a large variety of topics. Additional information on teaching using themes and projects is provided later in this packet.

It is important not to leave content and sequence to chance. Teachers need to be familiar with the key content and skills in each domain. They must also be aware of the sequence in which these skills are typically acquired, understanding that learning and development is increasingly complex. Using this information as a framework for planning, teachers can ensure that children achieve the necessary skills.

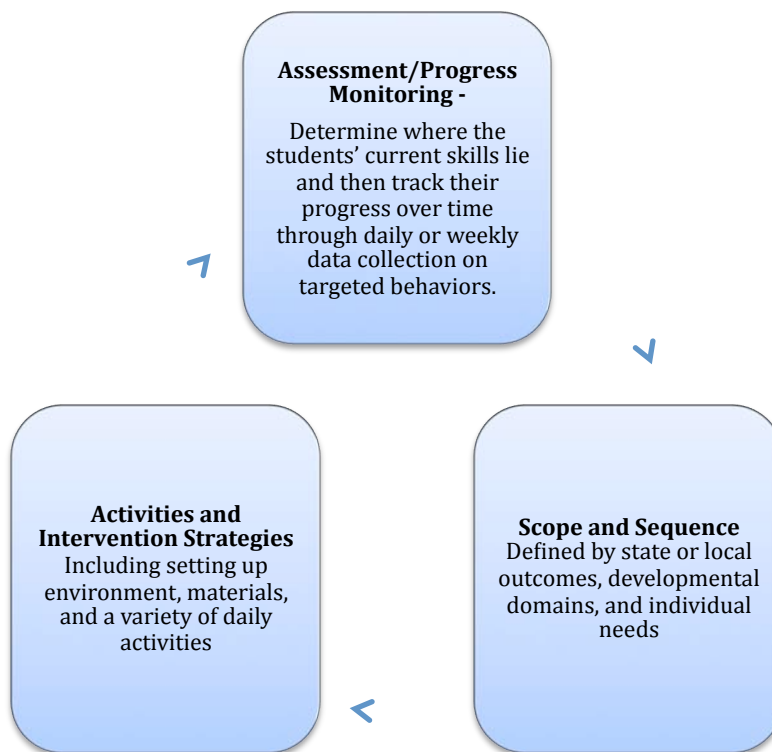
For more information on developmental milestones visit:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/interactive/milestones/social_3years.html

Development and learning rates vary from child to child and across areas for individual children. Adapting the curriculum is essential for those students who have missed some of the essential learning opportunities that support school success, as well as for those students who are progressing at a much slower or quicker pace than others.

In DAP inclusive classrooms, all experiences must be accessible to all children. Teachers can effectively meet the special needs of all children by working collaboratively with the appropriate specialists, as well as the families. When blending practices to meet the needs of all students, programs should adopt a curriculum framework that meets the needs of diverse students (Division for Early Childhood (DEC) 2007)

This framework should contain the following elements:





Teaching Using Themes

Philosophy, Purpose, Goals:

Thematic teaching involves a group of correlated activities that are designed around topics or themes and cross several areas of the curriculum. Themes support children to organize individual bits of learning in an integrated way that makes sense to them. Themes also help make connections among the bits of learning and transfer that knowledge into meaningful application.

Nature and Scope:

Themes should build on students' interests and prior knowledge by focusing on topics relevant to their lives. They help children relate to real-life experiences and build on what they already know. Thematic units provide one of the best vehicles for integrating content areas and addressing the diverse learning styles of the students. Other benefits of utilizing themes in the early childhood classroom include:

- Learning in-depth factual information
- Learning "how to learn"
- Becoming physically involved with learning
- Integrating learning in a holistic way
- Learning process skills
- Promoting group cohesiveness
- Addressing individual needs
- Motivating for children and teachers

Activities/Materials:

Thematic units can be planned around a book theme, an author study, or any topic that has interest for young children. Outcomes and standards can be easily integrated in a theme study. Connections can be made among different subject areas, including math, science, social studies, and literacy as well as art, music, dramatic play, and physical activities. These connections help children in the way they learn best: through meaningful experiences. This also allows children to learn using their preferred learning style. Learning centers and hands-on activities are easily implemented through a theme approach. Portfolios and performance based assessments compliment the thematic learning units.

Role of the Teacher:

The teacher is responsible for setting up the classroom environment to reflect the theme and provide the appropriate materials and activities. They then interact with the students in order to assist in achieving the desired outcomes based on the theme's activities. The theme should be infused throughout the day with both teacher-directed activities and child-initiated centers.

Role of the Child:

Children talk about the theme, pretend play in relation to the theme, create theme related products, and ask questions to further their understanding of the theme content. They may also show evidence of linking the current theme with their prior experiences at home or at school and continue to build on the skills gained during subsequent activities.



Teaching Using Projects

Philosophy, Purpose, Goals:

The project approach was influenced by Dewey's ideas that children learn best by doing and acting upon the world around them and that the teacher should guide the children's learning by providing opportunities for experiences and experimentation. It involves the children selecting a topic of interest, researching it, studying it and solving problems related to the topic.

Nature & Scope:

A project is an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. A small group, an individual or a whole class, may do the investigation. It is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic either posed by the children, the teacher, or both. (Katz, 1994)

Activities/Materials:

Webbing out ideas with students in a semantic map is an excellent way to brainstorm activities in order to begin a new project. Resources are gathered on field trips, brought in by the students, the teacher, or experts who visit the classroom. Those resources may include real artifacts, books, charts, leaflets, maps, pamphlets, and pictures. The project permeates the day and the classroom incorporating many different curriculum areas and skills. Portfolios of the students work assist the teacher in assessing the student's progress.

Role of the Teacher:

The teacher acts as a facilitator and consultant rather than a direct instructor. She/he provides ongoing supervision and helps to create a productive work environment integrating concepts through discussion and debriefing. They also observe the student's interests to help determine the next steps in the project.

Role of the Child:

Children make choices about what tasks to undertake and select the level of difficulty that is appropriate. They are actively engaged in the investigation and

application of knowledge and skills, working towards the completion of the project. Representations (drawing, building, writing or constructing) created by the child documents skill development. Activities are repeated to show growth in knowledge and skills as the project progresses.

Individually Appropriate Practice

Krista

Krista will turn five years old in January, making her the oldest child in your four-year old group. Krista's play, language, and motor development are, however, typical of a child two years younger. She communicates only in short sentences, has difficulty manipulating small objects, and has a limited attention span.

Krista enjoys working with manipulatives, but she is better at taking apart the buildings of others than building her own. She also has difficulty joining children in the dramatic play area, since she can't get involved at the same level of fantasy play as her peers. When the other children do let her join, she is often asked to be the baby sister and ride in the carriage even if she really wants to be a fire fighter. Krista is often found in the art area where she works alone, making random lines across piece after piece of paper.

Classroom Activity

You are designing an activity for the dramatic play area called "Pretend Store". The area has been arranged to look like a store with aisles, cash register and other props. In this area, the children will be encouraged to remember and act out typical "going to the store" activities. For example, they may be asked to "plan for the trip to the store" by making a list ahead of time; they may use real money or create play money to use to buy the goods. They may also choose to pretend to be a store clerk or cashier. General learning outcomes related to this activity include: Taking on pretend roles in play; the importance of planning in every day life; money exchanged for goods and services; and prewriting skills.

Your challenge is to plan and facilitate activities that are individually appropriate for Krista, within this developmentally appropriate activity.

Adapting to Meet Individual Needs

When adapting lessons or activities, it is important to start first with what the child can do. Creating appropriate activities requires educators to build upon the strengths of individual children. In relation to the store activity, list what you know Krista can do in each domain area (i.e. language, communication, motor, cognition). To illustrate this process we have identified one fine motor skill.

Example

Krista Can Do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify	Staff
Take things apart			

The next step is to determine what you would like Krista to learn. Looking at Krista's "can do list" write down what you believe to be the next higher skill. In the example above, we noted that Krista can take things apart. We also know that Krista likes to take apart buildings of others, rather than her own, which may causing some problems. Therefore, the next skill level for Krista in the area of "taking apart" might look something like this:

Example

Krista Can Do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify	Staff
Take things apart	Take things apart upon request of a teacher or peer.		

You have identified specific goals and objectives which are individually appropriate for Krista. Now identify specific resources, instructional strategies and/or modifications to the environment that must be to put in place to help Krista be successful.

Example

Krista Can Do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify	Staff
Take things apart	Take things apart upon request of a teacher or peer.	Pre-teach Krista to take the groceries out of the shopping cart and put them into a bag so she will have a clearly identified role during the play session.	

Once strategies, modifications and materials have been identified, make a list of the staff person(s) responsible for these activities as well as how or where special instruction might take place.

Example

Krista Can Do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify	Staff
Take things apart	Take things apart upon request of a teacher or peer.	Pre-teach Krista to take the groceries out of the shopping cart and put them into a bag so she will have a clearly identified role during the play session.	ECSE T-Direct Instruction SPL-In conjunction with speech lesson

Developmentally appropriate practice suggests that activities are age appropriate and individually appropriate. Such activities build upon what children know and can do. When adapting lessons or activities to meet the needs of individual children we must build upon individual strengths. The key is planning ahead and planning for individual success.

Adapting Lesson Plans

Lesson/Activity: _____	Date: _____	
Learning Outcomes	Materials Needed	
Student: _____		
Can do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify
		Staff

Adapting Lesson Plans

<p>Lesson/Activity: Pretend Store. House area set up like a store with aisles, cash register and _____ Date _____</p> <p>other props. Children are encouraged to "plan for the trip to the store" by making a list ahead of time. General learning outcomes related to this activity include: Taking on pretend roles in play; the importance of planning in every day life; money exchanged for goods and services; prewriting skills.</p>			
Learning Outcomes	Materials Needed		
<p>New roles in play w/ peers Maintain attention in play w/ peers</p>	<p>Paper/pencils for lists Cash register/ real or play money Shopping carts Food boxes/ play food Wallet/ purse</p>		
<p>Student: Krista is 4 years old. Language, play and motor skills in the 2 year range. Likes manipulatives, fine motor activities (i.e. tear down blocks, paint with brush). Parallel play stage.</p>			
Can do	Next Step	Adapt/Modify	Staff
<p>Parallel play - along side w/peer</p> <p>Wants to play in group/take on role</p> <p>Fine motor skills: take apart blocks paint lines with brush</p>	<p>Using props in play w/peers Sustained attention in play w/peers</p> <p>Communicating wishes to peers regarding role play</p> <p>Take apart during appropriate times</p>	<p>Pre-teach a role to Krista including props (e.g. cashier, store clerk)</p> <p>Reinforce peers for interaction w/Krista</p> <p>Extend Krista's communication during play (i.e. "You are taking the money Krista")</p> <p>Pre-teach activities "taking out" that facilitate role play (e.g. taking objects out of the cart)</p>	<p>Teacher</p> <p>Aide</p> <p>SPED Teacher</p> <p>Aide/ Peer</p>

Goosen, M., & Lindeman, D. P. (1996). *Developmentally appropriate practices*. Parsons, KS: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities.