

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

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Foundations of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Early childhood development (ECD) is associated with children's care as well as education that ages 0 – 5 years. Before entering the primary school, children acquire [early childhood education](#) in an educational institution. These early years are important for the development of an individual. These serve as the base for success as well as the failure of the whole system of education. Therefore, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) has been taken as an important concept in early childhood education.

This is a framework that is constructed to promote young children's optimum learning and growth. It is at the heart of all of NAEYC's activities, consisting of publications, training programs, conferences and accreditation of childcare programs. Recent findings in brain research have associations with principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practices. These associations are assisting in exploring the implications for early childhood learning environments as well as teaching practices used to teach these young learners. These make each learner accept the challenges rather than fearing those challenges. This then results in the exchange of ideas that, in turn, leads to the construction of deeper understanding. Moreover, teachers have an inevitable role in confirming developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood. Teachers play an effective role in developmentally appropriate practice and enable children to achieve their educational objectives. This paper will examine the use of Developmentally Appropriate Practice as a strategy adopted by teachers to educate children effectively.

Creativity and Learning in Early Childhood Classrooms

In early childhood classrooms, children need to be more creative than children in academic-centred classrooms, where children need to be more dedicated to their studies (McKenzie, 2013). Students with greater DAP scores have greater mastery of basic skills and less occurrence of stressful behaviours such as nail biting or fidgeting. These students thus show self-competency.

Three main core considerations of DAP include a child's development as well as learning at different ages. This is DAP, which is considered a crucial starting point, and it makes this effective with the use of results drawn from different researchers. During all the stages, caring adults engage with children

by having face-to-face interactions that are a source of their oral language development and make them emotionally strong (McKenzie, 2013). Secondly, it is important to know what is appropriate individually. This knowledge can be gained by observing children while playing and interacting with the physical environment (“OVERVIEW,” 2018). With this consideration, biological growth and experience get to coincide with the next developmental step. Early childhood educators need to develop strategies that can address the characteristic arrangement of infant and toddler growth. There must be a well-founded understanding of the milestones to fully understand the needs of a particular age group. Thirdly, there is a need to know about the cultural preferences of children. This provides insight into families’ values and expectations. Thus, **developmentally appropriate** practice makes use of all these three considerations.

There are some pros of using developmentally appropriate practices while dealing with childhood education. However, there are also some cons to using this practice. As DAP is linked with Outcome-based education and makes use of creative practices, these practices are considered advanced practices for these young children (“OVERVIEW,” 2018). However, this criticism is not correct as the practices are used based on the educator’s recommendations and are according to the standards set by educational professionals to meet the educational needs of children. These practices will allow the students to interact actively with their environment and promote hands-on learning experiences. Critics also consider DAP as a rigid practice. However, these are not rigid practices; they are a set of principles that are applicable in different ways and in different contexts.

Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) are considered magic in early childhood programs as they are capable of making a difference in children’s early childhood education. The belief behind the DAP is that adults must interact with children, assemble their time and space, and strategize actions for them. If these are successful activities, then children excel in learning during different stages of their growth (Bredekamp, 2016). Developmentally appropriate practices guide teachers over time and offer them a chance to integrate DAP with ongoing assessments. With these, teachers get knowledge regarding the weak and strong areas of children and can develop strategies to improve them in the future. Thus, this practice incorporates most of the aspects of early care and education and is not only limited to teaching and learning practices (Obidike & Enemuo, 2013).

Cultural Knowledge and Social Interaction

Teachers are required to have knowledge of cultural influences and developmental characteristics related to children in order to get the desired results. In this way, they can easily extend and assist children’s concepts and benefits. Moreover, they can also provide suitable learning activities for children to meet their needs. With these activities, children get the required skills and knowledge of their curriculum.

These children also interact with peers and their teachers through these activities (Bredekamp, 2016). Teachers have a complete knowledge of cultural influences and are able to prepare and organize

individually as well as culturally appropriate classrooms that provide children with a variety of high-quality learning experiences. Teachers use different strategies to teach students in these specially designed classes. However, these strategies are not easy to implement for teachers as they face numerous barriers while implementing different strategies. These barriers are related to administration, government directives, budgeting restrictions, and professional development. Teachers also face challenges related to testing of different activities as class sizes are mostly large. There is also the unavailability of supportive staff and administration, which creates barriers to the implementation of services.

Age-Appropriate Practices for Infants and Toddlers

Some of the developmentally appropriate practices for infants can include continuity of care to ensure that there is a positive development of the relationship between caregivers and children. Having a close association enables the caregiver to know not only the child but also his family. These caregivers are required to spend most of their time with infants, fully fulfilling their requirements as a result of one-to-one interaction. In this way, the caregiver is enabled to respond to the child's nature along with his needs and other requirements. These infants have rapidly changing needs, and they require support as well as security not only from education professionals but also from their caregivers, with whom they need to spend most of their time. Thus, a mutually satisfying pattern of communication between infants and caregivers has been developed in the context of developmentally appropriate practices.

Furthermore, with toddlers, these caregivers are supposed to spend their time doing most of their chores and satisfying their needs during their presence in the schools. The interaction between caregivers and toddlers must be warm and caring to make this bond strong (Bredekamp, 2016). There must be the use of calm and simple language along with the use of more and more nonverbal cues. In addition to this, tasks designed for toddlers are mostly of a complex and interwoven nature. These activities are designed for the creation of a child's identity. Some of the activities enable the child to correctly use the language and explore different assigned materials. The child also learns to move independently and interact with different people and things in their given environment. In DAP, choose the best strategy that is based on the background information related to the child's prior knowledge and his future goals and objectives.

Holistic Development and Instructional Strategies

Thus, teachers take care of children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects with the use of specially designed strategies. In the context of physical development, the most important requirement is to have the proper balance of children. This is necessary to achieve in a timely manner as without these skills, children will not be able to move and will not be active participants in all the activities that are designed for their growth and educational development (Bredekamp, 2016). When

they learn how to move, they are also able to run, climb, and jump to make their environment safe and secure. Concerning social and emotional development, a child is required to excel in controlling different emotions through the assistance of teachers and their specially designed activities. For this area, special support is also required from parents. For example, they need to hold and sing with children to provide them confidence and support and to make them so comfortable with their teachers and other school environments.

During the early days of children, all the teaching practices that are according to the child's age and developmental status are required. The best strategy to be used in this regard is to make use of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), as this involves strategies that are designed to address all the needs of children. These strategies not only fulfil their educational requirements effectively but also address their emotional, social and physical needs as teachers have the complete knowledge of the child's backgrounds, including cultural differences.

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