

Infant and Toddler Newsletter

Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES (DAP) FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Young infants (0 to 9 months) seek security.**
- **Mobile infants (8 to 18 months) are eager to explore.**
- **Toddlers (16 to 36 months) are working on their identity; they want to know who they are and who's in charge**
- **Remember that every child develops at their own pace and in their own way.**
- **Prime Times develop basic trust, emotional intelligence, strong sense of personal worth and power, sense of autonomy, and language**

Good teachers understand typical development from birth through age 3. Knowing how the youngest children learn and develop helps professionals closely attune to individual children and their families—in all their variety.

Developmentally appropriate practice is one of those terms that gets through around a lot—but a lot of the time people don't stop to talk about what it actually means! So, what does DAP look like for teachers working with infants and toddlers?

At the core of DAP is a call for early childhood professionals to consider three core factors in their work:

- 1) Child development and learning.

- 2) What is individually appropriate.
- 3) What is culturally appropriate

With child development and learning with infants it is talking to them and giving them chances to explore their surroundings. Make sure they get tummy time every day and have opportunities to try to do things all by themselves. For toddlers it is communicating with them in a way that they understand. Sing to them! Sign to them! Tell them what is going to happen next. Understand that they are going to get into everything and make sure your environment supports that.

With individually appropriate practice you can use a developmental checklist and get to

know the children as individuals. Spend time every week with every child. Make sure there is space for the younger infants who cannot roll over as well as for the ones who are crawling. For toddlers have options for play for every child to enjoy and engage and have several activities going on so each child can do whatever is more interesting.

And for culturally appropriate practice think about how the following cultures impact what happens in your classroom a) your own culture—think about how you were raised, have things changed?, b) workplace culture—coworkers and policies impact the culture of your classroom, and c) families' culture—get to know your families and actively include them in the classroom.

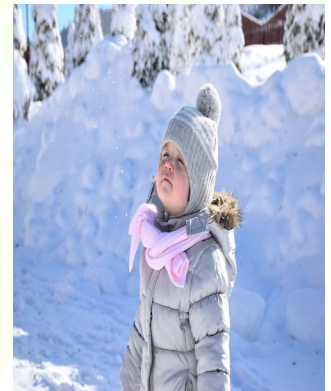
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DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

DAP is the approach early care and education professionals use to teach young children.

- It is grounded in research on how young children learn,
- Provides a connection to real-world experiences and opportunities to gain
- knowledge and skills through hands-on learning,
- Prepares children for future learning, and
- Acknowledges the role of play in learning and development.





FACTS AND HAPPENINGS

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1) Fact—all children, including babies, learn through play. Play is an important way that young children bond with their caregivers; develop cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills; and build an understanding of the world around them.

* Regularly touching, talking, and responding to child’s sounds and needs will solidify the bond between you and the child. Look into their eyes, sing songs to them, and interact with them regularly through activities.

2) Fact—starting from birth, meaningful play experiences help children build background knowledge, imagination, and rational thought that enables academic skill development. In fact, play is the primary way children use language and math concepts.

* Infants and toddlers take in new sights, sounds, smells, and sensations. Broaden their horizon by taking a stroll through nature, narrating what you see, smell, hear, and feel during the journey. This will expose them to new vocabulary through a positive outdoor experience.

3) Fact—in addition to learning skills like counting and speaking in sentences, it’s important for children to practice social, emotional, and physical skills that support their future success inside and outside the classroom.

* Be expressive with your face and make eye contact with the children. This will teach them different social expressions that help with non-verbal communication. Use your eyes and hands to point to something to teach the child how to follow other peoples cues. You can also introduce children to the names of emotions during this time.



PRIME TIMES: ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS

Prime times are moments of one-to-one responsive, nurturing interactions between you and child—those moments when the child has your full presence. These are the times when the child’s basic human needs for nurturing, food, rest, and learning with others are addressed. These times occupy a large part of the day in child care; therefore, maximizing prime time is an important signature practice.

There is no need to rush through prime times to “get to the curriculum” because maximizing prime time is the curriculum! Often infant teachers think of activities as only those experiences that they planned for their lesson plan, but activities also include all the important parts of an infant’s experience. Eating is an activity. Diaper changing is an

activity. They are just as much learning activities as the ones on lesson plans and they develop important skills we take time to maximize them.

In order to implement this signature practice, you need to slow down. For example, when changing a diaper talk, sing, and laugh with the baby. Allow baby to hear the sound of the water as you wash hands or talk to her about how it feels. In order for you to have relaxed time to diaper, feed, and interact with other infants, the environment must have interesting and developmentally appropriate materials readily available that keep infants engaged.

Here are some additional guidelines for maximizing primetimes and implementing this signature practice:

- 1) Be “fully there.”
- 2) Tell the infant what you are going to do.
- 3) Talk directly to the infant, not to other staff.
- 4) Speak positively to the infant about unpleasant care routines.
- 5) Pay attention to your body language.
- 6) Focus on the needs of the child.
- 7) Remain aware of the needs of other infants while you are working one-to-one.
- 8) Offer infants the opportunity to help based on their development

