



DAP HANDOUT

Core Considerations to Inform Decision Making

Developmentally appropriate practice requires early childhood educators to seek out and gain knowledge and understanding using three core considerations: commonality in children’s development and learning, individuality reflecting each child’s unique characteristics and experiences, and the context in which development and learning occur. These core considerations apply to all aspects of educators’ decision-making in their work to foster each child’s optimal development and learning.

1. **Commonality**—current research and understandings of processes of child development and learning that apply to all children, including the understanding that all development and learning occur within specific social, cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts.
2. **Individuality**—the characteristics and experiences unique to each child, within the context of their family and community, that have implications for how best to support their development and learning.
3. **Context**—everything discernible about the social and cultural contexts for each child, each educator, and the program as a whole.

To learn more: [NAEYC.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents](https://naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents)



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Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action

Using Knowledge of Child Development and Learning in Context

Based on the child development principles the following guidelines address decisions that early childhood professionals make in five key and interrelated areas of practice. These guidelines work hand in hand with [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#); they are based on the assumption that, as part of the sixth professional standard regarding professionalism, educators are advocating for policies and financing that support the equitable implementation of developmentally appropriate practice across all states and settings serving children birth through age 8.

1. Creating a caring, equitable community of learners
2. Engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families and fostering community connections
3. *Observing, documenting, and assessing* children's development and learning
4. Teaching to enhance each child's development and learning
5. Planning and implementing an engaging curriculum to achieve meaningful goals
6. Demonstrating professionalism as an early childhood educator

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Principles of Child Development and Learning & Implications That Inform Practice

NAEYC's guidelines and recommendations for developmentally appropriate practice are based on the following nine principles and their implications for early childhood education professional practice. These principles reflect an extensive research base. Because these principles are interrelated, this linear list does not fully represent their overall complexity.

1. Development and learning are dynamic processes.
2. All domains of child development are important; each domain both supports and is supported by the others.
3. Play promotes joyful learning. Play is essential for all children.
4. Although general progressions of development and learning can be identified, variations must be considered.
5. Children are active learners from birth.
6. Children's motivation to learn is increased when their learning environment fosters their sense of belonging, purpose, and agency.
7. Children learn in an integrated fashion that cuts across academic disciplines or subject areas.
8. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery.
9. Used responsibly and intentionally, technology and interactive media can be valuable tools for supporting children's learning and development.

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