



Facilitator's Guide

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Videos

Stream from http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/

"Providing Developmentally Appropriate Learning" (Overview)

"Understand How Children Think"

"Recognize Children's Strengths"

"Develop Self-Regulated Learners"

Introduction

This professional development training module is designed to help you lead educators in using best practices to teach appropriately for each child's developmental age and stage. It is one of several modules developed for early childhood educators by the Department of Early Education and Care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This training meets the guidelines for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as outlined by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MassAEYC).

For more information about this professional development training module, visit http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/.

About this Guide

This Facilitator's Guide provides instructions and narrative for delivering a video-based training for early childhood educators. You'll find an agenda, learning goals, preparation suggestions, talking points, activities, and handouts. You'll also find general tips and resources to help you facilitate the training. Use these materials with the accompanying videos to lead family child care and center- and school-based educators in an engaging, content-rich training.

Note: To access the videos referenced in this guide, go to http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/. Select "Providing Developmentally Appropriate Learning." Be sure you have access to the videos prior to and while leading this training.

Learning Goals

After participating in this training, educators will be able to:

- Summarize the best practices for providing developmentally appropriate learning.
- Describe the ways a "typically-developing" young child thinks about the world.
- Identify, nurture, and utilize children's strengths to address their weaknesses.
- Recommend strategies for developing children's abilities to self-regulate emotions and behaviors.
- Apply new knowledge to current practices.

Agenda

Introduction	15 minutes
Providing Developmentally Appropriate Learning	5 minutes
Understand How Children Think	15–20 minutes
Recognize Children's Strengths	15–20 minutes
BREAK (optional)	5–10 minutes
Develop Self-Regulated Learners	15–20 minutes
Try It	15–20 minutes
Wrap Up	5–10 minutes
Total Time	90–120 minutes

Preparation

Before leading this training, you should:

- Watch the videos and get to know the best practices.
- Read through the training module. Become familiar with the talking points so that you can share them in a natural, conversational way.
- Obtain and test the technology you need to share the videos with participants and make sure you have a reliable Internet connection during the training.
- Gather any props or materials needed for the Try It activity.
- Rehearse and fine-tune your presentation to “make it your own.” Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time.
- Create a handout packet with copies of the following for each participant:
 - Self-Assessment
 - Learning Log
 - Try It
 - Best Practices
 - Standards
 - Training Evaluation
- Consider working with a partner the first time you lead this training. You can learn from and support each other when preparing, practicing, and facilitating. After the training, you can reflect on participants' evaluations together.

Facilitation Tips

Whether you're a new or experienced facilitator, these tips can help your training run smoothly.

- Arrive early to prepare the training room for optimal learning.
 - Place handout packets where participants check in.
 - Have pens or pencils and paper on every table.
 - Check your technology setup to make sure videos play without problem.
- Create a space that is inviting and comfortable.
 - Play soft music as people arrive.
 - Greet participants with a smile and a handshake. A personal introduction helps set the stage for collaboration and learning.
- Invite partner or small group discussion.
 - Before the training begins, invite educators to identify a partner. People learn best when they have a chance to talk about what they are learning or thinking.
 - Allow a few minutes for partners to introduce themselves to each other.
 - During the training, provide opportunities for partner interaction.
- Keep participants engaged.
 - Follow the “ten-two rule” as you present the training: Speak for no longer than ten minutes at a time and then provide participants at least two minutes of interaction or activity.
 - Avoid simply reading the talking points that have been provided. Become familiar with each point so that you can keep the training engaging, fluid, and conversational.

Icebreaker Ideas

When working with a group of educators who may or may not know each other, it's a good idea to provide a few moments to “break the ice.” This allows people to relax, laugh, move, and get to know each other (and you!). Below are just a few ideas you can use to begin a training session.

That's Me!

Read a statement aloud to the group. Ask participants to stand up, raise a hand in the air, and shout *That's me!* if the statement applies to them. It's fun to see which statements apply to all participants and which do not apply to any. Statements might include:

- *I teach at a family child care.*
- *I have worked with children for five years or more.*
- *I was born in Massachusetts.*
- *I write down the funny things that kids say.*
- *I laugh out loud at least once a day.*
- *I check Pinterest at least once a week.*
- *I have no idea what Pinterest is.*
- *I believe that there is no problem that good chocolate can't solve.*

You can come up with your own statements or invite a few participants to come up with statements. When they say their statement aloud, others (including you) can reply, *That's me!*

Weave a Web

Holding onto a ball of yarn, share your name and an interesting fact about yourself with participants. Keep the end piece as you toss the ball of yarn to a participant. Ask the participant to share his or her name and a personal fact, and hold onto the yarn as they toss the ball to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a turn and the “web” is complete.

Two Truths and a Lie

Ask participants to jot down two truths and one lie about themselves or their work with children. For example:

- *I speak Japanese.*
- *I am related to Davy Crockett.*
- *I have three sets of twins in my program this year.*

Form participants into small groups of three or four people. Have each person in the group read their statements aloud and ask the rest of the group to guess which statement is not true.

Four Corners

Post a word from a set of four related words in each corner of the room, such as:

- *lion, bear, eagle, deer*
- *desert, beach, mountain, city*
- *sushi, salad, enchilada, pizza*
- *hybrid, convertible, truck, Mustang*

Ask participants, *Are you a hybrid, convertible, truck or Mustang?* Direct participants to move to the corner of the room with which they most identify. Ask participants, now in small groups in their corners, to share with one another why they chose that corner and how it represents their interests, so that they can discover common attributes they may share. Have each small group pick one person to share the group's common attributes with the larger group. Repeat the process with another set of four words as many times as you like.

People Bingo

Photocopy and distribute the “bingo card” below. Invite participants to find people who match a fact listed on the card and have them sign off on that fact. Each person can sign off on only one fact. Explain that when a participant has obtained five signatures in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), he or she should shout *Bingo!* and introduce the people who signed his or her card to the rest of the group

People Bingo				
Has traveled outside the U.S.	Likes pineapple on pizza	Has lived in MA for more than 10 years	Knows how to juggle	Has never been on a plane
Can speak a foreign language	Has 3 or more brothers	Likes to camp	Has been scuba diving	Reads the Sunday paper
Likes to scrapbook	Has a summer birthday	F R E E S P A C E	Likes to garden	Can say the alphabet backwards
Likes math	Does crossword puzzles	Owens a cat	Has been to Alaska	Likes to run
Likes thunderstorms	Has watched a meteor shower	Is afraid of snakes	Knows how to sew	Can play basketball

Training

Introduction

(15 minutes)

Welcome Participants to the Training

- Introduce yourself and share your background and experience.
- Announce the length of the training (1½–2 hours) and note other logistics, such as break times, restroom location, and so on.
- Review the agenda and explain the structure of the training.
 - Participants will watch an overview video and then three short videos that explore best practices in creating a learning environment.
 - After each video, participants will briefly discuss the main points and reflect on what they have learned.
 - Participants will also have the opportunity to share and reflect on their own practices.
- Share the learning goals and objectives. Participants will:
 - Explore the best practices for providing developmentally appropriate learning.
 - Discuss the ways a “typically-developing” young child thinks about the world.
 - Discover how to identify, develop, and utilize children’s strengths to address their weaknesses.
 - Examine strategies for developing children’s abilities to self-regulate emotions and behaviors.
 - Apply new knowledge to current practices.
- Introduce the Learning Log.
 - The Learning Log includes questions to help participants identify best practices and distill the important points made in each video. The *viewing questions* reinforce ideas from the videos. The *reflection questions* help educators draw connections to their own experiences.
 - The Learning Log can also be used to jot down notes, questions, and ideas.
- Consider doing an icebreaker activity to get participants “warmed up” and ready to learn and interact. (See Icebreakers Ideas for suggestions.)

- Ask each participant to identify a partner to work with during the training and encourage them to share ideas. (You can offer small group discussions if you prefer.)

Complete the Self-Assessment

Educators grow and hone their skills by continually identifying their own strengths and training needs and reflecting on their own practices.

- Invite participants to complete the first half of the Self-Assessment to help them discover the skills they already possess and to identify those they would like to work on.
- Explain that toward the end of the training, participants will complete the second half of the Self-Assessment to measure their growth and learning.

Providing Developmentally Appropriate Learning (5 minutes)

Introduce the Topic

Developmentally appropriate practice is carefully planned, intentional teaching based on what is known about the developmental stages and ages of the children we teach. The goal is to bring children to their full potential—cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Effective early childhood educators understand what is typical at each age and stage of a child's development while also being aware that each child is different. They get to know each child individually so that they can build on a child's prior knowledge, skills, developmental level, and interests, and address the full range of abilities each child brings to the learning environment.

To provide developmentally appropriate instruction, educators should understand how preschool-age children typically think and behave, recognize that each child has different strengths, and work towards developing each child's ability to self-regulate.

Introduce and View the Video

Introduce the overview video featuring Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College. Use this brief video to set the stage for a working discussion of best practices in providing developmentally appropriate learning in the early childhood environment.



"Providing Developmentally Appropriate Learning"

approx. 2 min

Understand How Children Think (15–20 minutes)

Introduce the Best Practice

Developmentally appropriate practices are defined as teaching and learning experiences grounded in what we know about how children learn at different ages and stages of development. Based on understanding the characteristics of a “typically-developing” child and recognizing that children vary within that norm, these practices require careful and deliberate planning. Educators should find every opportunity to reach out to children in specific ways for each child.

- **Young children tend to be concrete thinkers.** They cannot think in abstract ways. They need active, participatory learning that uses their senses. They need to touch, feel, and participate in experiences.
- **Young children are often egocentric thinkers.** They tend to see the world strictly from their own perspective. Educators can help children move beyond their own perspective to understand, appreciate, and respond to others' perspectives.
- **Young children generally have centered thinking.** They process one variable at a time. For example, they may see an object by its color, or by its shape, but usually not both at the same time. A good rule of thumb is “one step at a time.” Rather than introducing two variables in a pattern (color and shape), the educator asks children to consider color first. In a later step, children can focus on a second variable.
- **Young children tend to confuse appearances (the way things look) with reality (the way things are).** They might think their thumb is bigger than the moon, because the thumb can cover the moon.

Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants they will watch a video of center-based and family child care educators providing instruction based on what they know about how young children think. Their knowledge of what is typical development informs their planning, activities, conversation, and the pace of instruction.



“Understand How Children Think” (approx. 4 min)

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:

- *How do the educators help children learn about abstract ideas in concrete ways?*
- *How do the educators respond to children's centered thinking as they introduce new ideas?*

Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

Why is it important to provide developmentally appropriate learning?

- Children learn best when adults recognize their individual needs and interests.
- Children are encouraged to explore what excites their curiosity. Like adults, children participate actively in activities that are interesting to them and inviting. Unlocking that curiosity is key to learning.
- Young children learn best through a combination of explanation and experience.

What strategies can educators use to teach to children's concrete way of thinking?

- Encourage children to use their senses to feel, taste, see, and experience new things and concepts. Children learn best when they can *feel* a snakeskin to understand what the word *scaly* means, walk the distance to see the length of a dinosaur, or hold a turtle shell to measure its circumference.
- Provide hands-on experiences to help children explore the world directly. Then extend the experience. For example:
 - Display real-life objects for children to explore using all their senses. (*Hold the snakeskin. What does it feel like? What does it sound like when you move it? What does it smell like?*)
 - Introduce sensory vocabulary. For example, during a turtle shell exploration, introduce the words *rough, smooth, light, dark, heavy, full, and empty*. Then read and display picture books about turtles.
 - Encourage conversations and help inquisitive minds to test theories and hypotheses. (*How can we tell how long the turtle is? How can we measure how round it is on top? What words can you think of that describe the snakeskin?*)

How can educators respond to children's centered thinking—their tendency to pay attention to one task at a time?

- Give children simple directions, one step at a time. For example, rather than saying *Let's make a snowflake pattern using all of these colors*, break down instructions into smaller tasks.
 - *Let's make a pattern. White, blue, white, blue. What comes next?*
 - *Yes, white. Then what comes after that?*
 - *Now let's say the pattern. White, blue, white, blue, white.*

View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own programs. Ask them to answer the *reflection questions* in the Learning Log.

Recognize Children's Strengths (15–20 minutes)

Introduce the Best Practice

We know that there are typical physical, social, emotional, and cognitive benchmarks in a child's development—for example, the age at which a child is expected to walk or talk. We also know that when these benchmarks are reached can vary greatly from one child to another. Educators should also be aware that children have different kinds of skills or “intelligences.” Some children have good social and emotional skills, others excel in math and science, and others in language and literacy, or art.

As Professor Villegas-Reimers says in the overview, “We should promote all kinds of intelligences in the classroom.” To do this, educators should acknowledge children's strengths.

- **Recognize that all children are intelligent in different ways.** For one child, language may be his or her strength while for another child, it may be music, mathematics, science, drama, or something else.
- **Help children develop and become aware of their own strengths.** Create an atmosphere that is open to children's expanding development. For example, a space for children to create and act out dramatic play situations can help them become more aware of their abilities and experiment with and learn how to use their five senses to observe the world.

- **Identify and use children's strengths to address their weaknesses.** For instance, if a child is good at expressing himself or herself through sound and music, but does not easily grasp math concepts, try using musical rhythms to demonstrate those concepts (e.g., patterns).

Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants they will watch another short video—this time focusing on how educators identify and use children's individual strengths to help them learn and grow.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:



"Recognize Children's Strengths" (approx. 2 min)

- *How do the educators teach to children's differing strengths and needs?*
- *How do the educators nurture children's strengths?*

Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

Why is it important for educators to be familiar with developmental ages and stages?

- Knowing how children grow and change helps educators adapt their planning, pace, content, and teaching methods.
- Familiarity with typical development patterns can alert educators to signs that a child might be delayed or need extra help, or that a child is advanced and needs more and new challenges to keep him/her engaged.

How can educators teach to children's strengths and needs?

- Observe children regularly. Educators should be skilled "child-watchers."

- Listen closely as children play, respond in groups, react to stories and read alouds, and interact with peers.
- Notice where children choose to spend their time. Are they more comfortable in the reading corner? The block center? At the easel? These activities can help adults assess a child's strengths and interests.
- Use children's strengths to address their weaknesses. For example, if a child enjoys reading but struggles with science, share a book about science.
- Provide a multitude of choices. Young children are open to the world of learning. Giving them choices often introduces or reinforces interests that are just developing. (*Would you rather work with beads, paint at the easel, or read a book?*)
- Pair learners with different strengths. Children can learn from each other.

How can educators nurture children's strengths?

- Be explicit in recognizing and positively reinforcing a child's strengths. (*I like your pattern. You chose red, blue, red, blue. You did a great job!*)
- Acknowledge strengths and encourage others to reinforce them, too. (*Jaden is really good at puzzles. If you need help, ask him.*)
- Emphasize at least one strength for every child. Vary which strength is identified so as not to align a child with only that strength.
- Ask parents and other caregivers at home for their insights and observations. Discuss how the child likes to spend his or her time at home.
- Ask the child what she or he is good at doing. They often have surprising knowledge and self-awareness.
- Encourage children to do something they have never done or something they think they are not good at. Recognize the effort rather than the final product.

View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own programs. Ask them to answer the *reflection questions* in the Learning Log.

Break (optional)

(5–10 minutes)

Develop Self-Regulated Learners

(15–20 minutes)

Introduce the Best Practice

For a young child, self-regulation means learning to control one's emotions and behaviors well enough to focus on tasks, enjoy activities, solve problems, and get along with others. Self-regulation is the result of a well-developed *executive function*—all the cognitive processes that help a child think and behave in an organized way.

Children do not become self-regulated learners on their own. In order to develop good emotional and social skills, children need a nurturing, supportive, and positive environment with rules that are purposeful, easy to understand, and enforced. When children see themselves as an important part of the learning community, they feel more confident and are better able to control impulsive and disruptive behaviors. This, in turn, helps them develop their executive function, which later helps them in school and life.

- **Model problem-solving strategies.** Use role-play to help children understand that they have options for handling problems.
- **Understand and support children's emotions, fears, and frustrations** that stem from their struggles for success, especially as compared to their peers.
- **Use language to support children.** Ask questions and model language that encourage children to think about other people, not just themselves. (*Why do you think Paloma is sad? Or, Tell Peter why you're sad. Say, You stepped on my building.*)
- **Set up activities and centers to support children's self-control and self-regulation.** Limit opportunities for distraction, conflict, and frustration. Don't present challenging tasks at a time when children will have difficulty controlling their impulses (such as before lunch time or nap time).

Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants they will watch a video in which educators model negotiating skills and nurture a spirit of independence and social competency.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:



"Develop Self-Regulated Learners" (approx. 3 min)

- *What strategies do the educators use to foster children's abilities to self-regulate?*
- *How do the educators help children negotiate problems?*

Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked...*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

How can educators provide developmentally appropriate learning that fosters self-regulation?

- Use role-play to help children act out situations, help one another, and negotiate solutions.
- Encourage children to think of others' feelings, not just their own (even though their natural tendencies toward egocentric thinking may make it difficult for them to see things from other people's perspectives).
- Understand that children who differ in age and development have specific needs.
- Set up activities and centers so as to limit distraction, social conflict, and feelings of frustration. Consider schedule and children's disposition when presenting challenging tasks (e.g., children might have difficulty tackling new situations or controlling impulses before lunch time or nap time).

How can educators help children learn negotiating skills?

- Supply the words children need to express their feelings and show how using words results in a more satisfying resolution.
- Model language to help children process what is happening by thinking aloud.
- Role-play difficult situations and their solutions (e.g., sharing, taking turns, apologizing) to help children learn how to deal with conflicts.
- Ask questions that encourage children to consider persons, objects, or events not immediately present and to think about other people, not just themselves.

What are some indications that children have become self-regulated learners?

- Children are better able to:
 - Take turns. (*We can share!*)
 - Ask questions to further understanding. (*How big is a baby turtle?*)
 - Communicate ideas clearly. (*That's why it's called a pentagon.*)
 - Plan, make decisions, and communicate. (*Let's make a doctor's office. I'll be the doctor and you be the patient.*)
 - Control their impulses. (*It's okay that you knocked over my building.*)
 - Share information about what they have learned. (*The dinosaur was eighty-five feet long!*)

View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own program. Ask them to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

Try It

(15–20 minutes)

The Try It activity helps educators plan how to apply new ideas to their own early childhood program. Ask participants to work with a partner and direct their attention to the Try It handout in their packets.

What is DAP Anyway?

Participants will take a closer look at developmentally appropriate practice.

- Ask participants to discuss and define what developmentally appropriate practice means to them.
- Have participants read, discuss, decide, and explain whether or not each item in the numbered list is developmentally appropriate for young children.

Wrap Up

(5-10 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete the second half of the “Self-Assessment” and then measure their growth and learning.
- Ask participants to look over their notes from the training and jot down three things that they want to remember from today in their Learning Log.
- Invite partners or small groups to meet and share their three “keepers.” Then ask a few participants to share their “keepers” with the larger group.
- Thank participants for attending.
- Encourage them to fill out and return the Training Evaluation.

Glossary

benchmarks: the standards by which something can be judged. Benchmark behaviors are those behaviors that are typical, and against which most behaviors can be measured

developmentally appropriate practices: teaching and learning experiences grounded in the way in which we know that children learn, based on understanding the characteristics of a “typically-developing” child

executive function: all the cognitive processes that help a child behave and think in an organized way

self-regulated learners: children who have learned to manage strong emotions, control impulses, and stay on task with minimum distraction

social competencies: skills needed for successful social interaction; in young children these include making simple decisions, interacting with others in productive ways, and being able to resolve conflicts in appropriate ways (by using their words and negotiating and not being aggressive)



Self-Assessment

Name: _____

Date: _____

Before the training: Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your current comfort level.

After the training: Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your new comfort level.

1 = Very uncomfortable 2 = Uncomfortable 3 = Neutral 4 = Comfortable 5 = Very comfortable

	Before					After				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
General										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Recognize the characteristics of a “typically- developing” child.										
Plan activities that are appropriate for the developmental stages of the children in my care.										
Understand How Children Think										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Provide a variety of multi-sensory experiences that capture the interest of the concrete learner.										
Help children understand, appreciate, and respond to the perspectives of others.										
Respond to the needs of centered thinkers by giving clear directions, one step at a time.										
Recognize Children's Strengths										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Recognize the variations in learning styles among any group of children.										
Reach a child by providing activities that appeal to his or her learning style.										
Give children choices regularly.										
Use children’s strengths to develop their weaknesses.										
Develop Self-Regulated Learners										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Recognize and intervene in situations that arise because a child does not yet have the skills needed to be in control of his or her emotional responses.										
Model strategies that help children become skillful problem-solvers.										
Ask questions that prompt children to think about others.										



Learning Log

Understand How Children Think

View

In the video:

- *How do the educators help children learn about abstract ideas in concrete ways?*

- *How do the educators respond to children's centered thinking as they introduce new ideas?*

Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you assess the developmental needs of the individual children with whom you work?*

- *What did you learn that you will put into practice in your learning environment?*

Notes

Recognize Children's Strengths

View

In the video:

- *How do the educators teach to children's differing strengths and needs?*

- *How do the educators nurture children's strengths?*

Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you recognize and develop children's strengths?*

- *What did you learn that you will put into practice in your learning environment?*

Notes

Develop Self-Regulated Learners

View

In the video:

- *What strategies do the educators use to foster children's abilities to self-regulate?*

- *How do the educators help children negotiate problems?*

Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you develop children's abilities to self-regulate?*

- *What did you learn that you will put into practice in your learning environment?*

Notes



Try It

What is DAP Anyway?

Take a closer look at developmentally appropriate practice.

What does developmentally appropriate practice mean to you? Write your answer below.

Would you see these things in a developmentally appropriate learning environment? Circle “Yes” or “No” and explain why or why not in the space provided.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Sensory Table Center | Yes | No |
| 2. Listening station with earphones | Yes | No |
| 3. Bean bag chairs in a reading corner | Yes | No |
| 4. Coloring worksheets | Yes | No |
| 5. Display of leaves/pinecones/berries | Yes | No |
| 6. Commercially-made decorative “art” | Yes | No |



Best Practices

Developmentally appropriate practice is carefully planned, intentional teaching based on what is known about the developmental stages and ages of the children we teach. The goal is to bring children to their full potential—cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Effective early childhood educators understand what is typical at each age and stage of a child's development while also being aware that each child is different. They get to know each child individually so that they can build on a child's prior knowledge, skills, developmental level, and interests, and address the full range of abilities each child brings to the learning environment.

To provide developmentally appropriate instruction, educators should understand how preschool-age children typically think and behave, recognize that each child has different strengths, and work towards developing each child's ability to self-regulate.

Understand How Children Think

Developmentally appropriate practices are defined as teaching and learning experiences grounded in what we know about how children learn at different ages and stages of development. Based on understanding the characteristics of a “typically-developing” child and recognizing that children vary within that norm, these practices require careful and deliberate planning. Educators should find every opportunity to reach out to children in specific ways for each child.

- **Young children tend to be concrete thinkers.** They cannot think in abstract ways. They need active, participatory learning that uses their senses. They need to touch, feel, and participate in experiences.
- **Young children are often egocentric thinkers.** They tend to see the world strictly from their own perspective. Educators can help children move beyond their own perspective to understand, appreciate, and respond to others' perspectives.
- **Young children generally have centered thinking.** They process one variable at a time. For example, they may see an object by its color, or by its shape, but usually not both at the same time. A good rule of thumb is “one step at a time.” Rather than introducing two variables in a pattern (color and shape), the educator asks children to consider color first. In a later step, children can focus on a second variable.
- **Young children tend to confuse appearances (the way things look) with reality (the way things are).** They might think their thumb is bigger than the moon, because the thumb can cover the moon.

Why is it important to provide developmentally appropriate learning?

- Children learn best when adults recognize their individual needs and interests.
- Children are encouraged to explore what excites their curiosity. Like adults, children participate actively in activities that are interesting to them and inviting. Unlocking that curiosity is key to learning.
- Young children learn best through a combination of explanation and experience.

What strategies can educators use to teach to children’s concrete way of thinking?

- Encourage children to use their senses to feel, taste, see, and experience new things and concepts. Children learn best when they can *feel* a snakeskin to understand what the word *scaly* means, walk the distance to see the length of a dinosaur, or hold a turtle shell to measure its circumference.
- Provide hands-on experiences to help children explore the world directly. Then extend the experience. For example:
 - Display real-life objects for children to explore using all their senses. (*Hold the snakeskin. What does it feel like? What does it sound like when you move it? What does it smell like?*)
 - Introduce sensory vocabulary. For example, during a turtle shell exploration, introduce the words *rough, smooth, light, dark, heavy, full, and empty*. Then read and display picture books about turtles.
 - Encourage conversations and help inquisitive minds to test theories and hypotheses. (*How can we tell how long the turtle is? How can we measure how round it is on top? What words can you think of that describe the snakeskin?*)

How can educators respond to children’s centered thinking—their tendency to pay attention to one task at a time?

- Give children simple directions, one step at a time. For example, rather than saying *Let’s make a snowflake pattern using all of these colors*, break down instructions into smaller tasks.
 - *Let’s make a pattern. White, blue, white, blue. What comes next?*
 - *Yes, white. Then what comes after that?*
 - *Now let’s say the pattern. White, blue, white, blue, white.*

Recognize Children's Strengths

We know that there are typical physical, social, emotional, and cognitive benchmarks in a child's development—for example, the age at which a child is expected to walk or talk. We also know that when these benchmarks are reached can vary greatly from one child to another. Educators should also be aware that children have different kinds of skills or "intelligences." Some children have good social and emotional skills, others excel in math and science, and others in language and literacy, or art.

As Professor Villegas-Reimers says in the overview, "We should promote all kinds of intelligences in the classroom." To do this, educators should acknowledge children's strengths.

- **Recognize that all children are intelligent in different ways.** For one child, language may be his or her strength while for another child, it may be music, mathematics, science, drama, or something else.
- **Help children develop and become aware of their own strengths.** Create an atmosphere that is open to children's expanding development. For example, a space for children to create and act out dramatic play situations can help them become more aware of their abilities and experiment with and learn how to use their five senses to observe the world.
- **Identify and use children's strengths to address their weaknesses.** For instance, if a child is good at expressing himself or herself through sound and music, but does not easily grasp math concepts, try using musical rhythms to demonstrate those concepts (e.g., patterns).

Why is it important for educators to be familiar with developmental ages and stages?

- Knowing how children grow and change helps educators adapt their planning, pace, content, and teaching methods.
- Familiarity with typical development patterns can alert educators to signs that a child might be delayed or need extra help, or that a child is advanced and needs more and new challenges to keep him/her engaged.

How can educators teach to children's strengths and needs?

- Observe children regularly. Educators should be skilled "child-watchers."
- Listen closely as children play, respond in groups, react to stories and read alouds, and interact with peers.

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

- Notice where children choose to spend their time. Are they more comfortable in the reading corner? The block center? At the easel? These activities can help adults assess a child's strengths and interests.
- Use children's strengths to address their weaknesses. For example, if a child enjoys reading but struggles with science, share a book about science.
- Provide a multitude of choices. Young children are open to the world of learning. Giving them choices often introduces or reinforces interests that are just developing. (*Would you rather work with beads, paint at the easel, or read a book?*)
- Pair learners with different strengths. Children can learn from each other.

How can educators nurture children's strengths?

- Be explicit in recognizing and positively reinforcing a child's strengths. (*I like your pattern. You chose red, blue, red, blue. You did a great job!*)
- Acknowledge strengths and encourage others to reinforce them, too. (*Jaden is really good at puzzles. If you need help, ask him.*)
- Emphasize at least one strength for every child. Vary which strength is identified so as not to align a child with only that strength.
- Ask parents and other caregivers at home for their insights and observations. Discuss how the child likes to spend his or her time at home.
- Ask the child what she or he is good at doing. They often have surprising knowledge and self-awareness.
- Encourage children to do something they have never done or something they think they are not good at. Recognize the effort rather than the final product.

Develop Self-Regulated Learners

For a young child, self-regulation means learning to control one's emotions and behaviors well enough to focus on tasks, enjoy activities, solve problems, and get along with others. Self-regulation is the result of a well-developed *executive function*—all the cognitive processes that help a child think and behave in an organized way.

Children do not become self-regulated learners on their own. In order to develop good emotional and social skills, children need a nurturing, supportive, and positive environment with rules that are purposeful, easy to understand, and enforced. When children see themselves as an important part of the learning community, they feel more confident and are better able to control impulsive and disruptive behaviors. This, in turn, helps them develop their executive function, which later helps them in school and life.

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

- **Model problem-solving strategies.** Use role-play to help children understand that they have options for handling problems.
- **Understand and support children's emotions, fears, and frustrations** that stem from their struggles for success, especially as compared to their peers.
- **Use language to support children.** Ask questions and model language that encourage children to think about other people, not just themselves. (*Why do you think Paloma is sad? Or, Tell Peter why you're sad. Say, You stepped on my building.*)
- **Set up activities and centers to support children's self-control and self-regulation.** Limit opportunities for distraction, conflict, and frustration. Don't present challenging tasks at a time when children will have difficulty controlling their impulses (such as before lunch time or nap time).

How can educators provide developmentally appropriate learning that fosters self-regulation?

- Use role-play to help children act out situations, help one another, and negotiate solutions.
- Encourage children to think of others' feelings, not just their own (even though their natural tendencies toward egocentric thinking may make it difficult for them to see things from other people's perspectives).
- Understand that children who differ in age and development have specific needs.
- Set up activities and centers so as to limit distraction, social conflict, and feelings of frustration. Consider schedule and children's disposition when presenting challenging tasks (e.g., children might have difficulty tackling new situations or controlling impulses before lunch time or nap time).

How can educators help children learn negotiating skills?

- Supply the words children need to express their feelings and show how using words results in a more satisfying resolution.
- Model language to help children process what is happening by thinking aloud.
- Role-play difficult situations and their solutions (e.g., sharing, taking turns, apologizing) to help children learn how to deal with conflicts.
- Ask questions that encourage children to consider persons, objects, or events not immediately present and to think about other people, not just themselves.

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

What are some indications that children have become self-regulated learners?

- Children are better able to:
 - Take turns. (*We can share!*)
 - Ask questions to further understanding. (*How big is a baby turtle?*)
 - Communicate ideas clearly. (*That's why it's called a pentagon.*)
 - Plan, make decisions, and communicate. (*Let's make a doctor's office. I'll be the doctor and you be the patient.*)
 - Control their impulses. (*It's okay that you knocked over my building.*)
 - Share information about what they have learned. (*The dinosaur was eighty-five feet long!*)

Glossary

benchmarks: the standards by which something can be judged. Benchmark behaviors are those behaviors that are typical, and against which most behaviors can be measured

developmentally appropriate practices: teaching and learning experiences grounded in the way in which we know that children learn, based on understanding the characteristics of a “typically-developing” child

executive function: all the cognitive processes that help a child behave and think in an organized way

self-regulated learners: children who have learned to manage strong emotions, control impulses, and stay on task with minimum distraction

social competencies: skills needed for successful social interaction; in young children these include making simple decisions, interacting with others in productive ways, and being able to resolve conflicts in appropriate ways (by using their words and negotiating and not being aggressive)

View the self-paced video workshop at <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators>.



Standards

This professional development training module is aligned to Massachusetts standards and guidelines.

Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Center and School Based:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 3**
Program uses screening tools, progress reports, formative assessments, and information gathered through observation to set goals for individual children across all developmental domains; Staff demonstrate language and literacy skills either in English or the child's language that provide a model for children.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 4**
Program uses progress reports, appropriate screening tools, formative assessments, and information gathered through observation to inform curriculum planning, and use results to monitor each child's progress across developmental domains, and inform program decision-making (e.g. curriculum content, strategies for improved staff implementation, and professional development.)
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**
All staff receive orientation and ongoing formal professional development and supervision in how to support positive relationships and interactions through positive, warm and nurturing interactions.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 3**
Staff engage children in meaningful conversations, use open-ended questions and provide opportunities throughout the day to scaffold their development of more complex receptive and expressive language, support children's use of language to share ideas, problem solve and have positive peer interactions.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 4**
Staff utilizes teaching strategies that ensure a positive classroom environment, engage children in learning and promote critical thinking skills.

Family Child Care:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 3**
Either directly or through a network or system, educator uses screening tools, progress

reports, formative assessments, and information gathered through observation to set goals for individual children across developmental domains.

- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2** Educator has participated in formal professional development on how to support positive relationships and interactions with children through positive, warm and nurturing interactions.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 4** Educators engage children in meaningful conversations, as age and developmentally appropriate, use open-ended questions and provide opportunities throughout the day to scaffold their language to support the development of more complex receptive and expressive language, support children's use of language to share ideas, problem solve and have positive peer interactions; Educators utilize teaching strategies that ensure a positive learning environment, engage children in learning and promote critical thinking skills.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice:

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning A** Teachers are responsible for fostering the caring learning community through their teaching.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning B.2** Teachers continually gather information about children in a variety of ways and monitor each child's learning and development to make plans to help children progress.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning C** Teachers take responsibility for knowing what the desired goals for the program are and how the program's curriculum is intended to achieve those goals. They carry out that curriculum through their teaching in ways that are geared to young children in general and these children in particular. Doing this includes following the predictable sequences in which children acquire specific concepts, skills, and abilities and by building on prior experiences and understandings.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning D** Teachers plan for learning experiences that effectively implement a comprehensive curriculum so that children attain key goals across the domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and across the disciplines (language literacy, including English acquisition, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health).
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning E.1** Teachers arrange firsthand, meaningful experiences that are intellectually and creatively stimulating, invite

exploration and investigation, and engage children's active, sustained involvement. They do this by providing a rich variety of materials, challenges, and ideas that are worthy of children's attention.

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning E.2** Teachers present children with opportunities to make meaningful choices, especially in child-choice activity periods. They assist and guide children who are not yet able to enjoy and make good use of such periods.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning E.4** Teachers provide experiences, materials, and interactions to enable children to engage in play that allows them to stretch their boundaries to the fullest in their imagination, language, interaction, and self-regulation as well as to practice their newly acquired skills.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning F** Teachers possess an extensive repertoire of skills and strategies they are able to draw on, and they know how and when to choose among them, to effectively promote each child's learning and development at that moment. Those skills include the ability to adapt curriculum, activities, and materials to ensure full participation of all children. Those strategies include, but are not limited to, acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, modeling, demonstrating, adding challenge, giving cues or other assistance, providing information, and giving directions.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning F.2** To stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning, teachers pose problems, ask questions, and make comments and suggestions.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning F.3** To extend the range of children's interests and the scope of their thought, teachers present novel experiences and introduce stimulating ideas, problems, experiences, or hypotheses.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning F.4** To adjust the complexity and challenge of activities to suit children's level of skill and knowledge, teachers increase the challenge as children gain competence and understanding.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning F.6** To enhance children's conceptual understanding, teachers use various strategies, including intensive interview and conversation, that encourage children to reflect on and "revisit" their experiences.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning G.1** Teachers recognize and respond to the reality that in any group, children's skills will vary and they will need different levels of support. Teachers also know that any one child's level of skill and need for support will vary over time.

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning G.2** Scaffolding can take a variety of forms; for example, giving the child a hint, adding a cue, modeling the skill, or adapting the materials and activities. It can be provided in a variety of contexts, not only in planned learning experiences but also in play, daily routines, and outdoor activities.
- **2) Teaching to enhance development and learning H.1** Teachers understand that each major learning format or context (e.g. large group, small group, learning center, routine) has its own characteristics, functions, and value.
- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning H.2** Teachers think carefully about which learning format is best for helping children achieve a desired goal, given the children’s ages, development, abilities, temperaments, etc.
- **(3) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals A.1** Teachers consider what children should know, understand, and be able to do across the domains of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development and across the disciplines, including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health.
- **(3) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals D** Teachers make meaningful connections a priority in the learning experiences they provide children, to reflect that all learners, and certainly young children, learn best when the concepts, language, and skills they encounter are related to something they know and care about, and when the new learnings are themselves interconnected in meaningful, coherent ways.
- **(3) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals D.2** Teachers plan curriculum experiences to draw on children’s own interests and introduce children to things likely to interest them, in recognition that developing and extending children’s interests is particularly important during the pre- school years, when children’s ability to focus their attention is in its early stages.
- **(4) Assessing children’s development and learning C** There is a system in place to collect, make sense of, and use the assessment information to guide what goes on in the classroom (formative assessment). Teachers use this information in planning curriculum and learning experiences and in moment-to- moment interactions with children—that is, teachers continually engage in assessment for the purpose of improving teaching and learning.



Training Evaluation

Thank you for your participation. Please indicate your impressions of the training below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The training met my expectations.					
I will be able to apply what I have learned.					
The trainer was knowledgeable.					
The training was organized and easy to follow.					
Participation and interaction was encouraged.					
The handouts were pertinent and useful.					

1. How would you rate this training overall?

Excellent *Good* *Average* *Poor*

2. What was most beneficial to you in this training?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve this training?