

Core considerations in developmentally appropriate practice

Knowledge to consider in making decisions.

1. *What is known about child development and learning*—referring to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children’s learning and development.
2. *What is known about each child as an individual*—referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.
3. *What is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live*—referring to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children’s lives at home and in their communities that practitioners must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family.

Principles of child development and learning that inform practice

1. All the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, and cognitive—are important, and they are closely interrelated. Children’s development and learning in one domain influence and are influenced by what takes place in other domains.
2. Many aspects of children’s learning and development follow well documented sequences, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired.
3. Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child’s individual functioning.
4. Development and learning result from a dynamic and continuous interaction of biological maturation and experience.
5. Early experiences have profound effects, both cumulative and delayed, on a child’s development and learning; and optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning to occur.
6. Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities.
7. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.

8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
9. Always mentally active in seeking to understand the world around them, children learn in a variety of ways; a wide range of teaching strategies and interactions are effective in supporting all these kinds of learning.
10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence.
11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and also when they have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills.
12. Children's experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning, such as persistence, initiative, and flexibility; in turn, these dispositions and behaviors affect their learning and development.

Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice

1. Creating a caring community of learners.
2. Teaching to enhance development and learning.
3. Planning curriculum to achieve important goals.
4. Assessing children's development and learning.
5. Establishing reciprocal relationships with families.