

Tip Sheets

Four Key Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Inclusive Care



Using developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) helps caregivers promote optimal learning and development for

young children by differentiating program planning and engaging students in the learning process. Students should be treated as unique individuals, yet all practices should be appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage and build on previously taught concepts.

Four Key Principles

1. Participation in life has little to do with ability or disability. It has to do with equal access.

There is one world for each of us to be a part of.

2. During the first few years of life, children construct their view of themselves and their world.

Foundations are laid for how a child will get along in their environment, make friends, and cope with life's successes and challenges.

3. A young child's sense of reality is formulated through experiences of belonging and acceptance.

Children are more alike than different. All children deserve opportunities to participate in typical childhood experiences so as to feel accepted and develop a sense of belonging.

4. Developmentally appropriate inclusive care is:

- Age appropriate.
- Developmentally appropriate.
- Individually appropriate.
- Respectful of the diversity in others.

Implies:

- Knowledge of the individual child and family.
- Knowledge of the individual learning styles.
- A focus on the whole child—not on the disability.
- Everyone benefits.

Supports:

- A range of options for inclusion.
- Grouping children of varying ability.
- Normal ratios of children with and without disabilities (10% of children within a range of disabilities and 1% with severe disabilities).
- Children learning with each other.
- Sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Emphasizes:

- Childhood, not disability.
- Demonstration of positive attitudes.
- Flexibility, collaborative efforts, and willingness.
- A supportive environment for child, family, provider, and specialist.
- Allowing children to meet challenges.
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Additional Resources

NAEYC | Developmentally Appropriate Practice

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/dap>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

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