



# Developmentally Appropriate Practices

## Developmentally appropriate what?

This term is often heard in preschool and primary grades (K-3rd) and can be confusing for many families.

The following questions concerning "Developmentally Appropriate Practices" or DAP are the most commonly asked. We hope the answers will help you better understand what DAP is all about!

**W**hat does DAP mean?  
DAP has two components:



***Age appropriateness:***  
refers to the growth and change that occur in healthy developing children during the first 8 years of life. These predictable changes occur in all areas of development-physical, emotional, social, and cognitive.

## *Individual appropriateness.*

Each child is a unique person and comes to school with his or her own individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background.



Teachers who supports DAP are knowledgeable about human development and recognize the unique differences among each child. They are able to create classroom settings and plan activities that will better match the child's developing abilities while respecting their unique interests.

**W**hat if our cultural background is different than other families?

Teachers who support the DAP concept recognize that children's backgrounds, experiences, socialization, and learning styles are different and that no one

method will work with all children.

The younger the children and the more diverse their backgrounds, the wider the variety of teaching methods and materials required.

Cultural differences are celebrated and used as foundations for building new information for all the children....even the teacher!

**I** never had DAP when I was in school and I'm ok...Why change? The traditional method of education we grew up with, formalized instruction where everyone was expected to be on the "same page" and "know the same material" at the "same time", needs to be re-evaluated and revised in light of new research.



Recent research has shown that children learn best through "real", play oriented approaches to early childhood education (birth to 8 years old). This finding, combined with the recent brain research showing how stimulating activities can promote brain growth, challenges educators and early childhood professionals to reconsider the use of

traditional or formalized instruction and methods.



**I** want my child to **LEARN** not just play all day!

Research has shown that curriculum and teaching methods should be designed so that children not only acquire knowledge and skills, but they also acquire the trait or tendency to use them.

When children are exposed to excessive drill and repeated practice in skills they have already mastered such as reading and arithmetic skills, it tends to lessen the child's interest in using these skills.

Novelty is the key! Teacher's who value DAP recognize that a child's interest for learning can be strengthened by providing diverse activities for acquiring or using a skill. Over use of one way can turn kids (or adults) off to becoming lifelong learners!

Parts of this tip sheet came from NAEYC, Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs, 1993 10th reprint.

For more information contact:



**The Center for Parent Involvement** (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi). The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPI (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

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