



# Developmentally Appropriate Practices

# Teaching Methods

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**DAP classrooms are created to facilitate learning and development, therefore:**

*Objects in the environment are important*

- real or concrete as possible
- include many manipulatives
- relevant to the life experience of the child

*Environment facilitates interaction among children and adults*

- play is work
- children learn through activity

*Learning contexts in the environment*

- the environment allows the child to explore one concept throughout the classroom environment
- facilitates repeated experiences of a concept

*Individualizing instruction through the environment*

- learning centers should accommodate individual educational needs
- an effective way to gather assessment information
- provide opportunity for drill and practice
- should be designed with specific outcomes in mind

*Organize the physical environment*

- to meet the needs of children
- areas designated for individual, small-group, and large-group activity
- allow for different activity and noise levels
- provides a place for each child to store personal belongings
- areas to display work
- children have easy access to teachers as well as learning tools
- activity area boundaries are well defined and observable to children
- accessible to all children

*Schedules*

- are flexible, predictable, and varied in pace
- provide for whole group, small group, and free choice activities
- provide for a variety of interests and skill levels

Adapted from Gullo, D. F. (1992). *Developmentally appropriate teaching in early childhood*. (pp. 45-46). Washington, DC: National Education Association of the United States.

# Project Approach

## Philosophy, Purpose, Goals

The project approach was influenced by Dewey's ideas that children learn best when interest is fully engaged. Dewey believed that the acquisition of knowledge and concepts are acquired through a variety of domains; capitalizing on individual proficiencies while at the same time addressing specific learning goals, knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings. Projects foster a growing understanding of a multifaceted phenomenon.

## Content - Nature & Scope

Projects are investigations of something specific and indicate a direction of the work that will be undertaken. They are an extended study of a topic and might include experience in writing, reading; measurement; drawing and painting; model making; creating stories, drama, fine arts; history; numeracy; mapping; music; or social studies. Projects may be conducted with the whole class, a small group, or an individual. Often times experts in the community are utilized in the project approach.

## Activities/Materials:

Children collect information through direct observation, interviewing relevant experts, performing experiments, collecting artifacts, preparing visual and verbal reports of findings, field trips, actively studying real phenomenon in their own environment. Secondary source materials include books, charts, leaflets, maps, pamphlets, and pictures.

## Role of the Teacher

The teacher acts as a facilitator and consultant rather than an instructor. The teacher provides ongoing supervision and helps to create a productive work environment.

## Role of the Child

Children make choices about what tasks to undertake and select the level of difficulty that is appropriate. They are actively engaged in the investigation and application of knowledge and skills, working towards the completion of the project.

## Resources

Bayman, A. G. (1995, September). An example of a small project for kindergartners that includes some 3Rs learning. Young Children, 27-31.

Hartman, J. A., & Eckerty, C. (1995, Spring). Projects in the early years. Childhood Education, 141-147.



# Teaching Using Themes

## Philosophy, Purpose, Goals

Theme teaching involves offering children an array of activities built around a central idea. Themes are conceptual organizers, connections to big ideas helping children form linkages among individual bits of information.

## Content - Nature & Scope

Theme teaching involves offering children an array of activities built around a central idea. Teachers select themes, keeping in mind children's interests, developmental capacities, and the ecological context in which they live and learn. Related activities are integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and take place within a concentrated time frame.

## Activities/Materials:

Teachers select themes based on concepts which children are familiar (first hand experience) and create themes which provide for hands-on activities. Using reference books, children's books, or other people as resources, teachers generate a master list of terms, facts and principals (TFP's). From this list, 10 to 15 TFP's are selected on which to focus. Activities are developed for each of the TFP's (2-3 activities). Activities are assigned to curricular areas (e.g. language, social, cognitive, motor, etc.) and allow for varying degree of skill level within the group (beginner, intermediate, advanced). Whole group, small group and independent activities are designed. Themes are in place for 2 to 3 weeks and at least 2 theme-related activities are available to children every day.

## Role of the Teacher

The teacher articulates the relevance of the theme to the children, insuring that the information is accurate and conveyed in a manner in which is meaningful to them personally. The teacher shares the TFP's with parents and may post them in the classroom for easy reference.

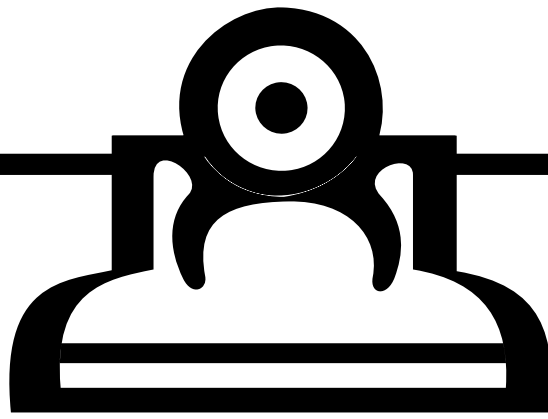
## Role of the Child

Children talk about the theme, pretend in relation to the theme, and create theme-related products of their own invention. They may demonstrate linking the theme to their past or current experiences and may continue to refer to the theme in subsequent activities.

## Resource

Kostelnik, M. J., Soderman, A. K., & Whiren, A. P. (1993). Developmentally appropriate programs in early childhood education. New York: Macmillan.





## Learning Centers

- An effective management system must be developed and well understood by the teacher and the children.
- The teacher must genuinely know the children and their abilities, achievement levels, previous experiences, and overall maturity (physical, mental, emotional). In addition, she must know the goals and objectives of a good early childhood program and apply these goals in designing the curriculum.
- Centers must be attractive, well organized and provide for a variety of learning styles and skill levels. They must include the necessary supplies and resources, and provide for feedback through self-correcting materials of various types.
- Children must be taught how to effectively use the center materials and equipment.
- Individual and group planning guidance, and evaluation of center activities must be provided.
- The children must possess the necessary skills and prerequisite information for effective utilization of the centers. They must understand the purposes of their activities; be able to exercise self-discipline; and depending on their reading or computational level, be able to keep good records of their activities.
- The activities in the centers should have educationally valid purposes. They should reinforce skills, concepts, and knowledge; be integrated with other appropriate skills and concepts; and be based on diagnosis of the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the children.

### Resources

Dodge, D. T., & Colker, L. J. (1995). The creative curriculum for early childhood. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

Kostelnik, M. J., Soderman, A. K., & Whiren, A. P. (1993). Developmentally appropriate programs in early childhood education. New York: Macmillan.