

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Parent Tip #13

Developmentally Appropriate What?

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

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

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!

What does DAP mean?

DAP has two components:

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

Individual Appropriateness refers to the fact that each child is a unique person and comes to school with her own individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background.

What 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 and 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 eight 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 tendency to use those skills.

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

Places parents can find more information about Developmentally Appropriate Practice

<http://www.naeyc.org/ece/resources.asp>

<http://www.nncc.org>