Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Imagine walking into a classroom where the education is catered to each individual child. Developmentally appropriate practice is different for every. Understanding that every child is different, develops and learns in individual ways and pace is critical for a teacher. When I think of developmentally appropriate classroom, the ideal classroom is created for each child to express their individuality, be a part of a community filled with caring educators and peers, and somewhere where learning capacity is infinite. In order for all children to get the full benefit from developmentally appropriate practice, they need to enjoy the classroom while participating in all of the activities.

All activities in a developmentally appropriate classroom should be constructed around the children’s individual needs, the classroom environment, and any other factors that could play a part in a child’s education. While catering to each child’s needs, the teacher has to remember to make the classroom challenging but achievable for each child. If a child finds the material to be too easy, a problem arises because they cannot reach their full potential. No child should be held back because of this instance. In NAEYC’s Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 3rd Edition, one can find under the positions statements that “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” (pg. 11). This means, teachers need to modify their teaching methods to accommodate all learners and their abilities.

Under the same section in the book, it is reinforced that “all children have their own strengths, needs, and interests” (pg. 11). This goes along with children developing at different rates. When the curriculum is modified to fit each child’s needs, learning is able to reach its’ maximum potential. For a teacher to reach a developmentally appropriate classroom, sometimes a need for outside sources and help is needed additionally to the teacher who is already there. For example, a special needs child may have additional needs that can be attended to with additional efforts.

Along with attending to all of my individual students’ needs I will incorporate developing appropriate practice into my classroom by creating a caring community of learners along with following the guidelines on a daily basis. A community feeling can be found by having students sit in a circle while paying attention to the classroom along with addressing all students as my friends. Another aspect of developmentally appropriate practice that is covered by addressing students as “friends” is having children become a part of a community where they are safe and valued. This will help create a feel that I am on the same level with my students and that I want to help them reach their fullest potential. The community feel can also be incorporated in my classroom by having my students make a class project every year, and the project will be displayed throughout my classroom so all future students can see. All throughout the Child Development Center there were pictures and artwork displayed from the previous graduating classes.

An aspect of DAP that I was able to observe at the CDC is how children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know. This became acknowledgeable to me when Mrs. Hallem went over the date with the children. Some students wanted to touch the “18” marker for the calendar when it was brought around to them when others just simply looked. This shows how some are visual learners while others are kinesthetic and need to be active and feel what they are learning.

Two more aspects of DAP that are very observable and I have seen at the CDC are: 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, and that play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence. When breaking these principles apart, the children at the Child Development Center all learn differently, and are catered to by using different methods. Some get their need of kinesthetic learning fulfilled by dancing and singing and doing arts and crafts. Others who are auditory learners get their dose of learning by song, and listening to the teacher. Finally, visual learners gain their knowledge from all of the artwork, calendars, and creative aspects that become visual aides for the students. The teachers at the CDC hit all of these styles of learning. Also, play is a very important aspect of learning because play is a child’s work. Although I was unable to view the children playing when we visited the CDC as a class, I was able to see the children play with toys at other points throughout the semester. Play helps all of the children to develop socially because they are interacting with friends of different ages, backgrounds, genders, and ethnicity. This helps them learn how to work and play with others. Playing with the educational toys help them to develop emotionally as week because their emotions come up during play. Knowing and learning how to control their emotions of anger and fear while playing becomes essential, as well as learning how to share and being kind to one another.

A main focus of the CDC bases from the DAP principal that 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. A major part of my observations at the CDC covered this principal. I was able to view this taking place while the children were having circle time. Physical development took place when the children had their colored rhythm sticks and danced to the music. Children also were able to make their own decisions by choosing their own colored sticks. Social development took place by the interactions between the children. Some was viewable when the children sat next to one another in the circle, as well as, while standing on their circles for the song and dance, and when transitioning from Mrs. Hallem’s room to Mrs. Gourley’s. Cognitive development took place through the sounds, pictures, and letters taught. The children were able to see the letter “F” both in uppercase and lower case. They went over the “F-sound” and then each child was able to take a turn locating the “Ff” on the dry-erase crayon board. In case a child had any trouble locating the letter, there was a picture on the side of the board for reference.

In closing, observing the children at the Child Developmental Center helped open my eyes to the world of Developmentally Appropriate Practice. It was completely centered around the guidelines and principals of DAP, and made for a wonderful as well as beneficial experience.