

# Focusing on Infant and Toddler Teaching: Shifting Mindsets and Overcoming Challenges with Developmentally Appropriate Practice

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We are advocating for developmentally appropriate practice as a unifying framework for practice that can drive positive change for programs serving infants and toddlers and strengthen teachers, leaders, and systems that serve infants, toddlers, and their families.

## Questions to Inspire Reflective Practice in Your Program

### Guideline 1: Creating a Caring Community of Learners

- What does it mean to create a learning community of practice where adults, families, and children learn and grow together?
- How do we address psychological safety for children? How can safe spaces and practices be culturally congruent – and what does this mean for your program?

### Guideline 2: Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families

- How do we identify and remove bias in family evaluation, expectations for children, and children's behavior?
- How do we make space and time to evaluate ourselves, our own identity and experiences, and then invite families to share stories, experiences, and insight?

### Guideline 3: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Development and Learning

- How can we use authentic documentation beyond required (commercial) digital assessments?
- How do we include cycles of reflective practice to explore children's interests and skills and make our own practices visible and intentional?

### Guideline 4: Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning

- How do we promote creative, linguistic and social-emotional expression, and language development through playful learning?
- How do we plan for child-centered teaching that includes sensory, social, and cognitive challenges?

### Guideline 5: Planning and Implementing an engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals

- How do we move beyond daily challenges to prioritizing DAP curriculum and teaching?
- How can we shift the current lens of teaching to incorporate developmentally appropriate, individualized experiences for infants and toddlers? What are the next steps in planning?

### Guideline 6: Demonstrating Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

- How do we help teachers move beyond surviving to setting goals for improved teaching and professionalism?
- What can program leaders and teachers do together to draw families and community resources together to strengthen programs?
- What are high-impact next steps to advocate for children, families, programs, and the profession?

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## Reflective Practice: Identifying and Removing Bias

What can you learn from children as you explore your ideas, expectations, decisions, and actions through an asset-based, strengths-empowering mindset?

- Observe “through the eyes of the child” to evaluate the situation, level of support, and how the experience feels to the child.
- Document accurately, capturing the child’s experience without bias.
- Reflect with colleagues to ask questions, evaluate your observations and ideas. Are there unexamined beliefs and practices? What other perspectives and understandings are needed?
- Shift mindsets and plan action steps. What do you need to think about and do differently? Where did you use a deficit lens? How does using a strengths-based lens change your words, labels, and actions?
- Implement change. As a result of a mindset shift, how will your behaviors change? Your planning? Your support of children? Your questions for families?

*Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Care for Infants and Toddlers: Strategies for High-Quality Teaching (Teachers College Press, 2024)*

### Coming Soon:

- Focus on DAP: Joyful, Equitable Teaching with Infants and Toddlers (NAEYC)
- Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Care for Infants and Toddlers: Strategies for High-Quality Teaching (Teachers College Press)
- Honoring the Moment in Young Children’s Lives: Observation, Documentation, and Reflection (Redleaf Press)

### On the Shelf:

- Casebook: Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8 (NAEYC)
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8 (NAEYC)
- Enjoying the Parenting Roller Coaster: Empowering Your Children Through the Ups and Downs (Gryphon House)
- Let’s Talk Toddlers: A Practical Guide to High Quality Teaching (Redleaf Press)
- What Does Brown Mean to You (Penguin Random House)

### Additional Resources:

- State of Babies Yearbook, Zero to Three (2023): <https://stateofbabies.org/>
- National Academies Sciences Engineering Medicine: Closing the Opportunity Gap for Young Children (2023): <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/exploring-the-opportunity-gap-for-young-children-from-birth-to-age-eight>
- DAP Position Statement: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents>
- Zero to Three Take Action Now: <https://stateofbabies.org/take-action/>
- NAEYC Build Your Advocacy Skills: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/build-your-advocacy-skills-and-knowledge>
- QRIS Resource Guide by State: <https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/states>