

Using DAP as a Mindset and Roadmap to Create Meaningful Change

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The Power Point and handouts for this session are located under “Resources” at www.mariemasterson.com. The handouts include:

- Session Activities (this document)
- Leading for Impact: High-Impact Levers for Leadership, Teaching, and Advocacy
- Family Survey and Conversation Questions
- Strategy Toolbox for Teachers: Creating Moments of Joyful Learning
- DAP Behavior Guidance with Infants and Toddlers
- High-Priority Teaching Strategies (Includes checklist)

ACTIVITY #1: Supporting Infant and Toddler Teachers

1. If you could help teachers change one thing or you could change one thing, what would it be?
2. How do infant and toddler teachers (or yourself) most need support?
3. For infant and toddler teaching, what is working well? What is something you are doing that’s had a positive impact?

I asked a team of professional trainers and quality assessors what I/T teachers need to know and do.

1. Understand teachers’ impact in shaping children’s future.
2. Focus on strengthening development across every domain.
3. Set learning goals for purposeful play to support emerging skills.
4. Incorporate cultural contexts and build on family strengths.
5. Support active learning through responsive relationships, interactions, and the setting.
6. Connect the home to program practices to support belonging, purpose, and agency.
7. Offer meaningful, content-rich teaching (including language and literacy).
8. Provide adequate challenge and skill support for each child (use both/and thinking).

These are directly related to the **Eight Principles for Child Development and Learning and Implications that inform Practice – from the NAEYC DAP statement** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/principles>

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER

- Infant and toddler teachers have the highest turnover rate. 49% of infant and toddler teachers leave their centers or the field each year (Bassock et al., 2022, *Evidence of Teacher Turnover*).
- 50% turnover when the program serves children birth to three with subsidies.
- 26-27% turnover when the program serves children without subsidies.
- Only 10% of child care programs nationwide are rated as high-quality.
- 75% of toddlers in center care and 93% in home-based care experience low or mediocre quality care settings that can harm their development.
- Fewer than half of infants and toddlers in licensed care have the highest QIS ratings (Perlman et al., 2017).
- Overall, the quality of care for infants and toddlers is low and variable (Mangione, et al., 2016).
- Quality is low in programs serving low-income families (Bichay-Awadalla & Butotsky-Shearer, 2022).
- Families with high neighborhood violence, poverty, and ACEs are least likely to have access to high-quality programs (Coley, Speilvogel, Kruzik, et al., 2021).
- In the United States, only 34.2% of children are screened and only 28.5% of children from families living in low-income are screened (Cole et al., 2023). Only 1 in 3 received screening with family input. Only 29.5 percent were screened from families of low income
- The percentage of infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to 2 years old who received early intervention services under IDEA Part C during 2021 was 6.8 percent. Those with access to Early Head Start Access with screening was 11 percent (Zero to Three, 2023).
- 161 peer-reviewed papers (2009 and 2020) show infant and toddler teachers received fewer professional development supports than other early education teachers.
- Fewest training supports available for infant and toddler teachers in under-resourced communities (Lang et al., 2024, *Teacher Inequities*).
- Little curriculum is specifically developed for infants and toddlers (Smith & Osborn, 2024).

ACTIVITY #2: Reflecting on Current Data

1. What surprises you most about the data?
2. If you are a teacher, what kind of support do you need from leaders and coaches?
3. If you are a leader and coach – what do you really want to do to support teachers? Lessons learned? Take-away action steps?

WHERE IS YOUR INFLUENCE?

Studies find that racial bias is less likely to be recognized in early childhood programs than in other settings. This is known as the “bias blind spot,” where we may recognize bias in others (and other places) but not in ourselves (Blackson et al., 2022).

- Does your program reflect many diversities in language, race, culture, socioeconomic status, family structure, gender, age, and more.?
- Does your program represent a single race, culture, or language?
- Even when programs are mono-cultural, conversations about culture bias, and racial equity provide a necessary anchor leadership.

ACTIVITY #3: Cultural conflicts and infant and toddler teaching

Infant and toddler teaching is a unique space where **culture** is an active prime-mover in daily interactions, teaching decisions, perceptions, and caring routines, but practices take culture down one of three pathways in staff, family, and child interactions:

Hidden – Power differentials, unexamined differences, and lack of reflection lead to families experiencing exclusion and inequity, implicit bias, and discrimination.

Unexamined – There may be awareness of differences or superficial recognition of stereotypes and emotional responses, but no examination or reflection. These actions lead to frustration, conflict, counterproductive decisions, explicit bias, and negative messages.

Overcome – Differences recognized, and staff are moved to action (meaning they take intentional steps to explore, learn, recognize, reconcile, and create changes. These actions lead to deeper and more meaningful relationships with families, children, and staff.

Describe a cultural conflict, norms or barrier that is **hidden** in the program in which you lead, support, or teach. What happened and what was the result.

Describe a cultural conflict, norm, or barrier that is **unexamined** in the program in which you lead, support or teach. What happened and what was the result?

Describe a cultural conflict, norm, or barriers that has been **overcome**. You and your program (or a program you work with) has recognized an issue and **moved into action** to gather staff together, set an action plan – and create change. What happened and what was the result?

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ACTIVITY #4: Key strategies for teaching and behavior guidance

1. What are the most important strategies for teaching and behavior guidance?
2. How do teachers inadvertently work against the goals they hope to achieve?
3. What can program leaders and coaches do to support teachers on the most important priorities? What are our next steps?

STEP UP INTO ADVOCACY

Get involved in your state quality improvement system and ask directly to incorporate developmentally appropriate practice as the pathway to equity and inclusive practices. Join with national and state organizations to leverage collective impact on behalf of infants, toddlers, families, and teachers.

ACTIVITY #5: Closing the gap with professionalism and advocacy

1. What can we do together to strengthen infant and toddler teachers and teaching?
2. How can we close the gap between what is and where we want to be?
3. How can we use DAP as the jet fuel to revitalize infant and toddler teaching?

Look for two new books that support infant and toddler teachers and DAP teaching:

Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Equitable & Joyful Learning with Infants and Toddlers (NAEYC, 2024 in press) and *Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Care for Infants and Toddlers: Strategies for High Quality Teaching* (Teachers College Press, 2025 in press).

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