2.6: Developmentally Appropriate Practice

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Position Statement, "The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in…intentionality, in the knowledge that practitioners consider when they are making decisions, and in their always aiming for goals that are both challenging and achievable for children.” In order to do this they must use developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). DAP includes three areas of knowledge:

1. Age-appropriateness – using what is known about child development and learning in general
2. Individual-appropriateness – using what is known about each child as an individual to be responsive to each child
3. Social-and cultural-appropriateness – using what is known about the social and cultural context in which children live[1]

Head Start has guiding principles that reflect developmentally appropriate practice by an intentional teacher.

- Each child is unique and can succeed
- Learning occurs with the contexts of relationships.
- Families are children’s first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.
- Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.
- Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.
- Teaching must be intentional and focus on how children learn and grow.
- Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family’s culture, background, language, and beliefs.[2]

References
