

## More than Attendance: Helping Children with Special Needs Participate

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## Benefits of Inclusion

- Inclusion provides many benefits for *all* children in the class, parents, and teachers.
- What are the benefits? Let's make a list.

## DAP & Inclusion

- Inclusive early childhood programs are built upon a foundation of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and consider individualized approaches that benefit all children.
- Inclusive programs welcome ALL children, including children with disabilities, and provide opportunities for each child in the group to participate, learn, and truly belong.
- Care and education professionals consider the needs of all children when planning, implementing, and evaluating the program.

Growing Ideas: Inclusive Early Childhood Education, 9/23/11  
<http://www.ccds.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas>

## What is DAP?

- DAP = Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- DAP describes an approach to education that guides early childhood professionals in their everyday practice. DAP comes from more than 75 years of research on child development and early learning.
- DAP gives early childhood professionals information from which to make decisions based on their knowledge of child development and what is known about how young children learn.

Growing Ideas: Thoughtful Teaching: Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 9/23/11  
<http://www.ccds.umaine.edu/Appropriate/resources/ec-growingideas>

## DAP considers the following:

- **Age appropriateness:** what is best for most children of a particular age?
- **Individual appropriateness:** what is best for a specific child's development?
- **Cultural and social context appropriateness:** what is most relevant to and respectful of the child and the child's family, neighborhood, and community?

Growing Ideas: Thoughtful Teaching: Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 9/23/11  
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## What are some keys to success in providing DAP?

- Focus on developing supportive relationships and building a caring community of learners where all children, staff, and family members are valued and included.
- Understand age-related child development. Create a learning environment that supports children's growth and development. Provide safe, healthy, interesting experiences, and encourage exploration and discovery.

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### What are some keys to success in providing DAP?

- Know each individual child. Develop a curricula that considers knowledge about each individual learner including interests, temperament, gifts, talents, needs, rate of learning, and social and cultural background.
- Be flexible and responsive. Routinely use assessment systems to gather information about each child to use in planning learning goals for the individual and the group.
- Establish partnerships with families. Work together to support each child's development and the success of mutually agreed upon goals.

Growing Ideas: Thoughtful Teaching: Developmentally Practice, 9/23/11. <http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/Appropriate/resources/ec-growingideas>

### Using DAP to create a successful learning environment:

- Review information about development and learning for the age group in your program.
- Observe and record each child's interests, level of development, learning style, and temperament.
- Use observation information when selecting learning materials and activities.
- Set up indoor and outdoor learning environments so all children can participate in activities and use the materials and space.

Growing Ideas: Thoughtful Teaching: Developmentally Practice, 9/23/11. <http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/Appropriate/resources/ec-growingideas>

### Using DAP to create a successful learning environment:

- Allow children enough time to fully engage in activities and complete projects.
- Create defined work areas so children can work alone, with a friend, or in a group.
- Rotate materials and activities, as needed, to meet individual and group needs.
- Incorporate culturally appropriate learning materials into each learning center.

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### Planning for Participation

- Combine what you know about DAP and what you know about the individual abilities of each child to help you plan for participation.
- Ask key questions...
  - What am I trying to teach with this activity?
  - Can all children in my class participate fully?
  - If not, how can I alter it so that all can participate and benefit from it?
  - Are all the materials used in this activity accessible and user friendly for all children? If not, what can I add or do to make them so?

### Planning for Participation

**Sensory needs?**  
Think of additional tools you could include in a finger painting/tactile activity to accommodate this sensitivity. Paint brushes, gloves, trucks, sponges with handles, straws, balls, etc.

**Cognitive needs?**  
Allow the child to be in the first group beginning an activity and continue to work as long as needed to complete it, even if other groups come and go while they work.

**Fine motor needs?**  
Provide a variety of types and sizes of fine motor materials. Ask therapist to show you a hand-over-hand technique to teach cutting and writing skills.

### Planning for Participation

**Gross Motor Needs?**  
Provide equipment that allows for a variety of skill levels. Arrange environment with extra space around equipment, tables, walking paths, centers, etc.

**Emotional/Behavioral Needs?**  
Be consistent with daily routine, and post a photo chart of routine in a visible place. Warn child of upcoming transitions or changes to routines. Involve the child in helping notify rest of class of upcoming transition/change. Consistently enforce classroom rules. Talk to child face to face, not across room.

### Planning for Participation

**Speech/Language Needs?**  
 Find out how child communicates at home. Utilize method in the classroom. Work with parents and therapist to increase communication and add new ways to communicate as child is ready. Include DAP language stimulation activities in your daily routine.

**Literacy Needs?**  
 Determine at what level the child is functioning currently. Then, provide a variety of opportunities to practice and increase proficiency in those skills: reading books, phonics games, labeling everything in classroom with photo and word, rhyming songs, etc.

### Planning for Participation

**Social needs?**  
 Use social storybooks to teach new skills. Include conversations about social skills in everyday activities. Practice social skills.

**Adaptations will vary based on each individual child's needs, even among children with the same diagnosis.**

### Adapting Common Activities

Circle Time Example:

**Individual Special Need:** The child can only sit for 5-7 minutes.

**Accommodation:** Shorten circle time, and make it interactive. Have more than one short circle time during the day if needed or desired.

### Adapting Common Activities

Musical Chairs Example:

- **Individual Special Need:** The child uses a wheelchair.
- **Accommodations:** The child with the special need can control the music for musical chairs; the children can touch the chairs instead of sitting in them; the children can sit in chairs and pass an object until the music stops.

### Adapting Common Activities

Cooking Example

- **Individual Special Need:** Limited muscle control.
- **Accommodations:** The child uses a switch to operate the blender; the counter is covered with shelf liner to prevent slipping.

### Brainstorming & Sharing

What type of special needs have you accommodated in your classroom?

What did you do to ensure participation?

What needs have you struggled with that you need more ideas for adaptations?

### Resources

- Inclusion is a team effort. Working effectively with the child, their parents, their therapist(s), and others involved in the child's life is crucial to success.
- When you need help, ask for it. There are many resources of all types available.

### Teaching High School Students about Inclusion

- Provide a secure foundation in DAP.
- Evaluate all conversations, assignments, and lab work using DAP as the primary measuring stick for the duration of the ECE program.
- Explain that DAP is the foundation for everything quality in early childhood education, including inclusion.
- Make sure all lesson plans have additional ideas for 1) possible adaptations, 2) simplifications, and 3) extensions for learning.

### Teaching High School Students about Inclusion

- Have students complete a Parent Interview. Assign them pointed questions to ask to help them understand the child's needs and how the child's disability affects their daily life and family.
- Use and insist that students use person-first terminology.
  - Child with autism... NOT autistic child.
  - Child with special needs... NOT special needs child.
  - Child who uses wheelchair... NOT wheelchair bound
  - 'Typically developing'... NOT 'normal.'

### Teaching High School Students about Inclusion

- Explain and discuss often the benefits of inclusion.
- Discuss candidly the differences students may observe in other settings that are not best practices of inclusion. Use these conversations to reiterate why its necessary to have more professionals that embrace and truly understand how to use DAP to provide a quality environment for ALL children.

### Teaching High School Students about Inclusion

- If you have a lab program onsite, make sure it's a high quality, inclusive one.
- If your students go off campus for their lab time, seek out high quality, inclusive classrooms for them to visit. Ask around. Call the Inclusion Coordinator in your area and ask for a referral.
- Have your students explore the resources available to teachers, families, and children for inclusion.

### Brainstorming & Sharing

What have you done to teach high school students about inclusion that has been memorable and worked well?

What inclusion related resources have you found to be helpful in your area?

Any other tips for success?