**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE K182 Child Development**

**Course Materials**

**Fall 2019**

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**Course Description:**

Prerequisite: ENG\* K101 eligibility or permission of the Program Coordinator / instructor based on ECE work experience.

This course presents the basic principles, current research, and traditional theories of child development, from the prenatal period to the onset of adolescence, with an emphasis on the earlier years of childhood. Candidates will be guided in the development of a scientific and objective attitude toward the interpretation of child behavior and will study various methods of conducting research in child development. They will observe children and analyze their behavior in each of the following areas: physical abilities and motor skills, cognitive abilities, as well as social and emotional development.

**Required Text(s):**

Charlesworth, Rosalind. Understanding Child Development (10th Ed.). Thompson Delmar Learning. 2016.

ISBN: 978-1-305-63648-1

**Course Objectives:**

* Develop an understanding of the diverse theoretical frameworks of child development. (NAEYC Standard 1.a )
* Increase understanding of every child’s behavior and how children differ in their development and approaches to learning. (CEC Standard 1.0)
* Understand and interpret how children grow and develop through successive stages, including all developmental domains. (NAEYC Standard 1.b)

**Course Outcomes:**

* Candidates will understand the biological and environmental influences on growth and development, including current developments in brain research for all children. (NAEYC Standard 1.b and 1.c) (CEC Standard 1.2)
* Candidates will analyze the importance of involving all families in their children’s development and learning. (NAEYC Standard 2.a and 2.b)
* Candidates will understand and identify the ways that child observation, documentation and other forms of assessment are central to early childhood educators. (NAEYC 3.a)
* Candidates will develop an understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of their work with young children. (NAEYC Standard 5.b)
* Candidates will describe guidelines for and examples of developmentally appropriate activity planning for all children. (NAEYC 4.a and 4.b)
* Candidates will articulate the major theoretical approaches in child growth and development by develop a personal learning theory and conduct research to promote understanding of how theory relates to best practice. (NAEYC 5.b and 6.c)
* Candidates will involve themselves in the early childhood field and demonstrate the importance of being a continuous and collaborative learner. (NAEYC Standard 6.a, 6.d. and 7.a)

**General Education Goals:**

* Candidates will be prepared to develop oral messages and written texts of varying lengths and styles that communicate effectively and appropriately across a variety of settings. (Goal1)
* Candidates will be able to use traditional and digital technology to access, evaluate, and apply information to the needs or questions confronting them throughout their academic, professional, and personal lives. (Goal 4) (CEC Standard 5.2)
* Candidates will develop an increased understanding of the influences that shape a person’s, or group’s attitudes, beliefs, emotions, symbols, and actions, and how these systems of influence are created, maintained, and altered by individual, familial, group, situational or cultural means. (Goal 7)

**Policies:**

If you have problems with the course or material, please see me or call to arrange for an appointment. Candidates who are not able to complete the course need to speak to me immediately as we will try to work together to have you complete the class successfully.

As part of the course, candidates will be required to spend **additional time observing** and/or working with children in actual or simulated child development settings.

Active participation in class discussions and activities is required. Candidates are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class and come to class prepared to discuss them. Throughout the course there will be other written assignments to help guide your studies which will be handed in and counted as part of your participation grade.

Class attendance is required. The greatest amount of learning occurs during class time, where group activities and interactive assignments allow for learning not covered by the text and required assignments. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class. Frequent absences will count against your attendance grade.

Candidates are urged to devote their time and energy to fulfilling stated class requirements. Please note that a credit hour ‘work expectation’ equates to one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class candidate work. So for this three credit course you should expect to spend a minimum of three in class and six out of class hours (total of nine hours) per week on this course in order to be successful.

Extra credit points may be considered if a candidate is active in the Future Educators Club, participates in early childhood events, or tutors / supports another classmate in their understanding of course content. Additionally, with prior permission, there may be an opportunity to redo and resubmit an assignment. These opportunities will be decided on an individual basis.

Take home tests will not be accepted beyond the scheduled due date. Make-ups for in class, scheduled tests are only allowed when planned in advance. Make-ups must be done in a timely manner.

It is assumed that all assignments will be completed and turned in on time. Ten percent of the grade (10%) will be deducted from a late assignment. Assignments will not be accepted beyond a one-week extension. Late assignments cannot be rewritten or resubmitted.

Spelling and grammar will be included as part of the grade for all written work. Thus, proper spelling and careful proofreading are important. A candidate's written work is expected to be originaland done independently unless otherwise indicated. Citations and references must be used to **acknowledge the source and avoid plagiarism**. Violations of academic integrity will be referred to and dealt with in accordance with the college policy. Academic integrity is essential to a useful education. Failure to act with **academic integrity** severely limits a candidate’s ability to succeed in the classroom and beyond. In this class and in the course of your academic career, present only your own best work; clearly document the sources of the material you use from others.

TRCC has assigned you a college email address. Please familiarize yourself with this as this is the **primary way the college communicates with you** (course schedules, financial aid, etc.). In the past students have found it useful to set up their college emails to be forwarded to another place (email or iphone, etc.).

Lap top computers and tape recorders may be used during class time, with prior permission and for the purpose of note taking only. Computers and other forms of technology are prohibited during tests.

Cell phones, pagers, ipods, and other similar devices must be turned off during class. **Texting or using your cell phones during class is not acceptable and you may be asked to leave the class.**

The candidate is responsible for all materials covered in class as well as the assignments. If a candidate misses a class, it is the candidate’s responsibility to get the notes from another candidate. **Do not contact the Instructor and ask for a review of the class**. Learn to rely on your syllabus and / or another candidate. You may want to share your contact information with other candidates to help facilitate this process.

Candidates with documented disabilities are provided supportive service and accommodations to assist them with their academic objectives. Services are strictly confidential. Disability services may include individualized accommodations, advising, advocacy, counseling, technical assistant and / or referral information. Students are required to submit a Self Disclosure Form, provide documentation, and meet with a Disability Service Provider before the start of the semester, if possible. Please call the Counseling Center at (860) 215-9017 for more information. Students who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with the instructor as early as possible. You will need to provide written documentation of your disability to the Candidate Services Counselors (Disabled Candidate Counselor). Appropriate accommodations will be provided to candidates who have completed this procedure.

Please refer to the Institutional Policies available in the Office of the Dean of Student Development and Services as well as on line, which include regulations regarding candidate conduct and the disciplinary code.

The Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) in conjunction with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) is committed to insuring that each member of every BOR governed college and university community has the opportunity to participate fully in the process of education free from acts of sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence and stalking. It is the intent of the BOR and each of its colleges or universities to provide safety, privacy and support to victims of sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence.

TRCC does not follow the local school closing schedule. The TRCC website offers the most updated information about school closings and / or early dismissals. It is recommended that all candidates sign up for the electronic notification system to receive instant alerts and messages. In the event that class is cancelled, separate from the college, the instructor may notify candidates using the Blackboard messaging system and / or the email contact available through TRCC.

This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced.

**Points given for requirements are as follows:**

Please use this as a tool to keep a record of your progress in this course.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Points** | **Due Date** | **Grade Received** |
| Theory Assignment  (4 points from Digication submission) | 40 |  |  |
| Observation Assignment | 24 |  |  |
| First Test (Chapters 1 – 3) | 10 |  |  |
| Second Test (Chapters 4 – 7) | 15 |  |  |
| Third Test (Chapters 8 – 15) | 15 |  |  |
| Attendance and Participation *(article reviews included)* | 13 |  |  |
| **Total** | **117** |  |  |

**Final Grade:**

To determine your final grade take the total number of points awarded and review the following breakdown. This will be further explained.

Highly Competent A 100 – 117 points

Competent B 81 – 99 points

Minimally Competent C 63 – 80 points

D 45 – 62 points

F anything below 44 points

**Course Content and Study Guide**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Date(s)** | **Activities / Assignments** | **Reading** | **Key Concepts** |
| **1** | 8/28 | Orientation / Introductions  Review Course Syllabus  Review Theory Paper | NAEYC and CEC Standards  [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) | participation |
| **2** | 9/4 | **No class Monday** | Chapter 1 | young children  theories |
| **3** | 9/9  9/11 | Article Review: Brain Research and Early Childhood Development | “Cute” video | history  assessment |
| **4** | 9/16  9/18 | Library Research Presentation  Theory Group Work |  | research |
| **5** | 9/23  9/25 | Article Review: Play: Context for Development | Chapter 2 and 3  Play video | how children  learn |
| **6** | 9/30  10/2 | Article Review: Rewards not Working?  Handout Take Home Test One | Chapter 3 | adult role  scaffolding  ADA / IEP |
| **7** | 10/7  10/9 | **Test One Due**  Review Observation Assignment | Chapter 4  Prenatal video | conception  prenatal  development |
| **8** | 10/14  10/16 | **NAEYC Visit**  Article review: SIDS and Babies  *Out of class activity for Wednesday* | Chapter 5 | infancy  attachment |
| **9** | 10/21  10/23 | Digication Presentation  **Theory Assignment Due** | Chapter 6 and 7 | Toddlers  autonomy |
| **10** | 10/28  10/30 | **Test Two** |  |  |
| **11** | 11/4  11/6 | Article review: Why Soft is Missing  Multiple Intelligence Test | Chapter 8 and 9  [www.iqtest.com](http://www.iqtest.com)  Play pod video | preschoolers  big body play  obesity |
| **12** | 11/11  11/13 |  | Chapter 10 | beginning  literacy |
| **13** | 11/18  11/20 | **Observation Assignment Due** | Chapter 11 and 12 | adult to child  language |
| **14** | 11/25 | **No class Wednesday** | Chapter 13 | affective  development |
| **15** | 12/2  12/4 | Article review: Parental School Involvement | Chapter 14 and 15 | primary / school  aged resiliency |
| **16** | 12/9  12/11 | **Test Three** |  |  |

This calendar is subject to change. Any changes will be announced.

**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE K182 Child Development Resource List**

**Dr. Jennifer Nally**

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004). *The Everything Sign Language Book.* Adams Media.

*ACEI Exchange.* News and Communications from the ACEI Community

*Alliance for Childhood* [*www.allianceforchildhood.org*](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org)

Anderson, K. (2010). *Treating ADHD Holistically.* Parenting

Bryner, J. (2005). *Rewards not working?* Instructor magazine.

Carlisle, A. (2001). *Using the Multiple Intelligences Theory to Assess Early Childhood Curricula.* Young Children.

Catlett, C. (March, 2012). *Evidence-based resources at your fingertips*. FPG Child Development Institute. Chapel Hill, NC.

Charlesworth, R. (2008). *Understanding child development.* (7th ed.). Thompson Delmar Learning.

Charlesworth, R. (2010). *Understanding child development.* (8th ed.). Thompson Delmar Learning.

*Connecticut Charts A Course –* Resources, articles and trainer materials

Connecticut DOE. (1999). *The Connecticut Framework: Preschool Curricular Goals and Benchmarks.*

Cooper, J.L., Masi, R. and Vick, J. (2009). *Social-emotional Development in Early Childhood: What every policymaker should know.* National Center for Children in Poverty. August.

Crain, W. (2005). *Theories of development: Concepts and applications* (5th ed). Pearson Education, Inc.

DelCampo, D. & DelCampo, R. (2006). *Taking sides: Clashing views in childhood and society.* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Derman-Sparks, L. & Edwards, J. O. (2010). *Anti-Bias education for young children and ourselves*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Diamond A. and Amso D. C*ontributions of Neuroscience to our understanding of cognitive development: A New Look*. Article 7. Annual Editions (2013).

DuBois, L.A. *No Child Left Behind: Who’s Accountable?* Article 6. Annual Editions (2011).

*Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center* (ECLKC)

Education Services, Inc. (2000). *A creative adventure: Supporting development and learning through art, music, movement, and dialogue*. Alexandria, VA.

Englebright Fox, J. *Back to Basics, Play in early childhood.* Article 21. Annual Editions (2013).

Epstein, A. S. (2009). *Me, you, us*. High Scope Press.

Gallagher, K. C. (2005). Brain research and early childhood development: A primer for developmentally appropriate practice. *Spotlight on Young Children.* Washington DC: NAEYC.

Gartrell, D. (2004). *The power of guidance: Teaching social-emotional skill in early childhood classrooms*. Delmar Learning.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1996). *Diversity and communication*. Crystal Lake, IL. Magna Systems.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2006). *Young children in the family and the community*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008). *Diversity in early care and education: Honoring differences* (5th ed). McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.

Griffin, Abbey. (2003). *Why soft is missing in many early care and education settings and why we should bring soft stuff back*. Community Playthings.

Gronlund, G. & James, M. (2005). *Focused observations: How to observe children for assessment and curriculum planning*. Redleaf Press.

Halacka - Ball, R.A. (2012). *Supporting and Involving Families in Meaningful Ways.* Spotlight on Young Children and Families.

Hart, B. & Rislet, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children.* Paul H. Brooks Publishing.

Hill, N. & Taylor, L. (2008). *Parental School Involvement and Children's Academic Achievement.*

Jacobs, H. H. (2010). *Curriculum 21: Essential education for a changing world*. ASCD Publications.

Kaiser, S. and Sachser, N. *Effects of Prenatal Social Stress on Offspring Development*. Article 3. Annual Editions (2012).

Kamler, J., Senger, S. and Snyder, B. (2012). *Creating Active Children One Workout at a Time.* Focus on Infants and Toddlers. Volume 24, no.3.

Klein, T., Wirth, D., & Linas, K. (2003). Play: Children's context for development. *Spotlight on Young Children.* Washington DC: NAEYC.

Mandlawitz, M. (2007). *What every teacher should know about: IDEA 2004 laws and regulations*. Pearson Education, Inc.

McNeil, M. (2007). *Governors Uniting for NCLB Changes.*

Mishori, R. (2008). *What do we know about autism?* Parade magazine.

Mooney, C. G. (2000). *Theories of childhood: An introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky*. Redleaf Press.

*NAEYC Position Statement.* (May 1998). Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children.

*NAEYC Position Statement.* (Spring 2004). Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for early childhood adult educators.

Nelson, K. *Developmental narratives of the experiencing child*. Article 10. Annual Editions (2013).

Olson, K.R. and Dweck, C.S. *Social Cognitive Development: A New Look*. Article 11. Annual Editions (2013).

Orenstein, P. (2010). *Kindergarten Cram: Crisis in Kindergarten.* New York Times.

*Promoting Social Behavior of Young Children in Group Settings: A Summary of Research.*

Sanders, S. (2005). *Active for life*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Scherer, M. (2006). *Teaching to student strengths.*

Schickedanz, J.A. (2008). *Increasing the Power of Instruction: Integration of language, literacy, and math across the preschool day.* NAEYC: Washington, DC.

Spiegel, A. (2008). *Old-fashioned Play Builds Serious Skills.* NPR Your Health. September.

Thomas, M.S.C. and Johnson, M. *New Advances in Understanding Sensitive Periods in Brain Development*. Article 6. Annual Editions (2012).

University of Connecticut. *All Children Considered.* Newsletter

US Department of Health. *Safe Sleep for Your Baby.*

Voltz, D., Sims, M. J. & Nelson, B. (2010). *Connecting teachers, candidates and standards: Strategies for success in divers and inclusive classrooms.* ASCD.

Vygotsky, l. (1978). *The role of play in development.* From the *Mind in Society.* Ambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

**Assignments**

**and**

**Grading Rubrics**



**NAEYC Accreditation Key Assessment #2**

**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE\* K182 Child Development**

**Theory Assignment**

**Course Objectives:**

* Develop an understanding of the diverse theoretical frameworks of child development. **(NAEYC 1a)**

**Course Outcomes:**

* Candidates will understand the biological and environmental influences on growth and development, including current developments in brain research for all children. **(NAEYC 1b and 1c)**
* Candidates will analyze the importance of involving all families in their children’s development and learning. **(NAEYC 2a and 2b)**
* Candidates will develop an understanding of positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of their work with young children. **(NAEYC 5b)**
* Candidates will articulate the major theoretical approaches in child growth and development by developing a personal learning theory and conduct research to promote understanding of how theory relates to best practice. **(NAEYC 6c)**
* Candidates will involve themselves in the early childhood field and demonstrate the importance of being a continuous and collaborative learner. **(NAEYC 6d)**

NAEYC Standards are noted on the grading sheet to help focus you on these goals throughout the assignment. Refer to the NAEYC Standards information that was supplied and discussed at the beginning of the semester.

A child development theory is an integrated collection of beliefs about how and why children behave, think and feel as they do. A theory can include beliefs about the nature of learning and development, the role of heredity and environment, and how adults, other children, schools and communities contribute to the process. No single, universally accepted theory exists. After discussing the different types of theories you should have developed your own beliefs about how children develop as it relates to a specific theory. This would be a first step in using theory to shape how you will work with children and families, which is also how you start to develop a ‘philosophy’ of your own and apply what you have learned to other professional settings.

**Assignment Requirements:**

Answer each area with details utilizing diverse resources. You must use research as the foundation for this assignment as you are learning about a child development theory that highlights what you believe is best for young children and their families. The research is will support your learning process.

Work hard to be a better informed research consumer! The more research you consume, the better you will do.

Although some child development theories may be connected to a specific theorist you are to focus on the theory not the theorist(s). As this is a scholarly paper you must conduct research about the theory you have found to write about. Include resources and other sources of information (you must use at least three) to show you understand the theory and can support your position. **(NAEYC 6c)** Include this information throughout your paper; but be sure to cite appropriately.

Reflect on children’s needs and the role the theory plays in promoting development. Show that you understand and can apply the theory you focused on.

You are expected to provide information addressing the following sections as appropriate:

1. Identify the child development theory you feel most aligned with and explain it in detail. Include relevant details that support your understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs. **(NAEYC 1a)** *This part of the assignment requires you to explain the theory and it’s components in detail, identifying the basis for how it would be applied.* As we discussed in class play is children’s work so include information about the theoretical perspective on supporting children’s play, activity and learning processes and motivation to learn.

*Specifically cite information from the text and the scholarly resources that you explored to include all relevant information. Explain it in detail, including lots of citations in this first part of the paper, but be sure to use your own words as well. This is the most important part of the assignment as it provides the foundation for the entire assignment. Make it meaningful to you.*

1. Why did you choose the theory specifically? *Include the reasons specific to the theory about why you identified with this theory.*
2. How does the theory explain how children develop across all domains? **(NAEYC 1b)** *You should include information about all four developmental domains: cognitive, affective, motor and physical development.*
3. What do you plan to do in the future (related to children and families)? Include information showing how the theory supports decisions about creating supportive learning environments for children. **(NAEYC 1c)** *How does this theory support your work with children and / or families? Give details that relate to you that are supported by the research you compiled.*
4. How does the theory explain the role nature and nurture has on development?Include information about nature (genetics) and nurture (family and the environment) and how this theory reflects on it. **(NAEYC 2a)** *This requires you to define and support your choice with practical details that relate back to the research you conducted.*
5. How would you plan to use this ‘theory’ to support your work with young children? Utilizing the foundation of the theory include specific ways that you will interact with children and curriculum. **(NAEYC 5b)** *Consider how you would introduce new topics and materials, and how children would be expected to interact with one another.*
6. How would this theory be reflected in the way you would interact with families? **(NAEYC 2b)** *Include information about how the theory supports relationship building and engagement with families.*
7. What are the opposing viewpoints of this theory? Include reflections on your approach to working with children and examine differing viewpoints related to the theory. **(NAEYC 6d)** *What would the critics (or colleagues or families) be skeptical about? This section will also require research that shows what the limitations are of the theory. Remember to cite your sources!*

Lastly, this assignment is a part of the college wide collection of artifacts for the **General Education outcomes**. You must submit this assignment to receive the points. More information will be provided to you by the instructor.

**ECE\* K182 Child Development**

**Theory Assignment Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Highly Competent**  **(4 points)** | **Competent**  **(3 points)** | **Developing**  **Competencies**  **(2 points)** | **Incomplete /**  **Missing** |
| Written and verbal skills | Well organized, submitted on time and was well written without any grammatical errors. Neatly typed, interesting presentation. | Assignment was turned in on time, had minor grammatical errors and was presented in a readable format. | Assignment was missing some pieces, had some grammatical errors. Included little to no relevant details of the theory. | Incomplete assignment turned in after the due date.  \_\_ 1 point |
| Identified the theory and why it was chosen  **NAEYC 1a**  Knowing and understanding young children’s characteristics and needs, from birth through age eight | Candidate explained and applied the practical parts of the original theory to identify a philosophy.Applied outcomes to show relevance to children with emphasis on the interrelatedness between all areas of development. Included the theoretical perspective on supporting children’s play, activity and learning processes and motivation to learn. | Candidate explained the practical parts of the original theory to identify a philosophy.Applied outcomes to show relevance to children with emphasis on the interrelatedness between areas of development. Included the theoretical perspective on supporting children’s play and learning processes. | Candidate explained some of the ways that the theory supports child growth and development. Applied outcomes to show relevance to children’s characteristics and needs. Included information about children’s play and learning. | Candidate provided a limited explanation about the theory, missing details related to child growth and development.  \_\_ 1 point |
| Nature versus nurture as it is viewed by the theory  General  Education:  Social Phenomena Knowledge  **NAEYC 2a**  Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics. | Candidate included information that showed an understanding of the influences that shape a person’s, or group’s attitudes, beliefs, emotions, symbols, and actions, and how these systems of influence are created, maintained, and altered by individual, familial, group, situational or cultural means. Candidate included reflection that supports understanding and application of the theory as it relates to families and communities. Explained the interrelatedness between biological and environmental influences on children’s development. Included references to the importance of considering socioeconomic conditions, cultural and ethnic diversity of children. | Candidate provided information that they were beginning to develop an understanding of the influences that shape a person’s, or group’s attitudes, beliefs, emotions, symbols, and actions, and how these systems are created, maintained, and altered by individual, familial, group, situational or cultural means. Candidate included information about how the theory supports children and the interrelatedness between biological and environmental influences. Included details about the role the adult has on the development of a child’s identity. | Candidate included limited information about the influences that shape a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and actions. There was a limited description of how these systems are created, maintained, and altered by individual, group or cultural means. Candidate included information about how the theory supports either the biological or environmental impact on development. Missing details about the role the adult has on the development of a child’s identity. | Candidate included information about nature and / or nurture but it wasn’t related to the theory.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Developmental Domains  **NAEYC 1b** Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on development and learning. | Candidate clearly explained how the theory supports the multiple influences on young children’s development. Reflected upon all four key developmental domains; cognitive (language and brain), affective (social and emotional), motor and physical development. Included specific information about relationships with adults and peers, children’s individual learning styles and potential influence of early childhood programs or other early care settings on development. | Candidate explained how the theory supports the multiple influences on young children’s development. Reflected on the cognitive (language and brain) and affective (social and emotional) areas of development. Included information about relationships with adults and peers and children’s individual learning styles on development. | Candidate identified the influences on young children’s development. Reflected on the cognitive and affective areas of development. Included information about how adults and peers impact children’s development. | Candidate included limited information about children’s development.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Connected theory to environment  **NAEYC 1c**  Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging learning environments for young children. | Candidate supported theoretical application in the classroom environment, included practical details and applied relevant knowledge of young children. Included at least five ways the educator can develop an environment that supports and challenges children in a healthy respectful environment. Created new ideas about children and environments from the research conducted about the theory. Used your own words and made it meaningful to you. | Candidate identified how the theory could be applied in the classroom. Included three to four ways the educator can develop an environment that supports children in a respectful environment. Created new ideas about children from the research conducted about the theory. Used your own words and made it meaningful to you. | Candidate included information about how the theory could be applied in the classroom. Included one or two ways that the educator can change the environment to support children. Included research that reflected some developmentally appropriate practices. | Candidate included information about developmentally appropriate practices but they were not supported by theoretical research.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Related theory to interactions with children  **NAEYC 5b**  Knowing and using the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures of content areas or academic disciplines. | Candidate utilized diverse resources about the theory to show how adult interactions set the foundation for children’s learning. Identified the impact prior experiences have on learning and how the adult needs to build off these experiences. Included three or more curriculum ideas that show developmentally appropriate learning processes. | Candidate included resources about the theory as it relates to interacting with children. Identified the impact prior experiences have on learning and how the adult needs to build off these experiences. Included two to three curriculum ideas that show developmentally appropriate learning processes. | Candidate included resources about the theory as it relates to interacting with children. Identified the impact prior experiences have on learning. Included some ideas about possible activities that would be provided based on the theory. | Candidate identified skills that children would be developing but they weren’t reflective of the theory or best practices.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Related theory to interactions with families  **NAEYC 2b**  Supporting and engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships. | Candidate included details about the importance of building positive relationships with families with emphasis on individual and unique differences. Identified cultural variations and the role the family plays in planning as it relates to the theory. Provided a multitude of methods through which the family could be engaged in the classroom in a meaningful way. | Candidate included details about building positive relationships with families. Identified cultural variations and the role the family plays in planning. Included two to three ways that families could be engaged in the classroom in a meaningful way. | Candidate identified the role the family plays in their child’s development and learning. Included some information about building relationships with families. Included one or two ways that the family could be engaged in the classroom. | Candidate identified the role the family plays in child development. Reflection was not theory specific.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Opposing viewpoints and challenges  **NAEYC**  **Standard 6.d**  Integrating knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives in early education. | Candidate provided a multitude of perspectives (four or more) to support opinions and application of the theory. Identified possible challenges faced as it relates to familial, cultural, environmental and / or academic application.  Utilized research to recognize the limitations of the theory and possible areas for further exploration. | Candidate provided at least three opposing viewpoints based on research. Identified possible challenges faced as it relates to familial, cultural, environmental and / or academic application.  Utilized research to recognize the limitations of the theory. | Candidate identified at least two considerations reflective of the application of the theory. Included details about either the family and / or cultural implications that may be faced with this theory. The explanation of how to address these concerns were opinion based. | Candidate identified possible challenges but they weren’t addressed.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing this response completely  \_\_ 0 points |
| Citations and reference information  **NAEYC**  **Standard 6.c**  Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice; using technology effectively with young children, with peers, and as a professional resource. | Candidate utilized diverse resources and built on information covered in the textbook and information from the ECE\* K182 course.Provided more than three scholarly resources, cited appropriately, that were relevant to the theory. Resources were applied in a way that demonstrated the candidate was able to improve their understanding of the theory to improve children’s experiences. | Candidate utilized resources that included additional information than what was provided in the textbook. Included minimal information from the early childhood course.Provided three scholarly resources, cited appropriately, that were relevant to the theory. Resources were applied in a way that demonstrated the candidate was able to understand the theory and how it connects to child growth and development. | Candidate provided less than three resources, cited appropriately, that provided little additional information than what was covered in the textbook. It wasn’t clear that the resources supported the candidates learning as it applies to the theory and its application. | Candidate provided incomplete citations in the paper and / or in the reference page.  \_\_ 1 point  Missing citations and a reference page    \_\_ 0 points |

**Grading**: *This assignment includes a possible maximum of 40 points. This system of grading allows for a focus on skill versus points and will be discussed further.*

**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE 182 Child Development**

**Observation Assignment**

**Course Objectives:**

* Develop an understanding of the diverse theoretical frameworks of child development. (NAEYC Standard 1.a )
* Understand and interpret how children grow and develop through successive stages, including all developmental domains. (NAEYC Standard 1.b)

**Course Outcomes:**

* Candidates will understand the biological and environmental influences on growth and development, including current developments in brain research for all children. (NAEYC Standard 1.b) (CEC Standard 1.2)
* Candidates will analyze the importance of involving all families in their children’s development and learning. (NAEYC Standard 2.a and 2.b)
* Candidates will understand and identify the ways that child observation, documentation and other forms of assessment are central to early childhood educators. (NAEYC 3.a)
* Candidates will describe guidelines for and examples of developmentally appropriate activity planning for all children. (NAEYC 4.a. and 4.b)
* Candidates will involve themselves in the early childhood field and demonstrate the importance of being a continuous and collaborative learner. (NAEYC Standard 6.a and 7.a)

**ECTC Candidates are required to complete 10 hours (approx. 4 - 5 hours for each age group) of observation for this assignment.**

The purpose of this assignment is to offer candidates an out of class learning opportunity, where you can observe the concepts covered in this course. Candidates are encouraged to use all prior experiences with young children and families as a basis for this assignment, but it is important to show an understanding of the concept(s) and provide details to show how each of the parts of the assignment are applied. Beware that this assignment may require **more than one visit** to the program(s) as you have multiple concepts that you must observe. *Be courteous and appreciative about the opportunity offered to you by the center staff. Remember confidentiality!*

**Assignment Requirements:**

For each of the questions below you should

* define the ‘concept’ (you should use your textbook and any other resources for this part, and be sure to cite sources) **Please note** that not all the concepts may have been covered in class prior to the observations you are completing so you may need to read ahead / research some concepts on your own.
* give an explanation in your own words
* give details about your observation and / or conversation that you had with the teacher(s) that show you have an understanding of the ‘concept’. If you didn’t observe it directly **state that in your answer** and give a description of what you expected to see. The answer must show an understanding of the ‘concept’ and include lots of details.

**1. Experiences you are using for this assignment.** Specifically, the introduction of the center(s) you visited, settings you have experience with and any other relevant environments you are using for this assignment. **(NAEYC Standard 2.a)** You may include some limited details about the center, environment, staff, children, etc. to give the overall feeling of the observation. Please feel free to express opinions and compare the different sites and experiences you are using.

**2. Infant / Toddler Observation (children from birth to three)**

When you observe make every effort to observe infants (children between six weeks through twelve months) as well as toddlers (children between fourteen months up to three years of age). In class we have been exploring some important milestones young children acquire. Explain each of these following concepts and provide an observation you made of at least one child who was developing these skills.

* Describe the characteristics of each of the four developmental domains observed in Infants and Toddlers. **(NAEYC Standard 1.b)** *Include what you observed the teachers doing to promote the development of these skills, including adaptations to the environment and activities.*
* Object Permanence. What is this and what were the differences between children who have acquired this skill and those who have not? *Reflect how the development of this skill changes their play.*
* Attachment and the role the adult plays in developing relationships is critical to infant and toddler development. What were some of the ways you saw care givers developing attachments with children? **(NAEYC Standard 4.a)**
* In some classroom settings some children can experience separation and/or stranger anxiety. How did care givers, adults or the environment help the child cope with these experiences? **(NAEYC Standard 4.a)**
* Autonomy. What were characteristics of children who are developing this skill and how does the development of this skill change their play? How did the care givers build a caring community of learners? **(NAEYC Standard 4.a)**
* How do caregivers promote parent involvement? **(NAEYC Standard 2.b)** *Include details from your observation that show what caregivers were doing to facilitate connections with families. Be sure to look at the environment and interactions, as well as other subtle ways the program shows respect for children and their families.*

**3. Preschool / Pre-Kindergarten / Kindergarten (children from three to eight)**

When you observe make every effort to observe preschoolers and primary age children. When identifying concepts, you must include details about the environment, caregivers, interactions and children’s ages as well.

* What are the stages children go through in developing language? *Include any observations made of children acquiring these skills and the efforts caregivers made to promote literacy.*
* Children utilize their prior experiences and go through seven stages to solve problems at this age. Explain the stages and examples of the ways children solve problems. How did you see teachers or parents facilitate this process?
* Social competencies of children in a school setting. What are the differing characteristics of popular, rejected and neglected children? *Describe your observations, if possible, of children who fell into these categories and how care givers, adults or the environment helped the child cope with this experience.*

**4. Conclusion / Wrap Up**

These final responses are asking you to compare the over arching growth from children that occurs from birth through age eight.

* As you reflect on what you have observed and learned about all children, describe in your own words what you noticed as the major differences in growth and development. **(NAEYC Standard 1.a)** Include information about how the children grow and develop from birth through age eight.
* What does atypical development (not considered as typically developing) mean? Then describe some indicators (at least three specific instances) of atypical development in the children you observed. **(NAEYC Standard 4.b)** *Be specific to age and include any discussions with the teachers about how they are meeting this challenge.*
* Describe and explain the different methods of assessment, both formal and informal, you observed teachers and or parents using to assess development. What were the types of documentation and purpose and how does it differ between age groups? **(NAEYC Standard 3.a)** *Ask the center staff about evaluation of children to include more details in this section.*

**Please note the following:**

You should **review the grading rubric** as it will give you further details about each of the questions and the specific criteria required. This will be reviewed in class to show the connection between the assignment and instructor expectations.

You also have the option of reviewing a sample from a previous candidate so check with your instructor. This is for reference only, so a partial assignment may be available to you. You also have the availability of submitting a rough draft / outline of your assignment so check with your instructor. This will be accepted no later than two weeks prior to the assignment due date. The purpose will be to review your progress and make suggestions for you to apply for your final submission.

According to ECTC requirements students must complete and attach a copy of the

Observation Documentation for this course / assignment. This assignment and the corresponding hours of observation are required for students who are applying for an ECTC. Maintenance of this assignment and observation documentation are the responsibility of the student, not the instructor nor the college. More information will be provided in class.

**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE 182 Child Development**

**Observation Assignment Grading Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Highly Competent (3)** | **Competent (2)** | **Developing Competencies (1)** |
| Experiences  NAEYC Standard 2.a | **Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics**. Used a wide variety of observations to make the concepts meaningful to you. Included all relevant information about the settings used for the assignment. Gave explanation about why these observations were relevant to you. | **Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics**. Descriptions include details that identify the settings used to observe children. Description included some basic observations about the environments and general details about the reasons why those settings were utilized. | **Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics**.  Limited details are provided about the settings used but not enough to identify what the program promotes or the general set up of the establishment. Not all age groups were represented. |
| Developmental Domains  NAEYC Standard 1.b | **Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on development and learning.** Explained in detail how at least two children were displaying skills across all four developmental domains. Information supported understanding of how children grow and develop from birth to age three. Used observation to identify characteristics of these concepts and included relevant details to how the interactions and environment impact child development. | **Knowing the multiple influences on development and learning.** Explained and gave an example of the four developmental domains. Observation details showed that the candidate was beginning to understand how children grow and develop from birth to age eight. Included some details to how interactions and environment impact child development. | **Identified the multiple influences on development and learning.** Included most of the developmental domains. Observations were limited and did not support understanding of how children grow and develop from birth to age eight. Focused on some specific domains for each age group. |
| Infant and Toddler Milestones  NAEYC  Standard 4.a | **Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of their work with young children.** Defined and explained object permanence, attachment, separation and stranger anxiety and autonomy in detail using observation to support the concept. Gave specific examples of behaviors in children, identifying important characteristics of why the children responded the way they did, using environmental clues and interactions with caregivers and other children. | **Identified the ways relationships and interactions with children impacts their work with young children.** Explained object permanence, attachment, separation and stranger anxiety and autonomy and supported the description with some details. Used observation to identify characteristics of children who have and have not acquired this skill. Included some details relevant to interactions and environment. | **Included information about interactions with children.** Definition of object permanence, attachment, separation and stranger anxiety and autonomy was from the textbook and didn’t show understanding in the explanation. Observation had some details but didn’t include enough information to support application of the concept. |
| Infant and Toddler  Parent Involvement  NAEYC 2.b | **Supporting and engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships.** Identified diverse ways that parents are involved in the child’s development. Observation supported unique methods of interaction both with caregivers and other parents. Explained the importance of parental involvement and the impact it has on a child’s development. | **Engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships.** Explained the importance of parent involvement and included a few observations that supported this process. Examples were relevant to interactions with children. Identified why getting parents involved is important. | **Involving families and communities in their children’s development and learning.** Included a few ways that parents are encouraged to be involved in the child’s development. Observations weren’t specific enough to show relevance or understanding. Details did not include all relevant age groups. |
|  | **Highly Competent (3)** | **Competent (2)** | **Developing Competencies (1)** |
| Preschool,  Pre-K and School Age  Milestones | Explained the development of language, and problem solving skills as well as social competencies in detail. Supported your understanding of these concepts by giving observations that included relevant and meaningful details about each of the concepts. Included information about the age of the child, interactions with teachers, environment, and discussions. | Started to include details about the development of language, and problem solving skills as well as social competencies with some details. Used observation to identify characteristics of these concepts and reflected on the way interactions and environment impacted development of these skills. | Definitions of the development of language, and problem solving skills as well as social competencies were from the textbook and didn’t show understanding in the explanation. Observation had some details but didn’t include enough information to support application of the concepts. |
| Growth and Development birth through age 8  NAEYC  Standard 1.a | **Knowing and understanding young children’s characteristics and needs, from birth through age eight.** Explained the multiple influences on young children’s development. Reflected upon all four key developmental domains; cognitive (language and brain), affective (social and emotional), motor and physical development. Included specific information about relationships with adults and peers, children’s individual learning styles and potential influence of early childhood programs or other early care settings on development. | **Knowing and understanding young children’s characteristics and needs, from birth through age eight.** Candidate explained the multiple influences on young children’s development. Reflected on the cognitive (language and brain) and affective (social and emotional) areas of development. Included information about relationships with adults and peers and children’s individual learning styles on development. | **Knowing and understanding young children’s characteristics and needs, from birth through age eight.** Candidate identified the influences on young children’s development. Reflected on the cognitive and affective areas of development. Included information about how adults and peers impact children’s development. |
| Typical and Atypical Development  NAEYC Standard 4.b | **Knowing and understanding effective strategies and tools for early education.** Defined and explained what atypical development is and described three or more instances of atypical development in the children you observed. Examples given were specific to age and included details from either discussions or direct observations about how teachers are meeting this challenge. | **Knowing the effective strategies in early education.** Explained atypical development and supported the description with some details. Included two or three behaviors of children to support your answer. Used observations to identify characteristics of this concept. Included some details relevant to interactions and environment. | **Identified some of the ways educators work with children.** Definition of atypical development was limited and didn’t show understanding in the explanation. Observation was limited to less than two children and didn’t include enough information to support understanding. |
| Evaluation and Assessment of Children  NAEYC Standard 3.a | **Included information that showed understanding of the goals, benefits and uses of assessment.** Compared different forms of evaluation you observed and the importance of assessment. Evaluated the types of documentation and the purpose as it pertains to the setting you observed. Examples given were specific to age and included details from either discussions or direct observations about how teachers are using evaluation. | **Included information about the goals, benefits and uses of assessment.** Explained evaluation and assessment and supported the description with some details. Used information collected at the setting to support understanding. Included some relevant details. | **Included some information about assessment.** Included the importance of evaluation but didn’t show understanding in the explanation. Observation had some details but didn’t include enough information to support the connection of evaluation to assessment. |

**Grading**: *This assignment includes a possible maximum of 24 points. This system of grading allows for a focus on skill versus points and will be discussed in class.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Observation of children in the field  NAEYC Standard 6.a and 7.a | **\_\_\_\_\_\_ Included documentation of that supports the hours required as part of this assignment for NAEYC and ECTC.**  **\_\_\_\_\_\_Observations were made in at least two of the four age groups.**  **\_\_\_\_\_\_Missing Documentation** |

**Section**

**One**

**Chapters**

**1 – 3**

Introduction

Theories

Developmental Domains

Section One

**Reading:** Students must read Chapters One through three in the textbook.

**Chapter 1 Studying the Young Child**

Young children are children from birth through age eight according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC]. Infants are children from birth to one year of age and the characteristics of these children are that they are very dependent and rely on us for their personal comfort, so we have to keep them warm, fed, and in a dry diaper. Toddlers range from age one to age three and their key characteristics are constant movement and exploring with a need to start to do it on their own. Preschoolers are three, four, and five-year-olds who have not yet entered elementary school who start to develop an increasing independence. They can accomplish routine tasks, eating, sleeping, bathing, toileting, and dressing. Primary age children are enrolled in kindergarten classrooms; usually between the ages of four-and-a-half and six years then they move to grades first, second, and third which is the oldest age range we will be exploring.

While studying **Ch 1** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

young children

typical and atypical child development and growth

infants

toddlers

preschoolers

kindergartners

primary period

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

four developmental domains

Developmental theories (6)

1. Maturation / Normative theory
2. Cognitive Developmentalist theory
3. Language / Communication (Constructivist) theory
4. Psychoanalytic theory

Psychosocial (Erikson)

Self-actualization (Maslow)

Self-concept (Rogers)

1. Socio-cultural
2. Sociomoral

Behaviorist theories (2)

1. Behaviorist theory
2. Social Cognitive

DAP / Developmentally culturally appropriate practices (DCAP)

Ecological research model

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*When you think of child development and young children what are you thinking about?*

*What is NAEYC? Who has had experience with this organization?*

*Where do adults work with young children?*

*Why learn about the development of young children?*

*What is our role when working with young children?*

*What theory(ies) have you seen in action?*

*What do you believe in, what makes you think that way?*

*What theory(ies) do you feel are most important? Why?*

**Chapter 2 How Play, Technology and Digital Media, and Disabilities Affect Learning**

A behavior change that results from experience is how we define learning. It involves many different types of experiences, but what experiences you focus on differ as do your points of view. Developmentalists emphasize stages and readiness. Behaviorists emphasize the environment.

Play is the major vehicle through which children learn and focuses on not academic work but spontaneous, creative activity and is joyful and pleasurable. Play promotes development in all areas. (Cognitive development) Play increases brain development because it creates opportunities for sensorimotor, language, and problem-solving activities. It increases language and literacy as story re-enactments build comprehension and retention and offers an extension of literacy behaviors through reading and writing props and play. Play provides opportunities for children to explore language in social situations. (Social development) Play helps children explore other people’s viewpoints and social roles and promotes maturity as children “pretend” to be older.

While studying **Ch 2** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

brain development

learning

learning styles

classical conditioning

operant conditioning

imitation

generalization

assimilation

accommodation

equilibration

memory

perception

senses

dramatic play

Parten’s play categories (6)

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*What is learning?*

*What is your opinion of ADD / ADHD? Medication versus environmental changes? What challenges are families facing?*

**Chapter 3 Factors Affecting Learning**

Transition of theory to practice: all theories support that children need some degree of freedom. Each theory takes a different focus / approach to identify what our role is when working with children. Cognitive-developmental theorists work focus on the fact that freedom occurs within limits; choices are offered with concrete materials and social interaction. Psychoanalytic theorists work focus on the fact that educators need to ensure outlets and avenues are available for expressing feelings such as hostility, doubt, shame, pride, and happiness. Maturationist theorists work focus on the fact that broad limits to allow room for growth; activities should fit the stage of growth. Behaviorist theorists works focus on the fact that environment permits maximum positive reinforcement of appropriate adaptive behaviors. Social cognitive theorists works focus on the fact that the environment provides control and behavioral models. Constructivist view theorists works focus on the fact that children play an active role in their own learning. Behaviorist theorists works focus on the fact that to increase the likelihood a behavior will reoccur, positive consequences or reinforcements must follow the behavior.

Family is a basic social and human unit instrumental for individual and social survival (provides economic support, recreation, socialization, self-identify, affection, and education). The parent is the child’s primary educator. In the different family structures the parent-child interactions have been found to impact learning regardless of the type of family.

While studying **Ch 3** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards

scaffolding

zone of proximal development

reinforcements

PL 99-457 / ADA / IDEA 97

IEP / IFSP

diversity

multicultural education

cultural stereotyping

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*Why is the environment important? What does your environment ‘say’ to you?*

*How do you reinforce positive behaviors in young children?*

*What is your family structure?*

*What did you think of the discussion around families and technology? Where does TV fit?* *What about computers?*

The text states that: fathers’ emotional investment, attachment, and provision of resources are all associated with degree of children’s well-being. *What do you think about this statement? What does this say about our current prevailing family structures?*

**Brain Research and**

**Early Childhood Development**

**A PRIMER for Developmentally**

**Appropriate Practice**



**Kathleen Cranley Gallagher**

bserve an early childhood program, and evidence of early brain development abounds. Using brain research to inform early childhood education and care is not a new idea. More than 40 years ago, research on brain development suggested that brain growth was most dramatic in the years before children started formal schooling. This knowledge provided a jump start for early childhood education in the United States with the inception of Head Start. Recognizing that the early years were critical for intervention, Head Start programs aimed to increase cognitive and social development for children from families living in poverty (Ramey & Ramey 2004). However, early insights into brain development only touched on the wealth of information scientists were now uncovering.

**IN THE INFANT ROOM**, Sophia cruises, holding on to the edge of a table. At the end of the table she stops. The three foot gap to the closest piece of furniture looks scary. Sophia, a bit anxious and wondering what to do looks to Mia, her caregiver. Mia moves slowly to Sophia and looks into her eyes. “What are you going to do, Sophia?” she asks gently. The caregiver watches and waits, ready to help if Sophia is unable to resolve the dilemma without becoming distressed or ready to rescue Sophia if she takes a fall. Either way, Mia’s warm smile and her eye contact with the child say, I’m here for you, Sophia, you can do it.

**IN THE PRESCHOOL ROOM**, Azim is building an amazing structure – a cardboard and block tower he has been working on for quite a while. His friend Frank approaches. Indicating a particularly vulnerable section of the structure, he says, “Azim, I think that might fall.” Azim looks up. “Yeah, it might.” Frank offers to hold the base while Azim finds the problem. “Miss Nancy,” the boys call out, “look at our amazing tower.” Miss Nancy, watching from several feet away realizes that what is amazing are the cognitive and social abilities Azim and Frank used to avert a block center crisis. “Frank and Azim, you solved a tough problem together!” she responds.

Research on brain development now provides increased understanding of developmental periods of dramatic brain growth, information about regions of brain growth, and details on brain functions. We know that the brain has growth spurts during certain times of development, such as early childhood and adolescence (Schore 2001). And throughout the lifespan the brain is described as plastic because of its ability to adapt and change when necessary (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bruer 2004). Neural development, stress hormones, and brain specialization are three areas of brain research that inform and support developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in early childhood.

**Kathleen Cranley Gallagher,** PhD, is an assistant professor in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kate’s experience includes teaching in an early intervention program and a kindergarten, directing a preschool/child care program, and teaching child care professionals. Her research focuses on children’s early relationships and developing social competence.

Illustrations © Sylvie Wicksrom.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

This article summaries some key finding from brain research and suggests implications for aspects of children’s development and teachers’ developmentally appropriate practice – in particular, creating a caring community of learners, teaching to enhance development and learning, and establishing reciprocal relationships with families (Bredekamp & Copple 1997).

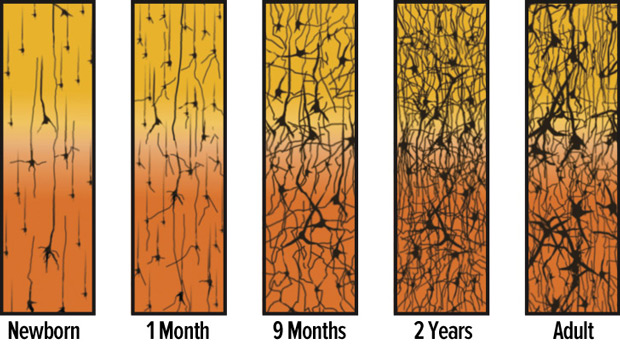
**Neural development and developmentally appropriate practice**

Developmentally appropriate practice requires that we consider current, quality scientific knowledge of children’s development in our consideration of best practice (Bredekamp & Copple 1997). Brain research constitutes some of the most important research to consider in pursuit of developmental knowledge. This knowledge starts with an understanding of some basic structures and processes of the brain, in particular, neurons and neural development.

**Synapse development and pruning**

Neurons are the basic materials of the brain. These cells are responsible for communicating messages in the brain and from the brain to the body (Bloom, Nelson, & Lazerson 2001; Kolb & Whishaw 2001). Most neurons – there are approximately 100 billion in all – are in place before a child is born (Shore 1997). After birth the synapses, which are the connection points between the neurons, develop rapidly, becoming more numerous and dense (see “Synapse Development”). This rapid change is called synaptogenesis. The greater numbers of synapses allow a greater number and variety of messages to travel in the brain, enabling more information to be processed (Bloom, Nelson & Lazerson 2001).

**Synapse Development**

 **newborn 3 months 15 months two years**

The brain produces more synapses in an infant than are needed. A one-year-old has 150 percent more synapses than an adult (Bruer 2004). Scientists are not sure why the brain overproduces synapses, but over-production may increase the likelihood that the brain has enough neuron material to meet whatever demands the environment places on it (Nelson & Bloom 1997). In other words, the brain doesn’t know what the child will need until it –t he brain – interacts with the environment; so, better to overproduce. This may be nature’s way of preparing children for many of the potential environments in which they may live (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000).

When neurons are not used, their synapse connections decrease. This decrease of synapse density is known as pruning, and it is a normal, lifelong process of brain neural development. Pruning is not a “use it or lose it” scenario, as it is sometimes described (Cashmore 2001). Unused synapses are pruned, but neurons remain intact for later learning.

**Practices that support neural development**

As an example, repetition of sensorimotor patterns may help infants and toddlers maintain important synapse linkages. Babies bat objects and mouth toys in exploration, and toddlers dump and refill containers in experimentation. Infants coo and their caregivers coo back, engaging in an oral-auditory dance, accompanied by visual stimulation from the face of the smiling caregiver. Toddlers point to objects, and caregivers name them and may bring the child close to touch and explore then new discovery. New discoveries maintain synapses, and unused neuron synapses are pruned. Together, these early relationships with caregivers, stimulating environments, and an engaged, active child form a system that shapes the brain’s growth and development (Shore 1997).

Synaptic pruning doesn’t imply that a child who never hears classical music will be unable to plan an instrument of that a child who has limited physical abilities will not develop understanding of moving objects. A stimulating environment that engages a child in a variety of interesting activities, however, may improve the quality of brain functioning or a least prevent decreased quality of brain functioning (Bruer 2004).

Under some circumstances, lack of active engagement may limit a child’s potential. Consider a child whose motor activity is limited due to a disability or medical condition (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). The child’s inability to experience movement, engage with new objects, or grab and mouth toys may limit his potential to understand how things in the environment work. In this case, *teaching to enhance development and learning* may include repositioning or moving the child frequently and providing assistive technology. For example, a toddler with limited lower body motor abilities may benefit from using a tummy-scooter to simulate the physical, social and, emotional experiences of crawling. In addition to therapies the child may receive, the child’s teacher should provide ample opportunity for movement. The child’s brain may benefit from frequent stroller trips, an adaptive swing, and riding an adapted tricycle. Teachers and parents can bring objects for interaction to the child and find ways for the child to engage in sensory activities like playing at a sand and water table. A child with limited motor ability needs frequent opportunities and extra adult assistance to experience movement, different views, and spatial relationships.

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**Fixed pieces of equipment such as playpens, highchairs, and bouncy seats should be used sparingly, as they provide little opportunity for varied and active experiences.**

A typically developing child also needs frequent opportunities for movement and interactions with people and objects. Fixed pieces of equipment such as playpens, highchairs, and bouncy seats should be used sparingly, as they provide little opportunity for varied and active experiences. Teaching for enhancing development and learning includes considering the active nature of children’s learning, and it requires considerable supervision and safety planning.

Children need many and varied sensory experiences to maintain neural material (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). It is important that teachers provide a variety of auditory, visual, and tactile experiences. Evidence from animal research supports this point: rats and monkeys raised in restricted, less complex environments developed less dense neural synapse structures. Rats returned to complex environments showed improvement in their synapse structures (Francis et al. 2002). We do not have evidence that complex or stimulating environments increase neural synapse material in humans. However, we do know that deprived environments in childhood, lacking in sufficient nutrition, health care, and/or auditory stimulation, are associated with greater neural pruning (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bruer 2004).

Every new opportunity gives children new ways in which to interpret and understand the world and may help maintain precious neural connections. In some cases, children’s sensory problems go undetected. Brain research suggests that it is critical to identify and treat children with early sensory delays as these sensory deficits could lead to more serious, permanent disabilities (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000).

**Stress hormones and developmentally appropriate practice**

A second area of brain research that supports developmentally appropriate practice is the study of stress hormones. The body produces chemicals called hormones that help regulate body functions and reactions to the environment (Gunnar & Cheatham 2003). Many hormones work together to regulate the activities of the brain.

Cortisol, a hormone that increases in response to stress, contributes to the fight-or-flight reflex that helps the body respond to challenging situations (Kolb & Whishaw 2001). Even daily stressors such as being angry, hearing a loud noise, or solving a difficult problem can cause increases in cortisol levels. In moderate doses cortisol is a good thing – it helps the brain respond to stress and solve problems. However, too much cortisol production over a long period of time is not good and can lead to problems with memory and self-regulation (Gunnar & Cheatham 2003). In other words, frequent and intense stress can harm abilities like remembering important information and controlling negative emotions or behavior. (For example, consider how stress can lead an adult to draw a blank during a test or yell at another driver in heavy traffic.)

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Animal research provides some interesting ways to think about the effects of cortisol on the care and education of young children. Mother rats nurture their pups by grooming and licking the pups’ fur. Scientists know from years of working with rats that when mothers provide high-quality nurturing, defined as frequent grooming, rat pups are healthier and react less to stress (Caldji, Diorio, & Meaney 2000). Animal studies are helpful in considering how important nurturing caregiving and nurturing relationships may be for helping children cope with stress. Research with children also indicates that cortisol production varies in response to stress and is associated with children’s behavior and adjustment (Smider et al. 202; Gunnar et al. 2003).

**Too much corti-sol production over a long period of time is not good and can lead to problems with memory and self-regulation.**

Children respond to stress differently. Early childhood programs may not be able to reduce stressors in home and community settings. However, child-focused settings, such as a child care program, can be oases of security – places where the child feels both protected and autonomous. Research on cortisol and young children supports guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice in teaching to enhance development and learning and for establishing reciprocal relationships with families.

The following research findings provide guidance for supporting transitions, peer play, communicating with families, and development of self-regulation.

**Transitions and stress**

Cortisol level can be measured in any body fluid, but it is most easily taken from saliva samples. People have a baseline cortisol level that is typical for their own biology and personality. Cortisol typically fluctuates throughout the day (usually higher in the morning and lower in the afternoon) and increases in response to stress (Smider eta al. 2002).

Researchers studies changes in cortisol levels in 15-month-old toddlers during the transition to formal child care. The children’s cortisol levels were double their baseline (home) levels during the first hour of child care, when separated from their mothers (Ahnert et al. 2004). After several days children’s distress decreased and their cortisol returned to baseline levels. Mothers remained in the classroom with the children during the transition to child care for several days. When mothers spent more days in the classroom during the transition, children’s attachment relationships with mothers remained secure, but when mothers spent less time in the classroom during the transition to care, children were at greater risk for relationship problems with their mothers.

Secure parent-child relationships are essential for children’s well-being. Developmentally appropriate practice in this context suggests that early childhood professionals and programs should support families by allowing sufficient time for children and families to negotiate transitions gently to and from early childhood programs (Bredekamp & Copple 1997). Predictable routines help reduce the stress of transitions. When routines are about to change, children need to be notified and prepared. Foreshadowing is a technique in which adults share news of upcoming events with children to help them prepare. Examples of foreshadowing include “Five minutes till cleanup time” and “A guest is visiting today during group time.” Foreshadowing of activities and transitions helps children feel in control and reduces stress.

**Children need time to solve problems on their own and opportunities to engage in extended play.**

© Kathy Sible

Because children vary in their reactions to changes in routines, it is important also that adults respect children’s individual temperaments and needs (Gallagher 2002). For example, a child who adjusts slowly to transitions or who reacts negatively to change may need individualized foreshadowing a few minutes before the group foreshadowing for a transition or small change in routine.

**Supporting families**

Research in stress hormones has implications for how we consider the common stressors in children’s lives and our relationships with families. In one study (de Haan et al. 1998), stressful home-related life events for two-year-olds (such as the birth of a sibling, parent job changes, and moving) were associated with increased cortisol levels. Teachers reported more shy and anxious behavior in the classroom for children with higher cortisol levels. It is important to recognize times of stress for young children and provide the necessary comfort and attention in the early childhood setting.

Parents share with teachers important and sometimes sensitive details about their lives. Professionals need to withhold judgment about family situations and share their concerns about children in a nonthreatening way, as families cannot always control the stressors.

**Classroom climate**

Developmentally appropriate practice is effective in helping reduce stress in the early childhood setting (Hart et al. 1998). Positive emotions should dominate an early childhood classroom climate, and interactions should be characteristically calm and positive. Teachers may greet each child and family daily with eye contact, a smile, and a calm and positive manner. When interactions between children are intense, teachers can try to comfort children and provide opportunities for them to return to a calm state as quickly as possible.

Finally, it’s not a good idea to rush from activity to activity. Sometimes we feel we must stimulate children constantly or stick to a schedule. Children, however, need time to solve problems on their own and opportunities to engage in extended play. A fast-paced approach may interfere with opportunities for real learning and enjoyment.

**Development of self-regulation**

Children with higher cortisol levels may sometimes be described by their families and early childhood teachers as more anxious, distressed, and socially withdrawn (Smider et al. 2002; Watamura et al. 2003). Teachers can support self-regulation by accepting and guiding children’s expression of emotion, talking through their anxieties, and

scaffolding children’s understanding of their emotions. Using emotion words, accepting emotions that children express, and offering alternatives for dealing with stressful situations are all ways teachers can help children deal with strong emotions as they experience them (O’Brien 1997). It is important to recognize that children vary in their emotional expression – gender, culture, and genetics all influence how we react to stress and change.

**The right side of the brain experiences greater growth during the first 18 months of life and dominates brain functioning for the first three years.**

**Peer play**

We cannot assume that the path to social play and friendship is the same for all children or that it is without struggles. In one study, children with lower cortisol levels played more cooperatively with other children (Watamura et al. 2003). Children with higher cortisol levels sought out social play, but they were more likely to experience difficult interactions with peers. In a study focusing on the transition to preschool, tow-year-olds with higher cortisol levels showed high activity levels and aggressive behavior with peers (de Haan et al. 1998).

Early childhood professional can help children experience success with their peers. Developmentally appropriate practice requires that teachers join children in their social play, modeling and guiding children’s interactions and supporting children in times of conflict. Without interfering or stifling children’s play, teachers can help play become more complex and at the same time more collaborative (Gartrell 2004).

**Brain specialization and developmentally appropriate practice**

A third area of brain research providing guidance for early care and education is in the area of brain hemisphere specialization. The right and left sides of the brain – or more accurately, of the cerebral cortex – specialize in certain functions (Kolb & Whishaw 2001). Generally, the right side of the brain is more responsible for processing negative emotions, intense emotions, and creativity. The left side of the brain is more responsible for positive emotions, language development, and interest in new objects and experiences (Davidson & Hugdahl 1995).

These brain specializations are not fixed, though. When an individual has brain damage to one side of the brain, the other side often takes over the damaged side’s functions (Kolb & Whishaw 2001). Furthermore, the sides of the brain do not develop at the same rate. The right side of the brain experiences greater growth during the first 18 months of life and dominates brain functioning for the first three years (Schore 2001).

So, during the period just before birth and for three years after birth, the right brain experiences a growth spurt. What does this mean for the child’s learning and experiences?

**Learning to regulate emotion**

Given that the right brain is responsible for processing and helping to regulate negative emotions, and that it develops rapidly during the first three years of life, learning to regulate emotion plays an extremely important role in early childhood development. Infants and young children rely heavily on adult caregivers to help them regulate their own behavior, caregivers help to minimize the children’s stress and provide comfort. The experience of regulating their distressful emotions helps infants organize their experiences. In the opening vignette, Sophia turns to her caregiver for support in negotiating a cruising gap. Similarly, toddlers point to objects, asking their caregivers, “What’s that?” Children learn to stop and assess fearful situations, use expressive language to make their needs known, and apply strategies for managing stress. With repeated, sensitive support, children come to know that they will be “okay,” that justice will prevail much of the time, and that, most important, they have some control over their experiences.

**Building relationships**

Ongoing interaction between infant and caregiver (especially when face-to-face) forms the basis of an infant-caregiver relationship (Brazelton 1982). The caregiver’s modulation of an infant’s arousal helps the infant focus on and sustain attention to people and objects. The infant-caregiver relationship then forms the basis for the child’s ongoing ability to regulate behavior and emotion.

In a reciprocal dance, the right brain guides children’s expression of emotion, and the quality of the adult-child interactions then guides the development of the child’s right brain (Schore 2001). When a caregiver responds quickly andappropriately to a child’s distress – rocking, peaking softly, meeting the child’s gaze with a reassuring face – the child learns to expect the caregiver’s support and to rely upon it. The expectation of support helps the child manage emotions and deal effectively with challenges (Landy 2002).

Some child or family circumstances may put children at risk for not receiving enough help regulating emotion. Conditions related to prematurity, such as difficulty breathing (Diener 2005), may make it hard for an infant to cry to express her needs. A child’s challenging temperament may cause the caregiver so much stress that providing individually appropriate, sensitive care is difficult (Gallagher 2002). When a family member experiences mental illness (Clark, Tluczek, & Gallagher 2004), it can be hard for a parent to provide quality caregiving.

What happens when infants do not receive enough assistance regulating emotion? When infants are frequently overstimulated or when they experience distress and are not comforted, they may withdraw from new experiences and relationships and lose opportunities for interaction and learning (Landy 2002).

**Caring, teaching, and building relationships**

**In a reciprocal dance, the right brain guides children’s expression of emotion, and the quality of the adult-child interactions then guides the development of the child’s right brain.**

Using developmentally appropriate guidelines for caring, teaching, and building relationships, early childhood professionals can help children gain emotion regulation in many ways (Landy 2002). It is important to accept children’s emotions and teach children coping strategies for dealing with strong feelings. Caregivers can create a safe climate for children’s expression of emotion.

Teachers need to plan activities that stimulate, challenge, and soothe a child and are appropriate for the child’s age and individual characteristics. Joyful experiences should dominate the early childhood climate. Negative emotions cannot, and should not, be completely avoided, but early childhood professionals can help children develop approaches for dealing with intense negative emotions.

For teachers of infants and toddlers, this means providing comfort when children are distressed. For preschool, kindergarten, and primary teachers, support consists of naming and accepting emotions and modeling strategies for coping. Teachers can help children understand that anger, frustration, sadness, and fear are all part of being a person (Gartrell 2004). Our preschool program displays a poster of emotion words and facial expressions for teachers and children to use as a reference. Teachers encourage children to express their feelings with words, as well as they are able, and they help children negotiate their needs with teachers and other children.

Modeling is also important. Teachers may help children name their emotions and model problem-solving strategies: “When someone takes the toy I’m trying to use, I get really angry. I tell him how angry I am and say that he can use the toy when I am done.” When early childhood professionals lose control of their own emotions, they can apologize and explain their feelings and behavior to children.

**Conclusion**

Understanding brain research means understanding the importance of positive, supportive relationships in early childhood development (Bredekamp & Copple 1997; Shore 1997; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Schore 2002). In its preamble the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct calls for decisions about interactions and relationships in early childhood programs to be based on knowledge of child development (NAEYC 2005). In light of our knowledge of brain development, developmentally appropriate practice means keeping these relationships at the forefront of what we do with children and families.

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Let’s consider the children we observed at the beginning of this article. In the case of Sophia, the cruising toddler, using developmentally appropriate practice that is informed by knowledge of the brain development of an 18-month-old means balancing emotional and cognitive support for the toddler as she tries new steps – and comforting her when the steps result in falls. For preschoolers Azim and Frank, it means providing an environment in which problem solving and collaboration can occur and stepping back to allow learning to happen. It also means being ready for setbacks – in this case a tumbling structure – and offering emotional support and problem solving when needed.

Developmentally appropriate practice means creating a caring community of learners, one that is inclusive, safe, and orderly and emphasizes social relationships. It means teaching to enhance development and learning by respecting children’s individual differences, fostering collaboration among peers, facilitating development of self-regulation, and structuring an intellectually engaging and varied environment. Finally, it means establishing reciprocal, supportive relationships with families in times of stress, linking them with support services, and recognizing the complexity and importance of the shared responsibility in child-rearing (Bredekamp & Copple 1997).

It does take a whole village to raise a child – and brain research can guide our use of village resources.

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**Play: Children’s Context for Development**

Tovah P. Klein, Daniele Wirth, and Keri Linas

Excerpts from an article by Tovah P. Klein, Daniele Wirth and Keri Linas, published in NAEYC’s journal *Spotlight on Young Children and Play*, 2004.

Community Playthings

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The four-year-olds are busy. “Go get some muffins, and we’ll jump into the car,” Sophie orders Nicholas. She and Issy run hand in hand to the slide. Underneath the slide their car awaits them—and their plan for a getaway.

Nicholas comes running back, his hands held out. “Here are the muffins,” he says as he hands Sophie and Issy each a piece of warm, buttered air. “I’ll drive,” he says, skootching in to the driver’s seat.

Sophie and Issy wiggle backward to make room for their friend. Nicholas sits with his arms held out in front of him, gripping an invisible steering wheel. The girls wrap their legs around the person ahead, placing their hands on that child’s shoulders—a three-child chain.

“Can I come with you?” yells Nina just before the car takes off. “Sure!” hollers Sophie. “Hop in the back.” Nina joins the chain, and with engine sounds they zoom away.

Children’s surroundings provide a world for exploration, discovery, and enjoyment. Playing is what young children spend most of their time doing from the moment they wake up until they close their eyes at night.

Grasping the significance of play helps us see inside the child’s world and appreciate the impact playing has on development and learning. Through play, children learn about cultural norms and expectations, discover the workings of the world, and negotiate their way through their surroundings. Play teaches children about themselves, others, rules, consequences, and how things go together or come apart.

The importance of play is not accepted universally (Landreth 1993). Play is viewed by some as the opposite of work; play does not mean learning. Play is often trivialized in sayings like “That is mere child’s play” or “He is only playing,” as if to say play is unimportant. Many would prefer that young children spend their time tracing letters or matching figures on a worksheet. This article defines the elements of play, illuminating its central role in young children’s learning and development. The focus is on toddlers and preschoolers, age groups that spend most of their time involved in exploration and play (Fein 1981; Piaget [1962] 1999). Also addressed is the critical role of adults in supporting and extending children’s play.

**Characteristics of Play**

There is no universal definition of play. This is hardly surprising given that behaviors at one developmental stage can take on new meaning or functions at another stage (Howes 1992). Yet there are certain agreed-upon behavioral characteristics of play (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg 1983). The major defining characteristics of play are positive affect, active engagement, intrinsic motivation, freedom from external rules, attention to process rather than product, and nonliterality.

Positive affect refers to children’s enjoyment of play as shown in their laughter, smiles, singing, and expressions of joy while playing (Shaefer 1993). Like adults, children seek enjoyable experiences and work to continue them; pleasure sustains the activity.

Children’s enjoyment of play is paired with another element, active engagement—deep involvement without distraction. Although this characteristic seems obvious, it is an important attribute; play fully absorbs children’s interest.

Closely related to engagement and enjoyment is perhaps the most widely agreed-upon aspect of play—a child’s intrinsic, or internal, motivation to play (Shaefer 1993). Different factors can motivate a child; novelty, gaining a new angle on a familiar experience, achieving mastery with known objects, needing to work through feelings. Although the motivation comes from the child, adults establish a safe environment and support or assist in the play.

Adults have an important role, but they do not make the rules for play. Instead, play occurs outside external rules as the rules and structure governing play come from the children (Landreth 1993).

Freedom from external rules does not mean the total absence of rules. Children set rules, governing roles, relationships, entry into play, plot development, and acceptable behaviors (Fein 1981). The players develop and agree upon the rules, which are implicitly understood.

It’s cleanup time, and the pizza delivery girl makes an entry. “Who ordered a pepperoni pizza?” Texeira hollers as she carries a block toward the block shelf.

“I did,” answers Ashook as he takes the block from Texeira and places it on the shelf. He is the block organizer, neatly stacking the wooden “pizzas” according to size.

Soon other children begin delivering pizza. As they pass the blocks to Ashook, the chants echo through the classroom: “Who ordered a cheese pizza?” “Here’s another pizza!”

The children have distributed roles and created a structure for their pretend play to succeed. While the activity leads to a successful cleanup, the pretend aspects are what engage the children and sustain the play.

During play, young children focus on the process or performance of the activity, not on a goal or the results (Landreth 1993). It is this aspect in part that separates play from work. Here, the process is the activity; it keeps the children involved, exploring and discovering without a defined beginning or end. Players set the goals, and the goals can change in importance according to desire (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg 1983). The process allows play to take new directions and be transformed, curtailed, or extended spontaneously and without disruption to the activity.

Adults establish and guide the play environment. The environment serves to significantly facilitate the process of play.

Lissa grabs a blob of blue playdough. She sticks tongue depressors upright in the playdough and holds the concoction out toward her friend. With a wide smile she sings, “Happy birthday to me…”

The teacher comments, “It’s your birthday. Will you have a party?”

Lissa grins, puts her hands on her head, and says, “Here’s my party hat!”

For the moment it is Lissa’s birthday. The teacher builds on Lissa’s fantasy (“It’s your birthday. Will you have a party?”), guiding her to extend her play.

Exploring—gaining information about an object—is a foundation that often leads to playing. In exploration children ask, “What is this? What can it do?” The inquiry process enables discovery, familiarization, and feelings of competence and security. (“This is something that I know”). By asking open-ended questions (“What does that feel like? What can you do with it?”), adults invite an unengaged child to participate and to expand the involvement of those already engaged (Tegano, Sawyers, & Moran 1989).

**How does play support learning and development?**

Enrichment and growth naturally evolve from playing as children learn about themselves and their surroundings. A child’s active participation in his or her world facilitates mastery and control, leading to feelings of competence and self-efficacy. Both contribute to young children’s sense of self (Pruett 1999). The internal excitement derived from discovery and mastery nurtures children’s innate desire to learn. This passion and internalized sense of accomplishment is what motivates children’s learning.

[http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/valueofplay/playchildrenscontext...](http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/valueofplay/playchildrenscontext) 5/10/11

Play lets children make important discoveries about the self—including their own likes and dislikes. They continually shift activities to maximize pleasure, while discovering what is easy and hard to do and what makes them happy or frustrated. They learn to understand the feelings of others and develop empathy. These skills are crucial for healthy peer relationships.

Julia, nearly three, cries at her mother’s departure. “It’s OK to cry when you’re sad,” the teacher quietly reassures the child slumped in her lap. “Mommies and daddies come back.”

Harry, perched on a chair nearby, closely watches the scene. He wiggles off the chair, slowly approaches Julia, and hands her a teddy bear. Harry repeats the teacher’s mantra: “Mama come back soon.”

Play fosters language skills. Pretend play encourages language development as children negotiate roles, set up a structure, and interact in their respective roles (Garvey [1977] 1990). Adults support language by commenting on or labeling children’s play (“I see you are washing that baby,” “That’s a big blue painting you’re making!”). Such comments provide a language-rich environment and naturally reinforce concepts and build on the play.

Language is tied to emotions, which are expressed and explored through pretend play (Slade 1994). Pretending gives children the freedom to address feelings, anxieties, and fears. Through fantasy, children re-create and modify experiences to their liking. They foster a sense of comprehension, control, and mastery (Schaefer 1993). This can enhance feelings of security.

“Grrrr, grrrrr.” From the doorway between the cubby room and the classroom, a dry, raspy growl is heard. “Grrrrr, grrrrrr.”

Three-year-old Sharie steps into the classroom, followed by her mother. Sharie’s stance is tense and wide, braced for action. Her arms are outstretched. Her hands and fingers are scrunched up as claws. With teeth bared, Share gives another growling greeting to the teacher while clawing the air. Approaching the teacher, she stomps down hard with each step.

Sharie continues to growl and flex her claws. Then she turns to the mirror and growls at her image.

Becoming a ferocious lion allows Sharie to put aside the timid child who fears leaving her mother. Instead, being a fierce animal lets her test the waters and helps her cross into the classroom with confidence. The teacher can encourage or welcome the lion into the forest, noting the scary growl and offering materials like blankets to make a lion’s den. In time, the lion will disappear and Sharie will enter the classroom as herself.

Adults can continue to reinforce and extend the play to sustain children’s interest, or they can enter the play directly if invited. Labeling feelings and reflecting on emotional content is an effective way to extend fantasy play: “That lion sounds so angry.” It can help children understand feelings by saying, “Why do you think that monster is so sad?”

Play is a vehicle for expressing feelings, with minimal language needed. Moving feelings from the child to the pretend character reduces anxiety and frees the child to explore emotions. The adult’s message is “It is safe to have and express these feelings.”

Play teaches children about the social world. It provides opportunities to rehearse social skills and learn about acceptable peer behavior firsthand. With age and experience, children’s awareness of peers playing around them increases. This leads to more interactions between children and incorporation of peers into their play (Parten 1932). Group play provides a stage for rehearsing peer skills and learning to be a community member.

Both social and solitary play provide opportunities for children to practice problem solving and negotiating—skills needed to achieve competency in learning, in social relationships and in being a group member.

**Conclusion**

A child’s world is filled with the magic of exploration, discovery, make-believe, and play—vehicles for development. Much of children’s early learning comes through self-discovery—an outcome of play. We have defined and illustrated the elements of play as a way to better understand its essential parts, the development it fosters, and the adult’s crucial role as a supporter of the play process.

Play is young children’s most familiar and comfortable tool for engaging the world, with adults as essential scaffolds. Using observation and intervention aligned to children’s developmental capabilities, adults provide a bridge from children’s current to their future language, cognitive, social, and emotional processes.

For children, play is a dialogue with their surroundings—indoors or out, pretending or exploring, talking or being quiet, alone or with others. The rich complexities and subtleties offered through play provide a base for ongoing development. Not all children have opportunities to play in safe environments, but certainly all children deserve the chance to do so.

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**G**

**REWARDS**

PHOTOS: GREG LORD; STYLING: JEFF STYLES; HAIR & MAKEUP: JENNIFER WOBITO

**NOT WORKING?**

Education expert Alfie Kohn explains

why incentives hurt kids and how teachers can break free of them. **By Jeanna Bryner**

old stars, extra recess-time. Most of us would say that we use incentives to help kids stay on track in the classroom - and we give warnings and time-outs when they're not. There's no question it's hard keeping a class of 25 energetic eight-year­ olds engaged and learning. But is this approach the only option? There's always the child who refuses to behave despite repeated loss of privileges, or the one who chooses a long book to read, saying, "I want to win more stickers."

Do rewards and punishments encourage learning? Author of *Beyond Discipline,* Alfie Kohn, says no. He spoke to *Instructor* about how teachers can give up "behavior management" and create a community of compassionate and invested learners in the process.

***Can you share your thoughts on classroom management as a teaching goal?***

https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTgpER6-EFJOfgnkJ6P76DedUiMw83mmqEbEkYRrJvbBmLjI9KBIt really is possible to have a successful classroom

without focusing on discipline or class­ room management. Using rigid techniques to make kids behave properly rarely succeeds in creating an environment

that fosters learning. I've seen so many wonderful classrooms that employ what

I ultimately carne to call the three *C*s: content, choices, and community.

***How do no-rewards***

***classrooms work?***

First, what the teachers are asking of kids is reasonable and respectful. Second, the children are brought into the decision­ making on things large and small. And most of all, these classrooms feel like car­ ing places where everyone belongs.

We have to give up control and let children take charge of their learning. When kids are encouraged to work for grades, they become less interested in

the learning itself - research clearly

shows this. The more they're focused on getting an *A* or a sticker, the more they come to see the learning itself as a tedious prerequisite to that goody.

Getting rid of punishment and rewards is almost a requirement for helping kids

to love reading, to get a kick out of solv­ ing problems, and to care about one another, even when there's no authority figure in the room.

***Talk about the importance of giving children unconditional acceptance.***

Children need to feel loved and valued even when they aren't succeeding or behaving. When kids don't feel trusted and accepted, behavior problems

become worse. The use of punishment, including time-out, sends a message to kids that they have to jump through our hoops for us to accept them.

In my book *Unconditional Parenting,*

I mention Marilyn Watson, an educational psychologist who helps teachers trans­ form their classrooms into caring commu­ nities. She argues that a teacher can make it clear that certain actions are wrong while still providing "a very deep kind

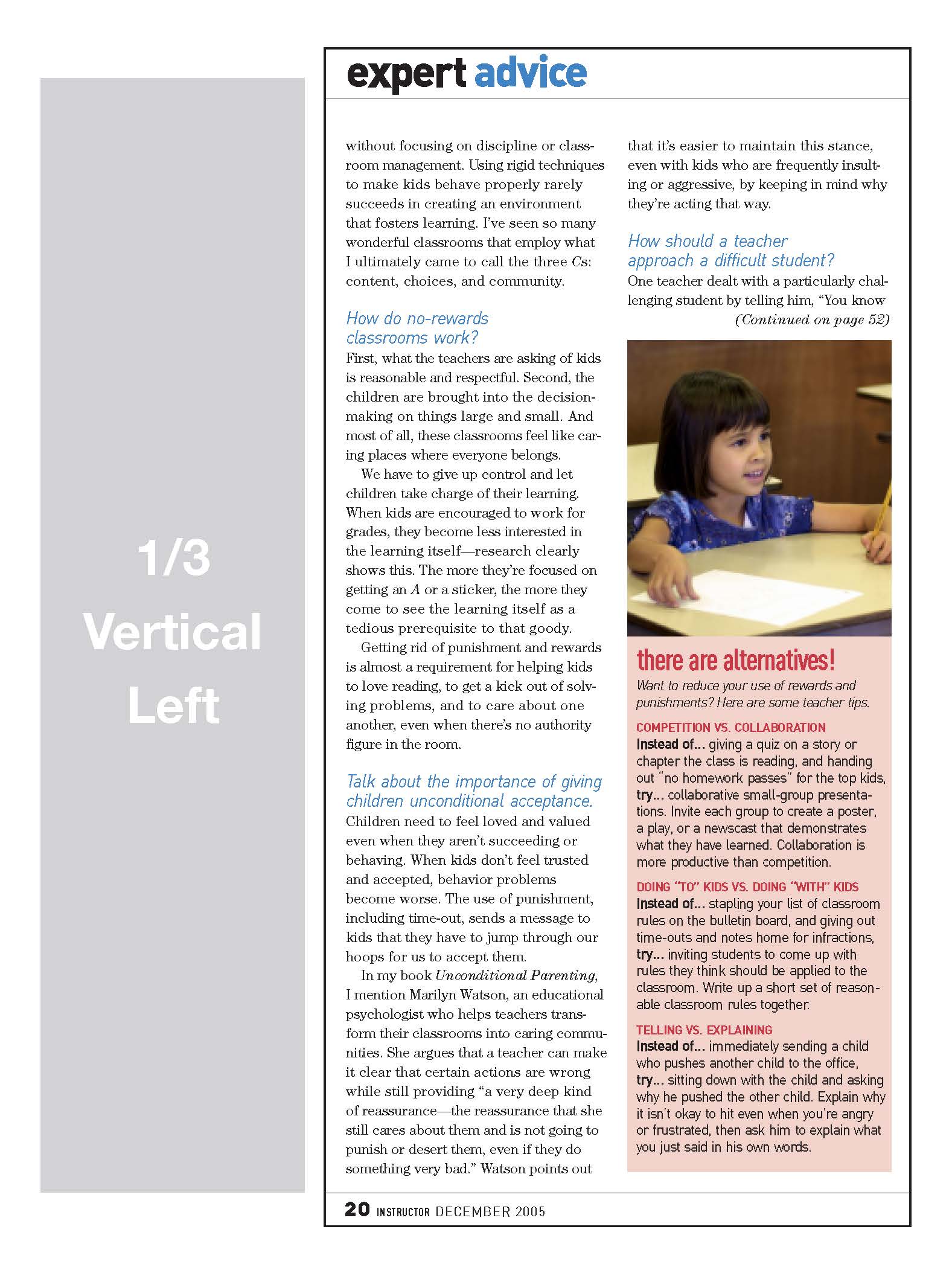
of reassurance - the reassurance that she still cares about them and is not going to punish or desert them, even if they do something very bad." Watson points out

that it's easier to maintain this stance,

even with kids who are frequently insulting or aggressive, by keeping in mind why they're acting that way.

***How should a teacher approach a difficult student?***

One teacher dealt with a particularly chal­ lenging student by telling him, "You know



**there are alternatives!**

*Want to reduce your use of rewards and punishments? Here are some teacher tips.*

**COMPETITION VS. COLLABORATION**

**Instead of…** giving a quiz on a story or chapter the class is reading, and handing

out “no homework passes” for the top kids, **try…** collaborative small-group presenta-

tions. Invite each group to create a poster,

a play or a newscast that demonstrates

what they have learned. Collaboration is

more productive than competition.

**DOING “TO” KIDS VS. DOING “WITH” KIDS**

**Instead of…** stapling your list of classroom rules on the bulletin board, and giving out time-outs and notes home for infractions, **try…** inviting students to come up with

rules they think should be applied to the classroom. Write up a short set of reason-

able classroom rules together.

**TELLING VS. EXPLAINING**

**Instead of…** immediately sending a child who pushes another child to the office,

**try…** sitting down with the child and asking why he pushed the other child. Explain why it isn’t okay to hit even when your angry or frustrated, then ask him to explain what you just said in his own words.

what? I really, really like you. You can keep doing all this stuff and it's not going to change my mind. It seems to me that you are trying to get me to dislike you, but it’s not going to work. I'm not ever going to do that." She told me that it was soon after this conversation that his bad behavior started to decrease.

***And involving kids in class decision-making helps?***

All people - including kids - ought to have some control over their own lives. It's important to experience a sense of autonomy, a feeling that we are the initiators of much of what we do. If expectations are imposed on kids without their consent or participation, then it's less likely they will develop any desire to fulfill those expectations. And when kids stop wanting to fulfill your expectations, that's when teachers feel compelled to trot out the bribes and threats. The problem isn't with kids. It's with the idea of doing things to them, rather than working with them to figure out together how we want our classroom to be.

Ask kids on a regular basis to reflect about their own experiences and to think about how to .make the classroom

a happier place.

***So help kids express their feelings?***

Yes! For instance, teachers can invite kids to talk about why school sometimes stinks. Many teachers are afraid of asking a question like that. They only want to hear good news, which requires kids to hide their feelings - from friendship fears to learning difficulties. But if kids are given the freedom to talk about what they didn't like in years past, then the follow up question can be: "What do you think we can do this year so all of that bad stuff doesn't happen?" That leads them to think about creating a different kind of class­ room - a place that's alive and inviting, where kids are asking questions and helping one another to understand ideas from the inside out. That is true motivation.

***How else can kids be involved?***

Consider bringing students in on deciding how the furniture will be

arranged, or how the walls will be decorated, or what you're going to read next, or what field trip to take. These are ways of showing kids respect, which has the additional advantage of helping them become more engaged.

***What about classroom competition?***

'The only thing worse than a reward is an award. A competition creates a situation where the number of rewards has been artificially limited so that "If I get one, you won't.” Kids are taught that other people are obstacles to their success. It's virtually impossible to cultivate a caring community in the classroom if there are contests that set kids against each other.

***What can teachers do instead?***

A better alternative is to frame things in terms of cooperation. The best teachers arrange their classroom so that children frequently learn from one another.

Studies have shown that children think more deeply when they put their heads together and jointly devise problem­ solving strategies. But they also learn something that goes beyond academics: They learn to care about other people. Cooperation predisposes people to a benevolent view of others. It encourages trust, sensitivity, open communication, and ultimately helpfulness.

***This is a grand goal for***

***education.***

To do what I'm describing asks a lot more of us than just using rewards and consequences to get kids to do whatever we tell them. It's hard to give up some of our control, but it's terribly important if our long-term goal is for kids to be decent people who love learning. Kids learn to make decisions by making decisions, not by following directions. But no one can make the shift all at once. The idea is to keep moving forward to what I'm describing. We're all on a journey here. □

ALFIE KOHN IS THE AUTHOR OF *UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING* AND *BEYOND DISCIPLINE* AND MANY OTHER BOOKS. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ALFIE KOHN AND TO READ MORE ARTICLES, GO ONLINE TO [WWW.ALFIEKOHN.ORG](http://WWW.ALFIEKOHN.ORG). TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS INTERVIEW, E-MAIL THE EDITORS AT INSTRUCTOR@SCHOLASTIC.COM.



**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE K182 Child Development**

**Article Review Questions**

Throughout this course you will be given many different resources to review as a way to enhance the materials covered in class. You are responsible to read and familiarize yourself with these materials. To help you with this process I have developed some review questions to go along with some of the articles. These questions will need to be handed in and will count as part of your grade (participation).

They will **not** be accepted late as they will be used to promote participation the day they are due.

**Section One**

**Chapters 1 - 3**

Gallagher, Kathleen C. Brain Research and Early Childhood Development: A Primer for Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Young Children. July 2005.

1. What is developmentally appropriate practice and how does the authors definition differ from the one covered in the textbook?
2. What was the main idea of the article?
3. What were some of the interesting facts from the article?
4. How does the information about brain development explain why children do what they do?

Klein, Tovah, Daniele Wirth & Keri Linas. Play: Children’s Context for Development. Spotlight on Young Children. May 2003.

1. What is play and how is it important?
2. How would you defend playtime in a classroom to a parent who is concerned about the child ‘not learning’?
3. How does play promote development across all domains (cognitive, affective, physical and motor)?
4. What part of the article do you agree with the most, and why?

Bryner, Jeanna. Rewards not Working? Instructor. December 2005.

1. What did you think about rewards in the classroom prior to reading the article?
2. What was the main idea of the article? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. Go online and find a video, article or other resource that supports your position / opinion. Provide this information here.
4. What was the main idea of the resource?

**Section**

**Two**

**Chapters**

**4 - 7**

Conception and Child Birth

Infants

Toddlers

Section Two

**Reading:** Students must read Chapters Four through Seven in the textbook.

**Chapter 4 Prenatal Period, Birth and the First Two Weeks**

Both hereditary and environmental factors influence the course of child development.

Hereditary determines characteristics from the moment of conception characteristics such as skin, hair, and eye color; potential physical size and proportions; and potential temperament and cognitive characteristics are included. Conception process is covered in the text. Moment of fertilization is conception. It requires the ovum: female egg cell and sperm. Fertilization is the joining of the sperm to the egg. There are many factors that impact this development.

Birth presents huge change in the environment for the newborn like temperature, sensory stimulation, need for outside food, digestive system functions and elimination.

Past delivery methods tended to be hard on both parents and child. Current delivery methods tries to make the change from the womb to the outside world as relaxed and happy and with as little environmental change as possible. Most common description of birth is natural childbirth.

While studying **Ch 4** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

hereditary versus environmental factors

genetics

fertility

conception

periods of prenatal development

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

AIDS

infant

natural childbirth

neonate birth to 2 weeks

bonding

premature infants

infant temperament

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*What would you expect to pass on to your children?*

*What qualities do you see in other children that they have inherited? Traits that are learned? How do you know the difference?*

*How are you different then other members of your family? What accounts for those differences?*

*What things can impact the bonding process?*

*What do you know about temperament? What is yours?*

**Chapter 5 Infancy: Theory, Environment, Health and Motor Development**

The infant environment should be interesting but not overwhelming; it should allow children to explore and exercise their senses, including experiencing the outdoors.

Caregiver should be informed about typical child development and aware of the child’s physiological needs and psychologically safe. Needs of independence and autonomy

must be met.

Millions of children lack adequate medical care because of lack of health insurance, but due to government programs like the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid this number is decreasing. The rate of physical growth is most rapid during the first year. Feeding is important for nutrients and socializing. Low-birth-weight (LBW) infants are the victim of poor prenatal nutrition. The number one concern with nutrition is obesity.

While studying **Ch 5** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

trust versus mistrust

sensorimotor period

perception

proprioception

early intervention

socioeconomic and cultural considerations

SIDS

immunizations

reflexes

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*In reviewing theories and how they reflect on infants, did you find yourself referring back to your theory paper?*

*What are some things to consider in the infant environment? Infant health considerations and factors – nutrition, illness, diseases, safety, housing and mental health.*

**Chapter 6 Infant Cognitive and Affective Development**

Cognitive development was explored by Piaget. He covered the six substages of sensorimotor development. Infants move in rhythm with the speech of adults around them. Infants first form of communication with speech is sound based but moves to cooing and babbling at the age of seven to eight months and at 10 months start to imitate speech. Brain development in an infant occurs at a fast pace. The right side recognizes negative emotions faster, and left side recognizes positive emotions faster. Optimal development involved developing communication between both.

Attachment grows over time. First three months are critical time for development of attachment relationship. As infants develop they build from just gaining attention into the emergence of autonomy where the infant begins to take the lead in the interactions with adults. Attachment will be reflected in the manner that infants react to strangers.

While studying **Ch 6** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

object permanence

object recognition

categorization

social referencing

brain research

stranger anxiety

separation anxiety

four types of attachment – reunion behavior / under stress

reciprocity

imitation

post partum depression

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*How can we test object permanence? What do we do to promote this skill?*

*Who remembers a child’s first attempts at speech? How else do we promote language and literacy with children?*

**Chapter 7 The Toddler: Autonomy Development**

Toddlers move from dependence to independence. It’s a transition for developing skills needed to accomplish goals. Toddlers younger than 18 months are primarily activity oriented; by 24 months toddlers pursue a goal with a stopping point in mind. They are striving to develop autonomy. Toileting is the first demand made on a young child; if handled improperly it can result in adult psychological problems. Bandura focused on more observational learning; the toddler moves from visual to symbolic representations. Piaget focuses on how the toddler goes from latter part of sensori-motor period to early part of preoperational period, when language development is the focus of cognitive development.

Piaget and Vygotsky both recognize the importance of representational play as children’s first use of symbols. Piaget stated that toddler is transitioning from the sensorimotor period to the preoperational period of cognitive development.

Play and imitation become the dominant means for cognitive growth. Concepts are the building blocks of knowledge. Toddlers learn properties of objects in meaningful ways: size, shape, number, classifications, comparisons, space, parts and wholes, volume, weight, length, temperature, and time.

Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social and cooperative behavior. He developed the concept of the zone of proximal development. The partner (peer, adult or older child) supports the child’s learning within the ZPD. Toddlers begin to develop a sense of success and failure that depends on approval from adults. How they react often has to do with what adults do. Toddlers react at separation as an attention-getting technique such as clinging and crying. Parents of toddlers show more hovering and distracting behaviors, they tend to sneak out of the classroom. Teachers can help by reassuring parents that learning how to separate is part of normal development.

While studying **Ch 7** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

toddler

autonomy vs. shame and doubt

pre-operational period

behavior modification

representational thinking

development of speech

sharing

morality

self-concept

zone of proximal development

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*How would you define terrible two’s?*

*How does baby proofing change from infants to toddlers? What must one be cautious about in the environment?*

*Who has had an imaginary friend?* *Why would they ‘appear’ during this period?*

*How should we encourage sharing in the classroom?*

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# SIDS and Babies: Why are infants still dying from SIDS?

Retrieved from http://www.parenting.com/article/sids-and-babies

When Melissa and Rudy Haberzettl's son Jacob was born in November 2006, he was perfect in every way—full-term, healthy weight and a champion eater. Like many new moms, Melissa was determined to follow doctor's orders: She breastfed Jake exclusively, put him to sleep on his back, never exposed him to cigarette smoke and kept soft toys and [beddinghttp://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/icon1.png](http://www.parenting.com/article/sids-and-babies) out of his crib. And Jake thrived. "He was such a happy baby, always looking around and cooing," remembers the Colorado Springs mom. Of course Melissa had heard about [sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)](http://www.parenting.com/article/solving-the-sids-mystery)—the designation most commonly used when a healthy baby dies in his sleep, suddenly and without any medical explanation—but she wasn't really worried about it. "When you do everything right, you just don't think it can happen to you," she says.

But when Jake was 3 months old, the unthinkable happened. Melissa had arranged to return to work two days a week as a physical therapist, and she had chosen an in-home daycare center highly recommended by friends. Though she felt anguished about leaving her baby for the first time, she also felt certain Jake was in good hands and she resisted the impulse to check in. Rudy, also a physical therapist, didn't. He called the sitter three times, reporting to Melissa each time that the baby was just fine. He planned to pick up Jake at 3:30 p.m. Melissa hadn't heard from Rudy by 4 p.m., so she called his cell. The instant she heard Rudy's voice, she knew something was wrong. "I could tell he'd been crying, and my husband does not cry." When Melissa asked, "Is Jake okay?" Rudy just said, "Stay where you are. I'm coming to get you."

Trying not to panic, Melissa called the sitter, but the person who answered would tell her only that the sitter wasn't available. By the time her husband arrived in a police cruiser a few minutes later, Melissa understood. "Jake's dead," she said as soon as Rudy stepped out of the car. "When he said yes, I just fell apart."

### Why isn't SIDS solved?

The death of a healthy baby is always a terrible shock, but it may be even more shocking today. That's partly because SIDS, which is classified as a natural cause of death, is considered so rare. The official rate from the National Centers for Health Statistics (NCHS) is roughly one death for every 2,000 live births—or .05 percent. The other reason? Many parents believe that the only babies still dying of SIDS are the ones whose caregivers just aren't following the safe-sleep rules. It's hard to blame them, given that the American Academy of Pediatrics's (AAP) Back to Sleep campaign, which launched in 1994, has been credited with cutting the SIDS rate in half.

But as the Haberzettls learned so tragically, SIDS is still very much a threat, despite the accomplishments of Back to Sleep. And research suggests that the real SIDS rate may in fact be significantly higher than the official numbers indicate: Although fewer than 2,500 infant deaths this year will be classified as SIDS, an additional 2,000 seemingly healthy babies under 12 months will also die mysteriously in their sleep, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). SIDS may be a very rare event, but the news is terrifying nonetheless. No parent wants to consider the possibility of losing a child, which is why we've reached out to top experts in the field to learn what they know now—4 years into the campaign—and what more can be done to save babies.

### A difficult diagnosis

Spotting SIDS would seem fairly straightforward, but the truth is quite the opposite. And that makes it very hard to know exactly how and why babies succumb, or why the highest rates occur in infants between 2 and 4 months old. The condition can be diagnosed only when a death has been carefully investigated—including an autopsy, a study of the scene and circumstances of death, and an examination of the baby's medical history—so that all other possibilities can be ruled out. The process is expensive, and many counties don't have the resources to conduct such thorough investigations, says Amy Martin, M.D., Denver's chief medical examiner. The result? Some cases may be missed.

Government bureaucracy only compounds the problem. In 2006 the CDC acknowledged that its SIDS reporting form, which each medical examiner's office is charged with completing, was unnecessarily confusing; the revised form can be completed almost entirely by checking boxes. But for on-the-ground forensic pathologists, says Dr. Martin, the new version is still problematic. "If you don't have enough trained investigators who can go out to the death scene, you're going to have a difficult time filling out a form like that—not to mention getting to the bottom of what really happened," she says.

And yet even when resources are available, identifying a true case of SIDS can be challenging. When a baby is found lying on her tummy—or in a bed with adults, or a crib full of soft toys—the coroner can't rule out the possibility that the baby was accidentally smothered and may call it "possible accidental asphyxia" or "threats to breathing" rather than SIDS. That's why some states today report no SIDS deaths at all, despite the fact that babies still die there every year, says Fern R. Hauck, M.D., associate professor of family medicine and public health sciences at the University of Virginia.

As Melissa Haberzettl found out, this variation in labeling—a phenomenon called code-shifting—can happen if the examiner discovers a possibly unrelated underlying condition as well. Five weeks after offering a preliminary assessment that Jake had died of SIDS, the Colorado Springs coroner changed his diagnosis. Even though the baby showed no signs of illness, the medical examiner concluded that Jake had died of viral pneumonia. "I kept asking, 'How can a healthy baby die of pneumonia?' but I never got a straight answer," says Melissa.

She sought out a second opinion from Henry Krous, M.D., a SIDS researcher at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego. In his view, the local examiner had missed a perfectly obvious case of SIDS: "With viral pneumonia, infants don't die suddenly without getting sick first," says Dr. Krous. "If one has a degree of pneumonia that can be seen only with a microscope, and then the infant dies, he dies with it, not of it."

Regardless of how or why it happens, code-shifting helps to explain why SIDS deaths have dropped in the past 14 years while other sudden infant deaths, like those attributed to accidental suffocation or even, simply, undefined causes, have increased significantly. If true SIDS cases are being assigned a wide variety of other diagnoses, it makes it nearly impossible for researchers to get a good handle on what's happening with the rates and risk factors right now, says Dr. Hauck. That's why for parents, it's more important than ever to follow the safe-sleep recommendations, including putting babies down on their backs, says Dr. Krous. "Nothing we know at the present time will absolutely prevent SIDS, but the risk can be substantially reduced."

### What we know so far

Despite the challenges, SIDS research goes on. And though much remains to be learned, scientists do have some answers (see "4 Other Ways to Protect Your Baby"). For instance, theyknow that certain infants, such as African-American, Native American and premature babies, are at particular risk and that certain situations (including sleeping on a soft surface and exposure to secondhand smoke) raise the odds for all babies. They also know that babies who sleep on their stomachs or sides face the biggest danger: They have twice the risk of dying from SIDS as babies who sleep on their backs. When a baby's face is turned toward the bedding, he's in a position to re-breathe the carbon dioxide he exhales, which limits the amount of oxygen he takes in. "When they aren't getting enough oxygen, most babies will do something to change their environment—they'll turn their heads, or they'll sigh, or they'll yawn," says Rachel Moon, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics at George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC. "But babies who die of SIDS don't wake up when they get into trouble, and we don't fully understand why."

One of the most plausible theories may be a brain-stem abnormality that affects the brain's ability to make and use serotonin—a theory corroborated by a new Italian study that found that serotonin overproduction caused SIDS-like deaths in mice—and it may be responsible for well over half of all cases. Along with its role affecting mood, serotonin helps regulate breathing and arousal. If that arousal center isn't functioning properly, a baby sleeping in a position that limits his oxygen may not wake up in time. This discovery, made by researchers at Children's Hospital Boston, helps explain why SIDS rates drop dramatically after 6 months and disappear entirely at one year: The brain stem continues to mature, and even abnormal brain stems are eventually able to process serotonin appropriately.

### The many sides of SIDS

As encouraging as this research is, it's become increasingly clear that the syndrome likely has several biological explanations, with different babies dying for different physiological reasons—and that complicates the mystery even more. Along with brain-stem problems, researchers are also looking into undiagnosed genetic anomalies that cause no symptoms but are ultimately fatal. A [metabolichttp://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/icon1.png](http://www.parenting.com/article/sids-and-babies) disorder called MCADD (medium chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency), for instance, impairs the baby's ability to process fatty acids, eventually causing a sudden and fatal interruption in heart function. Another condition is long QT syndrome, an electrical disorder in the heart that causes sudden bursts of extremely rapid heartbeats and can lead to cardiac arrest. MCADD and long QT syndrome account for fewer than 15 percent of SIDS cases, but both disorders can be successfully treated if caught in time by a blood test; unfortunately, these tests aren't routine in most states.

Although some infants seem to be at greater genetic risk for SIDS, it's also possible that all babies are susceptible if the factors are strong enough at the time of greatest vulnerability. "It probably takes more of a stressor to tip a baby who has no predisposition over into SIDS than it takes for a genetically susceptible baby, but it could still happen," says Dr. Moon.

Preliminary research also suggests that babies who begin daycare before 4 months of age, like Jake Haberzettl, may be at increased risk as well. In the most recent AAP analysis, about 20 percent of all SIDS deaths occurred while the baby was in the care of someone other than a parent. One third of the infants died during the first week of childcare, and half those deaths occurred on the very first day. "It may be that starting a new routine interrupts the baby's sleep cycle, so that when he finally does fall asleep, he sleeps too deeply," says Dr. Moon. It may also be that some providers don't recognize the risks of tummy sleeping. The danger? Babies who are accustomed to sleeping on their backs are 18 times more likely to die from SIDS when put down to sleep on their stomachs. That's why it's important for parents to emphasize safe-sleeping practices with their providers, and try to use only a licensed facility.

Eventually, researchers hope that it will be possible to create a diagnostic test to identify the babies most at risk for SIDS. "But our real dream is to develop some sort of protection to use through the risk period," says Dr. Krous. Reaching that goal will take a lot more funding, a lot more research, and more accurate information from death-scene investigations. As Dr. Krous says, "That's a long way off, but that's the dream. To save lives."

Melissa Haberzettl shares this dream. In March, she gave birth to a second son, Dylan Jacob, whose middle name is a tribute to the older brother he'll never know. "I was nervous about trying to get pregnant again," says Melissa, "but Rudy and I both said to ourselves, 'We have to try.' " (To make sure his risk was low, Dylan was tested for both MCADD and long QT syndrome, but he has neither.) And she continues to keep up with SIDS research. "I'm hopeful that in my lifetime, people will say, 'SIDS? What's that?' And no other family will have to go through what we did when Jake died."

**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE K182 Child Development**

**Article Review Questions**

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They will **not** be accepted late as they will be used to promote participation the day they are due.

**Section Two**

**Chapters 4 - 7**

SIDS and Babies: Why are infants still dying from SIDS?

*Retrieved from* <http://www.parenting.com/article/sids-and-babies>

1. What is SIDS?
2. How do we prevent it?
3. What did you find interesting about this handout?
4. What would you also want new parents to know? How would you communicate this to families? *If using an online resource please include the link here.*

**Section**

**Three**

**Chapters**

**8 - 15**

****

Preschoolers

Primary Age

Section Three

**Reading:** Students must read Chapters Eight through Fifteen in the textbook.

**Chapter 8 Physical and Motor Development**

Preschoolers are children between the age of three to five years. There are lots of threats to preschoolers physical growth. Malnourishment occurs when children consume enough calories but not enough nutrients. As children get older diets get worse. Adults working in Early Childhood should observe daily for signs of health problems and implement effective prevention. Physical play benefits physical, cognitive, and social development. Types of physical active play preschool children engage in include exercise play and rough-and-tumble. Physical active play has social, motor, and cognitive benefits.

1:10 children have a mental health illness; one in five receives treatment. Stress affects mental well-being. Causes of stress include moving, divorce, birth of sibling, exposure to violence, etc. Teachers support children by providing nurturing relationships.

Characteristics of gross motor development is the focus on developing the fundamental motor skills such as running, jumping, hopping, galloping, etc. The specialized movements need to be developed and promoted in the classroom. Motor skills develop depending on physical characteristics, environmental opportunities and maturity of the nervous system (probably the most critical factor). Children with physical or motor disabilities still need to participate in motor activities.

Writing development includes an interest in name writing (by three years), pretend cursive and mock letters (three years) and combine letter like forms and real letters (four years). Things for adults to remember are that reversals are common for beginning writers and young children need lots of practice with fine motor experiences, including woodworking, manipulative building materials, puzzles, etc. Development of drawing skills parallels development of writing skills where children move from the manipulatory-exploratory stage, where they gain control over materials, to a communicative phase, where they name and label drawings.

While studying **Ch 8** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

preschoolers

big body play / rough and tumble

nutrition

obesity

specialized movements

brachiating

perception

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*What does nutrition mean to you? Are your decisions impacted by various factors including social, economic, cultural and psychological factors?*

**Chapter 9 The Cognitive System, Concept Development and Intelligence**

Cognitive development is covered through different theories. Piaget’s periods of cognitive development is covered again. One consideration is that preschoolers are egocentric (the child centers perception on the most obvious; seeing is believing) and other processing traits. The social context has an effect on cognitive development. During late sensori-motor and early preoperational periods the child’s pre-concepts join into pre-concept groups.

Preschoolers start to develop a theory of mind and metacognition. Some children suffer from false beliefs and they do not perceive the mind as an independent structure. There are different hemispheric functions, left-brain functions are more analytic while right-brain functions include orientation in space, creative talents, awareness of body, face recognition. Communication between two sides of the brain is necessary to reach full creative potential.

Intelligence is the ability to benefit from experience, that is the extent to which a person is able to make use of his or her capacities and opportunities for advancement in life. There are five intelligence theories (psychometric, information-processing, cognitive developmental, ethological, and successful intelligence) discussed in the chapter. The theory of multiple intelligences covers the many ways one can have strengths in learning. Evaluation of intelligence are typically conducted with IQ tests. Some criticisms are that they do not consider coping skills, have been used to label children with poor test-taking skills as developmentally disabled, test content is unfair to children without English language skills or appropriate experiences necessary to give correct answers and the tests raise stress levels. One should use authentic assessment to determine intelligence. Some things that impact intelligence is creativity and giftedness. Four criteria related to child’s thinking process are originality, appropriate and relevance to a goal the child has fluency and flexibility.

While studying **Ch 9** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

cognitive development of preschoolers

schema

concepts

egocentric

overgeneralizations

overdiscriminations

metacognition

causality

spatial concepts

intelligence

theory of multiple intelligences

authentic assessment

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*When working with special needs children what are some considerations to think about when planning an environment?*

*What are some of the basic concepts preschoolers need to acquire to promote later learning?*

**Chapter 10 Oral and Written Language Development**

Language is a well-ordered system of rules that each adult member of the language community tacitly comprehends in speaking, listening, and writing. Learning theory places an emphasis on the environment; language is acquired through mechanisms of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and imitation. By 2025 more than half of children enrolled in U.S. schools will belong to minority groups. Supportive, natural, language-rich environments that provide acceptance and meaningful interaction are optimal.

The infant’s use of language progress as the sounds infants make are like those they will use when they learn to speak. The toddler’s use of language progresses as they make their first words, usually involve names of objects acted upon by the child or by others, and continue by speaking about objects and their ideas about objects. Preschoolers move into two-word combinations, they use some consistent patterns. Child modifies speech to fit the age of the listener. Talk is less self-centered and more collaborative. They proceeds from social speech to private speech to verbal thought. Children explore language in their play.

Four stages of literacy development occur where the child progresses from a beginner stage to a conventional reader. To be successful readers children will need to master the ability to identify printed words using the connections between spellings and sounds, use previous knowledge and comprehension strategies to read for meaning. There are many approaches to this, including the phonics approach, whole-language approach and the balanced approach. Early reading focuses on the identification of words in the environment appears to be the first step in learning to read. Young children learn some of the conventions or rules of print use. Children as young as three know that print carries a message. Children begin to develop concepts about print at the same time they begin to recognize letters. Writing and drawing develop in parallel fashion.

Cultural differences in home literacy activities do not excuse schools’ failure to educate particular groups of children. NCLB Act was designed to meet these concerns but it may not be meeting this challenge. Non-contextual knowledge, including concepts of print, phonemic awareness, letter names, emergent writing and word recognition, are critical for children coming from low SES backgrounds.

While studying **Ch 10** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

language as a system of rules

ELL

bilingual

literate– four stages

NCLB Act

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*What are the four theorists views of language? How does this reflect in what we do in the classroom?*

*What role does the NCLB Act play in how we encourage literacy in young children?*

*What is intelligence?* *How should it be measured? How does knowing about intelligence help in educating children?*

**Chapter 11 How Adults Enrich Language and Concept Development**

Some suggestions for teachers of young children, especially English as a Second Language Learners, want to ensure that we are aware of individual differences—do not push children too fast into becoming second-language proficient. Be accepting of whatever the children say, and provide opportunities for trial and error. The classroom environment should be accepting and value culturally and linguistically diverse young children. The adult’s role is to provide scaffolding for children’s language development, which begins in infancy.

Listening to children’s speech reinforces the use of speech by communicating that what they are saying is worthwhile. Young children start to learn about written language at home. Adults support literacy activities, especially if they are accepting of invented spellings and non-conventional sentences and interact verbally with children while reading to them, and encouraging question asking. In school children use their knowledge of letter names to learn letter sounds.

While studying **Ch 11** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

cultural and linguistic diversity

adult- to- child language

routines

**Chapter 12 Affective Development**

Affective development is the area we focus on in early childhood education. The psychoanalytic view of personality reviews the three parts id, ego and superego. Erikson focuses on the initiative versus guilt stage at which conscience begins to develop. Children’s mental health is important that they have opportunities and methods for expressing their feelings. Children do not become independent of emotional attachments but instead change the way they show love and affection, widen their emotionally dependent attachments to others, and seek more verbal attention.

Use environmental and personal resources to achieve a good developmental outcome. Makes possible satisfying and competent participation in and contributions to the groups, communities, and larger society to which he or she belongs. Giving positive reinforcement to peers not only shapes the behavior of others but is also associated with the degree of peer popularity. Older children give more positive reinforcement to more different children than do younger children. Peer rejection during elementary school years is predictive of school dropout, antisocial behavior, delinquency, and psychopathology in adolescence and early adulthood.

While studying **Ch 12** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

sociomoral development

initiative vs. guilt

industry vs. inferiority

hierarchy of needs

social reciprocity

sexuality

social competence

self‑regulation

conscience

empathy

2 types of aggression

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*What would each of these theorists (Erickson, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bandura and, Maslow and Rogers) state is important to consider about a child’s social development? The text discusses the reasons why we should promote moral development in young children. How does this relate to apologizing?*

**Chapter 13 How Adults Support Affective Development**

NAEYC developmentally appropriate guidelines for adult decision making ensure that we create a caring community of learners. Teaching to enhance development and learning means that teachers respect, value, and accept, children and treat them with dignity. We must establish reciprocal relationships with families. All children need to feel loved and cared for so we need to express love and affection to children, emotional aspects (what each person feels) are as

important, if not more important, than observed behavior such as hugging, tickling, or cuddling. Primary children are developing a view of culturally acceptable gender roles and is related to children’s flexibility of views and knowledge about sex roles and stereotypes. The key is that adults express affection at the same time the child feels the need for affection. Acceptance and respect are the most necessary ingredients for good relationships and they come before love and affection. Touching is important but it must be done on the child’s terms.

Children need to actively construct understanding about appropriate, productive ways of behaving in classroom settings. Directive techniques like modeling and reinforcement are not frequently used when focusing on developmentally appropriate practices. Positive guidance is when we teach children what the expected behaviors are and how to solve their conflicts using words rather than physical force. Teaching styles also affect children’s behavior, guidance ‑oriented approach produces students who are better disciplined and self‑regulating than authoritarian classroom. Corporal punishment has many negative effects.

While studying **Ch 13** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

discipline and guidance

punishment

time-out

4 parental styles

teaching for democracy

**Chapter 14 Preschool to Primary: Bridging the Gap into the Primary Grades**

Primary child is defined by a transition period from childhood to school. Concept of readiness tends to promote the view that preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades are separate entities. The period from five to seven years old is a time when a cognitive shift takes place as children pass from pre-operational to concrete operational thought processes. Developmentally appropriate classroom structure provides the best transition. Children are not pressured to arrive at the “correct” answer but are encouraged to think autonomously and discover relationships on their own. Play is not part of many kindergarten programs and is rarely included in primary grades. Play becomes an activity that breaks up the monotony of required work.

Readiness has changed from letting children get ready through the typical course of development with adult support and guidance to making them ready. Can be inappropriate, like using standardized achievement tests, which is stressful, encourages teaching to the test, not a valid or reliable measure, contains inappropriate items and poses a danger if results are used to make high stakes decisions. Appropriate assessment procedures include authentic evaluation using teacher observations, interviews and written compositions.

While studying **Ch 14** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

primary child

continuity

4 reasons for assessment

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*How do you view assessment? In what ways are you assessed? What are they actually measuring?*

**Chapter 15 The Primary Grade Child Development**

Physical development and health in the primary years slows but still makes steady gains, muscle mass increases and arms and legs become more proportional. Baby teeth are lost. Children spend a majority of day in school. Health education should include nutrition, correct hand washing, tooth brushing. AIDS education must incorporate teachers, parents, and children, but remember confidentiality. Drug education includes role-playing, small-group activities, brainstorming and cooperative learning and discussions based on student interest and involvement are most effective.

Transitional stage between preoperational and concrete operational periods. Primary children are beginning to handle more complex cognitive problems and connect symbols with concrete experiences. Children are also transitioning into elementary school. Higher mental functions emerge around planning, monitoring, evaluating and deliberate memory. Intrinsic motivation emerges where children gradually transition from play to learning. Problem solving in mathematics and science develops in stages from concrete, readiness, copying, mechanical to problem-solver. In literacy development children usually are expected to be able to read conventionally by the fourth grade. By utilizing children’s interest in fantasy and superheroes one can promote reading and literacy. It allows children to work through their need for power and express the complexities of their social lives. Technology, when used in a meaningful way, may enhance learning.

Preschool through first graders tend to focus on social behavior rather than academic achievement as the criterion for “smartness.” By the second grade children set work habits (being neat, working hard, practicing), are being good, and are following rules as indications of intelligence. Fifth or sixth grade children perceive ability as a stable trait when repeated failure causes task persistence to decrease. Cognitively primary aged children are more similar to preschoolers and kindergarten children than upper elementary school students.

Increasing self-consciousness and sensitivity occurs during the primary years. Self-evaluations continue to provide children’s degree of self-esteem. Children with learning disabilities are vulnerable to poor self-concept and benefit from a combination of affective and academic interventions. Peer relationships become more important during the primary years. Play is enjoyed by grade-school children and affords opportunities to improve social problem-solving skills. Antisocial behaviors, may be aggressive or nonaggressive. Behaviors have their roots in early childhood experience and increases during adolescence.

Stress continues to be a problem beyond kindergarten. Top stressors for primary-aged children include school concerns, worries about family and parents and peer pressures. The overall role of adults is to promote self-esteem and moral worth based on authentic adult feedback, scaffolding supports autonomy, individuals are different and that self-esteem is multifaceted.

While studying **Ch 15** the following key words / concepts should be focused on:

recess

technology

7 stages of problem solving

peer relationships

resiliency

respectful engagement

anti-social behaviors

anti-bias approach

Questions to ponder while reading the text:

*How should one approach behavior in primary aged children? Thinking about the use of positive guidelines and rules, what differs from educators to parents?*

*What is the importance of recess in Kindergarten? What has changed about the amount of recess offered to children? Why? What are your biases?*

**Why Soft is Missing in Many Early Care and Education Settings  
& Why We Should Bring the Soft Stuff Back**

Abbey Griffin, PhD

**[](http://www.communityplaythings.com/products/chairs/armchair/index.html)In the name of health, we have sterilized our**

**Early Care and Education (ECE) environments.**

Healthy is good, but spending all day in spaces that offer no soft, cozy places for children and adults to enjoy comfortable, semi-private moments is like being in an institution. The soft elements bring a sense of home into the environment, a sense that one can get away from the group, to be alone or to share an intimate conversation with a friend. Children and adults need time to be away from the group and a

safe place to observe the activities of colleagues and friends. This article presents an argument for soft,

cozy spaces and offers suggestions for keeping them clean.

Let’s start with what we mean by soft elements. I am

a big fan of a couch, an ottoman or a soft chair big

enough for an adult to sit with 2-3 children. Cushions,

foam mats and hammocks are great in the reading

area and other cozy nooks that can be created in most

ECE environments. Some adult seating in various areas of the room is guaranteed to boost staff morale as well as invite parents to watch their child at play. Window seats with cushions make for great adult and child seating; and, if made with easy to lift covers, become wonderful and much needed storage. Lofts can offer active play on top and cozy, protected space underneath. A low book shelf or cabinet with the door removed can be designated as a cozy child space. Even a plastic children’s pool with cushions inside can provide a wonderful contained quiet space. Use your imagination.

**When thinking of soft elements,** think also of the walls and ceilings. Awnings, canopies and tents are great ways of covering an area with soft light filtering through the material. Banners offer visual cues about where different activities are located. Quilts on the walls change the color of spaces, give a sense of warmth and containment and help reduce noise (a major health concern in child care). As a general rule, all furnishings and decorative elements should be simple in color. Clashing colors and patterns are visually distressing and can cause problems for children and adults who are easily over stimulated. However, I have seen very bright colors in Latin American and African American programs which work because they are part of the culture of the community.

Consider plants, both inside and in outdoor areas. Plants provide opportunities for nurturing growth and change. They also nurture us by improving the air quality in our indoor and outdoor spaces. They are soft to look at and emanate a sense of well-being.

**A working definition of soft elements includes:**

1. seating for children and adults that is comfortable and located in areas of the room designated as quiet areas;
2. seating for adults in eating areas, at the entrance to the room, and positioned around the room;
3. warm and cozy respites, spaces that offer a sense of containment;
4. soft visual elements that have the dual purpose of defining a space as well as helping to reduce noise; and,
5. plants we can nurture and that nurture us by improving air quality.

What follows are the practical uses of soft elements, including how to keep them clean.

**Let’s talk about where soft elements could be placed** and how they add quality to our early care and education program philosophy and curriculum. High quality programs invite parent/family involvement. This begins with encouraging smooth transitions at the start and end of the day. Most parents are going to work so they are not going to sit on the floor or navigate their way down to a child’s chair. A couch, a chair, even a large ottoman placed near the entrance is both welcoming and invites parents to sit for a moment with their child. Having some age-appropriate books placed within easy reach offers a useful tool for sharing a quiet moment for both parent and child to ease into the separation. At the end of the day, it can be a blessing to the parent whose child is cranky or resists leaving usually because, like all of us, they want those they love to join in what they do during the day. Adult seating can also be a

tool for teachers who want to encourage the ease of parent-child interaction. Consider this story:

An overweight, low energy mother arrives at the end of the day. Her very active four-year-old begins to run up and down the loft and slide. Her mother stands at the door looking miserable. Such tensions at separation and reunions are a daily occurrence and the teachers want to help. A teacher places an adult chair near the bottom of the slide and invites the mother to sit and relax. Once the mother is seated close to where her child is playing, the child begins to calm and within a few minutes she gets a book and sits in her mother’s lap. They read together. That day, they leave without conflict. It is not magic. It works because the chair allows the mother a comfortable place to be with her child. Once seated, the mother is giving her child the attention she needs in order to make the transition from group to home.

**[](http://www.communityplaythings.com/products/chairs/gliders/index.html)Soft Seating**

Criteria for high quality care also emphasizes strong, trusting relationships between teacher and children. An adult chair, an ottoman, window seat or hammock invites teachers to sit with children, watching, engaging in conversation or holding a child who needs comfort. Adult chairs in the eating area are essential for babies to be individually fed or assisted in eating. Chairs make it easier for adults to create family-style eating while still having to get up and down to provide whatever is needed. A glider (well, everyone should have one of these) offers a magical sensory

experience for the child having trouble settling down for a nap. Being on your feet all day is exhausting to most adults and bending over to pick up or talk to a child is a real occupational hazard. Comfortable adult seating encourages the kind of face to face interaction that builds strong trusting relationships as well as protecting the physical health and safety of teachers.

**Healthier Environments**

Group environments can be taxing for both children and adults. Group care is plagued by noise, air pollution and unhealthy lighting. Soft elements can help diminish these problems. Harsh, overhead lighting fixtures are common and inexpensive, but they have been found to increase stress and the frequency of headaches. If you consider how often the young child has to look up, it is obvious that they pose a risk to eye health. Noise levels in ECE rooms have been shown to cause hearing loss. Noise begets noise because when children are loud, teachers need to talk louder just to be heard. Wall hangings, rugs, and cushions help absorb noise. Soft elements, like awnings, canopies and tents, soften the glare of overhead lighting as well as reducing noise. Together, these additions to ECE environments make life in group care more enjoyable and healthier for all.

[](http://www.communityplaythings.com/index.html)Having corners of relative quiet comfort can help ease the pressures of constant interaction. There is a sense of home that is comforting to children, teachers and parents. Window seats offer places to look over the environment or out the window from a higher perspective. They offer the young toddler a place to hold onto while practicing standing and walking. Mats with vinyl covers make excellent seating inside or outside; but they have the added advantage of being used for tumbling and other large motor activities.

**Soft and Clean**

Keeping soft elements clean is too often the argument used to keep them from the classroom. Fabrics, like cotton sheets, coverlets, or any washable throw can be used to cover couches, easy chairs or over foam mats. Parachute material is wonderful for making tents or canopies. It rarely needs to be washed but does need to be dusted. You have to look at your state regulations as well as fire codes when hanging anything from the ceiling. Cushions should be removable as well as easily washed. Fabrics can be sprayed to resist staining and allow for sponge cleaning. Most cleaning and stain-protecting products are toxic and are best left to completely air out before returning to the classroom. Plants just need to be dusted.

**Just Like Home**

The benefits of soft elements in ECE environments far outweigh the challenges of keeping them clean. They support the needs of both children and adults for comfortable, quiet spaces. They reduce noise, help clean the air and soften the harsh glare of overhead lighting. They support the curriculum by encouraging parent involvement and teacher child interaction. It takes imagination and a keen eye for nooks that can become protected quiet spaces. It takes planning and careful selection of materials to ensure a routine cleaning schedule. But it is worth it – our teachers and young children are worth it. Let’s keep our ECE environments as home-like as we can.

**About the Author**

*Abbey Griffin has over 30 years of experience in the field of Early Care and Education (ECE).  She began in 1967 as a teacher in a low income child care center in New York City, went on to teach in a university lab school in Milwaukee, WI and founded and directed 2 centers serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers.  She has both a Masters and a Doctoral degree in ECE.  She taught and supervised student teachers in her four years at the University of MD.  She was a Senior Associate at* [*ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families*](http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer)*. Currently, Abbey is a consultant for ECE programs, including Early Head Start, home visiting, center and family child care programs and parent organizations.  She is developing a training approach called Focus and Reflect, which is a strength-based training using camcorders (Alice Eberhart-Wright is co-author of the training).  She has also developed training materials for working intensely with groups on design and environmental health, developmentally appropriate practices, mentorship and early development.*

CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Parental School Involvement

and Children’s Academic

Achievement

Pragmatics and Issues

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**ABSTRACT**—*Developing collaborations between families and schools to promote academic success has a long-standing basis in research and is the focus of numerous programs and policies. We outline some of the mechanisms through which parental school involvement affects achievement and identify how pat- terns and amounts of involvement vary across cultural, economic, and community contexts and across developmental levels. We propose next steps for research, focusing on the importance of considering students’ developmental stages, the context in which involvement takes place, and the multiple perspectives through which involvement may be assessed. Finally, we discuss enhancing involvement in diverse situations.*

**KEYWORDS**—*parental involvement; academic achievement; family-school partnerships*

Families and schools have worked together since the beginning of formalized schooling. However, the nature of the collaboration has evolved over the years (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Initially, families maintained a high degree of control over schooling by controlling hiring of teachers and apprenticeships in family businesses. By the middle of the 20th century, there was strict role separation between families and schools. Schools were responsible for academic topics, and families were responsible for moral, cultural, and religious education. In addition, family and school responsibilities for education were sequential. That is, families were responsible for preparing their children with the necessary skills in the early years, and schools took over from there with little input from families. However, today, in the context of greater accountability and demands for children’s achievement, schools and families have formed partnerships and share the responsibilities for children’s education. Parental school involvement is largely defined as consisting of the following activities: volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, and attending school events, meetings of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and parent-teacher conferences.

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It is well established that parental school involvement has a positive influence on school-related outcomes for children. Consistently, cross-sectional (e.g., Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994) and longitudinal (e.g., Miedel & Reynolds, 1999) studies have demonstrated an association between higher levels of parental school involvement and greater academic success for children and adolescents. For young children, parental school involvement is associated with early school success, including academic and language skills and social competence (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003). Head Start, the nation’s largest intervention program for at-risk children, emphasizes the importance of parental involvement as a critical feature of children’s early academic development because parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences for children and has positive effects on parents’ self-development and parenting skills.

Most of the literature focuses on parental school involvement in elementary schools. Parental school involvement is thought to decrease as children move to middle and high school, in part because parents may believe that they cannot assist with more challenging high school subjects and because adolescents are becoming autonomous (Eccles & Harold, 1996). However, few parents stop caring about or monitoring the academic progress of their children of high school age, and parental involvement remains an important predictor of school outcomes through adolescence. For example, one study demonstrated that parental school involvement was associated with adolescents’ achievement and future aspirations across middle and high school (Hill et al., in press). Moreover, although direct helping with homework declines in adolescence, parental school involvement during middle and high school is associated with an increase in the amount of time students spend on homework and with an increase in the percentage of homework completed (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

Parental School Involvement

**HOW DOES PARENTAL SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

There are two major mechanisms by which parental school involvement promotes achievement. The first is by increasing social capital. That is, parental school involvement increases parents’ skills and information (i.e., social capital), which makes them better equipped to assist their children in their school-related activities. As parents establish relationships with school personnel, they learn important information about the school’s expectations for behavior and homework; they also learn how to help with homework and how to augment children’s learning at home (Lareau, 1996). When parents are involved in their children’s schooling, they meet other parents who provide information and insight on school policies and practices, as well as extracurricular activities. Parents learn from other parents which teachers are the best and how difficult situations have been handled successfully. In addition, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents’ expectations for their children and their children’s teachers. Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that compared with parents who were not involved, involved parents developed more complex strategies for working with schools and their children to promote achievement.

Social control is a second mechanism through which parental school involvement promotes achievement. Social control occurs when families and schools work together to build a consensus about appropriate behavior that can be effectively communicated to children at both home and school (McNeal, 1999). Parents’ coming to know one another and agree on goals—both behavioral and academic—serves as a form of social constraint that reduces problem behaviors. When children and their peers receive similar messages about appropriate behavior across settings and from different sources, the messages become clear and salient, reducing confusion about expectations. Moreover, when families do not agree with each other or with schools about appropriate behavior, the authority and effectiveness of teachers, parents, or other adults may be undermined. Through both social capital and social control, children receive messages about the importance of schooling, and these messages increase children’s competence, motivation to learn, and engagement in school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

**FAMILY AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT**

Parent-school relationships do not occur in isolation, but in community and cultural contexts. One of the biggest challenges schools have today is the increasing diversity among students (Lichter, 1996). Demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and cultural background, and other parental characteristics are systematically associated with parental school involvement. Overall, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in schooling than parents of lower socioeconomic status. A higher education level of parents is positively associated with a greater tendency for them to advocate for their children’s placement in honors courses and actively manage their children’s education (Baker & Stevenson, 1986). In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face many more barriers to involvement, including nonflexible work schedules, lack of resources, transportation problems, and stress due to residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Finally, because parents in lower-socioeconomic families often have fewer years of education themselves and potentially harbor more negative experiences with schools, they often feel ill equipped to question the teacher or school (Lareau, 1996). It is unfortunate that parents with children who would most benefit from parental involvement often find it most difficult to become and remain involved.

Involvement in school sometimes varies across ethnic or cultural backgrounds as well. Often, teachers who are different culturally from their students are less likely to know the students and parents than are teachers who come from similar cultural backgrounds; culturally different teachers are also more likely to believe that students and parents are disinterested or uninvolved in schooling (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). One study found that teachers believed that those parents who volunteered at school valued education more than other parents, and this belief about parents’ values was in turn associated with the teachers’ ratings of students’ academic skills and achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003). Parental school involvement seems to function differently or serve different purposes in different ethnic and cultural groups. For example, African American parents often are more involved in school-related activities at home than at school, whereas Euro-American parents often are more involved in the actual school setting than at home (Eccles & Harold, 1996). This tendency to be more involved at home than at school may be especially true for ethnic minorities whose primary language is not English. Among African American kindergartners, parental involvement at school is associated with enhanced academic skills, perhaps reflecting the role of social capital (Hill & Craft, 2003), and the influence of parental involvement in schooling on achievement is stronger for African Americans than Euro-Americans among adolescents (Hill et al., in press).

Apart from demographic factors, parents’ psychological state influences parental school involvement. Depression or anxiety present barriers to involvement in schooling. Studies consistently show that mothers who are depressed tend to be less involved than non-depressed mothers in preparing young children for school and also exhibit lower levels of involvement over the early years of school.

Self-perceptions also affect parents’ school involvement. Negative feelings about themselves may hinder parents from making connections with their children’s schools. Parents’ confidence in their own intellectual abilities is the most salient predictor of their school involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). A factor that may be especially important in this regard is the experience of poverty. Poverty exerts direct effects on parents’ mental health and self-perceptions through increased stress resulting from the struggle to make ends meet. Poverty also has indirect effects on children’s early school outcomes because its adverse effects on parents are in turn associated with lower parental involvement in school.

Parents’ own experiences as students shape their involvement in their children’s schooling. As a parent prepares a child to start school, the parent’s memories of his or her own school experiences are likely to become reactivated and may influence how the parent interprets and directs the child’s school experiences (Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, in press). Memories of supportive school experiences are likely to enhance parents’ involvement and comfort interacting with their children’s school.

In addition to characteristics of the parent and family, the school’s context and policies influence parental school involvement. Teachers’ encouragement of such involvement is associated with greater competence among parents in their interactions with their children and more parental involvement in academic activities at home (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). There is increasing recognition of the importance of promoting schools’ readiness for children (Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999). ‘‘Ready schools’’ (Pianta et al., 1999) reach out to families, building relationships between families and the school setting before the first day of school. The success of teachers’ and schools’ efforts to encourage parental school involvement suggests that parents want and will respond to information about assisting their children. For example, LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, and Pianta (2003) found that the vast majority of families were willing to participate in school-initiated kindergarten-transition activities. These practices were associated with greater involvement across subsequent school years, underscoring the importance of school-based activities that encourage family-school links.

Nancy E. Hill and Lorraine C. Taylor

**KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH**

The most significant advances in the research on parental school involvement have arisen from the recognition that context is important and there are multiple dimensions to parental school involvement. Whether parental school involvement occurs because a child is having problems in school or because of ongoing positive dialogue between parents and school makes a difference in how involvement influences children’s academic outcomes (Hill, 2001). For example, a parent who volunteers in the classroom to learn more about the teacher’s expectations for students and a parent who volunteers in the classroom to monitor the teacher’s behavior toward her child are both involved in the school, but only the latter parent is likely to create distrust that may impact the children’s attitudes toward the school and the teacher. Parental school involvement does not reflect just one set of activities. Such diverse activities as volunteering in the classroom, communicating with the teacher, participating in academic-related activities at home, communicating the positive value of education, and participating in the parent-teacher relationship are all included in parental school involvement, and each is related to school performance (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Hill & Craft, 2003). Research on parental school involvement is taking these diverse factors into account. Despite the recent advances in conceptualizing and studying parental school involvement, there are still challenges. First, the multidimensional nature of parental school involvement has led to a lack of agreement about definitions and to measurement inconsistencies, making it difficult to compare findings across studies. In addition, whereas research typically examines the relations between types of parental involvement and achievement, the types of parental involvement may influence each other. For example, a high-quality parent-teacher relationship may strengthen the positive impact of a parent’s home involvement on achievement. And volunteering at school may lead to an increase in the communicated value of education or change the way parents become involved at home. Issues concerning the reciprocal relations among different types of involvement have yet to be addressed.

The second research challenge is integrating various perspectives. Whom should we survey when assessing parental school involvement? Parents? Teachers? Students? Is one perspective more accurate than another perspective? In fact, multiple perspectives are important for understanding parental school involvement. Although few studies have examined the influence of different perspectives on our understanding of parental school involvement, some studies found that teachers’, children’s, and parents’ reports of parental school involvement were only moderately correlated, but each was related to achievement, suggesting that each perspective is unique and important (Hill et al., in press). The vast majority of research on parental school involvement, like parenting research, in based on mothers’ involvement. What are the roles of fathers and other relatives? Does involvement of other family members vary according to demographic background?

Some research suggests that teachers’ or parents’ perspectives may be biased. Teachers often evaluate African American and low-income families more negatively than Euro-American and higher-income families (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Moreover, teachers who are not particularly supportive of parental school involvement may tend to prejudge minority or low-income parents (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Such stereotyping often results in substandard treatment of students and of parents when they do become involved.

Much of our knowledge about parental school involvement is based on research in elementary schools. Parental school involvement declines as children grow up, and middle and high schools are less likely than elementary schools to encourage involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Despite this decline, parental school involvement remains associated with academic outcomes in adolescence (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Hill et al., in press). Thus, the third research challenge is to take into consideration developmental changes in parental school involvement. Parental school involvement may be different for a 7thgrade student selecting course tracks or 11th-grade student selecting colleges than for a 1st-grade student learning to read. Current measures of parental school involvement do not reflect these developmental variations. In fact, parents’ involvement in schooling may not decline during middle and high school; rather, the research may show declining involvement only because the nature of involvement changes in ways that are not reflected in our measures.

**FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE**

Evidence strongly supports the potential benefits of policies and programs to increase parental school involvement across the school years and even before children start school. Most parents want information about how to best support their children’s education, but teachers have little time or resources to devote to promoting parental school involvement, and some parents are simply ‘‘hard to reach.’’ How do we help teachers facilitate parental school involvement? Most teacher training programs do not include courses on how to effectively involve parents. Linking research on parental school involvement to teacher training programs may go far to support family-school collaborations.

When parents cannot become involved, how can schools compensate for the loss of the benefits of involvement? Understanding the mechanisms through which involvement promotes academic achievement would point to logical targets for intervention. For example, if parental school involvement promotes achievement through its effects on the completion and accuracy of homework, then providing homework monitors after school might be an appropriate intervention strategy.

Impoverished families are less likely to be involved in schooling than wealthier families, and schools in impoverished communities are less likely to promote parental school involvement than schools in wealthier communities. Consequently, the children who would benefit most from involvement are those who are least likely to receive it unless a special effort is made. Promoting parental school involvement entails more in disadvantaged schools than in wealthier schools.

Compared with more advantaged parents, parents in impoverished communities often need much more information about how to promote achievement in their children, are overcoming more of their own negative school experiences, and have less social capital. Thus, programs and policies designed to promote parental school involvement in advantaged districts may be ineffective in promoting parental school involvement in high-risk or disadvantaged communities. Understanding each community’s unique barriers and resources is important for establishing and maintaining effective collaborations between families and schools.

Parental School Involvement

**RECOMMENDED READING**

Booth, A., & Dunn, J.F. (Eds.). (1996). *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

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Grolnick, W.S., & Slowiaczek, M.L. (1994). Parents’ involvement in children’s schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivation model. *Child Development, 65*, 237–252.

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Hill, N.E., & Craft, S.A. (2003). Parent-school involvement and school performance: Mediated pathways among socioeconomically comparable African-American and Euro-American families. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*, 74–83.

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Miedel, W.T., & Reynolds, A.J. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: Does it matter? *Journal of School Psychology, 37*, 370–402.

Pianta, R.C., Cox, M.J., Taylor, L.C., & Early, D.M. (1999). Kindergarten teachers’ practices related to the transition into school: Results of a national survey. *Elementary School Journal, 100*, 71–86.

Taylor, L.C., Clayton, J.D., & Rowley, S.J. (in press). Academic socialization: Understanding parental influences on children’s school-related development in the early years. *Review of General Psychology.*

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**Three Rivers Community College**

**ECE K182 Child Development**

**Article Review Questions**

Throughout this course you will be given many different resources to review as a way to enhance the materials covered in class. You are responsible to read and familiarize yourself with these materials. To help you with this process I have developed some review questions to go along with some of the articles. These questions will need to be handed in and will count as part of your grade (participation).

They will **not** be accepted late as they will be used to promote participation the day they are due.

**Section Three**

**Chapters 8 - 15**

Griffin, Abbey. Why soft is missing in many early care and education settings & Why we should bring the soft stuff back. Community Playthings.

1. What soft areas have you seen in classrooms?
2. Why are soft areas important? What types of experience do they promote?
3. Why have soft areas been removed from child care settings?
4. How could you bring soft areas back into the classroom?

Hill, Nancy and Lorraine Taylor. Parental School Involvement and Children’s Academic Achievement. Article 9.

1. What was the main message the author was trying to make?
2. How important is it to involve families in their child’s education?
3. How does parent involvement differ now that children are in a public school setting?
4. What, if anything, did you disagree with? Why?