

Background for Advocates and Educators Supporting #DAPinECE:

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Early Childhood Education (*Updated May 8, 2023*)

Top 3 Takeaways:

- Developmentally appropriate practices are time-tested, research-based approaches to teaching young children, created by and for early childhood educators to support the success of all children.
- Dragging early childhood into the culture wars only hurts families by causing stress for educators whose focus should be on children.
- Undermining educators' ability to do their jobs also puts at risk the thousands of small businesses that provide high-quality, age-appropriate care and learning for young children and families who need it.

What are the consequences of banning DAP?

- Banning the DAP book, and other resources that early childhood educators rely on, means making it harder for educators to create high-quality early childhood education settings for all children.
- Banning DAP sends a message that each child should not be valued and respected for who they are.
- Banning DAP denies educators the opportunity to use time-tested, research-based practices established by the ECE profession to support their professional learning and development.

How does DAP support the rights of parents and families?

- Entire sections and chapters of the DAP position statement and book are about establishing caring relationships with families that respect families' expertise related to their children and what they learn.
- By definition, DAP requires educators to seek out and value families' expertise; take responsibility for forming and maintaining strong relationships with families and communities; and acknowledge a family's choices and goals for their child, responding with sensitivity and respect to their preferences and concerns.

How does DAP talk about diversity and equity?

- Educators use DAP to help children learn that they are valued by others, and to help them treat others with fairness and respect.
- Helping educators have age appropriate, thoughtful conversations about our diverse world helps them support children's sense of belonging and safety so that they can learn.
- DAP helps educators understand that there are societal systems of injustice that affect everyone. Recognizing and addressing patterns of inequity and bias serves to benefit children and society at large.
- DAP is focused on ensuring our youngest children get high-quality, age appropriate care from birth so that they are ready to be successful in school and beyond.

What's the connection between DAP and NAEYC Accreditation (Early Learning and Higher Education)?

- The accreditation systems are built on the *Professional Standards and Competencies* and *Early Learning Program Standards*, which draw from the foundation of DAP as they relate to using teaching practices that promote each and every child's optimal learning and development.
- The accreditation systems provide flexibility for programs to engage in diversity related concepts in ways that feel authentic and meaningful for their specific needs.

What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)?

[Download the DAP one-pager](#)

- For nearly four decades, and in partnership with hundreds of thousands of families and educators, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) has served as the foundation for high-quality early childhood education across all states and communities.
- DAP is not a curriculum, nor a book for children; it is a resource for educators.
 - It is deeply rooted in research and evidence about what works to support children’s learning.
 - It has been honed over multiple decades to support teachers in helping all children learn and thrive.
 - It helps educators learn about child development and effective teaching practices.
 - It is embraced and relied upon in centers, schools, and family child care homes.
- Developmentally appropriate practices are evidence-based methods that promote each young child’s development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning.
 - To define and support developmentally appropriate practice, NAEYC has produced many resources, including a DAP textbook, additional books, webinars, and a position statement.
 - The DAP position statement is a framework of principles and guidelines to support a teacher’s intentional decision making.
 - The DAP book expands upon the position statement by delving more deeply into its principles and guidelines for practice, such as those related to conducting observations and assessments with young children, teaching various content areas, and working with families of young children.

What are some of the core ECE goals, beliefs, and principles that are aligned with DAP?

- In order to learn math, science, and reading, children need to feel seen, safe, and supported – which is what developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is all about.
- Respectful relationships between and among educators, children, and families are the core of DAP.
- Every child should be able to feel a sense of safety and belonging; every child should be able to value who they are, and have respect for each other.
- The early childhood education field benefits from a diversity of perspectives, settings, and approaches. Anyone who interacts with children knows that one size does not fit all.

What is the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)?

- NAEYC is a nearly 100 year-old non-partisan membership organization whose mission is to promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8.
- NAEYC reaches family members, faculty members, and practitioners who work in all early learning and professional preparation settings, including child care centers, family child care, faith-based programs, Head Start, public PreK, the early grades (K-3), institutions of higher education, and more.
- NAEYC supports all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children and their families. NAEYC’s vision is that all children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

If you have questions, or to request more information, please reach out to advocacy@naeyc.org.