



The Improving Teacher Quality Early Learning Projects Classrooms

FINDINGS

The Early Learning Projects demonstrate that incorporating Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) into the learning content and facilitating collaboration between early educators across settings and age groups contributed to significant gains in children's learning.

- Increase children's learning
- Integrate cross-disciplinary curriculum activities
- Push DAP into primary grade classrooms
- Create culture of connection - "we" and "our children"
- Vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment

Increase learning

ITQ professional development sessions contributed to children's classroom learning experiences. Many underscored the increase early educator content knowledge and pedagogical practices. Participants noted an increase in children's learning proportionate to engagement. Improved exam grades, and deeper connections across academic content were made by children.

Integrate cross-disciplinary activities

Early Childhood Educators found the value of incorporating art activities into academic content areas, to significantly increase children's learning and enhanced their overall experience. Early Childhood Educators also provided evidence that their children "loved" and "really enjoyed" increased hands-on activities, adding an artistic component to the joy of learning.

Push Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The trainings included in the ITQ program resulted in increased developmentally appropriate practices applied in preschool kindergarten and primary grade classrooms. This contributed to a better learning environment for children. Early Childhood Educators readily transferred what they learned during the trainings into their classroom practices and were especially satisfied with the adaptability of instruction levels, easily adjusted for different grade levels.

Vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment

Training sessions helped align P-2 curriculum within and across grade levels. Participating in the ITQ program allowed schools to provide similar professional development to Early Childhood Educators across multiple grade levels, and at some locations helped to provide a common planning time for each grade level. Many commented that opportunities to collaborate with colleagues improved teaching practice throughout the building.

Create connected culture

The ITQ program enabled Early Childhood Educators throughout the mixed delivery system to build partnerships within communities. When school districts and community-based early childhood education programs shared training opportunities for Early Childhood Educators, the community benefited. Participants recognized that regardless of what early education program children attended, they all ultimately attended the local public school. It proved advantageous to offer collaborative trainings for all early educators in the community, because it created a culture of "our children" among adults.

"[After participating in the trainings,] teachers had a greater sense of confidence in the content they're teaching, which enables them to use the methodology that they know is the most appropriate way to teach young children, which is: permit children to explore the play, to ask questions, to make mistakes, and to mess around."



MASSACHUSETTS
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Higher Education

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TOOLS

- Understand and apply Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)
- Integrate curriculum activities
- Use NAEYC classroom standards for Relationships, Teaching, and Curriculum

Understand and apply Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is essential to the delivery of high-quality early childhood education. Teaching practice that is rooted in knowledge of child development supports children's learning and growth. Review information about developmental stages to set appropriate expectations for the children in your classroom. Find out about the look, the sound and the emotional climate in a high-quality DAP environment for the age and stage of children in your classroom. This necessitates cultural proficiencies- knowledge and understanding of the culture and languages of the classroom community. Include families in classroom activities and provide opportunities for family engagement. Work to make families and children feel most welcome every single day. Learn more about DAP at: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/developmentally-appropriate-practice>

Integrate curriculum activities

Develop thematic and integrated curriculum activities surrounding a theme that is meaningful and relevant to the children in your classroom. Do this by cross-pollinating visual arts, dramatic play, music, movement and block building with mathematics, engineering, science and literacy. Work with other adults to increase meaningful connections and create excitement and curiosity about the material. When lesson plans emerge from children's natural interests, learning abounds: children retain concepts longer, are more motivated, and have greater focus.

Use NAEYC Standards for Relationships, Teaching and Curriculum

Create a culture of connection by referencing the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards for Relationships, Teaching and Curriculum when planning for children and carrying out activities in the classroom. Reach out to early educators in other classrooms to build stronger connections and a sense that the children belong to everyone who will spend time teaching and learning with them. Create the value that when children engage and succeed in exploring discovering and learning something new, it is your success too. For more information about the NAEYC standards, visit: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-naeyc-program-standards>