

# DAP and Why We Don't Push Kids Down the Stairs

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## What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice? It boils down to one word: **RESPECT**

Make notes below each heading.

A: What this means B: What applying this looks like for you

- **Respecting childhood as valuable and valid.**

A:

B:

- **Respecting the larger developmental process.**

A:

B:

- **Respecting children as individuals.**

A:

B:

**Where do you see these principles at work in your classroom or site?  
How could they be improved?**

## How do we / How could we better implement DAP in....

- the furniture and supplies we use and in the way we arrange the room and set out supplies?
- the way we structure the daily schedule and routine procedures?
- our selection of activities throughout the day?
- our implementation of group times?
- the way we speak to, with, and about our children?
- our expectations for learning and behavior?
- how we educate parents and our community?

# DAP and Why We Don't Push Kids Down the Stairs

## The Cost of Ignoring DAP:

- Challenging Behavior



Expulsions were higher in programs that use more flashcards and worksheets and less dramatic play. Yet, trends showed programs using more flashcards and worksheets and less dramatic play over time. *Sometimes what we see as inappropriate behavior is actually a reflection of inappropriate expectations.*

**Flip the Script:** Responsive, respectful environments proactively reduce misbehavior by putting children in a supported environment where they will succeed.

- Missed Social-Emotional Skills



While researchers try to untangle why early academic gains from ECE seem to even out after a few years, they have also noticed that social-emotional skills are predictive over decades. *Pushing out play and other social-emotional opportunities in order to push down academics forfeits the most salient benefits of ECE.*

**Flip the Script:** Supporting social interactions through scaffolded, child-centered activities build both cognitive skills AND social-emotional skills.

- Shaky Foundations



Academic understanding is built upon foundational skills, often formed through play. *When we teach children at the level where we want them to be rather than where they are, we're building on a shaky foundation and valuing performance over real learning.*

**Flip the Script:** Responsive, respectful teaching meets children where they are and secures a solid foundation for learning to build on.

- Disengaged Learners



Emphasizing "school readiness" over schools that are ready for and responsive to children sends some children the message that they don't belong. They act out, get kicked out, and eventually drop out. *It seems in an effort to create more success, we have inadvertently created more unnecessary failures.*

**Flip the Script:** When children are valued as they are and invited to take an active part in their learning environment, they develop positive attitudes about school and about themselves as learners.

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**What Children Really Need**

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Relationships

Words/Communication



Interactions

Curiosity/Wonder

Play

***"Developmental science tells us that a key ingredient to quality ECE is the instructional, social, and emotional "serve-and-return" interactions that occur daily between teachers and children, as well as among classmates....***

***"The odds for better outcomes are improved when these back and forth interactions are consistent and responsive."***

*(Puzzling It Out: The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects, Brookings Institution)*

**Responsive not Prescriptive --- Remember to really look at your "quarter"!**

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## **5 KEYS TO QUALITY INTERACTIONS**

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>1 - (POINT DOWN.)</b>  | <b>GET ON THEIR LEVEL.</b>                 |
| <b>2 - (PEACE)</b>        | <b>CREATE A SAFE, WARM ENVIRONMENT.</b>    |
| <b>3 - (MAKE THAT O.)</b> | <b>ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.</b>           |
| <b>4 - (3 V'S)</b>        | <b>VOLLEY.</b>                             |
| <b>5 - (STOP)</b>         | <b>GIVE THINK TIME AND THINK OUT LOUD.</b> |

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*"If I had to characterize the key difference between a high-quality and a low-quality preschool environment, it is this: in a high-quality program, adults are building relationships with children and paying a lot of attention to children's thinking processes and, by extension their communication. They attend carefully to children's language and find ways to make them think out loud."*

- Erika Christakis, *The Importance of Being Little*