

## Nevada Developmentally Appropriate Practice Kindergarten Policy Statement

Each and every child across Nevada, birth through 3rd grade (B-3), has the right to equitable learning opportunities, beginning with the state’s youngest learners—in centers, family child care homes, or schools. These young children need opportunities that fully support their optimal development and learning across all domains and content areas. Educators who engage in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) foster young children’s joyful learning and maximize the opportunities for each and every child to achieve their full potential.

### What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

Developmentally appropriate practices, as defined by The National Association for the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC), promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning.

Educators implement DAP by 1) recognizing the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning setting as unique individuals and as members of families and communities; and 2) building on each child’s strengths. Educators design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all content areas and all domains of development, including physical, cognitive, health, social and emotional, and approaches to learning. To be developmentally appropriate, educator practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child.

### What is DAP Kindergarten (DAP K)?

Kindergarten is a pivotal year that bridges the gap between changing pedagogies of 0-5 years and K-3<sup>rd</sup> classroom environments, both of which must be grounded in child development. Although kindergarten classrooms are emergent, flexible, and ever changing, the following essential elements guide DAP K:

- A balance of both team- and child-initiated learning activities
- Play, daily routines, and classroom experiences focusing on four frames of thinking and learning: belonging and contributing, self-regulation and well-being; demonstrating literacy and mathematics behaviors, and problem solving
- A large block of uninterrupted play, when children manipulate objects, act out roles, and experiment with different materials; and
- A large block of time for child-initiated learning activities, often at learning centers where meaningful interactions have been planned (NAEYC, 2017)

These elements show up on a continuum as identified in the graphic below (Miller & Almon, 2009) with best practices finding the sweet spot in the middle.





## Principles of Child Development & Learning That Inform DAP

Nevada adopts the following principles of child development and learning (NAEYC, 2020) to inform educator instruction and classroom environments in all early learning settings, birth through 3rd grade.

- Development and learning are dynamic processes that reflect the complex interplay between a child's biological characteristics and the environment, each shaping the other as well as future patterns of growth.
- All domains of child development—physical development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and linguistic development (including bilingual or multilingual development), as well as approaches to learning—are important; each domain both supports and is supported by the others.
- Play-based learning is defined by hands-on, inquiry-driven exploration and choice that is childcentered. Play-based approaches promote joyful learning that foster self-regulation, language, cognitive and social competencies as well as content knowledge across disciplines. Play is essential for all children, birth through age 8.
- Although general progressions of development and learning can be identified, variations due to cultural contexts, experiences, and individual differences must also be considered.
- Children are active learners from birth, constantly taking in and organizing information to create meaning through their relationships, their interactions with their environment, and their overall experiences.
- Children's motivation to learn is increased when their learning environment fosters their sense of belonging, purpose, and agency. Curricula and teaching methods build on each child's assets by connecting their experiences in the school or learning environment to their home and community settings.
- Children learn in an integrated fashion that cuts across academic disciplines or subject areas. Because the foundations of subject area knowledge are established in early childhood, educators need subject-area knowledge, an understanding of the learning progressions within each subject area, and pedagogical knowledge about teaching each subject area's content effectively.
- Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery and when they have many opportunities to reflect on and practice newly acquired skills.
- Used responsibly and intentionally, technology and interactive media can be valuable tools for supporting children's development and learning.

Miller, E., & Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. Alliance for Childhood. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED504839.pdf>

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2017). *Ontario's Early Learning-Kindergarten Program: A transformative early childhood education initiative*. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/sep2017/ontario%E2%80%99s-early-learning%E2%80%93kindergarten>

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020). *Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)*. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/developmentally-appropriate-practice>