

## **DAP Paper**

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### **Belonging, Purpose, and Agency**

DAP is the concept of developmentally appropriate practice of child development and learning. There are nine new principles of DAP, but I would like to focus on one specific principle, number six. DAP principle number six states, “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 setting” (NAEYC 39). This means that children are inspired to learn as they feel loved and encouraged through their leaders as well as their peers. Teachers trying to get to know the children’s lives and families and incorporating what they learn into classroom curriculum can help create a feeling of inclusion for the children.

DAP principle number six was demonstrated through the older preschool PM class. The children were able to practice their agency by being allowed to choose which activities they participated in during play time. The children were also able to enjoy these activities with other children, increasing their feelings of belonging. The teachers helped the children to develop and feel a sense of belonging during gathering time. They did an excellent job making sure everyone had a spot to sit, and they also asked plenty of questions to help them feel like they were able to contribute to the discussion. The children were also able to increase their sense of purpose knowing that they can help be a part of the lesson. The teachers were very encouraging to the children as they created their own butterflies out of coffee filters. They were able to practice agency as they made their own unique designs.

## **Curriculum and Goals**

The NAEYC has also put together six guidelines to help professionals aid child development and learning. The fifth guideline emphasizes “planning and implementing an engaging curriculum to achieve meaningful goals” (NAEYC xlv). This means that the curriculum is planned to help bring about outcomes while also considering the child and their individual interests. These lessons should help the children grow in knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding.

When observing the older preschool class in the afternoon, the teachers planned their lesson around butterflies and how they develop. With it being springtime, the children will begin to see more butterflies and caterpillars outside, so this makes for an excellent and relevant lesson topic. They will be able to directly connect it to their immediate environment and within their own communities. They started by reading a story to the children which introduced new vocabulary such as “chrysalis”. At the end of the story, the teacher leading the gathering time held up pictures and challenged the children to call out which stage of development the butterfly was in. They were very enthusiastic about the activity. They eventually broke into smaller groups to create their own butterflies. This activity provided many opportunities to help the children to achieve meaningful goals: improving fine motor skills through painting and tying, learning to follow directions through listening, working as a team, and many more outcomes. At the end of the day, the children also played a game called “Bug in the Rug”. During this game, one classmate hid under a blanket while the rest of the class guessed the name of the child that was hiding. This game provided the opportunity for the children to learn each other’s names better and to build relationships with their fellow classmates.

## References

Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.