

Study Guide for Focus on
Developmentally Appropriate Practice
**Equitable & Joyful
Learning in Kindergarten**

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Study Guide for Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Equitable and Joyful Learning in Kindergarten.

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Introduction to This Guide

Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Equitable and Joyful Learning in Kindergarten presents foundational information for those working with kindergartners and their teachers. It includes key topics in child development and teaching and probes into the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion, and context within kindergarten settings. The book provides kindergarten educators, specifically, with the context and tools for applying developmentally appropriate practice in their work.

This chapter-by-chapter study guide is meant to facilitate self-study and reflection on the book chapters and can also be used for group discussion and professional development. Use it to think deeply about how to apply the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) as illustrated in the book to your own setting.

The main purpose of any guide is to help the reader break down information into smaller chunks to synthesize, summarize, and then apply the information in meaningful ways. Using this guide can help you deepen your understanding of the large amount of information provided within this new book about kindergarten practices and then to successfully adapt and implement strategies in your own setting.

If you are reading the book on your own, use this study guide to support your evolving thinking about the topics in each chapter and the potential application of the chapters' ideas and strategies for your work. You can record your thoughts and visit hello.NAEYC.org, where NAEYC members post questions and engage in discussions with the NAEYC community. If you are reading the book as part of a book club, book study, or professional learning community, use this guide as an anchor for group or partner reflection and discussion topics both for your own thinking and for making contributions and suggestions about implications for practice for your group. The questions on pages 38–42 of this guide will facilitate group discussions.

Tips for Reading and Study

- › Decide on a plan for reading. You might choose to read an entire part in one sitting. Or you might read just a chapter or two and take notes. Read “What Is in This Book” on pages 2–3 of *Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice* as you plan your approach.
- › Consider colleagues or other early childhood education professionals you might collaborate with in reading and discussing this book and its potential application to your work. You can use this guide together. Program directors and instructional leaders can use this guide with groups of educators as an anchor for group readings and discussions.

Before using this study guide, ask yourself the following:

What is your goal in reading this book? What are you hoping to learn from each part?

What's in This Guide?

For each chapter of the book, the following components will facilitate your reflection on the chapter topic:

- › **Key Ideas:** Main points of the chapter.
- › **Before Reading:** Prompts to activate your own knowledge and experiences around the topic ahead of reading the chapter.
- › **Reflection Questions:** Prompts to help you consider and think deeply on particular chapter ideas.
- › **Try This:** Strategies to help you apply the chapter ideas to your own teaching. You might write an action statement based on what you gleaned from a reading, including what you will do, when, and how.
- › **Additional Resources:** Suggested material in some chapters for delving into a topic or considering other perspectives on it.

Additional Chapter Questions to Consider

Here are some general questions you can use as prompts for deeper reflection on what you learn from the chapters and how this knowledge connects to your own practice:

- › What assumptions do I have about this topic?
- › What questions do I have?
- › Where do I (or my school or district) agree or disagree with the chapter content?
- › How could I begin to address any disagreements?

If you are reading this as a group, discuss these ideas as they pertain to your setting:

- › Share a win you experienced from implementing a tip or new idea from this book.
- › Share something that did not go as you expected. Discuss the reasons and brainstorm what you could have done differently.
- › Discuss how the messages and strategies within this book might be received by others in your setting or community.

Recording Your Key Takeaways

While this guide does not include designated space for recording your own thoughts about the content, we encourage you to jot down ideas and strategies you glean from your reading that are most relevant to your work and that you plan to incorporate into your teaching practice. You might choose one or more of these questions as a prompt to help you:

- › What ideas has reading this chapter or part sparked? What ideas could improve your teaching and students' learning? How could you adapt ideas to better fit your setting, students, and families?
- › What's one thing you're excited to try? What might make teaching and learning more joyful for you and your students? What do you need in order to take the first step?
- › What, if anything, felt uncomfortable or out of reach for you? How could you address these areas?

Your Journey Through the Book and Study Guide

Remember that each classroom, each school, and each community is unique. The teachers and classrooms you read about may be very different from yours. Look for ideas you can adapt to your setting that will enhance learning and a sense of belonging for each of *your* students.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction

Developmentally appropriate practice is a framework that guides the thinking and work of early childhood educators to create healthy, respectful, and responsive learning environments in which children thrive. NAEYC defines developmentally appropriate practice as “methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning” (NAEYC 2020, 5).

- › What does this definition mean to you in your everyday work with kindergartners and their families? Jot down three or four things that come to mind.

Effective early childhood educators use **three core considerations** to make decisions about curriculum and teaching: commonality, individuality, and context. Review these considerations on page x of the book, then answer the following:

- › In your own words, describe each of these considerations.
- › Do you feel that any of the three should be given more weight? Why or why not?
- › In practice, do you think you lean on any of the three more when making teaching and curriculum decisions? If so, consider how you could begin to use all three together to ensure you are providing each child what they need to thrive.

Developmentally appropriate practice is based on **nine principles of child development** that have emerged from decades of research (review them on pages x–xi of the book). The principles inform teachers’ planning, instruction, and assessment. They also describe the importance of culture, context, and relationships for children’s development.

These three core considerations plus the nine principles are a foundation for **six guidelines for putting developmentally appropriate practice into action**. The guidelines lead teachers as they make decisions in these areas:

1. Creating a caring, equitable community of learners
2. Engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families and fostering community connections
3. Observing, documenting, and assessing children’s development and learning
4. Teaching to enhance each child’s development and learning
5. Planning and implementing an engaging curriculum to meaningful goals
6. Demonstrating professionalism as an early childhood educator

These guidelines form the structure of *Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Equitable and Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*.

Questions for Reflection

Before you dig into each part and chapter of this book, take some time to reflect on your own understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, the core considerations, the guiding principles, and the guidelines mentioned above. Ask yourself these questions.

1. What assumptions do I have about developmentally appropriate practice?
2. What pieces of developmentally appropriate practice make sense to me? Which pieces do I need to know more about?
3. What is my experience with implementing developmentally appropriate practice within my kindergarten classroom or supporting DAP in my school or community?
4. What questions do I have?

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Kindergarten

Kindergarten should be a joyful time in the life of a child and their family. A child's first experiences within a school setting set the foundation for all further attitudes and excitement for learning. In many ways, however, developmentally appropriate practices have become difficult to implement in the kindergarten classrooms of today. With the onslaught of assessments, scripted curricula, and in some cases unrealistic expectations and lack of administrative support, kindergarten teachers across the nation struggle to find a balance between a child-centered, play-based approach to instruction that is supported by decades of research and the more didactic, scripted approach to instruction that is required by many school districts and states.

Frustrated kindergarten teachers wonder how they can integrate purposeful play throughout each day in light of the demands that are placed on both the children and the teachers themselves. It's a real and valid question, one that the authors of the chapters in this book strive to shed light on by sharing insights about providing integrated learning opportunities that can be adapted to create a robust, rigorous learning environment that is play oriented, where children touch, hold, and manipulate objects; predict; observe; and explore concepts with wonder, excitement, thoughtfulness, curiosity, and questioning. The chapters provide multiple examples of how purposeful play is integrated throughout the day, illustrating how play is not a break from the curriculum but rather the best way to implement the curriculum (Tepperman 2007; Zosh et al. 2022).

Now it's time to dig deeper into what developmentally appropriate practice looks like in a variety of kindergarten settings. Use the questions and exercises in this guide—both the reflection questions in the introduction to each part and the more specific questions found in each individual chapter—to engage in your own reflective thinking as well as conversations with colleagues and families. This will provide you with tools for focusing on the unique characteristics, needs, and interests of young children in order to provide the most engaging and meaningful learning experiences possible.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you believe about how DAP is relevant to the kindergarten year?
2. How is your work developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for each child in your learning environment?
3. In what ways could you implement new strategies in your journey of providing engaging, appropriate, and joyful kindergarten experiences for your community of learners?

Creating a Caring, Equitable Community of Learners

Part 1 examines the ways in which teachers plan for and build a caring kindergarten community of learners in which each child receives the supports they need to develop their full potential.

Key Ideas

- › Developmentally appropriate practice takes place within a community of learners: a group of young children linked in relationships with one another and with one or more teachers, learning and developing together in partnerships with families.
- › Children learn and develop best when all participants in a community consider and contribute to one another's well-being and learning and are valued for the strengths they bring.
- › When planning for building a community of kindergartners, teachers consider two important characteristics: caring relationships and equity.

Consider Guideline 1

Before reading the introduction to Part 1 on pages 4–5 in the book, reflect on these questions:

1. What is your understanding of this guideline from the DAP position statement?
2. How do you ensure that each child in your kindergarten feels safe, valued, and seen?
3. How do you work to build a strong sense of group identity within your community of learners? How do you intentionally support positive relationships between your kindergarten students?

What Do You Think?

First Day of Kindergarten in Mrs. Fraser's Class

After reading the vignette in the introduction to Part 1 on page 4 of the book, reflect on the actions Mrs. Fraser took to create a caring and equitable community of learners in her kindergarten class. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What else could Mrs. Fraser do to create a welcoming and inclusive space for the children?
2. This vignette takes place at the beginning of the year. What are possible next steps for Mrs. Fraser to take to maintain a positive, caring, and equitable experience?
3. Thinking about your own work, how do you build a strong sense of group identity within your community of learners?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 5 of the book.

CHAPTER 1

Successful Transitions to and out of Kindergarten

Supporting Children and Families

Key Ideas

- › Many factors affect a child’s experience with the transition into and out of kindergarten.
- › Transitions are not one-time events that only happen on the first day of kindergarten. They begin before children enter school and continue throughout the year.
- › Schools, families, districts, and the community can work together to ensure smooth transitions into kindergarten.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Own Kindergarten Experience

1. What do you remember about your own beginning kindergarten experience (or that of your own child or a child you know)?
2. What emotions did you/they experience? Did you/they feel welcomed in the space? What made you/them feel this way?
3. What supports from adults eased the transition? What made the transition more difficult?

Factors Affecting Transition to Kindergarten

Because each child is unique, their transition experiences will also be unique. Think about the factors contributing to this discussed on pages 6–7 of the chapter. How could you incorporate some of this thinking into your planning and implementation of effective transition practices?

Smooth Transitions for Children and Families

Read the sidebar on page 8: “Advocating for Effective and Supportive Local Transition Policy.”

1. Think about the transition supports you, your school, and community provide now for children entering kindergarten. How effective are they for the populations you serve?
2. Are there children who need more support? Why? What additional supports can you, your school, and your district provide for these children and families?
3. What are your current practices supporting children and families as they transition out of kindergarten and into first grade?
4. What is one way you can advocate for better transition policies and processes beyond your own classroom?

Try This

Adapt or create a family survey to find out about families’ home languages, children’s interests, and other pertinent information that would help you welcome each child and family.

Additional Resources

Many states have transition toolkits, planning guides, or other resources that may be helpful to you. You will find some listed on page 10 in this chapter in the book.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 2

Routines, Rituals, and Mantras for Building a Joyful Classroom in Kindergarten

Reflections from Our Small Mountain Community Classrooms

Key Ideas

- › Joy in a kindergarten classroom is found within a sense of community.
- › A sense of community comes from the intentional actions and interactions of educators, administrators, and children and families.
- › Consistent routines, rituals, and mantras help to build and sustain an equitable classroom community by fostering deeper relationships.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Own Routines, Rituals, and Mantras

What routines, rituals, and mantras do you incorporate into your own life? How do they support your well-being and your sense of community around you?

The Importance of Strengthening Relationships Through Routines, Rituals, and Mantras

Review this section on page 14: “Mantras: A Foundation for Shared Classroom Values.”

1. In what ways do you currently incorporate mantras into your classroom practice?
2. What routines, rituals, and/or mantras are the children already familiar with at home and in the community? If you don't know, how could you find out? How might you incorporate some of these into your classroom community?
3. What other kinds of mantras would work in your setting? For establishing and strengthening classroom values? For facilitating friendships? For building community?

Try This

Consider a routine in your classroom in which you could introduce a new ritual or mantra to support children's understanding of each other, self-regulation, and joyful learning. Develop one and give it a try!

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 3

Supporting Self-Regulation and Autonomy in Kindergarten

One Teacher's Journey

Key Ideas

- › Executive function skills, including self-regulation, are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. These skills can and must be taught and practiced.
- › Children who have had opportunities to develop self-regulation skills are better able to remain focused and persist through the daily challenges in a rigorous classroom.
- › Executive function skills are developed within the context of positive relationships, scaffolded learning opportunities, and a safe, joyful environment that provides choice and agency. Play-based learning is an effective approach for *all* children.

BEFORE READING

Consider Factors in Executive Functioning

Do you have children who struggle to focus or to regulate their behavior or feelings? Are there patterns in behavior or within the daily schedule that seem to negatively affect these children's executive function abilities? Are there particular times of the day when those same children are more able to regulate their feelings or stay focused on activities? What can you learn from these patterns?

Providing Opportunities to Develop Executive Function Skills

1. Considering the before-and-after classroom environments shared by the author, does your classroom more resemble Ms. Blessing's initial emphasis on control and classroom management or the transformation into an environment of choice and student empowerment? What advantages of the latter can you see for your students?
2. If your classroom resembles Ms. Blessing's prior approach, what small changes can you begin to make to provide your students with greater choice over their learning?
3. Carefully consider your biases. Do you treat some children differently—encouraging some to contribute ideas, for example, while ignoring or being dismissive of other children when they want to talk? What effect might this be having on the development of self-regulation? On how children view each other?

Try This

Select one of the strategies on pages 19–21 in this chapter to try. Reflect on the ways it was successful. How did your kindergartners handle the opportunity? What challenges did you have? How can you adjust the strategy to better fit the needs of your own classroom community?

Additional Resources

For more resources related to the development of executive function and self-regulation in young children, see the Center on the Developing Child's "Guide to Executive Function" at <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/a-guide-to-executive-function>.

| ***What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?***

CHAPTER 4

How Do I See Myself? How Do I See Others?

Exploring Identity in Kindergarten

Key Ideas

- › Affirming and supporting positive development of each child’s multiple social identities can support an equitable and caring community of learners.
- › Studying and understanding our relationships with each other along with where ideas about identities come from are foundational to each child’s sense of self and their feelings of belonging and security.
- › Caring for each other, paying attention to the language we use to talk about each other, considering the ways we perceive each other, and wondering how those perceptions match or disrupt our preexisting assumptions helps us all to move closer to the world we envision, one in which each person in our families, schools, and communities feels seen, valued, and understood, and one in which every young child has opportunities to reach their fullest potential.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Own Thoughts About Identity Development

You may or may not agree with the approach and strategies discussed in Chapter 4 for supporting children’s identity development. Think about your assumptions around this topic and read the chapter with an open mind. Then, reflect on the feelings that arose in you as you read the ideas in this chapter. Jot them down if that is helpful.

Exploring and Understanding Children’s Self-Identity

1. How did the needs of the particular children in Ms. Berkowitz’s class prompt her and her teaching intern to realize they needed to address children’s identities in a developmentally appropriate way? How did they see this as a way to facilitate, more broadly, perspective taking among the children?
2. How did the unit help the teacher to be more inclusive of the children and their family members?
3. What strategies shared in Chapter 4 might benefit the children and families in your classroom?

Try This

As a possible first step into a broadened exploration of likenesses and differences, encourage children to represent people, hobbies, sports, animals, objects, and memories that are important to them. Display these representations in a creative way and use them to spark further discussions among the children to explain their depictions and to find similarities and differences among the classroom community. Reflect on the experiences. What conversations emerged from the children? What surprised you? What next steps can you take as a result of these beginning conversations? (See more ideas in “Parts of Who I Am” on pages 22–23 of the chapter.)

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 5

Becoming Upended

Teaching and Learning About Race and Racism with Young Children and Their Families

Key Ideas

- › Young children take notice of racial differences very early.
- › Engaging families in any discussions about race and racism is key to providing positive experiences for all those involved.
- › When learning about race and racism, the experiences should be based on children’s thoughts. Follow children’s leads as you design projects and experiences and incorporate read-alouds that emerge from their questions and concerns.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Own Experiences with Race and Racism

1. What are your assumptions about race and racism?
2. What are your own experiences with racism?
3. What is your comfort level for engaging with families and children on the topic of race and racism? What support do you have from your administration?
4. What more do you need to learn before starting a focused exploration with your kindergartners and their families?

Approaching the Topics of Race and Racism with Children and Families

1. What were the catalysts for Ms. Verwayne to begin implementing a curriculum on race and racism? What has prompted, or might prompt, you to do the same?
2. How did the various members involved in the discussions with Ms. Verwayne grow in their understanding and benefit from the exchanges?
3. The authors discuss racial colorblindness. What are the outcomes of such a view?
4. “Teaching and learning about race should begin with children’s observations” (page 30). What observations about differences in skin color and other characteristics have you noticed your students making? How might you use these observations to begin conversations or develop a curriculum?

Try This

Review “Considerations for Beginning to Address Race and Racism with Young Children” on page 30 in the book. Select beginning steps to take as you prepare to address issues of race and racism with young children and their families. Take an inventory of your books and materials to identify those that appropriately address race and racism from many perspectives. Also, identify any gaps in the diversity of these items and research additional materials that you could include (see page 31 in the book for some links to resources for stocking your library).

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections

Part 2 examines the ways in which teachers intentionally work to make all families and children feel welcome in and a vital part of the kindergarten community and build two-way partnerships with families.

Key Ideas

- › Developmentally appropriate practice requires gaining deep knowledge about each child, including the context in which each child is living.
- › Forming and maintaining respectful and reciprocal relationships and ongoing communication with families are important aspects of a kindergarten teacher's responsibility and reflect how families are valued members of the school community.
- › When teachers have knowledge and insight about each child and their family and the family's culture, they are better able to provide learning environments and experiences that are fully responsive to each child's needs.
- › Teachers actively work to engage families as partners in their children's learning experiences in a variety of ways, considering each family's preferences, availability, culture, language, and interests.

Consider Guideline 2

Before reading the introduction to Part 2 on pages 34–35 in the book, reflect on these questions:

1. What is your understanding of this guideline from the DAP position statement?
2. In what ways do you engage in reciprocal partnerships with families?
3. How do family partnership-building practices currently fit into your teaching?

What Do You Think?

Ms. Cole's Meeting with a Child's Family

After reading the vignette in the introduction to Part 2 on page 34 of the book, reflect on how Ms. Cole interacted with the parents during this meeting. Ask yourself these questions:

1. How would you have responded to the parents? How else could you make them feel assured that they have been heard?
2. Have you been in a situation where, like Ms. Cole, you needed to deviate from the "script" you had prepared for interacting with a child's family? How did pivoting change the situation? What lessons did you take away from that?
3. What does it mean to you to be "ready to serve each child and family" (page 34)?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 35 of the book.

CHAPTER 6

Developing Culturally Responsive Family Partnerships in Kindergarten

Communicating About the Value of Play and Honoring Families' Funds of Knowledge

Key Ideas

- › Kindergarten educators who see families as experts on their children and value each family's personal and cultural knowledge and experiences (funds of knowledge) create trusting, positive, two-way partnerships with those families.
- › The goal of addressing conflicting views is not to have a winner or loser but to manage the conflict in a way that is inclusive.
- › When differences in values arise, honoring families' funds of knowledge while actively seeking the third space enhances trust in the relationship, opens genuine learning possibilities for both families and educators, and advances the mission and goals of the school and community.
- › There are a variety of ways to communicate the importance of playful learning to families.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Experiences with Families' Cultures and Contexts

1. How do you understand the concept of funds of knowledge? In what ways do you seek to learn and apply families' and children's funds of knowledge in your classroom? What value do you place on what families believe is important for their children to be learning?
2. How do you communicate the importance of playful learning in kindergarten to your families?
3. When differing values lead to differences of opinion with families over teaching practices, how do you approach the issue? How has your approach been effective or ineffective?

Developing Culturally Responsive Family Partnerships

Consider the vignette about Mr. Klien's classroom.

1. How did Mr. Klien use both frameworks—funds of knowledge and a third space—to respond to families' differing viewpoints in culturally responsive ways? How did his use of each of these contribute to the way families responded to his efforts? What effect do you think this had on his relationships with the families?
2. Mr. Klien connected the children's learning of math concepts through games to the families' own experiences. How did this affect the families' understanding of playful learning? Contrast the effects of this experience with what may have occurred if Mr. Klien had instead simply explained to the families what the children gained from playing math games.
3. Mr. Klien had support from Ms. Ross for using playful learning and her assistance in navigating relationships with families. What support do you have? What other needed resources could you seek out?
4. When building trust and reciprocal partnerships with families is *not* emphasized, what types of outcomes can result?

Try This

Consider the frameworks described on pages 37–38 in the book. Reflect on past experiences. Consider how you could have approached those experiences with these frameworks in mind. Take steps to prepare for any future conflicts by developing a variety of strategies to honor families' funds of knowledge while actively seeking the third space. Be specific.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 7

Family Math Stories

Math for Cross-Cultural Connections and Community

Key Ideas

- › Establishing trust between school and home is particularly important for families from underrepresented cultures, who may feel uncomfortable, underprepared, or unwelcome in schools.
- › Research shows that involving families in their children’s math learning offers a path to strengthening children’s math identities. Children’s positive math identities have been linked to later persistence, interest, and proficiency in math.
- › By providing opportunities for children’s families to contribute their language, stories, and ways of doing math to the curriculum, math became a means of connecting people across generations and cultures.

BEFORE READING

Consider How You Connect Family and Community Knowledge to Learning

1. What are some ways you try to connect children and families’ knowledge and experiences with classroom learning opportunities?
2. What strategies do you use to build trust and partnerships with families, particularly at the beginning of the year?
3. In what ways do you provide meaningful, real-life math experiences for your kindergartners?

Building Cross-Cultural Connections

1. Ask yourself these questions posed by the author of this chapter: “What are the sources of knowledge in your classroom? Who do we value and include in our curriculum plans?” If some voices are not represented, how could you address this?
2. How can you increase opportunities to connect with families? In what ways can you identify and share sources of knowledge that reflect the diverse contexts of your families?
3. Why do you think involving families can strengthen children’s math identities? In what ways could you engage families in math learning who find math challenging themselves? In what ways could you engage families in other subject areas?
4. How else could you weave families’ stories and treasures into the curriculum?

Try This

Plan your own inclusive back-to-school night experience for the children and their families, similar to the author’s Family Math Book project. What other topics might work well with this strategy? Create a list of other resources you might need.

Additional Resources

See Alexandra Figueras-Daniel and Bernice Vasquez’s article “Engaging Families of Multilingual Learners: Using Families’ Stories to Link Classroom Content with Children’s Funds of Knowledge,” *Young Children* 79 (3), 6–13, 2024. www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/fall2024/engaging-multilingual-learner-families.

| **What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?**

CHAPTER 8

Exploring Families' Language Practices Through a Social Studies Inquiry in Kindergarten

Key Ideas

- › Children's language practices and cultural understandings encompass those they bring from home and community contexts as well as those they take up in schools.
- › Children's families and communities are valuable sources of knowledge, and teachers must engage them in the education process.
- › Research emphasizes the importance of supporting home language development in all educational settings by providing opportunities for children to continue their bilingual development instead of solely focusing on their shift to a monolingual, English-speaking reality (Tazi 2014).

BEFORE READING

Consider How You Support Multilingual Children and Families

1. How have you been able to support each child's continued development of their home language as they also grow in their English language skills?
2. In what ways do you honor the linguistic diversity found within your classroom and the bigger community?
3. How have you incorporated the various family cultures represented in your classroom into your kindergarten practices? Do your students see themselves and their families represented within the classroom in meaningful ways? How?

Valuing Linguistic and Cultural Identities

1. All families have interests, abilities, knowledge, and culture that the classroom community would benefit from learning about. How do you invite your families to share?
2. Consider the authors' statement on page 45 that "while teachers and schools might invite families to participate in school events, they rarely view them as partners in instructional work and learning experiences." If this statement describes you, think about why this is. What ideas or suggestions in the chapter could help you begin to change this viewpoint? Consider the tips on pages 48–49 as well as the idea of school-wide Family Fridays (page 46).
3. What barriers exist that may inhibit your ability to support the linguistic and cultural diversity found within your classroom, school, and community? How could you begin to address some of those challenges?

Try This

Develop a family interview process to use with your kindergarten families. Include general questions as well as questions related to how families use language in their daily lives. Use the information gained as you plan additional activities to be included in future family events.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 9

Being the Bridge

Supporting the Families of Kindergartners Whose Primary Language Is Not English

Key Ideas

- › For many immigrant families, kindergarten symbolizes the first step toward a future. That first interaction with the kindergarten teacher marks the future of a learner.
- › When you take the time to get to know children’s families and give yourself the opportunity to enter their culture, understand, and comprehend the world through their eyes, it allows you to break down cultural and language barriers.
- › Supporting the use of a child’s first language is essential for successful development of a second language.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Practice with Emergent Bilingual Learners

1. Have you been in an environment where you did not understand the language being spoken or the cultural practices happening around you? How did you feel? How could your experience help you in supporting children and families who are learning to speak English?
2. What assumptions or biases do you have regarding emergent bilingual learners and how to most effectively support their development? Where do these come from?

Providing Strong Support for Emergent Bilingual Students and Their Families

1. The author makes this statement on page 50: “For many immigrant families, kindergarten symbolizes that first step toward the future, a future that entails many sacrifices and is full of uncertainty. That first interaction with the kindergarten teacher marks the future of a learner.” Consider the types of sacrifices and uncertainty that may touch the lives of immigrant families, including children in your classroom. How might these affect children’s learning? As an educator, how can you lean into the role you have in “the future of a learner”? What does this mean to you?
2. On the same page, the author notes that the school environment often requires emergent bilinguals and their families to set aside their identities and languages to fit in. What are your thoughts and feelings on this? How can understanding the language acquisitions process, supporting children’s home languages, and building trust with families help children both be who they are *and* learn the skills and culture that are often needed to be successful in school? What other strategies from the chapter could be applied?
3. Which strategies for building bridges with families described in this chapter stuck with you the most? Why? How might you incorporate some of the strategies to ensure that you are meeting the needs of your emergent bilingual students and their families throughout the school year?

Try This

Review the list of suggestions in “Strategies for Building Bridges with Families” on pages 52–53 in this chapter. Choose one strategy from each of the five sections to try. Reflect on what went well, what might need adaptation for your particular setting, and what you might not implement again.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning

Part 3 examines the ways in which teachers intentionally observe, document, and assess each child's development and learning in authentic and appropriate ways during the kindergarten year.

Key Ideas

- › Observing, documenting, and assessing each child's development and learning are essential processes for educators to plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the experiences they provide to children.
- › Both formative and summative assessment are important and must be conducted in ways that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive to authentically assess children's learning.
- › Fair assessment practices help to prevent any unintended discrimination and ensure that major decisions are not based on limited data; such practices support an inclusive learning environment that nurtures children's holistic development.

Consider Guideline 3

Before reading the introduction to Part 3 on pages 54–55 in the book, reflect on these questions:

1. What questions do you have about this guideline?
2. Consider both the summative and formative assessment practices used in your classroom, school, and district. Are both types used in developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate ways?
3. What challenges do you face while using mandated curricula and assessments with your kindergartners?

What Do You Think?

Alonso's Retelling of *The Three Little Pigs*

After reading the vignette in the introduction to Part 3 on page 54, reflect on Ms. Blessing's observations of Alonso's play. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Ms. Blessing was observant during the children's play, which enabled her to notice Alonso's play and what it reflected. If Alonso had not been engaged in this play, in what other ways could Ms. Blessing have authentically assessed his skills around storytelling?
2. Are there students in your class who, like Alonso, are not served well by current assessment approaches? What other approaches could give you more information about their skills and abilities? Evaluate these approaches according to the list of qualities that characterize developmentally appropriate assessment on page 54 in the book.
3. When using developmentally appropriate assessments is *not* emphasized, what types of outcomes can result?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 55 of the book.

CHAPTER 10

Authentic Assessment and Playful Learning

Purposeful Assessment of Children's Understanding

Key Ideas

- › Authentic assessment
 - Is a broader, whole-child approach that recognizes children's social and emotional skills and mastery of academic content as complementary
 - Supports and extends kindergarten children's learning; playful learning, particularly guided play experiences, provide a unique window within which this assessment can occur
 - Is integrated into learning, not a separate activity

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Authentic Assessment Practices and Challenges

1. What is your experience with using authentic assessment practices during kindergartners' playful learning experiences?
2. Are the assessment practices used in your classroom, school, and/or district culturally responsive and accessible to *all* children?
3. What challenges exist for you in using a variety of authentic assessments (formative and summative) that provide a holistic picture of a child's development and learning?

Using Authentic Assessment Practices with a Whole-Child Approach

1. The authors note that guided play experiences offer wonderful opportunities to use authentic assessments. In what ways do you intentionally integrate authentic assessments into playful learning opportunities? How do or could you use these to assess children's progress in all areas of development, including social and emotional skills?
2. Which of the following assessment strategies described on pages 59–60 do you use on a regular basis: anecdotal records, checklists, frequency counts, rubrics, structured interviews, and portfolios? Which one(s) might you want to enhance or include in the future?
3. In what ways do you promote children's active engagement in the assessment process?

Try This

Identify three to five playful learning activities you currently use in your classroom. Consider how you can best capture authentic assessment data as you observe children engaged in those activities. Choose one of the activities and an assessment strategy and prepare to gather data when you next introduce the activity. Record the standards associated with the activities.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 11

Observing, Planning, Guiding

How an Intentional Teacher Meets Standards Through Play

Key Ideas

- › While direct instruction is effective in certain contexts, play-based learning is essential for young children.
- › Child-directed, playful learning is often more challenging to plan and assess than teacher-directed learning, but a balance facilitates healthy child development across all domains and content areas.
- › A flexible approach to teaching and learning—including sufficient time for self-directed and guided play—allows teachers to meet individual children where they are and help them move forward.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Strategies for Meeting Standards Through Play

1. What do you know about how young children grow, develop, and learn? How does this knowledge influence the types of learning experiences you provide for your kindergartners? How do common instructional practices today reflect what is known about kindergarten-age children? In what ways do they not reflect this knowledge?
2. In what ways are you able to use playful experiences to meet learning standards?
3. Are there certain standards that are more difficult to connect to kindergarten learning standards? If so, which ones and why?
4. How do you provide a balance between teacher-directed learning and child-directed play experiences? What challenges exist for you in your attempts?

Intentionally Connecting Standards to Playful Learning

1. On page 63, the author identifies three factors to consider when connecting standards to playful learning: being intentional in crafting experiences, identifying children’s developmental needs, and assessing growth. In thinking about your own efforts (current or future) to bring play and standards together, which of these three seem most challenging? What ideas or strategies in this section of the chapter could boost your efforts in that particular area?
2. What evidence of differentiation for individual needs, both in assessment and in learning activities, do you find in the chapter? How does play facilitate this?
3. In what ways could you integrate social and emotional skills into academic content using play?

Try This

Identify upcoming kindergarten learning standards that must be addressed. Also discover topics that are currently of interest to your children. Plan a lesson in which the topic is of particular interest to your students and learning standards are introduced. Next, develop several opportunities for children to apply and practice these new skills and concepts in playful ways. Consider what materials you need to provide for their active engagement, and develop questions to ask to extend their learning. Consider how to ensure that each child’s individual needs are being met. Create a variety of opportunities that combine open-ended experiences, child-directed initiatives, and teacher-guided activities. Reflect on these experiences to assess their effectiveness.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 12

Assessment in Kindergarten

Meeting Children Where They Are

Key Ideas

- › Intentional teachers gather data to guide instruction, using assessments to identify students' strengths and areas to target for early intervention. They use varying methods of observation and assessment to find out what young learners are able to do so they can help them progress and fully address their needs.
- › Large blocks of uninterrupted time for children to play and make choices set the stage for gathering meaningful information about young learners. Because children tend to choose play and learning areas where they feel safe and experience some confidence, this is a great opportunity to observe their skills and strengths, especially for children who are dual language learners or have delays or disabilities.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Assessment Strategies for Meeting Children Where They Are

1. Consider the types of mandated assessments that you are required to implement. What information might be missing if these were the only assessment tools you used?
2. How effective are your current assessment methods for children who are dual language learners? For children with delays or disabilities? What challenges exist in assessing these children accurately?

Using a Variety of Flexible, Authentic Assessment Tools to Record Children's Progress

1. Why is it so important to dig deeply to uncover what a student is thinking and understanding? What strategies does the author illustrate throughout the chapter that can help you do this?
2. On page 68, the author notes that it can be easy to focus so much on a dual language learner's language acquisition that the child's cognitive and developmental growth is overlooked. How can using authentic assessment tools help with this? What specific strategies might be effective?
3. Which types of authentic, flexible, ongoing assessments do you use or have you used in the past? What valuable information do you gain from these assessments?

Try This

Review "Questions to Promote Children's Thinking" on page 70 in this chapter. Create posters or small lists on a clipboard with some of your favorite open-ended questions to help remind you and any other adults who may support your community of learners to extend your kindergartners' thinking. Hang the posters on the wall or display them on shelves throughout the classroom. What additional questions would you add to the list? Be intentional in your use of these questions and reflect on what you learn from children in the process.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 13

Assessing Young Children in the Inclusive Classroom

Using Data to Create Equitable and Joyful Learning Experiences for All

Key Ideas

- › Inclusive instruction refers to teaching approaches that address the needs of all children, taking into account their individual interests, strengths, preferences, personalities, approaches to learning, knowledge and skills, abilities, cultures, and family languages.
- › Inclusive learning practices include differentiated instruction (tailoring instruction to meet individual needs), universal design for learning (ensuring access and participation), and tiered instruction (providing varying levels of support).
- › As you engage in assessment practices, data-informed decision making, and instruction, you have an obligation to consider how to design inclusive instruction for students, including students with delays or disabilities.
- › Sharing data collection with coteachers, paraeducators, other school-based professionals, and families helps to support a holistic perspective of the child.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Strategies for Using Data to Support Inclusive Assessment Practices

1. What is your experience with teaching children with disabilities? What challenges have you faced in meeting their needs?
2. What is your experience with the multitiered systems of support approach to ensuring that instruction is inclusive to meet the needs of your diverse learners (as described on pages 72–73 of the book)?
3. In what ways do you make data-based decisions in instruction to ensure equitable and joyful experiences for each child?

Addressing Challenges in Data Collection

1. Consider the author's vignette about Jana (on page 75 of the book), who after initial observations appeared to have difficulty with transitions. How did the teachers' further observations and collection and analysis of additional data lead them to realize that this may not have been the issue? What might have occurred if the teachers had given up relying on data to discover the real problem?
2. What strategies caught your eye when reading Mario's vignette on page 76? What other strategies might you have tried to support Mario?
3. What benefits have you experienced through collaboration with colleagues and specialists? What challenges or barriers have you faced with collaboration? What support might you need to make collaboration a more effective experience for all involved?

Try This

During a regularly scheduled grade-level meeting or during a specially called meeting of your kindergarten colleagues and other specialists, discuss the topic of creating high-quality equitable and inclusive classrooms for your kindergartners. Begin the discussion by identifying the ways in which children's needs are being met successfully in your classrooms. Next, identify common challenges and needs. As a group, begin planning ways in which you can support each other in collecting authentic data, analyzing it, and using the findings to drive instruction. Also identify additional supports needed to ensure that all children receive the appropriate support for their success. Work together toward changes to existing practices in order to provide the most equitable and inclusive environments for all children. Reflect on your successes and areas for improvement.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 14

Adding Play and Hands-On Learning into the Kindergarten Classroom

Balancing Mandated Curricula and Assessments with Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Key Ideas

- › Kindergarten teachers can create an environment that allows space for children to take different paths to achieve common learning goals and provide room for individual interests and needs—while meeting the rigorous standards of the K–12 system.
- › Curriculum and assessment are key components of the kindergarten experience and provide important guidelines for teachers when planning and implementing learning opportunities for students. Key strategies enable teachers to balance mandated curricula and assessments with developmentally appropriate practices.

BEFORE READING

Consider the Existing Balance

1. How do you provide a balance between mandated curriculum and assessments and developmentally appropriate practice in kindergarten? What challenges exist?
2. How have you seen kindergarten practices evolve over time? In what ways are these changes positive? In what ways do you feel they have had a more negative impact on experiences for kindergartners?

Choosing Strategies to Achieve a Balance

1. Review the authors' many tips and strategies for balancing developmentally appropriate practice with mandated curricula and with mandated assessments. Which ones feel the most feasible to you in your particular setting? Which ones would be difficult to implement and why?
2. While it may not be possible to change your mandated curriculum, the learning standards, or the initiatives of your teaching context, what small changes can you make to your own practice to improve on the mandated elements?
3. What are some ways you could increase children's engagement with a concept by using more meaningful materials and experiences rather than relying on worksheets?

Try This

Integrate a learning concept into a guided play experience where children are able to play with the new idea, apply new skills in meaningful ways, and joyfully engage in a playful activity that interests them. Think about the whole child as you plan. Intentionally designed play can address multiple standards at the same time, so consider how you could integrate several learning standards within this playful experience.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning

Part 4 examines the ways in which teachers make intentional decisions about the materials, interactions, experiences, instructional strategies, and learning formats likely to be the most effective for the group and each individual child.

Key Ideas

- › Educators blend opportunities for each child to exercise choice and agency within the context of a planned environment constructed to support specific learning experiences and meaningful goals.
- › Recognizing play as an essential way for children to experience joy and wonder in learning, kindergarten teachers provide opportunities for children to learn and master content and skills through playful experiences.
- › Intentional teachers carefully assess whether the instructional decisions they make are informed by diverse and inclusive perspectives, fully support each child and family rather than ignoring or devaluing some, and help children recognize and celebrate diversity and the full inclusion of all individuals (NAEYC 2020).

Consider Guideline 4

Before reading the introduction to Part 4 on pages 82–83 in the book, reflect on these questions:

- › What is your understanding of this guideline from the DAP position statement?
- › How do you use your knowledge and understanding of child development, individual students, and students' and families' social, linguistic, and cultural contexts to make instructional decisions?
- › Consider both the instructional strategies and learning formats used in your classroom. How do they enable you to respond to the unique needs, abilities, interests, and characteristics of your kindergarten students?
- › When the use of developmentally appropriate learning practices is *not* emphasized in kindergarten classrooms, what is lost for children?

What Do You Think?

Drawing Lines in the Dirt

After reading the vignette in the introduction to Part 4 on page 82 of the book, reflect on the actions the teacher took to document children's learning and build on their emerging knowledge. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What other concepts could the teacher connect to the children's play in this vignette?
2. Have you observed children at play and used that information to make connections to concepts and skills? What are some specific examples of this?
3. Are there other opportunities throughout the day when you can observe children at play? How could those observations support children's learning of necessary content and skills?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 83 of the book.

CHAPTER 15

Centers in Kindergarten

When Do You Have Time for That?

Key Ideas

- › Developmental learning centers are important for young learners and allow them meaningful opportunities to make sense of their world.
- › With purposeful planning by teachers, every center can provide children with opportunities to further develop more than social, emotional, and language skills: these centers can engage children in content in a way that invites them to be active participants in the learning process.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Use of Learning Centers

1. Do you feel that a developmental, constructivist approach can be paired with the content included in state standards to meet the developmental needs of kindergarten children and the expectations of today's accountability system? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel you have time to use learning centers in your classroom? If so, how are you able to find the time?
3. In what ways do you support the development of children's agency?
4. What barriers exist that hinder or prevent your ability to use a play-based learning center approach with your kindergartners?

Using Developmental Learning Centers in Kindergarten

1. What benefits of learning centers to children does the author discuss in this chapter? How might these be different from what children gain from more traditional learning formats?
2. Are you able to use research findings about how young children learn best and mesh that with current mandates and standards? If so, what strategies have you used?
3. How can learning centers be used to reflect children's social, cultural, and linguistic contexts? How can they meet individual children's learning needs and enhance their development?

Try This

Select one area in your kindergarten classroom to develop into a learning center where children can apply new concepts and skills in playful ways. Create an inviting space where children can go to make sense of their world. Gather necessary materials for the center. For example, provide open-ended art supplies for creative expression; manipulatives and blocks for building structures; scientific tools such as magnifying glasses, binoculars, nonfiction books, and nature collections for discovery; or dramatic play props and writing tools for children to engage in pretend scenarios. Find the necessary time within your schedule to provide these types of important opportunities for children to develop their social, emotional, language, and cognitive skills in meaningful and appropriate ways. Gradually add more opportunities throughout the year.

▮ *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 16

The Fine Art of Scaffolding Kindergarten Learners

Key Ideas

- › The term *scaffolding* describes the type of assistance offered to a student by a teacher or a peer to support the student’s learning. Scaffolding is temporary—provided while a new concept or skill is being mastered and then removed once the student is able to use it independently.
- › Key features of effective scaffolding include targeting one skill at a time and providing interactive and responsive support “just in time.”
- › Scaffolding is used to elevate each child’s unique strengths and talents in all areas of development and is core to developmentally appropriate practice.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Use of Scaffolding

1. What is your understanding of scaffolding, the zone of proximal development, and dynamic assessment? What questions do you have about them?
2. How do you currently provide individualized support that meets each child where they are and propels their development?
3. How do you communicate your confidence in each child’s ability to achieve goals? Are there children you find it difficult to communicate this message to? Why? How do you think children are affected by what you communicate?

Scaffolding Children’s Learning

1. Evaluate your practice related to the three key features of effective scaffolding on page 90 in the book. What changes can you identify that would allow you to be more effective in supporting students?
2. Consider the scenario about Ramona on page 91 in the book. What other strategies could you use to support peer scaffolding in this situation? How could you intentionally build in more opportunities for peer scaffolding in your classroom? Think about the needs of and benefits to both partners.
3. Read “Individualizing Scaffolding” on page 91 in the book. Which of these inclusion strategies do you use or have you used in the past to scaffold the learning of children with delays or disabilities? What additional strategies could you try?

Try This

Create several self-scaffolding materials to embed in your classroom environment as described on page 92 in the book. Consider providing pictorial reminders, self-correcting activities, and items and procedures for turn taking. Ensure that the materials support the emotional and social needs of specific children as well as their academic needs. After using these new materials, reflect on their effectiveness. What worked well? What needs improvement? What additional materials can you provide?

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 17

Joyful Learning Through Science Inquiry Projects

Snails and Letter Learning

Key Ideas

- › Building a joyful kindergarten classroom requires care, intention, and trust in children and families.
- › Providing children with tools for exploration will set the stage for robust, nurturing early learning that connects and integrates learning experiences.
- › Children’s observations lead to questions, theories, and new understandings. Although many inquiries originate in the science center, children’s curiosity and interests can catapult learning across content areas such as literacy and mathematics.

BEFORE READING

Consider Joyful Learning in Kindergarten

1. Where and when do you witness joy in your community of learners?
2. In what ways do you thoughtfully integrate content areas, strategically observe children, listen to their ideas and conversations, nurture and validate their contributions, and allow their inquiries to take root and blossom?
3. Is scientific inquiry incorporated within your kindergarten day? What amount of time are you spending on science topics with your kindergartners?

Designing Joyful Inquiry and Scientific Explorations

1. On page 95, the author offers three areas to consider for encouraging children’s explorations: the learning community and environment, the teacher’s role as facilitator, and the curriculum. How might you more intentionally use these considerations to plan experiences that will ignite children’s wonder and curiosity in the world around them?
2. In particular, think about your role as learner alongside children and facilitator of joyful learning. How effective do you think you are at this? What suggestions and strategies in the chapter can help you embrace this role? What outcomes do you think doing so might have for the children?
3. On page 97, the author describes several ways she differentiated literacy and science learning activities for students. In what ways do you, or could you, individualize projects and experiences for children? How does this affect children’s engagement and joy in learning?

Try This

Observe your kindergartners at play. What are they intrigued by? What treasures are they finding? What questions do they have? Based on these observations, identify a topic and design a scientific exploration opportunity for the children. Identify learning standards that can be integrated in meaningful ways into their investigation, and make a list of questions that you can ask to enhance their understanding. Intentionally plan for the use of strategies that are inclusive of the cultures, languages, and abilities represented in your community of learners. Provide multiple opportunities for children to engage in scientific practices, such as observing, experimenting, creating, and sharing their learning with others. Take anecdotal notes about what the children are doing, saying, predicting, and learning. Use these observation notes to adjust and enhance the experiences as needed as the children grow in their skills and in the understanding of the topic.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 18

There's a Story in My Picture!

Connecting Art, Literacy, and Drama Through Storytelling

Key Ideas

- › Kindergartners have so much to say, but they often struggle to get all of their words down on paper. The basic conventions of writing, as well as their fine motor development, can prevent them from documenting all of their thoughts if they become more focused on the skills required to form the letters and words.
- › Having the freedom to simply tell their stories provides more opportunities for children's creativity and detail. Through their storytelling, young children naturally integrate literacy into their art and drama as they strengthen their observation skills and critical thinking.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Strategies for Connecting Literacy to the Arts

1. The author of this chapter describes using a Reggio Emilia approach. What do you know about this approach?
2. How do you encourage creative expression among your kindergartners? How do you integrate visual arts, storytelling, and symbolic representation into the curriculum?
3. In what ways do you promote higher-level thinking in your students?
4. In what ways do you provide opportunities for storytelling to strengthen children's literacy skills?

Connecting Art, Literacy, and Drama

1. As the author notes on page 103, a great deal of learning across several domains emerged from the study of a single painting and one child's desire to tell his own story through art. What learning did you identify throughout the chapter? How did the author support her students to extend their learning at various points and throughout the curriculum?
2. What aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach described by the author would you consider incorporating into your curriculum? What more do you need to know?
3. The author describes her class's experiences with Vivian Paley's approach to storytelling, sometimes referred to as storytelling/story acting. How do you think your students might benefit from this approach? Consider giving it a try if you have not done so.

Try This

Facilitate exploration of the visual arts by supporting children in exploring and producing pieces of art using a variety of art media. Set up a space for the children to create, and provide a variety of materials, including various sizes of paper, tempera paint, watercolors, colored pencils, crayons, and markers. Offer various sizes of paintbrushes. Bring in reproductions of interesting paintings, books about artists from different time periods and heritages with photos of original pieces, and objects and artifacts valued by the cultures of the community. Support children's efforts as they express themselves creatively. Reflect together on the learning that is happening.

Additional Resources

For more on Vivian Paley's storytelling/story acting approach, visit www.bpsearlylearning.org/storytelling/intro.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 19

Teaching Writing with Mentor Texts in Kindergarten

Key Ideas

- › Mentor texts are pieces of literature that offer inspiration and guidance for children to try out new strategies, genres, and craft moves in their own writing.
- › Good mentor texts inspire children to try out new writing techniques as they establish their own identities and skills as writers.
- › Before using mentor texts as an instructional tool, teachers introduce them through engaging read-alouds so that children can first listen to, enjoy, and understand the book.
- › Providing children with good models of written text consistently demonstrates positive effects on their writing quality.

BEFORE READING

Consider Children’s Writing Experiences in Your Classroom

1. How do you typically engage your kindergartners in writing experiences? What successes have you had? What challenges have you had? In what ways have you helped children come up with ideas to write about?
2. Are some children more reluctant to write than others? Why?
3. What is your experience using mentor texts to inspire children’s writing?

Teaching Writing Using Mentor Texts

1. Which of the strategies described by the authors do you find most interesting? Why? Which strategies seem feasible in your setting? What strategy might you implement?
2. Have you done author studies with your kindergartners? If so, in what ways did those studies inspire children’s writing?
3. Knowing that students learn best when concepts, language, and skills are related to things they know and care about, how can you inspire the children’s writing? In what ways could you design experiences based on the cultures, languages, and abilities of your students?

Try This

Plan and conduct your own author study. Follow the steps outlined on page 105 of the book along with the guidance in “Considerations for Selecting Powerful Mentor Texts” on page 107. Select an author with consideration of children’s interests, integration of content areas, how the author represents mirrors or windows for children (see the DAP sidebar on page 14 of the book), and the potential for embedding learning standards into writing experiences. Seek children’s input into the choice of the theme and the author. Reflect on children’s abilities as writers as a result of this experience.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 20

The Healing Power of Play

Key Ideas

- › Trauma can affect how children play and learn. While play is beneficial for all children, it has a crucial role in supporting healing for children who have experienced trauma.
- › Play is not just a vehicle for observing the effects of trauma; more importantly, it is a tool for lessening those effects. Play and the reduction of stress are closely linked.
- › Both self-directed and guided play experiences benefit healing.

BEFORE READING

Consider the Impact of Trauma on Children’s Play and Learning

1. Think about your kindergartners. Do you know of specific children who may have experienced trauma? What signs of trauma do they display? Do you see their trauma represented within their play?
2. How have you supported children and families who have experienced traumatic events?
3. Have you thought about how to use different types of play to address the negative effects of trauma on young children? What questions do you have?

The Healing Power of Play

1. Given the benefits of both self-directed and guided play experiences outlined on pages 111 and 113, how do you see each of these types of play potentially benefitting your students? What additional information do you need to be able to use these strategies effectively?
2. Teachers are not always aware of trauma in children’s lives or of the specifics. Regardless of what you know or do not know, in what ways can you use play-based experiences to encourage and promote healing for all children, especially those who may have experienced trauma?
3. When children experience trauma, it is especially important to remember to take a strengths-based approach to supporting them. What ideas in this chapter could help you to do that?

Try This

Using the suggestions in “Supporting the Play of Children with Trauma History in Learning Centers” on pages 112–113 of the book, identify areas of your classroom where you could enhance the materials to promote the healing power of play. If you do not have learning centers set up in your classroom, consider adding one or two equipped with appropriate and engaging materials, such as blocks, toys, books, puppets, writing tools, sensory materials, and art supplies. Revisit your daily schedule to include enough time for children to become fully engaged in their play. Create a list of questions you can ask that will help children to reflect on and express their thoughts and feelings. Intentionally plan playful experiences that can lead to feelings of self-confidence, empowerment, safety, hope, and joy for your kindergartners. Actively involve families in creating these areas as well as joining in the play, when appropriate.

| What will you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals

Part 5 examines the ways in which teachers create and carry out curriculum plans to help children reach goals that are important for learning and development.

Key Ideas

- › Some of the most important decisions you make as a kindergarten teacher occur around selecting what and how to teach important content and skills, using your school's curriculum as a guide.
- › Intentional decisions about what and how to teach are carefully made in consideration of the particular students in your class, state and local mandates, developmental milestones and learning trajectories, and your own knowledge of and experiences with teaching young children.
- › While you may or may not have flexibility in what you teach, consider where you can add hands-on learning and play opportunities to support learning goals.

Consider Guideline 5

Before reading the introduction to Part 5 on pages 116–117 in the book, reflect on these questions:

1. What is your understanding of this guideline from the DAP position statement?
2. What aspects of your curriculum planning are mandated or strongly suggested? Which aspects are up to your discretion?
3. How do you design the learning environment and experiences to promote subject area knowledge across all content areas as well as across all domains of learning?
4. What strategies do you use as you plan a unit of study for your kindergartners? What is important to you to consider?

What Do You Think?

Learning About Spring Storms in Kindergarten

After reading the vignette in the introduction to Part 5 on page 116 of the book, reflect on the way Ms. Williams built on familiar events to engage children in learning key concepts and skills. Ask yourself these questions:

1. How did Ms. Williams use the children's experiences with strong storms in their rural community to support the development of an engaging curriculum?
2. What areas of the curriculum was she able to integrate throughout their study of storms? What other concepts or skills could she introduce and provide opportunities for children to explore in developmentally appropriate ways?
3. Thinking about your own work, are you able to provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that includes meaningful, engaging, and play-based activities, materials, and environments that stimulate children's holistic growth and learning? If not, why? What parameters must you navigate?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 117 of the book.

CHAPTER 21

Engaging and Enriching

The Key to Developmentally Appropriate Academic Rigor

Key Ideas

- › Many early childhood educators feel pressured to focus on academic rigor—often with instructional practices that are not developmentally appropriate.
- › Rigor and developmentally appropriate practice are both essential to early childhood education; done well, they are mutually reinforcing.
- › Developing academic vocabulary and gaining background knowledge are crucial for children’s reading success.
- › Using children’s interests and self-directed explorations to introduce new vocabulary and complex language enables teachers to provide students with meaningful, engaging learning experiences.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Understanding of Rigor and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “rigorous”? In your opinion, can developmentally appropriate practice and rigorous learning coexist? Why or why not?
2. How has kindergarten changed over the years? What types of experiences do you *not* see in kindergarten classrooms today? Why? How has this impacted children’s learning?

Providing Developmentally Appropriate Academic Rigor

1. The authors note the connection between teachers’ use of two instructional strategies—using sophisticated vocabulary and giving sustained attention while talking with children during self-initiated play—and children’s long-term reading comprehension and decoding skills. They also assert that these strategies require teachers to spend time in centers where students can select and direct their learning. Given the importance of these strategies, how are you able to, or how could you, provide opportunities to apply them?
2. How did the teacher and coach broaden children’s background knowledge? What ideas did this prompt for you?
3. What made the environments and learning experiences described in the chapter child centered? When you think about your own daily schedule of experiences, when do you clearly see children at the center of the curriculum? Are there ways you could leverage these opportunities for greater developmentally appropriate, rigorous learning? How do these practices allow you to meet the individual needs of each child in your classroom?
4. In the igloo scenario on pages 120–121 in the book, Juan and the other students wanted to study igloos—probably something none of them had direct experience with—and the teacher pivoted from her initial plan, leading to wonderful, deep learning. Think about a similar experience you have had and how you decided what to do. (More about following children’s interests is discussed in Chapter 25 in the book.)

Try This

Based on your kindergartners’ interests and on content area learning standards, design a developmentally appropriate, academically rigorous experience, similar to the igloo example described in the chapter. Invite children to be actively involved in the creation of this experience. Plan for ways for them to engage in contextually rich, meaningful conversations as well as to problem-solve and think critically as they apply new content understandings in relevant and playful ways.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 22

Incorporating Play-Based Learning into the Kindergarten Classroom

Key Ideas

- › The research is clear that young children learn best when they have agency and can construct their learning of new concepts through joyful investigation (see, for example, NAEYC 2020).
- › Play-based instruction that facilitates the achievement of learning goals consists of these crucial components: being intentional, focusing on the goal you want students to achieve, choosing appropriate supports, providing opportunities for student choice, and planning how to assess students' learning.
- › Playful learning, skillfully supported by early childhood educators, builds academic language, deepens conceptual development, and supports reflective and intentional approaches to learning.
- › A powerful benefit of play-based learning in kindergarten is that it provides many means of entry so that children of all abilities can access and participate in learning experiences.

BEFORE READING

Your Perspective on Play-Based Learning

1. What does guided play mean to you? How does it differ from children's self-directed play?
2. What does a play-based kindergarten classroom look like? Sound like? Feel like? What are children doing? What are teachers doing?
3. How can play bring more joy to the kindergarten year?

Meeting Needs Through Play-Based Learning Experiences

1. In the opening vignette of the chapter, the teacher introduced a topic that was required by the district literacy curriculum, yet it was a subject her kindergartners had little experience with or knowledge about. What strategies did she use to build their understanding through joyful investigations? How can you bring more active learning into your own kindergartners' day?
2. What evidence do you see in the chapter of teachers and students sharing the leading of the play and learning? In guided play, what are some ways you might step in or pull back?
3. Read the sidebar on page 125, "Considering Access and Engagement in Guided Play Experiences." Children with delays or disabilities may need more support or scaffolding than their peers to participate fully in play-based experiences. Why is it important to provide these types of experiences and support for all children? How could you adapt the ideas in the sidebar for situations in your own classroom?
4. How does a play-based approach support the diverse needs, experiences, languages, and backgrounds of the children in your community of learners? How does a play-based approach allow for meaningful differentiation?

Try This

Adapt one of your more teacher-directed lessons to a more play-based learning experience. Plan a guided play experience for your students. Review the suggested step-by-step guide on pages 126–128 of the book as you work to meet the needs of your diverse learners. Reflect on the successes and challenges.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 23

Finding Joy in Kindergarten Mathematics

Key Ideas

- › Research with young learners indicates that a positive attitude about math matters just as much as IQ because it enhances memory and allows children to engage in problem solving (Chen et al. 2018).
- › Children’s math abilities in kindergarten are strong predictors of later school success—even more than literacy, attention, and social and emotional skills (Claessens & Engel 2013).
- › Everyone is capable of learning math, regardless of age, gender, ability, interests, culture, or home language. Teachers need to believe this, communicate it to their students, and provide all children with genuine opportunities to learn and succeed in math.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Attitude Toward Math Learning

1. What is your attitude toward math? Do you consider yourself a mathematician? What influenced your attitude toward math? How do you think your attitude impacts your students’ attitudes about math?
2. Do you see opportunities for you and your students to find and experience joy in math? Why or why not?

Ensuring All Children Have Opportunities to Learn and Find Joy in Math

1. The author describes her previous dislike of and anxiety around math and the factors that produced those attitudes. How does anxiety about doing math impact young learners? In what ways can you provide experiences to lessen any anxiety that your kindergartners may feel?
2. Review the author’s suggestions for increasing your math knowledge and finding (or rekindling) enjoyment in math, including the resources on page 134. Which of these strategies could strengthen your own math knowledge as well as increase your confidence in teaching math to kindergartners? If understanding and teaching math is a strength for you, what ways might you find to support colleagues for whom it is not?
3. How can understanding that doing math is a natural part of young children’s lives open up opportunities for you and your students to engage in joyful math investigations?
4. In relation to racial and ethnic identities and gender, what stereotypes exist about who can and who cannot do math? How do you think these biases impact students’ math learning? What can you do to alleviate these stereotypes within your community of learners?
5. Review the vignette about Elliott on pages 131–132. How can child-led, play-based experiences enable you to better see children’s strengths? How could you grow those children’s capabilities and support their social and emotional skills in the process?

Try This

Consider the author’s suggestion to engage in playful math activities with your colleagues. Either during a regularly planned grade-level meeting or during a special gathering of those interested in strengthening their math knowledge, talk about your attitudes and feelings about math. Play math games such as What’s My Rule? as described on page 132 of the book. What other math games can you devise to play together?

| What will you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 24

Joyful and Equitable Literacy

The Intersection of Access and Opportunity

Key Ideas

- › When students experience joy in learning, acquiring and storing new information is more effective and efficient.
- › When teachers affirm and celebrate the complexity of children’s identities through words and actions, students experience more equitable and joyful literacy learning.
- › Educators can leverage students’ knowledge in culturally preserving ways and integrate joy and equity into instruction by using a framework that includes the following components for making teaching decisions: family perspectives, professional expertise and experience, and external and internal evidence.
- › Educators must be familiar with the features of children’s first language or dialect, including African American English and Southern American English, that may differ from those of academic English and carefully consider how these differences may affect literacy instruction.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Literacy Knowledge and Practices

1. Based on the mandated or suggested literacy program you use, do the literacy practices take into account the individuality of the children in your community of learners? If not, are there ways you have adapted some of the experiences to more effectively meet their needs? Are there specific barriers that prevent you from making adaptations?
2. In what ways are you committed to updating, challenging, refining, and adding to your professional knowledge, particularly in the area of literacy teaching?

Integrating Joy and Equity into Literacy Instruction

1. What ideas do you find in the chapter for using a joyful, whole-child approach to teaching literacy, rooted in social and emotional learning and trauma-informed practices? What additional resources and support might you need to integrate these ideas?
2. How do you use the three components of the framework discussed on pages 136–138 when making teaching decisions, especially in relation to literacy? Which of these areas could you give more attention to?
3. On pages 139–140, the authors offer a sample phonemic awareness routine that illustrates one way to bridge from children’s existing strengths and language knowledge to new learning. What evidence of strengths-based teaching do you see in the routine? What effect might this have on learners as opposed to the use of deficit language? Consider how this compares with your own practice.

Cultivating and Applying Your Professional Expertise

1. In what ways do you remain committed to updating, challenging, and refining your professional knowledge? Review “Educator Expertise for Equity and Joy” on page 137 of the book. Which of the recommended strategies have you participated in? What other ways have you added, or could you add, to your professional knowledge?

Try This

Try the authors' suggestions for learning about children and families. Identify strategies for practicing cultural humility. Create and administer a survey to families about their values, cultural practices, educational priorities, and other pertinent information. Ask children directly about their thoughts and what brings them joy. Refer to the ideas on pages 136–137 of the book. Think of other ways you could learn about your own and the families' perspectives and values.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

CHAPTER 25

Adapting the Curriculum to Incorporate Student Inquiry Through Teachable Moments

Key Ideas

- › When you have an important teachable moment, like when a child asks an intriguing question, you can adapt your plans while still staying connected to learning standards.
- › Teachers can go beyond rote approaches to address learning standards. They can connect different areas of the curriculum, ask engaging questions, and provide hands-on experiences to engage children in the learning.
- › In many kindergarten classrooms, teaching addresses isolated content areas. However, children benefit from an interdisciplinary approach to content learning, in which rich connections are made across content areas and domains of development. When two or more domains are integrated, learning in each is strengthened.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Responses to Teachable Moments

1. What teachable moments have you had with your kindergartners this year? How did you embrace those moments? What barriers exist that might keep you from being able to embrace them?
2. Does your curriculum teach content area skills in isolation, or are there opportunities to integrate content in meaningful ways? What resources or support would you need to provide more integrated content?

Adapting the Curriculum to Embrace Teachable Moments

1. Do you have support from your administrators for adapting lesson plans to take advantage of teachable moments? If not, what ideas from this chapter could you share with them to help their understanding of its importance? Refer to “Young Children Benefit from Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Content” on page 144 for ideas.
2. How does the author create an environment of joyful learning and exploration? How does she incorporate children’s interests and respond to their thought-provoking questions? Which ideas are most interesting to you? Why?
3. On pages 143–144, the author talks about the importance of teaching media literacy and labeling it as such. How can you incorporate media literacy into teachable moment explorations?

Try This

Think of something exciting that happened unexpectedly in your classroom. Did someone see a spider? Bring photos of their family trip to share? Think about ways in which you could embrace a meaningful teachable moment and adapt your lessons to capitalize on this interest. Then, watch for excitement among the children and be prepared to respond to unexpected questions and opportunities for meaningful learning. Knowing your learning standards and how to connect them to different topics of study, as the author illustrates on page 143, is the first step in being able to adapt your plans based on children’s interests and to invite exploration and investigation of new ideas. Make a list of ways that you can go beyond rote approaches to address learning standards, including asking intriguing and open-ended questions.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

Demonstrating Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

Part 6 examines ways in which teachers demonstrate professionalism by being lifelong learners, reflective practitioners, and advocates for children, families, and the early education profession.

Key Ideas

- › Educators identify and involve themselves with the early education field and serve as informed advocates for young children, families, and the profession.
- › In the early education field, the connection between professionalism, developmentally appropriate practice, and equity is especially strong. “The work of professionalism is . . . fundamentally about seeking equity and justice as part [of] an effort to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education for all” (NAEYC 2022, 253).
- › The sixth guideline, professionalism, brings forward the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable educators to make decisions and “exemplify ethical, intentional, and reflective professional judgment and practice” (NAEYC 2019b, 5). Thus, professionalism does not stand alone from the other five guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice—it is woven throughout all of them.

Consider Guideline 6

Before reading the introduction to Part 6 on pages 148–149 in the book, reflect on these questions:

1. What is your understanding of this guideline from the DAP position statement?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a reflective practitioner and a lifelong learner? Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you serve as an advocate for the guiding principles of early education and developmentally appropriate practice?

What Do You Think?

Reflecting on Your Professional Journey

After reading the introduction to Part 6 on pages 148–149, including the examples of professionalism from various chapters in the book, reflect on what professionalism means to you. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What is your story of growth and change over time?
2. How has this book helped you in any of the following ways: becoming more reflective of your own practice; remaining current on effective, equitable practices in kindergarten; and advocating for equitable opportunities in your classroom, school, and community?
3. How have you worked to strengthen your leadership skills? What new strategies might you try?
4. In what ways do you understand, practice, and advocate for social justice in your classroom, school, and community? What additional action might you take in your advocacy efforts?



REMINDER: Consider the Read and Reflect questions and the suggestions under Next Steps on page 149 of the book.

CHAPTER 26

Portraits of Teacher Leadership

Key Ideas

- › Early childhood educators should be well-prepared in their professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach in diverse, inclusive settings.
- › Teacher leadership is not necessarily just the assigned role of a grade-level chair or being a mentor to entry-level teachers. It is more of a state of mind.
- › Teacher leaders constantly reflect on their practice, seek new knowledge and solutions, collaborate and share resources, and model effective practices.
- › A teacher leader inspires and effects positive change in the lives of other educators, students, families, and the community in which they serve.

BEFORE READING

Consider How You Are a Teacher Leader

1. In what ways are you already a teacher leader?
2. Are there teacher leaders throughout your career who have inspired you and supported your growth as a teacher? Who were (or are) they? What did they do?
3. What professional growth opportunities have you participated in to improve your practice?

Strengthening Your Leadership Skills

1. Of the suggestions for strengthening your own leadership skills provided by the authors on page 152 of the book, which strategies have worked for you? Which strategies would you like to try?
2. In what ways do you or will you serve as an advocate for appropriate practices in kindergarten? What resources and supports do you need to be more informed and prepared for the work of advocacy?

Try This

As a next step in your journey of professionalism, invite a group of kindergarten colleagues, administrators, and curriculum leaders within your school and/or district to read this chapter. Bring the group together to discuss their thoughts about it. Highlight the ideas that you feel are most important to your work and to those included in the conversation. Consider the ways in which you and your colleagues can move forward in your professional growth as well as in advocating for appropriate practices in kindergarten. Identify the challenges that may arise as well as what kind of support you will need from your administrators. Identify professional development offerings that interest you and would support your knowledge of appropriate practices and strengthen your leadership skills. Research ways in which these opportunities could be funded. Plan ways to share your learning with other colleagues.

| What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 27

Agency and Power in Young Children's Lives

Five Ways to Advocate for Social Justice as an Early Childhood Educator

Key Ideas

- › Early childhood education is increasingly positioned as an important part of making societies more equitable and prosperous. Strong early childhood systems can be both a safety net and an accelerator for families experiencing poverty and other oppressive forces.
- › Social justice requires belief and effort: a belief that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities *and* significant effort to transform the institutions and systems that sustain unequal relationships and realities.
- › Social justice educators seek to understand and include families in addressing the underlying inequities that are responsible for so much trauma and suffering in people's lives and work to identify their own roles in perpetuating such inequities.

BEFORE READING

Consider Your Thoughts on Social Justice

1. In what ways have you or those you care about experienced injustices in your lives? How have they impacted you or others?
2. Why is social justice education important for early childhood education? Do you agree that young children should learn about how institutional racism and other social injustices impact their lives and the lives of others? Why or why not? What might this look like for young children?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the idea that instead of trying to fix children and families, we must look collectively at the systems and institutions that continue to create inequitable opportunities, resource allocation, and experiences?
4. What is your understanding of the terms *deficit thinking*, *White privilege*, *institutional racism*, and *structural inequities*?

Putting Social Justice into Action in Kindergarten

Review the authors' suggestions for five ways to center social justice in the classroom on pages 155–158. Consider these questions:

1. Have you heard colleagues use deficit talk when describing young children and their families? How does this type of thinking impact children and families? In what ways do you or can you intentionally reject deficit talk within your setting?
2. Reflect on the role your background, experiences, beliefs, and training play in how you interpret the actions of children and families. How do they impact your approach to teaching and learning? How can you check the lenses you look through (e.g., curriculum, research, pedagogy models, materials, classroom management approaches) to see whose voices are missing?
3. What opportunities do your kindergartners have to use their agency and to see themselves as leaders—those who can advocate, plan for, and make change for themselves and their communities? What do they need from you, their families, and their communities to make this happen?

4. In what ways do you make space for children's stories of what is going on and what they are thinking about? How do you use their realities and community knowledge in your curriculum planning?
5. To create healing spaces for children and families, teachers must recognize that trauma and its effects can look different and that actions undertaken based on teachers' own bias or lack of understanding of children's and families' lives can result in further trauma. Review the section on page 158 carefully, considering what perceptions you might need to change in order to support well-being for children and families.

Try This

On page 158 in the book, the authors point to NAEYC's position statement on advancing equity (2019a) and its recommendation that trauma-informed care is needed to address issues of inequity. One trauma-informed strategy is to create safe and healing spaces for young children. Consider the ways in which you already provide an environment where children feel safe. Enhance those spaces or create new ones in which your kindergartners not only feel safe and valued but also heal from the traumas they may have experienced.

| *What might you do differently as a result of reading this chapter?*

Group Discussion Questions

If you are reading *Focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Equitable and Joyful Learning in Kindergarten* as part of a book club, book study, or professional learning community, you can use the questions in this section as an anchor for group or partner reflection and discussion topics both for your own thinking and for making contributions and suggestions about implications for practice for your group.

Consider colleagues or other early childhood education professionals you might collaborate with in reading and discussing this book and its potential application to your work. You can use this guide together. Teachers can use this guide with a group of colleagues. Principals and instructional leaders can use this guide with groups of educators.

To be able to honestly discuss sensitive topics, find a group of colleagues with whom you feel safe to share your thinking, especially if they do not share your opinion.

General Questions

- › Does a book, part, or chapter offer a *central idea or premise*? What are the problems or issues raised? How could your group of educators address these ideas?
- › Are the book's ideas *controversial*? How so? And who is aligned on which sides of the issues? Where do you fall in that lineup?
- › Can you point to *specific passages* that struck you personally—as interesting, profound, unattainable, illuminating?

Chapter Questions

Part 1

Chapter 1

- › What supports exist for transition into and out of kindergarten at the district and community level? How can teachers be involved in any needed changes at this level?

Chapter 2

- › Share and compare the types of routines, rituals, and mantras that the group members are using or have used in their classrooms. Discuss similarities and differences in those practices and how they have or have not been successful in building a strong, positive community of learners. Work together to create additional strategies for bringing more joy into your classrooms.

Chapter 3

- › Has anyone in the group made a transformation similar to that of the author of this chapter? How were they able to make changes? What obstacles existed or still exist? What supports would everyone need to work toward offering more opportunities for child choice and responsibility for learning?

Chapter 4

- › Do your schools or districts look like the one described by the author on page 22? How are the expectations the same or different?
- › As a group, share your experiences and concerns related to identity and gender topics. Brainstorm ideas for exploring these topics with children in ways that can lead to powerful conversations and discoveries as kindergartners focus on their own strengths and unique stories.

Chapter 5

Share your ideas related to race and racism with your colleagues. Invite others to do the same. Use some of the following questions to spark discussion.

- › In what ways do you already support children’s relationships and their understanding of race and racism within your kindergarten classrooms? What barriers exist to doing so?
- › What can you do collectively to combat some of these barriers? What could be done to advocate in schools that might restrict what teachers can do around this topic?

Part 2

Chapter 6

- › Consider your own situations. Are your administrators supportive of using playful learning in kindergarten? What might you do if your administrators are not supportive? How could you support each other in these efforts?
- › How can your school, grade level, and community work to improve two-way communication with families, especially around their values and expectations and the importance of using playful learning experiences in kindergarten?

Chapter 7

- › What can you and your colleagues do collectively to increase and improve opportunities to connect with all children and families in your schools and districts? Are there families who need more or different opportunities in order to support these partnerships? Why? What additional supports can you, your school, and your district provide for these? How can you find out what families would find beneficial?
- › How is math experienced by the children in your kindergarten classrooms? How can you strengthen the experiences to be more relevant to the particular children in your schools?

Chapter 8

- › Discuss the ways in which your policies and practices support and inhibit multilingual children and their families. What adaptations could be made to better meet the diverse needs of this population?
- › Consider ways in which you, your colleagues, and/or your district could adapt the social studies curriculum discussed in the chapter to include more “inquiry through explorations and investigations,” as described by the authors.

Chapter 9

- › With your colleagues, discuss the challenges that exist when it comes to being the bridge to support kindergartners and their families whose primary language is not English. Where are there similarities across the school or district? Are there consistent reasons for these challenges that could be addressed by your group? Who else would need to be a part of the conversations?
- › In what ways could you and your colleagues adapt your current practices to include more intentional support for these families? What support would you need to do so?

Part 3

Chapter 10

- › How could you collectively begin to address your challenges in using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate assessment practices in your kindergarten programs? What additional support would you need for successful advocacy efforts?

Chapter 11

- › Consider the barriers to successfully implementing a child-centered playful learning approach with kindergartners. How could you and your colleagues begin to address these barriers?
- › How could you collectively advocate for more appropriate kindergarten instructional practices? What additional support would you need?

Chapters 12 and 14

- › As a group, discuss your experiences with using mandated and scripted assessment tools with kindergartners. What other types of assessments are still needed to allow you to look at each student as a whole child, including a child's approaches to learning, language development and communication, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and health and physical development?
- › How can you work together to advocate for changes to assessment practices in kindergarten? How could you support each other as you work toward striking the balance as described by the authors of this chapter? What additional supports might you need?

Chapter 13

- › Discuss ways that collaboration for inclusion happens in your grade level, school, district, and community. What is working well? What needs improvement? What supports do you need to be able to participate in effective collaboration efforts? Are there schools or classrooms where collaboration is done particularly effectively that you could benefit from observing?

Part 4

Chapter 15

- › Discuss the developmental learning centers the members of your group have or have had in their classrooms. Talk about the materials in each center, what happens in those centers, and opportunities children have to make choices in their play, talk with peers, and ask questions. What has been successful? Where have there been challenges?
- › How could you and your colleagues begin to address any barriers that exist to using learning centers in your kindergarten rooms? How could you collectively advocate for the use of developmental centers? What additional support, resources, furniture, and materials would you need for successful implementation and advocacy efforts?

Chapter 16

- › Discuss the ways you and your colleagues differentiate support for individual development within your diverse communities of learners.
- › How would the process of scaffolding, as described by the authors, make differentiation more effective? What additional support do you need to strengthen your use of scaffolding practices? What additional support do you need to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities?

Chapter 17

- › Discuss the integration of content in your kindergarten programs or the lack thereof. How could you use children's wonder and curiosity to spark learning across the content areas while you meet required learning standards?

Chapter 18

- › How are the wonder and excitement of creativity and creative expression stimulated in your kindergarten classrooms? How do you incorporate opportunities for exploring the process of art and drama?
- › There are many concepts and skills addressed and practiced through creative expression experiences as described in this chapter. What materials and resources would you need to effectively implement such experiences? How could you support each other in bringing more creative expression into your classrooms?

Chapter 19

- › Discuss the idea of using mentor texts to encourage writing in young children. Which of your current books could be utilized as mentor texts this year? What additional titles would you want to acquire? How could you and your colleagues support each other's efforts in using mentor texts?

Chapter 20

- › What barriers do you and your colleagues face in providing enough time in your daily schedule for kindergartners to become fully engaged in their play? Brainstorm ways in which you can make time for children to participate in the healing power of play.
- › As a group, discuss the experiences you have had with young children and their families who have experienced trauma in their lives. What strategies do you use to support these children and families? How do you help children who are upset or scared? What other specialists in your building or community could support your efforts?

Part 5

Chapter 21

- › As a group of educators who value the principles of developmentally appropriate, child-centered learning, consider your experience with past efforts at changing practices or curriculum. What challenges have you faced in providing this type of learning environment for your kindergartners? How could you support each other in addressing the challenges in your settings?
- › What strategies could you use to demonstrate the rigorous nature of child-centered practices to those who do not understand or value this type of learning for young children? What evidence could you provide?

Chapter 22

- › Revisit the sidebar titled "Advocating for Play in Kindergarten Classrooms Across Illinois" on page 124 of the book. What efforts has your state made, if any, to incorporate play-based learning into their kindergarten classrooms? Where has this been successful? What could you do as a group of committed colleagues to advocate for change?

Chapter 23

- › Together, try this exercise suggested by the author: Think of your best math-related memory. Where were you? What age were you? What happened, and how did you feel? Now think about your worst math-related memory. How have these experiences contributed to the way you feel about math today? Share your stories with each other and listen for clues about barriers to participation in math lessons and moments that provide meaningful access to learning. How might these apply to you? How might they apply to your students?

Chapter 24

- › Discuss with your group your feelings about the importance of the kindergarten year in relation to language and literacy development. What strategies reflect these notions? What strategies inhibit these notions in some ways? How can you work together to advocate for more child-centered, equitable instructional practices in literacy?
- › In what ways do you promote oral language and vocabulary development in your kindergarten programs? What adaptations are made for children who are learning English along with their first language?

Chapter 25

- › What stories do you have of teachable moments that have occurred in your classrooms? How did you handle them? How did you connect the experiences to learning standards?

Part 6

Chapter 26

- › As a group of kindergarten educators, how can you support each other in building your own leadership skills? How can you work together as a team of leaders to effect positive changes in your kindergarten practices? What supports will you need? What are the first steps you might take together?

Chapter 27

- › Discussing sensitive topics such as bias, social justice, and de-privileging White-centric approaches in education takes trust, commitment, and authenticity. How can you and your kindergarten (and other grade-level colleagues) tackle these challenges in order to support equity and agency for all children? How can you begin, if they haven't taken place already, the deep conversations necessary to unpack the stereotypes, biases, and systems that lead to social injustice?

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