



Transition to Kindergarten and Kindergarten Professional Learning Community (PLC) Discussion Guide

CHAPTER 1: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)



TK and Kindergarten Professional Learning Community (PLC) Discussion Guide

This guide was created to support conversations in Transition to Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Use this PLC Discussion Guide along with the Washington State Transition to Kindergarten and Kindergarten Guide to engage in a deeper understanding of what developmentally appropriate practice looks like in your district, building, and classroom. If you work in a smaller district and you are the only TK teacher, consider connecting with kindergarten colleagues in your building. If you are the only Kindergarten teacher in your district, consider starting a PLC with other TK and K teachers in neighboring communities.



Chapter One: Developmentally Appropriate Practice



Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is a cornerstone of early childhood education. After reading about DAP on pages 15-17 in the TK/K Guide, as a team, define developmentally appropriate practice in your own words.

Definition of DAP

[illegible]

Reflect on your current context. What aspects of your curriculum, school culture, or district currently support the implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practice? What barriers may be limiting its full implementation? Who could serve as collaborative partners in addressing those barriers?

Aspects Supporting DAP	Barriers to Implementing DAP
List of possible partners	

Read [NAEYC's Position Statement](#) below. Discuss what stands out to you and how that connects to your practice as an early learning professional. Record your thoughts below.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice
National Association for the Education of Young Children

"Each and every child, birth through age 8, has the right to equitable learning opportunities—in centers, family childcare homes, or schools—that fully support their optimal development and learning across all domains and content areas. Children are born eager to learn; they take delight exploring their world and making connections. The degree to which early learning programs support children's delight and wonder in learning reflects the quality of that setting. Educators who engage in developmentally appropriate practice foster young children's joyful learning and maximize the opportunities for each and every child to achieve their full potential."

Stands Out	Connects

DAP and Equity

Educational equity ensures that all children receive what they need to reach their full academic and social potential. It requires teachers to engage in ongoing reflection about how classroom structures, expectations, and interactions shape children's opportunities to learn.

Read the article [Mindful Reflection as a Process for Developing Culturally Responsive Practices](#) found on page 19 of the TK/K Guide. Reflect on interpretations of behavior, unconscious and conscious thoughts, mindfulness, and the 6-Step Process for Mindful Reflection. Then, share a time when you reacted to a child's behavior on "automatic pilot." What are some examples of conflicting beliefs between the automatic responses and the mindful responses discussed in this article?

Reflection and Discussion Notes

Read [Every Individual is Rooted in Culture](#) referenced on page 19 of the TK/K Guide. Consider the reflection questions at the end of the article. What stands out to you? After reading the article, complete the following sentence: For me, culture is... Write your response in the box below, then share and discuss your thinking.

For me, culture is...

As a team, list the strengths, identities, and cultural experiences of the children and families in your community.

Strengths	Identities	Cultural Experiences

Review the visual on page 18 of the TK/K Guide labeled Equality and Equity. Where do you see evidence of equity in your building and classrooms?

Evidence of Equity	
Building	Classrooms

What opportunities do you see to shift from “everyone getting the same thing” to “everyone getting what they need” in your building and classrooms?

Opportunities to Shift from Equality to Equity

DAP and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

[Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports](#) (MTSS) and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) are complementary frameworks that support the whole child. MTSS ensures children receive the right level of support based on data, while DAP ensures that those supports are developmentally, culturally, and individually responsive. Together, they create learning experiences that are both effective and aligned with how young children learn and grow.

Washington's MTSS Framework outlines the essential [components of MTSS](#), which include team-driven shared leadership, data-based decision making, student, family, and community engagement, a continuum of supports, and evidence-based practices.

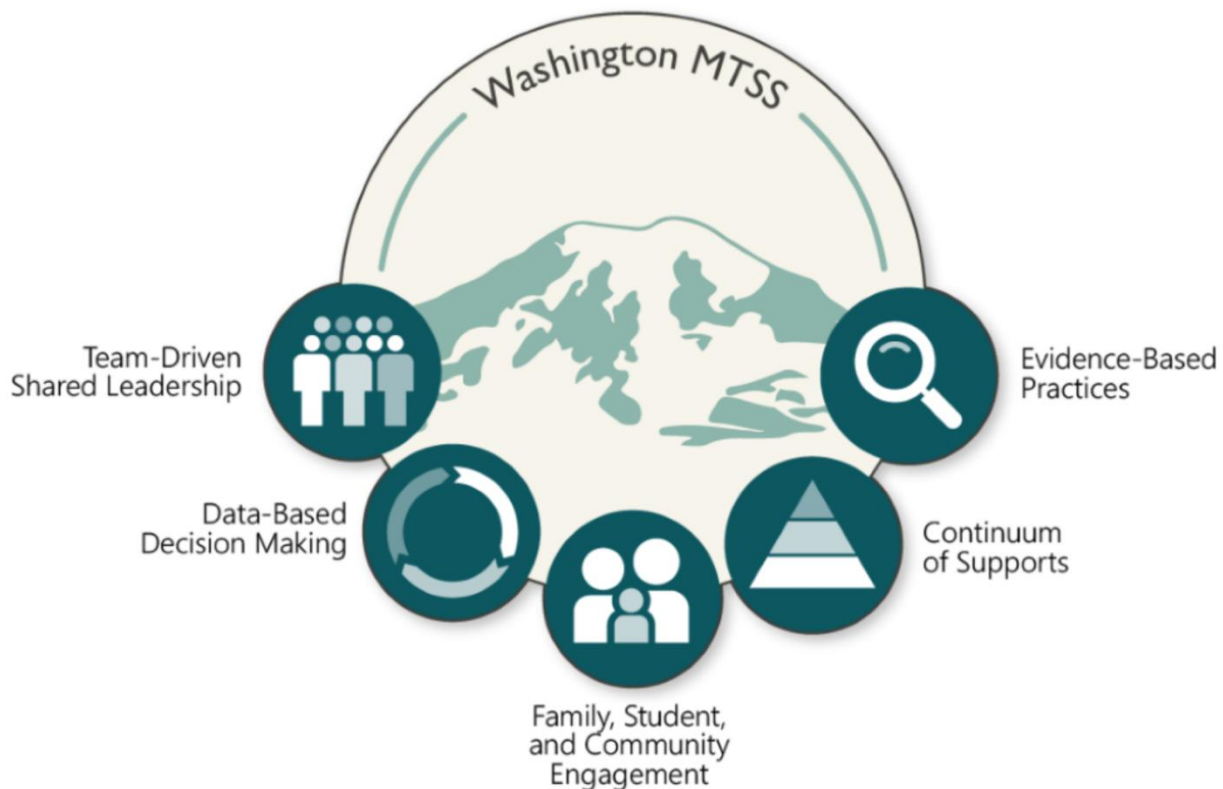


Image Source: [OSPI Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#)

Aligns with Chapter 1: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)
Washington State TK/K Guide

As a team, refer to pages 137-139 of the TK/K Guide and identify the MTSS components currently in place and the leaders or points of contact who can support your work.

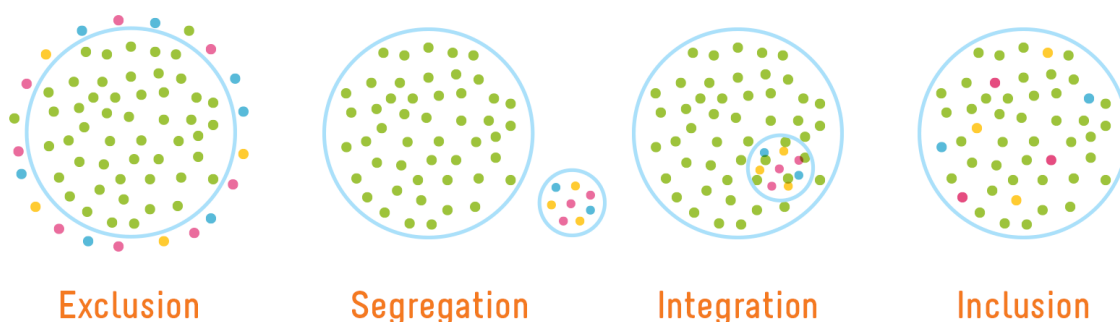
	Leaders and Points of Contact
Team-Driven Leadership/Shared Leadership	
Data-Based Decision Making (e.g., who reviews your monthly "catch" data)	
Family, Student, and Community Engagement	
Evidence-Based Practices	
Continuum of Supports	

DAP and Inclusionary Practices

Multi-tiered systems of support create inclusive learning environments by ensuring every child receives high-quality, differentiated instruction in the general education classroom. Through ongoing observation and data-informed decision making, educators provide increasingly targeted support based on each child's strengths and needs. This allows children to continue learning and participating alongside their peers whenever possible.

Inclusion brings Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) to life by ensuring every child has access to equitable, meaningful learning opportunities. Strong inclusionary practice supports DAP's emphasis on teaching each child by intentionally adapting instruction, learning environments, and modifications. When inclusionary practice is done well, it honors children's individual development, strengths, cultures, and abilities while fostering a strong sense of belonging.

Refer to pages 125 -126 in the TK/K Guide. When you think about inclusion in your current setting, which image best depicts how the system is set up to support children?



Source: [Keen Oxford](#)

As a team, refer to the images above on page 125 of the TK/K Guide. Discuss how you will determine what support children need in the classroom? What is the process for accessing additional support for children in your classroom?

Determining Support	Accessing Support



DAP and Child Development

Washington State Early Learning Developmental Guidelines (ELGs) and Developmental Standards

Understanding developmental milestones helps educators make informed decisions about classroom planning, schedules, curriculum, and instructional practices. As a team, take time to explore the Developmental Domains for your age group on pages 22–28 of the TK/K Guide. Place a check mark next to indicators you currently feel comfortable observing for WaKIDS or other developmentally appropriate assessments. Put a question mark next to those you would like to better understand. Then, identify at least one indicator from each domain that merits a deeper dive and discuss your selections and reasoning as a team.

Reflection and Discussion Notes

As a team, discuss how you currently collect documentation about children’s development and learning in your classroom. What is working? What is not working?

Working

Not Working

How might you support one another by sharing approaches that have been effective for documenting children's learning?

DAP and Relevant, Meaningful Learning Experiences

Ensuring young children's learning experiences are relevant and meaningful fosters overall development and lays the foundation for lifelong learning. Take 10 minutes together to watch [Michelle Thompson's TEDx Talk on Education Reimagined Through Constructivism](#) located on page 31 of the TK/K Guide.

Video Notes	
In constructivism, who is at the center of learning?	
What role does the environment play in constructivism?	
How does constructivism show meaning and purpose, and why does it matter?	
Reflection and Discussion	

Aligns with Chapter 1: Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)
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Explore how you might support planning relevant and meaningful learning experiences. Using the list on pages 31-32 of the TK/K Guide, identify your strengths in tailoring learning activities to facilitate engagement, ensure retention, foster intrinsic motivation, enhance cognitive development, and promote social emotional development. What strengths does each individual contribute to the team? *(For example: Maya has a lot of knowledge about social emotional development; she can help us create a sense of belonging in our classrooms.)* What do you want to learn more about as a team?

Individual Strengths	Team Strengths	Learn More About
<i>Ex. Maya has ideas to support belonging.</i>	<i>Ex. We can all share ideas about how to increase engagement.</i>	<i>Ex. We want to learn more about how to increase intrinsic motivation. We can talk to ____.</i> <i>We can explore ____ resources.</i>

DAP and Language Development

Educators play an essential role in nurturing language development by creating environments that invite meaningful conversations and responsive interactions. As children develop language, they also strengthen the cognitive, social, and emotional skills that support learning and healthy development.

Refer to page 33 in the TK/K Guide and watch this 4-minute video called [Beyond the 30 Million Word Gap](#) by the McGovern Institute at MIT to explore how talking, listening, and engaging in meaningful conversations help strengthen children's developing brains.

Video Notes	
What is the 30-million-word gap?	
Why are conversational turns so important in language development?	
When in your daily schedule are children engaging in conversational turns with peers or adults?	
How might you increase opportunities for conversational turns throughout your day? How might you support families in finding ways to increase conversational turns?	
Reflection and Discussion Notes	

DAP and Integrating Content

Integrated learning is essential because it provides holistic educational experiences and emphasizes deeper understanding and critical thinking. An interdisciplinary approach is typically more meaningful than teaching content areas separately.

Share an example of an integrated learning experience from your classroom. How did connecting multiple content areas deepen children's understanding and engagement? If you have not yet implemented integrated learning experiences, refer to the examples on page 34 of the TK/K Guide. Which example would you be most interested in trying, and why?

Reflection and Discussion Notes

DAP and The Importance and Benefits of Play

Play-based learning facilitates academic achievement, fosters critical thinking skills, strengthens social-emotional competencies, and provides a means for children to learn and express themselves. It allows children to naturally demonstrate their knowledge and skills, offering a true reflection of their abilities. Pages 35-37 of the TK/K Guide contain many playful learning resources for teachers and administrators to explore.

Watch the 8-minute video [Play in Early Childhood: The Role of Play in Any Setting](#) from the Center on the Developing Child from Harvard University. This video is referenced on page 37 of the TK/K Guide. As you watch, identify the three Core Principles that play supports. Discuss your

key takeaways, how these principles are reflected in your own classroom or school, and how they might strengthen your instructional practice.

Harvard's Three Core Principles	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Reflection and Discussion Notes	

Watch this 3-minute video from the Raising Children Network in Australia called [How Play Helps Child Development](#). After viewing the video, discuss why play is a critical part of healthy brain development in young children.

Video Notes	
How are connections in the brain made stronger through play?	
Why is it so important to have strong connections created in the brain through play as children get older? What happens to the weaker connections?	
When do you provide opportunities for children to play and practice repetition in your daily schedule?	
Reflection and Discussion	



Chapter Reflection

Independently or as a PLC: Based on your experience and what you have learned about Developmentally Appropriate Practice in this chapter, write down three key points you can share with colleagues and administrators to explain DAP in your classroom.

Three Key Points
1.
2.
3.

If you complete this activity independently, share your key points with your PLC when you are finished.